

# **A Policy Study of the Emergence of a Joint Interdisciplinary School**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Educational Administration  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, SK

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PERMISSION TO USE.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: THE NATURE OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Background to the Study.....	2
Purpose of the Study .....	5
Significance of the Study .....	5
Parameters of the Study .....	8
Assumptions .....	8
Delimitations .....	8
Limitations .....	9
Definitions.....	10
Isomorphism .....	10
Institutional change .....	10
<i>Institutional formation</i> .....	<i>10</i>
<i>Institutional development (or elaboration)</i> .....	<i>10</i>
<i>Deinstitutionalization</i> .....	<i>10</i>
<i>Reinstitutionalization</i> .....	<i>11</i>
Policy.....	11
Public policy.....	11
Stakeholders and actors .....	11
Policy community.....	12
Policy networks .....	12
Policy analysis.....	12
Problem stream .....	12
Policy stream .....	12

Political stream .....	13
Policy change and policy windows .....	13
First-order change.....	13
Second-order change .....	13
The Researcher.....	13
Organization of the Dissertation .....	14
<b>CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>16</b>
The Historical Context of Higher Education in Canada .....	16
The Current Political and Social Context in Education .....	19
Marketization of Education.....	23
The Changing Nature of Today’s Postsecondary Students.....	26
Institutions and Institutionalization.....	29
The Old Institutionalism .....	30
The New Institutionalism or Neoinstitutionalism.....	30
Comparison of the Two Theories .....	32
Three Disciplines or Types of Neoinstitutionalism .....	34
Historical Institutionalism .....	34
Economic or Rational Choice Institutionalism .....	35
Sociological Institutionalism.....	36
Three Types of Institutional Isomorphism.....	38
Forms of Institutional Change .....	40
Institutionalism and Educational Settings.....	42
Directions for Future Research in Institutional Theory .....	45
Suggestions for Research in the Canadian Context .....	47
Synthesis of the Literature Review .....	50
<b>CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>52</b>
Purpose of the Study .....	52
Policy and Public Policy .....	53
Policy Analysis and Policy Analysis Models .....	54
Organizational Problem and Policy Origin.....	61
Organizational Response and Policy Adoption .....	65

Channels of Change and Policy Implementation.....	68
Required Level of Agency .....	68
Required Level of Capacity .....	71
Required Level of Learning .....	72
Intended Impacts and Intended Levels of Change.....	74
Intended and Collateral Impacts .....	76
Visualizing the Dynamics of the Policy Process .....	78
Summary .....	80
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN.....</b>	<b>82</b>
Considerations in Research Design .....	82
Application of the Case Study Approach to This Research.....	83
Choosing the site .....	85
Data collection.....	86
<i>Policies</i> .....	86
<i>Documents</i> .....	87
<i>Interviews</i> .....	87
Data Analysis .....	89
Policies .....	92
Documents.....	92
Interviews.....	92
The Final Product.....	93
Ensuring Quality and Trustworthiness.....	93
Confidentiality and Ethics.....	96
Summary .....	96
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: INVESTIGATING CONTEXT AND STAKEHOLDERS.....</b>	<b>97</b>
Participants.....	98
Analysis of Policy Development: The Story .....	99
The Issues, Influences, and Contexts of the Policy Development.....	103
Critical Role of Institutional Planning as a Priming Mechanism.....	104
Removal of the Structural Barriers Through Organizational Innovation.....	105
Renewed Focus on Research Intensification and Increased Graduate Enrolment.....	107

Galvanizing the Policy Focus.....	109
Interdisciplinarity and Increased Capacity to Explore Activity at the Intersection .....	111
The Confluence of Forces and <i>Zeitgeist</i> .....	113
The Role of the Stakeholders and Policy Actors .....	116
The Involvement of a Few Key Policy Actors at University B .....	117
Multiple Stakeholders at University A: Enabling Broader Engagement .....	118
The Critical Role of Influential Policy Actors .....	120
Key Involvement at the Grassroots Level .....	122
The Support of Key Formal Leadership.....	124
The Inclusion of the School Idea in the Multi-Year University Plan.....	126
Summary .....	128
<b>CHAPTER SIX: IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES AND TENSIONS .....</b>	<b>129</b>
The Strategic Planning Process: Legitimizing Change.....	130
Policy Implementation: Max’s Frame .....	135
Max’s First Stage of Implementation.....	137
Resources: The process of capacity building .....	139
Issues concerning financial resources.....	140
Faculty and staff issues .....	146
Issues in curriculum development .....	155
Issues in finding physical space.....	158
Resources: Summary .....	159
The emergence of the joint school idea.....	159
Proposal development: Differential approval process.....	166
Time frame for implementation: Due diligence versus momentum.....	171
Resistance to change.....	175
Max’s Second Stage of Implementation .....	179
The support of designated leadership: Acting directors and executive sponsors.....	181
Max’s Third Stage of Implementation .....	184
Future development .....	188
Organizational Learning .....	191
Summary .....	196

<b>CHAPTER SEVEN: INTENDED AND COLLATERAL IMPACTS .....</b>	<b>198</b>
Articulation of the Intended Impacts of the School .....	199
The Broad Impacts: Policy, Praxis, Research, and Engagement .....	199
A Destination Program.....	202
The Development of Interdisciplinary Capability.....	203
Interconnectedness: Community, Outreach, and Engagement .....	204
The Establishment of a Focal Point for Policy Work.....	205
Infrastructure for Research Intensification.....	207
Section Summary .....	208
Collateral Impacts: A Value-Added Dimension.....	209
The Development of a Powerful Planning Tool .....	209
Institutional Fluidity and Nimbleness .....	211
The Establishment of a Test-Bed for Trying New Structures.....	212
The Building of a Culture that Welcomes Change .....	214
The Reculturation of the Faculty Environment.....	215
Attraction of Graduate Students Interested in Policy.....	218
The Establishment of Accountability Mechanisms.....	220
Section Summary .....	222
Perceived Changes in the Roles of the Participants.....	222
Summary .....	226
<b>CHAPTER EIGHT: ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, AND IMPLICATIONS.....</b>	<b>228</b>
Summary of Findings.....	229
Discussion: The Four Stages of the Policy Process.....	232
Policy Origin .....	233
Policy Adoption .....	236
Policy Implementation .....	237
Required level of agency.....	238
Required level of capacity.....	239
Required level of learning.....	240
Policy Evaluation .....	242
The categorization of the change: Was it incremental or transformative?.....	243

Elements of transformative and incremental change.....	244
Transformational change.....	244
Potential for transformation over time .....	245
Transformation in stages .....	246
Discussion: Neoinstitutionalism and Isomorphic Processes.....	247
Normative Isomorphism.....	248
Coercive Isomorphism .....	248
Mimetic Isomorphism .....	250
Discussion: Two Impediments to Change—Time and Resistance .....	250
Implications.....	252
Implications for Practice .....	252
Implications for Research .....	257
Policy implementation.....	257
Resistance to change: Voice of the dissenters.....	258
Isomorphic processes inhibiting change.....	259
The development of a collaborative culture .....	260
Retrospective examination of change: Evaluating outcomes.....	261
Implications for Theory.....	261
Policy development theory: Three stages of initial policy implementation .....	262
Change theory.....	263
<i>Four lenses to examine change</i> .....	263
<i>Temporal lens</i> .....	263
<i>Political lens</i> .....	264
<i>Organizational lens</i> .....	265
<i>Cultural lens</i> .....	266
Incremental and transformative change.....	267
Neoinstitutional theory .....	268
<i>The role of agents of change</i> .....	268
<i>An examination of isomorphic processes</i> .....	269
<i>Reinstitutionalization</i> .....	270
Reconceptualization: Visualizing the Dynamics of the Policy Process.....	270



Reflections on Methodology.....	278
Concluding Comments.....	282
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>284</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: APPLICATION AND APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROTOCOL .....</b>	<b>294</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY LETTERS .....</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>303</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: CONSENT AND RELEASE FORMS.....</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: LIST OF PSEUDONYMS .....</b>	<b>308</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

2.1	The Social Investment Paradigm .....	19-20
2.2	The Duality of Structure.....	32
2.3	Comparisons of Old and New Institutionalism.....	33
2.4	Three Neo-Institutional Perspectives .....	37-38
2.5	Institutional Change and Educational Research.....	48-50
3.1	Contrasting Rational and Critical Policy Analysis Models .....	56-57
3.2	Stages of Conception and Implementation of the Policy Cycle.....	60
3.3	The Characteristics of First-Order and Second-Order Change .....	76-77
3.4	Analogies of Types of Organizational Learning.....	78

## LIST OF FIGURES

3.1	Visualizing the Dynamics of the Policy Process.....	79
5.1	Timeline of Critical Junctures in the Development of the School .....	100
8.1	Visualizing the Dynamics of the Policy Process.....	271
8.2	Revisualizing the Dynamics of the Policy Process .....	273

## ABSTRACT

Educational institutions have remained remarkably unchanged throughout the last century, even when the political, cultural and social environments have undergone very significant transformation (*cf.* Duderstadt, 2005; Fullan, 2007; Rowan & Miskel, 1999). Because of the noted similarity among educational institutions and the institutions' perceived inability to change, I wanted to identify a significant change at an educational institution, and examine the context and policy process that promoted this change. The focus of this study was the process of policy development within one type of educational institution, the university.

In this case study, I examined the policy process involved in establishing a joint, interdisciplinary school, the School of Policy and Research. Data were gathered from three sources: interviews, documents, and policies. I conducted semi-structured interviews with thirteen participants who had some connection to the School, and analyzed the data by coding emergent themes. These were not discrete themes, but rather were interconnected and reflected the complexity of the policy development process.

From the findings, the concept of policy windows, as suggested by Kingdon (2003), was evident in the policy origin stage. The policy stream, the political stream, and the problem stream came together at a critical juncture as a confluence of forces that allowed the initiative of the joint interdisciplinary policy School to move forward into adoption and implementation. Due to this presence of a policy window, the initiative moved through the adoption stage relatively smoothly, at least initially. The policy actors were essentially the same at both universities; there was a core group of grassroots level faculty members who were involved in policy work and believed in the potential of the interdisciplinary policy School. They were supported by senior administrative personnel who saw this initiative as one way to address perceived problems confronting the institutions. However, the implementation stage at both universities was messy and difficult as the proponents of the School encountered many tensions, including issues around securing resources, program development, the proposal approval process, and several sources of resistance to change. The discipline-driven culture of the universities appeared to be an impediment to innovative practices that bridge disciplinary boundaries. Although the timing of this study obviated full consideration of the evaluation stage, the participants did speculate upon several intended impacts of the School, and they proposed possible collateral impacts.

Implications of this investigation for practice included a need for individual organizations to conduct a thorough examination of situation-specific organizational practices that promote or inhibit innovation, including reviews of current practice for determining what programs need to be discontinued, for articulating how to monitor progress in achieving outcomes, and for identifying how to promote a more collaborative culture. In terms of implications for research, further exploration of the implementation stage of successful policy development was seen to have some potential. In change theory, further research could address the stark absence of the voice of dissenters to change. Two elements of neoinstitutional theory that merit further research are the roles of agents in initiating change, and the role of isomorphic processes (coercive, normative, and mimetic) in inhibiting change in organizations. One theoretical implication of this study was the relevance of certain lenses (political, temporal, organizational, and cultural) in examining change. Additionally, the theoretical dichotomy of incremental and transformative change merits further examination in relation to the dynamics of the policy process.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey was truly a process where I had the firm support and guidance of many people along the way. I am especially indebted to my two supervisors, Dr. Patrick Renihan and Dr. David Burgess. Pat imparted his wisdom and knowledge of methodology and literature gleaned from advising so many previous doctoral candidates, and Dave added his brilliance and extensive knowledge of political and organizational theory to our discussions. Pat was the guru of dissertation writing and Dave was the guru of APA and diagram-making. This dynamic duo painstakingly went through the many revisions of each chapter and helped me establish tight deadlines that kept the forward momentum of the project intact. Their sense of humour was also appreciated.

I sincerely want to thank my committee members, Dr. Warren Noonan, chair, committee members Dr. Leonard Haines and Dr. David Mykota, and my external, Dr. Kent Donlevy. I am grateful for their perspectives and feedback. In addition, I really appreciate the willingness of the participants in my study who agreed to be interviewed, despite their very busy schedules. Their articulate responses resulted in a great depth and wealth of data.

Additionally, I am thankful to Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart, Department Head, for her encouragement and support throughout the journey. I am extremely grateful for the support of Dr. Bonnie Stelmach, who provided much encouragement to me personally; she steered me towards opportunities for scholarly professional development, in addition to her presentations to the College of Education Graduate Students' Association on scholarly writing. Dr. Gerald Fallon's classes and work on the policy process guided the initial stages of my work, and I discovered a passion for policy analysis. I would be remiss if I did not thank Dr. Randolph Wimmer who was the first person to say to me that I should consider enrolling in the doctoral program. Without that comment, I do not think I ever would have thought of starting this journey.

All of these people provided guidance, expertise, and encouragement. However, I never could have succeeded on this journey if it had not been for the support and encouragement of my friends, colleagues, and family. For those times when I was discouraged and tired, they would know what to say to help me "pull up my socks" and keep going. My colleagues from my school division, Saskatoon Public Schools, and my doctoral candidate colleagues listened to my ideas, and provided advice and encouragement. My friends on campus and off campus were so

wonderful and I should name them all, but one colleague, Carol Bullin, became a close friend and we shared so many laughs and tears over the last few years as we went through the journey together.

My family, especially my mom and dad, sister Sherry and my brothers, Craig, Gord and Allan, listened to me and supported me throughout the process, even though many times they probably didn't really know what I was going on about. My decision to begin the journey surprised them, but they always asked how it was going and patiently listened to me describe what I was doing around change theory, neoinstitutionalism, and policy development (as their eyes glazed over).

Most importantly, I have to thank my husband, Reg, and my children, Landon, Kevin, and Stacey. Reg provided the moral, technical (and financial) support to let me pursue my goal, while my children were my cheerleaders. When Landon started university, and I was still there, I promised I wouldn't walk to school with him! They (especially Reg) were wonderful supports when I had deadlines to meet. I never undervalue how lucky I am to have a terrific family and I am thankful every day for their love, patience, and caring (and sense of humour)!

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE NATURE OF THE STUDY**

Throughout my teaching career, I have seen many new ideas and programs introduced and implemented and a few have cycled through at least twice in two decades. Most of these changes have been incremental changes, such as new curricula for particular subjects or different approaches for teaching literacy. However, most changes are short-lived and are never truly institutionalized. Educational institutions have remained remarkably unchanged throughout the last century, even when the political, cultural, and social environments have undergone very significant transformation (Duderstadt, 2005; Emberley, 1996; Fullan, 2007; Rowan & Miskel, 1999). This phenomenon intrigued me. Why is it difficult to implement meaningful and transformational change in education even when there is significant pressure for it to happen?

The focus of this study was the process of policy development within one such educational context—a university context. The word “change” seems to dominate the current political and social landscape, in this context, and in most other organizational contexts. Whether the word is used in reference to individual, local, institutional, global, educational, environmental, or technological change, it provokes a response. While some people and institutions may embrace change and use it for political or social leverage, others try to avoid change and the challenges it may represent. Regardless of its context, the way it is defined, and the reaction it engenders, the perceived need for change is identified in many different contexts.

When attempting change, a series of “why” and “how” questions need to be addressed in pursuit of this change. Why is there a perceived need to change? What are the issues, influences, and contexts contributing to this perceived problem? How will the change address this perceived need or issue? Who is involved in the proposal, choice, and promotion of the potential solution? How do the proponents of the solution garner support for the change? How does the institution implement the change? How will the change be evaluated? All of these questions are considered within the process of policy development. Because the process is so complex, a detailed analysis is needed to really understand the change. How was attention to this complexity manifested in policy development within a university context?



## **Background to the Study**

Especially important to the discussion is the issue of federal and provincial involvement in post-secondary education. The decentralization of education through legislative mechanisms ensures that provinces retain jurisdiction over post-secondary education (Jones, 1997). However, Jones noted that few provinces have developed a “comprehensive, system-wide approach to higher education” (1997, p. x). Although the governing structure of Canadian universities is based on a common model and most universities are publicly funded, each institution has its own charter (Jones, 1997). Therefore, there is no centralized national approach to higher education in Canada, although the federal government is involved in providing some financial support to universities and to research at those universities. Cameron (1997) characterized this involvement as the “schizophrenic pattern of federal policy” (p. 9) in education. In fact, policy discussions about higher education for the past twenty-five years have focused on funding levels and mechanisms, as well as accountability, accessibility, and quality (Skolnik, 2005). These discussions, though, have not helped institutions address, in a substantial way, the pressures imposed by the changing political and social environment.

One of the political changes is the global movement away from policies reflective of the social welfare state towards those of the social investment state (Saint-Martin, 2007). This policy paradigm emphasizes the formation of human capital as governments focus on improving their economies and maintaining global competitiveness through developing stronger linkages between schooling, employment, productivity and trade, and emphasizing student outcomes in employment-relevant skills (Carter & O’Neill, 1995). There is increased emphasis on citizen engagement and involvement of community and interest groups in policy development, especially at the policy origin stage (Laforest & Phillips, 2007). The obvious impact on education was noted by Beach, Boadway, and McInnis (2005) who listed these factors: “the development of a technologically oriented, knowledge society; globalization; commercialization of teaching and research; advances in information technology and virtual education, and changes in skill and knowledge requirements that have increased the education needs in most occupations” (p. 54). Skolnik (2005) and Spencer (2006) noted that globalization has placed increased emphasis on economic results, rather than on education for academic pursuits.

In addition to the overarching social investment policy paradigm, social expectations have changed. Globalization has resulted in a commodification of education (Rice & Prince,

2001; Skolnik, 2005) where consumers expect results from their investment. In addition, there is an increased emphasis on credentialism, where more students, including those who may not possess the requisite skills, view a university degree as desirable. The end result (the degree or credential) is much more important than a broad education (Cote & Allahar, 2007; Duderstadt, 2005). This trend, along with technological advances, has meant that there is a competition globally for students. Skolnik (2005) described two possible organizational responses to this competition: direct, aggressive competition for the same students, or increased institutional differentiation to try and capture a different market. Clark (1998) described these organizations that pursued innovation and development as entrepreneurial universities.

In response to the complexities of the political and social environment, Cabal (1993) thought that universities should move towards increased interdisciplinarity. This type of education would produce better pedagogical practice and help students develop a broader understanding of the issues. Cabal (1993) identified two types of interdisciplinarity: *isomorphic interdisciplinarity* where cross disciplines are joined together, and *auxiliary interdisciplinarity* where several professions are united in examining complex problems. The rise of interdisciplinary schools across Canada would seem to suggest that policy makers are identifying this approach as a positive way to address complex, global issues.

Even though there is some movement towards change at the university level, the pace of change across Canada is uneven because of the lack of a national governing body overseeing post-secondary education. Another explanation may be found in one type of organizational theory, neoinstitutionalism, that emphasizes that institutions concentrate on persistence, continued order and stability because legitimacy is tied to stability (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991). Neoinstitutional theorists focus on interorganizational interactions and the formal structure of organizations (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991). They also consider organizational sectors or fields in a larger context (non-local environments). Considering the current environment of higher education, the theory of neoinstitutionalism seems to best explain the attempts of some universities to change and the persistence of other universities to maintain the *status quo*. As well, these changes may represent small, incremental changes in routines, or fundamental shifts in the way things are done. In some cases, incremental changes are sufficient in addressing issues; however, fundamental shifts, or second-order changes may be necessary to address some of the current, pressing issues facing universities (Cote & Allahar, 2007; Currie & Newton,

1998; Emberley, 1996; Skolnik, 2005). In fact, neoinstitutional theorists Fernandez-Alles and Valle-Cabrera (2006) suggested that the new institutional theory forms a valid approach for research on institutional change, strategic management actions, and the interaction of economic, social, and political pressures on institutional inertia that leads to change.

When studying policy development specifically, the type of policy analysis model used in the examination, and the particular stages of the model, need to be articulated because of the variety of models championed by different authors in the policy field. There are two types of policy analysis models, *rational* policy analysis and *critical* policy analysis. The rational model is described as a linear and sequential approach where the policy process is analyzed through exploring the steps of rational decision-making (Fallon, 2006; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Orsini & Smith, 2007). Experts and government officials (epistemic communities) shape policy, where the focus is on choosing the best approach to achieving a particular goal (Fallon, 2006; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Orsini & Smith, 2007).

The critical policy analysis model, on the other hand, is a pluralistic one in which divergent alternatives are explored and considered (Fallon, 2006; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Orsini & Smith, 2007). Policy networks and policy communities (and their interactions) shape policy (Fallon, 2006; Kingdon, 2003). In this critical model, policy results from the interaction of three streams: political events, problem recognition and policy proposal (Kingdon, 2003). Thus, critical policy analysis models are multi-staged, developmental and iterative (Fallon, 2006; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Kingdon, 2003; Levin, 2001; Orsini & Smith, 2007; Rochefort & Cobb, 1993). As will be more fully explored in Chapter Three, for this research study, the critical policy analysis model provides the best framework for an exploration of a specific policy development within a university context. However, because of its multi-faceted, iterative nature, this type of analysis is difficult to represent using two-dimensional models.

Although the nature of policy development is dynamic and complex, a policy analysis framework must also reflect the stages of the policy process. Levin (2001) pointed out that the subjective categorization of stages and headings is mostly defined by personal preference. Every stage, though, is affected by ambiguity and contingency because multiple influences affect the policy cycle. Levin's (2001) four-stage model best captures the stages reflected in this study of policy development: policy *origin*, policy *adoption*, policy *implementation*, and policy *evaluation*. Although I will not be conducting formal policy evaluation, this research will

provide insight into perceived outcomes of the policy process and imply possible future research directions for evaluating the change. At the policy origin stage, the problem is identified within a particular social and historical context; stakeholders propose and examine alternative solutions (Fallon, 2006; Levin, 2001). During the policy adoption stage, key stakeholders develop the policy and determine how it will be adopted (Fallon, 2006; Levin, 2001). The policy implementation stage focuses on interpreting the policy and determining how (and when) it will be implemented by whom (Fallon, 2006; Levin, 2001). Finally, the policy evaluation stage focuses on the perceived and actual impacts of the policy on all stakeholders (Fallon, 2006; Levin, 2001). Key stakeholders make decisions about continuation, adjustment, or termination of the policy. Because each of these stages is critical to the policy process, this study examines these stages and articulates key elements underpinning each stage.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this case study was to examine the policy development process that promoted the emergence of a joint interdisciplinary school, the School of Policy and Research. A policy analysis framework was employed to structure the exploration of the origins, policy networks, policy adoption procedures and the policy implementation process involved in the establishment of this interdisciplinary School. I asked the following questions:

1. What issues, influences, and contexts contributed to the origin and adoption of this policy?
2. Why was the policy window opened at this time?
3. Who were the key stakeholders and policy actors involved in the origin, adoption, and implementation of this policy development?
4. How, and why, were these stakeholders involved in this process?
5. How was the policy implementation process strategized and articulated?
6. How did the intended impacts of the policy process address the problem(s) articulated by the key stakeholders?

### **Significance of the Study**

This case study exploring policy development within a university context is significant in several ways. This study contributes to the literature on policy studies and policy development

through my elaboration, in detail, of the stages of policy origin, adoption and implementation. I examine how and why problems or issues were identified, and which stakeholders were involved in the problem definition. At the policy origin stage, Kingdon's (2003) concept of streams is applied to the university context. Specifically, the confluence of the political stream, the policy stream, and the problem stream occurred at this stage of the policy development process. The context and the confluence of these streams are highlighted and carefully described. This application of the streams to the policy origin stage contributes to the literature on problem definition and the determination of policy paths (Kingdon, 2003; Rochefort & Cobb, 1993). By examining the policy origin and adoption stages, I explicate the perceived reasons why the move towards interdisciplinary schools was occurring at this particular point in time. The articulation of the political and social influences within the university context contributes to the understanding of this trend towards the establishment of interdisciplinary schools.

For the policy adoption stage, I describe the process of articulating and promoting the change that precipitated the policy development process at the university. I examine the continuing role of the stakeholders at this stage and the process that they engaged in to ensure that a particular policy was adopted. In addition, I note how the decision-making process at the university level eventually allowed for approval of the School and the policy moved into the implementation stage.

By examining the policy implementation stage in detail, I contribute, through this study, to the understanding of the process of policy development within the university context. This implementation phase of the policy process is not always given the focus nor the resources needed to effect the intended change (Howlett & Ramesh, 2007). The frame of the four lenses of change was developed to examine the channels of change by describing the required level of agency, the required level of capacity, the required length of time, and the required nature of learning within the university context. The detailed analysis of the implementation phase contributes to the understanding of how change can occur in an educational institution. Through this case study, I elaborate on how the change that precipitated the policy development process was determined as a priority and then was enacted.

Although I did not conduct formal policy evaluation, I use the policy's intended impacts to determine whether the policy was targeting first-order change or second-order change (Levy, 1986). The policy analysis framework had implications for developing an understanding of the

intended impacts of policy development on particular institutions and on the resources that the policy was intended to influence. The framework contributes to policy evaluation studies, and the characterization of change as a combination of incremental and transformative change builds on our understanding of change theory.

The findings from this study can be used to inform subsequent studies on the policy process. Further, policy entrepreneurs may be able to apply some of the findings to their own efforts at effecting change at other institutions. In both cases, the policy analysis framework may be a useful model to analyze similar, and perhaps divergent, policy issues across Canada. Dobuzinskis, Howlett, and Laycock (2007) identified the need for better research into “the sociology of policy analysis” (p. 8). While other countries are conducting research into the impact of policy analysis on policy outcomes and into governmental utilization of knowledge in policy formation, Canada lags behind in conducting similar research as it applies to its own contexts (Dobuzinskis et al., 2007). Additionally, Dobuzinskis et al. (2007) suggested Canadians need to implement reforms to “enhance policy analysis in its varied practical contexts” (p. 10). The policy analysis framework developed for this study provides one tool for analysis that can be used in studying policy development in a variety of contexts.

This study has several implications for understanding change theory and neoinstitutional theory in the context of change at a particular type of professional institution that promoted the emergence of an interdisciplinary school. In this study, I connect reinstitutionalization to second-order change. The emergence of interdisciplinary schools is comparable to the process of reinstitutionalization, which can be conceived as “an exit from one institutionalization, and entry into another institutional form, organized around different principles or rules” (Jepperson, 1991, p. 152). The intended impacts are analyzed to determine if the change was an example of second-order change where there is a change in mission, purpose, culture, core processes and organizational paradigm (Levy, 1986). Neoinstitutional theorists have identified the need to further study institutional change and apply the constructs of neoinstitutional theory to the change (Fernandez-Alles & Valle-Cabrera, 2006; Strandgaard-Peterson & Dobbin, 2006). Through this policy analysis, this study contributes to the literature on neoinstitutional theory and institutional change, and extends Levy’s (1986) work on first-order and second-order change.

## **Parameters of the Study**

In this section, I describe the parameters used to frame the study. I examine the assumptions, the delimitations and the limitations of the study. I also define key terms; the definitions provided are the ones that suit the context and the purposes of this study.

### **Assumptions**

The research methodology I chose for this study was a qualitative research design. I used a case study research design to examine the policy origin, adoption and implementation stages of the policy process within the university context. By choosing this design, I assumed that this methodology would best address the questions I used to frame the study. I also assumed that the data collection methods uncovered adequate qualitative data to formulate themes that focus on these stages of policy development.

When designing this study, I made several assumptions. I assumed the director of the participant school nominated other interviewees who played key roles in the origin, adoption, or implementation phases of the policy establishing this interdisciplinary school. I relied on the director to provide me with names of potential participants who would willingly participate in the study and who would be key informants concerning the policy development process.

In this study, I assumed that the policy analysis framework utilized for this study as a conceptual model was pertinent to the organization and interpretation of the study. I assumed that it articulated the stages of the policy process accurately, even though I was aware that the process is iterative and non-linear.

### **Delimitations**

This study was delimited to a joint interdisciplinary school on two Canadian university campuses. The political and social contexts, and background of those campuses was examined. Although there were many types of interdisciplinary schools, I chose to study an interdisciplinary school that focused on policy studies. Other interdisciplinary schools could be studied in subsequent research on the emergence of interdisciplinarity on campuses.

Although the parameters of the study limited the range of application to other contexts, participants and experiences, I believe that the findings are pertinent to other campuses and other instances of institutional policy development. By providing extensive detail and description of

the particular case and its context, the researcher allowed readers to compare the context of this case to determine the degree of “fit” with another situation (Merriam, 1998).

For this study on the establishment of an interdisciplinary school at two university campuses, the policy origin, adoption and early implementation stages of the policy process were explored. Formal policy evaluation was not the focus of the study. Perhaps future research could concentrate on qualitative and quantitative assessment of the effectiveness of this initiative on achieving its stated goals. Although policies articulate desired goals and perceived impacts that policy implementation will achieve, determining the success in achieving those goals is a complicated process requiring a significantly longer time frame than that covered during this study.

The study focused on three sources of data: policies, documents, and interviews. The first interview was a semi-structured in-depth interview; these interviews were the primary source of data. The interviews were first conducted with the faculty and senior administration, including the director of the joint interdisciplinary School around which this study focused. These initial interviewees nominated other interviewees, using a snowball technique. Therefore, the interview pool consisted primarily of the director and his or her nominees. The data were delimited to interviewee perceptions and policies in place during the time of the study.

### **Limitations**

There were also some limitations to this research study. Because the in-depth interviews were my primary source of data, the limitations of using human subjects as research instruments apply. Additionally, the interviews were dependent on the truthfulness, thoroughness and candidness of the interviewees. Political and personal considerations could have influenced some responses. The possibility that the key informants selectively nominated individuals representing their own viewpoint was also a limitation of a snowballing technique, especially during the investigation of political issues. As a researcher, I tried to be aware of my own personal and political biases and how these biases could affect the interviewing process and, especially, the interpretation of the data.

Although identities of the campuses and interviewees are protected through the use of pseudonyms, anonymity cannot be guaranteed because of the limited number of university campuses in Western Canada. Some of the information gathered during the interviews could



potentially provide identifying information. However, participants had an opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time and to review the transcripts of the interviews, deleting any information that they wished to expunge.

The policy process is a very complex process (Howlett & Ramesh, 2007; Kingdon, 2003; Pal, 2006) that is not particularly well-illustrated with a two dimensional model. Although my conceptual framework suggests a linear progression through ordered stages, the process is dynamic, iterative and very complex. At any point, the previous stages of the policy process may be revisited. The two-way arrows attempt to illustrate that the process is non-linear.

## **Definitions**

Several terms were used to convey concepts that were fundamental to this study. In the following section, these key concepts are defined in terms of the context of the study. The definitions provide clarity and promote shared understandings of the meanings of these terms as they appear herein.

**Isomorphism.** When an institutional field is first established, it displays diversity and innovation in its structure and approach. However, as it becomes well established, it moves toward homogeneity (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). This process of homogenization has been called isomorphism. Burch (2007) defined structural isomorphism as “the convergence in policies and practices among organizations operating in a similar environment or competing for the same goods” (p. 85). For the purposes of this study, isomorphism is the process by which institutions within the same organizational field become more similar or homogeneous.

**Institutional change.** Jepperson (1991) identified four distinct types of institutional change: institutional formation, institutional development, deinstitutionalization, and reinstitutionalization. In conceptualizing these types of change, one must remember that “every entry is an exit from someplace else” (p. 152).

***Institutional formation.*** This change represents an exit from existing behavioural patterns (Jepperson, 1991).

***Institutional development (or elaboration).*** This process represents a change within an institutional form rather than an exit (Jepperson, 1991).

***Deinstitutionalization.*** This change is an exit from institutionalization “toward reproduction through recurrent action, or nonreproductive patterns, or social entropy”

(Jepperson, 1991, p. 152). In other words, it represents a move towards deinstitutionalization and away from the confining rules and procedures of an existing institution. Van Gestel and Teelken (2006) noted that the process of deinstitutionalization occurs when current organizational forms no longer meet societal expectations and new ideas and constructs are needed. Alas (2007) described the process of deinstitutionalization as the challenging and overturning of rules and practices, a process that can occur gradually or suddenly depending on the force underlying the change.

**Reinstitutionalization.** This change represents “an exit from one institutionalization, and entry into another institutional form, organized around different principles or rules” (Jepperson, 1991, p. 152). Alas (2007) referred to reinstitutionalization as the process of redefinition of an institution and its rules and procedures.

**Policy.** Delaney (2002) identified some common elements in the various definitions of policy. He noted that policy is a formalized act that has a pre-agreed objective (Delaney, 2002). Further, “policy is approved or sanctioned by an institutional body or authority” (Delaney, 2000, p. 15). Pal (2006) proposed that every policy has three key elements: “The first is the definition of the problem, the second is the goals that are to be achieved, and the third is the instruments or means whereby the problem is to be addressed and the goals achieved” (p. 7). Wildavsky (1979) contended that “policy is a process as well as a product. It is used to refer to a process of decision-making and also to the product of that process” (p. 387). For the purposes of this study, policy refers to university-level formalized statements with implications for the School.

**Public policy.** There are many definitions of public policy that include various elements. Jenkins (1978) defined public policy as “a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle, be within the power of those actors to achieve” (p. 15). Pal (2006) provided a more succinct definition of public policy: “A course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems” (p. 2).

**Stakeholders and actors.** A broad definition of stakeholder is: “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p. 46). In the policy analysis literature, these stakeholders are referred to as actors or

policy stakeholders. Policy stakeholders include “individuals or groups which have a stake in policies because they affect and are affected by governmental decisions” (Dunn, 1981, p. 47).

**Policy community.** The policy community consists of the “actors in a policy network, presumably those who share at least some common language and conceptual reference points but who may be opponents on the issue” (Pal, 2006, p. 274).

**Policy networks.** Policy networks refer to “the patterns of relations among members of the policy community” (Pal, 2006, p. 274). Policy networks and communities are becoming more complex, intense, and important to the policymaking process due to a variety of factors such as: globalization with its economic and political interdependencies, a changing political culture that is more individualist and participatory, and changing ideas of governance stressing smaller government and new types of public management (Pal, 2006).

**Policy analysis.** Policy analysis refers to:

applied social and scientific research—but also involves more implicit forms of practical knowledge—pursued by government officials and non-governmental organizations usually directed at designing, implementing and evaluating existing policies, programs and other courses of action adopted or contemplated by states. (Dobuzinkis et al., 2007, pp. 3-4)

Pal (2006) proposed a more succinct definition of policy analysis as “the disciplined application of intellect to public problems” (p. 14). For the purposes of this study, I combine elements of both these definitions. Policy analysis is the process of examining the policy process where there are attempts to address a public problem. The analysis examines the origin, adoption, implementation and evaluation of the policy.

**Problem stream.** There are three main streams involved in the policy process. One stream is the problem stream where various problems are perceived as public problems that require action on the part of government (Kingdon, 2003). In institutions, problems are perceived as requiring intervention on the part of the governing body or board in order to adequately address the problems.

**Policy stream.** In the policy stream, policy experts and analysts concentrate on examining the problem and proposing possible alternatives. The possible proposals are explored and narrowed down by this policy community of specialists (Kingdon, 2003).

**Political stream.** This stream is composed of factors such as changes in the public mood and public opinion, election results, changes in administration, and interest group pressure (Kingdon, 2003); “events in this stream occur independently of the streams of problems and proposals” (p.87).

**Policy change and policy windows.** Various factors can cause changes in the political or the problem streams, such as an emergent issue, a political or environmental crisis, or a change in governing parties (Kingdon, 2003). “These streams are coupled at critical junctures, and that coupling produces the greatest agenda change” (p. 87). In other words, a window may open at these junctures that allows policy actors to propose changes to policy. These policy changes can occur when “a problem is recognized, a solution is available, the political climate makes the time right for change, and the constraints do not prohibit action” (Kingdon, 2003, p. 88). The window does not stay open for very long: the crises pass, the push for policy change fails, the issue loses attention, or the personnel changes or participants perceive that some action has been taken through decision-making processes or enactment of policy (Kingdon, 2003).

**First-order change.** “First-order change consists of those minor improvements and adjustments that do not change the system’s core, and that occur as the system naturally grows and develops” (Levy, 1986, p. 10). First-order changes can affect one or more of the following dimensions: core processes, mission and purpose, and/or culture (Levy, 1986). These changes can have a long-term or short-term effect.

**Second-order change.** Second-order change consists of “change in all four dimensions: in core processes, in mission and purpose, in culture, and in organizational world view or paradigm” (Levy, 1986, p. 19). Second-order changes result in long-term impacts.

### **The Researcher**

When I wanted to explore ideas for my dissertation, I chose to focus on change theory to try to understand why education is notorious for endless reforms. While exploring the topic, I encountered neoinstitutional theory. This theory seemed to best explain the phenomena of continuous reform that does not accomplish permanent or deep change and the reticence of organizations to engage in meaningful change. In trying to determine a focus, I decided that the establishment of interdisciplinary schools on campus might be a reflection of a deeper change that necessitates reforms in several dimensions. More specifically, I thought it could represent an

example of reinstitutionalization, which Jepperson (1991) defined as a restructuring of a current model. Whether this type of change represented a second-order change would need to be determined.

When conducting this research, though, I was an *etic* researcher, investigating an issue as a relatively objective outsider (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This approach had several advantages: not entering the research with as many preconceived ideas and not being involved personally or politically in the process. The questions that I brought to the research reflected *etic* issues (Stake, 1995). Being an outside observer, though, did require me to investigate the cultural, political, and social context of universities today so that I could gain an understanding of the background of universities in Canada. Although I may not be aware of all the complexities and dysfunctions of the particular organizations I studied, I was, on the other hand, aware of the dynamics of organizations, both through my studies and through my work with three different school divisions. Thus, I was aware of the limitations of an *etic* researcher, but I believed there were some advantages to be gained, as well.

So why does the area of public policy fascinate me? Mintrom (2007) answered the question best:

People engaged in policy analysis, regardless of their substantive interests or their immediate purposes, have shared an understanding that they are engaged in important, socially relevant work. They share a common understanding that, at base, public policy involves systematic efforts to change social institutions. (pp. 157-158)

I believed that studying the policy process would help me develop a deeper understanding of the change process in institutions.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

In Chapter One, I presented the background, purpose and significance of the study. The assumptions, delimitations and limitations underlying the study were articulated. I defined particular terms that are significant to understanding the discussion. In Chapter Two, I examine the literature on neoinstitutional theory and on the changing social, political and cultural context of universities in Canada. In Chapter Three, I outline and explain the conceptual framework that formed the basis of the policy analysis process I utilized in the study. In Chapter Four, I describe

the research methodology employed in the study. I present the case used in my study and the methods for data collection.

I present the data in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. In Chapter Five, I examine the context and issues that contributed to the origin and adoption of the proposed solution, and investigate the various roles of the policy actors in developing the idea into a workable proposal. In Chapter Six, I describe the many implementation issues and tensions that the policy actors encountered during the establishment of the joint, interdisciplinary School of Policy and Research. In Chapter Seven, I explore the intended and collateral impacts that have resulted or could result from the establishment of the School. Lastly, in Chapter Eight, I summarize the findings of the study and discuss how those findings relate to the literature and my policy analysis framework. I describe the implications this study has for practice, research, and theory in the areas of policy process and policy development, change theory, and neoinstitutional theory. I revisit my conceptual framework based on these findings and implications.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

In this chapter, I review the literature pertaining to post-secondary education and to the theory of neoinstitutionalism. These two broad themes require examination because the purpose of my study was to examine the policy development process that promoted the emergence of a joint interdisciplinary school, the School of Policy and Research. A policy analysis framework, as described in Chapter 3, was employed to structure the exploration of the origins, policy networks, policy adoption procedures and the policy implementation process involved in the establishment of this interdisciplinary School. The examination of post-secondary education and neoinstitutionalism contributes to the development of the context of the study.

In this literature review, I examine the historical foundations of post-secondary education in Canada, focusing especially on universities, and describe the current political and social context for universities. Within that discussion, I highlight some of the issues and tensions that universities are currently experiencing in relation to the influence of political decisions on the direction and policies of universities, and the social effects of environment upon the functioning and daily work of universities.

Following the discussion of post-secondary education, I describe the theory of *neoinstitutionalism*, highlighting the origins of this theory and comparing the *old institutionalism* with neoinstitutionalism, and I contrast the three independent strands of neoinstitutional theory. Then I link neoinstitutionalism with educational settings and describe how this theory forms an explanatory framework for the realities noted in educational institutions. Included in this description are ideas for future research in this area. Within this section, I articulate how this theory supported the conceptual framework for this study, described more fully in Chapter 3.

#### **The Historical Context of Higher Education in Canada**

Higher education in Canada is shaped by the nation's diversity, the staggered entry of provinces into Confederation and the settlement patterns of individual provinces. The lack of one consistent model of higher education is attributable to the decentralization of education as established in the *British North America Act* (1867) and reaffirmed in the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution (Jones, 1997). Jones (1997) noted: "While there are some national

structures and the Government of Canada continues to play a limited role in this policy arena, it is clear that the provinces and territories now play the major role in terms of Canadian higher education policy” (p. x). He emphasized that few provinces have developed a “comprehensive, system-wide approach to higher education” (p. x). Thus, each province and territory has established its own framework for higher education, although there are some commonalities among their policies.

One common element is the establishment of a provincial or territorial coordinating or advisory structure for higher education. Another common element is the appointment of a minister of the provincial or territorial government who has responsibility for higher education within his or her portfolio. Another commonality is the funding structure; most Canadian universities are publicly funded (Jones, 1997). As well, the governing structure of Canadian universities is based on a common model, but each specific body is guided by its own institutional charter that delineates matters such as composition of the governing body and its authority (Jones, 1997). Because the universities in every province are non-profit corporations, provincial labour legislation informs labour relations and employment matters. Thus, salaries and other terms and conditions of employment are negotiated provincially. Instead of a centralized national approach to higher education, Canada’s higher education is characterized by a “combination of federal government involvement and provincial/territorial initiatives” (Jones, 1997, p. 7).

The federal and provincial/territorial combination of involvement in higher education was characterized by Cameron (1997) as “the schizophrenic pattern of federal policy” (p. 9) in higher education. Although jurisdiction for education is a provincial legislative responsibility, the federal government has been involved in establishing conditional grants or shared-cost programs since legislation passed in 1912 and 1913 to support agricultural training (Cameron, 1997). Economic and social conditions dictated other interventions, such as the establishment of the National Research Council in 1916 to support the war effort and subsequent post-war recovery, and the broadening of the shared-cost programs and establishment of a federal student loan system during the Great Depression (Cameron, 1997). However, the prominence of university education and the push for increased federal support and involvement greatly escalated during the post-war recovery period and the return of the war veterans following the Second World War (Cameron, 1997). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, federal financial support for postsecondary



education increased dramatically through grants and monetary transfers to provincial coffers, and through initiatives to support building and expansion (Cameron, 1997; Clark, 2003). Universities expanded their programming to include a wider variety of graduate and undergraduate programs, and, subsequently, enrollment increased dramatically (Clark, 2003). During this period, the provinces created the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) in response to the perceived threat of increased federal involvement due to the discussion around establishing a federal office of education (Cameron, 1997).

However, the decade of the 1970s brought different political and economic pressures to bear on universities. For example, the National Research Council was restructured into the Tri-Council structure that remains in place today (Cameron, 1997). Interestingly, in doing so, the federal government ignored the recommendation of two committees who proposed that the teaching and research functions of the university be separated financially, so that the federal government assumed full responsibility for funding research while the provincial government took full responsibility for the teaching at universities, even though these functions would usually take place at the same institutions (Cameron, 1997). At the same time as the restructuring of the federal research grants occurred, other policies were put in place that negatively affected the amount of federal financial support through grants and cash transfers that were available provincially for postsecondary education (Cameron, 1997). These actions negatively impacted the budget process for universities and continue to create financial constraints and tensions for both the research and teaching functions of universities today (Cameron, 1997).

During the last two decades, there has been much debate about federal financial support for postsecondary education. Different governing federal political parties have proposed various ideas and budget formulas, but none have provided fiscal relief for postsecondary institutions enduring new pressures. Skolnik (2005) pointed out that higher education policy discussions in Canada for the past twenty-five years have centred on funding levels and mechanisms, as well as accountability, accessibility, and quality. These discussions have examined the topics as they apply to the current structures. The structures themselves and the institutions' frameworks have not been debated, even though there are significant differences in the current political and social environments. This current environment and its impact on postsecondary education will be discussed in the next section.

### **The Current Political and Social Context in Education**

The overarching political environment impacts policies and programs at every level (local, provincial, federal) and in every social sphere (education, health, economics). When analyzing changes in policy, the global policy paradigms or “powerful, coherent global policyscapes” (Ball, 1999, p. 204) must be considered. The political paradigm that infuses most policy currently is the dominance of neo-liberalism. The movement in the 1980s towards a neo-liberal agenda meant a movement away from social welfare policies towards social investment policies (Saint-Martin, 2007). Nation states have less control over the economy, both internationally and within their own borders. Social policy is then affected as nations explore ways to remain competitive. Rice and Prince (2001) characterized these changes as follows:

In the process of creating the global economy, corporations and governments have been prepared to increase the risks community members must bear in meeting the demands of daily living, while reducing their collective abilities to deal with these risks. They have cut back on social benefits, dismantled parts of the welfare system, and removed support for people who are unable to find employment. (p. 7)

The policy agenda has changed from providing direct services to enabling people to access particular services, if they have the resources and knowledge to do so.

Saint-Martin (2007) further outlined the differences between the welfare state paradigm that was predominant after the Great Depression and the World Wars, and the social investment paradigm that is informing global social policy currently. These differences are described in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1**

***The Social Investment Paradigm (Saint-Martin, 2007, p. 284)***

	<b>Welfare state</b>	<b>Social Investment State</b>
<b>Formative events</b>	The past, the Depression, the Second World War	The future, new knowledge economy
<b>Emblematic figure</b>	Father-worker	Child (future-worker)
<b>Criteria of integration</b>	Employment	Employability

<b>Type of capital</b>	Finance	Social-human
<b>Basic cohesion</b>	Social justice	Inclusion/social principles
<b>Goal of social policies</b>	Protection against	Facilitate integration into the market
<b>Conception of risk</b>	Social safety net	Trampoline
<b>Delivery mechanisms</b>	Bureaucracy	Partnership

These policyscapes, based on social investment discourses, impact all areas of policy including education. Ball (1999) stated: “The discourse of economism constructs the topic—the ‘problem’ of education—and, as with any discourse, it appears across a range of texts, forms of conduct and at a number of different sites at any one time” (p. 200). Saint-Martin (2007) emphasized that social investment is primarily about human capital formation. And since the expected results of investments are located in the future, the SIS (Social Investment State) is also very much children-centred: the child is presented as the future citizen-worker around which social policy is being reconfigured. (p. 290)

Groups, such as the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, are also emphasizing that the returns on investments in the children’s early years are higher than investments later in life; therefore, much more government spending is now being directed to early childhood initiatives (Saint-Martin, 2007).

However, governments are also focused on improving the economy by developing stronger linkages between schooling, employment, productivity and trade, and emphasizing student outcomes in skills related to employment (Carter & O’Neill, 1995). At the same time, governments are investigating ways to reduce their share of the cost of education (Carter & O’Neill, 1995). The changes in federal funding of postsecondary education are indicative of the social investment state as governments move away from providing direct funding to universities as they did in the 1970s, to establishing a series of grant, loan, scholarship, and bursary programs for individual students who apply for this support (Cameron, 1997; Clark, 2003; Cote & Allahar, 2007; Snowdon, 2005). Within the social investment paradigm, the “fiscalization of social policy” (Rice & Prince, 2001, p. 146) results in an emphasis on economic management.

“Strategic planning and resource allocation are oriented to controlling costs and finding new revenue opportunities rather than assessing needs and addressing public issues” (Rice & Prince, 2001, p. 146).

Within this social investment paradigm, three interrelated phenomena have been identified as greatly impacting educational discourse: the knowledge economy, technological change, and globalization (Cabal, 1993; Cote & Allahar, 2007; Saint-Martin, 2007, Spencer, 2006). Beach et al. (2005) listed the following developments that have impacted education: “the development of a technologically oriented, knowledge society; globalization; commercialization of teaching and research; advances in information technology and virtual education, and changes in skill and knowledge requirements that have increased the educational needs in most occupations” (p. 54). Although the social investment discourse emphasizes the investment in younger children, education and training of workers for the knowledge economy must also be a priority, so that citizens are equipped to meet the challenges that Beach et al. (2005) outlined. Laidler (2002) summarized the impact of these phenomena on the universities:

The key to securing a rising standard of living at the turn of the millennium lies in the creation and dissemination of knowledge, particularly technological knowledge. The “new economy” is said to be a “knowledge economy” and within it, universities are often presented as having special roles to play as creators of new ideas in their research function and as producers of human capital capable of exploiting those ideas in their teaching function. In this way of looking at things, the output of universities is a vital input into the material progress of the market economy. (pp. 7-8)

Thus, universities are expected to play a key role in the “new economy”. However, the definition of that role is not always clear.

The stress on economic output in a global market has affected universities, primarily in two ways (Skolnik, 2005). First, the objectives of post-secondary education can be loosely categorized into economic and non-economic objectives. Globalization has placed emphasis on economic results. As a consequence, universities now face increasing pressures from governments and the social environment to concentrate on the economic objectives of higher education to the detriment of academic values and objectives (Rice & Prince, 2001; Skolnik, 2005). Spencer (2006) noted that “‘education for democratic participation’ has been displaced by an emphasis on ‘education for economy’ (which focuses on investing in human capital,

training and human-resource development)” (p. 111). He espoused that “the real purpose of adult education as social education has been forgotten and now needs to be rediscovered” (p. 111). Emberley (1996) suggested that governments are putting increasing pressure on university researchers to “contribute to the nation’s ability to compete globally” (p. 95), so that the “scholarly culture is being taken over by a powerful political and economic discourse that entrenches aggressive entrepreneurial activity” (p. 95).

Second, globalization has resulted in a marketization or commodification of education (Rice & Prince, 2001; Skolnik, 2005). Education is perceived as a commodity that is purchased by consumers who expect results from their investment. Rice and Prince (2001) pointed out the problem with such a perspective: “While citizens have rights and duties conferred by the state—and benefits that accrue from these rights—customers have only choices that are defined by their purchasing power” (p. 24). Skolnik (2005) pointed out that “as globalization has proceeded, there has been a shift in the way that postsecondary education is perceived, towards being a commodity for which the conditions of its provision and acquisition are determined by autonomous providers and consumers” (p. 56).

Duderstadt (2005) expressed that our universities may not be able to transform to meet the changing environment:

Our current paradigms for higher education, the nature of our academic programs, the organization of our colleges and universities, and the way that we finance, conduct, and distribute the services of higher education may not be able to adapt to the demands and realities of our times. (p. 88)

Duderstadt (2005) emphasized the most critical challenges for universities and other institutions continue to be the development of the capacity for change.

In addition, the combined effects of marketization, technological change, and globalization have opened the boundaries of postsecondary education (Skolnik, 2005). In other words, universities are now competing globally for potential students as they try to attract students nationally and internationally by offering a wide variety of programs through on-campus and distance education. This new phenomenon has been noted globally, and is now being studied by organizations such as the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education in the United Kingdom (Skolnik, 2005). Some institutions are regarding these developments warily because of the implications this has for governance, management, funding, and control of their

own research agenda (Scott, 2005). According to Scott (2005), the “high degree of institutional and academic autonomy” will be curtailed if universities evolve into “entrepreneurial institutions within a global market” (p. 48).

However, many universities are embracing internationalization and are incorporating a variety of initiatives into their programming. Some of these initiatives include:

an emphasis on academic mobility and two-way exchanges of both students and faculty, international research projects and networks, more academic courses integrating an international perspective, and a greater emphasis on how international cooperation projects, particularly with universities in developing countries, are mutually enriching for all participants. (Egron-Polak, 2005, p. 59)

Programming aimed at internationalization is characterized by an academic and cultural rationale with an entrepreneurial element to it (Egron-Polak, 2005). Egron-Polak (2005) emphasized that, although internationalization and globalization are linked, they are not synonymous. Globalization focuses on the marketplace and is driven by economic factors and competition; internationalization is focused more on academic policies and incentives and is driven by partnerships and cooperation. Both trends are affecting higher education, resulting in “new programs and courses, providers, new delivery mechanisms, and new kinds of linkages and networks among institutions of higher learning and also with the business community” (Egron-Polak, 2005, p. 64). Because of the emphasis on the marketplace and the economy, I explore the marketization perspective in more depth in the following section.

### **Marketization of Education**

Skolnik (2005) hypothesized that, in light of the changing political and social environment, the existing higher education structures need to be reformed. Provincial governments need to examine the effectiveness of the current models by determining “how effectively each higher education institution performs its role; and second, how effectively the mix of different types of institutions conforms to what is needed” (p. 54). Thus, as individual institutions try to protect their interests by advocating for their share of the resources, the whole mix of institutions needs to be considered objectively to determine if society’s, and postsecondary students’, needs are being met. Auld (2005) argued that there does not appear to be an optimal mix. However, in Canada, the mix appears to be determined more by political

decisions, rather than by “short- or long-term optimization” (Auld, 2005, p. 574). Funding mechanisms and the chronic underfunding of education are the results of government decision-making. Auld (2005) emphasized that there has to be “a concerted effort to reduce the politicization of higher education which has shackled creativity, forced colleges and universities to operate with rules that result in unwise economic and educational decisions and erode the fundamental purpose of higher education” (p. 577). Postsecondary institutions must be allowed, and enabled, to determine their own responses to the social and environmental pressures that confront them.

There are several ways that postsecondary institutions may respond (Skolnik, 2005). One response may be to adopt an aggressive, market-driven, and commercially oriented approach to attracting students and developing a financial support base. This approach results in direct competition for the same students, where there will be winners and losers in the battle for customers (Skolnik, 2005).

Another type of institutional response may be:

Increased institutional differentiation in which some institutions move very aggressively to take advantage of new commercial opportunities, or new institutions are created or existing ones in other fields allowed to cross previously existing borders in order to address new needs. (Skolnik, 2005, p. 58).

Theoretically, this would allow for greater choice for the “consumers.” Different provinces have already begun to move in this direction with promoting different types of technology programs, distance education, and private degree-granting institutions (Skolnik, 2005). The seriousness with which governments are treating the marketization of education is reflected in the establishment of the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity as an independent, non-profit organization in 2001, funded by the Government of Ontario, and established to conduct research for Ontario’s Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress (Skolnik, 2005). Cabal (1993), in response to this intensified self-evaluation in which universities are engaged, urged universities to “make certain that institutional quality in the university’s intellectual and educational missions and its mission of social service are beneficial and effective, without external pressures deflecting the university from what it considers most suitable for social needs” (p. 212).

One model that Cabal (1993) espoused would address the complexity of the current social and political environment is the expansion of interdisciplinarity. He argued that cross-disciplinarity produces better, more integrated pedagogical results and assists students in developing a deeper and more complete understanding. Cross disciplines could join together to form a new discipline such as biochemistry, a process Cabal called *isomorphic interdisciplinarity*. As well, the disciplines of several professions could be united (characterized as *auxiliary interdisciplinarity* by Boisot, [1970]). *Compound interdisciplinarity* is the process of examining a complex problem through a variety of disciplinary perspectives in order to arrive at a potential solution (Cabal, 1993). Additionally, interdisciplinary research can explore some of these problems from multiple perspectives, a practice that Cabal encouraged.

However, there are barriers at universities that impede interdisciplinarity, according to Fairbairn and Fulton (2000). Fairbairn and Fulton described universities as discipline-driven structures, where “academics have been entrenched in disciplinary ways of thinking” (Fairbairn & Fulton, 2000, p. 1) and organizational structures promote disciplinary ways of working. Any attempts at interdisciplinarity within that environment are often regarded as threats to that structure (Fairbairn & Fulton, 2000). Fairbairn and Fulton (2000) contended that interdisciplinarity is a problem-based approach where knowledge and a variety of methods are called upon to solve a complex problem (Fairbairn & Fulton, 2000). They added that interdisciplinarity means: “to go beyond specialization, to collaborate on common goals, to embrace interdependence, to deal with key problems that fragmented occupations and perspectives cannot grasp” (Fairbairn & Fulton, 2000, p. 13). They also argued that, at universities, “what is needed are more flexible forms of organization, structured so as to reduce the costs (time, energy) and increase the likelihood of innovation” (Fairbairn & Fulton, 2000, p. 24). They believed that the dismantling of disciplinary boundaries and the encouragement of collaboration would promote innovation.

Some universities have built capacity to respond to these changes. Clark (1998) referred to this type of organization as an *entrepreneurial university*, defined as one that “on its own, actively seeks to innovate in how it goes about its business. It seeks to work out a substantial shift in organizational character so as to arrive at a more promising posture for the future” (p. 4). Clark (1998) identified five common characteristics of entrepreneurial universities. They had a leadership group that steered the university through shared values and operating procedures.



They developed new units to explore interdisciplinary enquiry. They diversified their funding bases, becoming less reliant on government grants. They shared their resources across the university, supporting their core departments and new initiatives. Lastly, they developed a culture of innovation that was shared by the whole institution (Clark, 1998).

In examining marketization, Skolnik (2005) noted, however, that the environment surrounding universities and colleges currently is only partly market-determined; the government continues to control much of the policy around postsecondary institutions through regulations and financial support of the institutions and of individual students. Therefore, public policy and all the dynamics inherent in the policy process still greatly influence higher education. Reform and possible solutions to address these issues in higher education still require mechanisms that can affect policy development. How marketization affects the nature of the postsecondary students is explored in the next section.

### **The Changing Nature of Today's Postsecondary Students**

The view that university education is not only desirable but necessary for success in the global market is a view widely held among the public, the parents and secondary students. Enrollment at universities has been steadily increasing since the beginning of the 1980s. In fact, rates of university participation for young adults aged 18-24 rose from approximately 15% to 18% between 1990 and 2000 (Beach et al., 2005, p. 2). The acquisition of a degree is increasingly seen as a necessary requirement for desirable jobs and for access to prestigious graduate programs (Duderstadt, 2005). This quest for a degree is termed *credentialism*. "Credentialism encompasses both (a) the belief that preparation for the workplace is best undertaken through formal education and (b) the practice that results, whereby it is virtually impossible to secure a job without some sort of credential" (Cote & Allahar, 2007, p. 25). As more university graduates entered the job market, employers were able to choose employees with higher credentials. This circular pattern has resulted in fewer job opportunities for high school graduates and an increased demand for graduate programs (Cote & Allahar, 2007; Duderstadt, 2005).

The increased demand for university entrance and graduate programming has also resulted in a phenomenon called grade inflation, a negative practice that Cote and Allahar (2007) noted both in secondary and postsecondary environments. Secondary students push for higher

marks throughout their course work so that they meet the necessary requirements for university entrance. Cote and Allahar (2007) pointed out the number of “A” students entering university has increased steadily so that the averages required for entry into programs, especially highly competitive programs, have also steadily risen. The secondary teachers are facing increasing pressure to use an inflated grading system (Cote & Allahar, 2007). Yet, conversely, many students, upon experiencing higher education, felt that their secondary education had not adequately prepared them (Pillay, 2004).

Cote and Allahar (2007) also espoused that the emphasis on self-esteem in elementary and secondary school has resulted in social promotion of some students who have not acquired the skills necessary for successful completion of that grade. As well, students are encouraged to think of future prospects without realistic guidance (Pillay, 2004). They are bombarded with messages that tell them they can be successful at whatever path they choose. Thus, more students who are not adequately prepared for university, or who do not possess the requisite skills to be successful, are entering the system. The university then has to perform the “sorting, weeding and cooling out” function, encouraging students who do not possess the requisite skills to find other, more suitable career options (Cote & Allahar, 2007, p. 41).

In a pessimistic assessment of the consumer culture, Cote and Allahar (2007) hypothesized that the prevalent consumer mentality of parents and secondary students entering postsecondary institutions has led them to expect that they can purchase a degree, whether it has been earned or not. Cote and Allahar (2007) stated that these “young individualists” are “the products of a social system whose core values are individualism, materialism, and consumerism” (p. 115). For many reasons, then, there are significant numbers of disengaged students on campus who are interested simply in completing the degree, and do not value the wider objectives of university education, such as the academic pursuit of a broad base of knowledge. Universities are viewed as large businesses that should cater to the expectation of customer satisfaction where customers “*get their money’s worth*” with a minimal amount of effort on their part. Universities are viewed as a means to an end product that is seen as essential in our knowledge economy. Cote and Allahar (2007) reiterated that “there are serious problems in motivation and ability among a sizable proportion of students sent to universities from Canadian high schools” (p. 28).

The group of students now entering postsecondary institutions is often called the “millennial generation,” a term coined by Neil Howe and Bill Strauss to signify that these students are becoming young adults at the turn of the millennium (Cote & Allahar, 2007). They have grown up with advanced technologies and have developed strong social ties with their peers through these electronic technologies. Because of their familiarity with technology, they use their technological skills readily in completing coursework and accessing information. This trend has resulted in increased pressure on universities and professors to incorporate technology into course delivery. Although the *millennials* are comfortable with the virtual world, many of them are closely connected to their parents who have worked hard to protect them from problems and harsh realities. As these students are entering postsecondary institutions, they are sometimes having difficulty solving their own problems and dealing with the realities of the actual world, even though they are technologically advanced.

Another related and interesting phenomenon is the appearance of *helicopter parents* in postsecondary institutions. These helicopter parents continue to hover over their young adult children, often intervening to solve their children’s problems (invited or not), and remaining heavily involved in even the smallest details of their children’s lives (Cote & Allahar, 2007). Although the parents are emotionally involved with their children, this co-dependence is unhealthy and growth-inhibiting for the young adults. By navigating the system for them, the helicopter parents are stifling their children’s independence and problem-solving skills. In fact, some of the disengaged students are working for a degree as a result of being pushed into the university program by well-intentioned, but sometimes unrealistic, parents who are focused on the credential (Cote & Allahar, 2007). This brief description of the changing nature of the students on campus illustrates how universities are faced not only with pressures from the external environment, but also with other internal pressures.

There are many reasons why universities are institutions under increasing strain. Beach et al., (2005) suggested that universities are faced with chronic underfunding, resulting in increased tuition fees and increased student debt load. At the same time, there are increasing demands for university education, looming shortages of faculty, and changing student profiles, as noted in the previous sections. Related to these problems are the broader changes in the political and social environment, nationally and globally. Jones, McCarney, and Skolnik (2005) summarized this changing environment:

In these early years of the twenty-first century, institutions of higher education are having to confront the complex transformations currently taking place in the economic, political, scientific, and social climate. The university's response to the external challenges represented by a knowledge-driven, global economy is increasingly contested, with a view to better balancing the economic purpose of higher education with its cultural, moral, and intellectual purposes. (p. 3)

Universities need to examine their structures and functions within the current political and social context. During this reflection and during the formulation of possible initiatives and reforms, a framework to visualize these changes can be constructed to provide structure and guidance to this process. Because of the institutional nature of universities, examination and utilization of the constructs of neo-institutionalism can be instrumental.

### **Institutions and Institutionalization**

The term *institution* is used widely in many disciplines, especially in the social sciences. Within the broad context of sociology, Jepperson (1991) defined institution as “an organized, established, procedure” (p. 143). The procedures are represented as the rules of society, or as an orderly set of rules that influence interaction. The procedures or social patterns are “standardized interaction sequences” and are reproduced within the institution until the process reaches a certain state or property (Jepperson, 1991, p. 145). This process of engraining the procedures into standardized sequences is called institutionalization. In describing the process, Jepperson (1991) stated: “...routine reproductive procedures support and sustain the pattern, furthering its reproduction—unless collective action blocks, or environmental shock disrupts, the reproductive process” (p. 145).

Burch (2007) also characterized institutions as having “formal and informal rules, structures, values, and perceptions, which over the course of time have acquired stability and become taken for granted” (p. 100). Meyer and Rowan (1991) reiterated this idea with their view that “Institutionalization involves the processes by which social processes, obligations, or actualities come to take on a rule-like status in social thought and action” (p. 42). Institutional analyses allow theorists and researchers to determine the procedures or social patterns and interorganizational relations exhibited by particular groups of institutions (Strandgaard-Pedersen & Dobbin, 2006). Although institutions have been analyzed since the rise of organizations

through the Industrial Age (Shafritz & Ott, 2001), institutionalism was articulated only recently, within the last half of the twentieth century (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991).

### **The Old Institutionalism**

For the first half of the century, organizational theories centred on scientific management principles, such as the behaviour of rational-actors within the organization and the shared organizational goals of increased efficiency (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991). Theorists became increasingly dissatisfied with the utility of these principles and a number of different theories were proposed to explain organizations. One such theory that explained the prominence of institutions and the importance of social context was institutionalism. Powell and Dimaggio (1991) labeled this theory the *old institutionalism* to distinguish it from the later emergence of the new institutionalism or neoinstitutionalism.

The old institutionalism theory was based on the work of functionalists such as Philip Selznick and Talcott Parsons, beginning in the 1940s, but gaining more prominence in the 1960s and 1970s (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991; Rowan & Miskel, 1999). These theorists analyzed group conflict and organizational strategy. In addition, they explored how organizations placed constraints on individual actors so that the individuals did not act upon their own interests (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991). Old institutional theories explored the methods by which the informal structures of organizations (such as influence patterns, coalitions, cliques, retention) affected the formal structures. Parsons' organizational analysis also emphasized legitimacy as the source for survival for an organization and he described how organizations conform to existing societal organizations (Rowan & Miskel, 1999). However, in the mid 1970s, there was a widening difference of opinion over key constructs of institutionalism, including its close ties with functionalism (Strandgaard-Pederson & Dobbin, 2006), and the recognition of the influence of cognition in human behaviour and motivation (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991). These influences led to the rise of an independent theory, new institutionalism.

