

# **Educational Developers Caucus (EDC) GRANTS 2011 Final Report**

## **Title of Project:**

Building a Career in Educational Development: The perspectives of early-career stage developers.

## **Principal Investigator:**

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## **Overview of the project:**

Twelve educational developers who are relatively new to the field (< 5 years) and working in teaching centres at a Canadian post-secondary institutions were interviewed about their career goals, and the supports and barriers that are impacting their ability to realize these goals. Following the interviews, the transcripts were analyzed and a summary of the results were presented at the EDC conference in February 2012 in Halifax, NS. A manuscript, currently in draft form, is being prepared for publication.

## **Educational findings/outcomes:**

The main career progression concern of new educational developers was identified as 'there is no clear path.' This concern may not surprise many developers, as it has been previously identified in the research literature. In this study, each of the new developers articulated career goals that ranged from holding a more senior position in the field to taking on additional responsibilities and increasing impact in their current roles. Despite having career goals and vision, the new developers were

largely unsure how to gain the necessary experience and to develop the required skills and competencies, as one participant points out:

*Career progression, it is two sides of a coin. On one side it is very new and open; I can do so many things, tailor my speciality and grow in different areas that are not predefined. At the same time, the path is not clear. For someone like me, maybe a suggested path would help. Not something that is set in stone, but here are some ideas that could help you move forward in your profession. My manager does help me in certain respects, but at the same time, she focuses in a different area and she is very busy. It is more up to me to seek things out.*

Without a map or clear sense of what knowledge and skills are required, new developers engage in a variety of career advancing strategies to define and clarify the next steps in their careers, including:

1. Connecting - establishing a network of colleagues and mentors both within the workplace and the broader educational development community
2. Planning – defining a clear career vision and steps to realize this vision
3. Learning – developing relevant knowledge and skills attending conferences, participating in training, and taking courses
4. Practicing – accumulating experience and learning on the job
5. Reflecting – making sense of experience in the field, adjusting career plan, etc.

The ability of new developers to engage in these strategies is mediated by available funding and culture operating on the personal, workplace, institutional, and extended professional community levels. Implications for research and ways that the educational development community can enhance the career advancement experiences of new developers are then explored.

### **Budget:**

The original award amount of \$2500 was used to hire a graduate student to assist with preparation of documents for ethics review, interviewing interested educational developers, and completing data analysis. The research assistant was also able to participate the EDC Conference and co-present the results of this study.

### **Conference Presentations and/or publications based on the project:**

Roderick, C. & Isukuru, F. (2012). Building a Career in Educational Development: The Perspectives of Early-Career Stage Developers. Halifax, NS: Educational Developers Caucus, February 23, 2012.

Planned journal article– Roderick, C. & Isukuru, F. Charting a way forward: The career advancement experiences of new educational developers