

Research Briefs

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Psychodynamics of Student Work In a Context of Job Scarcity and Economic Insecurity

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Silence and Repression of Anxiety

In programs where job scarcity is well known, such as sociology, visual arts, literature, communication, love for the discipline is an overriding condition of integration. Passion is both vital and indispensable. Like any person who works, students in those programs are concerned about how the usefulness of what they do is valued, that is, they hope for living conditions, a recognition of the beneficial effect of their work and its marked value. However, these hopes are dampened by the image that society conveys to them of the thinker, the intellectual and the useless artist (old clichés that resurface in the race for high-paying jobs). This is heightened by the doubts that families and friends have about their future and by the taboos which block communication. In many programs, passion becomes an implicit and explicit norm: "You have to be born with it". In this message conveyed by employers, teachers and the media, enthusiasm and passion are prescribed as an antidote to moroseness. This motivation discourse takes the form of a paradoxical command. Thus, this context leaves no room for students to express doubts about the purpose of their studies, and even less room for them to criticize the training and the institution.

Silence on this subject becomes a burden, a suffering that is borne alone and which can become increasingly oppressive over time. To avoid bringing up these questions, students choose not to discuss the worrying factors because, for many of them, anxiety is something to be hidden. Students decide to not bring up these topics that are considered to be personal because they fear being judged by their peers and future employers. It is better to "appear to be motivated" in order to believe in the future and not be identified, or even labelled, as not being passionate enough, even if it means that you do not truly feel this at all. Passion could become instrumental in a quest for effectiveness and productivity.

Performance and Endurance

We now turn to the context in which employment is almost guaranteed but where competition and selection still prevail: computers and health sciences programs. Students are rigorously selected on the basis of academic results. For example, in occupational therapy, only 60 out of 500 applicants are chosen per year. Thus, those students are the symbols of excellence and have been the pride and joy of their families and friends since childhood. Although honours give the greatest of pleasure, the downside is that they include the requirements to perform. This requirement comes first from the education system whose practices are heavily focused on measuring results, and then from parents for whom marks are very important. Students have internalized these norms and are in the habit of setting extremely high targets for themselves and continuously keeping themselves above average, which gives them an immediate

feeling of euphoria that must be constantly renewed. The pressure exerted in this way has led to brilliant results but also to bouts of intense stress and even exhaustion.

A new requirements is added to the results-related requirements, that is, to be a well-balanced person. In wishing to project an almost perfect image as students and future professionals in the helping relationship, there is a risk of doubling the academic results performance with performance related to psychological balance. It is no longer enough to succeed, one must project the image of a well-balanced person, show self-confidence in the face of uncertainty, manage one's stress, etc. These students are aware of the dangers inherent in a productivity-centred work organization, having read academic studies on stress and burn-out. In this sense, they believe that they are on a well-balanced path because they have the information that allows them to develop an objective knowledge of these issues. However, this is but a narrow line. Within this ideal, there is little room for fatigue, bad mood, disagreement or mistake and there is a real risk of slipping towards a defensive ideology which over-values the individual's responsibility to adjust at the expense of a critique of systemic constraints. This defensive strategy means keeping one's problems to oneself, subjecting oneself to a harsh discipline, working without complaining, gritting one's teeth and ... often putting one's desire on the back burner. Students agree to subject themselves to this in the hope that, one day, they will no longer be forced to make so many sacrifices for their work. This second nature is laden with after-effects. Over time, they become experts in enduring and come to believe and say that they have no choice but to adjust to the situation.

Conclusion

This approach of psychodynamics of work can play a preventive role in counselling and guidance. In speaking out about work organization, concrete courses of action and intervention areas can be developed in the education community.

We conducted this study in partnership with the Counselling and Psychological Assistance Service and the Guidance and Counselling Clinic of the University. Their respective directors participated actively in the study as co-researchers. They were involved at all stages of the research, including the writing of the final report. Thus, the psychodynamics of work may well have a future in the academic environment (high school, college, university, etc.) because its theoretical and methodological approach can be used to support students as they construct their identity by helping them to recognize, at an early stage, the sources of pleasure and suffering linked to their occupational choice as well as the defence mechanisms being constructed at the same time. Through this approach, it is also possible to identify institutional shortcomings or problems linked to training programs. In this respect, this approach may prove to be a useful tool for student associations fighting for improvements in these areas. In short, the psychodynamics of work is an approach that allows for innovative actions in the relationship of students to their studies and to institutions.

