SERVICE RESTRUCTURING, EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN BC'S LABOUR MARKET

The Centre for Inclusion and Citizenship

Research with Relevance

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Vancouver, B.C

- 3.8 million (13.7%), or more than one in ten working age Canadians report having a disability (activity limitations)(Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012)

- The disability rate in British Columbia (14.8%) is higher than the national average (13.7%) by more than a full percentage point; CSD results indicate that 546,746 British Columbians report activity limitation (Statistics Canada, 2012b).

- Persons with disability, in British Columbia, have an employment rate of 59.1% (Age 15-64); almost 15 percentage points lower than that of persons without disability (74%; Age 15-64) (BC Stats, 2009)

Over the past 35 plus years there has been a shift of focus away from locating the problems disabled people face in achieving full inclusion within the individual and towards a focus they face in society: attitudes, lack of accommodation, etc. and this has also been the focus of employment policy.

- Between 1981 and 2012 some 20 reports and studies have emerged from the House of Commons alone, most dealing in part or exclusively with economic inclusion and employment (Collin, 2012).

- There is a vast amount of academic literature written about barriers and best practices. A Google Scholar search using the key words "barriers to employment persons with disability" returns over 200,000 results.

Labour Market Policy in BC

- Labour Market Policy for PWD is an extremely complex web of ever changing programmes, mix of federal and provincial arrangements and funding.

- Not surprisingly data is inconsistent, incomplete and often non-existent in any form which could be used to track changes or progress.

- Until very recently, there was virtually no tracking of employment programme outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities despite significant, long standing investment

	Year	
	1997	Opportunities Fund Created Canada-BC Labour Market Development Agreement Signed (co-managed)
	1998	Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities Agreement (EAPD) replaces VRDP
Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act (EAPWD) *Community Services Interim Authorities Act* Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities (ESPD) (Three year service plan) Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities (EPPD)	2002	
Minister's Council on Employment for PWD	2003	Canada-BC LMDA agreement extended
	2004	Budget 2004 introduces Multilateral Framework for Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities (replaces EAPD) Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities signed
Community Living Authority Act (Replaces *Community Services Interim Authorities Act*)	2005	
	2006	
Redesigned EPPD	2007	**Advantage Canada:** requested the negotiation of fully devolved LMDAs with remaining P/Ts Announcement of LMAs

	Year	
	2008	Canada-BC Labour Market Development Agreement signed (LMDA) Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement signed (LMA)
	2009	Fully devolved Canada-BC LMDA implemented
	2010	*United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*
	2011	
Employment Program for BC (EPBC) replaced EPPD	2012	
Redesigned the *Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act*	2013	
	2014	**Economic Action Plan** Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities (Renewed)

Restructuring and Inauguration of WorkBC

- 2012

- Community Living British Columbia
  - Community Action Employment Plan

- Employment Program for BC (EPBC) replaced EPPD

- WorkBC Employment Services Centres

- Number of service providers reduced from over 400 to 73. (Coward, 2013)
- Service delivery through 93 Employment Service Centre storefronts as well as itinerant services, satellite offices, outreach services and remote access services.
- Same "look and feel" and services offered throughout the province.

Research Purpose

- Explore how employment service restructuring (for example, changes to employment programs and changes to policy) affect disabled people's experiences with employment.

- For example:
  - Looking for a job
  - Finding a job
  - Keeping a job

Research Design

- Exploratory qualitative study
- Aim – to gather in-depth information about PWDs' employment experiences:
  - How have changes to provincial employment programs and policies impacted people with disabilities in BC over the past ten years?
- Data collection – interviews and focus groups (group discussions)
- Data analysis – thematic analysis –
  - finding patterns and interrelationships in the data (interviews).

All names and places have been changed in quotes used in this presentation.

Service Provider Participants

GEOGRAPHIC		
	Lower Mainland	11
	Vancouver Island	5
	Interior	11
	North	19
	TOTAL	46

YEARS IN JOB		
	1 year or less	16
	2 – 5 years	15
	6 – 10 years	9
	11 – 20 years	2
	Over 20 years	4
	TOTAL	46

Service Provider Participants

	INT	FG	TOTALS
Non-profit	12	20	32
For-profit	1	4	5
WORK BC	2	6	8
Self employed/consulting	1		1
TOTAL			46

	INT	FG	TOTALS
Management	9	14	23
Support workers / counsellors	6	16	22
Self employed/consulting	1	0	1
TOTAL			46

FINDINGS

- An underlying philosophy built on a "business model"
  - Performance based/fee for service
- A "one-stop-shop" approach
  - Loss of specialized supports
  - Lack of knowledge and training
- An inflexible structure that includes
  - a 4-tier system to categorize job-seekers/clients
  - An overburdensome administrative process
- Heavy caseloads

The underlying philosophy

It wasn't what it was intended when WorkBC came out, but it's what some of the WorkBC have become - 'cuz these are companies, right? These are for-profit companies, they're not non-profit. So anyone who's doing things for service, you're naturally going to put your business hat on. And I would do it too, right? I'd put my business hat on and say, "This person's more eligible than this person." Or, "This person's more job ready than this person"... It's not that they're flawed in their thinking - it's a different thinking. It's not a social model, it's a business model.

