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The role of continuous professional development (CPD) in “Client Delight” relationship

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According to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS, 1993), continuous professional development (CPD) is the systematic maintenance, improvement, and broadening of knowledge and skills, as well as the development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties throughout the practitioner’s working life.

The Institution of Surveyors, Australia (1994), defines CPD as the process by which professional persons maintain the quality and relevance of professional services throughout their working lives.

The importance of CPD

The concept of CPD (new knowledge, improved skills and the development of personal qualities) and its acceptance by professional practitioners in all fields who seek to provide effective, efficient service to their clients, is not new. However, what is new is the increasing realisation that *relevant, effective* and *sustained* CPD contributes to success in professional practice

Welsh and Woodward (1989) identified the following six reasons as the underlying factors in the growing importance of CPD:

- Competence
- Consumerism
- Litigation
- Maintenance of standards
- Quality assurance
- Competitiveness

Table 1: Business conditions: principal changes (adapted from FIG, 1995)

| From | To |
|--|--|
| Demand for services | Over-supply of providers |
| Investment in technology and human resources | Financial rationalisation and cost control |
| Quantity surveyors as suppliers of services (reactive) | Quantity surveyors attempting to anticipate and satisfy client needs (proactive) |
| Differentiation based (concerning technical expertise) | Quality and service based (concerning differentiation) |
| Opportunism (short-term) | Accountability (medium / long-term) |
| Client relationships: adversarial | Client relationships: partnership |
| Quantity surveyors as technical experts | Quantity surveyors as business consultants |

Table 2: The impact of changed business conditions on the individual consultant (adapted from FIG, 1995)

| From: | To: |
|---|--|
| Expectation: a job for life | Reality: no job is safe |
| Job: built on a single, specialised skill | Career: multiple skills required |
| Promotion route: vertical | Career path: horizontal / lateral / vertical |

| | |
|--|--|
| "Keep your head down" | Innovation and risk-taking |
| Employer: single (for entire career) | Portfolio of multiple employers |
| Planned employment course | Entrepreneurial flair and own initiative |
| Initial training for skills-specialisation | Continuous life-long learning |

Key features of CPD

Based on the foregoing definitions, effective CPD is therefore -

- continuous (throughout a practitioner’s working life)
- focussed (necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties; maintaining the quality and relevance of professional services)
- broadly based within a career domain (knowledge and skills and the development of personal qualities)
- structured (systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening...)

In South Africa, with effect from 1 January 1999, mandatory CPD policies have been instituted by two professional councils, one being the South African Council for Quantity Surveyors (SACQS) and the other the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) with specific reference to medical practitioners and specialists.

The booklet published by the Association of South African Quantity Surveyors sets out the policy approved by the SACQS.

According to Willie (1991) in a discussion on the human resources development framework proposed by the Ashbridge (College) Management Research Group, the differences between “fragmented” and “formalised, focussed and fully-integrated” CPD are the following:

Table 3: “Fragmented” versus “formalised, focussed, fully-integrated” CPD (adapted from Willie 1991)

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>A fragmented</i> approach to continuous professional training and development: CPD is | In <i>formalised, focussed and fully integrated</i> continuous professional training and development |
| ▪ not linked to organisational goals | ▪ the needs of the individual are linked to organisational goals and strategy |
| ▪ perceived as a “cost”, not an investment | ▪ the training and development are viewed as an investment in human resource management |
| ▪ discontinuous training (not continuous growth and development) | ▪ on-the-job performance, skill enhancement and knowledge-based training are a combined objective |
| ▪ unsystematic and random | ▪ both pre-course assessment and post-course evaluation are conducted |
| ▪ menu-driven (response to mail shots and flyers) | ▪ are about “learning” (not simply “training”) |
| ▪ geared to direct skill training and sporadic acquisition of skill knowledge | ▪ are translated into action and improved performance in day-to-day activities in the workplace |
| ▪ perceived as optional and attendance is frequently cancelled due to pressure of work or lack of commitment | ▪ the application is flexible, including open, distance and self-development learning programmes |
| ▪ not transferred /rarely implemented to enhance day-to-day performance | |
| ▪ perceived as a reward for good performance | |

