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Faculty Engagement in Co-op Competency-Based Learning

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FACULTY ENGAGEMENT IN CO-OP COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING

By

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We accept this Final Report as conforming
to the required standard

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was conducted in collaboration with the Sponsor organization, Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU). As a polytechnic university with four campuses located in the Metro Vancouver region of British Columbia, KPU (2013) offers bachelor's degrees, associate degrees, diplomas, certificates, and citations in more than 200 programs. The polytechnic mandate of the university "emphasizes applied education within the context of broad-based undergraduate learning to prepare our students for successful and rewarding careers" (p. 1).

In June 2013, KPU announced a five-year strategic plan that included a significant emphasis on increasing experiential learning opportunities for all students. Cooperative education, as one form of experiential learning, has the potential to play a meaningful role in assisting the university meet this goal. This announcement coincided with changes in the Cooperative Education (Co-Op) program as a result of a recent accreditation process in 2012 (KPU, 2012). One of the significant changes included implementation of a competency-based learning outcomes model in cooperative education (co-op). The new direction of the university and changes in the co-op program came at an opportune time. Cates and Jones (2000) asserted that the educational purpose in co-op should be clear learning outcomes in alignment with the mission and goals of the institution (p. 3). As a result of these external changes, the Co-Op department was in a position to refocus faculty behaviour, redefine the educational value of co-op, and develop teaching methodology that focuses on learning outcomes that are in alignment with the university's vision.

Purpose of Inquiry

The objective of this research study was for the university to benefit from an enhanced educational and learning-based co-op program that is in alignment with its strategic vision. The Co-Op department would be better equipped to facilitate programs that maximize student learning and be in a position to communicate the educational value of co-op and its significance to institutional plans. Finally, my hope for the research was to engage and inspire Co-Op faculty at KPU to make enhancements to the program that enabled student learning and program growth and considered the supports and resources they require to feel engaged. The question this raised for the KPU Co-Op program was: How can the Centre for Cooperative Education and Career Services engage Co-Op faculty in contributing to the long-term success of a competency-based learning model in Cooperative Education at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU)? Additional subquestions to assist with focusing the research for this project included:

1. What are the co-op educator's perceptions and insights of the current co-op competency-based model's advantages and limitations?
2. What enhancements to administration and process are suggested by the faculty to facilitate change from the current curriculum to a competency-based learning outcomes model?
3. What supports are required by faculty to move to a competency-based learning outcomes model?
4. What factors regarding engagement are fundamental to facilitate successful change to a competency-based learning outcomes model?
5. What are the strategies or best practices at other universities for implementation of a competency-based learning outcomes model?

As such, this focus on Co-Op faculty engagement at KPU had the potential to enhance competency-based teaching and learning pedagogy in co-op, support the development and engagement of co-op educators, as well as contribute to achieving the institutional vision of the university.

Literature Review

A thorough literature review explored competency-based learning in co-op, facets of engagement, and strategies for facilitating organizational change. The literature demonstrated a growing research base and trend in designing post-secondary co-op programs that emphasize student learning outcomes over work placement statistics (Cates & Jones, 2000; Coll et al., 2009; Eames & Bell, 2005; Jaekel et al., 2011; Parks, Fenster, Onwuegbuzie, & Houston, 2008). The literature also revealed there is a lack of a common definition of student learning outcomes in co-op and a lack of research into what students learn, how they learn, and from whom they learn while on a work-integrated learning experience (Coll et. al, 2009; Eames & Bell, 2005). In addition, little (if any) standards for reporting on learning outcomes to accreditation bodies or administration were noted (Parks et al., 2008).

My review of the literature revealed that although the definition of engagement continues to evolve (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck & Reio, 2011), there was evidence that engaged employees have an increased sense of commitment, enthusiasm, and involvement towards both their organization and specific tasks (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Mani & Nadu, 2011). In addition, for authentic engagement to occur, employees need to believe that the work they are doing is meaningful to both themselves and the organization (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008) as well as feel they have adequate resources to perform the task (Kahn, 1990; Shuck, Ghosh, Zigarmi, & Nimon, 2013). The literature on engagement revealed that investing the time and research into enhancing Co-Op faculty engagement could inspire innovation in teaching and learning in co-op and directly improve the sustainability of the inquiry's organizational change effort.

Finally, I explored organizational change literature to gain a better understanding of the challenges to change existing in higher education, how to create readiness for change, and how a focus on people and culture will assist with sustaining change. Some scholars argued that particular effort must be given to reframing and communicating change initiatives in such a way that maximizes employee engagement and gives a sense of urgency (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993; Choi & Ruona, 2011; Kotter, 2012); this assists with increasing readiness to change. In addition, the literature strongly suggested that focusing on changing individuals' behaviours is at the core of long-term organizational change (Armenakis et al., 1993; Burke, 2008; Choi & Ruona, 2011; Fullan & Scott, 2009; Jick, 2008; Kotter, 2012) as well as identifying the significance of culture in sustaining change management (Abrahamson, 2000; Fullan & Scott, 2009, Kotter, 2012).

Methodology and Approach

The inquiry research methodology I employed in the capstone was action research. Coghlan and Brannick (2005) noted the "central idea is that AR [action research] uses a scientific approach to study the resolution of important social or organizational issues together with those who experience these issues directly" (p. 4). The collaborative relationship between researcher and participants is central to the nature of action research. Incorporated within this action research inquiry project was an appreciative stance. Taking an appreciative stance implies

there are strengths inherent in the population; therefore, combined with action, which establishes a collaborative relationship with those who have ownership in the inquiry, an appreciative stance sets a foundation for positive change to occur (p. 8).

I engaged a mixed-method approach using three inquiry methods: survey, focus group, and an interview. Starting broad, the survey was employed to 186 co-op educators who are professional members belonging to ACE. Survey responses assisted with identifying key issues inherent to teaching, learning, and engagement in co-op programs across British Columbia (BC). Data collected from the survey were then funneled down to inform the inquiry's next methods, which were a focus group with four KPU Co-Op faculty members and an interview with the director of Co-operative Education and Career Services. As the Co-Op faculty and the director are in a position for implementing the recommendations of the study, the participatory nature of their involvement in the research invited ownership of the final recommendations

Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggested that "theme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research" (para. 1). As such, I employed a number of techniques during the data analysis stage to discover themes such as pawing, word repetition, key-words-in-context, comparing and contrasting, and cutting and sorting. I applied formal coding to the data collected, looking for themes, ideas, concepts, terms, phrases, and keywords that informed my research question (Gibbs & Taylor, 2005). As noted by Gibbs and Taylor (2005), behaviours, specific acts, events, meanings and interpretations, participation, relationships, conditions or constraints, consequences, and settings are all factors in the data that can be coded.

I followed a number of practices to ensure reliability, validity, authenticity, and trustworthiness was adhered to throughout the inquiry and a high standard of ethics was applied. Considering my role as an inside researcher, awareness of my biases and subjectivity (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) and mindfulness not to overfit the data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) were particularly significant. I used member checking, an advisory team to check my bias, and a reflection journal to mitigate these concerns. In addition, I adhered to the three core principles relating to respect for human dignity in research ethics: Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice. I clearly communicated to participants how the results of the inquiry would be disseminated, how participation was voluntary, how confidentiality and anonymity would be respected when possible, and ensured there was no conflict in participants reporting to me.

Findings and Recommendations

Three themes emerged in the study findings: teaching and learning in co-op, resources and supports necessary for engagement, and the impact of organizational culture. The findings represented the unique perspectives of each participant group and demonstrated a range in diversity and similarities in responses to the same issues.

Based on the analysis of data from the survey, focus group and interview, I have drawn three conclusions to assist with engagement of Co-Op faculty in contributing to the long-term success of a competency-based learning model.

1. Co-op educators and administration are strongly engaged in maximizing student learning in co-op and seek ways to increase their focus on teaching and learning.
2. Co-op educators and administration believe competency based-learning provides an evidence-based approach to advancing the success and learning in cooperative education.
3. Co-op educators and administration desire an organizational culture that values experiential learning and supports professional development.

The study's conclusions assisted with developing four recommendations that encompassed a systems approach to enacting realistic change at multiple organizational levels: external, internal, and departmental. The four recommendations that could facilitate engagement of Co-Op faculty in contributing the long-term success of a competency-based learning model at KPU were:

1. KPU Co-Op faculty and administration build on existing strengths in the KPU Co-op curriculum, identify opportunities, and create a sense of urgency to integrate competency-based learning into established courses and research best practices for implementation, assessment, and instruction.
2. KPU Co-Op faculty and administration engage in reflection to evaluate current and future resources, supports, and efficiencies in practice.
3. KPU Co-Op administration support professional development and training for co-op educators to enhance their knowledge of co-op and competency-based learning pedagogy, while being mindful to support adequate coverage and time for research, implementation, and transfer of knowledge into practice.
4. KPU Co-Op faculty and administration engage in discussion with stakeholders at KPU and ACE to explore synergies with departments interested in competency-based learning and assessment.

At the heart of these recommendations lies positive intent for change, a desire for collaboration, and belief that faculty engagement in the long-term success of competency-based learning at KPU is viable.

Implications for Organization, Sponsor, and Future Inquiry

The conclusions of this applied inquiry will require leaders and stakeholders to undertake behavioural and systemic organizational changes if recommendations are pursued. Change, of any kind, "finally succeed[s] or fail[s] on the basis of whether the people affected do things differently" (Bridges, 2003, p. 5). Therefore, when constructing the recommendations and implementation plan for this inquiry, I have considered the needs of participants and stakeholders to be at the forefront of the inquiry's success. Focusing on engaging stakeholders and creating a symbiotic relationship that aligns participant values with the goals of the inquiry is key to successful implementation. In addition, given that I am not solely responsible for implementing the recommendations, I will be working in close collaboration with the sponsor. The sponsor will play an essential role in creating an academic plan in collaboration with Co-Op faculty and advocating to senior administration and senior leaders at ACE about the value of learning in co-op.

Several opportunities based on the findings of this study were identified for future inquiry. Follow-up research projects could provide valuable insight to assist the goals of cooperative education and experiential learning in BC. Specifically, I suggest further research is conducted on competency-based teaching and learning in co-op, including best practices for delivery, integration, assessment, and how to engage employers and students in maximizing learning outcomes. Second, examine the relationship between competency-based learning in co-op and the knowledge of student learning theories, curriculum development, and technology such as on-line learning communities. Third, explore the role of the Co-op educator and what professional development opportunities would best enable personal and professional growth. These suggestions for future inquiry will assist with providing insight for enriching the co-op educator role and enhancing overall teaching and learning in the program.

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To my KPU and ACE colleagues, thank you for your continued support and participating in this inquiry. It was an honour to hear your stories. I am very thankful to KPU and the Office of Research and Scholarship for supporting my professional development and allowing me the time to reflect on this learning journey. Thanks to my sponsor, Shawn Erickson, for his solid support and genuine excitement for the inquiry. I would also like to thank Bevin Heath Ansley for her generous feedback throughout the process, her mentorship, and uplifting encouragement.

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CHAPTER ONE: FOCUS AND FRAMING

In June 2013, Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) announced a five year strategic plan that included a significant emphasis on increasing experiential learning opportunities for all students. Cooperative education, as one form of experiential learning, has the potential to play a meaningful role in assisting the university meet this goal. This announcement coincided with changes in the Cooperative Education (Co-Op) program as a result of a recent accreditation process in 2012. One of the significant changes included an implementation of a competency-based learning outcomes model in cooperative education (co-op). The new direction of the university and changes in the co-op program came at an opportune time. Cates and Jones (2000) asserted that the educational purpose in co-op should be clear learning outcomes in alignment with the mission and goals of the institution (p. 3). As a result of these external changes, the Co-Op department was in a position to refocus faculty behaviour, redefine the educational value of co-op, and develop teaching methodology that focuses on learning outcomes that are in alignment with the university's vision.

The objectives of this research study were for the university to benefit from an enhanced educational and learning-based co-op program that is in alignment with its strategic vision. The Co-Op department would be better equipped to facilitate programs that maximize student learning and be in a position to communicate the educational value of co-op and its significance to institutional plans. As a cooperative education instructor at KPU, I realized this was a propitious time for the department to enact positive change. However, with any change initiative, also come challenges as the department adjusts to new processes, new pedagogy, and new emphasis on how educational roles are perceived.

A consistent challenge for my colleagues and me has been balancing the many roles intrinsic to the co-op educator position. We are often torn between our roles as educators and placement coordinators. The current system in which programs are evaluated and by which success is measured is based on the number of students placed in a work term. As a result, it can be a struggle to place the necessary emphasis on teaching learning outcomes in co-op in light of the other responsibilities inherent in our roles (e.g., marketing, advising, teaching, and conducting site visits) and the current system of performance assessment. Co-op faculty recognize the value of emphasizing learning outcomes in co-op, but lack the time and resources to explore organized solutions on how to be more efficient, innovative, and collaborative in our instructional approach. In addition, with the introduction of a competency-based curriculum in 2012, professional development and training on how faculty will facilitate learning outcomes in the co-op courses was still pending. Thus, as positive change was on the horizon for the department, there were also comprehensive concerns on how this change would be implemented and managed.

By taking an action research methodological approach and directly engaging the Co-Op faculty at KPU in the research, my intent was for positive organizational change to occur as the recommendations would be inclusive of the key stakeholders who would be most impacted by changes to the program and who would be responsible for moving the change forward. My interest in pursuing the inquiry was supported by conversations with faculty and my project's sponsor, which revealed a desire for a structured co-op program that maximizes student learning outcomes, allows for program growth, and is mindful of the diversity and time constraints inherent in our roles.

The question this raised for the Kwantlen Co-Op program was: How can the Centre for Cooperative Education and Career Services engage Co-Op faculty in contributing to the long term success of a competency based learning model in Cooperative Education at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU)? Additional subquestions to assist with focusing the research for this project included:

1. What are the co-op educator's perceptions and insights of the current co-op competency-based model's advantages and limitations?
2. What enhancements to administration and process are suggested by the faculty to facilitate change from the current curriculum to a competency-based learning outcomes model?
3. What supports are required by faculty to move to a competency-based learning outcomes model?
4. What factors regarding engagement are fundamental to facilitate successful change to a competency-based learning outcomes model?
5. What are the strategies or best practices at other universities for implementation of a competency-based learning outcomes model?

Significance of the Inquiry

The significance of exploring how to engage co-op faculty in contributing to the long-term success of a competency-based learning model was a relevant and timely issue because the university was undergoing a restructuring of its strategic vision and goals and had identified experiential learning to be a focal point in the identity of the organization (KPU, 2013). Other goals that had emerged from the strategic plan included a need to prepare students for global citizenship and rewarding careers, an emphasis on learning engagement and retention, and

support for innovation in teaching and scholarship that aligns with industry needs (KPU, 2013). Therefore, the opportunity for KPU Co-Op to structure its program around competency-based student learning that is aligned with the overall goals of the institution was pertinent.

In 2012, the Co-Op department at KPU underwent an extensive process of accrediting its programs to meet the standards of the Association of Cooperative Education in British Columbia/Yukon. This process involved identifying learning outcomes and competencies that students in the co-op program would achieve. The department had yet to develop the teaching methodology and curriculum to best achieve these outcomes and plans to do so in the near future. Communication with faculty and the sponsor revealed concern for how this change in structure would impact the workload of faculty and staff, especially with the potential growth in co-op as a result of the strategic plan emphasizing experiential learning in every KPU program. As a result, pursuing this inquiry into faculty engagement was timely in order to manage and sustain the change that is coming.

There are many stakeholders who benefitted from this inquiry. The KPU Co-Op faculty had the opportunity to be involved in positive organizational change by contributing what supports, resources, and development are needed by them to successfully implement a new model of teaching in co-op. They have gained a better understanding of departmental strengths and best practices in facilitating a competency-based learning model as well as explored strategies to enhance co-op pedagogy. The Co-Op department has benefitted from an increase in awareness of the educational value of co-op and had the opportunity to align its curriculum and goals with the strategic vision of the university. Finally, co-op students and KPU will benefit from engaged faculty who are focused on maximizing student learning and development and

from employee engagement strategies that could be applied to programs outside of the Co-Op department.

If the inquiry was not pursued, there was the risk that the value of cooperative education could depreciate, competency-based student learning outcomes may not be met, and co-op curriculum and pedagogy could become outdated and not in alignment with the needs of a 21st century education. Furthermore, a lack of faculty engagement in impending changes could lead to faculty burnout, complacency, and retention issues

Organizational Context

As a polytechnic university with four campus located in the Metro Vancouver region of British Columbia, KPU offers bachelor's degrees, associate degrees, diplomas, certificates, and citations in more than 200 programs. The vision 2018 statement at KPU (2013) is: "innovative, transformative, and ambitious. Kwantlen Polytechnic University serves the needs of our region, of British Columbia, and beyond. We inspire students to excel in their careers, lead in their communities, and succeed in their lives" (p. 1). The polytechnic mandate of the university "emphasizes applied education within the context of broad-based undergraduate learning to prepare our students for successful and rewarding careers" (p. 1).

The Co-Op department where I work and where the inquiry took place oversees a centralized model of Career Services and Cooperative Education and reports to a single director. Services are offered to students on all four campus locations. The department consists of five co-op faculty, two program assistants, and a career services coordinator. It belongs to a larger division called Student Affairs, which is under the direction of the Vice-Provost Students. Thus, the programs housed in the Centre for Co-op and Career Services fall under the umbrella of experiential learning and, as such, are well situated to support the vision and mandate of the

university. Therefore, as the demand for applied learning at KPU increases, the need for faculty engagement in program modification, curriculum modifications, and the enhancement of teaching and learning will be significant. The centralized model of co-op programming as well as the diverse physical locations of co-op faculty were factors to consider when implementing the recommendations in the inquiry.

The university has been involved in an extensive, holistic, and integrated five-year vision process to develop a strategic plan for the institution (KPU, 2013). The final strategic plan was announced to the KPU community on June 7, 2013. In the opening message from the President of KPU, he stated,

> By improving the outcomes of our graduates through teaching innovation and scholarship, and by creating synergies as an organization to improve our effectiveness, KPU will demonstrate progress towards our vision as the leading institution of its kind in Canada and beyond. (KPU, 2013, p. 3)

This inquiry explored how to engage co-op faculty in implementing a competency-based learning outcomes model and addressed how faculty engagement impacts teaching innovation and scholarship. Furthermore, through this research, I looked into how the department could create synergy to improve our communication and enhance our contribution to the university as a whole.

One of the guiding principles of the strategic planning process that related to the inquiry stated, “The process takes into account external issues and trends in higher education and builds on existing strengths” (KPU, 2012, p. 1). As such, one of the trends in higher education that emerged from the planning process has been the importance of experiential learning. Specifically, KPU (2013) has stated its vision as: “experiential learning is integrated into every KPU program, connecting theory to application and the classroom to the community” (p. 9). As a

result, co-op, one form of experiential learning, has seen a significant increase in demand from programs wanting to include co-op in their curriculum. The anticipated growth in co-op has a direct impact on the structure of the program, including recruitment of students, administration, teaching, and workload for faculty and staff.

Another key pillar in the KPU (2013) strategic vision was an emphasis on quality learning and engagement. Essential to meeting this goal has been the plan to "**e**mbed learning outcomes within the university's academic plan that prepares students for global citizenship and rewarding careers" (p. 6). Co-Op, with the recent introduction of competency-based learning outcomes into its curriculum, has the opportunity to take a leading role in helping the institution meet this goal and assist internal departments who are looking to implement similar learning outcomes. This inquiry explored strategies and best practices at other universities for facilitation of a competency-based learning outcomes model that could then be applied to issues specific at KPU.

In regards to co-op faculty engagement, the KPU (2013) vision is to "implement initiatives that will attract, support, engage, and retain KPU's people and create an environment where all employees see themselves as contributing to student learning" (p. 7). A significant factor for the success of the inquiry was to consider the needs of co-op faculty and address what supports, resources, and behavioural shifts are needed for the long-term success of competency-based learning outcomes in co-op. The objective of this action research inquiry was to explore how to engage co-op faculty and inspire them to make enhancements to the program and student learning.

In regards to learner engagement and retention, a goal in the KPU (2013) vision is to "assess, select, implement, and celebrate learning methodologies and educational delivery

options that provide learners with the support within and beyond the classroom to succeed academically, personally, socially, and professionally" (p. 6). As such, co-op serves to "promote continuous learning through the integration of classroom and applied work-based learning" (Angerilli et al., 2005, p. 1). Students "develop and refine employability skills" and co-op educators "observe student growing in maturity and self-confidence as they progress through their co-op program" (p. 2); thus, co-op can assist with achieving the institutional goal of supporting student learning in a holistic manner. The ultimate goal of the inquiry was to improve teaching and scholarship for students by way of engaging and inspiring co-op faculty in implementing a competency based learning outcomes model. The objective was to not only set the path for positive organizational change within the Co-Op department but also contribute meaningfully to the university's strategic vision.