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Psychodynamique Du Travail Étudiant Dans Un Contexte De Resserrement Des Conditions D'Access À L'Emploi Et D'Insécurité Économique

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Le Silenc et la Répression De L'angoisse

Dans les programmes où la rareté de l'emploi est connue, tels sociologie, arts visuels, littérature et communication, l'amour de la discipline doit primer comme condition d'intégration. La passion est à la fois vitale et obligée. Comme toute personne qui travaille, les étudiants des sciences humaines et des arts sont préoccupés du jugement d'utilité qu'ils méritent, c'est-à-dire qu'ils espèrent des conditions de vie décentes, une reconnaissance du bienfait de leur travail et de sa valeur marchande. Ces espoirs sont toutefois refroidis par l'image que la société leur renvoie du penseur, de l'intellectuel ou de l'artiste inutile (ce sont là de vieux clichés actualisés dans la course aux emplois payants). Celle-ci est exacerbée par les doutes de leur entourage à propos de leur avenir et par les tabous qui bloquent la communication.

Dans plusieurs programmes, la passion devient une norme qu'il faut intérioriser et afficher: " Il faut avoir le métier dans le sang ", leur dit-on. Cette condition implicite est inquiétante, car comment savoir si l'on possède en soi, presque dans ses gènes, ce potentiel pour supporter les contraintes associées à cette profession ? Dans ce message véhiculé par les parents, les enseignants, les employeurs, les médias, l'enthousiasme et la passion sont prescrites comme un antidote à la morosité. Mais ce discours de la motivation prend la forme d'une injonction paradoxale. Il n'y a pas de place, dans ce contexte, pour exprimer des doutes sur les finalités des études, et encore moins pour exercer une critique de la formation et de l'institution. Le silence à ce propos devient un poids, une souffrance que l'on porte seul et qui, avec le temps peut devenir de plus en plus oppressante. Pour éviter de soulever ces questions, on préférera taire certains éléments angoissants. Car pour plusieurs étudiants, l'angoisse est quelque chose à éviter ou à contrer, pour ne pas prêter flanc aux remises en question. Même dans les cas où la sociabilité est fortement présente, les étudiants n'abordent pas ces thèmes considérés intimes, car ils craignent le jugement des pairs ou celui des futurs employeurs.

La Performance et L'endurance

Abordons maintenant un contexte où l'emploi est quasi assuré où règne toutefois la compétition et la sélection: en informatique et en sciences de la santé. La performance scolaire exigée pour se faire admettre en sciences de la santé, par exemple, a des effets sur le rapport actuel aux études. Les étudiants sont rigoureusement sélectionnés sur la base des résultats scolaires: sur cinq cent demandes par année, une soixantaine de candidats sont retenus en ergothérapie, à titre d'exemple. Symboles d'excellence ils font la fierté de leur entourage depuis leur enfance. Si les honneurs font plaisir, ils comportent toutefois un revers, celui de l'exigence de la performance. Cette exigence provient d'abord du système d'éducation dont les pratiques sont fortement axées sur la mesure des résultats, puis des parents qui ont accordé beaucoup d'importance aux notes. Les étudiants ont intériorisé ces normes. Ils ont pris l'habitude

de se fixer des objectifs extrêmement élevés et de se maintenir constamment au dessus de la moyenne, ce qui leur procure une sensation immédiate d'euphorie qu'il faut renouveler sans cesse. La pression ainsi exercée a pu amener à de brillantes réussites mais aussi à vivre des épisodes de stress intenses, voire d'épuisement.

