Response to the Challenge of Training International EAP Professionals: An Online Certificate Program

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For the past 30 years, the first author has been training Employee Assistance Program (EAP) professionals. As the director of the EAP specialization at the University of Maryland School of Social Work, she was frequently asked about EAP training opportunities domestically and internationally. To meet this need, the author developed an online certificate program with Catholic University in Washington, DC. Subsequent to this writing, the program has moved to the School of Social Work at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (USA). The program has been offered for three years and has enrolled students from more than 25 countries and the United States. Most of the students are indigenous to their country, whereas some are U.S. civilian employees living and working overseas. The reader will see a firsthand account of how EAPs operate around the world, as viewed by local EAP practitioners.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is essential for a profession (Masi, 2011). The factual foundation of the efficacy of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) comes through its knowledge areas. Unfortunately, the knowledge base that many practicing professionals in the EAP field possess is not the specific type of knowledge that would help accelerate EAPs from a field of practice to an actual profession. Most EAP professionals learn from working on the job, not through conceptual understanding of the field. Many EAP professionals have never taken an academic course in EAPs (Jacobson & Attridge, 2010; Masi & Tisone, 2010).

Since 1985, the first author has been training professionals in the field of EAPs (Masi, 2002). As a professor at the University of Maryland, School of Social Work, she developed the EAP Specialization Program for social work masters-level students. The program averaged 25 to 30 students each year and, besides coursework, required a 3-day per week internship at an EAP.

From the beginning of her tenure at Maryland, she recognized that there was a critical need for more training (Masi & Maiden, 1985). The dearth of pedagogy in the field was not limited to the United States. At the time, she was lecturing in many countries for the U.S. State Department and was frequently being called by professionals overseas asking where they could receive further EAP training in their country. Her inability to provide an answer to that question has led to the development of the online curriculum and certificate program (described herein).

In 1988, along with directing the MSW program, she coordinated (with the School of Business) the development of a joint MBA/MSW degree program at the University of Maryland. An outgrowth of that cooperation between the two schools led to the development of an annual one-week continuing education residential program for EAP professionals. Professors from the Business School lectured on topics such as EAP marketing and human resources. The program was successful in attracting students from many countries (and the United States). However, it was an expensive option for students, as they were responsible for tuition and their own travel expenses. Despite this, there was a full enrollment for 10 years, but it was not nearly capable of satisfying the demand for training.

In the year 2000, the author was chairing the EAP Quality Assurance Committee for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (Manderscheid, Masi, Watkins, Carroll, & Santiago-Fernandez, 2005). The continuing need for training led her to approach SAMHSA about the development of a video-teleconference educational EAP program. The two-day lectures focused on EAP training and service delivery and attracted participants from several countries. SAMHSA and the University of Maryland ran the video-conference program for 2 years. Unfortunately, they could not charge for this because SAMHSA

is a U.S. federal agency. Funds were not available to pay faculty for their time or cover any other operating expenses.

Meanwhile, online education was beginning to emerge, and the author realized that this development provided a unique option to offer EAP training to a truly global group of students and professionals (Masi, 2006).

NATIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

A member of the Catholic University alumni office who had heard about the author's interest in an online program contacted her (an alumna of the school) and suggested that she meet with the dean and discuss the possibility of providing the program through the university's National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS). Founded in 1918, NCSSS is one of the oldest schools of social work in the United States. The dean of NCSSS was enthusiastic about the possibility, and the author (through her firm Masi Research Consultants) entered into a contractual agreement with the University for the delivery of an online certificate training program regarding EAPs. Masi Research (MASI) specializes in the design, evaluation, and teaching of EAPs.

Under the arrangement, the university and MASI have specific roles. NCSSS is responsible for providing access to Blackboard (the web-based platform upon which the courses are offered), handles student registration and payments, and attains the approvals for the awarding of continuing education units and professional development hours credit. MASI develops the curriculum, markets to its network, teaches the courses, and provides its own technical support for the delivery of the electronic material.

