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The other day a colleague was commenting on her lack of skills. My response was that if she sat down and really thought about it, and listed the knowledge and skills she has acquired over the years through her education, training and work experience, she might be surprised at how much she is able to do.

Her next step would be to think about what further knowledge and skills she would like for her career development, and for her present job. A fairly straightforward, but useful, exercise in evaluating 'where am I at in my professional development, where do I want to be, and how am I going to get there'. All part of enhancing professional practice through continuing professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning.

Professional practice is a process of problem solving and decision making through selection of the best knowledge available to us which is suited to the situation.

However we often make those decisions without separating the thinking from the doing, without reflecting on why or how we make decisions, on how we use our body of knowledge built up through theoretical education and training and practical experience.

The inherent danger in using this tacit knowledge which is implicit in our actions is that we can overlearn—that is, make decisions based on assumption and error through relying too much on precedence and familiarity, rather than taking into account the particular circumstances, and new knowledge.

Generally, training activities are developed to impart and reinforce new knowledge and skills. Often the evaluation of CPD training activities on completion focuses on the presentation and content of the activity—whether you liked the colour of the presenter's suit and found the content relevant!

What is rarely measured, and may not be easily measured at that stage, is how the training has benefited those undertaking it in their professional practice. There is a subjective assumption that the training will benefit merely because it is undertaken, to acquire competence in specific areas.

However, that benefit is not realised unless the participant can reflect on what has been learnt and apply it in practice.

Next time you undertake a training activity, take some time to think about how you are increasing your knowledge and skills; and how you will apply them in practice; and think about what else you need to know. One way of doing this is to keep a diary in which you write your thoughts about the training and how it will change your professional practice. This can be done at stages during an extended training activity, or on completing a shorter activity.

After the training, go back to your diary from time to time and consider whether your professional practice has changed and how. Measure this against the aims and goals you have identified in your CPD and career plan. If your practice hasn't changed at all, then ask yourself why—was it the quality of the training activity, the relevance of

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the training, or just that, instead of incorporating your new knowledge and skills you are still relying on old habits and familiar procedures.

The Board of Education is currently reviewing criteria for recognition of formal award courses in library and information studies, to incorporate practical experience. Such a criterion would aim to evaluate how a work practice component enables students to successfully relate their theoretical knowledge base to their practical experience.

The Board is also developing a strategy for implementation from 1995 which will provide members with the option of a more structured approach to their CPD. Significantly, the strategy will include a component to empower members to identify and evaluate their CPD needs and develop a career plan. As well, the Board proposes offering members education and training opportunities in partnership with providers with proven expertise. The overall aims are twofold:

- to give members the opportunity to ensure that their knowledge and skills are of a high standard and applied to good practice;
- to let members use their CPD and career plan in workplace performance appraisal and assessment of training needs.

Give me a ring if you would like to discuss any aspects of the CPD strategy, career planning or training needs for members.

The next issue of *inCite* will feature information on competency standards development, competency based training and assessment. ■