

National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction

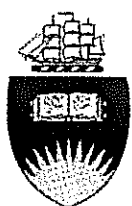
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Workforce Development and Capacity Building:

New Directions for the Alcohol & Other Drugs Field

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Major changes have occurred in the alcohol and drug field over the past 10 years or so. These changes have notably included a significant expansion in the knowledge base of the field and a concomitant shift to evidence-based practice. These developments are important for several reasons but most notably in regard to issues surrounding professional practice, workforce development and information and skills transfer. Until recently most countries have focussed on education and training as the principal strategy to upskill frontline workers in the alcohol and other drugs field.

However, it has become increasingly evident that while education is a necessary part of a workforce development strategy, it is not sufficient. To achieve a significant impact on alcohol and drug problems necessitates strategies that extend well beyond the traditional notion of 'training'. A redefinition of professional training is required which broadens the focus to one which incorporates all aspects of workforce and professional development including the full gamut of factors that impact on professional performance. These include structural factors in the workplace, information supports, work incentives (and disincentives) as well as education and training issues, and building capacity to sustain good practice.

This document outlines the contextual framework for this shift in emphasis and describes the elements of a comprehensive workforce development and capacity building model. The model is applicable to all settings, agencies and countries wishing to comprehensively address AOD issues. If meaningful advances are to be made in this increasingly complex area, then a fundamental shift is required in how we conceptualise the role of the workforce, and how we attempt to facilitate and sustain its development.

What



Why



Who



How

Who ...

is the target audience?

Workforce Development in the AOD field has a broad target audience. It extends well beyond the individual worker who might be the recipient of a training program to incorporate a wider system's perspective. The primary targets are key people such as:

Managers + Policy Makers + Funders

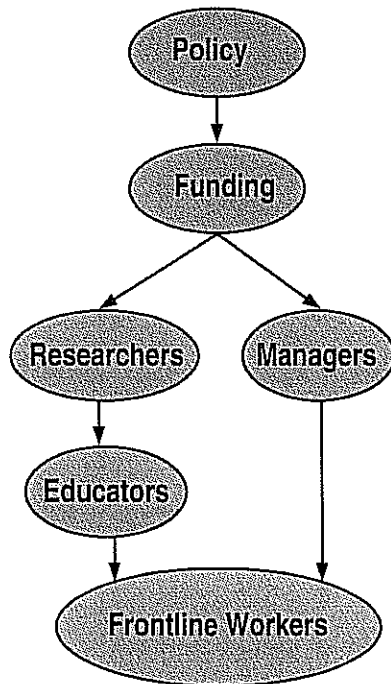
Workforce Development therefore involves people at an appropriate organisational level to influence systems change. It also involves researchers and educators. Of course, Workforce Development also includes:

- Specialist drug workers
- Other health workers, such as GPs, nurses, hospital staff, psychologists, social workers, counsellors and pharmacists
- Other human services workers, such as teachers, police, youth workers, corrective service workers and welfare workers.



Workforce Development in the AOD field involves many levels within organisations and agencies. It extends well beyond the frontline specialist or generalist worker. This broad approach serves several aims:

1. To enhance the effectiveness of organisations and agencies to respond to AOD issues
2. To facilitate collaborative, inter-disciplinary partnerships between different services
3. To address the crucial role of managers and policy makers in determining the shape and nature of the workforce
4. To equip individual frontline workers with knowledge and skills to recognise AOD problems and to deal with them appropriately.



- ➔ **Managers, policy makers, funders**
- ➔ **Researchers, educators, trainers**
- ➔ **Drug and alcohol specialists**
- ➔ **Health & human services workers**

How ...

is Workforce Development done?

A Workforce Development approach pivots on policy and structural issues. Overarching system's factors determine workforce development strategies such as recruitment, support, incentives, training and accreditation.

Recruitment Strategies

A comprehensive recruitment strategy is required to attract appropriate workers. Consideration needs to be given to the profile of the AOD workforce in any given context, geographical location, community or country. Proactive planning is pivotal in determining the profile of the AOD workforce and will heavily influence the shape of services provided. Issues to be addressed include:

- Salary awards
- Job satisfaction
- Career pathways.

Organisational Support and Incentives

Enhanced workforce performance is unlikely without appropriate support at the organisational level and beyond. These factors may include:

- Funding decisions
- Training availability
- Resource allocation
- Peer support and mentoring
- Onsite learning.

Appropriate support includes financial remuneration, availability of time to implement changes, increased access to resources (human, IT, transport, medical equipment) and opportunity for career advancement.