"performance based" or "fee for service"

- *You must complete all of the group of activities, put their employment discovery profile, and get them placed within a certain period of time. [It's] pay-for-service. And it can be challenging to work under a perspective of that kind of funding, because you end up spending a lot of time working with a person to get them to those needs, and in some cases you're almost feeling like you're pushing them along and you... you philosophically sit back, you remember you're client-centered, you're wanting the best ways, but see - their sponsor is really pushing you to make sure that you meet your outcomes, your target, otherwise your contract may not be renewed. So there's - you're in this rollercoaster of a hamster ride. "How do I be client centered yet how do I fulfill the sponsor, yet how do I do I make this work for me financially?" It's a struggle. And it's not the most client-centered place to be. (FG #11)*

A "one-stop-shop" approach

○ *The idea of a one stop shop for job seekers is a lovely idea; however, as we all know if you tried them on, one size fits all pantyhose there really isn't such a thing. So, that's what we're trying to accomplish in a WorkBC centre - is a one size fits all, and one size does not fit all. (FG#2, P3)*

Same Look Same Feel?

- Unfamiliar with how to create and practice inclusion!

- *Like I went one day [to Work BC] and I said, "I'll meet you there." I was taking him to meet the case manager to put in an ops funding application. He got there a few minutes ahead of me, and I got there. And, [pause], like "Whatcha Doing?" "I don't know. They gave me this piece of paper. I don't know what to do with it." … Nobody said, you know, like, "Do you need help with this?" "Can you read this?" "Are you okay?" Nobody wants to say in front of other people, "I can't read this" right? … It's not set up to be fully inclusive. It's just not. (FG #2, P3)*

Loss of specialized services and expertise
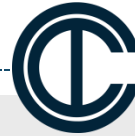
The requirement is that the staff have to work with too many hats. Who has those specializations? And so I think, the standard, and, without bad mouthing any particular organization, [they're] doing the work with the best that they have... There used to be an expectation that the person you were going to see had some experience, and that's not the case anymore - broadly speaking. In some centres that would be the case, but those could be an exception to the rule and what it used to be before this new model was there was specialized centres; so one for immigration, one for disabilities, which was us, you know, one for First Nations, ... however the piece behind that was you could go to any employment agency, ... nobody has the chance to specialize, right? (FG#9, P3)

Lack of knowledge/training

- *The language around the whole creation was, "This will be easier for clients that are barriered. Well, it's easier when they only have to get to one spot and not have to go across the city." But what's happening here, those individuals are having to go in and teach the person that they're working with what it means to be schizophrenic or what it means to have Autism. And they're repeating their story over and over again because [of] the system... (FG#9, P3)*

An inflexible, rigid system

- *"[The system is] process driven rather than client focused."*

- *They only do what they can do, what they're funded to do and what they're mandated to do. And, right now, it's, you know, you offer this, this and this, and this is what's there… a workshop, an interview workshop, a cover letter workshop, and a, I don't know, job research workshop (FG#2 P3)*

4-Tier Classification System

- *We get fifty-two weeks or forty weeks - depending on what tier they are of classification of person, how they tier a person in the WorkBC initiative. So, if you're tier three, you have 40 weeks to get employment. If you're tier four, you have fifty-two weeks and you must complete all of the group of activities, put their employment discovery profile, and get them placed within that certain period of time. (FG#11 P1)*

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Overburdensome administrative processes

- *"The Administrative burden on this WorkBC model is flawed" (FG #6 P2).*

- *"I think I've seen more of the effects on my staff... you know getting frustrated with the system" (Int#5, SP)*

Impact on clients...!

- *...the integrated case management system, ICM system - the horror of that system... so much of what [Sara – service provider in focus group] talks about, the opening and closing cases, is not necessarily done because a person, a case manager is unhappy with the person or not wanting to. It's the prompts from the ICM that only allow certain parameters for a person. So if John Henry comes up and he's already had twelve weeks in the career planning stage, that's all the ICM will allow... We'll have twelve weeks, and then have a choice, close the case or move them forward... If John Henry doesn't know, still doesn't know what kind of job he wants to go to, they've got nothing to enter into there. The case manager has no other choice but to close the file... Talk about the rollercoaster ride of employment. The more you put yourself out there and you have rejection, the further you go down on that rollercoaster... so how many times are they gonna push them down 'til they get so they're not gonna try... It's been unsuccessful. (FG#11 P4).*

Heavy Caseloads

- *"I know we struggle with our caseload"* (FG #2, P4).

- *"I think the pressure we're under and the amount of clients that we have, sometimes, if I'm being brutally honest, it doesn't allow us to give the best possible service that potentially could give"* (GF#7 P3).

Works differently in different offices/regions!

- *"... some of the WorkBC agencies are able to manage their disabled clients better than others - based on maybe who's on the front or how they set up services" (Int#11).*

- *"I've got three WorkBC offices now that I'm working with and making those relationships happen best so that the clients get the service, and each one's a little different despite the fact they've all got the same mandate and structure to deal with."*

Suggestions and Recommendations

- Broader range of services for PWDs (more holistic supports/services)
- Specialist services
- Need for services for Aboriginal PWDs
- Co-agency support (side by side)
- More information on how to support PWDs
- WorkBC be fully inclusive
- Address internal barriers (e.g., improved funding, address caseloads, ICM system, increased flexibility to address diversity of clients)
- Employer/community education

Thank you

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