

Evaluation Forum Newsletter

Linking People and Ideas in Human Resource Policy and Programming

Volume 2 Issue 1

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Welcome Back!

Hope everyone had a great summer of '98—the weather was outstanding, wasn't it? By the time you read this, summer will seem like a long time ago and Christmas will be just around the corner.

We are looking forward to this second year of the **Newsletter**—touching base personally with many of you, and providing you with information and news that makes a difference in what you do.

This year the newsletter will have: regular updates on **LMDA** evaluation progress; information on **professional development** opportunities; feature articles on **youth** and **aboriginal** evaluation and programming as well as regular columns on **what's going on where**, **methodology** topics and **websites** of interest.

This first issue focuses on the topical issue of **youth unemployment**, including a summary of current research and “schools of thought,” and information on high school programs across the country for young apprentices. **Next issue's focus will be on aboriginal programming and evaluation.**

If you have ideas or feedback, please contact us. Thanks especially to those who contributed to this issue.

Looking forward to keeping in touch and to another great year for evaluation and evaluators across Canada. ■

Susan Bradley

The Youth Situation: Myth or Reality?

Recent research presents **alternative** views on the youth **situation**—its severity, its causes, and solutions. This article looks at the evidence—what do we know about youth unemployment in Canada today?

In a 6-page overview of youth employment issues (April? 1998, <http://www.cwf.ca/>), The Canada West Foundation describes two “schools” of thought:

The Business-As-Usual School that links youth unemployment with a sluggish economy and the fact that youth have always needed time to find stable full-time jobs after schooling.

The Changing Environment School that links youth unemployment with globalization, technological innovation, government downsizing and corporate restructuring—factors outside the traditional school-to-work transition and business cycle.

An article in *Insights: Public Sector Management In Canada*, by John Szekula (May/June/98) provides an overview of recent studies that reflect on our current understanding of youth unemployment. Findings include:

- Youth feel their **employment situation is worse** (and are negative about prospects overall)

because education is now one small and costly prerequisite for a career in a competitive job market (*Toronto Star* survey of 1,000 individuals, age 18-30).

- The youth population is comprised of **several segments**, each needing its own consideration: students, graduates, and those neither in school nor in the labour market (Benny Tal, “An Analysis of the Labour Market Behaviour of Young People” in *Canadian Policy Research Networks*).
- Youth employment will only improve with increases in **overall employment levels** (Blanchflower and Freeman, “Why Youth Unemployment Will Be Hard to Reduce” in *Policy Options*).

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The Youth Situation: Myth or Reality?

- Youth employment will improve in the medium and long-term due to **demographic and economic trends** (Holt, "Will the Future Remain Bleak for Today's Youths?" in *Policy Options*).
- Youth employment is declining but **school enrolment** is increasing—a positive trend (Jennings, "School Enrolment and the Declining Youth Participation Rate," in *Policy Options*).

What other clues do we have as to the current situation?

Are university grads as employable as they used to be?

It appears that 1990 grads were doing about as well as grads did in 1982 (five years after graduation), according to the *National Graduate Survey* (Statistics Canada and HRDC). Some 80% of the 1990 grads surveyed were employed five years later, with less than 10% in unrelated fields. Even so, 1990 is eight years ago. What about today's and yesterday's grads?

An article in the *Research File* (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada) reports: "Youth unemployment is a serious problem, but it may not be as new as some media reports say. Canadians have reason to be concerned about joblessness among youth, but in fact, youth have always had high rates of unemployment." (p. 1, May 1998). This article suggests that the "problem" is more acute now because young people are better educated than ever, and that the transition into the labour market is more difficult since well-paying,

permanent jobs are not always easy to come by after graduation. This has led to the "perception" that a good education is less worthwhile today than it was a few years ago.

Is a trades certificate as good as a university degree? The Graduate Survey (referred to above) showed that for 1990 grads, the unemployment rate for university grads was about half that of trade/vocational grads. Even so, many of today's high school students are encouraged by opportunities presented by a trades/vocational certificate compared to a university degree.

Is the situation "worse" in Canada? The *Applied Research Bulletin* reported that Canada's youth unemployment rate was 16% in 1996 compared to 12% in the U.S. The differential has been 2-3 percentage points on average since the 1980s. In a study that focused on young white males with little formal education (using 1986/87 data), it was found that more seasonal and temporary employment in Canada, and the more generous employment insurance system likely resulted in higher use of the employment insurance system by this target group in Canada. (Bowlus, comparing Canada to the U.S.).

