

Overview of Integration-through-work Practices in Canada Outside of Quebec

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RÉSUMÉ • Cet article traite des expériences d'insertion par l'économique au Canada hors Québec. Les stratégies d'insertion par l'économique sont classées selon deux types : 1) les stratégies axées sur la formation (entreprises d'insertion, formation en milieu de travail et développement sectoriel de l'emploi) et 2) les stratégies de création d'emplois (travail autonome et développement d'entreprises sociales). Les enjeux discutés sont la nécessité d'une intégration à la fois sociale et économique, la création d'emplois et le rôle de l'État, le *workfare*, l'emploi et la pauvreté, les forces et les défis de programmes globaux et le financement. Bien que les pratiques d'insertion par l'économique puissent représenter un volet important et innovateur parmi les stratégies de lutte contre la pauvreté, les auteurs croient qu'elles devraient également faire partie d'un effort communautaire plus large et mieux coordonné, appuyé par les secteurs privé et public. D'autres recherches seraient souhaitables, en particulier sur les relations entre les pratiques microéconomiques et les politiques macroéconomiques ainsi que sur la façon dont les initiatives d'insertion par l'économique contribuent au développement de l'*empowerment* individuel et collectif, au capital social et à la promotion de la société civile.

ABSTRACT • This paper examines a variety of integration-through-work (insertion par l'économique) experiences in Canada outside of Quebec. Integration-through-work strategies are presented in two principal types: 1) training strategies, made up of training businesses, on-site training, and sectoral employment development; and 2) job creation strategies, which include self-employment and social enterprise development. Key issues discussed are: the need for simultaneous social and economic integration; job creation and the role of the State; *workfare*, employment and continued

poverty; the strengths and challenges of comprehensive programs; and funding. The authors conclude that while integration-through-work practices can be an important and innovative part of strategies combating poverty, they should be part of a larger and more coordinated community-based effort supported by both the public and private sectors. Further research is recommended on the relationship between microeconomic practices and macroeconomic policies, and how integration-through-work initiatives contribute to individual and collective empowerment, social capital, and strengthening civil society.

RESUMEN • Este artículo presenta algunas experiencias de inserción por lo económico en el Canadá, Quebec excluido. Las estrategias de inserción por lo económico se dividen en dos tipos: a) las estrategias centradas sobre la formación (empresas de inserción, formación en el trabajo y desarrollo sectorial del empleo) y b) las estrategias de creación de empleos (trabajo autónomo y desarrollo de empresas sociales). Las cuestiones centrales que se abordan en este texto son: la necesidad de una integración social y económica a la vez, la creación de empleos y el rol del estado, el “workfare”, el empleo y la pobreza, el potencial y los desafíos de los programas globales de financiamiento. Si bien las prácticas de inserción por lo económico pueden representar un aspecto importante e innovador de las estrategias de lucha contra la pobreza, los autores creen que estas prácticas deberían formar parte igualmente de un esfuerzo comunitario más amplio y mejor coordinado, apoyado por los sectores privado y público. Se requerirían además otras investigaciones, particularmente sobre las relaciones entre las prácticas micro-económicas y las políticas macroeconómicas, así como sobre la manera en que las iniciativas de inserción por lo económico contribuyen a reforzar el poder individual y colectivo (“empowerment”), el capital social y la promoción de la sociedad civil.

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INTRODUCTION¹

In French-speaking countries, policies and programs to combat poverty are frequently referred to as being in the realm of “*l’insertion par l’économique*”² – translated here by the term “integration-through-work”³ – since they are often based on the idea that poverty is a process (as opposed to a state of being) and that it progressively excludes individuals both economically (from the work force) and socially (from networks and resources) as it gets worse.⁴ Intervention to counter this process must hence simultaneously occur on both economic and social levels, and must be adapted to a continuum of population groups caught up in the process of exclusion – the working poor, the short-term unemployed, the persistently unemployed, the dependent poor, and the indigent⁵ – or having special needs stemming from discrimination, oppression, or physical and mental disabilities. In this report, “integration-through-work” will refer to labour market entry strategies that attempt to reverse the process of social and economic exclusion through programs that are both multi-dimensional and incremental.

