

Strengthening the Capacity of Executive Directors

A Review of the Effectiveness of the Peer Learning Circle Process One Year Later.

Keith Seel, PhD (Candidate), Institute for Nonprofit Studies, Mount Royal College
Anita Angelini, MA, Bissett School of Business, Mount Royal College

Introduction

Executive Directors (EDs) are a significant asset in nonprofit organizations. They fulfill a critical leadership and/or management role and are responsible for organizing and directing employee and volunteer activities towards the completion of the organization's mission. As a group, EDs have not been a topic of research interest, unlike their CEO counterparts in the for-profit world.

In effect, EDs are the fulcrum on which balances the success or failure of an organization. Because of issues such as poor compensation and benefits, excessive demands and responsibilities, and few learning opportunities, EDs are an asset that is vulnerable and at risk for leaving an organization. Finding an approach to reduce the vulnerability of EDs is a timely undertaking. One obvious tactic along this path is to understand and improve the various dimensions of job quality and job satisfaction as lived by people in the role. Ensuring that EDs are satisfied in their role could significantly and positively impact on the capacity of an organization to address its mission with a strong, committed, and loyal employee and volunteer base. By strengthening the Executive Director role, the overall capacity and sustainability of individual organizations, and eventually the nonprofit sector, can be improved. If left unaddressed, the risk is that both leadership and management skill sets will leave the nonprofit sector for better jobs in other sectors. Should that happen, the ability of the nonprofit sector to cope with the demands placed upon it will drop dramatically.

The recent Canadian Policy Research Networks' recent paper, *Job Quality in Non-Profit Organizations* (McMullen & Schellenberg, 2003) identifies eight dimensions of job quality:

1. Extrinsic rewards
2. Hours and scheduling
3. Employment relationships
4. Organizational structure
5. Job design
6. Intrinsic rewards
7. Skill use and development
8. Health and safety

The first two dimensions – extrinsic rewards and hours and scheduling – were the focus of the work by McMullen and Schellenberg. The other dimensions were largely unexplored. In all cases, the data was generalized from the *Workplace Employee Survey* carried out by Statistics Canada.

Methodology

From January 2004 through May 2004 the initial Peer Learning Circle (PLC) ran with monthly two-hour meetings discussing one of the eight dimensions of job quality: pay and benefits, hours and scheduling, working relationships, organizational structure, job design, personal motivators, skill development, and health. Nine participants who were EDs took part in the PLC project. Each meeting was supported by two facilitators and discussion was guided by a worksheet with open ended questions specific to the

dimension of job quality being considered. The discussion questions were suggestions only and participants were not expected to answer all questions, though during the process of small group discussions nearly all the questions were covered.

The project began and concluded with a survey that probed individual perceptions of job quality and job satisfaction based on the eight job quality dimensions identified by the Canadian Policy Research Network paper on job quality in the nonprofit sector in Canada (McMullen & Schellenberg, 2003).

At the conclusion of the formal five-month project all PLC participants requested that the PLC continue until such time as the members felt that their needs had been met. As a result, the PLC ran for a further six months until January 2005. Meeting topics were identified and discussed by participants with the meetings being facilitated by the Institute for Nonprofit Studies, Mount Royal College. To understand the effect of the PLC on the job satisfaction of EDs, PLC participants were contacted in April 2005. A modified version of the pre-/post-project survey instrument was used to assess changes across the eight dimensions of job quality one year after the end date of the original research project.

Of the nine agencies that completed the original PLC project, six EDs were able to complete the follow up interview and survey in May 2005. Three EDs had left their positions: one for maternity leave, one changed careers within the nonprofit sector, and one became a senior manager (not an executive director) of another agency.

Participant Profiles

In December 2003, a total of 10 organizations were selected to become part of the Peer Learning Circle. Of that number, nine were able to participate from January through to the end of May 2004 when the project concluded. Organizations that became part of the project were contacted from a list of over 100 organizations generated with assistance from The Calgary Foundation, Volunteer Calgary, Family and Community Support Services, and reviewing the inventory of organizations making up InformCalgary – an online listing of social service agencies in Calgary.