Systems Analysis of the Inquiry

As an inside researcher within my organization, it was apt to take a systems approach in viewing the inquiry because there were numerous internal and external factors that influenced the system in which the inquiry took place. As such, these may not have been as apparent to me from my limited perspective as a co-op educator. As Senge (2006) noted:

> Since we are part of that lacework ourselves, it's doubly hard to see the whole patterns of change. Instead, we tend to focus on snapshots of isolated parts of the system, and wonder why our deepest problems never seem to get solved. (p. 7)

Therefore, a systems thinking approach allowed me to see the "organization as a whole, made up of interrelated and interdependent parts (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005, p. 118).

Coghlan and Brannick (2005) suggested "systems thinking and the action research cycle play complementary roles" (p. 119). As we move through the cycles in action research of "look, think, act" (Stringer, 2007, p. 8), there is constant interaction, collaboration, and consideration of

all the stakeholders and drivers that impact the system. KPU is a complex system in higher education consisting of multiple layers of internal and external influence who have considerable impact on the system. Coghlan and Brannick suggested that "in situations of dynamic complexity, systems thinking provides a perspective of viewing and understanding how a system is held together by patterns of action and reaction, relationship, meanings and hidden rules and the role of time" (p. 119). Approaching the inquiry from a systems lens, therefore, allowed me to have a better understanding of what the underlying drivers were in the change initiative and how this impacted co-op faculty engagement at KPU.

The Co-Op department falls under the policies, guidance, and structure of the broader system of the university. In this larger system, the department strives to be in alignment with the overall university vision, mandate, and established institution-wide learning outcomes. This goal for alignment within the larger system was one of the key drivers of the inquiry. As potential change agents and advocates, senior administration at KPU had a significant influence in supporting the inquiry on a larger systems level. As Stringer (2007) noted, the "decision makers determine how things will operate, who will benefit, under what circumstances, and according to which criteria" (p. 33). One of the objectives of the inquiry was to communicate to senior administration the educational value and ways in which Co-Op department can assist the university to accomplish its strategic vision.

Although the university is a large and complex system, the Co-Op department where the inquiry originated is much smaller in size. In order for the change effort to be embraced and sustained, the recommendations strove to be in alignment with the values of the Co-Op department and in harmony with the individual values of each co-op instructor who would be moving the change forward. The Co-Op faculty, director, and administrative support staff were

key stakeholders and played multiple, overlapping roles in the inquiry, including acting as change agents, advocates, and even adversaries; each role played a valuable part in offering a different perspective on how to view the change. Another internal factor in regards to engaging faculty in positive change was the number of competing roles or "hats" the co-op instructors wear and the conflict of role perceptions (e.g., workload and role conflict). The struggle to balance workload with teaching and learning was an important issue that needed to be explored further. Other internal factors that impacted the inquiry included resources, training, technology, decision-making models, and overall readiness to change within the team (see Appendix A).

Externally, one driver in the system that may impact the recommendations of the inquiry is the lack of new resources and the "assumption that funding from government will likely remain flat during the 2013/14-2017/18 planning period" (KPU, 2012, p. 1). As such, with the institution stating their desire to offer experiential learning opportunities in every program (KPU, 2013) and the acknowledgement that funding could be limited, the inquiry needed to consider how to best engage faculty and educate students in a cost-efficient manner. There were implications for the future of co-op and the need to communicate the value of co-op as a leader in experiential learning at KPU. Cates and Jones (2000) noted:

> A third important benefit is that the co-op program may ensure its survival in this post-funding atmosphere by reaching for academic goals. When we can contribute to the academic mission of the campus, we may prevent being marginalized or worse, seen as redundant to the services of the placement office. (p. 2)

The ability for the Co-Op department to grow is limited given its current delivery model; therefore, there was a need to implement cost-efficient solutions and changes to the delivery of services that do not impact student learning. The Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (2006), in regards to institutional commitment criteria, stated,

> The co-operative education program is not merely a "politically expedient and attractive option" for the institution. When the institution puts resources into co-operative education and makes curriculum adjustments in content and delivery it demonstrates that co-operative education is considered of value in the academic community. The growth or shrinkage of a program should cause the institution to reflect on whether the co-op program's success is being driven by internal factors (management, linkage to faculty) or external (labour market, competition). (p. 4)

Another external factor considered was the professional organizations to which the Co-Op department belongs, including the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education and the Association of Co-Operative Education in British Columbia/Yukon (ACE). Further exploration into the accreditation guidelines for competency-based learning outcomes in co-op is needed as well as an exploration into how KPU Co-Op is/is not addressing them in our current practice. Additionally, co-op educators at other universities were engaged in the inquiry to gain perspective of key issues related to engagement and competency based learning outside of KPU.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have provided a detailed description of the organization where the inquiry took place, context to support the significance of pursuing the inquiry, and a systems analysis describing the internal and external drivers that may impact it. A focus on co-op faculty engagement at KPU has the potential to enhance competency-based teaching and learning pedagogy in co-op, support the development and engagement of co-op educators, as well as contribute to achieving the institutional vision of the university. In the following chapter, I review pertinent literature on competency-based learning in co-op, facets of engagement, and strategies for facilitating organizational change in order to better inform the research inquiry question.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I explore the relevant literature to provide a framework for informing the action research inquiry question: How can the Centre for Cooperative Education and Career Services engage co-op faculty in contributing to the long term success of a competency-based learning model in Cooperative Education at KPU? Through this literature review, I will explore competency-based learning outcomes, engagement, and organizational change in order to assist the KPU Co-Op department to better understand the value and function of competency-based learning in experiential learning programs and inform them of best practices for successful assessment and delivery at other institutions. It will identify key strategies and the relevant theory behind engagement and organizational change in order to ensure sustainability for a new model of program delivery that best supports the needs of co-op faculty and enhances student learning.

Competency-Based Learning Outcomes in Co-Operative Education

Understanding the value of competency-based learning models in co-op and exploring best practices for assessment and delivery at other universities is important for providing context to the significance of the inquiry. In addition, reviewing relevant research on documenting and assessing learning outcomes, in addition to work placement statistics, will be valuable to co-op educators as a means to capture the achievements of co-op students.

Value and purpose of learning outcomes in co-operative education. The literature demonstrated a growing research base and trend in designing post-secondary co-op programs that emphasize student learning outcomes over work placement statistics (Cates & Jones, 2000; Coll et al., 2009; Eames & Bell, 2005; Jaekel et al., 2011; Parks, Fenster, Onwuegbuzie, & Houston, 2008). Parks et al. (2008) noted that “to be an effective academic model, cooperative

education must be viewed as an integral part of a student's educational experience rather than simply a placement service" (p. 47). Similarly, Johnston (2007) argued, "From a critical perspective, co-op program goals should therefore reflect more than the securing of employment as an outcome, they ought to also reflect the broader educational goals of the institution within which the program operates" (p. 27). Effective co-op programming that dictates an academic approach that fosters an emphasis on learning outcomes will contribute to enhancing the education for students and provide them with the opportunity to develop the skills that industry has identified as critical for success (Cates & Jones, 2000). Additionally, "the learning outcomes devised to maximize students' co-operative education experiences directly influence their skills development, educational plans, and career choices as well as establishes connections between universities and employers" (Jaekel et al., 2011, p. 11). From this perspective, facilitating learning outcomes in co-op curriculum serves to benefit all stakeholders in the co-op model: the university, employers, and most importantly, the students.

Structuring programming around learning outcomes also serves to inform faculty and administrators of the effectiveness of the co-op program (Cates & Jones, 2000; Jaekel et al., 2011). Jaekel et al. (2011) argued that "outcomes assessments are critical to the evaluation of co-operative education programs for higher education institutions in the current competitive environment" (p. 13). Parks et al. (2008) added, "Co-operative education administrators should emphasize student-learning outcomes in sharing program information with faculty and administrators on their campuses" (p. 45). Additionally, Cates and Jones (2000) advised that strategically aligning co-op learning outcomes with institutional goals will enrich the value of co-op (p. 2). Thus, with a growing interest in expanding experiential learning and a desire for academic accountability at KPU, the literature has supported the Co-Op department making a

conscious shift in emphasizing the value of student learning outcomes in communications with faculty and senior administration. This is especially important, as there are some in higher education who are skeptical of whether co-op experience is an appropriate source of learning in university (Moore, 2010). These idealists question whether the fundamental purpose of higher education is served by students working and "argue that the university should only teach students to understand and produce scholarship" (p. 7).

Coll et al.'s (2009) research recognized the abundance of literature on the benefits of co-op for its stakeholders, but noted they are "mostly pragmatic or operational in nature, it seems little is known about student learning—how this learning occurs and how it might better be facilitated or supported" (p. 15). Eames and Bell (2005) were in agreement that there is a lack of research into what students learn, how they learn, and from whom they learn while on a work-integrated learning experience.

The literature reviewed revealed there is a lack of a common definition of student learning outcomes in co-op, as they appear to vary across academic programs, institutions, and academic levels. The Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (2006) has not defined specific learning outcomes in their accreditation standards and rationale document. The requirements for co-op accreditation are operational in nature and include standards such as program orientation, performance evaluation, authentic assessment, and pre-employment training. In respect to learning, the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education noted in the accreditation document that

> Students see how their learning objectives align with various co-op job opportunities (through one-on-one coaching, workshops, self-reflection exercises etc.) . . . [and outlined] it is up to the institution to determine the appropriate format of the assignment based upon the professional, personal and program goals. (p. 8)

The literature highlighted the ambiguous definition of learning outcomes in co-op standards and practices.

The literature reviewed uncovered common themes demonstrating an increase in co-op practitioners recognizing the value of implementing and measuring learning outcomes (Cates & Jones, 2000; Jaekel et al., 2011); however, as Jaekel et al. (2011) noted, "The challenge arises in creating measureable learning outcomes that include social skills development woven into the co-operative education experience" (p. 13).

Assessment and best practices of learning outcomes in co-op. Parks et al. (2008) observed that the ACE standards "emphasized adherence to specific program structural standards as opposed to measurements of student outcomes" (p. 42). Researchers recognized the superior learning outcomes achieved in co-op (Cates & Jones, 2000; Coll et al., 2009; Jaekel et al., 2011; Parks et al., 2008); however, there were little (if any) standards for reporting on learning outcomes to accreditation bodies or administration. Members of ACE are required to track and submit annual statistics that relate to student placement numbers by program, geographic location, and industry. Other information tracked includes data on salary, length of placement, and year of program. There are currently no standards for reporting on the measurement of student learning outcomes in co-op, which was also identified by Parks et al., who noted "program evaluation should be tied to specific learning outcomes, not merely program structure" (p. 45).

Cates and Jones (2000) argued co-op programs need to implement evaluation instruments to measure specific learning outcomes and capture students' achievement while on a work term because this can contribute to "the on-going debate over assessment in higher education, especially with respect to the utility of authentic assessment techniques" (p. 3). They also noted assessment characteristics common to most co-op programs that can serve to provide useful

feedback to the university on the effectiveness of its programs include "multiple methods of data collection, multiple perspectives, student-constructed evaluation, program-based assessment, portfolios, and feedback loops" (p. 3).

The University of Windsor recently identified new learning outcomes in their co-op program and conducted a study examining the effectiveness of assessment methods and delivery (Jaekel et al., 2011). The results of the study highlighted the best practice of using portfolios in facilitating and assessing learning outcomes in co-op. Included in the portfolio were responses for reflective questions, final work term reports, resumes, cover letters, and evaluations from the employer and faculty. Jaekel et al. (2011) noted that:

> The objective of the portfolio is to enable students to recognize and articulate the impact of their co-op experience on their development of skills and knowledge. It also provides co-op coordinators with a standardized, objective approach for assessing student performance in the co-op program. (p. 19)

The portfolios also allowed for inclusivity of all stakeholders to contribute to the assessment, including students, employers, and faculty.

In addition to portfolios, the literature highlighted additional best practices for effective delivery and assessment of learning outcomes in co-op. One effective approach is applying theories related to student learning to the structure of the co-op program (Cates & Jones, 2000). Cates and Jones (2000) noted that "by developing an expertise of our own on relevant learning theories and their connection to cooperative education, we will be in the best position to teach others" (p. 1). This approach assists with reinforcing the educational objective in co-op and advances the value of learning outcomes (Jaekel et al., 2011). Secondly, Jaekel et al. (2011) identified learning outcomes for each level of student (i.e., junior, intermediate, and senior) and developed "corresponding new educational strategies and assessment tools for each academic

level" (p. 12), which was supported by Bloom's taxonomy related to the development of educational objectives (Cates & Jones, 2000). Finally, Freudenberg, Cameron, Brimble, and English's (2011) study, whereby they tested the development of competencies related to student satisfaction, self-efficacy, and generic skills in undergraduate business degrees with work-integrated learning, revealed a third best practice in incorporating learning outcomes in co-op programming. Their study assessed student competencies at three points in time: start of the degree, start of the second year, and start of the third year (p. 85), suggesting multiple and timely assessments are necessary to measure the effectiveness of learning outcomes over the span of a student's degree.

The literature reviewed revealed that further research is needed into the effectiveness of learning outcomes assessment tools, such as portfolios, faculty/employer/student evaluations, competency-based assignments, reflective journals, and work term reports. In addition, consideration should be given to how often assessment tools require revision, an awareness of any bias in self-reported data (Jaekel et al. 2011), how students value certain pedagogies such as self-reflective journals (Coll et al., 2009), and how employers can contribute to learning outcome assessment (Cates & Jones, 2000).

Summary. In summary, the literature highlighted that adopting an academic approach to emphasizing student learning outcomes over work placement is beneficial to the co-op program. However, the gaps in the research revealed there is little consistency among co-op programs in regards to the definition of learning outcomes, pedagogies, delivery, assessment, and reporting, which can result in inconsistency and ambiguity among co-op practitioners. Understanding how to quantify and thus communicate the learning in co-op will help to reinforce the valuable role engaged co-op educators play in student academic learning and development.

Engagement

Embedded within KPU's (2013) strategic vision is a goal to "engage and retain KPU's people and create an environment where all employees see themselves as contributing to student learning" (p. 7). In this regard, the inquiry explored the significance of engaging co-op faculty to ensure the long-term success of a competency-based learning model in co-op and enhancement of student learning. To better understand how faculty engagement could lead to the long-term success of a competency-based learning model in co-op, I looked to the literature to demonstrate the relationship between engaged employees and performance: specifically, how scholarly literature defined engagement and how facets of engagement such as increased commitment and sense of belonging could contribute to the success of the inquiry. Finally, I sought examples in literature to understand strategies for enhancing employee engagement.

Defining engagement. Employee engagement is a relatively new concept (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck, Ghosh, Zigarmi, & Nimon, 2013; Shuck & Reio, 2011) that "has received a great deal of attention in the last five years, especially in the popular press and among consulting firms" (Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 124). However, as Shuck and Reio (2011) noted, "As is the case with most constructs in the early phases of development, *employee engagement* lacks a certain level of consistency in definition and application across fields" (p. 420). This sentiment was echoed by a number of other academics who pointed out the competing and inconsistent interpretations, definitions, and measurements of the employee engagement construct (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck & Reio, 2011).

The definition of engagement in academic literature has continued to evolve; however, there seemed to be a number of qualities that can be agreed upon. Common to these definitions was "the notion that employee engagement is a desirable condition, has an organizational

purpose, and connotes involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort, and energy, so it has both attitudinal and behavioural components" (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p. 4). Engaged employees are fully committed, enthusiastic, and feel connected to their work (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Mani & Nadu, 2011). Kahn (1990) was an early pioneer in defining the term employee engagement in research and defined it as the "simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviours that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performances" (p. 700). In other words, engagement occurs when a person puts his or her personal energy, effort, and involvement into a task as a result of finding his or her work to be meaningful, safe, and supported. This definition supported the purpose of the action research inquiry, as I sought to directly involve and inspire Co-Op faculty in the long-term success of a competency-based learning model.

Another common quality denoted to engagement was its relationship to success, enhanced performance, and competitive advantage (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Mani & Nadu, 2011). Gruman and Saks (2011) asserted employee engagement is a "key driver of individual attitudes, behaviour, and performance as well as organizational performance, productivity, retention, financial performance, and even shareholder return" (p. 125). Furthermore, Shuck and Reio (2011) argued that "multiple lines of research evidence suggest that engaged employees outperform their disengaged counterparts on a number of important organizational metrics" (p. 421). Shuck and Reio referred to the earlier work of Kahn (1990) and suggested engagement can be understood as increased levels of discretionary effort (p. 422).

Facets of engagement. Increased commitment to an organization was recognized as one common feature of engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Mani & Nadu, 2011). Gruman and Saks (2011) stated,

> For engagement to occur, there needs to be an alignment between individual goals and organizational goals. Such an alignment ensures a strategic focus to engagement because it ensures that employees engage themselves in tasks that are important for the achievement of an organization's goals and objectives. (p. 128)

These findings were consistent with Macey and Schneider's (2008) conclusions, who proposed organizational commitment is an important facet of engagement when it is "conceptualized as positive attachment to the larger organizational entity and measured as a willingness to exert energy in support of the organization, to feel pride as an organizational member, and to have personal identification with the organization" (p .8). As such, when employees are engaged, they are often willing to work hard and devote discretionary effort to ensure the success of the organization (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Mani & Nadu, 2011).

The literature also suggested that employee engagement can include increased commitment to a specific task or goal. This has resulted in some disagreement among scholars who believe the emerging construct of engagement is associated with either commitment to a specific task/goal or to an organization (Shuck et al., 2013). In their study, Shuck and Reio (2011) appeared to bridge the gap of the debate and referred to engagement as a cognitive construct, in that it revolves "around how an employee thinks about and understands his or her job, company, and culture and represents his or her intellectual commitment" (p. 422).

There have been numerous studies that have demonstrated the relationship between employees' perceptions of doing meaningful work and high engagement. This second facet of engagement, otherwise coined emotional engagement (Shuck et al., 2013) or psychological

engagement (Gruman & Saks, 2011), refers to an employee's sense of belonging and whether they perceive the work they are doing is safe, meaningful, and important (Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Psychological meaningfulness "is achieved when people feel worthwhile, valuable, and that they matter" (Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 126). Furthermore, as noted by Shuck and Reio's (2011) study, "emotional engagement revolves around the emotional bond one feels toward his or her place of work and represents a willingness to involve personal resources such as pride, belief, and knowledge" (p. 423). In addition to safety and meaningfulness, employees also need to feel they have been adequately supported with enough resources towards a given work task (Kahn, 1990; Shuck et al., 2013). Resources can include both tangible (e.g., more staff support) and intangible items, such as time, care, and mental abilities (Kahn, 1990; Shuck et al., 2013).

Summary. My review of this literature revealed that although the definition of engagement continues to evolve, there was evidence that engaged employees have an increased sense of commitment, enthusiasm, and involvement towards both their organization and specific tasks. In addition, for authentic engagement to occur, employees need to believe that the work they are doing is meaningful to both themselves and the organization as well as feel they have adequate resources to perform the task. Thus, investing the time and research into enhancing co-op faculty engagement could inspire innovation in teaching and learning in co-op and directly improve the sustainability of the inquiry's organizational change effort.

Organizational Change

According to Fullan and Scott (2009), "many institutions of higher education are change adverse" (p. 25). Therefore, with possible changes to the program, including changes to operations, work load, teaching methodology, reporting placements, and new technology, creating a trusting environment to enact change will be imperative**.** I will explore the literature to

uncover challenges to change existing in higher education, how to create readiness for change, and how a focus on people and culture will assist with sustaining change.

Challenges to change in higher education. Organizational change is constant, and "because of increasingly dynamic environments, organizations are continually confronted with the need to implement changes in strategy, structure, process, and culture" (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993, p. 681). As such, with change also come challenges resulting in an overload of work, chaos, resistance, and turbulence (Abrahamson, 2000; Choi & Ruona, 2011; Fullan & Scott, 2009; Kotter, 2012). Abrahamson (2000) aptly noted that "change, as it is usually orchestrated, creates initiative overload and organizational chaos, both of which provoke strong resistance from the people most affected" (p. 76). These common characteristics of organizational change can relate to all change efforts; however, there are some challenges that apply specifically to institutions of higher education. Fullan and Scott (2009) argued that some barriers to effective change management within post-secondary include, but are not limited to, poor decision making and unclear accountability, funding and inefficient or unaligned reward systems, and a culture of weak implementation (p. 34).

Poor decision making can result in staff feeling disengaged from the core purpose of the institution, unresponsive to change, and confused about accountability for delivery (Fullan & Scott, 2009; Jick, 2008). Furthermore, it is not always clear if the structure and process of a change initiative are aligned when decisions are made (Fullan & Scott, 2009, p. 36). As a result, staff may question if the support resources and infrastructure are in place to assure delivery is successful.

