

CPD Report

Reflective Account of my first three months at UWTSD Swansea

Student: Liza Zanoni

Module Number: ACBA4003

Tutor: Allan Nantel

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Introduction

Embarking on a career in construction felt much like driving to Swansea, starting from Llanddewi Brefi, as a metaphor it took the form of a twisting, turning rural route comprising of small 'B' roads leading to progressively busier 'A' roads and dual carriage ways, ending in a confusing, maddening one way system to prior to reaching the IQ building UWTSD at Swansea Marina: I suspect in the coming year to make, metaphorically, many further wrong turns both in college and work but in putting together this assignment, I have realised that reviewing and acting on these events, through keeping up a consistent CPD practice will enable me to identify and form plans of action to surmount long term obstacles to progressing both as a student and professional.

Continuing with the road sign analogy, I have summarised below, my construction journey, (literally covering many miles to attend site visits and meetings during the last three years which eventually brought me to joining the course at University Wales Trinity St David (UWTSD) Swansea; here is the story so far:

The Beginning of my Construction Journey



Fig: 1 The B3434 road leading out of my home village Llanddewi Brefi (Kidd, 2009)

The B4343 symbolises a work shadowing experience I had at a local design studio, where I was asked to assist with marketing and photography for a project, involving renovation of an old mill using European funding, I never expected this experience to ignite an interest in construction, but on visiting back and forth to gather images for the client's website, I observed the on-going renovation works and decided I would like to apply my managerial and other wider skill set to construction. It was not a smooth progression interrupted due to lack of local opportunities post maternity leave so life included other paid work and voluntary work at this time, before I joined

Arycyd Ltd, a small local building company, to gain hands on construction experiences as an apprentice project manager, with a view to progress as a construction manager.



Fig: 2 The A485, representative of the second leg of my construction journey (Regan, 2007)

The next stage

Travelling north on the A485 to Aberystwyth and continuing on the A487 and A493 leads to Aberdyfi, where I managed a four storey Georgian listed building renovation, together with new build extension works within the same project. This was a baptism of fire in many respects, (due to lack of construction knowledge of technology, materials, regulations and laws) but helped me gather enough experience to then tackle a renovation and retrofit project in nearby Machynlleth, which had many difficulties, not least of which that the roof, (Containing 5 dormers and a rare bat colony), had to be programmed in accordance with habitat licence conditions, as well as planning permissions; this was a fraught but exciting time, leading to the next symbolic road:



Fig: 3 Road sign on the A40 symbolising third leg of my construction journey to date (Atherton, 2007):

A fork in the road....

Half way represents a landmark birthday and a metaphorical fork in the road, the preceding 18 months had been a continual unrelenting schedule, not allowing for time to review or evaluate issues that kept arising; consequently on completing the project at Machynlleth, I focused my efforts back to career development to explore problems encountered on projects to date, which I concluded stemmed from a lack of general construction knowledge, which could only be remedied by further training/studies, to improve my own skill base (so I could progress from assistant project management status) and also in doing so, increase the capability for the company to tackle bigger projects.

On reaching this decision, serendipitously, an opportunity arose to attend the Level 3 Course In Understanding Repair And Maintenance Of Traditional Pre-1919 Buildings, at Twyi Canolfan, Dinefwr Farm, Llandeilo, which I was

inspired to apply to after attending a heritage impact assessment workshop, earlier in the year.

On completing the course successfully, (and after dismissing initial fears of being too old) I decided to take a leap of faith and apply for the HND course in Construction Management at UTWSD; for which I had previously seen an advertisement in 2018, but was too late to apply at the time. I revisited the programme literature after completion of the retrofit project in Machynlleth and decided to embark on the next leg of the journey.

New Beginnings...



Fig: 4 Road sign depicting A4067, road that leads to the IQ Building, from my usual college commute (Regan, 2007).

