



THE CPD
STANDARDS
OFFICE
Part of the Professional
Development Consortium

Whitepaper Overview

This whitepaper from the Professional Development Consortium - home of the CPD Standards Office and the CPD Research Project - discusses the status quo of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

It then reviews the perception and behaviours of individuals undertaking their CPD, and the reasons why accreditation is necessary.

After discussing myths and misconceptions around accreditation, and the various accreditation options available, the paper concludes that continuing the expansion of a premium CPD community is a necessity if delegates and employers are to be fully engaged with effective CPD.



The Rise of CPD

The Role of Accreditation in Propelling Training Excellence

CPD's History: Where has it come from?

The term CPD was coined during the 20th century, and is now considered a complex professional discipline. Yet the concept and practice of ongoing structured lifelong learning began centuries ago within medicine, and through the beginnings of institutionalised teaching within the Royal Medical Colleges. Peer-to-peer learning was viewed as playing an essential role in progressing the latest medical developments and knowledge. Case discussions, meetings to discuss the latest advances in the field, and networking with other professionals helped cement the belief

that continued learning was essential to maintain and excel.

CPD FACT
#1

For a wonderful insight into the history of education for surgeons, visit the Hunter Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons in Lincoln's Inn Fields, London.

As the industrial revolution gathered speed, many professional bodies, institutes, and societies were founded to represent different subject disciplines or professional areas e.g. the Royal Statistical Society, or the Engineering Council. All of these organisations were concerned with advancing their domain, and saw growing numbers of professional individuals gather together to concentrate on developing skills, knowledge, and expertise.



The 7 Paradoxes Within CPD

As CPD is now a complex professional discipline, there are seven dilemmas surrounding its practice which face all of the stakeholders involved:

- 1 Compulsion or voluntarism
- 2 Employer or individual responsibility
- 3 Teaching or learning
- 4 Personal development or organisational learning
- 5 Life purpose or life experience
- 6 Values-driven or pragmatic development
- 7 Journey or exploration

CPD: What does it mean?

Today, CPD has a variety of definitions, yet all are focused around the core philosophy of structured lifelong learning. A widely accepted definition is:

“**Continuing**, because learning never ceases, regardless of age and seniority - **Professional**, because it is focused on professional competence in a professional role and concerned with - **Development**, because its goal is to improve personal performance and enhance the individual’s career”.

More recently, the ‘C’ has been dropped to simply Professional Development. In other areas, for example financial services, CPD also has another identity and is known as ‘Training & Competence (T&C)’.

Understanding the Main Players

Within different industries, there can be several authority organisations such as professional bodies, trade associations, trade unions, trade associations, and regulators. Often non-profit making, all of these form ‘membership organisations’ and their main purpose is to connect people together around a profession, industry, activity, or special interest.

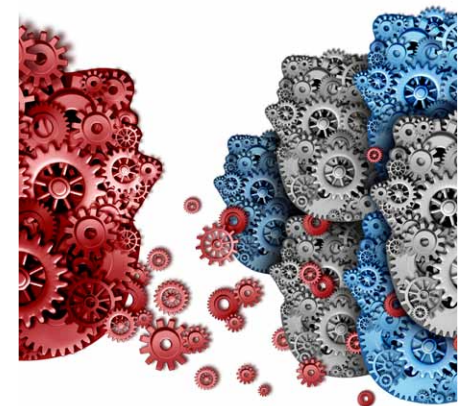
CPD FACT #2

There are over 1,400 membership organisations in the UK alone. Their total membership is estimated at 9m. Within this group, the CPD Research Project estimates that 5m professionals are expected to undertake CPD - that’s 13% of our workforce!

British Psychological Society (BPS), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Chartered Management Institute (CMI), and the Financial & Legal Skills Partnership (FSLP).

Regulatory bodies are only present where there is a legal mandate to regulate a market. Although similar to professional bodies, their primary purpose is to serve the public, and ensure that they receive services that are to required standards. Regulators have the authority to set entry requirements and standards of practice, assess applicants’ qualifications and credentials, certify, register or license qualified applicants and discipline registrants.

Examples of regulators include



the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA), and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

In non-regulated areas, there are sometimes councils present that act as umbrella organisations for membership organisations across a professional area. For example, the Science Council represent over 40 professional bodies, institutes and societies across all scientific disciplines.

Understanding CPD Schemes

Each membership organisation tends to have annual CPD requirements, in order to ensure that the professional learning of their individual members is monitored, captured, and relevant. CPD schemes tend to be highly established and can be complex to follow.

There are 3 types of CPD schemes:

Input Schemes: Require an individual to gain a set number of CPD hours, points or credits to be achieved across a specified time period.

Output Schemes: Require professionals to plan learning goals or objectives that are specific to their individual learning goals, and then undertake training activities to meet those goals.

