A Proposed e-Learning Policy Field for the Academy

Gale Parchoma
University of Saskatchewan

In this article, Lewin's (1951) social field theory is used as a framework for analyzing the potential for implementing scalable and sustainable e-learning initiatives in the academy. Powerful external economic and social forces coming to bear on academic leadership decisions are considered. The impacts of the emergence of the global learning society, knowledge economy, and information technology paradigm are explored. Five social forces—postmodernism, the interpretive turn, identity politics, globalization, and the post-colonial critique (Lincoln, 2001)—are examined. Existing and emergent pressures, exerted by both external and internal socioeconomic forces, are analyzed for their potential to support or inhibit adoption of e-learning initiatives into research, teaching, and learning activities. An e-learning policy field is posited.

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Definition of e-Learning

For the purposes of this article, *e-learning* is defined as electronically-mediated learning. e-Learning initiatives include the provision of online resources to support classroom-based learning, distance learning, and distributed learning models. *Distance learning* is defined as the provision of learning opportunities to learners situated away from a university campus. *Distributed learning* refers to the provision of learning opportunities in a combination of on and off campus settings.

Theoretical Framework

In order to analyze the forces that come into play in the transition from primarily place-based learning opportunities to the large-scale provision of distributed learning options in higher education, Lewin's (1947, 1951) field theory, as a framework for managing change, is employed.

Lewin (1947) argued that in order to successfully facilitate change, organizational leaders need to undertake a three-step process: *unfreezing*, *moving*, and *refreezing*. *Unfreezing* involves destabilizing the status quo. *Moving* includes identifying and evaluating the relative strengths of forces within a social field, considering available options and initiating incremental change. A social field is defined as an "ecological setting" in which "coexisting social entities, such as groups, subgroups, members, barriers, [and] channels of communication" (p. 200) undergo periods of relative constancy and change. The "relative positions of the entities" within the social field illustrate their roles as either driving or restraining forces (p. 200). Driving forces are defined as those forces that initiate and sustain change; restraining forces are defined as those forces that restrain or decrease the driving forces. *Refreezing* is the process of supporting a return to a sense of stability in the changed environment.

Figure 1 illustrates relative positions of driving and restraining forces within a social field, as well as potential changes in quasi-stationary states of the power of forces on equilibrium over time.

Emergent needs, trends, challenges, and pressures both external to and within the academy include driving forces for making the transition from primarily place-based learning to distributed learning models. Existing group norms, standards, values, and perceptions may be shown to be potentially restraining forces in large-scale adoption of e-learning. Therefore, an analysis of external socioeconomic forces, as well as internal organizational forces, for their potential to enable or limit adoption of e-learning initiatives into the practice of teaching and learning in traditional universities, framed within a social field, is useful.

As this article focuses on identifying driving and restraining forces within the e-learning policy field of the academy, its scope does not encompass Lewin's full three-step model. Rather than invoking the full

model, attention is paid to the first step, *unfreezing*, because we do not yet know how the transition to e-learning in higher education will move or stabilize.

Critiques of Field Theory as a Framework for Organizational Change

There are four predominant, contemporary critiques of the continuing usefulness Lewin's field theory as a framework for understanding organizational change. First, field theory has been criticized for its linearity, simplicity, and mechanistic approach (Dawson, 1994; Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992). Secondly, it has been argued that field theory can only support small-scale, incremental change, and therefore, is not appropriate in situations where broader-scale transformational change is needed (Dawson, 1994). Field theory has also been criticized for naively excluding issues of power and politics within organizations (Pfeffer, 1992). Finally, Lewin's work has been perceived to be a top-down approach to change management, thus lacking relevancy to the culture of contemporary organizations (Dawson, 1994; Kanter, et al., 1992).

Responses to Critiques of Field Theory

While Lewin's work has undergone significant critique in the past 20 years, recent re-analyses of field theory have countered many earlier criticisms. In particular, Burnes (2004) directly addresses the body of criticisms of field theory. In response to the linearity, simplicity, and mechanistic critiques, Burnes (2004) argues that these criticisms "appear to stem from a misreading of how Lewin perceived stability and change" (p. 992). Countering the critique of field theory as being limited to isolated and incremental applications, Burnes (2004) posits, "Over time, incremental change can lead to radical transformations" (p. 993). In contrast to the view that Lewin's lack of sensitivity to power and politics issues within organizations, Burnes states that this "seems a strange criticism. Anyone seriously addressing racism and religious intolerance, as Lewin was, could not ignore these issues (p. 994). Finally, Burnes notes that "gaining the commitment of all concerned" (p. 995) is a critical underpinning throughout Lewin's work. Therefore, perceptions that Lewin advocated a top-down approach are unfounded because Lewin's work consistently focused on how to identify the forces within and between groups who hold variant levels of power within and among organizations.