Institutions of higher education can also be characterized as being individualistic in nature and supporting a reward system that is not in alignment with core activities. Fullan and

Scott (2009) noted that "despite traditions of collegiality and collective debates, universities are amazingly individualistic . . . [and often the] incentive system and the culture reward individualism" (pp. 27-28). This was reflected in the current practice of co-op statistics and success being reported to management by individual programs and instructors. Kotter (2012) concurred and advocated for removing the system barriers that are commonly found in the public sector, in stating,

> Evaluation and rewards can disempower when they are at odds with the direction of needed change. The new vision and strategies say x, but the bureaucracy not only does little to identify and reward x, it helps block what is needed. (p. 106)

As such, the literature reinforced the value of aligning individual and organizational assessment and rewards with the change goals.

Finally, weak implementation can be a characteristic in university culture and places staff at risk of becoming subject to change fatigue (Abrahamson, 2000; Choi & Ruona, 2011; Fullan & Scott, 2009; Jick, 2008; Vestal, 2013). Choi and Ruona (2011) noted that "the cause of many organizations' inability to achieve the intended aims of their change efforts is often considered as an implementation failure, rather than flaws innate in the change initiative itself" (p. 47). Specific to higher education, Fullan and Scott (2009) observed that "universities often spend too much time discussing what should change and too little time figuring out how to make desired change happen" (p. 73), which was supported by the work of Pfeffer and Sutton (2006), who argued organizations spend an abundant time on strategic planning that can lead nowhere.

Creating readiness for change. The first step in enacting positive change is to create individual and organizational readiness. Armenakis et al. (1993) defined readiness to change as being "similar to Lewin's (1951) concept of unfreezing, is reflected in organizational members' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions regarding the extent to which changes are needed and the

organization's capacity to successfully make those changes" (p. 681). Choi and Ruona (2011) agreed that although there are some variations on the definition of readiness to change, there is a common theme that it relates to an individual's perception of the organizational capacity for successful change, the requirement for change, and potential benefits (p. 51). This concept is different from resistance to change, in which the literature generally depicted resistance to change recipients as negative, unsupportive, disobedient, and poor team players (Piderit, 2008, p. 419). Some scholars, however, are beginning to rethink the term and observed the potentially positive results that can come from understanding opposing views of change (Jick, 2008; Piderit, 2008).

The added challenge in higher education is the established issue of faculty behaviour. That is, there can be no obligation beyond fulfilling classroom duties for faculty to participate in change efforts that are outside of their academic scope (Fullan & Scott, 2009, p. 41). Therefore, particular effort must be given to reframing and communicating the change initiative in such a way that maximizes faculty engagement and gives a sense of urgency (Armenakis et al., 1993; Choi & Ruona, 2011; Kotter, 2012). Kotter (2012) advised that "without enough urgency, large-scale change can become an exercise in pushing a gigantic boulder up a very tall mountain" (p. 15). According to the literature, readiness to change messages need to be meaningful and can be successfully communicated by using two different change strategies: empirical-rational or emotional reasoning (Choi & Ruona, 2011; Kotter, 2012).

Choi and Ruona (2011) noted that empirical-rational strategies operate under the assumption that people are rational and "will adopt a proposed change if it can be rationally justified and if it can be shown that he or she will gain by the change" (p. 54). This approach has been common in academic institutions that value research. In fact, Fullan and Scott (2009) argued that "decisions about where a university is to head and how it is to be structured must be evidence-

based. . . . It is at the core of what any learning organization is about" (p. 83). Evidence could include "existing performance and trend data [and] strategic intelligence gathered through research, targeting networking, and benchmarking with institutions that have similar missions" (p. 84). According to Armenakis et al. (1993), readiness messages should also "incorporate the need for change, that is, the discrepancy between the desired end-state (which must be appropriate for the organization) and the present state" (p. 684). This discrepancy message could include evidence of the economic, social, and political pressures that are influencing the need for change.

Kotter (2012) offered an alternative approach, arguing that "people change what they do less because they are given analysis that shifts their thinking than because they are shown a truth that influences their feelings" (p. 1). This perspective represented scholars who believe that although empirical data are important for enacting change, more emphasis needs to be given on creating a trusting and collaborative environment (Choi & Ruona, 2011) as well as emotionally engaging participants in the change effort (Burnes, 2008; Kotter, 2012). Burnes (2008) noted the need for felt change in successful change efforts: that is, "an individual's inner realization that change is necessary" (p. 232). Kotter (2012) aptly noted that "both thinking and feelings are essential, and both are found in successful organizations" (p. 2). Therefore, a balance of empirical evidence and emotional engagement is necessary for change to be successful and sustainable.

People and culture. The literature strongly suggested that focusing on changing individuals' behaviours is at the core of long-term organizational change (Armenakis et al., 1993; Burke, 2008; Choi & Ruona, 2011; Fullan & Scott, 2009; Jick, 2008; Kotter, 2012). Choi and Ruona (2011) concluded from their research that "organizations only change and act through their members, and successful change will persist over the long term only when individuals alter their on-the job behaviours in appropriate ways" (p. 49). Similarly, Fullan and Scott (2009) observed

that all staff have a role to play in successful change efforts, and a common error is "not to develop sufficient ownership of a needed change by those who are to implement it" (p. 88). Developing ownership is reminiscent of the basis of action research, as Fullan and Scott (2009) noted:

> Ownership (like learning) is best created through purposeful action, two-way communication, and engaging those who are to implement a proposed change by inviting them to help determine what is going to be most relevant, desirable, feasible, and productive, always with a focus on results. (p. 88)

As such, long-term change can only occur if there is engagement, ownership, and a behavioural shift by those responsible for its delivery.

The literature on organizational change also underscored the significance of culture in sustaining change management. Culture, as defined by Kotter (2012), is "the norms of behaviour and the shared values in a group of people" (p. 163). Culture, as a complex concept, can be a source of strength as well as present challenges if not developed to be in alignment with the change goal (Kotter, 2012). Fullan and Scott (2009) argued, "If you are going to have a hope of changing an institution with eons of history, you have to tap into some aspects of existing culture" (p. 69). As such, honouring the past and engaging in what Abrahamson (2000) termed dynamic stability is one approach to changing culture. Dynamic stability is "a process of continual but relatively small change efforts that involve the reconfiguration of existing practices and business models rather than the creation of new ones" (Abrahamson, 2000, p. 76). Kotter (2012) aptly noted that:

> Tradition is a powerful force. Leaps into the future can slide back into the past. We keep a change in place by helping to create a new, supportive, and sufficiently strong organizational culture. A supportive culture provides roots for the new ways of operating. (p. 159)

In addition, "a culture truly changes only when a new way of operating has been shown to succeed over some minimum period of time" (Kotter, 2012, p. 174).

Summary. The organizational change literature reviewed presented the challenges to change that exist in higher education, which assisted with deepening the understanding for the environment in which the inquiry took place as well as developing recommendations that would be in alignment with this culture. In addition, the literature revealed that a focus on creating readiness for change and respecting culture and people during change efforts would assist with sustaining change. In any change effort, culture is not something that can be changed or addressed at the start (Fullan & Scott, 2009; Kotter, 2012), but it is a result of effectively creating readiness and implementing change efforts.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on establishing student learning outcomes in co-op and the direct impact learning outcomes have on academic credibility, enhanced student learning, and program accountability. Thus, a change to emphasize learning outcomes in the KPU program has been supported by scholarly literature. The literature also highlighted that long-term change can only occur if there is engagement, ownership, and a behavioural shift by those responsible for its delivery. As such, it confirmed that a focus on faculty engagement and an action research methodology was an apt approach. In addition, as subsequent chapters will demonstrate, the reviewed literature also assisted with informing the conclusions and recommendations that arose from analysis of my study's data. Fullan and Scott (2009) fittingly concluded that "change is a complex learning and unlearning process for all concerned. It is not a one-time event" (p. 92). Therefore, having an understanding of the challenges and solutions to change that exist in higher education, the significance of creating readiness to change, and the value of focusing people and culture assisted with the implementation of inquiry. In the following chapter, I provide context to the approach and methodology used to inform the inquiry.

CHAPTER THREE: INQUIRY APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I discuss in detail the inquiry approach and methodology employed to answer the question: How can the Centre for Cooperative Education and Career Services engage co-op faculty in contributing to the long term success of a competency-based learning model in cooperative education at KPU? Additional subquestions were: (a) What are the co-op educator's perceptions and insights of the current co-op competency-based model's advantages and limitations, (b) What enhancements to administration and process are suggested by the faculty to facilitate change from the current curriculum to a competency-based learning outcomes model, (c) What supports are required by faculty to move to a competency-based learning outcomes model, (d) What factors regarding engagement are fundamental to facilitate successful change to a competency-based learning outcomes model, and (e) What are the strategies or best practices at other Universities for implementation of a competency-based learning outcomes model?

I will cover the inquiry research methodology, over-arching framework, theory, and rationale for specific data collection tools and methods used to inform the inquiry. Particulars about project participant selection, study conduct, and data analysis will also be explored in detail. Finally, I will conclude with how the inquiry ensured a high standard of ethics was adhered to safeguard the privacy, rights, and welfare of all participants and information collected.

Inquiry Approach

The inquiry research methodology I employed in the capstone was action research. Coghlan and Brannick (2005) noted the "central idea is that AR [action research] uses a scientific approach to study the resolution of important social or organizational issues together with those who experience these issues directly" (p. 4). The collaborative relationship between researcher and participants is central to the nature of action research. In an earlier study, Coghlan

(2003) stated, “The participants themselves engage in an action inquiry process in which inquiry into their own assumptions and ways of thinking and acting is central to the research process” (p 453). Furthermore, in action research methodology, participation and action make research contextual. The fluid movement between the roles of the researcher and participants allows for “mutual development of knowledge and learning to understand people’s problems (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 33).

In this study, I worked through the three phases of action research as described by Stringer (2007) as “look, think, act” (p. 7). During the look phase, the researcher gains a deeper knowledge and understanding of the inquiry topic by gathering information from literature and key stakeholders in a collaborative process. Next, in the think phase, the researcher analyses data collected and generates themes based on the information. Finally, in the act phase, the researcher composes recommendations based on findings and creates a plan to implement and evaluate proposed recommendations. Please refer to Appendix B as an example model of organizational action research (see also Rowe, Agger-Gupta, Harris, & Graf, 2011).

Incorporated within this action research inquiry project was an appreciative stance. Taking an appreciative stance implies there are strengths inherent in the population; therefore, combined with action research, which establishes a collaborative relationship with those who have ownership in the inquiry, an appreciative stance sets a foundation for positive change to occur (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005, p. 8). The culture of the department was rich with history and experience; therefore, appreciation for the past and present state was necessary. Reason and Bradbury (2008) suggested that “social imagination, dreams and utopian ideals are living parts of culture, and that integrating social imagination with practical change ‘keeps alive hope’ for the possibility of radical change” (p. 24). As such, an appreciative stance combined with an action

research methodology allowed for appreciation of the past/present state, co-creation of a concrete action plan for the future, and specific measures to ensure sustainability for the change.

The purpose of this research study was to explore how a focus on faculty engagement could lead to the long-term success of a competency-based learning model in Co-Op at KPU. I engaged a mixed-method approach using three inquiry methods: survey, focus group, and an interview. Starting broad, the survey was employed to identify key issues inherent to co-op engagement in co-op programs across British Columbia (BC). Data collected from the survey were then funneled down to inform the inquiry's next methods, which were a focus group with KPU Co-Op faculty and an interview with the director of Co-Operative Education and Career Services.

Project Participants

In the following section, I will outline all project participants who assisted in providing data to inform the inquiry question as well as the rationale for their inclusion and exclusion. All of the participants were required to provide informed consent prior to participation.

Co-op educators. The project participants included a survey of 186 co-op educators who are professional members belonging to ACE. Membership is open to all co-op education professionals, students, and employers' representatives from 18 post-secondary institutions across BC and the Yukon (ACE, n.d., para. 1). Invitations to participate in the survey were sent electronically by me to all members of ACE via the association's email membership list (see Appendix C). I was not conducting research in their organization. Rather, the rationale for including this group of professionals was to seek their professional opinion as a function of their position and our shared knowledge of practice. The inclusion criterion was that participants must be registered members of the ACE association. Co-op educators who were not registered members of ACE were excluded from the survey to ensure consistency in regards to positional

status and geographical location (i.e., co-op educators educating in BC). The intention of using a purposive sampling procedure with this large group was to identify key issues concerning faculty engagement and competency-based learning outcome models in co-op that were present across institutions and province wide.

A focus group was conducted with four co-op instructors who were my peers at KPU, and an interview was held with the director of Co-Op and Career Services. The rationale was to be inclusive and invite all instructors who make up the entire faculty in the department, have equal positional status, and represent all three campus locations KPU Co-Op serves (i.e., Richmond, Surrey, and Langley). The objective was to seek their valuable insight as a co-op educator; thus building upon the strengths and knowledge inherent in the Co-Op department. The director had the authority to authorize the implementation of intended changes resulting from the inquiry. The rationale for interviewing the director separately was to mitigate any perceived conflict of interest due to his positional power over the other participants

I invited the Co-Op instructors to participate in the focus group by email (see Appendix D). If less than three participants had accepted the invitation, I would have shifted to individual interviews. The purposive sampling of participants for the focus group was due to the small number of co-op faculty, the open culture within the team, and the function of their instructional position to facilitate the competency-based learning outcomes in co-op. I personally invited the director to participate in an interview separate from the focus group to ensure conflict of interest was minimized (see Appendix E). Furthermore, including the four co-op instructors and the director was consistent with the rationale behind action research. Stringer (2007) noted a key element of action research is to give "people the sense that they are in control of their own lives and that supports them as they take systematic action to improve their circumstances" (p. 32).

Inquiry team. The inquiry team included the director of the Co-Op program, the former director of the Co-Op program, and an alumnus of Royal Road University's Master in Leadership program. The Director for the Centre for Cooperative Education and Career Services was also the project sponsor of the inquiry. He was an apt choice as sponsor because he was in a position to legitimize the change and be a key driver in communicating the message to the targets of the change initiative: in this case, co-op faculty. Coghlan and Brannick (2005) noted that as an inside researcher, "there are issues around how to attain some sense of objectivity and move beyond a personal perspective by testing assumptions and interpretations" (p. xiii); therefore, the purpose of an inquiry team was to provide objectivity and to limit researcher bias. I sought assistance and support from them in regards to piloting key questions that were in alignment with the research question, analyzing data, uncovering key themes that may not have been apparent to me as an inside researcher, and advising on final recommendations based on the data collected. Each inquiry team member was required to complete a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix F).

Inquiry Methods

The inquiry methods used during the action research process are summarized in this section. I include a description and rationale for the data collection tools, how the research was conducted, and how the data were analyzed.

Data collection tools. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) stated, "The use of multiple data-collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of the data" (p. 24). This method is referred to as triangulation and results in increased confidence in the research findings (p. 24). As such, the inquiry engaged in an appropriate balance of data gathering tools including survey, focus group, and interview. To increase reliability and to reduce bias, questions were developed and piloted in consultation with the inquiry team and my academic supervisor. The survey, focus

group, and interview questions were designed with an appreciative stance, meaning they are framed in positive, forward thinking terms and recognized the strengths and experience of all research participants.

Survey. The first inquiry tool I employed was a survey, which was sent electronically by me to all co-op education professionals in ACE. Morgan (1996) noted that when used prior to focus groups, surveys can provide preliminary inputs to guide the application of the latter. He noted "this research design typically uses the broad but 'thin' data from surveys to assist in selecting samples for focus groups or topics for detailed analysis" (p. 135). The survey helped to narrow the focus and applicability to the specific issue at KPU. Please see Appendix G for a list of survey questions used.

Focus group. Focus groups are a "form of a group interview that places particular importance on interaction between participants" (Freeman, 2006, p. 492). It is a particularly useful method "for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way" (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299). This tool was an apt choice for the action research inquiry as it directly invited participants "to express their experience and perspective in their own terms" (Stringer, 2007, p. 74). Following the survey, I conducted a focus group with the co-op instructors at KPU, which allowed for more in depth discovery via open-ended questions, encouragement of dialogue, and exploration of "the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities" (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299) related to the inquiry. Please see Appendix H for a list of focus group questions.

Interview. Finally, an individual interview was conducted with the director of Cooperative Education and Career Services. The rationale behind this was due to the positional

power he had over the Co-Op instructors; therefore, to eliminate potential conflict of interest and influence, I conducted an individual interview (see Appendix I for interview questions). Data from the interview were later analyzed in comparison to data collected from the focus group, as I had employed a similar set of questions. This served to uncover common themes and divergence between them. Individual interviews can be useful to "check the conclusions from their analysis and to expand the study populations included in the research" (Morgan, 1996, p. 134). In addition, in-depth interviews are similar to focus groups, in that it "enables researchers to gather detailed attitudinal and experiential information from respondents, and this information is elicited by supplementing the broad, open-ended, exploratory questions with pertinent, gently probing sub-questions" (Powell & Single, 1996, p. 503).

Study conduct. In this section, I will address how the study was conducted. The discussion will include how participants were selected, how data were collected, and how confidentiality of the participants was safeguarded.

Inquiry team. Inquiry team members were selected based on their knowledge related to the research question, their experience as academic researchers, as well as a function of their position within the university. Each member was asked to complete an informed consent form (see Appendix F). The function of their role was to provide guidance on the survey, focus group, and interview questions as well to pilot questions in advance to ensure the intended response was in alignment with the research question. In addition, I sought their feedback on analyzing the data and writing the final recommendations.

Survey. I invited survey participants by email to participate in a 10-minute online survey via the ACE's email membership list (please see Appendix C). The invitation included a secure link and password to complete an online survey facilitated by FluidSurveys

(http://fluidsurveys.com), which collected and securely stored the data. FluidSurveys was compliant with Canadian privacy, and all data resided on its Canadian servers. The invitation included information describing the nature of the inquiry and addressed how data collected would be confidentiality managed and stored. Specifically, no identifying information was solicited, including participant names and associated institutions. The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary; however, if they wished to withdraw after submitting a response, it would not be possible to remove their information due to the anonymous nature of the survey data collection. The invitation informed participants prior to participation that completion of the online survey would constitute their informed consent. The survey results assisted with informing the questions posed in the focus group and interview, thus demonstrating the cyclical nature of action research.

Focus group and interview. Following my research with ACE membership, I sent an email invitation to participate in a focus group to co-op instructors at KPU (see Appendix D). The focus group allowed for faculty to provide additional input into the inquiry; as members of ACE they would have been invited to complete the survey also. I facilitated the focus group, which took approximately 90 minutes to complete and was audio recorded with permission. An email was sent one week prior to the scheduled focus group to four faculty who had confirmed attendance. Included in the email was an agenda, list of the questions we would be exploring in the focus group (see Appendix H), and a copy of the consent form (see Appendix J). I explicitly stated in the participant informed consent that due to my position as a current co-op faculty member at KPU, for the purpose of this research, I would be a learner and not an employee of the KPU Co-Op department. As a researcher, I viewed my relationship with them as a research participant. It was my goal to foster an open, supportive, and trusting forum where all

participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts. All participants were made aware that due to the aggregate nature of the data collected, their individual contribution could not be removed once the focus group was completed; however, they were informed that participation was voluntary and at any time they could leave the group.

As the facilitator, I reviewed the purpose of the focus group, addressed questions regarding confidentiality and voluntary consent, explained how the session would be recorded, collected informed consent forms, and addressed the ground rules at the start. It was important to establish a positive tone for change and reinforce the goals of taking an appreciative stance to action research because the data originated from the participants themselves, and as such, content would be guided by them. As noted by Stringer (2007), "it is the researcher's task to facilitate and support these activities, rather than to determine their direction" (p. 34).

Following the welcome, participants self-selected into pairs and mini-interviews commenced. Participants were given a worksheet (see Appendix K) and three minutes each to interview their partner and take notes relating to the questions listed. Once everyone had been interviewed, each participant reported back to the group what they had heard. At the end of each question, 10 minutes was allocated to discuss the ideas as a group. The next activity in the focus group was based on Kurt Lewin's 1951 "force field analysis . . . [method, which] calls for organizing information pertaining to organizational change into two categories: those "forces" at work which restrain change, and those which facilitate change" (Nicholas, 1989, p. 28). The change goal pertaining to the inquiry was written on the flip chart, and as a group, we discussed factors working for and against the change. The purpose of this activity was to "determine which restraining forces must be weakened or which facilitating forces must be strengthened to move the situation toward the ideal state" (p. 28). Upon completion of the focus group, I transcribed

data from the flip charts, audio recordings, and individual worksheets and sent them to participants for review by secure email. I asked them to highlight what notes were most important to them and check for accuracy in the transcription.