Although increased economic growth has reduced unemployment levels in recent years and while various public policy changes have decreased welfare rolls, labour market restructuring along with continued barriers to employment for those receiving welfare on both administrative and policy levels⁶ have contributed to the paradox of simultaneously created wealth and poverty in most industrialised countries. Neither economic growth nor public policies are making significant inroads on the poverty front and new strategies to remedy this situation are thus actively being sought.

In North America, practice usually precedes policy, and most often, social and economic innovations emerge from groups of individuals or local communities attempting to deal with social problems of some kind. Unemployment, low incomes, and poverty are not new, of course, and have been considered central “social” problems for a number of decades. Indeed, many grass-roots organizations have, over the years, turned to commercial activities to create employment opportunities for their constituents or helped set up training programs to qualify them for entry or a return to the labour market. Many of these initiatives have taken an integration-through-work path, and this paper seeks to provide a brief overview of such practices in Canada outside of Quebec and explore some corresponding key issues.

PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

In general, integration-through-work practices can be seen as following two broad avenues: a) training and placement; b) job creation for specific target groups. While there is no overall, comprehensive integration-through-work policy in Canada, various government programs do exist in the areas of training and job creation. In fact, a trend of general policy frameworks and funding that allow provinces considerable leeway in program implementation is emerging in Canada. Since 1996, when the federal government presented to the provinces the Labour Market Development Proposal that offered them an opportunity to assume greater responsibility for the design and delivery of the active employment measures outlined in the Employment Insurance Act, the provinces have had an increased capacity to develop market programs that reflect regional priorities and needs.⁷

Support thus varies from province to province, and some integration-through-work initiatives have been able to take advantage of public programs. To an extent, the lack of formal State support specifically dedicated to an integration-through-work approach has frequently indirectly contributed to the development of numerous innovative local partnerships to ensure start-ups and ongoing operations of initiatives using this approach. Each one becomes a model of sorts, and the practice landscape across Canada is thus significantly different than in countries where specific public integration-through-work policies exist.

Training Strategies

There are different types of integration-through-work training strategies. On-the-job training and placement programs are usually found in either training businesses or in existing workplaces. Off-site training and placement programs, on the other hand, are characterized by a sectoral approach.

Training Businesses

A training business⁸ is most often a community-based, non-profit organization that incorporates a training-based, social integration framework within an enterprise engaged in producing goods or services. Its goal is to provide job and life-skills development in a true work setting, generally accompanied by job search support and placement services, to particular client groups within a limited time frame. The plant, office or store is usually run by managers with production, not social work, skills. Trainees are paid and expected to work as would any other employee and, therefore, to become productive, since the “business” operations are generally financed by revenues from sales and also because the ability to perform will be a major key to the individual’s keeping a job once the internship in the training business is over. The social component of these hybrid programs, except for the vocational training part, varies considerably from project to project. It is sometimes provided by an on-site educator using groupwork methods, but quite often is left simply to osmosis or handled by other staff members or even by other organizations. At times, lack of regular funding leads to less formal social intervention, life-skills development or professional training in such initiatives. When this occurs, a number of such ventures generally rely on more informal, often peer-based training and personal support methods to ensure a social development component. The blending of on-the-job training and social intervention works, in part, because of peer support – and peer pressure – provided by co-workers.

While the training business model is well developed in Quebec, there appear to be relatively few such businesses in the rest of Canada. Little research is available, but a significant case study evaluation was recently completed on a British Columbia program – Picasso Café – that identified intermediate measures of program success since lifestyle changes are also important outcomes although they cannot be a substitute for the long term of stable employment.⁹

Many non-profit businesses, for-profit subsidiaries of non-profit organizations, other related initiatives such as housing co-operatives, and even agencies providing social services or health care have, for many decades, set up commercial ventures in order to create job-entry processes and opportunities for their clients.¹⁰ The main difference between these and training businesses is that the latter are geared towards “exit” strategies where trainees are expected to leave the initiative by finding a job elsewhere or returning to school.