Small organizations in terms of staff complement were requested or searched for. No other criteria were given, thus not restricting the list of potential contacts to a particular budget size, number of staff, clients served etc. When individual organizations were contacted, the project was described as an initiative focusing on small nonprofit organizations. Organizations identifying themselves as “small” in the initial contact were invited to become part of the peer learning circle. All organizations were given the option to remove themselves from the project after the first meeting if they wished. The Peer Learning Circle was made up of the following nine organizations:

	Revenues (\$)	Expenses (\$)
Accessible Housing Society (low cost housing organization)	1,433,055	1,432,754
Ghost River Rediscovery (aboriginal cultural organization)	1,273,060	1,014,275
Native Addiction Services Society (service agency for aboriginal clients)	1,200,000	1,300,000
Progressive Alternative Society of Calgary (service agency for clients with disabilities)	1,140,972	1,140,972
Federation of Calgary Communities (association of community associations)	520,000	456,000
Calgary Chinese Community Services Association (ethno-cultural service agency)	449,000	448,800
Confederation Park Seniors (service agency for seniors)	440,000	490,000
Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth (service agency for ethno-cultural youth)	357,000	345,000
Calgary Multicultural Centre (ethno-cultural service agency)	285,000	238,000

Of the nine EDs involved in the study only one had made the choice to become an Executive Director. The other eight either fell into the role by being the only person at the organization who was familiar with its operations or were asked to take on the responsibility as a temporary move that, because it was not readdressed by the board, became a permanent position.

Peer Learning Circles in the Literature

The notion of a peer learning circle goes back more than 100 years in Sweden where it is firmly entrenched in that society (Suda, 2001). More than 50% of that country’s population engages with what they call ‘study circles’ during their lifetime. Each circle consists of five to 10 people plus a trained facilitator who work through a course of study and inquiry over at least seven sessions adding up to about 20 hours. Suda found that these study circles utilize the experiences of ordinary people as a starting point for “exploring socially relevant concepts” (p. 3). The group is provided with a study framework, reading material, other resources and structured questions to work through. The circles rely on dialogue that is both democratic and participatory. The facilitator is an equal participant rather than a teacher or keeper of knowledge (Larssen, 2000). Typically the make up of the group remains constant over the period of time agreed upon beforehand (Wade & Hammick, 1999).

Central to the learning circle is the achievement of some kind of learning by the participants. Vygotsky (1978) articulated the idea that learning is socially constructed during interaction and activity with others. Research on peer learning (e.g. O’Donnell & King, 1999) has demonstrated that the interaction between members of a learning circle influences the cognitive activity and therefore, the learning that is occurring. For high-level learning to take place, the thinking and interaction within the group must also be of a high cognitive level, characterized by the exchange of ideas, information, perspectives, attitudes, and opinions. This kind of interaction generates a discussion that has thought provoking questions, explanations, speculations, justifications, inferences, hypotheses and conclusions (King, 2002). As such a learning circle is a continuous process of learning from experience through to reflection and moving to action. A learning circle helps, “people to take an active stance towards life and helps overcome the tendency to be passive towards the pressures of life and work” (McGill & Beaty, 1993, p. 11).

Giving adults greater control over what they need and want to learn and how they learn it is central to the tenets popularized by Rogers (1969) who asserts that human beings grow in capacity and need to be self-directing. This process of maturing is coupled with our psychological development where the need to take greater personal responsibility for our own lives is essential (e.g. Erickson, 1965). As mature adults, human beings need to be critical thinkers, problem-solvers, decision makers and be creative in finding solutions (Wade & Hammick, 1999). Burnard (1987) observed that while adults may accumulate a considerable amount of knowledge they may not have had any direct experience of situations about which they might have knowledge of. This difference between “knowing of” and “knowing that” is the gap that can be traversed in peer learning circles. Until an individual has encountered a situation, become engaged in it, and developed their own set of beliefs and feelings about the situation, they have not gained personal knowledge through the experience (Wade & Hammick, 1999). Experiential knowledge is subjective and unique to the individual as well as changeable over time. It combines to form a ‘framework’ (Ausubel et al, 1978) that can be built upon and expanded as life experiences are encountered and reflected upon.