I invited the director to participate in an interview via email (see Appendix E) as a function of his position and ability to implement the recommendations of the research. To ensure trustworthiness, I informed him of how data collected would be confidentially managed and stored and included this information in a letter of informed consent (see Appendix L), which he signed prior to participating. The interview was 30 minutes long, and questions were emailed to him one week in advance. These interview questions are presented in Appendix I. He was informed that the session would be recorded by a digital voice recorded with permission, which I later transcribed following the interview. Upon completion of the interview, I distributed the transcribed text to the participant via secured email for confirmation of information and to ensure accuracy. Fullan and Scott (2009) noted:

> If those who will implement a desired change do not see its relevance, desirability, and feasibility and if they are not clear on what they must do differently and are not helped to learn it—there is no change, only window dressing and plans with no implementation. (p. 98)

As both the co-op faculty and the director are in a position for implementing the recommendations of the capstone, the participatory nature of their involvement in the research invited ownership of the final recommendations.

Data analysis. Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggested that "theme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research" (para. 1). To begin the process, I used a technique called pawing, which is essentially getting a feel for the text by handling the data multiple times, marking it with coloured pens, hunting for patterns, and intuitively seeing what

stands out (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Following this process of pawing, I applied formal coding to the data collected, looking for themes, ideas, concepts, terms, phrases, and keywords that informed my research question (Gibbs & Taylor, 2005). As noted by Gibbs and Taylor (2005), behaviours, specific acts, events, meanings and interpretations, participation, relationships, conditions or constraints, consequences, and settings are all factors in the data that can be coded.

The data collected from the survey contained both qualitative and quantitative results. As such, I began the process by analyzing the two qualitative short answer responses using word repetition as an initial tool for identifying emerging themes. According to Ryan and Bernard (2003), "words that occur a lot are often seen as being salient in the minds of respondents" (Word Repetitions section, para. 2). Five themes were identified and entered into a table with corresponding survey participant comments. This allowed me to see the frequency of significant words and analyze the context in which they were stated. I then copied and pasted the participants' quotes that supported each theme and noted the results of data collected from the quantitative questions that related to each theme. Data collected for each theme, based on both the qualitative and quantitative survey results, were summarized into conclusion statements.

Text from the transcribed focus group and interview was inputted into Excel, and by using the word count function, I was able to determine the frequency that words were repeated, which again alluded to the key issues that were of importance to participants. I plotted the common words in a Word table, noting corresponding participant comments and the frequency of which words were stated. It was important to use a key-words-in-context approach, which is a technique where "researchers identify key words or phrases and then systematically search the corpus of text to find all instances of each key word or phrase" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, "KWIC," para. 1); thus, simply noting the word without its immediate context could misrepresent the data. From here, I identified

relationships between themes, which resulted in four main themes emerging for each method. As well, I wrote conclusion statements summarizing the data for each theme.

Once individual data from each method (i.e., survey, focus group, and interview) were organized into Word tables, I applied the data analysis approach of compare/contrast, which was "based on the idea that themes represent the ways in which texts are either similar or different from each other" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, Compare and Contrast section, para. 1). This was an effective approach for comparing the data from the survey with the focus group and interview, thus uncovering relationships between the insights of the broader co-op educator community and KPU Co-Op faculty. In this loop of data analysis, I created tables for each theme and noted how participants from each group responded to the topic. It was effective for uncovering similarities and differences as well as identifying what was missing in the text. Ryan and Bernard (2003) noted that during qualitative data analysis, "much can be learned from a text by what is not mentioned" (Searching for Missing Information section, para. 2).

In addition, the conclusion statements summarizing the themes for each method were helpful, as I could cut and sort the statements, organizing them under the appropriate theme headings. During the theme analytical process, I was also able to identify and record researcher limitations. For example, applying the comparative approach to thematic analysis revealed the value of using similarly worded questions when comparing multiple texts.

Reliability, validity, authenticity, and trustworthiness of the data. In regards to ensuring reliability, validity, authenticity, and trustworthiness of the data analysis stage, I followed a number of practices. First, I used member checking by sharing the transcriptions and uncovered themes to participants in the focus group and interviews to verify that I reflected their insight authentically. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) purported that "by sharing working drafts, both

researcher and researched may grow in their interpretations of the phenomena around them" (p. 147); thus, this aided building trustworthiness of researcher interpretations. Another method to check validity of data analysis was to go back to the literature and "look again at the relevant literature in an attempt to reconcile their findings with those of other researchers" (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2006, p. 264).

Considering my role as an inside researcher, awareness of my biases and subjectivity, "also assist[ed] in producing more trustworthy interpretations" (p. 147). In data analysis, researchers need to be cautious "that they do not overfit the data—that is, find only that for which they are looking" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, Social Science Queries section, para. 3), or as Glesne and Peshkin noted, "It is sometimes difficult to know how much of what researchers see is a product of their earnest but unconscious wish to see it so" (p. 147). As such, I shared my data analysis with members of the inquiry team as a way to check my perceptions and to limit researcher bias. I also kept a research journal to record thoughts, which assisted with supporting reflective practice during the inquiry. Furthermore, triangulation, which is the use of multiple methods such as the survey, focus group, and interviews to cross check data and uncover key themes, assisted with increasing the trustworthiness of data and mitigating researcher bias (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 24). Reliability, validity, authenticity, and trustworthiness of the data analysis stage assisted with maintaining a high level of ethical standards throughout the inquiry.

Ethical Issues

Ethics concerns the relationship between researcher and participants and are "inseparable from your everyday interactions with your others and with your data" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 109). As a researcher conducting an inquiry within my organization, I had the responsibility to adhere to the humanistic and ethical obligations concerning research involving human subjects as

purported by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [CIHR], 2010). As noted by the CIHR (2010), "researchers' commitment to the advancement of knowledge also implies duties of honest and thoughtful inquiry, rigorous analysis, commitment to the dissemination of research results, and adherence to the use of professional standards" (p. 6). In the following sections, I describe how I adhered to the three core principles relating to respect for human dignity in research ethics: Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice (p. 8).

Respect for persons. Respect for persons in research involves respecting their autonomy, "giving due deference to a person's judgment and ensuring that the person is free to choose without inference" (CIHR, 2010, p .8). Therefore, all participation in the inquiry was voluntary, and I had a requirement to "seek their free, informed and ongoing consent" (p. 9) prior to involvement in the study. Respect for persons in research also relates to the issue of vulnerability and ensuring that participants are not subject to "abuse, exploitation, or discrimination" (CIHR, 2010, p. 9). None of the research participants or members of the inquiry team had a reporting relationship to me, and I was not in a position to hire or discipline any of the participants. However, some participants reported directly to the project sponsor; therefore, I interviewed the sponsor separately to alleviate any potential conflict of interest or discomfort with participants. Also, it was made clear that there was no secondary gain for me associated with conducting research with these participants.

I communicated specific measures that were taken to safeguard anonymity and confidentiality in the study. Survey participants were informed in the letter of the invite that partaking in the survey was completely voluntary (see Appendix C); however, after participation,

should they have wished to remove or edit their response, it would not have been possible due to the anonymous nature of the survey. Similarly, it was noted in the invitation to focus group participants that they may withdraw at any point in the process (see Appendix D); however, due to the aggregate nature of the methods, they were informed I would not be able to withdraw their contribution. In regards to the interview, I protected the well-being of the director by sharing and confirming any comments directly attributed to him. Informing potential participants in advance of the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw, and how data would be handled ensured respect for persons and "a commitment to accountability and transparency in the ethical conduct of research" (CIHR, 2010, p. 9).

Concern for welfare. Participants were informed in the letters of invitation how the data and results of the inquiry would be disseminated (see Appendices C, D, and E). To protect the privacy of individual participants in the research, no identifiable information has been disclosed within the data analysis, findings, or recommendations unless I have received prior permission to include it. Participants were assigned an identification number so that they could be identified for the purpose of transcription only. All personal information collected was only used by me during the data analysis stage. The themes have been identified in the findings and have only given the reader the scope of the research data. All personal information has been kept separate from the transcripts and will be destroyed six months after graduation. Any statements that may identify a specific participant have not been used without specific informed written consent from that participant. I also asked that participants respect the confidential nature of the research by not sharing names or identifying comments outside of the group.

Due to the small group size and participatory nature of action research, it was "difficult to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality as others can easily know who participated and may be

able to identify who said or contributed what" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005, p. 77) in the focus group and interview. Coghlan and Brannick (2005) suggested one way to mitigate this risk is to discuss with participants how points of view will be published in the report and shared with the sponsor (p. 78), which I implemented. Finally, as another way to keep good faith and increase trust with participants, I performed member checking to clarify any misunderstandings, provided a convenient and private place for group research methods, respected their time by adhering to pre-determined time limits, and offered refreshments for the focus group that was scheduled over the lunch break.

Concern for justice. The process for inviting research participants was inclusive, whereby all co-op educators who are members of ACE and all co-op faculty at KPU were invited to participate. There was no exclusion criteria in place based on the individual's institution, status, or relationship to researcher. CIHR (2010) noted that "justice refers to the obligation to treat people fairly and equitably" (p. 10). However, it is also important to note that "differences in treatment or distribution are justified when failures to take differences into account may result in the creation or reinforcement of inequities" (p. 10). Therefore, the separation of the director from the focus group was a conscious decision due to his positional power over the participants.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the inquiry research methodology of action research and its suitability for informing my research inquiry. I described in detail project participants, inquiry methods, data collection tools, my approach to thematic analysis, and how a high standard of ethics was adhered to throughout the inquiry. In the following chapters, I will discuss the findings of the research inquiry and recommendations for engaging co-op faculty at KPU in contributing to the long-term success of a competency-based learning model.

CHAPTER FOUR: ACTION INQUIRY PROJECT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

This purpose of this inquiry was to uncover insight to the research question: How can the Centre for Cooperative Education and Career Services engage Co-Op faculty in contributing to the long term success of a competency-based learning model in co-op at KPU? Five additional sub-questions were established to provide greater depth to inform the inquiry including: (a) What are the co-op educator's perceptions and insights of the current co-op competency-based model's advantages and limitations; (b) What enhancements to administration and process are suggested by the faculty to facilitate change from the current curriculum to a competency-based learning outcomes model; (c) What supports are required by faculty to move to a competency-based learning outcomes model; (d) What factors regarding engagement are fundamental to facilitate successful change to a competency-based learning outcomes model; and (e) What are the strategies or best practices at other universities for implementation of a competency-based learning outcomes model? In this chapter I present study findings based on themes that emerged from data gathered in the survey, focus group, and interview. The themes are supported by appropriate quantitative and qualitative data and inform the study conclusions, which are outlined in part two of the chapter. Finally, in this chapter I conclude with outlining the scope and limitations of the inquiry that may impact the conclusions offered.

I have organized the study findings into three sections represented by the research method employed and related themes that emerged based on analysis of the data gathered. The intent behind presenting the study findings based on research method is due to each method representing a different participant group. To protect the anonymity of all survey and focus group participants, no names will be specified in the comments provided in either the findings or

conclusions. In view of the fact that anonymity is not feasible in the interview analyses, I have received the interviewee's permission to reproduce these data and related personal statements.

Survey Findings

I sent out invitations to 186 members of ACE to participate in the survey, and 43 members responded for a 23% response rate. Ninety-eight percent of the respondents indicated they had been in their position for 2+ years, and 63% indicated they used competency-based learning in their co-op programs (33% were unsure and 4% indicated they did not use competencies). The purpose of including ACE membership in the inquiry was to assist with answering the following questions: How do ACE members across BC perceive the teaching, learning, and engagement in cooperative education; what is currently being done in their universities to address these issues; and what supports and resources do ACE members need to feel engaged in maximizing student learning in co-op? Ninety-five percent of the participants responded they are either strongly engaged or engaged in enhancing a student's academic education through co-op, which revealed that co-op educators have a strong interest in engaging in maximizing student learning in co-op (see Appendix M). The thematic analysis of the survey data produced three main themes informing the inquiry: (a) teaching and learning in co-op, (b) resources and supports for engagement, and (c) organizational culture.

Finding 1: Perception of teaching and learning in co-op. Understanding how co-op educators perceive learning and how learning is reflected in their programs will assist in appreciating how engagement impacts students' learning experiences. In response to the short-answer question: In what ways do you report on successful student learning outcomes in your program other than placement numbers, 13% made a direct reference to using competency assessments as a means to record learning outcomes. One participant noted, "Our institution

generates reports on how students, and separately employers, assess the degree to which student competencies have been strengthened or lessened during the course of their work term" (S-10). Of all participants surveyed, 63% indicated they use competency-based learning in their programs; however, when asked to give examples of how learning was recorded, only 13% referenced competencies, which suggested that co-op programs may not be using competency-based learning outcomes as a principal means to account for student learning.

Twenty-eight percent of participants distinctly referenced that other than placement numbers, they do not report or track student learning outcomes formally in their programs. Respondent comments ranged from the very direct "I do not report on student learning outcomes from work terms" (S-3) and "other than placement numbers we don't report anything" (S-38) to showing uncertainty if it was being done at another level: "In my position, I've not had to report on this; perhaps at the director level?" (S-6). Another response indicated the lack of means to record outcomes: "Apart from the statistics generated by our online competency assessments, we have no other method for reporting student success" (S-28). More than half of the participants provided examples of how learning is reflected in their co-op programs; however, the connection between student learning and reporting/tracking was absent from the text. See Appendix M for a table listing examples of how student learning was referenced based on analysis of common language and key words in text.

Respondents indicated that learning outcomes in co-op are predominantly reported informally through the sharing of success stories, anecdotal evidence, and student and employer testimonials, and presentations. One respondent noted, "[We] share anecdotal evidence to co-op administration and academic departments; share evidence with incoming and 'new' students; share evidence on both co-op and academic web sites and as part of university 'stories' (e.g. in the

university paper)" (S-14). A few respondents referenced annual written reports to key stakeholders indicating student success; however, the majority of the comments reflected reporting was done orally to academic faculty, management, advisory committees, and colleagues. In addition, marketing the co-op program and providing updates to stakeholders on program success were the main reasons for reporting on student learning. None of the respondents mentioned using learning outcomes as evidence to acquire additional program resources.

In regards to the issue of teaching in co-op, more than half of the respondents indicated that pressure for student co-op placements impacts their ability to emphasize learning and provide quality education in co-op (see Appendix M). One respondent noted, "At the moment, it appears to be placement numbers are the only indication of success" (S-28), which suggested that emphasizing teaching and learning in co-op may be over shadowed by programs highlighting placement numbers as a key indicator of program success.

In regards to teaching design, respondents indicated that co-op educators value established courses and a cohesive curriculum that emphasizes student development and learning. Respondents identified the "need to be in the classroom teaching in order to provide students with the foundations of career development" (S-19), and one ACE member suggested the need for "quality, measurable, learning outcomes that connect clearly to curriculum content in the student's program as well as to personally oriented learning outcomes" (S-31). The participants' responses to whether the current required assignments outlined by ACE are adequate in addressing learning outcomes did not result in any conclusive data (please see Appendix M).

Finding 2: Resources and support to increase engagement and optimize practice. A theme that emerged from the survey data was an interest in optimizing support staffing resources to allow for more of a focus on teaching and learning. In regards to workload, 28% indicated the

ratio of students in their portfolio was not appropriate to allow for quality focus on learning, which suggested that the number of students per educator varies among the different institutions surveyed. However, the struggle to balance the various roles inherent in the co-op educator position, including administrative, marketing, counseling, and education, was identified. One respondent commented on the need to be "less jack of all trades in our current roles, and more focus[ed] on the education piece. Having more admin. to take the redundant tasks off our plates would help so we can focus more on the teaching role"(S-32). This was supported by 27 comments that expressed the need for additional or concentrated administrative support to "allow educators to educate"(S-4). One ACE member acknowledged the paradox between enrolment demands and resources for universities:

> It is a tough balance for universities to find. They need the additional revenue; however, increased enrollments cause more work at the admin level, and no new resources are being added to support the coordinator's work with a student to support learning. (S-15)

In addition to administrative support, respondents' comments also revealed the desire for dedicated marketing, job development, and peer advising roles, which would allow for more time to focus on supporting student learning.

The issue of time was a common theme repeated in respondents' comments. Respondents expressed desire for "more time to work with students one-on-one and in class, time to do curriculum development for the pre-employment course, and more time to develop a competency-based model for the program" (S-12) and "time to give grades for work reports, time to give proper feedback to students during pre-employment curriculum and during site visits"(S-4. In addition, another respondent noted, "I don't need more technology or products, but I do need time to meet with students, faculty, and employers" (S-38).

The desire for appropriate technology and infrastructure to support the development of an online community, assessment tools, and database systems was also noted by some respondents as a means to assist with optimizing teaching practices and recording of student learning in co-op.

> Old processes remain, there is little automation in online tools, and hence, student learning at the workplace is left to the employer mentor… we could do more if our existing admin processes were streamlined to allow for more concentration on the student experiential learning. (S-15)

Technology, such as "an effective computerized management system that houses employer, student and job databases and generates statistical information reports" (S-16) and the creation of an "online learning community for students to share learning, resources, and reflections and for staff to share educational information" (S-36) could assist with optimizing current practice. This theme suggested the interest of co-op educators to optimize practice to focus more time on teaching and learning.

Finding 3: Organizational culture. The third theme that emerged from the survey was an interest in engaging key stakeholders, including senior administration, academic faculty, and employers, in promoting an organizational culture that values experiential learning and supports professional development (PD). Eighty-eight percent of respondents noted there needs to be a stronger emphasis on how co-op contributes to a student's academic education, and 47% currently feel supported by administration to focus on education. One respondent noted the need for "support from administration and management to focus on learning—they are very focused on placement numbers; creating a culture of learning outcomes within co-op rather than placement/recruitment numbers" (S-5). Respondents also commented that "as far as supports, it starts with establishing the fundamental campus-wide philosophy of the benefits of integrating

program specific work experience with academics" (S-38) as well as "a supportive Director that understands and values the cooperative education model" (S-16).

Respondents' comments identified the desire to work collaboratively with academic faculty to develop an organizational culture that engages and supports co-op learning and "ensure there is a transfer of information/learning from the classroom to the workplace and vice versa"(S-6). One respondent elaborated on the challenge to work collaborative with faculty:

> We are slowly helping faculty see the value of co-operative education in students' success and learning. The challenge is . . . it is difficult for them to value something that they have no experience in. This is a disservice to students returning from work terms who are eager to share what they have learned, and it is also a disservice to faculty who miss the opportunity to learn something from their students. (S-3)

As summarized by one colleague, "There is a need for a stronger organizational mandate that supports work integrated learning and is assisted by an increased participation from faculty—that is encouraged by administration" (S-37).

Respondents also identified the need for an organizational culture that supports PD and provides access to research and training related to co-op teaching and learning. Specifically, respondents expressed interest in "training in the development, guidance, and evaluation of student learning" (S-13), "access to research that covers best practices to develop student learning" (S-12), and "professional development on curriculum, on line learning, and competency based learning" (S-32). Some respondents suggested ACE as an avenue to offer this PD.

In summary, thematic analysis of the survey data yielded three main themes to inform the inquiry including: ACE members' perspective of teaching and learning in co-op, resources and supports desired for engagement, and an organizational culture supportive of experiential learning. These findings assisted in identifying key issues at a broad level and helped narrow the scope for the focus group.

Focus Group with KPU Co-Op Faculty Findings

A focus group with four Co-Op faculty at KPU revealed what resources and support faculty need to feel engaged in contributing to the long-term success of a competency-based learning model. Co-Op faculty communicated an interest in maintaining strong relationships with students and continuing to build a successfully established curriculum. As such, providing a high level of student service and education was at the root of what engaged co-op faculty in their role. There were some concerns of how introducing competency-based learning will impact current workload and a fear of the time necessary to build the infrastructure to implement; however, many positive opportunities were also identified for supporting the change. The three themes that emerged from the focus group were: (a) emphasis on teaching and learning in co-op, (b) balancing workload and optimizing practice, and (c) supportive organizational culture.

Finding 1: Emphasis on teaching and learning in co-op. In response to the question: What are we currently doing well to maximize the learning in co-op for students, participants' responses identified current courses such as COOP 1101 and the blended work term courses as an area of strength due to their professionalism and relevant content. One participant commented, "We are teaching classroom skills that mirror the reality of the workplace" (FG-1), demonstrating the relevance of the curriculum. Another participant reflected, "However, as the program continues to grow, we need to ensure the curriculum stays current and is relevant to 21st century teaching practices and industry needs" (FG-4). The blended model allows for engagement with students in the classroom, face-to-face, and online, and participants commented that the ability to develop relationships with students was important. One participant noted their "appreciation that embedded within the current curriculum is a peer-to-peer learning component"

(FG-3), while others acknowledged the strengths of the curriculum in emphasizing personal reflection and its flexibility to educate on a variety of topics.