Is it harder for youth to "move up" in the workplace? Statistics Canada reports in *Canadian Social Trends*, fall 1997 (Morissette research paper), that average earnings and the chance of "moving up" in the workplace for young men (under age 35) have declined since the 80s.

Is the unemployment rate for youth high, considering historical trends? The *Labour Force Update* (Spring/97, Statistics Canada) reports that the participation rate of youth today is at 61% (1997) compared to its historical peak of 71% in 1989. The youth unemployment rate (average Canadian) in the early 80s was over 20%; in 1990 it was as low as 10%. The youth unemployment rate has historically been more sensitive than the adult rate to fluctuations in the economy, and in the order of twice the adult rate. Today's youth unemployment rate of approximately 16% is about mid-way between the 20-year high of 20% (1983) and the low of 10% (1990).

The Canada West Foundation article (referred to previously) concludes: "It is important to note that these trends may reflect the increase in the proportion of youths attending school (52% of youths were in school in 1989 compared to 60% in 1996). Nonetheless, the persistent gap between the youth unemployment rate and the adult rate, combined with trends such as lower participation in the labour force and a lack of work experience among a larger proportion of youths, has highlighted the need to address the issue of youth unemployment."

Simply put, it's complex. The statistics presented by research raise important questions about the current situation. Today's youth, their parents and teachers are key to gaining insight needed to develop policies and programs that help, now. ■

Apprenticing in High School: Growth, Innovation and Evaluation

Interest in special programming that allows high school students to work for credit and for wages is increasing. Youth who take part in these programs can graduate with their high school diploma, credits toward a trade /vocational certification, work experience, job readiness, facilitated entrance to post-secondary education, and often money in the bank. This article reports on programs in Ontario, B.C., New Brunswick, Alberta and Texas.

Ontario Doubles Capacity

The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) has been in operation since 1989 with the participation of two thirds of school boards and a maximum enrolment of about 1,000 students. **Increased funding and a new administrative structure were announced in June, enabling school boards to double the number of students participating in the program from 1,000 to 2,000.** OYAP is part of the Youth Opportunities Ontario youth strategy. *For more information contact Barb Simmons, 416-326-5623.*

British Columbia Adds Scholarship for Apprentices

Students in the Secondary School Apprenticeship Program (SSAP) achieve first year credit towards their certificate, providing they complete a minimum of 480 hours of workplace-based apprenticeship training. **Graduating apprentices who qualify are eligible for a \$1000 scholarship** funded jointly by the B.C. Government and HRDC (a Strategic Initiative).

Local steering committees select scholarship winners. *For more information contact: Heather Ratcli'e Hood at 250-387-0083.*

New Brunswick Guarantees Access to Post-Secondary

Since 1993, the Youth Apprenticeship Program (YAP) has sponsored one-week workshops for Grade 10- 12 students across the province. While continuing with high school, the students take part in 360 hours of paid work experience (primarily during summer months), as well as 360 hours of independent study, seminars and workshops related to their career objectives. **Students graduating from the program who meet minimum entrance requirements are guaranteed access to related programs at N.B.'s colleges and preferred admission status at its universities.** YAP students are currently involved in such areas as tourism/hospitality, veterinary medicine, computer science, engineering, information technology, as well as traditional trades. *For more information contact Joe Brennan, 506-453-2816.*

Alberta Reviews Its Progress

Since the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) program began in 1991, about 800 high school students have registered for the program which involves 1600 hours of workplace training. CAREERS: The Next Generation (CNG) is an industry/government partnership that promotes the RAP program and matches qualified, screened students with apprenticeship positions in companies. A

recent evaluation of CNG found that it was helping to increase school, student, and employer participation in the RAP program. *For more information contact Dr. William Wong, 403-427-4746.*

Lessons learned in Texas

Texas has been building a system of apprenticeships and career pathways to assist the transition from school to careers. R.W. Glover, Center for the Study of Human Resources, University of Texas reported these keys to success:

- Understand that engaging employers meaningfully in school-to-work programs is difficult even in tight labor markets.
- Move firms from complaining about problems of schooling to taking action in their own interest.
- Promote work-based learning as a catalyst for change.
- Pay greater attention to developing high quality structured on-the-job learning; emphasize training to full qualification-not just summer internships.
- Focus on high-growth, high-skill, high-wage employment.
- Arrange permanent sources of support.
- Enlist the leadership of local elected officials.■

Read the full document at <http://violet.berkeley.edu/~iir/ncw/wpapers/glover/index.html>.

Keeping in Touch Who's Doing What?

