Exploring Continuing Professional Development

We start by engaging in the essential practical and theoretical exploration of Continuing Professional Development.

This will assist you to orient yourself to this subject and, in the course of doing so, will get you started on considering your own professional progress.

Within these two chapters are a series of questionnaires and activities. We encourage you to start a personal CPD log and include your responses to these exercises within it.

This log will help you to crystallise and summarise your view of CPD and link your learning from Part 1 to the range of activities in Parts 2 and 3 of this book.

In Part 2, the chapters are structured to take the reader through a development cycle. Chapter 3 focuses on assessing your current CPD agenda. Chapter 4 explores where you want to be. Chapter 5 looks pragmatically at action to achieve your aim and Chapter 6 helps you to review and evaluate your progress.

Part 3 will assist you in recognising and consolidating your CPD successes. It offers suggestions for increasing your networks and experimenting with a variety of methods for analysis and planning for your next cycle of CDP.

Clarifying Continuing Professional Development

INTRODUCTION

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a process by which individuals take control of their own learning and development, by engaging in an on-going process of reflection and action. This process is empowering and exciting and can stimulate people to achieve their aspirations and move towards their dreams.

CPD provides the opportunity to soar like an eagle or a helicopter and look at our career progress from a wider perspective. It challenges us to make time for regular personal reflection and review. It reminds us that we have the responsibility for developing ourselves rather than pushing the onus on to our manager or others in the organisation.

Remember the old saying, 'You can take a horse to water but you can't make it drink'? Our response to that is to say that CPD is about becoming thirsty – thirsty for new knowledge, thirsty for new skills, thirsty for new experiences.

THE NEED FOR CPD

The need for CPD arises because security for individuals no longer lies in the job or organisation we work for but in the skills, knowledge and experience that we have within ourselves.

Authoritative reports (Institute for Employment Studies – Tamkin *et al*, 1995; Industrial Relations Services, 1998; Income Data Services, 1999) highlight CPD as a major intervention that we can make into our own development.

CORE CONCEPTS OF CPD

What makes CPD different from other types of training and development?

1   The learner is in control – CPD starts from the learner's dream.

2   CPD is a holistic process and can address all aspects of life and the balance between them.

3   Regularly looking forward to how we want to be, reflecting on how we are, and working from our present position towards the future direction, helps in achieving CPD's purposes and adds zest and direction to work and learning.

4   CPD works if you have the support and financial backing of your employer, and it also works even if the employer is indifferent or hostile.

CPD is not a panacea – like anything else it must be looked at in relation to the rest of the individual's life, the organisational context and the wider work environment.

STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN CPD

There are several parties with an interest or stake in CPD. Centrally, there is yourself. We have written this book with the firm conviction that CPD works for individuals, and that it makes complete sense to engage with the process whether you are under pressure to do it from others or not.

Others are also arguing that CPD is important for you. Many employers see it as crucial to development. They use CPD as a means of giving power and focus to a range of HRD interventions.

Universities and colleges also use CPD to help learners link their curriculum to the relevant and often pressing concerns of current work, or their future career. Academic institutions also develop CPD in response to the requirements of professional bodies. These bodies advocate it as a way of supporting their members and as a means to underpin individual Charter membership.

The benefits of CPD for individuals

As individuals, many of us may not have had appropriate careers advice when young or may have jumped at the first job on offer. In the rush of our day-to-day existence we may not have given ourselves the chance to reflect and consider whether we are getting what we want in our professional lives.

> Sadler Smith *et al*, 2000, found that the three main benefits of CPD for individuals were updating (maintenance), competence (survival) and enhanced mobility. How does this accord with your motives or those discussed elsewhere in this chapter?

The benefits of CPD for employers

Employers are increasingly concerned that employees undertake CPD, first, because it contributes to staff keeping their skills, knowledge and experience up to date. Secondly, many employers like staff to take responsibility for their own development and CPD provides the envelope in which a diverse range of development strands may be held together and leveraged for maximum benefit. Thirdly, CPD helps with succession planning. For some organisations in highly competitive sectors, CPD is a means of retaining staff. Staff vote with their feet – if the organisation is not committed to their professional development, they go elsewhere.

