

WITNESSING THE EXTRAORDINARY:  
INVESTIGATING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ALGC PROGRAM

by  
ARMINDO FONTANA  
M.Div., Regent College, 2007

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES  
(Adult Education)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
(Vancouver)

April 2016

© Armindo Fontana, 2016

## Abstract

This study investigates the reasons behind the achievements of the Adult Learning and Global Change (ALGC) program, an international online master's program developed and managed by four universities in Canada, Sweden, South Africa and Australia: The University of British Columbia (Canada), Linköping University (Sweden), The University of the Western Cape (South Africa) and three different universities in Australia (where the original partner, University of Technology Sydney, was replaced by Monash University, which is now being replaced by Australian Catholic University). The twelve individuals who have had leadership roles in the program since it began in 2001 were interviewed, and their answers to the same open ended questions provided the data for analysis. Based on their responses, it was possible to identify the six stages in the development of the program, the many accomplishments of the program from a variety of viewpoints (historical, educational, collaborative, administrative and personal), the different threats and weaknesses that endangered the program (and the way they were addressed), and, finally, the explanations for the accomplishments of the program. The conclusion is that thanks to its competent and committed leaders, a creative and innovative program, and constructive and caring relationships, the ALGC program has not only survived but thrived.

## Preface

This thesis is an original intellectual product of the author, Armindo Fontana.

My research committee, comprised of Dr. Tom Sork, Dr. Garnet Grosjean and Dr. Kjell Rubenson, had an instrumental role in identifying prospective participants and introducing me to them. Furthermore, they provided expert advice on all the different components of the research, writing and refining processes.

The ethical considerations involved in conducting this investigation and writing this thesis were approved by UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board: the certificate number is H12-02093.

## Table of contents

Abstract .....	ii
Preface .....	iii
Table of contents .....	iv
Acknowledgements .....	vii
Dedication .....	viii
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
1.1 Opening thoughts .....	1
1.2 The purpose of the study .....	2
1.2.1 Research problem .....	2
1.2.2 Research questions .....	2
1.3 The object of the study .....	3
1.3.1 The universities .....	3
1.3.2 The participants .....	5
1.3.3 The goals .....	6
1.3.4 The curriculum .....	7
1.3.5 The management .....	8
1.4 The importance of the study .....	9
1.5 The organization of the study .....	11
Chapter Two: Literature review .....	14
2.1 International collaboration .....	14
2.2 Program planning.....	19
2.3 The ALGC program .....	21
Chapter Three: Methodology .....	23
3.1 Selection of participants .....	24
3.2 Ethical Issues .....	25
3.3 Data collection .....	26
3.4 Data analysis .....	28
3.5 Limitation and delimitations .....	29
Chapter Four: The history of the ALGC program .....	30
4.1 Historical analysis .....	30
4.1.1 Conception .....	30
4.1.2 Planning .....	32

4.1.3 Implementation .....	40
4.1.4 Stabilization .....	42
4.1.5 Growth .....	42
4.1.6 Renewal .....	43
4.2 Motivational analysis .....	47
Chapter Five: The accomplishments of the ALGC program .....	51
5.1 Historical .....	51
5.2 Educational .....	53
5.3 Collaborative .....	58
5.4 Administrative .....	61
5.5 Personal .....	64
Chapter Six: Threats and weaknesses faced by the ALGC program .....	68
6.1 Threats .....	68
6.1.1 The planning stage .....	68
6.1.2 The implementation stage .....	72
6.1.3 The stabilization stage .....	74
6.1.4 The growth stage .....	79
6.1.5 The renewal stage .....	80
6.2 Weaknesses .....	83
Chapter Seven: An explanation for the success of the ALGC program .....	88
7.1 Competent and committed leaders .....	88
7.1.1 Competent .....	88
7.1.2 Committed .....	100
7.2 Creative and captivating program .....	102
7.2.1 Creative .....	102
7.2.2 Captivating .....	103
7.3 Constructive and caring relationships .....	105
7.3.1 Among its leaders .....	105
7.3.2 Among its students .....	113
Chapter Eight: Summary and conclusion .....	115
8.1 Summary .....	115
8.2 Conclusion .....	121
8.3 Final thoughts .....	129

References .....	130
Appendices .....	137

## Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge the enormous contribution of my supervisor, Dr. Tom Sork, and of the other members of my research committee, Drs. Garnet Grosjean and Kjell Rubenson, for their patience, guidance and encouragement. I will be eternally grateful for their support.

## Dedication

To my parents, Armindo and Eliane

&

To my daughters, Giovanna, Isabella and Rebecca

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.1 Opening thoughts**

Mark, Tony, Lucas, Nick, Elaine, Heather, Ned, Yolanda, Alice, Desmond, Yvonne, and Melody: twelve fictional names that represent twelve individuals and their rich variety of nationalities, personal backgrounds, experiences, interests, and accomplishments. Together these individuals have been responsible for the conception, birth, growth, and renewal of an educational program that has been extended to people in five different continents and continues to grow thanks to its ambitious goals, innovative character and distinctive approach. It must be emphasized that the mere existence of this program should bring great joy, hope and inspiration particularly for those concerned with the internationalization of education, and, specially, for educators that dream of developing projects related to international collaboration in an equalitarian, democratic and mutually beneficial manner. Without these twelve individuals, this program could not have achieved goals such as implementation, survival, stabilization, and growth. Therefore, the story of the fifteen years of this program cannot be told without the singular perspective of each one of these educators, and it is in the multitude of their narratives that this story can make sense in a way that people can understand that, despite its challenges and limitations, this program truly represents good news for the world of online education in a globalized era.

It has been a tremendous privilege to hear the stories told by the participants of this research project. I have been given access to the memories, experiences and lessons learned by these individuals who have witnessed the conception, birth, maturation and growth of something truly extraordinary. Creating a document that synthesizes their ideas about the program and communicating them clearly is the hope of this study.

## **1.2 The purpose of the study**

### **1.2.1 Research problem**

This study focuses on the Adult Learning and Global Change (ALGC) program, a project developed by universities in Canada (University of British Columbia), Sweden (Linköping University), South Africa (University of the Western Cape) and Australia (where the original partner, University of Technology Sydney, was replaced by Monash University, which is now being replaced by Australian Catholic University), in an attempt to determine the reasons for its survival, stabilization and growth. The uniqueness of the ALGC program in terms of both the number of universities partnering in the project and the absence of a market-driven orientation that characterizes the majority of international programs around the world suggests why a research project should be conducted on this topic. In light of the current trend towards internationalization among universities, a study of this nature seems to be highly justifiable.

### **1.2.2 Research questions**

How has the ALGC program survived all these years? In what respects is this program regarded as successful by those involved in it? How has this academic program accomplished important goals such as stabilization, growth and longevity? What factors threatened the survival of a program involving universities from countries and institutions with such strong cultural differences? How were these challenges addressed? If conflict has occurred, how was it handled and were all parties involved satisfied with the methods(s) used? What can be done to ensure that planning, implementing and managing a program in this global context assists in achieving its goals? These are the questions guiding this study.

### **1.3 The object of the study**

#### **1.3.1 The universities**

One of the partners is based in the city of Linköping, in Southern Sweden, which has its origins in the twelve century A.C.

“Linköping University (LiU) is one of Sweden’s larger academic institutions and among those that offer the largest number of professional degree programmes, in fields such as medicine, education, business, economics and engineering. Research is conducted within a variety of disciplines, with strong internationally recognized research environments...Since gaining university status in 1975, LiU has worked with innovation in education and research. For example it was the first in Sweden to introduce interdisciplinary thematic research, problem-based learning (PBL), graduate schools and several innovative study programmes. LiU has four campuses in three cities: Campus Valla and Campus US (both in Linköping), Campus Norrköping (Norrköping) and Campus Lidingö – Carl Malmsten Furniture Studies (Stockholm) (Linköping University 2015).”

Linköping University’s faculty of education offers a teacher education program; students can also complete masters and doctorate programs in different disciplines. Four people connected with Linköping University have been involved with the ALGC program, and three of them became participants in this study (the fourth one passed away).

Cape Town, the capital of South Africa, is the home of the University of the Western Cape (UWC). Its website states that UWC “has a history of creative struggle against oppression, discrimination and disadvantage. Among academic institutions it has been in the vanguard of South Africa's historic change, playing a distinctive academic role in helping to build an equitable and dynamic nation” (University of the Western Cape, n.d., a). It offers more than two-hundred degree, diploma and certificate programs.

“Currently, UWC is amongst the best universities in Africa, is the single largest producer of Black graduates in South Africa...The university has seven faculties: Arts, Community and Health Sciences, Dentistry, Economic and Management Sciences, Education, Law and Natural Sciences. In addition to its undergraduate degrees, UWC is home to a number of research schools, institutes and centres – all

carrying out cutting-edge work geared towards building a better society for all” (University of the Western Cape, n.d., b).

The Faculty of Education at UWC is divided into three departments: Educational Psychology, Educational Studies and Language. It is also the home of the School of Science and Mathematics Education, the Further Education and Training Institute, the Center for Adult and Continuing Education, the Science Learning Centre for Africa, and the Center for Higher Studies in Higher Education. “The faculty offers a wide range of professional and academic programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. They cover fields such as general pre- and in-service teacher education, language education, curriculum studies, adult education, policy studies, special needs education and classroom pedagogy, amongst others” (University of the Western Cape, n.d., c). Two professors from the UWC’s Faculty of Education have contributed to the accomplishments of the ALGC program.

The University of British Columbia (UBC), “a global centre for research and teaching,” has its main campus located in Vancouver, British Columbia, on the West coast of Canada; in 2005, UBC opened its second campus in Kelowna, in the Okanagan Valley, in the interior of the province. In total, it has close to sixty thousand students from 139 countries (21.4% of its student population is comprised of international students), and it employs more than fifteen thousand faculty and staff. UBC has consistently occupied a position among the top universities in the world according to international rankings, one of only three Canadian universities that have received such distinction (The University of British Columbia, n.d, a).

The Faculty of Education at UBC comprises of the School of Kinesiology and four departments: Curriculum and Pedagogy, Educational Counselling and Psychology, Educational Studies, Language and Literacy Education. It offers a variety of graduate programs for people interested in expanding their expertise in the field of education in a variety of roles. In addition,

The Faculty of Education at UBC equips a high number of people who teach, lead or provide support for elementary and secondary schools in British Columbia. Three scholars from UBC have been involved in the planning, implementation and management of the ALGC program (The University of British Columbia, n.d, b).

Three different Australian universities have participated in the ALGC program during its fifteen years of existence, and three Australian scholars have had a leadership role at different times; consequently, these three individuals were invited to participate in this research project on the accomplishments of the ALGC program. One of the founding members of the program was associated with the University Technology, Sydney (UTS), and he played a key role in assuring that UTS would participate in the program. For reasons that will be explained later, UTS withdrew from the ALGC program in 2007. Monash University took over from UTS and became the second Australian partner in the program. When Monash found it had to withdraw from the collaboration, The Australian Catholic University (ACU), a not-for profit organization funded by the Australian government became the new Australian partner. ACU has four departments (Education and Arts, Health Sciences, Law and Business, and Theology and Philosophy), plus several centers and institutes (Australian Catholic University, 2015a). “The Faculty of Education and Arts was formed in January 2014, bringing together the Faculty of Education's strong reputation in teacher education and development with the liberal arts and social sciences programs of the former Faculty of Arts and Sciences,” according to the Faculty's webpage. (Australian Catholic University, 2015b).

### **1.3.2 The Participants**

Twelve individuals have been active in leadership roles since the program began: four Swedes, three Canadians, two South Africans and three Australians. One of Swedish scholars,

who was instrumental for the early achievements of the ALGC program passed away in 2011, so the remaining eleven people took part in this study; six are women and five men. Only four of the original participants are still directly involved with managing the program; two have retired, four have changed roles, faculties or even universities. They are all highly respected internationally scholars who have taught, lectured and published on a variety of areas according to their research interests, including adult education, program planning, experiential learning, medical education, new modes of knowledge production, popular education, policy, sociology of education, historical and comparative sociology, and lifelong learning, among many others.

### **1.3.3 The goals**

“In 1998, representatives from four universities on four different continents met to discuss the possibility of developing a collaborative master’s degree programme focusing on adult learning and global change” (Sork, Walters, Larson, Madeleine Abrandt, & Boud, 2003, p.2). The end result of all those discussions and planning was a program that began in 2001 which, according to Larson, Boud, Dahlgren, Walters, and Sork (2005), aimed at allowing students to:

- “Learn and teach globally and use global technologies to understand knowledge-based societies and the implications for learning.
- Develop an understanding of globalization discourses, and develop cultural sensibilities and sensitivities.
- Develop equity perspectives on learning, and engage in reframing their own professional practices.
- Establish a global community of adult learning practitioners, and challenge orthodoxies in adult education practices” (p.63).

#### **1.3.4 The curriculum**

Students from each of the four participating universities must complete six core or required courses. The ALGC progress report for the years 2001-2005 (2007) summarizes the content of each course as follows. Locating oneself in Global Learning is a two-part course that “provides a supportive framework which assists students to orient themselves and integrate the diverse experiences from the other courses over two years. The first part of the course starts the overall programme, and the second part completes it two years later” (p.4). Adult learning: Contexts and Perspectives” assists students in becoming acquainted with “Contemporary theories of adult learning and develop knowledge and appreciation for the diverse contexts which adult learning occurs, particularly those locations outside the formal higher education and post-secondary education” (p.5). Work and Learning focuses on “The relationship between education, especially post-compulsory education and training, and work” while Fostering Learning in Practice “...is built on the notion that practice has a learning dimension, that practitioners are continually involved with learning and teaching, and that much of this learning is incidental and informal...this course enables participants to think strategically and critically about their practice” (p.7). The fifth course is called Global/Local Learning: “One of the goals of this course is to enable students to become knowledgeable and critically informed about how globalization has influenced adult learning policies at the local, national, and international levels, and how it is influencing their own and others learning opportunities and outcomes” (p.8). Finally, Understanding Research seeks to “develop students’ research literacy, to enable them to become critical readers and conductors of research, particularly as it relates to adult learning” (p.9).

Besides the six courses, students must fulfill different degree requirements set by each institution, and the Progress Report helps understand these local options. At LiU students have to

conduct a research project and the module is called Research Adult Learning: Project Work. “This course is comprised of four parts: following the different phases of a research process perspective and design; data collection and analysis; writing of the thesis; and critique and defense” (Intercontinental master’s programme in adult learning and global change: progress report 2001-2005, 2007, 10). South African students need to write a 10,000 words research paper (p.10), while at UBC students are asked to take three additional 3-credit elective courses (p.10). UTS students could choose any course at a Masters level offered by their Faculty of Education, and students at Months had the same option.

### **1.3.5. The management**

The ALGC program represents an alternative model that emphasizes cooperation over competition where the basic approach has been to negotiate the program and its delivery amongst four equal partners (Intercontinental master’s programme in adult learning and global change: progress report 2001-2005, 2007, p.3). This concern with a democratic, equalitarian and mutually beneficial approach to planning, implementing and managing a program required the creation of a few administrative mechanisms and procedures that have made running a complex international program like the ALGC viable. The annual management committee meeting has had a special place in this process. Every year the meeting rotates among the four universities; an agenda is created and sent to each member beforehand so they can all be fully prepared for the discussions. The list of items in the agenda is open for negotiation to ensure that important items are not forgotten and that different interests and concerns are taken into consideration. The responsibility to supervise this process falls into the hands of the international coordinator, a person chosen by the group to occupy this key position, who needs to make sure that resolutions agreed during the management committee meetings are subsequently carried out. This position

was originally held by a male scholar, then by a female scholar from LiU, but the only academic from UBC still directly involved with the program has been in charge of coordinating it in recent years. The last piece in the administrative machine is the local coordinators; they are responsible for overseeing the program in their respective universities. All universities and their representatives have to follow guidelines established by the group; however, universities have a good deal of autonomy to make decisions on a variety of issues such as hiring instructors, staff and tutors.

Sork, Walters, Larson, Dahlgren, & Boud, (2003) explains that “Early in the planning there were several key principles agreed upon that provided a foundation for the four-university partnership” (p.3). Among these principles was the idea that “There should be no transfer of money between the universities; each university must fund its share of the program from local resources,” (p.3) which explains how the programs has been managed from a financial point of view.

#### **1.4 The importance of the study**

There are a number of reasons that justify this investigation. First, as the literature review indicates, even though there are many resources on different areas and topics connected to the topic of this study, including a few that specifically focus on the ALGC program, a study that fully discusses the reasons behind the satisfactory implementation, stabilization and growth of the ALGC program has never been conducted.

Second, the trend towards internationalization continues to push educational institutions and their members to look overseas for opportunities to collaborate on educational projects (Bartell 2003, Stromquist 2007, Hughes 2008); therefore, many other educators and students will experience struggles similar to the ones experienced by those involved in the ALGC program

unless educational leaders become more effective in anticipating problems and their solutions, which they will hopefully be able to learn from this investigation. Third, if negative experiences become the norm in international education initiatives, increasing frustration among educators and students alike, the interest in internationalization and international collaboration might decrease; consequently, individuals, institutions and countries would not enjoy the benefits associated with internationalization (Welch 1997; Stromquist 2007). Furthermore, such a study might contribute to a more complete understanding of the differences between the cultures of the countries and institutions involved, which in turn might not only allow the development of more productive educational programs but also help nurture the relations among countries from these regions (Crabtree and Sapp, 2004). In addition, lessons learned from negotiation among international program planners and leaders within Higher Education could help educators working with international education in other areas (Bartell 2003; Vidovich 2004). Moreover, insights gained from negotiating educational programs across cultures could benefit the practice of negotiation in other fields, such as business, political science and conflict resolution. Finally, the field of program planning could benefit from the development, refinement and testing of theories and models of program planning in international contexts.

In order to conduct such a study certain deficiencies in current research must be highlighted. For example, there is still a need for more research on the appropriateness and prevalence of the several strategies that could be used in negotiating during the planning process (Yang et al. 1998) and, possibly, after a program is implemented. Also, scholars in the field of program planning have not yet fully explored the relevance of cultural differences for the planning process in the context of international collaboration, with the exception of Caffarella (2002). Besides, studies in international education concentrate on teaching and learning (Vita

2001; Volet 1999; Gribble & Ziguras 2003; Robson & Turner 2007), not giving much attention to program planning, implementation and management. Lastly, the literature reviewed on international collaboration does not describe its historical development.

Many would profit from understanding how those involved in the ALGC program have managed to not only keep it alive but also help it flourish. Those involved in international collaboration would deepen their understanding regarding the development of educational programs that could benefit all parties involved. Researchers in the area of program planning, intercultural theories and international education would be among them. In addition, program planners, educational administrators, and college and university instructors could use the knowledge gained through this study to enhance their practice. Educational organizations from those countries, particularly those in Higher Education, could certainly benefit not only from an educational perspective but also from an economic one. University and college students would enjoy programs which take into consideration the findings of such a study. The field of research methodology will gain something as well as an investigation using case study analysis will shed some light on the value of this research method and on how it can be better employed. Finally, the countries involved would also appreciate the positive economic and political outcomes that developing mutually beneficial international educational programs could bring. In conclusion, it seems very important that educators in general believe that it is worthwhile to work in partnership with institutions of higher education in order to achieve personal and organizational goals.

## **1.5 The organization of the thesis**

In this first chapter, I deal with introductory issues related to the nature, purpose, and scope of the study while in the second chapter I examine the literature with a twofold goal: first, to

investigate how previous studies might contribute to an understanding of international collaboration, of educational program planning theories, and of the history, structure, challenges, and outcomes of the ALGC program; second, to identify problems that have not yet been addressed by the literature reviewed.

Next, the methodology used in this study is discussed. The process of selecting participants is the first methodological item examined, which is followed by a section that describes how data was collected; finally, the data analysis process is scrutinized in order to explain how conclusions were reached regarding the purpose of this study.

To describe the main events in the history of the program represents the primary goal of Chapter Four. The ALGC's fifteen year long journey is divided into six periods: conception, birth, maturation, and renewal.

Chapter Five identifies the numerous accomplishments of the ALGC program, which are divided into five groups in order to facilitate the realization of their scope. The discussion begins with an analysis of historical aspects before addressing educational ones. Next, achievements are grouped according to a collaborative, administrative and personal points-of-view. By the end of this chapter, the audience will understand why participants believe that there are plenty of reasons to consider the ALGC program "successful."

Chapter Six begins to demystify the reasons behind the attainments of the ALGC program. The purpose of my research project is to expose the reasons behind the survival, stabilization, maturation, and growth of this fascinating international academic program, a fact that in itself already suggests that this study sees the ALGC program in a more positive than negative way; in addition, the tone and the vocabulary choices employed previously here could have reinforced this notion. Furthermore, Chapter Five provides plenty of evidence that highlights the

accomplishments of the ALGC program. By now readers might be wondering if this study exhibits the objectivity and unbiasedness that should characterize any research investigation, hoping that they are not going to be exposed to a sugar-coated version of the facts. Hence, there is a real need to investigate the threats and weaknesses of the program, and that is the focus of Chapter Six. Generally speaking, interviewees were quite frank in admitting that they faced several challenges, some quite serious; moreover, they did not hide the fact that the program has had its deficiencies. However, participants do not see these challenges as reasons to consider the program deficient; on the contrary, these obstacles are perceived as necessary ingredients for achievement. As one participant says, “I think it is very easy to tell a success story...When we focus on success, and it is true that we have many success stories, but is much harder to remember how much work it was. We forget those kinds of things. I would tell our success story, but at the same there is a risk that there is too much hard work to keep this program.”

Since the threats and weaknesses of the ALGC program are insufficient to deny its value, Chapter Seven moves on to the primary purpose of this study: to explain the factors responsible for the accomplishments of the program. Participants offered many explanations, and these were divided into three main categories: competent and committed leaders, creative and captivating program, and constructive and caring relationships.

Finally, Chapter Eight summarizes the findings of this study, presents a discussion of its major conclusions, and analyzes its implications. The hope is that this investigation will lead to a better understanding of the challenges, possibilities and benefits of international collaboration so its practice might be enhanced.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

### 2.1 Literature on international collaboration

In order to analyze the achievements of the ALGC program, at least as perceived by those behind it, one has to take into consideration the literature on international collaboration involving educational institutions of higher education. Keher, Schindel, & Mann (2010) wrote an article that represents the myriad of other similar articles that support international collaboration but do not share a lot of similarities with the ALGC program. They strongly argue in favor of a deeper collaborative effort involving leaders in pharmacy education in Canada and the United States, firmly believing that, besides inter-governmental efforts, “Regional consortia of pharmacy schools provide another platform for collaboration that could advance pharmacy education” (p.4).

Higgit, Donert, Healey, Solem, and Vajoczki (2008) explain that “There are, of course, multiple ways in which students and academics experience collaboration and exchange of ideas,” but their paper “focuses on interaction with international partners at both the institutional/departmental and at the module-specific (i.e. course) scale which is centred on collaborative learning,” which sounds very identical to what happens in the ALGC program. They contend that “collaboration has many faces and serves a variety of purposes.” institutional networking, benchmarking (for comparison among groups of similar institutions) and the prestige of strategic alliances. In addition, they defend that “The desired outcomes may be increased market share and income generation. For the faculty member seduced by the glamour of international travel and adventure, engagement in emergent collaborative networks may be a sufficient outcome in its own right.” However, their primary interest is on the learner outcomes: “the contribution of collaborative learning to cognitive, affective and inter-personal skills.” In

this regard, they conclude that “In establishing collaborative initiatives, the learner outcomes receive less attention than they merit” They also refer to the political dimension of collaboration when they say that “Competition and prestige may therefore strongly influence the nature of collaboration and access to networks. It is pertinent to ask whether the multiple agendas addressed in developing collaborative arrangements in higher education pay enough attention to enhancing the experience of the learner.” Finally, it is worth observing that they mention further challenges that those involved in international collaboration face throughout its different stages: inclusiveness, the preponderance of a Western (particularly an Anglo-American) influence, funding, cultural differences, and scheduling activities, technological constraints, and unevenness of participation.

Shore and Groen (2009), using narrative inquiry, emphasize the importance of interpersonal relationships for international collaboration and conclude that three factors contribute to the longevity of international partnerships: “a personal click, shared professional interests and a framework for institutional agreements and structures” (p.533). Jenkins (2011), although focusing on international exchange programs, discusses how collaboration is a key factor in bringing hope for economically challenged countries such as Israel, Rwanda and South Africa. She insists that investing in international collaborative projects should become a budget priority for American universities as these efforts also benefit institutions in the United States by allowing them to dialogue with universities in developing countries and to use the knowledge, skills and experience acquired throughout the process in order to meet American needs.

Robson and Turner (2007) conducted a study involving a faculty of humanities and social sciences at a university in the UK. The institution’s leadership highlighted “internationalization as one of four major areas for growth,” (p.41) and even though “The internationalization agenda

was largely focused on increasing recruitment, it also provided an opportunity to engage the academic community in a discourse about what internationalization meant for them and the challenges and opportunities it presented” (p.41). Therefore, despite the fact that this study does not focus on international collaboration, it sheds some light on pedagogical issues concerning faculty that works with a community of learners from various countries. For example, concerns about the impact of internationalization on learning, teaching and assessment standards have led to consideration of innovative approaches to professional development (p.42). There were also reasons to worry about internationalization such as the occasional negative attitude among faculty members who see internationalization as something inevitable but not desirable. Other topics that generated concerns were the contrast between a Western mode of teaching and other approaches, differences in students’ expectations, and students inhibitions to participate in an international classroom, to name a few. On the other hand, “The majority of participants agreed that the cultural diversity of the student body adds to the richness of the teaching and learning experience and ‘can be a lot of fun...it can transform the learning environment’ (p.45). In addition to discussing threats and benefits involved in international education, the study also talked about measures that could facilitate the process of helping students adjust to a new situation where they had to interact with people from other national and institutional cultures. For instance, “Most participants indicated the importance of an induction period for students prior to their programmes of study, acknowledging the cognitive, conative, affective, and situational aspects of learning impacting on students’ understanding in the new environment” (p.46). Finally, Robson and Turner refer to Cruickshank’s (2004) suggestion that “The notion of cultural inclusiveness lies more in the willingness to negotiate learning and teaching

strategies, to reflect on values and beliefs and to understand and embrace different ways of knowing, than in the adoption of any specific approach to pedagogy” (p.48).

Cooper and Mitsunaga (2010) examine “the motivations, support and barriers faculty are facing as they become involved in international collaborations” (p.70), and it seems interesting to examine if the items they raise were present in the ALGC program and how they have benefited and/or hindered it. According to them,

“Three things happen when today’s faculty members enter the challenging arena of international collaborations: faculty members leave the safety of their traditional classrooms and enter a broader and more complex world of global interactions that are often market driven; they encounter cross-cultural challenges that are often unanticipated and for which they may be ill-equipped; they encounter collaborative challenges, which can be accompanied by technological challenges” (p.70).