LMDA Progress Reports

British Columbia Surveys EI Clients

The **Canada/B.C.** LMDA formative evaluation is underway. B.C. reports the following:

- Client surveys are to be completed by the end of September.
- 1600 completions are planned including 1200 participants and 400 comparison group.
- The formative evaluation report will be ready for the Report for Parliament, due January 1999.
- The challenges of extracting client information from the federal data-base have been met successfully.
- Client survey responses will be segmented by type of program (employment benefit & support measure), type of client (EI, reachback, and mutual social assistance and EI clients), and by each of 3 Human Resource Centre of Canada (HRCC) regions.
- The qualitative research is taking part in three HRCC regions.
- The methodology and survey instruments used are based on those used in the federal 1997 evaluation of the EBSMs.

Federal NI-IQ evaluators have been instrumental in getting the evaluation off the ground quickly. The project continues to require significant time and commitment on the part of Joint Evaluation Committee Members. Good going B.C.! ●

Thanks to Derek Brackley, HRDC BC Region, for the update. (604) 666-6869.

Manitoba Integrates Programming

The devolution agreement was signed April, 1997, with federal staff transferred in November 1997. The evaluation framework for the Joint Evaluation Committee is currently being developed.

Most of the 16 employment centers across the province are already co-located. Manitoba is using all of the federal information systems, and they are currently working on integrating federal and provincial programming areas to reduce duplication and achieve synergies. ■

For more information: Lea-Anne Pauch at 204-945-0456.

Other Provinces Making Progress

Canada/N.B. A preliminary report on the formative evaluation work was received at the end of October.

Canada/ P.E.I. and Canada/Nfld Posted requests for proposals on MERX in September.

Canada/Alberta Selected Applied Research Consultants, a division of Canadian Facts, to begin the formative evaluation work this Fall. This is the same firm contracted by **Canada/B.C.**

Canada/Sask. Are working on the Terms of Reference for the Joint Evaluation Steering Committee. ■

N.S. Clients "Exceptionally Pleased"

In a Spring 1998 process evaluation, clients of two HRDC Skills, Loans and Grants (SLG) pilot projects expressed strong satisfaction. Clients found the SLG funding approach provided access to training that would otherwise be unaffordable to them, and they expressed comfort with the approval process. Recommendations focused on minor adjustments to the program process, as well as on training and communication issues.

A second N.S. evaluation underway involves a formative evaluation of the HRDC Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSMs). It will focus on the implementation, design and delivery, and early experiences of clients. The working relationships between HRDC and provincial departments as they participate in the strategic partnership approach as set out in the LMDA and the impact of those working relationships on the success of the EBSMs will also be considered.

The Joint Management Committee for the LMDA is presently facilitating the planning, implementing and evaluation of programs and services associated with EBSM in the areas of reach back clients, labour market information, literacy, youth, community capacity building, support to job creation, self employment assistance, and targeted wage subsidy. An evaluation component will be built into each program's design. ■

Thanks to Shannon Polley, N. S. Dept. of Education and Culture.

Keeping in Touch Who's Doing What?

Saskatchewan Links Evaluation with Program Design & Delivery

Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training is developing an evaluation policy and framework that will apply to all programming in the Department. The purpose is to bring evaluation into the regular operations of the department.

Each program or service area will develop an evaluation plan, including data-gathering activities. A collaborative approach has been used, with time spent discussing evaluation and its role throughout the department, particularly with program design and delivery staff.

This year's evaluation activities will focus on the four Strategic Initiative areas. Of particular interest will be the summative evaluation of the three Career Services initiatives. Each used a different service delivery model: one involved a community Board, another a College, and the third a partnership model. Each used different tools, including multimedia, self-directed, and online tools.

Stay tuned for any lessons learned on how best to deliver career services, and the use of technology-based tools. ■

For additional information, contact: Jan Gray at (306) 787 2638 or jgray@sasked.gov.sk.ca.

HRDC, Ontario Region, Assesses Co-Located Service Delivery Sites

A formative evaluation was just completed of Human Resources Centres of Canada (HRCC)/Social Services co-located service delivery sites. Sites in Hamilton and Oakville were examined to assess co-location from the perspective of clients and partnered staff. Were the results similar to those of Alberta's evaluation of co-located service delivery done last year?

The region is just finishing a report on the Employment Resource Centre (ERC) evaluation. The report will present findings on client profile, services used,

clients' perception of ERC services? and initial impacts of ERC on client abilities/knowledge/employment.

The region and Evaluation and Data Development are working together on a formative evaluation of Employment Benefits and Support Measures. The evaluation will look at issues related to client use/access to EBSM, service delivery and short-term employment impacts. ■

Update thanks to Andy Gaul (416-954-6135), HRDC Ontario Region.