### **The New Institutionalism or Neoinstitutionalism**

Powell and Dimaggio (1991) and Rowan and Miskel (1999) noted that a renewed interest in institutional theory and analysis began in 1977 with two seminal works by Meyer, and also Meyer and Rowan. These authors espoused the view that the main elements of modern

organizations are “rationalized myths” and that organizations are not structured as means to achieve efficient ends. Further, they argued that organizations follow “rule-like templates” that are institutionalized in society and organizations conform to these assumptions in order to gain resources and support (Rowan & Miskel, 1999, p. 363). Meyer and Rowan (1991) believed that “bureaucratization is caused in part by the proliferation of rationalized myths in society, and this in turn involves the evolution of the whole modern institutional system” (p. 47). The rationalized myths are created in three ways: through complex relational networks, through collective organization of the environment, and through leadership efforts of local organizations (Meyer & Rowan, 1991).

The new institutionalism is based on sociological traditions and perspectives, where organizations are viewed as open systems and they interact with their environment and other organizations (Strandgaard-Pederson & Dobbin, 2006). The neoinstitutionalists investigate “...interorganizational convergence, isomorphism and meaning construction through interorganizational paradigm construction...” (p. 900). Rowan and Miskel (1999) framed the new institutionalism as follows:

...the new institutionalism sees social actors of all sorts—individuals, managers, interest groups, public agencies, and corporations—as embedded in socially organized environments that generate rules, regulations, norms, and definitions of the situation that constrain and shape action. The goal of the new institutionalism is to study how such environments arise and to investigate their effects on social action. (p. 359)

The theorists moved towards investigations of larger groups of organizations to determine patterns of social action and moved away from studying the behaviour of rational-actors within the organization.

New institutionalists incorporate elements of structuration, a concept defined by Giddens, into their theory. Giddens (1984) examined the rules and resources of institutions and how they impacted the structure of these institutions. Giddens (1984) believed that “analyzing the structuration of social systems means studying the modes in which such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction” (p. 25). Institutions have the most deeply embedded structural properties or “structural principles” and extend over time and space (Giddens, 1984, p. 17). The constitution of the agents and structures are not independent of each

other; structure is not external to the individuals (Giddens, 1984). He described this interaction as the *duality of structure* where the “structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize” (Giddens, 1984, p. 25). The concept of duality of structure is explained in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2**

***The Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984, p. 25)***

Structure(s)	System(s)	Structuration
Rules or resources, or sets of transformation relations, organized as properties of social systems	Reproduced relations between actors or collectivities, organized as regular social practices	Conditions governing the continuity or transmutation of structures, and therefore the reproduction of social systems

These definitions describe how structures are organized, how systems are developed and how social systems are reproduced through structuration. The concepts of structures, systems, and structuration also are reflected in the theory of neoinstitutionalism and the process of isomorphism, which I describe later.

### **Comparison of the Two Theories**

One of the biggest differences between the old and new theories of institutionalism is the role of the environment. In the old theories, organizations were believed to be embedded in communities and were co-opted by the “multiple loyalties of personnel and by interorganizational treaties” (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991, p. 13). The new institutionalism concentrates on non-local environments (organizational sectors or ‘fields’) (Crowson, Boyd, & Mawhinney, 1996; Powell & Dimaggio, 1991; Rowan & Miskel, 1999). Powell and Dimaggio (1991) described the influence of environments when they stated: “rather than being co-opted by organizations, they penetrate the organization, creating the lenses through which actors view the world and the very categories of structure, action, and thought” (p. 13).

A second difference is the emphasis in neoinstitutionalism on the cultural and cognitive bases of institutionalized behaviour where learning theories, cognitive models, and attribution theory account for human behaviour and motivation, rather than socialization processes and

internalization of organizational values, as espoused by the old institutionalism theories (Crowson et al., 1996; Powell & Dimaggio, 1991).

A third difference is the respective views of conflict and change, where the new institutionalism concentrates on persistence, continued order and stability of organizations (stressing the relationship between stability and legitimacy) regardless of pressures for change (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991). On the other hand, old institutional theory addressed conflict through analyzing group conflict and organizational strategy. The fourth difference between the two approaches is the focus of analysis. Whereas the old institutionalism examined informal interaction within organizations, the new institutionalism focuses on interorganizational interactions and the formal structures of organizations (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991). The differences between the old and new institutionalisms are outlined in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3**

***Comparisons of Old and New Institutionalism***

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Old institutionalism</b>	<b>New institutionalism</b>
Role of the environment	Organizations embedded in communities; affected by personnel loyalties and interorganizational treaties	Concentrates on non-local environments (organizational sectors or fields)
Basis of behaviour	Socialization processes and internalization of organizational values	Cultural and cognitive bases (learning theories, cognitive models and attribution theory)
View of conflict and change	Analyzed group conflict and organizational strategy to address conflict	Legitimacy of organization based on persistence, stability, and continued order
Focus of analysis	Informal interactions within organizations	Interorganizational interactions and formal structures of organizations

As illustrated in Table 2.3, there are four main differences in the evolution of institutional theory. Although there are notable differences between the two approaches, Powell and Dimaggio (1991) pointed out that the differences are not usually mentioned: “They are all the more striking because they are so seldom noted; far from offering a sustained critique of the old



institutionalism, neoinstitutionalists, when they refer to their predecessors, tend to acknowledge continuity and elide points of divergence” (p. 15). As well, Crowson et al. (1996) noted: “Despite these distinctions, theorizing surrounding the new institutionalism is not as clear or as clean as the above comparisons might suggest” (p. 3). It is interesting to note that the new institutionalism evolved independently in three different disciplines, economics, political science and sociology, beginning approximately twenty years ago (Rowan & Miskel, 1999; Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006). I next examine these three disciplines or types of neoinstitutionalism.

### **Three Disciplines or Types of Neoinstitutionalism**

Three different disciplines of neoinstitutionalism developed independently from one another (Hall & Taylor, 1996). In the literature, there is some disagreement about the label for the three disciplines. One discipline is sociological institutionalism (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Powell & Dimaggio, 1991; Rowan & Miskel, 1999; Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006). A second discipline is historical institutionalism (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006) or political institutionalism (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991; Rowan & Miskel, 1999). The third discipline is rational choice (Hall & Taylor, 1996) or economic institutionalism (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991; Rowan & Miskel, 1999; Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006). The disciplines share some commonalities in that each explores the relationship between institutions and behaviour and the process of establishing or changing institutions (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Some theorists noted that recently there has been movement toward crossing disciplines, and exchanging ideas and perspectives (Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006).

Although lead theorists in the field, Powell and Dimaggio (1991), and Rowan and Miskel (1999), described these forms, later researchers such as Hall and Taylor (1996), and Van Gestel and Teelken (2006), elaborated much further on these differences. Hall and Taylor (1996) suggested that each discipline offers a partial view of institutions and behaviour, and that extensive interchanges with each other are desirable in advancing institutional theory.

### **Historical Institutionalism**

Rowan and Miskel (1999) noted that historical or political institutionalism arose in response to pluralist political theory that looked at democratic politics as a process of interactions of autonomous individuals and interest groups as they satisfy their needs through a political

agenda. As well, historical institutionalism borrowed from the group theories of politics and the structural-functionalist theories that formed the underpinnings of political science in the 1960s and 1970s (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Powell and DiMaggio (1991) further divided this area into positive theory focusing on domestic political institutions, and regime theory focusing on international relations. Historical institutionalists view the conflict between the political and economic institutions as instrumental in “privilege[ing] some interests while demobilizing others” (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 937). Responses to the political economy take the shape of collective action. As such, organizational fields are studied (with less emphasis on individual actors) using historicism as a basis (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006).

Neoinstitutional theorists contend that power structures, in the form of asymmetrical power relationships, are central to organizations (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006). These asymmetries of power influence decision-making and determine the structure of the organizations. Institutions “distribute power unevenly across social groups” (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 941). Another distinctive element of historical institutionalism is “the view of institutional development that emphasizes path dependence and unintended consequences” (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 938). Van Gestel and Teelken (2006) described path dependency as “elaborating and adapting to existing layers of historically evolved relationships” (p. 101). However, institutions are reluctant to change and “institutions are seen as relatively persistent features of the historical landscape” (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 941). There are long periods of continuity interrupted by ‘critical junctures’ caused by societal or political factors (Hall & Taylor, 1996). In other words, institutional change occurs when there are conflicting responses to external problems, events, or influences such as advances in technology or economic crises or political changes (Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006). Change occurs slowly and incrementally in response to these pressures (Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006).

### **Economic or Rational Choice Institutionalism**

The new institutionalism in economics had its beginnings at approximately the same time as historical institutionalism. This theory looks at the role of the existing rules, norms, laws, and procedures of institutions in structuring the choices of “rational actors” because a predetermined set of preferences and rational choices are the only ones given to the actors or agents (Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006). Individual choice is heavily influenced by collective

action dilemmas, where institutional context limits rational choices. Hall and Taylor (1996) described this process as “instances when individuals acting to maximize the attainment of their own preferences are likely to produce an outcome that is collectively sub-optimal” (p. 945).

Economic institutionalists emphasize the role of strategic interactions in shaping political outcomes (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006). These interactions are studied through transaction cost economics and principal-agent theory (Rowan & Miskel, 1999). Transaction cost economics considers how to best structure economic transactions as efficiently and productively as possible given the constraints and conditions of the market (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991; Rowan & Miskel, 1999). Principal-agent theory “describes a number of governance and control mechanisms that can be used by principals to constrain the behavior of agents and increase organizational efficiency” (Rowan & Miskel, 1999, p. 360). Change in institutions comes about due to economic pressures, and political and market changes. However, the size or depth of change influences the associated costs of the change, which is a consideration in implementation (Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006). Further, there is an emphasis on “voluntary contracts” which result in gains for individual actors rather than on changes to the institutional contexts (Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006). Van Gestel and Teelken (2006) believed that the explanation for institutional change is a weakness in economic institutionalism theory.

### **Sociological Institutionalism**

This form of institutionalism began in the early 1970s as a rejection of the models of institutions as closed, rational systems (Rowan & Miskel, 1999). Instead, sociological institutionalists believe that the forms, rules and procedures of organizations are expressions of the culture that shapes the behaviour and the identity of the actors (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Powell & Dimaggio, 1991; Rowan & Miskel, 1999; Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006). The behaviour of the actors is also influenced by “the symbol systems, cognitive scripts, and moral templates that provide the ‘frames of meaning’ guiding human action” (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 947). Cognition and culture are instrumental in shaping behaviour and, therefore, social constructivism is a key component of sociological institutionalism (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Powell & Dimaggio, 1991). These theorists “emphasize the highly-interactive and mutually-constitutive character of the relationship between institutions and individual action” (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 948).

Change occurs as a reaction to external events where innovative ideas are sought to replace ineffective procedures (Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006). As well, “organizations often adopt a new institutional practice, not because it advances the means-ends efficiency of the organization but because it enhances the social legitimacy of the organization or its participants” (Hall & Taylor, 1999, p. 949). Suchman (1995) defined legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (p. 574). Strandgaard-Pederson and Dobbin (2006) identified the sociological basis for this view of organizations as open systems, with “emphasis on organization-environment relations, stress on interaction and interchange between organizations, and depiction of imitation and diffusion as central processes in organizational legitimation” (p. 900). However, usually the processes of imitation and diffusion work to produce institutional isomorphism rather than change.

Van Gestel and Teelken (2006) highlighted the similarities and differences among the three neo-institutional perspectives in Table 2.4.

**Table 2.4**

***Three Neo-Institutional Perspectives (Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006, p. 101)***

Neo-institutional Theory	Historical institutionalism	Economic institutionalism	Sociological institutionalism
Character of institutions	Institutions in politics and economic structure benefit some interests and injure others	Institutions, considered as rules and procedures, structure the choices and information of rational actors	Institutions determine behavior with shared values and ‘frames of meaning’. Culture is part of organizations.
Institutions and actors	Institutions are a result of codification and compromises in the course of power struggle	Within the existing set of institutions, rational choices and a fixed set of preferences are given for the relevant actors	Institutions determine the images of behavior. Actors express their identity in relation to surrounding world views.

Central research issue	Power	Material interest	Identity
Origins of institutions	‘Path dependency’ and undesirable consequences. Instrumental and social motives for a suitable institutional arrangement (logic of appropriateness)	Strategic interaction, transaction costs, rational choice. Institutions show a positive function for the material welfare of actors (logic of instrumentality)	Legitimacy  Possibilities offered by institutions to guarantee actors’ identities (logic of social appropriateness)
Institutional change by:	Conflicting responses to external events, like new technology, economic crisis	Voluntary contracts that create a gain for individual actors. Altered preference structure.	Processes of diffusion and imitation which in turn foster organizational isomorphism.
Theory and methodology	Historicism Inductive/Eclectic	Functionalism Deductive	Social constructivism Inductive & Deductive
Preferred level of analysis	Organizational field	Organization	Society

Each of the types of neoinstitutional theory examines institutions and the process of institutional change from a different perspective. Interdisciplinary approaches will need to determine how to incorporate these different perspectives into their procedures and philosophy.

### **Three Types of Institutional Isomorphism**

Institutions in the same organizational field become very similar over time (Dimaggio & Powell, 1991; Rowan & Miskel, 1999). For example, Rowan and Miskel (1999) cited many studies that illustrated how one organizational field, education, is remarkably similar throughout the world. An organizational field can be described as a set of organizations that produce similar products or services. Dimaggio (1983) further defined organizational fields:

Fields only exist to the extent that they are institutionally defined. The process of institutional definition, or “structuration,” consists of four parts: an increase in the extent

of interaction among organizations in the field; the emergence of sharply defined interorganizational structures of domination and patterns of coalition; an increase in the information load with which organizations in a field must contend; and the development of a mutual awareness among participants in a set of organizations that they are involved in a common enterprise. (p. 148)

Thus, organizational fields are institutionally defined and participants in those organizations must recognize that they are involved in a common enterprise. As DiMaggio and Powell (1991) stated: “Highly structured organizational fields provide a context in which individual efforts to deal rationally with uncertainty and constraint often lead, in the aggregate, to homogeneity in structure, culture, and output” (p. 64). Organizational fields have a strong tendency toward isomorphism.

DiMaggio and Powell (1991) identified three mechanisms that produce institutional isomorphism: coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism, and normative isomorphism. Although the types of isomorphism are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they arise from different conditions and often result in somewhat different outcomes.

Coercive isomorphism comes 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” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 67). For example, government mandates and common legal environments shape particular organizational fields, whereas market pressures and societal expectations can impact other fields.

Mimetic isomorphism is a response to uncertainty (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). If an organization encounters a problem with unknown or unclear causes or solutions, it can search for effective solutions within its organizational field and model the actions of a similar organization that has successfully dealt with the problem. Mimetic isomorphism may happen in several ways. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) suggested that “models may be diffused unintentionally, indirectly through employee transfer or turnover, or explicitly by organizations such as consulting firms or industry trade associations” (p. 69). Organizations usually model themselves after others in the same organizational field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful than themselves (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). The adopted models do not necessarily lead to greater efficiency, but the dominance of a particular model legitimizes the structure of that model.

A third type of isomorphism is normative isomorphism, which concerns the professionalization process. The formal education and legitimation of professionals occur within professional colleges and universities where normative rules and procedures, models and beliefs are disseminated. In addition, professional and trade associations aid in normative isomorphism through continued professional development, adherence to particular codes of behaviour, and diffusion of strategies and conceptual knowledge (Dimaggio & Powell, 1991). The filtering of personnel through recruitment, retention and promotion practices also contributes to the process of normative isomorphism (Dimaggio & Powell, 1991). Thus, organizations can be shaped by many kinds of isomorphic pressures that contribute to institutional stability rather than institutional change. However, institutions can change, usually in response to pressures in the political or economic environment.

### **Forms of Institutional Change**

Jepperson (1991) identified four distinct types of institutional change: institutional formation, institutional development, deinstitutionalization and reinstitutionalization. In conceptualizing these types of change, one must remember that “every entry is an exit from someplace else” (Jepperson, 1991, p. 152). Institutional formation represents an exit from existing behavioural patterns whereas institutional development (or elaboration) represents a change within an institutional form rather than an exit (Jepperson, 1991). Deinstitutionalization, though, is an exit from institutionalization “toward reproduction through recurrent action, or nonreproductive patterns, or social entropy” (Jepperson, 1991, p. 152). In other words, it represents a move towards destructure and away from the confining rules and procedures of an existing institution. Van Gestel and Teelken (2006) noted that the process of deinstitutionalization occurs when current organizational forms no longer meet societal expectations and new ideas and constructs are needed. Alas (2007) described the process of deinstitutionalization as the challenging and overturning of rules and practices, a process that can occur gradually or suddenly depending on the force underlying the change. The last type of change that Jepperson (1991) defined was reinstitutionalization, which can be conceived as “an exit from one institutionalization, and entry into another institutional form, organized around different principles or rules” (p. 152). Alas (2007) referred to reinstitutionalization as the process of redefinition of an institution and its rules and procedures.

The type of change that an organization exhibits will depend on the purpose for change and the degree of change required to maintain legitimacy and more clearly define the identity of the institution and the actors. The role of the actors within organizations has not been emphasized. Hall and Taylor (1996) referred to this when they said that “the new institutionalists in sociology seem so focused on macro-level processes that the actors involved in these processes seem to drop from sight and the result begins to look like ‘action without agents’” (p. 954). However, there are now some researchers who have explored the role of agents in institutional change and have referred to them as “institutional entrepreneurs” (Burns & Nielsen, 2006; Koene, 2006).

Burns and Nielsen (2006) identified that institutional inertia is broken when “taken-for-granted” processes are incompatible with the changing economic conditions. In other words, “under conditions of non-adaptability, efficiency gaps, and inter-institutional incompatibility, and mediated by institutional crisis,” change is more likely to happen (Burns & Nielsen, 2006, p. 454). In their case study, management, a committee, and other influential individuals engaged in discourse and collective action to implement new ideas and strategies. These individuals acted as institutional entrepreneurs. Koene (2006), in his examination of a case of organizational field development, looked at the power and discretion of human agents in directing the change. The cognitive and cultural practices of management influenced the development of an emerging industry. Koene (2006) stated:

...The interaction between the context in which institutional change takes place and the behaviour of the actors effecting the change is important for understanding the nature of the process and its outcomes, presenting interesting challenges for further research studying human agency in processes of institutional innovation and change over time. (p. 380)

Although an early criticism of institutional theory was its lack of explanation of institutional change, neoinstitutionalists have explored different facets of change.

Fernandez-Alles and Valle-Cabrera (2006) suggested that the new institutional theory forms a valid approach for research on institutional change, strategic management actions and the interaction of economic, social and political pressures on institutional inertia that result in change. In other words, “the institutional processes of isomorphism, conformity, and institutional diffusion can generate change and strategic action in organizations, particularly in



an international context when the institutional pressures exist across fields, industries, and countries with different institutional contexts” (Fernandez-Alles & Valle-Cabrera, 2006, p. 512).

### **Institutionalism and Educational Settings**

Institutional theory is very applicable to the educational environment. Although much of neoinstitutional literature focuses on educational environments as they apply to elementary and secondary education, many of the concepts also apply to tertiary education. At this point, there appears to be a gap in the application of neoinstitutional theory to universities and other postsecondary institutions. However, Crowson et al. (1996) pointed out that the new institutionalism was important as a theoretical framework for educators:

It re-established a special interest in the political and social significance of institutions while it simultaneously warns that the reform movement in education must address some ‘deep structure’ issues in the organization of schooling and in relationships between the schools and the larger society. (p. 2)

The theory of new institutionalism can be a foundational construct in formulating a theoretical framework when undertaking significant reform in education.

Scott (1991) emphasized that schools are highly institutionalized settings where institutionally shared beliefs shape the organizational structures, rules and norms of the school. These beliefs are strongly held across organizational boundaries. That is, all the stakeholders, including principals, teachers, central management, support workers, parents, and students, share these beliefs (Scott, 1991). Therefore, schools demonstrate significant isomorphism based on normative pressures. This is a trend that is evident worldwide. Rowan and Miskel (1999) summarized this trend:

Over time, in American states, in various nations of the world, and in the world system of societies, an institutional sector has emerged to define and standardize educational organization. Today virtually everywhere in the world, mass schooling is organized around a remarkably similar set of categories that defines the grammar of schooling. This grammar includes ideas about why students must attend school, the appropriate professional division of labor within educational organizations, the general categories of the school curriculum, and how all these categories of pupils, teachers, and subjects are to be organized in time and space to constitute a school. (p. 368)

Rowan and Miskel (1999) also identified the sameness of teaching practices across classrooms in the United States and determined that institutional isomorphism produced routinized teaching practices. In Rowan, Raudenbush, and Kang's (1991, as cited in Rowan & Miskel, 1999) studies of teaching in high schools, they noticed that disciplinary specialization strongly affected teachers' preferences for particular teaching strategies, as well as their participation in collegial interaction and school decision-making.

Burch (2007) stated that policy implementation, one of the normative pressures in education, is dependent on interactions between governmental and nongovernmental organizations and analysis of these interactions should examine "the relationship between industry practices, broader cultural norms, and interactions across organizations" (p. 86). Governmental agencies, including local governance such as school boards, shape policy, but the actual teaching and learning are influenced by other organizations such as publishing companies, test developers and outside consultants. In Burch's (2007) case study of a district's educational reforms, she noted that implementation of initiatives varied across subject areas because of staffing and professional development practices and because of influences of professional associations.

Although institutional theorists have usually explained the driving forces for change as originating at the macro level (top down forces), some theorists are looking at the bottom up approach for change. Burch (2007) described three sources for change that may originate from local conditions and "diffuse upward and outward" or from broader environments and "diffuse downward" (p. 88). These sources for change include: ideological conflict in the organizational field, recurrence of a problem where status quo is not supported by the actors, and the contextual situation of the problem within the larger institutional policies (Burch, 2007). Marginal organizations and individuals can interrupt the *status quo*. Because they are not served by maintaining the *status quo*, they may "intervene pre-emptively in the cultural environment to develop bases of support for their ideas" (Burch, 2007, p. 89). These individuals or organizations may work collectively to implement reforms that support their own agenda. Burch (2007) noted that a particular network of individuals in her study were successful in "shifting established literacy practices [which] turned in part on their ability to identify a common problem, theorize an alternative solution, and build legitimacy for this solution by linking the innovation to established policy objectives and criteria" (p. 90).

Not only do the dynamics of the organization itself impact change, but Burch (2007) also pointed out that nongovernmental organizations are impacting change through their interactions with educational institutions. These partnerships and interactions need further exploration within research on educational change. Rowan and Miskel (1999) expressed that “as an approach to research in the field, we find that the new institutionalism presents a powerful set of explanations for the structure and functioning of educational organizations in modern societies” (p. 378).

Scott and Meyer (1991) referred to the type of institutional environment of schools using their characterization of organizations as having technical and/or institutional environments. Technical environments are “those in which a product or service is produced and exchanged in a market such that organizations are rewarded for effective and efficient control of their production systems” whereas institutional environments are “those characterized by the elaboration of rules and requirements to which individual organizations must conform if they are to receive support and legitimacy” (p. 123). These requirements may come from regulatory agencies such as governments, from professional associations, or from general belief systems.

Using these definitions, Scott and Meyer (1991) categorized schools as having a weak technical environment and a strong institutional environment. However, recent educational trends and reforms appear to be pushing schools into a more technical environment. Rowan and Miskel (1999) stated:

Concerted institution-building by the education professions, government agencies, and private sector organizations has begun to produce a more elaborate technical environment for schooling, one that includes not only an increasingly sophisticated theory of educational productivity, but also the technical capacity to inspect instructional outcomes in schools. As a result, it appears that schools now face much stronger demands for technical performance than they did in the past, without also experiencing a decline in demands for institutional conformity. (p. 365)

However, Scott and Meyer (1991) noted that organizations experiencing pressures to operate in strong technical and institutional environments experience greater conflict where the lack of consensus on procedures and rules produces dissension. This further destabilizes the institution, which engages in more intense reform and institution building, a trend that is evident in the proliferation of reforms in education (Rowan & Miskel, 1999).

If initiatives are institutionalized in the rules and regulations of powerful or influential agencies in an institutional environment, they usually are diffused throughout the organizations in that field (Rowan & Miskel, 1999). As well, organizational leadership plays an important role in this institutional isomorphism. However,

studies also find that organizational characteristics such as size, complexity, network location and linkages, resource dependencies, and other factors affect the response and timing of an organization's response to changes in the institutional environment, especially in the early stages of the adoption process. (Rowan & Miskel, 1999, p. 367)

Therefore, the complexity and structure of the organization affect how the organization responds to changes and how long those responses take to be constructed and enacted.

Another related concept in institutional theory, field effects, is useful in examining reform. Field effects refer to “increases in the ideological, human, and financial resources available to individuals or organizations working on an issue” (Burch, 2007, p. 90). Thus, the changing of procedures, processes, and resources (including financial, material, and human resources) to support an initiative can influence the success and adoption of the initiative. However, even failure to adopt a particular initiative can provide a powerful learning opportunity in studying how change is incorporated into particular organizations. Institutional theory is useful in viewing the influence of the broader cultural and contextual conditions on educational reform.

### **Directions for Future Research in Institutional Theory**

In the literature on institutional theory, there are many suggestions for future research topics. For example, Hall and Taylor (1996) suggested researching interchanges between the three forms of institutionalism because “each of these literatures seems to reveal different and genuine dimensions of human behaviour and of the effects institutions can have on behaviour” (p. 955). Rowan and Miskel (1999) referred to the interchange of the different forms of institutionalism when they stated:

immediate work is needed to see how the common governance mechanisms studied in transaction cost economics and principal-agent theory can be applied to the analysis of teachers' work and to improving the effort and engagement that students put into learning. (p. 379)

Rowan and Miskel (1999) suggested that other forms of neoinstitutionalism, in addition to sociological neoinstitutionalism, could be applied to research investigating reform in education.

Fernandez-Alles and Valle-Cabrera (2006) noted that institutional theory has the power and potential utility to “inform managerial behaviour by combining institutional accounts with other, seemingly contradictory, theories” (p. 504). They contended that future research “should continue to focus on the integration of strategic and institutional theories in order to explain change in a processual [*sic*] and longitudinal way” (Fernandez-Alles & Valle-Cabrera, 2006, p. 510). The process of change should be researched, especially in longitudinal studies, to examine the origin of the change, the organizational response, the implementation process, and finally the evaluation of the changes. This type of research necessarily is longitudinal in nature. In education, the process of adopting similar practices from other jurisdictions (mimetic changes) could be studied in this manner to determine which alternative solutions were proposed and how the particular action was chosen. The implementation process and the evaluation procedures then could be examined. Whether the new practice was implemented long enough in the new jurisdiction to allow for long-term evaluation of results would need to be examined.

Strandgaard-Pederson and Dobbin (2006) also proposed that neoinstitutionalists should study the mechanisms of diffusion of new concepts and models of immunization (the failure to adopt a new practice). They need to look at “whether ‘adoption’ of a new practice is wholehearted, is really little more than renaming, or is really a combination of old and new” (Strandgaard-Pederson & Dobbin, 2006, p. 905). In addition, they should explore why institutions sometimes do not adopt new trends, or how organizations implement new ideas. Cibulka (1996) pointed out that institutional theory does not help predict the outcomes of change initiatives, largely because of the complexity of the educational institutions and the unpredictable nature of events, interactions and individual actors in the institutional environment. Therefore, the process of change and the failure to change (inertia) need further exploration.

The role of human agency and the contextual influences are necessary research topics, too (Fernandez-Alles & Valle-Cabrera, 2006; Koene, 2006; Van Gestel & Teelken, 2006). Van Gestel and Teelken (2006) suggested that research “must consider ‘reform’ as embedded in rules, norms, and cognitive aspects that influence the processes of decision-making and the actions of management and organizations” (p. 103).

Dimaggio and Powell (1991) contended that studying similarities and variations among organizations is necessary, particularly looking at “the change in degree of homogeneity or variation over time” (p. 80). They believed in the utility of studying homogeneity as it applies to policymaking. “Policymakers concerned with pluralism should consider the impact of their programs on the structure of organizational fields as a whole and not simply on the programs of individual organizations” (Dimaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 80). Rowan and Miskel (1999) also emphasized the need to study change within educational systems using the lens of institutional theory. Reform efforts need to be studied longitudinally to determine what effects these reforms will have on educational institutions, including their structures and practices. Additionally, the effect of institutional processes on the teaching and learning in schools needs to be studied further (Rowan & Miskel, 1999). Changing education will require changing the “complex regulatory, normative, and cognitive restraints” inherent in institutions (Rowan & Miskel, 1999, p. 380). The issues of organizational survival and institutional legitimacy need to be examined within the context of pressures for technical efficiency and institutional conformity and whether the emphasis on outcomes and accountability in education lead to deregulation and market-based education reforms (Rowan & Miskel, 1999).

The proliferation of topics for further research using institutional theory suggests the potential utility of this theory in studying institutional structuration, institutional inertia, and institutional change.

### **Suggestions for Research in the Canadian Context**

Using the constructs of institutional change, isomorphism, and inertia, researchers can frame their studies to examine change initiatives in the Canadian context. Although Rowan and Miskel (1999) noted that education systems are remarkably similar throughout the world, there are differences in the Canadian educational environment that influence educational structures and coercive and normative isomorphism especially.

Even though each of these topics could be researched in many different jurisdictions, the Canadian context would influence some of the research. Because of the provincial jurisdiction over elementary, secondary, and tertiary education—and the shared provincial/federal funding for post-secondary education—the curricula, educational mandates, and priorities are determined by the provincial and territorial ministries. While the individual ministries may be influenced by

trends and directions in other provinces, territories and countries, each ministry sets its own agenda with regard to priorities and regulations. Examples within Saskatchewan would include the mandated establishment of School Community Councils across the province and the direction to each school division to develop its own strategic plan with accountability mechanisms such as identification of measurable outcomes within a structured “Continuous Improvement Framework”. As well, research should focus on some longitudinal studies in order to determine why some reforms become institutionalized, whereas the majority does not (Rowan & Miskel, 1999).

In Table 2.5, some examples of institutional change in the educational context are presented. The types of change are organized according to the construct of institutional theory that the changes reflect. Table 2.5 is not an exhaustive list of the application of institutional theory to educational settings, but it provides some illustrative examples of the utility of this theory.

**Table 2.5**  
*Institutional Change and Educational Research*

Institutional Theory Construct	Application of Construct to Educational Research and Change
Three types of neoinstitutionalism and interchange between the three types	Partnership development - interchanges across governmental departments and interactions between governmental and nongovernmental organizations (looking at how institutions promote or impede collaboration and cooperation)
	Interdisciplinary schools being established at the university level, representing interchanges among business, law, education, science colleges (i.e. establishment of the School of Public Health)
	Market view of education (commodification of education) where the market is pushing for more choices, either in parental choice of schools, charter schools or private schools. This includes the reconceptualization of schooling as fulfillment of a contract between the institution and students.

Deinstitutionalization	Growing trend of parents choosing home schooling rather than education in an institutional setting
Reinstitutionalization	Establishment of charter schools and more private schools to meet growing demand
	Schools being established at universities that represent interdisciplinary teaching and research groups
	Pressure to significantly change the structure and programming of the educational institutions to suit the needs of a knowledge society (especially at the secondary level)
Institutional formation	Growing pressure for governments to address early childhood education through establishing formal procedures and institutions to deliver preschool education (rather than a wide range of private and some subsidized preschools, and no preschools in some areas)
Institutional development	Movement towards a strong technical and strong institutional environment in education, focused on accountability, measurement and outcomes
	Proliferation of reform initiatives to address economic and political conditions (ie. incorporation of technology into the classroom, changing teaching and learning strategies in mathematics and literacy so that all children, including the disadvantaged, achieve)
	Amalgamation of existing school divisions into larger school divisions
Coercive isomorphism	Government mandates including revising curricula, strategic planning by school divisions to demonstrate “continuous improvement,” changing funding for special education
	Establishment of School Community Councils to support improved parent engagement in education
	School boards choosing particular priorities to support with resources, personnel



Mimetic isomorphism	Use of external consultants and programs for professional development activities and for supporting reform initiatives, based on the perceived success of the particular programs in other locations
	Redevelopment of curricula and supporting teaching strategies based on analysis of curricula from other jurisdictions (provinces, countries)
Normative isomorphism	Assessment of educational experiences for preservice teachers and evaluation of applicability of those teaching strategies and knowledge to their teaching experiences
	Assessment of recruitment, retention and promotion practices of school divisions and how those practices support the educational and political agenda of the school division

By identifying the underlying constructs of institutional change that may be affected by a particular reform initiative, procedures and supports to address those constraints may be implemented proactively, or if necessary, reactively, to ensure successful institutionalization of the reform occurs.

### **Synthesis of the Literature Review**

In this literature review, I provide an overview of the current political, social and economic context that is shaping the direction of higher education. In addition, I describe the changing nature of the students and their approach to higher education. These elements all impact the delivery of postsecondary education. A process for implementing reform in higher education systems needs to be articulated to ensure that universities and other postsecondary institutions can meet the demands imposed by these changes. Constructs from institutional theory are promising in shaping the conceptual framework for the policy process.

Institutional theory has much to offer in analyzing educational systems, especially in the current context of ubiquitous reforms (Mawhinney, 1996). By investigating the political and social environments influencing institutional change, as well as the constraints imposed by institutional isomorphism, researchers may be able to suggest ways to implement significant reforms in education. Once the change process is better articulated through the lens of

institutional theory, perspectives from that theory could be utilized to develop effective practices and procedures for educational institutions to consider in their attempts at reform. This theoretical analysis may inform teaching and research practice, student learning, and overall development of educational institutions.

The influence of the environment is central to neoinstitutionalism and, as such, the Canadian context must be recognized in research conducted on particular reform initiatives. There are many possibilities for research topics, including longitudinal studies to determine longevity of reforms and institutionalization of specific practices and structures. In the Canadian context, with provincial jurisdiction over primary, secondary, and tertiary education, some of the changes will be district specific; others will be specific to the province; others will be indicative of a trend throughout the country or even an international trend. However, each of the initiatives could provide valuable insights into processes that promote institutional change and those that inhibit institutional change.

Because universities face increasing pressures to meet the challenges of a knowledge economy within the context of globalization and technological change, institutional change processes need to be formulated. The constructs of institutional theory offer just such a framework for investigating and initiating change.

In Chapter 3, I further investigate these ideas in formulating a conceptual framework for this study. The policy process is outlined as a series of stages: policy origin, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. The social and political context described in Chapter 2 is foundational in the policy origin and policy adoption stages. Constructs of neoinstitutional theory are utilized in examining the intended and unintended impacts of the policy process. The impacts are evidenced in the policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation stages. Thus, concepts described in this chapter underpin the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

In this chapter, I outline the conceptual framework that I employed in this research study. This research represented a critical policy study that sought to explicate and understand the key features of the policy process that led to the origin, adoption, and implementation of a set of policies establishing a particular interdisciplinary school at one university. Therefore, in the framework, I elaborate on the key stages of policy analysis that I chose to incorporate into the model, based on the purpose of this research. In addition, I articulate and define each of the elements of the model and how each element is connected to the framework. Finally, I describe the utility of this framework in visualizing the process of policy development and identifying the impacts of policy development as first or second order change. A key consideration in this policy analysis model is the nature of policy development as an iterative process influenced by the political, social and historical contexts that is dynamic and open to changes in the policy environment.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the policy development process that promoted the emergence of a joint interdisciplinary school. A policy analysis framework was employed to structure the exploration of the origins, policy networks, policy adoption procedures and the policy implementation process involved in the establishment of this interdisciplinary School. In order to frame the study and assist with the analysis of the data, I developed a conceptual framework that reflects the constructs of policy analysis, first and second order change, and neoinstitutional theory as it pertains to the dynamic change process. The concepts within this framework guided the coding of the data collected during the study. Thus, the utility of this framework lies in its use for exploration of policy development, for delineating the elements involved in shaping those changes, and for explanation of how those elements interact and produce both intended and collateral impacts. Although the conceptual framework includes the evaluation stage of the policy process, this study focused on the policymaking development and adoption processes as shaped by “the participants who are active, and the processes by which agenda items and alternatives come into prominence” (Kingdon, 2003, p. 15).

### **Policy and Public Policy**

Many authors present different perspectives on what constitutes policy and how the term “policy” is contrasted with the term “public policy.” Guba (1984) outlined eight different definitions of policy that appear in the literature. These definitions state:

- Policy is an assertion of intents and goals.
- Policy is the accumulated standing decisions of a governing body by which it regulates, controls, promotes, services, and otherwise influences matters within its sphere of authority.
- Policy is a guide to discretionary action.
- Policy is a strategy undertaken to solve or ameliorate a problem.
- Policy is sanctioned behavior, formally through authoritative decisions or informally, through expectations and acceptance established over (sanctioned by) time.
- Policy is a norm of conduct characterized by consistency and regularity in some substantive action area.
- Policy is the output of the policymaking system: the cumulative effect of all the actions, decisions and behaviours of the millions of people who work in bureaucracies. It occurs, takes place, and is made at every point of policy cycle from agenda setting to policy impact.
- Policy is the effect of the policymaking and policy-implementing system as it is experienced by the client. (Guba, 1984, pp. 64-65)

Guba (1984) emphasized that all the definitions are constructions rather than absolute realities. The definition chosen by the researchers, policymakers, or policy analysts impacts the processes and products of policy analysis (Guba, 1984).

However, Delaney (2002) also identified that there are some common elements in the various definitions of policy. He noted that policy is a formalized act that has a pre-agreed objective (Delaney, 2002). As well, “policy is approved or sanctioned by an institutional body or authority” (Delaney, 2002, p. 15). Pal (2006) proposed that every policy has three key elements: “The first is the definition of the problem, the second is the goals that are to be achieved, and the third is the instruments or means whereby the problem is to be addressed and the goals achieved” (p. 7). Wildavsky (1979) contended that “policy is a process as well as a product. It is used to refer to a process of decision-making and also to the product of that process” (p. 387). For the

purposes of this study, policy refers to university-level formalized statements with implications for the schools.

The term *policy* is different from *public policy*, though, in terms of who is invested with the authority to act. Jenkins (1978) defined public policy as “a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle, be within the power of those actors to achieve” (p. 15). Abele (2007) referred to public policy as “the entire field of research, analysis, and traditions of authoritative decision making—ideas, institutions, and practices—that comprise the ground upon which citizens in a modern democracy meet to deal with issues of common concern” (p. 235). Pal (2006) provided a more succinct definition of public policy: “A course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems” (p. 2). Thus, public policy concerns problems or issues within the public sphere that must be addressed (or are ignored) by public authorities. For the purposes of this study, policy development concerns the policies of a public institution (the university) that is governed by public authorities. The governance structure of the university will be examined in more detail in Chapter 5.

### **Policy Analysis and Policy Analysis Models**

Policy analysis refers to “applied social and scientific research—but also involves more implicit forms of practical knowledge—pursued by government officials and non-governmental organizations usually directed at designing, implementing and evaluating existing policies, programs and other courses of action adopted or contemplated by states” (Dobuzinkis et al., 2007, pp. 3-4). Dye (1976) provided a more simplistic definition of policy analysis: “Policy analysis is finding out what governments do, why they do it, and what difference it makes” (p. 1). Essentially, policy analysis is “the description and explanation of the causes and consequences of government activity” (Dye, 1976, p. 1). Pal (2006) defined policy analysis more concisely as “the disciplined application of intellect to public problems” (p. 14). Wildavsky (1979) referred to the process as the art and craft of policy analysis because it requires creativity and technical expertise.

Pal (2006) pointed out that there is a resurgence of interest and activity in the field of policy analysis for a variety of reasons. One factor was the changing governance and political

structures globally with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the reconfiguration of Central and Eastern Europe, while the Western states experienced increased polarization among political parties (Pal, 2006). Additionally, there was an increasing realization that the solutions and frameworks of the previous decades would not be sufficient to address emerging realities such as economic and cultural globalization as well as the information revolution (Pal, 2006). In addition, in the 1990s, the public sector underwent reform based on new management techniques (Pal, 2006). Lastly, “it was clear that an effective public sector was an important ingredient in social harmony and economic progress” (Pal, 2006, p. 26). Mintrom (2007) emphasized this point:

Together, the increasing scope of the marketplace, the increasing complexity of social interactions, and expanding knowledge of social conditions created pressures from a variety of quarters for governments to take the lead in structuring and regulating individual and collective action. (p. 147)

There is also a demand for accountability regarding the effectiveness of government programs as they attempt to address these issues (Mintrom, 2007). Thus, there is increased emphasis on analysis of policy implementation and policy evaluation (Mintrom, 2007).

The process of policy analysis has been examined intensely as countries and organizations try to develop their *policy capacity*. Policy capacity is “the institutional ability to conduct policy analysis and implement its results effectively and efficiently” (Pal, 2006, p. 35). However, there are differences of opinion in the policy field about how policy analysis should be conducted. As Howlett and Ramesh (2003) pointed out, there are many different models that can be utilized as a framework in policy analysis. An effective framework is essential in policy analysis because the framework will allow the researcher “to figure out which maps people use by studying the paths they took on their journey” (Pal, 2006, p. 13).

One consideration in designing a policy framework is the choice between rational and critical policy analysis. Rational policy analysis models are exemplified by the framework proposed by Lasswell in 1956 (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). This traditional or mainstream approach “can be critiqued for its narrowness and the privileging of techniques derived from economic theory over analytical approaches that draw upon political and social theory” (Mintrom, 2007, p. 153). Mintrom (2007) expressed further criticism of the mainstream approach:

Steeped as it is in the rational choice or utilitarian perspective, mainstream policy analysis is poorly suited to help us understand why particular problems might manifest themselves at given times, why some policy alternatives might appear politically palatable while others will not, and why adopted policies often go through significant transformations during the implementation stage. (p. 155)

The rational policy analysis model has been criticized for its inability to adequately portray the dynamics of the actual policy process in today's context (Dobuzinskis et al., 2007; Geva-May & Maslove, 2007).

Critical policy analysis models, based on pluralistic political approaches, have gained prominence within the last two decades. This shift has occurred because of the recognition that a rational, linear model does not capture the complex nature of policy-making in the current context of globalization (Orsini & Smith, 2007; Pal, 2006), including the move towards social investment policyscapes (Saint-Martin, 2007) and citizen engagement in the process of decision-making and governance (Laforest & Phillips, 2007). Wildavsky (1976) emphasized that the process is non-linear because policy analysis “considers resources and objectives, means and ends, together, never separately” (p. 10).

The two policy analysis approaches diverge in a number of significant ways. The major differences between the rational and critical analysis models (Fallon, 2006; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Orsini & Smith, 2007) are illustrated in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1**

***Contrasting Rational and Critical Policy Analysis Models***

<b>Element</b>	<b>Rational Policy Analysis Models</b>	<b>Critical Policy Analysis Models</b>
Type of approach	Utilizes linear and sequential approaches	Utilizes pluralistic approaches
Environment	Designed for stable environment	Designed for dynamic environment
Discourses	Government-centred accounts; elite-controlled knowledge	Emphasizes how policy actors' narratives and discourses shape the policy agenda

Exploration of alternatives	Bounded rationality	Divergent alternatives explored and considered
Focus	Focus on achievement of goals (best approach to achieve goal)	Focus on movement toward or away from goals, depending on the relationships between events and policy actors
Analysis of policy process	Analyzes policy process through exploring the steps of rational decision-making: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Defining goals</li> <li>2. Determining alternate actions</li> <li>3. Evaluating consequences of each action</li> <li>4. Choosing alternative most likely to achieve the goal most efficiently</li> </ol>	Analyzes policy process by considering agenda-setting or multiple-streams models. Policy results from the interaction of three streams: political events, problem recognition and policy proposal.
Communities	Epistemic communities (experts and government officials) shape policy	Policy networks and policy communities (and interactions among them) shape policy

The critical policy analysis model represents a pluralistic approach where many perspectives are considered. It concentrates on interactions among groups and individuals and how those dynamics shape policy. The choice and design of a policy analysis framework needs to consider and incorporate these elements. Dobuzinskis et al. (2007) noted: “Openness towards a diversity of approaches can prepare the ground for democratic deliberation and the active search for untapped sources of more or less implicit knowledge” (p. 5). Mintrom (2007) suggested that the incorporation of “alternative disciplinary perspectives” would be beneficial in analyzing current policy issues (p. 156).

Mintrom (2007) summarized the reasons for the resurgence in the policy analysis movement and the search for better designs of policy analysis:

Today, the demand for policy analysis is considerable, and it comes both from inside and outside of governments. This demand is likely to keep growing as calls emerge for governments to tackle emerging, unfamiliar problems. On the one hand, we should



expect to see ongoing efforts to harness technical procedures drawn from the social sciences and natural sciences for the purposes of improving the quality of policy analysis. On the other hand, more people are likely to apply these techniques, reinvent them, or develop whole new approaches to counteract them, all with the purpose of gaining greater voice in policy making at all levels of government, from the local to the global. (p. 151)

The burgeoning interest in policy analysis has led to a renewed search for more effective techniques and models that can adequately capture the complex dynamics of the policy process.

The second consideration in developing a model is the organizational structure. One technique is utilizing stages of the policy process. Various models have specific numbers of stages, including Lasswell's seven-stage model and Brewer's six-stage model (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Soroka (2007) agreed that "the stages models have the advantage of describing the policy-making process with relative clarity and simplicity" (p. 186). However, the policy process is very complex and the stages models may not adequately capture the dynamics. As an example of the complexity, Soroka (2007) stated: "Agenda-setting is evident throughout the policy process; indeed, formulation, implementation, and evaluation often occur simultaneously rather than sequentially, particularly for programs that are already underway" (p. 186).

Howlett and Ramesh (2003) argued, perhaps less optimistically than Soroka (2007), that developing a comprehensive understanding of the policy cycle was difficult and required an organizational tool. They noted that a particularly effective method to accomplish this objective was to break the policy-making process down into a series of separate but related stages that together formed a continuing policy cycle (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Although some critics suggested that this policy cycle model unrealistically represents the policy process as sequential and systematic, Howlett and Ramesh (2003) contended that the diligent and cautious use of this model mitigated potential problems in the analysis of a policy process. They stated:

The advantage of employing the cycle model lies in its role as a methodological *heuristic*: facilitating the understanding of the public policy process by breaking it into parts, each of which can be investigated alone or in terms of its relationship to the other stages of the cycle. This allows the integration of the study of individual cases, comparative studies of a series of cases, and the study of one or many stages of one or several cases, of which the policy literature, for the most part, is composed. (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, pp. 245-246, italics in original)

Therefore, policy analysis can use a stages model to organize information. A stages model is one tool for explicating the policy process through examining the many facets of each stage.

The framework utilized in this study is based on a four-stage model of critical policy analysis, proposed by Levin (2001). Levin (2001) divided analysis of policy into four stages: origins, adoption, implementation, and outcomes. However, he pointed out that the choice of stages and headings is based on personal preference (Levin, 2001). Additionally, the subjective categorization of stages does not reflect the complexities of policy analysis and does not represent the dynamics and the iterative nature of policy development and the policy process (Levin, 2001). When considering each of these stages, it is also imperative to understand the historical and cultural influences on the initiation and process of policy development, including the impact of the “institutions of government and political culture” (Levin, 2001, p. 4). Levin (2001) emphasized that ambiguity and contingency underpin every aspect of the political cycle. “At every step, multiple and conflicting influences come to bear, purposes change or are worn down by existing structures and processes, and circumstances change in ways that require modification of plans and actions” (Levin, 2001, p. 5).

For this study of the policy process within the context of the establishment of an interdisciplinary school, I will be considering the interactions of the political environment and the policy communities on agenda-setting and the development and change in policy. Thus, a critical policy analysis model fits my qualitative case study because the study is an interpretivist construction (*cf.* Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 2005) of the dynamics of a policy process within a university environment.

Within my model, the stage of organizational problem or policy origin includes an analysis of the problem definition, the salient stakeholders and policy actors involved, the convergence of the problem, political and policy streams, and the process of agenda setting. The stage focusing on organizational response or policy adoption includes an examination of policy formulation and decision-making, such as the choice of which type of policy instrument to employ. Policy implementation is explored through the various channels of change that are utilized. The expression of policy impacts is the focus of the policy evaluation stage where the intended impacts, the collateral impacts, and intended level of change are examined. This stage is focused on determining long-term and short-term impacts of the change that precipitated policy development at one university with contextual influences of another university.

Each stage has specific focal points that need to be considered. Fallon (2006) explicated the essential elements of each stage of the policy cycle. These elements are detailed in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2**

***Stages of Conception and Implementation of the Policy Cycle (Fallon, 2006)***

Stages of Policy Cycle	Elements of Analysis
Policy Origins	<p><i>Key policy milestones:</i> the focus is on the <i>what</i> and the <i>why</i> from the past; the policy history, legislation, specific events and so on; the source of the policy.</p> <p><i>Social and political context:</i> the focus is on the social and political framework, change trends, policy drivers, and key political actors at play as well as the situational pragmatics and the intricacies of politics in action.</p> <p><i>Interests and ideas:</i> the focus is on the core beliefs that shape the policy; the framework used to think about the key policy issues.</p>
Policy Adoption	<p><i>Policy development process:</i> the focus is on the interactions and responses of actors around policy formulation; the roles and power of the main actors in the policy process; their strategies to represent their position in the policy process; the main actors' impacts on the policy processes.</p>
Policy Implementation	<p><i>Communication and dissemination:</i> the focus is on the conceptual underpinnings and logic used by government agencies and interest groups to raise the level of awareness regarding the new policy.</p> <p><i>Implementation process:</i> the focus is on developing an understanding of how the policy is interpreted and experienced by implementing agencies as well as of each agency's implementation capabilities for the policy being introduced.</p>
Policy Impacts	<p><i>Impacts of policy:</i> the focus is on developing an understanding of the ways the policy is being experienced by individuals and institutions; and on perceived impacts of the policy on the working environment of those directly involved in the implementation of the policy.</p>

Each stage has a particular focus, and within this focus, there are several elements. Each of these elements should be considered when conducting an analysis of a particular policy.

### **Organizational Problem and Policy Origin**

The first and most critical stage in the development of public policy is the definition of a problem in the public arena that requires the attention of government and other policy actors. Rochefort and Cobb (1994) described problem definition as the processes by which issues were recognized as such and placed on the policy agenda, were perceived and defined by various interested policy actors, then further explored, articulated, challenged (and, in some cases, given an authoritative definition) while other solutions were kept off the policy and disregarded. Stone (2002) also described problem definition:

It is rather a strategic representation of situations. Problem definition is a matter of representation because every description of a situation is a portrayal from only one of many points of view. Problem definition is strategic because groups, individuals, and government agencies deliberately and consciously fashion portrayals so as to promote their favored course of action. (Stone, 2002, p. 133)

The process of problem recognition can be a complex one that involves some political maneuvering, especially if there are several groups promoting the adoption of their definition of the problem or issue.

This process of problem recognition and definition sometimes is described as “agenda-setting.” Kingdon (2003) elaborated on this process:

The agenda, as I conceive of it, is the list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time.... Out of the set of all conceivable subjects or problems to which officials could be paying attention, they do in fact seriously attend to some rather than others. So the agenda-setting process narrows this set of conceivable subjects to the set that actually becomes the focus of attention. (p. 3)

Pal (2006) also described agenda-setting as “the social and political process of determining what issues to address and in what priority” (p. 131). Soroka (2007) emphasized this point: “Agenda-setting is the study of issue salience—the relative importance of an issue on an actor’s agenda. Moreover, it is the study of the rise and fall of issue salience over time, and of the relationships between actors’ agendas” (p. 185). Thus, agenda-setting is a process that organizations, policy actors or political elites utilize to focus their efforts and attention on priorities that they determine. Schattschneider (1960) believed that politics was essentially about political elites

framing political conflict by affecting which issues were on the policy agenda and by determining the relative importance or urgency of issues.

The overarching political environment influences all other aspects of the agenda-setting process. In order to properly define the organizational problem in contemporary society, the global policy paradigms or “powerful, coherent global policyscapes” (Ball, 1999, p. 204) must be considered. As discussed in Chapter 2, these policyscapes, based on social investment discourses, impact all areas of policy, including education. Key to the discussion is the determination of which stakeholders are involved in the development of these discourses and narratives that influence the agenda of higher education.

A broad definition of stakeholder is: “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p. 46). In the policy analysis literature, these stakeholders are referred to as actors or policy stakeholders. Policy stakeholders include “individuals or groups which have a stake in policies because they affect and are affected by governmental decisions” (Dunn, 1981, p. 47). Policy stakeholders can include many different groups or individuals, such as citizens’ groups, policy analysts, government agencies, political parties, and interest groups. The different policy stakeholders sometimes have extremely varying perspectives on the same issue. However, some stakeholders are more influential in the policy process than others.

According to Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997), there are three determinants of stakeholder salience: their power to influence others, the legitimacy of their relationship, and the urgency of their claim. Stakeholders may possess or be perceived to possess one, two, or three of these characteristics, although these characteristics are variable and may change over time (Mitchell et al., 1997). The stakeholders’ salience is determined by the number, or combination, and degree of these three attributes that they possess (or are perceived to possess). Their salience determines their level of participation in the policy-making process.

Defining who is included at each level of the policy process is complex. The policy universe includes “all possible international, state, and social actors and institutions directly or indirectly affecting a specific policy area” (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 53). During the agenda-setting stage, the policy universe can be included in the discussion. However, during the subsequent stages, only those stakeholders with more salience usually are included (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). These policy actors can be members of policy subsystems brought together for

common purposes, and their interactions can play a key role in the articulation and implementation of policy (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Howlett and Ramesh (2003) noted that “understanding the activities and interactions of policy actors is hence a key facet of understanding the policy process” (p. 16).

The terms *policy networks* and *policy communities* have been used to describe subsets of these systems and the different configurations of policy actors. Although the terms have been used interchangeably, articulating a conceptual distinction between the two terms helps to identify their roles and impacts on the policy process. The policy community consists of the “actors in a policy network, presumably those who share at least some common language and conceptual reference points but who may be opponents on the issue” (Pal, 2006, p. 274). Policy networks refer to “the patterns of relations among members of the policy community” (Pal, 2006, p. 274). Policy networks and communities are becoming more complex and important to the policymaking process due to a variety of factors such as: globalization with its economic and political interdependencies, a changing political culture that is more individualist and participatory, and changing ideas of governance stressing smaller government and new types of public management (Pal, 2006).

Specifically, policy communities and policy networks can be divided along the lines of knowledge or expertise, and material interest. Policy community members share a specific knowledge base (part of an epistemic community), whereas policy network members share a knowledge base and a material interest that results in interaction (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). The degree of consensus and cohesiveness among the members of policy communities and networks varies along a continuum. When groups work together, they are described as *advocacy coalitions*. These coalitions include “a wide range of actors, including government from all levels, officials, interest organizations, research groups, journalists, and even other countries, who share a belief system about a policy area and over time demonstrate some degree of coordinated activities” (Pal, 2006, p. 273). The stability of the coalition depends on the cohesiveness of the members. Howlett and Ramesh (2003) stated:

subsystems featuring closely integrated communities and networks will be more cohesive and better able to resist the entrance of new ideas and actors into policy processes than will those with sizable intellectual and psychological distances between the two subsets of actors. (p. 156)

Thus, the interactions of the policy communities and networks influence the agenda-setting process, helping to define the issue and propose alternative solutions.

There are many ways to describe the policy actors. Dobuzinkis et al. (2007) described the policy elite as belonging to one of three groups. The *proximate decision makers* are those with the “actual authority to make policy decisions” (Dobuzinkis et al., 2007, p. 5). The *knowledge generators* are those who “provide the basic scientific, economic and social scientific data upon which analyses are often based and decisions made” (Dobuzinkis et al., 2007, p. 5). The *knowledge brokers* are those who “serve as intermediaries between the knowledge generators and proximate decision makers, repackaging data and information into usable form” (Dobuzinkis et al., 2007, p. 5). These groups “share a common interest in ensuring that policies reflect the latest knowledge, and a common desire to improve policy making through better and more systematic analysis of policy options and outcomes” (Dobuzinkis et al., 2007, p. 5).

A useful model to visualize the interaction of all of the elements of agenda-setting is the model of policy streams proposed by Kingdon (2003). He contended that there are three separate streams: the problem stream, the policy stream, and the political stream. Briefly defined, the problem stream includes the perception of needed government intervention to resolve a public problem; the policy stream includes the examination of the problem and proposal of possible solutions by experts; and the political stream refers to the global and national political climate, the influence of interest groups, and the stability or change of governing political parties (Kingdon, 2003).

Usually, these streams continue independently along their separate paths. However, “these streams are coupled at critical junctures, and that coupling produces the greatest agenda change” (Kingdon, 2003, p. 87). In other words, a window may open at these junctures that allows policy actors to propose changes to policy. These policy changes can occur when “a problem is recognized, a solution is available, the political climate makes the time right for change, and the constraints do not prohibit action” (Kingdon, 2003, p. 88). The opening of a window may be planned (such as a scheduled election) or unplanned (such as a political event, globally or nationally). Kingdon (2003) further categorized the policy windows along a continuum of predictability, as that degree of predictability influenced the policy process. The window does not stay open for very long, because: crises pass, the push for policy change fails, the issue loses attention, personnel change, or participants perceive that some action has been

taken through decision-making processes or enactment of policy (Kingdon, 2003). Soroka (2007) noted that “policy change is often linked to changes in issue salience and/or the redefinition of public issues” (p. 190).

Howlett and Ramesh (2003) described two types of policy change. They noted that there is a high degree of continuity in public policy because “most policies made by governments are in some way a continuation of past policies and practices” (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 235). Howlett and Ramesh (2003) described two types of change as *normal* and *atypical*:

The more ‘normal’ pattern involves relatively minor tinkering with policies and programs already in place in existing policy regimes. Such changes are ‘incremental’ and do not affect the basic contours of existing policy styles or paradigms. The second, more substantial pattern fundamentally transforms policy-making and involves changes in basic sets of policy ideas, institutions, interests, and processes. (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 235)

In addition, both types of change can be described by the speed of the change. Howlett and Ramesh (2003) labeled these tempos of change as *gradual* or *rapid* and both terms can be applied to normal or atypical policy change. The social, political and economic context affects the type and speed of the change.

The perception and definition of an organizational problem is a complex process involving several dimensions. Key policy actors and institutions, as determined by their salience in the particular context, influence the process. The predictability of the opening of policy windows and the influence of the political, historical, and social context impact the process as well. Together, the elements of agenda-setting determine the organizational response to a particular problem.

### **Organizational Response and Policy Adoption**

Once the problem has been defined, formulating a response to that particular policy problem is the next complex step in the process of policy development. During this stage, a variety of actions that can address the problem are considered; the actions are then evaluated to determine which of the solutions are feasible and, of these, which would be the best approach to pursue. Levin (2001) espoused that sometimes policy is formulated on the basis of “careful strategy” and, at other times, on the basis of the influence of “unforeseeable events” (p. 6). The



process of determining which options are included and excluded in the discussion is messy and complex. Schattschneider (1960) stated: “The definition of the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power” (p. 66).

The main policy actors engage in negotiations to have their own interests represented and their voices heard in the formulation of a response. Stakeholder salience helps to determine who is included in these discussions. Their perceived power, legitimacy and the urgency of their claim impact their degree of inclusion in the discussions (Mitchell et al., 1997). The actors may include policy networks, policy communities, government representatives and experts in the field, and policy entrepreneurs or those who capitalize on the opening of policy windows (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Generally, only key policy actors are included in the formulation stage. Levin (2001) noted, though, that “it isn’t always easy to know which people are going to be key to a policy’s fate (p. 9). Who is involved in the negotiations determines what alternatives are considered. Schattschneider (1960) contended that “all forms of political organization have a bias in favor of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others because *organization is the mobilization of bias*” (p. 69, italics in original).

Interestingly, in the last three decades, more citizen engagement in the policy process has been promoted, especially since the theory of deliberative democracy has gained prominence (Laforest & Phillips, 2007). However, Laforest and Phillips argued that despite attempts to include citizens in a meaningful way, the model of deliberative democracy has not been utilized effectively. In order for this to happen, several dimensions need to be reformed or addressed: the development of the necessary structure to involve citizens in a timely fashion throughout the process, the development of citizens’ skills fundamental to building their capacity for meaningful involvement, and the development of the necessary political recognition of citizens’ potential contributions to the policy process.

In addition to determining who has a voice in the policy formulation, the process of policy adoption includes the choice of the type of policy instrument to be utilized. There are two types of policy instruments: substantive instruments and procedural instruments (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). To resolve or partially resolve substantive problems, “the use of state resources and capacities such as money, information, and personnel, and/or the exercise of state authority” are required (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 145). Thus, substantive policy instruments are designed to directly provide service to achieve a given goal, as demonstrated by such policies as

those providing universal health care. Procedural policy instruments, on the other hand, are designed to enable others to access a certain service or achieve a given goal, as exemplified in policies such as those establishing subsidized child care (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Procedural instruments provide the conditions necessary to enable or mobilize citizens, placing the onus on them to choose the right services or adopt the right behavior. In the current trend toward the social investment policyscape, the types of instruments used have shifted towards an emphasis on procedural policy instruments. Saint-Martin (2007) emphasized this when he pointed out that, in a social investment state, the policies are designed to “give individuals the tools they need to improve their employability—to give them the means to individually confront the changes in the constantly transforming global economy” (p. 289).

However, Howlett and Ramesh (2003) listed other factors that affect the choice of policy instruments. They stated that the choice is made based on the interplay of the following factors: “the characteristics of the instruments, the nature of the problem at hand, governments’ past experiences in dealing with the same or similar problems, the subjective preference of the decision-makers, and the likely reaction to the choice by affected social groups” (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 201).

During the formulation process, the political and technical constraints of the possible proposed actions are considered. These limitations determine which actions are feasible and which are not (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). It is important to recognize that this stage may become messy as competing interests formulate different policies and lobby for the adoption of their own. Some groups may have more salience than others, resulting in dominance of their voice in the process. Indeed, sometimes policies are drafted without any or without sufficient consultation with the affected groups. Jones (1984) emphasized that the process is not neutral; there are winners and losers. In particularly contentious situations, policies may be formulated and reformulated over a long period of time without building up sufficient support to have any of them accepted. In addition, “losers” can appeal the decisions, drawing out the process even longer (Jones, 1984). Political maneuvering and political events such as elections also influence this process (Levin, 2001). For these reasons, policy proposals may be “vague or even contradictory” (Levin, 2001, p. 9).

From the discussions and negotiations among the key policy actors, a particular policy eventually is chosen and drafted. However, Levin (2001) pointed out that often “political and

administrative considerations” modify the original intentions of the policy. Additionally, the actual implementation of the policy is open to interpretation and, because of this, the original policy may encounter modifications at this juncture. Even when a particular policy is negotiated and written, many factors may affect the implementation of the policy.

### **Channels of Change and Policy Implementation**

Levin (2001) proposed that the factors that affect implementation could be conceived as belonging to one of three categories. The first category includes the clarity of the policy and the degree of difficulty inherent in the implementation process for that policy. The second category focuses on the degree of understanding of the policy, the actors’ level of commitment to the change, and the amount of resources allocated to implement the policy. The third category considers the pressures either supporting or inhibiting implementation, including economic conditions. These factors combined affect the degree, efficiency, and speed of implementation. However, Levin (2001) noted, that “in few cases do governments appear to develop comprehensive strategies to support implementation of their policies” (p. 11).

On the other hand, a carefully planned strategy of policy implementation incorporates an examination of the requirements necessary to begin and continue the process. It is apparent that allocation of resources from the government to support implementation is beneficial, and sometimes essential, to this stage of the process. However, policy actors and institutions also can examine their own circumstances and capacity to implement the policy. The policy actors can determine where growth and capacity building are required by analyzing current practices, knowledge, and expertise within the organization. That is, actors and institutions involved in the implementation process need to examine the required level of agency, the required level of capacity, and the required nature of learning implicit in the implementation. They need to compare those requirements to their own organization and employ measures, where necessary, to achieve those requirements.

### **Required Level of Agency**

In the change process, the required level of agency must be identified so that the appropriate actions will be undertaken. Although institutional theory concentrates on responses of the organization and organizational field, researchers including Burns and Nielsen (2006),

Koene (2006), Rowan and Miskel (1999), and Van Gestel and Teelken (2006), recognized the need to examine the role of human agency in institutional change. Cibulka (1996) articulated that the outcomes of reform efforts are difficult to predict because the results depend on the complexities involved and on human agency, which is also difficult to predict and analyze. Burch (2007) noted that “agency-based perspectives in institutional theory provide scholars with new conceptual tools for examining institutional change” (p. 89). Although agency is discussed in neoinstitutional theory and other organizational theories, a comprehensive definition is rarely given.

However, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) articulated the following, detailed description of human agency:

We define it as the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal-relational contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations (p. 970).