The benefits of CPD for colleges and universities

Colleges and universities need to ensure that the content of their courses is relevant to the needs of their students while they are studying and also as they are planning their future careers. This is particularly pressing when the students are part-time and have

an agenda of concerns and challenges at work that they would like help in addressing. Discussion of CPD in tutorials or learning sets established for this purpose is a powerful way of linking this individual work-based agenda to the curriculum of the course. In recent years professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) have begun to lay a requirement on colleges to address CPD as a core part of the curriculum.

The benefits of CPD for the CIPD

The CIPD has a double agenda. First, as a professional body it has made clear that it expects all its members to complete a CPD plan and record at least annually. It sets this expectation because this will mean that its members keep themselves learning and therefore able to deliver more effectively than those outside the membership who do not have the push to keep up with their CPD. It will mean that the qualification will be worth more as a differentiator. In some professions – eg medicine (Sankar, 2003) – the backlash against compulsion highlights the limits to the exercise of power by professional bodies.

Secondly, the CIPD has a specific interest as a Chartered body in that it makes undertakings to the Privy Council in Britain that its members will meet certain standards in order to be able to claim their Charter status. These undertakings centre on members committing to CPD. Some branches of the CIPD, notably in Devon and Cornwall, have recognised that CPD is their core responsibility.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF CPD

Professional standards are important to every employee. We are going to use the CIPD's description of the key principles of CPD to explore why it is so important to us, as professionals.

The CIPD's key principles of CPD are:

- professional development is a continuous process that applies throughout a practitioner's working life

- individuals are responsible for controlling and managing their own development

- individuals should decide for themselves their learning needs and how to fulfil them

- learning targets should be clearly articulated and should reflect the needs of employers and clients as well as the practitioner's individual goals

- learning is most effective when it is acknowledged as an integral part of all work activity rather than an additional burden.

We shall explore each of these principles briefly here and then focus on them again, in detail, in subsequent chapters.

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Professional development is a continuous process that applies throughout a practitioner's working life

It is no longer possible to do all your learning at the start of your career and then spend the rest of your working life using what you have learned. The sell-by date for professional learning is getting shorter and shorter. Our assets do not remain the same if we do not freshen them – they dwindle, and they dwindle fast.

We also live in an information age when technology is producing continual changes. We need to assess continually how these changes could help us to carry out our roles better.

Do you want to spend all your working life focused on one career or do you want to change? One developer watched his father catch the same commuter train to the same job for years and felt saddened when his father died the year after his retirement. He made a commitment to himself that he would do things differently. At the age of 30 he left a lucrative job in credit finance and retrained as an outdoor management development consultant. He is now his own boss, earns less but loves what he is doing, and no two days are ever the same.

Individuals are responsible for controlling and managing their own development

We can get what we want, if we let ourselves. Sometimes it is hard to give priority to our own needs. If we have been conditioned not to take risks or 'put our head above the parapet', it can seem difficult to plan to do so.

Our greatest limitation is the constraint of our imagination. We tend to imagine and crave for experiences that are already known by ourselves or others – more of … this, or greater than … that, or sometimes less of … the other. We frequently do not consider going beyond, experimenting with new ways of being and doing, creating a unique path.

CPD reminds us of the need not only to dream our future but also to take active steps to create our dream in reality. There's no point in standing around the photocopier, discussing, with envy, someone else's promotion. We owe it to ourselves to create such opportunities for ourselves – apply for our ideal job, sign up for that part-time course, volunteer to take on new tasks to develop our skills.

Individuals should decide for themselves their learning needs and how to fulfil them

The path we walk is unique. Colleagues, family and friends may walk alongside us for some of the way but they cannot live life for us. So many people are in careers that were shaped by schooling and family rather than being their own choice. We also know that typically an individual may experience a range of careers in their working lifetime. A professional chooses their work and their employer, sometimes consciously,

sometimes unconsciously and can change – if they want to. Exploring CPD assists us both to be aware that we are making choices and to appreciate the range of options that are available.

Our CPD is not a 'puzzle' or 'jigsaw' where there is one right answer or way for the pieces to fit together. There are infinite possibilities and we need to take time to explore the range of options. The process of CPD is a little like standing at a crossroads with lots of roads radiating from the centre. We may want to wander up each of these roads a little way to see what each possible option has to offer. This can take some time and reflection but it helps us to appreciate the rich range of opportunities open to us.

Parts 2 and 3 of this book are structured in a way that will help you to explore the range of CPD options available to you.