Burnes' position on the continuing value of field theory is supported by Elord and Tippett's (2002) meta-analysis of change models across a range of disciplines, which provides strong evidence that more contemporary models are extensions of Lewin's model of change than those that diverge from it. Field theory is based "on building understanding, generating

FIGURE 1
Change in Relative Strengths of Driving and Restraining Forces over Time
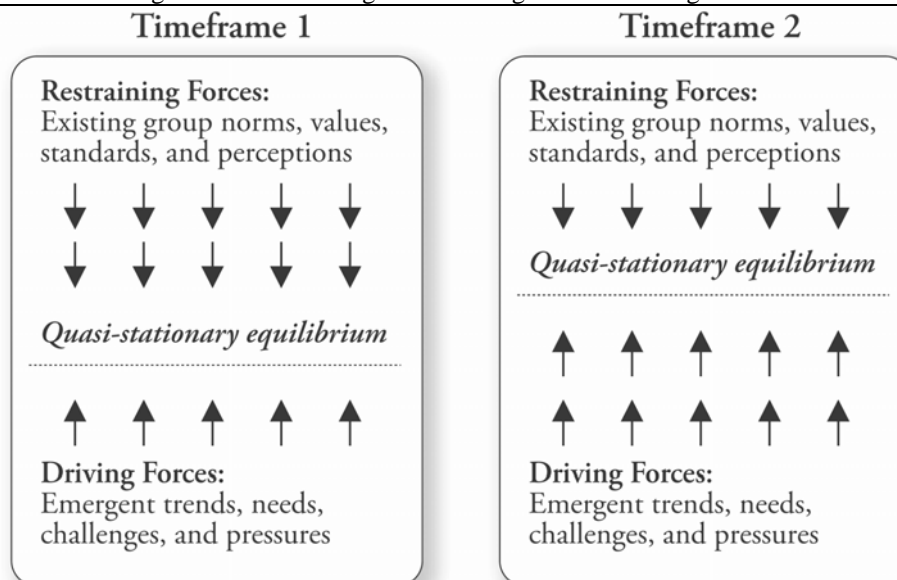
Note. Adapted from Lewin (1951, pp. 198-208).

learning, gaining new insights, and identifying and testing (and retesting) solutions" (Burnes, 2004, p. 997), and remains a relevant framework for understanding and managing change. As the adoption of e-learning is a potentially disruptive agent of change within the academy, field theory is a useful framework for understanding and managing this change.

Criteria for Evaluating the Feasibility of e-Learning Initiatives

This examination of the ecological setting of the academy focuses on e-learning initiatives for alignment and attunement with larger social and economic forces, as well as the existing institutional, organizational, cultural, economic, and pedagogical contexts. As in broader change initiatives, if the planning, design, and implementation of a strategic e-learning initiative is to be deemed worthwhile, it must have sufficient utility; it must "meet some need" and it must be operationally, fiscally, and politically viable (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 227). Further as with other transitions, the broad-scale adoption of e-learning must be, and must be seen to be, as an efficacious adjustment to emergent circumstances, for which alternative responses would be insufficient (Ruttenbar, Spickler, & Lurie, 2000). Determining whether a broad-scale e-learning strategy is feasible within a particular academic setting, depends in part upon, gaining an understanding of the driving and restraining forces that influence leadership within the academy as a whole, as well as variant levels of support for adoption from within individual academic contexts.

A factor that may make broad-scale adoption of e-learning an efficacious adjustment to emergent circumstances, for which alternative responses would be insufficient, is significantly increased demand for the provision of online resources to support classroom-based learning, distance learning, and distributed learning models. The emergence of a global learning society is increasing these demands.

Learning a Living

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan predicted that the future of work would involve "learning a living"; information technology would "unite production, consumption, and learning in an inextricable process"; and the "process of automation that causes withdrawal of the present work force from industry" would "cause learning itself to become the principal kind of production and consumption" (pp. 350-51). Forty years later, there is a significant body of evidence that suggests McLuhan's prediction of the emergence of a global learning society has been realized and has become a catalyst forcing complex issues to the fore in higher education.

