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## VECAP MISSION

The Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals (VECAP) is a nonprofit organization originally founded in 1967 to promote the professions and services of vocational evaluation and work adjustment. Formerly known as the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA), the name was changed in 2003 to better reflect the focus of the organization as well as emphasize the independent status of the organization. This group has no affiliation with the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) or the NRA/VEWAA.

The VECAP organization is committed to advance and improve the fields of vocational evaluation and career assessment and represents the needs of the professionals who provide those services. Its scope of services encompasses individuals who need assistance with vocational development and/or career decision-making.

VECAP's membership comprises professionals who provide vocational evaluation, assessment, and career services and others interested in these services.

VECAP members identify, guide, and support the efforts of persons served to develop and realize training, education, and employment plans as they work to attain their career goals.

For membership information visit [VECAP.org](http://VECAP.org).

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Spring 2016 edition of the *VECAP Journal*

### Vocational Evaluator's WORK!

The authors of the 30th Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (2003) discuss the *Actual Day-to-Day and Routine Vocational Evaluator Responsibilities* (pp. 68-72) in order to describe what we do. A recent example of the work of vocational evaluators (VEs) was presented by Jim Swain (2016), Program Specialist (Vocational Evaluation) for the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. He shared a snapshot of *NCDVR Vocational Evaluation* services that began in the 1970s and has received strong agency support since inception. There are 43 VE positions that in 11 years (2003–2014) have:

- Completed more than **4,000** evaluations annually!
- Turned around reports in an average of **4.5 days**!
- Used specialized software like OASYS to provide transferable skills analysis and/or career exploration **1,500** times per year!
- Visited business and industry more than **200** times annually (average)!
- Researched on average 400 community resources a month for clients!

This represents quite a bit of pick and shovel work done by dedicated professionals to help people with disabilities choose a career path.

This issue of the *Journal* contains two articles that complement the theme of work done by evaluators. First is a framework and model by Malka and Tiell that promotes understanding of the long term unemployment-job search-reemployment relationship that has been overlooked in the literature. Readers will be able to develop a deeper understanding of clients who are unemployed or have been classified as long term unemployed. The second article by Tate and Hinton examines the Military-to-Career Transition Inventory (MCTI), a useful tool for vocational evaluators working with a military population.

In addition, we continue the serialization of the book *Vocational Evaluation and Assessment: Philosophy and Practice* by Dr. Stephen Thomas, who is a well-known and respected practitioner, educator, and philosopher of our field. Dr. Thomas has graciously granted VECAP the rights to publish his text that has been used since it was first drafted in 1997 for use in the Introduction to Vocational Evaluation Course and only available through the East Carolina University bookstore. This issue of the *Journal* presents *Chapter Two: Standards and Professional Guidelines Influencing Practice Introduction* and *Chapter Three: Role and Function of the Vocational Evaluator*. In order to acquaint the new reader (or reacquaint those readers who know him) with Dr. Thomas, a short interview by Matt McClanahan introduces this work.

We extend a great big VECAP THANKS to Vanessa Perry, who served as the managing editor for the last three years. She is now Dr. Perry and on faculty at the University of Arizona. We wish her luck and continued success.

We extend a big VECAP WELCOME to Qu'Nesha S. Hinton, who is joining us as managing editor. She is currently a PhD student in the Department of Addictions and Rehabilitation Studies at East Carolina University.

We are proud of this edition and welcome your responses or comments.

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# VOCATIONAL EVALUATION AND CAREER ASSESSMENT PROFESSIONALS JOURNAL

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# **Job Search Turnaround and the Long Term Unemployed: an Exploratory Framework and a Contingency Model**

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## **Abstract**

While the study of human work and the workplace occupies a central place in scientific thought and discourse, less attention is given to the unemployment phenomenon and far less to the long term unemployment experience. Focusing on the latter, this paper offers a conceptual framework and a contingency model with moderators believed to influence the long term unemployment-job search-reemployment relationship. We offer a set of propositions that lends itself to empirical testing, and we discuss a multi-level interventional model that carries implications for vocational evaluation and career assessment practitioners working with the unemployed and particularly the long term unemployed population.

**Keywords:** career assessment; job loss; long term unemployment; job search; workforce development.

## **Job Search Turnaround and the Long Term Unemployed: An Exploratory Framework and a Contingency Model**

The U.S. Department of Labor estimated the jobless rate to stand at 5.5 percent in March of 2015. While that rate continues to decline, long term unemployment level remains at a historically high rate (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2015). A common measure used by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) defines a long term unemployed person as an individual who experienced a job separation lasting twenty-seven weeks or more. The BLS (2015) reported that as of February 2015 close to 6 million Americans fall within the long term unemployment definition. About one third of this group, or 1.8 million Americans, have been out of work for a year or more (BLS, 2015). Earlier data suggested that the number of long term unemployed reached over 6.5 million in early 2010, nearing 44 percent of the total unemployed (Katz, 2010).

Long term unemployment carries profound social implications for individuals and their communities and bears negatively on the United States economy as a whole. The negative impact of job loss on individuals' health, financial distress, obsolescence of skills, depleted social network, mortality rate, and precautionary savings and welfare are well documented (Carlier et al., 2013; Krusell, Mukoyama, Sahin, & Smith, 2009). For the economy, long term unemployment may accelerate the declining labor force participation rate, which is a key driver of economic growth. In 2012 the participation rate stood at 63.6%, a 30-year low. Declining further, that rate stands today at 62.7%, a 36-year low (BLS, 2015). Given the magnitude and

persistence of long term unemployment in recent years, some observers concluded that it is not likely to diminish with improved market conditions (DeLong & Summers, 2012). Furthermore, even with improved market conditions, as labor demand grows in a recovery, employers tend to turn first to workers with shorter unemployment spells, thus leaving the unemployed pool increasingly composed of long term job seekers who are socially stigmatized and whose work skills keep eroding (Aaronson, Mazumder, & Schechter, 2010).

Interventions designed to assist long term unemployed individuals (LTU) in securing a job before structural barriers take root are thus warranted and ought to be considered by public policy makers and by workforce development administrators. Yet, only scant data is available about programs that put people, and especially the LTU, back to work (General Accountability Office [GAO], 2011). A GAO audit, made public in 2011, reported that of the 49 federal job training programs administered by nine agencies and costing about \$14.5 billion in 2010, only five have had impact studies aimed at establishing rates of improvement in employment outcomes. The audit determined that the effect the five programs had on employment outcomes was only negligibly positive, inconclusive, or restricted to short term impact (GAO, 2011). As surprising is the paucity of intervention programs designed for the LTU at state and community levels. Katz (2010) mentioned in testimony to Congress only a few community-based sectoral employment programs that help connect job seekers with local and regional employers. Similarly, a recent survey of directors of career service providers across the United States, conducted by one of the authors of this paper, found no documented programs that specifically targeted this population.

Research has employed a host of general psychology and career theories in an effort to study numerous unemployment related constructs such as a sense of coherence following job loss (Vastamaki, Moser, & Paul, 2009), job-search persistence (Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorenson, 2005), self-efficacy (Albion, Fernie, & Burton, 2005), locus of control (Creed, Hood, & Leung, 2012; van Hooft & Crossley, 2008), and self-determination and job flexibility (Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Lens, & De Witte, 2010), yet only partial attention was given by this stream of studies to the LTU and to contingency variables capable of influencing the job loss-job search and reemployment relationship.

Notable theories that were developed for the specific study of the effects of unemployment on an individual's well-being such as Jahoda's latent deprivation theory (1981), Fryer's agency theory (1995), and Warr's vitamin model (1987), while providing sound insights into psychological processes that highlight the individual's state of well-being following job loss, have ignored the experience of job search among the LTU, and the efforts long term job seekers expend while job searching.

Jahoda's latent deprivation theory (1981) was developed within the context of unemployment and suggested that job loss deprived the unemployed of manifest and latent benefits. Aside from the loss of income, individuals are deprived of time structure, social contact, activity, identity, and shared purpose. Such benefit deprivation negatively affects a person's mental health and well-being. In contrast to Jahoda's deprivation theory, Fryer (1995) advanced an agency theory and argued that the five stated latent benefits of employment are often claimed to be costs of employment rather than benefits. In other words, a bad job carries the risk of

affecting individuals' mental health more than no job or unemployment per se. Warr's (1987) Vitamin model is concerned with the effects of certain environmental features on mental health. Warr suggested that nine features of the environment have a curvilinear effect on mental health, similar to the way vitamins influence physical health. Among the features that work provides are the opportunity for control, skill use, generated goals, money, physical security, and social position. Without suggesting that employment is necessarily better than unemployment in terms of these nine features, the model leads one to conclude that unlike the state of unemployment, the work experience tends to provide these features at beneficial levels.

An assessment of the three theories yields little insight, if any, into the LTU experience and into the dynamics of the job-search process per se. The apparent partial empirical curiosity with long term unemployment, and the little interest manifested by the paucity of community-based initiatives and intervention programs, may well be attributed to a dominant ideological view that perceives long term unemployment to be an individual matter rather than a larger social issue. It is even more likely that researchers and practitioners alike do not see a significant difference between short and long term unemployment and thus see no need for separate programs and studies targeting these respective populations.

The premise of this paper is that while research on unemployment can be applied to short term as well as long term unemployment, members of the latter group deserve special attention given their greater vulnerability in terms of resource deficit and well-being. The U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee's report on LTU (U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, 2013) concluded that as job searches drag on, skills atrophy and social networks fade, thus making it more difficult for this particular population to find work. The report further argues that, given the rapid pace of technological advancements and shifts in high-growth sectors of the economy, the location of, and the knowledge and skills required for tomorrow's jobs are less likely to be found among the LTU. In an effort to address some of the identified gaps, we propose a conceptual framework along with a contingency model believed to influence the long term unemployment-job search-reemployment relationship. We offer a set of propositions that lends itself to empirical testing, and discuss an intervention model with implications for vocational evaluation and career assessment practitioners who seek to target the long term job seeker.

### **A Conceptual Framework**

An integrative framework structured around variables capable of influencing the long term unemployment-job search-reemployment relationship could assist practitioners in customizing programs that target the most vulnerable sub-groups among long term job seekers. The latter appears critical given that the impact of unemployment on individuals is neither uniform nor universal (Creed & Moore, 2006). Our framework contains five building blocks: (1) resource scarcity, (2) time as an infliction point, (3) job-search attitudes, (4) government incentives, and (5) community-based job search programs. Treated as moderators capable of influencing the unemployment-job search relationship, these building blocks are represented in a contingency model along with their hypothesized relationships.

## Building Blocks

**Resource scarcity.** The personal resources of the long term unemployed, their human capital, social capital, and psychological capital are perceived as ability enhancers when coping with life stressors such as a job loss. Personal resources also play an important role in reducing the adverse effects of job-search setbacks, as well as in broadening access to employment opportunities, and thus as possible determinants of one's employability (De Cuyper, Makikangas, Kinnunen, Mauno, & De Witte, 2012; Drenzo & Greenhaus, 2011). Human capital refers to education and learned skills and past and present work experience; social capital refers to social relationships that can confer influence and provide access to external resources and information; and psychological capital refers to one's sense of mastery and control critical and conducive to decision making.