Two of the most important elements of a peer learning circle are the opportunity for reflection and the presence of a skilled facilitator. Brookfield (1993) observes that more effective learning will take place when, instead of engaging in reflection while alone, adults reflect on their experiences while part of a learning circle. In the learning circle conditions for creative problem solving can be created and personal resources such as experience and knowledge can be focused on the issue under consideration by the group. Participants need to develop the skills necessary to both identify their learning needs and use the help being offered by others (Wade & Hammick, 1999). Assisting with the group process (including reflection) is a skilled facilitator. This individual encourages group members to explore, ask questions, critique their perceptions in the light of group input and thereby draw out the meaning within their own experiences (Burnard, 1987, p. 193). Critical thinking skills of learning circle participants are enhanced when the facilitator asks critically oriented questions, identifies critical incidents, supports critical analysis, and provides information requested by the group to make sense out of their experiences and perceptions.

Supporting both reflection and the facilitator is the sense of trust that develops in the learning circle over time. To enable the growth of trust within the group, all participants must come to the learning circle willing to be trustworthy and competent. The facilitator has the role of nurturing the growth of trust by establishing with the group procedural ground rules and monitoring group processes.

The Peer Learning Circle Project: A Snapshot

As we already reported (Seel & Angelini, 2004) one of the ‘assumptions’ going into the project was that EDs in the nonprofit sector are constrained by the demands of their time and on their resources, and that, for the most part, the EDs operate in relative isolation from one another. They have little connection to the very sector in which they work, unless it is directly with the client, the government agencies that regulate their activities, or the funder groups.

We also assumed that in light of the apparent isolation experienced by the EDs, bringing the group together to (a) connect and (b) discuss issues about job quality, would be fruitful. We believed that such a process could ameliorate some of the isolation while providing support and structure to the members to consider the dimensions of job quality that most affect their sense of satisfaction in the job. Therein, the peer learning circle approach was adopted.

The participants committing to the circle would be supported by a resource person (for research and administrative purposes) and a facilitator who could speak to the broader activities, research, and

guidelines impacting the sector. The themes and sequence of themes for discussion at each peer learning circle meeting, held once a month for five months, were determined by the group.

Part of each meeting process also included a verbal commitment of each participant about what ‘action’ they would take to address a particular issue within their organization. The ‘action’ was attached to the particular theme that was up for discussion at that meeting (for example, creating some structural changes following the meeting that addressed the organizational structure theme). In the subsequent meeting, the participants would again verbally summarize their success or challenge in taking the action they had committed to in the meeting previous. Through these commitments to each other, many new actions were taken with clear, tangible, significant results for the organizations. An example is included in the results section.