On-site Training

Another type of integration-through-work practice is on-site training in existing conventional workplaces. Contrary to the training business approach, this strategy seeks to ensure permanent employment within the firm where the training is dispensed. This is accomplished through an enterprise-related educational program where skills taught are tailored to a specific business' needs and where specific population groups are targeted for intervention which, in turn, justifies the allocation of public or foundation funds to support them in whole or in part. Cogema Resources' apprenticeships, for example, open the door towards skilled and semi-skilled jobs for Aboriginal people in northern Saskatchewan by providing on-site education related to specific trades that the company needs.¹¹

This approach should not be confused with the temporary internships and jobs that are at the core of welfare-to-work and workfare programs. Even though training may be provided by the employer organization or firm involved in these latter programs, there is no guarantee of a job for the trainee once the training period is over. Comeau *et al.* suggest that internships can contribute to integration if they have two characteristics: they offer significant professional training and a real possibility of employment after the internship.¹² This is the case for participants in integration-through-work on-site training who usually retain their jobs once they have achieved the level of competency sought by the business¹³ but, because of this, must also usually commit themselves to working for the firm for a specific period of time afterwards. Some of these programs have evolved from efforts by local and regional development organizations to identify and meet the needs of small firms or of specific networks. In the United States, the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks is a recognized leader of this approach.¹⁴ Other such programs emerge from a sense of social responsibility that seems to be slowly making its way into the corporate realm.¹⁵ The Pennsylvania Blue Shield program, where 208 of 242 trainees were hired by the corporation, is a case in point,¹⁶ but such practices are still relatively few in number.

Sectoral Employment Development

The perceived failings of conventional education and training have led some recent integration-through-work practices to adopt sector-based¹⁷ job development strategies to tap into specific labour markets. Conventional job training programs are generally operated by agencies providing competency-based vocational skills training combined with outreach, counselling, referral and placement services, for specific population groups. Such training is often given in an institutional setting, usually in collaboration with a formal educational body, where trainees are encouraged to enrol in occupation-oriented programs. There may not be specific job openings for the occupation selected, but generally

training is offered for occupations that already provide employment to a great number of people. Most of these programs are not new, since this approach has been used for at least thirty years.

Based on the belief that this type of job training programs has “tended to focus on the short-term needs of currently unemployed individuals and to design training efforts with insufficient attention to market demand and long-term job quality”,¹⁸ training programs designed for sectoral employment development typically endeavour to simultaneously strengthen businesses in the sector by building a competent labour force and support the persons involved during their transition from unemployment to employment.¹⁹ Moreover, since supporters of this approach also think that the lack of jobs is not simply a lack of resources but also an absence of marketplace relationships, their initiatives are generally the result of collaborative efforts between the appropriate actors of both the industry and the community. This enables them to generally target an occupation within an industry and then intervene directly within the industry for the primary purpose of assisting low-income people to obtain decent employment and eventually create systemic change within that occupation’s labour market (how it either recruits or hires).²⁰ One of the best-known examples of this model is New York City’s Co-operative Home Care Associates (CHCA), one of the largest worker co-operatives in the United States that provides work for 375 people, 75% of whom are worker-members, with an overwhelming majority being African-American or Latino single mother heads of households.²¹

Job Creation Strategies

The main types of integration-through-work job creation practices targeting specific groups are: a) self-employment, and b) social enterprise development.

Self-employment

Hundreds of both public and private agencies across Canada promote and support the development of very small businesses and micro-enterprises (less than five employees, initial capital needs under \$5,000 to \$15,000 depending on the program) using training-based technical assistance or finance-based approaches (peer-lending loan circles, community development loan funds) or a combination of both. Most of these programs are less than ten years old.²²

Micro-enterprise development, where technical assistance is provided and financing made available using a group lending mechanism of some kind, is currently the best-known self-employment strategy targeting specific groups of disadvantaged individuals. The vigorous promotion by organisations such as the Corporation for Enterprise Development of the perceived successes of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, the availability of private funding (Calmeadow

Foundation), and positive research findings²³ have greatly assisted the growth of this strategy. However, concerns of critics are usually based on shortcomings of the Bangladesh experience – loans made to women ultimately controlled by male family members, demanding pay-back requirements forcing some to resort to usurious money-lenders – and caution is often expressed against seeing micro-credit practices as a panacea for poverty alleviation. In Canada, a number of public programs, most notably those administered by the federal government's regional development agencies and by some provincial welfare departments, support self-employment development by providing technical assistance and direct financing (without group lending).