Training Strategies

The issue of training is also crucial. Ad hoc, one-off training experiences are insufficient. A comprehensive training strategy is an integral part of Workforce Development. It needs to address issues such as:

- Quality
- Consistency
- Standards
- Rigour

Policy decisions may determine:

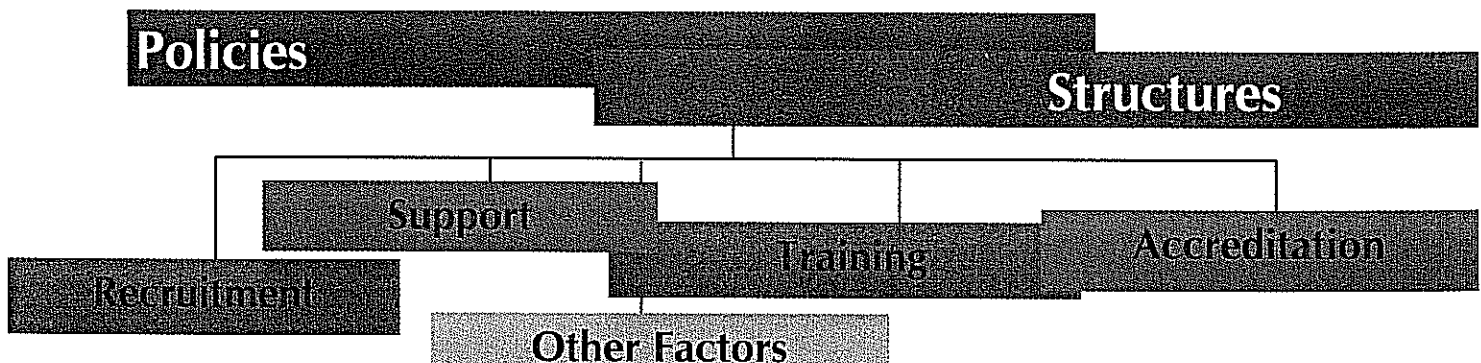
- Delivery mechanisms
- Educational methodologies
- Accreditation.
- Pedagogical issues
- Course content

Accreditation

In the AOD field, the issue of accreditation and certification is becoming increasingly important. Accreditation serves a number of purposes. It has a benchmarking role, ensuring that workers in the field have the skills and experience necessary to carry out their work. In this way, it acts to facilitate provision of the highest quality services. Accreditation can also act as an incentive to undertake additional training and ongoing professional development activities (eg CME points for general practitioners). Given the complexity of the AOD workforce, no single accreditation system will ever be appropriate. A tiered system of accreditation is required to match the variety of needs. Workers do not need to be specialists to provide an AOD service to the community.

The above is by no means an exhaustive illustration of workforce development strategies. In addition, they are overlapping, for example, funding is integral to the provision of support, recruitment and other incentives. Active promotion of the AOD field is a recruitment issue, which can be addressed through training opportunities. This overlapping hierarchy is represented in the Figure below.

Workforce Development



There are important policy and structural factors that shape Workforce Development. Some are shown here. They are not discrete entities but are overlapping and inter-related. For Workforce Development to be successful the full array of factors must be addressed.

Why ...

Workforce Development?

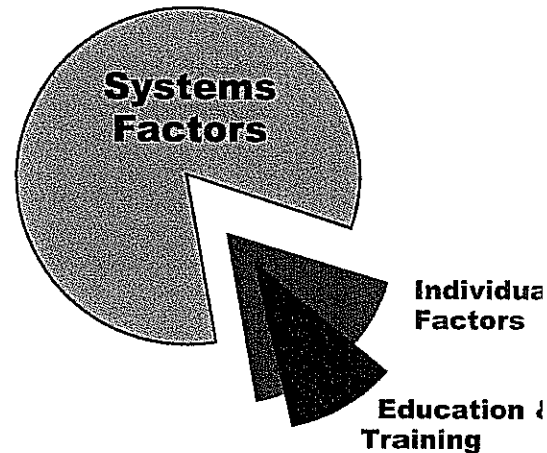
Limitations of Training

Traditionally, the focus has been much narrower than the one taken by Workforce Development. There has been a strong emphasis on factors that impact on the individual worker. The focus has been predominantly on education and training. Traditional attempts at improving the ability of the workforce to function effectively have focused on only a fraction of applicable factors (see adjacent figure). Workforce Development is still concerned with innovative and effective ways to improve the efficacy of education and training. Education and training are necessary, but not sufficient, to achieve behaviour and organisational change.

Reasons for this include:

- An individual worker's behaviour does *not* change in isolation to the system or organisation in which they operate
- There may be insufficient opportunities to practice new behaviours
- New behaviours may conflict with the workplace culture
- New behaviours may not fit in with existing workplace guidelines
- Insufficient time (or other pressures) may prevent new behaviours.

Just as changing individual client's behaviour is complex, so too is changing individual worker behaviour. Just as the behaviour of individual clients does not exist in isolation to their social, economic and geographic context, so too are workers similarly influenced by their working context and culture.