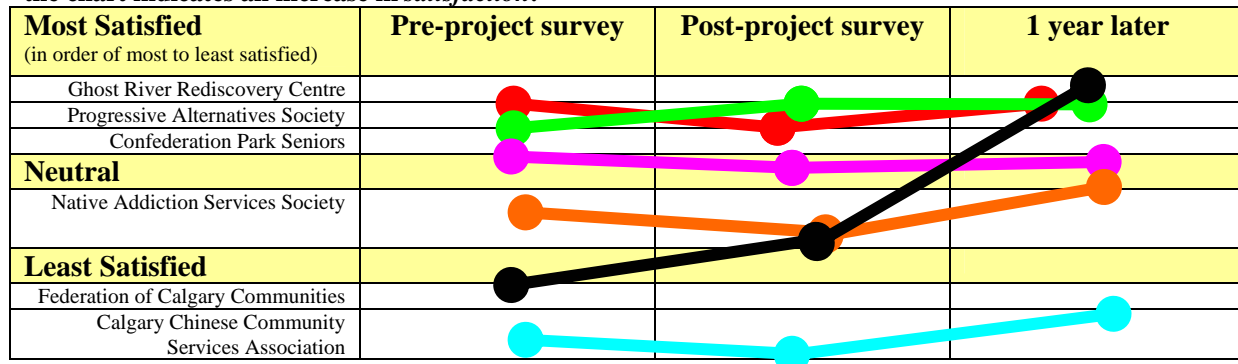
Results

Executive directors reported different degrees of satisfaction with each of the eight dimensions of job quality at the pre-project survey, post-project survey, and one year later survey checkpoints. Table 1 below shows the trend lines by agency across each of the three surveys.

Of the six agencies starting the project and able to participate one year after the conclusion of the PLC project, three EDs with high degrees of satisfaction remained satisfied throughout the initial five-month research project and continued to be satisfied one year later. One executive director who reported neutral satisfaction at the beginning of the project dropped in satisfaction by the end of the project but improved one year later. One executive director who began the project while feeling dissatisfied, had satisfaction improve over the five-month experience and gain dramatically one year later. The final executive director began the project feeling somewhat dissatisfied experienced a decrease in satisfaction by the end of the initial project but improved over initial satisfaction levels one year later.

Table 1. Satisfaction Trend Lines over the PLC Project and One Year Later

A line that dips to the bottom of the chart indicates an increase in *dissatisfaction* and while a rise to the top of the chart indicates an increase in *satisfaction*.



The specific dimensions of job quality that EDs expressed their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with varied widely between EDs and over time. The initial work of the PLC, on each of the eight dimensions of job quality, focused on having participants identify, plan, and implement incremental workplace changes in the month between PLC meetings specific to each dimension of job quality. The focus on participant action meant that EDs were working continually across the five-month period to make improvements to their job quality by addressing areas of concern such as organizational structure, pay, and job design. When gains were made in one specific dimension, other issues attached to other job quality dimensions could be addressed in turn. The dimensions of concern to EDs evolved and changed over the course of the project.

Post-project Experience

After the initial five-month project, EDs self-selected topics related to job quality to discuss. Nevertheless, for EDs job satisfaction generally continued to improve or as in one case, remain constant but at a high level. The effect of the PLC in stabilizing or improving the job satisfaction for EDs is significant when one considers that three studies have demonstrated that executive director exit rates from their jobs could be as high as 82% (Boland et al., 2005, Randall, et al., 2004, Wolfred, et al., 1999) over the next five years. Interventions such as the PLC that improve or stabilize job satisfaction should be a counter force to the anticipated turmoil of what amounts to a mass turnover at the executive level of the nonprofit sector. What our study shows is that stabilizing the executive director position does not necessarily mean paying higher salaries. Rather, as our first report demonstrated (Seel & Angelini, 2004), improving workplace conditions and the relationship with the board will likely be more influential over the long-term job quality and job satisfaction perception of EDs.

The research was also able to identify the dimensions of job quality that were most satisfying for EDs at various points during the PLC and one year after the PLC project was completed. Table 2 below outlines the most frequently mentioned dimensions of job quality that positively contributed to the executive director’s job satisfaction. The results are self-reported and come from the survey instrument delivered before the PLC, after the PLC, and one year after the PLC project. Participants could select more than one dimension of job quality.

Table 2. Dimensions most satisfying for job quality:

Pre-project (number of executive directors reporting) N=9	Post-project (number of executive directors reporting) N=9	One Year Later (number of executive directors reporting) N=6
Personal Motivators (6) Health (2) Working Relationships (2) Hours & Scheduling (1)	Personal Motivators (7) Health (3) Organizational Structure (1)	Personal Motivators (3) Working Relationships (2) Pay and Benefits (1) Skill Development (1)

Over the pre, post, and one year later surveys personal motivators, working relationships, and health were areas of consistent satisfaction for EDs. At the one year later point, many of the actions that were started during the PLC project had begun to yield results so that the number of job dimensions bringing satisfaction to EDs increased. Each of the six EDs who completed the one-year later survey process were either just as satisfied as they were when the project began in 2004, or had reported improvements to their overall levels of satisfaction.

