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CAREER AND PERSONAL COUNSELLING

Reference document coordinated by the British Columbia
Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology
for the sub-theme on *The Changing Labour Market Environment*

*The opinion expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of the British Columbia
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CAREER AND PERSONAL COUNSELLING

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Executive Summary

This report on Career and Personal Counselling has been coordinated by the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology as one of the four discussion documents within the topic area – The Changing Labour Market – for the May 28th -30th Third National Forum on Education.

The topic area is a very broad one. The report attempts to capture some of this breadth, while at the same time focusing discussion on a few discrete topics that will hopefully provide useful discussion points at the Forum.

The report starts by looking at how changes in labour markets and demographics are increasing the level of career development services that Canadians require, the need to sustain these services over their lifetimes, and the need for these services to be more connected. We also see that there are a number of different types of activities that fall within the rubric of ‘career development’. These include career education, career counselling, employment counselling, training in generic employability skills, and personal counselling.

Career development services are provided in a number of very distinct sectors – the report describes the K-12, post-secondary, adult/community, and employee/workplace sectors. The mandate and delivery of career services differ across these sectors as one might expect, but there are also a number of the same issues – the need to deal with career and personal development issues in a linked, holistic approach; resource constraints and difficulty making a case to retain or expand resources; and time pressures on the part of practitioners.

Accessible, relevant labour market and career information is a key element in a successful career development system. The report describes the very dynamic state of activities in this area across a number of jurisdictions. It appears that a lot of good information has been developed, but is not always available, or not available in a way that will benefit users. A related issue here is that career information needs to be provided in both mediated and non-mediated forms depending on the individual and the situation.

Three important themes arise from our review of the career and personal counselling area that would be useful for Forum participants to deliberate on:

Impact of labour market changes - Labour markets are now characterized by much greater ‘circularity’ and overlap between those preparing for employment, those working, or those in transition. The new reality is a state of ‘permanent flux’, with several careers in different fields being the norm rather than the exception. As a result, individuals need access to good career development services throughout their lives rather than only at certain major decision points. Career development will play a key role in meeting the challenge (and opportunity) of achieving smoother transitions, and wider-ranging choices within an environment of change.

Questions

- Is our assessment of the growing importance of career development correct?
- If so, what changes does this imply for the way career development is organized and carried out in Canada?

Resourcing and coherence - The resourcing available to career development appears threatened at the very time when, arguably, more will be needed. Evaluation of the long term impact of career development is difficult to carry out, so that supporters are often left to argue for resources based on values and beliefs, rather than concrete evidence. Career development occurs in a number of quite separate and distinct settings, inhibiting the kinds of linkages that would help provide more effective services. As well as linkages across sectors, a critical factor is the linkage of personal counselling with career counselling. There is a need to address personal issues, preferences and attributes in a more holistic way, if career development efforts are to be successful.

Questions

- How can a better developed case be made on the value of career development?
- How can information on the good practices already in existence across the various sectors be developed to help support the case?
- Are better linkages really necessary, or is it more important for career practitioners within each sector to concentrate on 'getting it right' within their own sector?
- Will career counselling get 'swamped' if it tries to deal too much with personal issues?

Access - Changing labour markets mean that, more than ever, there is a need for good career information and counselling for those already employed. Although the workplace is relatively less-developed than other sectors providing career development services, it would appear to be a logical location for the provision of these services. There is sometimes a divergence between the interests of workers and employers, suggesting a possible public role in supporting career development within this sector.

Questions

- What should be the roles of various players – employers, unions, professional/ occupational organizations – in helping to provide career development services in the workplace?
- Is the workplace the right place to receive these services, or should there be, for example, greater public investment in career centres that anyone could access?

1. Introduction

This report has been developed within the BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and with input from a number of individuals within government and non-governmental agencies.¹ The topic we were assigned is extremely broad, and this document does not attempt to give a comprehensive treatment of all the important topics within the areas of career and personal counselling. Career development services are provided within a number of quite distinct sectors – the K-12 system, post-secondary education, to adults through government and community agencies, and in workplaces. We have found a wealth of information on counselling within these sectors, and in particular on the role that personal counselling can play in effectively delivering these services.

We begin, in Section 2, by looking at the labour market and client context in which career services are provided. The dynamism of this environment is creating significant changes in the need for career development services, and the manner in which these should be delivered. We support the Canadian Labour Force Development Board's (CLFDB) call for increased career development services and acknowledgment that career development services includes components from the traditional domains of education, counselling and career education. As well, we propose that change in the labour market and demographics challenge the separateness of services from traditional educators, counsellors and career educators, and that more and more the inter-relatedness of the three domains is enlarging into the domain of counselling.

Section 3 examines the state of career development services in Canada and the degree to which different components of career development services are provided by educational institutions, community-based organizations, government agencies and in workplaces. This section relies heavily on a survey by the CLFDB and is supplemented by descriptions on recent developments in two of the sectors in British Columbia. There is, evidenced in Section 3, a good base, in terms of current practices and recent developments in the career development field, to continue building a stronger, better- linked system.