Recently, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has joined with NCSSS and MASI to publicize the program to its 150,000 members, through its EAPrefer Program. NASW is also sponsoring webinars to recruit social workers into the EAP field.

The venture is now beginning its fourth year. Most interestingly, in addition to students from the United States, the course has registered men and women from 26 different countries, a fulfillment of the goal to be offering training that is accessible around the world.

TECHNOLOGY/CURRICULUM

The certificate program includes two courses (4 weeks each): EAPs in the New Millennium and EAP Optional Services. The first course covers the essential ingredients and core technology of EAPs. The second covers optional services that EAPs may offer, such as work/life and online counseling. The content for each course was developed by MASI, and each has a syllabus, journal articles, handouts, and discussion topics. Each week, a PowerPoint lecture of approximately 35 slides (with extensive notes) is

presented to the class. Students are expected to read the current lecture and the recommended articles related to the lecture content, and participate in one or more discussion board forums.

The program is conducted on Blackboard. Using common applications like Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat to develop course material has meant few (if any) additional applications or plug-ins are needed beyond one of the prominent internet browsers. Syllabi and lectures were prepared in Microsoft Word or PowerPoint. Course introduction videos were prepared with the Panopto video capture software. References to journals, articles, other readings, and research are cited with hyperlinks or scanned and saved as Acrobat PDF files. As a result, at the end of the program, each student has an "EAP library." The program features one written assignment, described later in this article.

Following registration, a unique online account is created for each student. Documents are uploaded to the modified classroom shell and instructions guide students to current material. Settings can be used to automatically reveal course material on a specific date. Week 1 material is revealed on the first day of class, week 2 on the eighth day, and so on. Students can access the material on their own schedule, as the class is asynchronous. Discussion board forum topics are seeded with a starter thread. This initial thread starts the discussion much like a live question from the professor to a class full of students. Students comment and reply to each other, and each student comment is responded to by the faculty member. The discussion boards in each of the courses have been extremely lively. This is the most critical part of online learning: the interaction between the students in this forum really makes the learning ''come alive'' for them, build associations with one another, learn each other's backgrounds, and create a community.

Student technical support problems related to the use of the university's Blackboard website have been minimal. Of note, the difference between the frequency and type of technical difficulties accessing or using the Blackboard website by students inside or outside the United States is negligible.

THE STUDENTS

Countries Represented

China had the most number of students (six), all from Hong Kong. Other countries had several enrollees, such as Indonesia, Trinidad, Germany, and Greece.

The first two students to register were from Slovenia. Interestingly, an early registrant was an active-duty U.S. Navy serviceman serving as chief of mental health services on an aircraft carrier in international waters with 3,000 men and women on board. At certain times during the course the Navy would shut down the Internet, and he would be out of touch, but always returned and contributed a great deal.

From the very first class, there was a variety of countries and continents that were represented, which stimulated the discussions. Many of the students commented how pleased they were to see so many other countries represented in the class.

Over three years, in addition to numbers of U.S. registrants, international students from the following countries have enrolled:

- Argentina
- Azerbaijan
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Bermuda
- Canada
- China (Hong Kong)
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Indonesia
- Italy
- Kazakhstan
- Mongolia
- New Zealand
- Japan (Okinawa)
- The Philippines
- Portugal
- Russia
- Senegal
- Slovenia
- South Korea
- St. Lucia
- Trinidad/Tobago
- U.S. Aircraft Carrier in International Waters

Students' Educational Background

Regardless of country of origin, the educational level of the students was impressive. All of the students had a minimum of a bachelor's degree, and most had done master's work or higher (though there was no minimum-educational requirement for the program). Even with such credentials as the following, they still thought it necessary to enroll in classes on EAPs.

- doctors of philosophy: public health and social work
- doctor of education in counselor education
- doctor of medicine: psychiatrist

- masters of social work
- masters of arts in clinical/counseling/educational psychology
- master of business administration
- masters of science in human resources and occupational psychology
- bachelor of arts

Students' Positions

It was encouraging to discover so many international professionals who wanted to expand their knowledge of EAP service delivery and history, even though many were already working in the field. The following list illustrates the breadth of the students' careers.