Areas of dissatisfaction continued across the PLC project, and in the case of the dimension of organizational structure, worsened, one year after the PLC project. Areas of ongoing dissatisfaction were organizational structure, pay and benefits, skill development, and hours and scheduling. While pay and benefits was a concern, the original research (Seel & Angelini, 2004) demonstrated that only when organizational issues such as structure, hours and scheduling were left unaddressed did pay become significant enough of an issue that the executive director began to consider exiting the organization. Table 3, below, outlines common areas of dissatisfaction related to the dimensions of job quality. Participants could select more than one dimension of job quality.

Table 3. Dimensions least satisfying for job quality:

Pre-project (number of executive directors reporting) N=9	Post-project (number of executive directors reporting) N=9	One Year Later (number of executive directors reporting) N=6
Skill Development (3) Job Design (2) Health (1) Hours & Scheduling (1) Personal Motivators (1) Organizational Structure (1)	Job Design (3) Pay & Benefits (2) Hours & Scheduling (2) Skill Development (2) Organizational Structure (1)	Hours & Scheduling (3) Pay & Benefits (2) Organizational Structure (1) Job Design (1)

Executive directors supplemented their ranking of satisfaction of the dimensions of job quality with comments and reflections. One year after the PLC, EDs provided the following comments:

Table 4. Executive Director Comments of the Dimensions of Job Quality One Year After the PLC Project.

<p>Pay & Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improved because pay and benefits of my position shifted over the last year because: the organization hired additional support for my position. This has allowed me a little more time to provide more quality work. Talking and listening to others from the learning circle who have the same issues was very beneficial and made me appreciate and understand my job a little more. ○ Improved because of an increase in salary. ○ After hearing from others, I appreciate even more, the benefits my agency offers. With information from other E.D.' I believe today the work I do is worth more and if our agency receives an increase in funding, I will ask for a raise! ○ Improved because I feel more comfortable to talk to the board about wages.
<p>Hours & Scheduling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Peer Learning Circle has allowed me realize burn-out and long hours ED's face in their jobs. This has made me more aware of the amount of hours that I work and the amount I think about my job after work hours. I now try not to think about work after work hours and not work long hours. ○ I have gained some awareness around setting priorities and just how much time I can give the organization and remain healthy. This is an ongoing struggle for me but I have definitely improved. ○ I have worked harder at having more of a sense of balance. I have also worked harder to get the board to take on more responsibilities for their roles.
<p>Impact of Peer Learning Circle on Working Relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It has provided support, guidance and an opportunity to interact with other people (ED's) who understand and appreciate your challenges in your job. ○ The peer learning circle had impact on my working relationships because we had disclosure and I could say things that I can't say at work. The peer learning circle participants held the same position as me so we could relate and understand each other. ○ I think again, an awareness of the positive work relationships I have helped to increase my level of satisfaction. As well our agency has experienced a change of key people and this has served to revitalize some of the work projects.
<p>Organizational structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The structure is more beneficial this year because there is more support to the ED. The peer learning circle discussions made me realize how much I was responsible for. ○ There has been a change to the board composition and therefore a change in organizational politics. ○ Improved because I've realized that the organization can change without 'blowing up'. There is new energy from the new organizational structure and more confidence about just taking the new plan forward to see where it goes. ○ Before the Peer Learning Circle, I wondered if our agency's hierarchal structure was, in some ways, becoming obsolete but apparently not. I had the opportunity to learn about other systems that are working through the participants.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improved because I've made changes to the structure that have really benefited the services and I am happier with the changes as are the rest of the team.
<p>Job Design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I was given the opportunity to develop my own job description during the last year. Having been involved with the peer learning circle gave me some ideas on what would make a realistic and enjoyable job. ○ I have the ability to influence my job description with the Board. I can make more time to read and research and have started to do so. ○ I feel like I have more control over Job Design and can speak from a position of authority because I now know (as a result of Peer Learning Circle) what other EDs do.
<p>Personal Motivators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I have learned to be more selective in how I spend my time at work. In the past, I pretty did much everything. ○ I have learned to just 'hang in there'. ○ Over the last year, my satisfaction with personal motivators has shifted because...I think far more recognition of the value of the people who work in the voluntary sector needs to happen. ○ Changed because I involve the Board more with strategic planning, and I delegate and manage time better. I still have the same old funding challenges though.
<p>Skill use and Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has made me realize what my strengths are and what aspects of my job I enjoy more. ○ I can learn from other ED' things I thought I could only learn in a training session.
<p>Health and Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I recognize that our agency does have activities that assist in promoting a healthy workplace. ○ We still have a long way to go to support employee health.