A very important component of career education and thus career development services is labour market and career information. For the purpose of developing this paper, we conducted an informal survey and researched the availability, relevance and application of labour market and career information in various provinces. Section 4 provides a summary of these efforts and identifies seven emerging themes.

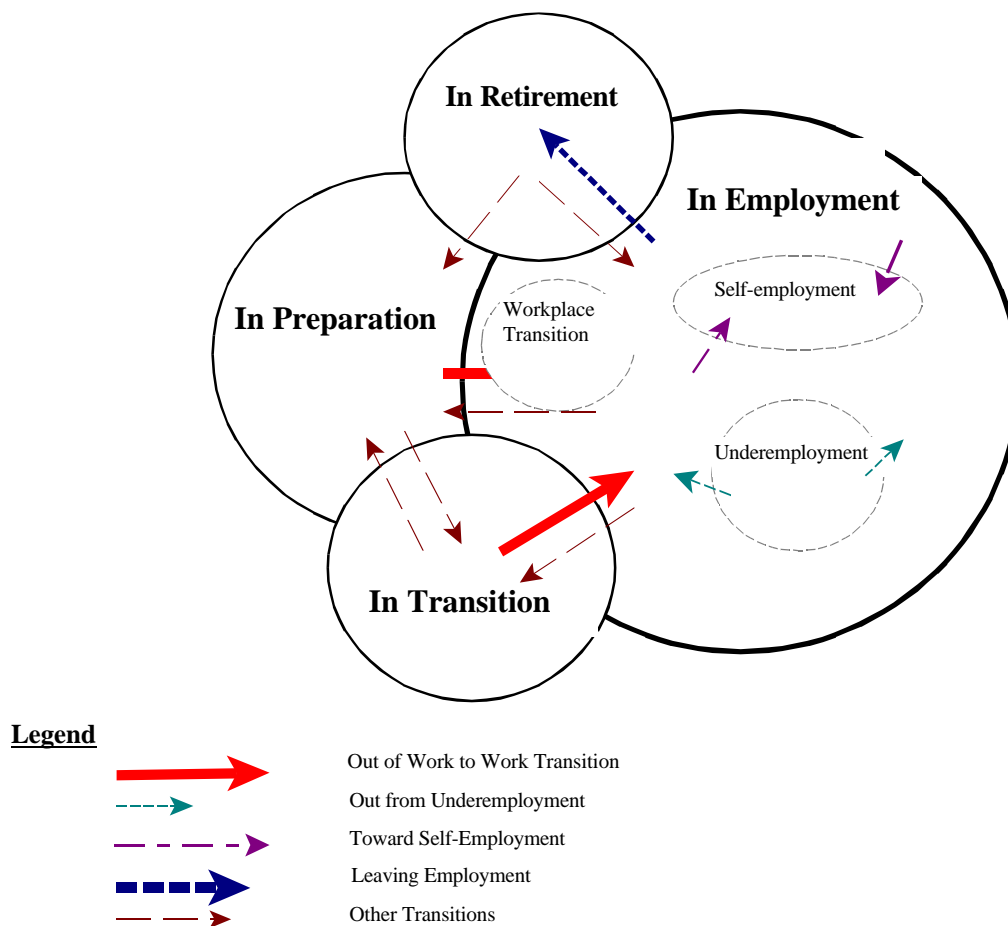
We conclude in Section 5 by outlining a number of points for discussion on how career development services might be more effectively provided, based on the interplay between what is needed (Section 2) and what exists (Sections 3 and 4). It is hoped that participants at the National Forum on Education will find these points as useful 'hooks' for their subsequent discussion on the topic of the Changing Labour Market Environment.

2. Career and Personal Counselling - Changing Realities

2.1 Context

Globalization, technological change and demographic shifts have resulted in massive changes in the labour market. We have argued in a recent paper² that the emerging labour market development system is becoming increasingly complex. It is characterized by increasing circularity between various states - in preparation, in employment, in transition and in retirement; and also by greater overlap between these states – with individuals in two or even three states at the same time. (see Figure 1) We are seeing a “new reality” of working lives as a state of “permanent flux”. Several careers in different fields are becoming the new norm while staying with a single employer is becoming the exception. Individuals now find it necessary to move many times between various states during their lifetimes, especially between education and work. As well, periods of unemployment (or in transition) are all too commonplace.

Figure 1
Labour Market States and Transitions - The New Reality



These changes have enormous implications for career services. In the past, individuals usually needed career services only at major decision points, such as leaving school, graduating from post secondary institutions, or changing jobs. As well, the traditional domains of education, career education and counselling could be kept distinct and separate. Now, however, these domains, while distinct, increasingly overlap and their relationships have become more complex. High school students increasingly need counselling services which motivate them to complete high school and move on to post secondary education. They also increasingly require career education services to make sound decisions about programs and career choices.

