

Professional Development: A Reflective Overview

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Abstract- Professional development (PD) is a tool used to learn new skills or update existing ones and help professionals to achieve their career goals. Unfortunately, some people consider PD to be worthless because it may not always align with career goals. PD is never a substitute for mainstream tertiary studies and it is not a magic solution to all career aspirations. This is why it is important to make educated decisions about what PD to undertake and to be informed about the value that PD may or may not add. We must always consider the learning outcome of any chosen PD and balance this against our professional goals, budget and/or overall compliance requirements of the industry that we are working in.

In this article, I have discussed my personal PD goals and provided evidence and support for how the PD that I have undertaken positively impacted upon my knowledge, skills and my abilities. I believe that PD has significantly supported and updated my skills, adding value to my academic qualifications.

Index Terms- ASQA, PD, Logs, CEO, QMS, RMS, NSU

I. INTRODUCTION

Professional development (PD) refers to various educational experiences undertaken in relation to one's work. According to Fletcher and Barufaldi (2002), PD is key in upgrading skills, knowledge and capabilities in order to remain both compliant as well as effective (Fletcher & Barufaldi, 2002). PD can include formal, structured type learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001) or informal learning opportunities, which extend professional competencies such as knowledge, beliefs, motivation or self-regulatory skills (Graham, 2001).

Professionals in various industries including accountants, teachers, lawyers, doctors and engineers require PD opportunities to improve their knowledge and enhance their professional performance (McIlveen, 2011). Technology and practices are ever changing, bringing new challenges to the work environment. Additionally, globalisation has led to relatively free importation and exportation of labour forces across borders, making the labour market quite competitive (Tams & Arthur, 2010). Therefore, in order to retain jobs in this competitive climate, employees must undertake PD to ensure their knowledge and skills remain current (Egan, 2007).

When companies attempt to motivate their employees, they are often found to be more productive overall; their performance and commitment levels improve, and they tend to work for longer periods of time, leading to improved organisational productivity and profitability (Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2005). Therefore, it is crucial that professionals in all industries undertake PD to enable them, not only to address new challenges, but also to improve their performance for the

organisations in which they work (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002). Professional development can make employees or managers stand out amongst their colleagues, with their achievements, skills and knowledge (Fletcher and Barufaldi, 2002). It allows people to gain professional respect and credibility, making them more marketable and valuable in the labour market (Harris, 2005). This reflective review is based on my own personal experiences with PD. It aims to specifically analyse how my learning objectives, were aligned with program outcomes and demonstrate successful implementation of relevant PD.

II. CONSIDER THIS AS AN ADDITIONAL TITLE

Who is responsible for the delivery and recognition of professional development to the workforce?

Several studies have proven that PD adds remarkable value to individuals across a wide range of disciplines. Therefore it is imperative that the chief executive at any professional organisation takes charge and encourages of the PD of its employees. Indeed spending funds on employee PD ensures that they are compliant, employable, marketable and more productive. Nonetheless, from my professional experience, even if the CEO funds PD, the contract of employment is considered one of the biggest negative motivation factors in employees productivity. Trainers' could write in their resume about the list of PD logs, but the organisation's existing assessment culture failed to show the new assessment work practice due to frequent change of workplace and new contracts - new opportunities in different workplaces. Unfortunately, the culture in many organisations fails to acknowledge the PD of its workers. Rather than attending conceptual workshops with zero application of scripted routines, Butlera, and Schnellert (2012) suggested that contextualised decision-making cements pedagogical principles and practices to best meet students' needs.

My overall professional development activities and their main objectives

All PD sessions I undertook were self-funded and motivated by my own desire to learn new things. The majority of my PD activities were face-to-face, teaching issues through reality-based workshop exercises. Appendix B provides an overview of the courses and workshops that I have attended, and their link with the intended learning objectives and outcomes in my work practices. These PD courses were intended to make me feel more empowered and give me a sense of fulfilment by helping me to work towards my dream of a successful career in Human Resources. After attending all these workshops, I did an internal audit and found many discrepancies between organisational practice and regulatory requirements.

Examples of my successful professional development activities

One of the first PD experiences that I had was with SAI global. SAI Global provides organisations around the world with information services and solutions for managing risk, achieving compliance and driving business improvement. In December 2013, I attended comprehensive training sessions on the theory and practice of auditing in a five-day, face-to-face Quality Management Systems (QMS's) course, based on ISO 9001:2008. My intention was to gain a practical understanding of the responsibilities of a quality auditor, as well as the techniques and methodologies required to effectively audit a QMS. Lessons learned in the Risk Management session facilitated my understanding of integrated governance, risk management and compliance. It built on my basic knowledge of the risk process and taught me how to establish a framework for managing risk through three days of face-to-face training using Standard ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management: Principles and Guidelines. This knowledge will add significant benefit to the way I work and I will be applying my new skills and understanding from this PD course together with other assessment related PD in at least two different ways.