The definition highlights their emphasis on the contextually based nature of human agency. They further refined this definition by describing the choral triad of agency, or the three core temporal dimensions of agency: the iterational element, the projective element, and the practical-evaluative element (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). The iterational element refers to the intentional, routine incorporation of past patterns of thought and action into daily practice. This behavior lends stability and order to organizations and social structures. The projective element refers to the imagining of possible future outcomes of particular actions that may result in actors revising or changing the given actions to suit their aspirations. The practical-evaluative element refers to the capacity of actors to evaluate alternative possible courses of action in relation to situations evolving in the present context (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

The iterational, projective, and practical-evaluative elements may co-exist in various degrees within any particular situation, but one temporal element will dominate the interactions of the actors. That is, the actions may be more directed towards engaging with the past, projecting to the future or responding to the present. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) believed that agentic processes always include intersubjectivity, social interaction, and communication. They espoused that “agency is always a dialogical process by and through which actors

immersed in temporal passage engage with others within collectively organized contexts of action” (p. 974).

The iterational element allows actors to capitalize on the use of habitual actions for daily activities in order to focus selective attention on new concepts. This element also includes the use of categorization to classify particular events, relationships and people into groups or types. Thus, actors can locate given experiences and contexts within their schema that assists them in choosing the correct action (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). It is interesting to note that neoinstitutional theorists concentrate mostly on the iterational element as they seek to explain why habitualized and routinized patterns of action and thought shape interactions within organizations even when those patterns are no longer suitable because of contextual changes (Dimaggio & Powell, 1991).

The projective element allows for hypothesizing about possibilities. Anticipatory identification is the term that Emirbayer and Mische (1998) used to describe the use of past experience to assist in mapping out possible trajectories of action. Narrative construction occurs when actors use narratives to frame possibilities and provide maps of action, whereas symbolic recomposition refers to playful exploration of a wide variety of possibilities free from constraints (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). All of the projective elements allow for innovation and creativity.

The practical-evaluative element concerns the contextualization of the current practices within the given situation. Problematization involves the recognition and definition of a particular problem within a current situation that requires addressing. The practical-evaluative element also includes the process of deliberation, where practical possibilities for a current problem are considered, and the process of decision, where a particular resolution is chosen. Finally, execution is the action to concretize that decision (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) referred to the “double constitution of agency and structure” whereby “temporal-relational contexts support particular agentic orientations, which in turn constitute different structuring relationships of actors toward their environments” (p. 1004). That is, within relatively stable historical and social contexts, organizations and actors may focus on the iterative element that is geared to the past practices that have served them well. In less stable, uncertain periods of time, other agentic activity may be necessary. Thus, the temporal and social context surrounding a change process impacts the level of agency necessary to implement the change.

### **Required Level of Capacity**

Second, the level of capacity involved in the change initiative needs to be considered. Does the change require capacity-building at the personal, interpersonal, organizational, or interorganizational level? Burch (2007) stated: "Capacity is assumed to be the degree to which implementers possess the skills, knowledge, networks, and financial resources to execute reform ideas" (p. 89). Capacity-building may include, but is not limited to, the three processes of isomorphism (cohesive, mimetic, and normative) as described in neoinstitutional theory. For example, mimetic processes are usually attempts to adopt particular 'best practices' that have been successful elsewhere; cohesive processes such as government policies may be used to ensure particular institutions engage in capacity-building to incorporate new programs into their existing structures; normative processes may include professional guidelines and policies that encourage or mandate continued professional growth (Dimaggio & Powell, 1991).

However, before implementing a change process, current capacity for the change needs to be assessed to determine how and at which level capacity needs to be built in order to implement this particular change. Mitchell and Sackney (2000) described three levels of capacity building. Personal capacity-building includes engaging in professional development and knowledge construction. It also includes the development of professional networks to support individuals' growth and the provision of opportunities to participate in reflective practice and to develop professional narratives. Interpersonal capacity-building includes development of collaborative and communicative skills or team-building skills. As well, interpersonal capacity-building involves the engagement of members in developing the cognitive and affective climate that supports the change process. Organizational capacity-building includes financial and administrative support for the initiative, including provision of time devoted to skill development and collaboration. Mitchell and Sackney (2000) emphasized that organizations build capacity by promoting shared leadership, providing the necessary structural arrangements, developing collaborative processes, and establishing and maintaining the necessary socio-cultural conditions. Thus, organizational capacity-building involves institutional development.

In addition to these capacities described by Mitchell and Sackney (2000), the capacity of the organizational field needs to be considered. Interorganizational capacity-building, a key element in neoinstitutional theory, involves developments in theory and practice within a particular organizational field and may include interactions with other fields. Scott and Meyer

(1991) described interorganizational capacity-building as including the development of horizontal and vertical linkages, the improvement of the technical flows among organizations, and the examination of local and nonlocal connections.

### **Required Level of Learning**

Third, the required level of learning will impact the process of change. Because learning theory is a very broad topic, I will limit discussion to aspects of professional learning in organizations as described by Irwin and Farr (2004), Schon (2001), Argyris and Schon (1978), and Robinson (2002). Thus, the ideas of collaboration, reflection-in-action, single- and double-loop learning, and deliberative and non-deliberative learning are explored in the following section.

Through analysis of other studies and through their own research, Irwin and Farr (2004) determined that a collaborative environment is essential in promoting change and professional learning. Environments that supported “power-with” procedures (collaboration where individuals are empowered) encouraged skill development and community building, whereas environments supporting “power-over” procedures (hierarchies where some individuals controlled the actions of others) reduced collaboration and motivation for the change process (Irwin & Farr, 2004, p. 361). Collaboration, shared decision-making and shared power, shared problem-solving, trust and mutual respect, and effective communication practices, are all elements of effective learning environments and can be categorized as supportive factors in the development of connection, autonomy and self-esteem (Irwin & Farr, 2004). Administrative support is also essential in that financial resources are needed for materials, personnel and support for professional development, including the incorporation of time for meetings and collaboration. Professional development will include collaboration between experts or consultants and participants on an ongoing basis so that particular skills can be rehearsed and reinforced and there is opportunity for open dialogue about the process (Irwin & Farr, 2004). This is especially important because “collaboration brings about the reflection so necessary for new knowledge to develop and for changes in practice to occur” (Irwin & Farr, 2004, p. 348). As well, staff and administration need to recognize that transformational changes occur over time, necessitating thoughtful long-term planning for professional and organizational learning.

Schon (2001) also emphasized the importance of reflection-in-action as necessary to developing professional knowledge. He pointed out that professionals engage in “patterns of tacit knowing-in-action” as they intuitively perform professional tasks, with the expectation that given results will transpire (Schon, 2001, p. 194). However, when a routine action results in an unexpected outcome, reflective practitioners engage in reflection and restructure their understanding of the event. Based on this new knowledge, they “invent a new strategy of action” (Schon, 2001, p. 197). Error correction becomes a type of inquiry (Argyris & Schon, 1978). It is only through reflection, experimentation, and articulation of tacit knowledge that professional practitioners can significantly enhance their learning and engage in professional growth and change.

In addition, Argyris and Schon (1978) described organizational learning, a key process in implementing new policies. They related individual learning to organizational learning through the idea of agency. According to Argyris and Schon (1978), the two types of learning are related because, “just as individuals are the agents of organizational action, so they are the agents for organizational learning” (p. 19). Members of an organization detect errors in the internal and external environments and respond to these errors by engaging in corrective action. Organizational learning happens only when the “learning agents’ discoveries, inventions, and evaluations” resulting from this corrective action are incorporated into the organization’s memory (Argyris & Schon, 1978, p. 19). This incorporation either maintains or restructures the organizational “theory-in-use” that governs the organization and shapes its norms and beliefs (Argyris & Schon, 1978, p. 20).

Based on the impact of learning on the organizational “theory-in-use”, Argyris and Schon (1978) made a distinction between two types of organizational learning. Single-loop learning refers to corrective actions aimed at modifying organizational strategies and assumptions without changing the organizational norms. This type of learning is concerned with effectiveness and efficiency (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Double-loop learning, on the other hand, refers to “those sorts of organizational inquiry which resolve incompatible organizational norms by setting new priorities and weightings of norms, or by restructuring those norms themselves together with associated strategies and assumptions” (Argyris & Schon, 1978, p. 24). For an organization to become and remain successful in achieving its goals, it needs to engage in both types of learning and develop the capacity for inquiry into organizational theory-in-use.



Robinson (2002) described the two types of organizational learning as non-deliberative and deliberative learning. Non-deliberative learning is characterized as learning embedded in action. The immediately relevant part of the task system is represented and manipulated so that a solution can be determined for a specific problem (Robinson, 2002). Usually the learning is scaffolded on cultural products of prior learning (Robinson, 2002). This process results in incremental learning and occurs more naturally and frequently (Robinson, 2002). As well, the solutions are generated and coordinated locally rather than centrally, producing a local rather than a global design. In this manner, solutions are proposed that solve local problems while reducing the cognitive loads on individuals (Robinson, 2002).

Deliberative learning, on the other hand, is centrally coordinated and includes developing more “whole picture” solutions (Robinson, 2002). Learning is decontextualized and is a separate task from the daily interactions of the organization. Deliberative learning requires a central vision or mandate; sequences and linkages between stages are articulated. Innovation, rather than incremental learning, is stressed (Robinson, 2002). This type of learning involves manipulation of symbolic representations to plan actions that are then implemented and adjusted. Inputs from a variety of sources are channeled into one unit; these inputs are then manipulated into a set of instructions that are given to appropriate actors (Robinson, 2002). Implementing these solutions are often costly, resulting in implementation gaps (Robinson, 2002). Sometimes developing strong communication patterns and cultivating the motivation to engage in implementation can address these implementation gaps (Robinson, 2002).

Learning can be labeled or conceptualized in a variety of ways. However, when implementing a policy change, members of the organizational field must engage in some type of learning.

### **Intended Impacts and Intended Levels of Change**

In addition to examining the channels of change, the intended and unintended impacts of the reform initiative need to be studied. It is important to articulate all of the results of the change whether those results were planned, anticipated or unintended. The impacts can be framed as one of three different types of organizational response: maintenance, adaptation, or transformation of the organization. In other words, the organization will change either minimally or substantially.

Actions that support the status quo can be termed maintenance actions. In neoinstitutional theory, maintenance of organizations is also called isomorphism. As described in Chapter 2, isomorphism occurs as a particular institutional field moves towards homogenization through one or a combination of three different mechanisms: coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism, and normative isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). The policy process can be involved in all three mechanisms, especially with coercive isomorphism. That is, coercive isomorphism includes the development of government policies and mandates, and the development of the legislative environment for that institutional field. Mimetic isomorphism includes adopting policies that are perceived to be successful elsewhere in order to address a particular problem. Normative isomorphism involves the use of professional codes, procedures, and policies to govern and guide its members (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Thus, a number of policy actions can serve to homogenize particular institutional fields.

A second type of impact is adaptation. Jepperson (1991), a neoinstitutional theorist, saw this action as a type of institutional change. He classified institutional change into four distinct types: institutional formation, institutional development, deinstitutionalization, and reinstitutionalization. Adaptation is representative of institutional development as it involves a change within an institutional form (Jepperson, 1991). Both of these terms refer to actions and policies that signal an adjustment, a reformulation, a refinement, or an expansion. Policies geared towards maintenance and adaptation would be examples of single-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

The third type of impact is transformation. In neoinstitutional terms, transformation can be equated to deinstitutionalization, institutional formation, and reinstitutionalization. For the purposes of this study, deinstitutionalization will be excluded as it concerns deconstruction and an exit from institutionalization (Jepperson, 1991). Institutional formation, on the other hand, represents an exit from existing behavioural patterns into a new institutional form. Reinstitutionalization represents “an exit from one institutionalization, and entry into another institutional form, organized around different principles or rules” (Jepperson, 1991, p. 152). Thus, these types of institutional change are examples of transformational change and represent a change in the organizational form, values, and norms. Transformation, then, exemplifies double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

### Intended and Collateral Impacts

Another way to conceptualize these outcomes is through categorizing them as first or second-order changes, using Levy's (1986) definitions. He stated: "first-order change consists of those minor improvements and adjustments that do not change the system's core, and that occur as the system naturally grows and develops" (Levy, 1986, p. 10). He contrasted this with second-order change that was "change in all four dimensions: in core processes, in mission and purpose, in culture, and in organizational world view or paradigm" (Levy, 1986, p. 19). A change in one of the first three dimensions may result in a change in other dimensions. However, a change in organizational paradigm results in changes in all the other dimensions. Therefore, first-order changes affect one, two and/or three of the first dimensions but second-order change is essentially a "paradigmatic change" (Levy, 1986, p. 19). First-order changes may have a long-term or short-term impact, but second-order changes always result in long-term impacts on the organizations. Thus, policies resulting in maintenance and adaptation of an organization would be termed first-order changes, whereas policies resulting in transformation of an organization would be considered second-order change.

In Table 3.3, the differences between first- and second- order change are delineated.

**Table 3.3**

***The Characteristics of First- and Second-Order Change in Organizations (Levy, 1986)***

<b>First-Order Change</b>	<b>Second-Order Change</b>
Change in one or a few dimensions, components, or aspects.	Multidimensional, multicomponent change and aspects.
Change in one or a few levels (individual or group level).	Multilevel change (individuals, groups, and the whole organization).
Change in one or two behavioral aspects (attitudes, values).	Change in all the behavioral aspects (attitudes, norms, values, perceptions, beliefs, world view, and behaviors).
Quantitative change.	Qualitative change.
Change in content.	Change in context.
Continuity, improvements, and development in the same direction.	Discontinuity, taking a new direction.

Incremental changes.	Revolutionary jumps.
Reversible changes.	Irreversible change.
Logical and rational change.	Seemingly irrational change based on different logic.
Change that does not alter the world view, the paradigm.	Change that results in a new world view, new paradigm.
Change within the old state of being (thinking and acting).	Change that results in a new state of being (thinking and acting).

When evaluating the implementation of a policy, the intended and collateral impacts must be articulated and compared to the goals of the policy. As well, policy actors need to determine whether the outcomes meet their needs, and whether the policy requires reformulation, termination, or expansion. If second-order change is desired, the impacts need to be evaluated critically to assess whether this has been achieved or whether further action is needed.

As illustrated in Table 3.3, second-order change is very difficult to achieve. Frequently, reforms aimed at second-order change result in a series of first-order changes as policies are revised, formulated, and implemented in an unsuccessful attempt to achieve a deeper change (Levy, 1986). Howlett and Ramesh (2003) stated:

This feedback process can easily affect the identification and interpretation of policy problems, assessments of the feasibility of potential solutions, and judgment of the nature of, and responses from, target groups, thereby altering the conditions under which policies are developed and implemented. (p. 217)

Thus, the feedback process often results in further action.

To draw a parallel to Argyris and Schon's (1978) model of organizational learning, single-loop learning is comparable to first order change where the goal is effectiveness and efficiency, resulting in changes in organizational strategies and assumptions, but not in organizational norms. Double-loop learning, on the other hand, is comparable to second-order change where the organizational norms and organizational "theories-in-use" are adapted, revised, or radically changed, and a paradigmatic shift occurs. First-order and second-order change can

be compared to deliberative and non-deliberative learning. These comparisons are illustrated in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4**

*Analogies of Types of Organizational Learning*

<b>First-Order and Second-Order Change</b>	<b>Second-Order Change (Paradigmatic Shift)</b>
Non-deliberative and deliberative learning	Deliberative learning
Single loop and double loop learning	Double loop learning
Institutional isomorphism	Reinstitutionalization and deinstitutionalization
Institutional development	Institutional formation

First-order change can be achieved through single loop learning and non-deliberative learning. Sometimes first-order change is accomplished through deliberative learning and double loop learning. However, to achieve second-order change, the organization must engage in deliberative learning or double loop learning. Second-order change is then expressed as reinstitutionalization, deinstitutionalization, or institutional formation.

### **Visualizing the Dynamics of the Policy Process**

We can combine all of these stages and elements into a visual model of the policy process. However, a two dimensional model cannot adequately represent the dynamics of the interaction among the policy actors and all the other factors, as outlined in this chapter, that impact this process. Howlett and Ramesh (2003) suggested, though, that development of a stages model allows for a systematic analysis of the policy process.

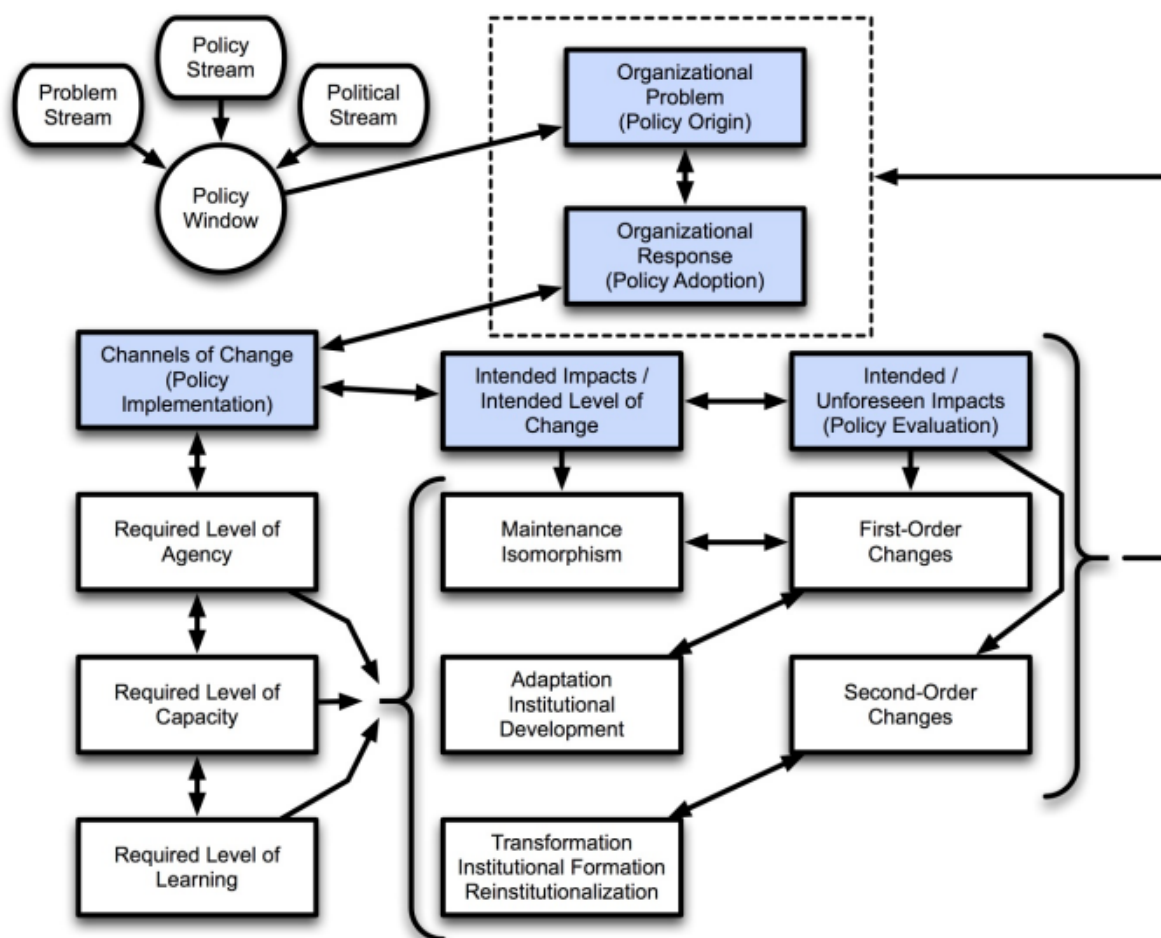
The model's greatest virtue, however, is its empirical orientation, which enables the systematic evaluation of wide range of different factors driving public policy-making at the various stages of the policy-making process. While abstract conceptualization is necessary to develop a broad picture of the policy process, an analytical framework that takes into account the details of the sub-processes in developing a picture of the entire process is essential. (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 246)

The critical analysis of policy is a valuable endeavor in understanding the policy environment, the policy trends and the resultant pressures (negative and positive) on organizations to engage in

the process of policy development in order to maintain, adapt, or transform the organization itself. As noted previously, this process is iterative as changes in any of the policy networks or policyscapes impact the current policies. Depending on the goals of the policy actors and the agenda-setting mechanisms in place, policy development is an expression of a negotiated struggle around competing goals and around power to determine the agenda of the organization. I illustrate the ongoing, iterative process in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1**

*Visualizing the Dynamics of the Policy Process*



As I show in Figure 3.1, the policy, political, and problem streams converge at critical junctures referred to as policy windows. The policy origin stage of the policy process includes all of these elements as an issue or problem is recognized and policy actors propose alternative actions to address these issues. The policy adoption stage includes the decision making process where key policy actors choose the alternative that will be implemented. As well, the type of policy instrument is chosen. Once the action is chosen, the methods of policy implementation are considered. When formulating strategies for policy implementation, the channels of change must be examined. These channels of change include: the nature and level of the learning that is required (and by whom), the level and type of capacity that is required, and the level of agency that is required. All of these actions are designed to achieve the goals articulated by the policies. The goals or intended impacts reflect different levels of change: maintenance or isomorphism, adaptation or institutional development, and transformation or reinstitutionalization. The last stage of the policy process, the policy evaluation stage, includes an examination of the intended and collateral impacts of the policies. These impacts can be classified as first-order or second-order changes. First-order changes are incremental changes in one or a few dimensions, whereas second-order changes are revolutionary jumps that are multidimensional changes.

For the purposes of this study, I examined especially the first three stages of the policy process: the policy origin, policy adoption, and policy implementation stages. The intended impacts and levels of change, according to the participants, were determined from the data gathered. However, an in-depth policy evaluation can be conducted only after implementation has occurred and the policy has been in place long enough for the results to be evidenced. Therefore, all of the intended impacts and the collateral impacts were not evident during the time frame of this study.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I briefly described the policy process and how it affects organizations. To provide a thorough explanation of all of these elements is beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, I attempt to capture all the critical elements of the policy process in Figure 3.1. This research study explores a policy development process through a critical policy analysis as represented by this diagram. As I illustrated in the figure, examination of the policy process involves many interrelated stages. These stages form a framework for categorizing the data

collected in this study. By utilizing this policy analysis framework to explicate the elements of the processes involved, I examine the policy processes that promoted the emergence of a joint interdisciplinary school, the School of Policy and Research.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, I describe the research design employed in this case study focusing on the policy process that promoted the establishment of an interdisciplinary school in a university context. To accomplish this purpose, I describe the research method and the specific methodology used in this study. I explain the rationale for making these choices, and how the research literature supports those choices. In the following section of this chapter, the case studied in this research is briefly described (a more thorough description follows in the chapter on data collection). I then outline the data collection and data analysis procedures. In addition, I discuss the criteria for ensuring quality research and the confidentiality and ethical considerations underpinning the research procedures.

#### **Considerations in Research Design**

When I examine my own philosophy, I find that my ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions are reflective of the qualitative research paradigm. I feel strongly that social, political, and historical contexts shape reality. Additionally, I believe that my own experiences and background influence my interpretation of reality. For this research, I needed a “complex, detailed understanding of the issue” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40) including an investigation of contextual influences. I wanted an in-depth description and exploration of my research questions, using the experiences of key actors in the policy process as part of my study. Their perspectives were important, as I believe that reality is subjective and multiple (Creswell, 2007). The resulting study is an interpretivist construction (*cf.* Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 2005) of the experience of establishing a joint interdisciplinary policy school at two university campuses. In my role as a researcher conducting a qualitative research study, I assemble and interpret the findings of the study. Whereas Merriam (1998) compared the qualitative researcher to a detective, Denzin and Lincoln (2005), among others, compared the researcher to a *bricoleur*, assembling parts into a whole, much as a quilter does, carefully weaving threads or themes throughout the research. As Peshkin (2000) noted, interpretation is inherent in all parts of qualitative research, from the moment the research focus is determined to

the final writing stages of the report. These characterizations of a qualitative researcher resonate with my approach to conducting research.

Qualitative research designs include a variety of approaches, and the field of qualitative research continues to evolve (Creswell, 2007). From among the prominent approaches, I determined that the key characteristics of the case study approach seemed to fit this study best. A qualitative case study design allows for an in-depth investigation of a complex process and incorporates multiple sources of data and multiple perspectives. The key elements of this case study are reflected in Merriam's (1998) comment that case study "is a particularly suitable design if you are interested in process" (p. 33) and that "case study has proven particularly useful for studying educational innovations, for evaluating programs, and for informing policy" (p.41). The focus of this study, a policy change that promotes the emergence of a different organizational structure, was identified by Yin (2003) as one of the applications of case studies. He suggested that case studies can include investigations of individuals, decisions, programs, organizational changes, or any other processes where the researcher wants to examine the contextual conditions because they are pertinent to the issue (Yin, 2003). In the following section, I describe the case study approach in more detail and I examine how the approach applied to this study. The subsequent sections articulate the specific research design utilized in this study.

### **Application of the Case Study Approach to This Research**

The purpose of this case study was to examine the policy processes that promoted the emergence of a joint interdisciplinary school. A policy analysis framework was employed to structure the exploration of the origins, policy networks, policy adoption procedures, and the policy implementation processes involved in the School's establishment. The main areas covered were the context and issues that contributed to the emergence of an interdisciplinary school, the stakeholders who were involved in the process, and the dynamics of implementation. I focused on an in-depth investigation of the policy development process, and the contextual influences on this process. In this case study, I explored the issue of policy development by studying the case of an emergent interdisciplinary school.

My choice of a case study research design to explore policy development is supported by the policy literature. Howlett and Ramesh (2003) pointed out that the policy literature is

composed mostly of the study of individual cases, of comparisons between cases, and of one or many stages of the policy process in particular cases. Merriam (1998) noted:

A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research. (p. 19)

This study focuses on answering why the change occurred by examining the policy origin and adoption stages, including the context and issues that promoted the emergence of the School and the stakeholders' involvement throughout the process (the policy origin and adoption stages). In addition, the study focuses on explicating how the policy was implemented (the policy implementation stage). Yin (2003) contended that "case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed" (p. 1). The focus of this research matches the types of questions usually posed in case study research.

One key element in designing this case study was the articulation of my positionality. As Creswell (2007) pointed out, a researcher needs to be clear about his or her stance, or positionality, and share it with the audiences. When considering this study, the qualitative case study approach seemed to best fit the research questions and my epistemological stance. In this study, I wanted to include multiple perspectives on the origin, adoption and implementation of the policy. Stake (2005) noted: "Qualitative researchers have strong expectations that the reality perceived by people inside and outside the case will be social, cultural, situational, and contextual—and they want the interactivity of functions and contexts as well described as possible" (p. 452). In addition, I needed to identify that I was an *etic* researcher who was studying policy development as a relatively objective outsider within a particular context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In addition to bringing the participants' different perspectives together in this study, I was bringing to bear my perspective as a relative outsider on the design of the study and the interpretation of the data.

Another key element of the research design was the delimitation of the object of study or the case (Merriam, 1998). As Stake (1995) pointed out, case study research investigates bounded systems. He emphasized that each case is complex and is embedded within a number of contexts that need to be considered in the research (Stake, 1995). Additionally, he suggested that, when defining a site, the researcher should consider the boundedness and activity patterns

of the case (Stake, 2005). In this research, I examined the specific bounded system of a joint school shared by two universities, including all the activity patterns that support the functioning of this system. Within this examination, I considered the context, issues, and dynamics promoting the policy development.

As part of the delimitation of the case to be studied, I chose one case that demonstrated the process of policy development at an educational institution. Creswell (2007) labeled this process of determining which case or cases to study *purposeful maximal sampling*. Creswell (2007) believed that “selecting the case requires that the researcher establishes a rationale for his or her purposeful sampling strategy for selecting the case and for gathering information about the case” (p. 76). The decision regarding the number of cases studied is affected by time and accessibility constraints, the length of the final report, and the number of cases needed to address the research questions (Creswell, 2007). Stake (2005) argued that researchers should choose the cases where they believe they can learn the most. In fact, “potential for learning is a different and sometimes superior criterion to representativeness” (Stake, 2005, p. 451). For this research, I chose to conduct an instrumental case study, defined by Stake (2005) as a case that is explored in order to gain insight into a particular issue. “The case is still looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized and its ordinary activities detailed, but all because this helps us pursue the external interest” (Stake, 2005, p. 445). Based on this definition, this research study was an instrumental case study because I examined the stages of the policy process through the establishment of a joint interdisciplinary school.

**Choosing the site.** In this study, I focused on the School of Policy and Research in order to understand the complexities and dynamics of a policy process that promoted the emergence of this School. So that I could more easily understand the origin and adoption stages of policy development, I chose a case where the interdisciplinary School was established recently. By focusing on this new School, most of the participants were key actors who had been involved in this policy process from the very beginning. I chose to study one policy school because the case would yield sufficient data to explore the policy process, especially the first three stages of policy development.

Stake (2005) emphasized that researchers need to consider “the logistics, the potential reception, the resources, and additional characteristics of relevance” in choosing the case (p. 451)

and “that may mean taking the one most accessible or the one we can spend the most time with” (p. 451). From a logistical standpoint, I chose the particular site because I could devote an extensive amount of time finding information and securing interviews for this research study. Through this extensive involvement, I developed an understanding of the universities and the context underlying the establishment of this interdisciplinary School.

**Data Collection.** After choosing the case to be studied, the next stage is the data collection process. This process may require extensive time because multiple sources of data will need to be considered (Merriam, 1998). Findings from multiple sources are then triangulated. Triangulation helps to clarify meaning and presents different perspectives. Which data source is the most instrumental and is weighted heavier in the analysis is dependent on the context of the study and the questions being asked. Merriam (1998) noted that “rarely, however, are all three strategies used equally. One or two methods of data collection predominate; the other(s) play a supporting role in gaining an in-depth understanding of the case” (p. 136). Merriam (1998), Stake (1995, 2005), and Yin (2003) all noted that the use of multiple data sources is essential in case study research. In considering the focus of this study, I chose three sources of data, including interviews, policies, and documents. In this study, the primary source of data was the interviews.

**Policies.** To accomplish my research objectives, I collected copies of policies (general and more specific) that promoted the establishment of this school, or concerned the governance or structure of the School. Policies are formalized acts that have pre-agreed objectives and are “approved or sanctioned by an institutional body or authority” (Delaney, 2002, p. 15). Pal (2006) proposed that every policy has three key elements: “The first is the definition of the problem, the second is the goals that are to be achieved, and the third is the instruments or means whereby the problem is to be addressed and the goals achieved” (p. 7). For the purposes of this study, policies are university-level formalized statements with implications for the School.

All of the approved policies were accessible to the public on websites and in policies published by the university. The published policies were available from administrative offices on campus and, in the case of older documents, from university archives, as some relevant policies were not from the recent past. I explored university websites and inquired at university offices in

order to obtain these policies. In addition, I asked interviewees to direct me to any pertinent documents or policies that were related to this policy development. Most of the participants gave me suggestions of particular policies that pertained to the School.

**Documents.** As a second source of data, I collected pertinent documents, such as minutes from meetings, which pertained to the emergence of this School. For the purposes of this study, documents referred to written artifacts “produced by organizational employees for record-keeping and dissemination purposes such as memos, newsletters, files” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 58). Stake (1995) claimed that “quite often, documents serve as substitutes for records of activity that the researcher could not observe directly” (p. 68). The potential documents are wide-ranging. Merriam (1998) stated: “Locating public records is limited only by the researcher’s imagination and industriousness” (p. 113).

Documents are contrasted with policies in that, for the purposes of this study, policies are formal plans of action and proposed action. Because documents are not formal plans, they may be more difficult to uncover. Some documents may be readily accessible, such as promotional material for the new School. However, some documents may not be publicly accessible, or may be stored in university archives. By asking the participants to direct me to pertinent documents, I discovered other information that was not initially apparent.

**Interviews.** As a third source of data, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the director of the school and used the snowball technique (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) to identify and interview other key informants. By using this technique, I could more easily identify some of the key informants and actors in the establishment of this School. As McMillan (2008) pointed out, “in snowball sampling (also called network sampling), the researcher begins with a few participants and then asks them to nominate or recommend others who are known to have the profile, attributes, or characteristics desired” (p. 121, italics in original). He espoused that “this kind of sampling is especially useful when the researcher has only a limited pool of initial participants” (p. 121). While the lack of dissenters is a shortcoming in assuming that this is a critical policy analysis, the snowball technique helped me to identify other key informants.

When obtaining participant consent, I informed the interviewees that the initial face-to-face interview would be scheduled at their convenience and would last approximately one hour.

The interview questions were emailed to them prior to the interview so that they had some time to reflect on their possible responses. The interviewees also were informed that I would perhaps request further interviews. I told them that I would phone or email them to clarify any details. For the semi-structured interviews, I used open-ended questions to provide some structure, but I asked further clarifying questions as necessary throughout the interview process. McMillan (2008) noted: “Semi-structured questions do not have predetermined, structured choices. Rather the question is open-ended yet specific in intent, allowing individual responses” (p. 177). Stake (1995) thought that “perhaps the most difficult task of the researcher is to design good questions, research questions that will direct the looking and the thinking enough and not too much” (p. 15). In addition, “good research questions are especially important for case studies because case and context are infinitely complex and the phenomena are fluid and elusive” (p. 33).

I used these questions in a pilot interview with someone who holds a similar position to the participants, but was not involved in this particular School. A second pilot interview was scheduled, but during the interview, I realized that this participant had a lot of insight and knowledge about the establishment of the interdisciplinary School. Because of this, I asked her if she would consent to be a participant of the actual research study instead of a pilot interview participant. She consented. However, the interview was conducted like that of a pilot interview in that I practiced the questions and asked for feedback on the questions. Merriam (1998) suggested that:

Pilot interviews are crucial for trying out your questions. Not only do you get some practice in interviewing, you also quickly learn which questions are confusing and need rewording, which questions yield useless data, and which questions, suggested by your respondents, you should have thought to include in the first place. (p. 76)

Field tests of the interview questions during pilot interviews allow researchers to reflect on and edit their question bank. In this case, the feedback from the participant in the pilot interview was taken into consideration, and some questions were reworded for certain participants.

The questions that I asked in the initial interview are contained in Appendix C. In some cases, I used a modified set of questions, depending on the participants’ backgrounds and connection to the School. The participants were informed that they could choose to not respond to particular questions. However, participants were encouraged to add any other information or details that they felt were pertinent to the discussion. In addition, I asked the participants if they

could direct me to any documents or policies that pertained to this policy process. I also asked them if there was any category of information that I did not have access to. Their responses to this question informed my broad search for further information by alerting me to information that was not publicly available.

Although I did not conduct a second semi-structured interview with any participant, I clarified some of the details through email. The interviews were transcribed and the participants had an opportunity to read the transcripts. The interviewees could request changes, additions or deletions to the transcripts. Once the participants were satisfied with the transcript, they signed a transcript release form, allowing the final versions of the transcripts to be used in the data analysis.

The total number of interviews included in the study was dependent on when the saturation point was reached. McMillan (2008) described saturation as the “point where no new important information related to the theory is obtained” (p. 294). Creswell (2007) defined saturation as the point where no new information is found that adds to the understanding of the categories that have been developed. In this case study, when the interview process led to duplication of information, the saturation point was reached. In total, I conducted 13 interviews with participants who had some connection to the joint interdisciplinary policy School. Most of the interviews lasted approximately one hour, although some participants who were more intimately involved with the development of the School and answered the questions in great detail had somewhat longer interviews.

Stake (2005) pointed out that the researcher must make a strategic decision about when to finish collecting data. The researcher can never understand everything about the complexities of the case (Stake, 2005). However, the researcher can decide on an endpoint for data collection through consultation with colleagues and advisors, consideration of logistical constraints, and determination of saturation points. Based on these criteria, I determined that the data collected were sufficient for the purposes of this study.

### **Data Analysis**

The process of data analysis can be a challenge in case studies because of the tremendous amounts of data generated from the multiple sources (Merriam, 1998). As mentioned in a previous section, using multiple data sources better ensures credibility and dependability of data.



The information can be triangulated to determine themes and key points. However, a different concept, *crystallization*, is emerging in the research literature, and it seems to suit the process of analysis better. Instead of using a fixed, two-dimensional object, the triangle, the crystal is used as the central imaginary. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) described this concept in detail:

Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose—not triangulation but rather crystallization. (p. 963)

Multiple perspectives add to the growing understanding of a topic, process or theme, much as crystals grow and change. Data collected from different sources adds to the richness of description and depth of understanding of the case. This imagery of crystallization seems to best describe the process of data analysis and interpretation that I engaged in during this study as I gathered the data.

In this case study, multiple perspectives on the process of establishing the interdisciplinary School were gathered through policies, documents, and 13 semi-structured interviews with participants who had some connection to the School. As the data were collected, I began preliminary data analysis because, as Stake (2005) contended, the process of preliminary data analysis and interpretation occurs simultaneously with data collection. Initial categories are developed and revised. Stake (2005) suggested that the researcher needs to have a plan, but the “caseworker needs to anticipate the need to recognize and develop late-emerging issues” (p. 453). The researcher is faced with many decisions, and those decisions are part of the interpretive nature of qualitative research. Before the data collection begins, the researcher should develop some ideas of how to organize the information, including developing preliminary categories and themes. Stake (2005) believed that, for instrumental case studies, initial coding schemes can be developed and utilized. “Because the critical issues are more likely to be known in advance and to follow disciplinary expectations, such a design can take greater advantage of already-designed instruments and preconceived coding schemes” (Stake, 2005, p. 450).

In this case study, I used the conceptual framework to organize the information and sort the data into four preliminary categories. These categories were the four stages of policy

development: policy origin, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. In addition, the conceptual framework guided my decision-making around defining priorities for categorization because, as Yin (2003) stressed, every case study should try to use a general analytic strategy to assist in defining priorities for analysis.

The works of Yin (2003), Stake (1995), and Merriam (1998) all devoted considerable discussion to the process of categorization and the development of themes. Additionally, Thomas (2006) contended that, in analyzing qualitative data, an inductive analysis approach is needed in making sense of the data. These approaches “primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). From the close readings of the text, the researcher identifies key phrases and segments of text that suggest a particular category. Subsequent passages that support or add to those categories are identified through further reading of the text. The data are coded according to these themes or categories.

Particular passages were coded to denote which information was pertinent to the particular stages. According to Merriam (1998), coding identifies “information about the data and interpretive constructs related to analysis” (p. 164). She characterized coding as “nothing more than assigning some sort of short-hand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data” (Merriam, 1998, p. 164). Certain passages were coded to denote whether the information was pertinent to the policy origin, policy adoption, policy implementation, or policy evaluation stage. Although an initial coding scheme was used, new codes emerged from information gathered during interviews, and during collection of documents and policies. The coding scheme was modified and adjusted as the study continued. Further coding schemes were used to mark sub-categories such as capacity-building, types of learning, policy windows, and stakeholders.

Yin (2003) noted that, in data analysis, the “most preferred strategy is to follow the theoretical propositions that led to your case study” (p. 111). For this study, the broad themes of the policy process as denoted by the conceptual framework were used. As data were collected, I analyzed where the information fit within the scheme of the steps of the policy process, as illustrated by this framework. Thomas (2006) suggested that “the outcome of an inductive analysis is the development of categories into a model or framework that summarizes the raw data and conveys key themes and processes” (p. 240). Although similar processes were used to

analyze the information gathered through each of the data sources, each type of data source was especially valuable for different reasons. These contributions are discussed in the following sections.

### **Policies**

Because policies are formalized agreements, they are available in print form. The policies accessed on the internet were downloaded and printed; the policies accessed through archives or from the participants were copied. Then, the policies were analyzed for key phrases, categories and themes. In addition to providing more information about the context of the policy process, the policies provided more information about the policy implementation plans and the intended impacts of the policy.

### **Documents**

As documents were collected, the information included in the documents was coded using the themes, categories, and sub-categories described in the previous section. The date of the document also was useful in placing the information within the themes and categories. Documents were especially valuable for providing contextual information about the site, the political and social context, and the history leading up to the policy development. The documents also provided some information on intended impacts of the policy.

### **Interviews**

As the interviews were completed, they were transcribed. The transcriptions were analyzed, using the same coding scheme that was employed in the analysis of the policies and documents. The interviews provided valuable information about the context and the history of the policy process that did not appear in the documents and policies. The information gathered helped to develop insights especially into the policy origin and policy adoption stages, and the processes used to define the problem, propose solutions, and choose the solution. The participants' responses highlighted the issues and tensions around implementation that were not evident in the documents. The interviews were the primary source of data.

### **The Final Product**

The last stage of the research process includes the writing and reporting of findings learned about the typical or instrumental case (Creswell, 2007). Merriam (1998) noted that the amount of detail, description, and analysis included in the final product is determined by the researcher. Stake (1995) believed that there is a danger in trying to make a case study serve too many audiences and accomplish too much. Conciseness needs to be balanced by the need for a careful, thorough description of the case so that the readers can understand the particular nature and context of the case (Stake, 2005). By presenting the case study through detailed reporting and careful analysis, “case study researchers assist readers in the construction of knowledge” (Stake, 2005, p. 454). Stake (1995) compared the final report to a work of art, a personal interpretation and construction of a particular issue, object, process, or policy. In this interpretivist case study, I included the many perspectives of the participants, supported by information from documents and policies, in a thorough description of the process of policy development promoting the emergence of an interdisciplinary school. Within the process of this construction, the issues of trustworthiness and confidentiality were kept at the forefront. These issues are described in the following sections.

### **Ensuring Quality and Trustworthiness**

Some researchers debate the trustworthiness of the case study approach because the data collection, analysis and interpretation are very subjective (Sturman, 1999). I attempted to address these concerns by keeping in mind the criteria for quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research as outlined by Lincoln (1995). These criteria include credibility (plausibility), transferability (context-embeddedness), dependability (stability), and confirmability (value explication) (Lincoln, 1995). Lincoln (1995) emphasized the emerging criteria for qualitative research. These criteria reflect relational criteria and the standards for judging quality in the inquiry community (Lincoln, 1995). Relational criteria refer to the relationships built between the researcher and the participants. These criteria include giving voice to the participants, researcher positionality, critical subjectivity, and the development of learning communities. The standards for judging quality reflect the standards used to judge research manuscripts. That is, the manuscript is written clearly and the procedures and limitations are well defined. In addition, the research builds on the field’s body of knowledge

and contributes to the literature. By following these standards, researchers can ensure the quality and trustworthiness of their work. In this case study, I pointed out that I am an etic researcher who researched a particular phenomenon within a given context. I included the perspectives of participants who had a variety of backgrounds and different connections to the School, and I tried to highlight their voices throughout the presentation of the data. By following the standards for quality and by incorporating Lincoln's (1995) relational criteria into this study, I utilized the emergent criteria for qualitative research that ensures quality and trustworthiness.

Some critics of case study research contend that using such small numbers of cases does not lead to establishing reliability or generality of findings (Webb & Auriacombe, 2006; Yin, 2003). In qualitative research, the issue of reliability is approached differently. Because researchers will have different backgrounds, personalities and perspectives, the interpretations and presentations of the case will vary. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggested that "qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations" (p. 36). I used a variety of strategies to ensure reliability such as member checking, where the participants were given the transcript to check and correct if they found inconsistencies. Additionally, I used policies and documents as sources of data to support the semi-structured interviews. If I had questions about any of the data, I emailed the participants to clarify my perceptions or answer my questions. Through these types of strategies, I sought to ensure reliability.

Because case studies are contextually bound, some critics suggest that transferability and generalizability are issues. However, Stake (2005) argued that case studies were valuable for "refining theory, suggesting complexities for further investigation as well as helping to establish the limits of generalizability" (p. 460). In addition, he noted:

The purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent the case. Criteria for conducting the kind of research that leads to valid generalization need modification to fit the search for effective particularization. The utility of case research to practitioners and policy makers is in its extension of experience. (Stake, 2005, p.460)

The whole focus of a case study is developing an in-depth understanding of a selected case or cases, with an emphasis on the context; because of this focus, the concepts of generalizability and transferability should be non-issues. In this case study, I investigated one case where a joint

interdisciplinary policy school emerged at two campuses. I focused on policy development in this particular case within this context only.

Sturman (1999) emphasized that careful and thorough description of the case is a necessary element of case study research. “For naturalistic generalizations to be possible, it is essential to ensure that the salient features of a case are documented so that a new situation can be illuminated by a very thorough understanding of a known case” (Sturman, 1999, p. 106). The term ‘naturalistic generalizations’, a term coined by Stake and Trumbull (1982), are “conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves” (p. 85). Merriam (1998) supported this suggestion and added that a researcher has an obligation to provide extensive detail and description of the context so that the readers can compare the context of that case to determine the degree of “fit” with another situation. In this study, I used three sources of data and semi-structured interviews with 13 participants in order to compile enough data to write a detailed description of the case.

Creswell (2007) presented a thorough discussion and examination of ensuring quality. He examined the ongoing debate around validation and reliability, including the debate around terminology and the use of those terms in qualitative research. Creswell (2007) proposed that there are a number of validation strategies that are helpful to employ in ensuring accuracy of the study. He suggested that researchers use a minimum of at least two of these strategies in any one study. In this study, I used five of the strategies that he listed: extensive time spent in the field collecting data and observing; triangulation of data to corroborate evidence; member checking (having participants check the accuracy and credibility of a draft form of the data presentation and interpretation); providing a rich description; and clarification of researcher bias from the beginning of the report (Creswell, 2007). By incorporating some of these validation strategies into the case study, I worked to ensure the accuracy of this study.

Although researchers can spend considerable time in setting up the research study and anticipating potential challenges, they need to be ready to engage in problem-solving as the study unfolds. Being well-informed and prepared for the “unexpected” are key to meeting these challenges. Examining prominent and credible authors in preparation for the study, and referring to them during the research study, are critical in this preparation process.

### **Confidentiality and Ethics**

Throughout the research, the general ethics procedures outlined by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research were followed. These guidelines included the use of participant consent forms, confidentiality procedures, and release of transcribed data forms. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and they would be able to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, they had the opportunity to view the transcripts of their own interviews and to request changes if necessary. They were provided with opportunities for feedback during and after the interviews. In the final report, pseudonyms for the locations, the documents, and the participants were used. However, the participants were made aware, through the consent forms and through discussion, that identifying information may appear within the case study. The Application for Approval of Research Protocol is contained in Appendix A and the sample letters for participation consent are contained in Appendix B.

### **Summary**

In the preceding chapter, I described the general methodology that was used in this case study. I briefly introduced the case that was the focus of this study and discussed the reasons for this choice. I described the specific research methods that were used, including data collection and data analysis processes. The conceptual framework underpinning this study was used as a guideline for coding the data, and sorting the data into relevant themes, categories, and sub-categories. In this chapter, I also addressed the issues of transferability, validity and generalizability, and their application to qualitative case study research. Finally, I noted that the ethical guidelines for research were adhered to in this study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ORIGIN AND ADOPTION: INVESTIGATING CONTEXT AND STAKEHOLDERS

The purpose of this case study was to examine policy development that promoted the emergence of a joint interdisciplinary school, the School of Policy and Research. A policy analysis framework was employed to structure the exploration of the origins, policy networks, policy adoption procedures and the policy implementation process involved in the establishment of this interdisciplinary School. In order to uncover the data, I asked several open-ended interview questions of 13 participants. The following four questions, about the context and the stakeholders, were structured to elicit background information about the initiative:

1. What issues, influences, and contexts contributed to the origin and adoption of this policy?
2. Why was the policy window opened at this time?
3. Who were the key stakeholders and policy actors involved in the origin, adoption, and implementation of this policy development?
4. How, and why, were these stakeholders involved in this process?

The data are organized according to the research questions that were asked. The purpose of this chapter is to present the data that addressed these preceding four questions. This chapter describes the issues and contextual elements that prompted the initial discussions, the problems that were identified, and the eventual solution to the problem that evolved into a formal proposal for an interdisciplinary policy school. This chapter also elaborates on the role of the various stakeholders and policy actors involved in the process. I will discuss the fifth question, focusing on implementation, in Chapter 6, and then I will explore the sixth question, focusing on the intended and collateral impacts of the policy, in Chapter 7.

For each section in turn, the data are organized and presented thematically, around the themes that emerged from the interviews with the 13 participants, and the data are supported by relevant information from pertinent documents and policies. Throughout the presentation and discussion chapters, pseudonyms are used for participants, document names, committee names, names of the academic programs, and locations. Additionally, the school is named, as a pseudonym, the School of Policy and Research, and the universities are called University A and University B. The years are denoted by antecedent events (important events prior to the actual



formulation of the problem and solutions) and by numbers (Year 1 of the process, and so forth). All pseudonyms are listed in Appendix E.

### **Participants**

In order to add clarity to the presentation of the data, I briefly introduce the interview participants. Throughout this discussion, it is important to note that the gender of the pseudonyms does not necessarily match the gender of the participants. There were 13 participants in the study; two participants (Jeff and Tom) came from University B and 11 participants came from University A. It should be noted at this point that, as a consequence of the disproportionate number of participants represented by the two universities, the data from University B will be underrepresented throughout the data presentation chapters. More of their commentary will emerge in chapter 6 as implementation is discussed and the dynamics of the joint school are explored.

Tom and Jeff are faculty members at the School's University B campus, and eventually one of them became part of the senior administration for the School. They were both involved from the beginning of the process that resulted first in the establishment of University B's independent policy School, and, then to the joint School of Policy and Research.

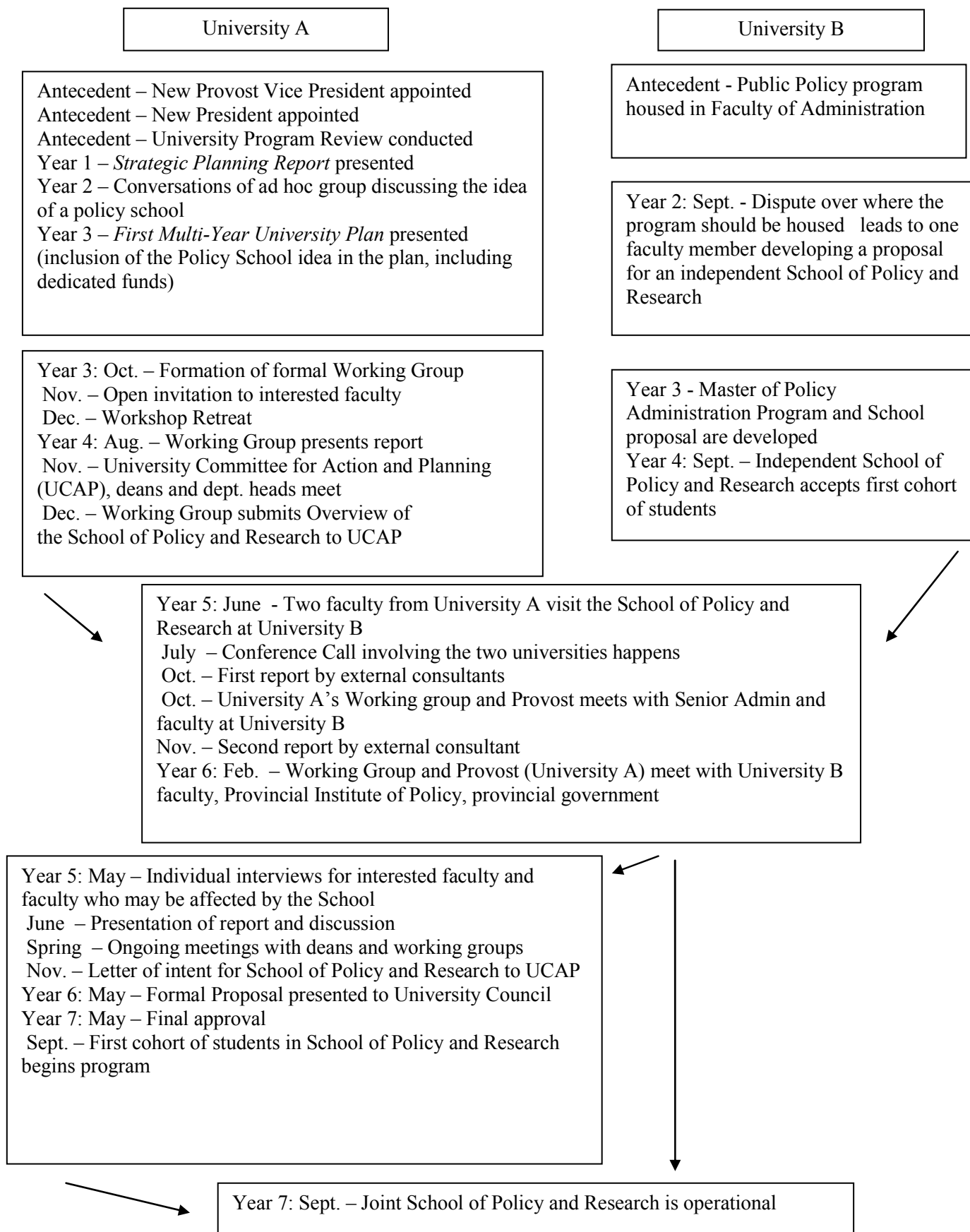
At University A, some participants were senior administration of the University and of the School; some participants were on the working committee that created the formal proposal and helped establish the School, and some were faculty and staff members of the School. The participants who were senior administrators included Linda, Jeannette, Charles, John, Don, and Dave. Some of these participants from senior administration were intimately involved with the entire process of establishing the School. Others had a very specific role to play in this process, such as in finance or in being the School's sponsor. Some participants were members of the working group who were involved from the initial discussions onward; these participants included Max, Malcolm, and Nelson. Other participants who were hired as staff and faculty later in the process included Jill and Carl. University A's participants represented faculty (administrative and academic) and staff who were connected with the school in some capacity.

### **Analysis of Policy Development: The Story**

Prior to the presentation of the data, a timeline (Figure 5.1), demonstrating the critical points of the development of the School, is presented and described. The evolution of the School is more clearly illustrated through the timeline. As well, the critical junctures where the ideas gained traction or substantially moved forward are more visible. By using the timeline, I portrayed the parallel development of the idea of a School of Policy and Research in the two locations, the point where a joint school was explored, and the eventual development of the current model. The data that are subsequently presented in the remainder of the chapter describe each of these points in more detail and highlight some of the complexities underlying the more simplistic timeline. It is important to note that there often is not a specific moment in time where people can identify the exact genesis of an idea. Rather, ideas incubate and percolate over time, and slowly evolve to become more defined and distinct. In addition, ideas may have multiple points of genesis and coalesce in fortuitous circumstances to establish a workable model that will address the identified issue. So it was with the School of Policy and Research. That is how this timeline should be viewed. Though it is a rather artificial construct to categorize data and events into a distinct timeline with defined stages, when the policy process is iterative and cyclical, I used the timeline as a contextual frame that allows for a more coherent presentation, analysis, and discussion.

This is really a school that had separate beginnings at two universities (University A and University B) in the same province. To further clarify the story of this School, the timeline is illustrated in Figure 5.1. In this figure, I portray the different paths the two universities took to arrive at the establishment of the School of Policy and Research. At University A, the School moved from idea into full implementation more slowly, even though the initial conversations in both locations happened at approximately the same time. For this reason, I will begin the story with University B's path to establishing the School.

**Figure 5.1 – Timeline of Critical Junctures in the Development of the School of Policy and Research**



University B had an existing policy program that was centered within a particular college and the program was delivered by that faculty, with the support of faculty from another college. The event that precipitated the move towards the School was a disagreement that arose (in Year 2) among these faculty members as the program expanded and needed to be adapted. In response to this disagreement, one faculty member developed a proposal for an independent, interdisciplinary School of Policy and Research. This proved to be a significant event in the entire process of the development of the School at University B. The faculty member showed this proposal to a few key people who gave approval for the proposal to be developed further. Through Year 3, the proposal for the School and its initial academic program, a Master's in Public Administration, was written and approved by University B's Council. In the autumn of Year 4, the first students were admitted into the new School of Policy and Research, making this event another highlight in the School's development.

Meanwhile, at University A, there were two antecedent events that were foundational in what followed. A new Provost was appointed and he initiated a University Program Review process, examining programming across all the colleges of the University. In addition, a new President was appointed to the University. He felt that the University really needed to define itself and determine what its priorities were as it developed a plan to meet the current challenges of internationalization, globalization, a need for research intensification, interdisciplinary approaches to research and programming, and recruitment and retention of students and faculty. To that end, the President released the *Strategic Planning Report* in Year 1. These two processes were the drivers for the conversations held around campus on the potential for doing something different. One group of faculty brought up the idea of developing a school that would aggregate faculty and graduate students who were interested in an interdisciplinary approach to studying policy. They approached the Provost with the idea as he was conducting the program review. This was another critical moment in the evolution of the School. The proposal was an idea that had the potential to address several of the issues identified in the *Strategic Planning Report*. The *ad hoc* committee developed the idea sufficiently well for the School of Policy and Research to be included in the next planning document, the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (FMYUP) that was published in Year 3. The inclusion of the School in the plan formed another critical moment in the School's development. This report identified the strategic priorities for the University, and outlined how the University would move forward within the four-year cycle to address those

priorities. By the end of Year 4, a formal working group was struck and all interested faculty were asked to attend a workshop retreat. One year later, by December of Year 5, the *Outline for the School of Policy and Research* was submitted to the University Committee for Action and Planning (UCAP).

As the process developed, University A became aware of University B's establishment of an independent, interdisciplinary School of Policy and Research. To learn more about University B's program, the Provost and another faculty member from University A visited University B in June of Year 5, where they discussed the possibility of some kind of collaboration. These faculty members followed up this meeting with a conference call a month later. The senior administration at University A hired two separate sets of external consultants to examine the idea of a possible collaboration and to investigate the possibilities for a policy school or schools in the province. After completing their reports in the late autumn of Year 6, both groups of consultants recommended a joint school. Their reports were instrumental in giving legitimacy to the idea of the School. The consultants noted that the introduction of a second, similar school within the same province would be problematic in terms of attracting students and faculty, and support from the provincial government. Finally, at the beginning of Year 6, some members of the working group from University A met with the faculty and administration of University B, as well as representatives from the provincial government and the Provincial Institute of Policy (PIP). PIP was a provincial independent, non-partisan institute focused on public policy research, analysis, and debate (PIP website). The members of the various parties agreed the idea of a joint interdisciplinary policy school had merit and should be pursued further. This agreement was pivotal in the School's development.

Meanwhile, the proposal at University A was making its way through the internal approval process. After many meetings with interested (and potentially affected) deans and faculty members, the working group presented the formal proposal for the School of Policy and Research in May of Year 6 to the University Council for approval. Interestingly, the proposal actually included two plans, one for a joint school and another for an independent school, in case the plan for a joint school did not move ahead at University B. At the same time, faculty members at University B were trying to obtain approval for the joint school, and were encountering some difficulty. The proposal for University A's School of Policy and Research was finally approved in May of Year 7, and applications were accepted for students at University

A to begin the Master's in Public Administration program in the autumn of Year 7. During the same time period, at University B, the proposal for the joint School finally gained acceptance. These two events were critical moments in the actualization of the idea of a joint, interdisciplinary School of Policy and Research. The joint School officially became a reality that fall (Year 7).

### **The Issues, Influences, and Context of the Change**

In order to understand why the interdisciplinary School was considered in the first place, I explored the issues, influences and contexts that contributed to the policy's origin. I wanted to examine how the issue or need was initially identified and framed. Not all of the participants were involved at this stage of the development of the School; only two participants from University B and six participants from University A were substantially involved from the beginning. Each participant who was there at the beginning of the process focused on a different starting point, but most of them concurred on the contextual elements that prompted these discussions initially. As Malcolm noted: "With a lot of ideas, there isn't a nice clean Eureka! genesis where you could say, that's the idea" (p. 1). This characterization applies to the establishment of the School; there was not one driving force that prompted this process, but, rather, a confluence of elements that provided the impetus for the new School.

The perspectives of the participants are exemplified in the main themes that emerged from the data. Specifically, these themes include: the establishment of the planning structure supporting this change process, the removal of the existing barriers, the prioritization of research intensification and graduate student enrolment as key foci of the university, the galvanizing of the policy focus on campus, the promotion of interdisciplinarity, and the timeliness or *Zeitgeist* of establishing an interdisciplinary policy school. These themes were reflected in some way by almost all of the participants who contributed to the discussion on the context and issues. The main difference among the participants was the degree of focus that they placed on the various elements. This consistency among the responses pertaining to context speaks again to the *Zeitgeist* of both the model and the focus of the School, specifically the establishment of an interdisciplinary policy school, and the perceived need for such a school in the province. In addition, these responses reflect the strong emphasis on specific priorities identified by University A through a strategic planning process.

### **Critical Role of Institutional Planning as a Priming Mechanism**

Four of the participants (Charles, Jeanette, Malcolm, Max) more fully described how the university's planning process was a fundamental foundation for the exploration of possible program delivery models. Although this process was established recently, Jeanette saw this structural change allowing for schools actually originating a few decades previous, when the issue of nomenclature was addressed. *The Structures and Names Report* from an antecedent year was written to elaborate on the differences in structure and organization between schools, and colleges and departments. The report sought to define each of those structures and add clarity to the issue. The document also examined the way program delivery was enacted through each of those entities.

However, it was not until much later that this document was re-examined. At that point, a new Vice President Academic was appointed. Because he came from a different campus, he had experience and knowledge of other university structures and delivery models, and he could examine University A's academic structure and planning process with a fresh lens. He established a planning office that could facilitate university-wide planning. One of the first documents he and the office produced was a document that provided a framework for planning. Jeanette described the intent of this document that was foundational in the planning process:

It was approved by University Council in [an antecedent year] and it talked about the creation of a priority determination process, as one of three processes that he wanted to implement and that the University needed to implement. And priority determination really was a process by which he, using his authority as a Vice President, convinced all the deans to put up a portion of one million dollars, which would be set aside to support emerging priorities that would be identified through a competitive process. (p. 1)

The planning office used the document to set the stage for determining a limited number of priorities, and to establish a method for partially funding these priorities. Malcolm also described this process of earmarking funds for the School, when he explained that the Vice President "taxed everybody; he created a small but continuing pot of resources for strategic priorities, and so he created a potential mechanism to essentially prime the pump to get things going" (p. 1). Charles noted that this priority determination process was initiated at the same time as the university became engaged in a "systematic program review so this was an exercise of quality assurance, which took a long time to complete, from seven or six years to complete"

(p. 1). This process helped to determine potential priorities for the university, and started conversations across campus about possibilities (Charles). Among the emergent priorities were: the need for research intensification, the growing interest in public policy as an academic pursuit at university campuses, the recruitment and retention of students and faculty, and the growing need for interdisciplinary approaches in research and problem solving (FMYUP, Year 3).

The whole planning process, including the development of the *Strategic Planning Report* (Year 1), was vital in defining the “sense of place” for the University. Max thought that this strategic planning process and systemic program review helped to define the university and its priorities and it provided “some kind of cohesion to the university” (Max, p. 5). All four of these participants emphasized that, not only was it essential to develop planning processes to guide decision-making for each college, it was also necessary to establish a mechanism to examine the institution as a whole and develop an explicit plan that incorporated the “big picture.” Within this plan, priorities were identified and mechanisms to support those priorities were articulated (Charles, Jeanette, Malcolm, Max).

### **Removal of the Structural Barriers Through Organizational Innovation**

Four participants (Jeanette, John, Linda, Max) elaborated on the necessity of removing structural barriers that inhibit change. The priority determination process had uncovered the perception across campus that there was a need for change (Jeanette, Max). Max highlighted this perception as he described why the University should change:

the *modus operandi* was no longer quite the same as it had been. We were getting just a little too deep into these tracks and a little bit too much of just doing things the same way we’ve always done them. It was time to break out of that. (p. 5)

Max suggested that, in order to establish a School of Policy and Research, a change in structure was needed. He recognized the need for

an organizational innovation to kind of break up the log jam that had been increasingly forming over the years. That really had to do with where colleges saw their influence, where departments saw their influence, kind of ‘turf wars’, all of that stuff that makes universities the unique places that they are. (p. 2)

Max also noted: “We were feeling that there was a need to change, or start to push some change for the structure of the university” (p. 2), and he recalled that “the kind of work that we wanted



to do was not really possible nor was it given any encouragement, and there were often roadblocks put in the way of it because of the then current structure of the university” (p. 2).

Jeanette concurred with this idea. She thought that part of this investigation of new structures was “really about how [University A] can break out of that set of barriers that we have associated with the disciplines. The hard colleges seem to just be so entrenched, and so difficult to change” (p. 3). These disciplinary boundaries were seen to prevent adequate exploration of possible solutions to contemporary problems and questions (Jeanette, John, Linda, Max). In order to address the major societal issues, Linda thought that a number of disciplines needed to be involved and the way to accomplish that was to “take a bold and courageous and new way of doing this” (p. 2). Providing a dedicated place and way to congregate people working on the same problems was a necessary element to this collaboration. John further described the potential for this interaction: “To provide opportunities and, if you like, catalysts, for them to come together, and to talk about not just the important disciplinary questions but the important questions at the intersection, is tremendously important” (p. 2). Though numerous participants alluded to this point, these four participants particularly emphasized that the best way to accomplish this interaction and dialogue was through a change in structure.

The President elaborated on the connection between institutional flexibility and the new possibilities for interdisciplinary research in the *Strategic Planning Report* (Year 1). He noted that the university had great potential to engage in interdisciplinary work, and funding agencies were increasingly recognizing projects that are cross-disciplinary. For that reason, the university needed to move beyond disciplinary boundaries and college and department loyalties. The President encouraged members of the university to adopt a more flexible approach to engaging in collaborative work. Interdisciplinary research was an area to explore, but the existing structure was an impediment to development of further opportunities. This concept of structural barriers was also emphasized by Jeanette who said that, through the planning process, the committee discovered, interestingly, that “colleges were themselves frustrated with the kind of structural impediments to sort of being proactive and interdisciplinary and all of that, and in fact they proposed some ways in which we could be more interdisciplinary, more proactive, more responsive” (pp. 2-3). As Max observed, in order to create the space for interdisciplinary work to occur, the barriers to such work, including structural, procedural, and cultural barriers, needed to be dismantled.