Outcome Schemes: This is a combination of inputs and outputs, where an individual professional can undertake a variety of training activities across a certain time period, AND must demonstrate how their learning has been applied and improved their professional practice.

It is no surprise that CPD schemes can be somewhat confusing, especially from the training providers point of view. Yet CPD Schemes are purposefully designed to be flexible in terms of topic, and membership organisations are rarely prescriptive in advising what, where, and how an individual professional should undertake their CPD.

The onus is very much with the individual to source CPD training activities that meet their personal learning needs and objectives.

A Deeper Dive Into Professional CPD Apathy

Despite the membership organisations having flexible CPD schemes that incorporate any type of learning activity, the reality is that the attitudes from the majority of professionals around CPD in the UK is at best unengaged, and at worst, contemptuous of its practice.

The CPD Research Project (which sits within the Professional Development Consortium) has researched individuals' perceptions of, and behaviours, around undertaking CPD and found that:

- CPD has a bad reputation in the UK with 90% of individuals apathetic and negative towards its practice.
- The reality of professional individuals committing their time to learning in formalised blocks has become outdated. Busy and chaotic professional lives mean that individuals are generally 100% focused on day-to-day responsibilities.
- This negativity is compounded by a sense of isolation within the learning process.



The Role Training Providers Play Amongst the Apathy

The British training industry is brimming with providers offering a variety of learning activities. Whilst there are many providers offering fantastic training, coaching, and learning resources, there are also a number of providers whose training is highly variable in quality, with questionable efficacy.

The CPD Research Project found that an alarming number of providers whose training activities are 'branded' as CPD happen to be in the lower quartile - in terms of quality - within the market. It therefore comes as no surprise that a central cause of CPD's bad reputation stems from individual professionals receiving negative, sometimes terrible, CPD experiences.

This was one of the most striking findings within the first phase of the research project and comments included:

“Too much talky talky, instructors or professionals that like the sound of their own voice but cannot provide visual or interactive training are boring and **not great to learn from.**”

“Courses pitched at too simple a level, irrelevant and the level of assumed knowledge very low.”

“The thought of undertaking **more CPD makes me groan silently.**”

“The tutor was too 'new age' for me and many colleagues on the workshop. The training was supposed to focus on serious issues.”

“Forced compliance based training material, we do the training because its required but **there is not any passion (in the learning).**”

The results of a CPD environment that is populated with low quality training, negative CPD experiences and apathy from all involved, has significant consequences. The most prominent being that high calibre training and learning options are rarely visible to professional individuals sourcing and undertaking their CPD.

Therefore, training providers have inadvertently become partly responsible for engaging individuals. Although there may be no quick fix towards CPD apathy, training and learning providers can easily ensure that their activities are enjoyable, useful, and productive.

CPD FACT #3 Over 2 thirds of training providers are not familiar with the CPD or training and competence requirements within their client sectors.



CPD is Beneficial for a Professional's Career Advancement

Given that CPD is crucial for career progression, keeping knowledge and skills up to date, and preventing professional qualifications from becoming obsolete; the current understanding and perceptions of CPD is worrying. As well as the theoretical case, there are three key reasons why CPD is beneficial for a professional's career advancement:

Firstly, the CPD Research Project found that that inclusion and individual promotion of CPD, such as on a CV, dramatically improves career prospects, which in real terms, means higher salaries and remuneration.

Secondly, the research found that regardless of whether or not an individual enjoys undertaking CPD, there are positive benefits for the employing organisation. The research showed greater 'work engagement' and commitment to their roles by those undertaking CPD activities.

Thirdly, despite CPD schemes containing a multitude of activities within training, learning, and coaching that constitute CPD, many individuals still believe that CPD rarely extends to anything further than 'going on a course'. Yet CPD schemes are purposefully structured so that individuals can choose activities that suit their learning style and can be completely tailored to their personal role.

Hence there is a strong case for undertaking CPD!

Completing the Circle: Integrating Skills Within CPD

Membership organisations recognise their individual members success rests as much on their business reputation and skills, as their technical competence.

Whilst not always overt within CPD schemes, individual professionals are encouraged to engage in CPD activities that cover a wide range of professional skills and general knowledge, including customer service and / or bedside manner, an array of interpersonal skills, health and safety, project management, first aid, and social media.

As a consequence many skills based providers are unaware that their training, learning, or coaching activities can count towards CPD requirements.

The Case for Accreditation

Before any case for accreditation can be presented, it is important to demystify accreditation. As in a sense, accreditation often receives similar negativity from training providers, to that which CPD receives from professionals.

The Myths and Misconceptions of Accreditation

Many individuals believe that accreditation is...

Expensive:

Many training providers within the UK fall into the SME category and struggle to budget for accreditation. Yet there are cost-effective options out there...

