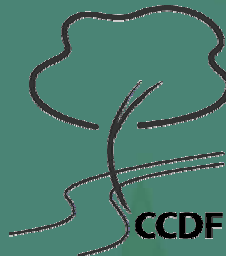


CANADIAN RESEARCH WORKING GROUP FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT (CRWG)

The State of Practice in Canada in Measuring Career Service Impact: A CRWG Report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

MEMBERS OF THE CANADIAN RESEARCH WORKING GROUP FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT (CRWG)	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS	V
LIST OF TABLES	IX
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION: MAKING THE CASE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA	1
Background	1
Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development (CRWG)	2
References	4
CHAPTER 2	5
THE EFFICACY OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS: A SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH	5
Background	5
Target Audience	6
Populations and Samples	6
Research Methods	7
General Findings	8
Diverging Theoretical Assumptions	9
Conclusions	10
References	12
CHAPTER 3	13
STATE OF PRACTICE IMPACT SURVEY: METHODS	13
Introduction	13
Data Collection	13
<i>Surveys</i>	13
<i>Telephone Interviews</i>	15
Data Analysis	17
<i>Survey Data</i>	17
<i>Telephone Interview Data</i>	17
<i>Focus Group</i>	18
CHAPTER 4	19
RESULTS	19

Demographic Data	19
<i>Respondents</i>	19
<i>Comparison of Anglophone and Francophone Respondents</i>	19
<i>Kinds of Career Services Provided</i>	20
<i>Demographics of Canadian Career Services Agency Respondents</i>	24
<i>Demographics of Clients Served by Practitioner Respondents</i>	24
Importance and Practice of Outcome Measurement.....	28
Measures of Association	29
<i>Type of Agency and Perceived Importance of Outcome Measurement</i>	29
<i>Type of Agency and Actual Measurement of Outcomes/Impact</i>	31
<i>Size of Service Provider, Perceived Importance and Actual Measurement of Impact</i>	34
Qualitative Analysis.....	35
<i>Most Important Outcomes that Agencies and Practitioners Report</i>	36
<i>Outcomes that Go Unreported</i>	37
<i>Focus Group Data</i>	40
Policy Makers' and Employers' Data.....	42
<i>Policy Makers</i>	43
<i>Employers</i>	44
Summary.....	44
CHAPTER 5.....	45
IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION	45
Generalizing the Findings	45
The Nature of Impact Assessment.....	46
Improving Outcome Measurement.....	47
Increased Level of Sophistication	47
Increased System Support.....	48
Comments on Statistical Trends	49
Recommendations and Next Steps.....	50
Summary.....	52
APPENDIX A. LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS	53
APPENDIX B. ENGLISH AGENCY QUESTIONNAIRE	57
APPENDIX C – STATE OF PRACTICE	65
APPENDIX D. LETTER OF INVITATION TO POLICY MAKERS	75
APPENDIX E. LETTER OF INVITATION FOR EMPLOYERS	77

APPENDIX F. PHONE SURVEY FOR POLICY MAKERS	79
APPENDIX G. PHONE SURVEY FOR EMPLOYERS	81

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Relationship Between Language of Practitioner Respondents and Perceived Value of Measuring Outcomes/Impact of Career Services.....	20
Table 2. Relationship Between Language of Practitioner Respondents and Actual Measurement of Outcomes/Impact of Career Services	20
Table 3. Kind and Frequency of Services Provided by Agencies	21
Table 4. Kind and Frequency of Services Provided by Anglophone Practitioners.....	21
Table 5. Kind and Frequency of Services Provided by Francophone Practitioners.....	23
Table 6. Comparison of Ranking of Service Provision: Agencies, Anglophone Practitioners, and Francophone Practitioners	23
Table 7. Age Groups Served by Agencies.....	24
Table 8. Age Groups Served by Practitioners.....	25
Table 9. Gender Focus of Practitioner Services	25
Table 10. Cultural Focus of Practitioner Services.....	26
Table 11. Employment Status Focus of Practitioner Services	26
Table 12. Employment Setting of Practitioners: Kind of Agency.....	27
Table 13. Employment Setting of Practitioners: Size of Agency.....	27
Table 14. Perceived Importance of Outcomes/Impact Measurement.....	28
Table 15. Actual Practice of Outcomes/Impact Measurement.....	28
Table 16. Relationship Between Type of Agency/Service Provider and Perceived Value of Measuring Outcomes/Impact of Career Services: Agency Results.....	29
Table 17. Relationship Between Type of Agency/Service Provider and Perceived Value of Measuring Outcomes/Impact of Career Services: Anglophone Practitioner Results	30
Table 18. Relationship Between Type of Agency/Organization/Service Provider and Degree to Which They Evaluate Outcomes/Impact of Services: Agency Results	32
Table 19. Relationship Between Type of Agency/Organization/Service Provider and Degree to Which They Evaluate Outcomes/Impact of Services: Anglophone Practitioner Results.	33
Table 20. Relationship Between Size of Agency/Service Provider and Perceived Value of Measuring Outcomes/Impact of Services: Agency Results.....	34
Table 21. Relationship Between Size of Agency/Service Provider and Degree to Which They Evaluate Outcomes/Impact of Services: Agency Results	35

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: MAKING THE CASE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA

BACKGROUND

The field of career development has a rich tradition of theory and research that dates back for almost a century. Today, career development interventions and services span educational, community and workplace settings across the globe. The primary goal of these services is to help individuals connect to, choose and manage education, training and work options which are congruent with their interests, passions, talents and sense of purpose. There is also recognition that, when these individual goals are realized, career development services can have an impact on broader social and economic goals, such as raising community quality of life, increasing opportunities, lowering social barriers to inclusion and economic independence, and generally maintaining a vibrant social and economic order.

Many specific claims can be made about the contributions that quality career development services can make. Perhaps the strongest is that individual quality of life improves, as can be reflected in a number of ways. When individual talents, interests and passions are harnessed, people tend to become more motivated learners. They are more likely to be productive employees when their sense of purpose aligns with that of the employer. There is a reduction in social exclusion, as people become empowered to explore and act upon the things that are meaningful to them. A cumulative impact of these outcomes is a more vibrant, equitable workplace where workers enjoy improved levels of mental health. And when career development services are integrated across social and economic strata, a strong foundation is built for cost-effective skills development and learning systems.

There are many indirect claims pertaining to the impact of effective career development services, particularly related to the direct cost benefits of career development systems of interventions. Articulating purpose with passion results in fewer “trial and error” learners. Students in educational settings have increased program completion rates and fewer within institution program transfers. People stay involved in the workforce longer, resulting in lowered social assistance and unemployment benefit payments. Improved mental health in the workplace reduces levels of stress, thus reducing health care costs. People with identified career paths are less likely to become marginalized in society and more likely to make positive community contributions. In the workplace, employers report that employees perform to a higher standard, there is less staff turnover, fewer people take sick leave, and more participate in professional development and/or learning activities.

Virtually anyone involved with the field of career development can attest, through direct experience and observation, to the veracity of these claims. There is only one small problem: we cannot really prove many, if any, of the above claims! In fact, we still possess very little concrete evidence that career interventions actually “work,” and the evidence that we do have tends to reflect very specific interventions for specific populations (see Chapter 2).

Why does the lack of direct evidence matter? Perhaps the greatest reason is that funding for service delivery is increasingly linked to demonstration of results. Simply put, if services cannot clearly demonstrate the impact they are having, they will be less likely to receive funding. Furthermore, one criterion of a profession is the evidence base for its practice; if we want to

increase our credibility, we will need to be able to document the impact we have. Increased professionalism is also related to public accountability; the people who use our services deserve some level of quality assurance. It will also be important to have a strong evidence base if we hope to influence public or organizational policy in desired directions. Finally, practitioners need evidence of the impact of their interventions for their own professional integrity and accountability.

Saying that evidence is needed is one thing; gathering that evidence is quite another. The difficulties associated with documenting the impact of career interventions may be attributable, in part, to the growing recognition of the complexity of career planning and the related challenges of efficacy research: (a) the range of factors influencing individual choice, (b) the wide variance in client groups, issues and concerns that makes comparison of evidence difficult, and (c) the lack of common outcome measures in the field of career development (Hughes, 2004). It is clear that a systematic framework for creating, collecting and evaluating career services efficacy is needed, one that captures the complexity of career practices and outcomes.

In response to this need, and directly following from the recommendations of Working Connections: A Pan-Canadian Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development (held in Toronto in November of 2003), a forum was convened to discuss the possibility of creating a comprehensive framework for the effective evaluation of career development services that could serve as a guide for career development service providers, practitioners and policy developers in Canada. At the initial forum, which was held in Ottawa in March, 2004, researchers from across Canada were invited to share their perspectives on the state of career efficacy research, and to discuss what steps can be taken to provide evidence for the “what, how, why, and for whom” of career development services in Canada. The Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development (CRWG) was created from this forum.

CANADIAN RESEARCH WORKING GROUP FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT (CRWG)

In response to a recommendation from the pan-Canadian Symposium, the CRWG launched, in the fall of 2004, a preliminary study to learn more about how Canadian providers of career services evaluate the impact of their services. The main goal of the research was to explore the current state of practice in Canada in order to create shared understandings of evaluation procedures currently being used as well as the desired outcomes for career development practices. Specifically, the CRWG set out to learn about:

- the service outcomes actually gathered and reported by front-line career practitioners;
- the service outcomes gathered and reported at the office, agency or school board levels;
- the service outcomes which are being achieved by front-line and office, agency, and/or school board levels but which are not reported;
- how policy makers (who fund services) evaluate the services, what they want back from the services, and the kinds of evaluation information and data they prefer to have about the services; and
- how employers evaluate career development services in the workplace, what outcomes they want from these services, whether the evaluation information is useful to them, and the kinds of evaluation information they would prefer to receive.

The products of this research are presented in this report, which contains five major sections. Chapter 2 provides a brief synthesis of recent research on the efficacy of career development interventions. In Chapter 3, the methods employed for collecting and analyzing the data are described. Chapter 4 provides a summary of the key findings for each of the research target groups. Conclusions, recommendations and an overview of the proposed research agenda to follow from this work are included in Chapter 5.

The research described in this report is the first concrete step in a much more ambitious research and development agenda in Canada. With the preliminary data in hand, the CRWG will be submitting a large-scale application for extended funding to continue the important work of creating an effective and accurate system for measuring the impact of career services. A complete listing of CRWG members, with contact details, is included in Appendix A with the letter of invitation to participants.

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CHAPTER 2

THE EFFICACY OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS: A SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH

BACKGROUND

Two recent symposia have highlighted the need for public policy to be guided by evidence pertaining to the efficacy of career development practice. The first was an international symposium entitled *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. It was held in Toronto in October 2003, with 28 countries represented. The second, held in Toronto in November 2003, was *Working Connections: A Pan-Canadian Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development* with all provinces and territories represented. A consistent theme that emerged from both Symposia was the need to develop effective systems for gathering data concerning the impact of career development/career guidance services on a number of levels, such as individual well-being, social inclusion, and economic development. Furthermore, participants in both symposia discussed the need for data to inform and influence public policy related to the provision of career services.

The participants at these Symposia echoed a growing call among researchers for more comprehensive efficacy assessment of career practices. Herr (2003) suggests the development of cost-benefit analyses to document the results of career services, and the creation of national research databases to collect and distribute such information. Watts (2002, 2004) urges efficacy research to link career practices to economic efficiency, social equity and sustainability. In Canada, Hiebert (1994) has called for increased and more precise efficacy assessment in career counselling. Currently, several Canadian researchers, including Bryan Hiebert and Vivian Lalande at the University of Calgary and Bill Borgen and Norm Amundson at the University of British Columbia, have been working on the problem of accountability and efficacy measurement in career services.

Despite increased awareness of the need for better understanding of how and why career services are effective, the number of outcome research studies has actually decreased in the last 20 years (Whiston, Brecheisen & Stephens, 2003). The decline may be attributable, in part, to the growing recognition of the complexity of career planning. Hughes (2004), for example, commenting on the difficulties associated with assessing the impact of career interventions, notes three major challenges to efficacy research: the range of factors influencing individual choice; the wide variance in client groups, issues and concerns that makes comparison of evidence difficult; and the lack of common outcome measures in the field of career development.

It is clear that a framework is needed for creating, collecting and evaluating the efficacy of career development services. An initial step in that process was taken with the compilation of the *Annotated Bibliography of Current Research on the Efficacy of Career Development Interventions and Programs* (Roest & Magnusson, 2004). The annotated bibliography focused primarily on articles that examined the efficacy of career development services and interventions and had been published in English-language career journals within the past 10 years. A parallel initiative, led by Michel Turcotte, examined articles published in French-language journals. Time constraints did not permit a comprehensive review; however, the articles included provide a representative sampling of research in the field. The central themes and observations derived from the review of 53 English-language articles are presented here, in

the following categories: target audience, populations and samples, research methods, general findings about efficacy, and diverging theoretical assumptions.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Most of the articles reviewed addressed an academic or research audience and, to a lesser extent, practitioners. Since the review focused on academic journals, this is hardly surprising. However, given the need for evidence to inform practice, it does pose a few problems. For the most part, descriptions and results are not presented in a manner that would be accessible to many practitioners. Thus, even when specific positive results are found, they may not find their way into general practice. As a result, efficacy research efforts may be replicated without any systematic building upon known data. The problem with this is that, each time an evaluation needs to be conducted, agencies must create their own processes, and do not benefit from the experience, knowledge and recommendations of earlier work. It is difficult to build systematically upon, and thereby advance, our knowledge of the impact of career services when such a piecemeal approach is taken.

The academic nature of the articles reviewed poses a secondary problem for practitioners. Even when positive treatment effects are found, very little description of the nature of the program, service or intervention is provided. Practitioners are thus left on their own to locate more detailed descriptions of exactly what it was that proved to be effective. Furthermore, most of the reports focus on holistic program or intervention effects; there is very little analysis of the impact or efficacy of specific treatment or program components.

It is not only practitioners who do not fully benefit from existing efficacy research. Published academic research studies rarely refer to the implications of the research for public policy. This is somewhat surprising because, as Herr (2003) noted, "Career counseling, in its many manifestations, is largely a creature of public policy" (p. 8). Taking Herr's comments a step further, it is also the case that the public institutions that develop policy (e.g., governments) are the largest source of funding for career services. It would be prudent for researchers to be sensitive to the implications of their work for the creation and shaping of public policy, because ultimately, that is the source of their funding. However, this does not seem to be the case. Although Herr cautions against too close a linkage between career services and public policy, little focused research is available that would support or better inform policy.

POPULATIONS AND SAMPLES

The primary participants in career efficacy research have been students of educational institutions. To some extent, the articles reviewed in the Annotated Bibliography illustrate the principle of "convenience sampling." Of the 41 specific research studies reviewed, 34 described intervention effects on students, mostly Caucasian, in educational settings. Of these, 20 studies were conducted with university or college students, 9 with high school students, and 5 with middle school students. This pattern is common in psychological research in general; most studies are done where access to participants is convenient. Although in one sense this a reasonable and understandable approach, it still leaves large gaps in our knowledge about the differential effects that career services may have on other groups, such as women, members of varying ethnic or cultural groups, or people from differing educational or socio-economic backgrounds. Clearly the focus of research needs to be expanded to include a much broader spectrum.

RESEARCH METHODS

The majority of the studies reviewed used quantitative methodology, and some used mixed method designs (i.e., quantitative analysis supplemented by qualitative analysis). The most commonly employed research designs were variations on pretest/post-test, treatment group to control group experimental designs. In some cases, treatment group/control group post-test only designs were employed. Depending on the sophistication of the study, one or more predictor variables were related to one or two criteria variables. In general, the studies attempted to isolate specific treatment effects (e.g., computer assisted guidance systems) on specific outcome measures (e.g., occupational decision-making).

A major concern with interpretation of the efficacy data is the imprecision of the outcome measures. Often instruments with questionable standards of reliability and validity serve as the specific outcome measure. For example, studies of youth often employ measures of career maturity, despite the difficulties associated with measuring the career maturity construct. Possibly even stronger efficacy results would be obtained with more accurate outcome measures.

A second concern pertains to assumptions about the outcome measures. Often specific outcomes are used on the assumption that they are linked to positive career planning. For example, increases in occupational exploration behaviours are commonly used as outcome measures, even though there is little evidence to support the assumption that such increases are related to making sound occupational decisions. An equally plausible hypothesis could be that increasing engagement in meaningful activities, regardless of occupational context, will lead to the discovery of satisfying opportunities. Most of the efficacy research published seems to be rooted in what Weinrach (1979) calls the “structural approach” to career development. However, the underlying assumptions governing the selection and subsequent measurement of appropriate outcomes are rarely made explicit in these studies.