Aux exigences reliées aux résultats, s'en ajoute une nouvelle : celle de montrer un état d'équilibre. Dans le désir de projeter une image quasi parfaite en tant qu'étudiants et futurs professionnels de la relation d'aide, il existe un risque : celui de doubler la performance liée aux résultats scolaires par une performance d'équilibre psychologique. Il ne suffit plus seulement de réussir, il faut présenter une image d'équilibre, démontrer de l'assurance face à l'incertitude, gérer son stress... Ces étudiants sont conscients des risques inhérents à une organisation du travail axée sur le productivisme. Ils lisent des écrits scientifiques sur le stress et l'épuisement professionnel. En ce sens, ils se croient sur le chemin de l'équilibre car ils détiennent l'information leur permettant de développer une connaissance objective de ces problématiques. Mais le fil est mince. Dans cet idéal, il y a peu de place pour la fatigue, la mauvaise humeur, le désaccord ou l'erreur et il existe un risque réel de glisser vers une idéologie défensive qui sur-valorise la responsabilité individuelle d'adaptation au détriment d'une critique des contraintes systémiques.

La stratégie défensive consiste à garder ses problèmes pour soi, à se soumettre à une dure discipline, à travailler sans se plaindre, à serrer les dents et ... à mettre en veilleuse son désir bien souvent. Les étudiants acceptent de se soumettre dans l'espoir, qu'un jour, ils ne soient plus forcés de tant sacrifier pour leur travail. Cette seconde nature n'est pas sans laisser de séquelles. À la longue, ils deviennent des experts d'endurance et ils en viennent à croire, et à dire, qu'ils n'ont pas le choix de s'adapter ainsi.

Conclusion

Le travail de réflexion fait auprès des étudiants universitaires permet d'échanger sur les plaisirs et souffrances liés aux études, de reconnaître certains mécanismes défensifs inhérents au type de formation choisie, et de transposer cette réflexion dans les instances représentatives ou décisionnelles, lorsqu'ils le décident. En ce sens, nous estimons que l'approche de la psychodynamique du travail peut aussi agir sur un plan préventif. La prise de parole autour de l'organisation du travail ouvre la voie sur l'élaboration de pistes concrètes d'action en milieu éducatif et promet de nouveaux créneaux de recherche et d'intervention.

Nous avons réalisé cette enquête, en partenariat avec le Service d'orientation et d'aide psychologique et la Clinique d'orientation et de counseling de l'Université. Les directeurs respectifs ont participé concrètement à l'enquête à titre de co-chercheurs. Ils ont été présents à toutes les étapes de la recherche jusqu'à la production du rapport écrit. On peut donc penser que la psychodynamique du travail a un avenir en milieu scolaire (secondaire, collégial, universitaire, etc.) car cette approche théorique et méthodologique permet d'accompagner les étudiants dans leur construction identitaire en les aidant à reconnaître, tôt, les sources de plaisir et de souffrance liées à leur choix professionnel, de même que les mécanismes de défense qui se construisent au même moment. Elle permet aussi d'identifier des lacunes institutionnelles ou des problèmes liés aux programmes de formation. En cela, elle peut s'avérer un outil intéressant pour les associations étudiantes qui luttent sur ces plans. Bref, la psychodynamique du travail

constitue une voie d'action novatrice dans le rapport des étudiants à leurs études et aux institutions.

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Measuring Effectiveness in a Clinical Setting

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Measuring Effectiveness in a Clinical Setting

Fiscal restraint has resulted in an increased emphasis on accountability in professional practice (Hiebert, 1997; Flynn, 1997). Health Management Organizations in the U. S., despite the raging controversy, have led the movement in responsible counselling and psychotherapy by requiring their suppliers to demonstrate both client satisfaction and client outcome. It is straight forward to measure client satisfaction using an instrument such as the Counsellor Rating Form (Barak & LaCrosse, 1975; available in French from Bachelor, 1987). However, it is more of a challenge to measure outcome. In a clinical setting (as compared to a research setting), it is particularly difficult to monitor success in anything but the most subjective ways (Collins, 2001). Clients may not expect testing, counsellors may be resistant to a greater work load, even the most basic technical advice may not be available, and financial resources will generally not have been put aside for such an activity. However, an instrument has become available to simplify the task of monitoring client outcome: the OO-45 (Lambert, Hansen, Umpruss, Lunnen, Okiishi, & Burlingame, 1996).

