LEARNING IN INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC ALLIANCES-
INTEGRATION OF RESEARCH PARADOXES

The “Learning Organization” is firmly in management lexicon. Rapid globalization makes cross-national strategic alliances between “learning” organizations increasingly important to understand as global acculturation is still a distant promise. Integration of contradictory research regarding the impact of national cultural distance on inter-organizational learning outcomes is suggested through a broad research framework.

The concept of the ‘learning organization’ is gaining currency. Organizational learning is seen to allow for development of organizational design and renewal that provides the most durable and least imitable form of competitive advantage (Almeida et al, 2002)

Crossan, Lane and White (1999) suggest that learning by a member of an organization has to be shared by other members and be institutionalized before the learning is part of the organizational knowledge base. The base can be developed in many ways including acquiring knowledge from outside of the organization through structures such as strategic alliance.

The resource-based view of learning (Morgan and Hunt, 1995) asserts that in international strategic alliances, increased cultural distance creates learning challenges due to communication, compatibility development of common approaches. (Tiemessen et al, 1997)

As counterpoint, Phan and Peridis (2000) suggest that cultural distance can represent a key component in the learning process. They cite the double loop learning process that is amplified in alliances between culturally diverse partners (Argyris and Schon, 1996).

Van De Ven and Poole (1989) “action and structure” framework is used to develop a research model (Figure 1) to resolve the paradox provide greater insight into learning in International Strategic Alliances. Validated metrics and potential samples are also suggested.

Figure 1

![Diagram](image)

There is a growing body of work that suggests managers should consider the value of “loosely managed conflict” to generate unique and competitively advantageous learning from culturally distant alliance partners rather than just focusing on ease of knowledge transfer.