As well, graduates need attributes like openness to lifelong learning, increased personal responsibility, flexibility and adaptability to “get their foot in the door” and to remain employed. It appears incumbent upon career education and counselling services to equip graduates with these essential attributes. Furthermore, given our quickly changing labour market, most Canadians need periodic assistance in making career decisions, in successfully maneuvering multiple career transitions and in retraining and/or upskilling throughout their working lives. As the Canadian Labour Force Development Board sums up – ‘Career education being optional and on the fringe of the curriculum was once tolerable. It is no longer. It is now acknowledged that career education must be squarely in the mainstream of core curriculum.’³

At the same time, demographic shifts which significantly alter the profile of college and university students, are also affecting the relationships between education, counselling and career education within the post-secondary system. The “new majority” of college students are ‘older, frequently attend school part-time and have needs different from the traditional undergraduate students (defined as under 25 and fully enrolled full-time in a four-year program).’⁴ Many are under-prepared students, re-entry women, mid-life career changers, recent immigrants facing language barriers, physically disabled, Aboriginal students and students working 30 or more hours a week. ‘The needs of these students vary widely and include issues of previous academic failure, self esteem issues, isolation and discrimination and uncertainty about academic and career direction.’⁵

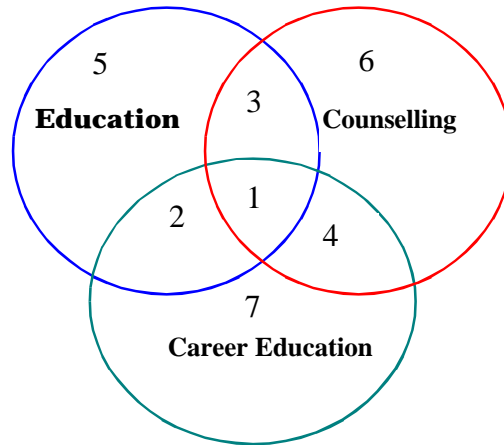
2.2 Career Development and the Role of Personal Counselling

The Canadian Labour Force Development Board on recognizing the massive labour market changes has called for increased career development services to assist Canadians in general to manage change effectively and economically. But, what constitutes necessary or exemplary career development services?

The Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation (now the Canadian Career Development Foundation) offers a helpful framework for thinking about career development (see Figure 2).⁶ It recognizes the traditional players in education, counselling and career education and suggests that career development encompasses some aspects of education or training, personal counselling and career education. It also suggests that personal counselling is a necessary component of education and career development. The degree to which the circles in Figure 2 overlap frames the

scope of career development services and the scope of services needed depends on the type of clients one serves and the resources available.

Figure 2
Inter-Relationships between Major Jurisdictions Involved in Career Development



Legend

- Career Development occurs in areas 1,2, 4 and 7.
- Career Counselling occurs in areas 1 and 4.
- School Counselling occurs in areas 1 and 3.
- Counselling occurring in non-educational settings happens in area 6.
- Career Education occurs in areas 1 and 2.
- No career development occurs in area 5.
- All other career education activities that are not counselling and not part of the educational system occur in area 7.

The Foundation defines career development as a broad range of activities designed to help people become more self-directed with their career/life paths. This involves programs and services which assist people to explore self and career options, understand labour market information and how to access it, acquire critical employability skills (such as decision making, planning, self management, team work), make transitions into or within the work force and define one's role in the world of work. It is a term including at least the following:

- **Career education** - helps students understand what motivates them, what they value, and how they want to contribute to society. It provides them with knowledge about the labour market; skills to make sound choices about education, training and working options; and career planning tools needed to begin to pursue a career direction.
- **Career counselling** - helps individuals clarify their aims and aspirations, make informed decisions, manage career transitions, cope with planned career changes and be self-directed in managing their employability.
- **Employment counselling** - helps individuals clarify their employment goals, understand and access job opportunities, make sound decisions about upskilling and retraining and learn skills they need to maintain jobs.

- **Training in personal**, but job-related, areas such as interviewing skills, self-exploratory skills, time management, anger management, entrepreneurship;

In essence, career development services include components from each of the traditional domains of education, counselling and career education. More importantly, some aspects of personal counselling are also included. There is ample evidence in the literature to demonstrate that personal counselling improves students' educational or academic success, retention, and ultimately career success. This body of evidence argues the need to include personal counselling as a component of career development services.

What this means is that policy makers and practitioners increasingly have to work together to find an integrated way of serving the needs of Canadians. The solutions and best practices may be outside of established disciplines and paradigms. Just as the separateness between "in preparation", "in employment" and "in transition" has started to break down, the separateness of services needed from traditional educators, counsellors and career educators are also breaking down. As well, it should be noted that the line between career education and education is also blurring. In British Columbia, for example, career education has begun to be integrated into the core curriculum in much the way the CLFDB is advocating as a result of the Career and Personal Planning Program (described in Section 3.1 below).