### **Renewed Focus on Research Intensification and Increased Graduate Enrolment**

Several participants pointed out that the focus on research intensification was instrumental in gaining support for the establishment of an interdisciplinary graduate school. Malcolm, Charles, and Jeanette all described this issue in more detail. Jeanette noted that coincidental to the establishment of the priority determination process, a new President was appointed to University A. Upon his appointment, he articulated the need to examine the whole institution in order to identify areas of strength, and gaps or weaknesses that needed to be addressed (Charles, Jeanette). He wanted the University to define itself more clearly and create the sense of place it needed. The President began a renewal process for the University, supporting program review and encouraging the process for determining priorities for the university. Charles recalled the President's belief that the research mission at the university was not being fulfilled adequately. Charles reflected that:

I don't believe that those sentiments were necessarily written down anywhere, but they were conveyed in a variety of different formal and informal fora. They were conveyed eventually and formally in a statement that the President made in November of [an antecedent year]. And that became the draft of a document called the *Strategic Planning Report*. (p. 1)

Part of this emphasis on research was a result of the federal government's movement towards awarding more research grants and establishing more research programs (Charles, Jeanette, Linda). This push for research intensification was also mentioned in the *School of Policy and Research Proposal* (Year 6) where it was noted that the School would facilitate the attraction and management of larger integrated research projects. This would benefit the universities. Charles pointed out:

The intention was that government funding would go to universities that had established research capacity and research record [*sic*]. And that forced us to face up to the research record of University A, which I would describe as uneven, so there were pockets of real accomplishment, but there were other parts of the institution that were not in any sense actively engaged in a research mission. At least not in the context of federal government funding. (p. 1)

This renewed focus on research intensification was tied to an emphasis on increasing graduate student enrolment and improving the quality and level of graduate work at the university. As

Charles observed: “One of the indices of active research inside universities is the extent of graduate work that’s been done, on the grounds that graduate students are, for many disciplines at least, a kind of life blood with respect to research” (p. 1). The President also articulated in the *Strategic Planning Report* (Year 1) that graduate students are essential to the scholarly work of the University.

During the University Program Review that University A undertook, Charles noted that a lot of the feedback suggested not only increasing the number of graduate students, but also “the character and quality of graduate work. So we were being told by outside reviewers, that the university had capacity that it wasn’t using to attract graduate students in to do more graduate work” (p. 2). In fact, there was a sense that the “university was missing a suite of programs that could attract more graduate students, and these were principally professional kinds of programs” (p. 2). By establishing different graduate programs, especially those with a professional focus, the graduate student enrolment would be more likely to increase (Charles).

This emphasis on growing the graduate student numbers through the establishment of new programs imposed new challenges. Malcolm and Charles elaborated on some of those challenges. Malcolm described one challenge for some graduate students who wanted to focus on policy work.

The view that research intensification required graduate students, and for the graduate students, we required the ability to house them, and the students that would contribute to our capacity in the policy area couldn’t realistically be housed in any of the disciplinary homes. And they weren’t fundamentally policy homes; they were economics, political science, sociology. The method drove the analysis and not the problem. (p. 2)

The question of accommodating more graduate students was definitely seen as a challenge. Malcolm suggested that, for those students working in the policy area, an interdisciplinary policy school would better meet their needs. Charles also pointed out the inadequacy of funding and space, as well as faculty, to support the graduate programs, in general, an inadequacy that would need to be addressed if the university hoped to increase graduate student enrolment:

The principal concern I guess—one of the obstacles facing us when it came to graduate work, well the number one obstacle was really there was not enough money in the system. So there was not enough funding out there for colleges and departments and individual faculty who wished to attract the best graduate students. Also, there’s not

enough space, if we wanted to expand graduate work in different parts it would be very hard on us because we didn't have enough lab space, for example. So those were obstacles. Also, we didn't have the faculty that was likely to be able to do all of this. So until we started to see faculty turnover we were going to talk a lot about research and a lot about graduate studies but we weren't necessarily going to see much change. (p. 2)

As these participants pointed out, further development of graduate programs would address two of the strategic priorities that had been identified, specifically research intensification and graduate student enrolment. However, accommodating more graduate students required adequate funding and resources.

### **Galvanizing the Policy Focus**

Many participants saw the evolution of the School as being driven by grassroots interest in policy development and analysis. There was a lot of policy work being done on campus, but it was done in an *ad hoc* way (Malcolm, Max, Nelson). Nelson, Max, John, and Malcolm described this element in more detail, but several others mentioned the aggregation of the policy work on campus as a driving force in the establishment of the School. John stated:

It was the sense that this University [A] was not as vigorous a participant in policy discussion as it ought to be. This is a complicated university with a very broad range of activity with involvement in a number of activities of substantial public impact and policy impact, but we were not doing a particularly good job of engaging systematically in the discussion or formation of debate about research into the policy aspects of our work. (p. 1)

Max pointed out that several faculty members were engaged in discussions about “the need for the university to be doing some things on the policy front” (p. 1). Many faculty members had been engaged in policy work for many years (Malcolm, Max, Nelson). Malcolm noted that, in fact, “you can go a long way back into the history of this university, as they’ve tried to grapple with... how they will engage with policy research, policy teaching, policy public engagement” (p. 1). He further described this point, when he said, “We’ve always been in the game, is the short answer, so it wasn’t that we weren’t interested” (p. 1). The university’s faculty members had a history of contributing to policy work and research, both provincially and nationally, through individual contributions, collaborative research, and work on commissions (Malcolm).

Despite University A's history in policy work, though, there was recognition that a more focused approach was needed in the area of public policy (Malcolm, Max, Nelson). Nelson elaborated on this observation when he said:

There was a lot of public policy happening on campus in terms of potential but it wasn't aggregated or galvanized in a way that made the best sense of, you could say, human capital on campus, but it needs to develop some social coherence, some sort of a way of actually bringing some of these pieces together. (p. 2)

Max agreed that a focused approach to the policy work and research on campus would provide a stronger base or foundation for the faculty and graduate students engaged in this area. He stated:

We thought that there needed to be some kind of bigger foundation or platform within the university to highlight some of the important public policy research that was going on. There had always been a lot of research and work around public policy within the university and there wasn't any sort of real way to pull this together; that I think was the sort of sense of an opportunity that we were feeling as researchers and academics. (p. 2)

Nelson supported this observation. He thought that University A needed to "not only pull the people together but also make space, in a sense, on campus. I don't mean physical space but intellectual space for conversations, for dialogue, or for dealing with the research challenges and the issue-based challenges" (p. 2). By creating a space on campus to focus on policy work, the university administration could facilitate these conversations around policy issues and problems.

This absence of a focused approach to policy work also was articulated in the *School of Policy and Research Proposal* (Year 6), wherein it was mentioned that University A needed to establish a way to aggregate faculty and graduate students interested in policy work. This structure or mechanism would help facilitate interdisciplinary research, attract larger research grants, and support outreach and engagement. It would also provide a forum for investigating and formulating "innovation policy" that addresses current policy problems (*School of Policy and Research Proposal*, Year 6). Although there was a long history of interest and work in public policy at both universities, there was a significant change in the dynamics of policy and a growing interest in policy development, as noted in this proposal. The *School of Policy and Research Proposal* (Year 6) described the role that all levels of government (federal, provincial, municipal, and First Nations) and, increasingly, citizens play in addressing the complex issues of the day. These complex issues require multi-faceted approaches that are articulated in well-

designed policies (*School of Policy and Research Proposal*, Year 6). This, according to the proposal, would also necessitate a real focus on outreach and engagement as one of the main goals of the School (*School of Policy and Research Proposal*, Year 6). Some participants emphasized that this outreach and engagement would be a critical part of the School in this changing approach to policy development (Charles, John, Linda, Malcolm, Max, Nelson). The participants from University B, Tom and Jeff, reiterated that this focus on policy work with the local community and provincial and federal governments was a key component of the joint School. These eight participants saw the School as a key player in the research and policy work around policy issues that affected the broader community.

### **Interdisciplinarity and Increased Capacity to Explore Activity at the Intersection**

There was also a growing recognition of the need to explore interdisciplinary approaches as ways to solve these complex, contemporary policy issues. The proposal for the School highlighted the possibilities for gathering interdisciplinary teams to engage in policy work (*School of Policy and Research Proposal*, Year 6). Nelson, Linda, John, Jeanette, Malcolm, and Max all articulated the perceived need to engage in more interdisciplinary work at the University. John described the interdisciplinary nature of public policy and this felt need for increased engagement in interdisciplinary work:

Another impulse was the often-isolated ways in which we go about our work. I have said more than once that the boundaries of the beautiful buildings on this campus can sometimes be the metaphors for the limits of our conversations. We are organized on a departmental basis. We build buildings for and around departmental activities. But many of the most important issues occur at the intersections of disciplines, of colleges and we needed to have a better capacity to explore the activity at the intersection. And a School of Policy and Research is one way of doing that. When you think about it, public policy is not appropriately departmentalized. It draws upon the knowledge and the perspectives and the backgrounds and the research and the understandings of many, many disciplines. Whenever you think about what would be an appropriate public policy, you think about its multiple dimensions. And so it's appropriate to bring those multiple dimensions into the discussion. And sometimes it's hard to do that, in a departmental structured organization. (p. 1)

Nelson supported this idea when he observed that society faces “lots of issues that really need us to think in an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary fashion, to solve the problems. We’re not going to be able to solve the problems in isolated kinds of ways” (p. 2). Linda reiterated this notion: “The universities need to be able to help communities and the broader society address some of the major societal issues and problems and the only way that we can do that is through doing more interdisciplinary work” (p. 1). By establishing an interdisciplinary school focused on public policy, the universities would be able to fulfill this perceived need for outreach and engagement.

Some participants (Malcolm, Max) suggested that structural models other than “schools” were not really considered, even in the initial discussions around aggregating the policy work that was occurring on campus. However, maintaining the *status quo* also was not an alternative, if the university’s administration were serious about enhancing the University’s capacity to engage in interdisciplinary work. Prior to the advent of this school, interdisciplinarity occurred in a very *ad hoc* way; Linda described this interdisciplinary work as happening in “an almost college by college, faculty by faculty way that we’ve been doing it” (p. 1). Malcolm, Nelson, Max, and Linda emphasized that interdisciplinary work had been occurring prior to the implementation of an interdisciplinary school. Malcolm noted that “we had a latent background and we had a growing experience with interdisciplinarity” through previous interdisciplinary programs and models that had been established on campus (p. 1). These previous experiences with interdisciplinary models at University A will be discussed further in the section on organizational learning in Chapter 6. These experiences, though, were foundational in developing the model of an interdisciplinary, independent School of Policy and Research.

As a result of these experiences, the idea of schools had been the emphasis from the beginnings of the discussions at the grass roots level, and that is how the initial model was presented when the idea first surfaced in the program reviews (Malcolm, Max). Max pointed out that, in developing a model for this School, the first *ad hoc* committee thought that “we would take the model that was developed elsewhere. We weren’t interested in coming up with a brand new model. We were more interested in getting the substantive things actually happening” (p. 2). In the opinion of the informal committee, “this was something that we felt needed [the] kind of stature” of a school (Max, p. 3). In fact, at University A, other interdisciplinary schools were proposed at the same time, during the program review. Jeanette noted:

What we were looking for here were schools that were united by a theme of studies, and that we would also invest in, institutionally, that would draw and attract students to the university in large numbers and that would provide a home for a limited number of faculty members that would be directly involved and associated with the School, as well as have an outreach and engagement component to them. (p. 3)

Interested faculty and colleges developed some proposals for schools during the course of the program review, and three potential schools, including the School of Policy and Research, were chosen as ideas to explore. These Schools were described in the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3). Included in this description was the rationale for focusing on the three particular interdisciplinary Schools, and the common theme among the Schools was the potential impact the schools could have on research intensification, graduate student enrolment, outreach and engagement, and, especially, an enhanced focus on interdisciplinary work.

### **The Confluence of Forces and *Zeitgeist***

The timing of the development of the proposal for an interdisciplinary school was fortuitous, as was noted by a number of participants (Jeff, Malcolm, Max, Nelson, Tom). There were several elements, discussed in the previous sections, that came together to support the establishment of the School. The universities were willing to explore different structures for program delivery; the importance of a strong research program came to the forefront; increasing graduate student enrolment was emphasized; interdisciplinary work was being recognized as necessary to find solutions for contemporary problems; and there was a growing interest in and need for policy research and policy work. This growing emphasis on universities engaging in policy work was manifested in the number of policy schools that were being established nationally and internationally.

The group of academics who formed the working group was aware of other policy schools, in Canada, in addition to the well-established schools of public policy in the United States, including the Kennedy School of Government (Max). Through the course of their investigation, they discovered other schools; what they had not been aware of was that many other universities were undergoing the same process of establishing schools of public policy at the same time (Jeff, Max). Interestingly, at least three other universities in Canada are coming



on-stream with policy schools contemporaneously (Max). Max suggested that the growing popularity of establishing policy schools indicated the timeliness of the topic.

Jeff observed that, across Canada, universities were expressing a burgeoning interest in public policy work and most campuses either had a School of Policy and Research or were developing one. “So there was a lot of activity in this area, and I think there was just a critical mass of people. There were initial reasons at each university that were peculiar” (Jeff, p. 1). This sudden interest in public policy was also noted in the *School of Policy and Research Proposal* (Year 6). The number of existing and new policy schools and academic programs focused on policy work are evidence of the growing importance of policy work within universities. For that reason, the authors of the Proposal urged the University to act strategically and quickly to establish the School.

This phenomenon of universities pursuing a School of Policy and Research at the same time adds cadence to the idea that the “time was right” for this initiative. The *School of Policy and Research Proposal* (Year 6) noted that this rising interest in public policy was not evident even five years previous. Max echoed this sentiment when he suggested that “the School couldn’t have been started ten years before” (p. 9), because now the contemporary focuses on public policy, and interdisciplinarity lend currency to the idea.

Interestingly, there were similar discussions occurring at University B. There had been a public policy program, but it was housed in the Faculty of Administration (Jeff, Tom). Tom described a dispute that arose “between the faculty of administration, on the one hand, and the department of political science on the other, about the future of the Master’s in Public Administration and the Department of Political Science desired a Master’s in Public Policy and the inherent competition between the two” (p. 1). In exploring solutions to this dispute, Tom suggested the idea of an interdisciplinary school focused on public policy. Tom emphasized:

This needed to be truly interdisciplinary; it needed to involve social sciences writ large as well as the best that any management school could offer in terms of public sector management and that those things needed to be brought together. In fact even beyond the social sciences, it should involve law for example. (p. 1)

Tom noted that the reason for this focus on interdisciplinarity was that “there were two of us that had spent extensive time in government and we defined what we thought the challenges were and how they could be addressed and the interdisciplinary nature of the way in which you

address them” (p. 1). Tom constructed a proposal to address this issue, and he presented the “idea of creating a destination school, and what would be needed for this kind of modern School of Policy and Research and Administration” (p. 1). Tom described the response of the university’s senior administration as supportive: “Within a short time, mainly because this was seen as a potential solution to the dispute, it got picked up and we began, within about two months, to work on what this might look like, and then we were assigned to work on the curriculum” (p. 1). The authors of the proposal described a possible administrative structure, and outlined the objectives for the School. The objectives included becoming a “destination graduate school attracting superior students” that would also attract superior faculty. In addition, the School would be established for the purpose of achieving “a critical mass of research in public policy” creating a centre of national excellence and attracting more research funding (*Proposal for a Graduate School of Policy and Research*, University B, Year 4). Many of these objectives mirrored those articulated by the other campus. The underlying context and issues were very similar in the two locations.

The *School of Policy and Research Proposal* (Year 6) identified the issues that formed the basis for the argument of why the School was needed. This articulation summarized the context well: key policy issues required interdisciplinary approaches and solutions; the considerable policy work being conducted on campus would have a more powerful presence if aggregated; larger, more interdisciplinary research projects would attract larger research grants; graduate students would be attracted to this type of program. The perceived need for the School was well defined at both locations, and circumstances allowed the idea to gain traction at this time. Many elements came together as a confluence of forces that provided the foundation for this change. Nelson outlined these elements:

We have absolutely a powerful combination here, in terms of personage, in terms of institutional backing, add to that government support, both previous government, current government’s pre-election platform, and ongoing support. All those kinds of factors coming together, you know, there will be room for enthusiasm there. And room in a sense to push [University A], and [Universities A and B], to be as nimble as possible in terms of making enabling policy, against its normal habit. (p. 3)

Malcolm concurred with this sentiment. He described the establishment of an interdisciplinary School of Policy and Research as “partly planned, partly serendipitous, partly situational” (p. 3).

In short, the confluence of forces that came together included: implementation of institutional strategic planning, the removal of structural barriers that inhibited change, the identification of priorities for the university that included research intensification, increased graduate student enrolment, and promotion of interdisciplinarity, and the growing awareness, locally and nationally of the importance of policy development. These factors were influential in promoting the growth of an initial idea into a fully implemented School of Policy and Research, that was potentially capable of achieving the objectives as outlined in the proposal.

### **The Role of the Stakeholders and Policy Actors**

In order to uncover the role of various stakeholders and policy actors in the establishment of this School, I asked participants to describe who was involved throughout the process or at key stages of the process. It is interesting to note that, in both locations, there was involvement of key, committed faculty at the grass roots level, in addition to involvement of senior administration as drivers or inhibitors of the ideas.

The faculty members who were involved in the process were people who had been engaged already in policy work and interdisciplinary work within their own colleges and departments. At both universities, these grassroots people developed the seed of the idea, and found the necessary backing to nurture the growth of this idea into a workable model. Then, on each campus, the idea had to be further articulated into a formal proposal for presentation to the University Council. However, the idea would have not developed into a formal proposal had it not been supported by the senior administration at each university. At University B, the key faculty readily received approval from senior administration to move forward with the idea of their own policy School; however, the idea of a joint school had not been fully accepted by the senior administration, and, as a result, the proposal for the joint School was not firmly supported through the approval process. This lack of support, as noted by Tom and Jeff, slowed the development of the joint School and negatively affected the key policy actors who were trying to move the idea forward.

At University A, the key policy actors first proposed the idea to senior administration, who supported the idea because it addressed several of the key priorities of the university. However, even with the firm support of the senior administration, the process of developing the idea into a proposal, and formulating this into a well-articulated proposal that then had to be

approved by University Council, was an arduous journey, and negatively affected the key policy actors. Thus, although the two universities took different paths to arrive at the same destination, the journey required similar policy actors: key faculty members who were involved in policy work and were excited by the opportunity to establish an interdisciplinary policy school, and senior administrative members who could provide the “policy clout” necessary to move the idea forward. As evidenced by some of the participants’ comments throughout the chapter on implementation, though, this circuitous journey took a similar toll on the key policy actors at both universities.

In this section, I explore the role that the key policy actors played, and at what point various faculty and senior administration became involved. I describe who initiated the original idea, and how that idea was developed into a potential solution to the issues and contexts identified in the first part of this chapter. Because the idea of an independent policy school was articulated at approximately the same time at the two universities, but for different reasons, I discuss the role of policy actors at these universities separately, beginning with University B. The interaction between the two sets of policy actors will be described in Chapter 6 when I examine implementation.

### **The Involvement of a Few Key Policy Actors at University B**

At University B, the idea really was an extension of what already existed, necessitated by a change in the focus of the Business School. Jeff commented that “[University B’s] Business School was becoming a real business school and so they were hiving off their public policy stuff” (p. 2). Key faculty involved in the delivery of the initial program represented “a partnership between the business school and faculty of arts, particularly economics but also political science” (Jeff, p. 2). When the dispute occurred about how to adapt the program or move it forward, Tom proposed an interdisciplinary, independent School of Policy and Research and he presented it to “a few people at the time that I thought I could get some support on in terms of the dispute” (Tom, p. 1). He explained that “after I showed it to some people, it was picked up by probably the Vice Presidents, mainly the Vice President Academic but to some extent the Vice President Administration” (p. 2). The idea was approved, and the proposal and the curriculum were developed within a few months by a small number of interested faculty members (Tom).

The formal proposal and business plan for the Graduate School of Policy and Research was submitted for the approval of the committees in January of Year 4. As Tom observed, the senior administration supported the proposal “as it was stick handled through the committees” (p. 2). In addition, Tom noted that one key faculty member “probably played a pretty large role in steering some of this stuff through the committees because he and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the time were put sort of in charge of the governance of this” (p. 2). Upon approval from the “two or three committees” (p. 2), the School was supported with resources, specifically space and faculty. The independent School of Policy and Research had a relatively smooth transition into existence and began accepting students by the autumn of Year 4 (Tom). From the commentary provided by these two participants, the infrastructure at University B permitted an expedited process for establishing an independent policy school. However, Tom and Jeff pointed out that, when the idea of a joint school was proposed, a few key senior administrators were not as supportive. This will be examined further in the later discussion about the development of the joint School proposal.

### **Multiple Stakeholders at University A: Enabling Broader Engagement**

At University A, the initial idea of a school focused on policy work came from the grassroots level as well (Malcolm, Max). Several participants (Charles, Malcolm, Max, Nelson) mentioned that many faculty were involved in policy work across campus, but the establishment of a School of Policy and Research was seen as a mechanism that would focus this work. The School would address several issues identified by the President, including a need for research intensification, a need for increased recruitment of graduate students, and a need for more interdisciplinary work (*School of Policy and Research Proposal*, Year 6). In the *Strategic Planning Report* (Year 1), the President challenged University A to “put together a robust planning process that would engage the whole university” (Charles, p. 2), so essentially the stakeholders involved included the whole university. Charles described this process:

There was planning going on, but it was like Lindblom [(cf. 1979)]. It was *disjointed incrementalism* and people were making changes and people weren't working together, so one of the big things we had to do was to say, look, we're going to come to terms with our challenges, the ones the President has outlined. We're going to do it in the context of the planning process; we're going to put more energy and effort into it. And everybody's

going to be part of it. So, in a way, the entire institution was broken into planning entities, in obvious ways like the colleges. But that included all the administration and all the various ancillary kinds of units, centres, institutes and so on. All of them had to gear up to produce a strategic plan along the lines that [were] outlined for them. So it was a huge undertaking and, in a sense, everybody was a stakeholder in the process. (p. 2)

Through the planning process, everyone on campus theoretically had a part in designing a strategic plan that would focus on a few key priorities for the University. Charles and John pointed out that not everyone will choose an active role in the planning process; however, everyone will be affected by the growth, negative or positive, of the university. The success of the university depended, in part, on a carefully designed strategic plan that could focus the work of the university (Charles). If everybody invested much time and energy into developing a plan that did not produce positive results, the consequences could affect individuals and the institution in a negative way, as Charles noted:

Broadly speaking, whether they knew it or not, everybody was a stakeholder in this process because if we had labored long and hard and really brought forth nothing, or very little, then, you know, frankly, not only would people have been a bit deflated by it all but the institution would have lost an opportunity. (p. 4)

The whole process of identifying and resourcing priorities affected the university broadly, and the success of this process would be foundational for further institutional growth. Charles emphasized that “it was vitally important that the process produce some things that were new and that make sense for us” (p. 4). Other staff and faculty were strongly invested in the success of this initiative (Jeanette, Malcolm, Max, Nelson,). For example, Jeanette commented:

My personal commitment was to make sure that whatever it was that we were going to be doing succeeded, or at least got going. And the Provost, I think his track record is get things going and then sort of get out of the way and hope that something happens, go back and see later how it turned out. (p. 4)

The Provost was instrumental in setting up the structure, and then leaders at the grassroots level were enabled to develop the initiative (Jeanette, Max). At University B, the leaders at the grassroots level sought out and obtained support from the senior administration, at least initially (Jeff, Tom). Because the grassroots level leadership, as well as the working committees and the

senior administration, were all involved in the development of the model, this initiative represents the collective energies of many people on both campuses.

In terms of process, John thought that establishing a new programmatic model “requires broader engagement with the academic community and certainly here that took place” (p. 3). As John observed, members of the academic community can be involved in the discussions at many different points of the development process, and, within the university community, stakeholders include not only those people directly involved with the initiative itself, but also the wider group of people who are engaged in the discussions and decision making. John elaborated on how the approval process allows input from other stakeholders:

It is the University Council that approves all really major academic initiatives. It is the University Council that under the [*University A Act*] has a responsibility for oversight of the academic affairs of the university. So, these kinds of things do not happen...by edict. In the university world, they happen as a result of discussion and collaboration and proposal and ultimately governance approval. (p. 3)

As John stated, the proposal must be approved ultimately by University Council after it has been discussed and presented to other groups and committees. Many participants noted, though, that this approval process was very circuitous and time consuming. This process will be discussed further in Chapter 6 where I describe implementation.

### **The Critical Role of Influential Policy Actors**

Even though all members of the academic community were essentially stakeholders, some people were more invested in this process than were others (Charles, John, Malcolm, Max). Charles thought that change “came principally when people began to reach beyond their existing organizational forms to connect up with others” (p. 3). Charles noted that one influential group was the positional and legitimate leaders on campus (*cf.* Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Another group, who provided the leadership for this initiative at the grassroots level, was involved in advocating for a School of Policy and Research. Charles, John, Malcolm, and Max described, in more detail, the role that these policy actors played in the process. John emphasized that “the faculty certainly of the two universities in the area of public policy, the leadership in the two universities in the area of public policy, these were the people who were most involved” (p. 2). Max noted how the initial thought about a policy school was first planted;

a couple of faculty members who were on the University Planning Committee initially articulated the idea of a policy school based on conversations happening at that committee level.

Max and Malcolm described how, further to those conversations, some other interested individuals joined the dialogue to form a small, *ad hoc* working group. Charles added further clarification by noting that the informal working group was comprised of “key faculty members from different departments around the university” (p. 3). This group, in essence, expressed that “we are interested in new ways of doing business, bringing people together, creating new things. So let’s take this to the next level” (Charles, p. 3). Max described these faculty members as people who had an interest in policy work and saw the potential for a new model or structure for engaging in an interdisciplinary approach to policy work. In the autumn of Year 2, this informal group “put together a page or two pages describing what the concept would be” (Max, p. 1).

Max commented that the following January or February, the Provost picked up this idea as he “was, at that time, putting together the very first *Multi-Year University Plan* and the idea that we were proposing seemed to fit in with what he was thinking about in terms of a new direction for the university” (p. 1). The *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3) identified priorities for University A; Charles noted that these priorities were then assigned to different leaders on campus who would be able to move the ideas forward. As Charles observed, these people were not necessarily positional leaders:

Who were the influential people? The stakeholders kind of sit in the background. They have a stake in the outcome but they’re not necessarily the ones who are making the decision. Every dean and every college would have had a stake, but they were not the ones who made the decisions. If we’re talking about the overall plan, the overall plan has a number of people in charge of certain parts and it was divided up...this is how you do these things. You divide this up, put the work in the hands of trusted people and give them some direction with respect to the content, and then let them do whatever they do.  
(p. 4)

Charles contended that these trusted people included both formal leaders and opinion leaders, and their involvement was critical to the process. The leadership in this initiative was distributed among these influential people. These main stakeholders included, in Charles’ perception:

the academic leadership, some of which at least were in formal roles, like the deans, in the case of the School of Public Health. Others of which were simply influential people,



inside the University [A], who if you sat down with them for lunch or something, on the topic ...you paid attention to what they said. And because you knew behind them they would carry quite a bit of weight with other people, so if this is something they were interested in, at least, and if this was something they thought was a good idea, well, you need to pay attention to what they're saying. (pp. 3-4)

Charles elaborated on the role of the formal leaders on campus: "The deans had a role, mostly in feeding ideas into the process. In fact, every leader in a formal position of leadership on campus, whether it would be on the academic or administrative end of things, had a role" (p. 5). Because everyone in formal leadership positions on the University A campus was intimately involved in the strategic planning processes, they had a key role in the development, formulation, and promotion of the university's priorities, including this School.

After the School of Policy and Research was identified as a university priority through the development of the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3), senior administration assigned key faculty the task of forming a formal working committee and developing a proposal. This committee consisted of trusted people on campus (Charles). The composition of the formal working committee is described further in the following section.

### **Key Involvement at the Grassroots Level**

Many participants emphasized the importance of the grassroots leadership in this initiative. Charles, Max, Malcolm, Nelson, and Jill elaborated on this key element in the evolution of the School. When the formal working committee was established, most of the people who had been involved in the *ad hoc* group moved onto this committee (Max). Max related that, although one key member left during this time period to go to another university, "everybody else that we sort of had pulled in on a voluntary basis into the working group remained and we added some additional people" (p. 3). Max continued: "At the time we were adding additional members, we more systematically made sure that the people who would have an interest in the School were represented" (p. 4). Nelson agreed that this was an intentional process; at this point, the *ad hoc* group said, "Let's make sure that as we assemble a smaller group, we can get people who are from around the campus, and keep them engaged to the extent that they're willing to talk about this and progress this" (p. 4). As the proposal gained shape and substance, interested faculty members were invited to an initial meeting in November, Year 3,

where the Overview of the School of Policy and Research was presented (*School of Policy and Research Proposal*, Year 6). Although some faculty sought out this opportunity and challenge, others were encouraged because of their policy work to join the group. This was noted by Malcolm: “A few people weren’t at the initiation [of the working group], in the early stages. They came in later and we almost headhunted them and we tried to catch their attention and interest” (p. 3). Malcolm commented that through this process, “we’d bring in quite an eclectic group of people” (p. 3).

Shortly afterwards, in December, Year 3, there was an open invitation for all interested faculty to attend a retreat where the participants would have an opportunity to indicate their interest in the School, describe their work, and engage in discussions about ideas for potential structure and programs for the School (*School of Policy and Research Proposal*, Year 6). During this retreat, Nelson noted that they asked questions as a group about what the School should look like and should include. “It wasn’t a brainstorming session but for all intents and purposes, that was what it was” (Nelson, p. 4). Max added that, through this process, they included people who were actively engaged in policy work and in doing research in that area. Max emphasized that, during this stage of the deliberations:

We did not involve deans and department heads at that point. In fact, it wasn’t until very, very, very far along that that sort of formal administrative structure was brought into the discussions. We kept the discussion at kind of what I would call...a more substantive level. (p. 4)

The formal working committee concentrated on developing a cohesive proposal that described the overall mission and vision of the School. The proposal included sufficient detail to outline how the School would accomplish this mission and vision, and how it would be supported with financial and human resources. Nelson pointed out that the whole process was not necessarily an entirely rational process.

It’s not just a political piece; it’s not just a market piece; it’s not just an intentional strategic direction. It just came together. The goers got together, did things sufficiently right to gain momentum and credibility and backing, [so] that it was supported as a priority of University [A]. (p. 3)

Nelson and Malcolm described how the support of grassroots leadership and senior leadership coalesced with the institutional backing in the form of resources and with the foundation of a

strategic planning process. Malcolm summarized how the structural and logistical factors worked in conjunction with the faculty: “Latent interest, a rising willingness to try different models, through facilitating mechanisms like the [*First Multi-Year University Plan*] and the tax that was created, and then at the end of the day, a lot of it is people-driven” (p. 2). Even though the leaders at the grassroots level were supported by the planning and funding mechanisms, the involvement of leaders who were interested in policy work and who were open to trying new ideas was essential in moving the proposal forward.

Nelson, Max, Jill, and Malcolm emphasized that the grassroots level was key to the development of an idea into a plan of action. Nelson noted that there was informal sponsorship of the plan because it was an idea that made sense, and it had the backing of people “who had the resources or at least the influence to support it” (p. 4). However, there were also some key point people who were crucial to the successful development of the plan. Nelson described one key faculty member who acted “as a point person, kind of collecting the information, writing things up as they emerged, and through really very much a consensus approach, as problems were identified, he’d tack this way and check things out and get that resolved” (p. 4). Jill identified the same person as instrumental in the development of the School.

Anything needs a champion behind it and there has to be somebody who is persistent and who is willing to take it to the next step because at the university there are so many steps.

You need somebody behind it pushing it through and [he] was a key person. (Jill, p. 8)

Although many informal leaders were involved at the grassroots level, Jill and Nelson agreed that there was a certain individual whose work and influence was crucial in the development of the proposal. This person acted as a catalyst throughout the whole process, and galvanized the various policy actors into action (Nelson, Jill).

### **The Support of Key Formal Leadership**

Although the previous two sections described the critical involvement of formal and opinion leaders on campus, at University A, and the involvement of grassroots level leadership, many participants thought that the support of key leadership was very important in this process of moving ideas into action (Charles, Jeanette, John, Malcolm, Max). These participants identified the leadership as having positional authority as well as legitimate authority. Specifically, the support of both the President and the Provost throughout the whole process was

crucial in the development of the idea into a formal proposal that was passed by University Council. Charles thought that the President began the process with the implementation of strategic, university wide planning, and then created space for new structures and ideas to be discussed and explored.

Well the main thing probably was the President's part ... I mean the number one thing that we cannot do without was the support from the President's office all the way down the line. And it was starting with the strategic planning statement with complete support for the restructuring. [University A] created the Provost office at the same time because before it was the Vice President Academic. (Charles, p. 8)

The President's personal leadership was instrumental in setting the stage for the process that followed. By identifying key priorities for the University through a strategic planning process, by supporting the work of the Provost and the University Committee for Action and Planning, and by continuing to promote the vision for the University, the President supported the evolution of the School (Charles, Jeanette).

Other participants emphasized the Provost's role in establishing the School. Max, Jeanette, Malcolm, and John agreed that the Provost's support and guidance was critical in exploring the idea of an interdisciplinary school focused on public policy. He also promoted the idea of a joint school with University B. The Provost was open to new ideas and structures, because, as John explained, the Provost was "an original and provocative thinker" (p. 2). Max supported this description when he commented that:

Whether it had been a good idea or not, it wouldn't have got much further had it not sort of got kickstarted and somebody, in this case the Provost, saw it as a vehicle for doing something bigger within the whole University [A]. (p. 1)

Max reiterated that the Provost's involvement was critical: "I know for certain that it would not have worked had we not had someone at the Provost level clearing the way for this and making some space for it to happen within the university structure" (p. 4). Malcolm agreed and noted that "he always made space for this to happen...and gave encouragement, and obviously he helped to create some of those mechanisms that would facilitate the School" (p. 2). This creation of organizational space was a necessary element in moving the idea into the implementation stage. Jeanette described, in more detail, why the Provost was especially valuable in the evolution of the School:

If we wouldn't have had the personal leadership of [the Provost], we wouldn't have had the Schools; we wouldn't have had priority determination, we wouldn't have had a lot of things. And so what happens is, he would call this his political capital, and social capital, and that's what he used every time he went around and said, I think we need to do this. I think we need to do this, here's why I think we need to do what we're doing. And other people, because he was their academic leader, because he was new, because he was seasoned, because he had good ideas, because clearly he was working for the...best interests of the University [A], he was able to champion a number of these initiatives forward. He also had very strong support by all the executives at the university, the President, the other Vice Presidents, and you know, the deans to a lesser or greater extent, supported it depending on whether or not they thought that potentially there might be some funding for them or some interest for them. (p. 5)

Although there were many formal and informal leaders who played a role in this initiative (as described in the previous two sections), Max, Malcolm, Jeanette, Charles, and John felt that the support, encouragement, and influence of key leadership were necessary for the idea to gain traction. At University A, the key leadership identified by the participants was that of the President and the Provost. In short, their role included providing clear direction, establishing a mechanism to provide structural and financial support, and enabling and encouraging grassroots leadership to move the idea forward.

### **The Inclusion of the School Idea in the Multi-Year University Plan**

One means by which key leadership supported the evolution of the School was through their support for the School's inclusion as a priority in the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3). This plan was developed based on the *Strategic Planning Report* (Year 1) wherein priorities for the university were identified. As noted in the previous section, the Provost created the University Committee for Action and Planning in Year 1. Charles thought that this committee saw the interdisciplinary Schools as:

a vehicle for making some programmatic changes at the graduate level. And those decisions were really made in the end by a body that was created called the University Committee for Action and Planning, and it consisted of Vice Presidents principally, not the President. And that was the group that hammered out the *First Multi-Year University*

*Plan* [Year 3] and the budget and the committee had to cut money out of the university budget at the same time as University A was investing in these new things and so politically it was a challenge. (p. 5)

The committee identified three interdisciplinary schools as priorities for University A and described these Schools and their objectives, including the School of Policy and Research, in the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3). The committee was instrumental in determining how these Schools could be resourced and funded. Jeanette and Charles noted that this committee, under the leadership of the Provost, was especially fundamental in moving the idea forward.

The inclusion of the interdisciplinary Schools in the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3) lent some credibility and legitimacy to this new structure (Jeanette, Max). This was especially important in promoting the idea to faculty and some of the formal leaders on campus. Some deans collaborated in proposing an interdisciplinary school in the first place (Charles), as they saw the need for that kind of interdisciplinary approach in addressing the issues that affected their disciplines. However, other deans were more concerned about the impact that the School may have on their colleges' resources and faculty positions (Max). Max emphasized the importance of including the School in the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3):

I think it would have been difficult for us to get the school up and running had we included the deans and so forth earlier. Once they started to understand what the School might mean, there was tremendous pressure on them to modify the School in ways that would have made it much, much less effective, or to pull the plug, or pull the rug out from under it completely. So this was interesting sort of dynamics and path, and looking back on it, I think the outcome could have easily been something other than what it was. Certainly making it part of the *Multi-Year University Plan* [Year 3] was critical. Had it not been for that, it wouldn't have seen the light of day. (p. 4)

By including the School as a priority in the *First Multi-Year University Plan*, the initiative was awarded policy clout and organizational impetus, allowing the idea to move forward despite some organizational reticence. This process of evolving the idea until it came to be incorporated into the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3) will be further articulated in the chapter describing implementation.

### Summary

In this chapter, I reported on participant perceptions of the issues, influences and contexts underlying the establishment of the School of Policy and Research. Only eight of the participants contributed to this discussion as the other five participants were not part of the initial conversations about the perceived need for the School. Several themes emerged from the data. Specifically, these themes that articulated the issues included: the establishment of the planning structure supporting this change process, the removal of the existing barriers, the prioritization of research intensification and graduate student enrolment as key foci of the university, the galvanizing of the policy focus on campus, and the promotion of interdisciplinarity. Based on the proposal documents and the number of participants who identified each theme, the themes were almost equally weighted in terms of importance to the process. The other strong theme, the perception of the confluence of forces or *Zeitgeist* of establishing an interdisciplinary policy school, represents the opening of a policy window with the appropriateness of the timing of the idea. Depending on the perspectives of the particular participants, some of these elements were more critical to the process than others.

In this chapter, I explored the role of various stakeholders and key policy actors in articulating the idea of an interdisciplinary graduate school focused on public policy, and in supporting the evolution of that idea into a formal proposal. At both University A and University B, there was involvement of key, committed faculty at the grass roots level, in addition to involvement of senior administration as drivers or inhibitors of the ideas. However, the main theme that emerged at both universities was that both the grassroots leadership and the formal leadership were necessary to the development of the interdisciplinary School. The energy and enthusiasm of the grassroots leadership lent momentum to the idea, and the positional clout of the formal leadership lent credibility to the process. However, some of the participants identified that if the approval and implementation is too slow, the policy actors may lose their sense of momentum and enthusiasm.

## CHAPTER SIX

### IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES AND TENSIONS

In Chapter 5, I described the themes that emerged from the data concerning the issues and contexts that prompted this initiative, and the roles that the various stakeholders and policy actors played in this process. In this chapter, I explore the implementation stage of the new policy direction, or namely, the establishment of an interdisciplinary, joint School of Policy and Research. I asked the participants the following question: How has the policy implementation process been strategized and articulated? So that the participants would provide detailed descriptions, I added the following questions:

- 1) What structures and capacities (personal, interpersonal and organizational) need to be built in order to implement this policy? How have the organizational prerequisites necessary for the change been addressed?
- 2) How has the implementation process addressed the level of agency required in executing the plan?
- 3) What kind of learning is needed as individuals and as an organization or institution? How has this process been included in the implementation process?
- 4) How was the implementation time frame articulated? Why was it structured this way?

The participants' responses in this chapter reflected their roles and levels of involvement during the different stages of implementation. As a reminder, there were 13 participants. The two participants from University B, Jeff and Tom, were faculty members. At University A, some participants were senior administration of the University and of the School (Charles, Dave, Don, Jeanette, John, Linda). Some participants were on the working committee that developed the proposal, including Malcolm, Max, and Nelson. Two participants, Jill and Carl, were new faculty and members of the School. Because there were a disproportionate number of participants from University B, the data from University B are reported less frequently. However, the connection between University A and University B was an especially important element of the establishment of the interdisciplinary School. Therefore, the inclusion of the two participants from University B was beneficial in understanding the implementation of the joint School.



The implementation stage is implicated throughout the whole policy process, from the time the idea is first proposed until it is fully implemented (Levin, 2001). Levin (2001) noted that, because the implementation stage (like the rest of the policy process) is iterative, the plan solidifies over time as details are articulated, implemented, and reevaluated. The process is also messy; the themes that emerged highlight the issues and tensions that became apparent during the implementation stage. Nelson described this process, in the context of University A: “As people started to accrete momentum by gathering together and it looked like something was going to form substantively, now the system needs to back fill to be able to provide, in a sense, the road or bridge to go on, in a policy sense” (p. 1). Because there were so many parts to this road and some side roads, there were many ways to structure the presentation of the data. In order to organize all the data that emerged, I categorized the information into themes that roughly followed the timeline that was presented in Chapter 5 (Figure 5.1). Accordingly, this chapter begins with further discussion of the strategic plan and ends with a discussion of the first year of operation for the joint School of Policy and Research in Year 7. This time period included the earliest stages of development of the School, including the many issues and tensions that were encountered during the process. As will be presented within the thematic development of the chapter, Max provided a frame for examining the initial implementation of the initiative. However, prior to the description of Max’s frame for the stages of implementation, I examine the foundational planning processes that set the stage for the establishment of the School, and legitimized the change. The planning processes at University A were critical in establishing the context for the change; the processes also foreshadowed the issues and tensions underlying the implementation.

### **The Strategic Planning Process: Legitimizing Change**

As noted in Chapter 5, the new leadership at University A implemented the process of examining the current structure and programming, and then engaging in planning to establish priorities for the University. To that end, the Vice President began the University Program Review (in an antecedent year) and established the University Committee for Action and Planning (Year 1). At the same time, the President formulated the *Strategic Planning Report* (Year 1). Several participants (Charles, Don, John) perceived these processes as foundational to the establishment and eventual development of the School. These participants reiterated that the

planning processes contributed to the context as well as the implementation of this initiative. Charles described the University Program Review as a process where issues were identified and many solutions and ideas were proposed. He observed that “it was a comprehensive job. And the Schools emerged in the course of this process, as a vehicle through which many programmatic changes could be made [and as] a way of addressing a number of perceived deficiencies inside the university” (p. 5). Charles emphasized that the University Program Review highlighted the strengths and, most importantly, the weaknesses and deficiencies of the university. Because it was the first time the university had engaged in such a thorough process, it was somewhat uneven, and took some time to complete. Members of the university proposed ideas during this process and the University Council gathered these ideas and provided feedback. The senior administration then worked with the proposals to evaluate them and determine which ideas to pursue to address the perceived deficiencies of the university that were identified in the program review.

The development of the strategic plan was also a critical element of the process, according to these participants. Charles said that the program review was not completed by the time the strategic plan was released, but already some of the weaknesses of the university had been identified. He pointed out that the President noted some of those weaknesses in the strategic plan and identified those as priorities for the university. John agreed that the strategic plan was foundational in the process. He described the strategic plan in the following terms:

if you like, it's the framework, it's the strategic statement. It has to be developed very, very carefully. It's not, as well, a particularly complicated document, but it has emphasis and nuances all of which are very important and they must be the result of careful thinking and many discussions. Not only that, university presidents don't produce strategic documents of that kind often, during their time in office. Indeed if they're doing that, they've got some problems. They're intending to produce that for its enduring impact and for the term in which they're in the office. Those are the signposts and the signals and so that was intended to speak to the foreseeable future in that sense...I know only that, as a university, we're pleased with the progress we've made in the area of planning and alignment of budgets with plans. It's a very difficult process in the university world. (pp. 4-5)

John emphasized that the strategic plan was developed carefully and in conjunction with discussions about the university's past and future. From those discussions, the priorities were identified and then were aligned with budgets. John contended that the final *Strategic Plan Report* (Year 1) was not a complicated document, but he suggested that the process of developing it and aligning it with the budget was difficult, especially in the context of the university environment. However, he believed it to be a key element of the development process.

Charles agreed that the strategic plan was a critical piece of the process. He thought that the *Strategic Plan Report* (Year 1) filled a perceived gap at University A. As he observed:

we had no document that really said this is University [A]. This is who we are; this is who we intend to be. There's nothing like that. So the president's strategic directions statement was the first statement that people really believed in. But this actually sized the place up, indicated the deficiencies, and there's some poetry in there about who we are and all of that, a sense of place, and then, next the details followed. (p. 8)

Charles emphasized that the President's strategic directions statement set the stage for the actions that followed. He suggested that the whole planning process was important in legitimizing the change that the university needed to undergo to address the weaknesses. He stated:

the planning process as a whole, acted, in a way, as cover for those changes, because the planning process is really about legitimizing change. Nobody wants to change anything, right, unless they are forced to. If you're engaged in the planning process then, you know, you're implicit in that there's a willingness to make adjustments if they are deemed necessary. (p. 5)

Charles pointed out that everyone was engaged in the planning process through the university-wide Program Review. He contended that, through their departments and colleges, everyone had the opportunity to contribute to the dialogue, and, thus, they would be implicit in the process. From those discussions, necessary adjustments would be noted. Priorities were identified, and the options to accomplish those priorities had to be explored. For example, one of the priorities in the plan was interdisciplinarity and collaboration. There were a variety of ways to achieve that goal. As John observed:

Well I don't think you [can] conclude that there is only one way of doing things, nor do you conclude that the identification of a School of [Policy and Research] as a desirable

possibility will exclude other possibilities. I think one of the quests to which most complicated universities are committed, maybe most universities are committed, is the quest to bring different perspectives and different disciplines together and you do that in many ways. The creation of a school is one way, and certainly an important way, but the other is bringing people together in conferences and discussions in buildings. (p. 1)

John further pointed out that an enhanced focus on interdisciplinary work was a priority for the university, but there were a variety of ways by which that objective could be accomplished. Dave agreed that a stronger focus on interdisciplinarity was needed, because, during the review process, the existing gap regarding interdisciplinary work on campus stood out. As he explained:

Through certainly the first round of integrated planning on this campus, one of the problems that I thought was loud and clear was the lack of value that was placed on interdisciplinarity. You had a system that was put in place to review programs, and by implication review faculty and review research and all of that, that created an incentive for deans, and for department heads and unit leaders right across the board, to really focus on the things that were totally within their domain. And nobody had an incentive to focus on the things that fell between domains, and I guess the notion was, if that's important and if there's a value to interdisciplinarity it's the provost office that will pick that up, or something. Somebody else would champion it, because it's important. But as a consequence you noticed a systematic review process where nobody really was dealing with any of the interdisciplinarity. Everybody was retreating back to various historical administrative structures, and that was a shame. And I see the interdisciplinary Schools, it's really a way to transform, from that reality, because it's not helpful. (pp. 8-9)

The possibilities had to be articulated and considered, and, as Charles noted, “[we] didn't know how we were going to do any of this. You kind of had to have faith in the process to some degree” (p. 8). There was no blueprint to follow; Max suggested that “the School is actually a rather unique instance of this kind of institutional change” (p. 3). He pointed out that there was a danger in the way the interview questions were framed because it would lead readers to think that there was only one possibility and it was developed. He stated:

So I would say there's an aspect to the way that you framed these questions that makes it look like this was all planned out and, it's easy to go back and say, here's the path that was followed. But in fact, that's what you are doing, is you're saying, “Here's the path

that was followed.” It doesn’t say [anything] about all the other paths that could have been followed, and there were many of them. There were different things that could have been done. It was not completely logically developed ... Here’s how we are going to do this. We have a policy that we want to do *x*. Here’s how we are going to do it. Let’s put the resources in place and do it. At some level that’s the case but much of this was contested along the way. (pp. 7-8)

Max emphasized that the process of moving an idea into implementation was not simply finding resources. He thought that the path from beginning to end was not a straight, smooth path as suggested by the order of the interview questions. The process started by exploring potential solutions to the issues identified in the strategic plan.

The university’s senior administration had to establish the structures necessary to explore the possibilities and support the priorities identified in the strategic plan. Charles stated: “If we’re going to do what the president wants us to do, then we need to have a different process and we need different entities” (p. 7). In order to plan around the priorities, the University Committee on Action and Planning (UCAP) was established in Year 2. Charles noted that the committee was an important element in the process because “as we’re gearing the planning process up, those people are there, so when the plans come in, we have to do all this work, we’re not running around and trying to second people” (p. 7). Don concurred that UCAP was essential in the process. He pointed out that UCAP was “created in advance of the University’s [*First Multi-Year University Plan*] to facilitate the planning processes at the university, basically to stretch the planning processes out from a one year period to a much longer time frame” (Don, p. 1). This committee was also tied to the Provost’s office because, as Charles observed, “the Provost principally is responsible for budgeting and academic planning. Not for financial management and not for the finances of the institution but for putting the budget together and the academic plans and marrying them” (p. 8). Charles noted that, in effect, the planning structures were centralized:

So part of the process here’s been some centralization of planning resources. You know, budgetary, facilities, and just simply the process of institutional planning, to...kind of make all of this work. And then you have the Provost’s committee itself so that means saying to the Vice Presidents, well Mr. Vice President of Research, we know that, you’ve got all these issues, you’ve got all these people and so on but we want you to take time

out of your schedule every couple of weeks and spend the entire afternoon sitting around your other vice presidential colleagues and worrying about this planning process and budgeting and so on. So they got drawn into the collective management of the institution, formally. (p. 7)

As Charles contended, having the Vice Presidents devote dedicated time to the planning process and budgeting, helped to centralize the planning, and resulted in the Vice Presidents becoming part of the collective management of the university. Charles, Don, and John agreed that these structures and processes provided the foundation for identifying priorities and funding the priorities (Charles, Don, John). With this foundation, a more concrete plan for realizing those priorities could be developed and the details could be articulated further.

### **Policy Implementation: Max's Frame**

After the priorities were articulated in the *Strategic Plan Report* (Year 1) at University A, the University's senior administration and UCAP developed the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3). Within this document, the School of Policy and Research was highlighted as one of the ways to actualize the priorities of the strategic plan. The *First Multi-Year University Plan* described the context and issues underlying the development of this interdisciplinary policy School, and outlined the basic objectives of the School. Moving this idea into a workable structure, though, required much more planning, and problem solving as many issues were encountered. As Max noted, there were many stages of policy implementation, where the details were added to the skeleton of the idea. Max suggested that the entire process could be characterized as three stages of policy implementation. The first stage was really the longest, most difficult stage of developing the proposal, and presenting the plan to the University Council for approval. The second stage occurred after approval had been given by the Council, and explicit details, including programming, needed to be articulated. The third stage was the first year of operation for the School, with the first cohort of students. Most of this chapter's data are focused on the first stage of the implementation process, because of all of the considerations, discussions, and time it took to move the idea into a formal proposal that was passed by Council. The timeline presented in Chapter Five portrays the many issues underlying this stage. Although each part of the policy process is discussed further throughout this chapter, Max encapsulated the main early implementation issues in his description of the first stage of implementation:

The first thing that was required was to move that paragraph in the integrated plan into something that was meaningful and that was real. And that was really the job of the working group, to take it through, to put some meat on the bones, get some buy-in, think about some of the things that were needed, and that process took an incredibly long time. That was a very, very slow process. And that was really where the university structure came; you really could see it. Some of it was certain people putting roadblocks up because they didn't want to see this happening. In other cases, it was just simply a lot of different groups wanting to have their say, to examine it, not move too fast, make sure that other people had been consulted and so forth. And as you came up to that point [of getting approval] the difficulties became bigger and bigger and bigger. And in some ways it wasn't quite clear up until probably a month before because at some point then the deans needed to be brought in and they had been largely brought onside, or they were accepting of the change. But even at the last moment there were, I think, questions as to whether or not it was all going to hang together or whether it was going to fall apart. But it did in fact sort of come together. That's a 3-year period where a lot of the time it didn't look like much was happening. But in fact there were lots and lots of meetings and lots of reports being drafted. We needed to become involved with [University B], and then that whole piece gets laid on top of this and adds an additional complexity to all of the discussions, because now people are raising the issue, well, maybe we could have a school but do we want to go along with University B? We needed to sort of buttress those questions and those arguments and shore those up so that we had support from people who were raising questions. And so a tremendous amount of sort of political work going on to get it to the point where it becomes really official policy and the actual approval of the school. And there are additional layers. (pp. 5-6)

As Max pointed out, the process of developing a fully articulated plan that could be approved by Council had many layers to construct. The working committee, in conjunction with UCAP and the Provost's office, had to outline all the details of the School, and answer many questions and concerns. Nelson added to the description of the proposal, and he compared the proposal to draft policy. He stated: "The iterative nature of it allowed the senior administration to begin to know what it needed to have policy on, in terms of the metapolicy, the larger policy" (p. 4). Max highlighted that, at University A, this process took three years from the time it was included in

the multi-year plan until there was final approval for the School and another year of articulating the finer details and obtaining final approval for the program before the initial cohort of students entered the School. The development of the proposal and the approval process is described further in a later section.

Meanwhile, at University B, key faculty retooled an existing policy program, as described in Chapter 5. From the initial idea through the detailed articulation of the proposal, to the final approval of the new program, the entire process took two years. The idea of a joint school was a secondary consideration, and the idea occurred after the new policy school opened at University B. For University B, there were more roadblocks in obtaining approval for the joint school (Jeff, Tom). However, because it was a pre-existing program that was changed over a shorter time frame (a two year period), University B's campus of the School of Policy and Research had approximately five times more students than University A at the time of this study (Max, Tom). According to Tom and Max, throughout the two years that University A explored the idea of the policy school, University B introduced and continued to offer its Master's of Public Administration program. The circuitous approval process is described in more detail later in this chapter.

This section briefly described the stages of implementation at the two campuses of the joint School. In the following sections, the many issues and tensions encountered during the first stage of implementation are examined. Specifically, I explore the resources (human, financial, and space) needed for this change, the program development, the dynamics of the joint School proposal and the reports of the external consultants, the length of time required, the approval process, the resistance to change, and the structures needed for actualizing the approved proposal.

### **Max's First Stage of Implementation**

As noted previously, Max characterized the first stage of implementation as beginning with an idea developed by a few interested academics into a model of an interdisciplinary policy school that would address several of the priorities articulated by the President in the strategic plan. As well, Max thought this idea "presented a model or some kind of a vehicle for introducing some other change within the university system" (p. 2). The informal working group of faculty then moved the idea forward through "fleshing out" all of the supporting details. Dave



agreed that the model supported the priorities, and he described the importance of the working group's involvement:

You'll only ever create a value proposition for an interdisciplinary school if there's a group who can see themselves in part of it, when it's still an idea. I think on a go-forward basis we just always have to be an organization that's receptive to those ideas. And a place where a group of motivated faculty who want to pursue something can, and they're not totally stymied in their attempts to create new enterprise, to create new learning experiences for students at the undergrad and graduate level and create new areas of scholarship, in areas of outreach and engagement. So, keeping in mind, these ideas will always be driven by individuals, find a way to bring individuals together and make things happen. So, as I say... I'm a big fan of the notion of subsidiarity. I think that once a value proposition can be created and the university has made a resource commitment then it's time to let it happen. Move very quickly to the executive director stage, and let that person have real resources and real decisions to make; recruit well, and therefore, enjoy the results. And be okay with experimentation. It's impossible to predict exactly how these things are going to roll out, and it's unrealistic to expect that there's going to be a five-year plan and it will never be deviated from. (p. 6)

As Dave pointed out, it was important to have a group genuinely committed to moving the idea forward, but he cautioned that, even with articulating all of the finer details of the proposal, it would be impossible to foresee all eventualities. He thought that the University should support the faculty who are committed to actualizing an innovation, and allow the innovation to move forward without every single detail being articulated and approved. Most importantly, he agreed with Max that the grassroots level development of the idea of the policy school moved it forward. Malcolm described the members as "a bit of a hybrid group" (p. 7). He explained that "it was largely bottom up" with a group of interested faculty, and it was "facilitated by the Provost's office" (p. 7). Because it was driven at the grassroots level, Malcolm characterized it as "a semi-organic initiative" (p. 7). This group collaborated on developing the idea into a workable model. In the process of developing the proposal during this first stage of implementation, many tensions and other logistical issues needed to be resolved. The following sections describe the process of "fleshing out" the idea into a formal proposal, and the difficulties encountered along the way.

**Resources: The process of capacity building.** One of the major issues that needed to be resolved in developing the proposal included securing resources (human, financial, space). At University A, especially, where the interdisciplinary policy School would be a new entity, finding sufficient resources was essential to the development of the School. The working group had to consider these logistics in order to determine the feasibility of the idea. Before the idea could move forward, the working group and the senior administration needed to examine the present and potential capacity of the university for establishing an independent policy school. At University B, the faculty members and senior administration also had to problem-solve around the issues of resources, especially when more students were applying for the program than could be accommodated.

Almost all of the participants (Carl, Charles, Dave, Don, Jeanette, Jeff, Jill, Linda, Malcolm, Max, Nelson, Tom) described some of these logistics in detail. According to most of these participants, early in the School's development, various policy actors engaged in the whole process of articulating the School's needs and examining ways to designate resources to fill these needs. Max noted that the informal working group became a more formal group during the same year that the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3) was released. This group worked in conjunction with the Provost's office and UCAP to determine all of the details. Charles outlined all the areas that needed to be considered:

The Schools need leadership, they need resources, they need human resources, they need programs, they need space and they need students. And so that's just a short list...but the core list of things they need. All of the schools begin life with none of this...except for some resources, so the Provost's [office] said, we are going to take...some resources from different parts of the institution. We would take some of the Canada Research Chairs, and we would give those to the Schools. We would take some of the receipts of the campaign, the fundraising campaign that was ongoing, and we would take some of that and give that to the Schools. We would take some positions that existed already and were in entities that weren't performing particularly well, and that were kind of out there. We would take that and give those to the Schools. So we would get the Schools going then. [They'd] also pledged to hire executive directors for each of the Schools. So then it wasn't like so, here's the School and, [they're] done, you guys worry about the details. [The Provost's office had] to supply all of that. And [they] said, you know, you will

facilitate and try to get through Council the academic programs. The academics have to put the programs together but [the Provost's Office] will facilitate and expedite those programs through Council. (p. 6)

As Charles observed, the Provost's Office had an essential role to play in terms of determining how to provide the physical, financial, and human resources. The academics who were part of the formal working group were responsible for designing the programs, and then the two groups would work together to get the programs approved. The senior administration was necessarily involved in making decisions around resources, but the involvement of a core group of interested faculty was also very involved in articulating the details. There were many types of resources to consider in this process. Charles listed all of the different resources needed: financial and human resources, leadership, space, programs, and students. Nelson agreed that implementation required consideration of all these details, and he articulated a very similar list of all the needs. With the exception of the students (that are discussed more in the second and third stages of implementation), these resources are described in more detail in the following sections.

*Issues concerning financial resources.* Securing financial resources was critical for the development of the School. Don and Charles noted that the senior administration tried to match the university's priorities with the budget, and, because the School would address some of those priorities, the School should be adequately funded. As Don pointed out, the School had operational and capital needs, and funding to meet those needs had to be secured. Several participants (Charles, Don, Jeanette, Linda, Tom) discussed the complicated financial considerations necessary in establishing a new entity on campus.

The participants from University B did not go into much detail about the financial side of things, but Tom mentioned that there were dedicated funds for the School; they also received a "little bit" of additional funding in recognition of their student enrolment. However, Tom suggested that the level of funding was "not as much as [he] would have liked" (p. 4). He noted that the School charged double tuition because it was a "professional program" (p. 4); of the extra tuition, the School received about half of it and the university got the rest. Because the enrolment was quite high (approximately 150 students according to Tom), this extra tuition helped financially. The larger enrolment, though, had implications for space and faculty that also impacted finances.

At University A, the four participants discussed how the finances tied into priority determination and accountability. Charles emphasized that the planning process “doesn’t work without leadership from the top, without the structures and roles and responsibilities recast to make it work. And then you have to have the resources to put in to what it is you decide to prioritize” (p. 9). According to Charles, the leadership required real resources to put towards strong ideas and projects. They had to build capacity for change. Charles elaborated on this point:

I think that the other thing you had to have a little bit farther along was really you had to obtain some capacity to actually make some changes, so it couldn’t just be kind of rhetorical, or even regulatory directive. You know we’re going to improve the speed with which we process graduate applications for example. I mean that’s helpful, and is useful, as a process change. But then we also knew we needed to have new real resources to put into things. So [the senior administration] began to accumulate those...They took a portion of the budgetary allocation to the University from the provincial government, and they put that in an academic priorities fund. (p. 8)

As Charles noted, the senior administration needed to dedicate funds to support the priorities, and build capacity for those changes. They established an academic priorities fund for that purpose. That fund needed to have significant money available, according to Charles and Jeanette. Jeanette elaborated on how the academic priorities fund was established:

That fund was when the deans all put in so much money each to make one million, that was really a one-off venture. The academic priorities fund was established from funding first of all, through the funding mechanisms in the University, who put three million roughly, into a...fund that would support the initiatives in the [First Multi-Year University Plan]. And, to the extent that we didn’t spend them all in the first year we had all that money to do things. We had roughly 14 million of fall-in money. This time around, we have four-and-a-half million, in the academic priorities fund, which sounds like a lot but it’s still very small, compared to what we need. (p. 5)

Jeanette noted that the funds were allocated from the deans and their colleges’ budgets across the campus, and other funding mechanisms in the University, and Charles added that some of the funds came from a portion of the provincial government’s funding to the University. Part of this

process came from a recognition that the resources on campus had traditionally been silo-based. As Jeanette observed:

I think when we went down this path we said that we had a number of resources. We have resources that are silo-based, right? And so the question is, how do you get more impact out of those silo-based resources? And...so you need to bring them together to discuss some other or identify some bigger problem that you see various disciplines contributing to, as opposed to, well, I can solve it over here, or I can solve it over here, or I can solve it over here myself. (p. 13)

Jeanette pointed out that the University tried to move past having silo-based resources by amalgamating at least some funds into a combined fund. This combined fund would be used to explore options from an interdisciplinary standpoint. Jeanette and Charles emphasized the importance of having dedicated funds to support the new initiatives that were proposed, especially those initiatives that reflected the identified priorities of the University.

Don concurred, noting that this budgeting process helped to match the University budget with the priorities. In fact, of the five participants who specifically discussed the financial aspect of the change process, Don especially elaborated on the many aspects of the finances, and how the budgeting process had evolved. He described the budget structure:

The university's resources are, well, they are certainly not finite and you never really know what they are from year to year. You can speculate and you can project but you know your main sources of revenue are provincial government funding followed by tuition which is based on enrolment, so you have to be concerned about enrolment patterns [because] they go up, they fluctuate. A lot of your costs tend to be fixed costs and you have a large salary component...What the university did, is they said if we are going to have new priorities, we have to have funds to manage those priorities and to initiate them. Therefore we will set aside money so we will take the total of our operating budget and our tuition revenue and we will set aside a fund called an academic priorities fund, a name that has money in it, and then we will use this money in order to fund the institutional priorities. So when they approve the first [multi-year university plan] there is money, and when they approve the second [multi-year university plan], there is money. So now the question becomes, well we have priorities and we have money how will we now take the priorities and match them up with the money that we have set aside. So the

institution is funding its priorities with a fixed amount of money hoping to grow it, but at least they have set it aside and so they know it's there. It's not wishful thinking; it is we do actually have money. And when they move down the road of three interdisciplinary schools there is a pool of money they can access, so the question was, how much of that funds will we set aside for the three interdisciplinary schools? (pp. 2-3)

Don noted that the University considered three interdisciplinary schools in the funding process, but there were other ideas brought forward in the discussions. He said that there still were unfunded requests because "being told what the priorities were and then identifying what costs were and the whole multi-year budget is based on revenues and costs; unfortunately we live in an environment where we have unlimited desires and wishes and limited resources" (Don, p. 2). Don commented that some of the multi-year budget depended on speculation and that required making decisions around what ideas to fund.