Social Enterprise Development

Social enterprise development generally refers to the setting up of financially viable, usually non-profit, ventures (often co-operatives) that create real jobs for low-income individuals while generating revenue from the production and sales of goods and services. In this model, an enterprise usually relies on commercial transactions for much, if not most, of its revenues. Social enterprises are sometimes referred to as alternative businesses, community enterprises, or social economy initiatives. They differ from training businesses by going beyond the provision of training opportunities, attempting instead to create an alternative job market for people with special needs. The Edmonton Recycling Society, for example, provided job and life-skills training to hundreds of individuals with disabilities and poor work records while employing more than seventy community residents for a number of years.²⁴

While non-profit market-oriented activities are not necessarily new,²⁵ these have become much more prevalent in recent years, and non-profit organizations have tapped into a number of markets usually served by either the private or the public sectors.²⁶ Community leaders initiating and managing these operations are seen as “new social entrepreneurs”.²⁷ When these initiatives provide services that could be expected from public programs, they are severely criticized for creating a bastion of cheap labour and ghettos of poor-paying low-benefit jobs (for women especially), or, at the very least, for playing into the hands of governments seeking to disinvest themselves of their social responsibilities.²⁸

No overall listing of social enterprises currently exists, but there are indications that the number is significant and growing. For example, one report identifies over forty examples of organizations that fit this model or the training business one across Canada.²⁹ Indeed, while such programs have been around for many years as well as in many countries,³⁰ this approach has attracted increased attention since the publication of Jeremy Rifkin's book, *The End of Work*, wherein reference is made to third-sector organizations providing more basic services in the wake of government cutbacks.³¹ Some see potential

markets in such services, especially in the field of personal care, which is labour-intensive and provides new job opportunities.³² Moreover, legislation often provides market opportunities for specific population groups – for example, the Kitsaki Development Corporation was aided in its growth by a Saskatchewan government regulation that provided 10% preference to northern businesses. A growing number of practitioners are leaning towards social enterprise development since they believe that it has the potential to provide more good jobs for marginalized people than short-term training.

Social enterprises also generally tend to have their operating and governance structures managed by members of their target populations (although participation and control levels vary widely from project to project).³³ As is the case for training businesses, existing social enterprises have few formal ties between themselves, except when they have emerged from a single sponsoring agency or target the same local population group. The psychiatric survivor-run community enterprises in Ontario, for example, are networked through the Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses that they set up a few years ago and still control today.³⁴

It should be noted that social enterprise development also refers to certain for-profit ventures, such as wholly-owned subsidiaries of public agencies and non-profit organizations, or community-owned businesses, when these have been set up to provide jobs to the unemployed or the “unemployable”. Among some of the better known examples of these are the Human Resource Development Association (HRDA) in Halifax that currently operates four for-profit subsidiaries that provide sixty jobs to welfare recipients and training to hundreds more (since the number of firms, and thus the number of jobs, has varied over HRDA’s lifetime),³⁵ and Nisga’a Economic Enterprises Inc. in North-Western British Columbia that combines direct business ownership by the community, often through joint ventures, with related training strategies and job creation as a strategy for building an economic base for the First Nation communities that it serves.³⁶

ISSUES

Simultaneous Social and Economic Intervention

The labour market entry strategies presented in this paper recognize, to varying degrees, the links between social and economic exclusion. According to McAll, poverty itself is the principle factor thwarting efforts at integration.³⁷ Its social characteristics (limited social networks, less free time, greater fatigue, less resources to participate in collective action and building relationships) undermine efforts at economic integration.³⁸ A study on the integration of welfare recipients led McAll to conclude that the positive impacts of experiencing

social relationships in which each person's rights are respected (such as by living in a housing co-op, performing a community internship or by volunteering) are underestimated.³⁹ A social intervention is thus an essential component of an integration-through-work strategy.