Efforts currently underway to develop national standards for career development services will be a key factor in achieving an integrated way of meeting needs. It will be importance for these efforts to build on the experience and success of approaches which currently exist within the K - 12 and post-secondary systems. In the meantime, it is critical to ensure that the necessary range of services is being provided in one form of another by either the traditional domains or the new career development practitioners.

Furthermore, the scope of needed career development services varies depending on what stage of life the individual is in, whether the individual is a student, a graduate looking for work or an employed person looking for career guidance. It also varies depending on the type of individual - whether a single parent, an Aboriginal person, a challenged person, or a displaced worker. For example, a student in school might need more guidance and counselling than an employed adult in a restructuring workplace who needs more labour force adjustment services than a student attending school. However, it would be incorrect to assume that an individual could not be studying, working, and parenting at the same time and thus may need a wider range of services than one who is a full-time student or a full-time employed person. All of these differences in clientele help to explain why career services tend to emphasize different components of career development at educational institutions, community-based organizations and government agencies.

In conclusion, labour market changes have created a need for career development services for Canadians of all ages. While many groups have recognized that need, there is as yet no national agreement or standard for what career development services entail or who should provide what to whom. The services no longer fall neatly into traditional education, career education or counselling domains and the delineations of these boundaries are blurring as educational

institutions and communities attempt to better meet clients' increasing needs. In particular, personal counselling is playing a more prominent role in career development services. Furthermore, just as policy makers and practitioners have to work together, in this climate of fiscal restraint, practitioners in the field of education, career education and counselling also have to work in an integrated manner within their institution and even within local communities to better serve the needs of Canadians in today's "new reality."

3. Career Development in Canada

This section of the report will provide a somewhat selective snapshot of the current "lay of the land" with respect to career services and information available in Canada. In our view, it is worthwhile to look at the three sectors – K - 12, post-secondary education and adult/community counselling separately. The delivery structure and approach of these sectors are different mainly because they serve different clients. We will also touch briefly on the emerging area of career development provided through the workplace.

The primary source for this section of the report is a paper commissioned by the Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB) in 1993⁷ which involved an extensive survey of counselling practitioners across Canada. For each of these sectors, the survey provides an indication of issues including what components of career development services are considered priority; which are cited as the most time-consuming tasks by counsellors; and areas where counsellors have indicated a need for further training. As well, the inter-relatedness between career and personal counselling in each of these sectors will be evident.

Although somewhat dated, the report is valuable for its comprehensive coverage of the system and wealth of information on a number of key issues. Many of its major findings still ring true today. For greater currency, we will supplement the discussion based on the CLFDB report with other, more current views, pertaining to developments within British Columbia, where we have greatest familiarity.

3.1 The K-12 Sector

Heads of guidance counselling functions within schools placed a relatively high priority on career counselling, with 40% rating it 'high' with 52.5% indicating 'medium'. When asked to identify areas within their mandate, secondary school counsellors ranked personal counselling and career decision-making equally high as their top areas. The breakdown of counsellor time and tasks sheds further light on relative priorities, with 'personal counselling (including relationship, crisis, abuse, etc.)' being cited as among the five most time-consuming tasks by 62% of counsellors, compared with 33% who indicated 'assisting client to develop a career action plan'. It is also worthy of note that labour market information, employment counselling and career/occupational information were among the topics most frequently cited by counsellors as areas where they

required further training. Despite the relatively high importance of career counselling, counsellors spent relatively little time working with employers (only 1.5% cited this as a top-five task).

In terms of how K-12 services are offered, the CLFDB notes that ‘Although the client expectations for counselling suggest the appropriateness of activities like group counselling, mentoring, coaching, and intervention with third parties, counsellors spend negligible time on any of these issues.’ The majority of their time is spent on individual counselling. About 40% of respondents indicated that in the two previous years, staff resources had decreased, and 55% expected them to decrease in the next two years. Under-staffing was noted as a problem. In a time of fiscal constraint, counsellors indicated that their service was generally not well-understood by principals. The CLFDB report also notes that there appears to be a relatively low priority placed on evaluation. Both these latter points are worrisome in a time of continuing restraint and increasing pressures on the counselling function.

BC’s Career and Personal Planning (CAPP) Initiative

It is useful in this section to describe the CAPP initiative⁸, because it combines many of the elements of career education, career counselling and personal counselling in one program. Established in 1995, the program represents the integration of previously separate career skills and family/life programs within BC’s schools. Its aim is ‘to enable students to become thoughtful, caring individuals who plan and reflect, make informed choices, and take responsibility for their own personal and career development.’ Not only does the program combine personal and career planning in the same course, it attempts to weave career exploration into other subjects and includes a compulsory work experience component. Students must complete CAPP 11 and 12 in order to satisfy graduation requirements. The career development component is comprised of three sub-categories – career skills awareness, career exploration and career preparation. CAPP is unique in Canada in its legislated requirement for work experience and its span across all years from K-12. Within a larger policy context, Career Development is legislated as one of the three goals of education for all students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Career Development is defined as, ‘to prepare students to attain their career and occupational objectives; to assist in the development of effective work habits and the flexibility to deal with the change in the workplace.’