Learning targets should be clearly articulated and should reflect the needs of employers and clients as well as the practitioner's individual goals

Charles Handy (1994: 71–3) talks about portfolio careers. Even if we have only one source of paid employment, we still need to think in a portfolio way – developing 'our own portfolio of knowledge, skills and experience' which are transferable to any new opportunity.

There are a number of perspectives on this. First, you can see yourself as developing value to employers. Second, you can develop your life purpose and mission. The distinction between these two can be somewhat illusory – especially if you start from life purpose – as people who follow their dream tend to add value wherever they go.

Third, you could see yourself as being on a journey with several attractive stopping places (employers or clients) where you stay for a while and then move on. You may or may not be clear about your final destination – what is important is the feeling of moving forward and developing.

Fourth, CPD may not involve us in doing anything different – instead it may help us to view what we do in a different way. David, when he was working in a management position he was not enjoying, came to see himself not as working in the organisation but as working on the organisation. This involved a subtle change of perspective to one that enabled him to feel more empowered.

Part 2 of this book will also assist you to seek your purpose, clarify your perspective and set clear goals to realise your future.

Learning is most effective when it is acknowledged as an integral part of all work activity rather than an additional burden

When we were working with Commercial & General Union (Gibb and Megginson, 1999), our clients and participants summarised their reasons for participating in CPD. These are described in the following box.

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CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN CGU

For the individual

- I will be listened to and given a fair chance to develop
- I like the idea of a detailed review of my development
- I like the balance – what I am good at and what I need to improve
- I think that a specific action plan will help me to focus.

For managers

- development needs plus action = improvements in performance
- more effective people = fewer problems for me
- I like the idea of concentrating more on learning from work experience
- it is satisfying to help people to develop.

For CGU as an organisation

- it emphasises development as a priority – not just a tag-on to other processes
- it contributes to growing a learning organisation and a good learning climate
- it grows skills of flexibility and self-responsibility
- it helps learning how to learn.

For individuals, learning is the path to a more fulfilling career and a more exciting life. For organisations it is the means of supporting staff in their development and keeping fresh their knowledge, skill and engagement with work.

GIVING PRIORITY TO CPD

Having recognised the need for CPD, how do we make time in our busy lives to do it?

This section will explore how we can increase our motivation to make CPD a priority in our working day and will also examine the loss of potential in not developing ourselves.

$$\text{Professional performance} = \text{ability} \times \text{motivation}$$

Getting things done in the right way at the right time depends not only on our ability to do something but also on how much we want to do it – the effort we put into it.

One way to approach your professional development is to see it as an add-on – something separate from your work, something to do when you have a spare moment, a reward or bonus when you have finished other things.

If you are tempted to approach CPD in this way, it could be important to examine the elements of your professional performance. We are not focusing here on the skills and knowledge you possess to do your job but the ways in which you are stimulated to want to begin, follow through and complete the tasks involved.

Motivation theorists help us to be aware that we are rarely actuated just by money. We need money to furnish our basic needs for food, warmth and safety but what keeps us in a particular job are often motives like responsibility, recognition, opportunity for advancement or development and working with others.

As CPD helps us to fulfil these motives, it is central to our everyday work.

What happens if we do not make CPD a priority?

Perhaps we think that it is 'too hard' or that 'people like me don't get high-profile jobs' or that 'I wouldn't want to do better than … my friends, my partner'. We carry most of our limitations in our own heads. If we spend a few moments reflecting on those, then consider the time and effort these limitations are costing us, we may feel motivated to do things differently.

We asked a wide range of people why they do not engage in conscious and deliberate CPD, and included their responses in the following questionnaire.

Questionnaire

The exercise below invites you to take a few minutes to consider ways in which you might be unconsciously hindering your CPD.

We list a range of issues that have 'tripped up' other people and invite you to consider your own limitations and add them to the list.

WAYS IN WHICH YOU MIGHT BE UNCONSCIOUSLY HINDERING YOUR CPD

Is this a problem for you
– often?
– sometimes?
– never?

1   Not developing skills you need, like using computer programs and equipment, that could help.

2   Being fuzzy and lacking clear vision and focus.

3   Negative self-talk – eg 'It's too hard', 'I'll never …', 'I'm not the kind of person who …'.

4   Putting other people's priorities before your own.

> 5   Not confronting difficult challenges, prevaricating, avoiding issues.
>
> 6   Working to someone else's definition of success, rather than developing your own.
>
> 7   Projecting blame on to others, rather than accepting responsibility.
>
> 8   Focusing on the past instead of living in the present.
>
> Add your own limitations below:
>
> 9
>
> 10

TRANSFORMING LIMITATIONS TO CPD

We now include a range of suggestions, linked to each of the eight points in the questionnaire, to start you thinking about transforming these limitations. These issues will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

1   Sorting out skills deficits

Book that course or find someone to work alongside you and teach you. Alternatively, delegate to someone who has the skills.