The OO-45 is a 45 item questionnaire that measures client progress in therapy, and is designed to be repeatedly administered during the course of counselling. As pointed out by Howard, Moras, Brill, Martinovich and Lutz (1996), following client progress is a fairly straightforward activity. The key is to have criteria against which the client's progress can be evaluated. The OO-45 allows a degree of base-line screening and comparison with established norms. It is not intended for diagnostic purposes. The instrument is sensitive to changes, inexpensive, and has high levels of test-retest reliability ($r = .84$) and concurrent validity (.53 to .88). It is generally administered just before each session, and it takes about five minutes to complete. The instrument measures three aspects of client outcome: symptom distress, interpersonal relations, and performance of social roles (Lambert & Cattani-Thompson, 1996).

As a test of the value of the instrument, three counsellors used it with ten personal counselling clients in an internal Employee Assistance Program in a large office, and with ten vocational counselling clients used as a comparison. The clients were seen for at least five sessions with an average of seven sessions. The clients had an average age of 43 years, and the counsellors held two masters' degrees and one doctorate in appropriate fields.

The results can be seen in Figure 1. The scores for personal counselling begin well above the cut-off, indicating real clinical need. They drop slightly in the next session presumably because the program has early intervention and the clients become even more aware of the presenting problem. By the third session, the scores dropped substantially, and by the last session, they are near the baseline score for the general population.

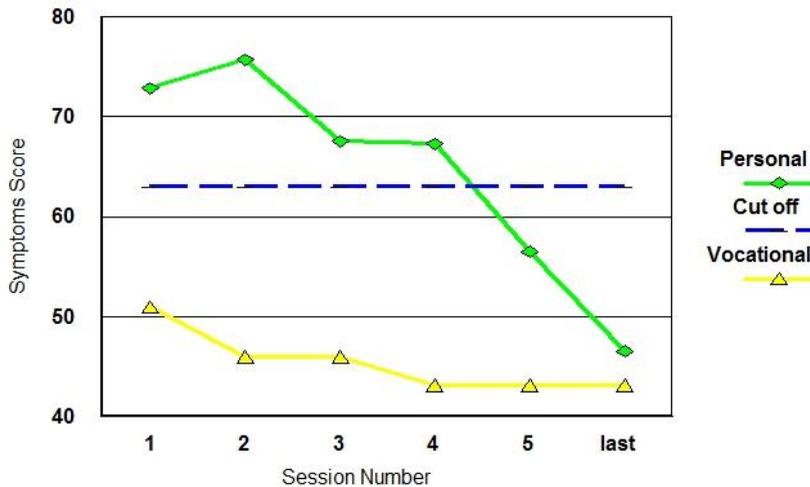
Interestingly, the vocational clients showed the same pattern of change, beginning slightly below the cut-off line, and improving in three sessions. In our very small sample, clients showed positive change to such questions as, "I am satisfied with

my life”, “I feel I am not doing well at work”, “I feel something is wrong in my mind” and “I feel blue”. This support Bégin’s (1998) view that vocational counselling is not just help getting a new job, but a question of reconstructing personal identity.

Figure 1

Results of the OQ-45 in a clinical setting.

Results of the OQ-45 in a clinical setting.



In practice, using the OQ-45 was found to be a very simple, straight-forward task. Clients in personal counselling found the questions reasonable and the administration unobtrusive. Even in individual cases, the plotted results quickly showed realistic treatment responses. Some counsellors verify key questions such as suicidal ideation, drug use and the ability to work. Viau (1998), in a community clinic, found that many clients showed interest in seeing their results. In two cases where the clients were slow to respond to therapy, they were shown the results, asked to explain them and then invited to collaborate in redefining the counselling approach.

