Canadian Centre for Management Development and the international arena: why CCMD and similar institutions should be involved internationally

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INTRODUCTION

In order to respond to the many challenges and priorities faced by governments around the world every day, a strong, well-trained and effective public sector is vital. The Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD) is dedicated to excellence in public sector management. CCMD has a mandate “to support present and future Canadian public service managers through learning programs and courses, learning events, strategic research and other leadership development activities”.

Since its inception, CCMD has concentrated its efforts on achieving excellence in the Canadian public sector. In the face of increasing international demand and in consideration of other factors, CCMD recently made the decision to expand its activities into the international arena. This was done for many reasons, which shall be explored in this paper. They include the impetus toward finding new ways to be innovative in the face of increasing globalization, the desire to align CCMD goals with the Canadian government’s foreign policy and development assistance priorities, and the mutual benefit to be derived from cooperating with other international partners who face many of the same issues as their Canadian counterparts.

WHAT DOES CCMD HAVE TO OFFER INTERNATIONALLY?

CCMD has long been renowned for its expertise in the development of public sector management. Calling upon their in-depth expertise in virtually every aspect of governance and public management, from democratic institutions to public sector reform to fiscal management, CCMD provides high-level training courses and offers experience at all three levels of government, as well as not-for-profit and private sector organizations. The Canadian model in particular may have relevance for some developing countries, as we have a bilingual (English-French) and increasingly multi-lingual capacity, experience in a multi-jurisdictional country with dual legal systems, an ethnically complex society, strong experience with citizen-consultation and in the use of electronic information systems, significant international experience throughout the public sector, and one of the best – and best-respected - public services in the world.

The question is not only “What does CCMD have to offer internationally?” but perhaps just as important: Why should we offer it internationally? The answer lies in a variety of reasons, from our responsibility to support government policy and initiatives to our responsibility as a good global citizen, and to perhaps less altruistic reasons of competitive self-interest and the need to maintain and enhance our own skills. We shall explore each of these reasons in turn.
WHY SHOULD CCMD BE INVOLVED INTERNATIONALLY?

The world is an ever-shrinking place. Increased international traffic of products, services and human capital, dynamic and constantly changing communications technologies and serious common economic and social challenges faced by governments worldwide all point towards the need for enhanced cooperation in all sectors. When faced with such realities of globalization, a government has a choice to make: it can either adopt a protectionist approach toward the outside world and limit its involvement on the global stage, or it can engage with the world, take an internationalist view and profit from the opportunity to learn and share with other nations.

The Canadian government embraces its role as a full participant in the international arena. Through policy papers, speeches and action, the Canadian government has outlined its unwavering commitment to internationalism. As part of the Canadian government, the Canadian Centre for Management Development has a duty to do likewise. After all, we are not merely citizens of Canada, but citizens of the world.

SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND CANADIAN VALUES

Canada’s foreign affairs and international trade policy has long been one of internationalism and engagement. We want open markets and fair and equitable trade – and we recognize that trade goals must be balanced with a commitment to what we take for granted in Canada: human rights, social justice and democratic freedoms. Our vision of world citizenship is outlined in the foreign policy paper Canada in the World: Wherever the values of respect for the environment, human rights, participatory government, free markets and the rule of law are observed, there is a greater prospect of stability and prosperity. By assisting in the propagation of these values outside our borders, we enhance the conditions under which Canada may flourish.

The CCMD, as with all public service learning institutions, has an opportunity to support overall government foreign policy as outlined by Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), and development assistance objectives as determined by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). DFAIT and CIDA have identified as a key issue that of improving governance and public sector management in certain cases abroad. They have sought the expertise of CCMD to support their mandate by providing this expertise under the auspices of CIDA and DFAIT programs, and using resources provided by CIDA and DFAIT.

At the beginning of each new session of Parliament, the government outlines its plans and priorities for the coming year in a “Speech from the Throne” delivered by the Governor-General of Canada. In the Speech from the Throne on January 30, 2001, Governor-General Adrienne Clarkson mentioned the “shared sense of citizenship” that Canada has in the world today – and pointed out that this has implications for every branch of government and for its public service. This shared citizenship brings with it the responsibility to share our knowledge at the global level and the need to learn from the knowledge of other international players.

More than just supporting government policy, however, CCMD International has an important role to play in the implementation of Canadian policy objectives. This must be done by projecting Canadian values, sharing knowledge, learning from other countries to enhance our domestic policy capacity and seeking cooperative solutions to global problems. Our experience with living in a representative
democracy has taught us that good governance requires modern and efficient democratic institutions and a professional and ethical public service. It has also taught us that building democracy, and the strengthening of democratic institutions at home, requires participation in strengthening democratic institutions abroad. We must not only protect democratic interests at home, we must encourage and support their development elsewhere. Canada has moved in this direction by undertaking such initiatives as overseeing elections abroad and providing legal and financial aid to democratizing countries. However, leading public sector management institutions such as the CCMD can also play a vital role by sharing their expertise in governance and public sector management with international partners. We have often seen that expertise is just as powerful an aid as money – perhaps even more so.