Hobfoll's theory of conservation of resources (Hobfoll, 1989) appears particularly relevant for understanding the potential role resources can play during unemployment. Hobfoll defines resources as valued factors that meet survival needs of the individual (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993). This theory posits that individuals flourish when they gain, maintain, and conserve resources. The addition of resources means enhanced survival capabilities. On one hand, more resources allow the individual to compartmentalize stress following loss and setbacks, augment resiliency, and accommodate, withstand, and overcome threats. On the other hand, stressful or traumatic events consume such resources and increase sensitivity to subsequent stressors.

Applied to the LTU, job loss triggers heightened stresses that negatively affect resources, as well as some personal characteristics, with the passing of time (e.g., work skills). Studies of the unemployed support the important role human capital skills and social networks play in employment probability (Nordlund, 2011; Thomsen, 2009) and highlight their impact on the ways the unemployed search for work (Lindsay, 2005). Human capital provides the will, knowledge, and skill necessary for interaction with search activities, and social capital provides the strength and range of social networks available (Selwyn, 2002). Social capital, in particular, is found to provide emotional support, self-affirmation, and information. In addition, it emerged as a mediator of unemployment effects and as a coping mechanism during the stress process that follows a job loss (Cassidy, 2001; Creed & Moore, 2006).

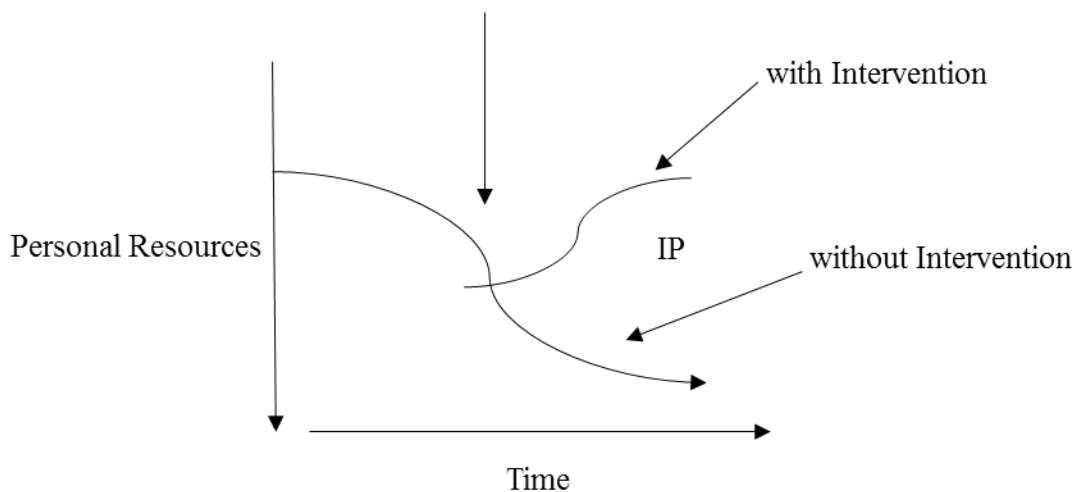
The literature that views the construct of employability as an essential resource in the aftermath of a job loss is of particular relevance. De Cuyper, et al. (2012) view employability (e.g., ease of finding another job) as a personal resource and a buffer in relation to job insecurity. Workers may find security in the belief that their skill set is transferable across jobs and organizational boundaries. The perception of a "boundaryless" career may mitigate the negative strain of potential job loss among individuals who perceive themselves as highly employable (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; De Cuyper et al., 2012; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006).

While a job loss can elicit a passive reaction that can negatively affect the sense of employability and lead to a defensive posture that uses more resources (Berntson, Sverke, & Naswall, 2010), a job loss may also prompt an active response in the form of job search activities and additional training aimed at enhancing employability (Drenzo & Greenhaus, 2011). Under

both views, however, these defense mechanisms are energy consuming and thus resource consuming as well (Staufenbiel & Konig, 2010).

**Infliction point.** Given the finite nature of resources, the longer a person is unemployed the greater the probability of personal resources being consumed with the passing of time. The probable impact of time on the human, social, and psychological capital of the LTU cannot be ignored, and should be carefully considered when evaluating individual resource inventory and sustainability, and when considering career assessment and intervention. Figure 1 depicts a possible relationship between these variables.

We apply the concept of “Infliction Point” (IP) to highlight the critical importance of time and use the term somewhat loosely to illustrate a possible association between time and personal resources. Adopted in other works (Burgelman & Grove, 1996), we believe the concept has heuristic value that can be applied to the dynamics of long term unemployment and to the potential role of professional intervention in influencing the “IP trajectory” of the unemployed. Some degree of resource loss, beyond the sheer loss of income, characterizes a person’s experiences during varying periods of unemployment. As individual resources are invested and consumed in job search, they reach a point beyond which further drops in human, social, and psychological capital may undermine the individual’s welfare and well-being. The unemployed’s coping resources reach the Infliction Point. Ideally, reemployment and/or professional intervention should occur prior to a person reaching their IP.



*Figure 1.* Individual infliction point (IP)

Time as a critical variable has attracted some attention in unemployment research (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Phillips, 1994; Borgen & Norman, 1987; Rowley & Feather, 1987; van Hoye & Lootens, 2013). Findings suggest that time plays an important role during the job search experience (Barber, et al., 1994; Sharone, 2007; Wanberg, Zhu, & van Hooft, 2010). Barber et al., (1994), for instance, focused on changes in the dynamics of search behaviors that occur with the passing of time. Resembling a funneling pattern, job searchers use strategies involving sequences of various behaviors at different times—searching broadly first and

engaging in a more narrow and in-depth exploration later. Stress and frustration during the search effort causes searchers to expand, contract, or change search activities altogether.

Borgen & Norman (1987), studied the evolution of psychological reactions during the job search experience. Using their “roller coaster” model of the emotional cycle associated with unemployment (Amundson & Borgen, 1982), the authors argue that the initial reaction phase, a job loss grieving process, is comparable to the grieving stages suggested by Kubler-Ross (1969), representing a significant emotional loss. Toward the end of the grieving cycle, unemployed individuals experience an acceptance phase recognizing that the job is gone and a job search should commence. This second phase begins with much enthusiasm but hits stagnation as repeated rejections piles up.

Sharone (2007), likewise, found periods of boost and bust that characterize job seekers with the passing of time; namely, an initial phase of energetic engagement and a burst of activity devoted to the task of job searching, and a second phase characterized by self-blame as confidence in job search strategy erodes with reoccurring employer rejection over time.

Given the shifts in emotions and cognitions, and the individual’s reactions to unemployment with the passing of time, pursuing intervention options that range from fine-tuning job search practices to renewing self-confidence and augmenting resources appears critical for the unemployed, and are particularly warranted in the case of the long term unemployed (Borgen & Norman, 1987; Fineman, 1983).

Practitioners, therefore, need to aim at reinforcing the individual’s personal resource inventory, thereby assisting in changing the possible trajectory of decline and reversing its direction toward personal sustainability, adaptation, and growth.

Support for the progress-effort link, within the context of job search behavior, is reported by some works. Wanberg et al. (2010) reported a negative association between daily job search progress and job search effort in a sample of job seekers. The recorded job search progress on a given day was followed by a reduced job search effort the following day. Other works also suggested that job searches appear to begin with an employment goal in mind that tended to follow with self-regulating actions (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001; LaHuis, 2005).

**Attitudes.** The impact of attitudes on job search intentions and behavior occupies a central place in several works (Georgiou, Nikolaou, Tomprou, & Rafailidou, 2012; Lopez-Kidwell, Grosser, Dineen, & Borgatti, 2013; van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009; Wanberg et al., 2010). At the heart of this stream of research lie social cognitive theory and its two related perspectives: self-regulation theory and the theory of planned behavior. Self-regulation theory posits that individuals adjust their effort based on their perceived progress toward an established goal. Specifically, individuals reduce their effort when they perceive that they are doing well but increase their effort in the face of poor progress (Carver, 2006).

A second perspective is the theory of planned behavior (TPB). TPB asserts that behavior is explained by a person’s intention (Ajzen, 1991). Antecedents of the latter are the person’s attitude toward the behavior (e.g., favorable or unfavorable appraisal of the behavior), the

subjective norm (e.g., social pressure from significant others relative to the behavior), and the perceived behavioral control (e.g., perceived difficulty in performing the behavior).

Applied to unemployment, TPB suggests that a positive assessment of self-performance of a particular behavior (e.g., job search) refers to a belief that job search, as a proposed “preventive behavior,” reduces the vulnerability to the negative outcomes of unemployment. This in turn leads others (e.g., family members, friends) to view such behavior positively, and the individual’s perceived control over it increases, given cognitive traits such as locus of control and other well studied dispositions of job seekers.

Among such dispositions are a proactive personality (Brown, Cober, Kane, Levy, & Shalhoop, 2006), self-esteem (Caplan, Vinokur, Price, & van Ryn, 1989), goal orientation (van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009), job search self-efficacy and clarity (Georgiou et al., 2012), job search intensity (Wanberg et al., 2005), and action-state orientation (Moynihan, Roehling, LePine, & Boswell, 2003). Positive changes in attitudinal variation were associated with a significant reduction in psychological impacts of unemployment, as well as with an increase in job search activity and improved employment prospects (Vastamaki et al., 2009; Albion et al., 2005).

In the context of our framework, attitudes concern the individual’s perception of unemployment in terms of the degree of stability of unemployment as a stressful event. Borrowing from attribution theory, two attribution dimensions that have been used in related studies are stability and controllability of the perceived event (Mone, McKinley, & Barker, 1998). These dimensions suggest an association between control and attitudes. An internal self-control reflects the individual’s perception of unemployment as being controllable by one’s capacity to engage in active search routines, thus viewing one’s state of unemployment as a temporary rather than a permanent phase, and positively affecting the individual’s search routine.

Such perceived subjective feelings of control appear to be important correlates of employment probability (Creed et al, 2012; McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005). Job seeking activities after job loss were significantly related to one’s locus of control; reduced control coupled with exhausted resources negatively affected job seeking behavior (Creed et al., 2012; van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009). Therefore, we perceive attitudes to be a subjective and a distinct construct linked to individuals’ job search activities and reemployment.

**External government incentives.** Unemployment insurance and other incentives in the form of governmental benefit payments are critical in the aftermath of a job loss. Yet, such incentives are reported to be positively linked to the duration of unemployment. External incentives coupled with a weak labor demand were found to be the prime drivers of the dramatic rise in the average duration of unemployment since 2009 (Aaronson et al., 2010). This research suggested that government extensions in unemployment benefits emerged as a significant factor that exacerbated such rise. The latter was extended in mid-2008 from 26 weeks to 39 weeks with the passage of the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Act (EUC).

While some early researchers estimated the average duration of unemployment to moderately rise by up to 0.2 weeks for each additional week of extended benefits (Katz & Meyer, 1990), Aaronson et al. (2010) reported a steeper and accelerated estimate, and calculated

that the extension of benefits since 2008 accounted for as much as 3.1 weeks of the 12-week increase in average duration of unemployment, or up to 25 percent of the total increase since the passage of the EUC Act. The negative impact of external incentives on job search was likewise reported by studies outside the United States. (McDonald & Marston, 2008). Overall, research suggests that unemployment benefit receipt undermines labor market participation and job search activities (Lazear, 2013; McDonald & Marston, 2008).

