

Career Developments

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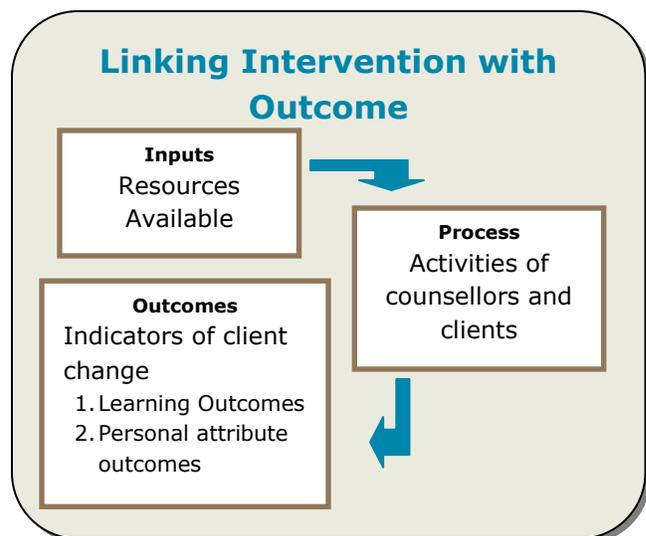
WHO WILL STEP FORWARD?

THE NEED FOR MULTIJURISDICTIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR INCREASED ACCOUNTABILITY

During the **2001 International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy** a paradox was observed. Practitioners reported that one of their primary goals was to provide better services to clients and practitioners saw policy makers as frequently providing a barrier to achieving that goal. Interestingly, policy makers reported that a primary goal for them was to provide better services to clients and policy makers saw practitioners as frequently being a barrier to achieving that goal. For each group, client best interest was a key goal and each group saw the other as interfering with the achievement of that goal.

A similar situation was observed in a major study of the evaluation practices of those involved in delivering career development services (Magnusson & Lalande, 2005). In that study, front line workers and agency managers reported that they believed it is important to evaluate career development services, however, when asked how often they evaluate their work with clients, the majority reported that they seldom did it. They thought the programs and services they offered were beneficial and the interventions they used were effective, however, the kind of data they collected made it difficult to produce evidence that would provide a convincing link between the interventions they used and the outcomes that were achieved.

In the above research, respondents expressed frustration that client contextual factors and societal impacts typically were not seen as relevant for evaluation. They also identified many outcomes that they thought were important, but which they did not (or were not allowed to) measure or report. These included client intrapersonal factors such as: Belief that change is possible, internal locus of control,



self-confidence, motivation, self-esteem, client self-reliance and initiative, and opportunity awareness. Practitioners also lamented that there was no way for them to report factors such as: Client goal attainment, client skill acquisition, independent client use of resources provided in career services centres, and client acquisition of non-job-related skills (job search,

literacy, etc.). Thus, many areas of client change were not being reported, mostly because they were seen as not important by their managers.

The research reported above was conducted by members of the Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development (CRWG, see <http://crwg-gdrc.ca>), using a combination of surveys, focus groups, and telephone interviews. Responses were obtained from more than 370 people, representing practitioners, employers, agency managers, policy makers. The resulting picture is paradoxical. People at all levels in the career industry agree that it is important to measure the outcomes of services, but very little evaluation is taking place. There is little agreement on what constitutes acceptable evidence of success. When evaluation is done, it often is restricted to variables that are easy to measure, but only scratch the surface. The many important indicators of client change, and other factors affecting client outcome, are not assessed.

One observation in the above research seems to underlie much of the data. Practitioners did not evaluate their work with clients because managers did not encourage them to do it. Agency managers did not promote evaluation because they were being funded to provide services to clients, not to do evaluation. Funders lamented that they did not have evidence of the client outcomes that resulted from the programs they funded. The lack of evaluation was seen as someone else's fault.

Who's in charge?

Especially in times of economic hardship, it is important to demonstrate the value of career development programs and services. The research mentioned above indicates that evaluating services is seen as important by all levels in the career development sector, but there seems to be a leadership vacuum: No one is willing to take the

first to initiate change in evaluation practices. All jurisdictions have the capability to effect change in the evaluation practices in the career development industry. However, someone needs to take the first step in creating change. We might ask: *If not me, the who? If not now, then when?*