Why scholars engage and remain involved in international collaboration despite these challenges? Cooper and Mitsunaga (2010) suggest that in the early stages, in addition to potential extrinsic rewards like generating revenue, increasing enrollment or international travelling, “Central elements include shared professional interests, personal affinities, and institutional agreements or structures that smooth the way for collaborative efforts” (*Ibid*). Cooper and Mitsunaga, however, conclude that intrinsic factors such as personal satisfaction, caring for the students, and a sense of accomplishment, play a much significant role in maintaining faculty connected to an international collaboration project.

Pooranachandran and Balasubramanian (2011) discuss the possibility of enhancing international collaboration from a social computing perspective. The authors explain that “In all technology-enabled learning, there are less social opportunities for students to engage themselves in face-to-face meeting; it may also involve social, cultural and language differences” (p.722). “Due to constraints of time and space,” they continue, “there is a loss of physical interaction and contextual cues between the teacher and the students, and among students themselves” (*Ibid*).

Lack of trust and, consequently, unwillingness to collaborate with others in online learning is the end result. Pooranachandran and Balasubramanian suggest that doors can be open for collaboration by using Social Networking Analysis (SNA) techniques, which “Enables researchers, practitioners, and educators to see how actors are located or ‘embedded’ in the overall network [4]...Its methodology enables the analysis of relationships at individual and group level” (p.724). The authors created a web based learning environment to demonstrate the usefulness of SNA as it allowed them to “Analyze the collaborative pattern of learning and to identify powerful and important actors of the network. It can also help to interpret deficiencies and structural holes in the network” (Ibid).

Hastie, Megan, Hung, and Chen (2010) describe the positive impact of a blended synchronous learning model for international collaboration, where “the fundamental concept of blended learning is to combine at least two or more learning settings [online and classroom learning, for example] into a flexible learning environment” (p.10). They acknowledge the limitations of the approach they are proposing while at the same time reinforcing their belief in its effectiveness by referring to advantages it brings to students, instructors, and administrators.

Finally, Smith (2010) investigates the issue of assuring the quality of programs in international education. She describes her study in the following terms:

“This article attempts to show how linguistic analysis can be used to decode underlying messages in the way we describe quality assurance processes. It looks at three codes of practice from major exporters of higher education: USA, UK and Australia. The article focuses specifically on the roles and responsibilities of the awarding higher education institution and their partner, issues of equivalence and opportunities for adaptation of curricula to meet global and local requirements.”

## 2.2 Literature on educational program planning theories

In addition, a literature review on the topic of this study must explore the educational program planning theories that can help developers, administrators and practitioners design programs that will benefit all parties involved.

Program planning was viewed as a purely technical process since Tyler introduced his model in 1949 (Sork 2000); in this approach, issues like assessing needs, establishing goals and objectives, designing instructional plans, and evaluating courses and programs, for example, were the only focus. Following Tyler, many others developed theories that emphasized the technical side of program planning, including Houle (1996), Knowles (1980) and Caffarella (2002), to mention the most influential ones. Caffarella deserves special recognition for being the scholar who has paid attention to the role of culture in planning educational programs.

Wilson and Cervero (1994, 1996, 1997), however, incorporating the work of Forrester (1999), revolutionized the field of program planning by recognizing and discussing the many factors involved in the political dimension of the program planning process. In *Working the Planning Table* they point to negotiation of power and interests as a key feature that must be invoked to understand all stages of program planning (2006). Wilson (1999) and Rees, Cervero, Moshi and Wilson (1997) discuss the issue of power in program planning. Sork (1996) and Umble, Cervero and Langone (2001) studied power and negotiation. Yang (1999), Yang and Cervero (2001) and Yang, Cervero, Valentine and Benson (2001) have not only discussed several different strategies used in the negotiation process, but also developed an instrument to measure these different strategies. Others have followed Cervero and Wilson in their emphasis on the political dimension of program planning, including Heaney (2007), Hendricks (2001),

Watkins & Tisdell (2006) and Boothby (2003), who also highlights the role of power in the process.

Two articles add an international perspective to the analysis of the political dimension of program planning by investigating programs developed in Korea and Botswana. Ryu and Cervero (2010), based on the Freirean view that education is never politically neutral, discuss the influence of traditional Confucian values in the negotiation of power and interests on educational planning in South Korea. Here were two primary categories of findings: (a) planners' embedded Confucian values, such as group harmony, respect of hierarchy, propriety, face, bond of affection (jeong), and distinctive gender roles, were reflected in the everyday actions of planners and (b) these Confucian values, especially those of age, gender, and group harmony, influenced the exercise of power and negotiation of power and interests. The article written by Maruatona and Cervero (2004) "Explores how planning the Botswana National Literacy Programme aided the state in maintaining its power and control over the past two decades. Using critical educational theory as the theoretical framework, it demonstrates how the planning of literacy education promotes conventional views of literacy and perpetuates state hegemony" (p.235). Therefore, it provides a negative illustration of how program planning can be used to perpetuate harmful political goals.

Sork's model (2000, 2004) also needs to be examined for three reasons: it adds the ethical dimension to the technical and political, it highlights the flexible nature of the program planning process more than any other, and it gives enough importance to the analysis of the context and of the learning community as a crucial first element in the planning process, something that opens the door for considering the role of cultural differences for planning educational programs.

Hansman and Mott (1999) also value context as a key aspect to be taken into consideration when planning educational programs.

### **2.3 Literature on the ALGC program**

Finally, documents that specifically discuss the ALGC program must be examined. Larsson, Boud, Madeleine Abbrandt, Walters, and Sork (2005), in an article written by scholars from all universities involved in the program, focuses on the planning stage and highlights four differences among the collaborating universities that affected the program's development: local decision processes, systems for examinations and grading, financial conditions, and resources in information technology (particularly access to the web). Boud et al. (2006) presents actor-network theory as a better theoretical framework than Giddens' (1984) concepts of 'structure' and 'agency' and the Dahlöf's frame-factor theory presented by Lundgren (1985), which were the basis of the previous article, for understanding the program in terms of capturing "the complex interactions of human, physical and geographical conditions" faced by the participants (611). The article describes the critical steps in the emergence of the program before analyzing this process from an actor-network perspective. It concludes with the authors highlighting both the reasons for the success of this enterprise and the problems that still need to be addressed. Sork, Walters, Larson, Dahlgren and Boud, (2003) use Sork's three dimensional approach to program planning, which sees this process as having technical, political and ethical domains, in order to analyze the development of the ALGC program. The article is particularly helpful for listing the key principles that "served as criteria for judging proposals made during the various stages of planning" (p.3). Dahlgren, Larson and Walters (2004), "Focuses on the discourse of an intercontinental on-line Master's programme in adult learning, using English as the lingua franca

of the program...,” which caused mistake anxiety among students (p.1). According to the authors,

“The results show that the official discourse of the programme as a text, with its emphasis on equity, change and development gets subordinated the discourses produced and reproduced by the students in the programme as a discursive practice and social practice. The students’ accounts reveal that there are fragments of an alternative discourse emerging, based on mutual concern and friendship, which might suggest a potential for changing the communicative pattern in the programme” (p.1).

One last document that sheds light on the achievements of the ALGC program is the Intercontinental Master’s Programme in Adult Learning and Global Change: progress report 2001-2005 (2007), which explains the historical process behind the implementation of the program, describes its courses and results, presents students’ perceptions of the program and discusses its future challenges.

In sum, the studies cited in the literature review help me not only understand a complex concept such as international collaboration in education but also begin considering possible explanations for the stabilization, growth and accomplishments of the ALGC program. All these ideas will guide me during the research and writing processes.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

Case study was the methodological approach employed in this study. Palys and Atchison (2008) offer a discussion on the challenges and scientific legitimacy of using case study analysis for research purposes. Other sources of information regarding the value, guidelines and procedure for using qualitative study case analysis are Merriam (2002), Bickman and Rog (1998) and Denzin and Lincoln (2000). Adopting case study analysis as a research method seemed a logical choice considering the purpose of the study (identifying the reasons behind the accomplishments of the ALGC program) and the nature of case studies themselves. Merriam explains that while “some define case study research in terms of the process of doing a case study (Yin, 1994), or in terms of the end product, other scholars define the case in terms of the unit of analysis” (2002, p.178). In order to reinforce this last notion she quotes Stake, who argued that “Case study is less of a methodological choice than ‘a choice of what is to be studied...a bounded system, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries’” (p.178). Merriam lists a few factors that can create the boundaries around a case: time, space and/or other components such as the number of participants, for instance. Since my study focuses on one program that had a temporal origin, requires students to take a fixed series of courses and assessment methods, involves a certain number of participants from a specific group of universities, it seems reasonable to conclude that investigating this particular unit, the ALGC program, fits the definition of case study research.

The challenges in conducting a case study analysis cannot be minimized, and they were experienced as this particular study was conducted. The first difficulty lies in the complexity of any case. “With its own history, the case is a complex entity operating within a number of contexts – physical, economic, ethical, aesthetic, and so on,” says Stake (Denzin and Lincoln

2000, p.439), and this was surely attested as a multifaceted program involving four different universities in four different continents like the ALGC was analyzed. A second problematic issue presented by case study research is related with the possible conflict between the scientific concern with generalization and the specific circumstances of a case. The kind of study being conducted here fits in what Stake calls “intrinsic case study,” something that “is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because, in all its particularity *and* ordinariness, this case itself is of interest” (p.437). Therefore, “the purpose is not theory building” (p.437) but to study a particular case hoping that others might further explore the topic chosen, the lessons learned, and the issues raised by this investigation. Merriam admits that “Perhaps because a case study focuses on a single unit, a single instance, the issue of generalizability looms larger here than with other types of qualitative research,” (2002, p.179), but she remarks that “as several writers point out, much can be learned from a particular case” (p.179), so hopefully this will be the case here.

### **3.1 Selection of participants**

Several comments need to be made regarding the selection and recruitment of participants. First, considering that the purpose of my study is to explain how the ALGC program accomplished significant goals like survival, stabilization and growth and that case study analysis was identified as the most suitable research method to investigate the research problem, it seemed natural to determine that identifying people who witnessed the events that shaped the history of the ALGC program should be the first step to be taken. Therefore, with the assistance of the members of my research committee, eleven people from the four universities who were involved in planning, implementing and/or managing the ALGC program were identified: three from Canada, three from Sweden, three from Australia, and two from South

Africa (a twelfth individual was identified, another scholar from Sweden, but he passed away a few years ago). In collaboration with members of my research committee, it was decided that the eight scholars involved in the conception, planning and management of the program in its early years should be interviewed first. A letter of introduction, which can be found in Appendix A, was drafted and approved by my supervisor. After being introduced to prospective participants living in the other countries by one of the members of my research committee, a letter of introduction was sent to each one of them, asking if they would be willing to participate in my research project. They were all kind and generous enough to agree with the request. In addition, a draft of a consent form outlining the purpose of the study and the measures that would be taken to guarantee the privacy of all participants was created and submitted to my supervisor for approval, which was granted; a copy of the consent form is found in Appendix B. Next, consent forms were sent electronically; they were signed and sent back to me. Later the same process would be repeated as I approached the other three prospective participants who became involved with the program at a later stage.

### **3.2 Ethical issues**

In *Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research*, Christians states that “By the 1980s, each of the major scholarly association had adopted its own code [of ethics], with an overlapping emphasis on four guidelines...:” (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p.138) informed consent, opposition to deception, privacy and confidentiality, and accuracy. They also discuss the important role that institutional ethics boards have in ensuring that these four factors are properly addressed whenever a scientific study is conducted.

In order to obtain the consent of the participants and to safeguard their right to confidentiality and privacy, I wrote a consent form where I included comments on specific measures I would

take to ensure that their rights regarding those two areas would be protected. Appendix B includes a copy of the informed consent form that participants signed before I started collecting data. Furthermore, I obtained the approval of a UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB), following the process described in the Office of Research Ethics Services website ([www.ors.ubc.ca/ethics](http://www.ors.ubc.ca/ethics)). Moreover, by observing all the guidelines and principles prescribed by UBC's Research Ethics Board or Committee, the participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality were observed throughout the investigation and writing processes. A particular step taken to protect the identity and, consequently, privacy of participants was to adopt a pseudonym for each one of them; therefore, participants are not referred to by their real names in this document but by their code names.

In terms of protecting participants from deception and of lack of accuracy, the only important step taken was to give to my supervisor and/or to members of my research committee access to the research project proposal, the outline, and to different drafts of the thesis without revealing the identity of the participants. Since they are familiarized with the ALGC program, they would be able to identify and intervene if problems with deception arose, which they didn't, and with accuracy, which they could spot and help me correct.

### **3.3 Data collection**

The process of gathering data began with collecting and analyzing documents related to the planning, implementation and management of the ALGC program: e-mails, memos, curricula, program plan, letters, and so on, which were made available to me by members of my research committee. Moreover, I continued to examine the literature on the key areas related to the main topic of the study in order to not only generate ideas and questions but also identify possible relevant factors.

I wrote a questionnaire containing eleven questions for face-to-face or Skype interviews with the participants in order to obtain analytic or evaluative information from open ended questions, and a copy of the questionnaire utilized can be found in Appendix C. The questions asked were aimed at inquiring about the research problem and the research questions previously mentioned; they were worded in a way that intended to give participants the freedom to share ideas and opinions without any form of manipulation or control. As the interviews progressed, several other questions were asked for probing or clarification purposes. Then, interviews were scheduled, conducted and recorded before they were all transcribed by me.

Interviewing the participants was a pleasant, exciting and rewarding experience; they all demonstrated a great desire to contribute with their answers and worked hard to be as frank and resourceful as possible while sharing their memories and opinions. The interviews lasted between 45 to 75 minutes, and problems with connectivity or audio quality were almost non-existent. I started the interviews by reminding participants of the purpose of the study and by asking if they had any questions about it or about the consent form; after all issues were addressed, I started the interview process by asking the questions in the order they were written in the questionnaire. I used my smartphone, which is password protected, to record the interviews; all the audio files were saved on my password protected laptop immediately after the interviews ended.

The process of transcribing the interviews, although tedious, tiring and time-consuming, proved to be extremely useful in the sense of allowing an opportunity to further reflect on the information shared by the participants. All transcriptions were stored on my password protected laptop.

### 3.4 Data analysis

Analyzing the data was the next stage in the research project. The first concern at this point was to identify patterns and themes noticed during the process of gathering data and to cluster items in order to begin categorizing them. Several strategies were used in order to accomplish that. First, I reviewed all transcriptions. Next, I created a document where I compiled responses to each of my interview questions from all eleven participants; in addition, I created another document where I grouped the responses to my interview questions to not only observe similarities, patterns, and themes but also to rank them in terms of frequency and importance.

After the data was carefully examined, I constructed possible explanations for the factors that resulted in the implementation, stabilization, growth and renewal of the ALGC program. I accomplished that by first generating and considering rival plausible explanations. Could the program achieve its goals because of the level of friendship enjoyed by its founding members, the nature of the program, its timing, its pedagogical approach, the wealth of resources of the four universities involved, the political savviness of its leaders, or technically sound planning? These were some of the possible answers to the research problem that were explored.

An additional strategy employed was to examine the ALGC's modus operandi. "In the event that *more than one* plausible factor emerges," state Palys and Atchison, "Scriven (1976) suggests that we look for a modus operandi (MO) to help identify the actual cause" (2008, p.314). The authors explain that "The MO of a particular case is an associated configuration of events, processes, or properties, usually in a time sequence, which can be described as the characteristic causal chain... connecting the cause with the effect" (p.314). Therefore, examining the MOs of the ALGC program allowed for the identification of causes behind effects such as survival, stabilization, growth and renewal.

Throughout the process, I tested a few metaphors that could shed light onto what happened as the ALGC program was created: marriage, parenthood, the gospel story, midwifery, and, finally, witnessing. I also compared and contrasted the ALGC program with others I found while examining the literature that reflect a more colonialist or market driven approaches.

The end result of this process was the creation of a detailed outline that included a thesis statement, which was submitted and approved by my supervisor, in which I structured the ideas and information collected through the research process before starting writing.

### **3.5 The limitations and delimitations of the study**

This research project possesses some limitations. First, it is possible that participants could have felt uncomfortable about saying anything negative concerning individuals or institutions involved in the program regardless of my efforts to safeguard their confidentiality. Moreover, one important voice could not be heard as a key person in the early years of the program passed away a few years ago. Finally, my own lack of experience as a researcher might impact the quality of the study.

It is also important to clarify the delimitations of this research project. First, it focuses on one specific international program; as a result, it has a limited scope. Second, this research project seeks to investigate a program developed by four universities; it is not intended to investigate what happens in terms of international collaboration in primary and secondary international education. Third, the study does not take the opinions of students, staff and instructors (other than the participants) into consideration. Finally, the study does not provide a detailed analysis of all factors that caused the ALGC to thrive; it will highlight the most critical ones.

## **Chapter 4: The history of the ALGC program**

This section of the paper first describes the most significant events that took place during the different stages in the history of the ALGC program before analyzing the reasons that brought and kept this group together throughout all these years. It is true that the literature on the ALGC program depicts the historical development of the early years of the program; however, here, in addition to information on the more recent history of the program, detailed accounts offered by the people who witnessed the conception, gestation, birth, maturation, and renewal of the ALGC program will add a personal touch and a richness of details that allow a better understanding of the sophistication of the ALGC program. The focus is on the first two stages since many of the most important decisions that shaped the future of the program were made in these early periods.

### **4.1 Historical analysis**

#### **4.1.1 Conception**

Boud et al (2006) provides a brief but vivid description of how the ALGC was conceived:

“The idea that led to the program germinated in 1998. It was fostered by the contingencies of personal contacts between principal human actors in each institution, all of whom held chairs in adult education in their respective countries. The world of scholarship in adult education is not a large one and all had had some contact with one another before discussions about this programme began. Yolanda from South Africa visited Sweden after a proposal for a distance-learning programme in adult education at the University of the Western Cape failed to attract funding. She discussed possible joint programmes with Nick. He was receptive to this as it was a time when there was a move at Linköping to establish, for the first time, Master’s programmes for international students. Shortly after Yolanda had returned to Cape Town, Desmond from Australia visited Linköping as part of a sabbatical leave. The University of Technology, Sydney, had been offering part of its own long-established Master’s in adult education in distance mode and institutional priority was being given to international initiatives. Following a walk in the snow and further discussions, the notion of a three-way collaboration emerged” (p.613).

During the interview process, a scholar from Sweden offered many more details related to this historical moment in the history of the ALGC program:

The Swedish agency for promoting international cooperation between universities (STINT) had a campaign for International Masters, where Swedish universities cooperated with a university in another country about the program. The dean for my faculty looked for areas in the faculty, where such a master's program could be developed. When Yolanda visited our university, he asked if her and my unit could develop such a program. I thought about it but came to the conclusion that it would be a too thin thing to lift. So I dropped it. However, later in 1998, Desmond visited my university in relation to his involvement with Problem-based learning pedagogy, and interest he shared with my colleagues Ned and Elaine, who were specializing in higher education. Since Desmond had got a post in adult education I was invited to meet Desmond and I invited all to my home. During a walk along the canal close to my home Desmond and I discussed our field, adult education." During that conversation it struck me that the idea of an international master would be much more realistic if UTS were part of it. I therefore presented the idea about an international master to Desmond and he was immediately enthusiastic."

Nick recalls that the conversation he had with Desmond led them to take action:

The day after, Desmond and I met at my office and had a very constructive and efficient scrutiny of the possibilities and problems and how to solve them. We also discussed possible partners - UBC became a candidate and UWC...UTS, UBC and my university were at that time probably the biggest centers for academic work in the area of adult education in terms of academic staff. After the meeting we had contacts with Lucas from UBC and Yolanda, but more important for the development were two during my sabbatical in spring 1999, which I spent at UWC. One of the things that Yolanda and I discussed was UWCs interest in the program. I also gave a seminar presenting the idea to staff at UWC. The general impression was that participants did not believe in it - it was a too grand thing to do. I remember the comparison with the British Open University. However, the idea became present in a the mind of a considerable number of key persons in UWC. During my sabbatical I went to Sydney, where Desmond "used" me to persuade key design-makers at UTS to go for the idea of an international master in adult education/adult learning (do not remember which label we used at that time).

All the conversations and meetings finally resulted in the conception of the ALGC program, as Nick reminisces:

The result became that we started to develop a program and as far as I remember, we met (Desmond, Yolanda, Ned, I and if there were more I do not remember - do not think there were anyone from UBC, but I might be wrong) end of summer 1999 at a conference and spent time with planning, most important was a sketch of a

curriculum, which on the whole survived in terms of subject areas. My impression was that this was much based on the idea of the participant's competence and interest.

UBC started to become involved with the ALGC program when a senior member of the Department of Educational Studies was contacted not only because he had met the educators who were conceiving the program in international conferences but also since he had worked at Linköping. "I was involved with the program from the very early start when I was approached by my colleagues and friends in Sweden...and our friend in Australia, and UBC and I could participate...the ideas came from I think maybe from our Australian colleague initially and he contacted Sweden, and they all contacted me, and we worked together from the beginning," he recalls. Nonetheless, they all seem to agree that a certain familiarity they had with one another facilitated the process, as the only scholar from South involved at that point says, "The ideas were being generated through those quite intimate conversations between people who more or less knew each other." Therefore, the conception of the ALGC program was the result of the continuous networking effort by these four individuals that allowed the formation of the ALGC program as an idea; however, that does not mean that there was not something extraordinary in the Marking and manner in which the program began.

#### **4.1.2 Planning**

The planning stage could be compared to a gestation period: for those involved, it seemed like it took an eternity because of the many inconveniences experienced, but it was also a Time of great excitement for the "parents" as they dreamed about the future of their "baby" and carefully thought about all the details that would need be needed for this program to survive and mature.

Cape Town was the place where the first planning meeting occurred and by then a few others joined the planning group: a couple from Sweden, a female professor from South Africa, and a representative from UBC. Funding of the program was an issue that was tackled in the early stages, as Desmond recalls:

“Now we had to come up with some kind of conception of what a course would look like, and one of the things that we looked at fairly early on was the businesses model that we could operate under. Then we looked at how it worked in our 4 different countries and we realized that the models that the 4 different countries used were quite different. And it probably precluded any movement of money between the 4 institutions. So we then had to come up with a design for a course that didn’t involve any movement of money across countries. And that was a basic design feature of the program. Aside from the pedagogy, which was a whole set of other issues, we had to form a business model that meant that students enrolled in each of these institutions would share the teaching but we didn’t send any money between each other. And the reason for that was, for an example, in Sweden there are no fees. Any students enrolled via Sweden pays no fees for anything. In a country like Canada or Australia we would have to pay fees. And South Africa was somewhere in between. So they paid fees but they didn’t forward fees. So that meant that we had to have a model in which students enrolled in foreign institutions but with a common program and that then created another set of challenges for us...”

Tony makes interesting comments about how decisions on funding shaped the planning process and decisions made at that stage:

“...Because there was no funding involved in setting this program up one of the decisions made early on was not to request funding, and in that way we could sort of fly under the radar and not have problems from the institutions that we represented in terms of setting up a program until we were ready to actually officially announce that we had something ready to go. So all the discussions would happen at conferences; we would all go to conferences and at some time during the conference the group would get together and discuss a bit more about this idea that we had and how we could make it fly. So all of this was done sort off the side of the desk; there was no official planning involved in it from the universities perspective. There definitely was, you know, from the planning group, because with Mark on board, one of the best things you could do is to get a good planner for planning a program, so by having Mark involved he was able to guide things as we went along, and also he was the one responsible for shepherding it through the myriad of approval processes at UBC.

As Tony suggests, the participation of a seasoned program planner made a huge difference in terms of ensuring that several key factors were considered as decisions were made:

“Mark brought strengths that none of us had; we all had teaching experience; we all had a certain technical experience, if you like. We had experience in how to do things, once they were there. We didn’t have the experience on how to properly plan them. And Mark was a very good voice in saying, “Well, if you plan on doing this, then you should also consider doing this; and you have to look at the ethics of doing this. How you know, you can plan to have, say, differential tuition at different universities? How is that ethical? Why should a student here pay more than a student there?” So he brought this discussion into the planning process, which really enriched it. And also just the basic stages of planning a stage and then going back and reflecting on it.”

Mark himself provided several insights into what guided him as he took a key role during the planning process, and he made it clear that traditional planning theories could not assist the group develop such a complex program as the ALGC:

“I had long ago kind of given up reliance on conventional planning models. This program, if someone said “what was the need this program was responding to?”, it would be hard to answer that because this program didn’t do a needs assessment, we had a vision for this program, and we had a hypothetical student in mind who we thought might be interested in the program, but we didn’t have a clue about who would actually come. And it was more on faith than anything else that we were able to even convince university officials and curricula committees that would be an audience for this program. And I think there has been an audience for this program, but if you try to fit this program in a conventional planning model, it would not work because we didn’t know who the learners were going to be. We couldn’t have done a needs assessment, it would have to be a very prescriptive needs assessment we would have done on behalf of the students. I mean, it just didn’t follow into the usual pattern.

The Australian scholar involved in the planning process complements Mark’s comments on the need for a unique approach to planning:

“There are two ways of thinking about program planning. One as a rational, thoughtful, organized process, in which case some of the things we did we weren’t logical or rational about it. But also there is a model of program planning which is not very organic, so we very much adopted an organic approach, which meant that we didn’t necessarily plan everything systematically in advance because we didn’t know all the things that we needed to take into account.”

The employment of an organic approach to program planning did not prevent the group from discussing and deciding on crucial pedagogical issues but forced them to embrace the

necessary flexibility that an international program in a globalized world demands, according to Desmond:

“So we were very clear on the objectives and aims of each program, what the output should be built in this process of...one of the assessment products in each course had to be a collaborative product, and the principles of a lot of sharing so that part of the learning in every course was that you learn from what happened in those other countries...but at the same time we did allow for the fact that the way we teach in a different country added a different cultural flavour to it so we tried not to eliminate that but tried to help each other to be sensitive to those variations so the Swedes taught in the way the Swedes teach and the Canadians taught in the way that Canadians teach, and students experienced this kind of shift when they went from one course to another. But that was part of the overall experience, and we celebrated that, we didn’t eliminate that, it was part of the learning. So if you want to understand globalization, you need to understand the fact that although we all would teach in English, there are different styles, and different emphasis, and different ways in each people operate by the virtue of the culture they come from.”