Methods of establishing experimental conditions and of measuring aggregate outcomes are problematic for career efficacy research. Very little attention has been paid to the differential effects that interventions may have on sub-groups within the sample or on diverse samples. Furthermore, few studies compare interventions and their treatment effects. One of the most commonly reported types of study assesses a specific intervention or treatment (“the effects of treatment program A on outcome measure X”). Such studies usually reveal positive, but modest, support for the intervention; however, few studies compare the efficacy of interventions with similar goals (“Is treatment program A any more effective than treatment program B?”). Some studies attempt to assess the effects of computerized systems of guidance, frequently comparing the impact of these types of programs to individual counselling and/or to combine counselling and computerized interventions. More comparisons of this kind are needed. Furthermore, as Brown and Ryan Krane (2000) note, more attention needs to be paid to the combined effect of interventions.

Methods of data aggregation are problematic for career efficacy research, particularly in analysis of the efficacy of programs of intervention. While many program evaluation studies provide multiple outcome measures, very few analyze the differential impact of specific program components. The focus on global outcome measures does not help us understand what components, and in what combination, contributed to the outcome. Furthermore, unless process variables are specifically addressed, there is no way of knowing if poor results are related to actual program content or simply to the lack of adherence to program design. Although Hiebert (1994) called for both process and outcome assessment components in program evaluations

over a decade ago, few such comprehensive evaluations are making their way into academic publications.

There have been a few attempts to conduct meta-analyses of career efficacy research (e.g., Sexton, 1996; Whiston, Brecheisen & Stephens, 2003; Whiston, Sexton & Lasoff, 1998). Most of these attempts were hampered by questionable research methodology, insufficient information, or lack of consistency in the reporting of the data in the original studies. Furthermore, there is very little consistency in the choice of outcome measures, even when measuring identical constructs. Therefore, it is very difficult to draw conclusions pertaining to career intervention efficacy across studies. Despite these problems, most of the authors of the meta-analyses and literature reviews agreed that career development interventions are indeed effective. The problem is that little is known about why, how, or for whom they work. Overall, research in career intervention efficacy is piecemeal, fragmented, and unsystematic.

GENERAL FINDINGS

Given the limitations of audience, population samples and research methodology discussed above, one might wonder what, if anything, we can conclude about career efficacy research. Despite these limitations, a few trends did emerge among the studies reported. The most common finding in the efficacy research was that career interventions or programs had a positive effect on participant satisfaction. For example, even in studies that demonstrated no specific treatment effects, the authors would report that clients were satisfied with the processes or interventions, or that they “reacted positively” to the different treatments. It can be concluded that participants generally express satisfaction with career interventions.

Much of the evidence for the efficacy of career interventions pertains to changes in client competence (37 of 41 studies) or client behaviour (8 of 41 studies). Even though a broad spectrum of interventions is represented in the studies reviewed, career interventions in general have been shown to have significant effect in two main areas. First, career interventions increase client exploratory behaviours. Participants are more likely to engage in activities that broaden their range of information and knowledge of career options after engaging in some form of career intervention. Second, participants in the studies reviewed are more likely to make career decisions after engaging in a career intervention. Unfortunately, there is little evidence to suggest whether the various interventions have differential effects; we do not know if one form of intervention is more effective than another in producing these effects.

Very little attention has been paid to aspects of career planning or career development processes other than exploration and decision-making behaviours. Examples of gaps include the role that engagement plays in career planning (e.g., the use of personal meaning in career planning, or the identification of sources of personal meaning as a motivator/guide for career exploration), the development of prerequisite and planning skills needed to actualize a decision, and the development of systems of social support and/or feedback when implementing career decisions. Overall, the research may be characterized by a central assumption that career planning is largely a cognitive process, and that once a decision is made, it can and will be implemented.

The review of the literature reveals another problem with the assessment of career intervention efficacy; scant attention has been paid to broader outcomes of career interventions. There are little follow-up data to indicate whether clients who use career services attain greater levels of later job satisfaction, work performance or life satisfaction, compared with those who do not

access the services; more longitudinal studies are needed. Given that most agencies and services find themselves in an era of fiscal restraint, research into global outcomes is essential for sustaining existing programs and for providing evidence of the need to develop new ones.

Finally, the global impact of career interventions remains virtually unknown. For example, it is very difficult to determine the economic benefits of career interventions. As Hughes (2004) reports, "Research findings that measure the economic benefits of guidance are problematic, mainly because guidance effectiveness research in the United Kingdom is usually short-term and focused on immediate results" (p. 2). The same observation could be applied to studies conducted in North America, where even less is known about the social impact of career interventions. While it may be reasonable to speculate that good occupational decisions would lead to stronger, more stable families, increased connection with community and decreased isolation or alienation, no studies have been found that address such possibilities. Longitudinal research that is able to build upon multiple sources of research evidence and address multiple factors is clearly needed.

DIVERGING THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

In the studies reviewed for this annotated bibliography, results are often presented as if there is agreement regarding the true goals of career planning. Theoretical assumptions are rarely made explicit, even though there may be a variety of perspectives about what constitutes effective career planning. As noted earlier, most efficacy research seems to have been conducted from a structural perspective (e.g., linking specific individual attributes and occupational choice). Typically, this approach results in the selection of outcome measures such as increased knowledge of self (e.g., through standardized or informal career assessment measures), increased knowledge of the world of work (e.g., increases in occupational information or occupational information seeking behaviours), or the selection of a specific occupational goal (occupational decision-making). The relationship between these variables and broader outcomes such as career satisfaction or career stability is not known. Furthermore, there is little evidence even suggesting that these are the most relevant factors for consideration in career planning.

The lack of description of process variables associated with career planning is also problematic. In most studies, little differentiation is made regarding the process of career planning. Although process approaches to career planning have been described (e.g., Magnusson, 1992; Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1990; Super, 1990), research studies rarely identify the process of career planning that interventions intend to address. A dominant although covert assumption seems to be that attending to one component of career planning improves overall career planning. Examples of such covert assumptions include the belief that increasing exploratory behaviours is a desired result, or that the general goal of interventions is decision-making.

In addition to the problems with outcome and process measures, there is also a need to identify client or career problem characteristics that may moderate the effects of treatment. Three specific areas are of concern. First, few if any attempts have been made to link interventions to clients' presenting problems. In most analyses of psychotherapeutic interventions and their efficacy, the client's presenting issue or problem is clearly identified and the subsequent intervention for that presenting problem is described and tested. However, in career research, the nature of the client's presenting concern is usually not described, or if it is, it is given a generic label such as "undecided." Yet clients who are "undecided" about their career paths may run the gamut from those who are trying to choose between two or more preferred futures, to

those who perceive that no options are available to them. For the former, information strategies may be more relevant, whereas for the latter, issues of self-efficacy may need attention. It would be very difficult to measure the true impact of a general intervention if the intervention is not even appropriate for the presenting problem.

The second concern related to the impact of treatment pertains to the role of intrapersonal processes in career planning. Perhaps because of the dominance of the assumption of the cognitive nature of career decision-making, very little attention has been paid to affective factors in career planning. The role that emotional states such as anxiety, depression, and anger, or even of the more positive emotions such as anticipation, hope or confidence, have on career planning process and outcome has not received sufficient attention in efficacy research.

The third concern related to the differential impact of interventions that needs further attention in efficacy research is the role that interpersonal processes play in career planning. Decision conflict may arise when a client's occupational aspiration does not fit with family values, cultural mores, parental aspirations, or spousal demands. In a purely structural sense – the matching of individual potential with occupational demand – a decision may be a very good one, but on an interpersonal level the decision may be problematic. It will be important to devise research programs that identify and attend to the multiple variables that are related to career planning. A multivariate approach is more likely to enable us to determine the differential effects of interventions.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions drawn from this review echo those of recent researchers (Heppner & Heppner, 2003; Hughes, 2004; Sexton, 1996; Whiston, Brecheisen, & Stephens, 2003; Whiston, Sexton, & Lasoff, 1998). As Hughes (2004) noted, "Much of the research that is conducted has been one-off and fragmented, rather than strategic, and not disseminated widely or effectively" (p. 2). Heppner and Heppner (2003) call for increased research into the career counselling process, so that we can better understand what happens in career counselling and how those processes account for positive outcomes.

Obviously a comprehensive research strategy is needed for assessing the efficacy of career interventions. Given the complexity of career processes and factors, this may seem like a daunting proposition. However, the multiple facets, targets, processes, and outcomes of career development clearly need to be identified. We must deepen our understanding of the presenting issues that clients face, of the differential treatment modalities that may be brought to bear on those issues, the combined effect of those treatments on specific client outcomes, and the general and cumulative impact of client change on individual, social and economic well-being.

Compounding the problems associated with creating a comprehensive research framework are the problems of relevance and practicality. The field of career development is different from its psychotherapeutic cousin, in that its practitioners are often not specifically trained in the theory and practice of career counselling. The presentation of findings, and the means of data collection, must speak to the practical realities facing practitioners, policy makers, employers and researchers.

Finally, the general methodologies that would be included within a comprehensive framework must allow for consistency of data interpretation. Increased attention needs to be paid to the means by which data may be aggregated across context and client concern. The broad range of issues and factors associated with career planning demand a robust means of data aggregation

across impact studies. Furthermore, the long-term effects of career interventions can only be determined by conducting longitudinal, cross-sectional research.

Whether or not it is possible – or even desirable – to create such a framework remains to be seen. An initial task of the CRWG was to discuss what steps could be taken to improve our understanding of the “what, how, why and for whom” of career planning. To help with that process, it would be useful to have access to program evaluation research that has been conducted at agency, municipal, provincial, and federal levels. It will also be important to link the work of Canadian researchers with similar work being conducted in international contexts, particularly Great Britain and the United States. Perhaps the newly created International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP) would be a useful mechanism for coordinating such international cooperation.

Participants at the Ottawa forum agreed that Canadian career services providers are under increasing scrutiny and pressure to prove that the services they offer are both cost-effective and beneficial. They also agreed that an important first step towards assembling an evidence base for career practice would be to determine the current state of outcome evaluation practice in Canada. To that end, a national on-line survey was created. The survey focused on three major stakeholder groups: representatives from agencies providing career services, front-line practitioners, and those involved either in policy development or as large-scale employers.

Four questions guided the development of the survey:

- How important is it to assess the impact of career services?
- How is the impact of career services determined?
- What results are achieved through the provision of career services?
- How are those results measured?

The methods used to collect and analyze these data are described in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 3

STATE OF PRACTICE IMPACT SURVEY: METHODS

INTRODUCTION

The general purpose of this research was to determine the state of Canadian practice regarding the evaluation of career services efficacy. The research focused on the perceptions of three primary groups: agencies providing career services; practitioners of career services; and those in government and industry responsible for career development policy and employment.

DATA COLLECTION

The research was conducted by collecting data through surveys and telephone interviews. The first two groups (agencies and practitioners who provide career development services) were deemed likely to have a common understanding of the concepts and practices in this field from their training and experience. Consequently, the survey method was selected to collect a large amount of data from this sample.

However, little research has been conducted regarding the efficacy of career development services with individuals or organizations that do not actually deliver the services. Because the research with employers and policy makers was exploratory in nature, it was decided to utilize telephone interviews to collect data from these samples. This allowed the interviewer to provide information when clarification was necessary, and the interviewee to volunteer information that survey questions may not have elicited. Each method of data collection is described below.

SURVEYS

In autumn 2004, two on-line surveys were developed (one for agencies and one for practitioners) to answer the following questions:

- How important is it to assess the impact of career services?
- How is the impact of career services determined?
- What results are achieved through the provision of career services?
- How are those results measured?

For the purposes of this research, an intervention was defined as any intentional activity that is implemented in the hopes of fostering client change. Another way to think of an intervention is that it is anything that is done to produce an outcome for the client or target group. An outcome was defined as a specific result or product of an intervention that might include any combination of the following factors:

- A difference in client competence that is reflected by changes in client knowledge, skills and/or attributes.
- A change in the client's situation, for example, in employment status, educational status, etc.

- Broad or long term changes for the client and/or community, such as in the client's financial situation, social inclusion, family changes, community economic development, etc.
- These definitions were included in the surveys to provide a common understanding of the focus of the questions.

Parallel forms of the survey were developed: one form was completed by representatives from agencies and organizations providing direct career services to clients, and the second form was completed by practitioners. The structure and items on each form were identical, with only wording changes to reflect the specific target audience. In addition, each form was available in both French and English; potential participants were directed to the appropriate form and language version when they first accessed the survey website.

Invitations to participate were distributed to a master list of agencies and practitioners who provide career development services in Canada, maintained by the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF). This list included participants from Working Connections: A Pan-Canadian Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development (held in Toronto in November of 2003; n = 150); the Career Circuit Network (n = approximately 3000); The Stakeholder Liaison and Advisory Council (SLAC) of the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners (n = 65); and the Canadian Career Development Foundation Board of Governors (n = 11). The invitations (see Appendix B) included a description of the nature of the research and a link to the online survey. Furthermore, invitation recipients were encouraged to forward the invitation to other agencies or practitioners who may not have been on the original list, creating a "fan-out" effect. Thus, while the original distribution list contained over 3200 names, the "fan-out method" made it impossible to tell how many people ultimately received an invitation to participate.

Potential participants, upon accessing the survey website and selecting the appropriate form to complete, were provided a brief introduction that explained the goals of the research and clarified the terms that would be used. Those individuals who agreed to complete a survey were asked to review and agree to a research consent form that outlined the ethical terms of the research involvement; consent was indicated by selecting an "I Accept" button at the end of consent form. Selecting the "I Accept" button was the only way to gain access to the actual surveys.

The surveys contained three main sections. Part I, Context of Services and Agency Profile, included demographic items pertaining to the nature of the agency, the services offered, and the populations served. These items required closed-ended or forced-choice responses. One format of question asked participants to estimate how frequently ("never," "sometimes," or "often") they offered each of a list of career services. A second format of questions asked participants to select appropriate responses from a list provided (i.e., identification of the target of services, including age, gender, culture, employment status, and special needs; and the kind and size of agency). Participants could also indicate "other" if the list provided was not reflective of their services. The data from Part I of the survey were used to develop a context for career service provision in Canada.

Part II, Outcomes of your Services, contained both closed and open questions. To answer the primary research questions, participants were asked to indicate how important they believed it was to collect impact data ("not at all," "somewhat," or "very") and whether or not they actually engaged in the practice of impact evaluation ("yes" or "no"). These data were compared to the

demographic data from Part I to determine whether there were any relationships between agency/service demographics and the importance and practice of impact assessment.

A series of open-ended questions were also posed. Participants who responded “yes” to whether or not they actually engaged in impact assessment were then asked to identify the three main outcomes they report, and the evidence they collect for each outcome. All participants were then asked to indicate the outcomes they believe they were achieving but that do not get reported, and the evidence they have for those outcomes. To provide further context, participants were asked to describe the difficulties they face when trying to collect evidence or document the impact of their services. Three final questions, designed to explore what participants would like to see, concluded Part II of the survey. Participants were asked to indicate the kinds of outcomes they would like to report on if they could, and to suggest ways in which the impact of their services could be better measured. Finally, participants were invited to comment on any other aspects of impact evaluation that they had not yet had an opportunity to mention.

Part III, Follow Up, provided an opportunity for further involvement in impact assessment. Respondents were invited to provide examples of any exemplary evaluation tools that they have used, and were also encouraged to indicate if they were interested in participating in follow-up interviews.

All data collected from the on-line surveys were stored in a custom-designed database. When participants completed an item, the response was automatically stored in the appropriate cell of the database. The composite data set was transferred to a spreadsheet for subsequent data analysis; all quantitative analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Telephone interviews were conducted with the third target group of the research, who were divided into two distinct samples: (a) individuals who were employed by governments in policy portfolios connected to career and workforce development and (b) Canadian employers. The sample was identified from a group of individuals who participated in the Working Connections Pan-Canadian Symposium in 2003. A total of 41 policy makers and 23 employers were contacted to participate in the study. Of the policy makers, 37 were obtained from the symposium list and 4 were identified by personal referrals. Twenty employers were obtained from the symposium list, and 3 employers were identified by referrals. Nine policy makers and 7 employers participated in phone interviews that ranged from 10 to 35 minutes in length.