Charles also pointed out that different ideas were considered, but the proposals' proponents needed to demonstrate that the programs would yield results. Some ideas, like the School of Policy and Research, were more feasible from a financial standpoint, according to Don. He noted that the School had the enhanced "ability to seek out other sources of funding, aside from tuition revenues and aside from research revenues" (p. 6). This occurred because University A was now poised to work with University B and the provincial government "as it relates to policy issues in the province so there is better potential to marshal funds than you could have without those particular structures" (Don, p. 6). The School had revenue-generating potential through its relationship with University B and the provincial government that could lend support to its programs and structures. However, University A still had to fund the School adequately; according to Don, the School had to have "sufficient money to [become] operational" (p. 3). He emphasized that it didn't have to be fully funded, but he would describe it as reasonably funded because "the last thing you want to do is start a school which is immediately in financial difficulty. So you have to provide a reasonable level of funding. If you're going to do it, do it right, do it well" (p. 3). Don mentioned that each of the three new Schools received the same initial funding, but the funding changed afterwards based on the needs of the individual school. Don described those needs:

A program has two needs. It has operating needs, which is the operating budget and it has capital needs, which is the capital budget and the university consistently treats them

separately. The university realizes there is overlap but the university will provide space and it will provide operating funds. The question then, and that is kind of why I was saying there is a bigger issue than the space issue, yes they are important but there are bigger issues. On the operating side, it becomes a question of how do you gather the funds for the operating needs? Traditionally people look to the operating budget of the university to provide all the operating funds for a program and the university “central administration” is saying, well that’s part of it, and yes I know you would like it to be all of it, but it’s just part of it. The other parts are how much research activity can you have that will provide or fund some of your indirect costs of research and provide some of your student supports? How much funds can you generate through advancement (fundraising) activities? What other sources of funding can you bring to bear on your operating budget? If it is not direct funding, can you have shared resources with other departments or administrative units to provide the resources you need to operate? So I guess it is really a question of what they can do outside of the resources that are available, the limited resources that are available, within their operating budget? How can they manage to grow that particular budget? (pp. 8-9)

Don noted that the operating budget traditionally supported the ongoing costs of the colleges and schools; now, the University administration was encouraging all departments, colleges and schools to look for additional ways to support their programs and research, as well as their daily operations. Don described the original “mother document” for the Schools that outlined the faculty arrangements, the joint appointments, the financial arrangements, and the general goals of the Schools, such as growing research capacity. He then talked about the specific proposal for each School:

The financial document in approving schools was more of a “here’s how we are going to bring money to bear” without getting into detailed financial projections. It was just a concept document. We have money set aside. Here’s how much we are going to allocate and there are things we want to see from individual schools before we allocate more. The individual Schools had a budget, so each one had a budget. I believe it was a 5 year budget. And it talked about its specific enrolment goals, it talked about its funding needs, it talked about the fact that if you took their budget and looked at it, there’s a budget shortfall. Where was the money for the shortfall going to come through? There were

some expectations that the Schools had some “to be determined” funding sources. At the end of the day, you are going to have to match your revenues and your expenses. But there was a... I wouldn't say a detailed budget but a fairly sufficient level of budgetary information for people to understand the size, the expectations, the hopes and the accountabilities (I call them accountabilities) for the schools. (pp. 13-14)

Don emphasized that each proposal outlined the “hopes and accountabilities” for the School. Don pointed out that one of the common objectives of the new Schools was growing the student base. Each school would have an existing base, and use new student enrolment to add to that base. He stressed that the goal was not to move students from an existing department to the new School; Don thought that, if one existing program's student base shrank while the School's expanded, then “all the university has done is spent more money to accomplish exactly the same thing” (p. 4). In order to address accountability issues, Don explained that each School had to have reasonable growth plans, and the university was going to monitor student numbers.

Linda mentioned that the Schools had to be specific with their objectives. She expressed that the level of funding was cyclical; there was an initial amount of money, but that the ongoing funds were linked with the schools' objectives and outcomes. As Linda observed:

Well, because of this, the funding is not just asking for one time funding. In the first proposal to just kind of get the schools started was a first kind of budgetary, a first kind of bucket of money, and now all three schools have just submitted now...sort of their “ask” for the next planning cycle, for the next four years. So they have had to project, and what the university requires is that, by the end of this planning cycle, what are going to be the outcomes? So that's why the specificity is there, is that we need to be able to say we need “X” amount of money, because we are going to have, whether it's X amount of graduate students or Y amount, and so we have to be able to have that detail. One impacts the budgetary “ask”, so there's a couple of documents I am going to give you, almost in sequence. One sort of gives the broad strokes, and leads to the next proposal, which leads to the next. (p. 5)

Linda emphasized the cyclical nature of the budgeting process; she also alluded to the necessity of projecting what outcomes the schools hoped to achieve. These outcomes led to the development of the next proposal. As Linda observed, the initial funds needed to be provided but subsequent funding was tied to outcome and projections. Jeanette agreed that accountability



was an issue, as the Schools represented a huge investment for the university. Because the study occurred shortly after the Schools had become established, it was too early to identify any successes, especially from a financial standpoint, but Jeanette suggested that she was interested in the outcomes. According to Jeanette:

I'll be very interested to know how the Schools do, you know, because they have been...the single biggest investment that we've made, and we're looking at, from the academic priorities fund, around the 1.8 million dollar investment, not to mention all the other things that we're putting into the Schools, bringing it to about eight million in total...in terms of funding. So it's huge for the university. Now, in terms of overall budget, it's maybe 2% of the institution's operating budget, but it's still huge in terms of the message it sends about what we're trying to achieve here. (pp. 4-5)

Jeanette thought that the Schools were "huge" for a couple of reasons; they were the single biggest investment of the university, and they presented a message to the broader university about what the university was trying to achieve through the whole process of identifying priorities and marrying those priorities with substantial funds and resources. Although the participants from University A emphasized the importance of this process, not all people on campus were happy with the changes. This reaction will be described in a later section.

*Faculty and staff issues.* There were many issues to consider in the staffing process; this is evident from the number of responses that related to this theme, and from the number of participants who discussed this theme in detail. Eight of the participants (Carl, Dave, Don, Jeff, Jill, Linda, Malcolm, Nelson, Tom) described the human resources necessary for supporting this initiative. Most of the discussion centred on faculty issues, but support staff were also discussed.

At University B, Tom commented that the faculty issues included having enough faculty to support the large number of students enrolled in the program. Tom mentioned that, at first, one and a half positions were filled by moving vacant positions from the Faculty of Arts into the School, and two faculty members moved into the School from the Faculty of Administration. Tom also pointed out that University B did not have any joint faculty; the joint faculty position was unique to University A where it was used for the first time when staffing the interdisciplinary Schools (this new structure will be discussed further when describing University A's faculty). At University B, Jeff said that, at the time of this study, there were now

seven faculty in the School, to meet the demand for the program. In fact, Tom noted that they had to limit applicants “because of the size of the faculty” (p. 4); even though the university gave the School additional funding in recognition of their student enrolments, and they had added some positions, the School needed to limit the number of students. At the time of this study, University B was in the process of possibly hiring two additional faculty members (Carl, Jill). Tom added that interdisciplinarity was important in the hiring of faculty. He explained:

Everybody embraces it as a principle, but the extent to which they practice it fluctuates or varies a great deal. Everybody talks interdisciplinarity but very few people behave in that way; more people do in our school but still the natural reflex is to operate solely within your discipline. Some people may not even have the skills or ability unless they are mentored extensively in how to do that. [For interdisciplinary research] it’s left up to the individuals and, by and large, people like myself, that’s what we do. Whether there will be a joint effort across the faculties in both campuses, that hasn’t happened yet and until we get settled and get things really moving here it might take another year or two before we do that. But a good test of whether we are succeeding as a joint faculty is whether that happens. (p. 8)

Tom suggested that everyone agreed with interdisciplinarity in principle, but did not always practice it. He believed that the extent of interdisciplinary research that the campuses eventually engaged in would be a good test of the joint faculty model. He pointed out that the two campuses would not be in a good position to do that for a year or two, until they were both settled and the faculty was in place.

At University A, there had not been an existing, independent, policy program, so the faculty needed to be built from the beginning. According to Don, senior administration explored ways of staffing the three interdisciplinary Schools that were established at the same time. One way they looked at supporting the schools was through Canada Research Chairs (CRCs) and Centennial Chairs. Don described the two programs extensively, and contrasted the two types of research chairs. He explained that Canada Research Chairs are a federally funded program and that each university receives a number of chairs. It is then up to the university to determine how to use those chairs. Don noted that, because of this, there are “segments of the university really competing for Canada Research Chairs” (p. 9). The administration decided to “indicate that

[their] priorities for the Canada Research Chairs would be some to the Schools” (Don, p. 10). Don said that the university:

can nominate an individual to be a Canada Research Chair in a particular area, which then has to go through an approval process. So the university can control who they put forward, but somebody else has to make the formal approval process. (p. 10)

The university hoped to put some CRCs in the Schools. Don mentioned that, at the same time, the university used an internal funding process to set up some Centennial Chairs. He explained that the university raised funds through a capital campaign and, from those monies, could endow some chairs. He added: “Why don’t we designate that money? We’ll set it aside and we’ll use the investment income off that money to fund three chairs and we will call them Centennial Chairs, one in each of the three Schools” (p. 10). These chairs were an important addition to the staffing package, according to Don. He emphasized that the “Centennial Chair is internal, Canada Research chairs are external, and funded from sources outside of the operating grant from the provincial government and tuition revenue. They are funding sources that can be brought to bear on the activity” (p. 10). Don added that the Chairs are “sustainable within the rules and regulations of the particular program” (p. 11), so the Canada Research Chairs follow the rules of the federal program, and the university committed to funding the Centennial Chairs for a particular amount of time. However, Don noted that “like a lot of things, though, as soon as you start it, there are expectations that it will continue regardless” (p. 11). Don pointed out that, for the initial stages of implementation, the addition of these chairs was beneficial to solidifying the faculty complement of the Schools.

Linda suggested that, when hiring the initial faculty, there were numerous factors to consider. She described how the policy areas, the research, and the various programs all affected the hiring of faculty. She said:

It will require significant resources, both in terms of having a faculty, and in terms of the number of areas or thematic sort of strands that have to be supported, which comes into play with scholarships, and various kinds of programs both at the Master’s and PhD levels, the type of faculty that will need to be employed in terms of both research and clinical and academic viewpoint. (p. 6)

As Linda observed, the hiring committee had to consider the type, as well as the number, of faculty needed in the new School. The hiring had to reflect the faculty members’ areas of

scholarship and expertise, and the School's program (Linda). Carl concurred with that observation. He stated: "We have eight faculty but only four are here full-time at the School. We are hiring and that's probably the most interesting aspect to work out: how do we hire in an interdisciplinary context?" (p. 1). The initial hiring had to reflect the interdisciplinary focus, as well as fulfill program needs, and the same consideration was given to subsequent hires.

At University A, the existing faculty at the time of this study consisted of some full-time faculty, some part-time faculty, and some joint faculty. Determining this arrangement was left to the working group, according to Dave. He elaborated on the faculty determination process:

In terms of identifying what would be a good critical mass of faculty...that was really the responsibility of the working group; so each of the Schools had a working group and who were these folks? These were just a...group of scholars who self-selected to be a part of the project. They were involved from the very beginning, in helping understand what this could be and helping develop the Council documents. The chairs of those working groups, I think in each case, became the acting directors of the School, so that was a pretty natural fit between the two positions. So there was a group of advisors that were already established and it was this group that played the role of determining how many core faculty did you need, how many of them had to be primary appointments and how many could be secondary, how many had to be full appointments in the School versus joint appointments, either primary or secondary. So that was a collegial discussion, that wasn't predetermined by the approval of the Schools. It wasn't determined by the executive sponsors, it wasn't even determined by the acting director alone, it was determined by this advisory group. In some cases there was a mapping between someone who was on a working group and where they might end up in the School. But as you would expect, I mean it would make sense to do it that way. (p. 2)

Dave described the process of determining the human resources required to support the new program, and he noted that it was discussions at the grassroots level that established the staffing requirements. Dave alluded to the move of some of the working group members to the new School, either as full-time or joint appointments. He felt that this was a sensible move for these faculty members because they believed in interdisciplinarity and had an interest in policy. Dave explained:

There wasn't a need to spend much time with the faculty members who were pursuing either a transfer or a joint appointment. They had in many cases already self-selected to show an interest. They didn't have to be convinced of the value of an interdisciplinary school, they didn't have to be convinced that there was value in being joint between two academic units, so there were no formal curation processes put in place for those folks. (p. 3)

Dave mentioned that interested faculty began to pursue a transfer or joint appointment. These faculty members understood the value and structure of the joint, interdisciplinary policy School. Throughout the first and second stages of implementation, these faculty negotiations carried on, according to Dave, Nelson, and Malcolm.

Nelson also described this movement of interested faculty into the School's faculty. He noted that there were some people who were quite involved, "to the extent that they convinced themselves, and perhaps others, that this is where they wanted to find their home. And so those people began to migrate into places of negotiation with their home units" (p. 6). Meanwhile, the deans had been kept informed of the possible faculty arrangements as documents made their way through Council, according to Dave. However, as the time came closer for these arrangements to come into play, there was "a moment of reckoning to realize it was actually going to happen" (Dave, p. 3). Both Dave and Nelson noted that, at this point, the deans were now considering the logistics of sharing, or losing, a faculty member. Each faculty member began negotiations with the respective dean, and Nelson wondered "from a policy perspective, how much do you make central policy and how much do you allow to be worked out, based on idiosyncratic needs and so forth?" (p. 6). According to Nelson and Malcolm, some deans, the faculty association, and some faculty members had questions about the whole process, including the use of joint faculty. Malcolm described this tension:

The joint [appointments] were new but they were created ahead of us, and that was of course one of the debates, one of the questions that came up. What about these joint things? Why should we do those? We already had those, they were negotiated in the collective agreement; the processes were there. It wasn't our job to defend that. We were just there to use it. If you didn't want it, don't put it on the books was our argument. I mean we did it pleasantly but that was one of the frustrations of the process. (p. 14)

The joint faculty positions were negotiated prior to the Schools' establishment, but they had never been used before, and there were questions about how they would work and the implications for the home colleges, according to Malcolm.

Nelson, on the other hand, described the transfers and use of joint faculty as representing the cooperation of the deans, even though it was not easy. He said:

Great cooperation, not easy, necessarily, but great contributions from the deans around campus, especially the affected ones, like Arts and Science, Law, Education, and that's just really helped. I think because it was new, and it was because it was a bit about being a citizen, of the university, and because the idea just made sense. And because there was payback to both. (p. 7)

He suggested that the deans did cooperate with the process, even though it was not easy. He thought that they did so because they recognized the payback there could be to the university. They supported the new School because they were also citizens of the university.

Just as interdisciplinarity was considered for the new hires, Malcolm and Nelson noted that the initial faculty members were drawn from many different disciplines and had expertise in policy work in some capacity. Malcolm suggested that "everybody in that school is heavily engaged in policy systems, and I think we've got between us probably a couple of hundred years, if you add [the two universities], of policy relevant experience" (p. 4). He thought that this experience was essential to the success of the School and the program. Malcolm explained:

Schools of public policy don't really go anywhere unless you've got somebody who knows how the system works, and the system works at multiple levels, and it is inherently a political process so people who have been in, down and dirty in the political system, both as actors and as observers and commentators are important. But policy isn't just politics; the vast majority of what happens, happens among technicians and functionaries and bureaucrats, among experts, and so many of us have held positions related to that. And that is part of the creative tension of the School; we'd get into interesting debates. So, in a way, the School provides us with an ability to create some economies of scale, some capacity, to say, look you know, we're not just a bunch of individuals. We are actually a powerful actor in the policy field. And that will attract students, that will attract research grants, because nobody's got everything, if you've got somebody who has got political, somebody with technical, somebody with academic

expertise and capacity in an area, much more important if you're going for money or if you're trying to attract students, or trying to attract speakers to engage in a public dialogue. (p. 5)

Malcolm emphasized both the faculty's interest and experience in the policy field, and how that expertise was very beneficial to the School. As well, he hoped that galvanizing that expertise in one School would attract students, research money, and speakers to the School. Nelson agreed with Malcolm that the School's faculty included many leaders in the policy field who were "very key individuals on campus" (p. 7) and were "really intelligent and able academics" (p. 7). Both Malcolm and Nelson thought that having a faculty with extensive policy relevant experience was a real strength of the joint policy School. The faculty members drawn to the School were already involved in policy work and interdisciplinarity, and this faculty background really supported the objectives of the School, according to these participants.

However, one drawback to having a small initial staff was that it was more difficult to work through all of the administrative tasks, especially since it was such a new School. Carl noted that there were a few committees, such as hiring, admissions, and curriculum committees that were staffed by the faculty of the School. He added that "it's a very simple division of labor. It's a pretty small operation so we have relatively few committees because we don't have enough people to staff them, and it's just too small to do that" (p. 7). Carl mentioned that, often, the executive director would just ask for help on a specific issue if he needed it. He emphasized that the structure "can't be too rigid because we have so few people and we're so new that that would not make any sense" (p. 7). Malcolm agreed that setting up the School with a small number of faculty was difficult. For the joint faculty, who had homes in other colleges, they needed more time to meet with their colleagues without having to work on administrative duties. He explained:

The reason the eight of us agreed to be in there is we were excited about wanting to work together, and we haven't done it yet. So that's where I think the next year will be so critical. We've got to find a way of adding incrementally to our intellectual pursuits. It's not enough that we just teach and do administration and go our separate ways for our research. We've got to find a way of sparking. And when you're together for those 10 minutes before and after meetings and things, we do get excited. So it's still there. We have to find a way of making it happen. It's not just physical space, it's time space, it's

mental space and I know that everyone with heavy administrative or teaching duties in this university says that the biggest challenge is really doing anything well and really adding to what we're trying to do is finding that uninterrupted space, time, place, people and resources that match up in some way, in some appropriate configuration. (p. 24)

Malcolm, like Tom, thought that the faculty needed uninterrupted time and space to explore interdisciplinary research together. At this point, the School was still settling in, and, according to Malcolm, the administrative tasks were overshadowing other opportunities for working together. The tensions of setting up the new School, and changing or adjusting their faculty positions affected the initial faculty members throughout the first three stages of implementation. These tensions will be described further in following sections of the chapter.

When staffing the Schools, the senior administration and the working group at University A also had to determine what support staff was needed and what capacities needed to be filled. Two participants, Malcolm and Jill, discussed the deployment of support staff. Malcolm provided some context for these appointments:

partly uniquely within the school is an admin assistant or manager and some support staff that were totally dedicated to the School. And then ... the university had made, I think quite rightly, a good decision that we needed development, communications and financial support, and that the Schools were qualitatively different from the rest of the university and so they...provided some resources so that we, as an institution, share one, so we each get a third of one of those. (pp. 14-15)

Malcolm suggested that, because of the unique interdisciplinary School model, the university administration established a manager in each of the Schools, and then designated three shared positions to support other functions, such as finance. Jill further described the roles of these support staff:

We have a financial officer whose role is pretty clear. She deals with the budget and deals with the faculty research accounts. We have a marketing and communications officer who deals with the website and helping a little bit on the student recruitment plan. And then a third position is the development officer, which is currently vacant. (p. 3)

Each of the positions had clearly defined tasks, according to Jill. The role of the manager was harder to define. Jill listed several of the duties of the manager including: supporting the executive director and the faculty and curriculum committees, working with the students in an



administrative capacity, and resolving “general administrative tasks” (p. 2), such as space issues. The manager also was heavily involved in managing the recruitment and hiring process in the first year that the School was operational at University A, by assisting in the advertising, managing the applications, supporting the search committee, setting up the candidates’ itineraries, and serving as the contact person for the candidates. As well, according to Jill, the manager was the “primary contact for the university” and any queries would go through her. A lot of the questions were academic-based, but the manager “could farm them out to the right people and make sure the information got channeled back” (Jill, p. 2). However, Jill felt that there were aspects of the staffing that could be done differently in future models. She explained:

What’s interesting about the staffing of the School is that there are three positions that are each one third devoted to this school and they’re shared with the other Schools. Then there’s my position, which is full-time. There is a Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) position. All the four Professional Administrators Association (PAA) staff are all hired on terms, but the CUPE position wasn’t. It was hired permanently, and so in hindsight I am not sure why the decision was made to do that. But anyone going forward, I would recommend that they [do not] copy that same scenario. (p. 1)

According to Jill, it was not helpful to have the support staff from two different unions with two different types of contracts (permanent and term) working as support staff within the School. For Jill, sharing the three staff seemed to present few issues, but the differing union and contract structures did not work as well. Malcolm also commented that there were some problems with staffing because of human resources issues:

[Human resources] is slow. It took us five tries to get a person as an administrator, and that was only because I finally pressed my part-time administrator into taking the other half of her life and putting it into this, and a lot of that was, we fairly and squarely found a candidate and others would say, “Hey, you found a good candidate!”, as we were going through the approvals process, grabbed them, and put them into their job. Because they didn’t have to comply with the long, torturous process and the bird in the hand [is worth] two in the bush and you know where people will go! (p. 16)

As Malcolm saw it, the staffing was a slow process, which resulted in the School losing opportunities to hire some talented staff. In the end, he and Nelson agreed that the School was staffed by some wonderful, talented people, but the process was not easy.

Interestingly, Tom noted that, in staffing the School at University B, they also had a receptionist and a program administrator. The program administrator had a different role description than other administrators. Tom said that he had “urged from the beginning that we have somebody act like a professional administrator, not a typical academic model. So she had more responsibility than the typical sort of thing you find” (p. 3). The two campuses had a similar administrative position with more responsibility than other typical program managers or administrators. This person was an important link among the School, the students, the faculty, and the rest of campus, according to Jill, Malcolm, and Tom.

In the development of the School, staffing requirements, both faculty and support staff, needed extensive consideration. For support staff, the Schools needed a more professional administrator. For faculty, the Schools needed people who understood and practiced interdisciplinarity. The faculty members had to be drawn from a wide range of disciplines, and work in a collaborative fashion with people from other disciplines. The School required people committed to this model of interdisciplinary work and research, because the process of establishing a new entity would not necessarily be easy. The joint faculty appointments would require some patience as the issues with the appointments got resolved.

*Issues in curriculum development.* Four participants (Carl, Charles, Jeff, Tom) discussed the programs that had been or were being developed for the School. Nelson provided a context for the program development. He noted that the program was designed for students who were interested in a career in the public service, and he suggested that the “jobs in the public service are just absolutely there. They will be, for the foreseeable future...So it’s not just good for job-getting, that’s not what the School’s principally about, but it doesn’t hurt from an enrolment potential perspective” (p. 5). He said that the courses helped prepare the students for a career in the public service, and for careers in policy work.

Carl especially described the process of curriculum development, and Jeff and Tom described the different programs that University B offered. Because University B had started the program earlier, they had developed the Master’s of Public Administration (MPA) degree, which Jeff said was a course-based Master’s program. Essentially, University A adapted that program for its initial program offering, according to Carl and Charles, but they were currently developing

the curriculum for a thesis-based degree, the Master's of Public Policy (MPP), and for the PhD program. Carl explained:

The MPP and the PhD are still under construction and we are taking the leadership on those ones. In terms of the MPA, [University B] created the curriculum and created the MPA program and we basically adopted the program as is, but we made a few changes but really the MPA program, all the course list, at least for compulsory courses, not for the electives, it basically comes from [University B]. But of course we adapt some of the courses, but it's the same basic title and we cover the same basic material and some courses; there is co-teaching involved between the two campuses. So that adds to the complexity. (p. 2)

Carl noted that there was a lot of collaboration between the two campuses in terms of curriculum development, programming, and teaching. For the initial program, the MPA, University A adopted the program that University B designed. Carl emphasized that the core courses were the same, and there were "some elective courses that are offered at both campuses, like social policy" (p. 2), but some elective courses depended "on who we have on hand" (p. 2), and the areas of expertise of the faculty members. Charles reiterated that idea of building on strengths:

The program is exactly the same there as it is here. Now, one of the programs, the other, they have a little bit more tailoring to their strengths. It's a combination of a substantial amount of commitment to academic programming, and to some degree to research effort. But some individuality in each of the campuses is to kind of do your own thing based on your unique resources. (p. 12)

Each campus had its strengths, and the programs were tailored to reflect those strengths and available resources, according to Charles. Carl suggested that "in order to kind of harmonize the curriculums and create really a provincial school, it was the best thing to do" (p. 4). He also pointed out that University A was taking the lead in developing the MPP and the PhD. He described the difference among the three programs:

So the MPA is much more applied and that makes a huge difference because the MPA is about basic professional skills, more technical skills and the basic skill set they'll require to work in government or kind of a more applied position while the MPP is for researchers, especially for people who have a PhD in mind, so who want to do a PhD related to the area, or who really want to postpone the PhD for a while and work in the

research position. So it's much more research intensive so that's why it's a two year program with a master's thesis, but the other one is just more course based and it is much more applied. That's the way we see it. (p. 4)

Carl emphasized the research intensity as a central component for the MPP and the PhD programs. Students pursuing academic and research careers would be more interested in those programs, according to Carl, whereas students interested in the civil service would be more interested in the applied program. Although University A was taking the lead in developing the research programs, he explained that the development for the programs was still done in consultation with University B. Carl observed that sometimes the consultation and development were done in innovative ways:

We had a curriculum meeting last week and we had a satellite stream there in the [lecture room] and then half of the meeting was on our own, and then after that we engaged with them by satellite system, and we discussed different possibilities. Because if we adopt the program, later on they will probably follow like we did for the MPA program. Now the MPP agreement is that we put forward the MPP program with some consultation, and then later on they could adopt it. So that is why we can't just go forward and do what we want because we want to harmonize the programs as much as possible. Otherwise it won't be one school. It would be just a name and then it would be two very different entities. So now we are doing the work for the MPP and the PhD and we take the leadership, but we need to take into account their concerns. (p. 5)

Carl pointed out that any graduate students from across campus could apply to take the Master's program courses: "Our courses theoretically are open to outsiders. Normally, I think we have to give approval, but people elsewhere on campus can take a class here if we think it's relevant" (p. 5). He thought that, for the first year, there were not many "outsiders" signed up for the School's courses because it had been advertised so late.

At University B, Jeff suggested that "there's new degrees all the time" (p. 3). He said that they were "adding the MIT program, the Master's of International Trade" (p. 3) and they were adding some new graduate certificates. In conjunction with University A, they were going to add the MPP and PhD. As well, Carl noted that University B was located in the provincial capital city, which was really advantageous in developing a program in public policy and policy work. That was a strength that was built into their program, including the elective legislative

internship (Jeff). In short, the courses were built in collaboration to harmonize the two campuses, but each campus adapted the courses to reflect their particular strengths and resources.

*Issues in finding physical space.* One of the issues that many participants mentioned in passing was the process of finding the physical space on both campuses for the new School. Four participants (Charles, Jeff, Malcolm, Tom) went into more detail about this theme. Although space is an essential element for a program, it is a need that is resolved through the senior administration as they find potential places to accommodate the program's needs and student numbers (Charles, Tom). At University A, Charles mentioned that the senior administration:

started moving people around in order to make space available, not just for the Schools, because we needed space for other things as well, so none of the space moves were solely for the Schools, but they had the effect of clearing up some space for the School. (p. 7)

Charles noted that a lot of this planning took place through the University Committee on Action and Planning (UCAP) and that there were facilities people who participated in the planning. According to Charles, the School of Policy and Research was the only new School that already had dedicated space, but he mentioned that they still had more renovations to do in the building. Malcolm commented that sometimes these renovations took a long time, and were completed long after they were promised or after the program had begun. He said that sometimes work was started, and then stopped, to be completed later; sometimes faculty and departments had to wait for small renovations for a long time. He stated:

It's an institutional lethargy that's partly, as long as you do the process, your job's done. And that's not unique to this institution but I think it's endemic and I think it's from senior administration into the administrative cadre of H.R, budgeting, all the peer structures and committees, and there's no sense of urgency. (p. 17)

Malcolm went on to say that, especially when you are attempting to change things, completion is critical. He pointed out that, not only are there administrative hurdles to bridge during change, but there also are "operational hurdles that are impediments to change" (p.18). He described the whole process as follows:

Without some institutional grease, some pressure from critical actors in the system, they don't plan maintenance and building and H.R., facilities management, finance, they're

not aligned against priorities; they're aligned against ongoing business and priorities get slotted in, and if somebody really squeezes them, puts pressure on them, they might reallocate to make space for them. But generally they're just put into the rest of the mix. But that's a hard way to make change. (p. 18)

Malcolm thought that, because of incomplete facilities issues, adjustments had to be made to accommodate programming. Eventually things came together, but he stressed that those problems detracted from the overall program, and added to the stress of change.

At University B, similar adjustments had to be made to accommodate the new School. Then as the program proved to very popular and there was a huge student demand for the program, adjustments had to be made to accommodate those numbers. The faculty members "continue to teach in the classrooms we had taught in before at the [other faculty] and that area is really in the education building. The classrooms are really not supposed to belong to anyone. They are a university resource" (p. 4). Both Tom and Jeff mentioned that there also was dedicated office space in a separate building. The offices were in "a small building with a few offices, at the time it was more than enough for us" (Tom, p. 3). Since the initial implementation of the School, they have added more faculty to meet the demand for the program; this would have implications for space requirements.

**Resources: Summary.** The participants elaborated on all the specific details that needed to be articulated in the first stage of implementation. Most of these details were logistical ones concerning resources. Some participants listed the resources; others described the resources in more detail. There seemed to be consensus, though, among most of the participants, that the necessary resources included financial support, human resources, physical space requirements, and curriculum development. These required resources were stipulated in the proposals from the two universities for the School. However, changes, additions, and adjustments to the resources were ongoing as the School moved through the three stages of implementation.

**The emergence of the joint School idea.** Another issue that developed was the potential conflict between the two universities in one province delivering essentially the same program. During the first stage of implementation, the working group at University A became aware of the new policy school that was being developed at University B. Even though plans for an

interdisciplinary policy school were well under way at University A, University B had already been delivering a very similar program for two years. The senior administration at University A knew this could be a “deal breaker” because one province’s student base and resources could probably not support both programs. Tom pointed out that the provincial government also would not support both programs, and, if it was a competition for resources, students, and funds, Jeff thought that University B would have a tremendous advantage.

Several participants (Carl, Charles, Jeff, Jill, John, Max, Tom) discussed this aspect of the School’s establishment in more detail, especially Tom. Tom explained that a couple of faculty came to University B to meet with the faculty there, and from that moment, the idea of collaboration between the two campuses was explored. As evident in this section’s data, this idea was one of the most contentious pieces of the development of the School.

As described in Chapter 5, University B had an existing graduate program in policy work, but a dispute led to the proposal for an independent School of Policy and Research. The proposal received approval and the School was accepting students in the autumn of Year 4. At approximately the same time, the working group at University A realized that University B had retooled their policy program so that it was delivered through an independent interdisciplinary school. The group at University A recognized that this could be a potential issue. In the spring of Year 5, a senior administrator and the chair of the working group went to University B. Jeff described the initial meeting:

For the School, it’s interesting. I mean, it was actually when [University A] started their program, they were starting theirs, in the initial stages. I think they came down to meet with me, because our program was already going. And we talked a little bit about how we might want to cooperate and so on when we got together. And as I told them more about what we had done, they weren’t really aware, they realized pretty quickly that we were in this game a lot before, well, maybe not a lot, a couple of years, but we were in a pretty strong position, and they wanted to find a way to partner. But they realized they needed to think it through and we agreed that we wanted to do something at that point together. And then at a larger meeting, about a month later, another person was there and it was a pretty small group, there was only 4 of us. But they were the people who were in charge of the various initiatives on their respective campuses. And I think there was just the recognition that I wasn’t threatening them, but I said, “you know, if you come, we are

going to kick your ass, if you are going to start a school without us. I mean, we are so far ahead, we are in the provincial capital. The government probably isn't thrilled about starting another policy school and so on." So I think for a lot of reasons, the idea of us getting together and not competing with one another, we're competing against schools across Canada, we don't need to compete in [the province]. I think those were some of the reasons. (p. 1)

Jeff expressed that two policy schools within the same province would result in too much competition for students, and the government would not look favorably upon that arrangement. He thought that, because University B's program was much further developed, it would have a distinct advantage. University B had the advantage of being in the provincial capital. The meeting was a significant moment in the School's establishment. Tom described that first meeting:

I'll never forget this because it happened very quickly. We were into this discussion for a couple of hours and we all agreed that maybe we should go as far as we could in terms of integrating the operations or at least coordinating because it just didn't seem to be much sense to having two completely autonomous policy schools in a small province like this. (p. 5)

Tom and Jeff explained that the meeting ended with the understanding that they would explore the idea of integrating as far as possible. In the *School of Policy and Research Proposal* (Year 6), the timeline indicated that this initial meeting was followed up by a conference call between University B's policy school faculty and University A's policy school working group the following month. At this point, the two groups confirmed that they were committed to developing the idea of integration or, at least, collaboration. Shortly afterwards, in August of Year 5, a memorandum of understanding to establish a partnership for a joint policy school was drawn up (*Memorandum to Explore a Joint School*, Year 5).

Even though the idea of collaboration seemed to be logical based on the reasons given by the participants, there was an historical context that made collaboration more problematic. University B had been established much later in the province's history than University A, and it was not as large an institution, according to the universities' websites. Charles said that the two universities had no history of cooperation, and University B had perceived that University A had attempted to constrain their growth. There had been so much tension that, according to Charles,



approximately two decades prior to the study, the government became involved. He thought that the government was not sure about continuing to support two universities. Charles explained that, because of this perception, the government had commissioned someone to study the two universities at that time. According to Charles, his report recommended that the “universities could work together a bit more, especially if their mandates were clarified” (p. 11). Charles observed that the report’s recommendations had not been implemented, but the universities did work together a bit more almost a decade after the report was released. He emphasized that, within this context, the School was a huge innovation. He said the School: “represents far and away the biggest investment in one another’s agenda. The creation of an entity that is jointly owned by two universities is, well, I was going to say almost unheard of” (p. 11). There were lots of reasons to pursue the partnership, but Charles suggested that one of the most important reasons was capacity building. Charles thought that “there are more and more university projects requiring more capacity than any institution alone can give them” (p. 12). By building the School’s capacity through this partnership, he felt that the program would be unique. He elaborated:

So it’s just a capacity that nobody else in the country has, so for institutions that don’t have that, that live more or less kind of in the same neighborhood or in the same province, whatever, then in order to get the capacity in areas adequate for international competition, they have to learn to collaborate. Otherwise you just kind of become a dot, on a map that has a thousand other dots. So you can just say, well if you join two dots you still are not that much further ahead. Well, true, but, you are at least kind of getting up. You’re starting to join others with more capacity than you have. (p. 12)

Charles expressed that the joint, collaborative nature of the School of Policy and Research made it stand out. He noted that this initiative was very much about capacity building, and, represented an innovative collaboration between the universities.

Because this model was unprecedented in the history of the two universities, the two faculties had to build support for this model. The Provost at University A hired three external consultants to conduct discussions and prepare reports on the possibilities for collaboration and integration, and the feasibility of doing so (Charles, Jeff, Max, Tom). Two studies were conducted in the fall of Year 5 (two consultants collaborated on one). These external consultants

came from other policy schools across Canada to conduct a study on the proposition, and share their perspectives on the idea. Max emphasized that this was an important step:

Partly that helped us understand better what we needed to do about some of the roadblocks we were facing, the challenges we were going to be facing, so it was really helpful that way. And of course part of it was to build up legitimacy so that if someone from [another well-respected university] comes and says, yes, this is a good thing, it makes everybody a little more comfortable. (pp. 5-6)

Max pointed out that the reports from external consultants were likely perceived as legitimate, independent perspectives on the feasibility of the initiative. The reports were also seen as a way to determine what were the roadblocks and challenges to implementation. In the first report, the *Anderson and Johnson Report* (Year 5), the authors described the changing policy environment, the need for trained policy professionals, and the resultant growth in the number of policy schools in Canada. They discussed, at length, the possible options for courses and degrees to offer. In addition, they talked about the possibilities for integration with the Provincial Institute for Policy (PIP). They concluded their report by recommending that the joint School be pursued, as it presented the strongest option for becoming a policy school with a national profile, capable of attracting larger research grants. According to the authors, this option would also be looked upon most favorably by the provincial government.

The second report, the *Ferguson Report* (Year 5), was released the following month. The author had read the previous report and conducted further consultations. He concurred with the recommendations of the previous report that the two Schools should integrate as far as possible and the Provincial Institute on Policy should work closely with the School, and possibly be integrated into the initiative, as well. Tom summarized the sentiments of the report:

By the end, [he] recommended very strongly in a subsequent report, but also verbally to us, that we should integrate as far as we could; that would be a better solution. That while cooperation was fine, and some collaboration was always good, but that the efforts [of] that kind of loose cooperation, and collaboration generally failed at universities. Second of all it was going to be a very competitive world out there pretty quickly and that we should ensure that we do everything possible that we stand out in a crowded field. (p. 5)

Both Tom and Max agreed that the reports' authors strongly recommended the pursuit of a joint policy school. The two universities should, at least, collaborate, but Ferguson suggested that

collaboration did not generally work at universities. By having a joint school, the independent expertise of the faculty could be galvanized and produce “economies-of-scale” (*Anderson and Johnson Report*, Year 5). Pooling the faculty members’ talents, experience, and expertise would help to quickly develop a national and international reputation for the School, in terms of attracting students and research grants.

At University A, the senior administration was very supportive of the idea of the joint School from the beginning. Jill stated:

I think if that idea weren’t supported solidly enough, [the Provost] never would have supported the creation of the [School of Policy and Research at University A]. His view is that we should have done this a long time ago. [University B] did it first, and now we either don’t do it or we collaborate with them. We can’t be seen to be competing with our sister university in a small province. (p. 11)

Jill echoed Jeff’s sentiments that University B had an advantage, and that advantage was large enough that University A either had to join with them, or abandon the idea altogether because they couldn’t be competing against each other.

In order to move the idea forward, the Vice President from University A started talking with senior administration from University B about a joint school model. Carl expressed that this was important to the process because “[the Vice President] was very careful at consulting with them, and he’s good, very diplomatic, and you need to do that, because there is some tension, traditionally, between [University A and University B]” (p. 11). John noted that, at this point, the senior administration from University A started to dialogue with the senior administration from University B as well as with the provincial government because “the provincial government played such a prominent role in the funding of these institutions, both of them, and therefore, has a vital public policy stake in the way in which we go about our business” (p. 2). During these discussions, John thought that the joint School idea gathered momentum. He explained:

I think it was just the natural outcome, of the discussions that took place. I think it was simply recognized that, if this was something that could be done collaboratively, between the two universities, this was desirable. It was not a *sine qua non*, but it was desirable. (p. 2)

John said that the policy actors and government perceived that the joint School idea was desirable, so further dialogue took place among the two universities, and the provincial government. Charles and Malcolm added that representatives from the Provincial Institute of Policy were participants at the table as the conversations progressed. Malcolm noted that, as “the two universities started to talk about a [School of Policy and Research], [the government was] quite positive and encouraging and they did say as we got closer that [the Provincial Institute of Policy] would be part of that” (p. 7). As the discussions progressed, all of these participants investigated the possibility of the joint School, and the perception was that the joint School was a positive move.

The discussions were not as smooth at University B. Jeff noted that they needed the support and commitment from the senior administration at University B, and that was the most difficult part of the whole process. When initiating the independent policy school, the faculty had been fully supported by the senior administration; this was not the case for the joint school proposal. Jeff mentioned that one of the vice presidents was “just not into it. She thought that ‘we started it, and we don’t want to have to do anything with those damn [University A] people.’ So she was really kind of parochial in her attitude” (p. 4). He thought that “universities just don’t encourage this kind of thing” (p. 4). Tom agreed with Jeff’s perspective. He elaborated:

The president was not, I don’t think, overly concerned but the vice presidents, academics and research, were basically dead set against it, and I actually got into a huge dispute. [Jeff] was more diplomatic, but [he] supported the position of the joint School, and because he had to be more careful. I could sort of get away with really tweaking their noses, which I did, and we got into a very, very difficult period. [University A’s Provost] got thrown into that, and he was not treated the way he should have been treated by [University B’s] administration but he too knew, being an experienced administrator, how to deal with that kind of thing, but also he didn’t have a lot to lose. But there were times when I wondered whether there was any support at [University B] because it wasn’t just the administration, it was also regular professors saying that the only time [University A] wants to come on board is when you have something successful and [University A] will never ever invite you to come but of course they invite themselves when things turn out and so there was a lot of suspicion. (p. 6)

Tom referred to the lack of support from the senior administration, as well as the other faculty. He related that he was still told that it was a “dumb idea.” He thought some of the problems dated back to the historical context that Charles discussed. Tom said that some of his colleagues still referred to University A as the “Wicked Witch of the [West]” (p. 6). He added that it went back to “the creation of [University B] and the fact that [University A] constrained the growth of the University campus for years as a junior campus of [University A], and they have never forgiven [them] for that” (p. 6). Tom noted that eventually the conflict dissipated because there was a “lot of turmoil at the senior level” (p. 6) at University B and those key individuals left. Tom expressed that the conflict became personal, and his and Jeff’s loyalty was questioned. Tom suggested that, even though the idea was supported by some committed faculty at both campuses, the external consultants, most of the senior administration, and the government, the influence of two senior administration members significantly detracted from the implementation of the initiative. The problem was resolved only after the key individuals left. Tom added that it took a while to bring the new vice presidents onside, but eventually they got the solid support of the senior administration at University B.

**Proposal development: Differential approval process.** As described in Chapter 5, several faculty members at University B proposed the development of an independent policy school. Throughout Year 3 and part of Year 4, the details of the proposal were articulated. The committee members and senior administration determined what resources were needed. The detailed proposal then made its way through the committees for approval, and the School was ready to accept its first cohort of students in the autumn of Year 4. The approval process for the joint School of Policy and Research was a much more difficult process, as noted in a previous section.

At University A, the process of developing the proposal and getting approval was much more time consuming. The difference in the approval process at these two universities was very distinct. Charles described the difference:

This institution is far more culturally speaking I would say, far more process-driven than say [University B]. [At University B], they think that having a school of public policy is a good idea, and six months later they have one. We think that having a school of public policy might be a good idea, all depends, and then about two-and-a-half years later we

have it. Because you know, we have to answer the more metaphysical questions first. What is a school, what is a college, what's the meaning of life? So we spend quite a bit of time here doing that. With the result that, they end up two years ahead of us. (p. 19)

As Charles observed, the two universities had different approaches to approving proposals, with University A being much more process-driven. Several participants (Charles, Jeanette, Linda, Malcolm, Max Nelson) described the process of the development of the proposal and the approval process in more detail during the discussions about implementation.

Linda, Jeanette, and Nelson noted that the whole process began with first obtaining approval for the concept of schools themselves. Because the structure of schools had not previously been implemented at University A, the senior administration first had to gain approval for developing schools (Jeanette, Linda, Nelson). Jeanette mentioned that the senior administration presented the 'schools' idea to the University Senate and the Senate "thought it was a good idea" (p. 6). Then, in developing the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3), three interdisciplinary Schools were proposed, and that had to be approved. Jeanette commented that the Board received reports concerning the Academic Priorities Fund, and how it provided some money for the three interdisciplinary Schools. She noted that "there's tacit agreement there, but it's less obvious" (p. 6). After the university's senior administration received approval for the Schools, Linda said that each School established "their own respective steering or development committee" (p. 2). In moving the proposal forward, there were several levels of agency involved, according to Nelson. He described how important the different levels were:

It is multiple level, and it's informal [and] formal. There is that individual agency that's crucial...but at the same time there really is an informal collective, probably behind the scenes, and talking it up, influencing that way. But then also the collegiums, the support, that you get when people 'get it', and give you good feedback to make it better. You're going to get good critique as you go. But that's made it better. (p. 10)

He pointed out how the levels of agency worked together on the proposal. Linda agreed. She explained that the working committees developed the proposal in consultation: "[the steering committee] held various town hall meetings, various meetings with all of the other colleges, centres, and research institutes, and key community folks outside of their working group" (p. 2). Nelson added that they "researched to find out what others were doing so there's a lot of environmental scanning" (p. 4). From the research, environmental scanning, and consultation,

the proposal was articulated. Nelson pointed out: “Subsequently as the proposals were worked out, there were lots of little details to work out; lots of little details are still being worked out” (p. 4). Linda described at length how the proposal “is detailed enough to say not only what it is that we want to achieve, but what do we need to achieve it” (p. 4). She said that the proposal began with a description of the rationale for the program and the benefits for the university, the faculty, the students, and the broader community in general. Then the proposal articulated the details of how to achieve that vision. Linda explained:

First of all it talks about the program, the academic program and the research program and the outreach and engagement, in sort of the three broad areas. Then under each of those, once we know what the academic program is, then it will say, to fulfill that academic program, what do we need? So we need faculty and this type of faculty. And if we have faculty, they will need these types of resources. Then under research it will also say, in terms of research, what kinds of faculty do we need to do the research, like, for example, research chairs, etc. Then it will say, what kinds of resources do we need for outreach and engagement? Again it is who do we need doing what and what are the resources that would be required? Then it would talk about, in terms of how, whenever you operate schools, it’s like how you operate a college. What administrative resources do you need, and that’s both people as well as space and equipment so that whole infrastructure? You also need operating in terms of students. Again, you need things like scholarship, you need perhaps some other programs and services. (pp. 3-4)

Linda pointed out that the governance of the school was addressed, and the proposal outlined the roles and responsibilities of the various groups and individuals. Interestingly, the *School of Policy and Research Proposal* (Year 6), described the School as a joint school and discussed how the joint School would be governed, but the proposal also had a caveat. The proposal noted that, should the joint School idea not be approved by University B, there would be some implications for the program, and the proposal mentioned how the School would move forward as its own school, independent of University B.

Once the proposal was completed, the proposal needed approval from various bodies. The participants (Charles, Jeanette, Linda, Malcolm, Max, Nelson) discussed the length of the approval process. Jeanette described the committee structure and the approval process in detail.

The *University Act* requires that schools be approved by University Council. So therefore there's a whole process associated with University Council approvals and procedures that needs to be followed, beginning with a notice of intent to the Planning Committee, about which I still don't understand why we continue to need that. But at this stage, talking them out of it is really difficult. And then, it's discussed by the Academic Programs Committee of Council; if there's a sort of graduate program which these all are, the College of Graduate Studies needs to be involved, and ultimately they end up at Council, and I can only name two programs in my whole time on campus that have been turned down, once they get into the system. So, it's going to get into the system and you get approved, but it just takes some time to get there. Usually, that's the way it goes. Probably if you're talking to anybody over in the schools, you will get some sense of frustration associated with some of the processes. (pp. 3-4)

Jeanette commented that the process was a lengthy one, but the proposals were rarely turned down. Because the process was formally articulated in the *University Act*, all steps needed to be followed. The matter of approval appeared to be determined by the persistence of the proposal committee, rather than the strength of the proposal.

Max was more specific about the time frame for the approval process. He said that it took about 11 months (April of Year 6 to March of Year 7) to "get approval for our flagship graduate program which was the Master's of Public Administration" (p. 6). The proposal had to make its way through six committees on campus. Max named the six committees, a list that reiterated most of the committees that Jeanette mentioned. This approval process was time consuming, as Max observed:

Getting all of those and answering questions and making sure that you had covered off this and addressed that particular concern. Again it took a tremendous amount of time and part of the way to solve those things is just taking time and writing additional reports, and bringing in experts and so on. (p. 6)

As described in an earlier section, the working group helped to answer the questions by writing more reports and bringing in outside consultants. The consultants' recommendations provided some legitimacy to the proposal (Max).

Malcolm also commented on the number of committees and the number of meetings needed to get approval. Malcolm thought that having so many committees also affected the



sense of individual responsibility the proponents felt. If there were a quick and clean system for approval, the advocates for the initiative would be challenged and have to defend their plan. Then, having passed the defense of the proposal, they would move forward and the “proponents really own what they propose” (p. 11). However, in a system with many committees, the advocates would have to defend the proposal to so many groups who made recommendations at each level. Malcolm suggested that the original proposal was so changed by the process that the proponents would not feel as much responsibility for its success. He added: “So I think we lose individual responsibility through that, and we somehow in the overabundance of caution to allow peer interface and peer engagement, we’ve taken away the notion that anybody has obligations and responsibilities” (p. 11). According to Malcolm, the culture of the university discouraged teamwork and collaboration. In a control and command organization, Malcolm said that people “optimize within the constraints”, but, in a system like the university’s, “the best they can do is optimize [their] own personal circumstances, so I think you tend to get a lot more people who don’t think as team players” (p. 11). As Malcolm observed, presenting the proposal to so many committees and following the recommendations given at each stage meant that the advocates of the change felt further and further removed from the proposal, and felt less responsibility for its success.

Malcolm explained that the proposal had to be presented at several meetings that followed a sequential order. There were problems with this process, such as the proposal not getting covered in the meeting even though it was on the agenda. In addition, the order and timing of some of the meetings meant that the proposal got bumped until a later date. Malcolm pointed out the “you keep slipping. It’s like cogs are slipping in the system because it’s not designed for speedy delivery. It’s designed to slow you down, and to force that contemplative oversight” (p. 19). Malcolm characterized the committee structure as “byzantine” (p. 8). He elaborated on this point:

You can’t plan out to know when your proposal will get to the end. There is nominally a pathway, and nominally a time path that is semi predictable. But they’re voluntary committees and they run on their own time sometimes and sometimes committees don’t meet when they should, and then that takes you out of the cycle and there is a lock step of rising higher through the authority chain. (p. 8)

Malcolm explained how this process added to the time required for approval. He compared it to University B's process, and thought that University B had about half the committees and fewer people with a vested interest in the outcome. Malcolm noted that the Provost had made some steps to change the governance structure when he was first appointed, so that there were fewer barriers to change. Malcolm commented that during this rejuvenation of the governance structure, the senior administration discovered that "we have eleven authoritative steps. Well no institution in the modern world has that many steps. Even the medieval ones that we patterned ourselves on, usually only had about two steps, but they were Draconian" (p. 10). Malcolm thought that further changes should have been made to streamline the process, because, at each committee level, the details were debated. Malcolm suggested that "there was no substantive debate about what we wanted to do. At every stage, people wanted to go back and debate the pre-existing policy landscapes rather than the content of what we were proposing" (p. 10). According to Malcolm, the debate concerned policy issues such as the Academic Priorities Fund, or student fees, or other items that did not deal with the proposal itself. This theme about the long process needed to develop the proposal and gain approval is also reiterated in the following theme, the time frame needed for establishing the School.

**Time frame for implementation: Due diligence versus momentum.** The tension between giving due diligence to an initiative and capitalizing on the momentum was mentioned by several participants at University A where the development of the idea into a proposal that was approved took approximately five years. Many participants at University A (Charles, Jeanette, John, Malcolm, Max) noted that the implementation process took much longer than anticipated. A few of them (John, Malcolm, Max) mentioned that the time frame for implementation had not been articulated from the beginning of the process. As described in the section on the development and approval of the proposal, there were many steps to go through during the process. John thought that the senior administration moved as quickly as they could, given the constraints. He elaborated:

I don't think we were completely prescriptive on institutional time frame, but we were conscious of the need to move forward with efficiency. It can be difficult to mobilize resources and people for change, and you hope to follow up on good ideas by generating momentum to pursue them. That requires uninterrupted conversation and

implementation. So we simply wanted to move with as much dispatch as was reasonably possible. (p. 3)

John pointed out that there was tension between the momentum to move forward and the difficulty with mobilizing resources and people, and engaging them in the change process. He commented that it was important to capitalize on the good ideas efficiently and as quickly as possible.

Max observed that, although a definite time frame was not articulated, the implementation process has “taken much, much longer and much more work than I think people were anticipating. And there were many more stages and aspects to the implementation than I think people really fully realized” (p. 7). Max thought that there were unanticipated issues that came up during the process, and many decisions that had to be made along the way. He suggested that the framing of the interview questions gave an inaccurate impression that it was a straight path. He stressed that there were many different options to discuss and consider, and this contributed to the length of the process. According to Max, the process did not follow a logical development path. He thought that “to see this as being a kind of measured response to problem *x* is not the right way to think about it. It’s much, much more organic than that” (p. 8). Max noted that implementation was not a smooth and easy process, but rather, one that evolved organically.

There were other contributing factors that slowed the process, according to some participants. Charles, for example, mentioned that there was “quite a bit of work in marshaling the resources, and this takes a long time. Really we probably underestimated how much time it would take to get the Schools kind of on their feet” (p. 6). Malcolm agreed with this sentiment when he said that “the spirit was willing, but the institution had more difficulties satisfying the wants of the spirit” (p. 16). Many details had to be worked out through the process; Malcolm commented that “due diligence” (p. 16) was important, but coming to a consensus on all these details was “draining for quite a few very senior faculty for quite a while and for the institution” (p. 16). Malcolm suggested:

Sometimes just going through the paces isn’t adding value and you need to decide to put it to vote. It may not be unanimous but it moves things expeditiously and you get to the end, as long as you address as the appropriate issues and you don’t just ram it through. (p. 16)

As Charles and Malcolm pointed out, marshaling the required resources and obtaining approval for the allocation of the resources was time consuming. Both of these participants also noted the grassroots level of work needed to determine and obtain the resources.

Jeanette mentioned that the *Second Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 7) tried to address governance and decision-making by prescribing how to respond more nimbly to questions and changes. Including this governance piece in the second plan was a response to the difficulties encountered in implementing the initiatives in the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3), according to Jeanette. After the first plan, the working group was formed, but she thought that they were not empowered. Then, a year into the plan, when the senior administration met with the working group, they discovered things were not going as well as hoped, and the senior administration came to the realization that “it was going to take a lot more energy on the part of the Provost and the Provost’s office to get some of these things off the ground” (p. 10). Jeanette said that, for the governance piece “we need to have a better kind of process” (p. 9) because it seemed to “take forever to get programs through” (p. 9). Currently, according to Jeanette:

The University is the final decider about whether or not we have a particular program. Government doesn’t interfere. If we went to a system where government interfered we might be less likely to spend 400 years trying to figure out if we’ve crossed all the t’s and dotted all the i’s. (p. 9)

She suggested that senior administration was investigating how to speed up the processes by doing some things differently, because “you can’t have huge processes around everything. You just crumble under the weight of policies” (Jeanette, p.11). Jeanette added that the schools initiative had moved forward relatively fast for a university, but it was not where they hoped to be, in terms of the implementation stage.

Malcolm agreed that the length of time needed for implementing change was “what kills a lot of things in this institution” (p. 8). He related that he had had some experience with previous initiatives. He explained:

I’ve been part of a lot of things that went nowhere, and a lot of things that turned up but they turned up too late to really get the full benefit, and so you sometimes miss the opportunity or mistime the opportunity, but even more important for institutional change is that it just kills energy. And the advocates and proponents of new ideas, the only reason that they’d ever start is that they’re enthusiastic or they’re excited, they’re

committed; and you watch them go through the system and, even if successful, a lot of them, by the time they get through to, that first point of approval, are so burned out that they back off. (p. 8)

Malcolm noted that the senior administration tried to avoid some of the burn-out that had been evident in previous initiatives. They built capacity for the change by buying out some of the teaching responsibilities of some of the leaders of the initiative so that they could do the “heavy lifting” required during the development of the proposal (Malcolm, p. 7). Malcolm suggested that, despite this, the whole discussion and approval process took too long, and that the School was essentially ready a couple of years before its actual start up date. He said that “the systems all work but they work slowly. And at a higher cost than I think they need to” (p. 16). He described the approval process as a definite factor in this delay:

We demand full approval before we do anything in this institution. Nothing can happen until it’s been vetted by everybody, and, as one of my senior colleagues in administration says, our structure of our peer system where we don’t have representative government, we have whole government. We have representatives who turn up but anybody has standing if they just want to turn up and ask for a voice. And so we have a thousand points of no. Or, whoa! They want to but they can’t actually stop it but they say whoa, by asking the wrong question, or the right question at the wrong time or *vice versa*. (p. 9)

Malcolm pointed out that everybody could have a say in the process. Even though they could not stop the process, they could delay it by asking some questions at the meetings that needed to be addressed. Full approval for an initiative was a difficult process, according to Malcolm, and was an impediment to timely implementation. Although five participants from University A mentioned the length of time for approval, Charles, Jeanette, and especially Malcolm commented extensively on this issue.

**Resistance to change.** One theme that came out very strongly at both campuses was the resistance to change that became evident at both campuses. At University A, the tension arose during the first implementation phase as the proposal was being developed and approved. At University B, the development of the joint school caused the most tension. Most participants mentioned the resistance briefly within their comments on implementation, and those comments were often included within the other sections. Some participants (Charles, Don, Jeanette, Jeff,

Malcolm, Max, Tom) expanded on their comments about the resistance to change, or went into more detail. Their comments are described in this section because the resistance was so evident to them.

At University B, Tom described the difficulty with gaining the support of the senior administration. He said that eventually they accepted the idea of the joint School. However, some of the other faculty continued to express negativity about the initiative. Tom suggested that “Now the problem is the rank and file outside of our graduate school because the people at [University B] still feel that [University A] has claimed credit for something that it didn’t do” (p. 7). He added that his response to that criticism was:

This is nothing to do with claiming credit or this is a fundamentally different venture and we got to look outside and we got to realize that you know, we would hardly be able to have a national profile in this country unless we were able to get our act together here. But the debate goes on to some extent and there are people here that say it is a mistake now. And it’s all the usual suspects. (p. 7)

Tom emphasized that, despite the criticism, the move to a joint school was necessary for developing a national profile in Canada. The uniqueness of a joint school, with the strengths of two campuses combined, would make the School of Policy and Research a destination program.

Jeff, on the other hand, mentioned that it was still difficult, and that “it’s been a very trying process” (p. 8). He described a meeting the faculty had just had with the university secretaries on the day of the interview. He found that some people at the university were still not very supportive. He stated:

Universities are just incredibly rigid institutions that do not adapt well to anything that is innovative or outside of the box, and I would discourage anybody from trying to do this again. That’s my message. I just found it trying, difficult. The support of my senior administration is rhetorical. The internal structures don’t bend easily; it’s very rigid. You know, universities are not entrepreneurial organizations. (p. 8)

Jeff thought that the universities were so rigid trying anything innovative is just too difficult. The process had been so trying that he discouraged others from attempting anything innovative that required adaptations to the university structure. Although Tom noted that the lack of support was now most evident from other faculty at the university, Jeff commented that there was a continued lack of actual support from some of the senior administration, as well.

At University A, the senior administration had been involved in the initiative from the beginning and was solidly behind the joint school idea (Charles, Max). However, some other faculty, including some department heads and deans, were more reticent about the changes, according to some participants (Charles, Don, Jeanette, Malcolm, Max). Some of the resistance was described as resistance to new initiatives, or resistance to the School specifically. Some participants noted that some of the resistance stemmed from a discipline-driven culture (Malcolm), where there was a lack of collaboration (Jeanette).

At University A, according to Jeanette, “they’re all competing all the time amongst them for everything. It just doesn’t feel like they pull together. We’ve certainly had more pulling together but not to the degree to which we need” (p. 12). She suggested that, not only was there a lack of cooperation, “there are some folks on campus who are actively trying to thwart these initiatives” (p. 15). She also added that “people here seem to have difficulty envisioning things in ways different than [how] they currently exist” (p. 10). Jeanette described this resistance to change as inertia. She explained:

Why does it have to take so long to have this conversation? And there is such a set of inertia, organizational inertia to make these sorts of changes, of any kind. And you know, that no matter what happens there’s going to be students that are mad, alumni that are mad, faculty that are mad [at] all the rest of us that are associated with this kind of change. So you have to couch the change in a way that people can understand why we’re attempting to do this, right? (p. 11)

According to Jeanette, educating others about the context of and the necessity for the change would possibly be one way to break the organizational inertia. There would be continued resistance to the change as long as people did not understand the rationale for the change and did not see the benefit to the university and themselves.

Malcolm agreed that the university’s culture was an impediment to change. He described that culture:

There’s a culture, there’s an ingrained culture...You can see people becoming immersed in the culture of, I don’t want to call it complacency, but stasis; that, unless it’s really worth something to you personally, don’t get out ahead of the crowd because it doesn’t pay. (p. 12)

Malcolm suggested that people preserved the *status quo*, rather than being innovative. He thought that the only time that most people would engage was when there was a personal benefit to them. Malcolm added that the costs of being innovative outweighed the benefits.

Max also referred to the discipline-driven culture and its reluctance to change. He said that “much of this [initiative] was contested along the way” (p. 8). Max described the nature of this resistance:

Deans, faculty members, various people saying the school isn't the way to go. There are lots of people on campus who are waiting for the schools to fail because they don't think this is the way universities should be. You talked about interdisciplinarity. I think part of this is the school is seen as a threat to the disciplines, very, very much so. So that has been part of the dynamic as we've gone along. (p. 8)

As Max observed, there were various people on campus who did not support the interdisciplinary school because of the potential impact it could have on the disciplinary structures of the University. Changing the culture of the university and changing the perception of what universities could be was part of the dynamic of the lengthy approval process.

Charles thought that how the schools were viewed was really a matter of perspective. For example, deans needed to be able to explain this initiative to their faculty and to explain the college's actions to senior administration. Charles stated:

When you look at things from the deans' perspective, these are new entities that, yes, they can be advantageous, but they can be threats as well, and I think every dean is naturally a bit concerned about the development of new entities that could take time and energy and money away from them. Or even faculty members for that matter. So deans tend to be a little more cautious about new things, unless they are the ones who are proposing them. Not all deans, by the way, but some. (p. 16)

Charles commented that, for some deans, the new entities could pose a threat to their own resources. That dynamic was one element of the resistance to this change. Jeanette agreed that the deans' perspective was that of individual colleges. She said that the deans discussed the schools at several of their administrative meetings, and they wanted to know “what they could expect to receive in compensation for allowing some of their best faculty to go and join the schools” (p. 6). The President responded by describing a discussion he had had with another university president about a different initiative. The President noted that an excellent, innovative



program “drags up” the university and “buffers up all of the departments and all of the disciplines to be better, because you’re part of a better school, just overall” (p. 6). However, Jeanette added that “getting people [at this university] to understand the collective value of stuff is really difficult” (p. 6). Malcolm commented on the competitive, rather than collaborative, nature of University A. He said that “We had assumed that groups would be generous, but groups aren’t being generous. When you see it as zero-sum, you want every pound of flesh you can get out of somebody” (p. 23). Because the colleges were being asked to share their resources, they wanted some sort of compensation (Jeanette, Max), which did not usually happen. Malcolm mentioned that it was a zero sum approach, so that total faculty and resources on campus would remain approximately the same, but some resources were now allocated to the new schools. This approach resulted in some tension around the establishment of the new entities, the interdisciplinary schools, on campus.

Don spoke extensively about all the issues and concerns that were related to this initiative. He explained that “while part of the schools are being resourced with new money”, there also was “a shifting of resources from colleges and departments into the schools” (p. 5). He added:

I think the Deans would see that as losing resources; departments could very easily see that as losing resources; department heads could very easily view the schools as competition. Schools will have some type of priority in terms of obtaining resources which means that I’m, as a department head, I could be at risk of losing resources. (p. 5)

Don suggested that these different levels of administrators would be fearful of losing resources to the schools. He also thought that there was some fear of change and fear of the unknown underlying the resistance. There were other implications of this change, such as broader structural changes. Don stated:

Schools, interdisciplinary schools, just don’t fit into the traditional structures that we have at the University; so does that mean that if schools are successful, there could be a change in broader university structures as it relates to colleges and departments, as it relates to the power or lack thereof the departments have in the college structure. So I think there are all sorts of hurdles and mine fields associated with doing something very different. I think for individuals, particularly employees, faculty, there are risks associated with it, and I think there are resistances because of those risks. (p. 5)

Don noted that there was resistance because of the short-term impacts, such as possibly losing some resources, and the potential long-term impacts, such as changes to the power structure. He also mentioned that there were financial concerns, because the university was investing a substantial amount of money into three new structures whose success was unproven, when it could be allocating those funds to alternate programs and colleges. He said that there were concerns that the programs would not be monitored closely enough to ensure that the money was being well spent. He summarized by saying that there were many issues that contributed to the resistance towards this initiative. Don's description encapsulated most of the participants' perceptions about resistance to change.

### **Max's Second Stage of Implementation**

As the implementation plans solidified, the School at University A moved into the second stage of implementation. The time frames are not discrete separations from one stage to another. Rather, the discussions and conversations became more concrete and the details became better articulated. As mentioned earlier, though, the negotiations around faculty and staffing, as well as programs and curriculum began in the first stage of implementation, but continued throughout the second and third stages. Max suggested that the second stage really happened when the acting director was appointed. He described the activities that occurred at this time:

We had from July 1st [Year 6] to the end of June [Year 7] when there was a sort of second implementation stage, with [an acting director] which was where we needed to move this beyond just something that had been approved by council to something that could greet its first students [in the autumn of Year 7]. And that required a whole different set of things. The School had been approved, there's some resources in place, but what do you actually do? Where do you get the staff? How do you hire some people so that you can actually teach it? How do you actually make the curriculum operational? How do you get students in the door through advertising? So then we get to roughly [the summer of Year 7 just before the School opened]. (p. 6)

Although the proposal outlined what programs and degrees would be offered, how many and what kind of faculty needed to be hired, and what the student enrolment targets were, Max related that the details needed to be articulated. Designing the courses, hiring specific faculty and staff, advertising for students, and acquiring space were each important activities at this

time. Jeanette added that the University Committee on Action and Planning, and the senior administration was especially involved in securing the initial funds to begin the implementation stage, and supporting the working group as they developed the proposal. According to Jeanette, this committee, along with the senior administration, worked with the group “in making sure that they had the space and the budget and the program understandings, to move the program space and budgets forward” (p. 7). They also ensured that policies around faculty and school structures were developed, as well (Jeanette). Now, as the schools became operational, UCAP and the senior administration were more involved in monitoring the progress of the schools.