18 EAP workers
4 U.S. military contractors
Lecturer in social work
U.S. Navy
Police officer in Royal Police Force
Educational researcher
Project worker in developing country
Psychiatrist, private practice
Professor on sabbatical from university
Freelance consultant in human capital management
Psychotherapist running a psych-support program in pediatric oncology
Counseling psychologist at a nongovernmental organization working with
    victims of human trafficking, family violence, incest, and sexual abuse.

DISCUSSION THREADS

Each course has generated approximately 500 student comments and faculty responses.[1] A sample of these Discussion Board questions and student comments follow:

Discussion Question: Ethics: Do You Think the EAP Field Today Has Any Ethical Issues? (Employee Assistance Professionals Association [EAPA], 2009; Ethics monograph, 1996; Sharar, White, & Funk, 2002)

Slovenia[2]: I have a basic ethical question. In capitalism, where by default we have two antagonistic sides – owners (managers/supervisors) and workers, is it really possible to work equally for both sides, when one side is paying for your work but the other side is obviously weaker?

Germany: It is so important to have an ethical framework! The companies often put pressure on the EAP because they want information (not on individuals,

but they want detailed reports to see what is happening in their company). It is sometimes difficult to convince them that we cannot give them that much detail. Also we are confronted with the question of telling the company how much it is saving because the EAP was used. This sometimes brings up ethical issues, because one doesn't really want to discuss things like: How much is the value of an employee that did not commit suicide because he had access to counseling at the moment when he needed it most?

Greece: In Greece, there are some mental health professionals that are practicing without having licensure or even sufficient training in the area that they claim as a specialization. In addition, we sometimes face some ethical issues regarding our multiple roles: we serve managers and employees as well as EAP providers.

Slovenia: Ethical issues can occur when EAP staff is trying to save some money and is therefore signing contracts with cheaper subcontractors that may not be the most appropriate and competent. Consequently people are not getting quality service. Ethical issues can also arise if an EAP counselor doesn't have proper knowledge and training, for example, about alcohol or drug abuse and, despite that, is counseling people with those kinds of problems.

New Zealand: Balancing the needs of the employer and the employee through the work done by a clinician (counselor/psychologist) is potentially an ethical dilemma. The challenge is often about confidentiality and how to manage and balance how much remains confidential especially around issues of power and who holds it. There are cases where an employee's behavior is perceived to be (and often is) unacceptable in the workplace. I have seen aggressive employees attempt to hold their roles through intimidation and threat. Equally I have heard some managers put challenging behaviors and demands on their employees. Who is right and how are these issues best resolved?

Greece: I absolutely agree with the vital importance of the client filling out the Statement of Understanding, the Release of Information, and Consent Form at the beginning of the first session. The client/employee and the organization must know the rights of the EAP counselor to disclose information under certain circumstances. As one of the articles mentions, it is unfortunately very difficult to control the affiliate EAP counselor: some of them are not always familiar with the procedures and the forms to be given to the served employee.

Regarding anonymity, take as an example a factory's onsite counseling: it has been observed by some EAP affiliates that sometimes employees find it hard to approach this EAP service and hesitant to visit because they must first go to their supervisors to ask for permission and then go to the HR manager or director to sign the permission, which is like taking a short sick-leave/time-off from work to visit the EAP counselor.

Hong Kong: Exemption to confidentiality issues: We have a mechanism that is a crisis response team to discuss whether there are justified reasons to

breach the confidentiality clause under the following conditions: (a) People with high/imminent suicidal risk, (b) people who pose harm to the public/others and (c) document/records requested by the court. I think it is crucial always to have collective/organizational responsibilities on these important issues.