While it is too early for a full evaluation, initial results based on surveys and focus groups with students, parents and teachers are generally favourable.⁹ Overall, students express strong support for CAPP and the opportunities it provides for personal growth and development. However, they also say that the purpose of CAPP has not been fully articulated to them. Students also expressed the view that teacher inexperience contributes to ineffective implementation of some CAPP components, particularly in the personal development area. Among the recommendations made as a result of this initial review are: that the Ministry of Education re-state its support for, and commitment to, the continuation of CAPP; that the Ministry communicate more clearly the purposes to students, teachers, parents and the community; that a CAPP component be introduced in BC teacher education programs; and that CAPP be taught by teachers who are interested and/or have a background in the program, and access to in-service training opportunities.

3.2 The Post-Secondary Education Sector

The highest rated area within the mandate of career counselling services at colleges and CEGEPS was career decision-making, followed closely by personal counselling. Respondents to the CLFDB survey also indicated that, while career information is the major reason why students come to counsellors, 'it is worth noting that client expectations are perceived to change, so that later client expectations move beyond career planning toward preparing for action, i.e. taking more personal responsibility, self-agency and employability.... It is surprising to discover 'lack of belief in self' as the most frequently mentioned client obstacle... Financial problems and family responsibilities also presented substantial obstacles to client progress.' So in the PSE arena as well, it would appear that personal and career counselling issues are inter-related.

It would also appear that group counselling is limited, as is the case in the K-12 sector. Again, the counselling function is not particularly well-understood, with only 42% answering unequivocally that their dean understood the counselling process. This sector had done slightly better in terms of resource changes than K-12, with about equal percentages having seen increases as decreases, and the majority experiencing the same staffing levels. Future expectations were, however, more pessimistic than past experience. Evaluation seems to have a low priority, which is a concern given the current environment. Respondents' greatest demand for training was in labour market information.

Post-secondary Counselling in BC

It is also instructive to look at post-secondary counselling in a more micro context. Within BC's colleges, counselling resources have also declined over the longer term, despite substantial FTE growth within the system.¹⁰ (A shorter term perspective on this reveals a slight growth in student support resources in 1996.¹¹) The emphasis within BC is very much on student success and retention. Career and personal counselling are seen as elements in a continuum of student supports that includes information sessions, workshops, early supports (such as library orientations), ongoing supports (such as learning skills), and personal crisis intervention. In turn, this continuum is part of a larger system of supports including financial advising and aid, housing, child care, and work study/co-op. It is argued that there is a need to treat all of these supports more holistically as elements of an overall support structure. In the past (and to a degree this still remains an issue) these functions have tended to operate separately from one another with few linkages. Breaking down these silos must overcome barriers, not least of which is the fact that there are practitioners with different backgrounds and credentials at various points in the continuum. As well, responsibility for these areas sometimes resides within different parts of the college organization, inhibiting the development of an integrated approach.

There are also issues of equity of access to counselling services. The access model has become one that is to a large degree client-initiated. It can be argued that many college students who need counselling services the most are also those lacking the assertiveness to seek out these services. Single parents frequently lack the time to avail themselves of counselling, and students away from the main campus in multi-campus institutions often do not enjoy the same level of access. As counselling resources have been cut back, the function tends to shrink to a more 'head office' one.

One final comment reflects on the significant variations in the resourcing and approach to counselling across BC's colleges. Some have very active, well-resourced programs, while a few others, after reducing staffing levels to a certain point have eliminated them entirely. As a general observation, the level of counselling support available in colleges is greater than that in universities in BC.

3.3 Adult/Community Sector

As might be expected, counselling within this third sub-sector has both a career decision-making, as well as a job search and placement focus within its mandate. As documented in the CLFDB survey, personal counselling is still rated fairly high as part of the mandate of these services, but at a lower level than in schools or colleges. Counsellors' time allocation reflected this mandate with relatively large percentages selecting 'assist client to develop a career action plan' and 'train in job search' as major time users. Personal counselling was lower, but this time allocation appears not to be completely congruent with client needs.

For example, another question indicated that, as obstacles to counselling, lack of belief in self and low motivation to change were significant obstacles with much higher ratings than in the other two sectors. In a similar vein, the time spent working with third parties was quite low. The report sums up the non-congruence between client needs and emphasis as follows:

'Certainly teaching job search skills is important, as is assisting a client develop a career action plan. But when the problems are also those of low self-confidence, and motivation reinforced by pessimism about success, there is a need to be active in mentoring, coaching, and working with third parties. These activities, apparently, were not accorded significant time by the counsellors.'