Stages in improving professional performance (adapted from FIG, 1996)

Stage 1: Unconscious incompetence

Following assessment and mentorship-review (performance appraisal /career planning /human resource strategies within an organisation), diagnosis should follow, based on comparison with a competence model related to specific career-stages. For example, immediately following graduation, when a candidate applies for entry to the SACQS Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) or prior to registration for post-graduate study, it is vital that initial diagnosis of continuing professional development needs is accurate, focussed and practical

Stage 2: Conscious incompetence

Following diagnosis, spheres of desired training and development are identified, planned and should be pursued. The choice of CPD programmes must be appropriately widened to ensure that improved skills are applied in the workplace within a structured development plan and not limited to "structured training" or an *ad hoc*, sporadic effort.

Stage 3: Conscious competence

Application in practice of enhanced skills development programmes with structured review and performance evaluation, offering ongoing indication of the -

- real aims and objectives of CPD
- professional needs to which CPD is related
- assessment procedures for establishing the benefits and outcomes of CPD implementation policies in accordance with the requirements of the South African Qualifications Authority (Regulations, SAQA Act, 1995).

Stage 4: Unconscious competence

Continuous review and refreshment of skills enhancement.

CPD: FORMAL MODELS OF LEARNING

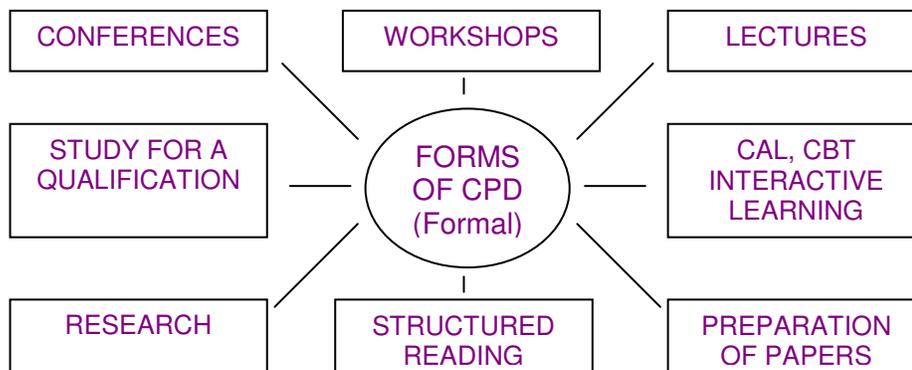


Figure 1: Formal models of learning (FIG, 1996)

CPD: STRUCTURED "DEVELOPMENT" MODES OF LEARNING

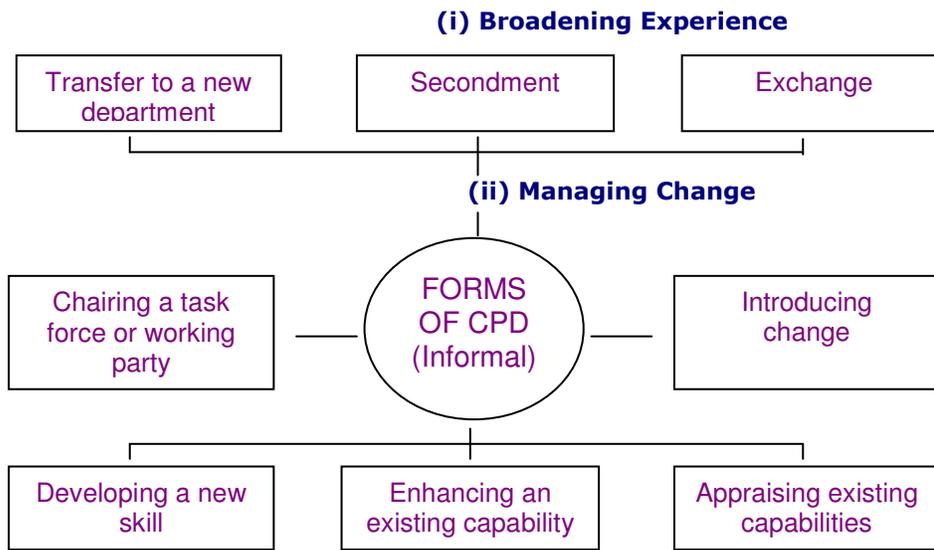


Figure 2: Structured "development" modes of learning (FIG, 1996)