2   Fixing fuzziness

This book will help you clarify your professional direction and goals. The following metaphor and story (www.sandrastewart1@aol.com) will start you on this process and subsequent chapters will offer a range of other frameworks. Read the story and then apply it to your own life.

> ### BIG ROCKS
>
> One day, an expert in time management was running a seminar for very busy professionals.
>
> He challenged them to a quiz.
>
> He set a one-gallon wide-mouthed jar on the table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and put them into the jar. When the rocks reached to the top and no more could be put inside, he asked, 'Is the jar full?'
>
> Everyone in the class said, 'Yes.'
>
> 'Really?' he replied, reaching under the table for a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing the pieces to work themselves down into the space between the big rocks.

Then he asked the group once more. 'Is the jar full?' By this time the group were on to him. 'Probably not,' one of them responded. 'Good,' he replied. He then reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand and sprinkled this in the space between the rocks and the gravel.

Once again he asked the question, 'Is the jar full?' 'No!' everyone shouted. Once again he replied 'Good.'

Then he took a pitcher of water and began to pour it until the jar was filled to the brim. He asked the group, 'What was the point of this illustration?'

One eager person commented, 'The point is that no matter how full your schedule, you can always fit some more things in.'

'No,' said the expert. 'Think about the order I put the things into the jar. If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all.'

'What are the "big rocks" in your life?' he continued. 'Take a few moments now to make a list of them: … your loved ones … your education … your dreams … a worthy cause … mentoring others … doing things you love … time for yourself … friends … Start a list now and add to it in the next few days.'

He summarised: 'Remember to put those *big rocks* in first or you'll never get them in at all. If you sweat the little stuff [the gravel and the sand], then you'll fill your life with little things to worry about that don't really matter, and you'll never have the real quality time you need to spend on the important things [the *big rocks*].'

Activity

IDENTIFYING THE *BIG ROCKS* IN YOUR LIFE

Read the story of *'Big rocks'* again. Identify the *big rocks* in your life.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

Clarifying our *big rocks* helps us to focus beyond the minutiae of day-to-day living.

Exercises in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 offer help in implementing these priorities.

3 Choosing your attitude

Our attitude towards life has a great impact on our professional progress. Henry Ford emphasised this when he said:

> **If you believe you can, or believe you can't, you're right.**

Our vivid imaginations can dream up many reasons for not doing things – if we let them. It is important to recognise that in many cases these reasons are not tangible or inevitable. We can change through choosing our attitude. Attitudes are learned and can be changed over time.

4 Putting our priorities first

Managers often want us to work towards the priorities of the organisation. Increasingly people are changing jobs and career several times during their years of employment. So we have also to take responsibility for our own development and consider the span of our professional career.

For some people this feels counter-cultural – their upbringing or religion has encouraged them to put others first.

Our belief is that everyone can change and grow and that they have a responsibility to develop that potential within them. Often, when we do this, we shall have more skills to be of greater assistance to others.

5 Preventing procrastination

Preventing procrastination requires reflection, clarity of purpose, commitment and courage.

We have encountered some very elegant forms of procrastination during our discussions with people when exploring their CPD. If you find yourself procrastinating about something, reflect on the following questions:

- Does this need to be done?
- Is there a different way of doing this?
- How will this help me/others?

■ What do I need to do to increase my commitment to this project?

6 Succeeding for self

Why do we do what we do?

- Because it excites us?
- Because it is what is expected of us?
- Because it is the most recent opportunity that has presented itself?
- Because it offers job security and a reliable income?

One of the things we need to check out when we are planning our own professional development is that we are working to our own agenda and that we are doing what we want to do.

Activity

ASSESS WHETHER YOU ARE WORKING TO ACHIEVE SOMEONE ELSE'S DEFINI-TION OF SUCCESS

Western society equates success with achieving more, with reliability, with predictability, but for some people it may be about doing less, being more spontaneous and seeking synchronicity.

Explore your own view of success by completing the following:

My boss will consider that I am successful when I ....

