The Experiential Learning Connections between University and Community: Recent Ontario Experience

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Abstract

Experiential Learning (EL), including a range of pedagogical approaches such as co-ops and community service learning, connect the university and its external community. Universities are considering such approaches to meet a number of needs and priorities both on and off-campus. As it unfolds rapidly at the present time, EL becomes the connection between the university and the community beyond its gates, both locally and more extensively. However, university-community or so-called town-gown (TG) connections traditionally focus on research and/or science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This thesis focuses on the teaching and learning connections, especially in Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS), which face persistent questions about disciplinary relevance and graduate employability. In addition, this thesis is concerned particularly with EL connections as they occur in the university’s local or ‘host’ community. The study shows the rapid and widespread adoption of alternative EL models across universities in Ontario. However, rapid adoption comes with diverse approaches and new tensions including issues of institutional centralization versus decentralization of EL arrangements. Funding challenges and the globalized agendas of universities also impact these local connections. In today’s skill and technology-driven world of work, university-community connections should be prioritized in higher education policy.

Keywords: Experiential learning; University-community connections; Ontario; Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.
Summary for Lay Audience

Experiential Learning (EL) is a form of learning where students engage in learning activities outside of the traditional classroom setting. Universities usually connect students with their local host institutions to achieve this learning objective, however, these University-community or so-called town-gown (TG) connections traditionally focus on research and/or Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). This thesis focuses on the teaching and learning connections, especially in Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS), which usually face questions about relevance and graduate employability in today’s knowledge-based economy. The study findings show that universities in Ontario are adopting several EL models to meet the emergent skills gap between academia and the world of work. However, these adaptations come with challenges such as funding, decentralization, and tensions within institutions as well as among partner community organizations. Higher education should therefore prioritize university and community connections to enhance their teaching and learning missions.
Dedication

I dedicate this work to my wife Laura and our wonderful kids, David, Levi, and Ava for their immense support and understanding even when I was away during nights and weekends in order to complete this thesis. Without you, it wouldn’t have been possible.
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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

Educational systems are being transformed by global economic, social, and political trends in unprecedented ways (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2019). New waves of technological advancements are changing the world of work and the future of jobs (Nübler, 2018). For some observers, these trends are leading to a skills gap - - described as a ‘quiet crisis’- - between academia and the world of work (Royal Bank of Canada, 2018).

Universities are responding to this call by forming partnerships with community and industry, primarily through Experiential Learning (EL). Traditionally, universities have forged so-called town-gown (TG) connections based on research-related exchange, such as technology parks and patenting, and these connections live through STEM-based disciplines (Benneworth, Charles, & Madanipour, 2010; Sattler, & Peters, 2013). The rapid diffusion of EL-based TG connections is therefore qualitatively new (Norton, 2018). These connections may be geographically local and based also in Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) disciplines. This newness forms the fundamental rationale of this thesis and offers an opportunity to fill a gap in the literature.

This thesis therefore seeks to understand the emerging connections between universities and their community partners with a particular interest in EL engagements. Thus, the research asks: To what extent and in what ways do universities work with their local communities, mainly via teaching and learning? This question is explored across the full range of the universities' disciplines, but with emphasis on HASS and local
university-community geographies. In this regard, scholars such as Chuh (2019) maintain that these distinctive contributions of HASS towards industry and the general world of work sits at the confluence of increasing recognition in academic and governmental circles. Also, local communities serve as the first frontier agents for the translation of university research agendas to advancing knowledge and quality of life. Therefore the power of learning-in-place is argued to be well established within local geographies and communities (Owens, Sotoudehnia, & Erickson-McGee, 2015).

The objectives of this study are to 1) understand the motivations behind the rising popularity of EL, 2) identify the myriad ways universities connect with host communities, and 3) find out the challenges that impact institutional efforts to venture outside of their [universities’] traditional mission of teaching and knowledge production.

2. Contextual definitions of EL

An early definition of EL is offered by Mezirow (1978) as learning in which the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied - - based on the principle that life experiences influence the way learning occurs. Historically, sending students into the community to gain real-world experience of what they learn in school formed the basis for EL. Scholars such as Keeton and Tate (1978) define EL as, “learning in which the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied” (p. 23). Dewey (1986) argues for the importance of the social and interactive processes of learning for a quality educational experience. In this context, the students learn when they are observing and actively involved in what is being taught. Kolb (1984) expands on this by stating, “…the
process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (p. 38). Over the years, EL has evolved to include how the learning occurs, what impacts the experiences have on the learner, and how that affects their career development. This understanding of EL is redefined by (Kolb, 2014) to imply a form of life experience that is often contrasted with lecture and classroom learning. Kolb observes the explosion of EL since the 2000s, acknowledging its assumed importance in addressing 21st-century problems associated with learning and education. In this context, Kolb (2014) claims knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experiences. Therefore, the general belief is that student experiences outside of the classroom add to the teaching and learning process. However, scholars such as Buys and Bursnall (2007) argue that most universities do not view community engagement as a priority in their work. The contention is that sending students to non-academic organizations is complex, raises ethical questions and may disrupt universities’ scholastic agenda (Taylor, 2001).

This thesis uses a more recent definition of EL as the basis for framing the research and designing the methodology. In this context, the University of Western Ontario defines EL as “an approach that educators use to intentionally connect learners with practical experiences that include guided reflection. EL allows learners to increase and apply disciplinary knowledge, develop transferable skills, clarify interests and values, strengthen career engagement and employability, and collaborate meaningfully with communities” (University of Western Ontario, 2019). Therefore, blending theory and practice to help prepare students for employment is becoming an important academic agenda (Hayne Beatty, 2018).
Debates exist around universities’ engagement with community and industry and how this potentially affects their [universities’] teaching and learning missions. Some scholars believe these out-of-class engagements may constitute the commercialization of academic knowledge, subsequently describing them as interferences (Giroux, 2015). Some scholars raise caution for universities not to lose their teaching and scholarly mission through these expanded outreach programs (Castleden, Daley, Sloan Morgan, & Sylvestre, 2013). In contrast, others argue that universities need to do more by engaging community partners as part of their teaching mission (Connell, 2019). Therefore, the advent of EL without clarity may be adding to the uncertainties which in turn justifies this probe into the extent to which universities engage with community partners on the emergence EL. Thus, EL is not only an unfolding pedagogy but also one that is manifest with diverse definitions and practices. Institutions are working through this problematization of the concept as it is being developed. We explore this further in subsequent chapters.

The findings from this thesis suggest that challenges exist as universities engage in these out-of-class frontiers. These include tensions that arise from attempts to bring traditionally decentralized faculty/departments under one umbrella within higher education institutions (HEIs). Competition also exists at the community level as faculty/departments compete for community engagements and vice versa. Funding remains a top challenge for EL development and implementation. Increased resources are required to have every student attain demonstrable work-related academic experience before graduation. Community engagement is a challenging and complicated process that necessitates time and academic leadership to implement fully.
In order to address the emergent EL-based connection between the university and its host community, a qualitative methodological design was adopted. This design involved two methods of data collection and each was based on Maclean’s 2018 national university ranking system as the sampling frame (Maclean’s, 2018). Focusing on Ontario, the lead-ranked institutions in each of Maclean’s rank categories - Medical/Doctoral, Comprehensive, and Primarily Undergraduate - were used to select institutions for the study.

Phase one of the research - document data analysis - comprised of EL policy documents (broadly defined) collected from the three lead-ranked institutions in each of the university categories. Data collection occurred between September and December 2018. The policy documents themselves dated from 2012 to 2019. Phase two involved ethics-approved (see Appendix A) key informant interviews relating to one university in each of the rank categories. Six interviews were undertaken: one from each institution and one interview with a local EL community partner. The interviews for the key informants occurred between January and May 2019.

The results from the study highlight important themes that arise out of the emergent EL context in Ontario. Themes that align with the literature include 1) universities’ decentralized structures, 2) funding EL as a challenging endeavour and, 3) lack of academic leadership in EL development. For instance, challenges around decentralized units have led to the creation of central offices or hubs intended to coordinate the complex emerging nature of networks across the study institutions. These central units are designed to mitigate tensions that arise when competing units (i.e.,
faculty/departments or community partners) attempt to forge partnerships with mixed expectations.

By contrast, themes that differ from the literature include 1) significant growth in HASS disciplines featuring in EL developments, 2) student career development and job readiness being central to universities’ missions, 3) funding opportunities from government and industry and, 4) lack of program evaluation for measured outputs.

3. Conclusion

Universities are expanding their teaching mission to include EL engagements in response to calls by government and community agencies. For instance, the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities1 through the ‘Career Ready Fund’ helps publicly assisted colleges and universities, employers and other organizations create experiential learning opportunities for post-secondary students and recent grads. Industry leaders such as the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) continue to make urgent calls for universities to teach and certify skills and to develop programs that support lifelong learning, and companies to hire for core skills over credentials2.

These strategies are also well documented in the universities’ strategic mandate agreements (SMAs). Although the pedagogical approaches adopted by the study

1 http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/programs/careerreadyfund.html#new
universities are relatively new in terms of naming conventions, they are not so in terms of program content.

EL is evolving as an integral part of the universities’ teaching mission. However, given the globalized agendas of most universities, its implementation needs time and academic leadership to implement and maintain. Funding solutions need to be fully explored before full-scale EL roll out. Further research may be required to explore the economic impact and social and ethical considerations for students, faculty, and community partners. This study contributes to the literature on university and community collaborations, particularly on the teaching and learning mission of universities.
Chapter 2

2. Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on the teaching and learning connections between the university and the wider community. The town-gown (TG) relationship may be constituted in many ways, but the focus of this chapter is how that relationship forms around the university’s teaching mission and experiential learning (EL) in particular. The literature review is aimed at this overarching research question: To what extent and in what ways do universities work with their local communities, particularly via teaching and learning? The focus of this research is on local community connections within universities’ host communities and this chapter explores literature that addresses this geographical scope. Moreover, this chapter also focuses on TG connections based principally in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS). The following review proceeds in three sections; the first section frames the literature in a broad historical treatment of the TG relationship, the second section describes the methodology, and the final section reviews the literature pertaining to the overarching thesis question and related areas of focus.

2.1 The History of Town-Gown Relationships

In the North American context, the establishment of the American land-grant system for colleges and universities is a helpful starting point to frame the TG relationship and EL specifically. Established by “The Morrill Act, 1862”, the American university land-grant system is widely considered to be the birth of universities and colleges working with local host communities in the holistic advancement of higher

In Canada, TG relations trace its roots to 1989 where the University of Waterloo and the City of Waterloo commenced annual TG engagements on research, sustainable housing, community policing and by-law enforcement, and provincial policy matters (Kemp, 2013, p. 105). The subsequent three decades demonstrate a changing pattern of TG relationships between Canadian universities and their host communities. A study by Levin (2002) suggests that the globalization processes in the 1990s led to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Canada and the United States embracing business, industry and marketplace connections. Addie, Keil, and Olds (2015) also attribute the emergence of university and community connections to the advent of neoliberalism and globalized development agendas for HEIs. These scholars argue that “the evolving geographic nature of city–university relations destabilizes normative understandings regarding the socio-spatial structure of the university and the interrelations between HEIs and urban space” (Addie et al., 2015, p. 30). The same authors also contend that the evolving TG relationships and their potential impact on stakeholders are complex and not fully understood. These developments highlight how TG relationships are gaining distinctive currency in academic circles and help expand our understanding of how spatial relations interplay within universities and their host communities. Therefore, this thesis contributes to the emergence of this knowledge through the lense of EL and with an emphasis on disciplines such as HASS. Similarly, Bruning, McGrew, and Cooper
state that TG relations have historically been a source of difficulty, frustration, and annoyance for both the town and the university.

Regardless of the historical challenges, a growing body of literature traces significant growth in TG connections in recent times (e.g., Gallo & Davis, 2009; Gavazzi, Gee, & Magrath, 2018). This growth is attributed to the economic and social benefits that outweighs the challenges in TG connections, and the universities’ belief that to “grow and prosper, their [universities] futures are inextricably linked with those of their surrounding communities and vice versa” (Martin, Smith, & Phillips, 2005, p. 4). These authors add that innovative partnerships help bridge the gap in TG relationships and that successful connections between university and communities require key factors such as funding, communication, measurable outcomes, and simplicity to be core to any EL mission. Although HASS disciplines including Geography and Social Work have a long history of connecting the classroom to field work, the present watershed moment for the emerging trends seems to be adding new levels and qualities of EL across the broad sweep of university curriculum. Therefore, these new developments of TG and the nuances of EL emergence need to be examined, contextualized in modern parlance.

The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, Canada (HEQCO) broadly sees EL as a process through which students gain experience in educational and practice settings (Academica Group, 2016). Contemporary definitions of EL are being expanded to include reflections for the learner, the institution and the community. For example, the University of Western Ontario defines EL as “an approach that educators use to intentionally connect learners with practical experiences that include guided reflection. EL allows learners to increase and apply disciplinary knowledge, develop transferable
skills, clarify interests and values, strengthen career engagement and employability, and collaborate meaningfully with communities” (University of Western Ontario, 2019). By this definition, HEIs place student learners at the center of their TG growing engagements with their communities and attempt to create new and innovative ways to enhance their teaching and learning. In the contemporary context, HEIs and researchers share common ground on the concept of knowledge creation through reflective experiences.

A key concept surrounding TG relationships is the use of different terminologies to describe the nature of engagements. These definitions are becoming increasingly blurred as the current drive gains momentum. Although co-ops and internships are among the most common, there are examples of work-based learning, service-learning, community-based learning, community-engaged, and community-service learning among many types of community-based learning labels (HEQCO, 2016). For the intent of this study, EL is the term adopted because of its relatively broad use in the literature. EL is also used to incorporate many of the alternative pedagogical approaches employed when teaching reaches beyond the traditional classroom in some substantial way.

Today, technological advancements and labour market dynamics continue to alter demand patterns for career and skill sets that are vital for human capital development (Dhir, 2019) This development provides further interest in TG relationships and their emergent EL activities. A 2018 report on the future of education and skills by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) draws attention to imminent challenges facing education and outlines a systematic framework aimed at shaping teaching and learning from now to 2030 (OECD, 2018). The publication
advocates for an integrated approach to training students as global citizens. To do this, local communities, academic institutions, and industries are encouraged to be part of the teaching and learning process by sharing common practices that support student learning. Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba group puts it this way: “if we don’t change the way we teach, we will be in trouble in 30 years from now” (Whithing, 2018). This is in light of how new waves of technological innovations are fundamentally changing the future of jobs (Nübler, 2016). Massey, Field, and Chan (2014) have also established that local employment opportunities created through EL are strong magnets for student retention in the community after graduation. It is therefore not uncommon to find universities developing new strategies and partnering with host cities to attract, retain and train students as human capital for their communities (McLean, 2013).

Universities are not only concerned with studying these EL trends but are also actively providing creative solutions within their host communities (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010). Benneworth and Jongbloed (2010) argue that the universities’ proactive approach, based in part on outreach activities and connections with local communities, is also an outcome of their [universities’] search for relevance and enriched teaching and learning for its students.

The history of TG relationships in Ontario also had a watershed moment when the Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU), implemented a new form of strategic engagements with HEIs in August 2014. Known as the Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs), this initiative seeks to “drive creativity, innovation, knowledge, skills development, and community engagement through teaching and learning” (MAESD, 2017). The rolling out of these experiential opportunities in a broad
range of academic disciplines, highlight the increasing recognition and interest by stakeholders to engage more. It can be argued that the provincial government, as one of the key stakeholders in higher education, seeks to promote improved relationships between HEIs and their host communities leading to mutually beneficial outcomes.

2.2 Literature Review Methodology

The primary sources of journal articles for the literature review included the Web of Science, Scopus, and ERIC. Google Scholar was used to further broaden the scope of research articles reviewed for this study. The literature search focused on finding journals and research articles that explored TG relationships in Ontario and Canada broadly. In order to do so, the following key terms and combinations were used: university community; experiential learning; town and gown; and teaching and learning. Alternative search terms were included to expand the scope of the search. These comprised of words and phrases such as work-integrated learning; internship; pedagogy; and work-study. Alternative combinations of these terms were used to capture as much relevant literature as possible. These included university-community and teaching and learning; university community and town and gown and/or teaching and learning; campus-community engagement and community service learning.

In order to do an in-depth analysis of EL, 1990 was chosen as the base year for searching published journals and articles. As Levin (2002) notes, the birth of globalization in the 1990s marked an important milestone for HEIs in Canada and the United States. The author states that “institutional behaviors during the 1990s were
directed at “economizing” through restructuring, labour alterations, productivity and efficiency measures (Levin, 2002, p. 66). The three-decade timeline for the literature review therefore provides an ample historical perspective of university-community engagements and the emergence of EL development in Canada. Further, although the search focused on Canada, the scope of the literature investigation was expanded to include continental Europe and other countries such as the United States and Australia, given that EL is a global phenomenon. It is important to note that the search terms produced overlapping results both within and across the databases. Most of the articles found in Web of Science, ERIC and Scopus were also found in Google Scholar. In total, an initial long list of 73 articles was retrieved and out of this, 11 were TG but not focused on student and community engagements. Therefore, the remaining 62 articles were deemed relevant for review. The literature also pointed to other key pieces that did not necessarily result from the formal literature review. In addition to this, related articles and policy documents written by organizations such as the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario were also examined. Finally, this literature review also included books that have become important in the broad TG literature and the emergent treatment of EL (Florida, 2019; Gavazzi, 2015; Giroux, 2015; Thorp & Goldstein, 2013).

2.3 STEM &/VS HASS TG Connections

The TG literature is long-established with an emphasis principally on research-related connections, such as research parks, tech transfers, innovation hubs, and business incubators (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010; Lazzeroni & Piccaluga, 2015). These connections, moreover, tend to be based on science, technology, engineering, and
mathematics, or STEM-related disciplines. Several studies, including Clarysse, Wright, Lockett, Van de Velde, & Vohora, (2005); Sadek, Kleiman, & Loutfy, (2015); Siegel, Waldman, & Link, (2003) argue that many universities establish specialized structures, such as Technology Transfer Offices (TTO’s) and science parks and incubators in a bid to support university–community and industry connections. In Ontario, the city regions of Waterloo, Cambridge, Kitchener, and Guelph have historically enjoyed university-industry connections with a key focus on research and STEM-related partnerships such as Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) (Nelles, Bramwell, & Wolfe, 2005). Until recently, BlackBerry’s³ relationship with the University of Waterloo was a prime example of a symbiotic relationship for the advancement of knowledge.