Manitoba Evaluates' Single-Parent Program

Manitoba is working on the final evaluation of the "Taking Charge" Strategic Initiative. This program is targetted toward single parents on social assistance in Winnipeg and has a community-driven structure. A range of employment and training services (including wage subsidy, work experience, employment **counselling**) and supports for child care, transportation, clothing, etc. were provided to clients. A community-based Advisory Board assisted in directing the service delivery.

The results of this program will be interesting compared with those of the Self-Sufficiency Project, the 7-year income supplement program that also targetted single parents on assistance in B.C. and N.B.

Are there other programs targetted exclusively to single parents across the country? What different approaches are

being used? Does "targetted" programming appear to be a successful strategy?

Did you know? Manitoba administers funds provided to post-secondary institutions through a Council operating at arm's length from government. Work on performance measures and accountability processes for the Council is underway.

Did you know? Manitoba Education and Training is proposing to administer education and training-related funds associated with the National Child Benefit Program. A federal/provincial agreement is in process. ■

Update thanks to Dallas Morrow (204 945 6173) and Lea-Anne Pauch (204 945 0456), Manitoba Education and Training.

Methodology Madness - Tips and Topics

Accumulation of Credible Evidence Needed

Dr. Carol Weiss, a prominent evaluator and professor of education at Harvard University was interviewed in *Evaluation Exchange*, a newsletter produced by the Harvard University Family Research Project. She commented on how evaluation can have a bigger impact on policy.

"First, we need to be very good evaluators...Evaluators should not take on studies when they know they cannot do a good job...To have a sustained influence [on policy], evaluations have to be well-designed and conducted. And there has to be an accumulation of evidence. We shouldn't think of evaluation as a set of one-shot studies."

She suggests that evaluators might ... "set up groups that systematically look at all the evidence that has accumulated about mechanisms of change in particular practice fields and the environmental conditions that are conducive to success... Such groups would . . . periodically summarize what they have learned and what still needs to be known."

The article also comments on challenges facing evaluation in the next century, and the need for education and training in evaluation. Ms. Weiss suggests that supervised apprenticeship is the best way to learn evaluation; and that practitioners need a basic understanding of evaluation to be **effective**. ■

Access the article in pdf format at <http://hugsel.harvard.edu/~hfrp/eval/issue11/>

Portland A Successful Program - Why?

A report by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation shows a Portland employment program to be among the most successful large-scale mandatory welfare-to-work programs studied, producing large increases in employment and earnings and large reductions in welfare benefits.

The program had these features:

- Most services were provided by local community colleges.
- The program was strongly employment focused, with the primary goal to help people move into jobs. Job search was the most common activity.
- Participants were encouraged to look for jobs that were full time, paid above minimum wage, provided benefits and exhibited potential for advancement.
- The program used a mixed services strategy—clients were

given short-term education, vocational training, work experience, and life skills training to improve their employability.

- The cost/client was moderate relative to other U.S. welfare-to-work programs.
- Clients were closely monitored for participation in mandated activities.

Additional keys to success were:

- strong partnerships with community agencies
- high-quality services
- integrated case management structure
- focus on basic education and trade certificates. ■

The full MDRC document can be accessed at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/isp/Portland/xsportld.htm>

Community-Wide Programs Tough to Evaluate

How do you get a comparison group when programs are available to ALL of a group of clients? An article by R.Hollister and J. Hill tackles this issue.

Hollister and Hill define community-wide programs as those that target ALL individuals in a given geographic area or subgroup of people. Establishing a valid comparison group is difficult.

Comparing the community before the intervention to after may not be

reliable--other factors (besides the program) may be influencing the change. Comparing the community to another that is similar is another option--to the extent that the communities are both influenced by the same external factors in the same way.

The authors also make the following observations:

- Random assignment is often not possible.

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Professional Development - What's Available?

Here is what we've found in our search for evaluation-related courses and programs.

University of Toronto • Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)

Offers M.Ed., M.A., Ed.D. and Ph.D. degrees. Students may specialize in program evaluation through the Measurement and Evaluation Program in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. **For more information:** <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/>.

California: Claremont Graduate University

The School of Behavioral and Organizational Sciences has a concentration in Program Evaluation through their psychology program. Program options include:

- A masters program focused on evaluation, with attention to program design and management.

- A one-year certificate program for returning professionals. Courses cover recent developments in the logic, theory, and methodology of evaluation.

Faculty includes well-known researchers Michael Scriven and Stewart Donaldson. **For more information:** www.cgu.edu, or e-mail to scriven@aol.com.