**Community-based job search programs.** Research conducted in Europe suggests that counseling and job search assistance are the most effective forms of intervention with the unemployed (Thomsen, 2009; Kluve, 2006). Research evidence also suggests that community-based programs prove to be more effective and less expensive in providing such interventions compared with other traditional training programs (Blundell, Costa-Dias, Meghir, & Van Reenen, 2004).

Given their advantage in terms of proximity, agile structure, and responsiveness, community-based organizations appear to be better positioned to counsel the unemployed. Katz (2010) calls for the creation of a structural market for community-based providers of counseling and advice that target the unemployed. Those providers are envisioned to supplement poorly accessible and fragmented governmental services; thus the importance of community-based interventions, in terms of access and content, cannot be understated.

For the unemployed, an expedient response is critical in light of crucial inflection points, but so is the nature of the intervention itself given the emergence of various empirically grounded themes. Among the emerging themes to be considered are: (a) a targeted investment in personal control and efficacy through cognitive re-framing and behavior modification, thereby strengthening resiliency of individuals with low self-efficacy and locus of control, and increasing job search behavior (Creed et al., 2012); (b) a targeted investment in the reorientation of the individual's work value system, by reducing job-seekers extrinsic work value orientation in favor of an intrinsic one, thereby increasing individual's job-flexibility (Broeck et al., 2010); (c) a targeted investment in the unemployed who express employment intentions, thereby supporting active job search behavior (Chadi, 2010); (d) a targeted investment in competence and social network, thereby positively affecting job seeking behavior and increased employment probability (Thomsen, 2009).

Guided by such empirically grounded themes, Figure 2 depicts a multi-level intervention model that can assist vocational evaluation and career assessment practitioners who deal with the LTU. Building on Noer's (1993) work, we applied a multi-level intervention typology to a matrix model that incorporates both an intervention depth with the breadth of issues to be dealt with. This model highlights the importance of identifying and dealing with the host of resource deficits and behaviors that are expressed, suppressed, and acted out following job loss.



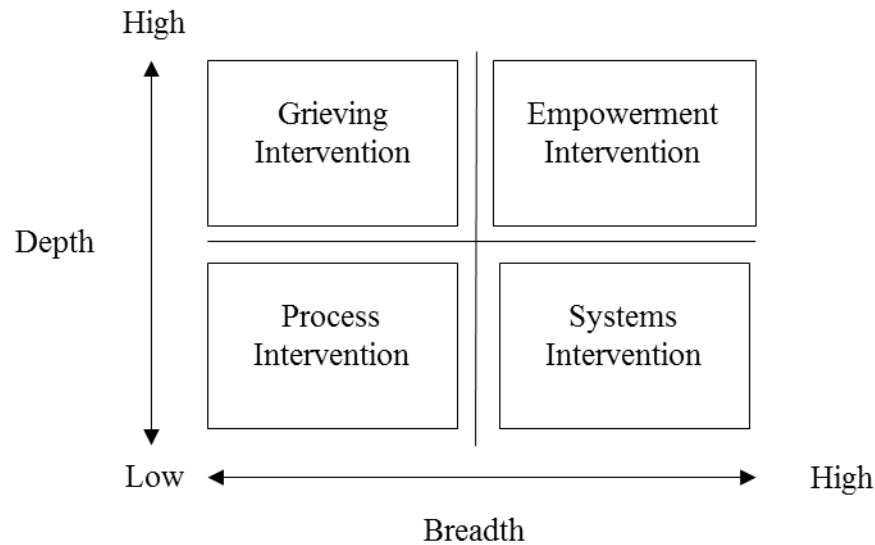


Figure 2. Multi-level intervention model

Grieving intervention focuses narrowly but with great depth on the most pressing active-destructive behaviors, such as anger and aggression. This intervention seeks to ensure that latent and salient destructive behaviors don't intensify with time. Process intervention targets secondary symptoms and behaviors that are passive-destructive, such as apathy and depression. Process intervention, using less breadth and depth, seeks to minimize risks, and its ultimate goal is to help move the unemployed toward fuller functioning. Empowerment intervention leverages the unemployed repertoire of resources aimed at regaining a sense of control. With great depth and intensity, this intervention helps the unemployed rebuild diminished resources, explore setback inoculation options, and prepare for a job search turnaround. Finally, systems intervention, educational and informational driven, seeks to disseminate vital information about other support systems that can further assist the unemployed. This intervention level, broad in scope but limited in depth and intensity, informs individuals of other existing community-based resources.

Notwithstanding the model's integrative qualities, Figure 2 also presents some challenges for vocational evaluation and career assessment practitioners. First, managing a multilevel intervention process, at times simultaneously, is a complex task to consider. Second, determining the breadth of issues to be captured and the depth with which they ought to be approached is another critical task to be addressed. Third, in light of agency resource constraints, prioritizing targets for intervention requires careful evaluation and assessment of at-risk groups. A targeted investment in unemployed individuals with employment intentions may be one initial option to explore. Fourth, the level of program customization within areas of individual resource scarcity should also dictate who should be targeted first by an intervention.

Ultimately, the choice is primarily between those unemployed who are most vulnerable in terms of coping resource deficit, and those who are actively engaged in job search activities, thus being more motivated to re-enter the labor force (Chadi, 2010). An effective action is for

career assessment professionals to first target sub-groups that carry higher promise, such as the active job seekers and those with strong employment intentions.

### A Contingency Model and Propositions

The preceding discussion revolved around building blocks considered relevant for our conceptual framework and proposed model as depicted in Figure 3. Clarifying the nature of the relationship between our model’s independent and dependent variables is essential. We assert that the transition from unemployment (an independent variable) to a reemployment status (a dependent variable) is mediated by the individual’s job search intensity (i.e., the frequency and scope of engagement in job search behaviors) and is influenced by several personal and situational variables (moderators) that formed our theoretical framework. A display of the complete set of the proposed relationships is shown in Figure 3.

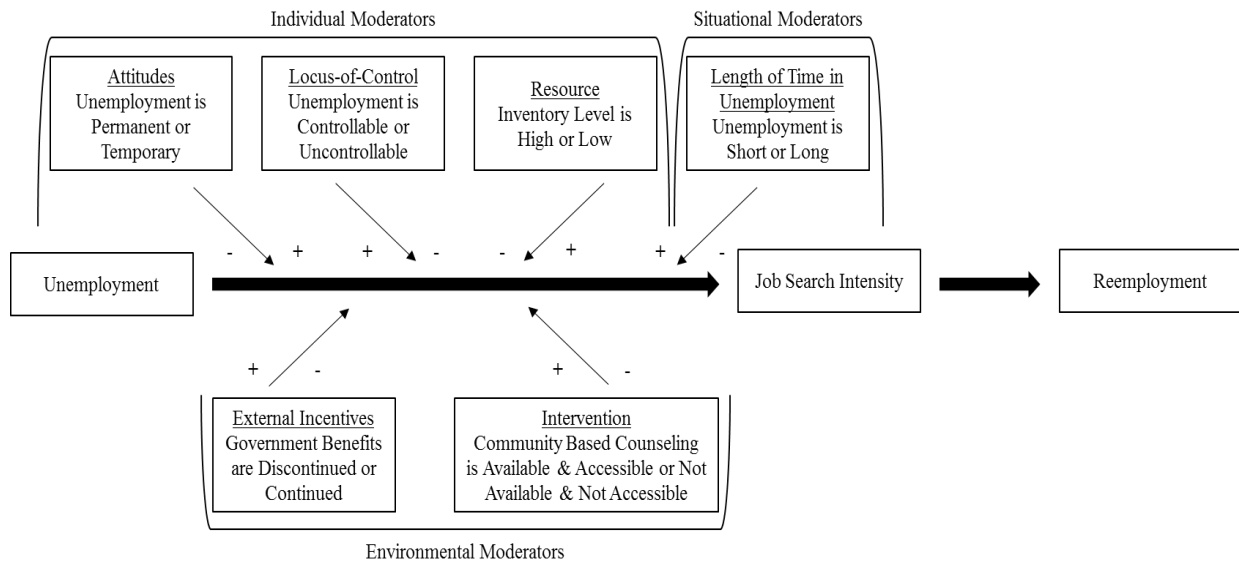


Figure 3. Moderators of long term unemployment – job search – reemployment relationship. The signs indicate the direction of the proposed moderating effects.

Specifically, we perceive the relationship between unemployment duration as a continuous independent variable, and re-employment outcome as a dependent dummy variable, to be mediated by job search intensity. The model’s five building blocks discussed earlier—personal resources, time, attitudes, access to community-based job search programs, and government incentives—are considered moderators that influence the relationship between unemployment and job search intensity. Integral to the framework and model, we propose several propositions amenable to testing.

### Propositions

The level of personal resources is a variable that moderates the long term unemployment-job search relationship. Human, social, and psychological capitals are assets that can be used to engage in job search routines in the aftermath of a job separation. Low level of resources translates to less available assets to fund the cost of search initiatives under conditions of

prolonged job loss. As discussed earlier, the evidence suggests that resource consumption occurs regardless of whether the individual adopts a passive defensive posture following job loss, which in turn uses more resources, or whether they adopt an active response in the form of job search during the unemployment period (Berntson et al., 2010; Drenzo & Greenhaus, 2011; Staufenbiel & Konig, 2010). Consequently, a diminishing resource level may lead to increased sensitivity to subsequent stressors (Hobfoll, 1989), and reinforces a fixed mindset viewing job loss and job search setbacks as personal failures (Dweck, 2012). Our argument leads to our first proposition:

*Proposition 1.* The greater the resource scarcity, the more negative the effect of long term unemployment on job search intensity and employment outcome.

We further propose that the length of time since separation from work is a variable that moderates the long term unemployment-job search intensity relationship. Research on job loss points to common symptoms and behaviors that tend to intensify with the passing of time, such as social isolation, withdrawal, apathy, and depression (Noer, 1993; Finney, 2009). The probability of the LTU experiencing such common symptoms is high. Social isolation and withdrawal reduce the benefits inherent in one's social capital, and depression and apathy negatively affect one's psychological capital. A prolonged unemployment erodes one's work skills and experience, making them increasingly obsolete, thus, negatively affecting their human capital (U.S. Congress, Joint Economic Committee, 2013). Our assertion leads to a second proposition:

*Proposition 2.* The longer the time since job separation, the more negative the effect of long term unemployment on job search intensity and employment outcome.

We further propose that the individual's perceptions of events in the aftermath of a job loss can influence subsequent actions. Theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and attribution theory (Fiske & Taylor, 1991) posit that individuals' perceptions of events, rather than the actual events, determine to a large extent subsequent behavior. Attribution theory maintains that search routines are affected when outcomes are unexpected, significant, and do not meet a desired objective (Kiesler & Sproull, 1982). Perceiving unemployment as a stable, permanent event rather than a temporary phase may negatively affect one's search routines given the unexpected and significant nature of unemployment and the goal disruption inherent in such event. Moreover, the subjective perception that the state of unemployment is controllable and can be shaped by one's capacity to engage in search routines is critical. The evidence suggests that an internal locus of control moderates the relationship between long term unemployment and job search intentions and, ultimately, reemployment (Creed & Bartrum, 2008; van Hooft & Crossley, 2008). These arguments lead to our third and fourth propositions:

*Proposition 3.* The stronger the views of unemployment as being a permanent phase, the more negative the effect of long term unemployment on job search intensity and employment outcome.