External Economic Forces

The *knowledge* economy is a powerful force in contemporary society (Nesbit, 2004; Alcaly, 2003; Norton, 2000; O'Driscoll, 2003). As increasing numbers of countries move towards knowledge-based economies, the importance of human capital—sharable knowledge, leadership capacity, and creativity of a human involved in economic activity—will continue to grow. In the foreseeable future, workers who create and use knowledge to add new value to products and services will be "a prominent and perhaps the dominant group in the workforce" (Alcaly, 2003, p. 9). Given the economic and social promise associated with success in higher education, demand for access is likely to continue to significantly increase over the next decades. Limitations on existing tertiary educational institutions' abilities to accommodate rising enrollments, increasing numbers of adult learners, as well as competing responsibilities in adult learners' lives, have all contributed to the demand for distance learning options.

While the new economy's reliance upon a well-educated workforce for survival and success suggests a strong role for the academy in the future, cultural and value differences may impede corporate-academic collaboration. Corporate demands for knowledge workers who continually renew their knowledge for the purpose of sustaining innovation—but do not necessarily seek formal credentials for that knowledge—and may not be attuned to traditional university culture and values. The norms of the traditional academy may not well serve the corporate agenda, and may not wish to do so.

Current structures and functions of the traditional academy may not reflect the "network enterprise" norm of the corporate world (Norton, 2000). Networked enterprises are described in terms of a triangulation of initiatives, each of which work toward the goal of achieving maximum flexibility as a strategy for dealing with complexity, ambiguity, and continual change. Implementing a networked system effectively involves an inter-related and complex set of changes to conventional business practices, which can only be accomplished "if managers and workers understand" that the changes do not constitute "a fixed way of doing things but, rather, a method, or philosophy of experimentation, of constantly testing existing procedures against proposed changes, of always searching for small ways to improve" (Alcaly, 2003, p. 148).

Coping with the ambiguities of work as an experimental arena where there are no fixed processes

or procedures will require an adaptable, informed, and innovative workforce, capable of high levels of effective interpersonal communication and collaboration. Members of this workforce will need to continuously renew their knowledge; and therefore, adopt learning as a life-long process. The resultant pressures on existing post-secondary educational institutions to provide continuing personalized education for adult learners via flexible, affordable, distributed learning options may become an increasingly strong driving force for change within the institutions themselves.

e-Learning as a Disruptive Technology?

In the new economy, even the most knowledgably staffed and effectively networked enterprises, as well as, one might argue, traditional universities, need to be aware of the possibility of the emergence of a "disruptive technology" (Norton, 2000, p. 129). A disruptive technology is defined as any technology capable of "overturning the established order" (Norton, p. 129). The "irony" of disruptive technologies is that "in the face of a disruptive technology, good management can contribute to [organizational] failure" (p. 130). The reason for failure is that disruptive technologies *do not* serve the needs of existing organizational structures, *do not* support existing business incentives, *do not* provide avenues to "increase profit margins on existing products," and *do not* meet the needs of an organization's "most-valued existing customers" (p. 130). Disruptive technologies gain advantage via newcomers' creations of "bare-bones product[s]," initially distributed to "the low end of the market" (p. 130). The newcomers "then improve the package over time while still charging a lower price. At some point the over-served established market will start to turn to the minimalist newcomer, and all bets are off for the leaders" (Christensen, p. xvii).

A parallel in higher education is plausible. To date, e-learning competition from the private sector may only indirectly influence faculty. Faculty responses to this new competition tend to lack a sense of urgency "due to [faculty] belief in the quality and rigor of their own programs" (Olcott & Schmidt, p. 269). However, leaders of traditional universities may wish to consider the extent to which e-learning is driving a "transformational market" within higher education (Olcott & Schmidt, p. 269). The educational sector cannot hope to escape the influence of the new economy, including its disruptive technologies; therefore, universities may need to consider how to adapt to this influence.

One way to approach adaptation is to study the complexities and convergences that mark the new economy to identify *crossover points*—points at which new economy forces will most likely and most immediately influence university activities. The convergence of research, higher education, and information technology (IT) in e-learning initiatives is an evident and immediate *crossover point*. Archer, Garrison, and Anderson (1999) argue that the emergence of e-learning as a potentially disruptive technology in higher education is already evident:

> Universities currently enjoy a dominant position in the postsecondary education "industry." However, this "industry" now seems to be entering a period of rapid technological change – the sort of period in which the leading firms in an industry may rather suddenly be eclipsed by new players. (p. 13)

The increase in the number and sources of electronic distance education "products" is an outgrowth of rapid technological change (Archer, Garrison, & Anderson, 1999, p. 14). Moreover, many new players, institutions that specialize in e-learning, such as the University of Phoenix and Athabasca University, have focused their attention on the least profitable "customers" in the educational sector (Archer, et al., p.18). "In the environment of public universities in Canada, it is easy to identify undergraduates as being among the university's 'least profitable customers'" because they do not contribute to the most "lucrative part of the 'market' addressed by traditional universities" (Archer, et al., p. 18).