Argentina: One of our concerns is related to EAP's legal responsibility in cases of suicidal risk. Let's assume the EAP assesses telephonically only, refers the client to an emergency service (psychiatric) external resource, and makes sure that a family member is informed: What is EAP's legal responsibility if the client harms himself or commits suicide? What if the family member ignores the warning? Is EAP's responsibility the same as if the client has had face-to-face sessions or is it reduced because of the telephonic assessment and referral? As EAP is not a known service in Argentina, there are no laws that regulate our practice yet. How does this work in other countries?

France: Because of the strong responsibilities of EAP providers who are partly in charge of employees' health, there certainly are ethical and legal issues in the EAP field. In France for instance, employers have a ''duty'' statement (performance obligation) regarding their employees' health. For example, if an employee commits suicide for professional reasons, the CEO could be sentenced to imprisonment. Obviously, in spite of the duty statement, the court will be much more accommodating with an employer that has a strong EAP than a company that does not.

Hong Kong: What should be done in response to a request from a Human Resource manager seeking consultation on what HR can do to determine if the company needs to report the case to police after terminating a staff member discovered to have several thefts in the company?

Slovenia: I would like to comment on the problem with these ''anticapitalistic'' system values, as we have bumped into this once at our supervision meeting. In our small team of counselors most of the counselors are younger and from the ''new generation'' (Slovenia was a socialistic country and has been capitalistic only since the nineties); the older counselors gained most of their work experience (and lived most of their lives) in the socialistic society. Discussing the counseling strategies for cases with problems such as work overload or life/work issues, the two groups of counselors took quite different positions. The older counselors were much more sympathetic to the worker.

Discussion Question: Core Technology: Do You Think This Is an Appropriate Conceptual Basis for the EAP Field? Include Your Comments about the Optional Services Listed in the Lecture (Roman & Blum 1988)

Slovenia: I agree that the Core Technology is an appropriate conceptual basis. I especially agree with training and assistance to the work

organization's leadership and the use of constructive confrontation. In Slovenia, Wellness is for the privileged—it is not covered by insurance and you have to pay for it, except for physiotherapy after accidents. So I think it would be a great progress if we could include Wellness into EAP programs in Slovenia.

Germany: I like the Core Technology and think it is important for the EAP profession. I understood from my colleague that they are not very popular in Europe in the EAP community. I don't understand where the resistance comes.

Portugal: In Portugal I work as an external EAP provider and we are trying to educate the market about the value of EAPs. I work mainly with private companies that are beginning to accept that these programs are very helpful with problems, but they only accept it when they have ''tried everything else.'' In our field the EAP Core Technology is adopted with care, as the market is not mature. Having an EAP is viewed as a threat because it is seen as a failure of the company to take care of its employees. Even when I explain the impact in well-being, productivity, performance or return on investment the skepticism is enormous. Promoting EAPs is an amazing and great challenge.

US Aircraft Carrier: The military's adaptation of constructive confrontation (intrusive leadership) will not work in the private sector. In the military there is a greater sense of ownership of our employees .... I believe the best EAP counselors will be highly visible people in an organization with a genuine talent for reaching employees through the use of the Core Technology. EAP counselors will be caring people who are not afraid to get involved–constructive confrontation–and diffuse issues before they overwhelm the employee.

Following my review of the lecture and reading assignments I believe the Core Technology of EAP is on solid footing. While I have not been formally trained as an EAP counselor, I will say that I see many parallels with the Core Technology in my current capacity as a senior enlisted Sailor in the US Navy. As Roman and Blum suggest, follow-up and supervisor involvement are key contributors to turning poor performance around and salvaging a good worker.

Hong Kong: The Core Technology is not popular in Hong Kong, and even less so in mainland China, as employees' benefits are sometimes perceived as a liability instead of capital in the commercial balance sheet. Employers are willing to pay more for rent but not for services. Deploying an EAP system and technology in the commercial, educational, and government industries is definitely not a priority (in Hong Kong).

Slovenia: Those who are involved in the EAP field should recognize the importance of Core Technology in the EAP profession no matter who developed it. In my opinion such prejudices from some European

EAPs are quite immature and foolish. Not all of us from Europe are so narrow-minded.