The theme of providing students with holistic success that extends learning beyond the classroom and helping students transition from academia to the workplace consistently came up as a source of pride for participants. As such, participants recognized that as the program continues to grow, changes are necessary to accommodate growth; however, they also expressed concern for the potential impact change could have in providing quality education. One participant expressed concern for how the "potentially larger class sizes and consequently, increase in diversity among student population" (FG-1) would impact teaching and learning. As the student demographic in co-op becomes more diverse, participants were concerned they would need additional support and training on how to accommodate the needs of these students.

Co-op faculty identified a number of factors working for facilitating a competency-based learning model, including alignment to the institutional vision, personal interest in being better educators, opportunities for research, a tool to measure and communicate student learning, and a means to increase credibility with stakeholders. Participants' comments regarding competency-based learning ranged from "it is a new concept for students to learn" (FG-3), to "a concrete concept to use with students that is more specific than broad learning goals" (FG-4), and "a way to help students articulate their learning and transferability of skills" (FG-3). In addition, participants recognized the opportunity to contribute to an established body of research in competency-based learning. One participant commented, "There's a lot of literature on benchmarking and competency-based learning; this is a good direction to move towards" (FG-2). There was general consensus that competency-based learning would allow for deeper self-reflection and student learning once properly introduced.

Finding 2: Balancing workload and optimizing practice. As the program continues to grow, participants identified challenges that could impact learning and engagement, including faculty workload and determining an appropriate faculty-student ratio, administration support, and strategies on optimizing practice to accommodate the various priorities inherent in the role. Participants' comments reflected a concern for being a "jack of all trades" (FG-1), "being stretched to do too much" (FG-4), and valuing "engaged administrative support to take administrative tasks off of our plate" (FG-1). A discussion on feeling pressure for student placements was raised as a concern in balancing workload. As well, others perceived job development as a potential challenge because an increase in time spent on job development could impact time spent on teaching and learning. As such, suggestions were made for increased support from key stakeholders such as institutional marketing and alumni to assist with branding and job development.

In addition to dedicated support staff and marketing assistance, other suggestions were raised on how to optimize practice. Comments ranged from having "private office space to assist with productivity" (FG-1), to "collaborative events" (FG-3), to a "discretionary program budget to assist with employer relations and enhancing education" (FG-2). Discussion ensued on how introducing changes to the program could impact workload, and participants expressed uncertainty for the time required to build the infrastructure necessary to implement a competency-based model. One participant stated, "I understand that it takes time to introduce a new model and build the infrastructure; therefore, if we are doing this, what are we not doing?" (FG-2). In response, another participant suggested the department could "explore efficiencies in regards to grading and assessment in order to maximize time engaged in teaching and learning"

(FG-4). Thus, this suggested the possibility of assessing current practices as one solution to create the time needed to support new development.

Repeatedly, the issue of optimizing practice in order to provide time for personal and PD was mentioned. In fact, 100% of participants agreed that time for PD was desired to become better educators. One participant noted, "We need consistent and ongoing training on how to best utilize competencies and incorporate [them] into the curriculum" (FG-1). Participants described that a key strength of the Co-Op department lies in faculty being current in industry and knowledgeable instructors. As such, with changes to a competency-based curriculum, participants expressed uncertainty of how to teach this new model and concern for ensuring there was consistency among educators in its delivery. The issue of PD also raised discussion in regards to having adequate time and coverage to complete training, make changes to curriculum, and participate in related research and conference presentations.

Finding 3: Organizational culture/support. Participants' responses indicated a desire for increased personal and professional support from academic faculty and management. The majority of participants stated that their current relationship with academic faculty in their program was strong. However, they identified that opportunities existed to strengthen partnerships and explore occasions for shared learning and synergies in order to maximize student learning and program faculty engagement. Once again, time was a common theme, as participants expressed the desire for additional time to engage with key stakeholders, including internal departments and faculty at KPU. In regards to institutional support, participants felt that competency-based learning could provide an opportunity for the department to align with the institutional vision and culture of the organization. One participant noted, "Competencies may assist with raising our credibility within the KPU academic community and increase support for Co-Op" (FG-2). In contrast,

concern was identified for the long-term interest in competency-based learning and uncertainty that it would continue to be supported by senior administration in the future.

In regards to organizational culture at the department level, participants identified that an organizational culture that supported a focus on teaching and learning and valued the PD of individual educators could result in increased levels of engagement. One participant commented, "I would feel more engaged and valued if there were a focus on teaching and minimizing involvement in administrative tasks" (FG-4). Other participants expressed the desire for an organizational culture that supported PD, such as goals, mentorship, and coaching. Another participant desired the "opportunity to engage in rotating committees and be involved in the strategic direction of the department" (FG-1). This was supported by others who expressed interest in better understanding the institutional landscape and communicating with senior management on the direction of the department.

In summary, study findings from the focus group with Co-Op faculty identified strengths in the current co-op curriculum, opportunities for positive change in introducing a competency-based learning model, concerns for balancing workload, suggestions for optimizing practice, and a desire for an organizational culture that is supportive of PD.

Interview with Management Findings

The interview with the Director of Co-op and Career Services uncovered a number of parallels between the interests of the co-op faculty and management. Study findings revealed the Co-Op department has a strong foundation for maximizing student learning through competency-based learning outcomes and the current curriculum. An assessment of current and future resources and how efficiencies can be achieved to ensure faculty are supported and appropriately utilizing their skill set is desired. The director has sought to support faculty engagement by

creating an organizational culture that advocates for the value of learning in co-op as well as one that encourages PD and training for faculty. The thematic analysis of the interview data uncovered three themes: (a) emphasis on the value of student learning, (b) maximizing resources and optimizing practice, and (c) organizational culture.

Finding 1: Emphasis on learning. Analysis of the data identified that the director desires the department to continue to prioritize curriculum development and ensure there is alignment between curriculum and practice. He recognized a number of strengths in faculty expertise and the established curriculum and suggested the "need to explore the benefit of a student engaging in experiential learning and understand the learning. . . . [So] it becomes a visible piece at KPU and within post-secondary education in general". He emphasized that engaging in curriculum development needs to be continuously addressed as a "systemic piece we build into what we do, otherwise it could get lost."

In regards to facilitating a competency-based learning model, he perceived this change as "an opportunity to focus more on learning and transferring it beyond the Co-Op department" to the broader umbrella of all experiential learning at KPU, including work-study and service learning. He also noted that the competency-based model allows for students to articulate what they have learned in co-op and is an engaged way of learning. However, in order for this change to occur, the infrastructure to facilitate a new model needs to be built, while addressing faculty knowledge and adapting past pedagogical practices. He noted the internal role conflict inherent in the position and challenge for educators to split their focus between student placement and learning. He noted that:

> [It is a] balancing act between the role of co-op educator and the industry standard which seems to be more of a co-op coordinator. At the end of the day, the goal is to get as many

> students in work terms. Yes, that is important, but it can also get in the way of [faculty] PD, curriculum, and overall learning of a student in co-op.

This suggested the concern for balancing multiple priorities innate to the co-op educator role is shared among practitioners and management.

Finding 2: Maximizing resources and optimizing practice. A significant theme that emerged from the interview suggested co-op educators assess current and future resources and determine how efficiencies can be achieved to ensure faculty are supported and appropriately utilizing their skill set. According to the director, this assessment may aid in defining the purpose and mission of Co-Op as well as assist with increasing faculty engagement.

The director recognized that opportunity for growth existed and noted its relationship to resources:

> As the department continues to grow, we reach a tipping point, and we need to either add additional resources or optimize current ones to meet the student demand. It is about demand vs. resources and the impact on students.

He identified that an assessment of appropriate administrative support and allocation of resources is necessary for accommodating program growth. In addition, additional resources would allow co-op faculty to "become better educators; having those resources in place allows faculty to worry less about administrative things and focus more on student engagement, learning, and coaching." However, additional resources are not always an option; therefore, with KPU Co-Op facing increased demand from students and uncertainty of future resources, he suggested the department also consider optimizing practice:

> We need to ask ourselves, "How we have functioned in the past, is that going to work for us in the future?" …We need to re-look at how we can achieve efficiencies in what we do by not only adding resources, but making sure they are added in the right way.

In addition, competency-based learning has the potential to provide evidence for additional resources. He noted it "builds credibility which is important in an academic environment as it

helps with resources/funding but more importantly, it helps with answering what is our purpose here."

Once again, analysis of the text demonstrated a high frequency of the word "time", which suggested the issue of creating time to focus on teaching and learning in co-op is significant. In context, time was frequently connected to strategic planning, research, and development. For example, in response to the question: What do you feel are the challenges to facilitating a competency-based learning model, the director responded, "It's time—the time to unplug from something and the time to do the research to successfully implement it." Time was also referenced in terms of allowing time to stay current with teaching practices, curriculum development, and discussions around professional development. As such, an assessment of current practice, exploration of where efficiencies can be found, and making the time to prioritize teaching and learning in co-op were identified by management.

Finding 3: Organizational culture. The relationship between competency-based learning and positive organizational change was repeated throughout the interview. Competency-based learning provides opportunities for departmental and faculty growth, innovations in teaching and learning, and being a forerunner in experiential learning. The director referenced the positive organizational change competency-based learning could provide:

> This excites me. It's a new way of doing things, or changing the way we do things. It puts a new lens on what we do. Helps move the faculty mind beyond job development and placements and provides another view of why we do this. Helps us rethink things. Perhaps even moves us to become more expert in an area which can provide opportunities like research.

In addition, it was referenced as being the right time and environment to enact change because "having a faculty model with a polytechnic mandate means we are in the best situation to build

upon that side of the house." As such, from the perspective of management, there is opportunity and positive intent for change.

Advocacy was viewed as a key element in enhancing organization culture. He stated, "We have to articulate the value of Co-Op—it's heavily resourced—and advocate for this type of work and learning" to our key stakeholders, including senior administration, government, students, and our peers in ACE. This can be especially challenging with fluctuating leadership, as expressed by the comment:

> It sits at our level now, but with changing leadership, it's difficult to get traction. I am hopeful that the new person embraces and advocates up the line; makes the deans more aware of what we are doing, not just statistics but the learning side to things.

As such, from a systems perspective, advocating for the value of learning in co-op includes engagement of stakeholders at all levels.

An emerging theme revealed the Co-Op department seek ways to create a supportive culture that encourages PD for faculty to grow in their area of expertise and engage in relevant research. The director noted "We need to do the best we can to allow faculty to grow in their field of expertise . . . [and] We need to encourage people to build upon their area of expertise—whether this is PD or engaging in research". This suggested the relationship between supporting PD opportunities for co-op faculty and an increase in engagement.

In addition, study findings demonstrated creating an organizational culture that supports PD could aid with faculty knowledge and expertise in competency-based learning. The director acknowledged one of the challenges in implementing a new model: "The next hurdle is from the instructional point of view. We need to ensure faculty really understand what competency based learning is, and are able to teach it to students." Thus, this suggested supporting training in the subject area may lead to an increase in interest and engagement in faculty delivering it as well as

enhance curriculum development. The idea of increased interest or "stimulation" was noted: "Part of the reason the curriculum can become comfortable and possibly stagnant, is not only lack of resources, but perhaps the need to engage more with current trends, professional development, and research to stimulate us to develop current curriculum."

In summary, the interview revealed an excitement from management for the opportunities that competency-based learning may bring for the department and an understanding that investing in PD of co-op faculty could lead to increased engagement and an enhanced curriculum. Finally, in regards to developing a supportive organizational culture, it was recognized that "there needs to be a spirit of encouragement to do this and a plan" (I-1). A central observation of the findings represented by the three participant groups revealed that the emerging themes were interconnected. This relationship will be discussed further in the conclusion section.

Study Conclusions

Based on the analysis of data from the survey, focus group, and interview, I have drawn three conclusions to assist with engagement of co-op faculty in contributing to the long-term success of a competency-based learning model.

1. Co-op educators and administration are strongly engaged in maximizing student learning.
2. Co-op educators and administration believe competency based-learning provides an evidence-based approach to advancing the success and learning in cooperative education.
3. Co-op educators and administration desire an organizational culture that values experiential learning and supports professional development.

Conclusion 1: Co-op educators and administration are strongly engaged in maximizing student learning in co-op. Based on the study findings, co-op educators and administration are strongly engaged in maximizing student learning in co-op and value the existing learning opportunities co-op provides for reinforcing a student's academic education. However, they desire clear, established, course curriculum and a means to quantify learning outcomes. Cates and Jones (2000) noted "the coordination of work experiences with the campus educational program provides a closer relationship between theory and practice therefore students find more meaning in their studies" (p. 3). The overall perception of co-op educators is that both students and employers value co-op as more than job placement and are knowledgeable of the student learning outcomes associated to the program (see Appendix M). The inquiry revealed that administration at KPU is also in agreement that the co-op program affords valuable learning opportunities to complement a student's studies. This was supported by Parks et al. (2008), who remarked "to be an effective academic model, cooperative education must be viewed as an integral part of a student's educational experience rather than simply a placement service" (p. 47). However, 88% of ACE respondents noted there needs to be stronger emphasis on how co-op contributes to a student's academic education, which suggests a disconnect between those who are directly engaged in the delivery of co-op and other stakeholders. In addition, this suggests perhaps stronger communication is needed to internal and external stakeholders on how co-op complements a student's academic studies.

Although there was agreement that valuable learning occurs in co-op, the means by which learning outcomes are recorded, tracked, delivered, and understood was inconsistent among co-op educators. In addition, the participants' responses to whether the current required assignments outlined by ACE are adequate in addressing learning outcomes did not result in any

conclusive data (please see Appendix M). As such, it raises the question whether the approach to teaching and learning in co-op needs to be more consistent across university programs. This conclusion is supported by literature, which recognized the lack of documented research on what students learn, how they learn, and how to best facilitate or support student learning while on a co-op work term (Coll et al., 2009; Eames & Bell, 2005).

The literature reviewed and study findings revealed how the ambiguous definition of co-op standards and practices may also contribute to the reason co-op educators are challenged to articulate, and consequently report on, the learning that occurs in co-op. In the co-op accreditation guidelines, the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (2006) noted, "It is up to the institution to determine the appropriate format of the assignment based upon the professional, personal and program goals" (p. 8). As such, this has resulted in co-op programs across Canada approaching co-op pedagogy in a variety of manners. In addition, at the provincial level, co-op programs are required to annually submit student placement statistics and other logistical data to the Association of Co-operative Education. However, due to a lack of a standardized set of learning outcomes, evidence-based data on student learning are not tracked by co-op programs and reported to ACE. This observation was supported by researchers (Cates & Jones, 2000; Coll et al., 2009; Jaekel et al., 2011; Parks et al., 2008) who acknowledged there is little (if any) standards for reporting on learning outcomes to accreditation bodies or administration.

Co-op educators identified the value of established courses and cohesive curriculum that emphasize student development and learning in both pre-employment and work term courses. The inquiry uncovered that KPU Co-Op faculty and management deem the established co-op courses offered in both classroom and blended learning methods are strengths of the department

and agreed that curriculum development and alignment between curriculum and practice continue to be a priority for the program. Furthermore, the desire to enhance co-op pedagogy and to stay current with 21st century teaching practices was expressed by participants at KPU. Cates and Jones (2000) stated it is critical to consider "the teaching methods which improve student information processing, motivate students and get students involved in their own learning" (p. 1) when building a co-op program that promotes effective student learning.

Conclusion 2: Co-op educators and administration believe competency based-learning provides an evidence-based approach to advancing the success and learning in cooperative education. The survey results of ACE members revealed that 63% of respondents use a competency-based learning outcomes model in their co-op programs. This suggests a general interest by co-op programs in using an evidence-based approach to articulate student learning in co-op. Co-op educators seek ways to acquire formalized training, optimize practice, maximize resources, and create time to advance co-op pedagogy. Incorporating competency-based learning into co-op programming is one way of communicating to faculty and administration the effectiveness of the co-op program (Cates & Jones, 2000; Jaekel et al., 2011). Jaekel et al. (2011) noted, "Outcomes assessments are critical to the evaluation of co-operative education programs for higher education institutions in the current competitive environment" (p. 13). In addition, as suggested by the study findings, a competency-based learning framework also serves to enhance the credibility of co-op programs to their stakeholders, provides a means for students to articulate their learning, and provides an opportunity to align to a university's institutional vision. Strategically aligning co-op learning outcomes with institutional goals enriches the value of co-op (Cates & Jones, 2000, p. 2) and supports the goal of many universities to increase accountability.

Although the inquiry uncovered general support for competency-based learning in co-op, it also revealed a level of inconsistency and uncertainty among co-op educators in its application. Participants expressed a desire for further knowledge and training in competency-based learning. Shaheen, Naqvi, and Khan (2013) revealed "an optimistic and significant relationship between employee training and organizational performance" (p. 496) as well as an increase in job engagement. An increase in knowledge and training would deepen co-op faculty engagement into putting competency-based learning into operation and its long- term success. Gruman and Saks (2011) argued that "such an alignment ensures a strategic focus to engagement because it ensures that employees engage themselves in tasks that are important for the achievement of an organization's goals and objectives" (p. 128).

Employees need to feel they have been adequately supported with enough resources towards a given work task (Kahn, 1990; Shuck et al., 2013) in order to feel engaged. Study participants repeatedly referenced not having enough time to ensure quality teaching and learning was a central point of their position. Specifically, participants noted time was desired for working one-on-one with students, providing quality feedback and assessment, developing stakeholder and student relationships, improving curriculum, and participating in relevant research. As such, an assessment of current practice and exploring ways in which to optimize practice was sought. Co-op educators suggested one way to optimize practice could be an exploration of how to best use technology to support competency-based learning and create efficiencies in practice.

In summary, assessing current resources, exploring strategies for optimizing practice, and providing training opportunities could contribute to increased engagement in the long-term success of competency-based learning. Shuck and Reio (2011) concurred that if "there is a lack

of resources to complete the work assigned, employees would often choose to pull or push away" (p. 422). Therefore, the right conditions need to be in place in order to create a behaviourally engaged workforce that is committed to implementing a new competency-based model of teaching and learning in co-op.

Conclusion 3: Co-op educators and administrators desire an organizational culture that values experiential learning and supports professional development. A recurrent theme in the study findings was a desire by co-op educators and administrators for an organizational culture that values experiential learning and supports PD. These factors were identified as being directly linked to the resources and supports a co-op educator requires to maximize student learning in co-op and enhance engagement in their job. Organizational culture was defined by participants as "creating a culture of learning outcomes within co-op rather than placement/recruitment numbers (S-5), "academic units that engage and support co-op learning" (S-14), and "a fundamental philosophy campus-wide of the benefits of integrating program specific work experience with academics" (S-38). In this regard, organizational culture refers to the participants' culture at their respective universities. Schein (1990) noted:

> *Culture* can now be defined as (a) a pattern of basic assumptions, (b) invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, (c) as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, (d) that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore (e) is to be taught to new members as the (f) correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 111)

Eighty-eight percent of survey participants responded there needs to be a stronger emphasis on how co-op contributes to a student's academic education. As such, encouraging a culture that supports experiential learning and one that is widely accepted and considered valid by all members is what co-op educators desire from key stakeholders, including senior administration, academic faculty, colleagues, and management. In turn, the increase in support and

understanding by key stakeholders in the value of co-op could possibly lead to long-term support and commitment to enhancing the program.

The organizational culture needs to support an alignment between organizational values, individual values, and change goals. Co-op educators are strongly engaged in maximizing learning for students; however, as noted above, 88% of respondents believed that more focus is needed at the organizational level to advocate for the value of co-op. This potential disconnect between the interests of co-op educators and their perceived lack of support at the organizational level suggested that increased communication and the development of a shared vision is needed. Kouzes and Posner (2007) argued that the best leaders engage their employees and inspire them to realize a shared vision (p. 18). The authors noted "To describe a compelling image of the future, you must grasp what others want and need" (p. 18). In regards to engaging KPU Co-Op faculty in facilitating successful change to a competency-based learning model, the study findings revealed a genuine interest and excitement from management to learn what supports and resources are required by faculty to enhance engagement. Furthermore, the study demonstrated an alignment between the departmental change goal and KPU's institutional vision.

Participants also identified a desire for an organizational culture that valued the PD of co-op educators and provided access to research and training opportunities related to teaching and learning. As such, an organizational culture that supports PD could result in increased levels of employee engagement and enhanced co-op programming. Soyars and Brusino's (2009) research supported this assumption:

> Employees desire opportunities for growth and advancement in their organizations. This means that the learning opportunities offered at an organization have a direct effect on engagement. The survey found that 65 percent of respondents answered that the "quality of training and learning opportunities" positively influenced employee engagement to a high or very high extent—the strongest response of the survey. (p. 63)

PD opportunities identified related to enhancing professional practice, such as curriculum development, competency-based learning, and assessment strategies, to personal development topics, such as goal setting, mentorship, and coaching. Moreover, participants desired the time to pursue PD, including time for training, research, conference presentations, and integrating new learning into practice.