Nelles et al. (2005) and Perkmann et al. (2013) state that most TG connections are devoted to research-related connections which largely impact the nature of their academic engagements. In contrast, teaching and learning connections often take a back seat. However, Norton (2018) highlights a shift in universities’ cultural patterns towards teaching and learning engagements. Perkmann et al. (2013) cite instances where TTO’s such as patenting, licensing and entrepreneurship take precedence in the universities’ formal community relationships. By this, they claim individual discretion, coupled with perceived commercial benefits play a key role in academic engagements. The authors note that most community engagements are largely founded in research-related activities rather than the teaching mission. Consequently, these existing relationships between universities and high-technology jobs in places such as Silicon Valley and Kitchener-

³ Originally known as Research In Motion or (RIM)
Waterloo regions are widely celebrated as success stories in community and regional economic growth (Howitt, 2019).

Although some critics debate TG engagement as commercialization of academic knowledge and caution them as interferences, others support this connection for various reasons such as economic development and research and technology advancement (Markman, Siegel, & Wright, 2008). Florida (2004) adds to this debate through the observation that the rise of knowledge and creativity in university and community connections is progressing beyond traditional science and technology to encompass new fields such as arts, media, and culture. Florida’s theory of ‘the creative class’ postulates creativity as the new driving force for economic development in light of the post-industrial and knowledge-based revolutions. The theory defines diversity and creativity as the basic drivers of innovation for regional and national economic growth. This growth is purported to come from the new emergent class or demographic segment made up of knowledge workers, intellectuals and various types of artists (Florida, 2003). Florida’s work has influenced many urban policymakers who embrace the creative class theory with regard to urban and economic development (Clemens, 2012). Numerous studies are critical of some of Florida’s empirical claims that the creative class is the bedrock for the new economy and urban development. For example, Peck (2005) argues that Florida’s creative class offers no correlational framework and is subject to circular logic. Subsequently, Peck (2005) states that the display of liberal cultural innovation and creative strategies do not necessarily disrupt contemporary urban policy formulation. In this regard, putting too much emphasis on the thirty percent (30%) of western cultures’ workforce who shape urban economies is at odds with basic economics (Malanga, 2004).
In contrast to these criticisms, however, Florida makes an important observation that the concentration of creative industries or HASS derivatives has exploded significantly in recent years. To this end, Florida (2017) states, “the concentration of creative industries [e.g. spanning music, the visual arts of acting and dance] and jobs in superstar cities goes far beyond what their large size alone can account for” (p. 29). It is the larger than expected HASS expansion in conjunction with the universities’ emergent quest for increased community engagement that this study seeks to explore.

In addition to the historically STEM purported biases, authors such as Peters, Sattler, and Kelland (2014) assert that university-community partnership opportunities are traditionally developed for disciplines with clearer career pathways, such as business, health, engineering, and education. Further, they contend that the nature of these relationships may not be as easily applied to HASS. Accordingly, HASS relationships are created to help stakeholders, including the universities, students, community and private corporations to be competitive in the global market (Lederer & Seasons, 2005). In Canada, studies also suggest that most connections between HEIs and their host communities tend to be research-focused and/or in STEM disciplines (Sattler & Peters, 2013). However, knowledge on how other non-research, teaching-based campus-community connections are conceptualized, built and maintained over time is still lacking. This is also considering that some studies suggest a growing number of university-community connections in recent years, emphasizing the role of humanities and creative arts in today’s technology/knowledge-based economies (Bullen, Robb, & Kenway, 2004; Florida, 2019).
Despite the increasing focus in the literature on the positives of STEM-based TG connections over the years, scholars such as Giroux (2015) raise some critical concerns for their implementation. For instance, Giroux suggests that active community and industry engagements through policy dictates may interfere with the traditional scholarly mission and mandate of universities. The author further asserts that interferences through collaborative industry research potentially undermine academic freedom and traditional pedagogical practices. Benneworth and Jongbloed (2010) also claim that HASS disciplines are disadvantaged compared to the hard sciences. The authors theorize that “HASS stakeholders have, because of their internal characteristics, failed to become salient stakeholders to universities, and universities have paid little attention to valorizing their HASS research base” (p. 572). Consequently, Benneworth and Jongbloed (2010) argue that HASS has over the years received less attention and, inadequate funding because its outputs are less tangible and more difficult to measure. This raises a concern about how HASS could be commercialized, and more importantly, should commerce be a benchmark for knowledge creation?

In contrast, authors such as Bullen et al. (2004) highlight that partnerships between HASS and government organizations have the potential to offer more than financial rewards. Although Bullen et al. (2004) admit humanities and creative arts suffer from funding constraints, they argue that globalization and the rise of the knowledge-economy and industry are at the forefront of recognizing the value of knowledge in the humanities and social sciences. This position aligns with Leydesdorff’s (2000) view that there is an evolutionary helix where HEIs, industry, and governments are working together to foster a new kind of economic and social development.
2.4 TG Teaching and Learning Connections

Traditionally, most universities do not view community engagement as a priority in their work (Buys & Bursnell, 2007; Kennedy, 2003). However, evidence suggests this trend is changing in the wake of contemporary labour market dynamics, increasing funding opportunities and the universities’ quest for relevance (McNall, Reed, Brown, & Allen, 2009; Nübler, 2016). In this regard, HEIs play more active roles in the community through TG relationships. This emerging TG relationship has often focused on research-related connections. Invariably, science, research and technology parks as well as business incubators are known to be common strategies adopted by universities for knowledge transfer (Huggins, Johnston, & Steffenson, 2008). This STEM bias on TG partnerships is not a new phenomenon as it goes back decades. For example, Storey and Tether (1998) argue that the creation of science parks is central to most universities’ strategies to increase knowledge spillover. In addition, researchers are interested in these developments and paying very close attention to the roles and activities of science and technology parks (Vedovello, 1997).

Teaching and learning connections are less known and less represented in literature. To establish strong campus-community relationships, universities are turning to contemporary pedagogical modules such as community service learning with teaching and learning being central to their response to communities’ call for collaboration (Smith-Tolken & Bitzer, 2017). The focus of this study, therefore, is on the teaching and learning connections between the university and its community, with emphasis on the local or university host community.
2.4.1 The TG Metaphor and Debates

Scholars such as Gavazzi (2015) use the metaphor of marriage/partnership to describe the nature of TG relationships between institutions of higher education and the communities in which they are located. Gavazzi argues that the quality of TG relationships depend on key characteristics such as 1) the level of comfort that higher education personnel and community stakeholders experience inside of their relationship; and 2) the level of effort required by both partners to maintain the present state of the TG relationships (Gavazzi, 2015). This symbiotic relationship and the associated requirements from each partner are discussed extensively by researchers such as Bringle and Hatcher (2002). The authors hypothesize that campus-community collaborations with special emphasis on interpersonal relationships such as initiation, development, maintenance, dissolution, equity, and power-sharing, are foundational to successful TG relationships. As Gavazzi (2015) expound, co-parenting, and in a broad sense, community members involved in activities such as co-teaching becomes a mutual responsibility of the partners involved in the relationship. The current interest for this study is therefore informed by the focus on teaching and learning connections as opposed to research connections.

Pioneer scholars such as Howard (1998) highlights innovative pedagogical modules such as academic service-learning and community service-learning for teaching and learning outside of the classroom. Although Howard outlines challenges such as potential student overload in TG engagements, the author emphasizes that these out-of-class emergent frontiers have the capabilities of revolutionizing traditional teaching and learning. This revolution, in part, amplifies the surging call by government and industry
for universities to expand traditional pedagogy beyond the classroom. For example, Ibrahim and Soufani (2002) state that mentorship and incubator programs enhance student entrepreneurship and skills development. These non-traditional teaching models are new adaptations by HEIs. In addition to this call, Owens, Sotoudehnia, and Erickson-McGee (2015) argue for field-based learning, emphasizing its associated positive impact on teaching and learning that are primarily based on students’ feedback. Higher education policy researchers such as Cooper, Levinand, and Campbell (2009) also chronicle the impact of new pedagogies in teaching and learning for HEIs and call for the use of knowledge mobilization (KM) in higher education policy. The authors, Cooper et al. (2009), acknowledge the growing trends and the need to use evidence-based research in making policy decisions for learning outside of the classroom. This position is affirmed by Martin et al. (2005) who propose that there is a changing pattern from research connections into teaching and learning connections. Martin et al. (2005) state that HEIs across the United States are venturing into non-academic contemporary roles in order to promote more university-community engagements. The authors observe that universities are venturing into areas such as 1) service provision, 2) faculty involvement, 3) community in the classroom and 4) service-learning (Martin et al., 2005, p. 5). In lieu of this expansion, a wide range of academic disciplines are introduced into host community engagements as an attempt to address the purported chasm between institutions and communities. The authors also note that these disciplines have expanded to include sociology, psychology, social work, education, anthropology, political science, public administration and others (Martin et al., 2005). However, these concerns summarize the notion that the universities’ traditional roles of knowledge production
may be compromised when urged to engage outside of their teaching mission (Giroux, 2015).

Although some authors argue for university and community partnerships, others question their purpose and value. Feminist and indigenous health scholars such as Castleden, Daley, Sloan Morgan and Sylvestre (2013) caution on short-term fieldwork/learning approach and draw attention to their inherent and subtle weaknesses. They maintain that the short-term fieldwork approach adversely affects instructor/student leadership positions and may, in some cases, diffuse the intended connection with the local community. For example, instructors and students often describe the process as disorienting, unsettling, and sometimes deeply personal in nature. This acknowledgment is summed up in a context where “students… aware of their poor performance, express considerable frustration at their own ignorance” (Godlewska, Moore, & Bednasek, 2010, p. 430). Consequently, students experience difficulty in recreating experiences from field studies in the setting of the classroom which invariably undermines its potency as an effective teaching and learning tool (Castleden et al., 2013). Therefore, measured outcomes and evaluations play an important role in the overall transformation of students. However, Howard (1998) points out that skepticism expressed by instructors could be offset by student motivation, enhanced academic learning, and renewed excitement in teaching.

Other feminist Geographers such as Mckinney (2019) have waded into the debate of sending students into the field. The author states that the central pedagogical aim is for students to include time, space and place in evaluating their field studies and not rely solely on single experiences to explain the world around them. The authors agree with
Luke and Gore (2014) that critical feminist pedagogies demand critical examinations of what lies below the surface. In this regard, “critical pedagogies view education as the development of critical consciousness and as social transformation, education in which power and oppression are addressed through teaching and learning” (Mckinney, 2019, p. 28).

The arguments for community partners’ involvement in the teaching and learning mission of the university have perceived legitimacy. Researchers such as Reed et al. (2010) believe it can encourage transformative and social learning as students transform how they see and act in the world through interaction with their social networks and contexts. In this regard, the positive relationships established between students and community members through EL are partly attributable to the invaluable role of the university and host community members (Massey et al., 2014). For this reason, Wurdinger and Allison (2017) argue that EL is gaining popularity with students considering that, it is more enjoyable and leads to deeper learning when compared to didactic teaching approaches. In addition, Gentry (1990) postulates that “one of the benefits for experiential learning is that students get a feel for the “messiness” and ambiguity associated with real-world situations” (p. 20).

As an emergent phenomenon, EL partnerships between universities and their communities are gaining currency and are seen as a strategy to bridge the gap between academia and host communities. Elwood (2004) observes that EL is being widely adopted across undergraduate studies and argues that such pedagogies can foster students’ critical thinking and learning. The author notes that sending students out into the field is crucial to creating learning environments in higher education that include a
greater diversity of student identities and life experiences. Recent studies highlight the importance of bridging the skills gap between industry and academia through concerted efforts of having students learn on the job (RBC, 2018).

In addition, a growing body of literature has shown that community partnerships are emerging as vital arrangements for teaching, research, and practice (Butterfield & Soska, 2013). To this end, HEIs are increasingly investing in university-community partnerships as a mechanism for strengthening relationships with the local community and expanding on their EL (Hayne Beatty, 2018). Therefore, although sending students into the community is not a new phenomenon, it is increasing in prominence. Scholars such as Mezirow and Taylor (2009) argue that students are changed by experiences. In the debut of the transformative learning theory, Mezirow (1978) contends that learners [students] change their specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions when they engage in critical reflection on their experiences. Decades after this early study on transformative learning theory, most scholars still align with Merizow’s approach where life experiences or encounters, are used to enrich students' experiences and offer practical opportunities for them to prepare for the world they will enter (Fizzell, 2012; Gavazzi et al., 2018).

In contrast, authors such as Taylor (2001) believe that Mezirow grants too much importance to rational critical reflection. Taylor (2001) argues that “…recent research not only provides the support that emotions can affect the processes of reason but more importantly, emotions have been found to be indispensable for rationality to occur” (p. 219). This position implies that in addition to life experiences, there are many other key factors that significantly affect the way learners learn. Factors such as emotional literacy
and multiple intelligences are all part of a wider scope of other ‘ways of knowing’ (Taylor, 2001). This study therefore investigates the nature and form of these emerging EL engagement systems and how that impacts all stakeholders including, faculty, students, and community.

2.4.2 Nature of TG Engagements

Traditionally, most HEIs have a decentralized engagement with the host community to foster positive interactions between students and community members (Massey & Gouthro, 2011). Some researchers note that formalized and decentralized systems of TG connections are complex and a source of worry for HEIs in community engagements (Hayne Beatty, 2018). Scholars such as Broström, Feldmann, and Kaulio (2019) acknowledge that formalization of outreach activities challenges the academic tradition of giving individual professors discretionary mandates to enter and manage external relationships. Broström et al. (2019) refer to these emergent university-wide initiatives that seek to strengthen these types of exchange as establishing “structured relations”. The authors assert that there is a new wave of initiatives by HEIs that are meant to institutionalize contacts between the university and the community. In this regard, they argue that structured relations could generate tensions and potentially ‘crowd out’ other forms of collaboration and interactions (Broström et al., 2019). It is therefore important for institutions to tactfully court their community engagements allowing flexibility and intentionality to guide their EL developments.

Hollander, Saltmarsh, and Zlotkowski (2002) add to the debate by noting that centralization is becoming an enabling mechanism for an engaged campus. In an ideal situation, a centralized unit that manages the relationship with the community enables
stewardship and leads to greater benefit to the community partner and to the university (Nikolova & Andersen, 2017). Other researchers such as Murphy and Flowers (2017) opine that experiential education comes with unpredictable and sometimes messy day-to-day experiences. The authors contend that these experiences are shaped by encounters with individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and realms of experience that may differ greatly from those of traditional-aged college students. In this regard, centralization is seen as one of the core challenges for institutions wanting to undertake major initiatives to extend and deepen their civic engagement with the community.

In contrast, earlier authors such as Bringle and Hatcher (2002) acknowledge the important and emergent role that centralized units play in facilitating partnership initiatives, information management as well as student, faculty and community agency collaborations. With the advent of technology and advanced database systems, there is the belief that centralized units can manage all aspects of the university, student, and community engagements. Other research indicates that creating substantive and efficient partnerships between the community and academic institutions requires significant time and human resources (De Souza, Aguilar, and de Castro, 2013), regardless of the relationship being managed by centralized or decentralized units. Collaborative efforts are required by both the academy and local community for campus and community partnerships to work. This introduces the concepts of competition versus collaboration.

In addition to the centralization and decentralization tensions, other researchers point to the emergence of various forms of competition versus collaboration in TG relationships. For instance, Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009) argue that although competition has always been present in academia and in many ways can help produce
excellence and best performance among faculty, it can also contribute to a decline in a sense of academic community, mission and traditional values. These scholars claim that the pressures of accountability and the desire of university leadership for excellence have in many cases pitted departments and/or faculties against another as they position themselves to acquire the institutions’ limited resources and academic staff. However, studies show that collaboration is a powerful tool for innovation, especially in today’s networked economy (Sawyer, 2017). This study therefore seeks to explore the interplay of power and leadership dynamics when it comes to institutional collaboration and the purported tensions displayed when HEIs venture into community engagements.

2.4.3 Role of Geography in TG Relationships

The neighbourhood community and location are also discussed as an eminent factor in university and community engagements. Rosan (2002) proposes that locational proximity is critical in the successful implementation and delivery of TG connections. The role of place in neighbourhood collaborations is widely discussed by Florida (2010) as having increasing importance in recent times. Florida contends that cities and communities are now the social and economic organizing unit of the creative age (Florida, 2010). Yet, other authors challenge the role of place and its significance with the advent of globalization and technology. Economists such as Thomas Friedman have waded into the discussion on the importance of place by arguing that ‘the world is flat’ and that things like outsourcing and offshoring weaken the importance of proximity and nearness for great relationships in the context of globalization (Freidman, 2005). For instance, Rogers Communications Inc. outsourcing their call centers to India affirms the lesser role location typically plays in community development. It would, therefore, be
easy to concede the exaggerated “death of geography” (Morgan, 2004), and that place has become an obsolete concept. However, many geographers are particularly critical of Friedman's position and draw in the unequal nature of globalization. Other authors argue that the world is not flat, but as we globalize we become more concentrated in cities, communities, and neighbourhoods that in turn propel economic development (Florida, 2019; Fox, 2014).

The foregoing discussions draw on the emergent debates on TG development and motivations behind universities’ eagerness to work more closely with their host communities. According to a 2018 Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) report, Canadian jobs will be heavily disrupted by technology in the coming decade (Royal Bank of Canada, 2018). Titled as “Humans wanted’, this RBC report identifies academic-industry gaps as a “Quiet Crisis” that can be solved by meaningful experiences between higher education and the labour market. In the report, the president and CEO of RBC urge educators to look beyond degrees and encourage the placement of ‘all students’ into the world of work as a panacea for the daunting skills gap. In this regard, focus on EL and its intersection with the world of work is deemed to be experienced in myriad ways (Ferns, Campbell, & Zegwaard, 2014; Kolb, 2014). However, this phenomenon of learning through experiences is at a confluence which includes a wide range of disciplines within higher education institutions (HEIs). Therefore, we continue to ask, could this emergent trend of non-research EL based programs be creating new and different ways of learning?
2.5 Chapter Conclusion / Summary

This chapter reviews the multi-disciplinary body of literature regarding the development of TG relationships and the emergent subject of EL in teaching and learning connections. The literature review looks at the history of TG relationships and how scholars study these trends. Also, by the examination of research articles, journals, and books, the literature review explores definitions, rationale and key concepts of EL and how these relate to TG connections. It is evident that a growing body of literature extensively explores TG connections, but the subject matter is mostly on research/STEM-based connections. Therefore, a perceptible gap exists in the literature in particular on HASS-based connections. The study contributes to addressing this gap by exploring TG engagement over teaching and learning particularly in HASS connections in Ontario. The key themes that emerge from the literature review center on contrasting pathways. One of the themes focuses on centralization versus decentralization of TG engagements. Another theme highlights contested views on the level of institutional collaboration required to reduce/manage tensions that arise out of completion among faculty/departments for limited resources and community partnerships. Also, funding challenges emerged as one of the key themes in EL development. These findings serve as important signposts for further examination of policy relevance of EL on improving the development of TG connections.
Chapter 3

3 Methods

This chapter explains the research methodology that was used in gathering data for the study. It provides information on the selection process of policy documents on experiential learning (EL) from nine selected universities in Ontario. It also describes the process of conducting the research in phases one (1) and two (2) which include responses from six (6) key informants and the rationale for the use of qualitative content analyses to extract themes and indicators. Lastly, the chapter discusses the ethics approval process that was sought to ensure the study complied with the Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) standards.