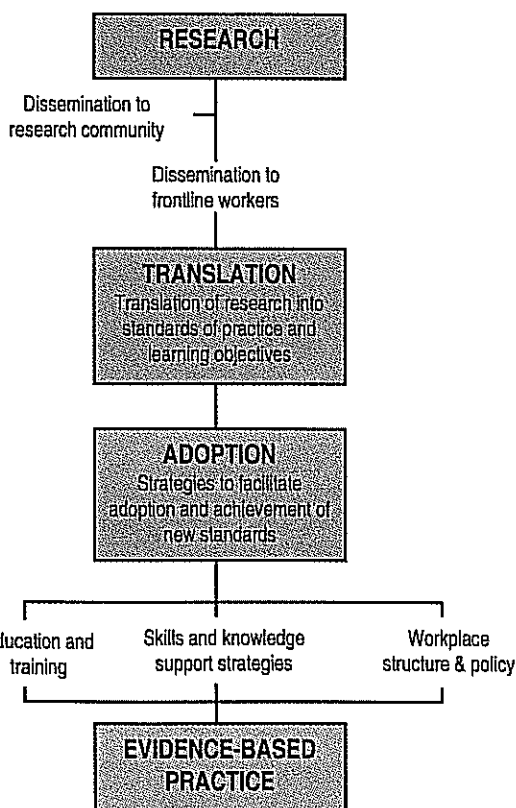


Systems

Workforce Development has a broad focus. It starts at the highest level of the systems surrounding the workforce. Traditionally, the focus has been on the individual workers and their professional development needs. This results in "nibbling at the edges" - there may be some change for the individual worker or a small group, but the workforce as a whole may be largely unaffected. In contrast, a Workforce Development approach incorporates policies, systems and structures which create and sustain the work environment. Through this approach, systemic changes are possible. Decision makers and funders who drive change represent the starting point for Workforce Development.

Knowledge Transfer

Another important focus of Workforce Development relates to the manner in which research, knowledge and skills are translated into practice. There is a wealth of information being generated in the AOD field. This rapid knowledge expansion is exacerbated by changes such as globalisation and the information technology explosion. How do workers and organisations filter, synthesise and absorb knowledge? Many education and training programs are not tailored to critique or synthesise new information, nor to assist trainees to develop the skills to do so. It is vital that workers learn to access and critically assess recent research. The shift to evidence-based practice is one response to this need, as illustrated opposite.



**Education and Training are
necessary,
but not sufficient!**

What ...

is Workforce Development?

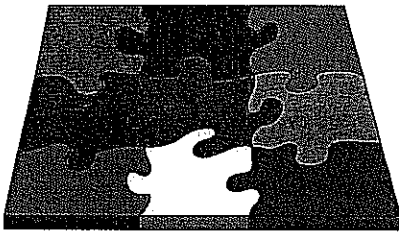
Workforce Development is a multifaceted approach which addresses the range of factors impacting on the ability of the AOD workforce to function with maximum effectiveness.

Workforce Development has a systems focus. Unlike more traditional approaches, it is broad and comprehensive, rather than just addressing education and training of individual frontline workers. The primary aim is to facilitate and sustain the AOD workforce. It does this at different levels, targeting individual, organisational and structural factors.

Level I - Systems

Workforce Development aims to improve the functioning of the entire AOD workforce through the structures and systems that shape it. While it includes activities that impact on individuals, its focus is much broader. It means creating environments and systems that support the full range of workforce development strategies. It is a top down approach that requires the support of upper levels of management and government.

Examples of systems and structural factors which impact on Workforce Development include:



- Legislation
- Policy
- Funding
- Recruitment and retention strategies
- Resources
- Support mechanisms
- Appropriate incentives/disincentives.

Level II - Current Workers

At the individual level, Workforce Development encompasses methods of improving individual functioning. It means ensuring that opportunities to develop individual skills, knowledge and attitudes are of high quality, effective and available and that there is high uptake of these opportunities and sufficient resources (eg money and time) to utilise them. This can include:

- Formal education
- Training
- Workplace training
- Mentoring
- On the job learning
- Online learning
- Best practice guidelines.

Level III - Future Workforce

Development of the workforce does not only refer to current workers. It also means ensuring a sufficient pool of skilled workers for the future. The types of factors that impact on availability of future workers include:

- Recruitment
- Availability of education and training
- Affordable and geographical access to education and training
- Intrinsic motivation for doing this type of work, eg wages, satisfaction
- Availability of funding to employ workers
- Supportive and facilitative policies.

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- ➔ **Systems approach**
 - ➔ **Top-down support**
 - ➔ **Incentives and Support**
 - ➔ **Pool of skilled workers**