In order to articulate the details around resources during this second stage of implementation, the Schools needed to establish their own committees, as well. Malcolm mentioned that there was a programs committee and a search committee for hiring faculty. He thought that the search process had been one of the more contentious issues for a couple of reasons. According to Malcolm, the joint faculty positions had been approved in the collective agreement, but the process for establishing these appointments had not been articulated. This process of working through the joint faculty appointments is described more fully in the section concerning the executive sponsors. The second contentious issue that Malcolm described was the search for a Canada Research Chair. Malcolm mentioned that the search committee members consisted of different faculty members who were from administrative positions, but it did not include members from the grassroots policy group. He added that the situation was resolved by:

creating a sort of *ad hoc* process, for the faculty was invited to join the search committee during the interviews and the *de facto* agreement was that the search committee would only recommend someone who was acceptable to the faculties. So that was a nuance that came up and once again, we got the cart slightly before the horse and the system wasn't quick enough to adapt and we ended up with a system that could have been really problematic. If they had found a candidate that they thought was great, and if people had really played situationally, they could have taken advantage of it and tried to hire somebody who would have been a terrible policy person but a great economist or a great sociologist or a great historian. But fortunately people didn't take advantage of the power that they'd been given; they recognized that this was a transitional problem. (p. 15)

As Malcolm observed, some transitional problems presented themselves only as the School became operational, and decisions around resources needed to be made. Malcolm noted that a potentially problematic situation was resolved through developing an ad hoc process. As he pointed out, even with some policy frameworks to guide the process, many details needed to be resolved as the situations arose. In the following section, the role of leadership in articulating these details is described.

**The support of designated leadership: Acting directors and executive sponsors.**

Several participants (Charles, Dave, Jeanette, Malcolm, Nelson) commented on the theme of establishing dedicated leadership for the School, especially as it entered the second stage of implementation. Council approved the formation of the schools in the spring of Year 6; the following year, the formal proposal was then articulated and finally was approved by June of Year 7. The participants pointed out that, during this year, as the School was becoming operational, the senior administration needed to designate leaders who were responsible for guiding the activities of the School. The senior administration appointed an acting director (from among the working group) and an executive sponsor (from among the university senior administrative faculty). Malcolm described the two leadership positions:

Executive sponsors, were deans or vice deans. There were [also] acting directors who were still in-scope. They were quasi-head positions at that point. Now they've gone to the executive director model; those as I understand are vice deconal or deconal level. And they are out-of-scope and we're debating the scope line. We did build up an administrative structure within the School. (p. 15)

Malcolm noted that part of the second stage of implementation (and ongoing), was the determination of an administrative structure and governance structure for the schools. As well, the scope line of the administrative positions needed to be defined. Dave added that, although the policies were in place, the finer details had yet to be articulated. He said that the leadership positions were filled only after Council approved the formation of the schools. He stated:

Executive sponsors were only identified after council had approved formation of the interdisciplinary schools; then the step was taken to find the executive sponsors now that approved schools were in place. Keep in mind, University Council also approved not just the schools as a concept but they approved a document on what schools look like and

how they behave in the university, relative to other administrative structures. And they also approved the document on faculty appointments to the schools, so those broad policy frameworks were already in place, before executive sponsors were identified, not after.  
(p. 1)

Dave pointed out that the policy frameworks were established before the executive sponsors were appointed. The structures of the schools, the schools' operational guidelines, and the policies for faculty appointments were already approved, and the executive sponsors worked within these policy frameworks.

Nelson and Charles emphasized that this dedicated leadership was an essential element. Charles suggested that leadership helped ensure that things fell into place. He commented that "Leadership is an issue. I mean, it moves a lot faster if you can have one person who's speaking on behalf of an entity" (p. 13). If there is no dedicated leadership, Charles said that "everybody feels that decisions have to be tentative; they can't be far reaching in any way" (p. 13). He added that leadership was critical in making timely decisions; leadership was critical throughout the first five years of development, but it was especially critical in the first year. Nelson agreed that, even if the "basic infrastructure needs" are taken of, "what you really need is leadership" (p. 7). Nelson suggested that the leadership appointments were excellent choices. He thought that the executive director was a "leader of leaders", "reputationally, skillwise, interpersonally" (p. 7). Nelson mentioned that, for the formation of the joint School:

You needed somebody with huge credibility, because there were going to be some changes, both for those that were starting new as well as for those that had been going for a bit. You had to sort of establish trust, and you had to build a sense of a more precise vision. (p. 7)

He also described the acting director as "an incredibly effective administrator, [and a] really world-renowned researcher as well, [with] lots of credibility", and the executive sponsor was someone who was "able to work out of the box and within the box" (p. 7). Nelson mentioned that the combination of leaders and their strengths was strong. He thought that dedicated leadership was essential, but equally important was choosing capable people with desirable skill sets to fill those positions.

Dave and Jeanette were more specific about the role of the executive sponsor, a role that was unique to University A. Jeanette described the executive sponsor as the "go-to person that

can bring problems and issues to [UCAP] for additional discussion and clarification” (p. 7). Jeanette added that the executive sponsors of the three schools would meet and “get their issues and agendas on the table” (p. 7), and work on some of the common issues that the schools had encountered in starting up.

Dave gave an extensive description of the role of executive sponsor. He explained that the executive sponsors worked “with the acting directors who were responsible for the day-to-day operation” (p. 1). They worked together on developing position profiles, examining the budget, and making operational decisions based on the budget (Dave). However, he indicated that the executive sponsors’ biggest role was in negotiating faculty transfers and joint faculty (primary and secondary) to work in the schools. He elaborated on this point:

The biggest role [was] in working with deans across campus to identify how to share faculty, with an interdisciplinary school. But while it’s an implementation issue, it’s not sort of the day-to-day management either; it’s the broader conversations about resources. Part of the strategy behind an interdisciplinary school is to take the best researchers, the best teachers, bring them together into a community of scholars and hope that then that creates even more, gravity, and more force, but of course if they’re very good researchers and if they’re very good teachers, they’re also highly valued in the units they currently are in. So those were interesting discussions about resources and how you could possibly conceive of the school as anything other than a zero sum game. That was really the biggest challenge as an executive sponsor. That was really most of the time spent. (pp. 1-2)

Dave added that the executive sponsor discussed with the different deans, and the interested faculty, what the implications were for the home unit as well as for issues such as tenure and promotion, and the opportunities for co-listing graduate classes in several schools and colleges. He called these meetings discussions rather than negotiations, because he thought “negotiations” made the process sound more adversarial than it was (p. 2). Dave emphasized that these discussions around faculty arrangements was the primary responsibility of the executive sponsors.

As the transitional year progressed, the new schools moved through the second stage of implementation. Malcolm noted that each of the three schools at University A was at a different stage of implementation for a variety of reasons. Most of these participants mentioned that

strong, dedicated leadership, a committed group of faculty at the grassroots level, and the support of the senior administration had moved the School of Policy and Research through its second stage of implementation during that one year. In short, during the second stage of implementation, the main activities included; the securing of faculty and staff, the continuing development of programs, and the appointment of the School's leadership.

### **Max's Third Stage of Implementation**

As described in Chapter 5, the School of Policy and Research at University A received final approval in May of Year 7, and registered its first cohort of students in the autumn of Year 7. Max defined the first year of operation as the third stage of implementation. Max summarized the activities of this stage:

I would say there is a third stage of implementation, which is really this sort of first year of operation. Everything now that is required to actually run an academic unit has to be put in place so you need committees; you need a much more formal graduate committee, a much more formal curriculum committee; you need to do salary reviews because now you have faculty in the school. You need to have regular faculty meetings and you have to be setting out policy around everything from communication to outside visitors to relatively minor things. We're in the process right now of hiring new faculty, so that process is going on. And of course this is with a brand new group of people so you need to have really all these conversations that most departments just take for granted. We are having to have these conversations because we have to really establish a culture of how we are going to do this. So I would say this third phase is sort of developing the operating procedures but you can't do that without establishing a culture at the same time. And it's a very different phase from any of the previous ones. (p. 6)

Max expressed that this stage is different because the faculty and administration were working on the daily, operational tasks, as well as establishing policies and procedures to guide that operation. He pointed out that these activities were happening as the people in the School worked on establishing a culture. Added to these dynamics was the building of a joint school with two campuses.

Nelson noted that culture-building was important, especially in the context of interdisciplinarity and the joint school. Now that faculty, programs, students, and space all had

come together, they had to work together to establish the culture and to move towards a common purpose. He said:

How do you actually create a new school, so it's actually literally a school, not in the physicality sense, but in the actual moving together towards common purpose, in distinctive and unique kinds of ways as individuals but collectively aggregating the skills, talents, passions, into something great. (p. 9)

Nelson also wondered "how much of a critical mass" had to be together to effectively engage in building culture and to "actually move things ahead" (p. 9). Nelson commented that, to this point, the faculty had been concentrating on the "bureaucratic, operational things", and now they needed to consider the cultural aspects, such as engaging in collective research (p. 9). According to Nelson, it was important to develop how to work collectively, yet also capitalize on individual strengths and accomplishments.

Charles characterized this process as a "merger", between the two sets of senior administrators, faculty, and staff (p. 11). He stated: "Everybody at all these levels that you like or all these different groups that people have to accommodate themselves to one another, and create a common agenda for the school" (p. 11). However, he noted that "there are limits to how far you can do that because you've got different collective agreements, you've got different financial systems, different HR systems, and different players" (p. 11). According to Charles, working through those administrative procedures and producing a common agenda was an important, but not easy, task for the School.

Jill expressed her opinion that the process definitely had not transpired "as smoothly as I would have liked" (p. 4). She commented that she had "underestimated how much work it is to establish a new unit" (p. 4). According to Jill, there continued to be many implementation issues to resolve. For example, she mentioned that there were renovations to the building and other "capital requirements" (p. 4). Jill described how there was still work to be done around policies and procedures: "you don't know what you're missing until an issue comes up and you see you don't have a process for dealing with it, and so it's those kinds of things that are taking a long time" (p. 4). She added that there were "three fairly distinct components that all take a lot of energy and require reorganization" (p. 4). She elaborated: "It's a unique unit, because we're trying to create a new unit here, we're trying to integrate with the existing school [at University B] and we're merging [with the Provincial Institute of Policy] which is now our outreach unit"



(p. 4). Jill emphasized that, although it had been a lot of work, it had also been interesting, as the transitional year and the first operational year unfolded.

Carl agreed that the first year of operation had presented its challenges, due to the unique nature of the School. He concurred with Jill that it was “a brand new school so we invent as we go” (p. 6). As problems and issues came up, Carl mentioned that the administration and the faculty had to solve them. He especially emphasized two challenges, the interdisciplinary focus and the joint school structure. Carl elaborated on the implications of the joint school:

What’s really new is that we have two challenges to face, interdisciplinarity, so it’s an interdisciplinary school and it’s a dual campus school having a school with two different universities involved. And that means two different organizational cultures, organizational traditions, and also the rules are different. When we hire people here and there, it’s different; unions are different. I mean the way it works on the ground at least, so it’s a lot of coordination involved. So far, it hasn’t been as challenging as some may have expected. I thought there would be more problems at first. I think it’s just because of the people there. (pp. 11-12)

Carl noted that the dynamics of the joint school included dealing with two different organizational cultures, traditions, and rules. There was a lot of coordination needed to broach the two different campuses, according to him. Carl suggested that, given all the parameters of establishing a joint interdisciplinary school, the initial months of operation had not been as challenging as expected. He attributed the smoother-than-expected transition to the work of the individuals involved.

In addition to the emphasis on building the culture of the new School, two important elements of the third stage of implementation were student and faculty recruitment. Malcolm, Tom, Nelson, and Jill discussed this component of the third stage. The two universities had very different experiences in recruitment because University B had had a pre-existing policy program, according to Tom. Although the program at University B had been running since September of Year 4, Tom recalled that, during the first year of operation, student demand had surpassed the faculty’s expectations. Because it had been a pre-existing program, Tom noted that they “already had a bit of a base but it grew rapidly” (p. 3). Tom stated:

There was probably even more of a demand out there for this than we even suspected. We knew there was going to be good demand. [Jeff] and I both felt in our bones that

there was fairly good demand, but you never know these things until you open the doors and, well, we opened the doors and were quite surprised at the number of applicants. (p. 3)

As described in an earlier section, Tom pointed out that the demand for the program continued to grow, so that it was difficult to meet the demand with enough faculty and space.

At University A, however, Nelson pointed out that student recruitment had been affected by the late approval of the programs, so they had had only a few months to advertise the new School before September. Their first academic program was a Master's of Public Administration, but now, according to Malcolm, they were hopefully adding two more research intensive degree programs, the Master's of Public Policy and the PhD program. He noted that the "next step is to add research students into the mix. And that will help to intensify our research rather than draw us away from research" (p. 7). Jill and Malcolm agreed that the timeline was tight, in terms of getting approval and having enough time to advertise for the next September. Jill commented that "We do have some interest, so it's not like no one has ever heard of it and we'll have to start from scratch. We certainly will do some targeted recruiting for those two programs" (p. 4). As Jill, Nelson, and Malcolm observed, lengthy approval processes for programs were affecting student recruitment.

In terms of faculty recruitment, the initial faculty at both campuses was staffed with people who worked in the policy field, and most of them had been part of the pre-existing program (University B) or had been part of the formal working group (University A). However, both campuses were busy recruiting for the following year. Carl noted that the interdisciplinary nature of the school continued to impact the hiring process. Carl suggested that, in the next round of hiring that year, the hiring committee might be looking for a political scientist, or a geographer, or an economist, in addition to a Centennial Chair. The hiring committee wanted to have a strong mix of interdisciplinary researchers from a broad range of areas, according to Carl. He used the example of economics to explain that people in one discipline learn, not just techniques, but also a world view. An economics program would be dominated by one world view. In an interdisciplinary school, the students would be exposed to a variety of perspectives, but it was also important to understand the "fiscal pressures and market logics" (Carl, p. 8). Carl said:

They have to understand basic economics at least, and be able to be a consumer of economic literature, so they have to hear from other perspectives too. Practitioners [also are needed], of course, people who have concrete policy experience, people from other fields, geography, sociology, political science, law, education and so forth, so they aren't single minded. (p. 9)

Carl really stressed the interdisciplinary nature of staffing the School, and he felt strongly that a balance of perspectives from the different disciplines needed to be presented to the students. He used, as a counter example, another new policy school whose faculty was heavily weighted with economists. He expressed that the discipline's world view would dominate that School's program. According to Carl, University A's School needed to hire new faculty who would complement the existing faculty. Malcolm agreed that, with the new faculty in place, the entire faculty needed to build the culture and network with each other so that they established a true interdisciplinary, collaborative culture. He stated:

We need to build that [culture] up and that takes time, you know. We are in the early stages. This is one of the things we're telling the new recruits we are looking at, [that] we're not established, our patterns of work aren't established and this is the chance really to get in on the ground floor, and to influence how this thing grows. (p. 4)

Malcolm commented that culture-building took a long time, and was still developing because the School had been so recently established. Malcolm thought this was a good opportunity for new faculty to be part of building the culture, and, therefore, be influential on how the culture developed. By identifying that up-front with the new recruits, Malcolm thought they would be prepared to be part of that culture-building.

**Future development.** One theme that emerged from the data was that a component of the third stage of implementation was an emphasis on thinking about future development of the School. Some of the considerations were continued themes from the first two stages of implementation, specifically identifying the needs of the School and securing the resources to meet those needs. During the third stage of implementation, discussions about resources (spaces, faculty, programs, students, financial backing) continued. However, these discussions concerned anticipated needs and resources (Charles, Jeanette, Jill). Jill, for example, discussed future projected enrolments. She commented that the School's faculty had set enrolment targets for the

next three years. Jeanette, on the other hand, talked about the School achieving targeted student enrolment numbers by specific times. Charles mentioned student enrolment in the context of all the resources that the School's administration needed to secure on an ongoing basis:

We still have a long ways to go. We have to introduce programs, we have to get student levels up to where we want them to be, which won't be next year but the year after. We have faculty to hire, we have renovations. While we've made renovations in this building, we have more renovations to make. (p. 20)

As Charles observed, the official opening of the School did not mean that everything was complete. The School needed to continue to build capacity, according to Charles, and that capacity building would occur in a series of stages over time.

One of the subthemes of the third stage of implementation was the development of ways to measure the outcomes and the successes of the School. Several participants (Charles, Jeanette, Jill) mentioned that monitoring of the School's progress and determining means of assessment and evaluation of the School were important components of thinking about the future. Jill thought that "the next four years are really crucial for the School, because it will be reviewed" (p. 6). She added that it would probably be reviewed for the next decade, as the University moves through its four-year planning cycles. Jill knew that the School would be closely monitored "because, to establish a new unit, there are certain targets we have to meet in order to continue to exist" (p. 6). According to Jill, there were some articulated targets that the School had to achieve within this planning cycle and into the next cycle in order to justify its existence. Jeanette contended that these targets and expectations had not been communicated well enough by the senior administration. However, she thought that "another thing to be also implemented in this cycle is some, benchmarks, some assessments, performance indicators, those sorts of points for each of the schools" (p. 8). Jeanette said that the schools needed to be aware of the expectations associated with the development of the new structures, especially since these schools represented a big investment for the University. Jeanette emphasized, though, that the University needed to ensure "that they have adequate and appropriate funding given the existing kind of funding situation the University finds itself in" (p. 8). Jeanette recognized that the funding had to be maintained to allow the schools to establish themselves, yet there were expectations associated with that funding.

Charles agreed that establishing “strong feedback processes” was critical, especially at the beginning, “where we’re kind of launching on a path; we have to make sure it’s the right one” (p. 10). He added that the University and the School needed to “put into place some feedback mechanisms around [the] key stakeholders in the School” (p. 10). He elaborated:

Now [key stakeholders are more easily] identified when its faculty, students, staff, and government to a large degree, everybody needs to have a chance to comment on or ask questions about how the School is going, or offer observations about it. So, you’re spending a lot of time informing people and then gathering up, you know, intelligence around their reactions. But I find that you’re constantly monitoring the environment. And, for the time being, that’s about the best we can do until we kind of institutionalize feedback a bit. (p. 10)

Charles commented that the gathering of feedback and the constant monitoring of the environment were important feedback mechanisms to include in evaluating the School’s progress. He did allude to the future institutionalization of feedback mechanisms as part of the School’s operations. However, he maintained that this feedback process was especially critical at the beginning stages of the School’s development.

Jeanette commented that methods to articulate the successes of the schools and share those successes with the rest of the university still needed to be determined. For example, Jeanette mentioned that one of the objectives in the *Second Multi-Year University Plan (Year 6)* was to become an “engaged university, one that’s more collaborative and more interdisciplinary” (p. 8). She noted that determining which projects and research activities were successful would be impacted by how success was measured and defined. She used the example of determining who could claim ownership of and take credit for an interdisciplinary research project: the home unit(s), the School, or both. Jeanette thought that the “rigid systems” of the university would need to be changed to solve this problem (p. 8). According to Jeanette, the university would need to establish protocol for the research activity of faculty and graduate students.

Determining how to monitor and evaluate the development and progress of the School was one of the most important activities that the faculty and senior administration engaged in during the third stage of implementation. However, securing resources was also important at this stage. Student and faculty recruitment were the two resource areas that were of most concern to the participants at this stage. One strong theme that emerged, as well, was the culture-building

that began at this stage and then was ongoing. A theme that was threaded throughout the three stages of policy implementation was the organizational learning that had occurred and that was ongoing. In the following section, I describe the types of organizational learning that was implicated in this process.

### **Organizational Learning**

Many of the participants (Carl, Charles, Dave, Jeanette, Jeff, John, Linda, Malcolm, Max, Nelson, Tom) contributed to the discussion about organizational learning, because it was so important to the process. They described learning from past experiences, current learning, and learning for the future.

Several participants at University A (Dave, Jeanette, Malcolm) described the learning that had occurred from the attempt at that university to establish a virtual college. Jeanette explained that a set of documents was drawn up, the virtual college was defined, four positions were established within the college, and the programs were developed. She commented that there were many “structural impediments to doing things” (p. 2). Malcolm and Jeanette described these issues that included difficulties with program changes, obtaining resources such as finding space for labs, and governance issues (Jeanette). For those reasons, the experiment failed and the virtual college was formally dissolved through Council in Year 6. Malcolm also suggested that time was a factor. Because it took two or three years to get going, Max commented that the original planning group “just burned their energies out at the committee table” (p. 9), with the result that, by the time the college got going, “there wasn’t one of them doing anything in the virtual college” (pp. 8-9). From that experience, Malcolm suggested that they learned that “if senior people promoting it don’t actually do it, you’ve got a problem” (p. 9). Malcolm added that many good ideas got worn down; he said “we very seldom say no to anything, we just talk it out on the clock. We filibuster it” (p. 9).

Malcolm pointed out that the university had tried several different approaches for interdisciplinary studies, including the virtual college. He suggested that each of the programs “revealed certain opportunities but also certain problems with the model, that they were less than what we thought they were going to achieve, and, hence the school model” (p. 6). Dave agreed that the school model was a result of previous experiences. He stated:

From my point of view, interdisciplinary schools rose as an institutional learning to other structures. So in particular, there was something at one point called the Virtual College, which was an attempt to create an interdisciplinary program spanning the natural sciences and social sciences and the humanities, and it was a structure that I think had the greatest of intentions but it didn't have any sort of formal governance and it didn't have authority over resources. (p. 4)

Dave added that the “architects at the interdisciplinary schools” (p. 4) kept those lessons in mind as they developed the proposal. Governance and resource issues had to be resolved, and, according to Dave, they had to determine “how do we capture the excitement that created the virtual college in the first place, but do that in a way that codifies some resources and some authority so that there is sustained ability here” (p. 4). As he observed, the organizational experience of the virtual college informed the design of the interdisciplinary schools.

Some participants (Carl, Malcolm, Nelson) commented on the learning that happened by doing some environmental scanning, and learning from other programs. Both Carl and Nelson said that, in developing the curriculum especially, the working committee looked at other programs and policy schools across Canada. Malcolm noted that, because University B had been running its program for a couple of years, the faculty there had passed on some of the lessons they had learned already.

Some participants (Jeff, John, Max, Tom) talked about learning to be open to new concepts, and developing new views and perspectives, that would result in a reculturation of the faculty environment and the university. Tom thought that “everybody embraces [interdisciplinarity] in principle” (p. 8), but practice of the principle is more difficult and requires a new set of skills and abilities, and an openness to the concept. Jeff concurred when he suggested that “you needed people to agree to the concept” (p. 3) of interdisciplinarity to even seriously begin to explore the idea of an interdisciplinary school. John also agreed that openness is required. He commented: “Being open to the concept, to the policy, that's the learning that has to go on. The openness to cross-disciplinary conversation, cross-disciplinary collaboration, inter-institutional conversation, and collaboration. And that's a learning process” (p. 3). Max talked extensively about the necessity of changing the point of view and the cognitive framework of the organization and individuals:

I think that what was needed was the organization, and individuals within it, needed to start to see and understand the world in some different ways. I think it's more about the way cognitively that people saw the world and understood what the university was and the way it could be structured. I think what was required to get the schools up and running was a change in that view. And that was clearly the reason it took so long to undertake, because this change takes a long time to actually implement. And part of what it took was the discussions that went on, but part of it was just time. The university world was quite a bit different in [Year 6] than it was in [Year 3]. Interdisciplinarity across the country, across the academy widely speaking was much more accepted at the end of that period than at the beginning of that period. (pp. 8-9)

According to Max, the adoption of this change required a change in the widely-held view of how universities were structured. The required organizational learning occurred over time, partly due to the conversations held around campus, but partly because of the changing acceptance at campuses across the country of the concept of interdisciplinarity.

Some participants (Dave, Jeanette, Linda) talked about organizational learning that resulted in trying to make the new structures more fluid. Through the whole university-wide planning process, proposal development, and approval process, the senior administration learned more about structural impediments to change that needed addressing (Dave, Jeanette, Linda). From this process, Jeanette emphasized that there needed to be “active engagement on the part of the Provost, [UCAP], council” (p. 9). Jeanette added that they needed to continue “to ask questions about how we are doing, how do we know we're being successful, what is helping, what is hindering, where do we need to go for additional help” (p. 9). She thought that the senior administration learned that the continued monitoring of progress on initiatives was an essential part of the process.

Jeanette described that the goals of the broader university needed to be supported by the rest of the organization, and the senior administration needed to address this barrier. She said that the University needed:

To make sure that the higher level institutional goals aren't stymied by silo-based approaches or historical approaches to things that get in the way of these things...I think there might need to be institutional learning as well throughout the campus about why we're investing in these areas and not investing in them. (p. 9)



Jeanette suggested that the university needed to do some work around developing support across campus for the initiative, especially when the issue of allocating resources came up. She noted that traditionally, the university allocated resources to departments and colleges, and it would require institutional learning to change that view.

Linda agreed that this was an opportunity to learn how to work differently as an organization. She explained that these schools were non-departmentalized, and that the disciplines were integrated within the schools. Linda added that, with the new structure:

It's almost removing some of the barriers and boundaries that sometimes happens with those kinds of departmental types of structures. It's the sharing and mobilizing of resources, not only people resources, but in terms of programmatic resources and other types of operating, and program types of costs. So it's seeking synergistic ways of doing things. (p. 4)

Linda thought that this initiative would promote sharing and mobilizing of resources. She hoped that this new way of working would result in learning how to work together as a university, and the organization, the different departments and colleges, and individuals themselves would to learn how to work collaboratively.

Dave mentioned that one of the institutional learnings that came from the experience of the virtual college was that colleges organized around disciplines and departments were not conducive to innovation and nimbleness. He thought that the interdisciplinary Schools "have a potential to stay more fluid" (p. 5). Dave suggested that the departments were established for administrative purposes and for historical reasons, but "these aren't the communities of scholars where innovation tends to be happening. It's the boundary spanning stuff that tends to have lots of innovation" (p. 5). He cautioned that "the interdisciplinary Schools are probably well placed to be fluid and dynamic, provided they don't try to become colleges" (p. 9). Dave pointed out the lesson that he thought the university learned through the long process of establishing the Schools was that the structures around decision-making needed to change. Dave commented that long, drawn out organizational processes often meant that the enthusiasm and momentum for the project dissipated before the initiative could begin. He suggested that, instead, the organizational structures should allow the organization to be nimble enough to act on opportunities in a timely fashion. He thought that universities should "just allow subsidiarity to happen. Decisions occur at the level where the benefits and costs are best understood. And it would help implement things

quicker, and it would help seize momentum” (p. 4). Dave added that this was an important lesson the university learned in this process.

Malcolm hoped that the university learned another lesson through these initiatives. He thought that people at the university needed to learn how to discontinue programs that no longer met the needs of the university. He described the zero based model that many institutions used:

[If] you want to do something, what are you going to get rid of, [because] you’re worried that you are going to get just anarchy because you just keep loading the system with too much. So, if a department or someone wants to create something new, what are they going to get rid of? They’ve got to back out of something else [and they’ll] just have to think through the implications. Because there’s a lot of models for innovation in institutional design. And we don’t use [them] here. (p. 10)

Malcolm believed that innovation and new programs should be encouraged, but programs should also be cut where necessary. He thought that continually adding programs to the system would overload it, even if they were innovative programs. The solution was to abandon some programs to make room and free resources for the new programs.

Most participants discussed the learning that continued to evolve. One participant, Nelson, described extensively the ongoing learning that was taking place, throughout all three stages of implementation. He characterized it as “just-in-time” learning (p. 8). There were several types of learning that were happening. Nelson said that part of it was “retrospective that says if we were to have done this differently, how might we have done it” (p. 8). Then, there was ongoing learning which occurred when a “diverse group of people from different disciplines” (p. 8) got together and had to figure out “how to make decisions that make sense, and how to become mutually dependent, and sort of trusting of other intellectual paradigms, and how to yield, as well as how to push forward” (p. 8). Additionally, Nelson suggested that the faculty were “culture-building right now, and I think we’re learning as we’re going, building that professional learning community if you like, and I think it’s going extremely well; it’s exceptionally well led, [because] everyone is a leader, in their own right” (p. 9). As Nelson observed, this type of learning was extensive and ongoing. The university campus had to engage in organizational learning, as many participants noted, but the faculty also had to learn to work together as a professional community.

### Summary

In this chapter, I described the implementation of a new entity on campus, a joint interdisciplinary school. Most of the discussion focused on the implementation process at University A, because of the disproportionate number of participants at this university, in addition to the extended amount of time the implementation process took at University A. This initiative began through several institutional planning processes, including the strategic planning process, and the multi-year university plans. Those processes developed the School from an initial idea into the implementation phase. As Max observed, there were three stages of implementation. The data were categorized according to those three stages. Some themes ran through all three stages, such as the securing of resources. Many participants discussed all the operational details that needed to be considered, including financial support, hiring faculty and staff, finding physical space, developing programs and curriculum, and recruiting students. Several other themes concerning the first stage of implementation emerged. One important theme was the development of the joint School idea. One theme that concerned only University A emerged from the processes involved in developing the formal proposal and obtaining approval for the proposal. A related theme was the length of time the first stage of implementation took at University A, with the result that University B was at least two years ahead of them in the implementation of a policy school. Another theme that was expressed at both universities was the organizational learning that happened. Some of those lessons were prior learning that helped shape the new initiative; some of the learning happened during the implementation process and included individual and organizational learning; some of the learning was evolving as the school moved through development; some of lessons were ones that could hopefully be applied to future initiatives. One theme that emerged strongly at both campuses was the resistance to change that was expressed by others on campus.

For the second stage of implementation, one theme that emerged was the focus on articulating the details of the plan and securing the necessary resources. This included faculty negotiations and program approval. The other theme that emerged at University A was the appointment and role of the designated leadership for the School.

For the third stage of implementation, resources continued to be a theme, but there was emphasis on student and faculty recruitment. Two other themes emerged at this stage: the building of the culture of the new School, and the development of ways to monitor and evaluate

the success and progress of the School. As participants noted, those were ongoing themes that would continue to be developed as the School moved towards full implementation. Another underlying theme throughout the three stages of initial policy implementation was based on the types of organizational learning. Learning from past experiences was evident in how the “schools” model was developed. Current learning included learning to be open to new concepts, learning by scanning other universities’ programs for effective interdisciplinary policy programs, and, in the case of University A, learning from the experiences of the sister campus. Learning for the future was needed as the organization tried to learn to work in a more collaborative, interdisciplinary fashion.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **INTENDED AND COLLATERAL IMPACTS OF THE CHANGE**

The School of Policy and Research was established in Year 7 as a joint school. Because of the timing of this study, the School had not been established long enough to evaluate its progress on the objectives that were stated in the proposals. This study's focus was not to critically evaluate success in achieving those goals; instead, the study examined why the policy development process was initiated and why those objectives were decided upon and enacted in the establishment of the School. The intended impacts of the policy were also indicative of the context and the espoused reasons underlying the discourse for this initiative. In addition, there could be value-added or collateral impacts from having this joint School. In order to explore participants' perceptions about the overall impact of this initiative and how the establishment of the School addressed the articulated issues, I asked the following question: How do the intended impacts of the policy address the problem(s) articulated by the key stakeholders? As corollaries of the question, I asked about intended impacts, collateral impacts, and perceived changes to the participants' roles.

This is the third chapter where I present the data gathered from documents, policies, and semi-structured interviews. In Chapter 5, I described the themes that emerged from the data around issues and contexts that prompted this initiative, and the roles that the various stakeholders and policy actors played in this process. In Chapter 6, I examined the themes that described the implementation process. In this chapter, I explore the themes that illustrate participants' perceptions about intended and collateral impacts of the initiative. In the first section of this chapter, I report on the themes that describe the intended impacts as perceived by the participants. These intended impacts include: the establishment of a destination program, the establishment of an interdisciplinary entity, the enhancement of outreach and engagement with the community, and the development of a new way to bid on and conduct research. In the second section, I examine additional, collateral impacts of the School, as perceived by the participants. Specifically, the participants noted that the School could be influential in: the development of a powerful planning tool, the building of a culture that welcomes change and provides a test bed for new ideas and new structures, the promotion of mechanisms to determine success, the provision of different opportunities for faculty and students, and the improved

retention and recruitment of faculty and students. In the third section of the chapter, I examine the participants' perceived changes in their roles (if there were any changes), after the establishment of the interdisciplinary School of Policy and Research. All participants contributed to these discussions.

To reiterate, there were 13 participants in this study. The two participants from University B, Jeff and Tom, were faculty members. At University A, some participants were senior administration of the university and of the School (Charles, Dave, Don, Jeanette, John, Linda). Some participants were on the working committee that developed the proposal, including Malcolm, Max, and Nelson. Two participants, Jill and Carl, were new faculty and members of the School. As noted previously, there is a disproportionate number of participants from University B. As a result, the data from these participants, and from University B in general, are disproportionately represented in the overall presentation of the data.

### **Articulation of the Intended Impacts of the School**

When asked about the intended impacts, most participants referred back to the formal proposals. A few participants spoke only briefly about the intended impacts and noted that these impacts were stated as objectives in the proposals. However, all participants all highlighted at least one impact. Three participants (John, Linda, Malcolm) summarized the intended impacts, while every participant elaborated on at least one specific espoused goal. Their responses reflected their familiarity with the proposal documents as many participants identified the same intended impacts. This congruence of responses emphasized that the proposal documents were the foundations for this initiative. The main themes that emerged when discussing the intended impacts included: the training of policy professionals, enhancement of graduate academic programming, improvement of outreach and engagement, the emergence of a destination program for work in policy studies, the establishment of an interdisciplinary entity, the provision of a focal point for policy work, and the development of new ways of bidding for and undertaking research. The next section examines, in more detail, these themes.

### **The Broad Impacts: Policy, Praxis, Research, and Engagement**

The formal proposal documents for each of the schools clearly articulated the compelling reasons to establish the School and the intended objectives that the School hoped to achieve. At

University B, these objectives, framed in the proposal, included: becoming a destination graduate school, preparing students for advanced professional policy work, using the province's reputation as a policy leader to build a name for the School and its program, attracting superior faculty interested in interdisciplinarity, and amalgamating the expertise and research potential to attract significant research grants (*Original Proposal Document*, University B, Year 3; *Proposal for the Graduate School of Policy and Research*, University B, Year 4).

Earlier, in Chapter 5, the premise for establishing the School of Policy and Research at University A was articulated. In addition, the *School of Policy and Research Proposal* (Year 6) noted that the School had two central goals. The first goal was to be one of the top policy schools in Canada, so that it attracted the best faculty and students who would work on key policy problems. The second goal was closely related. The School would be a focal point for designing and coordinating large research projects on policy problems. This interdisciplinary focus would attract higher levels of research funding, and, in turn, attract more graduate students (*School of Policy and Research Proposal*, University A, Year 6). The proposals for both University A and University B stated the central objectives of the School in general terms, but both proposals also outlined some very specific targets, such as projected numbers of graduate students the universities hoped to have enrolled at each campus every year over the next four years, and potential revenue during that time period.

The participants reiterated many of the espoused goals that the proposals for the School of Policy and Research outlined. These impacts had been articulated early in the discussions, yet Max noted that the objectives had remained constant throughout the whole development process. Max pointed out that, in the establishment of the School, "I would say, interestingly, we can stay pretty true to those intended impacts, that we outlined way back" (p. 10). Although there were many specific details in the proposals that described intended impacts, three participants (John, Linda, and Malcolm) spoke broadly about the objectives of the School. Linda emphasized the potential impact the School could have on the community. She categorized the impacts into three broad themes: training of policy professionals, graduate academic programming, and outreach and engagement. Linda elaborated:

I like to come back to those three broad themes, is that one is in terms of training, and increasing our capacity, and the type of professional that is needed out in the broad society, sort of the training aspect, and the next one is certainly the academic

programming, and the third is the outreach and engagement. The anticipated ways that it's going to affect things is that it's in terms of the types of individuals or the high quality personnel, the research and the outreach and engagement. What I think it's going to do more so is bring the university more into the community and the community more into the university and being able to do a better job of translating the knowledge into practice and policy. (pp. 5-6)

Linda noted how these three objectives could potentially bring the community and university together in an effort to meld policy and praxis. John agreed with Linda that there were three broad goals of the School of Policy and Research, and the impacts that he articulated very closely resembled the themes that Linda related. John described his perception of the main objectives:

I think there are several. One is to have good students well educated in the art and science of public policy, so as to have better qualified public policy participants, analysts, so the education of students to take positions and leadership roles in public policy is obviously part of—and a very important part of—the activity. Another is to ensure that we are developing the kind of disciplined research capacity that is needed to analyze, and in a timely way, to comment upon public policy. Public policy has historical elements, but it's not just history. Public policy has a very contemporary essence and impact and you want to have the institutional capacity to participate in what is a highly contemporary activity, because today's public policy issue may be gone tomorrow. So that's some really interesting stuff. So, that's another part of it. Then, and I guess the third dimension would be the one that I've already mentioned, the bringing to bear of different perspectives, on the public policy questions. So educating students, participating in and contributing to the discussion about public policy through research and commentary, and introducing the many dimensions and perspectives on public policy that are involved. (p. 4)

Even though Linda and John articulated the main goals somewhat differently, they both emphasized the potential contributions that the School could make in training students for policy work, in furthering the research agenda in policy arenas, and in working with the community on policy issues. Malcolm concurred that the research intensification and engagement components were important to the School:



In the proposal that went forward, we committed to certain teaching targets, to a degree of research intensification that wasn't explicitly itemized in terms of books and conferences and grants and things. And a more generic continued and sustained engagement in public debate and dialogue. (p. 19)

All three of these participants agreed that the combination of these impacts was the fundamental *raison d'être* for the School. In addition to the discussion about the more general goals, all of the participants described specific impacts in more detail. Max, John, and Linda, though, related these goals to the three broad themes that were articulated. These specific, intended impacts are discussed in the next sections.

### **A Destination Program**

Several participants (Jeanette, Jeff, Max, Tom) highlighted the potential impact of the universities becoming a destination school for students interested in working in the civil service. These participants reiterated the proposals' objectives when they pointed out that the School was intended to be a unique, destination program. All of these participants strongly emphasized that, by establishing an interdisciplinary program for policy work, the School would become a leader in public policy work at the provincial, national, and international levels. As well, Jeff noted that, by linking the two universities in a joint policy school, the School could make better use of provincial resources and could provide different opportunities. Jeff especially emphasized the additional opportunities this School provided for students and how this impacted their training for public service:

I think it's to take advantage of provincial resources most effectively, making sure that we can teach the right kind of classes, that we can provide the right kind of opportunities for good students, and that we can become a destination program for students from across the country, that we can help rebuild the public service. (p. 5)

Jeff articulated that the School needs to identify the right kinds of classes and opportunities that can best prepare students for the civil service and, at the same time, establish the School as a destination program. Max supported this notion of preparing students for the public service. "There's a tremendous turnover that's occurring in the civil service and we are now in a position to train some of those people who will be going into those positions" (p. 10). Tom wanted the School to position itself as a leader in training students for public service. He stated: "I would

hope that our outreach and training capacity is something that is tapped throughout Canada as a major sort of impact on governments and on non-profit organizations” (Tom, p. 10).

Jeanette concurred that the School needs to determine how to make a name for itself, distinguishing itself as a leading, prestigious public policy school that is unique and different within the context of a country with many established and new schools. Having a prominent policy school should impact the universities positively. Already, the establishment of the School “has had a bit of an impact on a reputational level for University [A]” (Jeanette, p. 12). By building a reputation as a destination program for students pursuing a career in the public service, the universities could capitalize on the anticipated turnover in the civil service to which Max referred.

### **The Development of Interdisciplinary Capability**

Several participants (Carl, Charles, Dave, Malcolm, Max) articulated that another of the major goals of the School was to establish a structure that would better facilitate interdisciplinary interaction amongst the faculty, and facilitate interdisciplinary graduate work. All of these participants underscored that the facilitation of interdisciplinarity was a major objective of the School. Malcolm pointed out a perceived gap at University A in terms of interdisciplinary work: “We have the capacity to do a whole bunch of interdisciplinary graduate work here but do virtually none of it, except by sort of random choice” (p. 21). By having a structured program that focused on interdisciplinary graduate work, the university could fill this gap that Malcolm had identified.

In addition to facilitating interdisciplinary policy work by graduate students, the university needed a more focused approach of aggregating the work done on various types of policy by faculty across campus (Charles, Dave, Malcolm, Max). Charles described this intended impact of the School:

This is an interdisciplinary entity, so it brings people from different disciplines together and gives people an opportunity to step away from their career as outlined by their disciplines, and interact with people with whom they would never have interacted. (p. 14)

Charles pointed out that the School would facilitate interaction among faculty from various disciplines. However, Carl noted that having a shared space is not necessarily enough to

promote true interdisciplinary dialogue and research. He used a counter example of another school that had intended to be interdisciplinary but had difficulty achieving this objective:

The problem was that when they created the school, they had people from many different disciplines under the same roof, but economists were busy doing their stuff and political scientists were busy doing their stuff, and there was no real dialogue between these people and the research never really merged into interdisciplinary research and maybe not even in the teaching because people teach their own area and students are exposed to different disciplines because of that. But it was really a mosaic in a sense that they never really meshed in any way. (p. 11)

The intention was that this School, on the other hand, would be interdisciplinary in all respects, including academic program, research, and interaction. Carl emphasized that “for most of us, we want to have not just an interdisciplinary school in terms of the course offering but interdisciplinary in terms of having a real dialogue between members” (p. 10). He thought that the opportunity to dialogue among different disciplines could promote more interdisciplinary research and programming. This theme of interdisciplinarity was also reflected in the proposal documents.

### **Interconnectedness: Community, Outreach, and Engagement**

Some participants (Charles, Jeanette, Jeff, Jill, Linda, Nelson) pointed out that the School was intentionally focused on outreach and engagement, and these participants felt that engagement with the community was one of the most important goals of the School. Jeanette noted that, in the proposal documents, one of the articulated impacts was “to draw together faculty members...into a more cohesive role around a particular societal problem” (p. 11). Jill commented that the faculty members would then engage the community in attempting to address these issues. She thought that “it really speaks to the mandate of the School, that we have a really outward focus in our requirement to get out and talk to the public and engage the public” (p. 7). Nelson concurred: “We will actually I think be able to address some specific public policies in ways that will be helpful” (p. 12). He agreed with the idea that universities needed to take the role of knowledge broker in facilitating discourse and problem solving around issues:

So I think one of the impacts is going to be, in a sense, doing what universities have always done, but need to continue to do better and must not lose, which is to be a forum,

for ideas. And in a way that, you know, is translating them to the public. You'll have noticed perhaps the editorials [about public policy issues] that have been in the newspaper from colleagues; that may not have happened had the School not have been explicitly encouraging that kind of intersection. (Nelson, p. 11)

These participants emphasized the School's goal of helping communities through an interconnectedness in researching and problem solving around societal issues. There would also be a stronger link between knowledge and practice and policy (Jeff, Linda). Charles elaborated further on how the School hoped to achieve this goal of community engagement and outreach:

These schools are supposed to be windows on the rest of the world. So there are opportunities for people to come and get involved in the university, in ways that ordinary departments and colleges are less welcoming. Not because people aren't nice, but just because they go about their business in a more formal academically structured way. The Schools are supposed to be more porous; they're supposed to be entities that reach out into the community and pull people in and push people out. So we run a lot of symposia, a speaker series. These are things that are extremely important, same with government or relations with government. We're doing training programs, and so there is a kind of service requirement that is built into schools, that doesn't exist for ordinary departments in colleges. (p. 14)

Charles pointed out that, through different aspects of the program, such as a service requirement and speaker symposia, the School would attempt to make stronger connections with the community. As these participants noted, promoting intersections with the community and engaging the public were key elements. Jill perceived that outreach and engagement was one of the mandates of the School. Jeanette, Jill, Nelson, Charles, Linda, and Jeff saw this interconnectedness as a way to draw the community in and develop stronger links between knowledge, practice, and policy.

### **The Establishment of a Focal Point for Policy Work**

Several participants (John, Max, Nelson) commented that the School of Policy and Research was an attempt to bring together a coordinated, focused approach to policy work at the two universities. For these participants, the establishment of a focal point for policy work at the university was a key objective of this initiative. The School would contribute to the broader

policy world in an intentional, focused way, as noted by these participants and the proposal documents. John provided further elaboration:

I think in addition to the many dimensions of university life, or among the many dimensions of university life, there has always been the idea that universities should be contributing to a disciplined discussion of the problems of society and the questions that are faced by society. That's done on many different levels and in many different ways. But one of the ways in which I think it can be done successfully is through an initiative of this kind. I think schools of public policy have to be active and contemporary contributors to the debate on the problems that society faces. And that will be one of the very important criteria by which the success of this School will be determined, or will be assessed. (p. 5)

John thought that, by analyzing policy issues and formulating responses and possible solutions to these issues, the School was well placed to become a leading contributor to policy research and policy product. Nelson commented that the aggregation of these people who were well-known in the policy field would result in a critical mass of people who could produce and disseminate research on policy issues. Nelson stated:

No question. I mean University [A] is not on everybody's map, but the potential, having aggregated this group of people together who are otherwise disparate, and we have some people who on our campus are extraordinary public policy people who are not directly involved with this yet. And that's fine. But, they're well known around the world. And maybe they are all associates for the most part of this unit. But when you put all that together for people looking down on University [A] from anywhere, whether it's from Europe or anywhere, they'll see a very significant critical mass now and then as we begin to see some dissemination product moving out of this place. Very significant. (p. 13)

Although, as Nelson pointed out, some faculty members were already engaged in public policy work, they were not necessarily interacting with faculty from other disciplines. Max agreed that the faculty working in the area of policy could benefit from being aggregated at one place. The resultant research possibly would reflect a stronger, more interdisciplinary approach to policy solutions, as Max noted.

That very small group of us, that initial working group, we said that we need a place that could be a focal point for policy work on campus. We need a place that can bring

together the people from the different disciplines and tackle the policy questions that need this interdisciplinary approach because policy questions, by their nature, need these different perspectives. You can't solve a problem just by looking at the economics aspect. You have to understand the legal aspect; you have to understand the social ramifications that are going to occur, *et cetera*. And that's what a public policy school brings and gives you. (p. 10)

The initial working group contended from the beginning of the process that a policy school would provide a focal point for much of the policy work being undertaken on campus. This impact was incorporated into the formal proposals for both campuses. John, Nelson, and Max each supported the idea that contemporary public policy demanded an interdisciplinary approach; an interdisciplinary School of Policy and Research would bring together the perspectives of faculty engaged in policy work in a focused way.

### **Infrastructure for Research Intensification**

Several participants (Carl, Don, Max, Tom) described how the School would enhance the universities' research capacity. Max suggested that the interdisciplinary focus of the School of Policy and Research should promote more interdisciplinary research, a focus that the government is encouraging through increased funding for interdisciplinary teams of researchers. Tom suggested that the School could provide such a vehicle for "interdisciplinary research, policy research that has an impact on both the scholarly world as well as the actual decision making world" (p. 10). The interdisciplinary approach to the School could be expressed through collaborative publications and research, as Carl observed:

Although it's a professional school, scholarship is very important. An issue we are talking about is how we can collaborate between different members of the school. To have a real interdisciplinary school, people should collaborate with people from other disciplines, and not just be people from different disciplines under the same roof and teach their own stuff to students. It should be an interdisciplinary spin at least, or content, to the courses and also some research collaboration. (p. 10)

Additionally, Max commented that this approach should positively impact the amount of research funding, because many agencies are preferentially funding interdisciplinary teams of researchers:

We had pointed out that increasingly the teams that are required to land large research projects have to be interdisciplinary. The funding agencies are demanding that you have a team, so we've now got a built-in team that we can use. This will be one of the things that we can now turn our attention to. We haven't been able to do that because we have just sort of been looking after logistics. But this will be the thing that we will be doing in the next year and from here on is developing new ways of bidding for research, undertaking research and so on. (p. 10)

Don strongly emphasized that research intensification was an intended impact: "The main goal's generating more research activity, generating more research funding, generating resources through research activity to fund graduate students" (p. 6). He linked the research activity to providing more funding opportunities for graduate students.

According to the President of University A in his *Strategic Planning Report* (Year 1), the research component is a key priority of universities and having an interdisciplinary school for policy research should generate more opportunities for faculty and students to obtain research funding. As described earlier by participants, the faculty needs the physical proximity and the mental space to capitalize on developing ideas for interdisciplinary research into proposals and grant applications. Dave emphasized that whether this potential becomes a reality could be evaluated only after the School has been functioning for several years.

### **Section Summary**

The intended impacts of the School of Policy and Research, as articulated by participants and the proposal documents, included a focus on training of policy professionals, by establishing a reputation as a leader in policy work, and becoming a destination program for students working in policy studies. In addition, some participants noted that the School was intended to provide an infrastructure for research intensification and for enhancing graduate academic programming. Several participants pointed out that a key intended impact was improving outreach and engagement. Other participants suggested that the School would develop the interdisciplinary capacity of the universities and provide a focal point for policy work. Although different participants focused on particular intended impacts, all of the elements were identified as important, and were articulated in the proposal documents. The participants' responses reflected their familiarity with the proposal documents and the espoused objectives of the School.

### **Collateral Impacts: A Value-Added Dimension**

Each of the proposals specifically outlined the intended impacts of the School. However, when I asked the participants if they anticipated any other consequences or possible changes that could result from the establishment of the School, most of the participants suggested that there were other potential changes. They noted several collateral impacts that lent a value-added dimension to the process. Although some of their responses overlapped with the articulated impacts of the School, they elaborated on these points and suggested other potential changes. The participants' responses focused on two main themes: the collateral impacts on the planning processes and structures of the universities, and the collateral impacts on faculty and staff. Specifically, several participants thought that the process for establishing the interdisciplinary School had demonstrated the efficacy of using powerful planning strategies. Some participants mentioned that the process underscored the need for articulated measures of success or outcomes, and a mechanism for conducting evaluations and gathering feedback. Other participants hoped that the process would provide a mechanism for promoting future change initiatives, and, additionally, this change would impact the universities' cultures. A few participants described the collateral changes for students and faculty in general, while a few specifically articulated, as a collateral change, the impact that the School would have on preparing students for work in the policy field. In addition, I asked the participants if they thought that the establishment of the interdisciplinary policy School would affect their roles. Several participants identified the personal impact that this School would have on them as faculty members and researchers, whereas others thought that their roles would not be significantly affected. The participants' responses to this question were dependent on their personal or professional connections to the School. The first four themes address the change process and facilitating change, whereas the following themes describe how the opportunities and culture for faculty and students would change.

### **The Development of a Powerful Planning Tool**

Jeanette and Don strongly emphasized the importance of implementing a well-defined planning process to provide the foundation for this initiative. In turn, the experience of using strategic planning to facilitate change, could promote the use of a similar strong planning process in future change efforts (Charles, Don, Jeanette). Therefore, the strategic planning document



was important to the context and foundation of the initiative, but these participants perceived that the successful use of the strategic planning process would promote its use in future change efforts. According to these participants, the development of a well-articulated planning process through the *Strategic Planning Report* (Year 1), the University Program Review, and the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3) allowed for the establishment of the School. Don commented that this initiative demonstrated that the planning process was really “a good example of how powerful that particular planning tool was” (p. 6). He elaborated on this point:

You have these Schools coming out of it, which were the results of taking all these ideas and all the plans, and looking at them and seeing some common themes coming through. So the academic side of the university had the forethought and the wisdom to initiate a process that would actually lead to new administrative structures. (Don, p. 7)

Through the University Program Review, the systematic analysis of the colleges, departments and programs identified strengths and weaknesses across campus. The Review was foundational in guiding the decision making of the senior administration when determining priorities for University A. The President articulated those priorities in the *Strategic Planning Report* (Year 1). The university’s administration then devoted energy and resources to supporting those priorities and aligned the budget to reflect those priorities. Jeanette pointed out that such a detailed planning process was not necessarily a common activity of universities:

Universities in Canada are beginning to adopt more of an integrated planning approach, or a planning perspective. They do it to a set of various degrees. University A was an early adopter, not required by government to do planning. Other jurisdictions are required by government to do planning. But I would say in Canada we’re amongst the top three in terms of the planning processes that we have, and our planning processes all have the potential to be even more robust than anywhere else, largely because of the assessment function that [University A] wants to put into it, but also because of that strong link with communications that virtually no other university understands. And we’ve also put together capital and operating planning, and I’m not sure how well that’s working out but that’s certainly another piece that other universities don’t do very well or effectively. Lots of universities in Canada talk about the budgets and then they say they have a plan. Very few universities [say] ‘we have academic goals, and this is where we’re headed, and this is how we’re going to get there and our budget is designed to support that.’ That’s what

we do, and not everybody else does that. Very, very few that I can name say, well, not only do we have goals and the operating budget that gets us there, but also our capital stuff is all on line with our goals and priorities. (pp. 11-12)

By developing a powerful mechanism for determining priorities and linking priorities with resources, University A positioned itself to set objectives, map out paths to achieve those objectives, and use resources to support its journey (Jeanette). Aligning budget with priorities was an important part of the planning process, and the resultant process promoted integration and coherence in planning (Jeanette). University A extended the process implemented in the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3) by developing the *Second Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 7). According to these participants, the development of a strong planning tool, that proved to be very beneficial to the change process, was a collateral change of the successful implementation of the School of Policy and Research. These participants thought that the planning structure used to establish the School could be applied successfully to future change initiatives.

### **Institutional Fluidity and Nimbleness**

Four participants (Charles, Dave, Don, Malcolm) mentioned that the experience with the School could facilitate the development of a more nimble institution. These participants emphasized that universities have to be poised to respond to external forces that, at times, cannot be accommodated by the *status quo*. By having a blueprint of a successful change, the administration of the universities would be able to learn from the challenges and problems and develop a more streamlined process that allows for further structural changes (Charles, Dave, Don, Malcolm). Dave especially focused on this theme and he commented that “the interdisciplinary Schools are probably well placed to be fluid and dynamic provided they don’t try to become colleges” (p. 5). These structures need to be able to facilitate and encourage innovation and change in a timely fashion, as Dave pointed out:

You have to be in a world where you can respond to opportunities, challenges that become scholarly opportunities. So I would cut down on articulating the deliverables up front. If you’ve recruited well, and you have people that are passionate about it, they can be accountable for the results, without fully anticipating what they all are. (p. 6)

Dave referred to the recent economic crisis as an example of emergent issues that can affect universities and can challenge them to change quickly. Charles agreed that institutions need to

become nimble in their approach to tackling these challenges and opportunities. Charles articulated his hope that the initial model of the interdisciplinary School may pave the way for future, more rapid changes, and enhance the nimbleness of the organization:

I think the Schools will develop these new programs a lot faster than they would have been developed without them. In a sense, the Schools are supposed to speed some things up: new programs, more students, better relations with the broader community. (p. 14)

However, Don, Dave, and Malcolm expressed that the change may mean that colleges will have to reexamine their programs, because it is unsustainable to always keep adding programs without subtracting. In other words, sometimes a zero-sum approach is necessary in terms of financial and human resources (Dave, Don, Malcolm). As Don mentioned, the university has to work within the parameters of a finite budget, and the changes have to be accommodated within that budget. Don added that, in order to work within the budget, there was a shifting of some resources from colleges to the School. Although everyone did not agree with the change, Malcolm pointed out that the restructuring was necessary to accommodate change:

Part of the purpose of change is not doing something. You can't always keep adding new things and we don't kill things very fast. We're very bad at terminating things and yet that's something that this forces. Departments all of a sudden have to just decide: What are we going to get rid of, because we can't afford to do everything now? And most of them haven't gone through that yet. And so that's partly the challenge I think. That's an intended consequence but it was not intended by parts of the system. (p. 22)

According to Dave, Don, Malcolm, and Charles, universities needed to remain more fluid and nimble, allowing them to respond to emergent issues in a timely fashion. That could mean developing new programs more quickly (Charles), but it also meant eliminating or changing the existing programs that did not meet the current needs (Dave, Don, Malcolm). These participants pointed out that the School brought about some restructuring through establishing an interdisciplinary frame and through the aligning of budgets to match university-wide priorities (Don, Jeanette, Malcolm). This process could promote institutional fluidity at University A.

### **The Establishment of a Test-Bed for Trying New Structures**

Several participants (Don, Jeanette, Malcolm, Nelson) pointed out a related collateral change. They described how the whole process of establishing the School led the administration

of University A to examine more closely the impact of administrative structures on university programs. As Don pointed out, the School impacted University A's structures significantly. He thought that "one could probably just do a study on the implications of university administrative structures—i.e. schools—on existing collective agreements, and whether or not they are doable, because existing collective agreements are based on administrative structures" (Don, p. 12). Jeanette agreed that the university had to "create some new structures to support what we were doing" (p. 16), because the current structures weren't amenable to growth and change.

Of these participants, Malcolm especially thought that the School provided a platform to try some of the alternative structures that were proposed. For example, Article 29 of the *University Faculty Collective Agreement* (Year 6) allowed for joint appointments for faculty, but the School was the first place they had been tried:

The administration has viewed particularly the policy School but I think all three Schools as a test bed for trying new things, and the policy of Article 29 was the new version [and] was first used in the School. The first joint appointments on campus were used through the Schools. I think it's an intended consequence, but is a broader consequence because if things work there, they'll get some lessons about what did we do right and wrong. How can we generalize this? And it may feed back into the colleges like ours here. (Malcolm, p. 21)

The administrative structures of the model of the School and the use of joint faculty appointments were new structures (Jeanette, Malcolm). The establishment of the new School presented an opportunity to test these structures.

Although there were new administrative structures, Nelson commented that the School provided opportunities for new collaborative structures. The School represented a new way of doing business, not only across boundaries that exist across colleges, and departments, but also across universities. As Nelson observed:

Well in a lot of ways, we're proving a new way for [University A]. And the second university plan has imbedded in it and also explicit in it, collaborations across units. And at least two of the 20 commitments are related to that. This is also, I think, going to really show the university that a small province with two universities can actually do cross-boundary work. So hopefully one of the impacts would be having made a way for more inter-university and intra-university collaboration. And so that's part of becoming a

deuteral learning or the double-loop learning piece for the university. What happens is we've actually created some brand new things that we couldn't do apart. (p. 11)

As already described in Chapter 6 on implementation, previous interdisciplinary models had been tried on campus, and the organizational learning from those experiences helped to shape this School. Now, according to Malcolm, Nelson, Jeanette, and Don, this School represented a new model, one that the university could use as a vehicle for testing new ways of operating.

### **The Building of a Culture that Welcomes Change**

As described in Chapter 6, several participants (Charles, Jeanette, Malcolm, Max) perceived that there was a need to change the culture of the university because it did not promote or welcome change. A couple of participants (Dave and Max) specifically articulated how this new model could impact University A in terms of building a new culture. This new culture, according to them, would welcome change, and allow innovation to move forward. As Dave stated:

I think there is a broader culture issue in that one of the intended impacts, perhaps unintended but positive impacts, is that it does send a signal to faculty that there is an opportunity to create that with an idea that's strong and robust and if you're prepared to push it, and you will have to push it, nobody's going to pull it, but you do have to push it, and if you're prepared to push it that this is an environment that's willing to take a chance on those types of ideas. (p. 7)

This School would show faculty that strong, innovative ideas would be welcomed (Dave). This was especially important because it was difficult to change the existing culture, especially in very complex institutions (John). Some participants noted that many faculty and deans of colleges were still deeply entrenched in the traditional structures with independent disciplines and the siloing of resources (Carl, Charles, Dave, Jeanette, Malcolm, Max, Nelson). However, Max hoped the initial concerns that other faculty expressed would be replaced by a new perspective, once the new structure was designed and implemented. Max elaborated on this idea that faculty members would develop new concepts of what universities are and what they are capable of doing:

In terms of other possible consequences, it will be interesting. In one way, I think this opened up the university in a way that the university did need opening up and that's

going to have some possible consequences down the road as people think about sort of structures of the university. In the short run, it may have meant that there is nothing else that will be happening for awhile because these things are really, really tough to do. They involve a tremendous amount of resources, and I think you see that in the current university plan where it's really about kind of consolidating what we've got done as opposed to trying to do something brand new. It's about engagement rather than trying to do new things. But I suspect that down the road one of the consequences might be some different view of what universities can do. (p. 10)

Dave and Max suggested that, through the process of successfully establishing a new model of an interdisciplinary School, the faculty would see how innovation could occur, and would gain a new perspective on what the university could do. Dave pointed out that the School could act as a signal that University A actually welcomed change and would support the change efforts of the faculty. Max noted that this School would herald the opening up of the university to new ideas and structures. Thus, Dave and Max emphasized that the School could mark the beginning of a reculturation of the university, from a culture that reinforces traditional silos of knowledge and resources to a culture that embraces innovation, collaboration, and change. As described in the next section, there would also be a reculturation of the faculty environment.

### **The Reculturation of the Faculty Environment**

Several participants (Charles, Don, Jeanette, Malcolm, Max) suggested that the establishment of the School would probably impact faculty. For some people, the impact would be minimal, but for others who were more directly connected to the School, there would be a more explicit impact (Charles). Charles thought that the interdisciplinary Schools would be positive for University A and would open up new possibilities for University A and for faculty. He stated that it depended upon one's perspective:

I would tend to look at these things as mostly positive, but you have to have a certain frame of mind around this sort of thing. Most faculty members would be quite indifferent. They would have looked at these Schools and say, how does this affect me positively or negatively, and most would say, it doesn't affect me at all. So it really doesn't matter one way or the other. (p. 17)

As Charles said, many people would be indifferent to the School, because there would not be an obvious direct impact on their daily lives as faculty members. However, there was a possibility that the new structures and the dynamic of interdisciplinary schools may eventually have an impact on the way the wider university operates (Jeanette, Malcolm, Max). For example, one newly implemented practice that affected faculty only at University A was that of joint faculty appointments. Although many faculty members may not have had direct ties to the School, they may have been affected by the advent of the joint faculty members. Specifically, when the college shared a faculty member with the School, the home college was not compensated for the time that the joint faculty was appointed to the School (Dave, Malcolm). It was this potentially contentious issue that one participant, Malcolm, wanted to point out.

I think one of the unintended consequences is that it is going to raise some serious questions about how we treat individuals as they follow their individual career paths, and how we collectively treat them, because there's already been a little bit of animosity and I'm anticipating a lot more as people have vacated one unit and moved into one of the Schools. That's cultural in the sense that you are owned by a discipline is not unanimous across universities in the world, but it's very true here. (p. 21)

The joint faculty appointment was, at that point, difficult, because those faculty members did not necessarily get a reduced load at their home college, and yet there were extra administrative duties involved in setting up the new School (Malcolm). "Maybe in the future, when we're not doing as much hiring and we're not building programs, it will be much less onerous and not just on top" (Malcolm, p. 23). However, according to Malcolm, the current workload and the atmosphere were not sustainable: "under its current configuration, it's not stable" (p. 23). Malcolm thought that the faculty were committed to this enterprise and "it's not that anybody says that it's been a waste of their time. They're just saying it's not sustainable in the current structure" (p. 23). Malcolm believed that, on the part of faculty, the willingness to undertake a joint faculty position was there but the position itself needed to be retooled to make it more workable. The School was the test-bed of the joint faculty structure; to ensure the success of the model, some aspects of the model would need to be re-examined to make it sustainable over the long term (Malcolm). The structure of the joint faculty positions supported interdisciplinarity by allowing more disparate faculty members to work together in one School; as Nelson pointed out, having the shared space promoted dialogue and better facilitated interdisciplinary work.

This model of increased collaboration was connected to Jeanette's hope that she would see, within ten years, these Schools really "draw the campus together and [make] people understand more, and more effectively, about what it means to work together, to be part of a collective group" (p. 12). Don concurred that the School provides new experiences for faculty members: "Another goal is to provide a better environment for faculty, get them out of their current environment and put them in an environment where they themselves can grow and have new experiences" (p. 6). As Jeanette and Don observed, there are some potential benefits for faculty. The joint faculty position really supports the model of interdisciplinarity and allows individual faculty members to grow; should the position be unsustainable, a valuable opportunity to draw together different perspectives would be lost.

Max also cautioned that some faculty members were concerned that there may be negative consequences for their own colleges and departments. He believed that some work had to be done to build bridges between the existing colleges and departments, and the School. Max elaborated on this point:

I think that the [questions] that you can obviously anticipate, and I think this was the one that was of concern to many people on campus, was, what was the school going to do to the rest of campus, to the rest of the units? What was it going to do to graduate programs in other areas? What was it going to do if you lost a faculty member to the School? What would it mean in terms of the ability of a department or a unit to get a new faculty position? Does it mean a loss of influence, or maybe a continued loss of influence of the disciplines as interdisciplinarity took hold not just here but across the country? I think some of the people in the disciplines were saying, "But hold it, what about the disciplines? And where do we sit and what's our role?" I think those are obvious consequences that we can anticipate, that people were anticipating. We'll see what happens on those. We'll see how this works. There is, I think, a sense on our part at the School that we need now to find a way to really reach back to other parts of campus and bring them in to this new endeavor in some way, and that if we didn't do that, then what was the purpose, to set up another sort of department that would build its own stove pipe, which was the problem that we were worried about and that got the discussions going in the first place. It wouldn't seem to have got you very far if that's what you ended up



doing, so my sense is that one of the things that we're going to be looking for is how can we build those linkages back with the disciplines in some new ways. (p. 10)

Even though there were potential benefits to be accrued through the establishment of the School (Don, Jeanette), some faculty members had questions and concerns about how the School could affect them in a negative way (Max). Max felt that the faculty at the School could alleviate some of these concerns through building linkages with the existing disciplines and through rebuilding connections. In short, the participants noted that the School impacted faculty in the following ways: most faculty members would not be directly affected by the School, but the joint faculty appointments could affect their colleges and departments; the joint faculty positions needed to be reworked to make them more sustainable; there were potential benefits for the faculty in terms of new opportunities, but some faculty members of the university in general continued to have questions and concerns about the establishment of the School and the use of joint faculty positions.