In the Speech from the Throne in January 2001, the government outlined Canadians’ responsibility to “work to strengthen global governance as well as existing and new multilateral institutions….” and to “advance efforts to strengthen democracy, justice and social stability worldwide”. How can we best do this? The answer lies in sharing our stores of knowledge with those who would reform their own governments.

**PURSUING THE CANADIAN INTEREST**

*Changing Markets, Changing Products*

A 1997 report from the International Development Research Council on Canada’s international priorities for the 21st century pointed out that “Knowledge now plays such an important part in the process of development, that development itself is being redefined in terms of the ability to generate, acquire, disseminate and employ knowledge, both modern and traditional”. The global economy is changing from one that has traditionally been built upon task-based work, to one that is now knowledge-based. Knowledge is one of the most important tools that we Canadians have at our disposal. CCMD in particular has a large store of knowledge in the field of public sector management practices. Interested international parties have long sought after this expertise, but until recently CCMD was not in a position to take on the international commitment. With the advent of CCMD International, this expertise can be shared with those countries struggling to reform their public sector.

However, altruism is not the only motivating factor behind knowledge sharing. Passing along knowledge and experience in these fields is not only an important tool to benefit others; it is a means of ensuring Canadian economic survival. In future, continues the IDRC report, “Canada will be obliged to earn its way internationally, in large part through its intellectual capacity and policy leadership, through broad-based intellectual partnerships, transnational policy inquiry and our mastery of new technologies. Foreign policy… is no longer ‘foreign’. It is simply an extension of national issues”. Therefore, in order to compete in the global economy, Canada will need to offer its expertise as a product. CCMD is particularly well positioned for this, being an organization that already recognizes the product value of knowledge. Our expertise is not merely relevant within Canada’s borders, but has greater marketability elsewhere.

**CCMD as a Learning Organization**

In Winnipeg in June 1999, CCMD president Mme. Jocelyne Bourgon warned, “the public service must now become a learning organization. In a global environment, in a knowledge-based society and a knowledge-based economy, it will be the only way to ensure the ongoing relevance of government to
citizens. It will be essential to create the comparative advantages that Canada will need in the global competition for talent and investment."

A learning organization is one that promotes learning; learns from experience; values people and diversity; integrates learning into management practices; learns in order to better serve; and evaluates processes and outcomes. These principles are vital to any organization wishing to ensure its continued capacity for growth and success. CCMD itself has long espoused the importance of being a learning organization, and has striven to become one. The pursuit of international cooperative ventures is a logical progression in the evolution of the learning organization, and can only enhance organizational learning.

By pursuing international cooperation, we are promoting learning through encouraging public sector managers to take on challenges in different venues. Public sector employees must be exposed to different learning opportunities and gain experience working outside the vertical, domestic power structure. We expand policy capacity in the public service by requiring that managers gain international experience in dealing with crosscutting and cross-cultural issues. Giving public servants learning opportunities in the more complex international environment will serve to expand our knowledge base. Knowledge of new cultures, business practices, and the building of international relationships will enhance our ability to target policy effectively. The public sector must be not only committed to working with our international colleagues but also capable of doing so: functional in other countries, fluent in other languages, aware of cultural differences, familiar with local customs and able to adapt to different business ideas and practices. To compete in the global marketplace, it is vital to understand the market and its players.

Enhancing the Canadian Public Service

One of the greatest challenges that the public sector in Canada is now facing is the issue of our aging workforce. In the next five years, 70% of our public sector will be eligible for retirement. This is nothing short of a crisis – and must be addressed in the most effective and expedient way. CCMD has focused much of its attention in recent times on the key issues of recruitment, retention and learning. With an expanding and aging population worldwide, the ability to develop a strong, effective and efficient public service to face the challenges of today and tomorrow is crucial. We must be competitive and able to attract the best and the brightest to the public sector.

We must address our recruiting and retention challenges and use the international experience to learn from other countries’ hiring practices. We must make our positions attractive to both Canadian and international talent, with competitive compensation and the promise of challenging work. As Mme. Bourgon has said, “knowledge workers will join the public service because of the challenges a public service career has to offer. They will only stay if they are given the chance to continuously develop their skills and acquire new knowledge… Lifelong learning must become a reality”, and the public service must become an employer of choice.

With the challenges posed by globalization, our public service of the future must be capable of managing and developing policy and making decisions in a horizontal manner. International experience is vital, and everyone benefits. A new definition of leadership must be imparted to public servants but in future, the characteristics of a good leader will be defined by international, not national, competencies.
The development of global governing institutions, and a professional, ethical, international public service not only strengthens domestic governance; it provides international career opportunities that serve to enrich domestic capacity. In addition, employees of today and tomorrow will seek new skills and experience that they need to remain current and competitive. We must offer employees the opportunity to gain international experience in the public sector context – or they will seek the experience elsewhere. As the government noted in the Speech from the Throne of January 2001, “the Public Service must be innovative, dynamic and reflective of the diversity of the country – able to attract and develop the talent needed to serve Canadians in the 21st century.”