However, the idea that there is more to program planning than just its technical side was flourishing when the ALGC program was being planned, so the political dimension of the progress (Cervero & Wilson 1994, 1996, 1997) was considered as well, as Mark explains,

“At the time we started to plan this, one of the recently emerging ideas in educational planning as I think you know were Cervero and Wilson’s work on negotiating power and interests. And the idea of negotiating interests was kind of on my mind at the time we started to do this, and that was kind of a helpful construct to me as we went through the process because we would be sitting in meeting and we would have different takes or orientations to some aspects of the program, and we tried to figure out how to reach a common agreement, a common understanding about it. And we were negotiating our interests...we...I mean, I am sure that there were some gender differences and power relations and all of that, but we were all fairly senior people in each of our programs, so it was not as there was junior people and senior people sitting at the table. There was a little bit of that but not a lot of it, so it had to do more with gender relations and how those played out, and how we came to understand the context in which each one of us was working.”

Members of the planning group somehow disagree on what is the best way to define the political dynamic that took place during the planning process. An academic from Sweden involved in the process stated, “We negotiated everything, even the agenda for every meeting,” but Mark does not think the word “negotiation” fully describes what occurs when people engage

in defending their ideas, ideals and interests as they plan an educational program even though he used it in the previous paragraph:

“I have been a bit critical of the notion of negotiating power and interests because I think negotiation isn’t quite a good word to capture all the things that happen. There were some tense times in the development of the program, there were some disagreements, there were some personality conflicts when different groups got together. There was concern about leadership, there was concern about both not having enough leadership and having too much leadership, too much direction. I think there were some big misunderstandings about the field of adult education, what it represented or what it could represent. We had debates about the title of the program, and those kinds of interesting things all happened. So I think in most cases where I was involved in those discussions, I think we kind of reasoned our way to a consensus of some kind, not a hundred percent agreement but a working consensus, and in other cases where tensions developed we tried to work hard to figure out what we do about these tensions now that they surfaced, what do we do to build on them or to overcome them, whatever the issue might be.”

Regardless of the term chosen to describe what took place at that stage, another professor from Sweden gives a realistic and humorous portrayal of the conflicting dynamics involved whenever the members of the planning committee met:

“Almost every planning meeting had the same structure - An reasonably organized start, then we ran into problems, which had to do with the differences between the partners' academic cultures, administrative rules or that we simply did not believe the way the others' practices. We therefore felt that we had to give up. However in the end of the meetings, we focused on solving or ways of solving these problems.”

Ethical questions were examined as the third element to be considered when planning an educational program according to a more holistic perspective on program planning (Sork 1996). “We were concerned about equity and access early on... We have always been concerned in the curriculum that the curriculum does not reflect a unitary or Euro-Western view of research or knowledge,” Mark clarifies.

It was during the planning stage that a decision had to be made about the delivery mode of program, and the option for online education was quite revolutionary and bold as the Internet was still a very recent development. That explains, for example, why “Prior to this program there

were no online programs at UBC,” as Tony states. The novelty meant that “...When we started, none of us had ever taught online before. So we were all learning from scratch,” adds Yolanda. Alice explains that, besides the convenience that the Internet offers, another reason for choosing online education was the disillusionment with traditional methods of distance education:

“We knew about distance education, that was like the frame of reference we were using to construct this program, and we said instead of people doing a correspondence adult education program where people would be sending the materials, we would use the internet to upload the materials and we would conduct our conversations online. So that was like the frame of reference; say that was the dominant thinking at the time at the university, that module of distance education doesn’t work.”

One of the scholars from Sweden told an amusing anecdote that illustrates vividly what the novelty, the excitement and the risks that exploring the idea of using the Internet as tool to launch an international program represented for all involved:

I think that we all thought it was so exciting to see what would happen...you know, the first idea was to do sort of the same...we didn't have an idea that we would put them all together, that we would do the same thing in four different places, and then it grew from there to why don't we put them all together. We can send them around the world. We can't do that. That's too expensive and not doable. Then we had this idea: perhaps they can have an e-mail list that we can use, and then the idea that we could also bring them together online. I think it was the novelty of it all. None of us had done that before, except for the guy in the UK...I forgot his name...he said, ‘It can't be discussed in this way; it has to be online. You have to click on it and it's there.’ I mean, I guess none of us realized what that meant. We almost got irritated about it. ‘What is he going on about? You just click there and it is there!’ But we learned after a while; no one taught us to work online.

LiU took over the responsibility to provide the learning platform, which happened almost accidentally, as Elaine recalls with a good dose of humour:

I didn't even know that we had access to Blackboard for free at LiU. I just got to know that by chance, by talking to the ICT guys who were in education because he was talking to me and saying, ‘Well, if you decide to go with WebCT I guess I will have to learn how to do that and how to work with that; otherwise, you would have to use Blackboard, we have Blackboard. Of course, if you decide to go with WebCT, why don't you go ahead. ‘And I said, ‘What?! We can use that for free?’! So everybody got on board and we solve that, and that was like ‘Phew!’ This is something we can do.

Navigating through the approval process for the program in each of the universities represented another monumental task that leaders of the ALGC program had to complete. Sweden was the only exception, as Tony describes: “The story goes that in Sweden when they wanted to get the program approved they just had tea with the Dean and it was done.” Members of the planning committee soon found out that it wouldn’t be that simple in the other three universities, as Desmond recalls: “We would just be sitting with open mouths at the number of steps that we had to go through because we realized early on if we would have to have one program across 4 institutions we had one set of documentation that went to all 4 institutions, but that documentation had to accommodate to all the idiosyncrasies of every single institution, so it was a much more formidable document that would be needed if anyone were on their own.” In South Africa, “Yolanda was responsible for navigating through the university administration the acceptance of this program; it wasn’t an easy task, and I have to commend her for doing it,” says Elaine. However, “UBC’s Byzantine” approval system, as one of the scholars from UBC itself referred to it, proved to be the most onerous one. “At UBC there were fourteen stages, and they took so long, that when it came time to open the program in 2001, we still did not have approval yet at UBC for our program. So we had to register our students through UTS; because we recruited students but we couldn’t register them at UBC, we had to register them at UTS, and when then within about three weeks of the program starting we did get the approval at UBC,” clarifies Tony.

The name of the program was debated and the choice for “Adult Learning and Global Change” clearly indicates the concern to explore the implications of globalization to adult learning in an era extremely influenced by increasing access to technology.

Obviously, pedagogical concerns were examined during the gestation period. Members of the planning committee deliberated over the best approach to develop the content of the six courses, so the responsibility for their design fell on the shoulders of the different scholars according to their area of expertise, as Tony recollects:

We knew what everybody else was doing; we knew their area of specialization. We knew, for example, that Lucas was the best person to write the work and learning course because of the research he was doing; Nick, the understanding research course because he'd had just been publishing in that area, and we knew that from South Africa, Yolanda was someone who had access to literature from the South that none of us had access to. So that course is completely different than all the other courses in the program because when students go through...we try as much as possible to use literature from around the world, but when they hit global local...that's a completely different one because it's taught from a Southern perspective, using research from the South.

Desmond explains how issues related to the content, method of delivery and collaboration shaped the design of the program and of one of its critical courses:

One of the things we tried to do, we tried to have wrap, a wrap subject, a wrap course, a course that started the program and ended the core program. And I was responsible for designing and teaching that initially. And what it tried to do, it tried to induct students into working with each other across continents and becoming familiar with the platform we were using and to establish very, very basic ideas about being present and how do you cope with being present when you are not physically there. So I put a lot of that effort into very simple, straightforward exercises that both moved people along, but it was really about them being comfortable with the media, being comfortable with collaborating with each other, so that was very carefully scaffolded so that students within the first six weeks were in a position to kind of deal with a more normal course. So there was a lot more handholding in that than you would expect from a normal program. And that was necessary because of the massive diversity of students and also their lack of support in their own physical location because it was not as if the students were close to the institution in which they got enrolled. They could be thousands of kilometers away from their home institution.

Assessment was another area that demanded considerable amount of time during the planning stage to the surprise of those involved. Sheila remembers quite clearly the moment when the academics involved realized that they had distinct views on assessment:

When we were in Sydney, in Australia, we were having a discussion around assessment. And we were all sitting in the room as colleagues and friends, all imagining that we had the same views of things. Suddenly, and I just remember this one...at a certain point I think it was Desmond speaking from an Australian point of view, and he said, "Grading...giving people grades is ridiculous." And you know, they used to pass/fail. And of course immediately, and he said it quite strongly, so immediately people said, "No, it is not ridiculous. This is how we do it." And each person started to discuss how assessment is in our different universities.

"I will never forget the discussion we had when we were discussing what kind of grades we were going to give. We thought that we had the same opinion. It turned out that we were four universities and we ended up having five different grading systems! Crazy!," concurs Elaine, who also described the solution the group found for this problem:

We actually invented a grade currency converter, as crazy as it sounds. Because we did use the ECTS scale, the European system of grading as our common denominator, and then we translated, if someone would say "very good, this is a very good" according to ECTS to which everybody got judged on, that would perhaps be translated as an B in Vancouver and an A in South Africa depending on the cultural differences in grading because there are cultural differences, I mean, everybody knows what an A means, right, but that differs between different countries and between different universities as well; it is very contextually bounded and situated, so we tried to do that.

Therefore, the incubation phase was an extremely important but also time, energy and resources consuming period when a multitude of discussions took place and many of tasks were performed, and it is important not to forget that only the most important ones were recorded here. However, when it was over, what was only an embryonic idea had gained the form and substance necessary for the ALGC program to meet the real world.

#### **4.1.3 Implementation**

The implementation stage covers the first several months of the existence of the ALGC program as UBC students joined the program only in the second year. The implementation of the program designed by the eight scholars from Australia, Canada, South Africa and Sweden started several months before classes began in the Fall of 2001 with marketing and recruitment efforts.

However, how can you promote such a unique program as the ALGC in a way that prospective students could see the benefits of something that hadn't been tried before? Mark explains both the dilemma and the solution chosen by UBC to deal with this problem from their end, which represents similar struggles faced by the other universities:

We didn't even know how to time the program because it was in the early stages of the web, and we knew that setting a website was going to be important but we put articles in the Georgia Straight to recruit people locally, and it was an online program, so people could enroll in it from anywhere, but we didn't know how to time it to an international audience at that point. So we were lucky in a lot of ways because we made some good decisions to get the program off the ground, but none of those decisions followed a planning model that well.

Recruitment constituted another task that demanded a major effort as the ALGC program was about to be launched. "For us, we needed to get sufficient number of applicants, of course," reminisces Elaine, indicating that the survival of the program depended on having bodies in the classrooms and on collecting fees, which was quite challenging in an era where universities were aggressively competing for both domestic and international students. Tony talks about how the different universities performed in relation to recruitment in the very beginning:

UBC was the one who was behind when we implemented the program in that first cohort. Everyone else recruited students. For Sweden it wasn't difficult, nor for South Africa because they had exchange programs at the doctoral level before, so they had student exchanges, so there were people that they knew that could assist them in recruiting, and that was not a problem. And UTS never had a large number of students. They were largely driven by Desmond, who went out and selected people to be in the program. While the rest of us were getting in, you know, fifteen, twenty students, UTS was only taking in six to eight students, so it was a small contingent but a very active contingent once they got in.

As the Report reveals, the first cohort had students from LiU, from WCT, from UTS, and none from UBC; the picture changed with students from UBC joining the program in the second year.

#### **4.1.4 Stabilization**

After surviving the first year, the ALGC program was taking its first steps but still required the attention of its “parents” as it was still very young. Even though there were still obstacles to be overcome, the leaders of the program could now enjoy the benefits of a sense of familiarity with a certain routine and of the experience gained in the process.

Like most infants, the ALGC program kept growing and getting stronger, and enrolment was one of the signs of that. The number of students enrolled during years 3-5 grew and stabilized.

However, the sense of progression was interrupted as struggles emerged to keep UTS as a member of the program, and the departure of the Australian university marks the end of this period. Desmond, who was involved from the very beginning in the creation of the ALGC program and brought UTS into the partnership, explains the forces behind this process:

The simplest description of that is, although we were one of the founders of it...the financial model basically that we were required to follow in Sydney was set...we had to charge full commercial fees for students to enroll in the course. We had to do that while simultaneously offering a Master's degree in Adult Learning that didn't have full commercial fees, so we were eventually competing against ourselves with a massive financial disadvantage for the students doing the ALGC. And what that meant was that we never got a critical, viable number to sustain the program basically because we were shooting ourselves in the foot.

#### **4.1.5 Growth**

Years six to ten, which comprise a period in the existence of the ALGC program characterized by stabilization and growth, is timed by two major events. The first one was the arrival of Monash as a replacement for UTS in Australia. Mark explains how the leaders of the program felt as they faced the crisis initiated by UTS's departure: “We were worried then, “Ok. What do we do about a fourth partner?” And I had visited colleagues at Monash University, and I knew they had an Adult Education program there not as established as UTS, but a solid one. And

we approached them, and they were interested, and they joined..." Tony adds his insights on the transition process till Monash became involved with the ALGC program:

Fortunately, we had a very good friend at Monash and discussed the program with her; she was excited about the program, she knew about it because colleagues in Australia were openly talking about the program. She was excited to participate in it, and she picked up the ball and ran with it at Monash and got all the approvals at Monash, so we didn't miss any students from Australia. When UTS students dropped out we already had an intake of students from Monash, so it continued.

However, it was not only partners that were replaced at this stage; LiU decided to change platforms from Blackboard to It's Learning, a fact that occurred, according to Elaine, thanks to a Swedish policy:

Universities are not private enterprises, they are public, so everybody, according to our legislation, all these enterprises....public institutions....like hospitals, schools and so forth, they cannot...we cannot buy all our paper from your firm; you are not allowed to do that; we have to set a bid...put a proposal people can put in bids and we are supposed to take the one that is the cheapest or best. This is how it has to be. So the agreement with Blackboard was for four years, and the rumour is that they forgot to put a new bid on that, so out of a sudden Blackboard was out, so they had to take another one, and they decided to take this Norwegian It's Learning. And that meant that forty thousand people who were Blackboard users in our university had to move, be moved from one platform to the other.

#### **4.1.6 Renewal**

Death and new life have walked side-by-side during the last seven years in the history of the ALGC program. "Death" has been experienced in a variety of ways: the loss of one of the founding fathers, who passed away; the departure of other key contributors to the accomplishments of the ALGC program, who either moved to other ventures or retired; and, the crisis that gradually culminated with Monash leaving the partnership. New "Life" arrived in the form of new leaders and of a new partner to replace Monash in Australia, the Australian Catholic University (ACU).

Ned passed away in 2011. When communicating to the world that one of its most prestigious members had died, LiU's website commented on his contribution as a university professor and these comments shed light on the tremendous loss that Ned's death has represented for the ALGC program, for LiU and for the fields of Higher, Adult and Medical education:

[Ned] was appointed in 1986 as professor at Linköping University. His research was truly interdisciplinary, and especially he developed partnerships with healthcare field worldwide. In this context, he met his wife Elaine and they worked closely for many years. Ned's research was focused on teaching in higher education and the relationship between higher education and employment. He supervised 43 PhD students and his research has resulted in over 160 publications. Many of the educational materials he starred in have been classics (<http://www.liu.se/uv/nyheter/arkiv/1.284535?l=sv>).

Several of the founding members have severed ties with the ALGC program during the past few years, including Elaine herself, who for several years fulfilled the role of international coordinator of the ALGC program but was moved to the faculty of medicine at LiU. Likewise, Mark limited his participation in the program as he pursued other challenges and now holds a senior position at UBC. Lucas and Nick retired in 2015; Yvonne resigned from Monash when they withdrew from the program.

Melody offers an insider perspective on why Monash dissociated itself from the ALGC program to the point that it was not possible anymore to keep this gigantic Australian university connected to the ALGC family:

Clearly at Monash, for both internal in the faculty but also at university politics, the course has not been appreciated at all; we are a marginal faculty in the university, Education, the management of this university has become increasingly score oriented, so people who are working in adult education and sociology of education have become marginalized...The faculty has not promoted the course outside of the faculty to the rest of the university; they should have done it, they should be proud of it. Monash is a very large university so most people don't know this course has existed at Monash.

As people and organizations left the ALGC program for a variety of reasons, the program was able to not only avoid death but also breathe new life as other leaders and organizations

joined it. Heather started cooperating with the program in 2008 and became its local coordinator in Sweden in 2009 when she was invited by Elaine to take on that role, as she tells:

After the first year [of her PhD studies], my co-supervisor, Elaine, who was the program director at that moment, asked me if I wanted to supervise a student in this program with her, and if I wanted to take a job here. So it was an interesting way to be introduced to teaching and pedagogy, and I thought it was a very good suggestion, so I said yes. I always wanted to work with this program. Then Elaine left this institution, so this position was available. And I worked close to her; I have worked with her in this program for all these years, so I have much more understanding, not just of the teaching, but the structure, the partners, so she thought I was one of the best candidates. And I was very happy to say yes and become the program director here.

Yvonne describes her initial involvement with the program in these terms:

In about 2006 I received a letter when I was at Monash University and I think from Lucas, or it could have been Mark, who invited me...to come in into the partnership because the University of Technology Sydney was withdrawing. Subsequent to that I met with Lucas at a conference in Denmark, I think, and he talked to me about the program, so I had a strong sense of what the program was all about, I got a little bit of a sense of that, that it seemed to me from my own perspective and my own research work, that the program was opening up some really interesting issues, so I felt independently strong about taking the program forward at Monash.

The last newcomer to join the group was Melody, who started working with the ALGC program as a tutor: "I worked with Yvonne in a few other things, and she asked me to be a tutor. I liked very much working alongside Yvonne, and I really enjoyed it a lot; it was very good group work. So I did it again a year after, and then I went on a contract here, and I am still on as a lecturer. In 2013 Yvonne left Monash, but even before that, in 2013, I was already running the course for her."

With Monash leaving, the search for a new partner started and continued till ACU was finally welcomed to the partnership. The fact that Yvonne is now working at ACU consists in one of the most influential reasons why this particularly institution was chosen to become the newest member of the partnership.

## 4.2 Motivational analysis

As this brief account of the most important events in the history of the ALGC program comes to an end, there is one question that deserves an answer: What attracted these twelve scholars from such different backgrounds to the program? What brought them together?

According to the evidence collected during the interviewing process, it seems reasonable to argue, especially regarding the founding members of the ALGC program, that they were first and foremost attracted to each other. “They were my friends and my colleagues, so I liked to work with them and we worked a lot on other things,” admits quite openly Lucas, who worked at LiU before joining UBC. However, this mutual attraction among the original leaders of the program was not based entirely on personality issues or past experiences but on the “participant’s competence and interest,” as Nick points out. Desmond concurs that the personal element represented a smaller factor in the process of bringing these academics together, “It is not as if we were great mates, we weren’t spending a lot of time socializing with each other; it was more of a professional relationship.” He explains that familiarity with one another’s reputation was the primary factor, “Basically, adult learning is a very small world, and we were people that had met each other previously in international research conferences on a number of occasions, so we were familiar to each other. We didn’t know each other very well, but we knew of each other reputation and so on and so forth.” Mark seems to agree when he talks about what attracted him to this group of people, “I knew they were all serious scholars, I knew they were respected internationally, but I think it was more me getting to know them through the planning process that continued to excite me.” “We knew what everybody else was doing; we knew their area of specialization...,” adds Tony. Even a latecomer like Yvonne confesses that the professional dimension of the relationships developed appealed to her: “...They are nice people. The

programme is committed to a scholarly approach; I think a lot of programmes now are squeezed into vocational approaches. I think there is respect for the academic integrity of participants and their right to be able to shape their work..."

The global orientation of the ALGC program seems to have captured the attention and interest of those who devoted themselves to the program from the very beginning more than anything else, as Desmond elucidates: "It was just this kind of a glimmer of an idea that in an increasingly globalized world we needed people to work in adult learning together, work with each other and cooperate with each other." Many years after the program had begun the relationship between education and globalization was still relevant enough to fascinate a newcomer like Yvonne: "So through the 2000s I looked a lot at these global/local interfaces and their effects on teachers, managers in a different range of occupational settings, and that's why I was interested in the program," she states.

The academics from South Africa involved with the ALGC program were particularly concerned with bridging the North-South divide, a phenomenon that has increased in significance as globalization strengthens its power over nations around the world. "My interest was to try to respond to globalization in an innovative, creative way, and try to bridge the huge divide between the North and the South, the economic differences. I thought there was enough political and pedagogical commonality for us to try to build a foundation for a program that could be more authentically global," says Yolanda. Zola adds that her hope was that the ALGC program, by bringing the North and the South together, would benefit the field of education, particularly students: "People had different research interests, and they published in different areas, and they were experts on their own right, and so if we pooled our international resources we might be able to stage or present an international program or a global program with both North and South

perspectives and in addition to that taught by people who actually lived in the south and lived in the north, and that students would benefit from these different perspectives, and there would be, shall I say, some cross-pollination of ideas and perspectives and theoretical perspectives in the process.”

However, as Yolanda hinted, globalization has a very powerful economic dimension, and it was particularly this economic ramification that was in the minds of some leaders of the ALGC program. Lucas, for example, informs that the creation of the ALGC program was very timely because this was the time when “UBC started to engage in a large project on, an international project on web based learning particularly in the area of commerce, and this was a very commercial program. So I thought this as an alternative to what I saw as academic capitalism, and this was the kind of program that spoke much more to the tradition of adult education.” “We were genuinely concerned that basically commercial interests would come in and develop a kind of commercial programs,” agrees Desmond.

Colonialism in its political, cultural and economic forms, existed prior to the arrival of globalization, but many assert that globalization has created or reinforced conditions that stimulate colonialist efforts. Since leaders of the ALGC program were aware of that, they made a decision: “We also had in the back of our minds that we didn’t want to cooperate with countries that had a colonial model of course delivery, so we were thinking we wanted to avoid collaborating with the UK and the US,” says Desmond. Therefore, it can be concluded that fighting educational colonialism was another motivation behind the birth of the ALGC program.

Tony combines globalization with a second reason why individuals became involved with the ALGC program: the appeal behind the novelty of incorporating technology into

education. “I was very interested in computers and in using computers in terms of learning,” he testifies. Mark also points to technology as a factor that attracted him to the ALGC:

“I was excited by the innovative character of it because I had already done some international work. I was attracted to the global orientation of the program. We always have had a strong kind of Vancouver based Adult Education program that attracted people from other countries, but the prospect of using technology to bring students from anywhere in the world to focus on global change, adult education and global change was really attractive, so I was kind of taken by the concept and excited by it.”

Technology is only one of the elements that made the ALGC program so innovative, and the revolutionary nature of the program was another common explanation for why people decided to become involved with it. Nick, for instance, declares:

“When I considered the idea in the start, I was mostly occupied with the possibility to strengthen the content - i.e. the access to a broader competence than our own. Later, when the idea started to develop I became more occupied about the program as an adventure, an educational innovation on the international scale. It is unique and I am still amazed about the fact that we made it and that it still works 17 years after the birth of the idea.”

The international dimension of the program was another argument for the participant’s involvement with the ALGC program. Heather shows excitement when talking about “all these students from different countries, different experiences”. Tony demonstrates the same kind of enthusiasm when he describes the incredibly diverse mix of nationalities found among students: “Each cohort has students from approximately 35 different countries, and all these people come from different cultures, many of them have English as a second or additional language.”

Desmond adds that internationalization “involved real international collaboration.” Lucas adds one final comment on internationalization as an advantage of participating in something like the ALGC program when he states, “I thought it would be good for UBC and Adult education to be part of a program that would draw to students and make us reach out to different parts of the world.”

While the focus on globalization, the use of technology as an educational tool, the original character of the program, and the opportunity to experience and benefit from internationalization were common themes present in the explanations regarding why people were attracted to the program, a few other ideas were also mentioned by one of the participants. Tony, for instance, says that a factor that really intrigued him was the fact of using cohorts as he has long been a fan of cohort learning. Heather found attractive the opportunity to join this particular group of people: "It was amazing that we could work so well together for so many years," she says. "Lucas refers to a practical benefit for the department of Educational Studies at UBC: "It also would provide a lot of know-how that we could use in other programs. Our department and faculty did not have an extensive experience with distance education and particularly in internationally formed kind of web based initiatives." Finally, in a very honest answer, Melody explains why she was attracted to the ALGC program: "Nothing attracted me to the program; I was offered work."

As it can be noticed from the previous paragraphs in this section, there were a variety of reasons that stimulated this group of academics to join forces in order to create and maintain the ALGC program, so perhaps the best justification for their involvement was summarized by Elaine when she affirmed: "In a sense, the greatness of it all."

## **Chapter 5: Identifying the accomplishments**

What can the participants present as proof that the ALGC program truly represents good news for those working with adult and international education? As the leaders of the ALGC program looked back and thought about this question, they were each able to identify goals that the program has achieved. When all these are put together, a clear picture appears, and the image we see depicts the evolution of an educational endeavour that has benefitted many. Hence, the many accomplishments of the ALGC are highlighted in this chapter in order to offer a vibrant portrayal of a program that has distinctive colours and shapes.

### **5.1 Historical perspective**

First, it is possible to discuss the accomplishments of the ALGC program from a historical point of view by focusing on its survival and uniqueness. Surviving does not seem much at first, but since Darwin came up with his “survival of the fittest” theory, survival cannot be taken for granted. “Extinction is the rule. Survival is the exception,” said Carl Sagan; if he is right, staying alive despite the threats against you and your own limitations is no small feat. Thus, the merit of a program that has survived fifteen years so far cannot be dismissed, so it is not surprising that several of the leaders of the ALGC program refer to survival as a significant achievement of the program. “I think the main factor that it is still there after all these years is an indication that it has been approved, that it has been successful, it is sustainable,” declares Elaine, who is supported by Nick, another Swedish academic, who says, “It has met so many challenges and difficulties and survived.” Heather, another professor from LiU, also affirms, “I think it is successful when you think this collaboration could continue for so many years even though we had some problems or conflict.” “It has lasted for fourteen years,” stated Tony when interviewed during the last days of 2014, a fact that Yolanda emphasized as well. All these

voices proclaim in unison that remaining alive after so many years surely is an indication that there is something positive about the ALGC program.

Additional evidence of the historical significance of the ALGC program lies in its unique nature, which makes it have a special place in the history of international collaboration as it stands as something that had never before been achieved. As mentioned before, one unique trait of the ALGC program was the use of the Internet as a channel for the exchange of messages and ideas. “Our program and the master of educational technology were both approved by senate at the same time as the first two online graduate programs at UBC...And so that seemed very exciting and the potential of the Internet seemed very exciting,” recalls Tony, and the fact that one of the best universities in Canada did not offer a single online program prior to the ALGC certainly suggests that employing the Internet as an educational tool was a ground-breaking idea. In addition, the large number of collaborators also represented a special feature of the program since many of the partnerships around the world even today still involves only two or three universities. Another reason for considering the ALGC program as a one-of-a-kind initiative in the history of international education is its lack of a concern with profiting and market expansion, as Yolanda explains: “The main reason for a lot of the programs has been market-driven. Their history is not the same as this program.”