One year after the PLC project, EDs were also asked to reflect on two areas related to the PLC experience:

1. What changes in your job satisfaction occurred as a result of the PLC experience?
2. Which dimensions of job quality require more work for you to experience improved job satisfaction?

In responding to the first question, executive director responses fell into three broad categories: changes to the organization, building a support network, clarifying the role. Table 5, below shows the areas of job satisfaction and comments resulting from the PLC experience and sustained for a year afterwards.

Table 5. Sustained Aspects of Job Satisfaction Resulting from the PLC Experience.

<p>Changes to the Organization</p> <p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating our organizational chart. • I have changed the organizational structure of our services to deliver better service and deal with employee morale issues. • I have changed our organizational chart to more accurately reflect our agency's structure and chain of communication.
<p>Building a Support Network</p> <p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowed me appreciate my job more because of the opportunity to listen from other ED's. • I have made connections and now have external supports. • Networking • Building support with others outside of our agency mandate. • Support • Refreshing to get out of the office. • Communication

<p>Clarifying the Role Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My uncertainty about my role has been reduced. We all ‘scramble’. • Role definition • Feeling empowered to make changes as other ED’s have done or are doing. • I have taken more control for my job satisfaction. • Made me more aware of burn-out and job satisfaction. • Setting limits • Helping me develop a realistic job description.

Three themes also emerged in the responses from EDs regarding which dimensions still required work to achieve greater satisfaction: ongoing learning, enhancing the ED role, and salary improvements. Table 6, below, summarizes the comments associated with each of these three themes.

Table 6. Dimensions of Job Quality Requiring More Work Before Satisfaction is Experienced by the Executive Director.

<p>Ongoing Learning Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible get more training in certain areas • Peer learning or self directed learning • Education of self and others
<p>Enhancing the ED Role: Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a network of ED’s for support. • Stay in touch to keep collegial support • Communication • I will strive to keep a balance between work and personal time. • I will appreciate the many positives of my job and work towards changing some of the areas I can change. • I am starting to talk to our Chair about restructuring the ED position and dividing it into ED and Manager. This is a long-term issue to be addressed.
<p>Salary Improvements Comments: Remuneration I am working with the Board to review my salary and put into place a wage grid.</p>

Conclusion

The initial impetus for the peer learning circle was to explore the job satisfaction perception of EDs in the nonprofit sector. The peer learning circle approach was selected so that participants had the primary level of control over the themes and questions to be discussed and over the way they would participate, by implementing action following discussions, in the group.

Four very specific outcomes have emerged as the enduring elements of the original peer learning circle process: job understanding, assertiveness, a new appreciation, and critical thinking skills.

1. **Job understanding** was greatly expanded by creating the access to and opportunity for collegial exchange in the peer learning circle. Discussion with individuals in similar roles and responsibilities in other nonprofit organizations about the complexity, risks, challenges, and successes of being an executive director have shaped, and continue to shape, the perception that EDs have about the quality of their job.