As research is the currency of traditional universities, the predominant source of tenure and promotion for faculty, and as undergraduate students rarely contribute to this currency, emphasis on undergraduate teaching may be less valued. Further, within this potentially less valued group, "a few 'customers' have been a particularly "unprofitable market segment" (Archer, Garrison, & Anderson, 1999, p. 18). This particularly unprofitable group is made up of individuals, who for geographic, economic, or academic reasons, "cannot access a conventional university program" (Archer, et al., p.18). The educational aspirations of these individuals have created an opportunity for the emergence of distance education as a disruptive technology. As these individuals cannot not access traditional universities, they have little choice but to accept often simpler and sometimes, lower-quality educational "products." As long as distance education almost exclusively served this unprofitable market segment, within traditional universities it was marginalized in continuing education and extension divisions, and of little interest to the academy at large.

However, e-learning is blurring traditional boundaries, blending outreach and campus-based activities, introducing cost-recovery models, and

potentially becoming a disruptive technology, as well as a disruptive cultural influence—especially in institutions that have committed themselves to integrating entrepreneurial culture into the fabric of the university (Hanna, 2000). Integration of entrepreneurial culture into traditional college structures, is often perceived as commercialization and critiqued as evidence of an institutional lack of purpose and mission "beyond a vague commitment to 'excellence'" (Bok, 2003), and as a threat to "the quality and relevance of teaching, learning, and research" (Daniel & Mohan, 2004). Entrepreneurial continuing education and extension units may also be perceived as threats to existing discipline-based, instructor-centered, and classroom-oriented programming and "to traditional, content-based organization and decision making" (Hanna, 2000, p. 99).

A driving force behind an increasing emphasis on the development of an entrepreneurial culture within the academy has been accelerating competition among universities (Bok, 2003; Daniel & Mohan, 2004; Hanna, 2000). Increased competition has sparked concerted efforts within universities to acquire greater resources "because almost anything that a university does to try to lift its reputation costs money" (Bok, 2003, p. 14). While traditional universities have been focused securing funds for recruiting renowned professors and the most talented students in order to further their attempts to become first-rate research universities (Bok, 2003), newcomers in the arena of higher education have focused their efforts on providing access to higher education via e-learning.

For-profit or corporate universities, such as the University of Phoenix, Jones International, Capella University, among many others, have entered the post-secondary e-learning *market*, and have with variant levels of success, established themselves as significant players in both the undergraduate and graduate "sectors." For example, the University of Phoenix currently "enrolls over 70,000 students in degree programs" and has become the largest provider of online degrees in North America (DiPaolo, 2003, p. 6; See also Bates, 2000).

While the e-learning *market* remains highly volatile, the list of educational entrepreneurs has expanded both within and beyond the corporate model to include collaborations among traditional universities, corporations, publishers, associations, and both national and international governmental organizations, including the European Commission and the United Nations (DiPaolo, 2003, pp. 3, 11). Further, these initiatives are often very well funded. The European Commission adopted at "13.3 billion dollar plan" in April 2001 "to promote online university education" (DiPaolo, p. 3). Universitas 21, "an international network of universities," and Thompson Learning collectively invested 50 million dollars in their online learning alliance (DiPaolo, p. 4).

These newcomers often access traditional universities' more prominent faculty members, and pay these members very well, to refine and expand educational products and services. As a result, newcomers are becoming increasingly competitive in the graduate education market. For example, the University of Phoenix's most high profile and profitable offering is its "masters of business administration program" (Hanna, 2000, p. 144). *Strayer Online* is a for-profit venture in higher education that claims the position of being "the largest accredited adult-focused university in America, and a leading provider of online education" (Strayer University, 2005). *Stayer Online* delivers graduate degree programs through twelve campus sites (Hanna, p. 144).

Traditional universities have responded to the rise of educational competitors in a variety of ways. As well as entering into public-private collaborative ventures, they have also attempted with variant success to create for-profit spinouts. Duke Corporate Education, Babson Interactive, National University, and eCornell are, to date, operational; NYU Online, Fathom/Columbia, UMUC Online, and Virtual Temple are notable failures (see DiPaolo, 2003, p. 23). Given the level of risk, the apparently equal odds for success and failure of for-profit spin-offs, as well as alternative models for e-learning initiatives, strategic planning appears critical.