The individuals who participated in the phone interviews were fewer than originally planned and included only 2 Francophone participants (the goal was to interview 50 individuals of which half would be Anglophone and half Francophone). It was difficult to acquire research participants for the following reasons:

- work roles and responsibilities had changed for many policy makers, and they no longer were responsible for career and workforce development programs and services;
- many individuals indicated that they did not have time to participate in the interviews;
- the employers did not think they had enough information, as career development was too peripheral to their work;
- individuals did not respond to e-mails; and

- scheduling a suitable time for an interview was problematic with some of the individuals who were contacted.

The first step in collecting data was to send letters of invitation to participate in a research interview (see Appendix C for letter sent to policy makers and Appendix D for letter sent to employers). Follow-up e-mails were then sent to those who did not respond to the initial invitation. Individuals who agreed to participate in the research were sent a copy of the appropriate interview protocol (see Appendix E for the policy maker protocol and Appendix F for the employer protocol).

During the telephone interviews, the policy makers were asked the following questions:

- What do you want back from career development programs and services as a result of your funding?
- How do you evaluate if you are getting back what you want from these programs and services?
- What information are you getting to help you make informed decisions about the programs and services you are funding or will fund?
- How useful is the information you are getting? If you had a wish list, what information would you like to have to help you evaluate better?
- Do you have any exemplary examples of what is working well?
- If yes, can you provide a copy to the research team?
- What other comments would you like to make about measuring the impact of services?

The employers were asked the following interview questions:

- What do you want back from these programs and services as a result of your investment?
- How do you evaluate if you are getting back what you want from these programs and services?
- Are you getting the information you need to make informed decisions about the programs and services you offer?
- If you had a wish list, what information would you like to have to help you evaluate better?
- Do you have any exemplary examples of what is working well?
- If yes, can you provide a copy to the research team?
- What other comments would you like to make about measuring the impact of services?

These phone interviews were conducted by a member of the research team and a research assistant between January 2005 and March 2005. Notes were taken of the participants' responses during the interview.

DATA ANALYSIS

SURVEY DATA

Comparison of English and French data on global importance ratings. Parallel forms of the surveys were prepared for each official language. Prior to analysis of specific data, a comparison of Anglophone and Francophone respondents was conducted. Chi-square tests were used to determine if there was a significant relationship between language of respondent and the two global criteria variables of “Importance of Outcome Measurement” and “Practice of Outcome Measurement.” If no significant differences were found, the data were merged for subsequent analysis. If significant differences were found, the data for Anglophone and Francophone respondents were reported separately.

- Context of services (frequency analysis). Simple frequency analysis methods were applied to all demographic items on the survey, as well as to the items pertaining to perceived importance and practice of outcome assessment. Raw counts and percentages were tabulated for all of these items.
- Measures of association (chi-square analysis). To test for relationships between demographic variables and the criteria variables of perceived importance of impact assessment and actual practice of impact assessment, chi-square measures were applied, with alpha set to .05. Chi-square analysis was also used to determine whether or not there were significant differences between respondents who completed the surveys in English and those who completed them in French.
- Open-ended questions (content analysis). Data from open-ended questions were analyzed using content analysis techniques. Content analysis is a process of identifying general themes from the specific responses. Twenty participant “cases” were randomly drawn from the database, and verbatim responses were first examined for the presence of themes or patterns. As each new case was examined, the responses were coded into themes and categories; when a new theme or category emerged, each prior case was reviewed again to search for the existence of the new theme in that data. This process was repeated until no new themes emerged. As a check on the reliability of the themes, a second set of 20 cases was randomly drawn. No new themes were found, indicating that data saturation had been reached.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW DATA

The written notes from the telephone interviews were also analyzed using content analysis. The first step in the telephone interview data analysis involved reviewing the participants’ responses to each question and grouping similar responses into themes or categories. The number of responses in each theme was noted. These initial groupings of responses to each question were then reviewed, and higher order themes were identified that represented categories of responses. Because some of the responses to each question were related to some of the responses to other questions, the higher order themes were reviewed across the questions. This resulted in two lists of general themes that represented the responses made by the group of policy makers and those made by the group of employers.

One individual initially conducted the analysis of data; then the original responses and themes were sent to another person who confirmed the interpretation of the results. This enhanced the validity of the content analysis.

FOCUS GROUP

Focus groups were held, in French and English, in order to present the initial themes from the data, and to seek feedback on the accuracy of the themes, as well as clarification and expansion on the themes that were identified through the survey data. In January 2005, separate English and French open sessions were held at the National Consultation on Career Development in Ottawa. The preliminary results were presented to attendees, who were then invited to comment on the accuracy of the themes, to suggest additional themes that may not have been captured through the survey data, and to expand or elaborate on any of the themes. The focus groups served as useful reliability checks on the data from the surveys.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

From November 2004 through January 2005, the Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development (CRWG) conducted a survey of agencies and practitioners providing career services in Canada. The general purpose of the survey was to determine the state of practice in Canada with respect to the measurement and reporting of the impact of career services delivery. Four questions guided the survey:

- How important is it to assess the impact of career services?
- How is the impact of career services determined?
- What results are achieved through the provision of career services?
- How are those results measured?

Surveys were sent to representatives of agencies providing career services, and to career development practitioners across Canada. Policy makers and employers were also interviewed to determine their views on the importance of career services impact assessment. The results of the surveys are presented first, followed by the interview results. Only those results that were statistically significant are reported.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

RESPONDENTS

The survey was conducted on-line; participants were able to access the site from November 2004 to January 2005. A total of 173 agency representatives completed the survey, 147 English-language respondents and 26 French-language respondents. An additional 214 practitioners completed the survey; of these, 168 were Anglophone practitioners and 46 were Francophone practitioners.

COMPARISON OF ANGLOPHONE AND FRANCOPHONE RESPONDENTS

Respondents had the option of completing the survey in either French or English. To determine if there were any significant differences in the perceived importance and actual practice of outcome measurement between the two language groups, Chi-square analyses were conducted. No significant differences were found between English and French agencies on the importance of outcome measurement, nor on whether the agencies reported on their outcomes. Therefore, these data were merged for subsequent analyses of the agency data.

There was a significant difference between Anglophone and Francophone practitioners on the importance of outcome measurement ($\chi^2 = 55.14$; $p = .000$). Francophone practitioners were more likely than Anglophone respondents to rate the measurement of outcomes as “Not at all important” (see Table 1). There was also a significant difference between Anglophone and Francophone practitioners on the practice of outcome measurement ($\chi^2 = 9.39$; $p = .002$). Anglophone practitioners were more likely to report on the outcome of their services (see Table 2). Because of the significant differences on the key criteria variables of the study, the Anglophone and Francophone practitioner data will be reported separately.

Table 1. Relationship Between Language of Practitioner Respondents and Perceived Value of Measuring Outcomes/Impact of Career Services

Language of Respondent	Count	Not at All Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Total
Anglophone Practitioners	Actual Expected	1 10.2	34 40.9	131 114.9	166
Francophone Practitioners	Actual Expected	12 2.8	18 11.1	15 31.1	45
Total		13	52	146	211

($\chi^2 = 55.14$; $p = .000$)

Table 2. Relationship Between Language of Practitioner Respondents and Actual Measurement of Outcomes/Impact of Career Services

Language of Respondent	Count	Yes	No	Total
Anglophone Practitioners	Actual Expected	118 109.4	48 56.6	166 166
Francophone Practitioners	Actual Expected	21 29.6	24 15.4	45 45
Total		139	72	211

($\chi^2 = 9.39$; $p = .002$)

KINDS OF CAREER SERVICES PROVIDED

A number of survey items were designed to provide a general picture of the kinds of agencies and practitioners that responded to the survey. As noted above, the Anglophone and Francophone agency data are combined, and the practitioner data are reported separately.

Respondents were asked to indicate the kind of services that they provided and to estimate in general terms how frequently these services were offered. Respondents were encouraged to respond to as many services as were appropriate. Table 3 details the kind and frequency of services provided by agencies; parallel data for Anglophone practitioners are presented in Table 4, and for Francophone practitioners in Table 5. When the categories of “sometimes” and “often” are combined, the most common services provided by Canadian agencies were career education (100%), job search information (94%), career and labour market information (89%), individual career counselling (86.7%), employment counselling (83.3%), and group counselling (78.6%). Thus, the agency respondents to this survey would seem to provide a representative sample of commonly offered career services and interventions.

Table 3. Kind and Frequency of Services Provided by Agencies

Service Provided	Never n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Total Respondents
Individual career counselling	17 (9.8)	35 (20.2)	115 (66.5)	167
Group career counselling	29 (16.8)	86 (49.7)	50 (28.9)	165
Career education programs	0 (0%)	65 (37.6)	71 (41%)	136
Assessment services	34 (19.7)	52 (30.1)	80 (46.2)	166
Career and labour market information services	13 (7.5)	45 (26)	109 (63)	167
Employment counselling	21 (12.1)	38 (22)	106 (61.3)	165
Job search information and/or resources	2 (1.2)	38 (22)	126 (72.8)	166
Work development	36 (20.8)	54 (31.2)	73 (42.2)	163
Other	8 (4.6)	10 (5.8)	45 (26)	63

There were some differences in the pattern of service provision by Anglophone practitioners compared to the reported agency patterns (see Table 4). While all Anglophone practitioners (100%) reported providing career education programs, they also all reported providing assessment services (compared to only 76.2% of the agencies). Higher frequencies were also found for individual counselling (97.6%), career and labour market information (97.6%), employment counselling (94.6%) and “other” (91.8%). However, with the exception of the role of assessment for Anglophone practitioners, the rank order of service provision was much the same (see Table 6).

Table 4. Kind and Frequency of Services Provided by Anglophone Practitioners

Service Provided	Never n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Total Respondents
Individual career counselling	4 (2.4%)	24 (14.4%)	139 (83.2%)	167
Group career counselling	34 (20.4%)	79 (47.3%)	54 (32.3%)	167
Career education programs	0 (0%)	66 (46.5%)	76 (53.5%)	142

Service Provided	Never n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Total Respondents
Assessment services	16 (9.7%)	54 (32.7%)	95 (57.6%)	165
Career and labour market information services	4 (2.4%)	49 (29.3%)	114 (68.3%)	167
Employment counselling	9 (5.4%)	47 (28.3%)	110 (66.3%)	166
Job search information and/or resources	2 (1.2%)	28 (16.9%)	136 (81.9%)	166
Work development	28 (16.7%)	80 (47.6%)	60 (35.7%)	168
Other	5 (8.2%)	15 (24.6%)	41 (67.2%)	61

There were some differences in the reporting of service provision between Anglophone and Francophone practitioners. Perhaps the most obvious difference was in the provision of career education programs: all Anglophone respondents reported providing career education programs, but only 45.7% of the Francophone respondents reported doing so. However, it should be noted that only 21 Francophone practitioners responded to this item; all of the respondents answering the question indicated that they provided career education programs “sometimes” or “often.” It may be that the phrase “career education” has a different and very specific connotation for Francophone practitioners; those outside of the school system may not view the term the same way as their Anglophone counterparts. Francophone practitioners were also less likely to report providing assessment services (76.1%) than their Anglophone counterparts (100%). When these items are excluded, the ranking of service provision follows the same pattern as for the Anglophone practitioners: job search information (93.5%), labour market information (93.5%), individual counselling (93.5%), and employment counselling (80.5%). Furthermore, while the provision of group counselling varied in rank from one group to the other, the relative frequencies were very common across the groups (78.6% for agencies, 79.6% for Anglophone practitioners, and 76.1% for Francophone practitioners).

It would seem from the analysis of the frequency of reported service provision that a broad and representative sampling of Canadian career service providers responded to the survey. It also appears that there is general agreement between agencies and practitioners about the relative ranking of the frequency of the provision of the different kinds of career services.

Table 5. Kind and Frequency of Services Provided by Francophone Practitioners

Service Provided	Never n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Total Respondents
Individual career counselling	3 (6.5)	7 (15.2)	34 (73.9)	44
Group career counselling	11 (23.9)	18 (39.1)	16 (34.8)	45
Career education programs	0	18 (39.1)	3 (6.5)	21
Assessment services	9 (19.6)	22 (47.6)	13 (28.3)	44
Career and labour market information services	2 (4.3)	15 (32.6)	28 (60.9)	45
Employment counselling	8 (17.4)	16 (34.8)	21 (45.7)	45
Job search information and/or resources	2 (4.3)	21 (45.7)	22 (47.8)	45
Work development	23 (50)	15 (32.6)	7 (15.2)	45
Other	2 (4.3)	3 (6.5)	6 (13)	11

Table 6. Comparison of Ranking of Service Provision: Agencies, Anglophone Practitioners, and Francophone Practitioners

Rank	Agencies	Anglophone Practitioners	Francophone Practitioners
1	Career education	Career education	Job search information
2	Job search information	Assessment	Labour market information
3	Labour market information	Job search information	Individual counselling
4	Individual counselling	Labour market information	Employment counselling
5	Employment counselling	Individual counselling	Group
6	Group	Employment counselling	Assessment

DEMOGRAPHICS OF CANADIAN CAREER SERVICES AGENCY RESPONDENTS

Agency respondents were asked to describe the clients that they served, in terms of a range of characteristics including age, gender, culture, and employment status. Respondents were encouraged to select all options that applied to them.

Table 7. Age Groups Served by Agencies

Age Group Served	Percentage of Agencies Providing Career Services to This Group (n = 173)
Students in Grade 9 or less	19.7
Students in Grade 10 to 12	37
Post-secondary students	41
Young People (< 25) not in school	49.7
Adults, 25 to 45	55
Adults, 45+	32.4

The vast majority of agencies (93%) provided services to males and females. Of the remainder, some (3%) were intended for females only, and 4% did not respond. Most agencies (76%) also did not have a specific cultural focus for their services; the two exceptions were agencies providing services to First Nations members (17.3%) or providing specialized immigrant services (2%). Many agencies did target clients by employment status: 56.6% of the agencies provide career services for unemployed clients, 42.8% for social allowance recipients, 34.7% for clients in educational settings, and 38% said that their services were open to anyone. Interestingly, only 11.6% of the agencies specifically targeted clients who were already working.

Agency respondents were asked to indicate the kind of agency or service that they represented. Most respondents represented not-for-profit agencies (50.3%) or provincial government settings (23.3%). Other kinds of agencies represented included school (K to 12; 8.6%), post-secondary (8.6%), private (for profit) agencies or private practice (6.1%), and federal government agencies (3.1%). Although the representation from school settings was less than hoped for, the remaining kinds of service providers would seem to be fairly representative of the range and relative frequency of career service providers in Canada. The frequencies of the kinds of service agencies were also reflected in the size of agencies: 41.1% of the respondents represented agencies with more than ten career service providers, 19.6% were in agencies with six to ten service providers, 28.8% worked in small (two to five service providers) settings, and 10.4% worked on their own (i.e., one person providing career services).

DEMOGRAPHICS OF CLIENTS SERVED BY PRACTITIONER RESPONDENTS

The demographic data for groups served by practitioners are provided for both Anglophone (n = 168) and Francophone (n = 46) respondents. Because of the large volume of data represented, the data are presented in a series of tables. The age group of client services is presented in Table 8; the gender focus of services in Table 9; the cultural focus of services in Table 10; the

employment status of clients served in Table 11; the kind of agency that the practitioners work for in Table 12; and the size of the practitioner’s agency in Table 13. A brief discussion of salient points from this data follows. Due to the small number of Francophone respondents, caution should be used in making comparisons with the data from the Anglophone respondents.

All client age groups are represented in the services provided by both Anglophone and Francophone practitioners. A greater percentage of Anglophone practitioners provide services to adults, whereas a higher number of Francophone respondents provide services to younger children. Otherwise, services are similarly distributed across age groups (see Table 8).

Table 8. Age Groups Served by Practitioners

Age Group Served	Anglophone Practitioners N = 168 n/%	Francophone Practitioners N = 46 n/%
Students in grade 9 or less	19 (11.3)	16 (34.8)
Students in grades 10 to 12	62 (36.9)	20 (43.5)
Students in post-secondary settings	81 (48.2)	17 (37.0)
Young people (i.e., 19 years old or less) who are not in school settings	82 (48.8)	17 (37.0)
Adults in early to middle age (25 to 45 years old)	118 (70.2)	25 (54.3)
Older adults (i.e., more than 45 years old)	102 (60.7)	18 (39.1)

The vast majority of services for both practitioner groups are open to both men and women, although there seem to be more Francophone practitioners providing services intended for women clients (see Table 9).

Table 9. Gender Focus of Practitioner Services

Gender Focus of Services	Anglophone Practitioners N = 167 n/%	Francophone Practitioners N = 45 n/%
Programs/services specifically designed for women	1 (0.60)	6 (13)
Programs/services specifically designed for men	0 (0)	0 (0)
Programs/services open to women and men	166 (99.4)	39 (86.7)

Similarly, the programs and services of the vast majority of practitioners have no particular cultural focus; the one exception seems to be a larger percentage of programs for First Nations clients provided by Anglophone practitioners (see Table 10).