In order to bridge the gap, a wide range of people working in the various facets of the career development industry will need to examine where they might exercise leadership in helping to demonstrate the value of career development services. For example, the contextual, intrapersonal, and skill-focused variables listed in the second paragraph of this article will need to be addressed, for they have an important impact to career development outcomes. The contextual variables comprise important barriers (or sometimes facilitators) to intervention success. They often mediate between skill and knowledge attainment and life-impact outcomes. The interpersonal factors speak to a client's willingness (or ability) to put the learning into action. The skill-focused outcomes are precursors to achieving the ultimate impact of career services. There is widespread agreement (cf. Killeen, White, & Watts, 1993) that such factors are important and that it is difficult to achieve client change if these contextual factors and personal attributes are not addressed. Agency respondents in the Canadian studies were warm to receiving this sort of evidence, but it was not being reported to them. Therefore, these types of client outcomes need to be identified and addressed in their own right, and trustworthy methods need to be developed to evaluate these types of variables. Furthermore, the impact will be greatest when there is a collective focus comprised of all jurisdictions working in concert, i.e., a multijurisdictional approach to demonstrating value.

What can I do?

To create a multijurisdictional approach to demonstrating the value of career development services, it will be important that all facets of the career development sector explore the contribution that they can make. The impact will be most profound when the answer to the *who question* is "Me" and the answer to the *when question* is "Now." Some examples of what might be done are provided below.

To create sustainable change in evaluation practices, the **academic community** will need to conduct and disseminate applied research that links practices with outcomes. Evidence gathering tools and procedures will need to be developed to track the intrapersonal variables mentioned earlier. These will need to be rigorously field tested in order to establish a basis for claiming they are credible and trustworthy data gathering tools that measure important factors affecting client outcome. Furthermore, these new evaluation procedures will need to be incorporated into practitioner training programs so that those working in the field begin to see their prime directives as including **both** the provision of services and the gathering of evidence attesting to the effectiveness of those services.

Professional training programs will need to be revised to make evaluation a more central (perhaps even compulsory) component of professional preparation. Furthermore, the evaluation practices will need to be demonstrated in the structure and practices of the professional training programs. Training programs will need to "walk the talk," demonstrating the importance of evaluation by making sure it is prominent in the structure and the practices involved with professional preparation.

People who design programs will need to build into their planning **both** a program delivery **and** a program evaluation component, so that when service providers think about **what they will do**

with their clients they also think about how they will tell **how well it's working**. Intervention guides will need to be developed that address explicitly how practitioners can enhance intrapersonal characteristics such as: Increasing motivation, building self-confidence, and enhancing client self-reliance. These intervention guides will need to include also procedures for gathering evidence of change in these intrapersonal variables that can be linked to the impact of services and also to the intervention in which clients participated.

Program evaluation experts will need to develop evaluation procedures that can be integrated into service delivery, so that collecting evidence of client change becomes a part of service delivery. Most people involved in the delivery of human services realize that the act of measuring something usually results in change. Recognizing this, evaluation becomes an integral part of intervention and evidence of intervention impact becomes part of the service delivery process.

Policy developers, program administrators, and funders will need to provide leadership by funding evaluation practices that are integrated into service delivery and insisting that a thorough evaluation plan is just as important as a service delivery plan. There will need to be a willingness to negotiate what indicators of client change will be viewed as acceptable evidence. Evaluation will need to be seen as a negotiated reality, rather than a prescribed reality (see Hiebert, 1994).

Practitioners will need to view their roles as combining two equally important components: Providing services (process) and gathering evidence that documents the changes that clients experience as a result of those services (outcome). Practitioners who have traditionally focused on delivering programs or providing services will need to examine what they are doing with a view to identifying the specific components

of their services that are responsible for the changes they see in their clients. Then they will need to develop a means for documenting the outcomes that permit them to link the outcomes with the services that are being provided (see Hiebert, 1997). In this regard, the *Compendium of Tools and Resources* developed by the CRWG will provide a useful starting point (see <http://www.ccdf.ca/crwg/tools.html>).

Agency managers and supervisors will need to give more prominence to evidence-based practice. They will need to provide in-service and professional development to give practitioners the knowledge and skill required to assess and document client outcomes. Practitioners believe that it is important for them to evaluate their work, but they often do not know how to gather evidence attesting to the outcomes clients experience. Thus leadership and encouragement will be needed in order for staff to incorporate evaluation into their service delivery.

Concluding Thoughts

During the 2001 International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy, policy makers issued a challenge to service providers and researchers: *You have not yet demonstrated the value of career development services*. The CRWG was formed in large part to address that challenge. The Working Group began by investigating current evaluation practices. The next step was to develop a framework for evaluating career development services that would be capable of tracking the outcomes associated with career development services in a way that could provide a link between the services received and the outcomes obtained (Baudoin et al., 2007). This was followed by several projects focused on developing innovative interventions and evaluating their success using the new evaluation framework (see Hiebert & Baudoin, 2007). In this way, the activities of the CRWG are an attempt to be part of the solution to creating

more effective evaluation practices in the career development sector.