Gruman and Saks (2011) acknowledged engaged employees demonstrate psychological meaningfulness, which "is achieved when people feel worthwhile, valuable, and that they matter" (p. 136). Thus, as noted by the interviewee, cultivating "a spirit of encouragement" with an organizational culture that invests in PD and values experiential learning may result in not only enhanced faculty knowledge and expertise in competency-based learning, but also increased engagement in its long-term success.

Summary. In summary, comparing the conclusions drawn from analyzing survey, focus group, and interview data with relevant literature supported positive organizational change for the KPU Co-Op department. Co-op educators and administration are strongly engaged in maximizing student learning in co-op and offered holistic insight into what enhancements regarding curriculum, training, resources, research, and organizational culture are needed for positive change to occur. The scope and limitations of the inquiry are discussed in the following section.

Scope and Limitations of the Inquiry

In this section, I will acknowledge the underlying factors that could limit the application of the inquiry findings to other settings. Action research, by its very nature, has limitations to generalized application. Stringer (2007) noted:

> Action research is necessarily based on localized studies that focus on the need to understand how things are happening, rather than merely on what is happening, and to understand the ways that stakeholders—the different people concerned with the issue—perceive, interpret, and respond to events related to the issue investigated. (p. 19)

This action research inquiry commenced with the intent of informing recommendations to an issue that was specific to the KPU Co-Op department and one that sought the engagement of co-op educators in BC to best inform it. As such, this inquiry is based on the perceptions and interpretations of a small sample of co-op educators specific to BC and may not be representative of the opinions of co-op educators across Canada. Furthermore, the conclusions apply to a smaller collection of co-op educators at KPU Co-Op, and caution should be exercised in applying conclusions to other experiential learning programs whose resources, department structure, organizational mandate, and curriculum may differ.

Moreover, due to the time constraints for completing this inquiry, I selected to conduct a single interview with the Director of Co-Op and Career Services at KPU, who represented the perspective of administration in this study. This was a purposeful choice given his position to implement the recommendations of the inquiry. However, if more time was allowed, the conclusions would be strengthened with more of a diverse sampling of senior administration and management viewpoints.

Due to the anonymous nature of the survey method, I chose not to obtain information identifying a participant's university or position. In addition, ACE membership is made up of management, faculty, professional staff, administrative support, marketing professionals, and employers, and I was remiss in not asking for this information in the survey. In hindsight, knowledge of the positional status of each participant would have been beneficial in informing the inquiry and determining whether their feedback represented the perspective of a co-op

educator, management, or support staff. Moreover, it would have been useful if I had followed up with participants to seek additional information into their response and clarity around the facilitation of their competency-based learning programs. However, the scope of the inquiry, time constraints, and the anonymous nature of the survey prevented this.

In addition, my role as an inside action researcher may have had an impact on participant involvement, feedback, and my conclusions. Coghlan (2007) recognized that "within their organizational roles, [action researchers] are managing within the boundaries of formal hierarchical and functional roles and informal roles of colleagueship and possible friendship" (p. 338). As such, my dual role as both a formal researcher and an informal colleague may have been a factor in participants choosing to be involved and what they shared due to our relationship. I endeavoured to increase the trustworthiness of the inquiry and respect the rights of the participants by including confidentially forms and keeping participants fully informed of the intent of the inquiry. Thus, as an inside researcher, it was critical that I heed the advice of Coghlan (2007) who suggested inside researchers regard the following practice:

> They need to do so in a critical realist approach which challenges them to transcend their own subjectivity through the quality of how they are attentive to the data, intelligent in their understanding, reasonable in their judgments and responsible in their actions. (p. 341)

I maintained a research journal to record my reflections and consulted with my advisory team to ensure I was not applying any bias to the conclusions.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the study findings based on data collected from the three inquiry activities, which included: (a) survey of ACE membership, (b) a focus group with KPU Co-Op faculty, and (c) an interview with the director of KPU Co-Op. Three similar themes

emerged in the study findings based on teaching and learning in co-op, resources and supports necessary for engagement, and the impact of organizational culture. The finding represented the unique perspectives of each participant group and demonstrated the range in diversity and similarities in their responses to the same issues. The study findings then informed the conclusions, which were supported by relevant literature and qualitative and quantitative evidence collected from the inquiry. Finally, the scope and limitations pertinent to the inquiry were addressed. In Chapter Five, I describe the study recommendations and organizational implications based on the findings and conclusions presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: INQUIRY IMPLICATIONS

The inquiry question explored in this project was: How can the Centre for Cooperative Education and Career Services engage Co-Op faculty in contributing to the long term success of a competency-based learning model in co-op at KPU? The subquestions included: (a) What are the co-op educator's perceptions and insights of the current co-op competency-based model's advantages and limitations, (b) What enhancements to administration and process are suggested by the faculty to facilitate change from the current curriculum to a competency-based learning outcomes model, (c) What supports are required by faculty to move to a competency-based learning outcomes model, (d) What factors regarding engagement are fundamental to facilitate successful change to a competency-based learning outcomes model, and (e) What are the strategies or best practices at other universities for implementation of a competency-based learning outcomes model? I discuss the study recommendations, organizational implications, and implications for future inquiry in this chapter.

Study Recommendations

The inquiry recommendations I present in this chapter represent the end result of extensive analysis of the study findings, conclusions, and literature review. My intent is for the recommendations to be actionable immediately and result in positive organizational change for the KPU Co-Op department, the institution, and co-op educators province wide, in the short and long term. The four recommendations that could facilitate engagement of co-op faculty in contributing to the long-term success of a competency-based learning model at KPU include the following:

1. KPU Co-Op faculty and administration identify opportunities and create a sense of urgency to build on, integrate, and research competency-based learning.

2. KPU Co-Op faculty and administration engage in reflection to evaluate current and future resources, supports, and efficiencies in practice.
3. KPU Co-Op administration support professional development and training for co-op educators.
4. KPU Co-Op faculty and administration explore synergies with stakeholders engaged in competency-based learning.

Recommendation 1: KPU Co-Op faculty and administration identify opportunities and create a sense of urgency to build on, integrate, and research competency-based learning. The recommendation that the KPU Co-Op department build on existing strengths in the co-op curriculum is based on study findings that revealed KPU Co-Op faculty and administration perceived the established courses as an area of strength. Opportunities exist to improve the teaching and learning; however, educators need time to research best practices for implementation, instruction, and assessment. First, the Co-Op department needs to create a sense of urgency and communicate to all internal stakeholders that integrating competency-based learning into the curriculum is a priority. Kotter (2012) suggested,

> In successful change efforts, the first step is making sure sufficient people act with sufficient urgency—with on your-toes behavior that looks for opportunities and problems, that energizes colleagues, that beams a sense of 'let's go'. Without enough urgency, large-scale change can become an exercise in pushing a gigantic boulder up a very tall mountain. (p. 15)

Although the initial work has been done to create the competencies in Co-Op, to date it has been a low priority, and there is a sense of hesitation due to anticipated workload to integrate them into practice. One strategy for creating a sense of urgency that the department could adopt is developing a change vision. Kotter (2012) posted "one reason people start a change process with the creation and presentation of a recommendation is because they want clarity of direction"

(p. 23). The vision needs to energize co-op educators into action and have enough urgency that the reasons for pursuing the recommendation far outweigh the consequences if the change is not implemented. Secondly, I recommend the Co-Op department create a strategic plan that addresses how to create time and accommodate coverage for co-op educators to research, develop, and test competency-based learning.

The next step in achieving this recommendation is for a member of the KPU Co-Op department to conduct research on best practices for implementation and delivery of a competency-based learning outcomes model. The literature and study findings demonstrated support for using competencies as a means to enhance and quantify co-op education; however, there was little documented on best practices for implementation. Perhaps, one reason for the lack of documentation is the challenging nature of quantifying soft skills related to co-op learning (Jaekel et al., 2011). The survey findings revealed that 63% of co-op educators are currently using a competency-based model; therefore, I suggest the KPU Co-Op department appoints a faculty member to conduct follow-up interviews with these members and obtain detailed information on how they are currently using competencies in their co-op programming. The results of the follow-up interviews could then be compiled and shared with all members for a next step in possible standardization across BC. Members of ACE would be an apt group to collaborate with to determine best practices in competency-based learning because they are knowledgeable of the internal strengths and challenges in Co-op education. Goulet, Krentz, and Christiansen (2003) noted that "collaborative partners identify strengths in one another's ideas and actions and build on them rather than tearing them down" (p. 325). Therefore, developing a standardized competency-based learning model or guide for best practices among ACE members would be most beneficial to co-op educators.

The recommendation for additional research on assessment strategies in competency-based learning would contribute to "the on-going debate over assessment in higher education, especially with respect to the utility of authentic assessment techniques" (Cates & Jones, 2000, p. 3) as well as enhance accountability which many universities strive for. Thus, partnering with ACE members to conduct research on how current co-op assessment strategies can be further linked to competencies would benefit this recommendation. In addition, this recommendation would benefit from partnership with internal departments at KPU who are interested in quantifying experiential learning experiences through competency assessment.

The third element in this recommendation is for someone in the KPU Co-Op department to develop and conduct research on how to best instruct competency-based learning in co-op. Cates and Jones (2000) suggested one effective approach is applying theories related to student learning to the structure of the co-op program and noted that "by developing an expertise of our own on relevant learning theories and their connection to cooperative education, we will be in the best position to teach others" (p. 1). Furthermore, Haddara and Skanes (2007) recognized an emerging interest by research in analysing the learning models embedded in co-op. The authors noted, "Work on understanding students' conceptions of learning in cooperative education will shape new programs" (p. 74), thus providing a foundation for designing competency-based curriculum and teaching strategies. Moreover, when designing teaching strategies and curriculum for facilitating competency-based learning, I recommend co-op educators consider Johnston's (2007) research on critical pedagogy and co-op curriculum. Johnston acknowledged the contrary worlds that co-op bridges between business and academia and argued "co-op educators are currently teaching the student the knowledge and behaviors needed to *fit into* the world of work, versus questioning or changing it" (p. 24). Johnston encouraged co-op professionals to consider

"to whom is co-op most answerable and for what?" (p. 29). Therefore, when designing and delivering competency-based curriculum, it will be beneficial for co-op educators to consider this issue of content stimulus in addition to application of teaching strategies.

Thus, based on study findings and literature, I recommend KPU Co-Op educators and administration create a sense of urgency to prioritize teaching and learning in co-op and research best practices for implementation, assessment, and instruction.

Recommendation 2: KPU Co-op faculty and administration engage in reflection to evaluate current and future resources, supports, and efficiencies in practice. In the study findings, co-op educators and administration repeatedly referenced requiring more time to focus on quality teaching and learning in co-op. Kaufman-Scarborough and Lindquist (1999) noted the nature of one's workplace and/or profession can have a significant impact on time use and concluded "one's organizational 'time culture' may 'dictate' the dominant or acceptable time use approach" (p. 293). As such, the authors' observation relates to the recommendation for this inquiry: Co-op educators need to take the time to engage in reflective practice in order to evaluate current and future resources, supports, and work place efficiencies. The literature and study findings suggest this recommendation is closely tied to organizational culture, in that the co-op profession or co-op department may need to prioritize teaching and learning in co-op over other tasks that take time and focus away.

Researchers acknowledged that employees need to feel they have been adequately supported with resources towards a given work task in order to feel engaged (Kahn, 1990; Shuck et al., 2013). Similarly, the study findings revealed co-op educators desired increased support staff and appropriate technology to focus on providing quality teaching and learning in co-op. Additional resources to support staffing challenges in co-op, such as job development, student

advising, recruitment, and marketing, were desired by co-op educators. Additional resources would be an advantageous solution to combating workload pressures and increase engagement in teaching and learning; however, this recommendation needs to consider how to best engage faculty and educate students in a cost-efficient manner. In today's economy, universities are not always afforded the benefit of additional resources; therefore, engaging in reflective practice of how to best optimize current resources, supports, and practice is necessary. For example, one suggestion to assist with this recommendation that came from the study findings is to reflect on how technology can best be used to support competency-based learning and optimize efficiencies in practice. Other suggestions from the study findings would be to reflect on teaching and learning strategies that support efficiency in grading, assessment, and curriculum development.

In KPU Co-Op, there are existing practices that, with more of a focus on collaboration, could potentially increase efficiencies and allow for more time to concentrate on enhancing competency-based learning in the program. Collins (2013) noted:

> Team members should have specific skills they contribute and it is beneficial to have members who have skills independent of one another so they become codependent (they can learn from each other) and yet maintain quality of individual contribution and involvement. (p. 4)

This observation was supported by study findings, in which the interviewee remarked, "Co-op educators [need to] assess current and future resources and assess how efficiencies can be achieved to ensure faculty are supported and appropriately utilizing their skills set." As such, approaching this recommendation with a lens of teamwork may assist with finding efficiencies by utilizing the skill sets of individual instructors. At present, the model in KPU Co-Op is that programs are managed in silos by individual co-op instructors, and as a result, there is opportunity for duplicity in work. Cilliers and Greyvenstein (2012) stated, "Silos result in the

splitting of organizational artefacts and relationships, and impact negatively on relationship forming between individuals and within teams" (p. 1), demonstrating that in addition to workplace efficiencies, silos may also impact organizational culture.

In summary, this recommendation revealed that the organizational culture should consider placing more value on teaching and learning in co-op over other tasks. In addition, co-op educators and administration could engage in reflection on how technology, collaborative work, and other changes to daily practices can assist with creating efficiencies in practice and free up time for quality teaching and learning.

Recommendation 3: KPU Co-Op administration support professional development and training. This recommendation for Co-Op administration to support professional development (PD) and training for co-op educators is directly linked to the KPU (2013) strategic plan, which stated KPU will "implement initiatives that will attract, support, engage, and retain KPU's people and create an environment where all employees see themselves as contributing to student learning" (p. 2). The study findings revealed that co-op educators desired an organizational culture that supports PD and that access to PD opportunities would increase engagement in student learning, quality teaching, and the long-term success of a competency-based learning model at KPU Co-Op. The findings uncovered that interest in PD opportunities extends beyond KPU to co-op educators who are members of ACE. As such, one suggestion is to connect with ACE to explore a partnership in offering PD to members on competency-based and co-op pedagogy topics. Maruska and Perry (2013) noted, "When employees share their knowledge with others, they become recognized for their expertise and contribute enduring assets to the organization. In turn, this sharing enables them and others to have the room to grow and expand their talent" (p. 48). Fullan and Scott (2009) also noted that "learning is a profoundly

social experience, and one's peer group is a powerful factor in helping or hindering engagement" (p. 137). Thus, utilizing the expertise within ACE by sharing best practices and knowledge regarding competency-based learning and co-op pedagogy is not only a cost-efficient solution, but one that is also beneficial to all co-op educators.

This recommendation involves commitment from management to support PD of co-op educators in order to achieve sustainable success in facilitating a change to competency-based learning in co-op. Maruska and Perry (2013) argued investing in employee's "talent development creates enduring assets and fulfillment for individuals and organizations" (p. 48). Furthermore, the authors noted that "trusting people to engage their hopes and giving them permission to pursue what's important to them produces results in many ways" (p. 48). In addition, Wheatley (2006b) noted a leader's job is to "ensure that the resources the organization controls get to local groups as fast as possible. Leaders need to trust that people will invent their own solutions, that they'll make good use of the resources they receive" (pp. 19-20)". The literature supported the recommendation for management to support PD for co-op educators and trust that staff will make good use of the training. As one manager noted in the interview, it is an exciting time, "a new way of doing things, or changing the way we do things; it puts a new lens on what we do" (I-1).

Maruska and Perry (2013) stated, "One of the biggest blocks people cite as getting in the way of their talent development is a lack of time and focus needed to pursue their hopes" (p. 47). This sentiment for requiring more time to pursue PD was repeatedly referenced by co-op educators in the study. As such, I recommend co-op educators and management consider prioritizing PD and creating supportive solutions to ensure staff coverage for PD leave is

provided. Maruska and Perry noted the challenge of lacking time for development, but emphasized the end result is beneficial:

> Yes, we all have busy schedules, and being immediately responsive to others has become both possible and expected with modern technology. But employees who set up their most productive work schedules, coordinate them with others in order to ensure coverage of emergency items, and follow this practice for just a few days report a large jump in both productivity and satisfaction. (pp. 47-48)

Supporting PD of employees also positively influences engagement, as it demonstrates that management value their employees' individual needs (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Maruska & Perry, 2013; Soyars & Brusino, 2009). As such, material support of PD opportunities will increase the likelihood of the long-term success of the inquiry because "people can be more focused and productive in such an atmosphere because they know that they are appreciated as individuals and that the expression of their talent matters" (Maruska & Perry, 2013, p. 46).

Wheatley (2006a) eloquently articulated the need for management and co-op educators to prioritize PD:

> As we let go of the machine model of organizations, and workers as replaceable cogs in the machinery of production, we begin to see ourselves in much richer dimensions, to appreciate our wholeness, and, hopefully, to design organizations that honor and make use of the great gift of who we humans are. (Introduction: Searching for a Simpler Way to Lead Organizations section, para 37)

As such, a focus on PD would be in alignment with the KPU (2013) strategic vision, and this recommendation has the potential to impact the long-term success of the inquiry.

Recommendation 4: KPU Co-Op faculty and administration explore synergies with stakeholders engaged in competency-based learning. The recommendation to explore synergies with stakeholders engaged in competency-based learning is similar to an earlier recommendation that discussed how teamwork at the department level could optimize practice and allow for more time to concentrate on enhancing competency-based learning in the program.

This recommendation involves looking at the issue from a larger systems perspective and reflecting on how the various stakeholders interested in competency-based learning can benefit from working together. In this sense, we are functioning as a "learning organization" (Senge, 2006, p. 4), viewing the inquiry from a bigger picture. The collective learning among ACE members and internal KPU departments deepens the vision of the inquiry and contributes to the sustainability of its long-term success as more people become invested in its attainment.

Previous recommendations involved partnering with ACE to share best practices, relevant research, and PD on competency-based learning co-op pedagogy. This recommendation, on the other hand, involves deepening the partnership with ACE by engaging with change makers at the board level. As such, one action that may arise after thorough research and discussion with members is to build synergies provincially and nationally for a standardized learning outcomes model.

This recommendation also involves engagement and collaboration with internal departments at KPU such as academic faculty, the Teaching and Learning department, and other experiential learning programs such as Service Learning, Work-Study, Career Services, and practicums. Many participants in the study expressed interest in working more closely with academic faculty to increase awareness of the value of co-op and to maximize the transfer of learning from co-op work terms to the classroom. Haddara and Skanes (2007) advised co-op educators to integrate work term experience into the classroom by "encouraging faculty to allow students to use their work term experiences as part of their projects or written assignments" (p. 4). Collaboration with the department of Teaching and Learning at KPU would be a symbiotic relationship in regards to enhancing learning design of competency-based learning curriculum, assuring quality of learning assessment and standards, stimulating inquiry, and sharing of effective practices (Fullan & Scott, 2009, p. 66). In

addition, partnership with other experiential learning programs at KPU would be in alignment with KPU's (2013) strategic vision to "broaden the modes and increase the frequency of communication within the university community in order to enhance transparency, decision-making, collaboration, and relationship building among departments" (p. 2).

Finally, this recommendation involves partnering with senior leaders at KPU who are the drivers of organizational change. As potential change agents and advocates, senior administration at KPU had a significant influence in supporting the inquiry on a larger systems level. As Stringer (2007) noted, the "decision makers determine how things will operate, who will benefit, under what circumstances, and according to which criteria" (p. 33). I recommend the KPU Co-Op department, when designing program changes to integrate competency-based learning, emphasises in communications to senior administration how co-op competencies are in alignment with the strategic and academic plan. One result could be an enhanced organizational culture that is supportive of how competency-based learning and experiential learning programs like co-op can play a significant role in helping to achieve the university's strategic vision.

Summary. The four recommendations I have presented in this chapter are based on the study findings and subsequent conclusions from this action research inquiry. In addition, the recommendations are supported by literature and are framed in such a way to be actionable within the context of the KPU Co-op program. I have taken a systems approach to presenting the recommendations and think they encompass suggestions for realistic change to occur at multiple organizational levels: external, internal, and departmental. At the heart of these recommendations lies positive intent for change, a desire for collaboration, and belief that faculty engagement in the long-term success of competency-based learning at KPU is viable. If these recommendations are followed, there will be organizational implications that need to be considered in advance.

Organizational Implications

In this section, I will describe how the recommendations that resulted from this action research inquiry require organizational leaders and stakeholders to undertake both behavioural and systematic changes within their organizations. In addition, I will discuss the implementation processes required to implement the study recommendations, implications if the recommendations are not implemented, and subsequent leadership implications for organizational change that the recommendations will require.