The Way Forward

The A4067 represented getting accustomed again to academic study, I did however enjoy the module content and researching for assignments, e.g. learning how to apply primary source data to produce my first real construction report, or looking at the application of materials such as steel and concrete in low and high rise buildings; the latter was challenging, as my construction experiences to date did not really entail construction of new builds on this scale, nor had I previously consider principles of civil engineering to this degree. I was also motivated to follow up on topics such as Biophilia and its application in the built environment, along with use of BIM, robotics and carbon zero strategies, not only in response to assignment targets but from considering the importance that to add to understanding of these areas, as they are become mainstream to future construction.

Networking with my peers and the general course curriculum also suggested new directions for widening my construction management practice, however new information gathering, was swiftly superseded by issues arising in matters of presentation, communication, and structuring and writing assignments.

This forced me to complete a through analysis, using 'The CIPD's Eight Questions' (Megginson & Whitaker, 2007, p. 146), as a basis, the results of which are presented in a summary table at the end of this account, (see Table 1 below), which aided reprioritising my CPD goals for 2020 as a whole, to tackle shortcomings both as a student and construction professional. I found working through this process enabled me to remain focussed on unearthing the key successes/ failures of my on going college/work experiences and to led to forming another long term goal: to work towards MCIOB status; in fig 5 this is likened to joining the M4, representing another leap in professional development and would also give me the necessary abilities to aiding the company to prepare for inclusion in local consortia, concerned with development/retrofit work at public sector level, in addition to continuing with private development and renovation works.

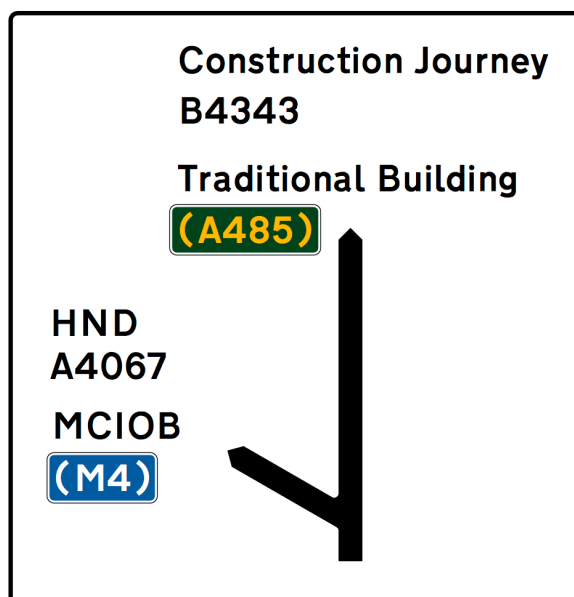


Fig: 5 Diagrammatic representation of 'the Way Forward'

Table 1: presenting the results for my completion of 'The CIPD's Eight Question' process, regarding evaluation of development in 2019 and plans for 2020

Last Year: 2019	Next Year: 2020
What were the three most important things you learned last year? How did you learn them? 1.I recognized a need to widen my knowledge base with respect to new industry innovations, in addition to learning about general construction technology building practices and regulatory laws to enable further application and build towards future professional resilience on a personal /company level: Learnt: Paying attention to common issues arising on site and researching ways to overcome these, i.e. researching digital project management applications to increase efficiency and sharing of team documentation on and off site, to minimize build errors. On attending Twyi Canolfan and College sessions, particularly	How do you identify your learning and development needs? 1.Primarily feedback from course work, tutors, mentor and peers and reviewing these against previous and ongoing work experience, will help establish where I should focus my learning/development needs for 2020. 2.Feedback from work colleagues, clients and employer review meeting will also form the basis for defining priorities regarding future learning and development needs.

professional skills module and construction technology, where I become aware of new innovations and processes, in module classes and assignment work.

2. Discovered lack of confidence and ability to structure assignments and development of critical thinking (basically representation in written presentation forms) I make prodigious lists, do lots of research and produce 'long winded' accounts, that do not reflect the preparatory effort spent. This is overreach and symptomatic of needing to learn new techniques to resolve this issue and improve my written report/presentation skills. This includes updating my IT skills to enable, production of better graphics, tables, diagrams and report formatting, to present a better professional output.