....

My family/friends will consider that I am a successful when I ....

....

I shall consider I am successful when I ....

....

In order to achieve this, I need to ....

....

Frank was puzzling over his next career move. He explained that everyone from his South Yorkshire village either went down the mines or went into the army. He had done his stint in the army, was studying for a professional qualification but was confused about his future plans. In our discussions we recognised that part of his discomfort lay in the fact that he had gone beyond the expectations of his parents and his place of birth. He had become a different kind of person. He had become the kind of person who enjoyed working with and developing disadvantaged adults and he began to seek jobs that would offer him the opportunity to do this.

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7 Acknowledging our responsibility

Projection is a defence mechanism that stimulates us to deflect ideas or feelings that we feel are too difficult or painful on to others.

If we find ourselves criticising others in relation to their professional progress it is useful to remember that when we point a finger at others, there are three fingers pointing back to us.

8 Living in the present

We get what we focus on.

> In a meeting, one person was very stressed and kept diverting the topic from the one on the agenda to different issues. However, decisions about these issues had been made by the power-holders the previous year. No one in the meeting could influence these decisions in the present or the future. It was difficult for others in the meeting to steer the topic back to the subject on the agenda and make progress about current issues.
>
> How often do we, or our colleagues, hold on to issues in the past which have, in our view, been unsatisfactorily resolved, rather than letting go of these so that we can give full attention to the present? If our time is spent on regrets and we are focused on the past, we have less attention and energy to explore our future development and to ask 'What can I do today that will enhance my future career?' Solutions-focused approaches to development help us to get away from a deficit-oriented approach to the past and are increasingly used in coaching (Berg and Szabó, 2005) and in change management (Jackson and McKergow, 2002). How might they help with CPD?

THE RELEVANCE OF CPD

The priority that we give to any issue depends on how relevant that subject is to us. The following questionnaire will assist you to assess the current relevance of CPD for you.

Questionnaire

Consider the extent to which the following are salient for you. Rate them on a 0–4 scale in which

4 = highly relevant

3 = somewhat relevant

2 = interesting but not relevant

1 = of not much relevance

0 = definitely not relevant to me

	The reason CPD is relevant for me	Rating (0–4)
1	CPD will help me develop my career into other jobs and widen my skills and experience.	
2	CPD will assist me to look at the whole of my life, assess my work–life balance and ensure that I am not becoming complacent.	
3	I want to do CPD to help me improve my performance in my current job.	
4	It is a requirement for me to complete CPD at work.	
5	It is required that I carry out CPD as part of my assessment on a course.	
6	It is an expectation for me to carry out CPD on my course.	
7	The CIPD requires me to complete CPD.	

Note your overall score and see whether it is near to the overall maximum (28) or much lower. If it is low, note whether your score is mainly in response to the inner-directed reasons (1–3) or the external requirements (4–7). If you have a reasonable score for at least one of the inner reasons, you are likely to be able to use the suggestions in this book to pursue your self-chosen agenda.

Rothwell and Arnold, 2005, in their study of CPD by CIPD members, conclude that there are six motivations for undertaking CPD:

1   to avoid losing one's licence to practise

2   because it is enjoyable in itself

3   to make up lost ground

4   to maintain one's current position

5   to get ahead of the competition

6   to affirm one's identity as a good professional.

Which of these six do you think were confirmed by their research as being salient for FCIPD and MCIPD members in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire? How do these motives compare with the other lists we have given in this chapter? The answer to the first question is Item 6, and to a lesser extent, Items 4 and 5. What are the implications of this for your own CPD and for organisations and the CIPD in encouraging CPD?

CONCLUSION

If we choose to give CPD priority in our lives, it can facilitate:

■   advancement and promotion

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- balance and quality of life
- capability enhancement.

We have observed (Gibb and Megginson, 1999) that people who embrace CPD appear to be more engaged, less stressed, more interested in new opportunities and open to working with new colleagues.

CPD can bring excitement and change into a previously routine pattern. It can add extra meaning to staff appraisal or review, and can encourage training and development.

2,500 years ago the philosopher Heraclitus said:

> **Everything flows and everything is constantly changing. You cannot step twice in the same river, for other waters are constantly flowing on.**

We need to recognise that CPD is a natural process – we are always changing and growing. This book will assist you to 'go with the flow' and provide structure and ideas to make CPD feel exciting and easy.

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