Schein (1990) argued that "every group and organization is an open system that exists in multiple environments. Changes in the environment will produce stresses and strains inside the group, forcing new learning and adaptation" (p. 116). Thus, the conclusions of this applied inquiry will cause organizational leaders and stakeholders within ACE and KPU to accept changes if recommendations are pursued. Change, of any kind, "finally succeed[s] or fail[s] on the basis of whether the people affected do things differently" (Bridges, 2003, p. 5). Therefore, when constructing the recommendations and implementation plan for this inquiry, I have considered the needs of participants and stakeholders to be at the forefront of the inquiry's success.

On a broader systems perspective, KPU senior administration, KPU faculty and staff, KPU experiential learning departments, and ACE leadership are all change agents who impact the attainment of the inquiry's recommendations. Kotter (2012) noted the value of building a guiding team "that has the capability—in membership and method of operating—to guide a very difficult change process" (p. 60). Involving ACE leadership at the board level will raise awareness of the inquiry, possibly ignite change to occur in co-op programs across BC, and encourage collaboration on future research and PD. KPU senior leaders and the broader community will assist in establishing and sustaining an organizational culture that supports competency-based learning and

values co-op education within KPU. Similarly, the employers and students who will be on the receiving end of the competency-based education will also benefit from being informed and engaged in the inquiry results. For some, this will involve them undergoing an internal change in how they view, articulate, and assess the learning outcomes and purpose of co-op.

The results of applied inquiry will require change on a deeper level in the KPU Co-Op department, as potential changes may include internal behavioural shifts for faculty and management, system changes to workload and practices, and curriculum and teaching changes. In fact, the organizational culture within the department may be impacted with the largest change to place more of a focus on engaging faculty in teaching and learning and involving management to fully support the change. Jick (2008) noted,

> No organization can institute change if its employees will not, at the very least, accept the change. No change will "work" if employees don't help in the effort. And change is not possible without people changing themselves. Any organization that believes change can take hold without considering how people will react to it is in deep delusion. (p. 404)

A focus on engaging KPU Co-Op stakeholders directly in the change and aligning recommendations with their needs is vital to the success of the inquiry. This focus will increase stakeholders' commitment to explore key operational changes at the department level regarding performance management, strategic planning, and aligning marketing/communications to reflect the goals of the inquiry.

Avison, Lau, Myers, and Nielsen (1996) argued an identifying factor of action research is the "emphasis is more on what practitioners actually do" (p. 96), thus illuminating the significance of the implementation stage. In regards to the process required to implement the study recommendations, I will work in collaboration with my colleagues in the KPU Co-Op department to determine a realistic schedule with phased-in recommendations, clear timelines,

and strong deliverables. An essential element of the implementation stage will be creating a clear vision for the future. Burke (2008) noted: "Without direction, both in terms of who we are and who we want to be in the future, desired organizational change will not occur" (p. 747). I will also be following Kotter's (2012) eight steps for successful large scale change: (a) increase urgency, (b) build the guiding team, (c) get the vision right, (d) communicate for buy-in, (e) empower action, (f) create short-term wins, (g) don't let up, and (h) make change stick. I have described strategies for addressing the first four steps in the recommendations section of this chapter; therefore, I will be concentrating on the last three during the implementation stage. I will ensure that early wins are acknowledged by the team and celebrated in order to build momentum for change and inspire confidence. For example, I can highlight at faculty meetings best practices and teaching accomplishments of my peers who create innovative assignments that align with competency-based learning. I will continue to keep urgency up, "not stopping until the vision is a reality, despite seemingly intractable problems" (Kotter, 2012, p. 157). This may mean adjusting the implementation plan midway if a recommendation is not effective.

One strategy to sustaining a sense of urgency in all stakeholders will be to use creativity to showcase the problem and consequence of not pursuing the inquiry through. Kotter (2012) noted that you "keep a change in place by helping to create a new, supportive, and sufficiently strong organizational culture . . . [that] provides roots for the new ways of operating" (p. 159). Therefore, as a final step, I will reflect and reassess with the team the organizational culture one year after the implementation. One strategy I can implement to reassess the organizational culture will be to gauge the shared language faculty and staff use during our department meetings to describe curriculum changes and goals of the program. Similarly, reviewing the language when hiring and training new employees will be reflective of whether the culture had changed.

If recommendations for the inquiry are not implemented, the implications could lead to a depreciation of co-op teaching and learning, an inefficient competency-based curriculum, and co-op faculty complacency and disengagement issues. Stringer (2007) noted "If an action research project does not make difference, in a specific way, for practioners and/or their clients, then it has failed to achieve its objective" (p. 12). The biggest indication of failure if recommendations of the action research inquiry are not implemented would be the adverse impact on enhancing the lives of the KPU Co-Op department members. It is vital to focus on implementation and "make sure that what emerges is consistently and effectively put into practice" (Fullan & Scott, 2009, p. 39).

In summary, the results of the applied inquiry will require leaders and stakeholders to undertake behavioural and systemic organizational changes. As such, I think that focusing on engaging stakeholders and creating a symbiotic relationship that aligns participant values with the goals of the inquiry is a key component to successfully implementing the inquiry recommendations. In addition, successful implementation will entail creating a clear vision for the future of the KPU Co-op department so stakeholders can visualize from the start the impact of positive change for the future as well as opportunities for future inquiry.

Implications for Future Inquiry

The implications for future inquiry based on the findings of this study are wide-ranging. Follow-up research projects could provide valuable insight to assist the goals of cooperative education and experiential learning in BC. Thus, I offer three suggestions for further exploration based on the study findings: (a) Conduct research on competency-based teaching and learning in co-op, including best practices for delivery, integration/operation, assessment, and maximizing the engagement of employers and students; (b) Examine the relationship between competency-

based learning in co-op and the knowledge base of student learning theories, curriculum development, and technology; and (c) Explore the role of the co-op educator and what PD opportunities would best enable personal and professional growth.

The first suggestion for further research is to deepen the knowledge base on competency-based teaching and learning in co-op. There were numerous references in the literature that supported competency-based learning or structuring co-op around specific learning outcomes, but there was negligible information on best practices for delivery, implementation, operations, and assessment that is specific to co-op. This could be related to the lack of a standardized learning outcomes or competencies in co-op (Parks et al., 2008) or the challenge in creating measurable learning outcomes for competencies related to social skills development (Jaekel et al., 2011). In addition, there was a gap in literature and in the study findings of how to enhance student and employer engagement in competency-based learning. In particular, what supports, resources, and information do these stakeholders need to feel engaged in this model of co-op learning?

Moreover, I found a lack of literature informing competency-based learning in co-op specific to Canada or BC. As a result of the survey, which noted 63% of ACE participants use competency-based learning, I recommend that follow-up research is conducted with these members to obtain detailed information on how competencies are currently being used to address teaching and learning in co-op. The results of the follow-up interviews could then be compiled and shared with all members for a next step in possible standardization across BC and strategies for engaging stakeholders.

The second recommendation for future inquiry relates to co-op pedagogy and examining the relationship between competency-based learning in co-op and co-op educators' knowledge of student learning theories, curriculum development, and technology such as on-line learning

communities. Some scholars recognized the benefit of understanding student learning theories as a means to strengthen co-op curriculum (Cates & Jones, 2000; Haddara & Skanes, 2007; Johnston, 2007); however, evidence on how this knowledge translates to co-op teaching and learning practices in Canada would be beneficial. Furthermore, Johnston (2007) raised a valid question, "to whom is co-op most answerable and for what?" (p. 29), thus underlining a further point of discussion in regards to what competencies should be developed in the co-op curriculum and for what purpose. Additionally, exploring the relationship between competencies and technology was a subtheme that emerged from the study. One survey respondent noted his/her interest in additional resources for an "online learning community for students to share learning, resources and reflections and for staff to share educational information" (S-36), which highlights an additional area for future inquiry.

Lastly, my third suggestion for future inquiry relates to exploring the role of the co-op educator position and what PD opportunities would best enable professional and personal growth. Repeatedly, co-op educators and administration in this study acknowledged the significance of supporting PD to enhance co-op pedagogy and educator engagement. Participants noted the consequences of allowing co-op educators to "grow in their field of expertise" (I-1) and the need to for "well-trained co-op education coordinators to manage the co-op programs" (S-16). As such, further research could explore what types of PD opportunities would best facilitate growth and what it means to be a well-trained co-op educator. Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore co-op educators' professional identities and how these impact the individual perception of teaching and learning in co-op. For example, what is the impact if a co-op coordinator views themselves as an educator versus a placement coordinator? What internal shift is needed, if any, to emphasize teaching and learning in co-op?

I believe the three suggestions I offer for future inquiry projects will assist with raising awareness and deepening comprehension of co-op's value in higher education. Further exploration into competency-based learning models, co-op pedagogy, and PD will provide insight for enriching the co-op educator role and enhancing overall teaching and learning in the program.

Report Summary

This inquiry explored how to engage co-op faculty in facilitating a successful change to a competency-based learning model and addressed how faculty engagement impacts teaching, innovation, and scholarship. My objective from the start of the inquiry was to inspire KPU Co-Op educators in forging a path for positive organizational change within the Co-Op department while contributing meaningfully to the university's strategic vision. The four recommendations, discussion of organizational implications, and suggestions for future inquiry revealed that successful implementation can only be attained with engagement and collaboration of key stakeholders. Wheatley (2005) simply stated that "people support what they create" (p. 89), which is at the root of action research and the purpose of this inquiry. Moreover, throughout the entire inquiry, the data collection, the literature review, and analysis, it was critical that I "actively listen[ed] in order to identify, link, and distill the elements of a workable and productive plan of action" (Fullan & Scott, 2009, p. 99). This is reflected in the implementation plan I outlined in this chapter. Fullan and Scott (2009) further stated,

> Listening with discipline can help build motivation to own the problem and act, that it can also build a better solution than what they alone could design (many minds are better than one), and that it will build a plan of action that is not only relevant, understood, and owned but feasible. (p. 100)

Thus, it was through the act of listening to co-op educators and administration in the focus group, survey, and interview and comparing the findings with established literature that I realized the

interconnectedness embedded within the inquiry's findings. Faculty engagement in the long-term success of a competency-based learning model in co-op and positive organizational change can be achieved through continued collaborative inquiry.

As such, the story of this inquiry does not end with this capstone project. It is an "evolving process that is undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005, p. 3). In the next steps for organizational change, given that I am not solely responsible for implementing the recommendations, I will be working closely with the sponsor. The sponsor will play an essential role in creating an academic plan in collaboration with Co-Op faculty and advocating to senior administration and senior leaders at ACE about the value of learning in co-op. Therefore, my role in future steps will be to support the sponsor and keep commitment and momentum alive with my colleagues for positive organizational change. Specifically, I will assist with developing an academic plan that is in alignment with the department vision, strategic plan of the university, and individual values of co-op educators. As a change agent, I will celebrate wins and keep the recommendations of this inquiry a focal point in faculty discussions. As a member of the Professional Development Committee for ACE, I will begin next steps in conducting follow-up research with ACE members on best practices of competency-based learning in co-op. In addition, in appreciation to the inquiry participants and to encourage further sharing of practices and knowledge, I will share my research findings at future ACE PD sessions, future conferences, or through our association newsletter. The fundamental goal will be to continue to engage people's interest in furthering the teaching and scholarship of cooperative education in Canada.

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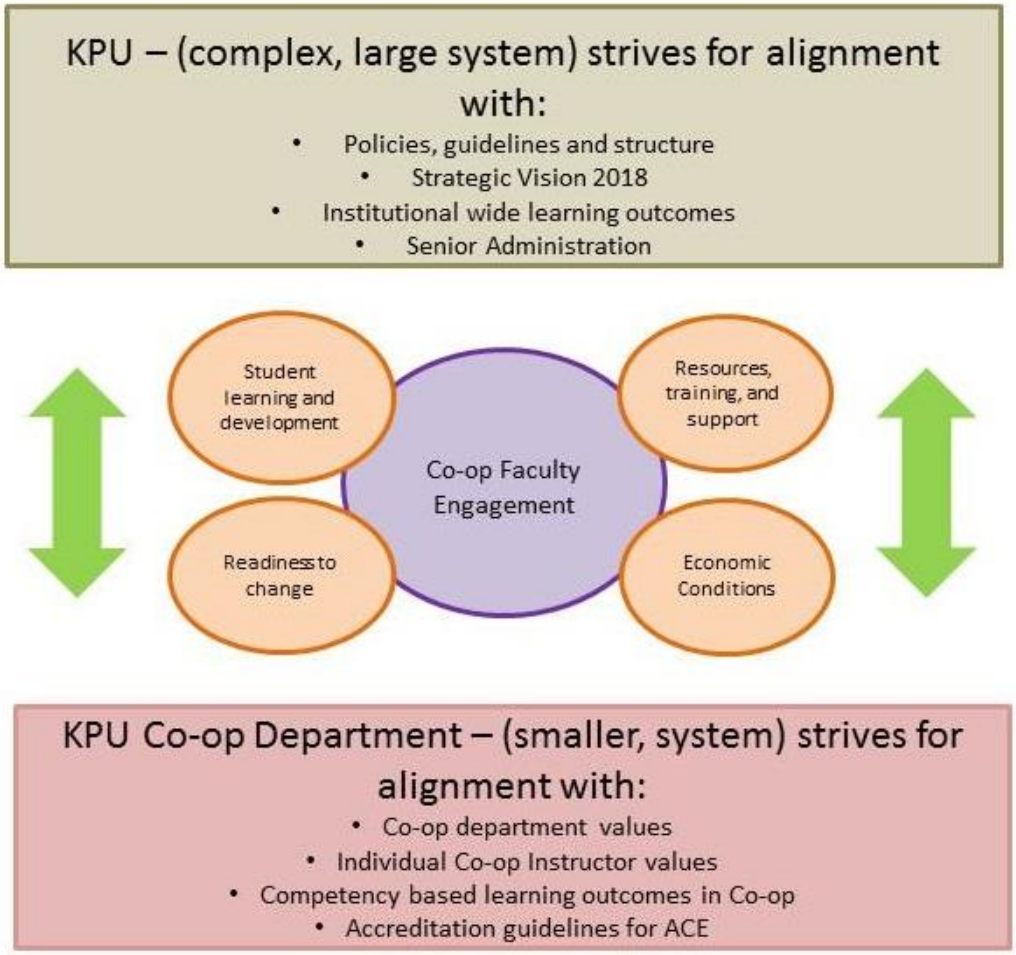
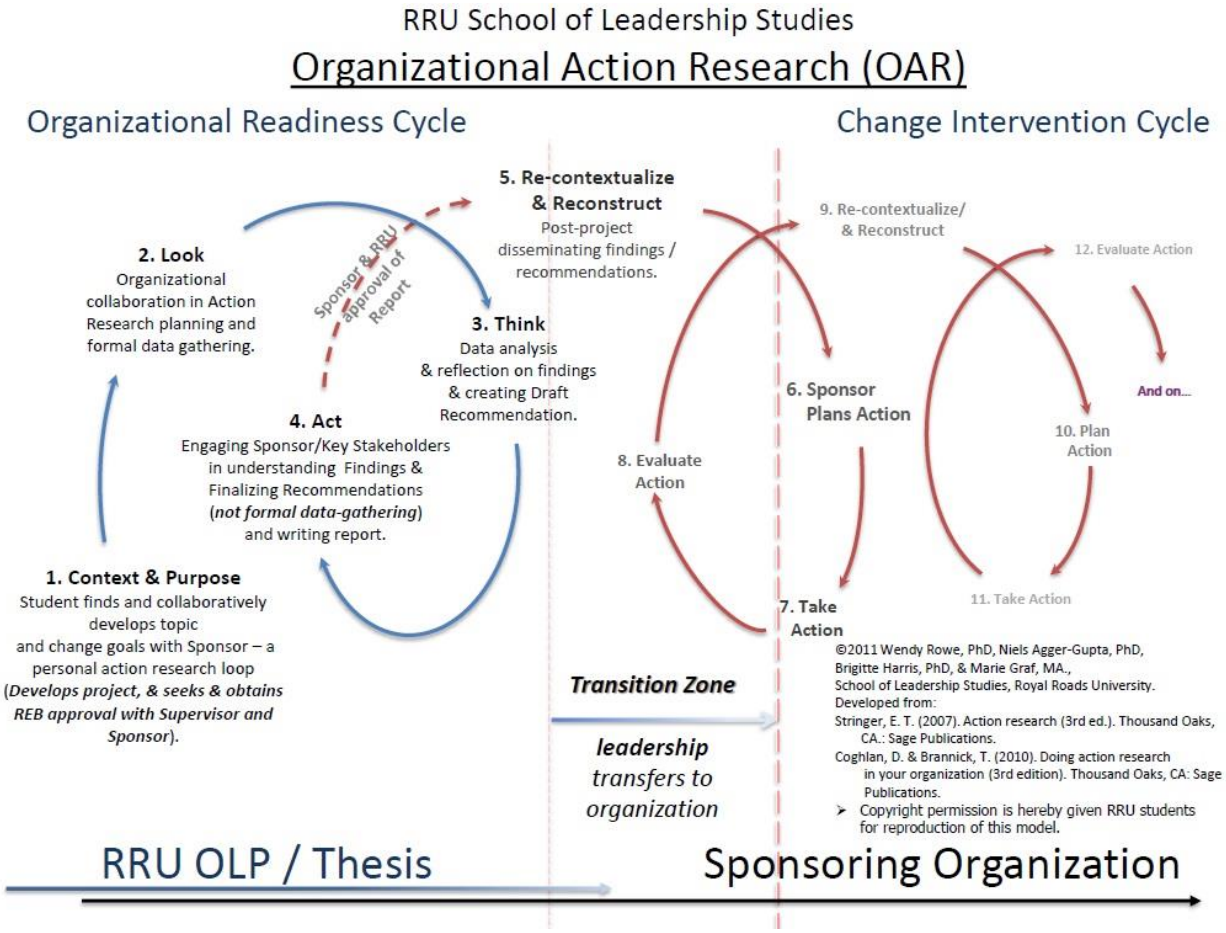
APPENDIX A: COMPETING SYSTEMS OF CO-OP FACULTY ENGAGEMENT



APPENDIX B: OAR DIAGRAM AS AN EXAMPLE MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH[1]



[1] *Organizational Action Research: The Readiness-for-Action Cycle* (p. 1), by W. Rowe, N. Agger-Gupta, B. Harris, & M. Graf, 2011, Unpublished manuscript. School of Leadership Studies, Royal Roads University, Victoria, BC, Canada.

APPENDIX C: EMAIL SURVEY INVITATION

My name is Lindsay Wood, and this research project focusing on Co-op Educator engagement and competency based learning is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [phone #].

The research will consist of this survey and is estimated to take 10 minutes to complete. The anticipated questions will refer to your professional opinion and insight as a Co-operative Education professional as it relates to teaching and learning in Co-op. Data collected from the survey will assist with identifying key issues concerning faculty engagement and competency based learning outcomes models in Co-operative Education that are across institutions and province wide. Your name was chosen as a prospective participant because of your membership in ACE and our shared knowledge of practice.

In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a Master of Arts in Leadership degree, I will also be sharing my research findings with Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU). The data and findings from the research may also be submitted to appropriate journal articles, and presented at conferences and professional development workshops. Participants may request a copy of the final report upon completion.

Please note, as this is an anonymous survey, individual participants' data cannot be removed once submitted. The online survey will be facilitated through Fluid Survey where information is stored on a Canadian server. The information you provide will be summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual or associated university. All information I collect will be maintained in confidence with hard copies (e.g., consent forms) stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Electronic will be stored on a password protected computer on my home computer and encrypted USB stick. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential and upon completion of the project, all raw data from the online servers as well as extracted data will be destroyed.

You are not required to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. Similarly, if you choose not to participate in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence. Your completion of this survey will constitute your informed consent.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Wood

APPENDIX D: LETTER OF E-MAIL INVITATION TO FOCUS GROUP

[Date]

Dear [Prospective Participant],

I would like to invite you to be part of a research project that I am conducting. This project is part of the requirement for my Master of Arts Degree in Leadership at Royal Roads University.

The objective of my research project is to explore how a focus on faculty engagement can contribute to the long term success of a competency based learning model in Co-operative Education at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU). My objective is to seek your valuable insight as a Co-op educator; thus, building upon the strengths and knowledge inherent in the Co-op department at KPU.

Your name was chosen as a prospective participant because of your position as a co-operative education instructor at KPU. This phase of my research project will consist of a focus group and is intended to last no more than 90 minutes. The date, time, and location is to be determined.

The consent form contains further information about the study conduct and will enable you to make a fully informed decision on whether or not you wish to participate. Please review this information before responding.