As noted in the literature review, the focus of this study is on the teaching and learning connections between the university and its community, with emphasis on the local or university host community experiential learning EL programs. In this regard, the overarching research question is: To what extent and in what ways do universities work with their local communities, particularly via teaching and learning? This question is asked across the full range of the universities’ disciplines, but with emphasis on the humanities, arts, and social sciences (HASS). The critical concern for the study on university-host community relationships is to understand the extent of teaching and learning connections, what contemporary pedagogical modules are adopted and implemented across universities in Ontario. It also seeks to shed more light on how the underlying intentions are programmed to adequately prepare today’s students for an increasingly skills-based labour market.
Given the nature of the research questions and study objectives, it was useful to employ a mixed qualitative approach to unpack the reasons behind the emergent EL relationships. This approach is appropriate as scholars suggest that qualitative research is best suited for when the researcher wants to gain insights into underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations for individual or institutional activities (Clifford, Holloway, Rice, & Valentine, 2008). It was therefore not enough to depend on policy documents and web-based information to fully grasp institutional motivations for the emergent EL collaborations. As a main technique in the field of qualitative research, key informants are acknowledged to be effective in studying social phenomena (Opdenakker, 2006). The author emphasizes the importance of social cues, especially where the interviewee plays important and distinctive roles in the subject matter. Viewed in this way, the use of a qualitative method was very suitable in determining the contextual settings of relationships between the universities and their community partners. The approach proved useful in uncovering both the perceived and working alliances captured in the universities’ strategic mandate agreements (SMA’s) and policy documents.

To address this research question, the mixed qualitative method involved the content analysis of publicly available policy documents of the study universities in Ontario, as well as case studies of selected universities and their host communities. In the subsequent sections of this chapter is an outline of the rationale for employing mixed qualitative methods and explore underlying objectives behind the relationship between university and community. Subsequently, a discussion is made on the two primary data collection and analysis phases i.e. (1) primary documents selected from a range of institution types and (2) key informant interviews. This chapter further explains the
selection process of the institutions, phase (1) and two (2) data collection and discussions on themes and indicators.

3.1 Sampling Framework

The Maclean’s university ranking 2018 was used in selecting the university institutions for the study. This ranking was chosen because it is the longest continuing university ranking system in Canada and it incorporates teaching and learning which plays an increasingly large role in shaping the goals of academic institutions and departments (Jackson, 2015). Maclean’s was chosen over other university ranking alternatives such as the Times Higher Education World University Rankings\(^4\) and QS\(^5\) rankings because it is exclusively focused on Canadian institutions and provides a helpful classification of institutions based on teaching and research inputs (Dill & Soo, 2005). In addition, although university rankings are gaining global traction, teaching and learning-oriented ranking is still very much an unmapped territory (Holmes, 2018). Using the Maclean’s University ranking system from 2018, the top three universities in each of the three principal categories were selected. Choosing the top three institutions seems like a good way of measuring which university in each category ostensibly are doing ‘leading edge’ work in the emerging EL. The following were the categories identified: (1) Medical/Doctoral, (2) Comprehensive, and (3) Primarily Undergraduate. The Universities in the Medical/Doctoral category offers a broad range of graduate-level

\(^4\) https://www.timeshighereducation.com/content/world-university-rankings

\(^5\) https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings
programs, including PhDs, and are strongly research-focused. The Universities in the comprehensive category conduct some graduate-level research and offer a wide range of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. However, the Universities in the Primarily Undergraduate category are generally smaller in size and offer fewer graduate degree programs, instead emphasizing the undergraduate classroom experience (Maclean’s, 2018).

**Figure 3.1: Location of selected universities in Ontario, 2018**
3.2 Documents and Interviews Sampling Framework

3.2.1 University-Community and Policy Document Selection

The following section gives a description of how the university-community regions were selected. Ontario was deemed suitable for the study given that it has the largest number of higher institutions of learning [place], specifically a diverse mix of higher education disciplines and a long history of academic-industry relations (Crespo & Dridi, 2007). In addition, compared to other Canadian provinces, Ontario universities tend to be more similar in character and their degrees tend to carry a similar currency in the labour market (Drewes & Michael, 2006). The Maclean’s ranking provided the guideline to select universities with local geographical traits and with similar demographic characteristics. In this sense, an outlier selection could have adversely influenced the results and introduced bias when analyzing the data (Rousseeuw & Hubert, 2011). It must be noted that because teaching and learning partnerships were central to the study, priority was given to documents that placed emphasis on non-research-based relationships.

3.2.2 Policy Documents Selection Period

The study used a time-bound and web-based document collection process to understand the nature and extent of the universities’ engagement with their local communities. Hence, the most recent policy documents and universities’ public information were used for the study. This involved assembling and analyzing all documents pertaining to EL and the universities’ TG relationships. Key policy documents that were found to be very useful in understanding the trends in the town-gown relationships were selected and analyzed. The data collection phase occurred
between September and December 2018. Major policy documents analyzed dated from 2012 to 2019. For reasons such as historical developments and long-standing partnerships, the period for policy document selection was extended back a decade or two in some cases.

The demographic characteristics of the selected universities in Ontario are summarized in Table 3.1. Additional criteria such as location and population were used in describing the characteristics of the universities selected for the study.

Table 3.1 Demographic characteristics of selected universities in Ontario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Town/Community</th>
<th>Total Student population*</th>
<th>Total Population**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical/Doctoral</td>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
<td>Toronto (GTA)</td>
<td>89,540</td>
<td>2,849,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Queens University</td>
<td>Kingston</td>
<td>28,140</td>
<td>156,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McMaster University</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>31,843</td>
<td>734,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>University of Waterloo</td>
<td>Waterloo</td>
<td>35,156</td>
<td>104,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Guelph</td>
<td>Guelph</td>
<td>29,910</td>
<td>150,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carleton University</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>30,940</td>
<td>973,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily Undergraduate</td>
<td>U of Ont. Institute of Technology</td>
<td>Oshawa</td>
<td>9980</td>
<td>375,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trent University</td>
<td>Peterborough</td>
<td>9560</td>
<td>118,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Durham</td>
<td></td>
<td>645,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lakehead University</td>
<td>Thunder Bay</td>
<td>8410</td>
<td>118,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Orillia</td>
<td></td>
<td>29,955</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* https://www.univcan.ca/universities/

**Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) StatsCan Census 2016

**Population of Kitchener – Cambridge Waterloo - 516,085 from StatsCan


https://www.utoronto.ca/about-u-of-t/quick-facts

*Total student population for Trent University and Lakehead University are from two campuses
3.3 Discussion of Research Phases

3.3.1 Phase 1a (Policy Documents collection)

The research was conducted in two phases as shown in Table 3.2. The first phase one (1a), which was conducted in the latter half of 2018, involved a cross-sectional publicly available policy document collection from the study universities. The documents gathered included policy documents, Senate reports, university's acts and bylaws, published white papers and any other document that generally described an EL relationship with their host communities. For the purpose of this study, and for the rest of the chapters, ‘policy documents’ is used to represent all documents collected and analyzed. Table 3.2 gives a summary of other important criteria in the selection of policy documents. These included the date of publications, duration of EL engagement, disciplines with an emphasis on HASS, EL terminologies, and the geographical scope associated with EL connections. In this regard, all the relevant policy documents were selected from across a range of key concepts and criteria.

In searching for policy documents within the study universities’ websites, common search engine techniques were utilized to ensure the thorough gathering of data for the study. These techniques included a) putting “quotation marks” for exact matches, b) using dash [-] to exclude words from searches, c) using @ in front of keywords and d) putting “or” for combined searches. These search engine strategies were employed as additional tools in gathering data from relatively large institutional websites. As observed by Eaton, Miron, and McBreairty (2019) it is often difficult to find information, requiring multiple page click and specific search terms especially when navigating the websites of universities in Canada. It must be noted that access to pages of institutional websites was
limited especially in instances where user login details and passwords were required. To overcome the issue of user access, all the study institutions were contacted through cold calling and emailing as explained in phase 1b of the data collection.

### Table 3:2 EL Connections: Ontario Universities and their host communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Duration of EL Placements</th>
<th>Principal Disciplinary focus</th>
<th>Informational interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical/Doctoral</td>
<td>Uni. of Toronto</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen's Uni.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kingston</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMaster Uni.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>Uni. of Waterloo</td>
<td>Waterloo,</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uni. of Guelph</td>
<td>Toronto, Guelph</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ridgetown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily Undergraduate</td>
<td>Trent University</td>
<td>Peterborough and Durham</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Ontario Institute of Technology</td>
<td>University of Ontario Institute of Technology</td>
<td>Oshawa</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakehead University*</td>
<td>University of Ontario Institute of Technology</td>
<td>Oshawa</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lakehead University*</td>
<td>Thunder Bay, Orillia</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Year - Key turning points when the institutions rolled out comprehensive programs to broaden the scope of their EL programs

2Duration of EL Placements

1= Short term

2= Medium term placements

3= Throughout program

3Principal Disciplinary focus

1= STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics

2. HASS = Humanities, Arts & Social Science *Identified case study universities (+ one anonymous university)

3.3.2 Phase 1b (Information Requests)

Given that phase one (1a) focused on publicly posted online institutional documents, it was important to also find out from the institutions if other useful policy documents were not readily available on their respective websites. This led to phase one (1b) where the study universities were contacted via emails and cold phone calls to get
any other useful information that may have been missed from the institutional website online searches. Appendix B shows sample informational interview notes sent for the additional data collection. This phase one (1b) resulted in getting supplementary materials that were not readily available on the institutional websites at the time of the search. See Table 3.2.

3.3.3 Phase 2 (Key Informant Interviews)

The second phase of the data collection involved the selection of case study universities for key informant interviews. As part of this selection process, the strategic vision and mission statements of all institutions were further examined. Scholars such as Bowen (2009) and Flick (2018) agree that analyzing institutional documents are common and frequently used in qualitative research. This analysis led to the creation of a set of criteria that assisted in narrowing down to three institutions for phase 2 - - key informant interviews. The set of criteria that emerged from analyzing documents from phase one (1a and 1b) were a) identifying evolving university-community connections on teaching and learning, b) Non-STEM and primarily HASS-based connections to the host community, c) recent EL relationships between the university and the community (i.e. in the last two to three years) and d) the geographical scope of the TG connection focus on local/community other than international partnerships as noted in Table 3.2. The universities selected for the case study key informant interviews had at least two or more of the criteria identified.

All three case study universities were contacted for the key informant interviews. This was done by sending recruitment emails (See Appendix C) to identified representatives for EL development and management at the various universities. A
follow up ‘Letter of Information and Consent to Participate in a Research Study’ (See Appendix D) was then sent to respondents to obtain their consent to participate in the interviews. Although some of the representatives referred the interviews to other individuals, all final respondents from the three case study universities consented to take part in the interviews.

In addition to selecting the case study universities, the community partners that were identified as having EL connections with the case study universities were also contacted. Recruitment emails were sent to prospective participants informing them of the intent of the research and soliciting their interest in participating. Interested persons were subsequently sent the ‘Letter of Information and Consent to Participate in a Research Study’ for consideration and consent. This process was in line with Western University’s ethics requirement.

A positive response from key informants led to setting a primary phone interview session to administer the semi-structured guide. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Through this process, three community partners who were engaged with the case study universities were selected, making a total of six key informants for the interviews. Table 3.3 shows the details of the six (6) key informant institutions that took part in the interviews. The key informant from the Medical/Doctoral University opted to have the institution remain anonymous.
Table 3.3 Selected Case study Universities in Ontario and their host community partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Host Community Partner</th>
<th>Partner Contact details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Anonymous</td>
<td>Medical/Doctoral</td>
<td>Law-Ametros partnership</td>
<td><a href="https://ametroslearning.com">https://ametroslearning.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carleton</td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>Pathways to Education</td>
<td><a href="https://www.pqchc.com">https://www.pqchc.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakehead</td>
<td>primarily Undergraduate</td>
<td>Sleeping Giant Brewery Company</td>
<td><a href="https://sleepinggiantbrewing.ca">https://sleepinggiantbrewing.ca</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The respondent from the Medical/Doctoral University opted for the institution to remain anonymous*

As noted in the sampling framework, the university institutions studied were selected from all three major categories of higher learning in Ontario. Combining content analysis and interviews with key personnel in charge of these relationships at the universities, allowed for an in-depth understanding of emergent key concepts such as centralization versus decentralization, competition versus collaboration, ethical considerations, leadership and the role of geography in these strategic partnerships. This was the result of analyzing, from the gathered documents, traits such as who, what, when, and where EL engagements were created. In this regard, the use of case studies was deemed to be an effective research approach especially where the focus of research is to answer questions such as “how”, “why” and or “to what extent” (Yin, 2003). This meant using multiple attributes other than statistical outcomes to analyze and select the case study institutions. Based on the analysis of phase one (1), a subset of the universities was selected for close examination using semi-structured key informant interviews as noted in Table 3.3.

3.3.4 Phase 2 (Interview guides)

A semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix E) was used in conducting the interviews with key informants in the three selected universities and their host communities. Those interviewed included EL hub coordinators, program administrators,
key contacts and community partners of the selected case universities. The rationale for
the questions asked during the interview is as follows. Open-ended questions were
adopted to allow the respondents to include more information, such as their perceptions,
attitudes, and understanding of the emerging EL. Also, given the broad concept of EL
and the exploratory nature of the questions, interviews were placed at the end of phase 1.
It is noteworthy that Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) was co-opted in the questioning to
cater for the institutions that used this terminology instead of EL

1. What would you say are the aims and objectives of work-integrated learning
   (WIL)/EL partnerships?

   To understand the links between mission statements of an institution and their
underlying intent, questions were asked about the aims and objectives of institutions’
WIL/EL partnerships. As argued by Stemler and Bebell (1999), analyzing the aims and
objectives of an institution’s mission statements provide a framework for understanding
the range of themes. As in many cases, scholars have pointed out that the nature and
structure of any strategic partnership do not always reflect what their mission statement
says (Andrassy & Bruening, 2011). To this end, the question was to help examine the
associations between what an institution defines as EL mission and how that actualizes
within their TG collaborations.

2. To what extent and in what ways does WIL/EL connect your community and
   university? Probe: How long have these partnerships been in place?

   To identify the contemporary pedagogical approaches being adopted by HEIs on
community partnerships, the researcher asked the extent and ways WIL/EL connects the
community and university. This probe is in reference to the literature that, technology
and globalization are pushing the traditional boundaries of teaching and learning (Howitt, 2019; OECD, 2018; Stephenson, 2018). The probe question on the length of the partnership was to establish modernity and recency of TG connections.

3. How are your WIL/EL connections developed and maintained? Probe: Which disciplines/fields of study are involved? Are the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences involved?

It was important to know the duration of these partnerships and understand its relevance as well as any evidence of transformation over the stated period. Furthermore, understanding how these connections were developed and maintained was necessary as argued by Fisher, Fabricant, and Simmons (2004), that visionary leadership develops a deepened commitment to university-community partnership. The study further enquired if these partnerships were in the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS). To achieve this, the probe intentionally looked at the non-STEM discipline community connections. This was intended to answer the question as to whether research and tech-transfers still dominate university-community partnerships. Researchers contend that most universities’ strategies in community partnerships are STEM-oriented (Clarysse et al., 2005; Sadek et al., 2015; Siegel et al., 2003; Storey & Tether, 1998).

4. Who initiates and leads the development of WIL/EL in your experience? Probe: How long have these partnerships been in place? How have they evolved/changed? Why?

Considering the vital role of leadership in the development, planning, and implementation of EL partnerships between the universities and their host communities (Rautiola, 2009), it was necessary to talk to the leadership in charge of community
relationships in the selected institutions. The intent of this question was to find out whether the connections were faculty/department-led or university-led.

5. Can you describe some of the challenges and opportunities involved in developing and implementing WIL/EL?

   The goal of this question was to understand institutional constraints and challenges faced by the leadership considering the complex nature of building relationships. As stated by Bruning et al. (2006), TG relations have historically been a source of difficulty, frustration, and annoyance for universities and their host communities. Regardless of these challenges, the growing interest in TG presents opportunities for universities to expand beyond their traditional boundaries, which warrants the inquiry into the challenges faced by partners.

6. Are the WIL/EL programs tracked/monitored and evaluated? Probe: What criteria are used to evaluate their progress and success?

   This question was designed to determine if program feedback systems were in place to manage existing processes and inform future policies. The question also attempts to find out what systems or tools are in place for evaluation and feedback. For example, could a centralized data system be used in managing sensitive partnerships? What could be the cost and end-user implications for multi-faculty level partnerships?

7. Can you describe any other constraints and benefits of WIL/EL between your local community and university?

   As in any partnership, there was the anticipation for constraints and general benefits that may exist within the various programs. As argued by Mayo (1997) partnerships can be empowering, but they can also be disempowering for communities.
In this regard, the study also aimed at understanding known and unknown limitations that could potentially derail efforts made by the partners in their attempt to forge these collaborations.

8. Do you have anything further to add to the theme of WIL/EL-based university-community partnerships?

Probe: Where do you see the future of university-community partnerships going?

As indicated, the key informants from each of the three selected universities shared their knowledge, views, and perspectives on collaborations with community partners.

Overall, eight (8) semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix E) were used for the interviews which lasted an average of 50 minutes each. The interviews helped to unpack the nature of the mandates given to the key leaders of the partnerships. The use of semi-structured interviews also allowed for flexibility in the interview process. Interviewees had the opportunity to answer open-ended questions allowing them to elaborate on what they deemed important for the study. Further, the use of open-ended questions allowed the researcher to discover the responses that the interviewees gave spontaneously - and also helped avoid the bias that may have resulted from suggesting responses to the interviewer (Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec, & Vehovar, 2003). Lastly, the study probed what and how future partnerships were being made and whether new policies were being drafted and implemented to manage the emerging and unexplored eco-systems of partnerships.