2. The capacity of EDs in terms of their **assertiveness** in the role as an executive director, particularly with relationships with the board and in managing individual stressors, grew because participants were equipped with relevant and valid information. For example, the salary reports which indicated the appropriate salary range for EDs was a tool that was used by many PLC participants to persuade the board to revisit pay and benefits levels. The peer learning circle, supported with research and other tools from the Institute for Nonprofit Studies, permitted the participants to become acquainted with literature that strategically matters and that they may not have otherwise been privy to through the normal course of day to day work or interaction with the board.
3. **Appreciation** of organizational resources was also expanded through the PLC process. Participants at the one-year later survey process were very explicit about indicating the degree to which their increased understanding of nonprofit organizations and the role of an executive director within the organization influenced their positive perception about the resources that their organizations deployed. It is almost as if the increased level of dialogue and information exchange amongst the EDs as a group, led to a decrease in assumption-making on the part of individual EDs regarding their organizations.
4. **Critical thinking** skills were enhanced through reflective discussion, guided inquiry and the appraisal of actions that were implemented back at the workplace. Coupled with this was the evident change of perception among EDs of the control they had to effect change in their workplace. The shift from an external to internal locus of control was a surprising finding in the initial research (Seel & Angelini, 2004).

These four outcomes indicate that a peer learning circle process in which participants are given the opportunity to guide both content and process is beneficial to reinforcing the executive director's overall level of job satisfaction over a sustained period of time. The peer learning process is a relatively unobtrusive and inexpensive option available for cultivating the continued commitment and success of EDs serving in nonprofit organizations.

References

- Ausubel, D., Novak, J. & Hanesian, H. (1978). *Educational Psychology: A cognitive view*. 2nd Edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Boland, P., Jensen, C., & Meyers, B. (2005). *Addressing the leadership challenge: Non-profit executive directors' views on tenure and transition in Alberta*. Calgary, AB: Calgary Centre for Non-Profit Management.
- Burnard, P. (1987). Towards an epistemological basis for experiential learning in nurse education today. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 12, pp. 189-193.
- Brookfield, S. (1993). *Developing critical thinkers: Challenging adults to explore alternative ways of thinking*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Erickson, E. (1965, 1950). *Childhood and society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- King, A. (Winter, 2002). Structuring peer interaction to promote high-level cognitive processing. *Theory into Practice*, 41(1).

- Larssen, S. (2000). *Is Sweden a learning circle democracy?* Popular Education Conference, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. (cited as Suda, 2001)
- McGill, I. & Beaty, L. (1993). *Action learning: A practitioner's guide*. London: Kogan-Page.
- McMullen, K. & Schellenberg G. (January, 2003). *Job Quality in Non-Profit Organizations*, CPRN Research Series on Human Resources in the Non-profit Sector No.2. Canadian Policy Research Networks
- O'Donnell, A. & King, A. (1999). *Cognitive perspectives on peer learning*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Randall, G., Maas, S., Ancrum, R., & Liss, D. (2004). *Executive director tenure and transition in Southern new England*. Worcester, MA: New England Executive Transition Partnership.
- Rogers, C. (1969). *Freedom to learn*. Westerwille: Merrill.
- Seel, K. & Angelini, A. (2004). *Strengthening the capacity of executive directors: Highlights*. Paper presented at ARNOVA 2004, Los Angeles.
<http://www.mtroyal.ca/nonprofit/StrengtheningtheCapacityHighlights.pdf>.
- Suda, L. (September, 2001). Learning circles: Democratic pools of knowledge. *ARIS Resources Bulletin*, 12(2), pp. 1-4.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wade, S. & Hammick, M. (April, 1999). Action learning circles. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 4(2).
- Wolfred, T., Allison, M., & Masaoda, J. (1999). *Leadership lost: A study of executive director tenure and experience*. San Francisco, CA: CompassPoint Nonprofit Services.