However, more needs to be done. As long as everyone waits for others to make the first move towards addressing the problem, the probability for change is low. When people begin to take ownership for their part of the situation, then change becomes more probable. The lack of evaluation could create a crisis in the career development field. Thankfully, all jurisdictions in the career development sector think that evaluation is important and see the need for better evaluation practices. Each participant group expresses a belief that the interventions they use are effective; they just don't know how to obtain verifiable evidence attesting to the outcomes associated with career development services. Thus, the time is ripe for all groups to take ownership of the situation and exercise leadership in addressing it. If we approach this in a multijurisdictional way, then there is an excellent chance that we can correct the evidence vacuum.

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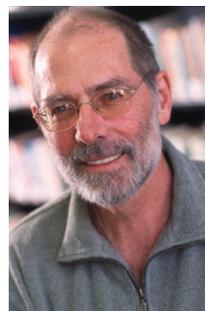
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ADVANCEMENTS IN EVALUATION

“You haven’t made the case for the impact and value of career development services.”

This is what policy makers told the Career Development Community at the end of the Pan-Canadian Symposium on Lifelong Learning, Career Development and Workforce Development in November 2003.

This challenge was the gauntlet that spurred the development of the Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development (CRWG) in 2005 to address two important issues in the field of career development:

- sharing of pan-Canadian research and promising practices, with an emphasis on sharing French and English research;
- strengthening the overall evidence-base for career development practice with an emphasis on informing policy.

Let’s have a look at where the field has gone with this challenge to date.

In the past five years the CRWG has completed a number of significant projects to advance the evidence base for career development including:

- The State of Practice in Canada in Measuring Career Service Impact (2005);
- Framework for Evaluation of career development services;
- Meeting Workplace Skills Needs: The Career Development Contribution (2007-2010); and
- Assessing the Impact of LMI on Career Decision-Making (2009-2011).

State of Practice

As a first step in developing an evaluation framework for measuring the outcomes of career development intervention, the CRWG undertook a research project focused on the state of evaluation practices in career development services in Canada. Practitioners, agencies, policy makers and employers were surveyed and interviewed on the importance of evaluation, the extent of evaluation practices, the types of outcomes identified and/or reported and the types of outcomes desired but

not reported. The research report "***The State of Practice in Canada in Measuring Career Service Impact: A CRWG Report***" by principal researchers Dr. Kris Magnusson and Dr. Vivian Lalande can be found in full on the CRWG website www.crwg-gdrc.ca.

Framework for Evaluation

Using information from the current evaluation practices, and the many years of research/evaluation experience of the group members, CRWG developed a framework for evaluating career development services that would track outcomes in a way that could provide a link between the services and the outcomes. A body of evidence for the outcomes of career development programs and services does not now exist but a common framework of evaluation used throughout the field will be able to provide a method for comparing evaluation and study results and thus begin an evidence-based database.

Meeting Workplace Skills The Career Development Contribution

In 2007, the CRWG received funding from Human Resources and Skill Development Canada under the Workplace Skills Initiative for a three year research project to develop and evaluate the impacts of career development programs on employees in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Career development programs are traditionally not widely used in SMEs or in Canadian workplaces more broadly. This study explored the impacts of innovative career development programs as human resource tools and the benefits to both employees and to the SMEs themselves. As part of this project, members of the CRWG conducted extensive research of the situation and career development needs of SME

employees and developed and evaluated the impact of three career development programs. Employees in the study were followed for 3 and 6 months in the case of two of the programs and for 3, 6 and 12 months in a third program. All three interventions resulted in positive impacts. Evaluation was based in the CRWG Framework. A full report of the results of the study is on the website, www.crwg-gdrc.ca.

Measuring the Impact of LMI on Career Decision-Making and Job Search

This 2010 study, funded by the Policy Research Branch of HRSDC, was done with 164 clients receiving services in several employment offices in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. Clients were followed for a four-month period. Adult participants requesting help in job search and career decision-making who had been given a package of labour market information specifically targeted to their employability need demonstrated an increase in: general ability to access and use LMI; knowledge about how to use LMI; skills for using LMI and taking action; personal attributes, e.g., optimism about their career future and confidence in their ability to self manage their careers. Evaluation of the interventions was based in the CRWG framework. The complete report will be on the website by the end of December.