Australia and via Internet: The University of Melbourne

The post graduate Diploma in Evaluation is a program for professionals involved in program evaluation and design. Courses are usually studied over two part-time years. Students are able to incorporate work-based projects into their studies. Those who complete the diploma with distinction are able to enroll with 50% credit in the Master of Education (specializing in Evaluation).

For those unable to travel to Australia to study, the program is now available via the Internet. Cost for the diploma program is \$8000 Australian. **For further information e-mail Marion Brown at cpe@edfac.unimelb.edu.au or visit website at <http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/cpe/cpe.html>**

New York: Cornell University

The Department of Policy Analysis and Management offers both a M.S. and Ph.D. in Program Evaluation and Planning. The program focuses on the planning-evaluation cycle within the context of human service policy, design, and service delivery. **For more information:** <http://www.human.cornell.edu/pam/> ■

Are you aware of any other professional development opportunities in the evaluation field? If so, please let us know!

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Community-Wide Programs ...

- Recent studies indicate the problem of selection bias is significant when a comparison is constructed by any other method than random assignment.
- The unit of analysis may vary from traditional approaches. Rather than the individual, it may be the family, a group of institutions, or the community as a whole.
- When assessing the impact on the community, inflow and outflow

of individuals across community boundaries must be considered.

The authors suggest that for better analysis of community-wide initiatives, we need:

- better demographic data on communities
- better community databases for monitoring their own development
- better statistical models for describing the nature of

community development.

- better understanding of the linkages between short-term and longer-term outcomes
- better understanding of how communities change over time, through community panel studies. ■

The paper is a Russell Sage Foundation Working paper prepared for the Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives. It can be accessed at: <http://epn.org/sage/rsholl.html>

For Your Information

HRDC Evaluation Website - Check It Out!

The HRDC Evaluation website mentioned in the last newsletter is now available.

Sponsored by Evaluation and Data Development (EDD), the site has had over 100,000 visits since becoming available in mid-July, including some from the US and South Africa. Active promotion of the site has been postponed until its permanent hardware is configured. Many documents are presently posted, and the search engine is available for use. Several pilots will begin this fall.

Sections of the site include:

Products and Services: Includes almost fifty evaluation reports and briefs dating back to March 1995, and two Lessons Learned documents. Users can search briefs and

reports by keyword as well as sort them by date, author and category. The format allows for easy movement between a brief and its corresponding report. Most reports can be viewed in both html and pdf formats.

Directorates: Provides an overview of the structure and functions of the EDD Branch.

Order EDD Publications: Print copies of reports and briefs can be ordered via fax, a toll-free phone number or the mail.

Mailing List: Users will be informed as new information becomes available on the site. ■

Access the EDD website at: www.hrhc-drhc.gc.ca/edd

Forum Feedback Positive

Participants in the May Evaluation Forum held in Saskatoon judged it to be a success. Evaluations completed by participants recommended:

- continue with the May dates
- promote it through a variety of communication strategies
- send out agendas in advance
- keep the focus on evaluation with some linkages to the Forum of Labour Market Ministers and possibly other departments
- continue LMDA content.

Most found presentations applicable to their interests, although more handouts prior to or during the sessions were preferred.

Federal, provincial and territorial perspectives were viewed as appropriately represented.

Although most agreed with recruiting members from other departments such as Labour, Social Services, Health or Education, there were caveats, including cost and not forming too large a group. The addition of a professional development session was also supported.

Next year's Forum is already in the works. Plan to attend! ■

For additional information, contact: Jan Gray at (306) 787 2638 or jgray@sasked.gov.sk.ca.

HRDC Tool Kits Available

Evaluation and Data Development have completed their first "tool kit" for "building evaluation capacity and knowledge." The topic is quasi-experimental research design, and the target users are "throughout HRDC and its partner organizations". It is 33 pages? available from Hervé Déry, and was prepared with the assistance of Power Analysis Company and Craig Riddell of the University of British Columbia. The second tool kit is on "Hiring Consultants" and will be ready by this year-end.

Hervé Déry at Evaluation and Data Development, HRDC, is looking for input on what topics would be most useful. Phone: 613-954-6329. ■

This quarterly Newsletter meets a need identified by members of the 1996 Federal/Provincial/Territorial Evaluation Forum on labour market initiatives. It aims to contribute directly to work done in human resource policy and programming, particularly by evaluators. Steering Committee members are:
Jan Gray, Province of Saskatchewan
Bill Wong, Province of Alberta
Serge Bertrand, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)

The Newsletter Project is sponsored by HRDC, Evaluation and Data Development

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