Overall, the instrument was an efficient way to monitor counselling effectiveness and it gave useful clinical feedback. Howard et al. (1996) point out that there are several advantages to measuring client progress, including judging the effectiveness of treatment, adjusting case loads based on expected treatment and comparing treatments in terms of dose-response relationships. The results were interesting to the clients and the counsellors. Managers appreciated the hard data on client progress when making decisions on funding priorities. The manual is clear and simple to read and understand. The instrument will be even easier to use when a shorter, 30 item version, becomes available. The author has observed that there is occasionally counsellor resistance but that this disappears after they see their first results. The instrument is limited to adult populations and to settings where a paper-and-pencil instrument would be seen as acceptable.

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Formula for Success in Career Building

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In the author's opinion, traditional education and training systems have failed to equip youth and adults for the continual life and work transitions they will face beyond graduation. The way people prepare for life and work transitions is changing, as are the goals of career education and counselling. The focus is shifting from an emphasis on helping people choose an occupational goal, then develop plans to meet its educational and training prerequisites, to also helping them learn essential life/work skills they need to be satisfied, self-reliant citizens, able to make the most of the myriad transitions life will present.

Prevailing wisdom in the twentieth century held that given reasonable access to good career information and guidance citizens will make good career decisions. The result will be improved human resource allocation, labour force mobility and productivity, and improved cost-effectiveness of employment, education and training programs (Krumboltz & Worthington, 1999). Many countries have invested heavily in developing and distributing print, video, computer and web-based resources on this premise. Watts (1999) made a good case for "The Economic and Social Benefits of Career Guidance." Recent analysis of school-to-work and work-to-work transition processes raises doubts about whether simply providing good information and guidance, which remains vital, is sufficient to reap the benefits Watts describes (Blustein, et.al., 1997; Krumboltz & Worthington, 1999; Lent, Hackett, & Brown, 1999; Savickas, 1999; and Worthington & Juntunen, 1997).

In addition to academic and technical skills, youth and adults need to learn essential life/work skills that empower them to become healthy, productive and self-reliant citizens. Gysbers (1997) refers to this concept as life career development, defined as "self-development over a person's life span through the integration of the roles, settings, and events in a person's life". An important part of "life career development" is giving individuals life/work skills that empower them to locate and process information, and to make good choices at the many transition points they will inevitably encounter on their life journey. The Conference Board of Canada (2000), representing many of the largest employers in Canada, insist that employability (life/Work) skills are as important to employers as the communications, mathematics and science skills all students are expected to acquire before leaving formal education. Krumboltz and Worthington (1999) state that "The goals of career counseling and of the school-to-work movement should be to facilitate the learning of skills, interests, beliefs, values, work habits, and personal qualities that enable each participant to create a satisfying life in a constantly changing work environment" and Savickas (1999) suggests that students need to learn to "look ahead" and "look around" before they leave school to develop competence and skill in the following five domains: (a) self-knowledge, (b) occupational information, (c) decision making, (d) planning, and (e) problem solving. According to Worthington and Juntunen (1997) "When employers are asked why they prefer not to hire youth, or why there are high turnover rates among youthful workers, they will tell you that today's youth frequently fail to demonstrate

essential employability skills.” Employers implore educators to ensure students "don't leave school without them," yet life/work skills have not found the prominence they deserve in "mainstream" curricula.

Canada prides itself in the quality and quantity of career and labour market information available for youth and adults. Excellent resources like the National Occupational Classification, Job Futures, WorkinfoNET, Choices, Career Explorer, Career Cruising, Career Directions, Canada Prospects, The Realm and The Edge magazines, Destination 2020, Smart Options and many more are readily available to citizens of all ages across Canada. Yet, although most students have ready access to quality career information and guidance:

- 70% of secondary students expect to go on to post-secondary studies (university, college, technical or trade school) and 80% of their parents have the same expectation, but only 32% go directly to post-secondary, and only about 50% of them will graduate
- Nationally 26% of secondary students drop out of secondary school before graduation
- 9% of secondary students expect to work after they leave secondary school, yet 64% of secondary students actually do go to work before any other career destination
- 47% of post-secondary students change programs or drop out by the end of their first year, and 50% of those who graduate are not in work closely related to their programs two years after they complete their programs

These statistics (Statistics Canada School Leavers Survey, 1997) suggest that fewer than 25% of Canadian youth arrive at their short-term career goals, let alone longer term goals. Are the 64% of secondary students who go directly to work ready? Perceptions vary. One recent survey (Environics Alberta, 1995) yielded the following results to the question, "Are secondary students ready for work when they leave school?"