A parallel study is anticipated in New Brunswick in French in winter, 2010.

Prove it Works

Prove it Works is a project proposing to build an Evidence Baseline in Career Development Services. The proposal is to use the CRWG evaluation framework to establish a body of evidence for the outcomes of career development programs and services. The

evidence will include tracking changes in learning outcomes (knowledge and skill acquisition as a result of services), personal attribute outcomes (including attitudinal and intrapersonal variables) and impact outcomes (including employment status as well as social, relational and economic measures). Such a body of evidence does not currently exist in the career development sector. A report titled "Quality Standards in Career Development Services: A Canadian "Snapshot" and an International Perspective" uncovered a number of promising but relatively unknown practices in measurement of outcomes. The Prove it Works concept paper includes incorporating such further innovation. Another positive development is that the provincial partners who were active in the LMI research project (Saskatchewan and New Brunswick) indicated a strong interest in participating in the Prove it Works project. The proposal has been submitted to the Policy Research Directorate of HRSDC.

Readers are invited to share their innovations or procedures for evaluating client services and/or changes in client learning outcomes, personal attributes and impact outcomes. Please email your information to information@ccdf.ca.

A PROVINCIAL VIEW: BRITISH COLUMBIA

A wind of change is sweeping across British Columbia in the career and employment sector. The BC Government has designed a new BC Employment Program Model for funded employment services that will be implemented in April 2012, combining all of the former provincial and federal (LMDA) employment programs into one program. The new model will transition BC from close to 300 direct funded contracts to 73 contracts overseeing 98 one-stop Employment Services Centres. Agencies and practitioners are working to understand the service delivery and payment model, and to form partnerships to operate these ESC's, while also navigating the closure of some programs and the broad reduction of budgets as the government seeks to manage available



funds through to the new program's implementation. Employment service providers are holding on to their hats as they join together to push through the wind and harness the power of the new employment service delivery model, with an end goal to provide excellent services to all British Columbians.

Over the past year, The BC Career Development Association has been committed to supporting members in facing the winds of change. The BCCDA has provided the following opportunities to members: "Decoding Business Transformation" and

"Certification/Training for Transformation" sessions delivered in six areas of the province as well as hosting a session and at the annual

Career Development Conference. As well, BCCDA held a training day on "Applying the Bridges Transition Model to Transformation", and a World Café and online survey for all members to contribute to the discussion on leadership and services of the association.

BCCDA, along with coordination of monthly training days and the annual Career Development Conference, is mandated with governance and management of the Certified Career Development Practitioner designation, based on the National Standards and Guidelines. Over 250 practitioners have now been certified, with 60 more applications under review, and many more being received each month. Due to the growing recognition of the value of certification and the pressures of the looming sector changes, the 'grandfathering period' has been extended one year to February 2012. This will allow more of the practitioners in BC who have 5 or more years' experience and who have taken the required ethics and career theories courses to attain their CCDP credential.

ASPECT, the BC association representing community based training agencies, has likewise been very active, convening a panel to review and respond to the proposed funding model for the new BC Employment Program, advocating on behalf of members, and delivering symposium and conferences such as "The Partnership Summit" and "underSTAND and DELIVER: The Implications and Analysis of the Draft RFP" to assist employment agencies in meeting the new program structure and requirements. ASPECT also launched their social enterprise division, Every Aspect Management, offering association and events management, ASPECT impact on-line training, and sales of employability resources.

Another development in the employment sector in BC has been a focus on Essential Skills. The Ministry of Adult Education and Labour Market Development has provided funding for a variety of Essential Skills training programs for small and medium businesses as well as unemployed individuals who do not have the benefit of Employment Insurance. Career development practitioners with education backgrounds have put their skills to work as workplace trainers, coaches and coordinators for Essential Skills training programs. Delivery of these programs is occurring in a variety of post-secondary institutions and other organizations across the province.

Looking forward, we expect that 2011 will have many windy days as agencies collaborate to submit proposals in response to the RFPs in the spring, and then as contracts are awarded in the fall, with the new services model start-up in April 2012.

BCCDA has planned the annual Career Development Conference (CDC 2011) for this March with the theme "Evolve: Transform with Passion and Purpose" (Registration is now open at www.bccda.org). The opening keynote speaker, Sareena Hopkins from the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) will help put the challenges and changes in BC within the context of what is happening in Career Development on a national and global level. We invite career practitioners from across BC and Canada to join us March 7-9th for this conference that will focus on building 'resilience', managing change, and gaining new career development knowledge and skills. We hope to see you there!

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