*Proposition 4.* The greater the level of internal locus of control, the greater the mitigating of negative effects of long term unemployment on job search intensity and employment outcome.

We further argue that two additional variables—governmental incentives and the availability of effective community-based job search programs—constitute external moderators that influence the long term unemployed-job search intensity-reemployment relationship. While the evidence suggests that the availability and continuation of government incentives introduces disincentives for job searches (Lazear, 2013), it also suggests that the availability of effective practitioner intervention enhances the quality and intensity of job searches, provides inoculation against job search setbacks, and increases employment outcomes (Caplan et al., 1989; Wanberg et al., 2010). Our final propositions:

*Proposition 5.* The longer external incentives continue, the more negative the effect of unemployment on job search intensity and employment outcome.

*Proposition 6.* The greater the accessibility to community-based career programs, the more positive the effect of unemployment intervention on job search intensity and employment outcome.

## Discussion

Unemployment is a dysfunctional state that strikes a vast number of individuals. Of those, more than 40 percent are defined as LTU by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2015). Whether frictional (due to occupational change), or cyclical (due to business cycle fluctuations), or structural (due to technology and automation), long term unemployment bears negatively on the unemployed and the U.S. economy. It subjects the long term job seeker to economic and social costs and exacerbates the rate of decline in labor force participation, thus curtailing a driving force of economic growth.

For vocational evaluation and career assessment practitioners, the growth in the ranks of this population presents both challenges and opportunities. Left unattended, a polarized labor market may emerge with a growing class of alienated and displaced workers whose skills erode with the passing of time. On the other hand, a paradigm shift in the employment environment that is underway offers new opportunities. The shift mandates the abandonment of the job-for-life contract for a short term contingency driven one, and calls for a reorientation of employee-employer relationships as well as for the transfer of responsibility for career development and growth to the individual.

Job security in today's emerging "boundaryless" career, it is argued, resides in one's portable skills set and is no longer the sole responsibility of employers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). These developments should encourage career assessment and vocational evaluation professionals to take a lead and experiment with low cost, innovative, and responsive programs tailored to the LTU and driven by a new mind-set.

Our proposed conceptual framework and models, depicted in Figures 2 and 3, are but a modest effort in support of new responsive programs. The framework's building blocks and proposed relationships lend themselves to testing and to further study that should enhance career assessment practitioners' understanding of the effects of long term unemployment on individuals. Acting as stimuli for active engagement in job search routines, the moderators

identified represent a theoretical first step and a possible explanation for why individuals with similar qualifications, and who face comparable conditions of unemployment, may respond in different ways to job loss and job search setbacks that necessitate customized interventions.

Practitioners' intervention should encourage and leverage active responses in the aftermath of a job loss by investing in career development competencies. Augmenting human and social capital is critical, but so are investments in psychological capital via inoculation against loss and setback. Having LTU anticipate situations in which setbacks or relapses are likely is but a first step; exploring alternative methods for overcoming dysfunctional responses to job loss is critical, and so is the acquisition of skills that are needed to cope with setbacks (Caplan et al., 1989).

Future research designs should not ignore the differentiated impact of conditions that enhance or reduce job search routines in response to long term unemployment. Further exploration needs to address potential limitations that are relevant for both practitioners and researchers. For instance, adding practical potency to some of the proposed conceptual mapping tools in our article requires the development of related metrics. Absent such quantifying measures, infliction points along with resource inventory audits and intervention themes while conceptually meaningful will remain wanting in terms of practical applicability. As such, this particular area presents both a challenge and an opportunity to consider by vocational evaluation and career assessment practitioners.

An additional direction for future research would be to move beyond a mere support for the proposed framework. Lending credence to our model is a necessary step, but empirical research ought to consider other effects. Individual differences, for instance, deserve a closer look beyond one's locus of control orientation or attitudes since the existence of individual differences may further moderate some variables in our model. Moreover, since it is likely that some or all of the variables in the model may affect the long term unemployment-job search intensity and reemployment relationship simultaneously, a multivariate research design that tests a set of moderators within the same sample seems appropriate. Finally, interactions within and amongst the moderators themselves should be considered. Some of our assumptions, such as the possible interaction between time and resource scarcity, must be further explored.

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## **Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals Test Review**

**Test Review:** Military-to-Career Transition Inventory (MCTI)

**Reviewers:** Tiara T. Tate & Qu'Nesha S. Hinton

**Institutional Affiliation:** East Carolina University

**Author:** John J. Liptak, EdD

**Publisher:** 2012 JIST Works

**Contact/Purchase:** Place order at the JIST website: <http://jist.emcp.com/military-to-career-transition-inventory.html> or via telephone 1-800-328-1452

**Cost:** As of January 2016, Packages of 25 are \$60.95.

**Examiner Qualifications:** No credentials required.

**Training:** No training required.

### **Background Information**

#### **Purpose**

The Military-to-Career Transition Inventory (MCTI) measures the level of readiness of active duty service members and recent veterans who have to transition from military to civilian careers. The inventory identifies six skill areas: (1) transition management; (2) knowledge of veterans benefits; (3) career transitions; (4) job search basics; (5) writing resumes and cover letters; and (6) interviewing and negotiating. The MCTI is designed to be an easy self-scored and self-interpreted inventory, providing immediate results (Liptak, 2012).

#### **Development**

Published in 2012, Liptak's research found that service members experienced difficulty finding jobs and were ill-prepared to reenter a civilian lifestyle. The scales are based on a review of the literature and grounded in surveys of veterans, employers, government officials, and educators. This inventory is only available in English, and was written for individuals at or above an 8th grade reading level based on the Flesch-Kincaid scale (Liptak, 2012).

#### **Standardization**

The MCTI is a standardized self-administered inventory. The six scales identify the most critical skills needed for military personnel transitioning into the civilian world. A pool of items was designed and tested for use of language, clarity, style, and to eliminate references to gender, race, culture, or ethnic origin. Additionally, employment counseling experts reviewed the items for inclusion. The inventory was administered to 25 military personnel from all branches of service and who were in their own transitions. The data collected was then measured for split-

half reliability and re-reviewed for use. The reliability of the MCTI was determined by split-half and test-retest correlations. The split-half correlations on the six scales ranged from .82 to .96, identifying high internal consistency. One month later, the sample population was retested with correlations ranging from .87 to .91, reinforcing high reliability. The MCTI uses means and standard deviations as evidence of validity. Performance of individuals or groups was evaluated in terms of mean scores on each scale whether they fall in the low range (10 to 19), average range (20 to 30), or high range (31 to 40; Liptak, 2012).

### **Practical Evaluation**

The MCTI is presented in an all-inclusive fourfold booklet. This inventory can be administered to individuals or groups, or it can be self-administered. Respondents should complete the descriptive data on the front of the booklet and follow along as the administrator reads the “About the MCTI” section. Directions are simple and easy to understand. The inventory has 60 items divided into six categories containing 10 statements each, and takes approximately 20 to 25 minutes to complete. The booklet has five steps: (1) taking the MCTI; (2) scoring directions; (3) profiling scores; (4) interpreting scores; and (5) developing an action plan. Respondents are asked to read each item on the inventory and rate how well the statement describes themselves based on a four-point scale ranging from “Very Much Like Me (4)” to “Not Like Me (1).” Responses are marked on the booklet. Items are chosen by circling the number of the response on the line to the right of the statement. Examples of statements in each skill set include, *I feel stress about my separation from the military; I have asked for individual relocation planning; I have organized my job search campaign; I have an effective civilian resume; and I am familiar with the three types of potential interviews.* Scores in each category are totaled and then compared to whether they fall in the low, average, or high range. Certain topics such as rapport building, accommodations, and start/discontinue rules are not addressed in the user’s guide.

### **Accommodations**

Modifications or accommodations to administration may be required for service members with service-connected disabilities; for example, sustained or exacerbated physical or psychological trauma during combat (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013). Common service-connected disabilities include: vision and hearing impairments, cognitive limitations (e.g., traumatic brain injury), and motor movement limitations (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], n.d.). The user’s guide does not discuss administration to respondents with disabilities.

### **Summary Evaluation**

#### **Limitations**

The MCTI may be a useful tool for recent veterans with the caveat that there is no indication of accommodations for service members who are disabled. Also the four-page layout may be difficult to navigate. The booklet involves the recording and transferring of responses to different sections, which requires respondents to maneuver between various pages.

The MCTI does not assess for contextual (e.g., housing, transportation) or psychosocial factors (e.g., stress, motivation) that may affect job readiness. Furthermore, there is scant research on barrier inventories with service members who have returned stateside for two or more years. The MCTI standardization sample is small (N=25) and does not identify what stage of transition the services members were in. A larger sample size will provide information that is more accurate. Lastly, while evaluated for cultural bias, the inventory is only available in English, making the MCTI culturally limited to English speaking populations.

### **Strengths**

The MCTI contains face validity in that the inventory appears to be a valid measure of service members' readiness to transition into the civilian workforce. Not only does the inventory assess respondents' current knowledge within the most critical transition categories needed for successful employment, the MCTI also brings awareness of specific areas of weakness that suggests further assesment. This instrument is not used to determine pathology; however, it can be utilized as a pre-discharge therapeutic tool. Implementing this tool is a cost efficient way to improve unemployment rates and alleviate the perturbation of change. Early screening identifies additional supports and services needed and assists with reducing barriers for a successful transition. Respondents are able to use this knowledge and target areas that need further development, and create an action plan to accomplish them.

### **Reviewers Comments**

The MCTI has been available for public use since 2012, making it relatively new. Currently, there is limited evidence based research supporting the efficacy of its use. Overall, we agree the MCTI assess the critical needs of veterans transitioning into civilian occupations. This assessment is based on self-reported information that indicates readiness (strengths and weakness) in the six categories. The instructions to administer, score, and interpret are clearly stated and simple to follow.

The MCTI is one of many tools available to aid veterans' transtion successfully to civilian careers. This inventory is designed to identify areas needing further skill devleopment and should be used in conjunction with vocational and rehabilitative services to enhance employability. Literature that is available to use with the MCTI, such as the *Military-to-Civilian Career Transition Guide* (Farley, 2010), provides service members a step-by-step checklist, worksheets, online resources, and helpful advice for reintegrating into a civilian lifestyle.