### **Attraction of Graduate Students Interested in Policy**

Many participants (Carl, Dave, Jeanette, Jeff, Nelson, Tom) described how the interdisciplinary graduate School of Policy and Research could impact students, as well as faculty. Although the attraction of more graduate students working in policy was one of the intended impacts articulated in the proposals for the School, these participants reiterated this point in the discussions about collateral impacts of the change. They added details about their hopes for improved graduate student recruitment. For example, Jeff emphasized that, by offering a strong interdisciplinary graduate program focused on training policy professionals, this School would attract more, high quality students interested in policy work, thereby increasing graduate student enrollment. Jeanette agreed with the intention that the School would increase the number of graduate students. According to Jeanette, "We have hopes that our current interdisciplinary Schools are where our graduate programming will grow during this cycle quite substantially" (p. 13). As well, Tom noted that a possible consequence could be that the School would generate graduates that stay in the province despite the fact that they are from other places in the country and the world. We see that more here right now but hopefully that we are in a sense, acting as a back door to some pretty high level expertise in emigration, emigrating to this province. (p. 10)

It was perceived that the School would especially benefit particular graduate students who had a keen interest in interdisciplinarity and policy work. Dave elaborated on this point:

Certainly, I think it just provides another horizon for both current graduate students and potential graduate students. I've often observed that there's a group of interdisciplinary research students in the College of Graduate Studies. A huge number of those were doing policy work. And, wouldn't it be nice to have a home for them where they are central to the activities of the unit rather than peripheral to the activities of a bunch of other units on campus, where what they're doing is part of a body of scholarship and it's not picking or choosing appropriate classes from elsewhere. There's an expected curriculum of policy analysis that has to be taken, and I think that's a great consequence.

(p. 8)

This coursework that focuses on policy would be instrumental in preparing these students for work in the public and private sectors (Carl, Dave, Nelson). Nelson expressed the view that “we already are seeing the effects of students, that are energized and to some extent equipped now, to do and interact in the world in a way better than they once were” (p. 12). Carl concurred when he described how the School would address the needs of those students enrolled in the School who were going to seek employment especially in the public sector:

A major market for our students in terms of job market is obviously government, both provincial and federal. For the PhD, academia will be a major market, but for international organizations and think tanks, even for the MPA, think tanks, research institutes, and also people who could work for different organizations and labor unions, or even for the private sector. Companies need to know about public policy and so for the MPR and even the MPA you can imagine people working for the private sector. But most of them will work for government, or organizations related to government in a direct way. (p. 9)

As Carl pointed out, the School would prepare graduate students for work in the policy field. This graduate program was new to the campus, fulfilling a need, as perceived by the participants, to increase graduate student enrolment. In short, one collateral impact was the effect that an interdisciplinary graduate School of Policy and Research would have on growing graduate student numbers at the universities, preparing them for policy jobs, and hopefully, retaining these students to work in the province's public or private sector.

### **The Establishment of Accountability Mechanisms**

Some participants (Dave, Jeanette, Malcolm,) commented that one collateral impact of the School was the emphasis on accountability, an emphasis that was evident in the University Program Review (Charles). For example, as part of the formal proposals for the Schools, the working groups had to articulate anticipated outcomes (*School of Policy and Research Proposal*, Year 6). Some targets would be easier to track, such as student enrollment, whereas others would be much more difficult to quantify, such as contributions to the national policy environment. Dave and Malcolm were especially vocal in elaborating on how accountability mechanisms were articulated in the process of establishing the School. However, Dave cautioned that University A's administration should not "be writing the report card of the interdisciplinary Schools, before they're even up and running, because we actually don't know what it is we are assessing yet" (p. 7), and the university "[had] to be careful with the way we assess" (p. 7). Although Dave recognized that there needed to be some immediate goals that could be achieved within a reasonable time frame, he strongly emphasized that the School needed some time to become established before a thorough evaluation could be conducted. He suggested that it would be more helpful to articulate and categorize the impacts as short, medium, and long term. Dave added:

I think you can think about it as short, medium, and longer term impacts for sure. I don't think anybody wants to be in a situation where you simply say, give us the resources and don't ask us any questions for a decade or longer. I mean that would be unsatisfying too. But there's a tendency to become preoccupied with results that may have been identified as possible, that are interpreted as promised. And suddenly there's a discussion not about what has been achieved but a discussion about what hasn't been achieved, and there may be very good reasons for an organization to deviate. (p. 7)

As Dave pointed out, the university had to set up assessment mechanisms carefully and thoughtfully. He noted that there had to be a balance between assessing outcomes before the School could become strongly established and waiting too long before holding the School accountable for achieving its intended impacts.

Because of this growing emphasis on accountability as noted by Jeanette and Charles, the faculty members of the School of Policy and Research were working on policies and documents that articulated mechanisms for evaluation of the program as well as for gathering feedback and

reflection from faculty and students (Malcolm). As Malcolm noted, the individual faculty members had developed their own goals for their work plans:

we can aggregate, and set some group targets of what we want to accomplish. So, I think we'll move towards quite transparent reporting and, in a way, I think we're going to be forced into it because at some point, in the not too distant future, somebody's going to say, "Okay, we've put a lot of money into you. What have we got from that?" (p. 20)

Malcolm, Charles, and Dave expressed that there was an expectation that the School would articulate specific outputs, once it has been operational for a few years. As Malcolm observed:

at that point then you pretty much have to start defining what your outputs are. And I would hope that we would be much more articulate in terms of having very measurable outputs in terms of our research input, or research grants and research outputs, our teaching outputs, and tracking. One of our goals is to track our alumni and people we teach through ground zero and start to measure, that's your first alumni group and get them in there, and then we'll be able to track where they go and how they go and count them as part of our continuing influence of the School. And then in terms of public engagement and public dialogue, there's a series of things that we're all engaged in. Have we got very measurable outcomes yet? No. But I don't think anybody does. (p. 20)

Malcolm pointed out that some mechanisms to determine outcomes were more readily available and easy to calculate. For example, Malcolm noted, "we have some methodologies that we can use to track our policy influence. Things like citation analysis, web crawlers and those are some of the tools to track policy, to track the evolution of policy networks and policy ideas" (p. 20). However, other outcomes such as research contributions or contributions to public policy debate and development can be calculated only after several years, or after even a decade or longer. As Dave suggested:

If you think about the time frame for scholarly work itself is probably measured by three or four years, cumulatively if you're expecting a significant contribution to scholarship you have to measure it in a broader time frame. Because you don't want an interdisciplinary school to simply be a think tank that provides day-to-day observations that will come into question if there isn't a foundation of peer reviewed research behind it. But when those two things are working together, that's actually a very effective university or school. (p. 7)

Dave, Malcolm, Charles, and Jeanette noted that the School needed to be accountable to the wider university, as do all the colleges. However, as Dave and Malcolm suggested, some of the impacts would be difficult to measure and would be apparent only after the School has been operational for a substantial amount of time. Interestingly, Jeanette pointed out that “right now we’re in the optimistic stage of this change” (p. 14) where the focus is on intended impacts rather than actual outcomes. Developing mechanisms for evaluating and gathering feedback on the School is a necessary and careful piece of the administrative duties undertaken by the School’s faculty and administration (Charles, Dave).

### **Section Summary**

This section was focused on the potential collateral changes or the value-added dimension to the establishment of the School; these were changes that generally were not specifically articulated in the proposals. However, in this discussion, some participants did reiterate some of the impacts mentioned in the proposals, but they added emphasis to these impacts by describing them further. Participants elaborated on several possible collateral impacts, focusing on two main themes: the possible impacts on the planning processes and structure of the university, and the possible impacts on faculty, students, and staff. Specifically, some participants noted that the process of establishing the interdisciplinary School contributed to the development of powerful planning strategies, and the establishment of accountability mechanisms. Several participants mentioned, as a collateral impact, the increased graduate student enrolment and enhanced preparation of policy professionals. Some of the collateral impacts mentioned were focused on change, such as improving institutional fluidity and nimbleness, building a culture that welcomes change, and establishing a test-bed for trying new things. Several participants elaborated on the reculturation of the faculty environment. In the following section, I examine the perceived impacts on the participants’ roles themselves.

### **Perceived Changes in the Roles of the Participants**

To better understand the individual impact that the School had on the participants, I asked, if, and how, the establishment of the School would affect their own roles on campus. Their answers reflected their connection to the School. A few participants thought that there would be

minimal, or no, impact (Dave, Don, Jeanette, John). John, for example, thought that his role had not changed “other than an ongoing interest and commitment to the success of the School” (p. 5). The interdisciplinary School did not significantly affect the roles that these four participants played on campus. For other participants like Max, the answer to the question was more complicated:

I mean the obvious answer is yes, I've moved departments, which doesn't happen very often. It does happen; there are people who move from one department to another but it doesn't happen all that often, so, in that sense, it's fairly major. In another way though, for me personally, as I operate as a faculty member in some ways it's not changing it very much because I was always operating outside of my department. I was involved in research projects, supervising a number of graduate students through the interdisciplinary program. I was involved, for instance, in chairing the interdisciplinary graduate committee. So I was linked in to other parts of campus in a way that most faculty members, I think it would be fair to say, are not. And in a way, what this shift has done, has simply moved me. My connections remain pretty much the same, but I'm just starting from a different point, so for me I'm still going to be involved in a bunch of other things on campus. And I think that's actually probably one of the roles I need to be playing because I think that's sort of what we should be having the School be. So then in a way then I don't think it's affected the way that I view my role much at all because to get here I had to change my view and this is sort of the ramification of the outcome of that change in view. (p. 11)

For some participants, their roles were not seen to be significantly impacted by the establishment of the interdisciplinary School, because they were not directly involved in the work of the School itself and were involved more in senior administrative roles guiding the development of the School in other capacities (Dave, Don, Jeanette, John). For others who had engaged in interdisciplinary work previously, the School provided a different vehicle for continuing their work (Max).

For some of the participants, though, they perceived that the School significantly impacted their work or their way of thinking. Some participants expressed that their involvement in the School had extended their skills in interdisciplinarity and collaboration. Tom noted: “I have always operated this way so in my case it hasn't [affected me] very much except in

teaching and applying interdisciplinarity in teaching in a way that is much more systematic and much more thoughtful of the traditions of other disciplines” (p. 10). Linda concurred that this initiative changed her thinking:

What it does in terms of—for me—is it broadens my way of thinking. It helps me to become more aware, and understand and be more sensitive to the various disciplines and not only in terms of the knowledge base and the types of research, but also how one discipline area can really significantly benefit the others, that mutual working relationship. (p. 6)

The new, interdisciplinary structure challenged the faculty and staff to consider the perspectives of other disciplines, but the joint School also challenged some participants to consider different perspectives across the province. Jeff described how his thinking had changed in this way:

It’s made me conscious of how we work across the province, in a certain way. It made me conscious of working at University A, and the need to work together. It made me conscious of being a little more interdisciplinary and what are some of the challenges of that. And it’s not easy, about how you have to structure a curriculum differently for an interdisciplinary program. I don’t think people realize that, that you have to hire differently so there’s a lot of different changes. (p. 7)

Dave and Max postulated that the transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking evident in the establishing and functioning of the joint School hopefully would extend across campus and affect the culture of the university. Jeanette further described this approach as about being collaborative and perhaps pushing the whole university culture to be more collaborative in its operation. “It’s not just about the Schools being collaborative. It’s about being generous with resources, across the campus, and so it’s got a lot to do with sharing resources” (Jeanette, p. 14). Jeanette perceived that there was potential for developing a more collaborative culture that would positively affect every faculty and staff member across campus; a culture of sharing resources would impact her role as a senior administrative member.

Although most participants noted that the School would affect them mostly in challenging them to further develop their interdisciplinary thinking, Nelson felt that there had been a significant impact on his role as a faculty member in other ways, such as in his committee work, in his writing, and in his consultations with others. He commented that he was “finding new ways to solve [his] problems by listening to [his] colleagues. It’s just these are people with

rich, rich backgrounds” (p. 12). Nelson perceived that his involvement in the interdisciplinary School had challenged his thinking and his perspective. He noted the importance of developing more interpersonal connections. These connections gave him an opportunity to test his own “disciplinary paradigm for excellence against other people’s views of what constitutes excellence in academic acumen” (p. 13). Additionally, he thought that his involvement in the School had opened up new opportunities for him in research and teaching.

Although most participants described how the initiative had challenged their thinking in positive ways, Linda talked about how the process also had highlighted the current barriers to the initiative:

So there’s lots of opportunities that these Schools are going to provide but it also highlights for me some of the barriers, some of the anxieties that exist, some of the resistance to change that is out there, and possibly to have to reflect and analyze why that resistance is there and to try to see how we, as an organization, can help assist that so faculty feel empowered and engaged, not threatened or anxious, that students feel excited and supported and nurtured, that communities feel welcomed. (p. 6)

As Linda articulated, there were potential opportunities that could materialize because of the establishment of the School, but only if the barriers could be identified and dismantled. As a senior administrative member, Linda perceived that this process would affect her role. Together, the senior administrative members needed to engage in reflection and analysis in order to determine why there was resistance, and how they could address the resistance.

In short, all of the participants had different perceptions of how their roles were going to change, or had already changed, depending on their particular involvement with the School. Most participants noted that there were going to be minimal changes to their roles because of the way they had always been engaged in interdisciplinarity. However, for a few participants, the School had meant huge changes for them personally. For some participants, the process challenged their ways of thinking and opened them up to new opportunities, but it also highlighted potential barriers and challenges. Additionally, there could be a reculturation of the faculty environment for the whole university, as described in the previous section, and a change toward a more collaborative culture.



### Summary

In this chapter, I described the participants' perceptions regarding both the intended and collateral impacts of this initiative. The intended impacts of the School of Policy and Research, as articulated by participants and the proposal documents, included a focus on training of policy professionals, and establishing a reputation as a leader in policy work, thereby becoming a destination program for students working in policy studies. In addition, some participants emphasized that the School was intended to provide an infrastructure for research intensification and for enhancing graduate academic programming. Several participants pointed out that a key intended impact was improving outreach and engagement. Other participants noted that the School would develop the interdisciplinary capacity of the Universities and provide a focal point for policy work. Although different participants focused on particular intended impacts, all of the elements were identified as important, and were articulated in the proposal documents.

Participants described potential collateral changes or the value-added dimension to the establishment of the School; these were changes that generally were not articulated in the proposals. However, in this discussion, some participants did reiterate some of the impacts mentioned in the proposals, but they added emphasis to these impacts by describing them further. Participants elaborated on several possible collateral impacts, focusing on two main themes: the collateral impacts on the planning processes and structure of the university, and the collateral impacts on faculty, students, and staff. Specifically, some participants noted that the process of establishing the interdisciplinary School contributed to the development of powerful planning strategies, and the establishment of accountability mechanisms. Several participants mentioned, as a collateral impact, the increased graduate student enrolment and enhanced preparation of policy professionals. Some of the collateral impacts mentioned were focused on change, such as the improvement of institutional fluidity and nimbleness, the building of a culture that welcomes change, and the establishment of a test-bed for trying new things. Several participants elaborated on the reculturation of the faculty environment.

Additionally, I reported on the participants' perceptions of how their roles were going to change, or had already changed, depending on their particular involvement with the School. Most participants suggested that there were going to be minimal changes to their roles because of the way they had always been engaged in interdisciplinarity. However, for a few participants, the School had meant significant changes for them personally. For some participants, the

process challenged their ways of thinking and opened them up to new opportunities, but it also highlighted potential barriers and challenges. Additionally, there could be a reculturation of the faculty environment for the whole university, and a change toward a more collaborative culture. The new culture would impact the participants and their roles at the Universities, whether or not they are directly involved in the School.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Because of my strong interest in change theory, I wanted to research a case within educational institutions where a fundamental change had occurred, and explore the policy process that led to the change. I chose to study a unique case where two universities were involved. The purpose of this case study was to examine policy development that promoted the emergence of a joint interdisciplinary school. A policy analysis framework, based on the work of Kingdon (2003) and Levin (2001), was used to structure the exploration of the origins, policy networks, policy adoption procedures and the policy implementation process involved in the establishment of this interdisciplinary School. I asked the following questions:

1. What issues, influences, and contexts contributed to the origin and adoption of this policy?
2. Why was the policy window opened at this time?
3. Who were the key stakeholders and policy actors involved in the origin, adoption, and implementation of this policy development?
4. How, and why, were these stakeholders involved in this process?
5. How was the policy implementation process strategized and articulated?
6. How did the intended impacts of the policy process address the problem(s) articulated by the key stakeholders?

I gathered data through semi-structured interviews, documents, and policies. The preceding questions provided the structure for the interviews, but I asked further probing questions where necessary to elicit more information. I conducted the interviews with 13 participants who had some connection with the implementation of the new, interdisciplinary School of Policy and Research. In this chapter, I summarize the findings, and analyze and interpret the data. I relate the findings to the literature on change theory, the current policy environment, and the structure and dynamics of universities. Additionally, I discuss some implications this study has for further research in the field of change theory, and neoinstitutionalism, and examine the significance of the results in terms of the policy process and policy development. I revisit my conceptual framework and construct a visual representation based on my findings of this study. In the final

section, I reflect on the study's methodology and examine the strengths and weaknesses of the study's design.

### **Summary of Findings**

The establishment of an interdisciplinary policy school was an idea that developed at two universities within the same province, beginning at approximately the same time. The origin of the idea, and the issues underlying that origin, differed at the two universities. At University B, the concept of an interdisciplinary policy program was proposed by one faculty member in response to a dispute between two faculties who were running the existing policy program at that university. The proposal was seen as a viable solution to the dispute, and was picked up by the vice presidents who, along with key faculty, moved the idea through the approval processes. By the autumn of Year 4, the first cohort of students had started the program at the School of Policy and Research.

At University A, the context of the change included the appointment of different senior administration who instituted more explicit planning processes for the university. As part of this process, the President identified some priorities for the university in his strategic plan. A small group of professors, who were involved in various aspects of policy work or research, proposed an interdisciplinary policy school. They believed that this type of school addressed many of the priorities articulated by the President. This group became a formal working group that then put together a proposal that slowly wound its way through the approval process. Around this time, the group became aware of the changes happening at University B. Because University B had already established its program, the working group at University A realized they either had to look for ways to work collaboratively on a policy program or give up the idea entirely. Two key faculty members from each university met to discuss the issue. The members from both universities agreed that collaboration was the most desirable approach and worked on developing the idea of a joint policy school. Eventually that structure was approved and the School of Policy and Research was established as a joint, interdisciplinary program at both campuses.

From the findings, I determined that the context and issues underlying the problem were somewhat varied between the two campuses. At University B, there was an existing program, but the problem that prompted the discussion was a dispute between the two faculties who ran the program. At University A, strategic planning and a program review prompted the discussion

about priorities for the university, and several faculty members proposed an interdisciplinary school as a way to address many of these priorities. This solution was seen as a way to galvanize the policy work that was occurring on campus. By utilizing a different administrative structure (a school rather than a department or college), it was hoped that some of the barriers to changes could be dismantled at the same time.

While the problems at the two universities were different, there were some contextual issues that they shared. One shared issue was the heightened focus on interdisciplinary research throughout academia nationally and internationally. This focus was expressed in the process for awarding federal research grants. Another shared theme was the need for more people trained in the policy field who could work in the civil service and other public policy positions. A related contextual issue was the changing policy environment where there was increased emphasis on citizen engagement in the policy process and on outreach activities involving universities and communities. In addition, a common interest among universities in the country was the increased focus on attracting large research grants, and on enhancing graduate programming to meet student demand. These issues highlight the *Zeitgeist* in which the idea of an interdisciplinary policy school for graduate students gained momentum.

Although the problems and issues differed, the solution proposed was remarkably similar: establish an interdisciplinary policy school on campus that becomes a destination program for graduate students interested in policy development. The policy actors at both campuses were also very similar. The idea, in both cases, was proposed by members of the faculty, at the grassroots level. These committed faculty members were part of the working group that developed the proposal, and took the proposal through the approval process.

The other policy actors, the senior administration at each campus, saw the interdisciplinary policy School as a way to address particular issues, and they supported the idea. Their support gave “policy clout” to the proposals at each campus. However, the process towards developing a joint school was slowed for different reasons. At University B, some of the members of the senior administration were really opposed to the idea of a partnership with University A. Meanwhile, at University A, the lengthy approval process for the establishment of the school, and then for the program itself, meant that the joint School program did not become a reality until Year 7.

In terms of the implementation process itself, there were similarities and differences between the two campuses. Three distinct stages characterized the early implementation process at both campuses. Throughout all three stages, the main activities involved securing resources. Resources included financial support, human resources (faculty, staff, and students), physical space, and the development of programs and curriculum. Participants at both universities also mentioned organizational learning in relation to this initiative: some learning occurred previously (establishing a virtual college) that was instrumental in the structure of this School, and learning had occurred through establishing the School. Several participants discussed the learning that was ongoing, or that would hopefully occur as a result of the new School.

However, there were also some differences between these universities with respect to implementation. At University A, the approval process took much longer. Because the School was a new unit, and because joint faculty appointments (unique to University A) were used for the first time to fill some of the faculty positions, there were more issues to consider. Because it was a new unit at that university, another strong theme was the emphasis on building the culture of the new School. Several participants at University A discussed the need for articulating firm targets and objectives and for establishing mechanisms to gauge success in meeting these objectives.

Perhaps one of the strongest themes, resistance to change, was expressed at both universities, but there were some subtle differences in the dynamics of that resistance. At University B, some of the senior administration and other faculty members were resistant to establishing a partnership with University A. At University A, some of the deans and faculty members were resistant to a new structure on campus, and the implications that had for their own colleges and departments, including the sharing of resources and potential structural changes in the future. For the people involved in establishing the joint School, this resistance was time-consuming and energy-draining.

The working group believed in the value of the proposal, though, and continued the effort to establish the School. They discussed the intended impacts of the School and collateral impacts or value-added dimension of the School. The intended impacts that the participants mentioned reiterated the objectives of the School as outlined in the proposals, and, therefore, illustrated both the participants' familiarity with those documents, and the fact that those documents were foundational and fundamental to the process. The intended impacts included a

focus on the training of policy professionals and on establishing a reputation as a leader in policy work, thereby becoming a destination program for students working in policy studies. In addition, some participants emphasized that the School was intended to provide an infrastructure for research intensification and for enhancing graduate academic programming. Another intended impact that some participants mentioned was a focus on outreach and engagement. Other participants noted that the School would develop the interdisciplinary capacity of the universities and provide a focal point for policy work. All of these impacts were equally applicable to both universities as the proposals articulated very similar objectives.

Participants described some of the possible collateral impacts of the establishment of the School. Within this discussion, they described two main types of impacts: those that focused on the planning processes and structure of the university, and those that concerned faculty, students, and staff. Several strong themes emerged. One collateral impact was the development of better mechanisms and processes for accomplishing change. It was believed that this would improve institutional fluidity and nimbleness, and build a culture that welcomed change. Several participants mentioned that this would include reculturation of the faculty environment, and the promotion of innovation.

In terms of the personal impact of the change, the participants' responses varied, depending on their connection to the initiative. For some participants, there was very little impact. For others, the School would not change their roles much because they had been engaged in interdisciplinary work previously. However, for a few participants, the School had meant significant changes for them personally. It had challenged their thinking and opened them up to new opportunities. A few participants mentioned that the process had highlighted for them some of the barriers to change that still existed. Even though these challenges remained, most participants continued to believe in the value, and the potential positive impact, of the School and its program.

### **Discussion: The Four Stages of the Policy Process**

In this section, I examine the connections between the findings and the literature, and discuss the findings in relation to theoretical and practical applications. I organized this section according to the broad themes that emerged from the data, and arranged the themes according to the four stages of the policy process: origin, adoption, implementation, and evaluation, based on

the conceptual framework for the study. I found that this process of separating out themes and arranging them in a reasonable order was a difficult one because the themes were not discrete. There were many interconnections and interdependencies among the themes. Just as the policy process was iterative and dynamic, so too were the themes as they emerged, and subsequently were developed further by additional data and emergent themes. Sorting and categorizing the data were similarly difficult because particular data could be interpreted as information concerning origin, or implementation or impacts. The lines were not distinct.

### **Policy Origin**

Beland (2005) suggested that “institutionalist scholars could further extend their analysis of ideas through the study of [Kingdon’s] agenda-setting” (p. 36). He added that “the study of agenda-setting must take into account policy feedbacks from previously enacted institutions as well as the manner in which policymakers frame their proposals to increase popular support, before and after their enactment” (Beland, 2005, p. 37). In this case study, I found Kingdon’s (2003) model of policy streams and agenda-setting to be applicable to the development of the interdisciplinary School of Policy and Research. Kingdon (2003) proposed that there are three policy streams that are involved in the policy process. The problem stream includes the perception of a public problem that requires intervention from a public institution to solve; the policy stream includes the examination of the problem and proposal of possible solutions by experts; and the political stream refers to the global and national political climate, the influence of interest groups and other policy actors, and the stability or change of the people with political influence in the organization (Kingdon, 2003). Kingdon contended that, usually, these streams operate independently but, sometimes, the streams come together at particular points, and it is at these points that the greatest agenda change happens. These policy changes occur when “a problem is recognized, a solution is available, the political climate makes the time right for a change, and the constraints do not prohibit action” (Kingdon, 2003, p. 88). Kingdon called these junctures where the policy streams come together *policy windows*. At both campuses, a policy window allowed an idea to move forward into implementation.

In terms of the political stream, the universities shared a common element, the political and social climate of universities. Included in this environment was the focus on interdisciplinary work and the federal research funding that increasingly recognized



interdisciplinary and collaborative research projects (Fairbairn & Fulton, 2000; *Strategic Plan Report*, Year 1). Additionally, there was increasing competitiveness among universities with the resultant focus on developing niche or destination programs (Clark, 1998; Rice & Prince, 2001; Skolnik, 2005). Another factor was the perceived need for training policy professionals in anticipation of a need for these experts in areas of public policy (Dobuzinkis et al., 2007). Added to this dynamic was the changing policy environment where there was an increasing emphasis on citizen engagement in policy development, and on collaborative work between communities and policy experts (Laforest & Phillips, 2007; Pal, 2006). All of these factors shaped the national political and social environment of the universities.

At University B, in an attempt to deal with the macro issue of the political and social climate, a micro problem developed between the two faculties working to address this issue. A dispute arose between the two faculties who delivered the policy program on campus. Simply put, the problem was not being resolved by the faculties. Thus, the problem stream at University B consisted of the macro issue (the political and social climate) and the micro issue (the retooling of the present policy program). The policy stream at this campus came to the forefront when one faculty member proposed a solution that could potentially resolve the issue. The political stream had two different elements. One element was the shared political and social environment. The other critical element was the perceived support of the senior administration. Tom and Jeff contended that senior administration supported the proposal through the approval process because it was seen as a viable solution to the identified problem.

At University A, the three streams were also evident. The problem stream focused on the need to redefine the university and determine how to stay competitive. The policy stream resulted from the university-wide planning that the university engaged to determine strengths and deficiencies and identify priorities for the university. The priorities were highlighted in the *Strategic Planning Report* (Year 1). A small group of faculty proposed the idea of an interdisciplinary policy school that would address several of these priorities, including research intensification, increased graduate student enrolment, and interdisciplinarity. In addition, the School would provide a focal point for the policy work done on campus. The elements of the political stream at University A were very similar to that of University B. The two universities shared the political and social environment. At both campuses, the idea originated at the grassroots level and the proposal from this group of faculty was supported by the senior

administration as a mechanism to work on several priorities. The senior administration supported the proposal by including the development of the School in the *First Multi-Year University Plan* (Year 3), and providing some financial backing in the form of the Academics Priorities Fund.

In both cases, the three independent streams came together into a policy window. Both universities were trying to respond to problems, and solutions to those problems had been proposed. The political climate was right, and there were many elements of the political and social environment of the universities that provided a favorable environment for change. This scenario reflects Kingdon's (2003) definition of a policy window. However, Kingdon added that, during a policy window, constraints did not prohibit the change. At both universities, there was some resistance to the change, and, at University A, a lengthy approval process, that almost derailed the initiative despite all the streams coming together. In my opinion, it was the strength of the political stream and the policy actors that allowed the initiative to go forward. At University A, the perseverance of the working group and the senior administration's support moved the idea forward through the approval process. At University B, the perseverance of the School's faculty and the political work done by University A's Provost allowed the idea of a joint policy school to move forward. Kingdon (2003) noted that the policy window does not stay open for long; this was true for the policy School. Moving the proposals forward meant that dedicated faculty needed to remain at those universities and be instrumental in providing intensive support to the proposal. As well, the universities were trying to establish a destination program for graduate students interested in policy work. As the study was being completed, three new policy schools were being established in Canada. That is a reflection of the *Zeitgeist* for the idea, but also of the need for timely innovations so that the initiative is on the front end, as opposed to the back end, of the cusp of an innovative idea.

Surprisingly, because University A was attempting to redefine itself and become more competitive through creating new programs, it was displaying characteristics of an entrepreneurial university, as it is defined by Clark (1998). Clark (1998) identified five common characteristics of entrepreneurial universities. They have a leadership group that steered the university through shared values and operating procedures. They develop new units to explore interdisciplinary enquiry. They diversify their funding bases, becoming less reliant on government grants. They share their resources across the university, supporting their core

departments and new initiatives. Lastly, they develop a culture of innovation that is shared by the whole institution (Clark, 1998). University A was trying to capture some of these elements, because its leadership group had developed a strategic plan and identified priorities. It had engaged in a University Program Review to determine its strengths and deficiencies. University A had promoted interdisciplinary enquiry through supporting three new interdisciplinary schools. The senior administration was attempting to share resources across the university by developing central funds to support new initiatives. I could not determine from my study the extent to which they were diversifying their funding bases. Additionally, they were attempting to develop a culture of innovation, but at this point, it was not shared by the whole institution, and, in fact, there continued to be points of resistance to change initiatives. In my opinion, there was much more evidence of entrepreneurialism at University A.

The policy origin stage at the two universities shared many similar elements, though there were some contrasts. These elements could be categorized as streams that came together at a critical juncture to form a policy window. I believe that the existence of a policy window allowed for a relatively smooth transition into the next stage, policy adoption.

### **Policy Adoption**

Levin (2001) described the policy adoption stage of the policy development process as the stage where alternative solutions to the identified organizational problem are proposed and then evaluated. Various policy actors champion particular alternatives and, as Schattschneider (1960) noted, “the definition of the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power” (p. 66). Jones (1984) contended that the process is not neutral and there are winners and losers. He pointed out that, in particularly contentious situations, policies may be formulated and reformulated over a long period of time without drawing sufficient support to gain acceptance of any of the policies. Interestingly, who is included in these discussions depends on their stakeholder salience; their perceived power, legitimacy, and the urgency of their claim impact their degree of inclusion in the discussions (Mitchell et al., 1997). In this case, according to the participants, faculty members at both universities proposed alternatives that addressed a pressing issue. Levin (2001) pointed out that, during this stage, alternate solutions are proposed, and then evaluated and one solution is determined. However, these policy actors proposed one solution, a solution that was seen by senior administration as addressing a perceived problem. This stage, at

both universities, was relatively straightforward, even though there were some similarities and differences.

At University B, one solution to the dispute was proposed, and the proposal was recognized by the senior administrators as a viable solution to the problem. As powerful policy actors on campus, the senior administrators supported the proposal during the approval process. Alternatively, when the idea of a joint school was proposed, some of these policy actors were powerful enough to affect the process for approval. The initiative for establishing an independent School of Policy and Research was well-received and supported by the senior administrators, allowing for a smooth adoption stage; the joint School idea was not supported by all members of the senior administration, resulting in a contentious, extended adoption stage for the joint School proposal.

At University A, the senior administration chose to include three interdisciplinary schools, in conjunction with some other actions, in the multi-year planning document as priorities. By including the interdisciplinary schools in the planning document, the senior administration gave the idea “policy clout” that allowed it to move forward even when there was resistance and a lot of negotiation and discussion around securing resources for the Schools. Therefore, at both campuses, the adoption process for the initial ideas was relatively smooth, because the proposal met organizational needs and was supported by powerful policy actors, the decision-makers of the university. At University B, however, the joint School idea did not garner full support which impeded the adoption of the joint School at that university.

### **Policy Implementation**

Unlike the adoption stage, the implementation stage was messy and difficult, and involved various tensions. I found that Max’s frame of three stages of implementation was a useful way to frame the issues and tensions of the initial stages of implementation. Within his frame, his first stage of implementation included the development of the initial idea into a detailed proposal that was then presented to University Council for approval. Max’s second stage of implementation occurred after the proposal was approved by Council, and the working group and administration further articulated the structure of the School, received approval for the program, and set up the required resources. His third stage of implementation included the School’s first year of operation, and the acceptance of its first cohort of students. Of these three

stages, the first stage was the longest at both universities. However, the overall length of time of stage one at University B was much shorter and less contentious. Regardless of the length of time required, many of the same issues and tensions were evident at both universities.

Levin (2001) proposed that these factors that affect implementation could be conceived as belonging to one of three categories. The first category includes the clarity of the policy and the degree of difficulty inherent in the implementation process for that policy. The second category focuses on the degree of understanding of the policy, the actors' level of commitment to the change, and the required resources allocated to implement the policy. The third category considers the pressures either supporting or inhibiting implementation, including economic conditions. These pressures could be viewed through the lens of the isomorphic pressures on institutions, as outlined by Powell and DiMaggio (1991). These three categories of factors combined affect the degree, efficiency, and speed of implementation. In establishing the School of Policy and Research, these factors were part of the process. The three categories that Levin (2001) described could be reframed as an examination of the required level of agency, the required level of capacity, and the required level of learning implicit in the implementation. These elements are critical to successful implementation of policies (Fallon, 2006; Levin, 2001).

**Required level of agency.** In terms of required level of agency, both universities had grassroots level leadership who proposed the idea and remained involved throughout the implementation process. At both campuses, the senior administration supported the idea and provided resources for the School. These policy actors worked together for a common purpose, and, as Howlett and Ramesh (2003) pointed out, their interactions can play a key role in the articulation and implementation of policy. Howlett and Ramesh (2003) noted "understanding the activities and interactions of policy actors is hence a key facet of understanding the policy process" (p. 16). The interactions between the senior administration and the grassroots level policy actors helped formulate the idea and move it forward into a workable proposal that was then approved.

Agents for change were essential for initiating the idea of the joint School and sustaining the effort throughout the implementation of the initiative. Cibulka (1996) thought that it was difficult to predict the outcomes of initiatives because they depended on the complexities of the systems and on human agency, which was also difficult to predict and analyze. Emirbayer and

Mishe (1998) described human agency as the engagement of human actors who, “through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations” (p. 970). From the three elements that they described (iterational, projective, and practical-evaluative), this initiative is reflective of the practical-evaluative element whereby a problem was recognized, possibilities were considered, a particular resolution was chosen, and then that decision was enacted. Although no other alternatives to resolve the dispute were proposed at University B, the *status quo* was not a desirable option either, so the one alternative path was chosen. Thus, the idea of an independent policy school was the result of problem-solving on both campuses, and concerted effort on the part of two sets of policy actors at both universities.

**Required level of capacity.** According to Burch (2007), capacity includes the skills, knowledge, networks, and resources (human and financial) needed in order to actualize initiatives. Levin (2001) observed that careful consideration of the organizational requirements for implementation is critical. Both universities had to engage in capacity building in order to establish the School. Mitchell and Sackney (2000) described three levels of capacity building, and there was evidence of all three types during the implementation stage. Personal capacity building was required of the faculty moving into the School as they learned to work either in a new unit or in a joint appointment. Interpersonal capacity building included development of collaborative and communicative skills, and development of the cognitive and affective climate (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). Many participants noted that this was critical, especially in the second and third stages of implementation where culture-building in the new School was one of the priorities. The third type of capacity building was organizational capacity building, which was evident throughout the implementation process, as senior administration set aside dedicated space and financial support. There was a lot of work done around securing faculty and staff. Mitchell and Sackney (2000) emphasized that organizations build capacity by promoting shared leadership, providing the necessary structural arrangements, developing collaborative processes, and establishing and maintaining the necessary socio-cultural conditions. In other words, organizational capacity building involves institutional development.

The two universities approached this task differently. At University B, this function was carried out by the faculty and the senior administration. At University A, there was a unique

institutional planning group, in addition to the working group and the senior administration, who engaged in organizational capacity building to support the initiative. The University Committee for Action and Planning was responsible for determining how to address the university's priorities and for developing concrete plans to meet these objectives. By having a group dedicated to developing the university-wide plan, University A could engage in sustained, institutional development, and build capacity for future changes.

**Required level of learning.** In the implementation of this initiative, several types of organizational learning were involved. Learning from past experiences and initiatives informed some of the decisions around the design and structure of the interdisciplinary Schools. Current learning included learning how to work collaboratively in a new unit. Learning for the future included the lessons learned from this experience that would hopefully provide a foundation for future endeavors. All three types of learning were evident at University A, whereas the participants from University B did not elaborate on using past learning in the development of the new School. At University A, a recent unsuccessful experience trying to set up a virtual college influenced the working group as they developed the proposal for the interdisciplinary School. Participants from both universities, though, described current learning and learning for the future as important organizational learning that occurred or hopefully will occur because of this initiative.

One participant noted that the university needed to learn to become better at abandoning some programs, so that the system was not overloaded. He added that the university needed to abandon programs that did not meet given targets and objectives or did not meet the needs of the university any more. This is a process that Caldwell (2001) referred to as *organized abandonment*. In order to facilitate change and make space for innovation, according to Caldwell (2006), the leadership needs to discontinue other programs or practices so that the organization has the resources and energies to pursue the new initiative. Faculty and staff can not continue to add on more programs and courses; tough decisions have to be made about what to abandon. Caldwell (2006) argued that *organized abandonment* should happen to ensure the organization is more efficient and up-to-date.

The participants who talked about the possibility of reculturation hoped that, through the establishment of these interdisciplinary Schools, the whole university would learn to work more

collaboratively. This move to collaboration requires extensive organizational learning because, according to Fairbairn and Fulton (2000), universities are disciplinary-driven structures, where “academics have been entrenched in disciplinary ways of thinking” (p. 1) and organizational structures promote disciplinary ways of working. Any attempts at interdisciplinarity within that environment are often regarded as threats to that structure (Fairbairn & Fulton, 2000). Fairbairn and Fulton (2000) also argued that, at universities, “what is needed are more flexible forms of organization, structured so as to reduce the costs (time, energy) and increase the likelihood of innovation” (p. 24). Irwin and Farr (2004) supported this idea as well, and suggested that a collaborative environment is essential in promoting change and professional learning. They emphasized that collaboration was especially important because it “brings about the reflection so necessary for new knowledge to develop and for changes in practice to occur” (p. 348). They believed collaboration was especially important for affecting change.

The types of learning needed for reculturation were reflective of both the double-loop learning proposed by Argyris and Schon (1978), and the deliberative learning proposed by Robinson (2002). Argyris and Schon (1978) described double-loop learning as “those sorts of organizational inquiry which resolve incompatible organizational norms by setting new priorities and weightings of norms, or by restructuring those norms themselves together with associated strategies and assumptions” (p. 24). Deliberative learning, on the other hand, is centrally coordinated and includes developing more “whole picture” solutions (Robinson, 2002). Deliberative learning requires a central vision or mandate; sequences and linkages between stages are articulated. Innovation, rather than incremental learning, is stressed (Robinson, 2002). Both of these models of learning describe the process that University A engaged to develop the new structure of an interdisciplinary school on campus.

This study’s findings point to the need to learn to be more fluid and adaptable as an organization. This was evident at both universities, but especially at University A with its convoluted approval process. This fluidity of organizational identity is supported by Gioia (1998), who argued that organizational identity should be much more fluid than individual identity. Organizations have to change more quickly because organizational environments can change so rapidly. These shifts have “an immediacy of impact that requires rapid reconstruction of identity so that the organization can maintain a light-on-its-feet flexibility that allows the organization to cope” (Gioia, 1998, p. 181). Organizations need to balance stability with



fluidity. If an organization can maintain some ambiguity, “it can accommodate many different presentations and actions; it can accommodate many complex pursuits; and it can engage in planned and unplanned change without appearing to violate its basic (and ostensibly enduring) values” (pp. 181-182). Duderstadt (2005) contended that the most critical challenges for universities and other institutions continue to be the development of the capacity for change. Some of the participants hoped that the process of establishing the interdisciplinary School and trying to move beyond disciplinary boundaries would lead University A toward a more fluid, dynamic identity so that it could respond to challenges and opportunities in a timely manner.

### **Policy Evaluation**

Although evaluation is considered the fourth stage of policy development, according to Levin (2001), it is implicated from the beginning of the process in that the targeted outcomes and the intended impacts of the change are usually articulated as justification for engaging in the change process. Many participants were very familiar with the proposal documents, indicating that the documents were the drivers of the change. The issues that the participants mentioned as context for the initiative were reflected in the objectives and intended impacts of the School. For example, a perceived need, as a university, to engage in more interdisciplinary work and research, was articulated as an objective of the interdisciplinary policy School. Interestingly, the proposal documents at the two universities were created independently of each other, and yet both proposals included nearly identical objectives (which again speaks to the *Zeitgeist* within which the “schools” policy was instituted). The final proposals at both universities were very detailed, with short-term and long-term objectives. Dave thought that the process of articulating all of the “deliverables” up front was counterproductive to innovation, and some of the intended impacts are especially difficult to evaluate. Certainly, outcomes and objectives need to be formulated, but specific details are difficult to determine until actual implementation. Several participants, though, expressed that there was a need to determine, from the beginning of the initiative, how to measure and report progress on the objectives.

The articulated objectives were the intended impacts of the joint School, but some of the participants mentioned some collateral or value-added impacts. Some of these collateral impacts were especially hard to evaluate and would not necessarily be evident until the School had been operational for an extended period of time. For example, some participants hoped that the

establishment of the interdisciplinary School would affect the culture of the university and lead to a more collaborative way of thinking and working across campus. Different impacts would be evident at different points of the development of the School. Because of that necessity to consider the objectives from a variety of time frames, I suggest that Dave's way of framing the impacts would be the most beneficial. He thought that the objectives could be articulated as short-term, medium-term, and long-term impacts. There need to be some immediate objectives for the School during its first two or three years of operation, and some objectives that would hopefully be met within the first decade of operation, after the implementation of the School is fully completed. Finally, the School should have some long-range goals that set a path for the School. Achievement of these long-term goals could only be determined after a significant amount of time, such as a couple of decades. Within that time frame, possible outcomes such as the following could then be assessed: the change in the university's culture from discipline-driven to collaborative, the built reputation as a destination program, and the influence of the School on provincial, national and international policy development. In the following section, the long-term impacts will be discussed further.

**The categorization of the change: Was it incremental or transformative?** Because of my interest in the change process, and the way that deep or significant change occurs in institutions, I wanted to study a policy process that was meant to bring about substantial change. I saw the establishment of a joint interdisciplinary school as a potential example of significant institutional change. Because many of the participants were academic leaders in policy or were leaders in academic, post-secondary communities, I was curious about their perceptions of the level of change effected by the School's development. I asked them to reflect on the change and to categorize the change as incremental or transformational (*cf.* Levy, 1986). I explained incremental change as improvements or developments in a few dimensions, and as change within the old state of being (thinking and acting). I described transformational change as multidimensional, multilevel change, and as a change that results in a new state of being. The participants' perceptions are reflected in the following sections.

There was a wide variation in the participants' opinions about the level of change. Some of the participants were reticent to prematurely evaluate the initiative because the School was so newly established. Charles emphasized that one's view on this change really depended on one's

perspective: “I’m going to take a postmodern cop out in that it depends very much on where you’re sitting in this” (p. 17). The responses of the participants reflected their perspectives, as well as their interpretations of the difference between incremental and transformational change. Often, they talked their way through their own thinking on the answer. Four themes emerged from their responses: the change had elements of both transformative and incremental change, the change was transformative, the change had the potential for transformation over time, and the overall change was transformative but would be achieved through a series of stages or steps. In the sections that follow, I describe some of their responses in more detail.

***Elements of transformative and incremental change.*** Some participants (Don, Max, Tom) thought that there were characteristics of both incremental and transformational change within the establishment of this interdisciplinary policy School. Max suggested that this initiative had elements of both kinds of change, in that there were some incremental changes and policy schools were not innovative nationally or internationally. However, he thought that it was a substantial change for University A:

New for [University A], in the sense of breaking, what I think had been developed as quite a strong mold where the colleges really had a great deal of influence in terms of what took place within and outside of them. So in that sense, it was a multilevel change and it was certainly multi-dimensional in that it, particularly with this School, involved this innovation not only within the university but also an innovation that saw us hooking up with [University B]. And that added a dimension to the School that is quite significant in so many ways. ...But I think that the change that went on was multidimensional and multilevel. It involved taking a new direction and that’s what made change so slow and so hard. (pp. 11-12)

Don, Tom, and Max noted that there were some elements of incremental change involved in this initiative, especially if you considered one or two dimensions of the change. However, both Tom and Max emphasized that, overall, the establishment of a joint interdisciplinary School of Policy and Research involved taking a new direction and required multidimensional change.

***Transformational change.*** For some participants (Dave, Jeanette, Jeff, Tom), the establishment of a joint interdisciplinary School of Policy and Research was definitely

transformational. Jeanette said that, for University A, “I feel that it has been transformational in the sense that we broke out of our mold, and we’re doing something different and unique for us, and we’re still inventing it as we go along which also tells me that it’s probably not just ordinary” (p. 14). As one example of the changes that would occur, Dave mentioned that it would impact faculty:

When we recruit new faculty, they’re all interdisciplinary. They talk about interdisciplinarity, they research interdisciplinarity. They don’t want to think that their career has to be spent between boundaries of this discipline ... I think it is transformative in that it’s going to help us recruit just some dynamic faculty who really want to live in these gray spaces where there’s lots of good questions. (p. 9)

Dave noted that the School would be a good fit for faculty who are interested in interdisciplinary approaches and spanning the disciplinary boundaries. He pointed out that this would positively impact the recruitment of some dynamic faculty. According to Dave, this, in turn, would be transformative for the university through the reculturation of the faculty environment.

Another participant (Malcolm) focused on different aspects of the initiative when he characterized the change as transformative. Malcolm pointed out that the structure of the School allowed for a coherent approach to interdisciplinary policy work. In addition, the development of a joint policy school was a completely new structure. Because of these elements, Malcolm thought that this initiative was transformative, but he noted that this initiative’s success could only be judged over time.

***Potential for transformation over time.*** Some participants (Don, John, Max, Nelson) emphasized that the establishment of an interdisciplinary school had the potential to be transformational but, like Malcolm, they thought that achieving that potential would only become evident over time. Nelson thought “the trajectory is good. I think we have increased our capability, we have increased our capacity, and therefore we have increased our potential for transformation” (pp. 13-14). Whether the university was successful in achieving transformational change through this initiative could be determined only after a significant amount of time had elapsed (Don, Malcolm, Max, Nelson). Don observed that there was an expectation that there would be some type of transformational change. He emphasized that there was an expectation that the establishment of the School would be a transformative change.

However, he also highlighted the issue of sustainability, an element that can be determined only if the program succeeds and sustains itself over time. Max agreed with taking this long view of the change. Based on his experience in another unit, he thought that the impact of the School would not really be known for at least a decade. John alluded to this success and the characterization of the change when he noted “if the School is highly successful, by the standards of Schools of Public Policy across Canada and around the world, it will have been multidimensional and not incremental change,” (p. 6). The impact of the School on public policy in Canada would be a good measure of success, according to John, but he did not elaborate on what time period would be needed and what measures of success would be used in the process.

***Transformation in stages.*** Several participants (Charles, Linda, Nelson) thought that the change had the potential to be transformative, but they emphasized that the change would take place in stages. Nelson said that the transformation would take place incrementally over time. He emphasized the potential for transformation, but this transformation would take place in stages, or incrementally, over time. He combined the terms and described the change as “incremental transformation” (Nelson, p. 13). According to him, the transformation would occur in steps or stages.

Another participant, Linda, characterized the change as transformational, but she agreed that it was being developed in stages:

In doing that, we need to do it in sequences, in steps. In other words, I shouldn't say it's a transition, because we are starting these Schools right away, but...we are not going to start all of the programs all at once. We're not going to have our full complement of faculty all at once, so there's certainly a staging approach but it certainly is not just taking something and modifying it. It's starting from scratch. (pp. 6-7)

Linda described the steps or sequences involved in making these changes. She described this staggered implementation as a staging approach to implementing something new. Charles concurred that the change took place in stages:

If you put the interdisciplinary Schools together and you talk about them as agents of change and representative of shifting attitudes, and emboldening other people to do things a bit differently, and conceivably entities that could grow way beyond the original inception, then yes, the seeds are there for significant change. The significant change

may take place incrementally, but it wouldn't take place at all if somebody didn't plant the seeds. So you know, some might say, well, this is just a bunch of incremental change. Actually at one point or other, a key decision is made... to move in a certain direction, and you know what it's like....the first step in that direction is only barely away from a direction you were in before so it's imperceptible. Over time, this could be quite significant. So this is the kind of blending of incremental thinking on the one hand and strategic decision-making on the other. (pp. 17-18)

Charles emphasized that a key decision was made to move in a particular direction, but the steps in that direction were very slow. He added that some of the first steps were so small that they were almost imperceptible, but, with a series of these small steps in the same direction, there could be a significant shift or change. Charles contended that incremental thinking and strategic decision-making were blended together in such a shift.

In short, most of the participants agreed that the following elements were evidence of transformational change: the development of a new structure (the School), the interdisciplinary focus of the School, the development of a joint school with another university, and the ability to develop a coherent policy program. However, many of the participants noted that the true categorization of this change could only happen over time as the initiative was sustained and the intended impacts were realized.

In the previous sections, I discussed the findings of the study and described how those findings related to the literature. The discussion was organized around the four stages of policy development, but there were many interconnections among the themes. In the following sections, I articulate how the findings of the study relate to the theory of neoinstitutionalism.

### **Discussion: Neoinstitutionalism and Isomorphic Pressures**

Levin (2001) mentioned that one category of factors that affects implementation includes the pressures either supporting or inhibiting implementation, including economic conditions. This idea is supported by the theory of neoinstitutionalism, wherein DiMaggio and Powell (1991) suggested that there were three types of isomorphic processes that inhibit innovation and encourage the *status quo* in organizations. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) categorized these processes as normative, coercive, and mimetic processes. In the establishment of the interdisciplinary School, these isomorphic pressures became evident, especially in the discussion

around the resistance to change and the length of the approval process. In the following sections, these normative, coercive, and mimetic pressures are discussed in relation to the findings.

### **Normative Isomorphism**

According to DiMaggio and Powell (1991), normative isomorphism concerns the professionalization process. Professionals within a shared organizational field develop a set of beliefs about that field through professional development, recruitment, induction, and promotion practices. Within that field, there is an adherence to particular codes of behavior, and there is a diffusion of professional strategies and conceptual knowledge (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Through these processes, the norms of that profession become entrenched. As Beland (2005) noted, “shared normative beliefs reduce the number of options available to policymakers” (p. 31). When participants discussed the sharing of resources and the resistance to the change, these normative pressures became evident. Several participants mentioned that the university was very discipline-driven where disciplinary ways of working and thinking are promoted. This structure continues to enforce the resource-based silos, and any initiative that attempts to bridge those disciplinary silos is regarded with suspicion. Changing this vision of what universities could be needed time as faculty came to understand the new structure and the interdisciplinary nature of the School.

Another instance of normative views impeding change was the historical tension between the two universities. Collaboration between the two universities was not the norm, and this attempt at a joint School was regarded with suspicion and distrust by some of the faculty members who were not involved in the initiative. The relationship between the two campuses was entrenched in historical antecedents that had then become the normative behavior. These tensions and the resistance to change exemplify normative isomorphism.

### **Coercive Isomorphism**

Another type of isomorphism, according to DiMaggio and Powell (1991) is coercive isomorphism, which includes the formal and informal pressures on an organization and the cultural and societal expectations of an organization. Those pressures include (but are not limited to) government mandates and policies, the legal environment, the constitution of the organization, and the stakeholders’ expectations of the organization. At University A, the

current policy environment, specifically the approval process, affected the implementation of this initiative. Given the convoluted approval process, some proponents of the proposal became frustrated. This process could have derailed the entire initiative if the policy actors had given up or moved on in the meantime. The approval process may have been structured that way to allow for oversight, but it also discouraged innovation and affected momentum (this will be described more in the following section).

The whole policy environment also discouraged both the interdisciplinary aspect of the School, and especially a joint School dynamic. The issue of sharing resources, especially faculty, was a point of contention at both universities. However, at University A, the deans had to give a portion of the colleges' funds to an Academic Priorities Fund. They had a faculty appointment structure called a joint faculty appointment that was being utilized for the first time in the School. These two resource-sharing structures caused a lot of concern at University A, as some deans and faculty members struggled with how this resource-sharing impacted their own department or college. Additionally, there were many policy issues around joint appointments that still needed to be articulated, in terms of promotion and tenure, and publishing. Included in those discussions were issues such as course and workload between the home unit and the School. For example, Malcolm felt that, in its current format, the joint appointment workload was not sustainable.

Coercive isomorphism and the policy environment was an issue in structuring the joint School. As Carl and Charles pointed out, there were two sets of governance structures, two different faculty associations and staff associations, two sets of policies concerning tenure and promotion, and two sets of senior administration. Faculty and staff at the School were still encountering some issues in those areas as the School of Policy and Research became operational at University A. Although the faculties spent considerable time discussing the dynamics of this initiative, Jill noted that there still were occasions where they encountered problems or issues regarding policies that needed to be revisited and retooled. Definitely, coercive isomorphism influenced the dynamics of the approval process and the structures of the School, due to its interdisciplinary nature and a joint school dynamic.



### **Mimetic Isomorphism**

Dimaggio and Powell (1991) described a third type of isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism, as an organization's response to a problem. The organization searches throughout the organizational field for effective solutions to the problem and adopts a model that is perceived to be successful. Organizations usually model themselves after others in the same organizational field that are perceived to be more legitimate or successful than themselves (Dimaggio & Powell, 1991). As Nelson and Max noted, in the initial stages of the development of the proposal, the working group scanned the university environment, looking at other policy programs. There were several other schools across Canada that focused on policy, and the working group investigated their programs and structure in developing their model. The group noticed the growing trend of interdisciplinary studies across Canada (although, as John said, public policy is, by its very nature, interdisciplinary). Then, as they developed their own proposal, they became aware of University B's new policy program. After meeting with the faculty from University B, the two groups determined that the best way to move forward was to develop a joint interdisciplinary policy school. This model was unique in Canada, so there was no real blueprint to follow in that aspect. However, because University B had had their MPA program running successfully for several years, University A decided to adopt that program as their initial degree offering. Now that the School was running at University A, they were developing the MPP and the PhD programs with the idea that University B would try to adopt those programs. Although mimetic isomorphism played less of a role in the development of the School of Policy and Research, it certainly influenced some of the decision-making.

### **Discussion: Two Impediments to Change—Time and Resistance**

Two underlying strong themes that emerged were: the amount of time that this initiative took from the initial idea to the opening of the joint School, and the amount of resistance the proponents encountered in developing and implementing this proposal. Part of the issue was the lengthy approval process at University A, but resistance to change also played a part in the time frame for the development of the joint interdisciplinary policy School. This lengthy process is counter to change and innovation. When the idea of an interdisciplinary policy school first surfaced at University A, there were only a few policy schools in Canada and interdisciplinary work was only beginning to gain strong support. During the seven years it took to develop the

idea, interdisciplinary schools and policy schools had significantly multiplied in Canada. Instead of being on the forward cusp or leading edge of innovation, the model was now more common.

In my opinion, the lengthy process and negotiations may have dissipated some of the resistance, but it also allowed for possible subterfuge. As Malcolm pointed out, the committees rarely say no to a proposal, but they “filibuster” it. At each of these committees, faculty members could ask questions, and the working group would have to respond even if it meant going back to find out the information and then returning to the committee. If some faculty member were especially opposed to the proposal, he or she could potentially delay the process until the opportunity or enthusiasm and momentum passed. If there was a seven-year time span involved, it is conceivable that faculty members who were opposed could purposefully put their names forward to sit on these committees. In addition, if they are chairing the committees, they could engage in further subterfuge because they control the agenda and potentially have the power to delay the meetings. Having such a complicated approval process could have two potential outcomes: over time, the working committee could build support and promote understanding of the initiative through dialogue, or faculty members who are opposed could derail or “filibuster” the initiative.

It was surprising to discover how much resistance the working group at University A and the faculty at University B encountered. This occurred despite the presence of a policy window where the problem stream, the political stream, and the policy stream came together. Neoinstitutional theorists emphasize that there is significant institutional inertia that results in maintaining the *status quo* unless there is a political, social, or economic crisis (Jepperson, 1991; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Rowan & Miskel, 1999). What was especially surprising to me, in this case, was the level of resistance that the proponents encountered even though the initiative had a minimal impact on individual faculty members. Especially at University B, there were very few direct consequences for other faculty. Of course, there were possible implications of what this could mean in the long term for the culture of the universities, and how the initiative could impact future decisions regarding structures and resources. As Don noted, there was a general fear of change and fear of the unknown that coloured individuals’ perceptions of this initiative. I would also propose that organizational trust played a part in this process. Some of the faculty members at University B were distrustful of University A, and were suspicious that the joint School was an attempt by University A to “piggyback” on the success of their policy

School. At University A, some of the deans and faculty members appeared to be distrustful of the university's long-term goals, and perhaps thought that the success of this initiative could signal a dramatic change in the structure of the university. That could mean a loss of autonomy for themselves and their department. Although there was no indication that this was indeed the case, there was an underlying current of tension about the implications the success of this initiative could have for the entire university. These two impediments to change, the length of time and the resistance to change, negatively affected the energy of the proponents of the change, but they believed strongly enough in the initiative to keep moving the idea forward.

In the previous sections, I discussed how the findings of the study related to the literature. In the following sections, I describe the implications this study has for practice in educational organizations, for research in policy development, and for the further development of change theory and neoinstitutional theory.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study have several significant implications for practice, for research, and for theory. In the following sections, I explore these implications. First, I examine the implications for practices in educational organizations, especially practices that promote or inhibit change. Second, I discuss implications for research in policy development, change theory, and isomorphism. Third, I describe the implications for theory, especially change theory and neoinstitutional theory.

#### **Implications for Practice**

The practice of organizational change is a complex, multi-faceted process that has been widely researched and about which much has been written (Alas, 2007; Dimaggio & Powell, 1991; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Fullan, 2007). Part of the complexity comes from situationally specific constraints that inhibit innovation (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006). From the findings in this case study, I suggest that organizations need to examine their organizational practices and policies to determine what organizational structures within their own organization impede change. Although a proactive approach to this examination is preferable, organizational learning from past attempts at innovation could identify impediments to innovative initiatives. As some of the participants at University A pointed out, they used lessons learned from an earlier

failed attempt establishing a virtual college to inform their decisions about the structure of the new School. Some participants also commented that the School was providing a test-bed for new structures such as the School and the joint faculty appointments. After the School had been established for several years, a retrospective examination of the experience would inform proponents of other initiatives about those practices that worked well. Interestingly, University A was engaged in the process of examining innovation and determining how to promote innovation at the university. This focus on innovation had been identified as a priority in the *Second Multi-Year University Plan (Year 7)*, and two working committees had been formed to investigate how to promote innovation. In my opinion, an audit of past attempts at innovation is a critical piece of that examination, and is a practice that should be adopted by organizations. In addition to an examination of impediments to change, another practice that should be instituted should be the practice of organized abandonment where the organization identifies programs that no longer meet its needs. By eliminating those programs, the organization is free to devote its energies and resources to developing innovative programs.

In addition, I thought the study's findings implicated the importance of the role of policy actors in the organization. There seemed to be significant implications of continuing analysis of the viability of the organizational decision-making structures. Part of this analysis should include the role of the policy actors in the stages of the policy process. As demonstrated by the problems encountered at University B, garnering support for the joint School, the support of senior administration is absolutely critical in the approval process. This implies that the appointment of key senior administrators, especially in public sector organizations, should be undertaken carefully so that, if innovation is a priority for the institution, individuals in those powerful positions should embrace and support innovation. If there are disconnects between personal philosophies of individual administrators and organizational philosophies, the organization needs recourse to rectify the situation.

The lengthy approval process at University A was a recurrent theme in the data. Although the process may have been designed to provide oversight and ensure that policy and program change met certain requirements, it affected the timeline of implementation dramatically. The study was not designed to examine the differences in implementation between the two universities, but, as the study unfolded, the stark difference between the approval processes became very apparent. I think there are two significant problems with a lengthy

approval process. First, the initiative loses momentum and the initial energy and enthusiasm of the initiative's proponents wane. Despite the synergy provided by the three policy streams meeting, the approval process was extremely slow. Some of the working group could lose interest or move on to other projects and research work that pulls them in another direction. In fact, Malcolm and Max named several people from the initial working group who moved to another university before the School became established. If the process takes too long, key individuals may leave and the initiative may never regain momentum. Second, timeliness is a critical factor in innovation. If an idea were truly innovative, it will attract people interested in the idea or program and it has a competitive edge in terms of building reputation and becoming a leader in that field. Although policy schools were not necessarily innovative, there are fewer interdisciplinary policy schools in Canada, and, according to Geva-May and Maslove (2007), some of the purported interdisciplinary schools are, instead, multi-disciplinary. Thus, the interdisciplinary policy school at University A had the potential to be a destination program for students interested in policy studies in Canada. However, by the time the proposal wound its way through the approval process, at least three more policy schools were opening in Canada, and University A had had to revise its original idea because University B had already established an interdisciplinary school. These developments point to the need for timeliness in moving innovative ideas into implementation.

Even though the proposal at University A took approximately five years for development and approval, there were still issues that needed to be resolved. Some of the organizational practices concerning joint faculty appointments—such as determining tenure and promotion, taking credit for research within this context, and establishing sustainable workloads—were all problems that still needed to be fully addressed. Malcolm noted that the joint appointment structure had been approved before the School was established, and guidelines for the appointments had been drawn up. However, the tensions between the home units and the new School needed to be completely resolved, and the workload had to be addressed, in some cases. Charles did mention that, during the third stage of implementation, the administration and faculty of the School were constantly monitoring the environment. He did not elaborate on how the monitoring took place or on any processes they had for addressing emergent issues. I would propose that an important organizational practice would be a well-articulated plan for intensive

monitoring of the organizational environment, especially during early implementation of a new structure, so that emergent problems can be addressed as soon as possible.

In addition to articulating ways of monitoring implementation, organizations need to be able to monitor progress on achieving specified outcomes. Jeanette mentioned that individual units and colleges within the university needed to articulate specific outcomes to achieve within particular time frames. Accountability mechanisms such as these are a common part of organizational environments (Fullan, 2007). The proposals for the new School outlined the general objectives of the School and clearly identified particular targets for the first few years of implementation. Jeanette emphasized that the School now had to determine how to measure progress on these outcomes and report the progress to the university. Although this is an important part of the organizational structure, trying to predict specific outcomes that are achievable within particular time frames is a difficult practice, especially for a new structure. I agree with Dave that, in order to promote innovation, new units should not have to articulate all the deliverables up front. General objectives are required, but specific targets are difficult to articulate. Also, there may be several collateral and value-added impacts that occur because of the innovation. Some of these impacts may be very difficult to measure, and may not be evident for decades. However, if a new program or initiative meets an identified need of the university, it has justification for existence, and implementation should not require a document that has minutely detailed, specific targets that need vetting through an extensive, multi-staged approval process. More fluidity is necessary for innovation to occur in a timely manner that will allow for capitalizing on opportunities.

Fluidity is important throughout the policy process. At each stage in the development and approval process, the idea is developed further until a workable proposal is articulated. At the initial stage, the seed of an idea is proposed and details are nebulous, but the idea is allowed to move forward if it is perceived to have potential in meeting the organization's needs or in solving a particular problem. At the next stage, more details are "fleshed out" so that the initiative begins to take shape. Again, the organization accepts some ambiguity, but there is an expectation that the proposal is better defined, with a certain level of articulation required at each stage. Each of these points of approval can institute a barrier to change if the proponents of the proposal cannot cross that bridge between tolerance for ambiguity and the organizational need for well-articulated proposals. This process is repeated through each stage; the number of stages

is determined by organizational practice. At each successive stage of the process, two dynamics occur: ambiguity is reduced, and there is a concerted push towards greater coalition and collaboration.

However, if an organization accepts very little ambiguity throughout the approval process, the initiative could stall as the proponents of the initiative struggle to articulate all of the deliverables upfront. Requiring all of the elements of the proposal to be specifically articulated before the initiative is implemented is a difficult process because the outcomes are unpredictable. In this case, University A had to move the proposal through many different committees and had to answer all of the questions at each level. Specific targets had to be determined, as well. This process of intense scrutiny of a proposal was counterproductive to innovation. As Dave and Malcolm observed, when an idea is good, it should be implemented after some scrutiny and explanation, and then it will fail or succeed on its merits. Some ambiguity in the process, even in the third sub-stage of implementation, allows for the unfolding of the initiative as circumstances warrant, rather than following a tightly defined game plan with no room for modification. Additionally, the organizational tolerance for ambiguity affects organizational fluidity. Organizations that are more tolerant of some ambiguity will allow innovation to happen more easily and are more accepting of cultural changes. Organizational fluidity allows for more rapid adaptation to changing circumstances.