Response from:	Ready for the Workplace	Ready for Post-Secondary
High School Students	80%	87%
Parents (K-12 Students)	40%	65%
Post-Secondary Teachers	35%	53%
Employers	35%	70%

Secondary curricula focus on preparing students for post-secondary studies, yet most will not go on to post-secondary studies. To receive a secondary diploma, students are expected to master complex academic material many will not need in the short term, if ever. At the same, few students systematically learn essential life/work skills all will need as young adults. In short, the majority of Canadian youth are not adequately prepared for life after secondary school. The system is not meeting their needs as well as it might. It is testimony to their personal resourcefulness that most students eventually find their way to acceptable, if not optimal, employment and lifestyles.

Adults are often ill prepared for their career transitions. Many encounter involuntary career transitions due to privatization and "right-sizing," especially older workers, must overcome larger obstacles in re-connecting with work and learning opportunities. Many have responsibility for dependents, while dealing with issues of lost income, shock, anger, fear, uncertainty, diminishing self-esteem and dignity, ageism, loss of identity, and emotional and financial risks as they cope with transitions (Newman, 1995).

The traditional goal of career interventions has been "to help people make informed career decisions." It was assumed that at some point, usually between their 9th to 12th year of education, students could assess their interests and abilities, analyze their options, choose a suitable occupational goal, then develop and implement plans to reach their goal. Recent projections in Canada suggest that young people now entering the labour market are likely to experience a succession of different work roles, with as many as twenty-five jobs (with elements of multiple occupations) in up to five different industry sectors during their lives (Alberta Learning, 1999). At times they may have concurrent part-time jobs, while at other times they may have no paid work. Work periods will be interspersed with periods of learning, either full- or part-time while holding one or more jobs. Krumboltz and Worthington (1999) describe a future where "... there will be more of a need for worker flexibility as worker requirements change more frequently and new teams are formed to work on specific projects. Workers will increasingly be expected to move from project to project doing whatever work needs to be accomplished, and not merely to fulfill a written job description."

The oft-heard question from parents, teachers and counsellors, "What do you want to be?" loses relevance in labour markets characterized by this magnitude and frequency of change. It is unrealistic, even self-defeating, to expect students to commit to one occupation for a lifetime. Any answer they give will be either incomplete, or wrong. "Learning how to adapt to changing conditions in the workplace will be one of the essential skills for success" (Krumboltz & Worthington, 1999). It is difficult for teachers and counsellors, who may work in the same building for much of their careers, to imagine this new work world let alone prepare students for it.

The end of work is not in sight. With all our "labour-saving" technologies, people have never worked harder. The notion of jobs is shifting dramatically. Except in unionized settings, those who say "That is not my job!" may not keep their jobs for long! Career is increasingly being viewed as something every human has, and the word is not being used as often synonymously with profession, occupation or job (Gysbers, 1997). The concept losing ground most rapidly is "occupation," yet it remains the cornerstone of most career information systems and databases, guidance processes and tertiary education and training.

Society expects youth and adults to define themselves in terms of an occupational goal, then choose education and training to prepare and qualify for their goal. Once on the path to their goal they are graded on acquisition of academic and technical skills, not essential life/work skills. Academic and technical qualifications are needed to get an employer's attention, but life/work skills determine subsequent success and advancement (Krumboltz & Worthington, 1999 and Worthington & Juntenen, 1997). Job seekers who market themselves as skilled in a narrow occupational specialty do themselves a disservice. Those who can describe the skills they bring to helping the organization meet its immediate challenges and achieve long term success, in whatever combination of roles, are more in demand (Worthington & Juntenen, 1997).