Time-consuming and arduous:

This seems to be due to many of the first accreditation offerings required multiple forms to be completed, and were surrounded by bureaucracy and red-tape. This is no longer the case.

Requires an army of colleagues to complete:

Many training providers believe they need a number of colleagues involved when undergoing an accreditation assessment.

Does not hold any real value for their clients:

It is difficult to measure the ROI for accreditation for clients. Yet many providers do not realise the prestige that an appropriate accreditation carries and the transferred value to a client.

Many of the myths and misconceptions are difficult to overcome, particularly when there is a lack of independent, objective information about the

choice of accreditations available. Anecdotally, the CPD Research Project has noted that many training providers are hard-pressed for time, and researching different accreditation options can be immensely time-consuming.



Generic Accreditations

Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM)

The Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) is primarily an organisation within the City and Guilds Group but also has an independent awarding body status. It focuses on assessing the soft skills within Leadership and Management, and enables training providers to award a qualification. The ILM accredit both, their emphasis is focused on supporting the individual professional by helping them recognise best practice standards.

See www.i-l-m.com

Training Accreditation Programme (TAP)

Offering all L&D practitioners a flexible pathway to a role relevant diploma as well as accreditation of events, online and new to training learning, TAP is an organisation pulling in the right direction. It is a skills based, modular, role relevant Training Qualifications and Accreditation service. Their mission to professionalise training is based on a patterned "L.E.A.R.N" technique which ensures that best practice principles are followed. TAP are excellent for an generalist badge which assesses the quality of training delivered.

See www.tap-training.com and www.managerofchoice.co.uk

Specific CPD Accreditations

For training organisations working within one particular sector, professional area, or industry, there are often (but not always) accreditations available from the professional bodies or regulators themselves. These are sometimes 'woven' into the CPD scheme for that area, or can be a general recognition available to training and education providers within the industry. As these accreditations are wide ranging, a few examples are listed below.*

*Please note that CPD schemes, and associated accreditation options, are often under review and are subject to change.

**Financial Services Sector:
The Chartered Institute of Securities & Investment (CISI):**
www.cisi.org/cpdotherbodies

**Medical Sector:
The Royal College of GPs (RCGP):**
www.rcgp.org.uk/revalidation-and-cpd/rcgp-educational-accreditation

**Legal Sector:
The Bar Standards Board (BSB):**
www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/regulatory-requirements/for-chambers-and-education-providers/education-and-cpd-providers/*

*Please note this accreditation scheme is due to change in 2015, and again in 2016.

Multi-disciplinary CPD Accreditation

Training organisations working across multiple sectors, industries, and professions can also receive a multi-disciplinary CPD accreditation which recognises their training as being appropriate for formal CPD purposes.

The CPD Standards Office

It has standards for four specific areas: Training courses, events, on-line activities, and coaching, and its assessment criteria incorporates the requirements from input, output and outcome focussed CPD schemes.

The CPD Standards Office is the only authoritative organisation, working with the CPD Institute, that offers independent CPD accreditation. This has been developed in consultation with professional bodies, regulators, membership organisations, and employers and from the findings of Phase 1 of the CPD Research Project. It is supported by an expert advisory board and has a growing community of training pro-viders with over 200 members. As a consequence it is an authoritative presence in the CPD sector with a unique ability to improve CPD pro-vision through their accreditation and strong integrated community.

See www.cpdstandards.com

Accreditation is Differentiation

Once training providers have been accredited, there are various benefits that go beyond receiving the 'badge'. For example, those that position themselves as generic CPD providers get access to annual "CPD budgets" within employing organisations, the choice is generally limited to the training organisations that have positioned themselves correctly as a CPD provider.

In addition, once accredited CPD training providers can 'pitch' to prospective clients knowing that their processes have been thoroughly vetted, and most importantly, their training activities can contribute to their individual delegates CPD requirements.

Summary

This paper has hopefully shed light on the complexity of CPD, CPD accreditation and the provision of high quality CPD activities. It has discussed the negativity towards accreditation and the undertaking of CPD.

Within this area, the CPD Standards Office is leading change, and now represents a community of several hundred training, learning and coaching organisations. Strengthening this community, with its multiple connections to membership organisations, employers and universities, is the ongoing work of the CPD Research Project.

Whilst there is still a great deal of work to be done, the Office believes that a premium CPD community is vital for eradicating negative views, increasing the quality of the training in the market, making individual professionals CPD experiences positive, productive, and most importantly ensuring a tangible impact after the CPD has been undertaken. This impact could be on the individual professionals career, the employing organisation, the end client or patient - regardless of whose agenda CPD is being delivered for - it can and should be effective and successful.

Thank you...

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If you have any questions about the white paper or it has inspired you to join the CPD Standards Office, please contact us directly at: info@cpdstandards.com.
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