Powerful evidence of the uniqueness of the ALGC program, and consequently of its tremendous historical significance, is found in the inability of participants to list other programs similar to the ALGC. Several leaders of the program, and we are talking here about individuals in senior positions in top universities in four different continents who have an extensive knowledge of the field, answered “no” when asked if they had heard of a program like the ALGC, and the few who acknowledged the possible existence of comparable programs sounded

somewhat vague or pointed to differences between the programs. Mark, for example, stated, “In one of the meetings that I attended in India, someone mentioned a program that sounded very much like this. I was at a meeting in India, I don’t remember who the partners were, but I think there were three or four universities, and it was an online program and they were each teaching some portion of the program. So it sounded very similar to ALGC.” Tony indicated that an analogous program had been created in Europe, but highlighted a difference regarding funding: “I know of another partnership that was started by a university in Denmark and it was a three university partnership with Greece and...I am trying to think of the other country now...and it was different from ours as it was run as an Erasmus program; therefore, the students who were recruited into the program were funded to take the studies.” Finally, Yvonne also offers some comments that suggest that although international collaboration has grown considerably over the years, nothing exactly like the ALGC has been achieved:

Actually, as part of my documentation for the approval of the program in this university and the last one too, I had to do market assessments to investigate alternatives to it. I think it is interesting that, in comparison to my period in Monash when I couldn’t find anything that was really equivalent or like it, running through the market assessment now, in 2014, it was last year, it is very clear that there are a number of programs that are starting to emerge that take a somewhat different form, usually they are bi-partisan teaching partnerships between two universities, often they include things like a comparative study abroad or study online...I did come across a conference in fact on global master’s programs, which acknowledged, and that was being run out of Europe, and I read that as an indication that in fact in many parts of the world these global initiatives are now consolidating networks in ways that means that they can run an international conference on that.

## 5.2 Educational perspective

A second perspective from which the achievements of the ALGC program can be appreciated is the educational one. Since the program was named Adult Learning and Global Change, it is important to start by noticing that one of the educational accomplishments of the program was to allow students to learn important lessons about globalization and social

inequalities. “It kind of taught them [students] about the possibility of globalization,” states Lucas. Yvonne agrees as she understands that the ALGC “Enabled students to learn and grow as humans beings in terms that enabled them to think critically and conceptually about globalizing spaces, their effects within national environments and how they as individual professionals would navigate those.”

An initiative with such a strong focus on a global dynamics like the ALGC program exposes the reality of social injustice, and the first ones to experience first-hand the impact of the social differences that exist in a globalized world were the academics planning the ALGC program. Yolanda explained how she and Elaine planned to use a time when leaders of the ALGC from other countries were coming to South Africa to open their partners’ eyes to the different conditions South Africans students lived in:

We used shock therapy for the group...Some of our students would be coming from these environments; you need to get it.” I remember some of my colleagues, who had never been in really very, very poor conditions, were very...the impact was huge. And you had that experience that you could remind people, and say, “remember that time,” and immediately there was this sort of visceral memory, which helped them to remember that this is how the majority of the world live.

Yolanda also remembers how the differences that persist in a globalized world became real for students as a group from Sweden visited South Africa on an exchange program:

The Swedish students came down to Cape Town, and it was a very telling interaction. Some of it was about the students...this is my memory of it anyway...at that point particularly South Africans had to...I think all the South Africans were black...most came out from poor or working class communities...and the Internet was relatively slow comparing to Canada, Sweden and Australia...our students...what was interesting was the Swedish students would have at least one or two computers, they all would have their own computers in their own homes, of course they would have one at work...there was an assumption even at that stage that that what you had...you have access to the Internet and it was relatively fast, I mean compared to one another. They heard the stories of how South Africans had to get up, some of them were getting up at 2 o’clock in the morning to try to get on the Internet in order to be able to communicate...because the Internet was not so busy and so on...and they usually would talk about making some coffee while they were trying to dial up to get on the Internet...Others would have to take a taxi to the

Internet cafes, so you had other costs of taxis, they could go on only 15 minutes at a time, the cost of the Internet. What was telling was the class differences.

Therefore, access to technology was a particular area where the differences between South Africa and the other countries became quite evident, and the South Africans were instrumental in helping the others see that, as Mark recalls: "Yolanda and also Elaine, who was a colleague of Yolanda, really helped us understand what was going on in South Africa with relations to technology access to students in South Africa." Elaine illustrates how shocking it was for the others to hear what South Africans, particularly students, had to endure in order to be online:

Everything took so long time for them to just open a page. We heard stories like, 'I turn on the computer and then I go make myself a cup of coffee and then I come back, and then it was uploaded'...so it was really, really slow. And then it was also that it was not self-evident that these guys had access to computers easily; they had to travel sometimes and sit in internet cafes, things like that, which wasn't safe for them. They had very different conditions.

However, it is interesting to observe that students from South Africa were also somewhat unaware of the significant gap that exists between them and students who come from developed countries as Yolanda reports:

I think they were also shocked to see the privilege of the Swedes. I think what it did was to open the lid of the realities of power and economic relations globally, and that was...is what the course is trying to do in many ways. It is trying to make people look critically at the global economy, which then translates into different...you know...cultural hegemony and so on and so forth...so these were ways of both conscientizing the Swedes but also conscientizing the South Africans to kind of get beneath some of the more superficial understandings of how the world works.

Therefore, one of the main goals of the program has been achieved as participation in the ALGC program has permitted both students and leaders alike to not only grow in their understanding of the multiple factors operating as individuals, institutions and countries interact in a globalized world but also perceive the practical implications of the different kinds of inequalities globalization has sustained and/or created. Yvonne's reinforces this idea when she

says, “One of the students said, ‘One does not learn about globalization in this course; one experiences it.’”

A different evidence of an educational accomplishment mentioned by a few of the participants is the fact that the ALGC program has been positively evaluated by outsiders due to its quality and innovative nature. Elaine states, “We just had an evaluation...from our agency in quality in higher education and they looked particularly to this program in this latest evaluation and it came out with very good quality according to their judgement. We managed to please our people who look after that, we do things with high quality. So that was very good.”

A third educational feat of the ALGC program resides in the learning outcomes it has produced, as Mark points out: “But I also think it’s been successful in terms of the learning outcomes; it has a set of unique learning outcomes that is produced through the nature of the students who enroll and the kind of interactions that occurs in the courses, and the kind of curricula that moves through one jurisdiction to another as we go through the years of the program.” Desmond complements what Mark stated:

We tried to be very specific in the outcomes, but I don’t think we used the learning outcomes language that we do today, but it was as close as you could get to it back then. So we were very clear on the objectives and aims of each program, what the output should be built in this process of...one of the assessment products in each course had to be collaborative product, and the principles of a lot of sharing so that part of the learning in every course was that you learn from what happened in those other countries

Yvonne, however, expands what her colleagues said about the learning outcomes of the ALGC program by elaborating on the meaning of “learning outcome” before indicating the unique nature of the outcomes produced by the ALGC:

It is interesting calling them learning outcomes because of course there are no measurements. The term “learning outcome” as far as I understand it is an empiricist term, a set of abstract indicators, standards of some kind. In some ways there would be ways of talking about these in more normative terms using, I mean the program uses the concept of capability but what happens seem an elaboration of that concept

in the program and it is not clear to me if the term is being used colloquially or whether it is been used in the context of human development agendas...clearly they learned things that are gradable but I know in my experience is not a "tick-a-box" grading, it is about sophistication of argument, usage of concepts, development of evidence, engagement with the world...that's the kind of measurement that I do, and therefore, it feels like I'm assessing the growth of the person and consolidation of their sense of self and identity, their capacity to act within complex environments, and those are the things I see as major outcomes.

Besides these three elements mentioned (giving students the opportunity to learn about adult education in a globalized world, receiving awards for the innovative nature of the curriculum, and producing a unique set of learning outcomes), which were educational achievements of the ALGC program referred to by a few scholars, a few other elements were mentioned by one of the leaders of the program. Lucas, for example, lists the creation of know-how as one of them: "We have been able to use this model in other programs...we made some changes to the Ed.D not to have it only kind of only course based where people would come only on weekends, but we combined it with the web based components. I know that they are trying to develop a new program in education and administration built on these ideas." He also argues that another benefit was maximizing the use of the cohort model as an educational tool: "We have been quite successful in the cohort model because it was taught quite well." A high completion rate and a low number of drop-outs were additional indicators used by Tony to prove not only that at UBC the ALGC program has been identified with success but also that using cohorts represents a key factor behind these accomplishments: "We have about a 92% completion rate in two years, which is one of the highest at UBC, it's way higher than our other online programs. So to me that speaks to success, and a lot of that comes back to the cohort experience; we don't have drop-outs, which is unusual." Finally, Elaine reveals that, at UWC, graduating a significant number of students from a Master's program is perceived as an educational accomplishment worthy of being celebrated. "I think that we have since the inception of the program graduated

master's students from the program that is an accomplishment. So I think I've counted, I think we are close to forty over a period of something like 15 years," she proudly recalls.

### **5.3 Collaboration perspective**

The ALGC program has also achieved interesting goals from an international collaboration point-of-view. The most significant, of course, was the development of the program in a truly shared manner. "It was developed on a collective and collaborative base," testifies Lucas, who also describes the process used:

The strategy was that we worked, I think, in a very systematic way... when we came to a clear clarification on some key principles. And from these principles, we took a next...in a very step like way to then say, "Ok. These are the principles. This is what we need to do. You do this, you do that," And then we would all meet and discuss so that the program and the courses to begin with don't belong to a certain department or the universities, I mean, it really became the program's ideas. And I think that working that way, it really moved forward the whole time, so we had the satisfaction that something had happened, something was done.

Elaine explains that there has been a concern among all leaders of the ALGC program to build it based on inclusiveness and equality; consequently, efforts have been made to do it without rejecting, ignoring, or limiting the participation of a partner who did not have as many resources to contribute. She reports,

Yolanda and Elaine from UWC, they used to raise a hand and remind us, remind everybody, Hey, South Africa is here too." But no one wanted to dominate South Africa in that sense. Everybody is sort of in their culture and comfort zone and talks from their perspective, and we needed, always, always, to be reminded. And sometimes we could do it, everybody could be that sort of reminding person and say, "Hey, what are we actually doing here?" There was a power imbalance that we have some strong guardians, the representatives from South Africa, but we also tried to do it ourselves. So I think that was a constant struggle and I guess it still is to make sure that everybody can participate in this program.

Desmond makes an interesting point that sheds light on another reason to consider the ALGC program fruitful from a collaboration viewpoint: "I think it was very successful in the way we designed it to accommodate to the limitations of people in less developed areas."

Technology is an area where UWC was at a disadvantage in relation to the others, and this idea has already been documented, but it is worth reading Mark's testimony since he also witnessed the moment when leaders of the ALGC program first realize how big of a challenge would technology be:

Yolanda and Elaine gave us a wake-up call in one of these meetings, and several of us could tell you the whole story, when we went to the office of their university IT department, and we tried at this first meeting to connect to the Internet, and he had a brand new Dell computer, but we found out that the pipeline coming onto the campus was only equivalent to something like two dial-up modems. I mean, it was a really low bandwidth, right? That was what the hang-up was; it was not the equipment, it was the bandwidth that was available going in and out of the campus at the time. And that was what made everybody nervous was realizing that even on a university campus that presumably had good IT infra-structure, we couldn't have Internet access, then what would happen in a village fifty miles outside of Cape Town? Would we really going to be successful in engaging in the program?

Desmond explains how leaders of the ALGC program approached the technological limitations in South Africa in a way that UWC would not be in a position of disadvantage when he says, "In terms of Internet access in South Africa, I mean the African continent in general, we had to have a very low tech approach to our design, and we kept it basic in terms of students collaborating with each other....we could...not include video, not include audio, so forth and so on."

However, technology has not been the only area where there has been a discrepancy in the wealth of resources among the university partners; in relation to human resources a gap has existed, too. Leaders of the ALGC program became aware that their colleagues in Cape Town did not have as many staff to support the program; thus, UWC has taken a lighter burden from a recruiting, teaching and administrative points of view without sacrificing its influence on the

direction of the program or the benefits it is supposed to reap from participating in the ALGC. “I know that in South Africa...they didn’t have many staff, so it was difficult for them to take a big group,” affirms Elaine. “We just don’t have the capacity to teach more than one [course]. That’s just the reality,” admits Elaine. Therefore, it seems reasonable to accept the notion that the ALGC program has been successful from a collaboration point of view exactly because it has survived and thrived despite the disparity among the universities terms of access to a variety of resources.

A few participants referred to the concerted effort towards the resolution of conflict as another extremely positive feature of the collaborative process. Heather, for instance, declares, “I don’t think it is conflict free. I don’t say we don’t have conflict, we have had problems, but we have always had strong willingness to solve the problems, so I think that we have worked for so many years is a success.”

According to participants, there is one final reason for assessing positively the ALGC program when examining its collective effort: it was able to transition successfully when there was a need to replace partners. Substituting ACU for Monash is a very recent event, so it seems natural that participants only commented on the transition from UTS to Monash as they reflected on how this process reinforces the notion that the ALGC program has achieved goals such as stabilization and growth. “We have also experienced a successful change of one partner in Australia,” highlights Nick, a statement that is confirmed by Tony: “We have had not the original four partners, one of our partners in Australia had to withdraw after six years....We immediately replaced them with Monash University, in Australia, because we had good colleagues there in adult education, and we were able to just continue on.”

Hence, the fact that leaders of the ALGC program were capable of planning, implementing and running the program in a cooperative way, of doing it while respecting the limitations of one of the partners, of dealing with conflict in a constructive manner, and of replacing Australian partners strongly suggest the ALGC brings hope for the future of international collaboration.

#### **5.4 Administrative perspective**

Participants referred to several achievements of the ALGC program that indicate they understand the program has been managed efficiently, which, in their opinion, constitutes another explanation for the positive results it has obtained. In the next few paragraphs, these accomplishments will be discussed in order to allow a better understanding of the different managerial mechanisms that have allowed the program to achieve its goals.

Enrolment is a first kind of evidence presented by participants that demonstrate the ALGC program has been successful from an administrative viewpoint. “From a UBC perspective, it’s always had a respectable enrolment, and enrolment is one measure of success,” states Mark. Tony agrees: “The fact that the program has been attracting people, the fact that demand far outstrips the number of spaces we have in the program, means that there is still a growing demand for the program after fourteen years.” The significant number of students registering for the program in Sweden was cited as a positive fact by Heather, who said: “Also, for so many years, the number of students... Yes, we are one of the biggest in Linköping.”

Another indication that administrative results have been perceived by participants as a way to corroborate the accomplishments of the ALGC program is its financial strength. Lucas, for example, affirms, “At UBC it has really managed to pay for itself, it hasn’t drawn on the general resources, but we have been able to be true to its ideas and goals without having to

sacrifice anything to be able to earn money on it.” Mark makes the same point: “financially it’s been a success as well because it generates some additional revenue for the department and for the faculty, and there aren’t too many programs that do that; the way it was set up it does generates additional revenue, and it has enough funding going into it to provide administrative support for the program, and so on.” Nick also comments on the issue from a Swedish perspective: “Another thing is that we are not dependent on any money outside of the ordinary local university economy - no international project money, which runs out. It existed in the start in relation to the connection South Africa - Sweden, but generally partners are self-sufficient.”

It seems important to remember that a problem related with finances was charging tuition and Desmond’s comments on both the challenge and the development of a particular business have already been documented: Elaine gave more details on procedure adopted:

Of course, there were challenges that in three of the participating universities there were fees, Sweden was the only one that didn’t have fees, so that was a threat, how do we work with this so that not everybody wants to be a students in Sweden because it doesn’t cost anything. How can we do that? So we simple divided the world! how difficult can it be?! We should give first priority to Africans for the program who were in our closest vicinity. So we wouldn’t accept a Vancouver student if we had a Swedish student applying; then the Vancouver student would have to wait till we sorted if there were any extra spaces. But we didn’t stop anyone, I think, we didn’t say, “You cannot apply in Sweden if you are in Vancouver; you should apply to Vancouver first, and if there is space you can make a switch, something like that we did.

Tony explains how the ALGC program has successfully dealt with somewhat recent changes in funding in Sweden that could affect the program from a financial, technological and enrollment perspectives:

As you are probably aware, tuition is now charged in Sweden, and it was one of the reasons why we had to make certain that we had a legal agreement signed between the four institutions before January 2011, which is the time when the ministry of education in Sweden was going to implement tuition fees. By having the agreement signed, it allowed Linköping University then to grandfather us, so that we could still use their learning platform without students having to pay tuition. And that took a lot of planning ahead of time and a lot of work to get that agreement in, but we were

successful. So we still now use a new learning platform called Lisam, which is developed in house at Linköping University, but all students in the program register through Linköping for one course, and that is a course that is taught by Linköping, and then we are all allowed to use that server for the rest of our courses. So that has been one of the main accomplishments of the program, of not having students pay tuition in other countries, and that came right back to our agreement which said no money would be exchanged between universities.

“I think it [The ALGC program] has been successful in the fact that we have been able to maintain it with very, very little investment and administration.” When Lucas made this statement, he declared that finances was not the only area where the program was efficacious; he also hinted that setting a smart administrative system allowed the group to run it without consuming too much of their time and energy, and that sure constitutes an impressive accomplishment considering the complexity of the program.

However, perhaps the greatest achievement of the ALGC program from an administrative point of view is the fact that a succession process has been occurring at each university that has not compromised the vitality of the program. South Africa led the way in modelling to the others how this transition could take place smoothly. “Yolanda and myself coordinated the program, Yolanda initially, I coordinated later,” recalls Elaine. In Canada, Tony also was introduced to program and took a leadership role in the early years of the program. A similar process has happened in Sweden several years later with Heather stepping up, and in Australia the baton was passed from Yvonne to Melody at one point. Therefore, Yolanda’s words seem to correctly depict the view that succession has been an integral component of the administrative achievements of the ALGC: “The initial group of people who were central to the running of it for the first, I don’t know, maybe 10 years, most of them are no longer centrally involved. And through the process new layers of people have come in and have been inducted into the program, I think relatively successfully.” The same sort of successful transition was experienced on an

international level where Nick fulfilled this role (2001-2003), and he was followed first by Elaine (2003-2008) and then by Tony (2009-present).

### **5.5 Personal perspective**

The ALGC program has brought “good news” to individuals. Both students and leaders of the program have enjoyed a series of benefits that suggest that it has been successful on a personal level as well, with student satisfaction being one of them. Heather explains: “We can keep our students, and they are very, very satisfied. Last year, graduates wrote the university to say how satisfied they are, how much it means, and they really feel like they are real students even though it was distance education, and they didn’t expect to feel it.” Melody agrees: “About 95% of the students love it… Most people love it!” Canadian students also seem to be quite pleased with the program, according to Lucas: “Almost every one speaks very highly of… they were excited about the cooperation, you know, the aim, and the topic, the content as such.”

South Africans profited from participation in the program in a special way due to their unique historical circumstances, as Yolanda explains:

The South Africans have found very illuminating to be able to have conversations as equals with people from different parts of the world and to see that they are able to stand up and cope academically. I think coming out of the colonial apartheid history, South Africans generally, previous generations of South Africans, have a quite inferiority complex about their abilities, so for them to be…having the opportunity to have discussions, to be able to make contributions and to educate others is an education in itself.

According to Elaine, South African students also benefited from the program on an individual basis as they helped and/or were helped by other South African students before adding that even on an international level the same process took place, which brought similar benefits for all:

Again, I am focusing on UWC. The really nice thing about this program and perhaps it is the fact that we have had students coming to these orientations (before they

begin the program), during the orientation students are able to make work, they make good relationships with each other and they network. And I say very categorically to students during the orientation, ‘It’s not me who is going to get you through this program but your colleagues and friends sitting around the table.’ So students have developed very good relationships; I’ve seen when they write their research papers the students, so we have these cohorts, as you know, in the cohorts you would find that students support each other during the proposal writing and the writing of the research paper. Some students get ahead of others, so in the cohort, a thirteen group I think it is, there are two students who are ahead of the others, they have already submitted their proposals, and so there are these conversations that go on among them where those who are ahead would advise other students on how they should pitch how they should write their proposals. So I think one of the reasons for the accomplishments here is that students actually support each other; not all students, but some students do. And I think I have to say this: in some instances international students have also supported each other.

Yvonne and Melody, two of the Australian academics involved with the ALGC program at Monash and ACU, emphasize that the transformative nature of the program represents an important factor in considering the ALGC fruitful. “It is transformational for them,” states Melody in a very straightforward manner. Yvonne expands a bit more when she says, “If you take more normative position rather than using empirically based abstract indicators, then as far as I was concerned it was a success because it enabled students to learn and grow as human beings.” The program has been able to transform students because of the experiential nature of some of its courses. As Melody explains in detail:

The experience of working with people is extremely rich, so when you get to the Global/Local Learning, the South African unit, the experience of being taught by people who work in Cape Town is very much about learning from someone who lives and work in the Third World and that is much more powerful than from someone from Canada and Australia. So in this sense there is something experiential in that. Perhaps the Adult Learning, the second unit, which comes from Sweden, which has a strong adult education tradition, maybe gives the chance to learn from an authentic adult education tradition. And also what happens in the course is that people have the think to think globally and talk to people from different places in the world, and that’s experiential.

One specific area where students experienced transformation was related to cultural and ethnic stereotypes, and this can certainly be seen as further evidence of the achievements of the

program on a personal level. Yolanda describes one particular instance where an eye opening experience involving Swedish and South African students led to the rupture with distorted views of people from other cultures as she recalls what Swedish students told her:

We [Swedish students] thought that it was about the stereotypes...we thought that the South African students were slow in responding because that's what Africans do. Africans have a different understanding of time." But then they started to hear what these Africans were doing...they were spending much more effort, much more time, and being much more diligent than the Swedish ever had to be! It was part of the "ah-ha" moments of the course.

Melody makes an important contribution when she highlights that a different kind of sign that the ALGC program has been successful, one more pragmatic in nature and quite useful from the students' point of view, is the fact that it opens doors to them on a professional dimension. First, she says the program has allowed students to become employable and/or to see a purpose in their current careers, as Melody clarifies: "It is also useful for people in terms of job opportunities; they focus on what they are doing. I also think it validates people's working experience, as they have to think about their work." Besides, Melody states that, because of its nature, the program has been useful in terms of helping students not only appreciate the interaction with people who have taken a different professional path but also learn from the experiences of these peers: "It is trans-boundary. It not only crosses national boundaries but also boundaries in terms of different roles people might have, you take nurses, but also administrators, public servants, military personnel, NGOs, and so on."

At this point it is necessary to argue that another reason to see the ALGC program as a positive educational enterprise lies in its ability to benefit instructors and leaders, and not only students. Instructors, for example, have benefitted from the program, at least in Heather's opinion: "I think teachers are satisfied, they think it is meaningful work." Furthermore, participants did not hide that they have gained something through their involvement with the

program. Elaine, for instance, states: "I had just started my employment at Linköping University after my graduation from the PhD...Nick asked me whether it would be a good thing to engage with that program, and I said, 'Yes' because it was a great opportunity to get to know other people internationally and to broaden my contacts in the field and all that." Heather is another participant who saw in the ALGC program a way to expand her professional horizons: After the first year, my co-supervisor [Elaine]...who is the program director at that moment, asked me if I wanted to supervise a student in this program with her, and if I wanted to take a job here. So it was an interesting way to be introduced to teaching and pedagogy, and I thought it was a very good suggestion, so I said 'yes'". "I feel very lucky to have that opportunity, so I am now more familiar about experiential learning and the theory of it," says Melody.

Participants were obvious about how proud they feel regarding what they have accomplished as they planned, implemented and ran a program such as the ALGC, which has produced so many signs that point to impressive results from a historical, educational, collaborative, administrative and personal viewpoint. All these outcomes demonstrate the ALGC has become a source of satisfaction for many people involved with the program, but perhaps not a single group can rejoice more over these achievements than those responsible for them. Having said that, it is important to recognize that despite all its achievements, the ALGC program has not been free of flaws, nor has it existed without facing obstacles, even some which have endangered its survival. Hence, it becomes necessary to explore them in order to fully comprehend the journey the ALGC program has embarked throughout these past seventeen years.

## **Chapter Six: The threats and weaknesses faced by the ALGC program**

Conflict is a vital ingredient of any good story. Thus, it shouldn't be surprising to realize that the history of the ALGC program, as probably the attentive reader must have noticed, has its own share of trials and tribulations. Furthermore, the program has not evolved in a way that prevented the manifestation of weaknesses that have hindered its effectiveness to a certain extent, and the leaders of the program are the first ones to admit that. Therefore, any attempt to understand the reasons behind the accomplishments of the ALGC program needs to consider its problems and limitations; in fact, the hope is that by doing this kind of analysis one can appreciate even more an endeavour that has achieved so much in spite of the problems it has faced.

### **6.1 Threats**

#### **6.1.1 The planning stage**

Participants referred to the different systems among the four universities as a major obstacle that needed to be overcome. "I think there were cultural challenges to overcome to begin with, you know. We had the different university systems, some people had to do a master's thesis, others had courses only," states Lucas. Heather recognizes the existence of differences: "As I understand, there are different regulations, different rules, how you formulate a document". "Among these things were differences in general master's program structures in the countries, grading systems, term systems in two hemispheres," says Nick. "Because of the mere fact that two of the programs were in the Southern hemisphere, we didn't have a normal rhythm for the academic year. And also the time differences: half of the guys were sleeping while the others were up, so we had to accommodate to that too. We couldn't follow the ordinary university time

schedule,” explains Elaine. Finally, Desmond also talked about how this issue became a problem:

We had to spend an awful lot of time understanding the differences between the systems. A classic example of that was assessment, student assessment. So student assessment in the four institutions was completely different; we had different scales, there were different expectations, there were different grade boundaries, I mean, it is as different as it got. And what we realized is that we couldn’t have a universal grading system. So we had to develop our conversion tables.

Issues related to accessibility and inclusiveness were mentioned by different participants as a significant risk encountered by the leaders of the ALGC program as they started to contemplate the possibility of working together. “We were very concerned early on, and Yolanda and Elaine did a very good job in illustrating this, with questions on access,” remembers Mark, who adds:

When I was talking about access to the Internet that was really what I was talking about. We didn’t want South African students to be disadvantaged because of the cost of Internet access and even their access to equipment. I mean, we heard some horror stories about people who were outside of urban areas where dust was getting into their hard drive, and you can kind of visualize South Africa with the dust blowing around and all that. So we were just really worried that the use of technology in the stage we were at in about 2000 would disadvantage access and inclusion in the program for some of the groups. And the point too of the clock ticking and the meter running whenever somebody was online limited...we were concerned it was going to limit the voices that would be injected even in the online discussions. Because people knew that every minute they were on they would be paying more money, they might truncate their conversation, they might not participate as actively or as frequently as other students in the program, so we would lose the voice of the people from South Africa.