3.5 Content Analysis

As noted earlier, qualitative content analysis was adopted because of its flexibility in examining emerging trends from qualitative data (Berg, 2001). In this regard,
qualitative content analysis is found to be an effective tool for systematically analyzing written and verbal material and therefore widely used as a qualitative research technique (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Institutional policy documents from the three selected universities and those from their partner organizations in host communities served as a source of data for this phase. Information from these documents are organized into themes in the subsequent analysis.

Mayring (2004) describes qualitative content analysis to consist of a bundle of techniques for systematic text analysis. The author defines it as an approach of empirical and methodological controlled analysis of texts within the context of communication that follows content analytical rules and step-by-step models without rash quantification. The author maintains that the procedure of qualitative content analysis has been utilized in many areas of psychological, pedagogic and sociological research. From this perspective, qualitative content analysis was considered suitable for the study because of its inclination towards teaching and education research.

Other authors, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) also characterize qualitative content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p. 1278). This process involves coding and theme identification which is used in grouping the information gathered from the policy documents. Researchers such as Krippendorff (2018) broadly define content analysis to include the review of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter which is not necessarily from the author`s viewpoint.
In addition to these interpretations, qualitative content analysis sets a constructive tone for a researcher to methodically detail findings without personal bias. Hence, unlike strictly qualitative designs, content analysis has external validity as a goal (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). Other scholars argue that although qualitative content analysis is time-consuming and sometimes labour intensive, it is an efficient approach to analyzing emerging ideas (Krippendorff, 2018).

3.5.1 Themes and Indicators

To ensure objectivity in analyzing the policy documents, the gathered data was grouped into themes and indicators. This technique is based on the flexibility of qualitative content analysis, and its utility in in-depth assessments. The grouping of raw qualitative data helped with valid inference and interpretation as raised by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) who argue that when a researcher carefully examines and constantly applies inductive reasoning to qualitative data, clear themes emerge.

Subsequently, the extraction of key themes from the interviews was informed by comparing the content of analyzed institutional documents with other responses from representatives of the selected institutions and their respective community partners. This was followed by differentiating the substantive institutional provisions and the practical implementation of EL programs from the institutional documents. The similarities and differences between the institutions and their community partners were also noted from the interview responses. The entire process involved grouping the interview responses and categorizing them into major themes, then measuring the opportunities discussed in the documents aligned with the interview responses related to EL.
It was also important to carefully align the themes and indicators with the research objectives and research questions. The general themes were broken down into sub-indicators as shown in Table 3.4. Overall, these themes and indicators allowed probing into how each institution place value on host community partnerships.

Table 3: 4 Policy Document Analysis Themes and Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Theme Indicator 1</th>
<th>Main Theme Indicator 2</th>
<th>Main Theme Indicator 3</th>
<th>Main Theme Indicator 4</th>
<th>Main Theme Indicator 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-STEM partnerships</td>
<td>HASS</td>
<td>Teaching &amp; Learning</td>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Local community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-set Indicators</td>
<td>Sub-set Indicators</td>
<td>Sub-set Indicators</td>
<td>Sub-set Indicators</td>
<td>Sub-set Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic priority</td>
<td>Strategic priority</td>
<td>Strategic priority</td>
<td>Paid or unpaid</td>
<td>Relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Work</td>
<td>Length of Work</td>
<td>New Pedagogies</td>
<td>Program incentives</td>
<td>building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning experience</td>
<td>learning experience</td>
<td>collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td>collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty-led vs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University-led</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Taskforce /working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>collaborations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main theme indicators were designed to act as guidelines for the research questions posed, whereas the sub-sets acted as probing indicators. The main theme indicators, one (1) and two (2) were designed to understand the focus of partnerships and to what extent the institution altered or changed positions on community partnerships. The sub-set indicators for main themes one (1) and two (2) were also developed to ascertain how current the partnerships were and whether it formed part of the institution’s core strategy. The main theme indicator three (3) was developed to establish whether institutional strategies were evolving from mainly research and tech-transfer partnerships to a more teaching and learning based partnership as established in the literature review. The main theme indicator four (4) and its sub-sets were designed to find the presence of rewards or incentives for policy change if any. Main theme indicator
five (5) and its sub-sets were designed to determine the drivers and sustenance of partnerships in the town-gown relationships.

3.5.2 Coding and Analysis

To analyze the documents collected, thematic analysis such as coding and labelling were applied. Ryan, Russell Bernard, and Bernard (2000) have observed that theme identification is fundamental to qualitative research. However, they posit that most social scientists are challenged in explaining and justifying the processes embedded in uncovering emergent themes in their qualitative studies. Scharp and Sanders (2019) also propose the use of thematic analysis such as coding, theme generation and labelling in qualitative research methods. Therefore, following Ryan et al. (2000) the techniques adopted in analyzing the content of the policy documents for this study included 1) key-word-in-context (KWIC), 2) word repetitions, 3) social science queries and 4) searching for missing information. The authors also state that the KWIC technique, which is based on simple observation, allows researchers to identify keywords and then systematically search the frequency of text to find all instances of the word or phrase. Some of the phrases used in the guidelines and policies for this study, accordingly, were ‘experiential learning’, ‘educational experience’ and ‘community engagement’. The KWIC system has also been used as a technique to identify and differentiate between major themes and minor themes. For word repetitions, the technique was to note words and their synonyms that were used repeatedly in universities’ searched documents. In this instance, repetitions sought to affirm the importance universities placed on community connections as a subject matter for EL. On social science queries, the interest was to
understand how documented information emphasized the importance of social sciences or Non-STEM EL perspectives.

In addition, each of the audio recorded interviews was manually transcribed verbatim into text formats immediately after the interview. Transcribed texts were re-arranged and categorized into themes. The themes found were 1) goals and objectives for community partnerships, 2) duration of partnerships, 3) challenges identified, 4) important opportunities, 5) importance of centralization, 6) future growth and direction and 7) reasons for ethical considerations. The results are discussed in detail in the subsequent chapters.

3.5.3 Ethics approval

Ethics approval was sought from the Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) before data collection commenced. The argument that a qualitative research study is honoured by informed consent is well documented in the literature, which means finding a reasonable balance between over-informing and under-informing (Kvale, 1996). Also, Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden (2001) argue that where the role of the researcher is clearly identified, the researcher will not be regarded as someone who is doing something dubious. Therefore, seeking consent was deemed very important because of the study’s probe into the universities’ traditional role in knowledge production.

Authors such as Caruth (2013) have noted the importance of anonymity as issues may arise where researchers fail to effectively conceal the identity of key informants in interviews. For this reason, this study ensured the use of pseudo names for those
interviewed. Participants were made aware of the anonymity option before all the interviews were conducted. The application was reviewed and approved on 5th September 2018. The Ethics Approval Notice is shown in Appendix A.

3.6 Summary of Chapter

This chapter discussed the mixed qualitative approach to analyzing the research. The chapter first reviewed the policy documents that were collected from the institutional websites. Secondly, the chapter looked at the research phases, which included the use of a semi-structured interview guide to gathering all relevant information on emergent EL between universities and their communities. Coding was also used to get the major themes and indicators from the policy documents and the interviews conducted. The chapter concluded by explaining the ethical mandate for data collection and analysis.
Chapter 4

4.1 Results: Documents and Interviews Analysis

This chapter provides results from analyzing published institutional documents, information requests and key informant interviews on Experiential Learning (EL). As previously indicated in the Methods chapter, phase one (1a) of the research was aimed at collecting publicly available policy documents from the websites of the nine universities studied. This was useful to understand how the universities present their EL strategies, through host community engagements as well as Ontario universities’ teaching and learning approaches to the public. Locating information on the websites was an important first step to understand the overarching EL objectives of each university which then informed the second phase one (1b) of the data collection - additional information request. Phase one (1b) was intended to complement the data collected in phase one (1a) by identifying and considering information that was not readily available to the public or apparent from the policy document collection. The analysis of phase one (1a and 1b) served as the basis for phase 2 which was the selection of three institutions and their community partners that had a principal disciplinary emphasis on Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) and teaching and learning as their focus. To further probe the institutional aims, scopes, motivations, objectives and other existing nuances on EL connections, key informant interviews were conducted, and these constituted the third phase of the data collection.

The objective of analyzing public policy documents and the follow up with key informant interviews is to gain a deeper insight and unpack the motivations for EL connections between universities and their community partners. As stated earlier, the
overarching question for the research is: to what extent and in what ways do universities connect with the wider community via teaching and learning with an emphasis on EL. Furthermore, the study is interested in uncovering whether these connections are local, particularly to the institution’s host community, and whether the town and gown (TG) connections are focused on HASS disciplines. In this regard, a key component of this examination is to identify recent trends in EL implementation that are being adopted by the selected universities.

In general, there are six major themes and three minor themes that emerge from analyzing the documents and key informant interview results. The major themes center on student job readiness, funding, academic credit, place of learning, community engagement and newly adopted pedagogies. The minor themes focus on entrepreneurship, mentorship, and leadership development. The sections below highlight these key findings from the various phases of the data collected and are presented throughout the chapter with detailed summaries in Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.

Table 4.1 shows details of some of the key policy documents retrieved for the study. These were sampled out from the 128 publicly available institutional documents. They include Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs), University annual reports, and academic policy guidelines with the years ranging from 2012 to 2019.
### Table 4.1 Details of Sample Key Documents retrieved from Institutional Websites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Policy Document Title</th>
<th>Year published / Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
<td>1. University of Toronto SMA 2017-20</td>
<td>2017 - 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. U of T Cascaded Course Evaluation Framework: Validation Study of the International Composite Mean</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. University of Toronto Course Evaluation Interpretation Guidelines for Academic Administrators</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen's University</td>
<td>1. Experiential Learning Working Group</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. SMA - Strategic Mandate Agreement University Annual Report</td>
<td>2015 - 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Experiential Learning Hub</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterloo University</td>
<td>1. SMA - Strategic Mandate Agreement</td>
<td>2017 - 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Centre for 2. Teaching Excellence annual report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. University of Waterloo - BOARD OF GOVERNORS Meeting – Excerpts on Experiential Learning</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Guelph</td>
<td>1. SMA - Strategic Mandate Agreement - University of Guelph</td>
<td>2017 - 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Experiential Learning at the University of Guelph</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The University of Guelph Pre-Budget Submission</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carleton University</td>
<td>1. SMA - Strategic Mandate Agreement - University of Guelph, Carleton University</td>
<td>2017 - 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Community First CFICE Phase II</td>
<td>2012-2016,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trent University</td>
<td>1. Strategic Mandate Agreement Trent University</td>
<td>2014 - 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Trent University MYAA Annual report excerpts</td>
<td>2013 – 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Trent Co-op, Career Services and Experiential Learning Review</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Ontario Institute of Technology</td>
<td>1. UOIT Integrated Academic Plan</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. SMA - Strategic Mandate Agreement University Annual Report</td>
<td>2015-2016,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Student Retention and Success</td>
<td>2017-20,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakehead University</td>
<td>1. Humans Wanted</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Strategic Mandate Agreement Lakehead University</td>
<td>2017-2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Academic Program General Policies Guide</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Findings from Document Analysis

As outlined in the Methods chapter, all the nine universities were selected using the Maclean’s educational ranking system of 2018. The top three universities in each of the three principal categories - Medical/Doctoral, Comprehensive, and Primarily Undergraduate - - for the study. Following this, each university’s published policy documents on newly adopted pedagogies on EL were further examined. These universities were the University of Toronto, McMaster University, Queen’s University, University of Waterloo, Guelph University, Carleton University, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Trent University and Lakehead University. The selected institutions acknowledge within their published documents the emergent need for community engagement strategies and also highlights the motivations and barriers to creating TG partnerships Hollander et al. (2002).

In order to address the central question of examining the extent to which EL is being explored, phase one (1) of the document collection and analysis provided a summary comprising the year the program was launched, duration of student-work placements, principal discipline focus, as well as the geographical scope of EL connections. Phase two looked at the contents of the documents analyzed and delved deeper into the specific contents of the EL documents for each university.

4.2.1 Phase one - Summary of EL Documents

Documents from each of the nine universities were obtained from their corresponding websites with analysis focusing on their references to EL. In some instances, information on EL were not contained in stand-alone policy documents such as
PDF or MS Word attachments but was rather spread across a wide range of institutional web pages. While some of the EL information was found within the main university websites, others were posted at specific faculty or departmental websites. For this selection, university-led EL initiatives on community engagements were given priority over that of faculty/departments on the main institutional websites. This strategy of scrutinizing university websites was in tandem with Morphew and Hartley's (2006) observation that university’s goals, curricula, and general education initiatives tend to be captured in the vision and mission statements of the universities which are usually visible online. By virtue of their positioning on main university websites, the documents become easily available for public consumption, accreditation and virtual review. The key sources studied for the EL information was expanded to broadly include policy documents, Senate reports, university's acts and bylaws, published white papers as well as board of governors meeting reports. The collected data from the websites are summarized in Table 4.2
### Table 4:2 Summary of EL Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Category</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Pedagogies found in policy documents</th>
<th>Geographical scope of EL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Links since</td>
<td>Avg. Duration</td>
<td>Disciplinary focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/Doctoral</td>
<td>Uni. of Toronto</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Queen's Uni.</td>
<td>Kingston</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McMaster Uni.</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>Uni. of Waterloo</td>
<td>Waterloo,</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uni. of Guelph</td>
<td>Toronto, Guelph</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carleton Uni.</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily undergraduate</td>
<td>Trent University</td>
<td>Peterborough and Durham</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Thunder Bay, Orillia</td>
<td>2017</td>
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1 Principal Disciplinary focus
2 Pedagogies found in policy documents
3 The geographical scope of EL

1=STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics)
2. HASS = Humanities, Arts & Social Science

1. Local
2. Offer Satellite Campus (Non-local)
3. International

1 Co-op, Internships
2. Mentorships
3. Workshops & Networking Events
4. Incubators and accelerators
5. Community-Engaged Learning
6. Practicum
7. Leadership programs
8. International Exchange
9. Labs
10. Fieldwork/experience
Table 4.2 provides details of EL connections between the selected universities and their host communities. Out of these nine institutions, the Medical/Doctoral universities had the earliest form of community member participatory approach to EL. The periods dated back to 2005, 2006 and 2015 for McMaster University, University of Toronto and Queen’s University respectively. The Comprehensive Universities had 2008, 2012 and 2016 as the respective years for launching EL programs, whereas the Primarily Undergraduate Universities had EL programs launched between 2012 and 2017. It emerges that the year 2012 marks an important milestone for the Comprehensive and Primarily Undergraduate Universities. For example, the University of Waterloo’s 2013-2018 Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA) and strategic plans declare experiential education as the University’s distinguished area of strength for innovation and growth. EL formally became one of the University’s core areas of “focus and action” to further deepen their TG engagements with the Waterloo community (University of Waterloo, 2017). Additionally, in November 2012, the Associate Vice-President for students at Trent University prepared a detailed report on EL opportunities and challenges. The report sought to among other things 1) increase student engagement and academic success, 2) enhance student employability on graduation, 3) improve student retention, 4) strengthen community partnerships, and, 5) create robust and innovative undergraduate and graduate research programs (Trent University, 2018b).

Although these identified TG connections had been within institutional domains for a long time, the period between 2012 and 2018 seems to have marked an EL renaissance across the selected universities in Ontario. As observed from the policy documents, the period between 2012 and 2018 indicates the beginning of an intentional convergence
between students, employers, community hosts, departments and instructors across all faculties to work towards deeper community engagements. Against this background, these dates/periods emphasize key turning points where the institutions rolled out expanded programs to broaden the scope of their EL.

Given that there seems to be a watershed moment in the development of EL across the study universities in Ontario, the retrospective launchings of EL special units, hubs, task forces, and working groups re-affirms the importance that universities are currently placing on EL within their host communities. In 2015, a centralized campus infrastructure or “Hub” was launched by Queen’s University. This launch led to the formation of an EL Working Group (ELWG) with a prime mandate of designing strategies that facilitate the development and growth of self-sustaining, curricular and co-curricular experiential education opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students (Queen’s University, 2015). Although Queen’s University have had several EL programs over the years, this launch indicates a significant milestone of having a campus-wide central hub in one location to articulate, manage and oversee all aspects of their university-community connections.

Trent University also recently adopted a centralized unit of EL on the campus in connection with its host community, Peterborough. In July 2018, the Trent Community Research Centre (TCRC)\textsuperscript{6}, was formally integrated into Trent University. Although the Centre has a 20-year history with the university, this integration creates unique

\textsuperscript{6} Formerly known as the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education.
community-based research and education programs that aim to contribute to community organizations through EL opportunities for their students (Trent University, 2018). By formally integrating these student experience modules into one, Trent University positioned itself to revamp EL, strategically strengthening and expanding its relationship with Peterborough.

The length of time that students work during placements is observed to be an integral part of EL as duration ensures program sustainability and success. For instance, Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) argue that longer EL periods, more than one academic year, of in-depth EL study, presents an opportunity for students to develop essential skill sets and knowledge base for their career development. Accordingly, this study is keen on documenting and understanding the length of time students spend on EL placements. For that reason, the duration of EL placements is grouped into three categories: short, medium and long terms. Short-term covers experiences where students spend at least one term or a semester in a workplace setting, while the medium-term refers to students spending at least one year in a work-related setting. For the long-term, students' work or field learning experiences are not less than one academic year or during the entire period of their study. These terms, therefore, help the research in defining the level of attention or importance the universities place on getting students into the field for EL programs. This grouping is done to enhance the thematic analysis of the data collected (Scharp & Sanders, 2019).