Many vocational colleges currently focus on implementing QMS's as part of their work process. Based on the government's regulatory audit requirements Risk Management training has taught me the mechanisms for developing assessment tools for various training packages that reduce the risk of non-compliance.

Each time I attended PD sessions my main objective was to learn new skills and knowledge, update my industry currency, or both. Throughout the PD I did relating to 'assessment design', the facilitator used two AQF level assessments to design and redesign two assessments – so that we were able to detect the changes and identify where improvements were necessary. Following this learning opportunity, not only did I recognise the mistakes that I had made in my own work, but I was also able to apply my new found knowledge to achieve more compliant assessment practice.

As a professional employee holding different positions across numerous private education businesses, I believe that PD makes workers to better equipped to dealing with unexpected challenges and it helps them to think outside the traditional framework/practice when planning a course of action.

Professional learning goals

To be marketable in the labour force, I must be productive employee, with relevant skills and knowledge in designing units and assessments for dealing with the current and future issues and challenges in my career. Sometimes and particularly in my case, PD goals need to align with the compliance requirements. After attending many audits with my clients', ASQA is seeking PD relevant to the industry and vocational education. As a result, I decided to split my PD budget into two categories– up skilling and updating my industry currency. In my PD logs, anyone can detect types of PD and organisation sources and topics are wide range industry relevant compliance choice. My PD logs demonstrate that I have covered a wide range of topics related to industry compliance throughout my formal PD learning.

How professional development helped me achieve my learning goals.

I believe PD to be an important necessity in today's world. As Speck & Knipe (2001) depicted, PD enabled me to feel more marketable in the competitive labour market, giving me a sense of fulfilment while, despite the aforementioned experience, making me more employable.

All my PD sessions have provided advanced knowledge and skills in working within the VET as sound practitioner, obtained respect among the Vocation college principals and owners, confident in client/student enquiry and overall improved my confidence when facing vocational workplace challenges and changes, thus make me more employable in diverse roles.

My professional goal in undertaking all this PD was to update my skills and knowledge in teaching and managing the educational workplace, to obtain a sense of fulfilment through meeting targets in terms of compliance versus money, and to increase my marketability and employability. PD was my gateway to the acquisition of my current skills and knowledge on the QMS, RM, Educational Leadership and assessment creation, validation and moderation in alliance with the national training package to improve the quality of work output.

North South University (NSU), the first private university in Bangladesh, was established by a group of philanthropists, industrialists, bureaucrats and academics. The university follows the North American academic system with all its distinctive features: semesters, credit hours, letter grades, a one-examiner system and so on. I was asked to teach as a full-time faculty member in the spring 2013 (Jan – April) session. It was during this time that I realised, my efforts into advancing my abilities through PD had truly paid off.

In my Human Resource Management class at NSU, I was teaching Workplace Health and Safety. Being the first private university in Bangladesh, my intention was to apply the ISO 9001 Quality Management System (QMS) and AS ISO 31000 Risk Management (RM) to NSU operations. Around 65 students participated in my session and pointed out fire preparedness as one of NSU's prime risks. Exactly three months after the course began, on 24 June 2013, the university had a fire in its 10-storey academic building (Appendix C). Fortunately, there was no casualties, but the university had to stop its academic operations for 28 days, consequently hampering the entire 2013 academic sessions.

Before this real life event, I was given the opportunity to teach students and assess their understanding of the QMS and RM framework, This meant that more than 45 students of two different sections were ready to deal with the real life risk that they faced when the fire incident took place. My students even informed me via social media on the expected class simulation and actual risk context and consequences. This tragic, but somehow serendipitous course of events proved that my PD activities had indeed made me better equipped with the skills and knowledge to work and teach in the areas of HR and WHS.

III. CONCLUSION

It is easy to see how acquiring new or updating current skills and knowledge makes an individual more marketable and appealing to different employers (Wilson, 2000), as was my

experience after attending PD sessions. My pursuit of PD was intended to achieve four main objectives, including updating my skills and knowledge in my field, obtaining a sense of fulfilment, being marketable and employable. On a personal level, PD has empowered me to seek better employment opportunities across the world.

Provided that individuals do their research and only participate in PD that is highly relevant and in line with their career aspirations, the value that this type of learning can add to any professional career is exponential.