Yolanda describes one of the initiatives she took to help leaders of the ALGC program from other countries to understand that access was not a theoretical threat:

I think what we did right at the beginning was we used a...the first meeting, we were discussing this course, was that we had the meeting in South Africa, and we used shock therapy for the group. And we had immersions, we had informal settlements, not a lot, we didn’t want to overdo it, but we took people into informal settlements, we had barbecue with working class people, seating around the fire, we had people experiencing the slowness of the Internet, we did all those things, and I think the memory of that kind of shock was the shock treatment that we gave them.

Incorporating technology into the program ALGC constituted an additional threat that could have jeopardized the survival of the program in its planning stage. According to Nick,

A key problem was the pedagogy and media. In the start internet platforms were not really considered. I had launched the idea of local study groups, which met face to face and discussed assignments which was then communicated and discussed on e-mail. Later we thought about e-mail conversations individually. When we eventually started to consider internet platforms, it did not work very well. At a meeting at UWC we wanted to test. However, in spite of the support of the university's expertise, it did not work at all - we could not connect! The next kind of frustration was at UBC, when we were presented with their own platform, which was fine, but who wanted more than half a million Swedish Crowns for the job to make it fit us. That could not be done. The solution was that Linköping University had a license for Blackboard, which could be used without any cost by the partners. There have been further crises around the same topic later - i.e. when Blackboard disappeared from our university and when Linköping have launched their own, not very good system. This has turned out to be a returning problem.

Heather reinforces the idea that integrating the technological component into the program was an obstacle, when she says, "I think technology was also very challenging at that moment," and Yolanda's testimony proves that not only incorporating technology was an issue but also that using it:

Maybe the questions of technologies that we were going to use I think it has been an ongoing theme, and the constraints and the possibilities. What was interesting was that when we started, none of us had ever taught online before. So we were all learning from scratch. But it was also a time when it was not the mainstream thing to do, so maybe that was another element where we were all quite modest...none of us were experts...none of us really knew what we were doing.

Obtaining approval from their respective universities represented another barrier, in the opinion of participants, who often pointed to UBC as the institution where this process was most time and energy consuming, as Lucas summarizes: "The other challenge was that we needed to get our respective universities to agree to this model." "The credibility in our own universities," answer Elaine when asked about threats faced, before adding: "I should say again that Vancouver, UBC was the worst place to get your senate and deciding committee to trust these people who were going to be involved in the program. I remember that document as well, I think

it was about 80 pages long, with everybody's long CVs we had to put in to people at your place that we were qualified enough to do this." Elaine, who commends Yolanda for her key role in leading this process at UWC, also recalls how difficult it was to be granted permission to offer the program in South Africa: "I was in some of the early conversations in my own faculty because it has to go through your own department first before it goes on to the senate committees, and there were lots of questions, there was a lot of reservation, and so we really had to work very hard to make this work."

While the different universities systems, the difficulty in the approval processes, concerns around accessibility and the effective use of technology were challenges present in the planning stage mentioned each by a few participants, there were other threats to the ALGC program listed by one of its leaders, including two related to finances. Elaine explains that "There were challenges that in three of the participating universities there were fees, Sweden was the only one that didn't have fees, so that was a threat. How do we work with this so that not everybody wants to be a student in Sweden because it doesn't cost anything?" In addition, Elaine suggests that the high cost of tuition was and has always become an increasingly serious problem for South African students. "And in fact let me respond and say that the fees are very high. The fees have increased over the years and, you know, and it's becoming a bit of a barrier as students proceed like I have just got an email from a student today who said to me, 'I have to pause; It has become very expensive for me.' He is not the only one," she admits.

Finally, Desmond discusses two more complications leaders of the ALGC program had as they planned it: the limited number of face-to-face meetings and the turnover of representatives. He states:

I think the big threat in the planning phase was the limitations of face to face meetings. Because we were engaged in a very, very complex planning process most

progress got made when we got together face to face... And the other vulnerability was turnover of representatives. So, for example, there was a period when several different people from UBC came to meetings.

### **6.1.2 The implementation stage**

During the birth stage, which comprises of the first year in the existence of the ALGC program, different threats were experienced. Recruitment was a key one. Elaine, for instance, affirms, “For us, we needed to get sufficient number of applicants, of course.” “We were quite anxious initially that we would have a very limited number of students who could afford to participate in the program,” frankly confesses Mark. He also explains how the aforementioned problems with the approval process at UBC prevented its students from participating in the program’s first year: “It was taking forever to go through the twenty or so steps we had to take to get approval here. And we ended up having to start the program without UBC admitting any students because it hadn’t been approved here yet, so we were teaching our course...but we couldn’t have any students because the final approvals hadn’t been given to admit students into the program.” Finally, Tony provides a detailed commentary on how enrollment issues could have affected negatively the program by creating a certain imbalance:

The implementation, as I mentioned, UBC was the one who was behind when we implemented the program in that first cohort. Everyone else recruited students. For Sweden it wasn’t difficult, nor for South Africa because they had exchange programs at the doctoral level before, so they had student exchanges, so there were people that they knew that could assist them in recruiting, and that was not a problem. And UTS never had a large number of students. They largely driven by Desmond, who went out and selected people to be in the program while the rest of us were getting in and, you know, fifteen, twenty students, UTS was only taking in six to eight students, so it was a small contingent but a very active contingent once they got in. But that was one of the things that we were concerned about at the outset so we had to have a meeting to decide on what is fair. If UTS was only bringing in six, is it ok for Linköping to bring in twenty five? Because when we put them all in one big classroom we now are going to have a preponderance of Linköping students and UBC students and we got the two outliers being UWC and UTS who had lesser students. So we had to come to an agreement that we would not take in more than 20 students in any one cohort from any one university, so it wasn’t overbalanced.

A second problem encountered at this stage was related with students' adjustment to online education and, consequently, with their academic performance. First, participants identified difficulties students had concerning taking part in a virtual classroom. Desmond, for example, refers to the fact that "Students didn't like the idea that they couldn't meet each other." Second, problems that compromised the performance of students, particularly those in South Africa, were noticed early on in the history of the program, a fact that was alluded to by both Mark and Elaine. "I think there were a problem and a challenge to get the South Africans students on board properly," states Elaine, "to get them to participate in online discussions and all that. And that I think was due to at least two things: first of all, the bandwidth to South Africa. Everything took too so long for them to just open a page. "There was something else," she continues, "and that is the way of communicating in text, through text with your academic CUs, your teachers, how do you that in a way that, in a comfortable way." In Desmond's opinion, "There was a lot more handholding in that than you would expect from a normal program. And that was necessary because of the massive diversity of students and also their lack of support in their own physical location because it was not as if the students were close to the institution in which they got enrolled. They could be thousands of kilometers away from their home institution." Finally, language limitations added difficulty to students' participation and performance, as Yolanda explains:

Many students in our program don't have English as their first language, you know. I think that in itself is a challenge...for the majority of the students, in fact, there are very few...maybe the Australians are the only ones...obviously a lot of Canadians do but not all of them...and as the group becomes even more diverse, more Chinese, more Korean, more different students...I mean, the language question is a very important one and how different students mediate it.

One can quickly realize that the low participation and performance from students creates obstacles from a teaching perspective, too. Heather discusses three different challenges instructors in the ALGC program have had to address:

Students from Canada, they have a different way to participate in discussion while the students from Sweden or other countries had very low participation...we could see they [the Swedish and the South Africans] were logged in everyday but [they] didn't leave any messages. So that was challenging for the teachers. How can we make them feel this is a safe place...And also for teachers, I mean, if you are in the classroom, if you are a teacher in a classroom course, you are there and everyone knows you are there; you don't have to do anything, your body is there. But online you have to make yourself visible all the time, make the students understand you are there to meet them. Also, you have to think about what kind of question is right to generate discussion. Elaine said, "As soon as I talk about a theory, the discussion died.

Finally, Desmond makes an interesting point when he says that dangers that were not experienced need to be discussed since they could have jeopardized the survival of the program if not addressed; he specifically talks about how a continuous renewal of people in leadership positions, a process that started early on in the history of the ALGC program, sustained the vitality and longevity of the program: "The one thing that could have been an issue but it wasn't was the continuity of staffing, so we were successfully maintaining the interests of staff and bringing new people in. So, for example, Tony was not a big player in the very early days, but he became a very big player as the program went on, so he then became one of the real cornerstones in our program," he says.

### **6.1.3 The stabilization stage**

During this phase, which ends with UTS's withdrawal, the ALGC program experienced similar and new problems. Enrollment continued to affect the program with some universities being more capable of attracting students than others. Desmond implies that there are harmful

consequences when unevenness in enrollment occurs, as it happened with the ALGC program, when he says, “One of the problems was uneven enrollment...some institutions had lots of students while others had very few.” How is this issue a problem?, one might ask. Tony answers: “Because when we put them all in one big classroom we now are going to have a preponderance of Linköping students and UBC students and we got the two outliers being UWC and UTS who had fewer students. So we had to come to an agreement that we would not take in more than 20 students in any one cohort from any one university, so it wasn’t overbalanced.” As she mentions UWC’s limitation in terms of human resources as a reason behind the South African university struggle with enrollment, Elaine demonstrates that she agrees with Tony on the risks of having unbalanced enrollment while highlighting the impact that a low number of students from one country has on the ALGC’s ability to maintain an equilibrium in the dialogue between the two hemispheres: “There was a time when my faculty would not allow us to take any new students in because we had too many students and too little capacity... So I would say that it undermines the north-south dimension.” Finally, Tony discusses two additional problems that a preponderance of students from one or two universities causes for a program that aim at encouraging dialogue among equal partners such as the ALGC:

I think of two perspectives. One is, when people from one partner university teach, they bring in with them the culture of the university. So ALGC at UBC is different in culture than ALGC at UWC or Linköping or Monash simply because of the university culture that is embed within. And that can be an unbalancing effect. And also the fact that when we break people up in small group discussions, and this is something I have been very conscious about from the very start, in every discussion forum, if everyone is participating the discussion becomes very long very quickly, so one of the first things we do in all the courses is to break them up in smaller groups. If we have sixty to eighty students we would break them up into four groups, and then we would break those groups up into even smaller groups of four or five and have them do a group exercise. Now if we have an abundance of students from one university, the small groups, when they are put together, we will have far more Linköping students than any other. So when they are talking about, for example in Work and Learning, with what is happening with policies on training in their own

countries, if you have the majority of them from Sweden in each of the groups it overpowers the discussions from the others.

Recruitment was a barrier in both South Africa and Australia. Lucas talks about UWC's case: "Some of the weaknesses we have had to do with some places student recruitment, some places now, Australia, Canada, Sweden, we have a steady recruitment, it has been more difficult for South Africa to do it." Mark expresses the same concern with UWC's ability to attract students as he offers a detailed explanation of the problems faced there and the efforts made to cope with them:

There were some times, and there is still some concern about, for example, the number of students who are able to enroll in South Africa. Because of the way universities are funded in South Africa, they don't get funding for their students till they graduate, so they get a little bit of money at the beginning of a student's program but they don't get any more till a student graduates, I may not be quite right but I think it is something like that, so if they don't finish students they don't get the big chunk of money that would come to support the program, and that funding is important to support the staff, to support the students, so that was a major concern. And at one point there was a new dean that came in at the University of the Western Cape, and the dean was threatening to close down the program because it had a relatively small number of students. So we kind of rallied around the program and I think met down there and had some correspondence with the dean to point out the importance of a South African presence in the program. And then I think we talked about what we could do as a partnership to try to overcome the difficulties. A recent example is the dean and I made a trip down there because we knew there is a renewal of the agreement coming up, and we met with some of the senior people, including the dean, and just did our best to explain why we thought this was a great program and why we felt the presence of the University of the Western Cape was really important.

UWC was not the only institution that struggled with recruitment though. The situation at UTS became increasingly serious and culminated with the Australian university exiting the partnership, which represented a danger for the survival of the ALGC program as Elaine admits: "I can't remember which year it was when UTS pulled out. That was a really important threat. We had to find a replacement for UTS." Elaine explains why this was a threat: "I think that when a partner leaves that always creates instability," while Lucas provides one explanation for UTS's

withdrawal from the program: “The university in Australia, UTS, The University of Technology Sydney, they couldn’t stay in the program because they couldn’t recruit students, and the reason for that was that they had initiated another program quite similar that competed. So that was a challenge there.” Nick also makes comments on how the unsteady enrollment in Australia led to UTS’s departure from the partnership: “One problem was the low number of students at UTS, which, as far as I understood was due to differences in cost for the students in different programmes. I suppose it had an effect on the view of the program at UTS and its decision-makers. Eventually, UTS gave up and Monash replaced them as a partner.” However, even more interesting is his statement about whether the problems could have been addressed differently: “I do not think we could have solved this in a different way, since it was not in our hands to act on the budgetary system of UTS.” but I think there was a good transition from where I sit from UTS to Monash,” says Elaine.

Desmond made several comments on issues related to enrollment and its impact on the continuity of UTS in the partnership, and he deserves to be heard as he offers an insider perspective on the process. First, he refers to the connection between enrollment and political power in educational institutions as one of the reasons that created an impossible situation at the Australian university: “UTS...had a small number of students, had difficulties in making an argument for offering subjects. So I had fights in my own faculty about ‘can we run this program?’ and eventually we lost.” Moreover, Desmond argues that the unique features of the ALGC program also played a role “Another issue was the unusual nature of the program so that we had to limit the numbers, but when you limit the numbers, you also limit the influence of the program in its own institution.” Finally, he suggests that finances were the main factor in determining the end of UTS’s participation in the ALGC;

The simplest description of that is, although we were one of the founders of it...the financial model basically that we were required to follow in Sydney was set...we had to charge full commercial fees for students to enroll in the course. We had to do that while simultaneously offering a Master's degree in Adult Learning that didn't have full commercial fees, so we were eventually competing against ourselves with a massive financial disadvantage for the students doing the ALGC. And what that meant was that we never got a critical, viable number to sustain the program basically because we were shooting ourselves in the foot. When it moved over to Monash, they had a different model, financial model internally, which has allowed them to thrive... It was a great disappointment at our end that we couldn't continue with it.

Yvonne reminds us that the threat created by UTS's withdrawal from the ALGC program seemed to have been caused by external factors such as educational, economic and political trends that represent additional dangers themselves. Among them, she lists the following items:

How educational reforms that intensify accountability regimes and regulatory frameworks against abstract indicators, which then acknowledge the normative dimensions of the program, I think there are threats associated with changes in the funding in higher education, which means that students are fee-payers rather than subsidized by the state, and particularly at the master's level that's what has been happening here.

One final challenge that likely started in previous stages but became more evident during the stabilization phase resulted from the discrepancies in the availability of resources among the four universities, particularly in the area of academic support. Lucas was the one who talked about how this problem contributed to student dissatisfaction: "Because we have had very intensive kind of personnel allotted to the program, so there have been issues around that, how many...I think Canadians tend to kind of put quite a lot of resources in teaching...I think that students have been sometimes...talking about how come they get so much tutoring in a course from UBC and much less from Sweden."

### 6.1.4 The growth stage

The growth stage begins with the arrival of Monash and ends with the departure of the some of the original founding members of the program. Again, threats that manifested themselves during the previous continued to demand the time, energy and resources of the leaders of the ALGC program, but several others appeared and these are going to be discussed here. The first worth mentioning was finding a replacement for UTS; Tony's comments sheds light on how this process that could have jeopardized the program was addressed in a satisfactorily manner:

We discussed it in the management committee meeting and we looked at the possibility of recruiting someone else, and at that time a lot of our colleagues were moving from place to place. So trying to find a university where we could establish the program, and we wanted to stay in Australia if possible, because we needed representation from the South, and so we looked around and it was difficult because our colleagues were moving around, and because of this initial friendship at the start of the program, we knew that that kind of trust was essential. So we had to locate someone whom we trusted, who we knew it was good at adult education, and at a university that had a substantial amount of adult education within it so it could support the program. And it took us about a year to do that. Fortunately, in our contract anyone who wants to leave the program has to give us a minimum of one year notice that they are going to leave, and they have to stay with the program until their students graduate from the program, so that means that they are with us for two years. So it gives us a little bit more of a time horizon when we are looking for a new partner. Fortunately, we had a very good friend at Monash and discussed the program with her; she was excited about the program, she knew about it because colleagues in Australia were openly talking about the program. She was excited to participate in it, and she picked up the ball and ran with it at Monash and got all the approvals at Monash, so we didn't miss any students from Australia. When UTS students dropped out we already had an intake of students from Monash, so it continued.

A second serious danger the ALGC program faced during the growth stage was the fact that tuition started to be charged in Sweden. Tony provides another extremely detailed explanation on the destructive potential of the threat, on its stressful impact on the leaders (and on him in a special way), and on the procedure adopted to cope with it:

The other threat that came up was the fact that Sweden decided to charge tuition. And that had the potential to completely derail the program because if our students

had to pay tuition to another university, why would they register with us and pay tuition? So it caused a lot of consternation; we had a number of discussions at management committee meetings around it, and that's when we came up and got the lawyers involved and drew up a legal agreement, which stated we would not exchange funds between institutions, which meant that ruled out our students paying tuition anywhere else. And we then got our colleagues at Linköping University to make sure that the university would agree to grandfather us when the department of education brought in the tuition, and they did, and that was in 2011. So that was a very anxious time. I was responsible for getting the agreement signed, and I got all the partners to sign it by December 10<sup>th</sup> 2010, and I submitted it to UBC with an urgent on it saying that this had to be signed by the end of the year otherwise we would not be grandfathered. Someone in Vice-President office picked it up, took exception to it, and said 'I don't think we have an agreement with Monash University,' and refuse to sign it. My hair was dark when I started that thing and it's now quite grey! It took a lot of meetings to try and convince them that yes, Monash was a tier one research university and that this person should not be meddling with it anyway, and finally got it signed. And fortunately there was a hold up in the implementation of the tuition in Sweden, and so we got it in by about the 16<sup>th</sup> of January, which was ahead of the deadline they had set in Sweden. So that's one of the things that was a bit anxious.

Heather noticed that the introduction of fees in Sweden changed the composition of the student body in a surprising way: "Before that we didn't have so many students from Europe; most students were from Russia, Africa, we could not keep the number, the proper number, then we would lose them...as soon as we introduced the students fee, suddenly we started getting many students from the EU. I don't know why!" Apparently, what could have hindered dramatically the program became indeed a blessing in disguise.

### **6.1.5 The renewal stage**

The last stage in the history of the ALGC program is characterized by the passing of old relationships and the breathing of new life into the program through the arrival of new leaders.

As noted previously, when Ned passed away in 2011, participants lost a respected scholar who had contributed to the program in a significant way, a fact that might not have threatened the survival of the program but made it weaker.

In addition, Monash decided it would leave the partnership, and that was a reason for tension. “But the biggest concerns that I had had to do with the Australian partners,” admits Mark. Elaine’s words echoes her worry with the uncertainty that such a loss causes: “When a partner leaves that always creates instability.” Melody not only explains that the lack of promotion within the university killed Monash’s chance of survival in the ALGC program but also expresses her disappointment with the way the program was treated by academic leaders at the large Australian university: “The faculty has not promoted the course outside of the faculty to the rest of the university; they should have done it, they should be proud of it. Monash is a very large university so most people don’t know this course has existed at Monash. I think it is quite disgusting the course has been disregard as much.” Besides, she clarifies that the rationale behind such a negative attitude towards the ALGC program was based primarily on economic reasons when she says, “In the case of the program itself, the faculty was more interested in another online education course for market providers, and this program was in direct conflict with that. For time reasons, the program is too cheap, too innocent, it is too idealistic.” In 2015, ACU became the new Australian partner, so it seems that fear that the ALGC program would lose one of its voices from the South can be put to rest at least for a while, but Yvonne’s words explains one of the reasons why these transition periods have represented a real danger for the survival of a program like the ALGC:

There are kind of complications because the program is located in a kind of educational space, but involves people in other occupations rather than teaching; education is what schools do, so there is a kind of narrative disconnection, which I think makes the program difficult sometimes, and for that reason it is sometimes hard to argue that, explain to people what the program is for and what the program is doing, particularly through approval processes.

A final challenging experience endured by the program was the retirement in 2014 of the last founding members still directly connected to the program: Nick and Lucas. One of the

participants who preferred to remain anonymous expressed fear regarding the succession process and its implication for the survival of the program: "I think they [Tony and Lucas] have been very much the driving forces behind the program, so I am not sure how sustainable it is, and I don't want to be quoted on that, you know, but yes, I have fears." Lucas also expresses concerns about how the succession process will affect the ALGC since the people who have been leaving the program had much more seniority than most of those who joined the program later:

And also the issue that the people who used to be involved were people who had power in their departments, they were the leaders of the different departments. If they decided something, they didn't have to go back to the department and try to negotiate it. People were the professor, and most departments had only one professor, I mean, a head professor. That is the, I would say, major difference now that they have been replaced by...people who are becoming more middle level faculty members and administrators, which are kind of less able to take initiative. And that I think is an issue for the future. And that's an issue as the program withstand and mature because as most of the people that initiated the program started to retire, there is a danger that the program will take a bit more of a conventional, traditional relations.

Tony demonstrates optimism regarding the transition the ALGC program has been experiencing while at the same indicating that it does represent a real challenge:

The interesting thing now...is we now have succession. Some of the original people in the program, one has passed away, three of them have retired, and another one has been moved to another department, so the original group of people who were involved in the program, who could get things done, have now been replaced by people who are younger, who are newer to the study areas, and are wonderful people by all means, but do not have that sort of historic background. So it is changing a little bit how things go. And at this stage, with Lucas retiring, I guess Mark and I are the only ones left from the old guard that are there to keep things along and to make sure that the transition goes smoothly because our colleagues that are newer need the benefit of the history in order to be successful. They are very enthusiastic, they are extremely capable, we have no doubts about that. But it is that sense of history that has to be developed to make sure that that friendship and trust continues.

New leaders breathed life into the ALGC program. The process started many years ago with Tony assuming the key role at UBC and Elaine later doing the same at UWC. In Australia, due to the changes in partners, the situation has been different, but for the last few years Melody took a leadership role at Monash before the program transitioned to the hands of ACU, where

Yvonne has been working since she left Monash. In Sweden, Heather had already taken over Elaine's role when Melody started leading the program in Australia. So far it seems that the change of guards has not affected the ALGC's chance of survival, but there is little doubt that the process adds risk to the existence of the program.

Mark identifies a threat that has evolved particularly in the last years: competition. It's worth remembering that when the ALGC program was conceived using the Internet as an educational tool was still an embryonic concept. However, online education has become a trend that has transformed the education landscape, so Mark's comments make sense: "I've always wondered about competition, there are lots of online programs now in the field of adult education, and I continue to worry a little bit about what the competition might be for this program."

## **6.2 Weaknesses**

The threats described in the previous paragraphs have not been the only factors that have jeopardized the ALGC program's past, present and future; the program has also developed different flaws, and most participants acknowledge the existence and impact of these limitations. However, it is interesting to notice the variety of answers, with no more than three participants addressing the same topic, which suggest a lack of agreement and/or a difference in opinion regarding the weaknesses of the program. Before discussing the specific faults, it should be mentioned that Tony, who is the current international coordinator of the program, prefers to see the struggles as problems the management committee has solved rather than flaws: "It's something we've looked at every time we do a review of the program, and I don't think I can point directly to something that is a weakness." The other participants understand that the ALGC has had its limitations.

One important criticism of the ALGC program relates to its inability to fully explore globalization issues. Elaine confesses that “One weakness could be that we haven’t given enough thought to the way we design more tightly our courses around the theme of adult learning and global change.” “Maybe we could have reflected better some of the globalization issues,” affirms Lucas. A particular consequence of living in a globalized world is experiencing diversity, and Elaine believes that the ALGC might not have completely prepared students to face the challenges that diversity brings: “But I think...if a classroom, the virtual classroom, is a microcosm of what happens in society, if we cannot succeed in learning in this diverse context, I’m not sure we can translate this, we won’t be able to work successfully or live happily in a diverse society...Perhaps one of the weaknesses is that we don’t exploit diversity enough.” Finally, Melody sees in an excessive European and North American influence a danger that could hinder the effectiveness of a program that aims at preparing people to live in a diverse society and in a globalized world. “What I mean is even though this course is global the fact is that the framing lenses of the course have been quite North-American and European, mainly North-American than anything else in the way the course is understood.”

Curriculum is another area that was identified as problematic by three of the scholars interviewed. “I suspect that curriculum and teacher competences are major challenges,” states Nick,” before mentioning an additional difficulty the curriculum creates: “Another problem is the thesis-modules - since almost all are working and studying at the same time, the thesis becomes often too much and many do not complete.” Elaine laments that the curriculum hasn’t been revised as it should have: “A weakness is that we haven’t really done so many deep going revision or evaluation of the different course modules.” Mark explains that due to the many

changes the world has gone through since the inception of the program not having re-evaluated the curriculum should be considered a weakness of the ALGC program:

I don't think we have had a quite open discussion on curriculum revision, as I think we should because people are comfortable, and yet the world is changing out there. I think that, for example, there is a lot more sensitivity right now to climate change, environmental sustainability and all those things, and I am not sure the curriculum has kind of embraced environmental sustainability, global climate change and those sorts of things as major adult learning issues.

Some expressed dissatisfaction with the way technology has been used throughout the history of the ALGC program. Mark, for instance, states, "I don't think we have used technology to the best effect." Yolanda basically gave the same answer when asked about the weaknesses of the program: "I think the fact that we haven't been able to explore a wider range of technologies, I think that they are being explored now." Elaine clarifies how she understands technology limits the program: "one weakness that we have had just one way to represent ourselves in the program: through text." Finally, Heather also voices her frustration with how technology hinders the program at times: Technology is the biggest strength and weakness... At this moment I am not satisfied with the platform we use; it is actually a local problem, it started as a local problem because people don't understand online education practice... they (platform designers) don't understand how difficult it is to change platforms."

In addition, participants referred to gaps in the research on the program as something that leaders of the ALGC program could have been more diligent. "Also, we haven't been able to maintain the joint research on the program," states Lucas. "I don't know really the outcome of the program in terms of where it leads people to, where do these people end up, what difference do they make...we don't really know that," acknowledges Elaine, pointing to a specific area where further research is needed.

Participants could point to weaknesses in the ALGC program from a pedagogical point of views. Yolanda, for example, sees the cohort model as a double-edged sword: “I think the fact that it is a cohort program has its strengths and has its weaknesses. Everybody has to live with a certain rigidity in a cohort program, but the strength of that means that people get to know one another over time.” She also provides an explanation for why she holds this particular view on cohorts: “It’s a kind of a tension, and we haven’t been very...it hasn’t been really possible to be very flexible; it has been quite...you know, you march through the program. And because the way the work is divided that differently among the partners, you don’t have room to move as much, I am sure the degrees of inflexibility which frustrates people, students.” In addition, Elaine understands that the ALGC would benefit if there was consistency on a pedagogical level:

Maybe we need to think about, I hate the word standardization, but perhaps we need to think about the diversity of the tasks, the variation in the tasks because this is one of the criticisms we had last year that in the global/local learning there are not group tasks, which we will take on board. I think the same goes for the number of readings, the complexity of the readings. The same goes for the expectations that students have about whether we give them everything right at the start or whether we, as one student says, group feed them. We have different approaches. It obviously...the way in which we present the course enables students to develop and understanding and therefore an expectation that all courses should work in a particular way. I wonder...I would hate to see standardization because the way we introduce variety is very good, but sometimes it creates tensions.