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7 Short = 1 Term, Medium = 1 Year, Long = 1 Year to full degree
From the analysis, eight of the nine institutions have short-term EL programs. The short-term EL experiences are when students spend a few weeks to at least one term in a workplace setting. The document analysis identifies that Carleton University has no short-term EL programs. This is quite an intriguing observation calling for a further probe. The probe indicates Carleton’s underpinning philosophy on EL is guided by a ‘Strategic Transformation Group on Employability’, that has a deeper focus on ‘course’, ‘community’, and ‘work integration’ at the center (Carleton University, 2018b). Carleton’s EL programs are not only integrated into the universities’ academic courses but are combined with direct experiences, which is focused on collaboration with host community organizations and students’ work combinations. It could be argued that these features at Carleton may have influenced and positioned the offering of mainly medium to long term EL programs, suggesting Carleton University’s differentiated peculiarity in EL understanding and approach. For instance, a document from Carleton’s EL programs and initiatives states:

*Experiential learning requires the student to not only engage in the experience activity but also requires them to reflect upon their learning and how their skills learned through their academic studies can be applied beyond the classroom. Workplace experiences such as co-op and internship placements are only one form of experiential learning opportunities that can be provided to students. Such opportunities are typically divided into three categories – a course focused, community-focused, and work-focused – giving students hands-on experiences not only in the classroom but also in the community and the workplace* (Strategic Transformation Group on Employability, Carleton University, 2018).
All the study institutions have medium-term student-work experience programs. The medium-term programs include a mixture of student experience programs that are beyond one academic term. In the case of the University of Waterloo, the launch of an EDGE Certificate program seeks to meet an emergent challenge for non-co-op students, giving them opportunities to engage in formalized experiential education (University of Waterloo, 2017). The program is designed for students to develop and acquire key professional skills and help them to discover and market their career alternatives to potential employers. In this regard, for a student to get an EDGE certification by the university, they are required to complete four main EL components. These are:

1) Skills identification and articulation workshop,

2) A career development course,

3) Three work/community experiences paired with a professional development course,

4) A final capstone workshop.

The observation here is that these medium-term milestones would take more than one academic term to complete.

Another prime example of medium-term EL is found at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology where students’ work experiences are integrated into all programs. For instance, the internship placement component for students at the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities requires a minimum of 280 hours of work in one academic semester. Additionally, students enrolled in this internship program are

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8 A conversation with a Program Assistant at the University of Waterloo revealed that the term EDGE is not an acronym
expected to be active participants in online discussions, write reflective journals, and then complete a final project. The underlying intention is to integrate and synthesize their work experiences with coursework and knowledge gained throughout their program of study. This approach to EL by the UOIT is succinctly captured in an EL policy document that explains this unique program.

*Experiential learning is integrated into all our programs as the framework necessary to ensure appropriate knowledge translation. We make sure that our students are fully competent in the use, and extension of, industry-standard technologies for each discipline (UOIT, 2018).*

In analyzing the policy documents on EL, it is also found that the typical medium-term duration for internship programs are at least 12 months. Given that a longer duration for EL could potentially serve as a disincentive to students’ enrollment, some of the universities identify several innovative ways such as the provision of financial incentives, curricular (for credit) and co-curricular (non-credit) to compensate for the student work experience. For instance, as seen in Figure 4.1, Queen’s University offers paid internships that cover programs ranging from 12 to 16 months. Further observation reveals that, although Queen’s flagship EL program - - Queen’s Undergraduate Internship Program (QUIP) previously focused on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines, it is now extended to include students from Social Sciences, Humanities, Creative Arts, and Languages.
Six of the nine universities who have long-term EL programs for students within their public documents are: The University of Toronto, Queen’s University, University of Waterloo, Carleton University, University of Ontario Institute of Technology and Trent University. It is important to note that long-term EL programs are found in all three university categories - Medical/Doctoral, Comprehensive and Primarily Undergraduate. The University of Toronto recently launched a MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program for students from Sub-Sahara Africa and make provision for award-winning recipients to take long-term internship programs. The local internship program first takes place in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) for three months during the second summer of studies. This provides participants with local practical work experience and skills, whereas the second
internship takes place in Africa during the third summer of studies (University of Toronto, 2019). Also, at UOIT, third and final year students are offered pre-practicum and practicum learning experiences with community organizations. The success of these programs at UOIT may have encouraged the university to launch its first international practicums program for social sciences. In February of 2019, practicum students from the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities were provided with the opportunity to travel to Costa Rica and Panama (University of Ontario Institute of Technology, 2019). These developments add to the observed growing institutional interest in both long-term and internationally orientated EL programs.

All the study universities have EL programs for the STEM disciplines. However, it is interesting to note that five institutions have recently launched programs specifically designed for the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS). The universities are Queen’s University, University of Waterloo, Carleton University, Trent University, and Lakehead University. Trent University, in particular, has made EL in HASS a prime focus. However, the University of Toronto, McMaster University, The University of Guelph and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology offer EL programs predominantly in their STEM disciplines. The discovery of HASS oriented connections in some of the selected universities is central to answering the research question; in what ways do Ontario universities connect with their host communities through EL, particularly in HASS?

All nine study universities have some form of local community connections. Trent University has EL connections in Peterborough and its satellite campus in Durham in the GTA. Trent’s Durham campus offers placements, practicum and internships opportunities
for students in Business Administration (Trent University, 2018). This phenomenon is in tandem with Collins (2017) observation that knowledge development with regards to the dictates of EL could occur both in the academic community and in industry, given that the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) offers students the opportunity to access and intern at a variety of industries and local community connections.

In the North American context, Sungu-Eryilmaz (2009) observes that partnership development has emergent and particular resonance in cities, where higher educational institutions (HEIs) are some of the largest urban landowners and thus have economic objectives for securing TG relationships with neighbouring communities. Overall, while some of the study universities are particularly keen on working with community members, others are focused on student-work experiences which, in turn, shape the nature of their connections.

4.3 Content Analysis of EL Documents

To examine the institutional arrangements for EL and how the study universities have designed them with community partners in mind, the contents of all the gathered documents are further reviewed. This analysis is useful in identifying key themes and indicators on EL from each institution. It is also in line with the study’s conceptual framework that seeks to analyze the correlation between what institutions define as EL strategies and how that shapes the structure of their host community partnerships. As Owen (2014) argues, policy guides for higher education are socially constructed and attempt to define the reality and rules that govern administrative functions. The author
refers to this approach to imply that universities’ design of such guides may only be in response to emerging trends and demands, as their operations may not necessarily be reflective of the contents of such guides. For this reason, understanding the planning, practice, and implementation of institutional policy statements is essential for this study.

The publication dates for all analyzed documents range between 2003 and 2018. As noted in Table 4.2, 46 documents were retrieved from Medical-/Doctoral Universities, 43 from Comprehensive Universities, and 42 from Primarily Undergraduate Universities. The total number of policy documents found within the nine Ontario universities was 128, which were retrieved from a total of 155 website pages. Table 4.2 shows the summary of the publication dates, the number of documents and websites assessed, key documents as well as key themes that emerged from the content analysis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Publication Dates</th>
<th>Number of documents</th>
<th>Number of websites</th>
<th>Key Documents</th>
<th>Key Themes</th>
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<td>- Community-Engaged Learning Course</td>
<td>- Skilled Workforce Strategy</td>
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<td>- Center for Teaching &amp; Learning annual reports</td>
<td>- Experiential knowledge</td>
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<td>- Global engagement reports (2017-2018)</td>
<td>- Placement and learning</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>- Co-operative education manual</td>
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<td>- Strategic Mandate Agreement (2015-2016 &amp; 2017 -2020)</td>
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<td>- Kingston ECDEV Strategic Plan- 2015-2020</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>- Partnership with industry</td>
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<td>- McMaster Un. Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines</td>
<td>- Experiential entrepreneur</td>
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<td>- Experiential Learning Assessment Guide</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>- Faculty and Unit Action Plans Strategic Plan</td>
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<td>- Practicum Manuals</td>
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<td>- RBC report on humans wanted</td>
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<td>- A Practical Guide for Work-integrated Learning</td>
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<td>- Strategic Mandate Agreements (2014-2017 &amp; 2017-2020)</td>
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<td>- Teaching &amp; learning with faculty</td>
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<td>- Community work Meaningful WIL placements</td>
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<td>128</td>
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In addition to the publicly available institutional documents, other key documents, such as Senate reports, university's acts and bylaws, from each institution were selected for further review. Of all the documents reviewed, the Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs) are found to have the most substantive information citing EL programs and activities. The genesis of the SMAs was from the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU). MTCU is the Ontario government’s ministry responsible for the administration of laws relating to post-secondary education and skills training. Among other things, the Ministry directs and shapes Ontario’s postsecondary education, employment, and training systems (MAESD, 2017). From August 2014, the Ministry has been championing a strategic program where all publicly assisted colleges and universities in Ontario sign SMAs highlighting institutional priorities for set periods. These agreements set out institutional approaches, strategic plans, and initiatives, designed by the individual universities and colleges to generally improve student-work experience (Spooner, 2018). There appears to be a direct correlation between the period when the Ministry of Education engaged the HEIs with SMAs and their corresponding emergent expansion of comprehensive EL. To enhance the student experience, all the nine universities identify and affirm EL as a strategic pedagogical module for their teaching and learning enhancement.

9 The ministries’ name was briefly changed to the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development MAESD in 2016-2018.
All of the Medical/Doctoral universities acknowledge in their SMAs the emergent EL opportunities that aim to improve student learning and overall employability. Of the three Medical/Doctoral universities, two of them identify EL as their institutional approach to innovation in teaching and learning excellence. For example, on April 11, 2017, the University of Toronto set up a university’s task force on “Experiential and Work-Integrated Learning” to bring together key internal stakeholders, and to manage the growing provincial interest in EL opportunities. By this, the Medical/Doctoral universities in Ontario demonstrate a shared interest with the province in growing EL opportunities. For instance, a section of the University of Toronto’s SMA 2017-20 states:

*The University of Toronto believes that work-integrated and experiential learning (WIL/EL) opportunities can play an important role in enhancing the educational experiences of students. The University currently offers a broad range of WIL/EL including co-ops, practica, internships, professional experience years, research opportunities, service learning, and clinical placements. We will expand these offerings further. Planned growth in WIL/EL opportunities for students will occur in a manner that maintains our high standard of academic quality and maximizes the learning benefit to students* (University of Toronto, 2017, p. 7).

McMaster University identifies EL as one of the key frontiers in enhancing their teaching and learning modules for students and their relationship with the Hamilton community. To accomplish this, the university expresses EL strategies within their SMA 2014-2017 as a major priority. The policy document outlines the pedagogical approaches that seek to include the community on student experiences for enhanced teaching and learning. To this end, McMaster revised its SMA in 2017 to expand on its community engagement programs. The university identifies institutional collaborations, business
partnerships, customized training, entrepreneurial activities, and industry affiliations under a broad theme of innovation, economic development, and community engagement. In September 2017, the scope of policy guidelines on EL was further broadened to include students with disabilities. For their off-site placements, the proposed use of multiple stakeholders was drafted in their ‘2017 Policies, Procedures and Guidelines’ which states:

In order to engage in the academic accommodation process as it applies to the experiential learning setting, multiple stakeholders may need to be involved, including the fieldwork coordinator (the faculty member who organizes fieldwork), the on-site supervisor, the preceptor (University or clinical supervisor who oversees individual fieldwork experiences) and SAS (McMaster - Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines – Sept. 2017).

At McMaster University, the Faculty of Social Science set up an Experiential Education Department with the singular aim of enriching undergraduate education through the fostering of unique approaches to learning within the classroom as well as actively engaging students in the community. One of their core mandates is to foster strong relationships between academic studies, career exploration, and the McMaster community. The Continuous Education unit at McMaster also has a strategic partnership with Riipen\(^\text{10}\), which is an organization with an EL platform for project-based collaboration amongst employers, educators, and students. The institution supports students and young professionals, educators, and companies through real-world industry

\(^{10}\) https://www.mcmastercce.ca/experiential-learning
project experiences (Riipen Networks, 2019). From their online platform, companies post small projects that students can complete for class credit, employer recommendations, cash or other incentives. The project is designed to help students develop skills through real-world experiences.

In addition to McMaster, Riipen also works with the University of Toronto, Queen’s University, University of Waterloo, and the University of Guelph to enhance their students' real-world experiences. Outside the selected universities for this study, it is also observed that Riipen collaborates with York University, Durham College, Mohawk College, La Cité College, and Seneca College; all located in Ontario on EL projects for community partners. Working with third-party providers such as Riipen amplifies the quantum of work involved in building these special EL relationships which in turn warrants such ‘professional’ assistance.

In summary, these observations on TG engagements are evidence of the concerted efforts by both HEIs and community partners to work more closely together. As a result, universities are increasingly seeing EL possibilities as effective pedagogical tools for students’ engagement and community connections (Coates, James, & Baldwin, 2005). These attempts may affirm the universities' growing desire for new EL modules that are designed to prepare today's learners for tomorrow's workplace.

4.4 Theme Identification in Documents

This section presents the results of the themes identified within all the documents that were gathered from the institutions studied. As Ryan et al. (2000) argue, theme
identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research. They opine that most social scientists struggle to clearly explain and justify modalities for uncovering emergent themes in their qualitative data— an observation also made by other scholars (Scharp & Sanders, 2019). To overcome these challenges, the authors propose a broad range of techniques that are drawn from across epistemological and disciplinary boundaries. These techniques simplify the process for the social science researcher to find themes from qualitative data that are sometimes complex and nuanced.

Following from Ryan et al. (2000), the techniques adopted in analyzing the content of the documents for this study include 1) key-word-in-context (KWIC), 2) word repetitions, 3) social science queries and 4) searching for missing information. To this end, the HASS aspects of community collaborations from all the information found were sorted. A final scrutiny-based approach was used to search for missing information from the policy documents. This process was specifically utilized to ascertain if common expressions or words were used across the institutions studied. For example, some institutions were using “task force” for their experiential learning team leads, others were using “working group” or “EL hub”.

4.5 Themes

There are six major themes and three minor themes that emerges from examining the institutional policy documents. Major themes are classified as those that feature as EL points of emphasis and are found in at least half or more of the institutional policy documents. Specifically, major themes constituted EL programs that are mentioned in an
estimated 60% of the 128 institutional documents forming part of this analysis.

Furthermore, major themes also cover areas of EL that are considered to be the main focus for most of these nine institutions.

The major themes identified are 1) career and job-ready students, 2) funding student work-experience, 3) academic credit for students, 4) workplace/field learning, 5) community engagement/partnerships, 6) pedagogy, technology, and program delivery.

4.5.1 Major Theme 1 - Career and Job-ready Students

Training students to be career-oriented and job-ready is paramount in the policies and guidelines documented by the universities studied. Eight out of the nine institutions identify EL as a tool for getting students prepared for the job market. This position draws on Blackwell et al.’s (2001) empirical studies of work experience in higher education, which suggests that work experience is related to a more positive view of the learning experience and to higher employment rates. To this end, the study institutions identify in their policies that, engaging students to have high impact practices, meaningful experiential placements, and systematic training, will result in a highly-skilled workforce for the labour markets (Nübler, 2018). In their quest to contribute to a highly skilled workforce, McMaster University notes experiential engagements as one of their innovative approaches in teaching and learning as documented in their 2017-2018 SMA:

This priority area focuses on innovative efforts including pedagogical approaches, program delivery and student services that contribute to a highly skilled workforce and ensure positive student outcomes. It captures institutional strengths in delivering high-quality learning experiences such as
experiential, entrepreneurial, personalized and digital learning, and student competencies that improve employability (McMaster SMA 2017-2018, p. 3).

4.5.2 Major Theme 2 - Funding Student Work-Experience

Another major theme that arises from analyzing the documents is the provisions and advocacy for funding student work-experiences. Providing resources for experienced-based learning as well as making provisions for paid co-ops, internships, and all forms of student community engagements are seen as a strategic means to enhance the student work experience. In their work on TG and Innovative University-Community Partnerships, Martin et al. (2005) observe that the source of funding, as well as the nature of financial relationships, are central to the success of university-community partnerships. Out of the nine institutions, six make provisions and, in some cases, argue for all students to receive some form of remuneration for their EL programs. These observations are seen across all institutional categories i.e. Medical/Doctoral, Comprehensive, and Primarily Undergraduate.

A connection can be made to a recent federal and provincial government of Canada’s monetary support for student EL in HEIs. In April 2019, the Government of Canada made funding commitments on “work-integrated/experiential learning” for higher education (Ministry of Finance, 2019). Although previous governments have made some progress in funding post-secondary student work experiences, the 2019 federal budget of $798 million (p. 250), earmarked specifically for EL for five years, constitutes a major milestone in government’s commitment towards experienced-based learning. This fund notably is to support “Student Work Placement Programs” created for work-integrated
learning of students outside STEM disciplines. The fundamental goal, therefore, is to give every student in post-secondary education access to work experience (Vendeville, 2019).

A major observation in the analysis of the institutional documents is the variations in funding strategies. In some cases, the funding responsibility falls on the community employer i.e., paying students for work done or to fund students’ EL. In other instances, the responsibility is on the university, the government or program-specific funds to fund their students’ EL programs. In contrast, not all EL opportunities are paid. For example, Guelph University offers “Unpaid Work Placements Programs” under its Community Engaged Learning (CEL) program. There are several other volunteer-based, unpaid EL programs. Examples include student housing, childcare, fitness and recreation, and community-based volunteering programs. The unpaid EL activity is not uncommon as an institutional position. Invariably, paid and non-paid EL mostly depends on the student’s course or program of study. These funding differences potentially pose barriers to students’ participation in EL programs. The implication may be that only privileged, and financially stable students can opt for unpaid placements. This may be counterproductive and contradictory to the emergent institutional policy positions that aim to enroll most students in the EL program.

4.5.3 Major Theme 3 - Pedagogy, Technology, and Program Delivery

The pedagogical approaches for student work experience is one of the major themes that evolve from analyzing the institutional documents. Some of the outlined policies identify new ways of teaching and learning particularly suggesting that innovative pedagogical approaches are capable of transforming traditional teaching and learning practices. All nine study universities point to a diverse range of pedagogical approaches
for student learning and community engagement. In addition to the traditionally known forms of student work experience such as co-ops, internships, and practicums, new forms of EL are summarized in Table 4.4. From the documents, a total of 20 terms (see Table 4.4) are identified. They describe contemporary ways that the university work with the host communities.

Although each university uses its own terms to describe how they connect with the host community, there are few variations in the meanings and adaptations for these terms. From the policy documents analyzed, the Comprehensive Universities have a wider array of programs connected with community partners with respect to teaching and learning. This is followed by the Medical/Doctoral and the Primarily Undergraduate Universities.