Research on antipoverty strategies that take a development approach tends to confirm the integration-through-work philosophy of combined social and economic intervention. For example, according to a study in the U.S. by the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED) which includes a number of models that can be considered integration-through-work initiatives,⁴⁰ two main themes emerge from best practice in this area: business development and self-sufficiency.

On the business side, successful initiatives: a) employ staff who understand both small business and the effects of poverty and discrimination, b) obtain appropriate funding and apply sound financial management controls, c) carefully identify niche markets and enter them strategically, d) are results-oriented, e) integrate personal support services in their operations for trainees (such as client self-assessment, child care, money management, and life-skills training), and f) network with mainstream businesses. Programs that support micro-enterprise development, social enterprises and small business development offer services that potential and actual entrepreneurs need and want, such as simple technical assistance, small loans, personal encouragement, and links to people like themselves.

On the social side, successful initiatives: a) understand the target population, b) adopt an asset-based (as opposed to a deficit-based) approach, c) explore asset development as a component of the process towards self-sufficiency, d) provide comprehensive (as opposed to fragmented) services, and e) work with private employers to develop job opportunities. Basically, they help people help themselves by actually supporting them throughout the process. None of these characteristics would be out of place in a Canadian context, and many of them coincide with those of empowerment-oriented social work practice⁴¹ and with social intervention in a strengths perspective.⁴²

These findings concur with those of a study by the Children's Defense Fund and the National Coalition for the Homeless (CDF/NCH) which also surveyed models that can be considered integration-through-work initiatives,⁴³ and offers three main recommendations based on its study of promising welfare-to-work practices:

- tear down employment barriers: improve skills and earnings capacity, provide on-the-job training, fund creative educational programming at the state level, and offer case management services for families with severe problems;

- support work: ensure continued health care and Food Stamps, make work pay, raise the minimum wage to improve earnings, apply the Earned Income Tax Credit, improve child support enforcement, provide affordable child care, meet transportation needs, help with housing;
- retain a safety net for unforeseen disability, lack of jobs, etc.

Both studies indicate that changes are also required in the regulatory environment, with the removal of disincentives to earning and accumulating assets as crucial. The CFED study takes this one step further by insisting on the exploration of asset development strategies as a means of supporting the process out of poverty. Such programs have been widely implemented in the United States⁴⁴ and are being experimented in Canada,⁴⁵ as means of enabling low-income individuals, particularly the working poor, to exert greater control over personal economic resources. Examples of these are individual development accounts (IDAs), set up in the name of an individual or family, and in the name of the sponsoring organization, that encourage low income earners to save for education, home ownership or to start a business. A major, nine-year demonstration project is currently being jointly led by the Social and Enterprise Development Innovations (SEDI) and the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) in ten locations across Canada.⁴⁶

Job Creation and the Role of the State

A prominent theme in Canadian literature underscores the necessity for governments to take an active role in job creation through macroeconomic and fiscal policy, direct spending and program delivery.⁴⁷ Deniger *et al.* have critiqued the estrangement of job training programs from the job market, and described as “dangerous and perverse” the maintenance of the illusion of opportunity through training when real job placements are often absent.⁴⁸ Rather than macroeconomic job creation, the direct services that are offered by the State to the economically excluded increasingly leave them solely responsible for their integration, blaming and further stigmatizing the victims of socio-economic restructuring.⁴⁹

The wave of government restructuring that swept through Canada in the 1990s has also intensified interest in the possibilities offered by non-profit organizations for service delivery in a variety of sectors,⁵⁰ including job training and employment integration. As subcontracts for service delivery between governments and community organizations multiply, the lines separating the public and third sectors become less clear, and there is a danger that the independence of these organisations to pursue their original mission be limited.⁵¹