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### **Author Note**

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## Interview of Dr. Stephen W. Thomas

### **Who is the intended audience for this book?**

*The book is designed for people who have an interest in engaging in vocational evaluation. This is what you might call an introductory text for students, but I also think it's intended for people who are going to be evaluators who really weren't trained in that area.*

### **In this book you describe vocational evaluation and how it contributes to successful employment outcomes for clients. You also explain the professional role of evaluators, and effective tools and techniques for practice. What was the driving force behind writing this book?**

*There just wasn't what I would call a definitive text for an introductory course in vocational evaluation out there. I can't think of any other source where you can go to look this stuff up. There are a lot of rehabilitation evaluation books, but nothing for vocational evaluation. So I think that's a good reason for this book to be developed and marketed.*

### **As an expert in the field of vocational evaluation, where do you see the profession headed and what tool or technique would you like to see emphasized in the future?**

*The market (for vocational evaluation) is still very much alive, well, and needed. I think functional assessment is going to play a very important role because you can involve family members, teachers, counselors, or other individuals who have actually seen the (client) perform things. As evaluators, observing behavior is such a big part of what we do and you can't always give someone a psychometric test and definitively say, "The behavior I saw there is going to be consistent with what would happen in a work environment." Psychometric testing is important, but getting really good behavioral information can be a longer-term process. If you're going to work with people with severe disabilities and make recommendations that maximize their potential, functional assessment is something to consider.*

### **What advice do you have for individuals beginning a new career in vocational evaluation?**

*I would recommend that they join a professional organization like VECAP or VEWAA, of which Dr. Sligar and I have been members.*

### **And you would also recommend that they read this book?**

*Yes, that's right.*

**Interviewer Note: Matthew L. McClanahan, MEd, CRC**, has worked as a vocational rehabilitation counselor and as a journalist. He is currently enrolled in the Rehabilitation Counseling and Administration PhD program at East Carolina University.

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**Author Biography: Dr. Stephen W. Thomas**

**Dean Emeritus**

**ECU College of Allied Health Sciences**

At his retirement on October 31, 2014, Thomas was bestowed the title of the first Dean Emeritus at East Carolina University (ECU) by Chancellor Steve Ballard. On July 1, 2003, he became dean of the ECU College of Allied Health Sciences in the Division of Health Sciences. He also served as the interim dean of the College beginning April 16, 2001. Prior to his interim dean position, Thomas was department chair, professor, and a vocational evaluation graduate program director within the Department of Addictions and Rehabilitation Studies at ECU. Prior to his arrival at ECU in 1980, he directed the vocational evaluation graduate program in the Department of Rehabilitation at the University of Arizona, served as a development specialist and instructor in the Materials Development Center, Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute at the University of Wisconsin–Stout, and as a vocational evaluator in the rehabilitation center at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, beginning in 1970.

Within his profession, Thomas has served as president of both the Arizona and North Carolina Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Associations and of the national VEWAA. He is also the recipient of the Paul R. Hoffman award from VEWAA. In addition, Thomas served as the chair of the Commission on Certification of Work Adjustment and Vocational Evaluation Specialists.

A Houston, Texas native, he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology from Texas Christian University, and Master's and Doctoral degrees in rehabilitation from the University of Arizona. He and his wife, Melodie, have two married daughters (Darby and Morgan), identical twin granddaughters, a grandson, and a granddaughter.

May 2015

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The following text by Dr. Stephen Thomas is an authorized reprint of *Vocational Evaluation and Assessment: Philosophy and Practice* presented as published in 1997.

## **Vocational Evaluation and Assessment: Philosophy and Practice**

### **CHAPTER TWO**

#### **Standards and Professional Guidelines Influencing Practice Introduction**

Nationally accepted accreditation guidelines, certification standards, and codes of ethics have been established to regulate the practice of vocational evaluation and assessment and ensure the quality of service delivery. Unfortunately, not all states mandate, or even encourage, that evaluation providers abide by these professional standards, guidelines, and codes, and, therefore, the service is not always provided as it should. As a result, it is the reputation of evaluation, and not that of the untrained or irresponsible evaluator, that suffers, often resulting in a reduction or elimination of the service. Evaluation works when performed competently, responsibly, and ethically.

Four different sets of vocational evaluation standards, guidelines, and codes for effective practice will be reviewed including: CARF Standards; the CCWAVES Knowledge and Performance Areas; the CCWAVES Code of Ethics; and, the Interdisciplinary Council's competencies. These standards and guidelines will change over time and professionals interested in current information should contact the appropriate organization for their newest accreditation or certification manuals (refer to the Resources appendix for addresses and telephone numbers).

#### **CARF Accreditation Standards**

CARF (formerly known as the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) was founded in 1966 as a national accrediting organization. Its mission is to "...serve as the preeminent standards-setting and accrediting body, promoting and advocating for the delivery of quality rehabilitation services" (CARF, 1996, p. v, modified 1997). Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services is one of many different program areas that is covered by CARF accreditation. Approximately 855 vocational evaluation programs throughout the United States currently hold full three-year accreditation.

All eight Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services standards must be met along with standards in other sections of the manual to ensure that the evaluation program is well managed, and that quality services are provided. Following is a summary of the eight standards and guidelines that are contained in the 1996 Standards Manual and Interpretive Guidelines for Employment and Community Support Services (CARF, 1996, pp. 59-3.A - 64-3.A). Standards are reviewed and modified annually.

The first standard stresses the need to help consumers make informed vocational choices by: 1) collecting local labor market and specific job information (e.g., wages, training and job requirements, availability); and, 2) evaluating personal skills, abilities, behaviors, and other attributes that relate to employment.

The second standard addresses the need to develop, continuously review, and modify (when necessary) an individualized written vocational evaluation plan with the person served, based on what is known and what is additionally needed. Specific content of the plan is detailed in the standards.

The third standard describes the need for a written vocational evaluation report. The standards outline report content and emphasize the need for recommendations to address training/education opportunities, career preparation, resources and supports, and employment.

The fourth standard requires that services be provided by, or under the supervision of, a qualified “vocational evaluator” or “vocational specialist.” Guidelines are provided that specify the work experience, education, and/or certification or licensure needed for the two positions.

The fifth standard identifies and profiles the three techniques used to evaluate persons served. They include work samples, situational assessment, and psychological testing.

The sixth standard lists 20 information areas, including achievement, supports, interests, learning style, and transferable skills, that should be assessed through Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services.

The seventh standard describes the need to consider reasonable accommodation and assistive technology throughout the evaluation process. The guidelines provide examples of areas of technology to be considered (e.g., adapted tools and switches, computer access, mobility).

The eighth and final standard reviews the content of a functional capacities assessment report, to include strengths, limitations, and strategies to overcome limitations (e.g., supports and accommodations).

### **CCWAVES Certification Standards**

Whereas CARF standards are designed for the accreditation of vocational evaluation programs and services, national standards are also available for the certification of vocational evaluators. Through the efforts of the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA), the Commission on Certification of Work Adjustment and Vocational Evaluation Specialists (CCWAVES) was established as an independent Commission in 1981. Individuals can become a Certified Vocational Evaluator (CVE) by meeting a combination of appropriate education and work experience, and passing an examination. Certification is valid for a five-year period and can be renewed through 80 contact (clock) hours of acceptable continuing education (e.g., courses, workshops) or through re-examination, every five years. (Editor’s note: CCWAVES closed in 2008 and no new applications are accepted. Certificants can maintain certification through the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification).

Both certification and certification maintenance must be directly related to a specified combination of the following fourteen Knowledge and Performance Area Definitions (CCWAVES, 1996, pp. 15-18).

**Foundations of Vocational Evaluation.** The philosophy and process of vocational evaluation involves knowledge of the basic philosophies, practices, and processes of vocational evaluation as applied to various disability populations in public and private settings. Such knowledge includes an understanding of specific instruments and clinical skills needed to provide meaningful services. Knowledge in this area also encompasses an understanding of legislation and how various legislation affects vocational evaluation services. The remaining Knowledge and Performance areas described below are examples of the types of practices and processes that are a part of the philosophy of vocational evaluation.

Occupational information includes job codes, definitions, industrial classifications, worker functions, classification of instructional program (CIP) codes, worker traits, physical demands, working conditions, worker-learner interests and temperaments and other labor market and training information as found in standard sources such as the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (and supplements), the Guide to Occupational Exploration, the Occupational Outlook Handbook, and various computerized databases. Related sources of labor market and training information deal with such subjects as the demand for workers, trends, training requirements, career ladders, geographical/industrial areas where jobs/training are located and prevailing local wages. Occupational information also involves identifying vocational training programs, curricula, agencies and resources that may provide services.

Functional aspects of disability refer to a body of knowledge about disabilities and their effect on work-related and independent living functions, together with recommendations for services that might enhance an individual's overall functional capacity or the community's inclusion of the individual.

**Planning.** Individualized vocational evaluation planning is an organized process and set of techniques for developing and writing a plan to structure individual evaluations. Specific skills include planning and the ability to integrate information from consumers and referral sources with other relevant data. This planning is an on-going process. All planning is conducted involving the individual to the greatest extent possible.

Vocational interviewing involves the use of methods for obtaining or providing information about an individual's vocational, educational, legal, medical, psychological, economic, and social background, primarily for the purpose of vocational exploration, transferrable skills assessment, and vocational evaluation planning. Attitudes, values and interests pertaining to these areas are also considered relevant. The skills required include interviewing, an understanding of personality and human development, and the ability to analyze and interpret verbal and non-verbal behavior.

Report development and communication of results and recommendations involve knowledge of the process for developing both written vocational evaluation reports (including format and writing style) and oral communication skills. The required skills include the ability to gather, analyze, integrate, synthesize, and interpret results with other relevant data in order to provide useful recommendations for employment, training, accommodations, adjustment, and other vocational services. The ability to orally communicate and interpret relevant evaluation

data effectively in meetings with clients and their families as well as in expert testimony situations is also important.

Modification and accommodation are techniques that require knowledge and application employment support services. Techniques include methods for overcoming architectural barriers and specific knowledge of a consumer's functional limitations and abilities as they relate to modification and accommodation needs in any life setting.

**Standardized Testing.** General knowledge of testing and measurement principles and the use of standardized instruments is needed to provide a quantitative assessment of an individual's cognitive, psychomotor, and affective traits. The required skills include selection, administration, modification, scoring, and interpretation as well as a basic understanding of the theory of tests and measurements (validity, reliability, scoring, and norms).

**Assessment Techniques.** The area of work samples and systems requires knowledge about the theory and practical application of locally and commercially developed work samples, work sample systems, and vocational evaluation systems. The skills involved include development, selection, and proper use of work samples and systems, as well as the ability to interpret both objective and subjective information derived from the use of the work samples and systems.

Functional skills assessment is a process of determining an individual's ability to function independently in various life situations, including transition from school to adult living. Functional skills encompass basic skills needed to work or function in community-based settings (e.g., daily living activities, money management, community mobility, ability to use local resources and supports needed in home, community, and work environments).

Behavioral observation is the systematic process for observing, recording, and interpreting work-related behaviors. It requires knowledge about various observational and recording techniques and sources of error that might influence the interpretation of data. Skills include the ability to schedule, observe, record, and interpret work-related behavior in a variety of settings using various instruments/techniques.

### **CCWAVES Code of Ethics**

In 1965, the American Association of Work Evaluators was formed, and in 1967, it dissolved into the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association when VEWAA became a professional division of the National Rehabilitation Association. As described in its current mission statement:

VEWAA as an organization is deeply committed to promoting the continued development and advancement of the professions of vocational evaluation and work adjustment by assuring that individual members will be afforded maximum opportunities for training, education, and professional support as they provide the best quality of service (VEWAA Brochure, 1997.)

The first Code of Ethics for vocational evaluators was developed by VEWAA, and along with a variety of other professional codes (Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification, American Psychological Association, American Counseling Association, National Board for Counselor Certification, Certified Insurance Rehabilitation Specialists), served as the model for the CCWAVES Code of Ethics. Since VEWAA is a voluntary organization, and membership is not required for practice, its Code of Ethics is not legally binding. In addition, it provided only basic ethical principles, and further descriptive detail was needed so that it could be applied to professional practice.