New Zealand: I too think that trauma (critical incident stress management) needs to be a core technology for EAPs. We have had quite an increase in critical incident calls over the last two years. This is in addition to the earthquake that happened in one of our major cities, Christchurch.

However, we take a much less interventionist role with our client organizations. Commoditization of EAPs is high and we no longer offer ''consultation with, training of, and assistance to work organization leaders.'' It is no longer a Core Technology for an EAP here in New Zealand. Approximately 90% of the counselling work that comes through our national free phone is self-referral. It is rare for our EAP to provide an intervention directly to management in our client organizations for this type of referral - unless we need to break our confidentiality agreement (at risk to self or others). The place where an EAP is best able to influence individual managers/HR and supervisors are through the 10% of referrals that are formally managed for specific expert consultation.

Greece: What Roman & Blum introduced is a good first attempt to describe the conceptual basis for the EAP field. The core EAP services include the basic components of the presence and implementation of an EAP in a work organization.

Commenting on the optional services, I would say that many EAP services are mentioned and some of them could be set under the same umbrella. For example: Welfare-to-Work programs could be along with the Wellness programs and Work-Life programs, since all these services together promote wellness, work-life balance and well-being strategies; the drug free workplace and SAP services might be considered together; conflict management/violence prevention may be connected with the risk management, because violence in the workplace, bullying, conflicts, impaired relationships between employees and many other issues are considered as risks for an organization. Could they all together be under a wider cate- gory of psychosocial & behavioral risk assessment/management service? Furthermore, I suggest coaching as another service to be offered for executives and managers, and expatriate support services for managers and their families (local and abroad).

As for the outplacement service, I think it is appropriately in our list, since this kind of service is extremely useful for our clients especially during hard times of downsizing and early retirements.

Hong Kong: EAPs originated from the occupational social work field where the concepts of ''welfare,'' advocacy for justice,'' and ''equality'' should offer some guiding, underlying principles in promoting the wellbeing of employees. I am curious to know how the field has evolved and come up with an agreement that ''productivity'' and ''work performance'' became the highlight of the field. As you may know, there often is conflict

between the employer and the employee. As an EAP professional, I am always wondering about the values for which we should stand.

I think that management consultation service is of growing importance in the field and it is a powerful tool to mitigating supervisor-subordinate tension and counseling them to a common solution to benefit both.

Concerning the Core Technology of EAPs, I would like to add crisis-care service as well. Service for expatriates and pre-retirement programs could also be included in view of the globalization trend in the world.

Argentina: Roman and Blum write that ''the Core Technology identifies those unique functions of EAPs that differentiate them from other human resource activities in the workplace.'' In Argentina as in other countries of Latin America, providing clients with a clear explanation of EAP Core Technology is fundamental, as EAPs have developed a very short time ago here and boundaries are still unknown. Argentina has a very long and strong history of psychotherapy, mostly psychoanalytic models, and this makes it even more difficult to differentiate EAP services from clinical practice. One of our challenges is educating organizations about the Core Technology of EAPs.

Another peculiarity of Latin American countries is about trends in utilization. Over the years we have observed a pattern of receiving more legal consults than psychological and financial, and this is the same for very different kind of companies. The average pattern is 62% legal consults, 23% psychological consults, 8% financial consults and the rest are informative consults. For this reason, we believe that in our culture legal counseling should be considered part of the Core Technology.

I agree with other participants that critical incidents stress debriefing should be included in the Core Technology.

Philippines: I am also not sure where to draw the line between ''short term intervention'' and psychological counseling. What is covered in ''short term intervention'' in the first place? In the Philippines, very few people go to counseling on their own account, and if they do, they do not have many sessions. They are not willing to pay for it. So they might as well get their therapy through the EAP. It's the most helpful thing we can do for people.

In addition, as I mentioned in a comment to another thread, screening employees for emotional fitness before being assigned abroad, and preparing employees to be assigned abroad, are valuable EAP services. For those non-accompanying family members, the EAP can be a beneficial support. If the destination country has no EAP, then we may offer online counseling to the expatriated employee.