Comprehensive Programs

Asset development strategies are also being promoted at the community level, as another way to combat poverty.⁵² For example, according to the Asset-based Community Development Institute,⁵³ five community-building “tools” can help support the journey from welfare to work: a capacity inventory (individuals), a self-help peer group, a circle of support, an inventory of community associations, and a business inventory. At first glance, it is difficult to see where such an approach differs significantly from community economic development (CED).⁵⁴ Whatever the strategy is called, what is important to note is that local employment development initiatives in general, and integration-through-work programs in particular, need to be co-ordinated and integrated into more comprehensive strategies at the local level.⁵⁵ Human resource development is an essential component of local development, but it has to be part of a mix with other ingredients such as financing and planning if community revitalization is to succeed.⁵⁶ Moreover, as both the CFED and CDF/NCH studies demonstrate, networking with other actors in the community is a key factor to the success of these programs. It can thus be argued that anchoring integration-through-work initiatives in local dynamics can, at the very least, help to avoid duplication (since many models overlap), and that they have the potential, by favouring ties and exchanges of all kinds, to solidify the bonds of solidarity that enable a community to make optimal use of all its resources.⁵⁷

Research suggests that local, democratically controlled, non-profit intermediary organizations are key to successful local development.⁵⁸ These are the structures required to transform the “eclectic group of strategies and projects [combining] education, human services, economic development, and employment training”⁵⁹ into a true job-centred and locally controlled economic development strategy. Unfortunately, many local development organizations, such as Community Futures Committees (CFCs), have not linked their efforts to support business and commercial development with new job creation or training for the specific population groups targeted by integration-through-work initiatives. On occasion, some of these programs are integrated into comprehensive local economic development frameworks by local development organizations, resulting in integration-through-work activities becoming part of a continuum of locally controlled practices that may include community organising, housing development, entrepreneurship training, and conventional business development over and above some of the aforementioned programs. New Dawn Enterprises Ltd., in Sydney, Nova Scotia, with its real estate companies, health institution for the elderly, home health care service, construction and maintenance arm, volunteer centre, and trade school, is a good example of program integration.⁶⁰ However, such cohesion is still too rare, which is unfortunate since, as Giloth notes, “comprehensive and integrated approaches have more potential to alleviate poverty”.⁶¹

Workfare, Employment and Continued Poverty

It was in 1985 that the federal-provincial Agreement on Enhancement of Employment Opportunities for Social Assistance Recipients began opening the door for provinces such as Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and Alberta to implement a variety of practices linking benefits to work or the participation in some sort of program.⁶² Whatever training had existed has often given way to welfare recipients having to attend job orientation sessions, look for work, participate in job clubs, work with job counsellors, and accept jobs that they might not otherwise have taken. Refusal to participate results in a financial penalty for non-compliance.⁶³

It is the mandatory nature of participation in these activities and the corresponding close supervision of welfare recipients by the authorities required to administer compulsory programs that lies at the heart of the debate about workfare. Supporters of this trend see it as a necessary evil of sorts, a new form of paternalism that is required to achieve the perceived behavioural changes in the individual required to ensure a transition to work (since not working is a major cause of poverty), that reflects the public will, and that has produced limited but encouraging results.⁶⁴ While detractors acknowledge that research provides some justification for workfare programs based on caseload reductions (although these may be due to other factors as well), they also believe that welfare reform projects hardly ever reach their target populations, may actually decrease the hours of work among welfare recipients (by requiring them to accept part-time employment), and do not increase financial incentives to work.⁶⁵ Although public assistance rolls have diminished significantly in the past two years in the United States, especially in rural and suburban areas, research shows that the majority of recipients in urban areas are still not working, and that those who have found jobs are either still receiving welfare because their earnings are below the level where benefits end or are still way under the poverty line.⁶⁶