Given that CCWAVES is a professional certifying body, it needs a Code of Ethics to regulate the practice of individuals holding the CVE designation. If the Code is violated, CCWAVES can investigate the alleged violation and take corrective action if necessary, which could include the suspension or even revocation of an individual's certification, as described in the Code's Guidelines and Procedures for Processing Ethical Complaints. The CCWAVES Code of Ethics consists of eight Tenets (or general principles). The second level consists of Standards, which further define the Tenets. The third and final level, Guidelines, provides a practical and applied understanding of the Standards, for determining compliance. An example of a Tenet (labeled 5), Standard (labeled 5.2), and Guideline (labeled 5.2.3) is as follows:

### **Tenet 5 – Confidentiality**

Professionals shall respect the confidentiality of information obtained from clients in the course of their work.

5.2 Professionals will safeguard the maintenance, storage, and disposal of client records so unauthorized persons cannot gain access to them.

5.2.3 Professionals will not forward any confidential information to another person, agency or potential employers without the written permission of the client, the client's legal guardian or the referral source and without considering the recipient's "need to know," unless ordered to do so by a court of law.  
(CCWAVES, nd, pp. 6-7)

In the interest of brevity, only the eight Tenets from the CCWAVES Code of Ethics will be given (CCWAVES, nd, pp. 2-10)

## **CCWAVES CODE OF ETHICS (In Summary)**

### **Tenet 1: Moral and Ethical Standards**

Professionals shall behave in a moral and ethical manner in the conduct of their professional roles.

### **Tenet 2: Legal Standards**

Vocational Evaluators and Work Adjustment Professionals shall abide by local, state, and federal laws and statutes in the conduct of their professions, maintaining

the integrity of the Code of Ethics and avoiding any behavior which would cause harm to others.

### **Tenet 3: Professional-Client Relationship**

Professionals shall respect the dignity and worth of all individuals with whom they work. The primary ethical obligation of professionals is to their clients, or those persons who are directly receiving their services. Professionals will endeavor at all times to protect each client's welfare and to place the client's interest above their own.

### **Tenet 4: Professional Relationships**

Inter-professional cooperative relationships shall be seen as vital in achieving optimum benefits for clients. Professionals shall respect the value and roles of professionals and staff in other disciplines and act with integrity in their relationships with professional colleagues, organizations, agencies, referral sources, and related disciplines.

### **Tenet 5: Confidentiality**

Professionals shall respect the confidentiality of information obtained from clients in the course of their work.

### **Tenet 6: Professional Competency**

Professionals shall provide services to clients which demonstrate competence of critical knowledge and performance areas, as established by CCWAVES, and ensure that all services are necessary and appropriate.

### **Tenet 7: Research and Publication**

Professionals shall volunteer to engage in or support research and publication activities that will benefit service delivery.

### **Tenet 8: Consultation**

Professionals shall adhere to recognized professional practices in pricing, promoting and contracting their services.

## **The Interdisciplinary Council's Competencies**

As stated in their Position Paper, "The Interdisciplinary Council on Vocational Evaluation and Assessment is a national coalition which represents the issues and concerns of personnel involved in vocational evaluation and assessment across a variety of settings and disciplines" (Smith, Lombard, Neubert, Leconte, Rothenbacher, and Sitlington, 1995. p. 1). It is composed of 11 professional organizations that have a common interest in competent and

uniform practice. To that end, the Position Paper contains the following list of Competencies (Smith et al., 1995. pp. 3-4).

The Interdisciplinary Council strongly recommends that all individuals providing vocational evaluation and assessment services demonstrate competency or successful completion of training in competencies related to each of the guiding principles identified in this document. They include the following:

### **COMPETENCIES**

1. The ability to select, adopt, and/or develop methods, and approaches which are useful in determining an individual's attributes, abilities, and needs.
2. The ability to utilize alternative methods and approaches which can be used to cross validate information generated from other assessment sources.
3. The ability to conduct formal and/or informal behavioral observation strategies which can be integrated in a variety of settings.
4. The ability to collect and interpret ongoing data that can be utilized to promote successful transition through critical junctures of the individual's career development.
5. The ability to interpret vocational evaluation and assessment data in a manner that contributes to the total service delivery system. Vocational evaluation and assessment team members must be capable of synthesizing and reporting formal and informal data in a manner that promotes appropriate planning, appropriate goal setting, and coordination of needed support services.
6. The ability to function as an affective participant on an interdisciplinary team.
7. The ability to select, implement and integrate evaluation and assessment approaches which are current, valid, reliable, and grounded in career, vocational and work contexts.

Along with VEWAA and CCWAVES there are a number of professional organizations that maintain divisions or special interest groups for vocational evaluation and assessment. A sample of these organizations includes:

National Association of Vocational Assessment in Education, of the American Vocational Association – Special Needs Division

Division on Vocational Evaluation/Career Assessment, of the Professional Association of Rehabilitation Counselors

Division on Career Development and Transition, of the Council for Exceptional Children

National Association of Vocational Education Special Needs Personnel, of the American Vocational Association – Special Needs Division

National Association of School Psychologists

National Association of Disability Evaluating Professionals National Association of Rehabilitation Professionals in the Private Sector

It is important to remember that vocational evaluation is both a profession and a discipline. There are states where practicing evaluators must possess appropriate education, training, or credentials (e.g., CVE) in order to provide services to schools, vocational rehabilitation, or worker compensation clients. However, there are state agencies, community-based facilities, secondary schools, institutions, employment programs and private practices that do not place restrictions on who is hired or assigned to provide evaluations. Therefore, it is the responsibility of qualified vocational evaluators and their professional and certification associations, to ensure that ethical principles and accepted practices (as specified above) are applied in the delivery of evaluation services by professionals in other disciplines, and by all agencies and institutions that offer the service (Thomas, 1994). If an evaluator, supervisor, or unit fails to function in an ethical or competent manner, the problem should be brought to their attention by sharing the appropriate code or guideline, and corrective action taken. Incompetent practice will lead to devaluation of the field; and it is consumers who will suffer the most at the hands of untrained or inexperienced evaluators.

### **Conclusion**

A rich variety of standards and professional guidelines is available to ensure the competent and ethical delivery of vocational evaluation services. Accreditation is available to agencies, facilities, and institutions that offer evaluation. In addition, certification is available to qualified vocational evaluators who desire professional recognition or need to meet certification requirements for practice in a particular state, secondary school, or community-based facility. Ethical codes have been created to protect consumers and referral sources from unethical and incompetent service providers. Professional associations and divisions that specialize in vocational evaluation and assessment provide practitioners with opportunities to become more involved in the field and to upgrade their skills. It is the responsibility of qualified evaluators and recognized organizations to ensure that, no matter who offers evaluation services, they are delivered in an ethical and professional manner, so that consumers can gain accurate and useful information about their abilities, needs, and opportunities.

### **References**

CARF (1996). Standards manual and interpretive guidelines for employment and community support services. Tucson, AZ: author.

CCWAVES (1996). Standards and procedures manual for certification in vocational evaluation. Washington, DC: Commission on Certification of Work Adjustment and Vocational Evaluation Specialists.

Smith, F., Lombard, R., Neubert, D., Leconte, P., Rothenbacher, C., & Sitlington, P. (1995). The position paper of the interdisciplinary council on vocational evaluation and assessment. Colorado Springs: Interdisciplinary Council on Vocational Evaluation and Assessment.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Role and Function of the Vocational Evaluator

#### Introduction

The duties of vocational evaluators are determined, in part, by a number of factors, such as: the types and numbers of individuals being served, the goals of the evaluation, length and instrumentation of the evaluation, and the skill and training of the evaluator. However, there are fundamental tasks that all evaluators perform, or should be prepared to perform in special situations. A number of regional and national studies are available that detail the role and function of the vocational evaluator. Results from some of the earlier investigations (Coffey, 1978; Egerman & Gilbert, 1969; Gannaway & Sink, 1979; Pruitt, 1986; Sink & Porter, 1978) have marked similarities to each other and to more recent surveys. It is these more recent studies that will be reviewed in this chapter.

#### Role and Function Studies

Several surveys noted the similarities in job function between school-based evaluators and evaluators in rehabilitation settings (Ellsworth, 1977, in Pruitt, 1986), and between the vocational evaluator and the rehabilitation counselor (Gannaway & Sink, 1979; Ruben & Porter, 1979; Sink & Porter, 1978; Vocational Evaluation Project Final Report, 1975). Although many job tasks were similar to varying degrees, significant differences were found in the amount of time spent in each activity, and the level of importance assigned to that duty as a result of the overall role of the worker. For example, both rehabilitation counselors and vocational evaluators conduct file reviews. Counselors review files to determine eligibility for, and planning of, **rehabilitation services**. Evaluators review files to determine appropriateness for, and planning of, **vocational evaluation services**. Although the goal for the consumer is the same in both settings (e. g., stable and satisfying employment) the **processes of** rehabilitation and vocational evaluation are different.

In a major role and function study, 2,500 vocational evaluator competencies were identified and narrowed down to 175 primary competencies (Coffey, 1978; Coffey, Hansen, Menz, & Coker, 1978). The resulting survey (using a 5-point Likert-type scale) was administered to vocational evaluation practitioners, students, and educators in eight states in the southeast. This survey was later used to conduct a national survey (Sigmon, Couch, & Halpin, 1987) and the results compared to the Coffey (1978) data to determine consistency of responses. High competency correlations between the regional and national sample groups suggested consensus, and allowed standards to be set for evaluator certification based on a nationally recognized and uniform set of competencies.

In a 1985 national survey, responses from 106 practicing vocational evaluators on a 39-item survey were analyzed from three different settings: rehabilitation (agency, facility); school (secondary schools, community colleges); private sector (self-employed, private rehabilitation/evaluation; Thomas, 1986). One section of the survey requested information on the respondents' three most *time consuming* job duties, the three most important job duties, and the

three most difficult duties. In all settings, report writing and evaluation (administration and scoring instruments) was rated as the most time consuming, most important, and most difficult job duties. Other high ratings under level of difficulty and importance were scheduling, marketing, and staffing, particularly in the rehabilitation and school settings. Budgeting received a high difficulty rating under the school category. Case management received a high difficulty rating under the rehabilitation category. The private category had high difficulty and importance ratings for administration of instruments, and a high difficulty rating for evaluation planning.