I realize that due to our collegial relationship, you may feel compelled to participate in this research project. Please be aware that you are not required to participate and, should you choose to participate, your participation would be entirely voluntary. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. Responses will become part of an anonymous data set.

If you do not wish to participate, please do not reply to this request. Your decision to not participate will also be maintained in confidence. Your choice will not affect our relationship or your employment status in any way.

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have additional questions regarding the project and its outcomes.

If you would like to participate in my research project, please contact me at:

Name: Lindsay Wood
Email: [email address]
Telephone: [telephone number]

Sincerely,

APPENDIX E: E-MAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEW

[Date]

Dear [Prospective Participant],

I would like to invite you to be part of a research project that I am conducting. This project is part of the requirement for my Master of Arts Degree in Leadership at Royal Roads University.

The objective of my research project is to explore how a focus on faculty engagement can contribute to the long term success of a competency based learning model in co-operative education at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU). My objective is to seek your valuable insight as a Co-op education director; thus, building upon the strengths and knowledge inherent in the Co-op department at KPU.

Your name was chosen as a prospective participant because of your position in the Co-op department at KPU. This phase of my research project will consist of an interview and is estimated to last 30 minutes. A mutually convenient date, time, and location for the interview will be determined.

The consent form contains further information about the study conduct and will enable you to make a fully informed decision on whether or not you wish to participate. Please review this information before responding.

I realize that due to our professional relationship, you may feel compelled to participate in this research project. Please be aware that you are not required to participate and, should you choose to participate, your participation would be entirely voluntary. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. Responses will become part of an anonymous data set.

If you do not wish to participate, please do not reply to this request. Your decision to not participate will also be maintained in confidence. Your choice will not affect our relationship in any way.

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have additional questions regarding the project and its outcomes.

If you would like to participate in my research project, please contact me at:

Name: Lindsay Wood
Email: [email address]
Telephone: [phone number]

Sincerely,

APPENDIX F: INQUIRY TEAM MEMBER LETTER OF AGREEMENT

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Royal Roads University, Lindsay Wood (the student) will be conducting an inquiry research study at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU). The purpose of the research project is to explore how a focus on faculty engagement can contribute to the long term success of a competency based learning model in Co-operative Education at KPU. The student's credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [phone #].

Inquiry Team Member Role Description:

As a volunteer Inquiry Team member assisting the student with this project, your role may include one or more of the following: providing advice on the relevance and wording of questions and letters of invitation, supporting the logistics of the data-gathering methods, including observing, assisting, or facilitating an interview or focus group, taking notes, transcribing, translating, or analyzing data, to assist the student and the KPU Co-op organizational change process. In the course of this activity, you may be privy to confidential inquiry data.

Confidentiality of Inquiry Data:

In compliance with the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Policy, under which this inquiry project is being conducted, all personal identifiers and any other confidential information generated or accessed by the inquiry team advisor will only be used in the performance of the functions of this project, and must not be disclosed to anyone other than persons authorized to receive it, both during the inquiry period and beyond it. Recorded information in all formats is covered by this agreement. Personal identifiers include participant names, contact information, personally identifying turns of phrases or comments, and any other personally identifying information.

Personal information will be collected, recorded, corrected, accessed, altered, used, disclosed, retained, secured and destroyed as directed by the student, under direction of the Royal Roads academic supervisor.

Inquiry Team members who are uncertain whether any information they may wish to share about the project they are working on is personal or confidential will verify this with Lindsay Wood, the student.

Statement of Informed Consent:

I have read and understand this agreement.

_____ _____ _____

Name Signature Date

APPENDIX G: SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Please indicate how long you have been working in the field of Co-operative Education
   - < 6 months; 6-12 months; 13-24 months; +25 months
2. Does your program have a competency based learning outcomes model in Co-op? (yes/no/unsure)
3. In your professional and personal opinion, which of the following best describes your role as a Co-op educator in BC? Please rate the statements below by selecting the response that best describes your opinion.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/Don't know	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am engaged in enhancing a student's academic education through Co-op.					
I have adequate administrative support staff to focus on student learning in Co-op.					
I have the appropriate ratio of students in my portfolio to allow me to focus on student learning in Co-op.					
I am supported by administration to focus on the education of student learning in Co-op.					
Pressure for high placement numbers impacts my ability to emphasize learning in Co-op.					
The current required assignments (e. g. learning goals & final report) outlined by ACE are adequate in addressing the learning outcomes in Co-op.					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/Don't know	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students understand the value of education in Co-op and see it as more than job placement.					
Employers I work with are knowledgeable of the student learning outcomes in to Co-op.					
There needs to be a stronger emphasis on how Co-operative Education contributes to a student's academic education.					

4. In what ways do you report on successful student learning outcomes in your program other than placement numbers?

5. What supports and resources do you require to maximize student learning in Co-op?

APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP INQUIRY QUESTIONS

1. What are we currently doing well to maximize the learning in Co-op for students?
2. What excites you, as KPU Co-op faculty, as we move to adopt a new competency based learning outcomes model?
3. What strengths in our teaching would you hope to see further refined/developed over time in regards to implementing a competency based learning model?
4. As the program continues to grow, what are the challenges that Co-op Educators face that could impact student learning?
5. What supports and resources do you require to feel engaged in your work as a Co-op Instructor and maximize student learning?
6. What are the challenges to facilitating a competency based learning model?
7. In closing the focus group, is there anything you would like to add or that has not been covered that you would like to share?

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW INQUIRY QUESTIONS

1. What are we currently doing well to maximize the learning in Co-op for students? What strengths would you hope to see further refined/developed over time?

2. As the program continues to grow, what do you think are the challenges that face Co-op Educators that could impact student learning?

3. What supports and resources do you think Co-op faculty require to feel engaged in their work as Co-op Instructors and maximize student learning?

4. What excites you, as the Director of Co-op, as we move to adopt a new competency based learning outcomes model?

5. What do you feel are the challenges to facilitating this model (competency based learning)?

6. What changes to current practice do you feel we need to make to move to a competency based learning outcomes model?

7. In closing the interview group, is there anything you would like to add or that has not been covered that you would like to share?

APPENDIX J: INFORMED CONSENT FOR FOCUS GROUP INQUIRY

My name is Lindsay Wood and this research project is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [phone #].

Purpose of the study

The purpose of my research project is to explore how a focus on faculty engagement can contribute to the long term success of a competency based learning model in Co-operative Education at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU), Specifically, I am seeking to learn:

1. What are the Co-op educator's perceptions and insights of the Co-op competency based model's advantages and limitations?
2. What enhancements to administration and process are suggested by the faculty to facilitate moving from the current curriculum to a competency based learning outcomes model?
3. What supports are required by faculty to move to a competency based learning outcomes model?
4. What factors are fundamental to facilitate a successful competency based learning outcomes model?

Your participation and how information will be collected

The research will consist of a focus group and is intended to take no more than ninety minutes of your time. The anticipated questions will address the questions outlined above. Information will be audio taped, and, when appropriate summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report.

Benefits and risks to participation

My hope for the study is it will assist faculty and administration in the Co-operative Education department to implement a competency based learning outcomes model that will enhance student learning and is in alignment with the strategic vision of the University. The hope is to gain an understanding of what curricular, pedagogical, and administrative changes are needed as well as what resource/supports are required by faculty to implement such a model. KPU instructors will benefit from a platform to voice their insight and contribute to shaping final recommendations that will be put forth to administration and will serve to set KPU Co-op apart from other institutions. There may be risks involved for participating in this study; they are assessed as minimal. Due to the nature of the research, your participation will require that you volunteer or share personal experience and information; however, there is no anticipated risk or discomfort associated with the questions and you are not required to respond to any question that you feel may cause discomfort. Other risks may include the time it takes to participate in the research and potential changes to curriculum; however, any decisions/final recommendations will be decided upon collectively by faculty.

Inquiry team

An inquiry team made up of KPU faculty and staff will be assisting with piloting research questions and assisting with analyzing the data. They will not have access to individual level

data. The purpose of the team is to provide objectivity and limit researcher bias. All members have signed a confidentiality agreement.

Real or Perceived Conflict of Interest

Due to my position as a current Co-op faculty member at KPU, for the purpose of this research, I will a learner, and not as an employee of the KPU Co-op department.

All information will be kept confidential. However, due to the small sample size of participants in the group (limited to Co-op faculty at KPU), it will be difficult to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. To mitigate this conflict of interest, we can discuss collaboratively how points of view will be published in the report/shared with the sponsor. I also ask that participants respect the confidential nature of the research by not sharing names or identifying comments outside of the group. In addition, due to the direct reporting relationship to the director, I have chosen to interview the director separately to alleviate any potential conflict of interest or discomfort by participants.

Confidentiality, security of data, and retention period

I will work to protect your privacy throughout this study. All individual level data and personal information collected will be accessed by me and used during the data analysis stage. Information collected will be maintained in confidence with hard copies (e.g., consent forms) stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Electronic data (such as transcripts or audio files) will be stored on a password protected computer on my home computer and encrypted USB stick. Information will be recorded in hand-written and taped format and, where appropriate, summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential and upon completion of the project, all raw data will be destroyed.

Procedure for withdrawing from the study

At any point you have the ability to withdraw from this project. However, if you choose to withdraw, information gathered during the focus group will be difficult to remove. When the information is summarized in the final report, it will not contain participant names and therefore it will not be possible to induce what comments you have contributed.

Sharing results

In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree, I will also be sharing my research findings with senior leadership at Kwantlen Polytechnic University and participants in the study. The data and findings from the research may also be submitted to appropriate journals, conferences and professional development workshops. Participants may request a copy of the final report upon completion. In addition, I will provide a copy of the final report on the ACE website which you can access at www.co-op.bc.ca.

You are not required to participate in this research project. By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 19 and have read the information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project.

- ☐ I consent to the audio recording of the focus group
- ☐ I commit to respect the confidential nature of the focus group by not sharing identifying information about the other participants
- ☐ I understand that due to the group nature of this study, the audio recording will be ongoing throughout the focus group and my voice cannot easily be removed.

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

**Please keep a copy of this information letter for your records.

APPENDIX K: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW WORKSHEET

Co-op Faculty Engagement – focus group interview activity

Interview Activity - in pairs, please interview each other (3 minutes each) and record answers below.

1. What are we currently doing well to maximize the learning in Co-op for students?

2. As the program continues to grow, what are the challenges that Co-op Educators face that could impact student learning?

3. What supports and resources do you require to feel engaged in your work as a Co-op Instructor and maximize student learning?

APPENDIX L: INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW INQUIRY

My name is Lindsay Wood and this research project is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [phone #].

Purpose of the study

The purpose of my research project is to explore how a focus on faculty engagement can contribute to the long term success of a competency based learning model in Co-operative Education at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU), Specifically, I am seeking to learn:

1. What are the Co-op educator's perceptions and insights of the Co-op competency based model's advantages and limitations?
2. What enhancements to administration and process are suggested by the faculty to facilitate from the current curriculum to a competency based learning outcomes model?
3. What supports are required by faculty to move to a competency based learning outcomes model?
4. What factors are fundamental to facilitate a successful competency based learning outcomes model?

Your participation and how information will be collected

The research will consist of an interview and is intended to take no more than thirty minutes of your time. Information will be audio taped, and, when appropriate summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report.

Benefits and risks to participation

My hope for the study is it will assist faculty and administration in the Co-operative Education department to implement a competency based learning outcomes model that will enhance student learning and is in alignment with the strategic vision of the University. Upon completion of the study, I plan to deliver to the University a full report of recommendations on how a focus on faculty engagement will lead to long term success of a competency based learning outcomes model in Co-operative Education at KPU. It will include research findings of faculty perceptions of the current model, ideas on curriculum and pedagogical enhancements, implementation and change management strategies, and a literature review on how other institutions have implemented similar models. As part of action research, I plan to present concrete next steps for implementing the recommendations in collaboration with staff and faculty at KPU. There may be risks involved for participating in this study; they are assessed as minimal. Due to the nature of the research, your participation will require that you volunteer or share personal experience and information; however, there is no anticipated risk or discomfort associated with the questions and you are not required to respond to any question that you feel may cause discomfort. Other risks may include the time it takes to participate in the research and potential changes to curriculum; however, any decisions/final recommendations will be decided upon collectively by faculty and director.

Inquiry team
An inquiry team made up of KPU faculty and staff will be assisting with piloting research questions and assisting with analyzing the data. They will not have access to individual level data. The purpose of the team is to provide objectivity and limit researcher bias. All members have signed a confidentiality agreement.

Real or Perceived Conflict of Interest
Due to the direct reporting relationship of the Co-op faculty to the director, I have chosen to conduct this interview separately to alleviate any potential conflict of interest. All information will be kept confidential; however, it will be difficult to guarantee anonymity due to the individual nature of the interview. To mitigate this conflict of interest, we can discuss collaboratively how points of view will be published in the final report. In addition, due to the dual role of sponsor and director/research participant, I also ask that you respect the confidential nature of the research by not sharing names or identifying comments outside of the interview/research findings. Due to my position as a current Co-op faculty member at KPU, for the purpose of this research, I will be a learner, and not an employee of the KPU Co-op department.

Confidentiality, security of data, and retention period
I will work to protect your privacy throughout this study All individual level data and personal information collected will be accessed by me and used during the data analysis stage. Information collected will be maintained in confidence with hard copies (e.g., consent forms) stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Electronic data (such as transcripts or audio files) will be stored on a password protected computer on my home computer and encrypted USB stick. Information will be recorded in hand-written and taped format and, where appropriate, summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential and upon completion of the project, all raw data will be destroyed.

Sharing results
In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree, I will also be sharing my research findings with senior leadership at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. The data and findings from the research may also be submitted to appropriate journals, conferences and professional development workshops. Participants may request a copy of the final report upon completion. In addition, I will provide a copy of the final report on the ACE website which you can access at www.co-op.bc.ca.

You are not required to participate in this research project and at any time, you are free to withdraw with no prejudice. By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 19 and have read the information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project.

☐ I consent to the audio recording of the focus group and interview

☐ I commit to respect the confidential nature of the interview and dual role sponsor/research participant by not sharing identifying information about the other participants

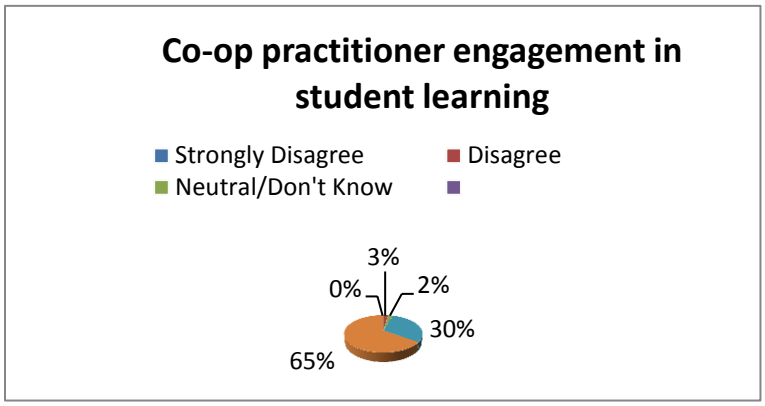
Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

**Please keep a copy of this information letter for your records.

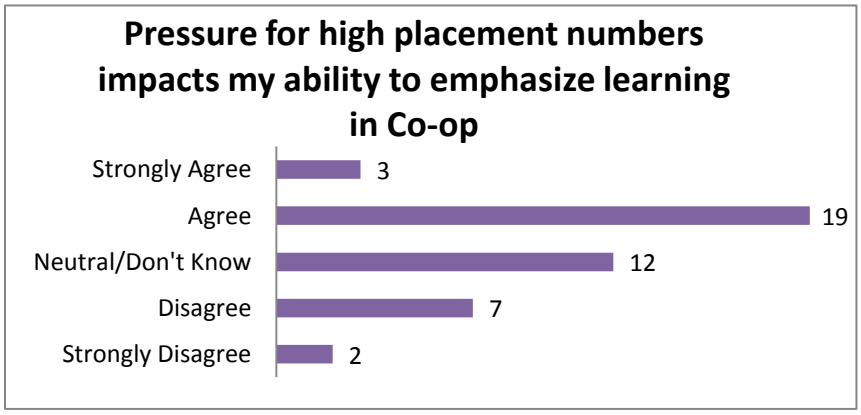
APPENDIX M: SURVEY DATA AND CHARTS



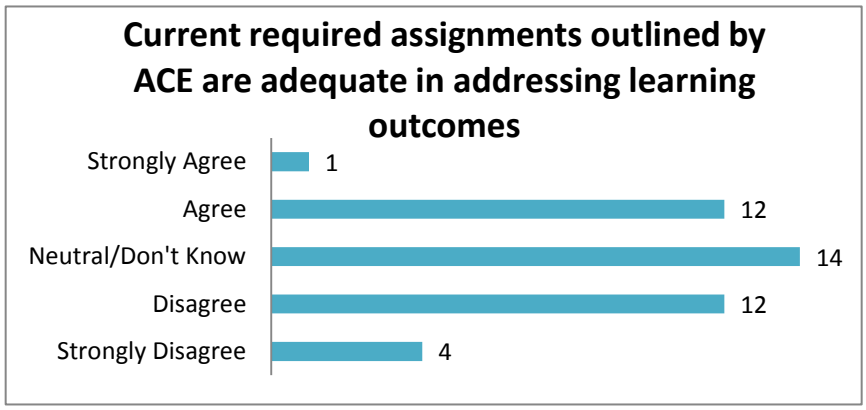
-ACE Member engagement in enhancing students' academic learning in co-op.

Language Referencing Student Learning	Frequency of participant comments
Work term assignments including final reports, reflective exercises, site visit	6/27
Student and employer evaluations	6/27
Reports (internal, external to program advisory committees, faculty, annual report)	7/27
Success stories/testimonials/sharing/verbal updates/feedback/conversations/discussions/oral presentations/anecdotal evidence/observations.	23/27

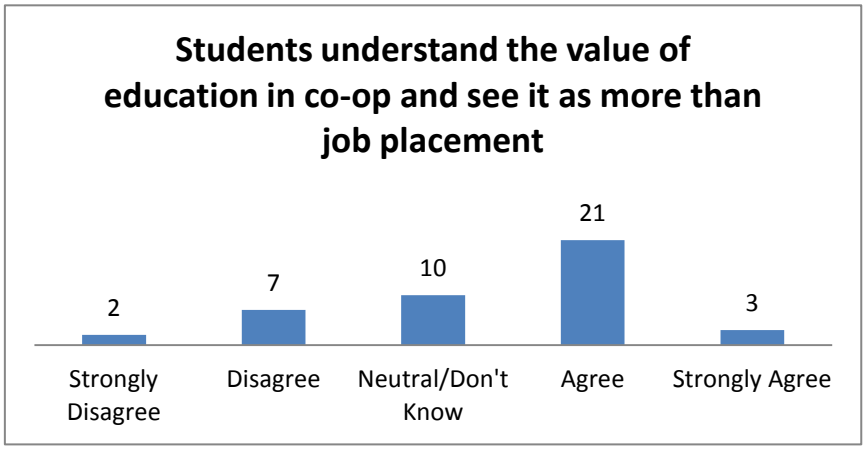
-Examples of how student learning was referenced based on analysis of common language and key words in text.



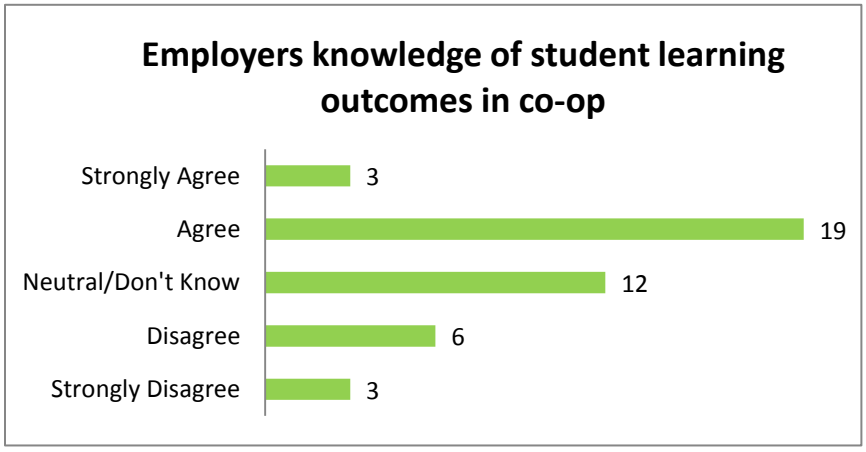
ACE Members who indicated pressure for high placement numbers impacts ability to emphasize learning in co-op.



ACE Members perrception that the current required assignments outlined by ACE are adequate in addressing learning outcomes in co-op.



ACE members' perception of how student value co-op education



ACE members' perception of employer knowledge of the student learning outcomes in co-op.