Abstract

Despite growing interest in post-graduate employment outcomes, limited empirical literature exists about how post-secondary career centres in Canada currently operate. Through a national survey, this study sought to describe the external conditions and the internal organizational factors that influence career centre operations, the philosophical orientations of career centres, the career services offered to various stakeholders, the measures of success that are collected and reported, and the human, financial, and space resources available to operate.

The Anglophone survey was designed using a Delphi panel of experts to ensure the comprehensiveness of the questions and tested using a pilot group of local career centre staff. Representatives from 63 career centres across Canada responded to the national survey from a variety of career centre types within university, college, or polytechnic institutional settings. The findings, which reveal the current landscape influencing career centre operations, are generally presented as descriptive statistics including means, medians, ranges, and frequencies.

Using Hackman’s (1985) theory of power and centrality in resource allocations as the lens for analysis, the researcher hoped to identify relationships between resources available to career centres and the operational choices that they make. For each of the six themes, the differences in how career centres have responded operationally across geographic region, institutional type, and career centre type were identified using chi-square and analysis of variance methods, providing a rich description of the Canadian post-secondary career centre landscape. Another contribution made by this study includes a framework for determining the centrality of non-academic units using Hackman’s (1985) theory.

The primary findings of this study are that career centres should rethink their focus on day-to-day differences and work together toward solutions for providing outstanding career development services for post-secondary students and that it is time to consider setting minimum qualifications for career development professionals in Canada.