DEVELOPING CLEAR LINKS BETWEEN CPD AND ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES ALLIED TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The following aspects require investigation:

1. Planned processes of business development in a professional practice.
2. Procedures for establishing the -
 - career objectives of individual staff members (known as a *personal development plan*), and
 - reviewing these objectives (known as a *performance appraisal scheme*).
3. Formal records ("milestones") of organisational development and growth within the practice, against which future development plans may be assessed.
4. Continuous mentoring of individual staff members in terms of their skill development to establish the pattern of attendance at seminars and workshops, i.e. whether sustained or *ad hoc*/discrete.
5. Whether the principals in a practice accept that efficient performance of an existing role is sufficient proof of efficient, effective professional competence.
6. The response of -
 - the principals in a practice if a potential appointee had to request them to include in their offer of employment a customised *structured learning plan*, and
 - potential appointees to the staff, if the principals had to require evidence of applicants' previous participation in structured professional skills enhancement programmes supported by formal assessment reports.

THE LEARNING CONTRACT

This is not a new concept. It is designed to help individuals clarify the -

- nature of changes which they wish to implement, and

- record the enhanced competencies or capabilities desired.

The learning contract requires answers to five questions:

1. What is an individual practitioner's *past* status relative to CPD needs i.e. definition is required of previous, personal knowledge base or experience?
2. What is the individual practitioner's *current* status relative to CPD needs i.e. definition is required of present, personal strengths or weaknesses?
3. What are the individual practitioner's aspirations i.e. definition is required of levels of skill or knowledge desired?
4. What learning plan and strategy will be adopted to satisfy the individual practitioner's aspirations?
5. What evidence will be provided to demonstrate improved competence achieved by the individual practitioner following participation in continuing professional development activities?

PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

According to FIG (1996), the following factors undermine sustained professional success:

- Rapid pace of change; need for quick response to changing market conditions, client requirements, influences of government policies.
- Innovation, adaptation and new skills (no longer optional); "keeping up to date" (central to professional practice).
- Business environment within which practitioners function: significant changes during the past five to ten years.

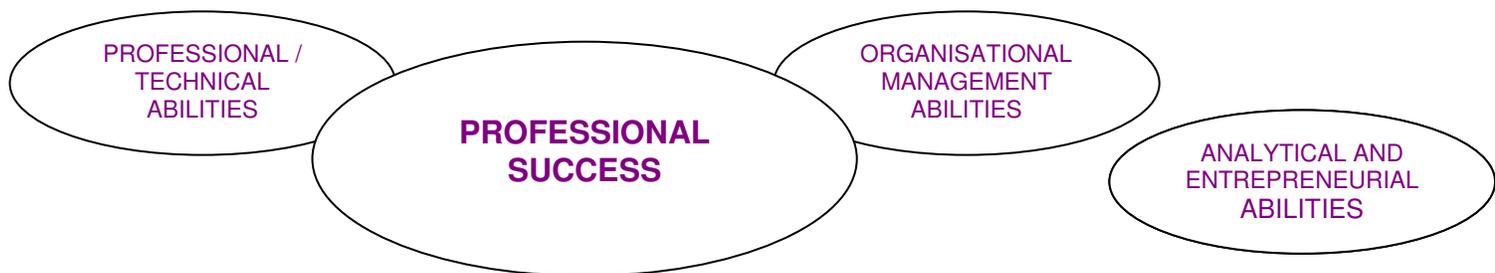


Figure 3: Attributes, which contribute to professional success (*Fédération Internationale des Géomètres*, publication no 15, September 1996)

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