Table 10. Cultural Focus of Practitioner Services

Cultural Focus of Services	Anglophone Practitioners N = 165 n/%	Francophone Practitioners N = 44 n/%
Programs/services designed with no specific cultural or ethnic group in mind	145 (87.9)	40 (90.9)
Programs/services designed for recent immigrants	3 (1.8)	2 (4.5)
Programs/services designed for First Nations people	17 (10.3)	2 (4.5)
Programs/services designed for other specific cultural groups	0 (0)	0

Small differences are noted in the employment status focus of practitioner services (see Table 11). Anglophone practitioners seem to provide more services to unemployed people and those on social allowance, while their Francophone counterparts provide more services to people in educational settings. However, this trend may be easily explained in terms of the employment settings where the practitioners work: A higher percentage of the Francophone respondents are employed in school settings, whereas more of the Anglophone practitioners work for provincial government agencies (see Table 12).

Table 11. Employment Status Focus of Practitioner Services

Employment Status	Anglophone Practitioners N = 168 n/%	Francophone Practitioners N = 44 n/%
Programs/services designed for unemployed individuals	95 (56.5)	18 (39.1)
Programs/services designed for social allowance recipients	71 (42.3)	14 (30.4)
Programs/services designed for people in educational settings	73 (43.5)	24 (52.2)
Programs/services designed for people employed in specific work settings	29 (17.3)	5 (10.9)
Programs/services designed for any member of the community, regardless of employment status	71 (42.3)	15 (32.6)
Other	16 (9.5)	6 (13.0)

Table 12. Employment Setting of Practitioners: Kind of Agency

Kind of Agency	Anglophone Practitioners N = 168 n/%	Francophone Practitioners N = 45 n/%
Federal government agency	9 (5.4)	0 (0)
Provincial government agency (non-school)	39 (23.2)	3 (6.5)
School within K-12 system	31 (18.5)	15 (32.6)
Post-secondary institute (college, technical institute, or university)	23 (13.7)	4 (8.7)
Career services or human resource unit within a larger company/organization providing services for the benefit of employees	3 (1.8)	2 (4.3)
Not-for-profit agency	50 (29.8)	15 (32.6)
Private (for-profit) career services provider	5 (3.0)	1 (2.2)
Private practice/consultancy (self-employed)	8 (4.8)	5 (10.9)

The practitioners who responded to this survey typically worked in small agencies or employment settings (see Table 13). Among Anglophone practitioners, 57% of the respondents worked in settings that employed 5 or fewer career development service providers, and almost 70% of the Francophone respondents worked in similar settings. Once again, most of the Francophone respondents were employed in either K-12 school settings or in not-for-profit agencies. Conversely, very few Francophone respondents (6.5%) worked in large (10 or more career service providers) settings, whereas more than one-quarter (26.3%) of the Anglophone respondents worked in large settings. These data may be more reflective of the methods used to invite Francophone respondents to participate than of any real differences in employment settings. It seems that the initial distribution list and subsequent “fan-out” methods may have been more inclusive of school settings for Francophone participants.

Table 13. Employment Setting of Practitioners: Size of Agency

Agency Size	Anglophone Practitioners N = 167 n/%	Francophone Practitioners N = 45 n/%
10 or more career development service providers	44 (26.3)	3 (6.5)
More than 5 but less than 10 career development service providers	28 (16.8)	10 (21.7)
2 to 5 career development service providers	71 (42.5)	15 (32.6)
One-person	24 (14.4)	17 (37)

IMPORTANCE AND PRACTICE OF OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

Prior to exploring agency and practitioner practice with respect to outcome measurement and reporting, it was necessary first to determine the importance that they placed on outcome assessment. To that end, respondents were asked, “How important is it to measure the outcomes/impact of career services?” Responses included “Not at all important,” “Somewhat important,” and “Very important.” These data are presented in Table 14. Following the question about importance, respondents were asked, “Does your agency/organization report on the outcomes/impact of its services?” Responses included either “Yes” or “No”; these data are presented in Table 15.

Table 14. Perceived Importance of Outcomes/Impact Measurement

Importance	Agencies	Anglophone Practitioners	Francophone Practitioners
Not at all important	4 (2.3%)	1 (0.60%)	12 (26.7%)
Somewhat important	40 (24.4%)	34 (20.5%)	18 (40%)
Very important	120 (73.2%)	131 (78.9%)	15 (33.3%)
Total	164	166	45

Table 15. Actual Practice of Outcomes/Impact Measurement

Report on Outcomes?	Agencies	Anglophone Practitioners	Francophone Practitioners
Yes	136 (84%)	118 (71.1%)	21 (46.7%)
No	26 (16%)	48 (28.9%)	24 (53.3%)
Total	162	166	45

There was almost universal agreement among agency respondents on the importance of measuring the outcomes or impact of career services; 97.6% of the respondents indicated that it was either “somewhat” (24.4%) or “very” (73.2%) important. When asked if they actually reported on the outcomes or impact of their services, 84% of the agencies replied “Yes.” Thus, there would seem to be a small drop-off between perceived importance of impact measurement and the actual practice of impact measurement among agency respondents.

There was also near universal agreement among Anglophone practitioners on the importance of measuring the outcomes of their services; 99.4% of the respondents rated it as either “somewhat” (20.5%) or “very” (78.9%) important. Francophone practitioners were less in agreement; 26.7% responded that impact measurement was “not at all important,” 40% rated it as “somewhat important,” and 33.3% rated it as “very important.” Once again, there was also a drop-off in the actual practice of impact measurement for both groups: 71.1% of the Anglophone practitioners and 46.7% of the Francophone practitioners actually reported on the outcomes or impact of their services.

MEASURES OF ASSOCIATION

The next stage of data analysis involved an exploration of possible relationships between the demographic variables and the perceived importance and actual measurement of outcome or impact measurement. The combined agency data and Anglophone practitioner data were used to conduct these explorations; tests of association were not conducted for the Francophone respondent pool because of its smaller size.

TYPE OF AGENCY AND PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

The first question posed was, “Is there a significant relationship between the type of agency/service provider and the perceived value of measuring the impact of career services?” To answer this question, a chi-square analysis was conducted comparing agency type (Survey Item 3.1) and the perceived importance of measuring the impacts/outcomes of services (Survey Item 4.1). The agency data are provided in Table 16, and the Anglophone practitioner data in Table 17.

Table 16. Relationship Between Type of Agency/Service Provider and Perceived Value of Measuring Outcomes/Impact of Career Services: Agency Results

			How Important is it to measure the outcomes/impact of your services?			Total
			Not at All Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	
Please indicate which of the following best describes your agency, organization or service.	Federal government agency	Count	1	1	3	5
		Expected Count	.1	1.2	3.7	5.0
	Provincial government agency (non-school)	Count	1	7	30	38
		Expected Count	.9	9.3	27.7	38.0
	School within K-12 system	Count	0	9	5	14
		Expected Count	.3	3.4	10.2	14.0
	Post-secondary institute	Count	0	6	8	14
		Expected Count	.3	3.4	10.2	14.0
	Career services within larger company	Count	0	0	0	0
		Expected Count	.0	.0	.0	0.0
	Not-for-profit agency	Count	2	15	65	82
		Expected Count	2.0	20.1	59.9	82.0

			How Important is it to measure the outcomes/impact of your services?			Total
			Not at All Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	
	Private-for-profit agency	Count	0	2	5	7
		Expected Count	.2	1.7	5.1	7.0
	Private practice	Count	0	0	3	3
		Expected Count	.1	.7	2.2	8.0
Total		Count	4	40	119	163
		Expected Count	4.0	40.0	119.0	163.0

(X2 = 25.036; df = 12; p = .015)

Table 17. Relationship Between Type of Agency/Service Provider and Perceived Value of Measuring Outcomes/Impact of Career Services: Anglophone Practitioner Results

			Question 4.1: How Important is it to measure the outcomes/impact of your services?			Total
			Not at All Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	
Question 3.1: Please indicate which of the following best describes your agency, organization or service.	Federal government agency	Count	1	2	6	9
		Expected Count	.1	1.8	7.1	9.0
	Provincial government agency (non-school)	Count	0	3	35	38
		Expected Count	.2	7.8	30.0	38.0
	School within K-12 system	Count	0	14	16	30
		Expected Count	.2	6.1	23.7	30.0
	Post-secondary institute	Count	0	6	17	23
		Expected Count	.1	4.7	18.2	23.0
	Career services within larger company	Count	0	1	2	3
		Expected Count	.0	.6	2.4	3.0

		Question 4.1: How Important is it to measure the outcomes/impact of your services?				Total
		Not at All Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important		
	Not-for-profit agency	Count	0	4	46	50
		Expected Count	.3	10.2	39.5	50.0
	Private-for-profit agency	Count	0	2	3	5
		Expected Count	.0	1.0	3.9	5.0
	Private practice	Count	0	2	6	8
		Expected Count	.0	1.6	6.3	8.0
Total		Count	1	34	131	166
		Expected Count	1.0	34.0	131.0	166.0

($X^2 = 40.8$; $df = 14$; $p = .000$)

The results demonstrate that there is a significant relationship between the type of service provider and the perceived value of measuring the impact of career services for agencies ($X^2 = 25.036$; $df = 12$; $p = .015$). Respondents from K-12 school settings were less likely to rate the impact measurement as being “very important,” and those in post-secondary settings were more likely to say it was “somewhat important.” Overall, respondents who worked in educational settings placed less importance on impact measurement than their counterparts in not-for-profit or government settings. There was also a significant relationship between the type of service provider and the perceived value of measuring the impact of career services for Anglophone practitioners ($X^2 = 40.8$; $df = 14$; $p = .000$). Practitioners in schools were also less likely to view impact measurement as “very important,” and not-for-profit agencies were more likely to rate it as “very important.”

TYPE OF AGENCY AND ACTUAL MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES/IMPACT

The second measure of association asked, “Is there a significant relationship between the type of agency/service provider and the degree to which they measure the impact of career services?” To answer Question B2, a chi-square analysis was conducted comparing agency type (Survey Item 3.1) and the degree to which they measure the impacts/outcomes of services (Survey Item 4.2). The agency results are presented in Table 18, and the Anglophone practitioner results in Table 19.

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between type of service provider and the actual measurement of service impact for both agencies ($X^2 = 32.388$; $df = 6$; $p = .000$) and practitioners ($X^2 = 47.812$; $df = 7$; $p = .000$). Agency respondents representing K-12 settings were less likely to report on the impact of their services; not-for-profit agencies were more likely to

report on the impact of their services. This finding essentially parallels the results noted above for the importance of measuring career services impact. Practitioners in federal government agencies, K-12 schools, and private practice were less likely to engage in impact reporting.

Table 18. Relationship Between Type of Agency/Organization/Service Provider and Degree to Which They Evaluate Outcomes/Impact of Services: Agency Results

			Does your agency/organization report on the outcomes/impact of its services?		Total
			Yes	No	
Please indicate which of the following best describes your agency, organization or service.	Federal government agency	Count	4	1	5
		Expected Count	4.2	.8	5.0
	Provincial government agency	Count	32	6	38
		Expected Count	31.9	6.1	38.0
	School within K-12 system	Count	4	9	13
		Expected Count	10.9	2.1	13.0
	Post-secondary institution	Count	12	2	14
		Expected Count	11.7	2.3	14.0
Career services within larger organization	Count	0	0	0	
	Expected Count	2.1	.9	3.0	
Not-for-profit agency	Count	75	6	81	
	Expected Count	67.9	13.1	81.0	
Private-for-profit agency	Count	6	1	7	
	Expected Count	5.9	1.1	7.0	
Private practice	Count	2	1	3	
	Expected Count	2.5	.5	3.0	
Total	Count	135	26	161	
	Expected Count	135.0	26.0	161.0	

($\chi^2 = 32.388$; $df = 6$; $p = .000$)

Table 19. Relationship Between Type of Agency/Organization/Service Provider and Degree to Which They Evaluate Outcomes/Impact of Services: Anglophone Practitioner Results

			Question 4.2: Does your agency/organization report on the outcomes/impacts of its services?		Total
			Yes	No	
Question 3.1: Please indicate which of the following best describes your agency, organization or service.	Federal government agency	Count	2	7	9
		Expected Count	6.4	2.6	9.0
	Provincial government agency	Count	37	2	39
		Expected Count	27.7	11.3	39.0
	School within K-12 system	Count	15	16	31
		Expected Count	22.0	9.0	31.0
	Post-secondary institution	Count	13	10	23
		Expected Count	16.3	6.7	23.0
	Career services within larger organization	Count	2	1	3
Expected Count		2.1	.9	3.0	
Not-for-profit agency	Count	43	5	48	
	Expected Count	34.1	13.9	48.0	
Private-for-profit agency	Count	4	1	5	
	Expected Count	3.6	1.4	5.0	
Private practice	Count	2	6	8	
	Expected Count	5.7	2.3	8.0	
Total	Count	118	48	166	
	Expected Count	118.0	48.0	166.0	

($\chi^2 = 47.812$; $df = 7$; $p = .000$)

SIZE OF SERVICE PROVIDER, PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND ACTUAL MEASUREMENT OF IMPACT

The third measure of association addressed the question, “Is there a significant relationship between the size of an agency/service provider and the perceived value of measuring the impact of career services?” To answer this question, a chi-square analysis was conducted comparing agency size (Survey Item 3.2) and the perceived value of measuring the impacts/outcomes of services (Survey Item 4.1). The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the size of the service provider and the importance of service impact measurement for agencies ($\chi^2 = 24.410$; $df = 6$; $p = .000$) (see Table 21). No significant relationships were found between size of the service provider and the importance of service impact measurement for practitioners. In general, the larger the agency, the more importance they placed on measuring the impact of their services.

Table 20. Relationship Between Size of Agency/Service Provider and Perceived Value of Measuring Outcomes/Impact of Services: Agency Results

			How important is it to measure the outcomes/impact of career services?			Total
			Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	
How many people in your agency, organization or service provision unit are responsible for providing career services?	10 or more career development service providers	Count	0	13	54	67
		Expected Count	1.6	16.4	48.9	67.0
	More than 5 but less than 10 service providers	Count	0	7	25	32
		Expected Count	.8	7.9	23.4	32.0
	2 to 5 career development service providers	Count	1	13	33	47
		Expected Count	1.2	11.5	34.3	47.0
	One person	Count	3	7	7	17
		Expected Count	.4	4.2	12.4	17.0
Total		Count	4	40	119	163
		Expected Count	4.0	40.0	119.0	163.0

($\chi^2 = 24.410$; $df = 6$; $p = .000$)

When size of service provider was compared to the actual measurement of outcomes, a significant relationship was found in the agency data ($\chi^2 = 11.809$; $df = 3$; $p = .008$) but not in the practitioner data. Once again, the larger the agency, the more likely they were actually to report on the outcomes of their services (see Table 21).

Table 21. Relationship Between Size of Agency/Service Provider and Degree to Which They Evaluate Outcomes/Impact of Services: Agency Results

			Does your agency/organization report on the outcomes/impact of its services?		Total
			Yes	No	
How many people in your agency, organization or service provision unit are responsible for providing career services?	10 or more career development service providers	Count	62	3	65
		Expected Count	54.5	10.5	65.0
	More than 5 but less than 10 career development service providers	Count	26	6	32
		Expected Count	26.8	5.2	32.0
	2 to 5 career development service providers	Count	35	12	47
		Expected Count	39.4	7.6	47.0
	One person	Count	12	5	17
		Expected Count	14.3	2.7	17.0
Total		Count	135	26	161
		Expected Count	135.0	26.0	161.0

($\chi^2 = 11.809$; $df = 3$; $p = .008$)

Measures of association between all remaining demographic variables and the criteria variables of “perceived importance of outcome measurement” and “actual reporting of outcomes” were also conducted. However, no other significant relationships were found. Therefore, for both agencies and practitioners, it was concluded that the kind of services provided, the target age group of clients, the cultural focus of services, and the employment status of the intended clients were all unrelated to either the importance or the practice of outcome measurement.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

A number of open-ended questions were asked of respondents. These were posed in order to indicate the range of issues related to the measurement of career services outcomes. As noted earlier, content analysis procedures were used to identify themes and to develop a deeper understanding of the responses. At this stage of analysis, no attempt was made to determine the prevalence of each theme (i.e., the data were not recoded by themes and then analyzed using frequency counts). The central themes for agencies and practitioners are provided for each of the areas of exploration.