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APPENDIX A: PD TOPICS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

[14] TOPICS: QMS	[15] TOPICS: RISK MANAGEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How to apply QMS audit principles and practices to ISO 9001 ➤ Personal and interpersonal skills required for auditing ➤ Processes involved in managing audit programs ➤ How to initiate and prepare for an audit ➤ How to conduct on-site audit activities, reporting on audit findings and conducting post-audit activities ➤ Appropriate oral, written and non-verbal communication techniques needed to lead an audit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Using an integrated approach to managing risk systems ➤ Introduction to GRC; understand the specific interaction between governance (G), risk (R) and compliance (c) in an operational capacity ➤ Introduction to compliance requirements as they relate to risk management ➤ Using a risk management framework and integrated risk management approach to make more effective business decisions ➤ Implementing risk management systems and supporting others to manage risk ➤ Evaluating the effectiveness of the risk management system and programs
[16] LEARNING OUTCOMES	[17] LEARNING OUTCOMES
❖ Review auditee documentation	❖ Understand the concept of governance and its relationship to risk and compliance obligations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Participate in developing audit schedules ❖ Identify, gather, analyse and evaluate information ❖ Compile results and report findings ❖ Assess the scope and objectives of a quality audit ❖ Communicate with an auditee regarding the proposed quality audit ❖ Identify the resources required to conduct a quality audit ❖ Develop and submit a quality audit plan ❖ Prepare and manage an audit plan ❖ Identify and prepare checklists and audit related documentation ❖ Conduct entry and exit meeting ❖ Guide team members in continuously improving their performance ❖ Negotiate the follow-up process with auditees ❖ Monitor and review audit systems and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Understand the concept of compliance and its relationship to risk and governance expectations ❖ Understand the links between governance, risk and compliance and identify appropriate areas for integration ❖ Establish infrastructure and processes for managing governance, risk and compliance requirements ❖ Understand what factors to consider when implementing risk management and compliance strategy ❖ Monitor and review system implementation
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APPENDIX B: CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AT A GLANCE

D Sources	Description	Professional Hours
The Centre Continuing Education, University of Sydney	Introduction to Counseling (Face to Face), English Grammar and Pronunciation, NLP Confidence Buildup and Emotional Intelligence	47.0 Hours
Higher College of Technology	Sharjah Conference 2017 - Collaborative Learning and Experiential learning, Introduction to Blackboard learning	9.0 Hours
Project Management Institute (PMI, Sydney Chapter)	Managing organization Change, How To run a program Women in Project Management (WiPM) Networking	9.5 Hours
ASQA, DEEWR and ACSF	Information Session, Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF), Transition, Information Session	48 Hours
AUSTRADE and Department of Privacy Commissioner	International Education Seminar Series 2011 on Latest trends, MENA - Middle East Market developments and opportunities	12 Hours
Australian Institute of	Hot Topic: Training Session	12 Hours

Management

COMCARE	Seminar on the Harmonization of 2012 Work, Health and Safety	8 Hours
E-Learning	Australian Flexible Learning: National Seminar and Workshops Outsource E-learning: Commlab India	16 Hours
Department of Education and Training (DET)	Workshops on Compliances and Training-Assessment	144 Hours
The Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency (AWPA) Former Skills Australia	Industry Consultation Session on the National Workforce Development Strategy	4 Hours
<u>Dynamic Web Training</u>	Workshop on to Adobe Acrobat 9 for Preserving Document Integrity and Learning Various Tips and Tricks on Applications as part of E-Learning Curriculum Design	8 Hours
Innovation Business Skills Australia (IBSA)	ESCAN, Industry Consultation and Workshops Energy Efficiency and Business Sustainability (VELG)	18 Hours
Others: Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, India and IVEY School of Business, Canada	Residential Workshop on exploring and understanding leadership dimensions, strategies and the art of stimulating a positive work culture and Case Study writing workshops	55 Hours
University of New South Wales (UNSW)	Presentation and Communication Skills for Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) and Principles of Tutoring – Preparing to Tutor, Facilitating Interactions and Self Managing	30 Hours
Service Skills Australia	Foundation Skills, LLN and ACSF Documents Literacy and numeracy needs for a LLN specialist	13 Hours
BEC Southern Sydney, Bankstown, Sydney	Starting a Business, Linked In Optimization	12 Hours
VELG	Suggested Evidence For Audit, TAE Workshop, Extending Assessment Practice, VET Question and Answer, Networking - NCVER, Copyright Issue	30 Hours
Total Hours as of 1 May, 2017		475.5 Hours

Appendix C: Fire breaks out at NSU

A fire broke at North South University in the city's Bashundhara Residential Area on Sunday night, reports UNB. Fire Service and Civil Defence sources said the fire originated at the power substation on the basement of the 10-storey university building around 8:45pm. On information, eight firefighting units rushed in to douse the blaze, said operator Nazrul Islam at the Fire Service and Civil Defence control room.

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