Desmond mentions one extra pedagogical limitation within the program:

One of the weaknesses in general is the differential preparation of students. Some students are much better prepared to engage in this kind of collaboration. In one level there is a kind of, there is a literacy issue. So, for example, some students are taking this program in their fourth or fifth language, so there is immediately a kind of challenge there. So was teaching in English for all the South Africans; in fact, I can’t recall certainly in the early days any of the South Africans where English was their first language. And ironically, the Swedes were much more fluent in English than the South Africans, which was an embarrassment to think that anyone anywhere could speak English. So there is a language thing, but also there is a progression thing, and the issue of confidence that some students are much more connected, much more confident, and that is something that any program of this kind needs to invest in building the confidence of students to be full participants.

Administration represents a fifth kind of drawback with the ALGC program perceived by the participants. A lot has been said already about recruitment, which is considered not only as a threat but also as a limitation by participants. Lucas mentioned recruitment in South Africa when he discussed the weaknesses of the program: “We have a steady recruitment; it has been more difficult for South Africa to do it.” Yvonne adds a second administrative point to the list when she defends that administration sometimes takes priority during management committee meeting, blinding the leaders of the ALGC and preventing them to focus on educational issues. “In some ways, there is not enough discussion on the content of the program and its logics. I think we focus a lot on the operations,” she worries.

One last area where a weakness was identified is international collaboration. Desmond argues that the model adopted by the leaders of the ALGC program might not be reproducible in other contexts, a fact that could limit the contribution of the program to the field. “So one of my fears is that it is too much of a program that is designed for the unique circumstances we found ourselves in, and it’s not something that can be rolled out on a bigger basis,” he states. Desmond also explains that the ALGC model is so difficult to be reproduced since it goes against a current trend in international education where programs are primarily a source of revenue. “No matter what they might say in terms of publicity and their rhetoric, universities still see international programs as income generating activities above all,” he says.

## **Chapter Seven: Explaining the accomplishments**

The twelve people involved in the conception, implementation, stabilization, growth and rebirth of the ALGC program have accomplished something extraordinary. In light of the extensive list of threats that the ALGC program faced and the weaknesses it has manifested, how can one explain the fact that it has not only survived but also thrived as proved by the chapter where its impressive results were discussed? A closer analysis of the information provided by participants as they answered questions regarding the history, feats, threats, and limitations of the ALGC program, allows the conclusion that this has only been possible thanks to its competent and committed leaders, its creative and captivating program, and the constructive and caring relationships that have sustain it.

### **7.1 Competent and committed leaders**

People matters! There is strong evidence to believe that the ALGC program wouldn't be successful in accomplishing its goals if it were not for the kind of people who have led it, and it seems reasonable to argue that it is the combination of competence and commitment that has allowed them to thrive.

#### **7.1.1 Competent**

Competence refers to one's ability to get the job done in the most effective and/or skillful manner possible, and no success story exists without competent individuals. Therefore, it is not surprising that participants talked about their peers as people who demonstrated a high level of expertise in a variety of areas.

### 7.1.1.1 Planners

Planning is one aspect where proficiency was revealed, and the first evidence that the leaders of the ALGC program were competent planners is the carefulness showed during this important stage, which became evident not only through the amount of time spent on planning but especially by welcoming the leadership of an extremely experienced program planner to the project. A second evidence of the competence of the leaders of the ALGC program is the choice of an organic approach to program planning over a traditional one that considers only technical issues and follows with a certain level of rigidity a predetermined set of steps. As it was explicated earlier, Mark used his expertise as a planner by avoiding a traditional approach to program planning that would not suit a program so unorthodox such as the ALGC.

Another proof that the leaders of the ALGC program (under Mark's guidance), planned it with great care lies in their ability to acknowledge and navigate through the gusty waters of a process as political in nature as the collaboration among four universities in as many different countries. Cervero and Wilson (1994) introduced the idea that the process of planning an educational program is fundamentally a political process.

It is interesting, almost ironic, to observe that participants disagree on the existence of conflict between them! Lucas and Tony affirm that no real conflict has occurred, and Elaine supports their view as she explains that having differences in opinion is a better way to name what has happened when leaders of the ALGC program meet to discuss issues: 'I think we have had differences of opinion. In the meeting which I have, in which I have been present...I can't identify any conflicts... I can't identify conflicts. I know it might sound a bit strange.' That seems to be how Elaine sees things as well: "We had conflict in view of things. Conflict in views but we always struggle to find a way to get around," she states. Desmond also understands that

conflict among participants was not experienced much, but he adds that it was a different story when they had to deal with their respective universities:

I think the main conflict was between leaders of the program and their institutions and faculty members back home. One of the things we realized early on was that we had to be very, very respectful of the circumstances of our colleagues in other institutions in that we couldn't put too much pressure on them. But on the other hand there was the need to really chase them. So there were very little conflict in the core team but there was considerable tensions when we had to go back home and had to work out how to do things.

However, Nick argues more strongly than anyone else that conflict did exist: "During the planning phase, we had constantly various conflicts, mostly because we had different views about how a program must work. However, no prospective partner university left. Some persons 'disappeared', but not because of conflicts, as far as I know." Mark offers a detailed list of items over which members of the leadership team disagreed:

I have been a bit critical of the notion of negotiating power and interests because I think negotiation isn't quite a good word to capture all the things that happen. There were some tense times in the development of the program, there some disagreements, there were some personality conflicts when different groups got together. There was concern about leadership, there was concern about both not having enough leadership and having too much leadership, too much direction. I think there were some big misunderstandings about the field of adult education, what it represented or what it could represent. We had debates about the title of the program, and those kinds of interesting things all happened.

What did the leaders of the ALGC program do when they had to address their differences in opinion? Lucas suggests that developing good will is the starting point when he states, "It was always possible to kind of reach a satisfactory resolution...We started to see other ways, other points, and expand on it." "I would say that a strategy was to create flexibility...always trying to find possibilities for different solutions," declares Elaine focusing on problem-solving skills while Mark highlights consensus building:

I think in most cases where I was involved in those discussions, I think we kind of reason our way to a consensus of some kind, not a hundred percent agreement but a working consensus, and in other cases where tensions developed we tried to work

hard to figure out what we do about these tensions now that they surfaced, what do we do to build on them or to overcome them, whatever the issue might be.

Mark adds that the group on occasions got stuck when an agreement could not be reached for whatever reason:

I think we got into a position where reaching decisions and reaching consensus with one another was quite our modus operandi. And when we got into a pattern where that wasn't happening or seemed impossible to resolve things that way, I don't think we knew exactly what to do because the old pattern had worked and there was a new variable that came into play and we didn't really know what to do about that. So my sense is that we didn't handle that as well as we could have, but we got beyond it; I mean, we were able to figure out what to do about it that didn't do great harm to the program but did create some tensions.

Heather explains the since the agreement was signed, it has become an important tool for minimizing the potential destructive effect of a conflict: "Since I have become the director we have an agreement, so when we have a conflict we have the agreement. We solve the problem based on the agreement, so it's fair to everyone, kind of. I didn't have any special anything that I say it was very difficult."

Participants offered a variety of reasons for why they have been able to cope with their different opinions and interests in such a competent manner as they plan the ALGC program. Desmond, for instance, mentions two, sharing a common vision and caring about their reputations:

One reason for that [having little conflict] is that we very early on we shared a common vision, so we had a view of what this program was that we deeply inhabited it, we felt very, very committed to. The other thing that was very important in making it work was peer repute. What I mean by that is all people who took a leadership view were quite prominent in the adult education scene. And one it was announced we were doing this crazy thing, we didn't want to lose face, so we had to make it work.

Yolanda points to transparency and cross-cultural sensitivity as explanations for the effectiveness in dealing with issues that could interfere with the planning process from a political point of view.

I think in general...the fact that the first...for the majority of the time we met face to face has been very important, and there has been a culture of quite a lot of transparency around agenda setting, face-to-face discussions, and I think there's been a lot of sensitivity in the way this kind of cross-cultural communication has happened. So I have admiration for the ways people have been very considerate of one another, so at this point I can't remember anything that was done in ways which was...so generally, I think conflicts have been managed very well, very professional but with that kind of cross-cultural sensitivities.

The personal connection among participants and their many years of experience with conflict resolution were factors mentioned by Nick when he attempted to explain the success achieved by leaders of the ALGC program in coping with the political dimension of planning. "I think the kernel of those involved liked to meet, simply and also that they were more and more involved so far as they had spent a lot of meetings together... I also think that the kernel group was rather used to conflicts, as leading academics often become and did not overreact in front of argumentation," he says.

Besides adopting an organic approach towards planning rather than a technical one and dealing with differences of opinion in a healthy and mature manner when they faced the political dimension of planning, the leaders of the ALGC program demonstrated their competence as planner also by considering the ethical side of the process. Tony's comments on how valuable was counting on Mark's expertise had already referred to the experienced planner's concerns with ethics, and Mark himself talks about a couple other moral issues that the group faced in addition to charging different fees to students: "We were concerned about equity and access early on... We have always been concerned in the curriculum that the curriculum does not reflect a unitary or Euro-western view of research or knowledge."

### **7.1.1.2 Curriculum designers**

It was not only when they dealt with the different facets of the program planning process that the original founders of the ALGC program proved to be competent but also as they developed the curriculum for the courses. They were able to create courses that have been appealing and useful to an incredible variety of people, and they accomplished that by making the wise choice of allowing individuals who were content experts in their respective fields to design the courses that represent the core of the program, as Tony narrates:

We knew what everybody else was doing; we knew their area of specialization. We knew, for example, that Lucas was the best person to write the work and learning course because of the research he was doing; Lucas, the understanding research course because he'd had just been publishing in that area, and we knew that from South Africa, Yolanda was someone who had access to literature from the South that none of us had access to. So that course is completely different than all the other courses in the program because when students go through...we try as much as possible to use literature from around the world, but when they hit global local...that's a completely different one because it's taught from a Southern perspective, using research from the South.

Additional evidence that the curriculum was well designed can be found in the fact that the ALGC program received a couple of prestigious awards for its innovative curriculum. "The program has won 2 or 3 awards for its pedagogical innovation," informs Lucas, a fact that Yolanda also mentions. Tony provides a bit more information on one of these awards and what it meant to the leadership team: "In 2005 we received an award for our curriculum from the Commission of Professors of Adult Education in the US for our innovative curriculum, which was a nice little boost to let us know that, yes, we are doing something right." In addition, the ALGC has received the Global Network Initiative Award, which was presented during the 14<sup>th</sup> European Conference on e-Learning that took place in Hatfield, UK, in October of 2015.

Student satisfaction represents another sign that the curriculum has managed to satisfy them on both intellectual and practical levels. Melody's testimony confirms that generally speaking students are extremely satisfied with what they have been learning in the courses:

Most people love it! It is successful in terms....I think of the risk of sounding a) patronizing and b) stuck in a very transformational educational style framework. It is transformational for them. For many people it is also useful for people in terms of job opportunities; they focus on what they are doing. I also think it validates people's working experience, as they have to think about their work.

The five year report contains several accounts from students who talk about how beneficial the program and its individual courses have been to them.

### **7.1.1.3 Teachers**

Participants acknowledge that one of the explanations for the accomplishments of the ALGC program is the quality of the teaching provided by them or by others hired to guide the teaching process, and one area where instructors were particularly effective was in operating in an international classroom. Elaine, for example, highlights the positive role teachers have had in allowing students from her home country to achieve the goals of the program by fulfilling different instructional duties: “South African students have been able to develop international perspectives on adult education or should we put it in this global perspectives in adult education or global perspectives on adult learning and global change through the teaching, the instruction, the readings, the literature from different countries, and the engagement with different students among themselves, both online and offline.”

The quality of the teaching is also attested by the instructors' ability to overcome the challenges created by the virtual classroom, “And online teaching is hard work!,” as Melody declares. Heather explains that online education was difficult for all parties involved: “We have more students who know what it is like to participate in distance education; in the beginning, it

was not just students but also teachers who did not understand what meant it to teach in distance education.” However, neither the lack of experience with online education nor its unique set of difficulties prevent them to succeed, and Tony offers an illustration of how time and energy consuming this type of education can be but, of the effort that needs to be adopted by a virtual instructor, and of the benefits it brings:

Yes, it is definitely not a 9 to 5 job. We had students who were online 24 hours a day, so quite frequently when I am teaching a course, you’ll see me online at all hours of the day and night simply because I learned from experience that if a student is having a problem, and the problem is not addressed, they will start to feel inadequate, they will start to feel it’s their fault, so responding when questions are asked in discussion forums, and they are asked to myself or the tutors, I try to get back to them at the latest within ten to twelve hours. And I have asked the tutors to make sure they respond within twenty four hours because they don’t have to keep the same hours that I do. But I am often online and when I’m teaching. I’ll check in day and night; if I can’t sleep, I’ll get up and sit at my computer and I’ll check who is online, make sure things are working out ok, if someone gets a problem, I’ll make sure I’ll respond to them. That kind of thing makes them feel like they are actually part of the cohort, they are not just an individual sitting at a computer terminal. And that feeling of inclusiveness leads then to the success of those people sticking with the program. And as I say, we don’t have dropouts largely because we pay attention to the people.

#### **7.1.1.4 Administrators**

There is also evidence that the ALGC program has achieved goals such as survival, stabilization and growth thanks to the administrative system its leaders created and to the hard work of people in management positions. Management committee meetings happen once a year and the different partners share the responsibility to host it; an agenda for the meeting is previously agreed on and the international coordinator has the responsibility to guide the discussions and to ensure that decisions are implemented. Local coordinators assist the international coordinator by supervising the program in their respective universities, by communicating on a regular basis with him/her, and by supporting his/her efforts to sustain the quality of the program on a global level.

The role of management committee meetings in the success of the ALGC cannot be overlooked. Elaine not only confirms that but also explains why: “I think that our management committee meetings are very successful...maybe a contributive factor is when we have all management committee meetings we spend some time socially... it’s a time to catch up not only professionally but also personally.” Mark focuses more on the importance of the meetings from an operational point of view: “I think we have taken seriously addressing problems as they come up; we haven’t let problems kind of sit there without being addressed to and discussed. And that has partially to do with the structure of the management committee meetings that are held I think every year somewhere in the world where there is an agenda that has been developed and we keep returning to problems and issues if they haven’t been solved yet; we try to figure out ways to overcome them.” Finally, Heather stresses the importance of these annual meetings especially for the new generation of leaders, instructors and staff:

I think it is very, very important that we have a management committee meeting every year, face-to-face...It is really important to have the meetings for two or three days, but also in a way for local partner university to introduce their staff to the program so they are not only teaching there but also understanding the history, understanding what is this program grounded. In a way it is important...when we visit the other universities, we meet the other teachers, not only the directors, so you can discover...discuss about the students, create a contact, a relationship, that’s very important. So for example, we will have a management committee meeting in Linköping this year, and I have announced to our division that this is in September. And I also have invited our teachers, we have lunch together, and meet teachers from other universities, and see them, and talk to them, so we are kind of creating a new friendship, a new trust, continuity in different forms, I think it is important. But you inherit the stories, the friendships.

International coordinators have made a significant contribution from an administrative perspective, with Nick being the first one to occupy this position; he was followed by Elaine and then by Tony, who holds it now. “I do consider it [the ALGC program] as successful. It has met so many challenges and difficulties and survived. One reason has been dedicated coordinators - Elaine and Tony were extremely important as long as I followed the program,” affirms Nick.

Similarly, Elaine credits the achievements of the program in part to international coordinators: “I think the generosity of the universities that have provided international coordinators. Tony is the international coordinator at this particular time, so UBC has provided that capacity; it requires a huge amount of work, and Tony never seems to run out of resources to help.” Melody also praises the current international coordinator: “I know there have been issues about timetabling, and assessments and issues that could have boiled over, but we kept talking to each other, and we should not discard Tony and his fabulous skills as a manager of people, you know, he sits in the center as some sort of puppet-master, he keeps things in a very civil and pleasant basis.” It has to be noted, however, that fulfilling this role is not an easy task. One of the participants talked about difficulties experienced by Elaine when she held the position despite her qualifications and hard work: “Now, she is a very strong person, she is a very organized person, a very scholarly person, a very respectful person, but I think she got into some situations where her leadership was being challenged by another colleague who had not been as involved as some of the rest of us,” recalls the participant before adding, “And I think she was doing a really good job, and I think it was the rest of us who was not being as responsive as we should have been. If things were getting delayed, it was not because she was not a good leader, it was because we were not following through on the commitments we made, and she was being a kind of gentle leader and not draining us for things we said we would do.” Elaine herself confesses that it was a real challenge to lead her peers: “I don’t know if you have tried to coordinate eight professors… It is a really challenging task!” Despite the struggles faced by all international coordinators, the ALGC program survived and thrived.

Local coordinators have played an important part in the accomplishments of the ALGC program as well. Participants didn’t discuss the contribution of the local coordinators but have

acknowledged their existence as part of the managerial structure of the program, and by doing so they imply that local coordinators are fundamental for whichever success the program has experienced. “I mean, this program is not my own, ok I run this program, but I don’t own this program. It is important that I have the support from my own department. I have a very close relationship with my staff here, teaching staff and also staff in the faculty, that’s also important, and continue to do so,” says one of the local leaders. “In 2013 Yvonne left Monash, but even before that, in 2013, I was already running the course for her. So we work collaboratively,” states another.

#### **7.1.1.5 Researchers**

Participants are all researchers who have published widely in their own respective fields; therefore it is only natural that they value research and expect quality in research projects conducted by their students, including those in the ALGC program. This concern with excellence in research has been demonstrated by demanding that students take a course on research specifically designed for the ALGC, by offering the thesis option in a couple of the institutions, by offering support for those who lack experience in research, and by engaging in research about the program.

Leaders of the ALGC program made sure students could produce research of good quality by including a course in the curriculum that could prepare them for the tasks involved. Nick was asked to design the course since he had been publishing in the area and the Five Year Report describes it.

At Linköping and UBC writing a thesis is one of the program requirements.

By providing additional support to students institutions also demonstrated their interest in the research component of the program. This was particularly true in South Africa, where

students struggle more with the academic challenge of writing a thesis. Alice offers a detailed explanation of why that took place at UWC:

Some of our students didn't do well in their research papers, which drew the attention of many colleagues, but I am pleased to say some of the accomplishments...fewer students were stopping out during the course of the great, during the time they were doing their course work, and our students are doing very well with their research papers...

She also clarifies what was done to remedy the situation in South Africa:

We have put additional support for students so we have done proactively for the Cape Town students. We would have what we call support seminars, and I have taken responsibility for these support seminars...when the course was about to start we would bring students to campus as a group, we would discuss what the requirements of the course are, when they had all their readings whether we could help with that. We would walk them through the first assignment, what the requirements were, what would they have to do in order to accomplish completing the work by the deadlines, sometimes we would call them, we would invite them either in prompt, one or two of them, or we would proactively again say, "Hi, how are you, how are you doing, would you like to come in again, and then maybe for the second assignment we would do the same. In addition to that, we started, and this is something I instigated or initiated, is what I call pre-course tasks because some many of the students would have returned...would have entered this program after quite a long absence from academic work.

A last piece of evidence that the leaders of the ALGC program have been efficient researchers is the fact that they have taken the opportunity to learn more about adult education, international collaboration, and program planning as they investigated the ALGC program itself. Five articles have been published by participants on the program, and the unique focus of each one of these articles has been discussed in the literature review; the five year report (and ten year one that is currently being produced) provides additional evidence that the scholars behind the ALGC want to learn from their endeavour and share the lessons learned with others. It is worth mentioning that the different documents participants have created over the years were not an accident but the result of their original intention to use the ALGC program as a learning opportunity, something that even added motivation for participating in the project, as Mark's

words demonstrate: “I also knew we had a commitment to do research about the program as we went through it; we wanted to produce scholarship on the process of planning the program. So I think all of those things were attractive.” One final comment on the effectiveness of the participants as researchers is found in Melody’s statement that the literature has been useful to introduce new leaders to the program. “I read Nick’s article about the planning,” she admits as she talks about how it helped her understand Monash’s involvement with the ALGC program.

### **7.1.2 Committed**

Competence by itself does not explain the accomplishment of the ALGC program; it achieved goals such as survival, stabilization and growth not only because its leaders were good planners, curriculum developers, teachers, administrators, and researchers: an unshakable commitment to the program provided the added strength it needed to thrive. Mark, for instance, defends that the core group could stay together despite the adversities encountered thanks to this desire to make it work: “Because we had such a strong commitment to the idea of the program that we were willing to stick to it.” It is interesting to notice that Yvonne, who was not involved in the early stages of the ALGC program, also refers to the participants’ commitment to the vision behind the program as a reason for their ongoing unity: “I think the way differences of opinions or views were managed were partially addressed by appealing to a larger project.”

Participants revealed that their commitment originated in both altruistic and more personal motives. Yvonne, for instance, clarifies why people were willing to make sacrifices for the program when she declares, “I think in a way we share an understanding of the vulnerability of the program, and therefore we pull together and try to create this space and maintain it, which locates the program.” Melody, in a similar tone, suggests that this personal commitment has roots in a deep desire to serve even at the risk of sacrificing personal gains: “I think everybody in

this course is very committed to it in a very altruistic sort of way.” Remember that when asked about the reason why they were attracted to the program, the South Africans mentioned bridging the gap between the North and the South, Lucas talked about contributing to the development of his department and university, while several indicated offering a response to globalization or to make driven approaches. In all these answers it is possible to see that participants were attracted to join something bigger than themselves. However, participants also acknowledged that sometimes they were motivated by their own research and career goals, which is not something to be ashamed of.

Commitment is not made of just words, but also of sweat and tears. Consequently, more than promises or wishes, it was the daily effort to complete tasks and defeat threats that safeguarded the ALGC program from failing. Together, leaders of the ALGC program fought bureaucratic or institutional obstacles such as complex approval processes or differences in tuition fees. They also overcame technological barriers like the limited bandwidth in South Africa and the always stressful and painful changes of platforms. Besides, situational problems had to be dealt with: the departure of Australian universities and the replacement of original leaders were just a couple. Finally, cultural issues represented additional challenges that had to be faced; for example, participants mentioned the different university cultures and systems, and differences in assessment views and criteria as well.

The important point is to recognize talent was not sufficient to sustain the ALGC program all these years; the good-will to make it work was extremely significant as well. Furthermore, it has to be emphasized that hard word or a strong will would not be enough to guarantee the results obtained; competence in several key areas allowed the achievement of the goals.

## 7.2 Creative and captivating program

Ideas Matter!

### 7.2.1 Creative

If the first explanation for the accomplishments of the ALGC program has to do with the kind of people who have created and run it, the second one can be linked with the nature of the program itself and two adjectives can be used to describe it: creative and captivating.

The originality of the program can be attested by three facts. First, the program was innovative in its emphasis on the relationship between globalization and adult education. . “My interest was to try to respond to globalization in an innovative, creative way,” stated Elaine. “I was excited by the innovative character of it because I had already done some international work. I was attracted to the global orientation of the program,” clarified Mark. Moreover, the program demonstrated a concern with innovation by incorporating the newest technology at the time. The final way the leaders of the ALGC integrated innovativeness into the program was by attempting something that had never been done before: to develop a partnership on an international level that involved four universities in four continents, “Adventure” is the word Nick uses to define what the program meant to him and the others: “Later, when the idea started to develop I became more occupied about the program as an adventure, an educational innovation on an international scale.” Desmond not only agrees but even defends that it is this last aspect that sets the ALGC truly apart from any other project in international collaboration:

I think one interesting thing is there aren’t lots of programs based on the model we developed. But if you look around the world I am not conscious that there are distributed international programs, so the dominant model is still one institution in one country running an international program. Now there may be some window dressing that makes it appear that there are other major players, but the model that fits conventionally is a model that says “we are going to run this and enroll other people. So I still think you could have an innovative program today that would use much more digital technology that could achieve the same ends...but the innovation

that we had was not about technology, it wasn't about distance education, it was about cooperation among continents. And that was the innovation, not the apparent innovation.

It shouldn't be a surprise then that the ALGC program received a couple of awards exactly for its innovative character

### **7.2.2 Captivating**

Similarly, it should be expected that a program that has had its originality recognized internationally would captivate its audience, and that is what happened with the ALGC program. The first and most obvious evidence that the program is appealing is enrollment; it has consistently attracted a high number of people interested in participating in it, as Tony confirms: "But the fact that the program has been attracting people, the fact that demand far outstrips the number of spaces we have in the program, means that there is still a growing demand for the program after fourteen years."

Another piece of evidence that the ALGC program has been considered attractive by many is its ability to keep those students who enrolled in the program. Tony again provides specific data:

And if you look at some of the statistics on programs at UBC, the graduate and post-doctoral studies did a survey of all graduate programs at UBC on time to completion, and our program is a two year program, and we have about a 92% completion rate in two years, which is one of the highest at UBC, it's way higher than our other online programs. So to me that speaks to success, and a lot of that comes back to the cohort experience; we don't have drop-outs, which is unusual. Now I have to clarify that statement. What we have...we set up a system where if students run into personal problems, financial problems, or something happens in life as it does in anyone's life, and they can't continue right then, we get them to take a leave of absence, and then when the next cohort comes in then they join the next cohort and carry on again. So what we have is a stop-out rather than a drop-out. If we didn't have that in there if students had problems we would lose them. So we have very few students who have dropped out of the program because they have the support of the cohort, and also because they have the benefit of the stop out where they can step back, get everything back in order again and then join the next cohort. And they are welcome into the next cohort; it has happened a number of times and works very successfully.

At this point it is important to clarify that it's not only students in Canada that have been satisfied with the program; in other institutions students have been quite pleased with their experience with the ALGC program, too. "About 95% of the students love it!" states Melody excitedly referring to students at Monash. In Sweden, the situation is not different, as Heather reports, "We can keep our students, and they are very, very satisfied. Last year, graduates wrote the university to say how satisfied they are, how much it means, and they really feel like they are real students even though it was distance education, and they didn't expect to feel it."

The Five Year Report contains several testimonials from students that further attest the program has fascinated those who have gone through the program.