A strategic plan obviously needs to include a sound business plan, but a sound business plan may not be a sufficient guarantor of success. Understanding the potential for e-learning initiatives to create a significant disruption of existing "group goals, group standards, group values, and the way a group 'sees' its own situation and that of other groups" (Lewin, 1951, p. 198) within the social field of the academy may be an even more important consideration. Stated differently, "How do we move from a position where everyone has a different, fixed idea about the changing higher education landscape to a position in which the community as a whole can move forward with confidence" (Brown & Jackson, 2001, p. 13)?

External Social Forces

Five "powerful social forces," warrant consideration in change management strategies because they currently exert influence on a "variety of social, economic, governmental and legislative activities around the world" (Lincoln, 2001, para. 1). These forces pervasively influence the social fields of policy creation because:

> Taken together, postmodernism, the interpretive turn, identity politics, globalization and the post-

colonial critique—even though each might be sensed or enacted differently at any given time—form a powerful force for social change. They will… force changes in our relationships with other countries, with other cultures, and indeed, with the multiple and pluralistic subcultures inside our own country. (Lincoln, para. 4)

Lincoln posits that understanding these forces, as well as the changes to existing social policies and structures they affect, is a crucial aspect in evaluating how a proposed change "fits with those changes, contradicts the changes, resists changes, or is completely out of touch with them" because "if one proposed change exhibits great consonance with other, larger social forces, its chances of surviving, and possibly thriving, is enhanced" (Lincoln, 2001, para. 3). Given that the adoption of a large-scale e-learning initiative may have the potential to significantly impact existing university organizational cultures, structures, and functions, consideration of adopting such a policy warrants analysis of the academic social field to determine the relative strengths of consonant driving forces and contradictory restraining forces.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism influences the way complex problems, such as whether or how to embed an e-learning initiative into the core activity of the academy, are articulated, analyzed, and resolved. From a postmodernist perspective, "reflexivity, rather than reason, is the process that postmodern thinkers advocate for coming to a deeper sense of the kind of world we are personally constructing with our words" (Sackney & Mitchell, 2002, p. 890). A *deeper sense* of the issues involved in e-learning initiatives in traditional universities involves an analysis of potential impacts on existing academic culture, as well as their alignment with and attunement to emergent social, cultural, economic, educational, and organizational trends.

A further implication of post-modern thought is "that theory and practice [must be] inseparable, and 'useful theories [will be] those that have the potential to offer new alternatives to the present culture'" (Mitchell, Walker, & Sackney, 1996, p. 50). Given a need for an inclusive, stakeholder-sensitive approach, e-learning system policy options need to be explored in an action-oriented perspective. The result of this broadly based environmental scan of the sense that variant stakeholders make of potential e-learning policies must assume that the emergent effects of "uncertainty, instability, complexity, and indeterminacy" (Sackney & Mitchell, p. 900), may surface value pluralistic constructions that "are inextricably linked to…particular physical, psychological, social, and

cultural contexts," which in turn, require a dynamic of "negotiation" (Guba & Lincoln, p. 8). The outcome of negotiation may be a consensus, a "shared construction" of how to respond to the situation (Guba & Lincoln, p. 9), or an explanation why a shared construction cannot be reached. A clear course of action may *not* emerge from this process; however, a deeper understanding of whether a strategic e-learning policy is operationally, fiscally, and politically viable may be reached.

The Interpretive Turn

Lincoln's (2001) second social force, "the interpretive turn," is an acknowledgement "that facts are only 'facts' within some theoretical framework, and that much of what passes for science is, in fact, some assertion within a theoretical discourse system" (The interpretive turn, para. 1). Within theoretical discourse systems:

Social constructivism posits that two kinds of realities exist side by side, and operate within the same domain: the first reality resides in tangible objects, sites, and events, and is peopled by individuals and groups with specific social interests. The second reality is constituted in the minds of…stakeholders, and is driven by the sense-making and meaning-imputation activities of the human minds. (The interpretive turn, para. 1)

Under the lens of deconstruction, a critique of theoretical language that questions both the predominance of scientific theory and the sole privilege of scientists to define independent knowledge, "the trademark of a research university—independent production of scientific knowledge is obviously challenged" (Tjeldvoll, 1998, para. 3). Given that "in the wake of postmodernism and the critique of positivism, the earlier division of knowledge into distinct disciplines is no longer generally accepted" (Tjeldvoll, para. 3), the discipline-based organizational structures of the academy may not be well-aligned to meet the knowledge needs of a global learning society. Interdisciplinary-collaborative research, teaching, and learning initiatives, which are enabled by e-learning solutions, may be better aligned to global knowledge construction because these initiatives include multiple perspectives, broader access to current theory, and therefore, wider-ranging critiques.