In their quest to impact the host community, it is not uncommon to find the universities engaged in a number of initiatives with local partners. These newer partnership engagements vary between local economic development boards, local organizations, and government institutions. This is reflective of Carleton’s position on community engagements as they state:

*The goal of Carleton University’s Community Engaged Pedagogy (CEP) program is to encourage students to participate in service in order to create linkages between academic study and larger public life and to better understand their roles as global citizens. Many of Carleton’s faculty have embedded community-based learning in their coursework and the university continuously explores opportunities to work with community partners on a number of initiatives* (Carleton University, 2018).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EL Approach</th>
<th>Medical/Doctoral Universities</th>
<th>Comprehensive Universities</th>
<th>Primarily Undergraduate Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Queen’s</td>
<td>McMaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible Experiential Learning</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blended-Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case-based Learning</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Curricular</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-Engaged Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-Engaged Pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service Learning (CSL)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-Campus Engagement (CCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial Learning</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Engagement</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands-on Learning</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Exchanges</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorships</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-based Learning</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulation</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Assistantship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Campus Work Experience</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20 or 33%</td>
<td>27 or 44%</td>
<td>14 or 23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As noted in table 4.4, the number of ways the study institutions connect with their local partners is expanding and evolving. The Comprehensive Universities such as the University of Waterloo conduct some graduate-level research and offer a wide range of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs (Maclean’s, 2018). It must be noted that these numbers were drawn from policy documents and online information that were available on the various university websites at the time of data collection.

4.5.4 Major Theme 4 - Academic Credit, Evaluation and Feedback

The provision for the acknowledgment and measuring of students’ work experiences is prominent in some of the policy documents of the study universities. Notably, the Comprehensive Universities advocate for the clear allocation of credit/marks for the students’ EL activities. The policies for student work experiences point to the need for students to feel that the time and work devoted to the engagement are acknowledged and credited. The provisions made also attempt to explore key strategies for the general student experience to mitigate expected difficulties in their EL engagements. The Primarily Undergraduate Universities, on the other hand, seek to broaden their EL opportunities with a wide range of incentives to enhance students’ work experiences. These include having student placements accredited, providing hubs and office spaces for student entrepreneurial start-up companies, and tapping into government and community funding initiatives to run the WIL/EL programs as evidenced in the following two excerpts.
Undergraduate and graduate students have the opportunity to gain academic credit and on-the-job experience by undertaking supervised research projects with local companies, government, and non-profit organizations in Peterborough City and County, Haliburton County, and the City of Kawartha Lakes (Trent University SMA, 2015).

The metrics in this component capture Trent University's strength in program delivery methods that expand learning options for students and improve their learning experience and career preparedness. This may include, but is not limited to, experiential learning, online learning, entrepreneurial learning, work-integrated learning, and international exchange opportunities (Trent University - PSED Accountability Reports, 2015).

4.5.5 Major Theme 5 - Workplace/field Learning

Learning in a workplace is a growing form of pedagogy (Manuti, Pastore, Scardigno, Giancaspro, and Morciano, 2015). Scholars such as Mckinney (2019) states that “student reflections… can be instructive as we argue the case for continuous investment in well-defined off-campus study” (p. 29). From the policy documents, all the Medical/Doctoral universities have workplace and or field learning as a strategy for supporting students’ success. The emphasis here is on the learning environment and its correlation with student teaching and learning. For instance, the University of Guelph, one of the Comprehensive Universities, identifies the creation of more workplace-based experiential learning as a key pedagogy to promote intentional and active learning. The provisions contend that the University of Guelph’s EL opportunities are grounded in an intentional learning cycle with clearly defined learning outcomes (University of Guelph, 2018). To this end, the opportunity for students to critically reflect on their experiences,
and how those experiences foster a deeper understanding of the learning outcome, shows as an important facet of the student learning as contained in a document which states:

At the University of Guelph experiential learning continues to be part of our core mandate, both in our curricular and co-curricular offerings. We believe that students benefit greatly from engaging directly in workplaces and communities where they can apply their learning in real-world contexts, develop key competencies, gain a deeper understanding of complex social issues, and collaborate with others toward community capacity building (University of Guelph, 2018).

McMaster University also identifies field experiences as key to helping students transform their learning experiences into practice knowledge. Reed et al. (2010) argue that the field study approach can encourage transformative and social learning as students change how they see and act in the world through interaction with their social networks and contexts. In this context, The School of Social Work at the Faculty of Social Sciences at McMaster offer field placement practicums. Students in the program spend the equivalent of two days per week in social agencies, or with other organizations, in a supervised practice setting. Off-Campus coursework is also offered as a form of EL. For instance, McMaster University posits that:

Academic accommodation extends to off-campus coursework such as fieldwork, placement, internship, and out-of-the-classroom learning experiences (McMaster - Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines – Sept. 2017).

The importance of ‘learning out there’ or in a field setting is a growing concept that is argued by some scholars to have a significant impact on students’ holistic success. Regardless of the challenges of fieldwork such as disorienting student learning and
navigating cultural and ethical issues/dilemmas, Castleden et al. (2013), argue that out-of-class undertakings allow students to understand and work with complex connections across time, space, and place. However, the challenging circumstances students encounter as they learn in the field, especially as a group, equip them with the experience of shared vulnerability that can deepen their learning (Mckinney, 2019). To this end, it is thought-provoking to note that all the study institutions identify some form of field learning as key models to have students engaged with their host communities.

4.4.6 Major Theme 6 - Community Engagement/partnerships

Community engagement and institutional partnership is a major theme that runs through the documents analyzed for this study. All three Primarily Undergraduate Universities seek to actively engage their host communities for their students’ EL. At Carleton University, for example, a $2.5 million Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) partnership grant was established in 2012 for a community first impact project, dubbed “Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement: (CFICE)”. The seven-year project was designed to create an EL strategic synergy between Ottawa’s non-profit and community-based organizations and the university. The project officially ended on March 31, 2019, however, there was no visible replacement for the continuation of the CFICE project at the time of this study.

As noted in the literature, Martin et al. (2005) state that HEIs across the United States are venturing into non-academic and/or non-teaching roles in order to promote more university-community engagements. In this regard, universities in Canada seem to have joined its southern neighbour in the quest for community engagements at a noticeable rate. Although this study looks specifically at local partnerships, significant
global engagement projects are also seen across all the institutional documents. Also, most documents from the University of Waterloo have significant information on local connections. The 2018 annual report from Waterloo’s Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) notes the importance of local institutional reach and engagement. (University of Waterloo, 2018). The report notes support for both academic and non-academic units, as well as having “extensive and strong relations” with their local partners and collaborator units.

Another key finding is the University of Waterloo’s quest to assign projects that require all students to interact with at least a local business, a government agency, or community organization as part of their EL. Such university-wide initiatives require an enormous amount of resources that may inadvertently impact teaching and shift academic focus. Howard (1998), argues that EL engagements such as service-learning are in contradiction to traditional pedagogical principles. The author observes that faculty interest has been shifting towards service-learning as more institutions are embracing EL ventures. This may be due to the belief that EL serves as a solution to the perceived shortcomings of the information-dissemination module that traditionally prevails in higher education (Howard, 1998).

4.4.7 Minor Themes - Experiential Entrepreneurship, Mentorship, and Leadership

The minor themes emerging from the policy documents are 1) entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial learning, 2) mentorship and 3) leadership. As noted in the methods chapter, key-work-in-content (KWIC) and word repetition (Ryan et al., 2000) was adopted in gathering information resulting in minor themes. These themes are less
prominent in the policy documents and therefore considered minor as they were not major points of emphasis in most of the documents of the study universities.

Entrepreneurship is found to be a key institutional strategy for student experiential engagement in two of the study universities: McMaster University and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT). The UOIT emphasizes the exploration of entrepreneurial opportunities as a key strategy for student and community engagement. This is stated in their 2015-2016 SMA and 2017-2022 strategic plans which states:

*We will offer practical hands-on learning experiences, like co-ops, internships, research practicums, international exchanges, and entrepreneurial opportunities to every student, because experiential learning, develops the skills that employers want (UOIT, 2017).*

Student entrepreneurship and start-up engagements are also found to be a key EL tool for students learning. For instance, McMaster University has EL programs designed specifically towards new business start-ups, entrepreneurial scholarships, and entrepreneurship funding. The SMA 201-2017 states:

*McMaster is launching a Centre for Student Entrepreneurship to build on the existing entrepreneurial environment and activities in commercialization. It will bring together student-led start-up companies, directed facilities, support mechanisms, and industry partners in a common space that will focus on collaboration, interaction, and start-up incubation (McMaster SMA 2014-2017, p. 4).*

The development of mentorship programs to accelerate the pace of EL is evidenced in the documents analyzed. As noted in the literature, mentorship programs in Canada are found to enhance entrepreneurial traits. Hence, most university entrepreneurship
programs tend to be the driving force behind training Canadian entrepreneurs (Ibrahim & Soufani, 2002). Six of the universities make provisions to cater for EL through mentorship. The institutions are the University of Toronto, Waterloo University, University of Guelph, Carleton University, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, and Lakehead University. A key observation is that the Carleton University Alumni Association has created a mentorship program aimed at helping students connect with employers. Part of the program goals are stated as:

The Mentorship Network at Carleton connects peer mentors and mentees across the Carleton campus. The program provides mentorship training, resources, and information for all peer mentors connected to the Network (Carleton University, 2018).

In all, mentorships programs are deemed to have the ability to encourage teamwork among students, foster positive attitudes, and facilitate the transition from theory to practice.

Leadership is also identified in the policy documents studied as an intentional institutional action strategy in EL implementation. In an article on experiential education, Guthrie and Jones (2012) argue that learning ought to be used in framing leadership education. This position is shared by scholars such as Banach, Foden, and Brooks Carter (2019) who state that EL enhances students’ self-assurance in group leadership. To this end, training student leaders through EL is a key strategic adaptation for both Queen’s and Lakehead Universities. The study notes that to develop ‘Strong Leaders’, Queen’s University launched ‘OceanPath Fellows’, where three selected students each received $25,000 in support of their proposed initiatives to promote healing and wellness in
isolated communities. The scholarship was set as year-long funding to support community-focused, experiential learning opportunities designed to foster sustainable and positive social change (OceanPaths, 2018). Funding the development of students through EL, therefore, provides a solid foundation for leadership education, as well as a framework for developing and implementing programs for students to reach their full leadership capacity (Guthrie & Jones, 2012).

4.6 Conclusion on Document Analysis

In summary, these findings from Ontario universities’ publicly available documents suggest that HEIs are actively expanding their TG connections with a prime focus on students’ EL. The current policies and procedures widely explore aspects of funding, the impact of technology, leadership structures, and place value on the importance of the role of community partners. In addition, the launch of new EL programs such as mentorship, entrepreneurial learning and expanded focus on local community partnerships suggests that HEIs are acknowledging a gap and putting programs into place to address them.

4.7 Results: Interviews with University Key Informants and Community Partners

This section presents the results of key informant interviews undertaken in three of the nine sampled institutions. Six interviews were administered - - one from each selected university and a complimentary interview from its local community partner. The themes from the interviews are thoroughly analyzed and compared with the policy document findings. Six themes that emerge from this exercise are summarized in Table 4.5. The
study finds gaps between the analysis of the policy documents and the interview responses which is also highlighted in Table 4.5. Although one key informant did not consent to be identified, all informants were anonymized for consistency\textsuperscript{11}.

\textsuperscript{11} All the institutions and community partners interviewed were anonymized in the summarized interview results.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Aims and Objectives - EL and students career development</th>
<th>The extent of partnership akin to funding</th>
<th>Score on EL Evaluation</th>
<th>Humanities Arts and Social Science</th>
<th>Geographical scope</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University A</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Very Important students with disability</td>
<td>Fairly defined</td>
<td>Significant attention given to HASS</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Concern over student workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Partner, University A</td>
<td>Important Career path highly esteemed</td>
<td>Very Important Funding may be limited for community</td>
<td>Fairly defined</td>
<td>Attention given to Humanities</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Crucial 50% don’t return due to jobs or schoolwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University B</td>
<td>Important Employer relations and preparing students</td>
<td>Funding opportunities challenging sometimes</td>
<td>Important but not defined</td>
<td>Significant attention given to HASS</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Decentralization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Partner, University B</td>
<td>Very Important Change due to rapid technological advancements</td>
<td>Important Funding depends on program</td>
<td>Explicitly defined</td>
<td>Attention given to Social sciences</td>
<td>Not significantly important (virtual)</td>
<td>Crucial Logistics of EL delivery and Diversity of programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University C</td>
<td>Very Important Skills shortage and labour force shrinkage</td>
<td>Very Important RBC funding for employer/ students</td>
<td>Explicitly defined</td>
<td>Attention given to business courses</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Critical skills shortage and labour force shrinkage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Partner, University C</td>
<td>Important a cultural change we need to make</td>
<td>Important Funding by government or institution</td>
<td>Fairly defined</td>
<td>Attention given to Social sciences</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Scheduling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Decentralization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7.1 Key informants Major Theme 1: EL and Student Career Development

Training students to acquire requisite skills for life long endeavours is identified as a fundamental mission of all the study universities. To this end, the career development of students emerges as a common theme from the key informant interviews. This feedback is in response to the institutional aims and objectives underpinning EL development. As noted in the literature by Hayne Beatty (2018), student career engagement and employability is becoming a front line mission for HEIs. For example, the respondent from University A alludes to student-career as a focus for their EL policy development on community engagement. Similarly, community partner A emphasizes that student work placements are crucial in shaping their perceptions and their long-term career goals. This position is consistent with University B and C’s EL objectives. Therefore, there seems to be a consensus that getting students into the field is an important pillar for student’s development and future career goals. The respondent from University A highlights key objectives for EL that are centred on career path development as seen in the following statement:

*So not only are we trying to provide access to EL opportunities to enhance their educational experience, but also trying to show our students where their potential career paths could lead them, and the fact that they should be aiming for upper-level employment opportunities if that’s something they are interested in pursuing* (Respondent, University A).

Although the student-career centred objective is consistent with University B’s EL position, their emphasis on place or work environment to student career path development signals a key turning point for teaching and learning occurring outside of the traditional
classroom setting. The respondent emphasizes the need to have every student participate in EL prior to completion of their studies. To them, off-campus EL experience is paramount and therefore central to the development of all EL programs. Community partner B also ascribes to the notion that the work environment is the place where a learner’s career is birthed and shaped. Authors such as Florida (2017) and Rosan (2002) note the important role of place in community collaborations. The respondent for community partner C also explains that the opportunities to see and experience the real-world of work are what help young graduate and postgraduate students refine and shape their perceptions on where and what defines their future careers. Community partner C reckons that the work experiences, particularly for young people, help with self-identification in their career development. In explaining the goals and objectives of University C’s EL programs, the key informant states:

_The goal is that every student graduate from here gets some form of an experiential learning experience. Yes, that is written in our strategic plan. And it also gives us a sense of what the needs in the community are for the skill sets that are being sorted out by employers as well (Respondent, University C)._  

Community partner C highlights that the objective of EL is to expose students to the work environment and have them ‘breathe some real-world air’. Similarly, the respondent from University C also deems EL as crucial in leveraging students’ entry into the business community which aligns with the university’s vision. In addition, the institutional response on community development suggests that University C’s EL policies are intentionally designed to train and retain highly skilled student labour force within the host community and its environs after graduation. This may therefore require the
provision of placements for EL opportunities within the city-region (Clemens, 2012). To this effect, the institution has undertaken a series of initiatives in collaboration with the city’s economic development board and other government agencies with the aim of student/alumni retention. Below is a response from the key informant from University C on ways the university connects with the community particularly through teaching and learning:

*I think this part of Ontario is experiencing skills shortage and labour force shrinkage. So, there are pushes on through the city, through all levels of government, municipal federal and provincial through economic development initiatives and through the university to encourage graduates to stay in the community or its environs. So, we feel that by making these connections and building these networks for students and making them members of the chamber of commerce and all those sorts of things that students develop an awareness of what opportunities are here.* (Respondent, University C).

This observation of the desire for fundamental cohesion between academic institutions and communities for student career development is consistent among all the institutions and their host communities with a level of heterogeneity.

4.7.2 Key informants Major Theme 2: The Role of Funding in EL

Another major theme central to the analysis of key informant interviews is the funding of student’s EL programs. The key informants were asked about general patterns and turning points that have spurred the growth of EL. All respondents identify funding as an important element for the successful implementation of EL programs on campus and in the host community. The following emerges as key to the success of EL program rollout: 1) Federal government funding, 2) career-ready stream funding from the Provincial
government, 3) RBC funding, 4) University funding and industry/community partner funding.

Although there are divergent views on prioritizing which EL programs and disciplines receive funding, most respondents acknowledge that sustainable funding is a key determinant to the success of their EL program. Some of the respondents raise concerns about the fact that uncertainties in the continuous funding of EL programs fundamentally affects program planning and implementation. For instance, the respondent for University A states that:

So, we’ve only been able to get full funding cycles from the summer. We didn’t get funds in terms of having mid-point just because we started in May. We got some funding at the end of April and we started our placements in May, and nothing was developed prior to getting the funding so we had to develop the program, the positions, and intake our students all at the same time (Respondent, University A).

A similar observation on funding is made by the key respondent at University B as highlighted in the statement below:

I am not sure if you’ve heard about the career-ready funds. So that was the previous Ontario Liberal government that developed this fund to help expand experiential learning. There were all different universities probably applying to do a few types of projects. We got one of such government funding in the form of wage subsidy…… those were one-time funding opportunities, we had it in the summer and one in the fall and that will come to an end on March 31st, 2019... We are wrapping up with all the projects for where we got that funding for (Respondent, University B).
The respondent from University A explains that the premise for some of the funding uncertainties for the institutions seems to emanate from the change of provincial government in Ontario in 2018. As noted in the literature review, Benneworth et al. (2010) raise the issue of funding as crucial to the successful implementation of EL engagements. To allay these fears on funding, however, a new federal government’s budget announcement detailed a relatively large financial support for Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL). The 2019 budget stipulates a total commitment of close to $800M over five years (CEWIL-Canada, 2019). According to the budget, three different streams of funding will support the development of up to 84,000 new EL opportunities per year across Canada.

Furthermore, the respondent for University B highlights a new funding development project by the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), dubbed “RBC Future Launch project” which was rolled out in March 2017 to provide funding for EL programs in post-secondary institutions across Canada. The project has a 10 year $500 million commitment fund for student-work experience, networking, and skills development (RBC, 2017). The emphasis for this project is on work experience and paid internships for college and university students with a particular focus on skills development and career discovery.

4.7.3 Key informants Major Theme 3: EL Program Evaluation

The key informants interviewed agreed on students’ evaluation and feedback as an important and integral benchmark to measure the success and sustainability of EL. Two of the institutions acknowledge historical lapses in judiciously monitoring students’ feedback on work experiences. Scholars such as Castleden et al. (2013, p. 496) acknowledge that short term EL assignments may not be ‘enough’ in terms of
transforming students' awareness and understanding. In this regard, evaluating students’ feedback has been an important aspect of the emergent campus and community EL engagements. The importance of student evaluation on EL is consistent with community partner A’s position that notes the lack of past monitoring may be due to general institutional inertia in prioritizing and analyzing students’ feedback on EL.