People need to identify broad work sector destinations and secure foundation skills that will equip them to take on multiple roles within them. This is more about education than counselling. Mastery of the skills essential to realization of their goals should be learned in mainstream curricula. According to the school-to-work transition literature, a good school intervention would: include simulated work experiences that excite students with the opportunities presented and motivate them to explore their occupational possibilities with more enthusiasm (Krumboltz & Worthington, 1999); teach them about the consequences of making decisions in life (Varenhorst, 1968,1973); allow them to test the adequacy of various decision making models (Krumboltz, Scherba, Hamel & Mitchell, 1982); allow students to sample various work roles (Krumboltz, 1970); incorporate role-playing, which is deemed the most useful intervention technique (Krumboltz & Worthington, 1999); facilitate the learning of skills, interests, beliefs, values, work habits, and personal qualities that enable participants to create a satisfying life in a constantly changing work environment (Krumboltz & Worthington, 1999); be developmentally appropriate and be distributed throughout the school years (Lent, Hackett, & Brown, 1999); and, allow students to develop employability skills (Worthington & Juntunen, 1997). Mastering the skills needed to find and maintain fulfilling employment also equips people to be better students, marriage partners, parents and citizens. What are these skills?

The Blueprint for Life/Work Designs

Pioneering work on an essential life/work skills framework was begun by the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee in the United States in 1988, under the leadership of Juliette Noone-Lester. In 1998, the process of adapting the US *National Career Development Guidelines* for Canada began, resulting in the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs*. Blueprint partners include the National Life/Work Centre, Human Resources Development Canada, Provincial Governments (Departments of Education and Labour) and national professional associations. Thousands of American and Canadian career practitioners and researchers have spent thirteen years developing, piloting, evaluating, revising and implementing this North American career building skills framework,

The Blueprint core *competencies* are sorted into three areas (A. Personal Management; B. Learning and Work Exploration; and C. Life/Work Building). These competencies are further defined for four levels:

Level One	Early Years (Primary/Elementary)
Level Two	Middle Years (Junior High)
Level Three	Senior Years (High School)
Level Four	Adult (including Post-secondary)

There are 10 or more *performance indicators* for each competency, at each level, organized by "learning stages." Measurable standards are developed by implementing agencies for each indicator. For the full framework of competencies and indicators, refer to: www.blueprint4life.

BLUEPRINT COMPETENCIES
AREA A: PERSONAL MANAGEMENT
1. Build and maintain a positive self-image 2. <u>Interact positively and effectively with others</u> [SEE BELOW] 3. Change and grow throughout ones' life
AREA B. LEARNING AND WORK EXPLORATION
4. Participate in life-long learning supportive of life/work goals 5. Locate and effectively use life/work information 6. Understand the relationship between work and society/economy
AREA C. LIFE/WORK BUILDING
7. Secure or create and maintain work 8. Make life/work enhancing decisions 9. Maintain balanced life and work roles 10. Understand the changing nature of life and work roles 11. Understand, engage in and manage one's own life/work building process

To illustrate, the indicators for competency 2 at the high school level follow:

COMPETENCY 2: Interact positively and effectively with others
Level Three (High School): Develop abilities for building positive relationships in one's life and work
Learning Stage I – Acquisition: acquiring knowledge -Discover the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to work effectively with and for others. -Explore helping skills such as facilitating problem solving, tutoring and guiding. -Examine appropriate employee-employer interactions and client-contractor interactions in specific situations. -Explore personal management skills such as time management, problem solving, personal financial management, stress management, life-work balance, etc.
Earning Stage II – Application: experiencing acquired knowledge -Demonstrate behaviours and attitudes required for working with and for others. -Demonstrate personal management skills such as time management problem solving, personal finances, stress management, life/work balance, etc. -Express feelings, reactions and ideas in an appropriate manner. -Demonstrate helping skills such as facilitating problem solving, tutoring and guiding.
Learning Stage III – Personalization: integrating acquired and applied knowledge -Determine the helping skills one feels comfortable with and wishes to contribute in relationships with others. -Acknowledge the positive effects of expressing one's feelings, reactions and ideas. -Integrate personal management skills such as time management, problem solving, stress management and life/work balance to one's life and work.
Learning Stage IV – Actualization: striving towards full potential -Engage in further learning experiences that help build positive relationships in one's life and work.