Senegal: I believe Core Technology is an appropriate basis for EAP, for upfront Roman and Blum illustrate the fact that EAPs must offer a broad and open view to employee care. The Core Technology functions are interested in the organization as a whole and take into account the

employees, the supervisors, and the system. This allows the EAP specialist to understand and offer more appropriate assistance to the employee. In contrast, some more traditional systems automatically stigmatize the employee and ask ''What is dysfunctional with the employee?'' rather than ''What in the system is making the employee unproductive?''

In the lecture, the graph represents several optional services. However, I would dissociate/remove any service that could be offered by the local social services. My concern is that employees not rely only on services provided through the EAP. Employees should be encouraged to be as autonomous as possible and they should learn to have a medical and social back-up independent of the workplace in order to avoid putting themselves in a precarious situation if they were to ever lose their job position.

Russia: I believe the Core Technology provides a solid base for EAP services. This especially applies to new companies in need of guidance. Personally, I can say that living in a rather chaotic environment here, it has done wonders to reduce my anxiety to have solid standards to match and keep the company moving along.

Optional services, I believe, can vary. There are certain ones that benefit any company, such as stress management or wellness. Then there are those that are needed more in certain cultures or companies—for example, our substance abuse program is usually used by large plants and factories that are based in small towns where people unfortunately feel that they have nothing else to do, and there are higher safety concerns. Our expat-support program is most needed in the city, for managerial staff who have been sent from other countries and have trouble adjusting (Russia is definitely not expat friendly).

Trinidad/Tobago: Based on my EAP experience on the island of Tobago, EAP Core Technology is definitely crucial especially as it relates to confidentiality of employees/client personal issues. The island of Tobago is very small and consists of a population where everyone either knows you or is related to you . . . therefore EAP Services would not be successful if clients felt their personal problems could not be addressed under extremely confidential conditions . . . which also includes the location of the EAP office. Therefore once EAP clients are reassured of confidentiality it is easier to address and treat their personal issues thereby improving work performance, employee/employer relations and by extension the work environment.

Japan: The Core Technology functions are effective for the EAP field. As the assessment function is imperative to good treatment planning and out-come; a solid foundation or canon from which to function is imperative to establish expectations and gauge effectiveness. Additionally, it sets a standard for the professional and those that engage in and with the activities of EAPs.

Barbados: The Core Technology is the raison d'etre for EAPs and designed to help restore employees to optimal functioning in the workplace. Hence it is an effective base for the EAP field. It does indeed set EAP apart from other human resource activities in the workplace and this is essential in helping EAP maintain its professional identity.

I like it that one of the EAP functions includes ''consultation with, training of, and assistance to work organizations' leadership (managers and supervisors, and union stewards)'' who are part of the environment of the troubled employee and who should all seek to improve employee functioning and well-being.

South Korea: Core Technology is mostly what I find to be the day-to-day things of an EAP. As for other functions I find they change day-to-day. I find working overseas I assist a lot of clients with just finding the resources within the community that they cannot get on post. The key is to find resources that can assist in English or have available translation services. Korea has a great off-post health care system and many of the hospitals have international clinics to assist.

As for optional services such as drug testing, I do not think an EAP should be part of the drug testing process: the EAP needs to be a neutral party in the process in case a person tests positive, so that the EAP could be involved to assist the client with what happens next in the process.

Discussion Question: Comment on the Certified Employee Assistance Professional (CEAP) Process. Is It Something of Value in Your Country?

Slovenia: I think that the CEAP process is necessary and if we can succeed as an independent EAP provider I am sure that we will have the same process of certification.

Germany: The CEAP process is not relevant in our country. I have heard of two Counselors/EAP managers in Germany that ran through the process. They did not renew, because it is a lot of work and nobody cares in Germany. I also heard that the language barrier is very high (not easy for a non-native speaker to pass the test) and that it focuses a lot on American legislation. The German market is in a process now where the EAP providers have to differentiate, so that the customer can choose the model that fits him best. The CEAP process would not be helpful in this stage, because it would suggest to the customer that the CEAP is relevant in Germany while this has not been discussed yet . . . we would just take something from America and assume that it fits here, which it does not necessarily do . . . . My team leader says that there has never been any discussion about the CEAP in the Employee Assistance European Forum (EAEF).