Four of the key informants, however, note recent institutional steps being taken on mid- and end-point evaluations with students and the employer organizations. In line with this position, University C’s key informant makes reference to a proposed use of a centralized database to keep records of student's and employers' feedback on EL. Community partner C acknowledges that because their partnership with the University is based on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), monitoring and evaluation has become a powerful pedagogical tool helping the institution in planning and forecasting their EL programs. In responding to how students' work experiences are tracked, monitored and evaluated, community partner C outline the power of using technology to assess students’ EL as observed in this statement:

*This [AI] is a very powerful pedagogical tool that empowers instructors to do things that they can’t do in the classroom because these simulations can provide so much feedback with so much learning all at the same time. It's kind of cool like you are assessed and you're learning all while this sort of simulated environment (Community Partner, University B).*

The respondent further explains how AI evaluations are purposely being used by the partner institutions to assist in curriculum development and program reviews. The community member B also alludes to an atmosphere of resistance and reluctance from the
institutional leadership in embracing new and unchartered waters of AI. The community member explains that these new technologies have the capabilities of evaluating highly sought-after skills such as empathy and persuasion — non-traditional areas that historically were not easy to evaluate. The respondent further explains that, although such tools are available today, institutional barriers, bureaucracies and the fear of private sector intrusion into the traditional academic circles act as barriers for embracing these technologies. However, as Taylor (2001) notes in the literature, there are significant ethical concerns about assessing student experiences and the correlation with how students learn. Using AI to evaluate human experiences for student measurable outcomes may therefore be subject to debate and further studies.

4.7.4 Key informants Major Theme 4: HASS

The analysis of the interviews reveals an emerging focus on EL connections in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Science (HASS). For instance, the key informant from University A states that significant attention is being given to the HASS for their EL programs and that, for the first time in their recent history, an analysis of the number of students enrolled in EL connections shows more HASS students than those found in the Sciences. The development is seen as a distinctive development across all the studied institutions in Ontario. This is consistent with Florida’s acknowledgment that the concentration of creative industries or HASS derivatives has exploded significantly in recent years (Florida, 2017). The following is a response to whether EL connection has students enrolled in HASS in these connections:
36% of our EL students are in the Arts and social sciences and we have about 28% that are in public affairs. Our lower population students are the students in the faculty of science and engineering and design. The faculty of Science forms 17% of our students are enrolled whereas Engineering and Design have about 12%. About 10% of our students are enrolled from the school of business and continuing education programs (Respondent, University A).

Respondents from University B and C reiterate a new focus on HASS for EL connections. The respondent from University B discusses how employers are beginning to look for graduates with skill sets in the Arts and the Humanities. They note that their respective universities are making good progress on the social science front when it comes to connecting students to the community. Further, the respondent from university B explains that EL research elements are being developed to be distinct from the traditional thesis or dissertation writing, as it will require students to spend relatively more time in the field when gathering data for research.

In addition, community partner C notes that the development of EL programs such as social work where students are offered longer-term clinical simulations and counselling sessions adds to the HASS oriented tangent. Students are now getting EL opportunities in the non-traditional, non-research, non-STEM disciplines which, until now, were rare areas for EL. The respondent states that:

We have done work with [University C*] specifically the Faculty of Social Work. We developed a simulation that essentially simulates a clinical setting and counselling sessions for students. So, it's a tool to essentially provide their learners in the social work program with a chance to practice within an Artificial Intelligence [AI] based client who needs some counselling service (Community Partner, University C). *edited for anonymity
These observations by the key informants confirm what the policy documents state on HASS advancements in EL development.

4.7.5 Key informants Major Theme 5: Geographical Scope

While EL connections outside institutional campuses are desirable, institutions tend to prefer building these connections with community partners who are within their immediate environment. Respondents from University A and C note their preference for local partnerships for several reasons including ease of coordination, local networking, and student retention within the host city after graduation. The key informant from University C discusses various collaborations with a focus on local partnerships within their community. Asked about the extent to which the institution leads and connects with the community, the key informant explains how the University intentionally creates linkages with the community to facilitate students’ post-graduation work retention and integration.

*Our economic development office uses our facilities as a meeting space and...*I think when we look at it we look at it as building an employment network for students so that through building partnerships and building these linkages that the community and the business community in [our city] become aware of the quality of our students and the kinds of work that they are capable of doing. And it also gives us a sense of what the needs in the community are for the skill sets that are being sorted out by employers as well (Community Partner, University C).

This local and immediate environment position is different from University B whose focus for EL partnerships expands beyond local to Canada-wide and international opportunities. The respondent notes that numerous new international university
connections and EL initiatives are being actively pursued, with emphasis on ‘global fluency’ and cultural consciousness for their students. The respondent further asserts that international research partnerships are growing and seem to center on giving students different opportunities to have real-world exposure beyond their immediate environment.

4.7.6 Key informants Major Theme 6: Challenges in Implementing EL

Also emerging from the analysis of the interviews are common challenges identified by all institutions and their respective community partners as impeding the implementation and success of EL. Key among these challenges are; concern over student workload; decentralization; logistics of EL delivery; skills shortage and labour force shrinkage. Other minor challenges include; risk management; ethical considerations; cultural sensitivity and training; and health and safety. In answering key questions about these challenges, University A explains how efforts are being made to centralize their system by bringing all their EL related programs under one umbrella. This is contained in the following statement:

*I would say that we are decentralized and that the EL hub development, was based on a recommendation from our experiential learning working group report. So, you can see that on our website that was 2015, one of the recommendations that came out of that was “in order to manage the growth of EL then we need to move to a more centralized model and the EL is one of the first steps (Respondent, University B).*

Placing this in context, the Community Partners for Universities B, and C paint an ideal centralized situation where university and community partners will be in ‘sync’ to avert an overly complex network of linkages.
The issue of student overload also emerges as one of the major concerns in the development of EL programs. A similar observation is made by University C’s respondent as seen in the statement: “Although the goal is that students come out of this program and are more workplace-ready than they went in…. we realize that it is a commitment for the student on top of what is already heavy course load” (Respondent, University C). All the institutions, however, acknowledge that they are in the early stages of exploring and designing strategies to mitigate the current challenges in the implementation of EL programs. Comparing the findings with the document analysis, the responses are useful in identifying gaps and opportunities in the development of EL in the study institutions. Table 4.6 highlights major gaps, challenges, and opportunities emerging from the interviews.

### Table 4:6 Institutional Gaps, Challenges and Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Gaps</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University A</td>
<td>Skills gap</td>
<td>Funding consistency</td>
<td>Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matching students – Skills Gap</td>
<td>High expectations</td>
<td>Availability &amp; readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Partner A</td>
<td>EL information may not be public</td>
<td>Decentralization</td>
<td>Teaching &amp; Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Decentralization</td>
<td>advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University B</td>
<td>Program delivery gaps Skills gap</td>
<td>Decentralization</td>
<td>Teaching &amp; Learning in HASS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Partner B</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Partner C</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.8 Gaps, Challenges and Opportunities

The following section outlines the gaps, challenges, and opportunities from the analysis of interviews on how the study institutions approach EL.
Gaps: Three of the respondents note the skills gap between academia and industry as a major catalyst for the emergent development of EL programs. Accordingly, matching students with the right skill sets with partner EL organizations may address the growing gap between employer expectations and institutional outlooks for students. Community partner C points out that making the courses more relevant to students is the driving force in joining the EL initiatives with their partner institutions.

Another key gap is the leadership of EL program offerings. Two of the respondents express misgivings on institutional leadership and interdisciplinary inertia. For instance, multi-disciplinary contacts with single community partners lead to confusion over who takes charge of the institution’s EL development. Furthermore, some of the study respondents note how decentralization can be detrimental to the implementation of EL. Some of the community partners also observe instances where different and, in some cases, many departments contact them for the same EL programs which are already operational.

A third gap in the analysis is the notable differences between what is in institutional policy documents and what is implemented. The respondent for University A, for instance, discusses how their EL policy falls short of clearly defining aspects of the program evaluation which necessitates a lot of improvisation. Below is an explanation for the program evaluation:

... that is why after the first term when we weren’t getting the feedback from the endpoint of evaluation, we had to use a little bit more man-power and hours on our side for ensuring that we get to build it [evaluation] into the placements (Respondent, University A).
**Challenges**: The following are key challenges identified by the respondents in their implementation of EL programs. These include decentralization, funding constituency, higher student responsibility and expectations, extensive and diversified EL programs, leadership, and scheduling. All the respondents from the study institutions acknowledge decentralization as a key source of concern with the development and implementation of EL programs. Respondents further highlight that operating in pods or silos is an avenue for tension within institutions and among community partners. According to the respondent from University B, lack of institutional champions and general corporate inertia present an enormous challenge to the implementation of EL engagements. Community partner B categorizes bureaucratic reviews, numerous committee meetings, and frequent program reviews, as growth impediments in successfully implementing EL programs.

Although funding also emerges as a major theme in the earlier analysis of this chapter, respondents note its consistency as a key challenge in the development and implementation of EL partnerships. For instance, many students are often eager and ready to sign up for EL programs but are constrained by limited and time-bound program funding. These and other restrictive funding initiatives affect EL development and planning. Additionally, scheduling and matching students with EL openings also present significant challenges. According to Community partner C, “...scheduling is the biggest challenge for us. It affects both the students and the community partners we work with” (Respondent, University C). The timing for recruitment for students as well as communication adds to the complexity of scheduling. To resolve this challenge, the
respondent for University B proposes the establishment of a central database to manage such tasks.

**Opportunities:** The respondents highlight the following as key opportunities that are emerging from the ongoing development of EL. These opportunities include: employment, availability and readiness of students, the advancement of teaching and learning, expanding EL in non-traditional areas such as HASS, expertise and partnership development. They advocate that getting students into the community gives potential employers the opportunity to find the right skills and train students for recruitment purposes. University A’s respondent notes: “*We are creating barrier-free connections that potentially lead to employment opportunities through EL projects*” (Respondent, University A). Additionally, University B’s respondent observes the positive impact of EL on students’ confidence especially among those that are community-engaged. Mayo (1997) notes such confidence as empowerment for engaged participants.

Respondents also reiterate the availability and readiness of students when it comes to EL. The opportunity to partner with big organizations in EL delivery is identified by community partners for both University A and B. The opportunity to partner with big organizations like IBM and Pearson, is paramount in the development of EL programs for both institutions. A shared platform for AI-based learning is noted as an exciting development. University A also explains how they are using EL to create opportunities for students with disabilities. By this, students with disabilities are placed with community organizations whose expectations and needs fit with the students.
4.9 Chapter Conclusion

The findings from the policy documents and the interviews for this study affirm the emerging interest in EL development across all the study institutions. However, there are major similarities as well as differences in the institutional approaches to EL design and implementation. The major similarities include the following: 1) New EL programs launched across various disciplines with host community partners, 2) creation of new centralized hubs or units to manage EL programs and TG engagements, 3) signing of strategic mandate agreements to expand EL programs aiming to cover every student. The major differences also include: 1) some universities have their focus on HASS development, but the majority have STEM-oriented EL engagements, 2) universities use diverse terminologies to define their pedagogical approaches. For example, some institutions primarily use work-integrated learning (WIL) to connect with the local community while others use EL. 3) Comprehensive Universities have a wider range of EL programs compared to the Medical/Doctoral and Primarily Undergraduate.

Further, the key themes resulting from analysis of the institutional policy documents and key informant interviews are: student career development, funding EL, decentralization, and evaluations for program delivery. Minor themes also center on leadership issues, entrepreneurial EL and mentorships. In addition, examining the themes, gaps, challenges, and opportunities and aligning them with the literature review provides key insights in EL which is discussed in detail in the concluding chapter of the study. By comparing and contrasting the document analysis and interviews, the findings suggest that policy formulations are ahead of implementation which may be due to the identified challenges.
Chapter 5
Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the emergent town-gown (TG) relationships as exemplified in Experiential Learning (EL). EL has gained popularity in recent years for several reasons, including its assumed importance in closing the gap between academic training and industry skill requirement. However, much of our knowledge of TG engagement is based on research-related disciplines in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) (Perkmann et al., 2013). Also, the tension that arises as institutions engage with communities adds to uncertainties in EL implementation. Thus far, there is a limited focus on TG teaching and learning connections and particularly in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS).

Therefore, this research asks: To what extent and in what ways do universities work with their local communities, particularly via teaching and learning? This question is explored across the full range of the universities' disciplines, but with emphasis on HASS and local university-community geographies. Using the Maclean’s University ranking system from 2018, the top three Ontario universities in each of the three principal categories - Medical/doctoral, Comprehensive, and Primarily undergraduate - were selected for the study. The study adopts qualitative methods to analyze publicly available institutional documents from nine universities. In addition, six key informant interviews are analyzed to complement the document analysis for greater depth. Finding respondents for interviews involved emails to contact person(s), following up referrals with calls and further emails, and finally setting up dates and times for phone interviews.
5.2 Significance of the Findings

The study findings indicate major themes and motivations explaining the rising popularity of EL. The motivations include student career and job readiness, new funding opportunities and the assumed importance of addressing the skills gap between academia and the world of work. Also, major themes that are emerging include debates on centralization versus decentralization of EL programs, competition versus collaboration, expansion of pedagogies, a new focus on HASS-based EL connections and the role of geography in TG engagements. Table 5.1 presents a summary of the findings, which are further discussed in relation to the literature on academic-TG relations.
Table 5.1 – Summary of Study Objectives, Key Literature, and Emerging Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study objectives</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Comparing / Contrasting findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The motivations behind the rising popularity of EL</td>
<td>Researchers attribute EL growth and expansion in the last decade to neoliberalism and globalism and assumed role in solving 21st-century educational challenges (Addie et al., 2015; Kolb, 2014).</td>
<td>▪ Student career development and job readiness is now a frontline mission of the university but requires academic leadership to implement. ▪ Launch of Strategic Mandate Agreements across Ontario universities influence universities’ teaching mission to include EL experiences. ▪ Funding opportunities and challenges impacting EL growth. ▪ EL is designed to address the skills gap between academia and the world of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What EL models are being adopted by universities?</td>
<td>Community engagements have not been a priority for higher education institutions (Buys &amp; Bursnall, 2007). The impact of new pedagogies and ‘out of class’ learning have a positive impact on teaching and learning. This is well documented in the EL literature (Owens et al., 2015).</td>
<td>▪ Findings suggest the current trend of community engagement is changing as universities are opening up to new collaborations. ▪ Several new pedagogical approaches are being adopted to ensure every student obtain some form of EL before they graduate. ▪ Institutions are renaming pedagogies, but the contents remain the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensions/Challenges in EL development and implementation.</td>
<td>Traditionally, most HEIs have decentralized connections with communities (Broström et al., 2019; Hayne Beatty, 2018).</td>
<td>▪ The study universities have established many centralized hubs as an attempt to move towards centralized systems. ▪ Tensions emerge as decentralized silos have to collaborate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are TG connections HASS or STEM?</td>
<td>Literature claim that connections are predominantly STEM and research-based (Perkmann et al., 2013).</td>
<td>▪ STEM relationships still lead in TG connections ▪ New HASS connections are currently developed across universities, along with teaching and learning engagements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A key focus of the study is to understand the underlying motivations behind the rising popularity of EL between universities and their host communities. Overall, the findings indicate that student career development and job readiness contribute to EL expansion. Earlier scholars (e.g., Martin, Smith, & Phillips 2005) attribute EL growth to the social and economic gains accruing to universities in the implementation of TG engagements. Others believe EL growth is a result of neoliberalism and globalism and its assumed role in addressing 21st century ‘wicked problems’ (Addie et al., 2015; Kolb, 2014; Martin et al., 2005; Ramaley, 2014). However, findings from this study suggest that universities are currently using EL as a means to close the skills gap between academia and the world of work. This observed trend may also be in response to concerns about a growing gap, or a looming “quiet crisis” (Royal Bank of Canada, 2018; OECD, 2018), between skills and labour market needs. Hence, several recently launched EL programs (e.g., EDGE, and QUIP) from the universities in this study focus on students’ skills and career development.

These attempts are clearly defined in the Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs) of the study universities, which are promoting coordinated and systematic training of students for the world of work through the development and maintenance of strong university and community engagements. This finding is in contrast with the current literature that asserts that universities are expanding on EL frontiers due to their globalized agendas.

12 EDGE - University of Waterloo
13 QUIP – Queen’s Undergraduate Internship Program - Queen’s University
Furthermore, some respondents note that EL engagements were primarily faculty-led until recently when the focus shifted to the centralization of EL activities. This raises a concern about the role of academic leadership in EL policy implementation. While it may be important to decentralize EL programs to faculty and department levels, care should be taken to harmonize and centralize these programs into a single body of policies in order to coordinate and direct their outcomes. The finding underscores the point that having policies in strategic agreements is not enough to result in the full-scale implementation of student career development. Rather, implementation of these EL missions may require academic leadership across all levels of university administration.

Funding and the form of financial provision are also essential components of the successful implementation of EL programs. For example, as reported in the results chapter, six of the nine study institutions include funding for EL engagements in their policy documents and SMAs. There is also institution-wide advocacy for every student to receive some form of remuneration for their EL engagements with community partners. Some researchers argue that incentivizing out-of-class student engagements is important for positive learning outcomes (Usher, 2019). Other scholars suggest that the level of funding for EL activities has a direct correlation with measurable learning outcomes (Martin et al., 2005). In this regard, the study institutions use several funding modules such as paid co-ops and internships as a means of exposing students to varied and crucial experiences of work environments. Some of the study universities offer paid internships that range from 12 to 16 months, while others provide full-time EL positions where interns are paid and professionally supervised. These long-term paid EL activities have
higher student patronage, which suggests that they may serve as motivation for program success among both students and community partners.

However, funding challenge remains a source of worry for some of the respondents at the study universities. Key informants raise concerns about intermittent funding difficulties, which affect EL program planning, design, and implementation. This finding is consistent with an earlier suggestion that higher education funding predominantly stops at research grants, with EL community partner engagements taking the back seat (Broström et al., 2019; Maassen & Stensaker, 2011). Some respondents attribute funding constraints to the current Ontario provincial government education funding reforms. Funding interruptions, including funding cuts, are likely to reduce the quality of education, particularly those relating to disciplines in humanities and social science (Beach & Milne, 2019). In this regard, HEIs need to prioritize funding as a critical pillar in the effective design and implementation of EL activities.