MOST IMPORTANT OUTCOMES THAT AGENCIES AND PRACTITIONERS REPORT

Participants were asked to indicate the three most important outcomes that actually get reported. There was considerable overlap in the themes that emerged from the agency data with those that emerged from the practitioner data, and no inconsistency in the themes. Three themes seemed to occur most often and were identified as “major themes.” The first major theme, emerging primarily from the agency data, was “number of clients served.” It would seem that a significant focus of outcome reporting is on the number of people who received services provided by agencies. The second major theme was “client change, growth and empowerment.” This grouping included changes in competence (e.g., skill development) and increased sense of self-confidence. It is interesting to note that the practitioners tended to be more specific in describing these outcomes. For example, practitioners elaborated on changes in client competence as including increased job search or career decision-making skills; they included elements such as “hope” and “confidence” under attitudes and mentioned increased levels of knowledge. The third major theme, “changes in client situation,” included changes in client educational or employment status, increased “connectedness,” increased financial independence, and goal attainment. The other themes that emerged included indicators of client satisfaction, the nature of services that were actually delivered, program completion or attendance, and indicators of the cost-benefit ratio of services.

Participants were asked to indicate how each of the outcomes was actually measured. There were virtually no differences between the agency data and the practitioner data, although it is useful to note that close to one-third of the practitioners chose not to answer this item. The themes that were identified included the following:

- Frequency counts. Examples of frequency counts included the number of clients served in each reporting period, the number of clients who found employment, the number of client action plans created, and the number of clients who completed programs.
- Evaluation and/or follow-up reports. Examples of measures used to complete these reports included client self-reports, stakeholder reports, surveys, telephone calls and interviews.
- Observation of client change. Many respondents indicated that they could tell that they had reached desired outcomes by observing changes in the clients that they served; this was particularly the case when reporting outcomes such as changes in client self-confidence.
- Cost/benefit analyses. This was reported both as an outcome and as one of the means by which an outcome was measured. It would seem that when respondents used cost/benefit analyses in the “outcome” sense, they were referring to the actual product (i.e., a determination that the benefits of providing services were worth the cost). When they used the term in the measurement sense, participants were referring to the process of engaging in cost/benefit analysis.

Respondents were also invited to provide any additional comments relating to what outcomes they report and how they measure them. This open prompt yielded interesting data that foreshadowed the responses to the more specific questions that appeared later in the survey. In particular, three major themes emerged. First, a number of respondents commented on the difficulty of the evaluation process, noting that some outcomes are just not measurable. Second, many respondents thought that there is too much emphasis on employment statistics at the expense of other outcomes that may be equally or even more important. This was also

expressed as a need to engage in the measurement of alternative outcomes. Third, respondents noted a need for specific research on the impact of career interventions with special populations. Each of these themes recurred later in the survey in response to other more direct survey items and will be elaborated upon later in this report. What is interesting to note is that many respondents felt strongly enough about these concerns to raise them in the context of simply describing what and how they measured the impact of their services.

OUTCOMES THAT GO UNREPORTED

The next section of the survey asked respondents to indicate if there were service impacts that they knew of, but that go unreported. Specifically, they were asked, “What outcomes do you believe that you are achieving that you are either not required to report or that you are not directly measuring?” Once again, for each outcome that they named, they were also asked to describe how they knew that they were achieving that outcome. While there was a relatively small and consistent list of outcomes that respondents were required to report on, there was a much longer and considerable more diverse list of unreported outcomes. Once again, the themes from the agency respondents were very similar to those that emerged from the practitioners’ responses. The common themes included the following:

- Client empowerment. This was expressed much more powerfully than the reported outcomes of “changes in client” noted in the previous section. Respondents were much more specific, and tended to reflect nuances not asked for in required outcome reporting. Examples included levels of skill development (e.g., self-management skills), increased client self-esteem, changes in client attitudes (e.g., about their future or about the nature of the workforce), and specific knowledge gains. Other forms of client empowerment included financial independence, the creation of support networks, and the creation of additional opportunities for clients.
- Client satisfaction.
- Community benefits. Respondents indicated that the community, and not just the client, was better for having received the services. Examples included clients who are increasingly involved in community activities, positive family impacts, and as one respondent noted, “contribution to community sustainability through skills enhancement.”
- Increased queries. Participants noted that when their programs or services were successful, they would receive increased interest in the service; there was a “word of mouth” effect that they attributed to satisfied clients telling others about the services.

In addition to the common themes noted above, agency respondents also described two additional outcomes that were going unreported. One of these was that programs were enhanced. Program development was described in terms such as, “[the] integration of career development competencies into curriculum and implementation workshops,” and continuously adding to the list of resources available. A second theme unique to agency respondents was the need to influence decision makers; this theme was expressed in terms of engaging in political lobbying in hopes of changing provincial infrastructure and developing enthusiasm among policy makers for career services.

Four unique unreported outcome themes emerged from the practitioner data. First, practitioners suggested “clients who returned for additional services” as an unreported outcome of service provision. Second, they spoke of personal professional development and increased professional

competence; in other words, by virtue of offering services, they got better at offering services. Third, practitioners spoke explicitly of client goal achievement, or of progress towards goal achievement; for example, one practitioner mentioned, "Client is closer to a goal, but has not yet achieved it," particularly in reference to the reporting of employment status. Fourth, practitioners noted the unreported outcome of provision of additional services or support. They indicated that some service outcomes were not directly related to the services they provided, but were important nonetheless for client change. Examples included "assisting clients with appointments," "support for diagnostic and therapeutic counseling," and "clients gained a sounding board and support."

Participants were also asked what evidence they had that they were in fact reaching those unreported outcomes. Many of the same indicators of evidence for reported outcomes were identified but there was a difference of emphasis. The evidence that was cited was primarily anecdotal (e.g., verbal reports of success from clients or employers) or observational (e.g., noted changes in client skills or attitudes).

Perhaps the most interesting theme to emerge from these questions came from the additional comments supplied by participants. There was a pervasive belief among respondents that many of the observed but unreported outcomes are not quantifiable, or at the very least that they are very difficult to both determine and measure. The perceived consequence of this difficulty is that those who fund services do not take such outcomes seriously. Once again, the "unsolicited" comments served to foreshadow a number of critical issues in impact assessment, which will be made explicit in the next section.

Participants were asked to reflect upon the difficulties they face when trying to collect evidence and/or measure the impact of their services. Once again, there were several common themes among agency respondents and practitioner respondents. In the discussion that follows, responses unique to each group are noted. The difficulties included the following:

- Complexity. Once again, respondents noted that some outcomes are "unmeasurable" and that it is very difficult to determine the outcomes of their services because of the variety of issues and factors related to career planning.
- Lack of importance placed on evaluation. While funding sources increasingly demand evidence of the impact of career services, the service providers sensed that little genuine importance was placed on impact assessment. Specifically, they referred to three sub-themes. First, insufficient resources (in terms of both finances and time) are allotted to measuring impact. Second, both colleagues and funding sources seem to lack appreciation for the importance of evidence-based practice. Third, there is a lack of training in evaluation methods. The combination of these factors led respondents to believe that only a form of "lip service" is being paid to service impact evaluation.
- Difficulty in obtaining client feedback. Even when there was a desire to collect impact data, respondents noted that it is often very difficult to follow up with clients. Agencies and practitioners often lose track of clients after services have been provided, and clients are often unwilling to provide feedback. Therefore, gaining access to follow-up data is very difficult.
- Lack of uniformity or agreement about outcomes across agencies and funding sources. Participants noted that there are often discrepancies from one funding source to the next, or from one funding year to the next, about the kinds of outcomes that are important to measure, or more precisely, about how those outcomes are defined or

described. Such discrepancies in turn make it difficult to speak about global impact of services, or even to compare service outcomes.

- Absence of evaluation protocols. There seem to be no agreed-upon standards for evaluating service impact, nor are formal tools or processes available. Therefore, service providers are not applying consistent methods of data collection or analysis.
- Disconnect between service provision and evaluation. This theme, noted in the agency data, reflects the perception that there is a notable lack of alignment between the services that agencies actually provide and what they are asked to report on. Many of the agency respondents expressed frustration at not being able to report on the full range of their services, and also at being asked to report on outcomes that the agencies did not consider high priority.
- Lack of experience with impact assessment. Practitioners spoke of their lack of experience in conducting impact assessments as a major barrier to their ability to engage in outcome evaluation. The responses did not indicate a lack of willingness to do so, but rather a lack of knowledge about how to assess impact in an appropriate fashion. Practitioners also noted that they have limited (or no) access to models of best practice, and that such models would be very helpful.
- Rapid rate of change. Practitioners also mentioned that the pace of change, in society and the nature of their services, added to their difficulty in determining the true impact of their services.

Two final questions were asked of respondents, in order to provide confirmation of prior data, as well as to provide final opportunities for respondents to express thoughts and issues regarding impact assessment. After exploring the difficulties associated with impact assessment, participants were asked, "What things would you like to report on if you could?" Once again, the responses between agencies and practitioners were similar; however, some new information did emerge that was not represented as clearly in their responses to previous questions. The newer information seemed to have a broader perspective, and it resulted in the identification of five themes:

- Social impact of services. There was a pervasive sense that agency representatives and practitioners would like to be able to document the impact that their services have on broader social issues. In particular, they wanted to show that their services had impact far beyond success rates in job placements. They wanted to be able to document the impact on individuals in the short term and the long term; on families of those who received services; on communities where services were provided; and on employers. There was a general sense that service impact was far reaching, and that more attention needed to be paid to these levels of impact.
- Client empowerment, growth and satisfaction. This particular theme echoed the data from earlier sections of the survey, but was expressed more forcibly.
- Service quality and utilization. Respondents expressed a desire to speak to process elements in their services; that is, instead of simply reporting on the global impact, they would like to examine how the various components of their services were related to the attainment of outcomes. They would also like to be able to include time indicators (e.g., indicators of how long it took clients to reach goals). Both of these indicators would speak to the quality of the services that were being provided.
- Longitudinal impact. Respondents acknowledged that the impacts of their services are often not felt immediately during or after the provision of services. Clients often do not

demonstrate the impact of a career intervention until months or even years after the service has been provided. Furthermore, respondents noted that major changes are often the product of a series of smaller changes in client perspective, skill or attitude, and that it would be useful to be able to document the longer-term impact of career interventions.

- Link between local results and national research. Respondents indicated that it would be very useful to be able to link the results of their impact assessments with larger trends, at the national or even provincial level.

The final question that was asked was, “How could the value of your services be better measured?” Once again, the intent was to provide an opportunity for respondents to confirm earlier data and to expand on earlier themes. Six core themes emerged from the responses to this question:

- More consistency. Respondents indicated a need for agreement on what constitutes “success” in career interventions, and more consistent utilization of measurement methods.
- Better tools. Respondents also indicated a need for the development of better and broader tools with which to measure career services impact. Furthermore, they expressed a desire to engage in authentic assessment and to use more qualitative methods of research.
- Embedding evaluation into service delivery. A clear theme that emerged was the need to embed evaluation into the core processes of service delivery. This was reflected in suggestions such as making evaluation part of the planning of service delivery, and funding evaluation in the same way as other components of service delivery. It was also noted that evaluation had to become a service priority and not an “afterthought.”
- Increased inter-provincial cooperation. This theme, represented in the agency data, reflected a belief that there are good examples of practice across the country, but that this information needs to be shared more across provincial jurisdictions.

FOCUS GROUP DATA

Once the preliminary analysis of the data had been completed, focus groups (in each official language) were held at the 2005 National Consultation on Career Development, in Ottawa, Ontario. The purpose of the focus groups was to receive feedback on the themes that had been identified through the surveys, and to provide an opportunity to expand, upon, clarify or refute that data. A total of 21 people attended the English-language focus group; the results of that discussion are presented here. A parallel focus group was held for French language participants; the results supported the findings of the English-language group, so only the exemplars and themes from the English respondents are presented. First, participants were asked to review the list of outcomes that result from the provision of career services and to comment on whether or not the list was adequate. The focus group supported the list of themes generated from the survey, but they expanded upon some of the themes in the following ways:

- Long-term impact of services
 - The focus of evaluation on employment statistics “doesn’t reflect a long term analysis – [clients] may get employment, but do they keep the job? Is it in their field?”

- On broader aspects of client’s life. Comments included statements such as, “What impact has the program had on them in a larger context – self-esteem, family relationships?” and “Health and wellbeing need to be measured.”
- On society/economy. Participants expressed, “Need a measure or measures that can be used to calculate/show the impact of career development services on the economy”; “I think most organizations measure what their funders require – reports are provided in a very black and white fashion. Sadly, this does not measure impact on the client and community – nor does it truly measure the impact on \$ allocated and thus the return on the social security net.”
- Improved organizational performance. Sample observations included, “Somehow we need to relate these outcomes to improved organizational performance, for example, what is the value to an organization of investing in these services?” and “what is the impact on workplace wellness/organizational health.”
- Recidivism rates.
- Number of target clients served (as opposed to number of clients served). “I would anticipate that many practitioners in our province would add to the outcome ‘number of clients served’ as ‘number of target clients served’ as a result of their funding arrangements.”

Focus group participants were asked if there were other important impacts of their services that were going unreported. Once again, the comments served to support the survey data; most comments were elaborations of the survey themes. Specifically, the focus group participants referred to the following outcomes that go unreported; where useful, exemplars and direct quotes are provided to illustrate the themes.

- Client health and well being.
- Outcomes in a self-directed environment. “Good things happen here, but how do we measure that beyond the obvious – use of equipment and resources?”
- Economic impact. “The direct correlation one agency has on the financial impacts of another agency. For example, client ‘A’ is unemployed and therefore relies on a number of other community resources”; “Need more concrete employment/economic impacts documented.”
- Community impact.
- Long-term impact.
- Competencies of counsellor.
- Validity and efficiency of the service.
- Reduction/elimination of barriers to client career development. “Actual barriers by clients”; “eliminate/reduce employment barriers, e.g., child care obtained, transportation established, housing stabilized”; “What are some of the personal issues the participants have improved, such as accessing services (counselling, child care, anger management)?”
- Changes in client motivation.

Participants were then invited to discuss what was preventing them from attending to these “unreported outcomes.” The main themes in the discussion again closely resembled the results from the survey; in particular, four themes received considerable discussion:

- Unable to conduct long term studies. “Lack of longitudinal research”; “Also worth noting that we need longitudinal studies to capture long term impact of these services. This probably requires major funding.”
- Lack of knowledge/training/tools/resources. “We need a researcher to help write an appropriate survey instrument so we capture the right data to measure the right outcomes!”
- Funders aren’t interested. “I agree that it is often the case it is measured/documented but the funder does not want/need to see this data”; “The reason was that our funder was not interested in this information as it was not seen as impacting a return on investment”; “These measures are not valued by the organization because they are not linked to improved performance of the organization.”
- Transient clientele.

Fourth, participants were asked if there were other outcomes or impacts of their services that they would like to report on if they could. Participant responses typically expanded on the themes from the survey data and focused on the impact that the services have on society (e.g., on divorce rates, crime rates, school drop out rates, etc.); personal empowerment (e.g., increase in optimism, decrease in anxiety, etc.); increased engagement in work; and the clients’ development of life skills.

The participants were then asked what they would need in order to be able to report on these additional outcomes. They identified several factors: more time, more resources, convincing funding sources to “value” alternative outcomes, better measurement tools, professional development in evaluation procedures, and involvement with professional researchers.

Finally, participants were engaged in a general discussion of the themes from the research. They suggested that the survey themes and codes were accurate and provided a good representation of the “state of practice” of career services impact assessment in Canada. Comments from the participants served to validate the accuracy of the themes and to emphasize the importance of several key findings from the survey.

POLICY MAKERS’ AND EMPLOYERS’ DATA

The opinions of representatives from career services agencies and career practitioners form the substantive base for beginning to understand the state of practice of career services efficacy evaluation in Canada. However, they are not the only stakeholders: those who develop and implement policy, and those who ultimately hire the recipients of career services, may also have views on the importance and practice of efficacy assessment. Furthermore, these groups were frequently mentioned by the survey participants, often in the context of the constraints that “they” place on what gets measured. Therefore, to provide an additional perspective on the state of impact assessment practices in Canada, telephone interviews were conducted with a small sample of Canadian policy developers (9) and employers (7). The results of these interviews are presented below. Due to the relatively small response rate, caution must be used in the interpretation and generalization of the results.