Identity Politics

Sensitivity to "identity politics" (Lincoln, Identity politics, para. 2) seems to be a topic distinct from the one at hand. However, issues of identity and ethnicity

are deeply connected to issues involving information technologies because both are "social construct[s] that might evolve in one context and change in another" (Zurawski, para. 2). Therefore, it is important to "understand the relationship between cultural identity and information technologies and how the dynamic of the information age affects the collective identities of groups and their modes of self-organization" (Zurawski, para. 3). Acknowledging this dynamic provides a further rationale for taking "into account the social, cultural, educational and political interests of various stakeholding groups" (Lincoln, Identity politics, para. 2), who will be affected by the result of the decisions of policy-making groups.

Globalization and the Post-colonial Critique

Globalization, the actualization of trans-national corporations, money, currencies, and whole economies moving "at lightning speed over the Internet," as well as the accompanying effects of the post-colonial critique of the "'McDonaldization' of the non-Western world" (Lincoln, Globalization, para. 1; See also Barber, 2001) are both driving and restraining forces in the development of e-learning strategies. Access to international learners may be perceived as a desirable strategy for increasing enrollment revenues; therefore, e-learning initiatives can be aligned with globalization, and re-colonization. However, it is not necessary to perceive e-learning in this fashion. While e-learning policy makers need to be cognizant of the potential effects of exporting "Western forms of thinking," which may "impinge" (Lincoln, Globalization, para. 2) upon learners' lives in international contexts, it is possible to include opportunities for critique of Western ways of thinking and respect for international contexts, and as a result, promote East-West, North-South dialogue. Such considerations can include an ethic of awareness, a sensitivity to possible outcomes of influencing international students' perceptions of the "norms and codes…embedded in the traditions, laws, customs, arts, and literature" of their home societies (Zurawski, Ethnicity and communication technology, para. 3). Variant levels of faculty expertise in cross-cultural issues and awareness of post-colonial critiques regarding "negative impacts on indigenous universities" (Hanna, 2000, p. 343) may be restraining forces in the success of e-learning.

Potentially Restraining Forces Within the Academy

Restraining forces within the academy may include place-based policies that have not been revised sufficiently to remove obstacles to effective distributed learning practice. For example, academic leaders may need to reconsider existing residency requirements

(DiPaolo, 2003; Olcott & Schmidt, 2004), imbalanced research and teaching reward systems (Archer, Garrison, & Anderson, 1999; Boyer, 1990), problematic intellectual property policies (DiPaolo, 2003; Hilton & Neal, 2001; Tallman, 2000), and insufficient levels of application of research-based distributed learning strategies (Bates, 2000). Inadequate levels learner-centeredness in instruction and in support services, or alternatively stated, meaningfulness to learners (DiPaolo, 2003; Hanna, 2000; Olcott & Schmidt, 2004; Thomas, Carswell, Price, & Petre, 1998; Thompson, 2000; Vinicini, 2001) can be especially inhibiting in distributed learning environments. Misaligned organizational structures and functions can slow the rate of adoption of e-learning options by creating unnecessary disciplinary barriers in development projects (Tjeldvoll, 1998).