Leahy and Wright (1988) analyzed role and function data from surveys of 270 vocational evaluators employed in public (48%), nonprofit facilities (29%), and private for-profit (22%) sectors across the country. The Rehabilitation Skills Inventory that was used consisted of 114 competency statements (using a 5-point Likert-type scale), and item responses were grouped into 10 clusters and labeled. Six competency clusters were perceived to be at least moderately important by evaluators in their work role. In their order of importance, the six clusters include:

1. Assessment planning and interpretation
2. Vocational counseling
3. Assessment administration
4. Job analysis
5. Case management
6. Personal adjustment counseling

A final national vocational evaluator role and function study was conducted on employed vocational evaluators from four settings: Vocational Rehabilitation offices, public schools, CARF Accredited rehabilitation facilities (private nonprofit), and the private for-profit sector (Taylor, Bordieri, Crimando, & Janikowski, 1993; Taylor, Bordieri, & Lee, 1993). The Vocational Evaluator Job Task Inventory-2, consisting of 84 job task statements and using a 5-point Likert-type scale for importance, was constructed specifically for this study. Factor analysis of the 526 useable surveys resulted in the identification of six factors:

- Factor I: Vocational Counseling
- Factor II: Behavioral Observation
- Factor III: Occupational Development
- Factor IV: Standardized Assessment
- Factor V: Professionalism
- Factor VI: Case Management

Although the job tasks of vocational evaluators contained in these six factors are more similar than dissimilar across the four employment settings, several differences were noted regarding the emphasis in job function areas by setting. For example, the following four employment groups rated one or several of the factors higher in importance when compared to evaluators in the other settings (Taylor, Bordieri, & Lee, 1993, p. 152):

- Evaluators employed in private for-profit settings perceived Behavioral Observation as less important compared to those employed in public school and private nonprofit settings.

- Private for-profit evaluators rated Occupational Development as more important than evaluators in public school and state agency settings.
- Private nonprofit evaluators rated Case Management and Standardized Assessment as more important job functions than those employed in public school settings.
- Evaluators employed in public school settings perceived Professionalism as being more important compared to those employed in private nonprofit and private for-profit settings.
- Of note is that all four employment settings rated the importance of Vocational Counseling as “high” in relation to their overall job activities. Job task items that were related to work samples and situational assessment loaded on the Behavioral Observation factor. This shared characteristic is not surprising since work samples and situational assessment both rely heavily on behavioral observation.

### **Three Roles of the Vocational Evaluator**

As documented above, much has been written about the role and function of the vocational evaluator. However, beyond the daily assessment tasks are three additional roles that are essential to expanding the visibility, marketability, recognition, and social value of vocational evaluation (Sawyer, 1987; Thomas, 1994). These on-going professional roles have taken on even more importance in current rehabilitation and transition environments that promote informed choice and career development. The three roles of vocational/career expert, disability specialist, and educator, must be developed and practiced so that they become a part of the evaluator’s daily routine (Thomas, 1997). Just as the opportunities for self-determination and career development are made available to consumers of assessment services, evaluators must ensure that these same opportunities are also available to them as evolving professionals. To fully appreciate the importance of these three roles, they must be considered, and applied, within the context of culture.

### **A Cultural Perspective of Vocational Evaluation**

Condeluci (1995, 1996) provides a provocative and enlightening perspective of the feelings and attitudes held by individuals with disabilities, rehabilitation providers (which includes vocational evaluators), and society in general, regarding status and opportunity. His view is that society is made up of a unique variety of “cultures.” There are those cultures to which many people, whether by birth or choice, want to belong. They may include, ethnic cultures (e.g., African, Italian, Scottish), religious cultures (e.g., Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Hindu, or even a specific sect or church), educational cultures (e.g., being a student or alumni of a particular high school or university), work cultures (e.g., specific trade groups or professions), and social cultures (e.g., organizations, clubs, societies), to name a few.

On the other hand, there are those cultures to which individuals may not want to belong because of a negative connotation or stigma—the “disability culture” for example. With the exception of support groups, clubs, and associations that individuals with disabilities voluntarily

join for personal growth and involvement, much of society has assigned “the disabled” to a station in life offering less than equal status.

This negative perception of disability as a typically undesired culture also impacts on rehabilitation providers. When providers reveal that they work in the field of rehabilitation, it is not uncommon to hear an uninformed person say something like, “Oh how wonderful it is that we have people like **you** to work with people like **them**.” This kind of attitude places practitioners such as vocational evaluators, work adjustment specialists, and rehabilitation counselors within the disability culture as well. With a desire for equal access, individuals with disabilities want to rise out of a negatively viewed disability culture and into more respected and productive cultures in society.

Condeluci (1995, 1996), asserts that rehabilitation providers are viewed by individuals with disabilities (and society as a whole) as being a part of the disability culture. Since most individuals with disabilities want to transition out of the disability culture, it is difficult for them to turn to rehabilitation practitioners who are, themselves, regarded as being trapped in the same culture. Therefore, persons with disabilities may turn for help to professionals who are considered to be “outside” the disability culture (e.g., physicians, psychologists, allied health providers)—the place where they would prefer to be.

If the concept of the disability culture introduced by Dr. Condeluci is considered to have merit, then vocational evaluators have no other choice but to change their image on either side of that culture. It is critical that vocational evaluators be recognized as rendering a service that has value to all individuals, with and without disabilities, who are seeking career direction. Evaluators must be regarded as offering professional services to society that are used by **everyone** when needed (Leconte, 1991; McDaniel, 1986). When this occurs, the image of a rehabilitation service mired in a disability culture will be replaced by one of a valued professional discipline that most people, including persons with disabilities, will want to use to help identify and achieve their career goals.

Implementing the three roles of vocational/career expert, disability specialist, and educator are the first step in changing attitudes and opinions about the importance and value of vocational evaluation services. The remainder of this chapter will describe how each role can be used to achieve this objective.

### **The Evaluator as Vocational/Career Expert**

It is of utmost importance that consumers, referral sources, and the general public understand that evaluators are, first and foremost, “vocational and career experts.” This term may bring to mind the more well-known forensic role of the “vocational expert” found in Social Security disability and worker compensation arenas. However, the term must be recognized in a much broader context.

Vocational evaluators have the resources, skills, and responsibility to provide accurate information on a consumer's vocational and career options and directions. To do their jobs properly, evaluators need to know about local and national jobs, employment conditions, current

and future labor market trends, and the community resources available to help consumers achieve optimum employment success. Intimate knowledge of occupational information contained in specialized publications and software, and the ability to collect such data through local job analysis and labor market surveys represents the primary expertise of the evaluator. Literature on certification, accreditation, role and function studies, and graduate-level evaluator training support (and in some cases, mandate) the possession for such critical knowledge and skills (CARF, 1996; CCWAVES, 1996; Coffey, 1978; Leahy & Wright, 1988; Sigmon, Couch, & Halpin, 1987; Sink & Porter, 1978; Taylor, Bordieri, Crimando, & Janikowski, 1993; Taylor, Bordieri, & Lee, 1993; Taylor & Pell, 1993; Thomas & Sigmon, 1989). In fact, in CARF's 1996 Standards Manual and Interpretive Guidelines for Employment and Community Support Services, "Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services" falls under the category of EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

Another equally important skill documented in the above literature is the ability to use a wide variety of assessment instruments and techniques to determine interest and potential. Assessment results can be shared with consumers and used in combination with available occupational information to help them effectively choose jobs and develop career plans. Vocational evaluation provides a unique opportunity for personal exploration and decision making that is usually unavailable to most people in society who want and need help with career direction.

The skills that set vocational evaluators apart from most every other rehabilitation and transition professional are 1) their thorough knowledge of occupational information and resources, and vocationally related assessment instruments and techniques, and 2) their ability to help people match themselves with satisfying work and training, and develop appropriate career plans. This is the most important service evaluators have to offer, and it must be emphasized first and foremost in any consumer orientation and marketing activity.

Vocational evaluators do not provide rehabilitation in the strictest sense of the word. This falls within the purview of psychiatrists, orthopedists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, rehabilitation nurses, and rehabilitation counselors, to name a few. Evaluators are a part of the "vocational services" provided in settings such as rehabilitation agencies and programs, school-based transition programs, social service agencies, institutions, and employment training programs. Vocational evaluators in private practice routinely contract with a variety of rehabilitation companies and agencies to provide "vocational/career assessment" services, not "rehabilitation" services.

A vocational evaluator who provided assessment services to injured workers from a particular company started receiving calls from the company president asking for career assessments with his own high school-aged teenagers. He felt that since evaluation was so effective in return-to-work planning with his injured workers, it would serve members of his own family equally well when choosing a college major. The evaluator was also contracted to conduct job analysis on key jobs in the company in order to assess candidates in final consideration for these jobs. In the eyes of the employer, the evaluator was recognized more as a vocational/career expert rather than a rehabilitation provider.

## **The Evaluator as Disability Specialist**

A uniquely challenging aspect of the evaluator's primary role as a vocational/career expert, is the need to consider the impact of disabling conditions and impairments on employment, training, job preparation, and career development. In addition to understanding the barriers created by physical, mental and sensory disabilities, evaluators must also be sensitive to the significant social, cultural, and economic conditions and stigmas that limit human potential and opportunity.

Vocational evaluators must have a strong foundation in medical, psychosocial, and functional aspects of disability and an understanding of how they impact on employment and resource needs. Knowledge of how rehabilitation and assistive technology services can be used to optimize placement success is fundamental to the vocational evaluator. Literature on evaluator certification, accreditation standards, and curriculum guidelines for graduate-level evaluator preparation strongly support the need for these special skills (CARF, 1996; CCWAVES, 1996; Coffey, 1978; Leahy & Wright, 1988; Sigmon, Couch, & Halpin, 1987; Sink & Porter, 1978; Taylor, Bordieri, Crimando, & Janikowski, 1993; Taylor, Bordieri & Lee, 1993; Taylor & Pell, 1993; Thomas & Sigmon, 1989).

Just as the point of person-first language is to communicate that the individual is the focus of attention rather than the disability, the vocational evaluator must attend to a consumer's career needs first and then to disability issues that impact on career opportunities. Individuals with disabilities often seek services from recognized professionals first, but who also have a specialized working knowledge of their disability. For example, if a woman with quadriplegia wanted personal counseling, she would first look for a qualified professional (e.g., therapist or psychologist), and second, for one who understood or had experience with her disability. After all, she views herself as an individual first, who just happens to have a disability. Likewise, when individuals with disabilities are trying to determine a career direction, they would want to find a vocational/career expert first, but one that understood how to accommodate their impairments in training and employment. Even the state and Federal agency known as Vocational Rehabilitation places the word "vocational" first in its title, and stresses career development and employment outcome as goals for consumers of its services.

Evaluators are vocational/career experts who also happen to know about disability, and how to overcome barriers to employment. If vocational evaluators can work effectively with individuals with severe disabilities and other significant barriers to employment, then they can work with equal or better levels of success with persons who are not physically or mentally disabled. Vocational evaluation has evolved within the rehabilitation movement, but it has been successfully adapted to other environments, and this has further enhanced its viability as a desirable service. When other disciplines lay claim to evaluation and assessment, its credibility is strengthened. Evaluators do not need to work exclusively with the disability community, but should realize that this is where their services may be needed and valued most. Likewise, some individuals with disabilities may not want to seek assistance with career direction from an evaluator who works exclusively in rehabilitation, but from a professional who is perceived as having broader knowledge of employment opportunities and human potential.

One last important facet of the role of the evaluator as disability specialist, is a thorough understanding of transition, rehabilitation, and disability policy, laws, and regulations. Having an up-to-date working knowledge of state worker compensation laws, the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, to name a few, is a fundamental part of the evaluator's repertoire. Other regulations and laws, not limited to rehabilitation or disability, that guide ethical and legal practice in general areas such as communication, test use, reporting of information, and confidentiality, must be familiar to the evaluator as well. Vocational evaluators should maintain a resource library of current laws and regulations that govern practice, protect consumers' rights, and clarify responsibilities.