**MUTUAL BENEFIT IN WORKING TOGETHER TO SOLVE COMMON PROBLEMS**

In addition to sharing national values, perpetuating democracy and pursuing national self-interest, perhaps the most compelling reason for CCMD and other public sector learning institutions to become and remain involved internationally is this: governments today are facing many common problems which cannot be solved in isolation.

Isolationism makes no sense in the face of the prevailing forces of globalization. Crime, poverty, pollution and disease are without borders. No one country can solve the environmental crisis by acting in isolation. Climate change mitigating strategies, for example, require concerted public policy action across nations and hemispheres. These challenges, global in nature, require international cooperation to solve.

There are many advantages to seeking out international cooperation to find solutions to these challenges. Different cultural and economic environments stimulate different solutions to similar problems. A public sector manager from China, for example, will likely have a vastly different perspective on how to approach conflict management in the workplace than perhaps someone from the United Kingdom. Sharing through international networks is important for innovation. By sharing best practices, documenting successes and building on one another’s strengths, each participant will exponentially increase their ability to solve problems. Jurisdictions that are dealing with these problems earlier can pass on their lessons learned to others in the international system, so that everyone benefits from the experience and may adapt solutions to fit their specific situation. This is a universal need.

For example, if the government of Brazil discovered innovative means to deal with the issue of decentralization, it would be in their best interests to share this information globally. Why? If another country intends to decentralize without learning from the best practices of Brazil, it may experience great difficulty with the process. This may lead to instability within the second country and its policy-making process – which could impact later on Brazil. It is always in a country’s best interests to share innovative ideas.

The same principle applies to sharing best practices and successes regarding governance and public sector management. If we in Canada have experience in developing a professional, merit-based public service with values that minimize corruption, we have a greater responsibility to collaborate with our international partners to try to eradicate corruption everywhere. This is valuable even when only looking at self-interest, because we have seen that countries who place high value on strong democratic institutions and an ethical public service tend to prosper much more frequently than those who do not
share those values. By helping to create a prosperous economy, Canada is looking after its own economic interests.

No country has a monopoly on innovation. Public Service has become transnational and global. Best practices can emerge anywhere, at anytime, and facilitate reforms in other countries. Innovation is much like the problems of crime, poverty, pollution and disease. Innovation knows no borders. If Canada wishes to remain competitive in the global economy of today and tomorrow, we must seek new and innovative solutions wherever they may be found. Managers of the public service internationally need to know what strategies and policies are most effective in other jurisdictions to deliver effective and efficient services that meet the needs of their citizens. This knowledge must be shared in a timely and efficient manner for all to adequately benefit.

HOW DO WE BEST SHARE KNOWLEDGE?

International institutions and agreements are multiplying. They require a high level of specialized technical expertise, which needs to be shared more effectively among country governments. Sharing best practices and documented successes in areas of public sector management and governance is also necessary for the benefit of all governments.

While we may recognize that sharing knowledge and best practices is vital, we are still faced with a great challenge: How do we go about this in the most consistent, effective and efficient way? With a wide audience of leaders in the public sector, CCMD International has the greatest opportunity to facilitate the exchange of information among international partners and disseminate this throughout the Canadian public service.

Globalization and the knowledge age require CCMD and their counterparts to integrate global and comparative knowledge into the core curriculum for managers to compare and evaluate their practices and acquire global experience and cross-cultural skills. A knowledge economy requires innovation and ingenuity to solve problems of industry, trade and commerce. It also requires international cooperation to take advantage of new information technologies to facilitate quick knowledge transfer. This will contribute to the common good, to enhancing quality of life in a framework of sustainable development. As the institutions mandated to prepare the public service management cadre of the future, learning institutions themselves require the opportunity to learn from their international colleagues and teach from their own experience in order to adopt and/or adapt the most effective strategies for learning.

CONCLUSION

The Public Service is not just an organization. It is a collection of people who believe in the importance of government and its institutions, who believe that public sector management is vital to the operation and well being of a country. Regardless of which country that may be, the public service is made up of people, and people are the wellspring of innovation. As fellow citizens in a global community, we have a responsibility and a golden opportunity to share knowledge and learn from one another.

CCMD International can and must participate fully in such an endeavor. With years of experience and large amounts of expertise, there is much that we can offer in the international arena. We are at a
turning point in our development as an organization, and we must seize this opportunity to become a key international player in governance public sector management in order to:

- Support the government of Canada’s foreign policy and development assistance agenda.
- Remain competitive in a global economy that is transforming into one that is largely knowledge-based.
- Enhance CCMD’s development as a learning organization by broadening our organizational knowledge and the skills of our employees.
- Make ourselves a more attractive employer at a time where recruitment and retention are vastly important issues.
- Work together to develop global solutions to common problems.

With all of these compelling reasons laid out before us, there is no longer a need to ask why CCMD and other like organizations should be involved internationally. The answer is obvious: we cannot afford not to be involved.

Select Bibliography


Notes:
1 CCMD Website, “About CCMD”. http://www.ccmd-ccg.gc.ca/about_ccmd_e.html