POLICY MAKERS

Policy makers reported that they were interested in receiving a range of outcome data from the career development services that they fund. In particular, they would like to receive: (a) measures of specific client outcomes (including client satisfaction, informed wise decisions, and the client's ability to find career related opportunities); (b) external indicators of client outcomes, such as statistics representing the number of jobs generated as a result of the services and the number of successful transitions made by clients; (c) indicators that the services made a difference that would not otherwise have occurred; (d) indicators that the services added value in terms of providing a return on investment or improving the economy; and (e) longitudinal evidence indicating that the outcomes of the services were enduring, allowing comparisons to those who did not receive the services.

In addition to the core themes noted above, which may be described as "specific outcomes of services," policy makers also wanted information about how the career services were provided. Their interest in process variables included indicators such as the number of clients served, the number of vacancies in the program (e.g., how well were the services being utilized compared to the capacity of the programs), and the number of assessments provided. An interesting finding related to the process variables was the interest that policy makers showed in the level of services provided and the appropriateness of the means of service delivery. Also of importance were the extent to which service providers follow through with service contracts, and whether there were evaluation measures specific to particular contracts.

Policy makers mentioned utilizing a number of current evaluation procedures, including (a) monitoring financial and activity outcomes, (b) acquiring feedback from employers or teachers about client outcomes, (c) use of client portfolios, (d) observation of client outcomes, (e) surveys of practitioners, clients or organizations, (f) qualitative data, and (g) acquiring information about whether other organizations use the program, (e.g., as an indicator of the quality of the program).

Although a few responses reflected satisfaction with the current methods that were used to evaluate career development services, most policy maker responses expressed a need to improve evaluation procedures. A number of evaluation needs were identified; in fact, a total of 19 suggestions were made on how to improve the evaluation of career development services. Respondents called for a better understanding of core concepts, including the development of clearer definitions of "outcomes" that could be accepted by practitioners and policy makers alike. They noted that identifying outcomes is not enough; they called for demonstrating cause and effect (e.g., linking specific interventions to specific results), for understanding the relative importance of outcomes (e.g., differentiating outcomes, and recognizing that some outcomes have a higher priority than others), and for determining the levels of services necessary for achieving differentiated outcomes.

Policy makers expressed a need to be able to compare outcomes between different services and between different service providers, and acknowledged that doing so would require the establishment of accepted benchmarks. In turn, improvements in outcome measurement are needed; examples cited include developing better surveys that could apply to a variety of stakeholders, improving the ability to measure client skill development, and establishing methods to evaluate long-term outcomes. They also expressed the need to measure the competencies of career development practitioners, in terms of certification and training, as a means of evaluating services.

EMPLOYERS

Employers also had much to say about measuring the impact of career services, but as might be expected, they were interested in more tangible results related to their organizational effectiveness. As a result of investing in career development services, employers wanted the following: (a) employees who were trained, skilled, committed, motivated, satisfied, and well prepared for work; (b) for the organization, increased productivity, reduced employee turnover, competency defined positions, improved internal employee mobility, and an integrated career development program; and (c) feedback from the service provider and employees who received the services about what worked and what did not. Employers reported that they currently evaluate career development services by tracking the career paths of employees who participated in the services; by reports about the services; and by various other means, including the number of employees who use the services, benchmarking, inability to hire, identification of gaps in particular positions, and increases in internal mobility.

Three employers said that they were getting the information they needed to make informed decisions about the career services offered, one disagreed, and two said they needed more information. A variety of suggestions (26 in all) were made regarding how evaluations could better provide the information that employers need. They wanted better identification of outcome indicators, evidence that employees are satisfied with the services, and evidence that can be observed in the workplace. One interesting theme that emerged was the sense among employers that measurement of specific outcomes is not enough; they also want to know if the clients were committed to the career development program and how much progress each employee made. Like the policy makers, employers seemed interested in understanding the process variables that might have an impact on outcomes. Employers also wanted improved methods for demonstrating the effectiveness of career development services, such as (a) more objective measures, (b) written evaluations by clients, (c) company exit evaluations, and (d) surveys of the clients. Employers also expressed the need for better labour market information so as to determine gaps in training and to improve their decision-making capability. Some employers wanted more quantitative and longitudinal data from evaluation procedures. The needs for ongoing benchmarking and for assessment of the needs of stakeholders were also noted. Finally, employers suggested that career development should be more integrated and comprehensive across the lifespan, facilitating the assessment of goal achievement and effectiveness of services.

SUMMARY

Members of the career development community in Canada responded with a wealth of data pertaining to the importance and practice of measuring career services impact. The depth and breadth of responses are strong indicators of the importance that the field is placing on this topic. There is also a clear call to action; all participant groups would like to see an investment in time and resources to improve the state of career services impact assessment in Canada.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The field of Canadian career development services has reached an important nexus. On the one hand, services by agencies and individual practitioners are proliferating. On the other hand, funding for career services and products, particularly at the Federal level, has been reduced in recent years. At the heart of the debate pertaining to levels of funding is the issue of accountability: to what degree can the impact of career services be measured and demonstrated? Before attempting to answer that more specific question, the Canadian Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development (CRWG) first sought to gain a better appreciation of the current state of career services impact assessment in Canada.

The CRWG conducted three separate but related activities in order to clarify the current state of practice. First, a national web-based survey of agency representatives and career practitioners was conducted to obtain their views on the importance and practice of outcome measurement. Second, follow-up focus groups were held to validate and expand upon the themes identified through the survey. Third, telephone interviews with policy makers and employers were conducted to gain their perspectives on the importance and practice of impact assessment.

The three primary research activities generated a wealth of data pertaining to perceptions of the practice of career services impact assessment. There was a very healthy response from career services stakeholders, and participants responded with detailed feedback to the questions posed. The implications of these findings for career practice in Canada are discussed here.

GENERALIZING THE FINDINGS

It is clear that, for the participants in this research initiative, the assessment of career services impact is an important and timely topic. While somewhat understated, it is perhaps one of the most powerful results of the work of the CRWG over the past year. The effort that participants gave in the completion of the surveys, the depth of the responses they provided, and the passion that was evident through both survey items and focus group participation all speak to the concern that career development professionals have for impact assessment. These concerns clearly need to be addressed in a systematic and comprehensive manner. Those working in the field of career development, as represented by the participants in this research, are clearly raising the clarion call to action and demanding that attention be paid to the issue. Of course, that begs the question of who should be rising to this challenge.

A second generalization that can be made is that the vast majority of career development professionals believe in the importance of impact assessment. While there was some variation in the degree to which they viewed it as important, the number of respondents that thought impact assessment to be “not at all important” was almost negligible. There is clearly no need to educate the Canadian career services community about the importance of impact assessment! There is also a strong basis for introducing impact measurement strategies and practices in Canada. Career development professionals are hungry for assistance in this area, and by all indications, willing to engage in making the field stronger.

The third generalization that can be made from the results is that people working in the career development community in Canada are clearly frustrated at the current state of practice of

impact assessment. This frustration stems from a number of sources, each indicative of a need for further work and/or development. Some of the more important of these are elaborated on below. The following discussion will focus on the broad impact assessment needs that have been identified by the Canadian career development community. In particular, the results of the research will be discussed in terms of the nature of impact assessment and the nature of the systemic support needed to effect change.

THE NATURE OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

While there was near-universal agreement by respondents on the importance of impact assessment, there was considerable variation in understanding about what constitutes “acceptable” outcomes. This was reflected in at least two different ways in the results. First, the belief that career services were achieving far more than they were being held accountable for was prevalent among agencies and practitioners. Some of the richest and most expansive data came from responses to the questions, “What outcomes do you believe that you are achieving that you are either not required to report or that you are not directly measuring?” and “What things would you like to report on if you could?” Both questions generated a wide variety of outcomes and measures but not much consensus. Second, participants frequently expressed frustration at the disconnects between what they were required to report on and what they were actually achieving. Perhaps one of the strongest sentiments expressed (both in the surveys and the focus groups) was the frustration that service providers experienced at being evaluated only in terms of employment statistics (e.g., the number of clients who found employment). There was a pervasive sense that there were important outcomes being achieved but that these did not seem to matter to funding sources. Both examples point to a lack of consensus between and among service providers and those who fund services as to what constitutes “acceptable” service impact. Third, there was considerable frustration at having to provide quantitative but simplistic data on service outcomes.

Despite the lack of consensus on outcome definition, it was interesting to note that the policy makers (who also often control funding) expressed that they would like to receive outcome data related to many of the same “unreported” impacts identified by agencies and practitioners. The views of policy makers were not as disparate as service providers believed them to be. Regardless of the disparity of conceptions, however, there is a definite need for providing clear and specific definitions of “outcomes” of career services. Once clarity of definition is achieved, a more standardized approach to the measurement of those outcomes may be developed.

Related to the issue of definitional clarity is the problem of scope. For the most part, career service providers wanted to broaden understanding of the range of important outcomes of career services. These included developmental outcomes (e.g., clients who had made progress on a continuum of career development), personal outcomes (e.g., changes in self-esteem, self-confidence), and competence outcomes (e.g., improved job search skills). Even the traditional “end-point” measure of “employment” as a measure of intervention success was questioned; service providers noted that appropriate employment (e.g., that which is commensurate with skills and interests) and capacity to retain employment were equally important measures. Thus, there are a broad range of potential outcomes that might be representative of excellent career services; success cannot be measured only in terms of a common end point (such as employment).

IMPROVING OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

Providing definitional clarity and expanding the scope of outcome measurement would seem to be a logical first step in improving the state of career services impact assessment. Once definitional clarity has been achieved, the next logical question is, “How can those outcomes be measured?” Most of the respondents expressed a level of discomfort or a sense of inadequacy with their level of expertise in outcome measurement. If the practice of outcome measurement is to be improved, the data clearly suggest the need to develop better evaluation tools and processes. Evaluation is often seen as a complex and difficult process, and the tools and strategies currently available often seem beyond the expertise of the service provider. The problem is further complicated by the belief of many respondents that it is not possible to measure the actual impact of their services. They called for the development of tools that could be employed easily, and that would begin to account for results that are hard to measure, such as changes in confidence or the impact of services on the clients’ families.

There is also a need to embed the tools in processes that are articulated as core components of basic service delivery. Doing so will mean that funding sources will need to acknowledge the costs of outcome measurement. It will also mean that service providers will begin to document service impact as a natural part of service delivery. However, current approaches seem to be insufficient to meet needs, so alternative methods of data collection and analysis that are integrated within services delivery will need to be developed. The development of good methodologies and a common framework for evaluation is further complicated by the need to tailor data collection and analysis to the specific needs and circumstances of each program or service.

INCREASED LEVEL OF SOPHISTICATION

Concomitant with the call for better and easier-to-use evaluation tools and processes is a need for an increased level of sophistication in measurement systems. One of the areas frequently noted was the need to be able to measure the differential impact of services. One example of differential impact is the effect that a career intervention or service may have for different individuals or groups. There was a strong belief among participants that “one size does not fit all.” Services must be differentiated according to client need; therefore, we need to find a way to ascertain if certain strategies work better for one group than another. A second example of differential impact is within the individual; some interventions may work some of the time and not at other times for any individual recipient of services. There may be a need to determine if the presenting client career development issue or stage affects intervention efficacy.

One of the strongest themes in the data, from all data collection sources, was the need to engage in longitudinal research and in the cumulative analysis of career service impact. The former is reflected in the expressed belief that the results of career interventions are often experienced over time. For example, it is difficult to determine how a change in a client’s personal belief may affect career decisions later in life. Often, within the scope of a particular form of service provision, seeds of development are planted that germinate many months or even many years later. Therefore, there is a need to document the results of interventions over a much longer time period.

The members of the career development community would also find it useful to analyze career impact across services or interventions. There is a need to aggregate the data being collected by hundreds of service providers and to demonstrate the cumulative impact that career services have. Doing so will require agreement on common definitions, better training, better tools, and

increasingly sophisticated systems. However, if successful, such meta-analytic approaches could demonstrate the broader social and economic impact of career services.

INCREASED SYSTEM SUPPORT

The data collected by the CRWG demonstrate unequivocally that the Canadian career development community perceives that outcome assessment is important, and that professionals in that community are ready to engage in the practice of outcome measurement. As noted above, making outcome assessment a reality will involve substantial improvements in our understanding of the nature of career services outcomes, the development of more accessible tools and processes for measuring those outcomes, and increased sophistication in how we use the data. Three general sources of system support were identified by participants as being crucial to improving the state of efficacy assessment practice in Canada: training support, financial support, and communication.

Participants in this research acknowledged the importance of outcome measurement; just as readily they acknowledge their lack of competency in conducting such assessments. Thus, there is a general need to enhance evaluation competence among service providers and policy makers. This can be accomplished in at least three main ways. First, respondents called for specific outcome measurement training to be included within counselling and career development training programs. It is not enough to develop skills in service delivery; the skills and techniques of service efficacy assessment must also be developed. In addition to the infusion of efficacy measurement in formal training, there is also a need for increased attention to in-service or professional development training. Third, effective models for evaluation need to be developed and provided in such a way as to promote accessibility (for example, maintaining a website of evaluation models, practices and results).

The second form of system support that clearly emerged from the participants in this research was the need to allocate financial resources to the collection of efficacy data. Some respondents were almost bitter in their belief that while there was increased pressure to document the results of their services, there was in fact less time or money provided to do so. A clear need was expressed for increasing both the time and the specific resources that could be allocated within service budgets for impact assessment.

Many service providers feel that they are in a paradoxical situation. On one hand, funding for services is becoming more and more difficult to obtain, more is being asked for the dollars provided, and evaluation resources are often not explicitly included within funding formulae. On the other hand, if service providers do not provide evidence that their services have had an impact, the likelihood of their receiving additional funding diminishes greatly. This seems to suggest that a second strategy is in order: a need to develop cost-effective but compelling assessment techniques that can be used to demonstrate efficacy and improve the chances of securing funding. That strategy may mean providing additional data not specifically required as a means of persuading funding sources of the value of the career services. The use of outcome evidence in such a manner represents a form of advocacy and education of the funding sources; the implication is that, left to their own devices, funding sources tend to ask for simplistic and sometimes not very realistic data.

The third form of system support needed, according to this study, is continued dialogue and advocacy amongst stakeholders. It was most interesting to note that, although there was strong suspicion of the limited focus of funding bodies (i.e., a perception that all they were interested in

were employment statistics), the policy group expressed a number of similar concerns about broadening the scope of impact assessment. This suggests a need for all stakeholders to engage in an on-going dialogue, to clarify assumptions, to serve as a forum for advocacy, and to develop joint strategies. The work of the Pan-Canadian Symposium and the associated provincial working groups is a good example of the benefits that can accrue from such interaction. It would seem prudent to continue and even expand upon those activities.

COMMENTS ON STATISTICAL TRENDS

As noted earlier, the results of this research point to overwhelming support for the perceived importance of impact assessment, and confirmation that the majority of Canadian career service providers already engage in some form of impact assessment. However, a few other trends from the statistical analysis of the data also deserve comment.

One of the notable findings from tests of strength of relationships in the data was that respondents who worked in educational settings placed less importance on impact measurement than their counterparts in not-for-profit or government settings, and were also less likely to engage in the actual practice of outcome assessment. One possible explanation for this finding is related to the manner in which services are funded. For some time, those who provide funding to community career service agencies have demanded some form of accountability measure as part of the funding agreement. Similarly, most direct government service providers are required to document the impact of their services. This does not seem to be the case for as many career service providers in school settings. Therefore, it would seem plausible that if accountability measures are not mandated, they are not used.

Despite the difference in funding mechanisms for the provision of services, it would still seem that school-based career services might be at risk if those who provide such services are not able to document their impact. In many jurisdictions, school authorities face difficult decisions regarding funding priorities, and it is not uncommon for support services to be among the first to be cut. The problem is complicated by the fact that many people who provide career services in schools also fill a number of other counselling and/or administrative functions; adding evaluation tasks to an already busy workload may seem too onerous. However, specific attention needs to be paid to school-based providers of career services in order to both encourage and support outcome evaluation activities.

The interviews with policy makers and employers also yielded some very interesting results. Of particular note is the extent to which both groups expressed the need for improved methods for assessing the value of career development services. Both groups gave a wide variety of suggestions regarding what was needed for development in this area. In particular, both agreed that outcomes needed to be better defined and wanted more effective ways to measure the outcomes. The policy makers indicated that it was not enough simply to measure particular outcomes; they wanted to understand more about the relationship between the interventions and outcomes. Both groups mentioned the need to better assess stakeholder needs and better utilize benchmarking procedures.