The Blueprint maps essential life/work skills all citizens would be well-served to master in order to proactively manage their life/work building process. It also provides administrators and practitioners with a systematic process for developing,

implementing, evaluating and marketing career development programs or redesigning and enhancing existing programs.

A national framework of essential life/work competencies and indicators helps service providers achieve a number of aims:

- Clarity of outcomes: The Blueprint framework enables practitioners (and their funders) clearly to articulate, and measure, the outcomes they are seeking and achieving.
- Service consistency: A common language within and between services and products helps citizens know what they need, and get what they need, as they move from one service or product, agency or organization, or geographic region to another.
- Efficiency: A common language for life/work skills helps clients and practitioners more efficiently review, compare and select programs and products.
- Reduced ambiguity: Assumptions abound regarding the meanings of terms such as *career planning* or *self-awareness*. Spelling out these assumptions for all to review enhances communication significantly.
- Career development culture: Having a common structure by which to discuss career development issues and aims helps all citizens become more conscious of career development and life/work issues.

The Real Game Series

Essential life/work skills, like literacy and numeric skills, should be mastered by students at all stages of their education (Lent, Hackett & Brown, 1999; Fouad, 1997; and Savickas, 1999) and by adults. Increased attention to these skills helps students see the relevance of their school studies, and can positively impact attendance, achievement and completion rates. Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand, Hungary and Denmark are working together on *The Real Game Series* to help learners at all ages master essential life/work skills. The Real Game Series is everything the career transitions literature suggests (above) a good intervention program should be.

There are six programs in Real Game Series:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| • The Play Real Game | Ages 6-8 | Grades 3/4 |
| • The Make It Real Game | Ages 8-10 | Grades 5/6 |
| • The Real Game | Ages 11-13 | Grades 7/8 |
| • The Be Real Game | Ages 14-15 | Grades 9/10 |
| • The Get Real Game | Ages 16-18 | Grades 11/12 |
| • Real Times, Real Life | Adults | Post-secondary to Retirement |

All programs involve role-playing and are set in participants' futures. Realistic scenarios, based on contemporary labour market realities, are so engaging that participants don't realize they are learning. Participants establish lifestyles, budget time and money, transition through job-loss and acquisition scenarios, plan business trips and vacations, balance family and work, engage in community activities, for example, in safe roles allowing them to experiment risk-free. Students see clear connections

between adult life and work roles and the subjects there are learning in school. "Students who believe that high school education has relevance for their future success are strongly and significantly more likely to work hard in school, even after parent, peer, school, and psychological variables are controlled" (Rosebaum & Nelson, 1994). Teachers also learn about a broad cross section of contemporary life and work roles, and have fun with their students!

These programs lend themselves to team-teaching, involvement of student mentors, and participation by community members and parents. Participants are more motivated to seek out, process and absorb traditional career and labour market information resources (print, computer, video, Internet). For more information see: www.realgame.com.

Conclusion

Canada's school-to-work transition efforts have failed too many youth and adults because we have not had a national framework of essential life/work skills to be learned by all. These essential life/work skills complement the academic and technical skills now required for completion of formal education and training. Adopting such a framework, and implementing curricula and resources such as The Real Game Series to help citizens master these skills, help more youth and adults become fulfilled and self-reliant citizens.

As the title of this paper suggests, a new formula for success in career building is: Acquisition of Good Foundation Academic and Technical Skills

- + Mastery of Essential Life/Work Skills
- + Access to Quality Career and Labour Market Information and Guidance
- = GREATER SUCCESS IN CAREER BUILDING, AND IN LIFE!

Addendum

By the summer of 2001 The Real Game Series partnership includes eleven countries. All concur that resources like The Real Game Series will help youth and adults more effectively learn and master essential life/work skills. This international partnership is non-commercial and not-for-profit. It reflects the will of the partner countries to work together in developing resources that will transform the landscape of career education in their nations. Current international partners, typically national departments of education, welcome new partners from countries who wish to develop their own adaptations of these programs. The latest editions of these programs would be available at no cost to them. However, any new partnership must include the national department of education of the country in question, and it must agree to share innovations with other international Real Game Series partners.

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