Significant concerns about financial risk may restrain efforts to develop and implement institutional e-learning systems. The notable failures (DiPaolo, 2003, p. 23) among those universities where scalable e-learning systems have been attempted are cause for caution. However, strategically drafting e-learning system policies, as crucial components of long-term planning initiatives, at a time when convergent driving forces for flexible, accessible, distributed learning opportunities are rapidly increasing is necessary.
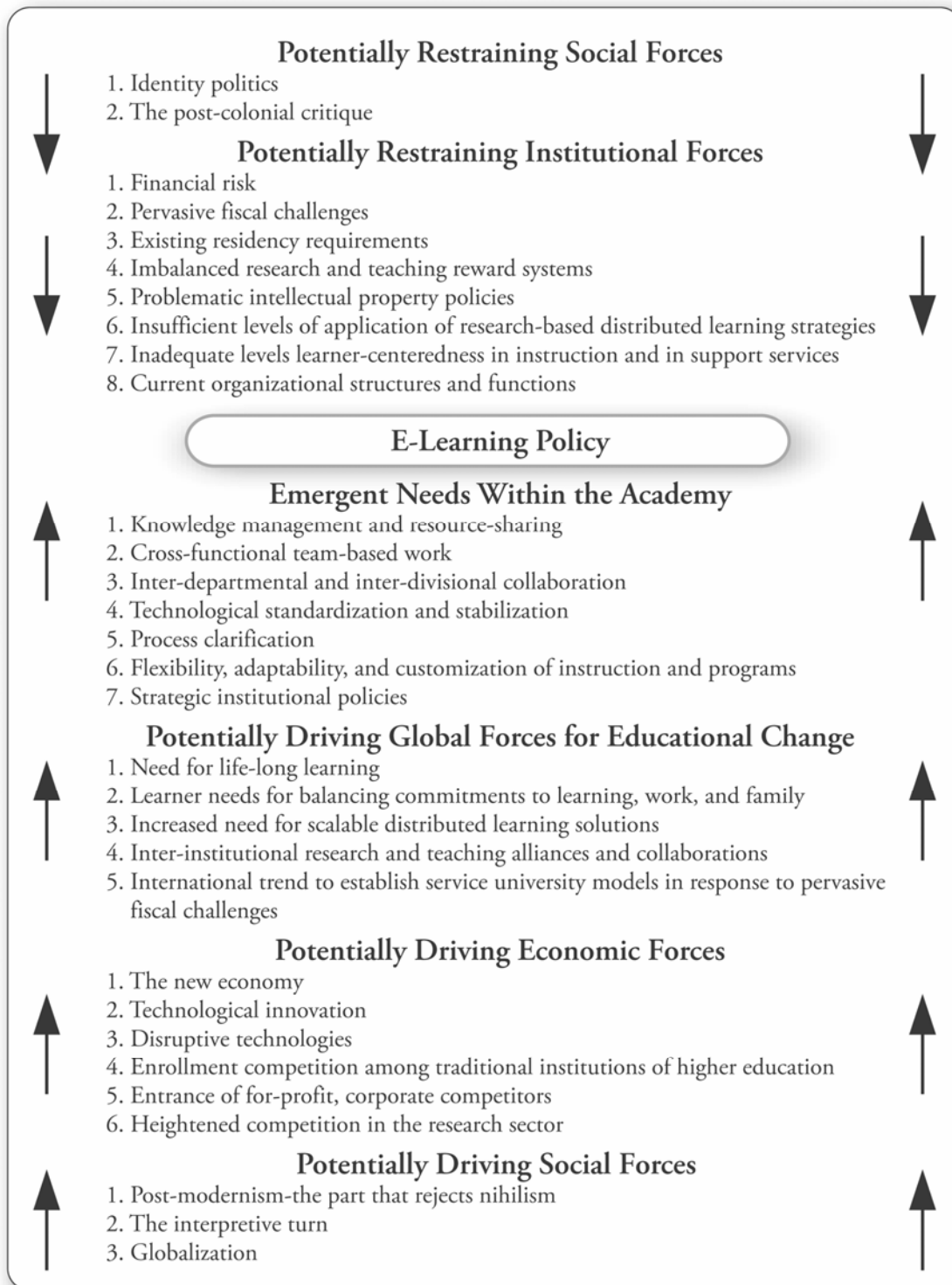
A Proposed e-Learning Policy Field

In order to determine if or to what extent restraining and driving forces may influence the adoption of e-learning within the academy, a force field policy model is posited. Eight potentially restraining forces within the e-learning system policy field are presented. Financial risk, pervasive fiscal challenges, existing residency requirements, imbalanced research and teaching reward systems, problematic intellectual property policies, inadequate levels of application of research-based distributed learning strategies, and potentially misaligned organizational structures and functions may each act as powerful restraining forces in the adoption of scalable and sustainable e-learning solutions.

Lincoln's (2001) five social forces may influence the direction of change within the academy, as the institution adapts to the changing social context of contemporary society. While the identity politics and the post-modern critique have the potential to become restraining forces, influences of postmodernism, the interpretive turn, and globalization may act as driving forces.