How can it be explained that the ALGC program has generated so much fascination among students? What is unique about the program that makes students so attracted to it? One major reason for that, as Melody explains, is the experiential nature of the program: "In a way the whole ALGC is about experiential learning, not only FLIP [Fostering Learning in Practice]. We had to formalize that study, but throughout the course people are using difference people's experiences." She clarifies how all courses in the program have an experiential character and not only of FLIP:

FLIP is explicitly built around experiential learning. That's the first one. The experience of working with people is extremely rich, so we you get to the Global/Local Learning, the South African unit, the experience of being taught by people who work in Cape Town is very much about learning from someone who lives and work in the Third World and that is much more powerful than from someone from Canada and Australia.

Melody adds an extra aspect that explains the popularity of the ALGC program: its dialogical nature. She explains how technology facilitates discussions:

Another thing is that is all based on asynchronous discussions. I have heard people being very critical of technology saying that there is so much you can do and bla-bla-bla, but in fact, it is about if you want to show off your technology or if you want to

teach students. And in terms of how much learning is going on, the asynchronous discussions are very good. People get a lot out of them.

Nick understands that the excitement of the students towards the ALGC program help explain its accomplishment, and similarly to Melody, he believes that the cause of this positive attitude lies in the opportunities the program creates for dialogue: “I think the enthusiasm from many students is an important thing - the fact that this is something that other students cannot experience - exchanging experiences from adult education, human resource development, etc...with other students from world - I think this is a key thing for the survival - it is a sound idea,” he summarizes. South African students have also been more than satisfied with what they are getting out of the course as a result of its dialogical nature, according to Yolanda: “The South Africans have found it very illuminating to be able to have conversations as equals with people from different parts of the world and to see that they are able to stand up and cope academically.”

### **7.3 Constructive and caring relationships**

Relationship matters! The individuals responsible for the ALGC program have accomplished something that has its roots in the kind of relationships it was built on and allowed to flourish and not only on its competent and committed leaders or on its creative and captivating program.

#### **7.3.1 Among its leaders**

None of the participants would deny the existence of a solid relationship among the leaders of the ALGC program. Elaine, for example, states, “But they are friends too, you know. They were friends, they were not unfamiliar to each other, they knew each other from before, they had a history and good laughs and good memories and all that.” A latecomer like Yvonne also acknowledges the advantages that knowing each other brought to the partnership: “It

benefits from the fact that many of the partners and delegates of the universities already knew each other.”

Trust has been the most fundamental ingredient for the formation and consolidation of a professional bond among the leaders of the ALGC program. Yvonne talks about “an environment of trust,” while Lucas affirms, “I think the base for that, as I said before, that there was such a deep trust that when we seat there.” Tony is clear and emphatic about the importance of trust for the development of the relationships that have sustained the program:

One word: friendship. And one thing that I think you will find if you look at planning, and particularly planning successful programs: trust is the bedrock of successfully planning programs. That trust was built specifically on friendships. We knew what everybody else was doing; we knew their area of specialization... So the one thing, the glue that has kept us together the entire time has been friendships, friendships and trust built through friendships.

Desmond confirms that without the friendship based on trust the ALGC program would not have even taken off:

It involved an extraordinarily high level of trust. Now when we started we didn’t realize how much trust was involved but that kind of become an enormous factor as the planning progressed...It wouldn’t have worked if we hadn’t got fond of each other. But on the other hand it is not as if we were great mates, we weren’t spending a lot of time socializing with each other; it was more of a professional relationship. It wasn’t any kind of deep personal relationship we had. But the....this distributive model that involved this whole level of trust because we each had to kind of go off and take what we had planned together and actually make it work. We had to do this four times in four different places. We just basically had to trust each other that we had enough technical capacity within our institutions to make it work and also for each other deal with the kind of problems that would arise.

Now, if relationships and trust matter that much, how can the ALGC program survive now that almost all of its founding members have retired and its new generation of leaders don’t share such a rich history? Heather, who recalls that “before the agreement our collaboration was always based on trust,” has already been quoted on the importance of the agreement signed for the resolution of conflict, and it can certainly prevent problems. However, it can never replace

friendship and trust, so the remaining members of the original group of leaders are working hard to ensure that a similar foundation will continue to exist.

A second feature that characterizes the kind of relationship that has perpetuated the ALGC program is equality. Elaine argues that without treating all members as equals the respect that is so fundamental for the survival of any partnership can't exist:

And of partnerships, if they are going to be true partnerships in the sense of striving for equality in the partnerships, you got to have the respect of, you know, everybody must come in as equals, you got to run it in that way. So I think that programs like this can, you could do many more because this program doesn't have huge capacity, but things cannot be imposed, you cannot decide them as an administrator. Because it's a paradox of almost any partnership, there must be something organic about its growth. You can't decide in a bureaucracy to have this partnership and this is how is going to work.

It is important to clarify that in the case of the ALGC program equality does not mean absence of discrepancies or even imbalance. Participants agree that UWC does not have as many resources as the other members of the partnership, and the first ones to agree with that are the South African themselves. It was beautiful to hear Elaine using the word "generosity" several times as she explained the reasons for the success of the program, acknowledging both UWC's lack of resources and the positive attitude of the other partners:

I think the reasons for that particular accomplishment are a few elements: generosity among the staff, commitment to the program, I suppose that knowing that the playing field is not level, and that means knowing UWC cannot contribute as many resources to this program leads me to say that generosity in terms of, should I say, addressing inequalities in the program... I think the generosity of the universities that have provided international coordinators.

Yolanda also mentions that from her point of view there have been significant differences in terms of access to resources:

That's the people who are privileged do not...one understands it, you know, but every now and then you realize that they don't realize what privileges they actually have, and that you are not all equal, in the sense of you are not all equal in the sense of the privileges that you have. I think there was a little bit of that, what I am sure

what might be reflective of any of the kind of north-south relationships that all of us experience, you know, it's kind of that...it's a little bit personal.

Others could see the discrepancy as well. Lucas, for instance, declared that those at UWC “don’t have the institutional resources” that the other universities enjoy. Desmond is another person who referred to the difference in access to resources and the impact it had on the working relationship:

I think the South Africans felt themselves a bit helpless because they certainly had less resources, and they were basically poorer, a poorer institution than the rest of us. So there was a kind of degree of sensitivity there, and we realized that we had to be a bit sensitive when working with South African colleagues to cope with the challenges they faced with their students... I think they were putting themselves down more than we were putting them down.

If equality does not mean similarity regarding access to different kinds of resources, it also does not imply absence of power imbalance. Was there any power imbalance? Elaine answers with, “Yes, yes, I would say so” before explaining her reasons:

I think Linköping University holds the platform, which gives them, which places them in a powerful position... They also teach two courses. UBC teaches two. There was a time when Monash taught two. We always taught one...We just don't have the capacity to teach more than one. That's just the reality. So I think...you know, resources...there are imbalances around resources, which may or may not translates in imbalance in power. I think if you take everything together, that we teach one course only, that we are the institution that has the least number of students, we have the least money to travel to management committee meetings and the least money to travel to the institute, if you take all of those together, and I am not afraid to speak negatively about power, I believe all this has influenced my own power or the perception of my own power in meetings and in the discussion of certain issues.

Heather points to another source of power imbalance: “the language aspect...because all students use the website from Linköping University, and students complained about that. I remember once in Monash said, “You participate in international program so you need to be prepared to understand that English is not the only language in the world, you have to meet these differences.

Yvonne provided an analysis of power imbalance within the ALGC that was rich in details and significance:

There were obviously power imbalances. It is partially at an interpersonal level, and it is partially at an institutional level between universities, and at an institutional level within the partners, and the partner network, if you like. So the people who designed the program obviously had the history and the understanding, which comes with being the founding fathers...or mothers. What's happening in the last few years is that of course many of those people have moved on, and so there is a succession process that is going out, and inevitably that succession process means that the new incumbent partners don't know each other in the same way the old partners knew each other. So the planning meeting has become very important as a way to introduce newcomers to the course, but they also have to find their place within it, so there is power imbalance. That's evident in terms of how much people speak, what kind of contributions they make, and of course it is also affected by the seniority of those academics and people who are senior, yes, I came as a senior professor so I didn't feel I needed to genuflect to the history as much as others do. Who knows? There is also imbalance in terms of the capacity of the universities to recruit students and so on, that also affects how each partner speaks in meetings, which affects the influence they have.

Yolanda talks about the effect that having to defend those less privileged had on her as she worked with the other leaders of the ALGC program standing from a position of weakness:

I was conscious I had to be the voice...it felt like you were carrying quite a lot of weight, a lot of responsibility, you are speaking for the whole of the South. And I do remember the odd occasions of feeling a little bit, just feeling a little bit tired having to do that all the time even though people were being very nice, very thoughtful and all that sort of thing.

However, in Yolanda's answer it is already possible to see that the leadership of the ALGC program worked hard to prevent discrepancies in terms of resources or power from compromising the partnership. Melody agrees: "I think there has been some [power imbalance]. I think we have been able to recognize it and in a way to accept it. Spaces like this are always configured by power, I mean, everything is. I think we sort of...I think the goodwill towards the program has been such that nobody has wanted to pull it apart too much. There are issues; there always are, but people have been able to work through them." Likewise, Elaine believes that participants were able to work together without taking advantage of the fact that there were

resources and power differentials to exercise control over others in less powerful positions. She says, “We didn’t have those kinds of conflict, no. Not that kind of power imbalance, like someone is trying to suppress someone or something like that I would say.” Lucas supports the same way to look at how equality was preserved despite the differences in resources or power: “No, I don’t think they were all quite strong headed people who were used to being in power, and that was important, at that time I think it worked really well. I think that’s probably why no one could really dictate and push. I mean, we were different people with different personalities, but everyone was very strong and used to pave, to lead, to drive.” Moreover, he explains why everybody sees any attempt to fuels conflict by abusing power as a step against the success of the program: “...and the other thing is that everyone really wanted this to work, so people thought at certain times that it was a necessity to kind of agree and move on.”

It is worth mentioning that throughout the history of the ALGC program its leaders have made an effort to protect the South-North equilibrium that prevents the predominance of a particular perspective over another. It is true that a few participants, as it was noted before, talked about an excessive North-American and European influence or about the burden of feeling they had to fight for the South, but it is reasonable to argue that there has been a concern from those from the North in ensuring fairness and equality to the process and to its end result, the ALGC program itself. In the previous paragraphs, several participants talked about this issue, but Mark’s words provide additional proof that there is an authentic interest in making the program equalitarian from a geographical point of view as well:

And we were losing the kind of global orientation of the program, and we were starting to see dominance from people from the Northern hemisphere. Canada and Linköping have always had fairly high enrollments, and Monash has gone up and down, but they were all kind of western institutions, right? And so that bothered us as well. And I think we figured out a way to make the transition from UTS to Monash, and we will see what happens making the transition from Monash to another

university. But those are things that I think threatened the overall design of the program. I would see bringing in Delhi University as re-establishing the North-South balance; that Delhi and Western Cape would be global south institutions, and UBC and Linköping would be global north institutions, and if we have Monash or another Australian university in the mix there would still be a bit of a balance there.

Finally, the relationship among leaders of the ALGC program has not only been characterized only by trust or equality but also by collaboration. They have set differences aside and prioritized the well-being of the program over their personal interests and their egos as they deal with conflict and find solutions to problems. In previous paragraphs, comments have been made on both the existence of conflict as a threat to the survival of the program and on the reality of power imbalance, and the purpose of mentioning these two potentially dangerous issues was to highlight participants' ability to address them not necessarily in a perfect manner but in a satisfactory one. The mere fact that the program has survived for as long as it has all these years despite these problems reinforces the notion that there is something special about the collaborative nature of the working relationship. Tony illustrates how the scholars leading the ALGC program have approached differences of opinion in a constructive way:

One of the things that we have endeavoured to do since the first meetings we had is to have at least one meeting a year face to face. And the purpose of that is we can go into a room, and we can meet, we can take exception to what other say, we can argue with people, but then we all go out for dinner and everything is sort it out. I mean, it is a way of being very adult in our approach to it that we can speak openly and freely. If someone says "I want to do this," and everybody else says, "No, we don't think that is a good idea," we have to find ways to get that sorted it out, but we always get it sorted it out, and then we go out for dinner. Then we come back the next day for the meeting and then we go on, move on with the agenda. So there haven't been conflicts within the partnership, between the universities. And again that goes back to the fact of the people being involved all being friends, and we know we can be honest with each other when we discuss things whether it's a good idea or a bad idea. And no one takes offense.

This quote also hints that the powerful synergy existent among participants when they tackle problems constitutes further evidence that collaborative relationships have contributed for

the results the ALGC program has obtained. Two situations exemplify the presence and the potent effect of cooperation in the history of the program. The first one took place when the leaders realized that differences in assessment criteria could interfere with the harmony among them; they found a solution to this obstacle as they created the beforehand described currency converter. Yolanda explains its meaning not only as an evaluation tool but also as a symbol of the kind of relationship among those responsible for the accomplishments of the program:

Then we invented this currency converter, which was, you know, if you got this in Sweden, equals this in Canada, equals this in South Africa, and equals that in Australia. That for me says a lot about the willingness of people to find solutions, so we had to create something new out of the reality of each one of us. And it took a lot of creative thought and energy, and I think that for me symbolized a lot of the attitude that we certainly, the founding people had. There was a problem solving approach, everybody was sufficiently committed to the idea to want it work. So everybody was trying to say, “Ok, I need to really try to understand the other in order to then help create a solution to this particular problem. And I think that was a very important part of that process the culture of the original group, which was about helping...the ideal was to solve problems and not to ensure that my opinion or my way of doing things this is eventually the one adopted.

A second episode that sheds light on the existence and importance of collaboration among leaders of the ALGC program was provided by Elaine, who used the words “generosity” and “respect” several times to explain the reasons behind the accomplishments of the program.

By examining these testimonies it is possible to conclude that a proactive approach towards problem solving characterizes the collaboration among the ALGC’s leadership team and explains its success, as Mark’s words prove:

In sum, there is enough evidence to support the argument that one of the reasons why the ALGC program has achieved important goals such as survival, implementation, stabilization, growth and rebirth lies in the nature of the relationship among its leaders, which are based on trust, equality and collaboration.

### 7.3.2 Among its students

It shouldn't be a surprise that a program which grew out of several rich professional relationships has been so successful in stimulating fruitful interactions among its students. The intentional effort to create a community of learners among the ALGC's students demonstrates its leaders understanding of the importance of relationships for a truly educational enterprise.

The utilization of the cohort model represents the first sign that those in charge of the ALGC program believe that deeper learning occurs when students work together and not in isolation. Tony does not hide his fascination with the cohort model: "also another thing that really intrigued me was the fact of using cohorts, and I have long been a fan of cohort learning." Hence, he attributes part of the achievements of the program to the use of cohorts: "So to me that speaks to success, and a lot of that comes back to the cohort experience." Yolanda sees limitations in the approach but speaks of its power as well: "I think the fact that it is a cohort program has its strengths and has its weaknesses. Everybody has to live with certain rigidity in a cohort program, but the strength of that means that people get to know one another over time. Elaine offers several details about how cohorts have allowed relationships to nurture learning:

I say very categorically to students during the orientation, 'It's not me who is going to get you through this program but your colleagues and friends sitting around the table.' So students have developed very good relationships; I've seen when they write their research papers the students, so we have these cohorts, as you know, in the cohorts you would find that students support each other during the proposal writing and the writing of the research paper. Some students get ahead of others, so in the cohort, there are two students who are ahead of the others, they have already submitted their proposals, and so there are these conversations that go on among them where those who are ahead would advise other students on how they should pitch how they should write their proposals. So I think one of the reasons for the accomplishments here is that students actually support each other; not all students, but some students do. And I think I have to say this: in some instances international students have also supported each other. I will make one example. One of the students focused her research paper on the ALGC. The students in her cohort were really supportive of her; they were always ready to have discussions with her, when she was at the proposal stage and beyond. So I think more of that would be very nice;

if we could have more networking and support from students across the universities when they are writing their research papers would be great.

The creation of the ALGC institute is the second indicator that the relational dimension of the ALGC program was not accidental but rather the outcome of a deliberate intention to foster collaboration among students. Tony describes the origin and purpose of the institute:

The second cohort was much more active than the first cohort and to the point where they were active, animated, they got to know each other so well online that in 2004, when the cohort completed, a group of students got together from that cohort, from UBC mainly, but with Australia and Sweden, and they decided they wanted to meet the people they had been learning with online. So they took their holidays and went to South Africa to meet the people they had been learning online. This is something that I strongly supported. And when they came back with all their videos and things from their experience, I got a group of them together and pitched the idea of setting up a ALGC institute, and the institute was originally to be set up for graduates of the program to have an opportunity to come together and meet people they had been learning online for two years. We had the first ALGC institute in Vancouver in 2006; we've just completed the fifth one back in Vancouver again last week. The Institute rotates around the different universities.

As this chapter on the explanation of the ALGC's achievements comes to an end, let's remember words from two geniuses. Da Vinci said: "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication," while Steve Jobs stated: "That's been one of my mantras - focus and simplicity. Simple can be harder than complex: You have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple. But it's worth it in the end because once you get there, you can move mountains." Both agree on the value of simplicity, which is helpful as we realize that there aren't any complex factors behind the accomplishments of the ALGC program: competent and committed leaders, a creative and captivating program, and constructive and caring relationships. However, as Jobs pointed out, simplicity does not mean lack of difficulty; creating and maintaining something simple might demand more time, energy and resources than a more sophisticated one. The leaders of the ALGC worked hard on simple elements, and apparently that was all that was necessary.

## Chapter 8 Summary and conclusion

### 8.1 Summary

Understanding the factors that contributed for the conception, survival, implementation, stabilization, growth and renewal of the Adult Learning and Global Change (ALGC) program has been the focus of this study. In light of the current interest in international collaboration among universities around the world, it seems extremely reasonable to investigate an educational program that was developed and managed by universities in Canada (University of British Columbia), Sweden (Linköping University), South Africa (University of the Western Cape) and Australia (where the original partner, University of Technology Sydney, was replaced by Monash University, which is now being replaced by Australian Catholic University).

Twelve individuals have witnessed events related to the history of the Adult Learning and Global Change program, an educational enterprise that was conceived seventeen years ago by eight of those academics, people who not only had met and in some cases even worked together previously but also enjoyed these professional relationships. The first classes took place in the fall of 2001 and since then the ALGC program has brought good news for all those concerned with adult education and international collaboration in a globalized era, especially for those involved with the program. Their memories have provided the data for the discussion in this document; they were collected through a series of interviews that took place in the first semester of 2015 where the same open ended questions were asked to each participant before all the data was examined. Again, concordance could be expected but an analysis of the accounts provided by these twelve witnesses shows at times differences in opinion on what happened and on the interpretation of the events. However, in the midst of all the dissonant voices it is also possible to

hear a consistent message that not only praises the achievements of an extraordinary educational program that accomplished impressive goals but also speaks of the causes of such triumphs.

The journey of the ALGC program can be divided in six time periods: conception, planning, implementation, stabilization, growth and renewal. The first stage involves the very first meetings where a small group of scholars started exploring the possibility of developing a joint international program back in 1998. Then representatives of the four universities started the arduous but crucial task of planning the program in all its complexity. Implementation began as soon as marketing and recruitment efforts were initialized and ended when the first year of studies was completed. That was followed by the stabilization phase, which ended with UTS departing the partnership in 2006. The arrival of Monash in the same year as a new member of the consortium ignited the growth period, which led to the last phase, renewal, a time period marked by the induction of new leaders as most founding members either retired or became involved with other projects and by the withdrawal of Monash and its consequent replacement with Australian Catholic University.

Throughout these years the ALGC program accomplished a multitude of goals, which can be discussed from a variety of viewpoints. Historically, besides surviving, which already represents a significant accomplishment in this quite competitive period of time universities find themselves in, the program can also be credited with possessing unique features such as its lack of an economic motivation, the number of universities involved in the partnership, and the use of the Internet as an educational and collaborative tool. Another evidence of its historical singularity lies in the absence of identical or even similar programs after all these years. From an educational perspective, the ALGC program has achieved the following goals: it taught students about globalization and inequality, it created know-how that could be used in other

educational programs, it produced a distinctive set of learning outcomes, it has had a high completion and an extremely low drop-out rate, it has created a culture of learning, and it has maximized the potential of the cohort model. However, the most undeniable proof that educationally speaking the ALGC program has accomplished outstanding results can be found in the positive feedback it has received in the form of internal evaluations and international awards.

Other kinds of achievements were mentioned by participants in the study. From a collaboration point of view, the ALGC program was praised for the collaborative manner in which it was developed, for the constructive and respectful way disagreements were dealt with, for the ability to replace Australian partners who withdrew from the program, and for the way it accommodated to the limitations of one of the partners in terms of technology and human resources. Furthermore, participants referred to the relatively small investment in terms of both energy and finances that has been required to create and manage the program, to the fact it has not only paid for itself but in some cases even generated revenue, to the positive enrollment figures, and to the successful transition in leadership, as indicators that the ALGC has attained important administrative goals. Finally, accomplishments of a personal nature were mentioned as well, including student and teacher satisfaction with the program, the growth in the self-esteem and academic capabilities of South African students, the transformative nature of educational experiences (including the rupture with stereotypes), the expansion of job opportunities, and the inter-professional dimension of the student network. The quantity and quality of these accomplishments testify that the ALGC has achieved tremendous results.

However, there have been setbacks and they were examined. First, participants referred to a number of threats the ALGC program encountered as it moved through the different stages of its existence. During the planning phase, for example, the different university systems (like

grading systems), the incredibly arduous approval processes (particularly at UBC), technological challenges particularly related to the learning platforms, issues related with accessibility, fees structures, the limited number of face-to-face meetings, the turnover of representatives who attended these meetings, the lack of experience with online education, and language barriers were listed as obstacles that had the potential to terminate the program. The implementation period brought other elements that jeopardized the ALGC program, including recruitment and enrollment, lack of power within the university due to low enrollment (a problem experienced in Australia), uneven number of participants from each university (no students from UBC during the first year), low participation in activities and lack of preparation and support in South Africa, difficulties in adjusting to communicating primarily through text, continuity of staffing, high fees creating a burden to South African students, and difficulties in adapting to online teaching. Some of the threats from the previous periods remained or reoccurred during the stabilization period, but new ones were experienced as well, and no other was more serious than UTS withdrawing from the partnership in 2005. Besides, complaints about difference in resources, the low number of students from South Africa, complaints about assessment due to cultural differences among the four universities, and educational reforms that promoted an emphasis on revenue generation were mentioned as dangerous factors the ALGC had to battle during those years. There were a couple of new major threats during the growth stage: Sweden started to charge tuition and different expressions of apathy towards the ALGC program within Monash culminated with the departure of the large Australian university. Finally, the current period, which has been called here “renewal,” has witnessed the manifestation of a few other critical hazards, namely, the need to find new leaders to replace the original founding members as they retired or moved on to other projects, the increase in the competition as more and different international programs have been

created, and the struggle to ensure that the agreement was signed. As all these threats are listed, it becomes understandable why participants referred to mere survival as an accomplishment of the ALGC program.

In addition to threats, the ALGC program had also to withstand its own weaknesses, which the participants openly admitted and discussed. Among these flaws, participants included not having incorporated new innovative features after the program was established, better reflecting globalization issues, conducting more research on the program, using technology well enough, properly revising of the curriculum especially in light of the changes the world has undergone since the inception of the ALGC. In addition, the fact that the thesis requirement at some of the partner universities extended the time to completion, that communication through text only was implicated in limiting the effectiveness of the interaction, and that no information on what happens to students after they graduate has been collected were suggested as faults of the program. Additional limitations were addressed by participants: the differential preparation of students from the four universities, the certain level of rigidity of the cohort model, the constant need to adapt to platform changes, the excessive focus on administrative issues during meetings in detriment of educational ones, the disproportionate North American influence on the program, the limited amount of standardization, the insufficient exploration of the positive side of cultural diversity, and the occasional lack of a better tuning of the course with the purpose of the program.

How can it be explained that the ALGC program was capable of not only surviving but also thriving in spite of having to struggle with these potentially destructive threats and weaknesses? The first answer to this question resides in the program's competent and caring leaders. Competence was demonstrated in the areas of planning, curriculum development,

teaching, management and research, while an incredible level of commitment to the program was revealed as leaders of the program as they fought the bureaucratic, technological, situational, and cultural challenges mentioned as threats and flaws were discussed. A second reason behind the achievements of the ALGC program lies on its creative and captivating nature. The fact that the program combined an emphasis on globalization, a truly international experience and an online component at a time when these were all very current and unexplored issues granted a degree of originality to the program that in turn generated a high level of interest around it. The excitement became tangible through the excitement displayed by the students as they were exposed to unusual courses, to a dialogical approach in their interactions with faculty and with other students, and to experiential learning, which recognizes the relevance of their experiences, allows the application of new knowledge/skills, permits the exchange of inter-professional perspectives and experiences, and creates career opportunities through networking. Last but not least, the accomplishments of the ALGC program can be credited to the constructive and caring dimension of the relationships that sustain it. Participants often referred to the kind of relationship they have with each other as one of the cornerstones of the program's attainments; trust was identified as vital ingredient for the nourishment of these connections, while generosity, respect, equality and a spirit of collaboration were also listed, too. Furthermore, there was a relational component in the interaction among students as well that contributed to the ALGC's success. This interpersonal dimension was stimulated by the adoption of cohorts and by the creation of the ALGC institute, which takes place every two years and rotates among the four universities, giving students the opportunity to meet and talk about their learning experiences. In sum, thanks to its competent and committed leaders, its creative and captivating program, and

the constructive and caring relationships nurtured throughout its history, the ALGC program has accomplished remarkable goals such as survival, implementation, stabilization and growth.

After both hearing attentively to the parallels and inconsistencies in the voices of the participants and realizing that the differences do not deny the existence of an agreement regarding the ALGC's achievements and the reasons behind them, several concluding comments can be made on the research process and its findings.

## **8.2 Conclusions**

### **8.2.1 The validity and usefulness of the research method**

The experience of interviewing the people who have led the ALGC program in order to find answers to my research questions confirmed what the literature on case studies have stated about the validity and usefulness of case study analysis and qualitative research.

The process of interviewing participants proved to be highly effective in terms of providing a picture that depicts a phenomenon in all its complexity. The discrepancies in views demonstrate that a closer understanding of such a multifaceted program such as the ALGC can be only obtained after examining it from a variety of perspectives and angles; differences are then not seen as contradictions but rather as complementary opinions. It was clear, for instance, that participants from the Northern Hemisphere have a somewhat different opinion on the existence of conflict and power imbalance from those from the South. It was possible to conclude then that there are different perceptions of these two issues, a fact that doesn't stop participants to agree that there has been enough good will or generosity (borrowing Elaine's words) to glue the group together as they work towards the fulfillment of the ALGC's purpose.

In addition, interviewing the people behind the program added a human component to the research process that would have impoverished the experience and the findings if absent. It

was fascinating listening to people share their stories; there was a wealth of details plus a level of excitement about the program and the study that definitely could not have been grasped if the literature was the only source of information.