The findings from the study indicate that the process of educating students is expanding beyond knowledge transfer and classroom teaching to myriad contemporary EL models. Some suggest that community engagement is not a priority in higher education (Buys & Bursnall, 2007). However, this research finds that universities are opening up to new collaborations in many different ways. There are several EL based programs that the study universities launched since the inception of their SMAs. Examples include 1) McMaster's Centre for Student Entrepreneurship (McMaster SMA 2014-2017, p. 4); and 2) Lakehead University's renewed Summer Work-Study Program. Lakehead's program focuses on preparing students for the workforce, developing skills around the theme of professionalism and time management strategies (Lakehead
University SMA 2017-2020, p. 7). It seems many of these programs are created to enhance students’ learning experiences and are leading to the formation of contemporary pedagogical approaches seen across the study universities.

Although the pedagogical approaches adopted by the study universities are relatively new in terms of labelling, they are not so in terms of program content. Across these approaches, there are few variations in the meanings and adaptations of EL programs in the study institutions. For instance, the program content of work-integrated learning (WIL) of one university is very similar to the content of EL of a different university. In addition, universities in the comprehensive category have an extensive range of EL models compared to universities in the Medical/Doctoral and the Primarily Undergraduate categories.

The top EL terminologies used across the study universities are presented in Figure 5.1. The Figure indicates the relative proportions of EL types that are used in the study universities’ engagement with their local host partners. About a quarter of all EL activities across the nine institutions are based on campus. This development suggests that a significant proportion of EL programs are dedicated to connections outside of the universities.
The theme of centralization versus decentralization is a significant finding of this study and it refers to the degree to which institutions either impose/coordinate EL or employ dispersed model in EL roll-out. Overall, the findings here suggest that although the study institutions are currently decentralized in their approach to EL, there are attempts to centralize community engagements by bringing them under central coordinating units. Consequently, the study institutions have recently launched central hubs or offices/units in an attempt to centralize their EL engagements with community partners. This emerging phenomenon may be due to challenges with existing decentralized EL models in the general university systems. Hence as part of the universities’ EL expansion story, faculties and departments act as academic silos (Hayne
Beatty, 2018) while the EL programs are implemented in overlapping community
connections embracing dispersed leadership from academic faculties and community
partners.

As noted by earlier scholars, decentralized TG connections ensure flexibility and
discretionary mandates for departments and professors to enter and manage external
relationships (Broström et al., 2019). This trend may be giving way to centralization due
to some of the challenges with EL implementation discussed above. This finding is also
consistent with Hayne Beatty (2018), who observes that decentralized systems come with
challenges, such as creating disconnected academic silos where community engagement
receives fragmented support and is undervalued. Other scholars (e.g., Hollander,
Saltmarsh, & Zlotkowski, 2002; Nikolova & Andersen, 2017) also argue that
centralization is becoming an enabling mechanism for an engaged campus - - enhancing
stewardship and promoting positive learning outcomes.

Although centralization is becoming more desirable, it also has some potential
challenges. The study participants acknowledge that it might require a significant amount
of time and resources to implement full-scale EL activities from centralized offices/units.
This finding is consistent with observations by researchers (e.g, Broström et al., 2019)
who posit that attempts to have centralized units are sometimes fettered with tensions and
unhealthy competition among faculty and community partners due to issues of power
struggle and equity sharing. Hence, institutionalized contacts between the university and
the community are difficult, time-consuming, and may potentially impact the quality of
EL activities. In this regard, the role of leadership is identified as vital in the
development, planning, and implementation of EL partnerships (Rautiola, 2009). This
observation is especially true when it comes to the issue of centralization vs
decentralization as leadership is required to navigate the complex nature of institutional
local relationship building as well as external relations.

Findings from the study also suggest that attempts by faculty/departments to launch
EL programs often lead to competition for the same community partners. In the same
vein, community partners in this study express concern about receiving multiple calls
from different departments of the same university which may imply competition and lack
of faculty/departmental collaboration. To overcome such conflicts and tensions, earlier
scholarship proposes strategic partnerships among stakeholders. In particular, Lederer
and Seasons (2005) state that one solution to decentralization is cooperative alliances.
Therefore, akin to the metaphor of marriage/partnership (Gavazzi, 2015), equal efforts
may be required by all stakeholders for the continuous and successful implementation of
EL activities. Also, policy tensions exist between local EL and international EL
developments as they are shaped and determined by many complex interrelated factors.
For example, whereas local EL policies are driven by the SMAs through the Ministry of
Colleges and Universities, international EL policies are generally driven by individual
institutional leadership.

Furthermore, this study finds that, although HASS-based EL connections are a
growing phenomenon, STEM relationships still dominate. All the universities studied
have well-established STEM-based connections. This observation is consistent with some
scholars (e.g., Perkmann et al., 2013; Peters, Sattler, & Kelland, 2014) who argue that TG
connections are mostly research-focused and STEM-based. However, five out of the nine
universities in the study have recently launched EL programs that specifically target
students in the HASS disciplines. Key informants note a significant increase in EL enrollments from the Arts and Social Sciences and reiterate rising employer demand for skill sets in the Arts and Humanities. It is noteworthy that, although the HASS based programs are new, they have structured evaluations aimed at measuring EL outputs and outcomes. This may be because the EL programs are new, have well-thought-out designs and with adequate human and financial resources to support their implementation.

These findings are in contrast with the work of scholars such as Benneworth and Jongbloed (2010) who argue that HASS receive less attention because of its supposed intangible outputs, which makes it difficult to measure. Nevertheless, teaching and learning engagements among universities in Ontario are not only research-focused as noted in the literature, but also gaining popularity with non-STEM disciplines such as HASS. The expansion is in the beginning stages and may continue to grow in the coming years, especially as employers continue to demand skill sets in HASS disciplines. The finding is, consistent with Florida's (2017) observation that HASS based partnerships and their spin-offs have grown significantly in recent years. Notwithstanding these findings, there is a new academic movement for higher education in Canada that seeks to integrate Arts into STEM to create a new emergent term - - STEAM, an acronym for science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics in the mainstream curricula (Bertrand, 2019). This evidence confirms the growing importance of universities in Ontario in pushing HASS, which may become a subject of keen interest in future research.

The study further reveals that the geographical scope of EL programs in the study universities goes beyond local connections to embrace international linkages. For example, while most institutions have active and often new local EL connections within
their host communities, the findings indicate that several active global EL connections exist between institutions within Canada and their partner institutions outside Canada. In addition, out of the nine universities in the study, only two have satellite campuses that offer EL programs in their communities. The important role of EL connections in student retention is confirmed in this study. Key informants acknowledge that local EL connections play a significant role in student retention within the community after graduation. This important observation supports the literature that local employment opportunities created through EL have a strong influence on students’ retention in the host community after graduation (Clemens, 2012). It also emphasizes the importance of geographical proximity and neighbourhood effect as key determinants in the successful implementation of EL programs (Florida, 2010; Rosan, 2002).

5.3 Overall contributions, limitations and next steps

This study contributes to the literature on university and community collaborations, particularly on the teaching and learning mission of universities. Most previous studies primarily focus on research-related connections and/or STEM-based linkages that traditionally form the center of universities’ external engagements. However, this research notes the growing development of HASS-based teaching and learning connections which, by far, are motivated by the rising popularity of EL. Nonetheless, these innovative learning connections are not well documented in the literature. Universities’ objective of creating globalized identities may affect the extent to which academic leadership can facilitate local EL engagements. In addition, funding remains a significant challenge and potentially impede the design, implementation, and sustainability of EL. The current interest of the Canadian Federal Government to invest
$798 million (Ministry of Finance, 2019, p. 250) and RBC’s commitment of $500 million (RBC, 2018) towards student-centred EL in HEIs are significant steps towards addressing funding challenges. With the finding that several HEIs are adopting innovative pedagogical approaches, the study amplifies the importance of newer ways of teaching and learning through EL.

This thesis adds to our understanding that underpins EL conceptualization and development and how that impacts themes such as centralization versus decentralization and competition versus collaboration. The extent to which institutions can effectively work with their local communities on EL pivots around flexible adaptations to new pedagogies, bold and intentional leadership as well as meticulous approaches to building institutional relationships and partnerships. The development and maintenance of any EL programs may have direct and indirect impacts on curriculum design, new institutional and academic cultural adaptations which may affect teaching and learning outcomes. In addition, methodologically, this thesis relies on primary qualitative research given the emergent context of EL referred to earlier as a watershed moment. Thus, there are limited data, including cross-institutional/system-level data, that permit analysis of such themes as 1) program uptake; quality, quantity and nature of relationships and partnerships; 2) range of disciplines involved; 3) student impact, success, and outcomes; 4) funding and costs to all participants. Given the system-wide adoption of EL not only in Ontario but across the Anglo-American university, the development and use of such data will be important for understanding program (re) development, evaluation, and improvement.

The limitations of this study relate to the sample size used for the research. Sampling from within one province aimed to ensure a degree of consistency within the
relevant jurisdiction (i.e., provincial) for higher education policy context and administration. Sampling universities from within the Maclean's frame allowed for this. However, time constraints meant the sample sizes were small across both methods. The findings may be extendable to other institutions within Ontario but perhaps less so nationally. In addition, the Maclean ranking system is primarily used for Canadian universities. However, the literature was expanded to include continental Europe and other countries, such as the United States and Australia. Using the QS or Times ranking may have resulted in choosing different universities for the study and may have yielded different results. Also, the selected documents from the study universities have a wide range of publication dates with periodic updates. Therefore, this snapshot in time at data collection could well shift to a new picture with a different collection point.

Teaching and learning within university and community is a complex process that necessitates the inclusivity and empowerment of all stakeholders: faculty, university leadership, students, and host community partners. This raises key questions such as whether place matter and whether the type of TG engagement matters in the development of EL. A successful system in one community, however, may not be transferable to another. To strengthen EL, there is a need for continuous, sustainable, and collaborative efforts from policymakers, higher education institutions, the communities, and their respective governments. Further research can elucidate the myriad ways in which EL may unfold and be sensitive to a local context, established practices, and stakeholder needs.
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Dhir, S. (2019). Scholarship @ Claremont The changing nature of work, leadership, and organizational culture in future ready organizations Recommended Citation. Retrieved from https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/2064.


Florida, R. (2010). *Who’s your city?: How the creative economy is making where to live the most important decision of your life*. Vintage Canada.


Appendix A: Ethics Approval Notice

Dear Dr. Michael Buzzelli,

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above-mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

Documents Approved:

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<td>class telephone script 5 september 2018</td>
<td>Recruitment Materials</td>
<td>05 Sep 2018</td>
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No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number: REB 00000341.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kelly Patterson, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randall Graham, NMREB Chair

*Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).*
Appendix B: Informational Interviews

My name is Emmanuel Asafo-Adjei, I’m writing to follow up on a phone call message I left on your phone asking for your help in getting information about your work-integrated (WIL) or Experiential Learning programs at Lakehead University.

I am a Master’s student at Western University in Geography working under the supervision of Dr. Michael Buzzelli. My thesis research is about university-community connections, particularly through teaching and learning (as opposed to research-based connections). I am especially interested in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) or Experiential Learning connections top between top Ontario Universities (Maclean ranking) such as Lakehead University and Thunder Bay / Orillia communities.

I’ve been on your website and I believe I have found most/all of what you have to describe your programs. But I want to be sure if there are any other key or recent developments (etc...) that you could share with me about what your outfit and your university are doing in terms of WIL and local connections?

Thank you so much and look forward to hearing back from you.

Kind regards,

Emmanuel Asafo-Adjei

If you’d like more information about our project please feel free to visit or call

https://geography.uwo.ca/people/faculty/buzzelli_michael.html
Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in Research

Invitation to participate in research on university community work integrated learning connections

Dear [Interview Participant]

This email is in follow-up to a telephone conversation I had with you last month on university and community links.

I am writing to invite you to consider participating in a semi-structured interview I am conducting as part of my MA. in Geography at Western University, under the supervision of Dr. Michael Buzzelli.

I've attached a one-page document summarizing the project, and would very much appreciate meeting with you, for about 60 minutes, to discuss your initial and current thinking regarding uptake of Work Integrated links in your organization. Please let me know if you are interested in participating, or would like additional information.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Emmanuel Asafo-Adjei, MA (c)

Email:

Phone:
Appendix D: Letter of Information and Consent

Letter of Information and Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Study Title: Examining the relationship between the university and its host community through the lens of work-integrated learning: the experience of Ontario’s universities

Principal Investigator:  
Dr. Michael Buzzelli  
Associate Professor,  
Department of Geography  
University of Western Ontario  
Phone:  
Email:

Research student:  
Emmanuel Asafo-Adjei  
MA Geography,  
Department of Geography  
University of Western Ontario  
Phone:  
Email:

You are invited to participate in a research study on the topic of the relationship between the university and their host communities. This research aims to document and analyse the teaching and learning connections between Ontario universities and their host communities, focusing specifically on the role of Work Integrated Learning, WIL. I am writing to you to invite you to participate in a research interview for this study.

The purpose of this letter is to provide information that you may need to make an informed decision about agreeing to participate.

What will I have to do if I choose to take part?
You are being asked to participate in a research interview. This is a semi-structured interview which means it is an interview focused on a small set of questions and themes.

1. We anticipate that the interview will take approximately sixty (60) minutes to complete and will involve asking you about ten (10) general questions.

2. The interview session will be held at an agreed upon date and time.

When the study is complete, the results will be available to you. Please get in touch with us in summer of 2019 when this study will be completed in order to obtain the results of our work.
Appendix D cont...

the interview guide will be used to facilitate the session with preference given to the
guide and its themes rather than note-taking.

2. The interview session will be held at an agreed upon date and time and will be
audio-recorded with your permission. Participants have the option to not be audio
recorded in this LOI and consent process.

When the study is complete, the results will be available to you. If you would like to be
contacted in order to receive the study results or a copy of your interview audio-recordings
(if you have consented to this), we ask that you indicate permission to maintain your
contact information.

Are there any risks or discomforts?

There are no known risks associated with taking part in this research. Your identity as an
interview participant will be kept confidential, and you will have control over when and
where data collection occurs. Pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of research results.
Although we feel this is a low-risk research, participants' professional position and identity
will also be masked in the research dissemination.

What are the benefits of taking part?

There are no predicted benefits to you, however your participation could help enrich
academic knowledge on the subject matter. Findings from the study will inform policy on
WIL with the aim of improving the development of these connections. Knowledge
obtained from this research will also help advance teaching and learning which can also
benefit related activities such as the economic development opportunities that may arise for
local communities.

What happens to the information that I tell you?

Any information you provide will be stored on an encrypted and password protected
laptop, and on an external hard drive. The transportation or transmission of study records
will conform to the requirements of the Western University Data Security and
Confidentiality-Guidance Document. The study records will be retained by the Principal
Investigator (PI) for a minimum of 7 years as per regulatory guidelines.
Appendix D cont...

The results will also be presented to Western University through a final study report, publications, and presentations, but again, your name will not be used. Note: A confidential file made by and available only to the PI and research student will include information matching pseudonyms with informants’ actual identifiers. All research data will be destroyed after 7 years.

Audio Recording:
We would like to audio record your interviews with us. However, you can choose not to be audio-recorded.

Voluntary Participation:
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate in the interview, you will be asked to sign a consent form following this letter of information. Consent is for the collection of data, audio-recording of interviews and to have access to your de-identified data.

You can withdraw your consent to participate at any time. If you wish to discontinue your participation, your data can be deleted up until the point of data analysis. Once data analysis begins, it may not be possible to separate any one participant’s data, as all data will be mixed together. However, if you direct the researcher to do so, no direct quotes from your data will be used in publications.

Participants are invited to contact us for more of study information.

Other Information about this Study:
If you have any questions or need additional information, you may contact: Dr. Michael Buzzelli (University of Western Ontario) mbuzzel@uwo.ca. Representatives of Western University’s Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may have access to all study-related information to check that the study is following proper laws and regulations.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact: Office of Research Ethics at the University of Western Ontario:
Appendix D cont...

Consent Form

Study Title: Examining the relationship between the university and its host community through the lens of work-integrated learning: the experience of Ontario’s universities

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

[ ] I consent to the audio recording of my interviews.

[ ] I would like to be contacted to receive the study results and/or my transcript

_________________________________________   _______________________
Signature of Interview Participant       Date

_________________________________________
Printed Name

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print):

Signature: _____________________________

Date: _____________________________

Appendix E: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

This study is about the relationship between the university and the communities, specifically as this takes shape through Experiential/Work-Integrated Learning (EL/WIL—such as student internships and cooperative learning). I would like to ask you some questions about that in this interview.

Name of Informant……………………………………………………………………………………………………
Institution………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Position……………………………………………………………………………………………………………….
Years involved in Organization/University’s EL/WIL…………………………………………………………
Programs………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

1. What would you say are the aims and objectives of EL/WIL partnerships?

2. To what extent and in what ways does EL/WIL connect your community and university?
   Probe: How long have these partnerships been in place?

3. How are your EL/WIL connections developed and maintained?
   Probe: Which disciplines/fields of study are involved? Are the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences involved?

4. Who initiates and leads the development of EL/WIL in your experience?
   Probe: How long have these partnerships been in place? How have they evolved/changed? Why?

5. Can you describe some of the challenges and opportunities involved in developing and implementing EL/WIL?
   Probe: Field of study? Community partners? Funding? Learning outcomes? Other?

6. Are the EL/WIL programs tracked/monitored and evaluated? What criteria are used to evaluate their progress and success?
   Probe: Learning outcomes? Partner input? Student feedback? Other?

7. Can you describe any other constraints and benefits of EL/WIL between your local community and university?

8. Do you have anything further to add to the theme of EL/WIL-based university-community partnerships?
   Probe: e.g. where do you see the future of university community partnerships?
# Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Emmanuel Asafo-Adjei  
**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:**  
KN. University of Science and Technology  
Kumasi, Ashanti Region, Ghana  
1997-2001 BSc.  
Fanshawe College  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2009-2010 Post Graduate Diploma.  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2017-2019 M.A.  
**Honours and Awards:**  
Dean’s Honour Roll Fanshawe College  
2009-2010  
**Related Work Experience:**  
Teaching Assistant  
The University of Western Ontario  
2017-2019  
Operations Coordinator  
HCL Logistics Inc. London, Ontario  
2013-2017  
Auditor  
Ceva Logistics Inc.  
2010-2013  
Deputy Head of Snr. School / Examinations Officer  
The Roman Ridge School – Accra, Ghana  
2008-2009