Career Counseling and Services: A Cognitive Information Processing Approach

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Chapter 14

Accountability and Evaluation in Career Services
Overview

• Need for accountability
• Defining career development
• Effects of career interventions
• Assumptions and propositions
• Five components of effectiveness
• Determination of costs
• Requirements to implement a CIP approach
• Implications
Need for Accountability

• Accountability
  – establishing responsibility for certain outcomes, given a set of human and non-human resources
  – long standing trend demanding accountability in public education and human services programs
  – essential element of professional practice in career services
Accountability

- Progress has been slow in linking inputs to outputs
- Demonstrating accountability critical aspect of successfully competing for funds
- Few useful accountability and evaluation models
Accountability

- Accountability models hampered by the absence of conceptual and operational constructs that define outputs of career service interventions, i.e.,
  - How do career services change the lives of clients?
Defining Career Development

- Variety of definitions exist
  - on-going process that occurs over the life span; includes home, school, and community experiences (Pietrofesa & Splete)
  - self-development over the life span through the integration of the roles, settings, and events of a person’s life (Gysbers & Moore)
Defining Career Development

- Total constellation of economic, sociological, psychological, educational, physical, and chance factors that combine to shape one’s career (Reardon, Lenz, Sampson, & Peterson; Sears)

- Implementing a series of integrated career decisions over the life span (Peterson, Sampson, Reardon, & Lenz)
Defining Career Development

• Analyzing career services counselors’ roles
  – developing and clarifying self-concepts
  – relating occupational information to self-information
  – teaching decision-making skills
  – providing opportunities for occupational reality testing
  – assisting individuals in educational and occupational placement
Defining Career Development

• Outcomes of career development services, key question:
  – Does a career development program meet the needs of students (or some other target population) at a manageable cost?
Defining Career Development

- Sample outcome criteria
  - increased use of community resources
  - decreased dropout and absenteeism from school
  - increased involvement of parents and teachers
  - increased work-related experiences
  - increased use of counseling services
Defining Career Development Outputs

- National Career Development Guidelines (Kobylarz, 1996)
- 3 key skills areas
  1) self-knowledge
  2) educational and occupational exploration
  3) career planning
Defining Career Development Outputs

• Initiative of the National Career Development Association (NCDA); Policy Statement of the NCDA Board of Directors
  – definitions of career development terms
  – philosophical statement on work in the United States
  – policy directives on career interventions for various age groups

• Helps standardize and clarify the nature & purposes of career programs
CIP Approach to Accountability

• Assessing client changes
  – primary effects
    • development of new cognitive capabilities
  – secondary effects
    • manner in which new capacities are applied to career and life-style decisions
Effects of Career Interventions

• Group or class interventions more effective than individual counseling
• Oliver & Spokane--career classes have greatest impact on client gains, but are most expensive
• Individual & structured group interventions are most cost-effective
Effects of Career Interventions

- Career courses for credit increased
  - career decidedness
  - career maturity
- Long term effects of career courses not established
- Study by Whiston, Sexton & Lasoff
  -- career classes followed individual & group counseling in effectiveness
Effects of Career Interventions

• Brown & Krane—**effective** career interventions have 5 common elements:
  1. allow clients to clarify career & life goals in writing
  2. provide clients with individualized interpretations & feedback, e.g., test results
  3. provide current information on risks & rewards of selected occupations
  4. include study of models & mentors
  5. assist in developing support networks for pursuing career aspirations
Assumptions and Propositions

1. Fundamental set of cognitive abilities and knowledges that undergird effective career problem solving & decision making

2. Career development intervention is a learning event

3. Causal linkage between acquisition of career problem solving & decision-making skills and career/life adjustment
Assumptions and Propositions

4 Cost for delivery of a career intervention determined by
- accounting for all resources required to administer an intervention
- to a cohort group of clients with a common career problem
- to achieve a desired level of proficiency in terms of the CIP pyramid
Assumptions and Propositions

• Career services program is composed of an integrated set of career service interventions, (e.g., organization unit with mission, goals, and budget)
Accountability System

• Means documenting the results of career service interventions in measurable terms and accounting for the resources invested in them
Five Components of Effectiveness

1. **diagnosis** of client needs
2. **prescription** of activities to address needs
3. documenting plans & activities that describe the **intervention process**
4. **outputs** or primary effects of the intervention
5. **outcomes** or effects of the primary changes
Diagnosis

- Gaps between existing levels & desired levels of knowledge & skill
- Analysis of client needs to identify skills and knowledge needed
- Assessment techniques to determine entry-level knowledge & skill performances
- Statement of desired level of attainment by the group
Prescription

• Development of a plan to meet client’s diagnosed needs, e.g., knowledge and skill gaps
• Objective of career service interventions--development of specified skills and knowledge areas
• Can use task analysis to develop set of learning activities
Process

- Series of activities (planned & unplanned) performed by client and the counselor to bring about change in skill and knowledge gaps
- Involves collecting data to indicate that progress has been made
Outputs

- New skills and knowledge acquired by the client
- Primary client changes resulting from career service interventions
- Also known as performance indicators
- Variety of tools available to assess changes in outputs
Outcomes

- Effects resulting from new cognitive or perceptual capacities, e.g.,
  - more focused plan for career exploration
  - reduced fear of failure
  - successful job placement
  - greater job satisfaction
  - increased performance in school or work
Outcomes

- Measuring outcomes may involve a published instrument or a homemade form that relates directly to the intervention objectives; may include open-ended questions that provide qualitative information.
Determination of Costs

• Can be a complex task
• Determining cost effectiveness may be critical for program survival
• Costs can be approximated by summing cost components for personnel, materials and supplies, and overhead
• Takes into account diagnostic procedures, prescription activities, and process, output, and outcome costs
Cost-Effectiveness

- Relating costs for career service interventions to outputs (gain in knowledge & skills)
- Comparing output/cost ratios of various career interventions to determine which are more effective or more efficient
Figure 14.2
Relationship between effectiveness and unit cost in human services programs
Requirements to Implement a CIP Approach

• Knowledge of skills and content domains that underlie rational career decision making processes
• Knowledge of conditions that bring about the development of knowledge and skills in clients
• Valid & sensitive measures to detect subtle changes resulting from career service interventions
• Knowledge of program planning and budgeting to document resources invested
Requirements to Implement a CIP Approach

• Counselors must become familiar with:
  – research findings in cognitive & developmental psychology
  – methods of measuring changes in cognition & perception
  – human services program management
Implications

- Accountability model draws distinction between outputs and outcomes
- Counselors may be held accountable for knowledge and skills that client acquires (outputs or direct changes) versus how changes are implemented in daily living (outcomes)
Implications

- Requires a rethinking of career services
- Focus is not just on immediate client gains (e.g., acquisition of career information, job search & interview skills) but also on the acquisition of long-term career problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Counselors can meet accountability requirements by demonstrating that clients have acquired new problem-solving capabilities (outputs) and can apply them to their daily lives (outcomes)
Summary

• Focus on defining accountability and career development in operational form--tying resources to results
• Distinguishing between outputs of career services interventions and their outcomes
• 5 component effectiveness model and a basic cost model
• Method for determining costs for a career service intervention based on CIP
• Requirements to implement an accountability approach; Implications of this approach
Getting the Most Benefit from Reading

- Examine the budget of a career development service.
- Describe the outputs and outcomes for a group of individuals with common career problems.
- Develop an evaluation strategy to document effectiveness and costs.
- Examine an internal evaluation report for an established career services program.
For Additional Information

www.career.fsu.edu/techcenter/

Thank You