Furthermore, a case study analysis adds a practical dimension to abstract concepts. Collaboration, assessment, ethics, politics, equality, accessibility are all ideas that are much easier to understand when one has the opportunity to contemplate how they are incorporated into an education program and/or how they affect people's work.

### **8.2.2 The complexity and importance of international collaboration**

In accordance to what the literature on international collaboration has emphasized, participants have affirmed that international collaboration is a complex, challenging and critical effort. Many talked about the importance of international collaboration, including Elaine who enthusiastically states:

Sure, yes, absolutely, yes. Yeah, perhaps it could be an alternative for all universities around the world to talk about internationalization, which they see as important criteria for success, and this is a way of doing internationalization without going anywhere. You can do international education at your own desk, so it should be attractive, and it has certainly the potential to create intercultural understanding and widen networks.

Some talked about the challenges that people who want to become involved with international collaboration would face. Desmond, for instance, says, "I think, yeah, I think it still might be possible although universities have become much more commercial in their outlook since we started this. But it's a matter of catching the ideal, catching the idea of doing something very different."

Besides the political and economic challenges that running a program like the ALGC offers, the amount of effort necessary to do it cannot be ignored as well, as Heather emphasizes: "I think it is very easy to tell a success story...when we focus on success, and it is true that we

have many success stories, but is much harder to remember how much work it was. We forget those kinds of things. I would tell our success story, but at the same there is a risk that there is so much hard work to keep this program.

Therefore, despite acknowledging the difficulties involved, participants see the value collaborative efforts among universities around the world.

### **8.2.3 The future of international collaboration: feasible and rewarding**

Some of the words recorded in the previous section have already suggested that participants believe in international collaboration and in the fact that it brings enormous benefits that outweigh the potential risks and obstacles. When asked the question “Do you still believe that international collaboration represents a viable and rewarding initiative to universities around the world?,” Tony answered: “Yes, it is highly possible.” Mark understands that the current context is even more favorable to projects related to international collaboration:

Yeah, I think it is possible. It is even more possible right now because as I travel around the world and read widely in international engagement, universities all over the world want to engage with other countries, and so I think it would be even easier now with the right people involved to get something like this going. They might start in a much more modest way, but I think it is even more possible now because so many universities have international engagement as one of their key priorities.

The feasibility of projects in international education similar to the ALGC program seems more certain now that know-how has been developed, as Lucas pointed out. Yolanda also argues that the lessons learned through the experience of designing, implementing and running the program can be useful to facilitate other projects: “I think the principles we developed, or the principles that have emerged, that were embedded in the answers I have given you, they are sustainable...,” she says.

The chapter on the achievements of the ALGC program proved that it benefitted students, institutions and even the leaders of the program, which is one of the most significant rewards for

all the hard collaborative work. Therefore, it makes sense what Heather has to say about having other programs similar to the ALGC that can benefit students in so many different ways:

I think it would be great to have a similar program. One of the things students mentioned when they graduate was “I thought it was not going to be so different from other programs, but we experienced different academic culture. I also think that this is a good opportunity for students to work with teachers from different countries because they all have different competences. Also, I am sure one of the most appreciated course is Global/Local Learning in South Africa, it is very, very good opportunity for our students to have that kind of education abroad... We often say that the world is becoming more global, interconnected, but in a way it is not obvious as people cannot go to physically go to other places, but this course in a way gives students the opportunity to experience other countries and culture.

#### **8.2.4 International collaboration as a democratic, equalitarian and mutually beneficial effort**

The process is as important as the goals and the results. This is one of the most important lessons taught by the ALGC program as an educational project. The program would not have survived all these years if its leaders were not profoundly committed to ensure that all members of the core group felt their voices and interests were being considered. This has to happen when these leaders represent a variety of ethnic, professional, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Tolerance, respect, generosity, and goodwill are all ingredients for successful collaboration in a context where diversity is the norm and not the exception. Differences should be expected and welcomed, and negotiation towards a working consensus seems to be the most appropriate strategy for ensuring sufficient concordance and movement towards the achievement of goals. Egos and competitiveness among equals must take a secondary role. Longevity can only be experimented in international collaboration when every member of the partnership feels he/she is not being manipulated, ignored, abused, or disrespected; the only hope for triumph is if all sense they are benefitting equally from the effort. Therefore, leaders of the ALGC have

experienced that planning an educational program such as the ALGC is a politically and ethically charged process, which confirms what the different theories on program planning explored in the literature review section defended. In addition, the participants' journey confirms that politics and ethics keep playing a significant role throughout the remaining stages in the history of a program.

### **8.2.5 The significance of planning**

Listening to what participants have to say about the history, accomplishments, threats and weaknesses of the ALGC program, one can easily realize that whichever success has been experienced it has a lot to do with how carefully the founding members engaged in the planning process. They recognized the relevance of taking care of the many technical, political and ethical tasks suggested in the literature on program planning. By inviting an experienced planner to guide them, by thinking carefully about the different aspects and dimensions of the project, by adopting an organic approach that valued flexibility instead of a rigid and technical one, by allowing content experts to design courses, and by setting up efficient administrative mechanisms and structure, the original leadership avoided many pitfalls that could have jeopardized the program.

In light of all that, one wonders why program planning has become a field of less interest to scholars in the recent history of education. The current interest in international education and collaboration in all their sophistication demands more attention to this field.

### **8.2.6 The need for more research**

There are several areas that could still be investigated in relation to the ALGC program. First, it would be worth studying what students think about the program in terms of its

weaknesses and strengths as this particular study focused on the leaders of the program. Second, comparative studies could attempt to identify programs that are similar to the ALGC in terms of purpose in order to notice resemblances and disparities, which in turn could shed more light on what works and what seems to be counterproductive. Half of the participants could not identify a program similar to the ALGC, but Yvonne and Mark suggested that there has been a significant increase in the number of projects involving international collaboration, so it is possible that one or more programs could be found and analyzed. “I don’t know really the outcome of the program in terms of the does it lead to, where do these people end up, what difference do they make...we don’t really know that,” reported Elaine. Consequently, a research project concerned with this issue could be quite interesting. Finally, Melody suggested comparing the ALGC program to MBAs and she explains why it sounds like an interesting idea:

I think it is quite interesting if you compare this course to an MBA, which so many people have done, many students have said I was going to do an MBA but decided to do this course instead, and we have had quite a diverse group of students, accounts working for the big four accounting firms, public servants, military personnel, there is very wide range of students at Monash, and it is quite interesting that the course does something to students who otherwise would have looked for an MBA.

### **8.2.7 Improving the extraordinary**

Even a program that has achieved so many goals such as the ALGC can still be improved. For example, participants admitted that they could have better assessed the program even though none of them listed insufficient assessment as a weakness or a threat. Lucas shows a certain level of satisfaction with what has been done but admits that there is room for improvement:

I think the evaluations have taken place. We have had a Five Year Report and a Ten Year Report. I think we probably have been more attentive to the first evaluation than to the second. The second was going to be done and we still haven’t really, really done it. I think that speaks to the changes, so in that way I think we have

become a little bit less attentive to it. There has been an issue with the platform we had that early evaluations and students comments were not anonymous because we couldn't do it. The new platform, despite all its shortcomings, allows that. So I think that...because we didn't do the full ten year evaluation we could have given a little more attention to look through the different curricula. You know, in the beginning we knew that everyone knew what was in the different courses; we haven't done this collective evaluation in the way we did in the beginning. We probably lack a certain understanding of what was actually going on in the different places, and that had kind of a cumulative effect on students learning, so I would say that we were better in the beginning than we have been over time.

Mark adds support to Lucas's view that assessment of the program should have received more attention as he provides a lengthy description of the problem and its causes:

I think we could have done better, and we still can do better in terms of a periodical review of the program. We decided we wanted to do an online course evaluation for each term of the program, and so we put that in place very early but even that was not the easiest thing to do. I remember an interesting conversation because I think there was something in the collective agreement at the University of Sydney that oddly enough said that you can't ask questions on a course evaluation about the instructor. It seemed very odd to me at that time, but there was something in the wording of the collective agreement that said any questions that we had in a course evaluation can't ask about the quality of the instruction or the characteristics of the instructor. And that was just one example of we have all these different traditions around evaluation, and we had to come to some consensus on what approach we were going to use for the program. But beyond individual course evaluation, what we tried to do is...we tried to debrief graduates, I think, on individual campuses, when people graduated we tried to get feedback from them on their experience in the program, and that feedback was examined in the annual committee meeting. And there were changes made to the curriculum and so on as a result of that. But I don't think we approached it in a systematic way as we should have. I think there was a five, five or six year program review, and I think it is still under way a ten year program review; it has been two or three years late now, but I think it's still under way. And we here at UBC, and I am sure at the other universities as well, we are expected to provide data about the impact of our programs from the perspective of graduates, and I don't think we have done that very well yet.

Besides, Desmond offers his own perspective on the limitations of what has been done in relation to program assessment:

There were the fairly conventional questionnaires and surveys with questions for the students. The other thing we tried to do, we tried to whenever we had a planning meeting, once the course started, we tried to meet students from that location and get feedback from them. So every time we met in a new location we met students from that location... What we didn't do is we didn't involve people from other institutions

in looking at our practice, so that wasn't a part of the evaluation. So evaluation was through members of the team and through students and not through peer review, academic peers.

A second area that was not perceived necessarily as a flaw of the program but was mentioned by two participants as an area of concern is the incorporation of new forms of technology into the program, particularly social media. Elaine talks about social media as a challenge for the future: "I wonder how one could use social media better. So it's a combination of the learning platform and social media...In the process we are missing a lot of the discussion that is taking place because it is taking place on social media using other devices." However, Tony makes the following comments about social media as past and future trial:

And it is something that has impacted our program ...When we began the program, we would post readings, everyone would read all the readings at the same time, and then we would open discussion forums, and we would talk about their interpretation of it. So it was a quite formalized set up and had some very rich discussions. But now with the advent of social media, there is a lot more influence and a lot more change in the way people respond to discussion questions... You lose control and it affects the possibility of copyright.

### **8.2.8 People first and foremost**

When asked to pinpoint the three most important lessons he has learned from his involvement with the ALGC program, Lucas replied,

The first one is to work with people you like to work with. The second thing is you need to see that you work with people who can have an impact in the institutions where they are, I don't think they can be too junior, you can have junior and senior people, but you need people who can put into place people with a lot of social capital where they are. And the third one is to have very regular meetings, very clear agendas, and strategies that you follow very systematically, the paradox between very relaxed meetings among friends and very structured agendas with very clear goals.

A close look at his answer confirms what the chapter on explaining the accomplishments of the ALGC program defended: having the right kind of people involved makes a tremendous difference in the outcome of any human endeavour, including developing a transnational

program such as the one studied here. The presence of competent and committed leaders has a powerful impact on the results a program gets. Working with people you enjoy makes a difference; it is even better if they can also make a difference.

### **8.3 Final thoughts**

By sharing their memories and opinions regarding the history of the ALGC program, the participants in this study contributed for the composition of a document that basically tells the story of how a group of scholars have proved that international collaboration is not only possible but feasible. By recording and synthesizing the thoughts and words of these witnesses, this study humbly hopes to inspire others to continue researching this exciting field in order to keep adding different angles to this story that we are writing together as we try to guide and inspire those involved in international education.

## References

- Australian Catholic University (2015, July 9). *Our University*. Retrieved from  
[http://www.acu.edu.au/about\\_acu/our\\_university](http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/our_university) on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2015
- Australian Catholic University (2015, October 13). *Education and Arts*. Retrieved from  
[http://www.acu.edu.au/about\\_acu/faculties\\_institutes\\_and\\_centres/education\\_and\\_arts/about\\_the\\_faculty](http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/faculties_institutes_and_centres/education_and_arts/about_the_faculty) on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2015
- Bartell, M. (2003). Internationalization of universities: A university culture-based framework. *Higher Education*; (45), 43-71.
- Bickman, L, Rog, D. J. (2009). *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Boothby, J. R. (2003). Adult educators as knowledge and power brokers. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, 23 (2), 127.
- Boud, D., Dahlgren, L., Dahlgren, M. A., Larsson, S., Sork, T. J., & Walters, S. (2006). Creating a ‘world class’ programme: reciprocity and constraint in networked global collaboration. *International Journal Of Lifelong Education*, 25(6), 609-622.
- Caffarella, R. S. (2002). Planning programs for adult learners: A practical guide for educators, trainers and staff developers. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Cooper, J., Mitsunaga, R. (2010). Faculty perspectives on international education: The nested realities of faculty collaborations. *New directions for higher education*, (150), 69-81.
- Crabtree, R. D., & Sapp, D. A. (2004). Your culture, my classroom, whose pedagogy? Negotiating Effective Teaching and Learning in Brazil. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, (8), 105-132.

- Dahlgren, M.A., Larson, S. & Walters, S. (2004). Making the invisible visible. On participation and communication in a global, web-based master's programme. *Higher Education*, 00, 1-25.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Forester, J. (1999). *The deliberative practitioner: Encouraging participatory planning processes*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Gribble, K. & Ziguras, C. (2003). Learning to teach offshore: Pre-departure training for lecturers in transnational programs. *Higher Education Research & Development*, (22), (205-217).
- Hansman, C. A., & Mott, V.W. (1999). Philosophy, dynamics and context: Program planning in practice. *Adult Learning*, 11 (2), 14 – 17.
- Hastie, M., I.-Chun, H., & Nian-Shing, C. (2010). A blended synchronous learning model for educational international collaboration. *Innovations In Education & Teaching International*, 47(1), 9-24.
- Heaney, T. W. (2007). Working the planning table: Negotiating democratically for adult, continuing, and workplace education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 57 (2), 177-178.
- Hendricks, S. M. (2001). Contextual and individual factors and the use of influencing tactics in adult education program planning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 51 (3), 219 –236.
- Higgitt, D., Donert, K., Healey, M., Solem, M., & Vajoczki, S. (2008). Developing and enhancing international collaborative learning. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 32, (1), 121-133.
- Houle, C. (1996). *The design of education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

- Hughes, R. (2008). Internationalization of higher education and language policy: Questions of Quality and Equity. *Higher Education Management & Policy*, 20, (2), 111-128.
- Intercontinental master's programme in adult learning and global change: progress report 2001-2005. (2007).
- Jenkins, K. (2011). From Rwanda to Israel to South Africa, collaboration yields dialogue, hope and shelter in a broken world. *Issues in Higher Education*, 28, (14), 38-39.
- Keher, J. P., Schindel, T. D., & Mann, H. J. (2010). Cooperation in pharmacy education in Canada and the United States. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 74, (8), article 142.
- Knowles, M. (1980). The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy. Chicago: Association Press/Follet.
- Larsson, S., Boud, D., Madeleine Abrandt, D., Walters, S., & Sork, T. (2005). Confronting globalisation: learning from intercontinental collaboration. *Innovations In Education & Teaching International*, 42(1), 61-71
- Linköping University (2015, June 05) *About Linköping University*. Retrieved from <http://www.liu.se/om-liu?l=en> on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2015
- Maruatona, T. & Cervero, R.M. (2004). Adult literacy education in Botswana: Planning between reproduction and resistance. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 36, (2), 235-251.
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). Qualitative research in practice. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Palys, T. & Atchison, C. (2008). Research decisions: quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Toronto: Nelson.
- Pooranachandran, C. & Balasubramanian, R. (2011). Collaboration in web based learning: a social computing perspective. *International Journal on Computer Science & Engineering*, 3, (2), 722-727.

- Rees, E. F., Cervero, R. M., Moshi, L., & Wilson, A. I. (1997). Language, power, and the construction of adult education programs. *Adult Education Quarterly*; 47 (2), 63 – 78.
- Robson, S. & Turner, Y. (2007). Teaching is a co-learning experience: Academics reflecting on learning and teaching in an ‘internationalized’ faculty. *Teaching in Higher Education*, Feb2007, 12, (1), 41-54.
- Ryu, K. & Cervero, R.M. (2010). The role of Confucian cultural values and politics in planning educational programs for adults in Korea. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 61, (2), 131-160.
- Shore, S, Groen, J. (2009). After the ink dries: doing collaborative international work in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34, (5), 533-546.
- Slaughter, S. (2001). Problems in comparative higher education: Political economy, political sociology, postmodernism. *Higher Education*, 41(4), 389-412.
- Smith, K. (2010). Assuring quality in transnational higher education: a matter of collaboration or control? *Studies in Higher Education*, 35, (7), 793-806.
- Sork, T. J. (1996). Negotiating power and interests in planning: A critical perspective. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education Journal*, 69, 81 – 90.
- Sork, T. J. (2000). Planning educational programs. In Wilson, A.L. & Hayes, E.R. (Eds.), *Handbook of Adult Education* (171-190). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Sork, T. J. & Newman, M. (2004). Program development in adult education and training. In G. Foley (Ed.), *Dimensions of adult learning: Adult education and training in a global area* (96-117). McGraw-Hill: Mississauga.

- Sork, T.J., Walters, S., Larson, S., Madeleine Abrandt, D. & Boud, D. (2003). *Speaking in Tongues about Global Learning: a case study of planning an international graduate programme*. Paper presented at the Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the education of adults, Cardiff, Wales.
- Stromquist, N. (2007). Internationalization as a response to globalization: Radical shifts in university environments. *Higher Education*, 53, (1), 81-105.
- Tyler, R. (1949). Basic principles of curriculum and instruction. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Umbre, K. E., Cervero, R. M., & Langone, C. A. (2001). Negotiating about power, frames, and continuing education: A case study in public health. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 51 (2), 128 – 146.
- The University of British Columbia (n.d.). *UBC overview and facts*. Retrieved from  
<http://www.ubc.ca/about/facts.html> on October 17<sup>th</sup> 2015
- The University of British Columbia (n.d.). *Faculty of Education*. Retrieved from  
<http://educ.ubc.ca/> on October 17<sup>th</sup> 2015
- University of the Western Cape (n.d.). *Welcome to UWC history*. Retrieved from  
<https://www.uwc.ac.za/Pages/History.aspx> on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2015
- University of the Western Cape (n.d.). *Then and now*. Retrieved from  
<http://prospectus.uwc.ac.za/educate/about/then-now/> on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2015
- University of the Western Cape (n.d.). *Faculty of Education*. Retrieved from  
<http://prospectus.uwc.ac.za/educate/faculty-of-education/> on October 14<sup>th</sup> 2015

- Vidovich, L. (2004). Towards internationalizing the curriculum in a context of globalization: comparing policy processes in two settings. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education*, (34), 443-461.
- Vita, G. (2001). Learning styles, culture and inclusive instruction in the multicultural classroom: a business and management perspective. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, (38), (2), pages 165 – 174.
- Volet, S. (1999). Learning across cultures: Appropriateness of knowledge transfer.
- Watkins, B. J., & Tisdell, E. J. (2006). Negotiating the labyrinth from margin to center: Adult degree program administrators as program planners within higher education institutions. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 56 (2), 134 – 159.
- Welch, A. R. (1996). The peripatetic professor: The internationalization of the academic profession. *Higher Education*, (34), 323-345.
- Wilson, A. L. (1999). Creating identities of dependency: adult education as a knowledge-power regime. *International journal of lifelong education*, 18 (2), 85-93.
- Wilson, A. L., & Cervero, R. M. (1994). The politics of responsibility: A theory of program planning practice for adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, (45), 249-268.
- Wilson, A. L., & Cervero, R. M. (1996). Learning from practice: Learning to see what matters in program planning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education Journal*, (69), 91 – 99.
- Wilson, A. L., & Cervero, R. M. (1997). The song remains the same: The selective tradition of technical rationality in adult education program planning theory. *International Journal of Lifelong Education Journal*, 16 (2), 84 – 108.

- Wilson, A. L., & Cervero, R. M. (2006). *Working the planning table*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Yang, B. (1999). How effectively do you use power and influence? In Silberman, Mel (Ed.), *The 1999 training and performance sourcebook*. New York: Mc Graw-Hill.
- Yang, B., & Cervero, R. M. (2001). Power and influence styles in programme planning: relationship with organizational political contexts. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20 (4), 289 – 296.
- Yang, B., Cervero, R. M., Valentine, T., & Benson, J. (1998). Development and validation of an instrument to measure adult educators' power and influence. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48 (4), 227 – 245.

**Appendix A: Message of introduction to participants**

Vancouver, (date)

Dear Dr.

Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in my research project. I am quite excited about having the opportunity to listen to your comments on the ALGC program since all members of my research committee have indicated that you have made a significant contribution to its design, implementation, stabilization and growth.

I am attaching the consent form to this message for your consideration. I would highly appreciate if you could sign it and send it back to me at your earliest convenience if you agree with its terms. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any further information, or if you have any questions.

I also would be very thankful if you could suggest a date and time for when the interview should take place. Please feel free to pick a date that is the most convenient for you, and I will accommodate my schedule to yours.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to talking to you soon.

Sincerely,

Armindo Fontana

## Appendix B: Consent Form

Department of Educational Studies  
 Mailing address:  
 2125 Main Mall  
 Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4  
 Tel: 604-822-5374  
 Fax: 604-822-4244  
<http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca>

**“Consent Form”**  
**UNVEILING THE MYSTERY:**  
**UNDERSTANDING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE**  
**ADULT LEARNING AND GLOBAL CHANGE PROGRAM**

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Tom Sork. Phone number: (604) 822-5251.

**Co-Investigator:** Armindo Fontana, Masters of Arts in Adult Education, Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education, The University of British Columbia. Phone number: (778) 855-4170. E-mail: aafontana@yahoo.com.

This research is part of a thesis for a Master's degree.

**Purpose:** I am conducting a research study that will investigate the Adult Learning and Global Change program (ALGC), involving universities in Canada (University of British Columbia), Sweden (Linköping University), South Africa (University of the Western Cape) and Australia (where the original partner, University of Technology, in Sydney, was replaced by Monash University), in an attempt to determine the reasons for its survival, stabilization and growth.

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a faculty member at one of the four partner universities directly involved in the planning, implementation and management of the ALGC program. As such, you likely have had direct access to the information and experiences related to the purpose of this research project, so you might help me explain the achievements of the ALGC program during its planning, implementation and growth phases.

**Study Procedures:** You are being asked to contribute to my research project by participating in at least one phone/Skype interview where I will ask questions about your participation in the ALGC program and about your views on the reasons for its stabilization, growth and accomplishments. I expect the interview to take no more than one hour initially. Any follow up interviews will require additional time, but no more than two hours in total.

The sessions will be audio-taped.

**Potential Risks:** There is a possible risk to the reputations of the people and institutions involved, although the likelihood of this happening is small since the focus of the study will be on the accomplishments of the program.

**Potential Benefits:** I believe participation in the study will benefit you as the program you helped plan, implement and/or manage will be highlighted, which can only improve your reputation.

I can send you also a report of the finding if you provide a mailing address.

**Confidentiality:** Your identity and the confidentiality of the information you will provide will be protected both during and after the research study as I will ascribe codes to all participants that only my supervisor and I will know. These codes will be based on code numbers, which will be ascribed randomly to participants. Please be assured that only my supervisor and I will have access to all the data, including codes. The data will be stored in computerized, hard copy and audio recording files. These codes will be kept in computerized files in my computer, which is password protected. The codes will also be kept in a hard copy file that will stay in a locked filing cabinet. My supervisor and I will be the only ones with access to the computer's password and the key to the filing cabinet. Although the data from the study will be published, your identity will not be revealed.

**Contact for information about the study:** If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Tom Sork, at 1-604-822-5826 or by e-mail at [tom.sork@ubc.ca](mailto:tom.sork@ubc.ca).

**Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:** If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail to [RSIL@ors.ubc.ca](mailto:RSIL@ors.ubc.ca).

**Consent:** Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

---

Subject Signature

Date

## Appendix C: Questionnaire



### **Department of Educational Studies**

Mailing address: 2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: 604-822-5374

Fax: 604-822-4244

<http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca>

### **ADULT LEARNING AND GLOBAL CHANGE (ALGC) PROGRAM**

As part of the process of writing a thesis, which is one of the requirements to complete a M.A. in Adult Education at the University of British Columbia, I have written a research proposal where I included a few questions that will guide my research project. Here are the questions I want to answer:

How has this academic program survived after all these years? In what respects is this program regarded as successful by those involved in it? How has the ALGC program accomplished important goals such as stabilization, growth and longevity? What factors threatened the survival of a program involving universities from countries and institutions with such strong cultural differences? How were these challenges addressed in a satisfactorily manner? If conflict has occurred, how has it been handled and are all parties involved satisfied with the methods(s) used? What can be done to ensure that planning, implementing and managing a program in this context becomes an effective process in terms of achieving its goals?

The questions below, which constitute the core of the interview I will conduct with participants in my research project, were formulated out of the desire to accomplish the goal of answering the research questions I raised in the research proposal by:

- A) Expanding the answers I have found in the historical records of the program and in the literature to the questions I raised in the research proposal
- B) Exploring other possible answers to the research questions I asked in the research proposal that were suggested by the examination of historical documents related with the ALGC program and of the literature on educational program planning and on international collaboration.

#### **QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Could you please describe your involvement with the ALGC program? What did attract you to the program?
- 2) What were the major factors that brought this group of people together?
- 3) Do you regard the ALGC program as successful? If yes, in what respects do you consider it successful? If no, please explain in what respects it has not been as successful? How has the ALGC program accomplished important goals such as stabilization, growth and longevity?
- 4) What factors threatened the survival of the program during its planning phase? How were they handled? Do you believe they were handled satisfactorily? Do you think they could have been handled in a different way that could have brought (even) better results? Could you please explain how?
- 5) What factors threatened the survival of the program during its implementation phase (the first two years)? How were they handled? Do you believe they were handled satisfactorily? Why? Do you

think they could have been handled in a different way that could have brought better results? Could you please explain how?

- 6) What factors threatened the survival of the program during its stabilization phase (years 2-4)? How were they handled? Do you believe they were handled satisfactorily? Why? Do you think they could have been handled in a different way that could have brought (even) better results? Could you please explain how?
- 7) What factors threatened the survival of the program during its growth phase (after the fourth year)? How were they handled? Do you believe they were handled satisfactorily? Why? Do you think they could have been handled in a different way that could have brought (even) better results? Could you please explain how?
- 8) When conflicts occurred, how were they handled and what were the outcomes? Do you think conflicts were handled in a satisfactorily manner for all parties involved? How could have they been addressed differently?
- 9) What have been the major weaknesses of the ALGC program? How can you explain them? What could/can be done to address these issues or to prevent them in future programs involving international collaboration?
- 10) What other important issues that I may have ignored have contributed for the implementation, stabilization and growth of the ALGC program?
- 11) Do you still believe that international collaboration represents a viable and rewarding initiative to universities around the world? Do you think it is possible for someone to launch a program like this today? What would have to be done to ensure that planning, implementing and managing a program in this context would allow participating institutions to achieve their goals for the program?