### **The Evaluator as Educator**

The final role of the vocational evaluator is that of "educator" (Thomas, 1994). This involves creating an awareness of the evaluators' roles as vocational/career expert and disability specialist through various forms of education (e.g., orientation, public relations, marketing, training, lobbying). Purchasers of evaluation services (e.g., rehabilitation counselors, attorneys, secondary schools, social service agencies), consumers and their families, and the general public are all recipients of this educational process. To ensure recognition and inclusion of evaluation services, evaluators must thoroughly educate legislators, authors of regulations and policies that govern the role of assessment in rehabilitation, transition, and employment programs, and Federal and state personnel who implement these regulations and policies. Other professionals (e.g., psychologists, physicians, allied health professionals, social workers, teachers) who may make referrals to evaluators or use assessment reports in planning and service delivery would profit greatly from education as well.

This concept of the rehabilitation professional as educator is not new. It has been used to describe the role of the expert as "educating" the judge during court testimony about rehabilitation or evaluation procedures and outcomes (Deutsch, 1990; Deutsch & Sawyer, 1996). For years, the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association has emphasized the need for more aggressive marketing and lobbying, but with limited success. Since many evaluators may not consider themselves good at marketing or lobbying, the idea of being an educator could be perceived as a less threatening approach to achieving the same objective.

To be seen as having social value and worth, the general public must understand how evaluation serves the rehabilitation, education, and human service sectors in our society in helping individuals with barriers to employment achieve independence, financial self-sufficiency, and improved quality of life (Nadolsky, 1969). Existing and potential referral sources need to understand how vocational evaluation and assessment can help them meet or exceed their service mandates. Through the application and orientation processes, consumers need to understand how a partnership with evaluators will help them acquire valuable information to make informed choices about desired employment and requisite career planning strategies.

Education has achieved its goal when consumers recognize how vocational evaluation and assessment can help them identify and plan for their chosen careers. When this level of

understanding is reached, consumers of rehabilitation services will know how to ask their counselors for a vocational evaluation, just as they might ask for dental, medical, legal, or psychological services when needed. More than any other market force, **consumer demand** for vocational evaluation will guarantee its growth. If at some point in time, consumers are able to choose who is on their rehabilitation team, or decide what services they want to purchase (i.e., a voucher system), then vocational evaluation must be one of those services they ask for by name.

Consumers, purchasers of services, regulation writers, and administrators are all part of the “general population,” and must be treated as such when educating them to the fact that vocational evaluation has social value and worth to everyone. To a certain extent, any service that is considered to be worthwhile markets itself. When evaluation benefits a consumer, that consumer will recommend the service to others living within the same culture or community. This “word-of-mouth” process promotes the value of the service through continued demand, with minimal marketing and advertising. An employment training program in a town of 60,000 had increasing difficulty obtaining and keeping clients. When the problem was researched, staff found that clients did not want to use a service that only placed them in entry-level, minimum wage, unskilled jobs they could find on their own. Since most of the dissatisfied consumers were from the same part of town, word got around, and other residents in the neighborhood decided not to use the service as well. Had the program made a positive impact on consumers’ lives, its community reputation, and numbers being served, might have been different. Vocational evaluation must also offer members of society what they want and need if it is to be valued and used.

### **Recommendations for Improved Recognition**

All three roles must be applied when evaluators and assessment units market their services locally. These roles must also be used nationally by VEWAA and CCWAVES to change and improve the field’s image. The role of educator is to teach the general public about the evaluator’s primary expertise as a vocational/career expert, and professional skill as a disability specialist. The following recommendations are given as strategies for improving the value and recognition of the vocational evaluator. The first two recommendations address the quality of the marketable skills of the evaluator. The last recommendation is both individual and organizational in its approach to planning and implementation.

1. Devote time and resources to obtaining further education and training that will upgrade and maintain skills in the three evaluator roles.
2. Develop and regularly update a library of resources (e.g., publications, software, assessment instruments) in occupational information, career development, disability, and appropriate laws and regulations, specific to the needs of the consumers being served.
3. Develop and implement strategies for educating the general public (including consumers and their families, purchasers of services, legislators, and writers and administrators of complementary laws and regulations) about the two primary roles of the professional vocational evaluator.



Vocational evaluation is too important and valuable a service to limit to a particular population, setting, or culture. How well the field is accepted by the disability community and society in general will depend on how well evaluators learn and apply the three roles of vocational/career expert, disability specialist, and educator.

### **Ancillary Personnel**

On a team basis, there are a number of other specialists who can contribute to the vocational evaluation and assessment process (Fourteenth Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (1987). In schools, hospitals, and community rehabilitation programs for example, the evaluation team, frequently headed by the vocational evaluator, may rely on a number of other in-house and community staff for additional assessment information. Results from the ancillary evaluations (those given during the course of the vocational evaluation) can be shared with the evaluation team through written and oral reports. The type of ancillary evaluation provided depends on the availability of qualified staff; and when it is given depends on its importance to developing or modifying the vocational evaluation plan. The information can be synthesized by the vocational evaluator into a single report, or covered in a variety of separate reports that are compiled into a report packet with an introductory summary. Some of the ancillary personnel and their assessment responsibilities include:

**Occupational Therapist** - Conduct evaluations of independent living, driving, functional capacity, and accommodation needs.

**Physical Therapist** - Conduct evaluations of functional capacity and accommodation needs.

**Physicians** - Depending on specialty, provide diagnosis and interpret functional implications and prognosis of various medical and psychiatric conditions. Nurses can also provide useful information in this area including medical care and self-care concerns.

**Psychologist** - Provide diagnosis and functional information on intelligence, personality, and neurological problems (the latter using a neuropsychologist). Interpret functional meaning of psychological reports.

**Counselor** (including Rehabilitation Counselor) - Determine personal concerns and problems that might affect evaluation outcome and future placement.

**Social Worker** - Provide information on family, living, and financial situation.

**Pharmacologist or Pharmacist** - Review current medications and determine their impact on functioning. Other medical professionals can provide a similar medication review.

**Teacher** - Provide a curriculum-based assessment of functional abilities and behavior from class.

**School Psychologist** (or Education Specialist) - Determine intellectual and achievement levels, as well as preferred learning style.

**Transition Specialist** - Provide a review of progress of school-to-work programming and its impact on placement options.

**Rehabilitation Engineer** (Assistive Technologist) - Provide an assessment of assistive technology, accommodation, and modification needs and solutions.

**Work Area Supervisor** - Conduct and provide information on situational and community-based assessments.

**Job Coach** - Conduct and provide information on situational and community-based assessments.

**Recreation Therapist** - Provide information on communication, cooperation, and team-work.

**Speech Pathologist** - Provide information on speech problems and recommend correction.

**Audiologist** - Provide information on hearing problems and recommend correction.

Vocational evaluation reports can include recommendations made by ancillary staff that are designed to improve placement outcome. If an ancillary assessment cannot be provided as a part of the vocational evaluation, then a report recommendation to offer the service at the completion of evaluation should be made.

## **Support Staff**

In units where evaluators are faced with large workloads, assistance can be provided through the use of aides and technicians (Nadolsky, 1974). The *vocational evaluation aide* **should** have at least a high school education, good communication skills, and a willingness and ability to work with the consumer population being served. Quite often, clerk-typists may be promoted to this position. Evaluation aides may provide all or part of a consumer orientation, set-up work samples, score tests and work samples placing the completed forms and profiles in the participant's working file, inventory and order test and work sample supplies, mail off tests to be computer scored elsewhere, keep the unit neat and orderly, provide or arrange transportation for consumers, make appointments for consumers when necessary, and administer some group paper and pencil tests under the supervision of the evaluator.

The **vocational evaluation technician** is a step above the aide and holds at least an Associate of Arts degree from a community college, preferably in human services. Some units may promote experienced aides or unit secretaries to this position. In addition to covering the same duties held by the aide, the technician will be trained and supervised in the administration and scoring of selected tests, work samples, and situational assessments. The technician may also supervise and observe participants at on-the-job evaluation sites in the community. It is not the

responsibility of the technician to carry an evaluation case load or write reports; this is the job of the vocational evaluator. When technicians reach this level, they should be promoted to a Vocational Evaluator I position.

### **The Professional Career Ladder**

Nadolsky (1974) presented a career ladder for evaluation aides and technicians, as well as for vocational evaluators. The career ladder for evaluators is based on increasing education and/or work experience. He recommends a career ladder beginning with the entry-level **Vocational Evaluator I** position, climbing to a Vocational Evaluator III position. The beginning Vocational Evaluator I position would require a minimum of a Bachelor's degree with a major in a human services area, and no work experience in vocational evaluation.

The **Vocational Evaluator II** position requires a Bachelor's degree in a human services area and two years' experience as a Vocational Evaluator I; or a Master's degree in Vocational Evaluation with no full-time paid work experience. A Master's degree in a related area (e.g., rehabilitation counseling, psychology, education) and one year paid full-time work experience as a vocational evaluator could also be accepted (two years are required to become a CVE). The Evaluator II would have a few more professional duties and responsibilities than the Evaluator I position. Requirements in this section are in line with the CCWAVES standards for becoming a Certified Vocational Evaluator (CVE). A Vocational Evaluator II should either possess CVE certification (preferred), or be eligible for certification.

The **Vocational Evaluator III** position is the highest clinical level and would require a Master's degree in Vocational Evaluation (preferred) with two years full-time paid work experience as a vocational evaluator; or a Master's degree in a related area, and three years full-time paid work experience as a vocational evaluator. In situations where a Master's level evaluator is not available, a Bachelor's degree in a human services area and five years full-time paid work experience as a vocational evaluator would be acceptable. CVE certification should be required. These suggested work experience requirements are higher than those recommended by Nadolsky (1974), and should be given full consideration when administrative duties are a part of the job. The Vocational Evaluator III is also considered a supervisory level and may carry an additional title such as Chief Vocational Evaluator, Senior Vocational Evaluator, Vocational Evaluation Supervisor, or Director of Vocational Evaluation. As evaluators move up this career ladder, their salary and seniority will increase.

### **Conclusion**

The role and function of the vocational evaluator has been well documented through a number of different regional and national studies. National survey research has revealed job task similarities among vocational evaluators in nonprofit and for-profit rehabilitation settings and public schools. Even similarities have been noted between the duties of vocational evaluators and rehabilitation counselors, although, there are differences in the importance and amount of time spent in these related activities. Role and function studies have been used to develop and upgrade CCWAVES' Knowledge and Performance Areas used in the certification and certification maintenance processes.

Vocational evaluators need to expand their roles beyond their daily job duties to include activities that will improve their recognition, visibility, and acceptance by society as a whole. Vocational evaluation and assessment is a service that is of value to everyone and not just to individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment. By emphasizing the role of the evaluator as vocational/career expert, disability specialist, and educator, the public at large will have a much better understanding and appreciation for how evaluation and assessment can benefit most anyone.

There are a number of other players on the vocational evaluation team who can provide important ancillary evaluations. These evaluations are to be used in developing and modifying the evaluation plan and formulating report recommendations. In addition, support staff in the form of evaluation aides and technicians will provide needed support to the busy evaluator. There is a well-defined career ladder for vocational evaluators that rewards increases in education and/or work experience with concomitant increases in salary and responsibility.

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