This reflects back to the mandate issue. Fully two thirds of respondents reported having to turn clients away whom they could have helped, because of restrictions of mandate or funding arrangements.

Again, there is a low use of group counselling in this sector. While there appears to be a slightly better picture with past and future resource changes, there are also strong concerns about job security and funding. Half the respondents indicated they were overloaded, and large numbers indicated they were lacking the career and employment counselling materials they needed.

3.4 Employee/Workplace Sector

This sector will arguably become an increasingly important locus for the provision of career development services. We noted earlier that awareness of changing labour markets, career threats/opportunities and educational opportunities is more essential than ever for those who are already in jobs. To a large degree, career development services provided in the sectors described above are not available to those who already are employed. Perhaps because of its early state of development, the workplace sector was not covered in the CLFDB survey, so we do not have information available to parallel that for other sectors.

This sector is quite distinct from the others in the way career development services are provided. The players can include employers, employees, unions, professional/ occupational organizations, and sector councils. Career activities provided in the workplace are likely to be more relevant and focused on specific needs of the workplace, and the education/training interventions necessary to move individual workers into these jobs.

This points to perhaps the key issue impeding the growth of career development in the workplace -- a divergence of interests between the worker and employer. Employers will naturally find it in their interest to provide employees with information on future job prospects and training opportunities within their firm, but will not see it in their interests to broaden the horizon of opportunities very much beyond. Unions and professional organizations may help mitigate this focus somewhat, but again their focus is likely to be on the individual workers staying within a somewhat restricted occupational area.

4. Labour Market and Career Information

A paper on career development services would be incomplete without a discussion on labour market and career information. The issues of accessibility and relevance to career and labour market information cut across all sectors described above and will be discussed in this section separately.

Good labour market and career information is an essential element in career decision-making. The system of educational and career choice which exists in Canada, as in most other developed countries, works very much on a free choice, as opposed to command, model. If anything, the dynamism of our labour market is accentuating this even more. The critical element of any free choice model is the informed consumer – or in this case the informed student or worker.

Within this country, Human Resources Development Canada is a major developer and promoter of career and labour market information, with its products available to the general public, including youth. However, its career development services are primarily intended for those receiving employment insurance, or who have done so in the past. Provincial responsibility for

education and social assistance requires career development programs, utilizing career and labour market information as supporting resources.

4.1 Labour Market and Career Information - Various Provinces/Territories

Provinces have a variety of perspectives and approaches in delivering career and labour market information through the education system, including K-12 and post secondary, and through the social assistance system. These in turn impact the quantity and range of career and labour market information. Provincial government representatives were informally surveyed and/or consulted to contribute to the following pan-Canadian perspective on the availability, accessibility, relevance and use of career and labour market information. While we did not receive responses from all jurisdictions, we received sufficient input to compile a representative view across the country with respect to labour market and career information.

British Columbia

There have been two key initiatives in BC which have positively impacted the development and delivery of career and labour market information (LMI). The first one is the three year federal/provincial Enhanced LMI Strategic Initiative, which is now winding down. Many LMI products and supports were developed with extensive collaboration from the career practitioner community. Secondly, there have now been three years of experience with the mandatory Personal Planning (PP) for grades k-7 and Career and Personal Planning (CAPP) for grades 8-12. This has seen the development of curricula, supporting materials and consultation with teachers and students.

In both these initiatives, career and labour market information and services were produced with provincial and community partners. The information is available in print and electronically, via the web through either BCWorkinfolnet, and through CDs. There has also been an emphasis on career and labour market information under program components of the Youth Works and Welfare to Work programs introduced two years ago for people on income assistance.

With the conclusion of the Strategic Initiatives Program, there is a major concern among career practitioners and teachers to maintain the level of product development, supply and supports. While no specific information gaps have been identified, there is an acknowledged need to initiate effective communications with the career practitioner and teacher communities to ensure that they are aware of available resources, as well as to continue to support professional development activities in understanding and using LMI in career development and CAPP.

To obtain a student, client and parent perspective, an Angus Reid¹² survey carried out in late 1997 indicated that these groups were not aware of several major LMI and career information products. Many products were considered to be of good quality but students indicated that they needed mediated assistance in using them, either through a teacher, career practitioner or even a parent.

With all groups - intermediaries and end users - there is a recognized need to extensively market information and information products and to improve information delivery mechanisms. There continues to be a need to instill in professionals/teachers, clients/students, workers and parents, that career development is holistic and lifelong.

Alberta

Information access and delivery is well developed in Alberta. Career and labour market information is available to all people in the province through a network of thirty career and employment services centres and through a Career Information Hotline which is accessible by phone, fax or e-mail. Specific information products are available free to any individual, with some fees charged for practitioners. Information is available through the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development web site.