Greece: CEAP process is the official credential that represents the EA profession and demonstrates ability and mastery of the body of

knowledge required for competence in EAP practice. A certain level of commitment is really necessary to understand the EAP model.

Greece: I agree with the point that CEAP is essential for protecting the EA professional from people who do not know the EA field, its philosophy, the services, the real aims and missions, and also protecting the client, employee and families. . . . I wonder why internships do not count towards EAP experience in the CEAP certification. . . . In Greece, client organizations do not ask for CEAP certification.

Hong Kong: Having the CEAP does not only demonstrate that the EA professionals possess the kind of professional skills needed to offer appropriate and confidential assessment, clinical intervention, referral and case management services, but that they also subscribe to the CEAP code of conduct and are accountable for our ethical behavior.

Argentina: The CEAP is fundamental for EAP professionals. Certification always improves quality of services and makes sure the professionals are doing what they are supposed to do. David Sharar's writings show clearly that the knowledge of many affiliates regarding EAP theory and practice is weak. Only 18% of the affiliates asked said that they were ''very familiar'' with EAP core technology, 37% are ''not familiar at all,'' and 26% were ''a little familiar.'' I am sure that in Argentina and the rest of Latin America, the percentage of respondents saying ''not familiar at all'' would be even higher. I hope CEAP spreads to all countries as soon as possible.

Philippines: Yes, I think the CEAP is very valuable, to professionalize what we do. I would say EAP is only starting in the Philippines and it is good to start right.

Hong Kong: Yes, the CEAP process is of value in Hong Kong. This is relatively new to us though it has been introduced in the 1980s. I hope the participation in CEAP helps to enhance the professional standard of the EAP services . . . having said that, the requirement for CEAP is really hard and challenging for me.

Discussion Question: Accreditation: What Do You Think Can Be Done to Convince the EAP Field that Accreditation Is the Responsible Professional Approach? (Council on Accreditation, 2014)

Slovenia: I think that the importance of accreditation is well-known. A contemporary problem is that pricing is more important than the quality. I see the solution in legislation.

Slovenia: For now there is only one company offering EAP services in Slovenia. I think that soon some people will see an opportunity to earn money with providing EAP services. My biggest concern is that in no time

there will appear numerous so-called EAPs without accreditation. Yes, maybe the best option to prevent this is legislation but we all know that unfortunately that takes time. By that time the damage is already done. Is there any other option to deal with that problem?

New Zealand: Accreditation is essential for an EAP to market itself as the fully professional organization it purports to be. EAPs work with the mental health of employees. Having a process that makes EAPs accountable is highly desirable. Businesses like well-run, credible providers, and I suspect that having an acknowledged accreditation would enhance an EAP's reputation. While commoditization of EAPs is the norm, that is no reason to not pursue accreditation.

Accreditation will ensure quality clinicians, minimize complaints, enable internal systems to be monitored effectively, help managers find and manage poor processes and procedures, provide incentives to develop different or more effective systems, and help integrate the organization as a whole.

Greece: I have never thought that I would have to justify this. From the beginning of my work in the EAP field I heard about Standards and Accreditation (S&A). I strongly believe that the only way to protect organizations from charlatans is the presence of strong professional associations, like EAPA and EAEF, the setting of S&A, and obliging private and public sectors to consider them before buying an EAP. In the EU, EAPs are still growing: this can be a blessing since we can prevent malpractice by promoting Buyer's Guides. Also, EU-OSHA and other large agencies related to health and safety legislatives should include EAPs in their directives and projects. There is no better argument for following accreditation standards than the threat of paying penalties if an EAP provider company does not follow the S&A of the profession.