To summarize the practical implications, I suggest that the implications for practice arising from this case study include a need for individual organizations to conduct a thorough examination of situation-specific organizational practices that promote or inhibit innovation. This includes engaging in review processes to determine what programs need to be discontinued. Through practicing organized abandonment, the organization can invest its energies and resources into developing new programs that better meet its needs. By conducting an audit of past successful and failed attempts at organizational innovation within that examination, an organization can identify, proactively, practices that will promote innovation. Included in those practices should be a well-articulated plan for monitoring progress on the objectives of the initiative so that emergent issues can be addressed. Another important practice to include is a method of incorporating accountability mechanisms into implementation processes that are not so onerous that they inhibit innovation. All of these practices would allow for more organizational fluidity and innovativeness.

## **Implications for Research**

In addition to implications for organizational practice, this study has several implications for research. Based on the themes of this case study, I believe that several topics related to change theory and policy development require further research effort. In change theory, there is a stark absence of the voice of dissenters to change. Related to that topic, there is a need to examine how to counter isomorphic practices that inhibit change. Additionally, the findings of this case study led me to wonder how a collaborative culture could be built within a university context, and how to research that aspect of change. Another implication for research that was apparent to me was the retrospective aspect of change. It would be interesting to examine this initiative from a longitudinal perspective in order to determine whether its intended impacts and some of the collateral impacts were realized and why it was successful or not in achieving its objectives. In a later section on incremental and transformative change, I explore this idea of longitudinal change further. This study also has implications for research in policy development. During the policy process, the implementation stage is very complex and, as Levin (2001) suggested, there has not been a lot of attention given to articulating the process and determining ways to successfully implement new structures and ideas into organizational practice. I begin with examining the implications for research on the implementation stage of policy development.

**Policy implementation.** Policy implementation is a complex, iterative process that is situation-specific. The policy environment, the social and political environment, the policy actors, the particular problem that is being addressed, and the institutional capacity for change are just some of the factors to consider in analyzing policy implementation. Although it is impossible to devise a blueprint for the policy process that is applicable across a wide range of organizations, certain common factors could influence the promotion or inhibition of policy change throughout the implementation stage. The literature on policy development describes implementation, but the treatment of the topic does not do justice to the absolutely critical nature of effective implementation practices.

As I conducted this case study, I came to the realization that well-articulated implementation processes are critical to the success of initiatives, and there are many factors that can interfere with implementation. I had attempted to illustrate the broad categorical considerations necessary in implementation in my conceptual framework, but the depiction of



the complexity is inadequate. The findings from the study point to this complexity and highlight the many tensions that can negatively affect the implementation. If constraints to innovation could be identified proactively, the problems may be able to be rectified, allowing for a smoother implementation process. In addition, further research into the implementation process in particular contexts could be influential in developing a deeper understanding of key essential elements that undergird successful implementation of initiatives (*cf.* Levin, 2001). For example, research into policy development in public sector organizations would elaborate on the implementation constraints within those contexts.

Even more informative would be research into change within organizations belonging to the same institutional field. Neoinstitutional theorists propose that organizations within a particular organizational field tend to closely resemble each other because of isomorphic practices and structuration (*cf.* DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Using that assumption, research into the policy process at a particular university could inform practice at another university. Even though there may be different provincial contexts, there are enough shared institutional characteristics throughout the institutional field that one university could learn from the experiences of another university. Opportunities to share experiences and research would facilitate the sharing of this organizational learning. It is particularly important to examine the policy implementation stage, because it is implicit throughout the policy process and effective implementation is fundamental to the success and sustainability of the initiative.

**Resistance to change: Voice of the dissenters.** A major theme that emerged in the implementation stage was the resistance to the change. However, this theme emerged from the perspectives of participants who had some connection to the School and who supported the potentially positive outcomes of establishing a joint interdisciplinary policy School. Although I had invited other people whom I thought may have a more critical view of the School, they did not respond to the invitation. At that point, I noticed an absence of the voice of dissenters to change in the literature. This experience made me question why they chose not to respond, and I realized that policy is political (Kingdon, 2003; Schattschneider, 1960). Their participation could have political implications for them. Despite my attempts to protect their confidentiality, I could not guarantee it, because of the nature of the university campus. If they still belong to the organization, the dissenters could be especially guarded with their answers. Besides the political

impact that participation could have, another factor for this absence could be the difficulty in determining who the dissenters were.

There is a group of individuals who represent a cynical view of this change, most of whom reside on the outside of the change. Some have been pushed there; others have chosen to leave because of perceived irreconcilable differences. Among this group could be individuals whose voices might be discredited by considering their opinions to be “sour grapes” and the voice of disgruntled employees. Others might be expressing *Schadenfreude*, and might take pleasure in seeing an initiative fail (van Dijk, Goslinga, & Ouwerkerk, 2008). Others may be ambivalent towards the change for a variety of reasons because of the multidimensional aspects of attitude (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral), as suggested by the work of Piderit (2000). Despite the work of Bolman and Deal (2003) who encouraged conflict in the change process and Janis (2005) who viewed voices of resistance as a counter to groupthink, there is a predominance to pathologize dissenters. Piderit (2000) contended that researchers have “largely overlooked the potentially positive intentions that may motivate negative responses to change” (p. 783) and have concentrated on the views of managers, rather than on “the perspectives of those with less power” (p. 784).

I believe that the voices of dissenters who have intimate knowledge of the implementation of change initiatives should be heard, and would be a valuable addition to research on change. It may be difficult to establish mechanisms for identifying the dissenters and for gathering their input so that they do not experience negative consequences for their opinions. However, their voices would add important perspectives to why they were resisting the change effort, and whether particular organizational actions would mitigate this resistance. Again, the research may be situation-specific, but the lessons learned from understanding the resistance to change could inform future practice.

**Isomorphic processes inhibiting change.** As described earlier in this chapter, factors that impact implementation include the pressures either supporting or inhibiting implementation. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) suggested that three types of isomorphic processes, normative, coercive, and mimetic isomorphism, inhibit innovation and encourage the *status quo* in organizations. In the establishment of the interdisciplinary School, these isomorphic pressures became evident. They played a central role in the resistance to change that the participants

encountered. I believe that developing a better understanding of these isomorphic pressures would positively affect the implementation process. If particular types or instances of isomorphism form barriers to innovation in certain institutional fields, identification of those barriers is key to developing ways of dismantling them. For example, normative barriers could include widely held beliefs about what a university is and how it operates. Research into identity formation in a university context would perhaps lead to a better understanding of how to change that process. Coercive barriers, such as federal research grant structures or university governance policies and their effects on innovation, is another potential area for further research. An additional example of a potential topic could be researching mimetic barriers to successful innovation, such as the implementation of particular degree programs or different course delivery models without careful consideration of the institutional capacity to support the program. I suggest that research using the lens of isomorphic processes to examine the barriers inhibiting innovation could be very beneficial in informing practices of organizational change and in dismantling some of the barriers to the change.

**The development of a collaborative culture.** Several participants mentioned that one collateral impact of the change was the potential development of a more collaborative culture that encouraged sharing of resources and promoted interdisciplinary work. This reculturation of the university environment would hopefully pave the way for future collaborative initiatives. However, the current culture is very discipline-driven (*cf.* Cabal, 1993; Fairbairn & Fulton, 2000; Laidler, 2002). Even though interdisciplinarity is gaining general acceptance in Canada and globally (*cf.* Fairbairn & Fulton, 2000), and interdisciplinary research is promoted through federal research grant structures, the culture of universities continue to impede the practice of interdisciplinarity, according to some of this study's participants. I contend that further research is needed in the process of reculturing the university environment. Through researching established interdisciplinary schools and their university environments, practices that promote a collaborative university culture possibly could be identified. It would be especially valuable if a long-standing interdisciplinary school could be studied in order to determine if the nature of that school and the university's organizational structure that supports the school have actually had an impact on the university so that a more collaborative university culture has developed. As interdisciplinarity gains acceptance and more interdisciplinary schools are established, it will be

interesting to research the impact that a critical mass of interdisciplinary schools has on the macro university environment, and whether this leads to a changed perception of what a university is and how it operates.

**Retrospective examination of change: Evaluating outcomes.** The purpose of this case study was to examine policy development that promoted the establishment of an interdisciplinary school. I focused on the first three stages of the policy process: policy origin, adoption, and implementation. Because the School had recently been established at the time of this study, I could not evaluate the School's progress on achieving its intended impacts or other collateral impacts. As many participants noted, progress on these impacts could not be assessed for some time. Dave suggested that there would possibly be some short-term impacts, some medium-term impacts, and some long-term impacts. I believe that a retrospective examination of each of these kinds of impacts would lend valuable information to the research on policy development. In order to examine each of these impacts, different research time frames would be necessary. The short-term impacts of early implementation could possibly be assessed within a five-year time frame; medium-term impacts could be assessed within 10 to 15 years of the initial implementation of the policy; long-term impacts could be assessed within 20 to 25 years of the implementation. These are suggested time frames, as the nature of the policies would dictate the length of time needed for the outcomes to become evident. A longitudinal study could uncover the policy path over time, and compare it with the intended path. In this particular case, it would be interesting to determine the degree to which the School was able to accomplish the specific targeted outcomes, the more general intended impacts, and the potential collateral impacts identified by the participants. I am especially interested in the School's impact on the reculturation of the university environment, in particular the culture at University A where three interdisciplinary schools were being established within the same planning cycle. This research was necessarily delimited to a particular time frame; however, a longitudinal research study would be particularly valuable in investigating policy development in a university context.

### **Implications for Theory**

As I analyzed and interpreted the data, I came to believe that this study had several important theoretical implications, especially for theories of policy development, change theories

and neoinstitutional theory. In policy development, this case study reaffirms Kingdon's (2003) model of policy windows and its application to policy origins. However, this study pointed out the need for a more effective way of describing the implementation process, and I suggest that Max's frame of three stages for initial policy implementation is a useful framework. In terms of change theory, this research project supports my contention that one way to examine change is through four lenses: political, organizational, temporal, and cultural. Additionally, the categorization of change as incremental or transformative, and first or second order change needs to be examined. This study has implications for neoinstitutional theory, and the critical role of policy actors as agents of structural change. The isomorphic processes that inhibit change are critical elements of neoinstitutional theory, and I believe that they form a valuable lens for examining the change process. Based on these theoretical implications, I modify my conceptual framework to reflect these considerations.

**Policy development theory: Three stages of initial policy implementation.** As I categorized and coded the data, I discovered the complexity of the policy implementation stage, and the critical importance of detailed examination of the many elements and issues of implementation. As Max observed, the implementation stage involved many decisions and did not follow a predetermined path in a stepwise, logical order. He suggested that the initial period of implementing the policy could actually be framed as three distinct stages. The first stage was the longest, most difficult stage where the initial idea was formulated, the proposal was developed, and then approved by the University Council. The second stage occurred after approval had been given, and then the final explicit details needed to be articulated. This stage included designing the degree program and having the program itself approved by Council. The third stage of initial policy implementation included the first year of operation for the School as it welcomed its first cohort of students. Max's description of these three stages seemed to encapsulate the whole process of implementation. I suggest that this framework provides one way of framing and describing the initial stages of policy implementation. However, the use of the word "stage" is potentially confusing as some policy literature refers to a number of distinct policy stages, as well. The term "steps" is also misleading because the term connotes a logical order down a particular path. Therefore, I suggest that this frame for the parts of initial policy implementation be termed the *three substages of the initial policy implementation stage*. In

other words, the theory of policy development could articulate the process as comprised of four stages with implementation divided into three substages. The three substages are not separate, discrete stages, because the impact of one action during one substage can resonate throughout the process. The process is iterative, and attention is paid to details from previous stages in conjunction with details for subsequent stages. Occasionally, decisions that were made at previous stages need to be revisited, and then revised and enacted. Because the implementation process can be lengthy and difficult, framing the initial implementation process as consisting of three substages may be beneficial in examining and enacting the change.

**Change theory.** Change theory is a broad theoretical area that examines change from many different perspectives. From the themes that emerged in this case study, I determined that change theory was implicated in two ways. First, I discovered one way to examine the change was through a combination of four lenses. Second, the dichotomy of incremental and transformative change did not seem applicable to this case study. In the following sections, I explain the theoretical implications for change theory.

***Four lenses to examine change.*** As the various themes emerged, I found that another way to view change became evident throughout the data analysis stage. There were temporal, political, organizational, and cultural elements that were woven through the data. These elements were especially evident in the implementation stage of the initiative. As I considered these elements, I thought that they could be viewed as interconnected lenses focused on change. Again, these lenses are not completely separate lenses, but rather they are interconnected. Their interconnections are dependent upon the context. For example, in this study, the cultural lens is connected to the temporal lens in that cultural changes occurred over time (and are ongoing, according to some of the participants). These changes supported the policy process. In the following sections, I describe each of these lenses in more detail.

***Temporal lens.*** The element of time was evident as I constructed the timeline for the initiative. Both universities perceived that there was a problem that needed to be addressed at approximately the same time. However, at University B, only two years elapsed from the time the interdisciplinary policy school was introduced until the first cohort of students began the

program. At University A, five years elapsed from the time the idea was proposed until the first cohort of students began the program. Throughout those five years, the proposal was presented to various committees and townhall meetings were conducted. Once the proposal was developed, it then needed to be approved by many levels of committees. All of these processes required time. Max suggested that the lengthy discussions and approval process helped build understanding of the initiative and eventual support for the School. In the meantime, however, other policy schools were being established and University A's policy School would not have as much of a competitive advantage in building a reputation and establishing a student base ahead of the other new schools. Additionally, University B's School had been accepting students for two years when the working group at University A realized they could not be in competition with a similar, established policy program in the same province.

The other temporal issue was the *Zeitgeist* of the idea of an interdisciplinary policy school. As Max said, interdisciplinarity had gained much more support recently. Governments were awarding research grants to larger, interdisciplinary projects. The President at University A recognized this emphasis on interdisciplinarity by identifying it as one of the priorities of the university in his *Strategic Planning Report* (Year 1). In addition, the changing environment of policy work had led to a number of new policy schools being established in Canada. This illustrates the timeliness of the establishment of the School of Policy and Research.

*Political lens.* The political element was evident in several aspects of the establishment of the joint interdisciplinary policy School. At both universities, faculty members at the grassroots level who were already involved in policy work proposed the idea. The idea was backed by the senior administration who facilitated the implementation through securing resources, and supporting the proposal as it moved forward through the approval process. It was the strength of the policy actors at both levels that kept the proposal moving forward, and the commitment of the working group at University A and the faculty at University B that ensured that the proposal was eventually accepted. There was a political element reflected in the actions of the senior administration and the working committee or faculty members, as they worked to build support for and promote this idea.

The joint School of Policy and Research was a political solution to the problem of having two proposals for an interdisciplinary policy school within the same province. At University B,

some members of the senior administration did not welcome the idea. In order to examine the feasibility of the idea, discussions were held among the various policy actors including the working group from University A, the faculty involved in the policy program at University B, the senior administration from both universities, and representatives from the provincial government and the Provincial Institute of Policy. Additionally, in an attempt to determine the best way to move forward with the idea, the senior administration at University A hired external consultants who prepared two separate reports. Both reports encouraged the two universities to collaborate as far as possible in the initiative, with a joint School being the optimal path to follow. This combination of political actions helped to build the support for the change. The political lens provided a perspective on the political processes involved in the adoption and implementation of the School.

*Organizational lens.* The organizational lens could be used to examine several aspects of the implementation stage of the School, including the organizational policies of both universities, the approval process at University A, and the processes for securing resources for the School. The organizational policies had an impact on the development of the joint School, because the two campuses had separate faculty and staff unions and contracts, separate registration procedures, separate administrative procedures, and different senior administration. As the School entered the second and third stage of early implementation, these different policies, contracts, and organizational administrative structures had an impact on the process. Various problems were encountered and required attention as they emerged.

The approval process at University A was perceived by many participants as an organizational impediment to change. According to Malcolm, there were many different committees where the proposal had to be approved, and there were a thousand potential “points of no” as faculty members could all have their say or ask questions. The proposal had to be presented to the committees in a particular order, which served to lengthen the process.

Securing the resources for the School was an organizational element of implementation. Included in this process was the articulation of the intended impacts of the School because financial and human resource requirements, physical space, and curricular considerations were all impacted by the size of the program and the anticipated number of students. At University B, there were some issues around finding adequate space and hiring enough faculty to meet student



demand for the program. At University A, there were some issues around the shared financial and human resources, including the joint appointments of faculty. There were some issues around the joint appointments that still needed to be worked out, including tenure and promotion, publishing and workload. For these elements, the organizational lens can be used to examine how organizational practices had an impact on the establishment of the School.

*Cultural lens.* The cultural elements were evident in the resistance to change and in the apparent demand for the reculturation of the two universities. The cultures of the universities were very discipline-driven. Max suggested that any initiatives that promoted other ways of thinking and working were regarded with suspicion. He thought that some of the deans and some faculty members were fearful of the change because of the potential impact that it could have on their own departments and colleges. Jeanette noted that the university was structured into resource-based silos that reinforced these disciplinary boundaries. At University B, some of the faculty members were distrustful of the joint structure of the School, and felt that the proponents of the joint School proposal were displaying disloyalty to their own university. The culture at University B included an attitude of independence and a history of resistance to collaboration with University A. There appeared to be a disproportionate image of one another that coloured the perception of the relationship, the perception of the nature of the implementation process, and the trust between the two universities. For these reasons, the current cultures of the two universities were instrumental in promoting resistance to the proposed joint interdisciplinary policy School.

The development of culture also became apparent in the discussions concerning the third stage of early implementation. Some participants mentioned that, during this first year of the School's operation, the faculty, staff, and students were engaged in building the culture of the new School. Malcolm commented that the current faculty and the new hires had an excellent opportunity to be involved from the beginning in the development of the culture.

Several participants hoped that the new School would set the stage for developing a new, more collaborative culture that encouraged sharing of resources and promoted interdisciplinary work. This reculturation of the university environment would hopefully pave the way for future collaborative initiatives. The cultural lens could be used to examine the current culture of the university and how that culture contributes to the resistance to change, the building of the culture

in the new School, and the potential for the reculturation of the university as a result of this initiative.

As the discussion of the four lenses illustrates, there are several perspectives that could be used to examine change. Each of the lenses focuses on particular elements of the change. The temporal, political, organizational, and cultural lenses provide an effective framework for examining all of the dimensions involved in moving this initiative forward. This focused examination provides clarity to the case study of the development of the School of Policy and Research.

**Incremental and transformative change.** As described earlier in the analysis of the findings, the participants had difficulty articulating whether the change was incremental or transformational. The participants' difficulty with categorizing the change and their subsequent comments led me to conclude that the terminology (incremental versus transformative change) was inadequate for portraying the real nature of change. They struggled with the dichotomy. However, in the change theory literature, incremental and transformative change often is described as a dichotomy (*cf.* Levy, 1986). For example, Levy described first-order change as incremental change and change within the old state of being, whereas second-order change was a revolutionary jump and change that resulted in a new state of being.

Many of the participants noted that the establishment of an interdisciplinary policy school had elements of both incremental and transformative change or had the potential to be transformative. While the intended and collateral impacts of this initiative forecast that the change to the university could be transformational, some of the participants were reticent to categorize the change because it was too soon to evaluate the university's progress on achieving the targeted outcomes. Several participants thought that the change would be accomplished through a series of stages. This echoes Lindblom's (1979) suggestion that most change occurs incrementally and there is a potential for more rapid change. He emphasized:

A fast-moving sequence of small changes can more speedily accomplish a drastic alteration of the *status quo* than can an only infrequent major policy change. If the speed of change is the product of size of step times frequency of step, incremental change patterns are, under ordinary circumstances, the fastest method of change available. (p. 520)

According to Lindblom, more rapid change can be achieved through a series of steps or stages, rather than through infrequent, revolutionary jumps.

After reflecting on the participants' responses and on the change theory literature, I propose that the term *staged incremental transformation* characterizes the process of a change that is intended to eventually result in substantial change to the organization. The change is multi-dimensional and multi-level change and promotes a new way of thinking and operating. However, this change is achieved through a staged approach, where one incremental change builds on the previous incremental changes in a series of stages over time. Some of these incremental changes are carefully planned and implemented; some of these changes evolve organically. Regardless of the origin of the incremental changes, the cumulative effect, over time, of this series of incremental changes is a fundamental shift in the organizational paradigm. This process of staged incremental transformation could provide a more useful theoretical construct in describing a significant organizational change.

**Neoinstitutional theory.** Neoinstitutional theory provides one theoretical framework for examining institutional structuration and organizational fields. Two elements of the theory that, to this point, have not been emphasized strongly enough, in my opinion, are the roles of agents in initiating change, and the role of isomorphic processes in maintaining the status quo and inhibiting change in organizations. This case study highlights the implications that those two elements have in promoting and inhibiting change.

***The role of agents of change.*** One criticism of neoinstitutional theory was its lack of emphasis on the role of individual actors within institutions (Hall & Taylor, 1996). However, some researchers have begun to explore the role of agents in institutional change. Burns and Nielsen (2006) and Koene (2006) examined the influence of these policy actors, and determined that these *institutional entrepreneurs* were instrumental in initiating change. This case study of the establishment of an interdisciplinary school confirmed the central role that policy actors played in promoting institutional change. There were two levels of policy actors: the grassroots level faculty members who were directly involved in policy work, and the senior administration who supported the initiative. It was only the strength, enthusiasm, and political and social capital

of the policy actors involved that allowed the idea of an interdisciplinary policy school to move forward despite the resistance to change.

This theme has implications for neoinstitutional theory and its examination of the role of agents of change in overcoming isomorphic pressures. The findings from this study suggest that identifying key policy actors to move the idea forward is necessary to the policy process. That support is critical throughout the process, especially when promoting new ideas and initiatives. Though neoinstitutional theorists (*cf.* DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) contend that there are many constraints that maintain organizational *status quo*, this study points out that individual policy actors can work to promote change, even when there is considerable resistance to the change.

*An examination of isomorphic processes.* Rowan and Miskel (1999) contended that educational reform would only occur by changing the “complex regulatory, normative, and cognitive restraints” that dominate this institutional field (p. 380). In neoinstitutional theory, these restraints are described as isomorphic processes. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1991), coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphic processes are powerful mechanisms that can impede or inhibit innovation and change in organizations. Even though DiMaggio and Powell (1991) described these processes almost two decades ago, these mechanisms have not figured prominently in the examination of change, even in strong organizational fields such as education.

I believe that these processes are fundamental to the practices and cultures of organizations, and play a central role in maintaining the operational *status quo* of entire organizational fields. For those reasons, institutions within the same organizational field tend to strongly resemble each other. By dismantling those isomorphic pressures, organizations could possibly facilitate institutional change more easily. The findings from this study illustrate how those processes affected the implementation of a new policy at these two universities.

In addition, the theory of isomorphism has more potential for development and application to the examination of institutional practices in order to determine ways to promote necessary changes at the institutional and organizational field levels. Further development of this theory has potential application in auditing organizational fields to identify barriers to change, and proactively working to remove these regulatory, normative, and cognitive restraints.

**Reinstitutionalization.** Another neoinstitutional theorist, Jepperson (1991), described institutional development and reinstitutionalization as two forms of institutional change. He described institutional development as a change within an institutional form. This process could be considered more as adaptive change or *tinkering at the edges*. Jepperson (1991) contended that most institutional change could be characterized as this form of change. Reinstitutionalization, on the other hand, could be conceived as “an exit from one institutionalization, and entry into another institutional form, organized around different principles or rules” (Jepperson, 1991, p. 52). Alas (2007) referred to reinstitutionalization as the process of redefinition of an institution and its rules and procedures. I suggest that the establishment of an interdisciplinary school is an example of reinstitutionalization, because a new institutional structure was introduced that was organized around different principles. However, whether this School becomes institutionalized as a new type of structure for the university and paves the way for reinstitutionalization cannot be determined for many years. Even though one of the long-term impacts of the establishment of the School may include reculturation of the university, the actual impacts could only be assessed by adopting a long-term view of the process. In this way, the theoretical construct of reinstitutionalization has parallels to that of incremental versus transformative change.

I believe that this element of neoinstitutional theory is useful in examining change in organizations. By identifying the intended impacts of a policy, the administration can develop a schema for short-term, medium-term, and long-term impacts as they build towards institutional adaptation or towards reinstitutionalization. Although reinstitutionalization does not figure prominently in neoinstitutional theory, further development of this construct could better inform the practice of institutional change.

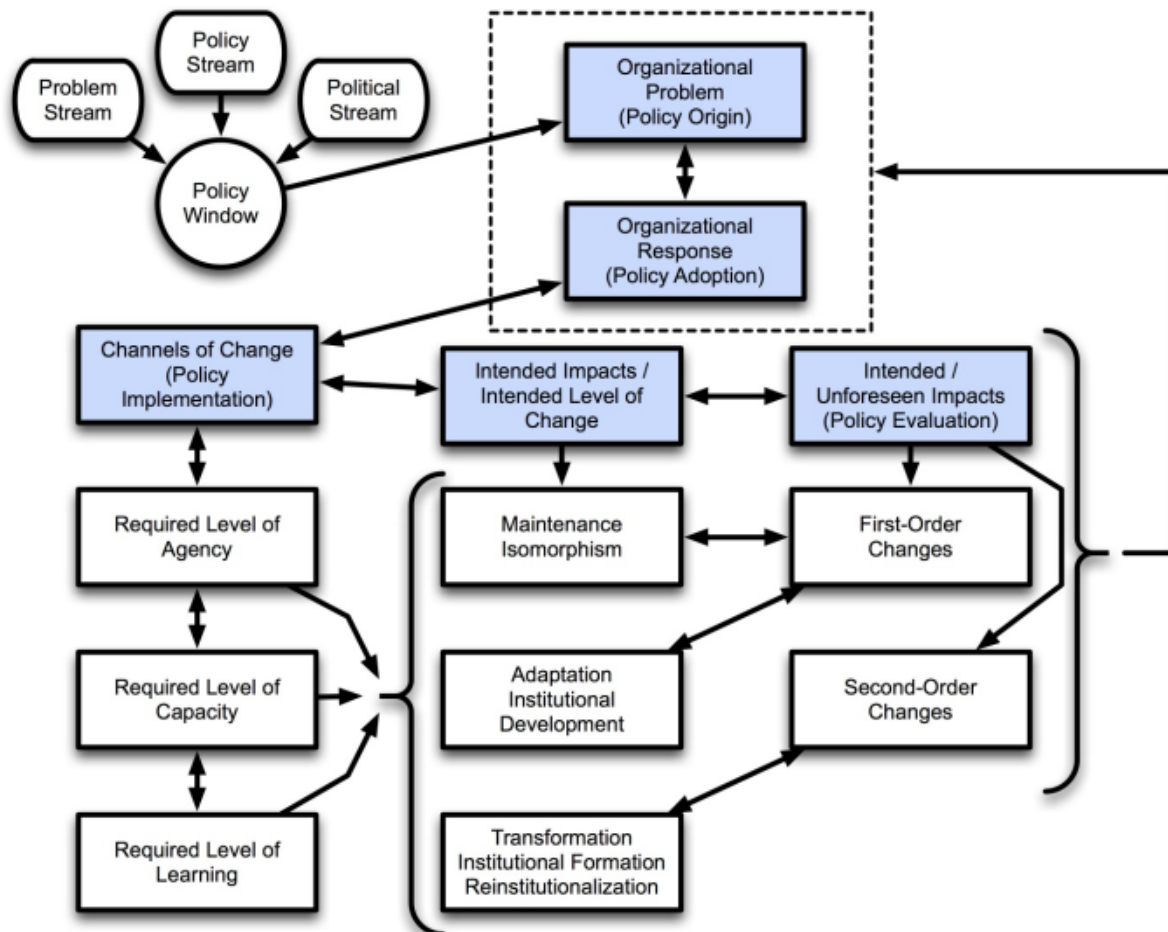
### **Reconceptualization: Visualizing the Dynamics of the Policy Process**

While I was conducting the research, I began to see that my original conceptualization of the process did not adequately capture the inherent complexities and dynamics of policy development. Lingering throughout the research was Max’s comment that the structure of the questions suggested the process followed a linear progression, when the process was actually very messy and dynamic. As I struggled with this realization, I referred to the policy literature and found that there was an underdeveloped commentary with regard to the lack of linearity in

the process. The literature did not delineate between the necessary linear elements versus the messy elements that come into play in policy development. This gap in the literature and my own personal dissatisfaction with the original framework led me to further reflect on how to portray the policy process. To add clarity to the original conceptual framework, depicted in Figure 8.1, the four stages of the policy process were highlighted through the use of dashed lines encompassing each of the stages. Even with that clarification, two stages portrayed in Figure 8.1, policy implementation and policy evaluation, were not adequately representative of the findings of the study.

**Figure 8.1**

*Visualizing the Dynamics of the Policy Process*



Because of my perspective as a researcher who was not involved in the process, my original conceptual framework erred on the side of an overview, with a concentration on the macro stages. Based on the different perspectives expressed in the research project, the conceptual framework needed to more clearly delineate those aspects that were macro stages and to highlight some of the issues embedded at the micro level that are attached to each of the macro pieces. The first version confused the micro and macro levels. The macro levels have a binary gate: if all of the predetermined criteria are filled prior to a particular gate, the process can move to the next stage, even though the criteria may not be finely articulated. Within each stage, though, there are micro issues that need to be resolved and specific criteria that need to be met before the process can move forward. The articulation of these details can occur more organically and can become messy and non-linear. As criteria in each progressive stage require attention, it is occasionally necessary to return to criteria of previously engaged stages to ensure continuity and to account for errors within the overall progress of implementation. The revised conceptual framework needed to reflect these micro/criteria level considerations involved. In addition, within the framework, some of the terminology needed to be changed to more accurately depict the findings of the study. The revised framework is presented in Figure 8.2: Revisualizing the Dynamics of the Policy Process.

**Figure 8.2**  
*Revisualizing the Dynamics of the Policy Process*

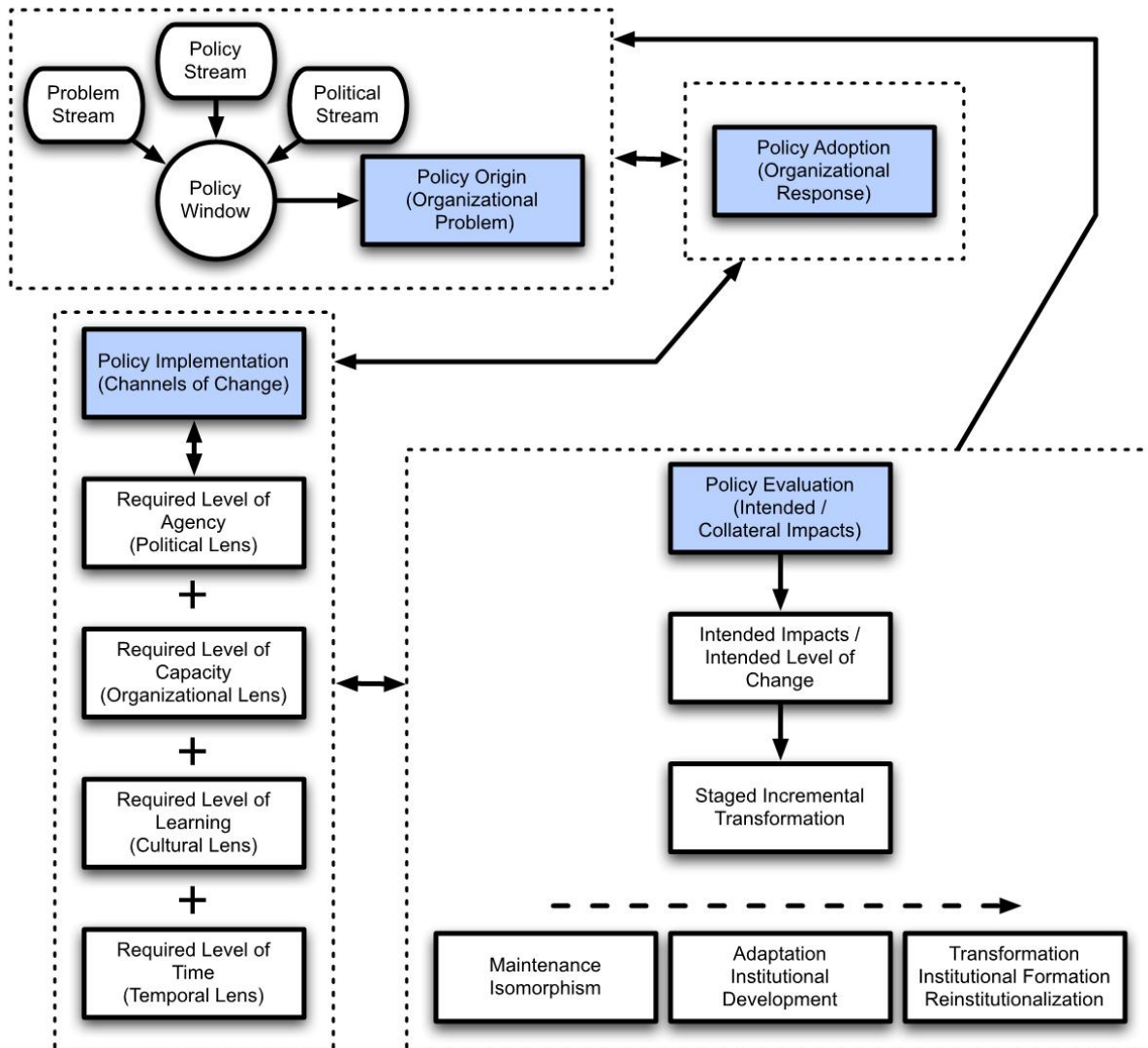


Figure 8.2 illustrates the dynamic, interconnected nature of the four stages of policy development and the iterative process. Each stage is built and developed further according to decisions and developments made during previous stages. Although the process loosely follows the path from origin and formation of the idea, to evaluation, it is not a linear process and the criteria are often so interconnected that they are sometimes difficult to separate and categorize. Within each of the stages, there are some issues and tensions to consider before criteria may be



met and the initiative can be actualized. In examining some of the tensions at one stage, the policy actors may determine that a prior decision made during a different stage needs to be revisited and perhaps modified as a result of new information. Each of the stages, though, forms a gateway, where the initiative must fulfill certain criteria before the process can move to the next stage. This is a binary decision: the criteria are fulfilled or they are not. If the criteria are not fulfilled, the initiative needs further development at that stage, or perhaps at a previous stage. Occasionally, the initiative is abandoned because the criteria simply cannot be fulfilled.

The first circle in Figure 8.2 portrays the policy origin stage. Kingdon's (2003) model of policy streams and a policy window seemed to fit the explanation for the origin of the School of Policy and Research at the two universities. The policy stream includes the organizational and external policy environment. The problem stream consists of the macro environmental tensions and, as in the case of University B, micro issues that occur in that particular environment. The political stream includes the political and social environment, as well as the policy actors who are involved. These streams come together at crucial junctures to form policy windows. The openings of policy windows are not always straight forward, or well-articulated. During these policy windows, however, it is more likely that substantial change will occur (Kingdon, 2003). The presence of these streams and windows can be foundational in contributing to the origin of a policy change and providing the momentum to keep moving the change forward. At both universities, the three streams were evident. A problem was articulated at both universities; although the problem stream had some shared elements, there was an additional micro problem that existed at University B. The political stream and the key policy actors at both universities were similar. The policy stream was evident at both universities. All of these streams came together to form a policy window. This confluence of forces allowed the proposals to be developed, accepted, and actualized.

The next stage (denoted by the second circle in Figure 8.2), adoption, is the process of identifying alternative solutions that could address the given problem. The strengths of the alternative actions are considered, and the most feasible option is usually chosen. The choice is made based on several parameters: the degree of political and social influence of the policy actors, the perceived urgency of the problem, and the feasibility and number of policy alternatives. Using these parameters, the policy actors weigh the options and choose the best option. Sometimes more information may be needed before a decision can be made. For

example, to determine if an alternative is feasible, the organizational capacity may need to be examined carefully, and the potential strength of the alternative would need to be considered. Sometimes, the organization needs to have an immediate response, which also limits the number of alternatives that are feasible. Depending on the particular circumstances, each of the elements can have more importance relative to the other ones in influencing the adoption stage. In this study, the proposals went through the adoption stage relatively smoothly because of the support of the key policy actors, including members of the senior administration and faculty members involved in policy work on campus. The proposals were viewed as potential solutions for perceived problems, and they were supported by powerful policy actors. For these reasons, the adoption stage for the initially proposed independent Schools was a relatively uncomplicated stage of the policy process.

After a particular policy alternative is chosen, the details need to be carefully articulated through the initial stages of implementation (denoted by the third circle in Figure 8.2). There are three sub-stages of initial policy implementation, as articulated by Max, where the idea is developed into a workable proposal, the proposal is approved, the resources are gathered, and the idea becomes operational. Within those sub-stages, the policy actors need to consider the four lenses of change: temporal, cultural, political, and organizational. Each of those lenses focus on particular elements that are critical for implementation. For example, the temporal lens focuses on the required level of ambiguity and organizational fluidity that organizations need in making substantial change. The political lens focuses on the required level of agency of the policy actors. The cultural lens examines the required level of individual and organizational learning needed to implement the change. The organizational lens focuses on the required level of capacity of the institution or organization needed to support the change. The lenses are not necessarily considered in a particular order, and are not necessarily treated as discrete elements. Some lenses may be weighted more heavily than others. This weighting of lenses could be an area for further research in an effort to answer the following question: For which types of initiatives would different lenses hold greater weight and have greater impact on an initiative? Using these four lenses, the members of the organization identify any barriers within the organization that impedes change. These barriers could take the form of coercive isomorphism, normative isomorphism, and mimetic isomorphism. By determining the types of barriers that exist, the organization's administrative team can determine the best approach or necessary

actions for dismantling these barriers. The use of the four lenses to examine change and the identification of the types of barriers inhibiting change are critical throughout all three substages of the initial policy development. In this study, the four lenses were evident at both campuses, to varying degrees. The temporal lens was useful in examining the time frame needed from the initial idea to the opening of the School. The policy actors at University B were able to implement the idea much sooner; however, the opening of the joint School of Policy and Research required much more time. The organizational lens provided a focus on the capacity building required at each university. Especially important in this examination was the articulation of human and financial resources needed at each university to support the School. The political lens was used to identify the key policy actors who gave the proposal enough “policy clout” to move the idea forward despite the resistance to change encountered at both universities. Finally, the cultural lens was especially important in this study because of the need to change existing discipline-driven structures at both universities so that the interdisciplinary School could be implemented. Additionally, a more collaborative culture between the two universities needed to be developed so that a joint school could be established. Changing the university culture was an important element that most participants identified as key to the success of the School.

The fourth stage of policy development (denoted by the fourth circle in Figure 8.2) is the evaluation stage. Although the success of the policy cannot be determined immediately, the intended impacts and objectives of the policy are considered and usually articulated at the beginning of policy development. Additionally, methods for evaluating progress in accomplishing those objectives and realizing those impacts often are determined near the beginning of the process. If the intended impacts of the change identify small changes for the organization, the change is considered to be adaptive; however, if the intended impacts are multi-dimensional and multi-level changes, the change is considered transformative. The degree of change will determine how long it takes the organization to go through the policy stages. In addition, some of the impacts will be more immediate whereas others will only be evident over time. The intended and collateral impacts can be classified as short-term, medium-term, and long-term impacts. Although the change process is ongoing, the end products of the change may not be determined for decades, and only then could the change be categorized as transformational if the change has been sustained and the intended impacts that reflect

substantial, multi-level change have been realized. I would argue that this whole process of achieving long-term impacts over time could be considered *staged incremental transformation*. Depending on the organization's long-term goal, the change occurs in a series of incremental steps to achieve an adaptation or transformation. Many of the participants in this study were hesitant to characterize the change as transformational because transformation would only be evident if the change is sustained over time. One participant, Dave, preferred to categorize the changes as short-term, medium-term, and long-term; this categorization seemed to be a better fit for the participants' descriptions of the intended and collateral impacts. Some of the participants noted that this policy development could potentially be a springboard for further changes in structure and culture at the universities. If this is one of the long-term impacts of the School, this potentially could be evidence of staged incremental transformation.

The policy process can be characterized as consisting of four stages that follow a relatively linear progression. To respond to Max' critique of the linearity of the questions, I suggest that there are macro stages with micro issues embedded at each stage. There is macro linearity when considering the process as a whole, but there is an absence of micro linearity as organizations move through the individual stages of the process. These stages form gateways or defined points that are part of the macro scheme, and the organizations need to satisfy given criteria to move through these gateways. However, within these stages there is a somewhat hidden subtext about the tensions and issues that are encountered within the stage. In the role I occupied as researcher, I could investigate the process from a detached, broad perspective. Some participants, though, related many details of the micro processes. Others described the "big picture" of the policy process. It appeared that their perspective depended on their level of involvement in the initiative. Those participants who were the most intimately involved or had ongoing involvement with the School described more of the day-to-day operations of the School, whereas those key participants who have had time to reflect on the process were able to see the linearity. The identification of these micro issues is dependent on the role and the involvement of the commentator or participant.

My role as a researcher who was not involved in the process allowed me to focus my perspective on the linear progression of stages of policy development, whereas different participants focused on various elements and issues within the stages. The different perspectives can be referred to as *etic* and *emic* perspectives. As an outside researcher, I had an etic view of

the process. Participants had assumptions about the process and different opinions about the linearity, based on their involvement. Some participants who were involved in the process brought their emic perspectives to the research. Interestingly, a few key participants changed their perspectives as their involvement with the School diminished and they adopted a broader viewpoint of the process, relating their comments more to the linear stages rather than the “messy” details. I suggest that a combination of perspectives on the policy process allows for the identification of the “big picture” of the policy in addition to the micro issues that need to be resolved.

### **Reflections on Methodology**

From a retrospective viewpoint, there were aspects of this methodology that were surprising, interesting, or noteworthy. In the following section, I articulate my reflections on the methodology of the study and the interesting implications and limitations of this methodology.

My participants were unsurprisingly, given their academic and professional backgrounds, very articulate and they provided a wealth of information about the process underlying the establishment of the interdisciplinary School. Because all of them were faculty, staff, or senior administration from two universities, they were very knowledgeable about the context and the process. They were obviously well-read individuals, and most of the participants were published authors of articles and books. As I was analyzing and interpreting the data, I reflected that the data provided so much valuable information, because of the nature of the participants. Some of the participants were very knowledgeable about policy development, and their responses helped me re-examine my concepts of the policy process, and the nature of implementation.

Related to the previous comment, was a realization that the framing of the questions was, at times, misleading. Max pointed out that the way the questions were worded led to the misconception that the policy process followed a stepwise order, and that one action or decision led logically to the next. He emphasized that the development of the proposal was an organic process, and it did not necessarily follow a predetermined path. Thinking about his comments, I realized that this had implications for the conceptual framework of my study, and I needed a better way to encapsulate or structure the discussion of the dynamics of the policy process (as discussed in a previous section).

In my attempts to gather a variety of viewpoints on the initiative, I contacted a range of stakeholders who were connected to the establishment of this interdisciplinary School. I invited several participants who I thought may be more critical of this process, but all of them chose not to respond to my invitation. That prompted me to wonder why they declined. I thought about the politics involved in policy development and role of dissenters in the process. As mentioned previously, the voices of dissenters, especially those for whom there may be political implications, appear to be largely absent in research. Had I been able to capture dissenters' viewpoints, I speculate that my presentation of the data concerning the policy origin and policy adoption stages would have taken on a more critical tone. The fact that I had no dissenters as interview participants points to a limitation of using the snowball technique. Because I was unable to make initial contacts with people who were opposed to the establishment of this School, I could not identify others who were of "like mind". The participants I interviewed were all initially in favor of the interdisciplinary School, although some were frustrated by the implementation process.

The tone of the data chapters was especially surprising. As I was sorting the coded data into the four policy stages, I became aware of the tone of the participants' comments. Throughout the discussion on the context and issues prompting the policy development and the role of the policy actors, the comments were very factual, and reflected optimism. However, as we began talking about the negotiations, dialogue and processes involved in the initial stages of implementation, I noticed that the tone of the comments changed dramatically. Many of the participants described the tensions underlying the implementation process. Some of them talked about tensions around securing resources; others described the issues around the approval process; others mentioned the difficulty in pursuing the joint School. Many of them commented on the resistance to change that they encountered. The participants' responses, when considered collectively, reflect a more negative tone. The initial implementation processes were very difficult, and the stress on some of the participants as they worked to carry the idea forward was evident. Through the tone of their comments, participants were clearly frustrated by the policies and procedures around garnering support for the initiative. Then, when the interview turned to the intended and collateral impacts of the policy, the tone again became upbeat and hopeful, as the participants described the targeted outcomes of the School, as well as the other collateral impacts that may be realized through the establishment of the joint interdisciplinary School. The

stark contrast among the three chapters was intriguing to me. I wondered whether the difficulties encountered by some of the participants would affect their future endeavors, and their enthusiasm for engaging in future change initiatives. This difference in tone also reflects Levin's (2001) contention that the implementation process is iterative and messy, and requires a continued focus on the outcomes as the details of implementation are formulated.

I realized in analyzing the data that the role of the policy actors in this study was especially influential in the success of this initiative. In this context, the person who championed the establishment of the School, and then continued to be a key figure in the administration of the School, had a significant amount of social and political capital that he used in moving the policy process forward. His presence may have made the establishment of this School an idiosyncratic example of policy development.

In addition, his influence reflected the power of a transformational leader (*cf.* Hoy & Miskel, 2005). He, along with the President of the university, articulated a strong vision for the university, then put mechanisms and planning processes in place so that the vision could be achieved. When the grassroots group of people involved in policy work brought a viable solution to this attention, he enabled them to develop the idea into a workable proposal and to lead the initiative. He supported the working group from the initial stages of establishing the formal committee right through the arduous approval process. Included in this process were the formal mechanisms such as the University Planning Committee, the inclusion of the School in the First Multi-Year University Plan, the establishment of the Academic Priorities Fund, and the hiring of external consultants to examine the proposal. He used his social and political leverage to build support for the joint School idea. Once the School was approved, he provided further support through appointing an executive sponsor and an acting director, and by establishing a physical space for the School. He continued to work with the faculty in building the culture of the School, promoting the interdisciplinary nature of the School, and strengthening connections with the School's campus at University B. Throughout all the stages of the policy process, he acted as a transformational leader and several participants emphasized the critical nature of his role. These actions exemplify the traits of a transformational leader who, according to Hoy and Miskel (2005), defines the need for change, creates a strong vision, garners support for the vision, and supports the work in accomplishing the long-term goals. Hoy and Miskel (2005)

contended that “followers become leaders and leaders become change agents and ultimately transform the organization” (p. 399).

When I asked about categorizing the change as incremental or transformative, I realized that there were problems with the terminology and the categorization. Most participants struggled with this question, and some of them appeared to “think out loud” as they tried to explain their answer. One participant, Jeff, expressed that the question was not well worded. In addition, most participants pointed out that whether this initiative is transformative or not could only be determined from a retrospective viewpoint. Max commented that, based on his experience, it would take at least a decade before many of the outcomes would become evident. Dave provided a framework for looking at the intended and collateral impacts. He thought that the impacts could be categorized as short-term, medium-term, and long-term in nature. I had originally included the question about categorizing the change because I was interested in substantial change initiatives, rather than those changes that are really *tinkering at the edges*. In hindsight, the concept of levels of change could have been addressed differently through the questions.

I included in this case study an examination of the development of the joint School idea. It was a critical piece because the working group and senior administration at University A realized, midway through the development of their proposal for an interdisciplinary policy school, that University B already had retooled their policy program so that now it was an interdisciplinary, independent policy school. That dynamic was a deal-breaker for University A, because the two programs could not be in competition with one another within one province. University B had a distinct advantage, being well established. University A’s administration knew that they had to investigate ways to collaborate or abandon the idea of a policy school. Including this dynamic in this study was essential, but it resulted in some lop-sided data. At University B, there were only a few faculty and senior administration (some of whom had left the university), that had been involved in the process of establishing the School. Because of that, I had two participants from University B and 11 participants from University A. This added to the difficulty in presenting perspectives from the two universities, but it was critical for me to attempt to represent the process from the perspective of the individuals from University B.

The issue of confidentiality was a difficult one in this case study because of the context. As the writing unfolded, I realized how many steps I needed to take to protect that



confidentiality. I used pseudonyms extensively throughout (see Appendix E), when naming the universities, the participants, the relevant documents, and the committees. In addition, I removed any identifying information from the data, and I designated the years with numbers rather than the actual dates. I also paraphrased information from the documents, rather than directly quoting the documents themselves. As a researcher, I hoped that all the steps that I took to protect the participants' identities demonstrated my commitment to protecting confidentiality.

I wondered how different cases would be portrayed using the four stages of policy development. In this case study, the most complex stage was the implementation stage, whereas the adoption stage was relatively smooth. Because the number of alternative actions was limited, this case study did not examine the dynamics of adopting a contentious policy when many other viable alternative solutions existed. As such, I did not study a prolonged adoption stage. Perhaps this stage needs to be researched further, in a variety of contexts, to better understand the dynamics involved.

Finally, an interesting coincidence occurred while I was conducting the study. The sudden economic downturn that reverberated around the world pointed out the unpredictability of the future. I wondered if the proposal would have moved forward if the School had not been already established by the time of this phenomenon. I reflected on neoinstitutional theorists' premise that major forces for institutional change are crises or *exogenous shocks* (cf. Jepperson, 1991; Lecours, 2005). The current downturn has certainly been expressed at universities across the country through job cuts and budgetary cutbacks. It will be interesting to see if the economic crisis becomes expressed through revised institutional practices at the universities.

### **Concluding Comments**

In this case study, I examined the policy process involved in establishing a joint, interdisciplinary policy school at two universities. I believe that the study's findings have implications for policy development, change theory, and neoinstitutional theory. The disciplinary-driven culture of the university appeared to be a significant impediment to instituting innovative practices that bridge those disciplinary boundaries. However, I believe that universities will need to focus on developing their interdisciplinary and collaborative potential so that they can explore the complex problems of the current social and political environment. In addition, the emphasis on outreach and community engagement is a valuable objective where the

research and problem-solving work done by academics is connected to improving outcomes in the community.

Additionally, I think that the case study illustrates that the development of a collaborative culture is more of a focus in organizations. Although this study focused on collaboration among the colleges of one university and between two independent universities, I believe that the underlying message of the value of collaboration is a strong one, and could apply to many organizations. Certainly, the current focus on partnership development in many different venues attests to the fact that working collaboratively results in better outcomes.

In conclusion, I found the personal journey to be a fascinating one, as I developed a deeper understanding of the university context, the process of policy development, and change theory. As much as the study was personally interesting, I hope that it contributes to the overall understanding of policy development theory, change theory, and neoinstitutional theory in the context of institutional change.

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**APPENDIX A:**  
**APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROTOCOL**



particular institutions and on the resources that the policy was intended to influence. This framework will provide one tool for analysis that can be used in studying policy development in a variety of contexts. This study also has implications for understanding change theory in the context of the policy process at a particular type of professional institution. This study will contribute to the literature on neoinstitutional theory and institutional change, as well as extend Levy's work (1986) on first-order and second-order change.

**4. Funding**

The student researcher has a Graduate Teaching Fellowship from the University of Saskatchewan for the 2008/2009 academic year.

**5. Conflict of Interest**

There is no anticipated conflict of interest in this study.

**6. Participants**

The joint interdisciplinary school at two universities will be selected as the focus of the study. The director of the school will be contacted for an interview. Initial contact with all the interviewees will be made by email, as many of the participants are involved in meetings and teaching outside of their offices. Prior to the interview, the list of questions will be sent to the director so that he may have time to contemplate responses. These semi-structured questions are included as Appendix B. At a mutually agreed upon time, the director will be interviewed, using a semi-structured interview format. The snowball technique will be used to identify other key informants who will be contacted. The director will be asked to nominate other key informants who were involved in the proposal, formulation and/or establishment of the interdisciplinary school. Primarily, the interviewee pool will consist of the director and the nominees identified through the snowball technique, but other key informants may be identified through documents and policies about the interdisciplinary school. These informants also will be contacted by email about participating in the study. Upon consent, the participants will then be interviewed using either the same questions or a similar set of questions, as the basis for the interview. Some of the participants may be interviewed a second time to elaborate on some of the concepts that the informants have mentioned in the first interview. The total number of interviews conducted will be determined as the research unfolds. The participants will be made aware that they may withdraw from the study at any time.

**7. Consent**

The following consent forms are included in Appendix C.

- Informed consent for participation
- Consent for data transcription release

**8. Methods/Procedures**

This case study is an interpretivist construction of the experience of establishing a joint interdisciplinary school of policy studies at two universities. Three primary sources of data will be triangulated. First, documents pertaining to the origin and adoption of this policy will be analyzed. Second, the policies will be analyzed using a framework to

explore the origins, adoption, implementation and policy networks involved in the establishment of this interdisciplinary school. Third, the director of the school will be interviewed using a semi-structured interview format. The snowball technique will be used to identify other key informants who will then be interviewed. The interviews will be transcribed and the data collected will be coded according to prevalent themes. The conceptual framework for policy development will also suggest potential themes. The themes will be examined through the lenses of neoinstitutional theory and first and second order change to construct an explanatory framework.

#### **9. Storage of Data**

Upon completion of the study, all data (digital tapes, electronic, and paper) will be securely stored and retained by Dr. Patrick Renihan, Department of Educational Administration in the College of Education in accordance with the guidelines defined by the University of Saskatchewan. The data will be placed in a locked cabinet for a minimum of five years. The data will be stored for five years after completion of the study. After this time, the data will be destroyed in an appropriate and secure manner.

#### **10. Dissemination of Results**

Results of this study will be used in aggregate form as the basis for this researcher's dissertation. In addition, results from this project potentially will be used for scientific publications and presentations to professionals, policy makers and educators, including academic conferences. Results of the study may also be used in a book or other publishable format, such as articles in scholarly journals.

#### **11. Risk, Benefits, and Deception**

No deception is involved in the study. Participants will not be exposed to harm, discomforts, or perceived harm.

- a) Are you planning to study a vulnerable population? This would include, for example, people who are in a state of emotional distress, who are physically ill, who have recently experienced a traumatic event, or who have been recruited into the study because they have previously experienced a severe emotional trauma, such as abuse? NO
- b) Are you planning to study a captive or dependent population, such as children or prisoners? NO
- c) Is there an institutional/power relationship between researcher and participant (e.g., employer/employee, teacher/student, counsellor/client)? NO
- d) Will it be possible to associate specific information in your data file with specific participants? NO
- e) Is there a possibility that third parties may be exposed to loss of confidentiality/anonymity? NO
- f) Are you using audio or videotaping? YES Participants will be audio-recorded, but recordings will be heard only by the researcher and by the transcriber. Transcriptions will be returned to participants for their review to edit or delete sections as they choose. Participants will be asked if they think there is any information that will identify them to those in the university community. If they do find any, this



- information will be deleted or changed if they so choose. Participants will be asked to sign a transcript release form.
- g) Will participants be actively deceived or misled? NO
  - h) Are the research procedures likely to cause any degree of discomfort, fatigue or stress? NO
  - i) Do you plan to ask participants questions that are personal or sensitive? Are there questions that might be upsetting to the respondent? NO
  - j) Are the procedures likely to induce embarrassment, humiliation, lowered self-esteem, guilt, conflict, anger, distress, or any other negative emotional state? NO
  - k) Is there any social risk (e.g., possible loss of status, privacy or reputation)? NO
  - l) Will the research infringe on the rights of participants by, for example, withholding beneficial treatment in control groups, restricting access to education or treatment? NO
  - m) Will participants receive compensation of any type? Is the degree of compensation sufficient to act as a coercion to participate? NO
  - n) Can you think of any other possible harm that participants might experience as a result of participating in this study? NO

## **12. Confidentiality**

All participants will be assigned pseudonyms. However, because of the scope of the study, confidentiality may be difficult to guarantee. In the case of the director of the school, his identity may be determined by the context. He will be made aware of the issue when he gives his consent. Other key informants may remain anonymous; however, their confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because of the context of the study and the smaller pool of potential informants.

## **13. Data/Transcript Release**

Because it is possible that the anonymity of participants may be compromised through direct quotes and through the context and setting of the study, participants will be provided with the opportunity to withdraw their responses after their interviews have been transcribed and prior to the publication of the findings. Participants will be asked to review the final transcript and sign a transcript release form wherein they acknowledge by their consent that the transcript accurately reflects what they said or intended to say.

## **14. Debriefing and Feedback**

Participants are provided with information on how the researcher can be contacted if they have questions or concerns based on the letter of information they received describing the study. A brief executive summary of the project will be provided to each of the participants upon request.

**15. Required Signatures**

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Vicki Squires  
Student

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Saskatoon, SK  
S7H 3B1  
(306) 931-0052  
[vicki.squires@usask.ca](mailto:vicki.squires@usask.ca)

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**APPENDIX B:**  
**SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY LETTERS**

### Introductory Letter – Sample A

(Insert Date)

Dear Participant:

My name is Vicki Squires, and I am a Ph. D. candidate in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. My study is titled **A Policy Study of the Emergence of a Joint Interdisciplinary School**.

The purpose of this case study is to examine policy development at two universities that promotes the emergence of an interdisciplinary school. A policy analysis framework will be employed to structure the exploration of the origins, policy networks, policy adoption procedures and the policy implementation process involved in establishing this interdisciplinary school.

This study will contribute to the literature on policy studies and policy development through my elaboration of the stages of the policy process. This case study will elaborate how change is determined as a priority and then is enacted. In order to conceptualize the policy process, I will develop a policy analysis framework, based on the work of Kingdon (2003) and Levin (2001). This framework will provide one tool for analysis that can be used in studying policy development in a variety of contexts. This study also has implications for understanding change theory in the context of a policy process at a particular type of professional institution.

I will utilize three sources of data; policies, documents and interviews. Because of your position as director of the School of Public Policy at your university, I would like to interview you using a semi-structured format. Prior to meeting at a time that is suitable for you, I will send the questions to you so that you may have time to consider responses to the questions. After completing the initial interview and reflecting on the responses, I will contact you to clarify or to extend certain discussions or concepts. I anticipate that the initial interview will last approximately one hour. I may request a subsequent interview that will be conducted in-person, by phone and/or email. The taped interviews will then be transcribed verbatim. You will have an opportunity to read the transcripts and make any changes you would like. You will be asked to sign a transcript release form when you are satisfied with the transcript. Data resulting from the interviews will be examined for themes and coded according to these themes. Direct quotations from the interviews may also be used.

The resulting research may be used for presentations at conferences, professional venues, and scholarly and professional publications. Your cooperation in this study would be greatly appreciated. If you agree to participate, please read and sign the consent form.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, I can be contacted by e-mail at [vicki.squires@usask.ca](mailto:vicki.squires@usask.ca) or by phone (931-0052). Thank you, in advance, for your consideration and cooperation in participating in this study.

Respectfully yours,

Vicki Squires, Ph.D. Candidate  
University of Saskatchewan

### Introductory Letter – Sample B

(Insert Date)

Dear Participant:

My name is Vicki Squires, and I am a Ph. D. candidate with the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. My study is titled **A Policy Study of the Emergence of a Joint Interdisciplinary School**.

The purpose of this case study is to examine policy development that promotes the emergence of an interdisciplinary school. A policy analysis framework will be employed to structure the exploration of the origins, policy networks, policy adoption procedures, and the policy implementation process involved in establishing this interdisciplinary school.

This study will contribute to the literature on policy studies and policy development through my elaboration of the stages of the policy process. This case study will elaborate on how policy is determined as a priority and then is enacted. In order to conceptualize the policy process, I will develop a policy analysis framework, based on the work of Kingdon (2003) and Levin (2001). This framework will provide one tool for analysis that can be used in studying policy development in a variety of contexts. This study also has implications for understanding change theory in the context of a policy process at a particular type of professional institution.

I will utilize three sources of data; policies, documents and interviews. Because of your involvement in the School of Public Policy at your university, I would like to interview you using a semi-structured format. Prior to meeting at a time that is suitable for you, I will send the questions to you so that you may have time to consider responses to the questions. After reflecting on the interview, I will contact you to clarify or to extend certain discussions or concepts. I anticipate that the initial interview will last approximately one hour. I may request a subsequent interview that will be conducted in-person, by phone and/or email. The taped interviews will then be transcribed verbatim. You will have an opportunity to read the transcripts and make any changes you would like. You will be asked to sign a transcript release form when you are satisfied with the transcript. Data resulting from the interviews will be examined for themes and coded according to these themes. Direct quotations from the interviews may also be used.

The resulting research may be used for presentations at conferences, professional venues, and scholarly and professional publications. Your cooperation in this study would be greatly appreciated. If you agree to participate, please read and sign the consent form.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, I can be contacted by e-mail at [vicki.squires@usask.ca](mailto:vicki.squires@usask.ca) or by phone (931-0052). Thank you, in advance, for your consideration and cooperation in participating in this study.

Respectfully yours,

Vicki Squires, Ph.D. Candidate  
University of Saskatchewan

**APPENDIX C:**  
**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### Semi-structured Interview Questions

- 1) What issues, influences, and contexts contributed to the policy's origin and adoption?
  - a) How was the issue that prompted the initial discussion identified and framed?
  - b) What was the context leading up to this discussion?
  - c) Why was this issue identified as a focus at this time?
  - d) How was the problem or issue defined or explicitly articulated?
  - e) What alternative actions were considered as ways to address this issue?
  - f) Why was this particular policy (action, path) chosen?
- 2) Who are the key stakeholders and policy actors involved in the origin, adoption and implementation of this policy development?
  - a) Who was involved in the framing of the issue (the policy origin stage)? Why?
  - b) How were the key stakeholders in the decision making process determined (the adoption stage)?
  - c) Who has been involved in the policy implementation process and what are their roles and responsibilities? How have the structures for fulfilling those roles been determined?
- 3) How has the policy implementation process been strategized and articulated?
  - a) What structures and capacities (personal, interpersonal and organizational) need to be built in order to implement this policy? How have the organizational prerequisites necessary for the change been addressed?
  - b) What kind of learning is needed as individuals and as an organization or institution? How has this process been included in the implementation process?
  - c) How has the implementation process addressed the level of agency required in executing the plan?
  - d) How was the implementation time frame articulated? Why was it structured this way?
- 4) How do the intended impacts of the change address the problem(s) articulated by the key stakeholders?
  - a) How are the intended impacts of the policy articulated?
  - b) Are you able to anticipate any other possible consequences of this policy?
  - c) How will the interdisciplinary approach address the issue that was defined by the university?
  - d) How has the policy change affected the way you view your role or the way you operate as a faculty member?
- 5) How would you describe this change and its intended impacts:
  - As incremental changes or improvements with developments in a few dimensions (adaptation)
  - As multidimensional, multilevel change that involves taking a new direction (transformation)

Why would you describe it this way?
- 6) Could you direct me to the pertinent documents and policies that apply to this policy?
- 7) Is there a category of information that I do not have access to?

**APPENDIX D**

**CONSENT AND RELEASE FORMS**



### Letter of Consent for Personal Interview Participation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby agree to participate in the research to be conducted by Vicki Squires, entitled *A Policy Study of the Emergence of a Joint Interdisciplinary School*, under the conditions set out in the letter of introduction. I understand that my participation involves a personal interview and a possible second interview conducted personally, or by phone, or by email. The initial interview will take approximately one hour. Subsequent interviews will be shorter in length. I understand that the information gathered may be used as data for publications related to this study, including the researcher's dissertation. The study may be presented at academic conferences or published in scholarly journals. I understand that confidentiality will be maintained, as far as possible, and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, and without any type of penalty. I understand that I will be advised of any new information that may affect my decision to participate in this study. I understand that I will be given the opportunity to review the transcribed data and that I may revise, delete, or add information and then sign the release form. If I have any questions, I may contact the researcher, Vicki Squires, by phone at 306-931-0052, or by email at [vicki.squires@usask.ca](mailto:vicki.squires@usask.ca)

This research project was reviewed and approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research on November 28, 2008, and any questions regarding my rights as a participant may be addressed to this committee through the Office of Research Services (306-966-2084).

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read this form, and discussed this study with the researcher. By signing this form, I give my consent to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this consent form for my personal records.

Participant signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Data/Transcript Release Form - Personal Interviews**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have reviewed all of the transcribed data of my personal interview(s) in this study, and acknowledge that the transcribed data reflects what I said in my personal interview(s) with the researcher, Vicki Squires. I hereby authorize the release of this transcribed data to Vicki Squires to be used in the manner described in the letter of introduction and the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my records.

Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX E**  
**LIST OF PSEUDONYMS**

## Pseudonyms

### Participants

Carl

Charles

Dave

Don

Jeanette

Jeff

Jill

John

Linda

Malcolm

Max

Nelson

Tom

### Locations

University A

University B

School of Policy and Research

College of Graduate Studies

### Other

Provincial Institute of Policy

Years 1-7

University Program Review

PIP Website

### Committees

University Council on Action and Planning

University Planning Committee

Professional Administrators' Association

### Documents

Structures and Names Report

Proposal for a Graduate School of Policy and Research

University A Act

Outline for the School of Policy and Research

Strategic Planning Report

First Multi-Year University Plan

Second Multi-Year University Plan

School of Policy and Research Proposal

Anderson and Johnson Report

Ferguson Report

Memorandum to Explore a Joint Policy School

University Faculty Collective Agreement

Original Proposal Document