

ADOPTING TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS IN AN ALLIANCE SETTING

The Case of Global eManagement MBA

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Abstract: The notion of initial conditions, empirically grounded by Doz (1996), provides a rich explanation of alliance evolution, stressing the need for learning about the environment and the partners as a prerequisite for the establishment of common practices among alliance partners. However, how initial conditions affect this process, at a micro-analytic level is not fully understood. Through a longitudinal case study of a global educational alliance, we examine the adoption of Internet-based mechanisms for teaching and cooperation among students. Research has shown that the introduction of new technological solutions disrupts existing organizational routines and in the case of strategic alliances leads to the establishment of common, inter-organizational routines. However, our empirical findings show that endogenous incompatibility of the four initial conditions can inhibit this process. The creation of Internet-based mechanisms to support common tasks needs to be supplemented by a frequent interface. Otherwise, failed expectations cause internal tensions in the alliance and partners tend to retreat in their own practices and abandon any common efforts.

Keywords: Initial conditions, task definitions, organizational routines, interface structure, expectations, Internet-based mechanisms for teaching, strategic alliances.

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