

10 CAREER DEVELOPMENT LESSONS FROM 7 CONTINENTS IN 1 YEAR



1. **Careers are everywhere.** People work, make choices, and juggle interconnected life roles. Career and life choices, however, as well as what are considered to be appropriate/acceptable roles and occupations or industries, may differ considerably across cultures and regions.
2. **Career influences may differ.** Across most cultures and regions, parents have a significant impact on the career choices of their children – through role modelling, supporting education/training opportunities, and sharing family and cultural values. However, in some regions, individuals have less say in terms of career choices and the power is held by parents/guardians, governments, or schools – opening specific career doors and closing off others.
3. **Career guidance is important.** [CERIC](#) currently has a slogan – “Career Development Matters,” necessary, in part, because career guidance tends to be taken for granted in the West. However, in many other parts of the world (e.g., China, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Zimbabwe) there has been very limited support for career development and, in those regions, emerging career development thought leaders and influencers are working very hard to introduce career services.
4. **Career practitioners need training.** It’s only relatively recently that [training for career practitioners](#) has been widely available in the West, despite the field of career/vocational advising being established for over 100 years. However, in countries where the notion of career counselling/guidance is still quite new, strategic partnerships, e-learning, and international education have facilitated building a solid foundation and, also, customizing to ensure cultural relevancy.
5. **Career development competencies are similar.** Through grass roots consultation, international partnerships, pilot projects, and environmental scans, most competency frameworks ([S&Gs](#), [GCDF](#), and [EVGP](#)) have not been developed in isolation – their similarities, therefore, are not surprising. However, each framework reflects unique contexts and purposes, resulting in significant, though sometimes subtle, difference and priorities. The biggest differences tend to be in the Areas of Specialization, not in the Core Competencies.



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6. **Context matters.** What is considered “good” or “appropriate” work differs across geographical regions and, in some cases, family status or “class.” Government scholarships, public education, student visa opportunities, apprenticeship rules, and, of course, money all impact what work is ultimately available, and for whom.
7. **Happenstance is global.** [Chaos theory](#) describes the “butterfly effect ” where small changes in one part of the world have a significant impact somewhere else. In recent years, we’ve seen this with terrorism, financial crises, and changes in the price of oil. Such changes may unexpectedly close some career doors and open others.
8. **Government funding helps.** Major career development initiatives typically benefit from government funding and support – to conduct research, engage stakeholders, develop standards and guidelines, pilot products and services, make training available, regulate professions, establish public policy, and evaluate outcomes. Public-private partnerships are increasingly common but, in most parts of the world, government plays a key role.



9. **Hope is essential.** In [research](#) within a large Canadian corporation almost 2 decades ago, optimism was the single best predictor of both career success and job satisfaction. More recently, hope was clearly linked to GPA and Vocational Identity. Across the world, youth without hope for their career futures flounder. Career development does matter if it helps to instill hope.
10. **It’s a small world after all . . .** As career practitioners, educators, and researchers, we’re part of a relatively small, but amazingly collaborative, community of practice. Visiting all seven continents within less than 1 year offered a chance to meet new colleagues, reconnect with many others, and mentor some amazing champions and thought leaders who are just beginning to build a career development culture within their countries.