Customer satisfaction surveys are regularly undertaken to assess the accessibility of information and mediated services, and the quality of these products and services themselves.

One barrier to access has been identified. While there is a lot of product and services marketing undertaken, many Albertans are unaware that services and products exist until they need them. Most people are not aware that career issues impact everyone and that everyone needs to be more self reliant. As a result, a greater emphasis on social marketing around career planning is expected in the future.

Recently, more emphasis has been placed on the needs of youth, particularly dropouts or those not in the K-12 system. There are Youth Employment Services Centres and these are going to be increasingly used as the vehicle to reach these youth. Further work is being done through a joint youth needs assessment between the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development and the Department of Education.

Ontario

The Ontario government provides career and labour market information as part of the community-based Information and Referral Service of the Job Connect Program. This is primarily a walk-in, self-directed service that anyone can access with priority given to those who are unemployed and not in an educational or training program. As a result, career and labour market information is readily accessible to those who are self-directed with sufficient education and knowledge on how to use the information. Products are available in print as well as through the Ministry of Education and Training web site or the "Youth Opportunities Ontario". Internet is seen as an option for increasing information availability.

There are concerns that existing career and labour market information is not necessarily effectively reaching students, youth and some adults. Many require mediated assistance to utilize this information because it is not in plain language or sufficiently interesting, or they do not understand why it is important to persevere with it. To address these concerns, a new secondary

school career development course will become mandatory for high school graduation as part of a new secondary school program that will be implemented in 1999.

It is recognized that there is a need to develop information products that are relevant and appropriate to adults and that can be adapted for students. Resource material has been developed or is under development for several career and LMI products.

Nova Scotia

Career and labour market information is readily available in Nova Scotia but, other than career practitioners, many people do not know that it is available or how to use it effectively. Career practitioners can assist clients and there are seven career resource centres in the province which lend materials. Mediated career and labour market information services are needed for most people to understand the context of the information and apply it effectively to their own decision making. A range of training courses is available for career practitioners depending on their background, including training for non-professionals through to graduate studies.

Under the Labour Market Development Agreement between HRDC and the Nova Scotia government, LMI has been identified as a priority and a joint LMI committee has been established. The LMI committee is tasked with completing a needs assessment, identifying gaps and creating new resources. There is recognition that the public may not be able to effectively use some of the existing LMI products.

Northwest Territories

Career and labour market information is readily available in the Northwest Territories, but as the information products are generally produced in “southern Canada”, the language is often not appropriate for the northern audience. There are sometimes cost barriers in accessing products, and the use of career and labour market information is not a skill that is routinely taught at school. More promotion is needed to raise awareness of career and labour market information and have it reach all intended audiences.

4.2 Canada Career Consortium (CCC)

Founding partners of the CCC include HRDC, Canadian Labour Force Development Board, the Canada Career Information Partnership (which includes provincial Career Information Partnerships), and the industry and occupational sector councils. The CCC was established to assist Canadians in transition into employment or further education/training by building capacity for career information resources. The approach requires establishing a strategic alliance of national, private sector, interprovincial and government partners. The link with the education community so far is via CLFDB (primarily post secondary) and the CCIP (K-12 and post secondary).

The objectives include:

1. *Deliver quality career products.* The CCC will provide advice and guidance on national career projects being funded under the name of the CCC. It will also serve as a catalyst, coordinate and manage the development of other quality career information products. It will use the expanded network of the CCC for greater promotion and distribution.
2. *Identify and address emerging issues.* The networks that result from forming the CCC will enable better identification of emerging issues, research on education and employment opportunities, and partnerships to meet the career information needs of Canadians.
3. *Develop and strengthen the strategic partnership and leadership.* The CCC will be developed as a unique and strategic partnership for providing leadership and coordination of a pan-Canadian strategy on career information resources.

These objectives and the activities of the CCC will be further developed based on the results of a Career Information Needs of Canadians project. This project will use questionnaires, telephone interviews, focus groups, and leaders forums to assess the pan-Canadian career information needs. The resulting report will be available by late summer and copies will be made available from the CCC¹³.

4.3 General Themes Relating to Career and Labour Market Information

The above discussion on accessibility, relevance and application of labour market and career information highlights a remarkable degree of convergence. The following general themes emerge:

- Career and labour market information, is a dynamic area in which many provincial governments are expanding services and resources or are looking at new policies and programs.
- There is a general consensus that the amount and scope of career and labour market information available is sufficient for motivated, educated and knowledgeable adults. However, youth and many adults do not, or are not able to, use it to support their career and life decision making.
- There is some concern that there still needs to be supports provided for professionals in using career and labour market information, including ongoing professional development and training.
- There seems to be some concern that effective information for youth is not necessarily available, and/or that they need mediated assistance in accessing it effectively.
- In most provinces, the use of career and labour market information is not a skill that all students learn at school, although there is one province where it is a mandatory part of the curriculum and one province where it will soon be.