Comparably, the new economy, and its significant impact on the everyday lives and needs of academy graduates to constantly update their knowledge and skills, may initiate and sustain change that drives e-

FIGURE 2
A Proposed e-Learning Policy Field for the Academy

Potentially Restraining Social Forces
1. Identity politics
2. The post-colonial critique

Potentially Restraining Institutional Forces
1. Financial risk
2. Pervasive fiscal challenges
3. Existing residency requirements
4. Imbalanced research and teaching reward systems
5. Problematic intellectual property policies
6. Insufficient levels of application of research-based distributed learning strategies
7. Inadequate levels learner-centeredness in instruction and in support services
8. Current organizational structures and functions

E-Learning Policy

Emergent Needs Within the Academy
1. Knowledge management and resource-sharing
2. Cross-functional team-based work
3. Inter-departmental and inter-divisional collaboration
4. Technological standardization and stabilization
5. Process clarification
6. Flexibility, adaptability, and customization of instruction and programs
7. Strategic institutional policies

Potentially Driving Global Forces for Educational Change
1. Need for life-long learning
2. Learner needs for balancing commitments to learning, work, and family
3. Increased need for scalable distributed learning solutions
4. Inter-institutional research and teaching alliances and collaborations
5. International trend to establish service university models in response to pervasive fiscal challenges

Potentially Driving Economic Forces
1. The new economy
2. Technological innovation
3. Disruptive technologies
4. Enrollment competition among traditional institutions of higher education
5. Entrance of for-profit, corporate competitors
6. Heightened competition in the research sector

Potentially Driving Social Forces
1. Post-modernism-the part that rejects nihilism
2. The interpretive turn
3. Globalization

learning adoption (Alclay, 2003; Barone, 2003; Ghosh, 2004; Norton, 2000). Technological innovation (Alclay, 2003; Bates, 2000; Barone, 2003; Norton, 2000), disruptive technologies (Archer, Garrrison, & Anderson, 1999), enrollment and reputation competitions among traditional institutions of higher education (Bok, 2003; Hanna, 2000), the entrance of for-profit, corporate competitors (Bates, 2000; Hanna, 2000), and heightened competition in both the academic and corporate research sectors (Bok, 2003; Tjeldvoll, 1998) may drive increased use of e-learning as conduits to competitiveness. In addition, the need to form inter-institutional research and teaching alliances and collaborations in order to achieve efficiencies (MacKay, 1996), and the need to address the international trend to establish service university models in response to pervasive fiscal challenges (Tjeldvoll, 1998) may drive the e-learning agenda.

E-learning solutions can provide distributed learning opportunities to broaden life-long access to higher education (Bates, 2000; Hartman & Truman-Davis, 2001). As life-long learners need to balance commitments to learning, work, and family (Bates, 2000; Hanna, 2000; Palloff & Pratt, 1999), access to distributed learning options may be the most pragmatic solution to meeting their learning needs.

Emergent needs within the academy, including solutions to knowledge management and resource-sharing challenges (Daniel & Mohan, 2004; Hanley, 2001), the requirement for cross-functional, team-based work to construct cost-efficient, effective learning resources (Bates, 2000; Hanley, 2001; Hartman & Truman-Davis, 2001), and the trends toward inter-departmental and inter-divisional collaboration to extend learning opportunities across disciplinary boundaries (Hanna, 2000a; MacKay,1996; Tjeldvoll, 1998) suggest that attention be paid to current organizational structures.

The need for technological standardization and stabilization to ensure quality, interoperability, and dependability of educational resources (Bates, 2000; Daniel & Mohan, 2004; Hartman & Truman-Davis, 2001), the necessity for process clarification to avoid duplication of efforts (Bates, 2000; Hartman & Truman-Davis, 2001), as well as a response to increasing student demands for flexible, adaptable, and customizable instruction and programs to meet individual needs (Daniel & Mohan, 2004; DiPaolo, 2003; McCalla, 2004), each require strategic institutional e-learning policies.

Figure 2 theorizes an e-learning policy field that addresses questions directed to external and internal driving and restraining forces for e-learning adoption within the academy.

Conclusion

Potential driving and restraining forces, which may significantly influence the broad-scale adoption of e-learning as a core function in traditional academies, have been discussed in this article. The ratio of driving to restraining forces in the *Figure 2* may appear to predict the adoption of e-learning as a core function across academies over time. However, the relative strengths of driving and restraining forces remain context-specific and time-sensitive. Furthermore, existing and emergent forces, which are not identified in this field analysis, may be particularly formidable in some contexts. Analysis of the context of an individual institution may benefit from the application or adaptation of the posited policy field, but the outcomes of such an analysis at any given time are not predictable.

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GALE PARCHOMA is a doctoral candidate in Educational Administration, an instructional designer, and a lecturer at University of Saskatchewan. Her instructional design work is currently focused on technology enhanced learning and the creation of virtual laboratories. Her research interests include e-learning policy, learner-centered instructional design, and evidenced-based pedagogical change. Prior to taking her current position at the University of Saskatchewan, Gale worked as an instructional designer for British Columbia's Open University and a tutor for the Commonwealth of Learning.