Being employed is not synonymous with not being poor since the primary result of a number of workfare programs has been to transform poor welfare recipients into poor low-wage earners⁶⁷ and to condition them to accept this situation.⁶⁸ To address this issue, in certain provinces and states, individuals leaving welfare have the possibility of maintaining supplementary benefits such as childcare, health care, transportation and employment expenses, depending on the level of wages earned.⁶⁹ Other State-assistance measures are also being experimented to make working “pay” for recipients of public assistance of all kinds. For example, the Self-sufficiency Project in British Columbia provides an earnings supplement to single parents who agree to leave welfare for full-time work⁷⁰ while the Earnings Supplement Project does the same for displaced workers and repeat “users” of unemployment insurance in different cities.⁷¹ A recent interim report of the Self-sufficiency Project found that the earnings

supplement substantially increased both employment and earnings, with no net increase in public transfer payments.⁷² Calls for other innovative measures are also being made, such as learning at the workplace and finding mentors there in order to help trainees increase their wages and advance within the employing firm.⁷³

While not all integration-through-work initiatives can be deemed workfare, many rely on workfare programs for part of their financing where training of recipients of welfare is involved. It is not really known, however, how they deal with these issues. Non-profit organizations in Ontario, for example resisted the co-optation implicit in becoming training sites for workfare participants.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the combination of market-related operations while having social objectives supported by state funds or other socially oriented sources creates complex goals and expectations as well as deep tensions between social and economic activities.⁷⁵ It can thus be presumed that many integration-through-work initiatives are torn between paying competitive wages and benefits according to their industry's profile and providing the money and benefits that their trainees require to move out of poverty. Moreover, since markets often fluctuate, this dilemma translates into an ongoing tension that short-term solutions cannot abate.

Women

Most integration-through-work initiatives target specific groups of people, such as individuals who have gone through mental health systems, the homeless, the physically challenged, ex-offenders, substance abusers, women, and especially youth.⁷⁶ Each category has its own dynamics and concerns, and programs are adapted accordingly. However, issues relating to women cut across all of these practices, mainly because women are more likely to be poor than men⁷⁷ and are therefore present in most categories. Moreover, because personal services in general are labour-intensive, they constitute an important market for integration-through-work programs. Women, more than men, will most likely be selected for such activities, since personal care of some kind has always been relegated to women in the home and has been their main source of employment outside of it.

Generally, specific concerns relative to women's participation in the economy are: a) the need to redefine productivity to include unpaid work in the home and in the community, b) the establishment of multiple bottom lines to evaluate performance, c) the development of collective resources, and d) the inclusion of women in decision-making that concerns them or their families.⁷⁸ Except for initiatives emanating from the women's movement itself, it is not clear if integration-through-work initiatives are addressing these concerns.

Funding

One of the difficulties in establishing a complete portrait of Canadian integration-through-work initiatives and programs is the fact that neither public nor private funds for such practices are centralized. In some cases, job development and training programs are funded through partnerships among local entities, usually corporations or foundations, and services are almost always provided by a private agency (non-profit or for-profit) using innovative models that are not found elsewhere. Some argue that this does not mean that the State is not involved in integration-through-work initiatives nor that it has completely divested itself of responsibilities, but rather that State-civil society partnerships are efficient ways to provide services. Foundations of all kinds as well as religious institutions are also solicited to help fill the void when public sector funds are unavailable for innovative socioeconomic approaches and when markets alone cannot support them.⁷⁹ Critics of this type of assistance see it as a form of direct control of social practice by the wealthy and thus as systematic social policy, since this type of giving could not exist without appropriate fiscal policy.

CONCLUSION

In a war against poverty, integration-through-work practices constitute an important part of a front-line arsenal. Their relatively flexible nature produces a variety of tactics that can be deployed according to circumstances. They are not, however, substitutes for more strategic combat weapons, such as fiscal and social policies, and should not be seen as such. Moreover, they are not the only battalions that are required, and the enlistment of others from both the private and public sectors remains crucial. Unfortunately, for lack of an overall combat strategy in Canada, they presently more resemble weakly supported trench warfare with occasional guerrilla operations than a principal component of a comprehensive plan of attack.