Philippines: The Philippines is a long, long way from the time when accreditation will be a common practice. But it's something to look forward to!

Bermuda: The predominant attitude can sometimes seem to be ''why do we need someone to tell us how to do what we do?'' My response to that is simple.

In this day and age, so many people are claiming to provide services without actually being held accountable. For example, in Bermuda there are currently four programs stating that they provide EAP services. In my opinion, only one of these programs actually does so. We decided this year to pursue accreditation as a means of distinguishing ourselves from the other companies and proving that we meet the standards.

My job is currently in the accreditation process through the Council on Accreditation (COA), and it is hard work! I think often programs can become content with the work they do, and do not want/wish/see the need to push themselves further into accreditation.

STUDENT VISITS

As part of the coursework, each student was also required to submit a paper based on the student's visit to a local EAP (either an in-house or external program). Students were asked to meet with key staff people (preferably the director) and conduct an interview about the EAP's operation (including the EAP model in place, staffing, training, and evaluation methods). If there was not an EAP in the student's area, the student was to visit a human resource professional at a local company. Due to privacy and confidentiality issues, in summarizing the major observations from the visits by the international students, specific students will not be identified.

A number of students interviewed HR personnel, since EAPs were not accessible. Several of the EAPs that were interviewed ranged from those that had been in business since the 1980s (Elder Associates and Shepell.fgi). to others that were extremely new, in business for only one or 2 years. Several programs existed in U.S. multinational corporations that have actually been responsible for the development of international EAPs (Chevron is one example).

Many of the EA and HR professionals interviewed expressed concerns about employee confidentiality. Interestingly, many of the programs in place required that an employee get permission from the HR and/or the supervisor in order to utilize the EAP. In addition to confidentiality, the idea of a stigma associated with mental illness (and, by extension, use of the EAP) was also of concern.

There was strong support for accreditation. Several of the EAPs interviewed were already COA-accredited (Shepell.fgi, Elder Associates, and EAP Bermuda). Many of the programs had full-time staff, so the use of affiliates was not found to be the same problem in some EAPs as it is in the United States.

Recruiting staff is a problem in many Eastern European countries because the teaching of psychology is based on theory, and not on practice and internship, so many graduates have not met with an actual client. As pointed out before, the conflict between the socialistic versus capitalistic view came up often as a concern, especially for those EAPs that wanted to simply act as employee-advocates.

The programs in the Balkans believed they would see growth in EAPs because of the strong support they were receiving from the European Union.

CONCLUSION

Students continually raised important questions and introduced issues that the EAP field should consider. Several students commented on the inherent conflict between the socialistic versus capitalistic philosophy in an employee

assistance program. Even in the United States, the author sometimes encounters this with students who want to defend workers (clients) over management, regardless of the issue.

Even though written in 1988, Roman and Blum's EAP Core Technology was perceived by most students as valuable. They frequently suggested that trauma response services should be included. One of the most thought-provoking comments was from the student who asked how the field evolved into one in which productivity and work performance were the highest goals, when it developed from occupational social work/alcoholism, where advocacy and concern for the welfare of the client was the main focus.

International students, and their U.S. counterparts, did not have a clear understanding of the difference between CEAP certification (meant for individuals) and accreditation (for programs). They supported both, often confusing them. They never faltered, however, in their belief of the need for oversight and monitoring of the individual EAP practitioner and the program itself.

Education has been sorely lacking for EAPs, and almost nonexistent in many areas of the world. There is no doubt that online learning is growing exponentially. The authors see the online program as described as one answer to meet this need. It has opened our eyes even more than ever of the need for EAP education. As the online program evolves, we intend to refine the technology and add more sophisticated tools to the program. We will also keep the cost at an amount that is affordable for all EAPs, regardless of the country of origin. We then can look forward to a universal understanding of EAPs and fostering an international conversation across country boundaries.

NOTES

1. To preserve anonymity student names are not used, and comments taken from the Open Discussion board are paraphrased.

2. More than one comment from the same country is due to multiple students from that country in the course, or the same student responding to another's thread.

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