Although the results of the interviews improve our understanding of the perspectives of policy makers and employers regarding the evaluation of career development services, this sample was very small, and it is difficult to generalize from this research. However, the process of consultation with different stakeholders is important within this exploratory research and may inform future research conducted in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The findings of this research suggest a number of possible avenues for further research and development in career services outcome assessment. For the purposes of this discussion, seven major recommendations are provided.

- **Recommendation 1:** Secure a stable funding base. One of the main themes that was identified through this work is that the issue of impact assessment is very important to career service providers, policy makers, and employers in Canada. It is also apparent that much work needs to be done to address the concerns raised by these groups. Furthermore, the research activities of the Canadian Research Working Group demonstrate that there is strong interest in outcome research among academics and representative career development organizations across Canada. However, the creation of an on-going agenda of research and development requires a stable funding base that would support research and development activities that would span a number of years. To that end, the members of the CRWG are actively engaged in the development of funding proposals. Career service providers can assist in that process by actively lobbying local, provincial and national government agencies, foundations and politicians on the importance of career impact assessment.
- **Recommendation 2:** Continue stakeholder dialogue. Service providers generally expressed frustration at the wide gap between what they thought was important to measure and what funding sources thought was important to measure; however, the data suggested that this “gap” was much smaller than believed. There was also unanimity on the importance of impact assessment. It would make sense, therefore, to continue the process of dialogue initiated through vehicles such as the Pan-Canadian Symposium on Career Development, Life-long Learning, and Workforce Development (2003), and the parallel consultations held in many of the provinces before and since the national symposium. The active engagement of all stakeholder parties in continued dialogue and development is necessary for clarifying common definitions, developing a lobby base for securing funding, and sustaining momentum for this important work.
- **Recommendation 3:** Invite client input. The previous recommendation spoke to the need for continuing the dialogue among stakeholders. One of the groups conspicuous by their absence in this study is the client group who benefit from career services. They were not included as a deliberate strategy; the goal of the research was to determine the current state of practice and outcome measurement needs. However, as the dialogue moves forward, it will be important to include the client voice. The beneficiary of services should have a voice both in the nature of the services provided and in the relative importance of the different kinds of outcomes that services may produce.
- **Recommendation 4:** Develop comprehensive models of or frameworks for impact assessment. The data from this research clearly point to the need for developing robust and comprehensive models for measuring the impact of career services. The field is currently limited in its capacity to justify itself by the lack of conceptual frameworks to guide impact assessment practices. Furthermore, there is limited capacity to engage in comparative or longitudinal research. Meeting this challenge will not be an easy task. Any model must at once be robust and concomitantly responsive to unique service provider needs or conditions; it must respect a diversity of career service intentions, practices and desired outcomes; and it must provide results that would be of practical use to service providers and funding sources.

- **Recommendation 5:** Develop clear, valid and reliable tools. The development of a comprehensive impact assessment framework is only the starting place for improving the state of practice in Canada. There is also a pressing need to develop tools that service providers can use in order to efficiently collect data pertaining to the impact of their services. Although this recommendation may sound relatively simple, it has several layers of implications. First, there is a need to devise measurement tools that are consistent with the expanded conceptualization of “career services outcomes” that was called for in the discussion of framework building. Given that many of these outcomes were considered to be “not measurable” or “intangible,” this will be a challenging task. Second, the tools must be valid measures of the constructs related to meaningful career services outcomes. For example, employment statistics may be valid measures of the job search component of career development, but they may not be valid measures of the career decision-making component of career development. Third, the tools must be reliable measures; that is, they must be able to deliver consistent results. Fourth, the tools must be simple enough that they can be implemented within the scope of already busy practice. If the tools are too complex, or take too much time to administer and interpret, they will not likely be used.

The development of effective tools and strategies for the measurement of career services impact will need to be a cumulative and dynamic process. Careful attention needs to be paid to monitoring the utility of the tools, so that a process of continuous improvement may be implemented. It would probably be wise to start with the development of a few clear, simple, but effective tools that can have an immediate impact, and then to add to the resource base of tools and strategies over time.

- **Recommendation 6:** Create a mechanism for disseminating and profiling impact assessment information. Currently, there is no single source of information and resources to assist people with career services impact assessment. Paradoxically, an array of impact assessments are being conducted; virtually all publicly funded career services provide some form of documentation of the impact of their services. Unfortunately, these data are not commonly shared. Furthermore, there is no place to turn if one wishes to learn more about impact assessment, to see exemplars or models of how to conduct impact assessment, or to engage in dialogue and share in best practices with colleagues. A centralized mechanism for collecting and disseminating impact information, and for creating a forum for the exchange of ideas, would unquestionably benefit the entire field of Canadian career development. While some initial steps have been taken in this area (e.g., the Impact website, at <http://www.careerservicesimpact.ca>), much more work needs to be done to provide the level of service needed by career development professionals.
- **Recommendation 7:** Foster international alliances. Canada is not alone in its interest in developing an evidence base for career development practice. Recently, in response to international symposia exploring the relationships between public policy and career services, the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy was formed. One of the first issues that the International Centre is considering is the need to develop international guidelines for collecting evidence pertaining to the impact of career services. The hope is to coordinate research development in order to minimize duplication of research among partner countries, and thereby to accelerate the evidence-based movement. In turn, such evidence is seen to be a critical factor in influencing public policy around the world. Given the considerable interest among career development professionals that was evident in this study, it will be important for Canada to play a significant role in these international activities.

SUMMARY

The goal of the CRWG was to explore the state of practice of career services impact measurement in Canada. The written and verbal responses of the participants in this research have provided a rich source of data that has contributed immensely to a better understanding of the practice of impact assessment. It is clearly a valued activity, and just as clearly professionals are ready to take the next steps towards creating an evidence-based culture for career practice. This is an exciting time for those interested in furthering evidence-based practice!

The results of the survey are also somewhat daunting. The scope of the work to be done is vast, and the challenges are many. However, with the concentrated effort of all stakeholders, and with appropriate support, we are poised to take the next giant step forward in demonstrating how valuable career services are, to individuals and to society at large.

**RESEARCH PROJECT
MEASURING THE IMPACT OF CAREER SERVICES: STATE OF PRACTICE**

Career development service providers are under constant pressure to prove that their services are cost-effective and beneficial. There appears to be very little “evidence base” as to their effectiveness and benefits; very few studies have been published in Canada identifying the outcomes and impacts actually measured and reported.

This letter requests your support for and participation in a preliminary research study on the state of outcome evaluation in the field of career development services. The results of this research will provide an overview of the state of practice pertaining to the evaluation of career development services outcomes and impacts in Canada and will inform the development of future evaluation processes.

In this study we want to identify:

- the services outcomes actually gathered and reported by front-line career practitioners;
- the services outcomes gathered and reported at the office, agency or school board levels;
- the services outcomes which are being achieved by front-line and office, agency, school board levels but which are not reported;
- the services outcomes policy makers gather and use to make decisions on career development service provision; how useful this information is and what evaluation data they would like to have but do not currently have; and
- the services outcomes employers use to make decisions on what human resource and career services will be provided to their employees or prospective employees; how useful this information is and what information they would like to have but do not currently have.

We are seeking participants from the following networks:

- the provincial/territorial teams who attended the Working Connections Pan-Canadian Symposium in November 2003 (policy developers, employers, career development deliverers);
- the stakeholders for the Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners and through the stakeholders, their memberships;
- the Career Circuit youth-serving agency network; and
- delegates to NATCON, January 2005.

The Research Team’s goal is to use the results of this relatively small study in developing a much larger study. The current study seeks 50 employers and policy makers who will participate in telephone interviews or focus groups. There are no restrictions on the number of people who can complete the on-line survey; however, the team will perform an in-depth analysis of the data provided by a small sample of respondents. The remaining data will be analyzed in the larger follow-up study, and the trends that emerge from the smaller sample will assist in supporting the case for a much larger study.

The Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) will coordinate the study on behalf of the Research Group, whose names and universities are attached. CCDF, a charitable not-for-profit foundation, organized the Working Connections Symposium. This initiative was recommended by Symposium delegates and has been included as one of the key Symposium follow-up actions. You will have access to the research report and will be invited to participate in the larger study if it is approved for funding.

The study design includes:

- an on-line bilingual survey to be completed electronically by practitioners (approx. 20 minutes);
- an on-line bilingual survey to be completed electronically by staff at the office, agency or school board level (approx. 20 minutes);
- based on the survey data, a series of more detailed consultation questions to be investigated at bilingual sessions at NATCON (approx. 90 minutes);
- a series of questions to be addressed through individual telephone interviews with policy developers or, where possible, to be addressed in a small focus group of policy developers (approx. 20 minutes); and
- a series of questions to be addressed through individual telephone interviews with employers or where possible to be addressed in a small focus group of employers (approx. 20 minutes).

Identifying information about any individual/organization participating in the study will remain confidential. We hope you will agree to assist us in completing the study by doing the following:

Practitioners:

- Complete the on-line survey on your own time or seek permission to complete it from the appropriate person in your place of work.
- If you are in attendance at NATCON, attend the consultation.

Staff at the agency, school board, office level:

- Complete the on-line survey on your own time, or seek permission to complete it from the appropriate person in your place of work.
- If you were in attendance at NATCON, attend the consultation.

Policy Makers:

- Agree to be interviewed by telephone or, if you are not the individual in your organization with the needed information, provide contact information for the best person to interview.
- Give these people in your organization permission to participate in the study.

Employers:

- Agree to be interviewed by telephone and provide contact information for two other employers in your network who would agree to be interviewed.
- Contact the employers you suggest and encourage them to participate in the study.

The on-line survey will be posted from November 1 to November 30 at www.careerservicesimpact.ca. Employers and policy makers will be contacted the week of November 1-5 to seek participation and referrals. Interviews or focus groups will take place between November 8 and November 30.

Your cooperation in helping to complete this initial study will be greatly appreciated. The researchers believe that this study, followed by the larger one, will advance evaluation of career development services, and that the actions which result from the study will benefit all stakeholders involved.

Lynne Bezanson, Executive Director (l.bezanson@ccdf.ca); and
Céline Renald, Consultant (c.renald@ccdf.ca)
On behalf of the Research Team

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF CAREER SERVICES: STATE OF PRACTICE

Welcome and thank you for agreeing to participate in this on-line survey!

Background

In November 2003, the Working Connections Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development was held in Toronto. The Symposium included representatives from practitioners, service providers, employers, academics and policy makers from every province and territory in Canada. One of the clear messages from the Symposium was that people and agencies that provide career development services are under constant pressure to prove that their services have an impact. Unfortunately, we do not have much information about how the results of services are currently being assessed.

As a follow-up to the Symposium, The Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development was formed and is launching a study to learn more about how Canadian providers of career services evaluate the impact of their services. Our goal is to better understand the current state of practice in Canada with respect to documenting the results of career interventions and services.

There are two surveys on this website:

- If you represent an agency or service provider, please follow the link to the Measuring Career Services Impact: Agency and Service Providers Form.
- If you are a career services practitioner, please follow the link to the Measuring Career Services Impact: Practitioners Form.

There are two steps to completing the survey:

- First, you will need to fill out the Participant Consent Form.
- Once that has been completed, you can proceed directly to the Survey. The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete.

Participant Consent

Please read the Informed Consent Information below. By clicking on the "I Accept" button (provided at the end of this document), you indicate that you have read and understand the nature of your participation in this research, and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

- I agree to participate in the research conducted by the Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development under the direction of Dr. Kris Magnusson of the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge. I am aware that this research is partly funded by a grant from Human Resources and Skill Development Canada, administered through the Canadian Career Development Foundation.
- I understand that the purpose of the research is to learn more about how Canadian providers of career services evaluate the impact of their services and to better understand the current state of practice with respect to documenting the results of career interventions and services.

- I acknowledge that my participation in this research will consist of completing an on-line survey. I understand that the information I provide will be kept confidential and that my name or agency will not be linked in any way to the responses I provide in the survey. I also understand that the analysis of the data will be included in a report of the research findings, and may be presented for publication in academic journals or at professional conferences. In addition, I understand that the information I provide will also contribute to the research requirements for a Masters degree in Education in Counselling Psychology for Mr. Mark Slomp.
- I understand that there are no known or foreseen risks associated with my participation in this survey.
- I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and may refuse to participate and/or to answer any of the questions on the survey. In the event that I respond only to select questions, I acknowledge that those responses will be used in the study.
- I understand that I may address any concerns about my rights as a research participant by contacting Dr. R. Mrazek, Chair, Human Subjects Research Committee, Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge (edu.masters@uleth.ca; 403-329-2425).
- I am aware that I may print a copy of this Informed Consent for my records.
- I understand that if I have any questions about the conduct of the research project, I may contact Mr. Mark Slomp at mark.slomp@uleth.ca or Dr. Kris Magnusson at kris.magnusson@uleth.ca.

Signature

Date

Agency and Service Providers Form

What evidence do we have that career interventions work? To answer that question, we must first determine what we mean by “what works.” In this study, we are particularly interested in learning:

- how your agency determines the impact of your services;
- what results you achieve; and
- how you go about measuring those results.

Explanation of Terms

Outcomes

Throughout this survey, we will be using the term “Outcome” to mean a specific result or product of an intervention. An outcome might be any combination of the following:

- Changes in Client Competence, reflected by changes in client knowledge, skills and/or attributes. Examples include:
 - Knowledge change, such as: increased information about occupational opportunities, ability to describe local and/or larger labour market conditions, increased understanding of personal interests/abilities, etc.
 - Skills change, such as: exploration skills, such as finding labour market information, decision-making skills, job search skills, such as writing effective resumes, effective interview techniques, and accessing public and “hidden” job markets, skills for assessing market demands and creating personal niches, etc.
 - Attributes change, such as: changes in level of client sense of hope; increased sense of self-confidence and/or self-efficacy, increased willingness to engage in career planning behaviours, etc.
- Changes in Client Behaviours
 - For example, increased job-seeking behaviours, application to or enrollment in educational/training programs, etc.
 - This may also be reflected by client progress through the processes or activities associated with the program or service provided.
- Changes in Client Situation
 - For example, employment status, educational status, etc.
- Broad Changes for the Client and/or Community
 - Examples may include changes in client financial situation, social inclusion, impact on families, community economic development, etc.

Interventions

We will also be using the term “Intervention” in a broad sense. An intervention may be thought of as any intentional activity that is implemented in the hopes of fostering client change. In other words, an intervention is anything that is done to produce an outcome for the client or target group.

English Agency/Service Provider Questionnaire

NOTE: Please answer all items from the perspective of the agency or service provider that you represent.

Part I: Context of Services and Agency Profile

1. Kind of career services provided

1.1 Please indicate how frequently your agency/organization engages in the following kinds of career services

1.1.1 Individual career counselling

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.2 Group career counselling

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.3 Career education programs

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.4 Assessment services

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.5 Career and labour market information services

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.6 Employment counselling

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.7 Job search information and/or resources

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.8 Work development

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.9 Other (please specify) _____

Never Sometimes Often

2. Target population

2.1 Which of the following describes the **age group** your services are intended to serve? Select as many as are appropriate:

Students in grade 9 or less

Students in grades 10 to 12

Students in post-secondary settings

Young people (i.e., 19 years old or less) who are not in school settings

Adults in early to middle age (i.e., up to 45 years old)

Older adults (i.e., more than 45 years old)

Other (please specify) _____

2.2 Which of the following best describes the **target group** for your services?

2.2.1 Gender

- Programs/services designed for women
- Programs/services designed for men
- Programs/services open to women and men

2.2.2 Citizenship/culture

- Programs/services with no specific cultural or ethnic group in mind
- Programs/services designed for recent immigrants
- Programs/services designed for First Nations people
- Programs/services designed for other specific cultural groups (please specify) _____

2.2.3 Employment Status

- Programs/services designed for unemployed individuals
- Programs/services designed for social allowance recipients
- Programs/services designed for people in educational settings
- Programs/services designed for people employed in specific work settings
- Programs/services designed for any member of the community regardless of employment status
- Other (please specify) _____

2.2.4 Special Needs

- Programs/services designed for individuals with special needs (please specify) _____

3. Kind and size of agency/organization/service provider

3.1 Please indicate which of the following best describes your agency/organization/service:

- Federal government agency
- Provincial government agency
- School within the K-12 system
- Post-secondary institute (college, technical institute or university)
- Career services or human resource unit within a larger company or organization
- Not-for-profit agency
- Private (not-for-profit) career services provider
- Private practice/consultancy

3.2 How many people in your agency/organization/service provision unit are responsible for providing career services?

- 10 or more career development service providers
- More than 5 but less than 10 career development service providers
- 2 to 5 career development service providers
- One person

Part II: Outcomes of Your Services

4. Importance and practice of outcome measurement:

4.1 How important is it to measure the outcomes/impact of career services?

- Not at all important
- Somewhat important
- Very important

4.2 Does your agency/organization report on the outcomes/impact of its services?

- Yes
- No

(If you answered "No," please proceed to item #6)

(If you answered "Yes," please proceed to item #5)

5. Please list up to 3 of the most important outcomes that you report. For each outcome, please describe how the outcome is being measured (e.g., what evidence do you have/collect that each outcome is being achieved).