Integration-through-work practices hold a considerable amount of promise and warrant much more research than has been done so far. Recent studies on social economy practices,⁸⁰ and on training and alternative businesses,⁸¹ have made significant contributions to the knowledge base, but these are too few in light of the challenge of this war. The relationship between these microeconomic practices and macroeconomic policies needs to be explored further, as do their potential to act as vehicles for individual and collective empowerment, their role in the creation of social capital within a community, and their contribution to the strengthening of civil society.

Notes

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2. Jacques DEFOURNY, Louis FAVREAU and Jean-Louis LAVILLE (1998). "Introduction à un bilan international", in Jacques DEFOURNY, Louis FAVREAU and Jean-Louis LAVILLE (ed.), *Insertion et nouvelle économie sociale*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, p. 11-38.
3. There is no English-language equivalent for "insertion par l'économique", a generic phrase used in French milieus which literally means "insertion using economic means". The Centre for Local Economic Strategies in Manchester, England, uses the phrase "regeneration through work", but this label is unknown in Canada and in the United States where Anglophones use a variety of other expressions to refer to this idea. Some of these can be quite colourful, actually. For example, one researcher from Wisconsin provided a reference to "wrap around job development programs", while a practitioner from New Hampshire wrote about "strategies for shoehorning low income people into good jobs".
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11. Pamela SLOAN and Roger HILL (1995). *Corporate Aboriginal Relations: Best Practice Case Studies*, Toronto, Hill Sloan Associates Inc., 251 p.
12. Yvan COMEAU, Louis FAVREAU, Benoît LÉVESQUE and Marguerite MENDELL (2001). *Emploi, économie sociale, développement local: les nouvelles filières*, Sainte-Foy, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2001, 302 p.
13. SHERMAN *et al.* (1998), *op. cit.*, p. 33.
14. APPALACHIAN CENTER FOR ECONOMIC NETWORKS (1994). *A New Approach to Training and Training Policy Design*, Athens, Ohio, ACEnet, 16 p.
15. See, for example: Alan REDER (1995). *75 Best Business Practices for Socially Responsible Companies*, New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 304 p.

16. Felice Davison PERLMUTTER (1997). *From Welfare to Work: Corporate Initiatives and Welfare Reform*, New York, Oxford University Press, 123 p.
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19. *Ibid.*, 49 p.; Peggy CLARK, Steven L. DAWSON, Amy J. KAYS, Frieda MOLINA and Rick SURPIN (1995). *Jobs and the Urban Poor: Privately Initiated Sectoral Strategies*, Somerville, Massachusetts, Mt. Auburn Associates Inc., 42 p.
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21. Steven L. DAWSON and Rick SURPIN (1993). *Home Health Care Enterprise Creation as a Strategy for Low-income Community Development*, New York, Home Care Associates Institute, 10 p.
22. Elaine EDGCOMB, Joyce KLEIN and Peggy CLARK (1996). *The Practice of Microenterprise in the U.S.: Strategies, Costs, and Effectiveness*, Washington, D.C., The Aspen Institute, 79 p.; Jeannine ESPOSITO (1998). *1998 Directory of Institutional Profiles*, Washington, D.C., The Microcredit Summit Campaign, 356 p.
23. Roberta SPALTER-ROTH, Enrique SOTO, Lily ZANDNIAPOUR and Jill BRAUNSTEIN (1994). *Microenterprise and Women: The Viability of Self-employment as a Strategy for Alleviating Poverty*, Washington, D.C., Institute for Women's Policy Research, 71 p.; Salome RAHEIM and Catherine F. ALTER (1998). "Self-employment as a Social and Economic Development Intervention for Recipients of AFDC", in Margaret S. SHERRADEN and William A. NINACS (ed.), *Journal of Community Practice*, Vol. 5, Nos. 1/2, and *Community Economic Development and Social Work*, Binghamton, New York, The Haworth Press, p. 41-61; Lisa SERVON (1999). *Bootstrap Capital: Microenterprises and the American Poor*, Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 155 p.
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27. Jed EMERSON and Fay TWERSKY (1996). *New Social Entrepreneurs: The Success, Challenge and Lessons of Non-profit Enterprise Creation*, San Francisco, Roberts Foundation, 417 pages.
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