- There is a some acknowledgment that government now needs to develop marketing frameworks for career development services and labour market information. This needs to include a social marketing component on the career development process itself to promote a better understanding of why it is necessary in today's changing economy.
- Delivery mechanisms are being reviewed in many provinces, recognizing that the Internet is increasingly an effective and cost effective way to connect to clients and career practitioners. However, there is also recognition that the Internet is not sufficient and that other communications, distribution and delivery mechanisms need to be better exploited.

5. Conclusion - Main Discussion Points

In this paper we have described how changing labour markets, as well as demographics, have created dramatic changes in the level of career development services required by Canadians, the degree to which this need is sustained over individuals' lifetimes, and the very nature and connectedness of the services they require.

We have also seen examples of these needs being recognized and met in some very innovative ways. We are on the right track in many of the new initiatives in career education within the K-12 and post-secondary systems, career counselling, labour market information, and in the leadership shown by a number of national career counselling bodies and organizations like the Canadian Labour Force Development Board. There is also evidence, in the research we have done, of areas where there appear to be gaps, or where greater emphasis could be placed. These can be grouped under the broad headings of priority/resources for career development, coherence of the system, access, and delivery. These form the basis for the discussion points set out in the Executive Summary.

Priority/resources

There appears to be steady erosion in the resources allocated to career development services at the very time when the need for these services is increasing dramatically. Part of this reflects the reality that they are seen as 'soft' or 'expendable' services in times of tight budgets. And partly, it appears that practitioners in the field have not helped their case by failing to carry out the kind of evaluations that would surely support, empirically, the widespread theoretical view that counselling and career development are essential.

Coherence

Substantial gains in the effectiveness of our career development efforts would appear to be possible if these are built on stronger linkages – between education, career education and counselling, including personal counselling. We need to move towards a more holistic approach,

where a client can access a full continuum of services from various entry points, rather than dealing with a system that is compartmentalized into silos. The need for greater linkages also extends to those between employers, unions and education/training providers; as well as better links between those who are producing labour market and career information and the career practitioners who are using it.

Access

Our view is that there is a lifelong need for career development services for everyone. The reality is that there is considerable unevenness in access, with those within various 'systems' -- K-12 or post-secondary education, or those on Employment Insurance or Income Assistance, having reasonable access to a range of services, while most others can access only certain elements. Part of the solution for this may be for an expansion of career development services available in the workplace. However, without public funding, such services may not offer workers information and counselling supporting the whole array of opportunities potentially available to them. We have also been alerted to the danger that, as access to various career services becomes more self-initiated, those who need the services most may not have the assertiveness or organizational knowledge to seek out the services they need.

Delivery

Finally, there are aspects of the delivery of the service that ought to be looked at. The discussion on coherence noted the importance of linkages across what should be seen as a career development 'system', while building on the strengths of the existing delivery models in various components of this system. One essential step toward linkage is for the elements of the system to become more flexible in their relationships with one another. We also saw, in the discussion on labour market information, that different clients require different levels of mediation in the provision and interpretation of career resources. What both of these points are arguing for is a more client-centred focus to the way career development services are delivered.

ENDNOTES

¹ We gratefully acknowledge the input, both formal and informal of: Charon Gill, BC Teachers Federation; Judi-Lynn Archer, Labour Market and Career Information Association of BC; Thomas Benjamin, Thomas Benjamin & Associates; Lesley Andres, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia; Jean Campbell, BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Heather Radcliffe Hood, Rosalie Williams and Lane Trotter, BC Ministry of Education; and officials responsible for labour market information in the Governments of Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia and the Northwest Territories. While acknowledging this input, the authors take full responsibility for any factual errors or misinterpretations contained in this report.

² Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology. *A Framework for Labour Market Development In British Columbia* (Draft, February, 1998)

³ A discussion paper of the Canadian Labour Force Development Board. *Career Development: The Emerging National Strategy* January, 1996, p.1

⁴ *Professional Counselling in BC College, University and Institute System*. Prepared for the Province of British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training and the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology, 1997, p. 27

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation. *Proposal to Develop National Occupational Standards for Career Development Practice*, August, 1995

⁷ Canadian Labour Force Development Board, *Career and Employment Counselling in Canada*, 1993

⁸ BC Ministry of Education website, <http://www.est.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/irps/capp/intro1.htm>

⁹ Working Committee on Curriculum Implementation, *Career and Personal Planning Review - Summary of Responses and Recommendations*

¹⁰ Much of the description on counselling within the BC system is based on an interview with Jean Campbell, Manager, Access and Health Programs, Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology

¹¹ *Professional Counselling in BC College, University and Institute System*. Prepared for the Province of British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training and the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology, 1997

¹² Angus Reid Group, *Information About Opportunities*, 1998

¹³ Canada Career Consortium. 613-230-6202 or 613-230-7681 for a copy of the Career Information Needs Assessment Study