Outcome of Service #1:

How the Outcome is Measured/Specific Evidence:

Outcome of Service #2:

How the Outcome is Measured/Specific Evidence:

Outcome of Service #3:

How the Outcome is Measured/Specific Evidence:

Additional comments?:

6. What outcomes do you believe that you are achieving that you are either not required to report or that you are not directly measuring? Please list up to 3 of the most important “unreported” outcomes. For each outcome, please describe how you know that each outcome is being achieved (e.g., what evidence you have).

Outcome not being reported #1:

Proof that it is achieved:

Outcome not being reported #2:

Proof that it is achieved:

Outcome not being reported #3:

Proof that it is achieved:

Additional comments?

7. What difficulties do you face when trying to collect evidence and/or measure the impact of your services?

8. Services and interventions often produce outcomes that are hard to measure, and funding agencies may seem to value (and therefore require reporting on) some kinds of outcomes over others. What things would you like to report on if you could?

9. How could the value/impact of your services be better measured?

10. What other comments would you like to make about the issue of measuring the impact of career services?

Welcome

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this on-line survey!

Background

In November of 2003, the Working Connections Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development was held in Toronto. The Symposium included representatives from practitioners, service providers, employers, academics and policy developers from every province and territory in Canada. One of the clear messages from the Symposium was that people and agencies that provide career development services are under constant pressure to prove that their services have an impact. Unfortunately, we do not have much information about how the results of services are currently being assessed.

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There are two surveys on this website:

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There are two steps to completing the survey:

- First, you will need to fill out the Participant Consent Form.
- Once that has been completed, you can proceed directly to the Survey. The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete.

Participant Consent Form

Measuring Career Services Impact: Agency and Service Providers Form

Measuring Career Services Impact: Practitioners Form

Participant Consent: Practitioners Form

Please read the Informed Consent Information below. By clicking on the “I Accept” button (provided at the end of this document), you indicate that you have read and understand the nature of your participation in this research, and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

- I agree to participate in the research conducted by The Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development under the direction of Dr. Kris Magnusson of the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge. I am aware that this research is partly funded by a grant from Human Resources and Skill Development Canada, administered through the Canadian Career Development Foundation.
- I understand that the purpose of the research is to learn more about how Canadian providers of career services evaluate the impact of their services and to better understand the current state of practice with respect to documenting the results of career interventions and services.
- I acknowledge that my participation in this research will consist of completing an on-line survey. I understand that the information I provide will be kept confidential and that my name or agency will not be linked in any way to the responses I provide in the survey. I also understand that the analysis of the data will be included in a report of the research findings, and may be presented for publication in academic journals or at professional conferences. In addition, I understand that the information I provide will also contribute to the research requirements for a Masters degree in Education in Counselling Psychology for Mr. Mark Slomp.
- I understand that there are no known or foreseen risks associated with my participation in this survey.
- I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, and may refuse to participate and/or to answer any of the questions on the survey. In the event that I respond only to select questions, I acknowledge that those responses will be used in the study.
- I understand that I may address any concerns about my rights as a research participant by contacting Dr. R. Mrazek, Chair, Human Subjects Research Committee, Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge (edu.masters@uleth.ca; 403 329 2425).
- I am aware that I may print a copy of this Informed Consent for my records.
- I understand that if I have any questions about the conduct of the research project, I may contact Mr. Mark Slomp at mark.slomp@uleth.ca or Dr. Kris Magnusson at kris.magnusson@uleth.ca.

Measuring Career Services Impact: Practitioners Form

Terms

What evidence do we have that career interventions work? To answer that question, we must first determine what we mean by “what works”. In this study, we are particularly interested in learning:

- how you determine the impact of your services;
- what results you achieve; and
- how you go about measuring those results.

OUTCOMES

Throughout this survey, we will be using the term “Outcome” to mean a specific result or product of an intervention. An outcome might be any combination of the following:

- Changes in Client Competence: Reflected by changes in client knowledge, skills and/or attributes. Examples of changes in client competence include:
 - Knowledge Change, such as: increased information about occupational opportunities; ability to describe local and/or larger labour market conditions; increased understanding of personal interests/abilities; etc.
 - Skills change, such as: exploration skills, such as finding labour market information; decision-making skills; job search skills, such as writing effective resumes, effective interview techniques and accessing public and “hidden” job markets; skills for assessing market demands and creating personal niches; etc.
 - Attributes change, such as: changes in level of client sense of hope; increased sense of self confidence and/or self-efficacy; increased willingness to engage in career planning behaviours; etc.
- Changes in Client Behaviours:
 - For example, increased job-seeking behaviours, application to or enrollment in educational/training programs, etc.
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 - For example, employment status, educational status, etc.
- Broad Changes for the Client and/or Community
 - Examples may include client financial situation, social inclusion, impact on families, community economic development, etc.

INTERVENTIONS

We will also be using the term “Intervention” in a broad sense. An intervention may be thought of as any intentional activity that is implemented in the hopes of fostering client change. Another way to think of an intervention is anything that is done to produce an outcome for the client or target group.

**Measuring Career Services Impact:
Practitioners Form**

NOTE: Please answer all items from the perspective of your current practice.

Part I: Context of Services and Agency Profile

1. Kind of career services provided

1.1 Please indicate how frequently your agency/organization engages in the following kinds of career services

1.1.1 Individual career counselling

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.2 Group career counselling

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.3 Career education programs

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.4 Assessment services

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.5 Career and labour market information services

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.6 Employment counselling

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.7 Job search information and/or resources

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.8 Work development

Never Sometimes Often

1.1.9 Other (please specify) _____

Never Sometimes Often

2. Target population

2.1 Which of the following describes the **age group** your services are intended to serve? Select as many as are appropriate:

Students in grade 9 or less

Students in grades 10 to 12

Students in post-secondary settings

Young people (i.e., 19 years old or less) who are not in school settings

Adults in early to middle age (i.e., up to 45 years old)

Older adults (i.e., more than 45 years old)

Other (please specify) _____

2.2 Which of the following best describes the **target group** for your services?

2.2.1 Gender

- Programs/services designed for women
- Programs/services designed for men
- Programs/services open to women and men

2.2.2 Citizenship/culture

- Programs/services with no specific cultural or ethnic group in mind
- Programs/services designed for recent immigrants
- Programs/services designed for First Nations people
- Programs/services designed for other specific cultural groups (please specify) _____

2.2.3 Employment Status

- Programs/services designed for unemployed individuals
- Programs/services designed for social allowance recipients
- Programs/services designed for people in educational settings
- Programs/services designed for people employed in specific work settings
- Programs/services designed for any member of the community regardless of employment status
- Other (please specify) _____

2.2.4 Special Needs

- Programs/services designed for individuals with special needs (please specify) _____

3. Kind and size of agency/organization/service provider

3.1 Please indicate which of the following best describes your agency/organization/service:

- Federal government agency
- Provincial government agency
- School within the K-12 system
- Post-secondary institute (college, technical institute or university)
- Career services or human resource unit within a larger company or organization
- Not-for-profit agency
- Private (not-for-profit) career services provider
- Private practice/consultancy

3.2 How many people in your agency/organization/service provision unit are responsible for providing career services?

- 10 or more career development service providers
- More than 5 but less than 10 career development service providers
- 2 to 5 career development service providers
- One person

Part II: Outcomes of Your Services

4. Importance and practice of outcome measurement:

4.1 How important is it to measure the outcomes/impact of career services?

- Not at all important
- Somewhat important
- Very important

4.2 Does your agency/organization report on the outcomes/impact of its services?

- Yes
- No

(If you answered "No," please proceed to item #6)

(If you answered "Yes," please proceed to item #5)

5. Please list up to 3 of the most important outcomes that you report. For each outcome, please describe how the outcome is being measured (e.g., what evidence do you have/collect that each outcome is being achieved).

Outcome of Service #1:

How the Outcome is Measured/Specific Evidence:

Outcome of Service #2:

How the Outcome is Measured/Specific Evidence:

Outcome of Service #3:

How the Outcome is Measured/Specific Evidence:

Additional comments?:

6. What outcomes do you believe that you are achieving that you are either not required to report or that you are not directly measuring? Please list up to 3 of the most important "unreported" outcomes. For each outcome, please describe how you know that each outcome is being achieved (e.g., what evidence you have).

Outcome not being reported #1:

Proof that it is achieved:

Outcome not being reported #2:

Proof that it is achieved:

Outcome not being reported #3:

Proof that it is achieved:

Additional comments?

7. What difficulties do you face when trying to collect evidence and/or measure the impact of your services?

8. Services and interventions often produce outcomes that are hard to measure, and funding agencies may seem to value (and therefore require reporting on) some kinds of outcomes over others. What things would you like to report on if you could?

9. How could the value/impact of your services be better measured?

10. What other comments would you like to make about the issue of measuring the impact of career services?

Part III: Follow-up

Thank you for participating in this on-line survey. The results will help to strengthen the arguments for providing career development services in Canada.

There are others ways that you can help as well. We would like to conduct follow-up interviews after we have done a preliminary analysis of the data. Please indicate below if you would like to participate in a follow-up interview.

We would also like to begin to assemble a collection of tools, instruments, questionnaires, strategies or procedures that people have found to be useful in documenting and/or measuring the impact of their services. If you have something you would like to contribute to this, please indicate below.

Please note that information you provide on this page is kept completely separate from the answers you provided to the survey. We will have no way of linking individual offers for further interview participation or exemplars of outcome measurement to the specific results of the survey.

- Yes, I would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview.

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

- Yes, I would like to submit a tool, instrument, questionnaire or strategy that I have found effective for documenting and/or measuring the impact of my service. You may contact me at:

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

If you prefer, you may contact the researchers directly to express your interest in either submitting an exemplar or being involved in further interviews. Please contact:

Mr. Mark Slomp mark.slomp@uleth.ca OR

Dr. Kris Magnusson kris.magnusson@uleth.ca

THANK YOU!!!!

Appendix D. Letter of Invitation to Policy Makers

As you know, In November of 2003, the Working Connections Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development was held in Toronto. One of the issues addressed at the Symposium was the need for better evidence and data to improve policy makers' capacity to steer career development services. To date, very few studies have been conducted in Canada to identify the desired outcomes of these services as well as how the outcomes of these services are measured and reported.

The Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development is launching a study to learn more about how policy makers who fund career development services currently evaluate the impact of these services. We are interested in both what evaluation practices are used and how evaluation practices are used by policy makers who make decisions regarding the funding of career services. We are also interested in what evidence and data policy makers would like to have regarding these services. We would like to invite you to participate in this research.

Your participation will play an integral role in helping to address these questions. This participation will consist of providing information during a brief phone interview, lasting approximately ten to thirty minutes. All information provided for this study will remain confidential and your participation will be anonymous. To ensure your anonymity, group results will be reported so that individual participants cannot be identified. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be e-mailed the interview questions prior to the scheduled interview to assist you with preparation.

Your participation in this study will provide important information which is intended to help improve the quality of career development services across Canada. Additionally, please feel free to include the contact information of any other individuals whom you think may be appropriate to participate in this study. Please reply by November 30, 2004 to confirm your availability to participate in this study as well as the dates and times that will be most convenient for your participation.

Questions regarding the study may be directed to Vivian Lalande, PhD, C. Psych, Associate Professor, University of Calgary at lalande@ucalgary.ca or 403-220-7573.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Appendix E. Letter of Invitation for Employers

As you know, in November of 2003, the Working Connections Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development was held in Toronto. The Symposium included representatives from practitioners, service providers, employers, academics and policy developers from every province and territory in Canada.

Career development services play a vital role in workforce development via assisting employees to make choices about their employment and training that will lead them to be more productive employees in the long-term and, in turn, help to bolster employer profitability. Nonetheless, concern is frequently expressed about the lack of evidence supporting the value of career development services and, to date, very few studies have been conducted in Canada to identify the desired outcomes of these services as well as how the outcomes of these services are measured and reported.

The Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development is launching a study to learn more about how employers are evaluating career development services in the workplace. We are interested in both what the desired outcomes of career development services are for employers and how employers evaluate whether they are obtaining the desired outcomes from these services. We are also interested in what evidence and data employers would like to have from these services. We would like to invite you to participate in this research.

Your participation will play an integral role in helping to address these questions. This participation will consist of providing information during a brief phone interview, lasting approximately ten to thirty minutes. All information provided for this study will remain confidential and your participation will be anonymous. To ensure your anonymity, group results will be reported so that individual participants cannot be identified. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be e-mailed the interview questions prior to the scheduled interview to assist you with preparation.

Your participation in this study will provide important information which is intended to help improve the quality of career development services across Canada. Additionally, please feel free to include the contact information of any other individuals whom you think may be appropriate to participate in this study. Please reply by November 30, 2004 to confirm your availability to participate in this study as well as the dates and times that will be most convenient for your participation.

Questions regarding the study may be directed to Vivian Lalande, PhD, C. Psych, Associate Professor, and University of Calgary at lalande@ucalgary.ca or 403-220-7573.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Research Introduction (review as necessary)

As you know, in November of 2003, the Working Connections Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development was held in Toronto. The Symposium included representatives from practitioners, service providers, employers, academics and policy developers from every province and territory in Canada. One of the issues addressed at the Symposium was the need for better evidence and data to improve policy makers' capacity to steer career development services. In fact, very few studies have actually been conducted in Canada to identify what the desired outcomes are and how these outcomes are being measured and reported.

As a follow-up to the Symposium, The Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development was formed and is launching a study to learn more about how policy makers who fund career development services currently evaluate the impact of these services.

We are interested in both what evaluation practices are used and how these evaluation practices are used by policy makers who make decisions regarding the funding of career services. We are also interested in what evidence and data policy makers would like to have.

Examples of career development services include:

- Job search services;
- Career counselling;
- Job placement services;
- On the job training;
- Labour market information; and
- Career education.

I will ask you to respond to 7 questions in this interview. I will take notes while you are talking, so I may ask you to repeat yourself occasionally.

Interview Questions:

1. What do you want back from career development programs and services as a result of your funding?
2. How do you evaluate if you are getting back what you want from these programs and services?
3. What information are you getting to help you make informed decisions about the programs and services you are funding or will fund?
4. How useful is the information you are getting? If you had a wish list, what information would you like to have to help you evaluate better?
5. Do you have any exemplary examples of what is working well?
6. If yes, can you provide a copy to the research team?
7. What other comments would you like to make about measuring the impact of services?

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

Research Introduction (review as necessary)

As you know, in November of 2003, the Working Connections Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development was held in Toronto. The Symposium included representatives from practitioners, service providers, employers, academics and policy developers from every province and territory in Canada.

Career development services have a role in workforce development. These services assist workers to actively manage their careers and to make sustainable and meaningful choices about their jobs and training. When individuals make good choices about their training and work, they tend to be both long-term and productive employees. This of course has significant impact on employer profitability. Concern is frequently expressed about the lack of evidence supporting the value of career development services. In fact, very few studies have actually been conducted in Canada to identify what are the desired outcomes and how these outcomes are being measured and reported.

As a follow-up to the Symposium, the Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development is launching a study to learn more about how employers are evaluating career development services in the workplace. This is the focus of this research.

Examples of career development services relevant to employers include:

- Recruitment services;
- Job placement services;
- On the job training;
- Career planning and progression (career coaching);
- Employee retention programs;
- Labour market information that supports strategic business planning;
- Workforce planning;
- Career transition management programs;
- Retirement planning; and
- Outplacement.

Interview Questions:

1. Do you offer any of these kinds of programs and services to your employees?
 - If yes, please list and describe them.
 - If not, ask why and stop interview.

If yes, say the following: “I will ask you to respond to 7 questions in this interview. I will take notes while you are talking, so I may ask you to repeat yourself occasionally.”

1. What do you want back from these programs and services as a result of your investment?
2. How do you evaluate if you are getting back what you want from these programs and services?

3. Are you getting the information you need to make informed decisions about the programs and services you offer?
4. If you had a wish list, what information would you like to have to help you evaluate better?
5. Do you have any exemplary examples of what is working well?
6. If yes, can you provide a copy to the research team?
7. What other comments would you like to make about measuring the impact of services?

Thank you for your participation in this survey.