Learnt

Via catalogue of disasters in authoring initial module essays for

college over the last three months, both final outputs were disappointing to me with respect to presentation of the facts and did not reflect the background effort in preparation.

Feedback from employer and mentor that my written communications, e-mails and risk analysis reports are sometimes unclear and not well structured.

3. Following on from points 1 and 2 I identified feeling increasingly uncomfortable in group meetings for work/onsite, as felt challenged in terms of being concise, clear and prepared, with respect to preparing relevant agendas to help achieve productive meetings for exchange of information delivery of key progress points and to help form effective follow on Action Points to keep projects moving forward.

Vital to sharpen this up as my role requires producing effective communication, on a daily basis, during projects, on core-project progress / supplier and client

matters. Tackling point 2, along with participating fully in college group work and presentation exercises, help to improve shortcomings regarding communication. Learnt: From CPD Review process, examining recurring themes from previous experiences of feeling inadequate regarding chairing meetings and presenting information as a teacher and taking part in voluntary committee work Feedback from employer and mentor that my written communications, e-mails and risk analysis reports are sometimes unclear and not well structured.	
What value did you add (to your organisation, clients, colleagues) through professional development? 1.During a recent tender bid submission, our company received	What are your three main development objectives and how will you achieve them? 1. Keep a CPD Log and Journal, attend relevant workshops throughout

acknowledgement of having produced a well considered and professional package (despite missing out, due to being too high cost wise)

I had never taken part in a tender process previously, but used new knowledge gained from Construction Technology /Material Sciences modules in college, to put forward queries regarding issues concerning previous site contamination and a change requiring siting a cess pool close to listed building foundations, this was taken on board by the designers, who communicated this back to all tenderers; though we were not successful for this bid, the firm praised our approach and have put us on their considered 'go to list for future projects.

2.I have also arranged funding and organised for my colleagues to attend NVQ Level 3 Artisan Trade courses, to enhance general skill level in the company, and to help contribute to the general

2020, via Self Learning and development: with particular attention to: CIOB, CIPD and ILM online and published resources, papers, journals.

2. Revamp CV and assemble professional portfolio, via self learning and development using, on line web resources CIOB/CIPD/ILM, coaching sessions with External Mentor/CITB officer and using guidance from HND professional skills sessions 2019

3. HND and NVQ- complete 1st year successfully, via improving Critical thinking/Essay writing/Report writing/IT presentation skills.

Also from self learning and development; books, online resources, tutor feedback, colleague feedback, class mate feedback and development

development of the company. 3.Introduced a methodology to effectively cost up smaller jobs (not requiring external Contract Administrators/Project Management due to falling under minor works category), developed this in conjunction with external mentor; subsequently applied this to an interim job query, which was successfully obtained in part to presenting costs in a concise and professional format.	
What are the tangible outcomes of your professional development in the last 12 months? 1.Taking the decision to attend NVQ Level 3 course, resulted in a tangible qualification, and accumulation of knowledge I could apply to future renovation works for traditional and listed buildings. 2.I have also successfully or not, completed three assignments for college and have been able to produce during the process a coherent review of 2019 and a congruent plan of objectives for	What differences do you plan to make (to your role, organisation, clients or colleagues)? 1.To set clear boundaries, regarding work e- mail responses; as I work remotely there is a expectation, I am always available to answer queries, this has led to highly stressful episodes, especially during busy project periods, not surprisingly it has led to miscommunication and errors, and a ‘fighting fire’ mentality rather than a reflective problem solving stance to client/team communications; setting clear boundaries, it will give me time to present considered, correct

betterment of performance for 2020, these pieces of work will take place of pride in my developing CPD portfolio as they represent a turning point in identifying (and forming plans to resolve) longstanding issues regarding making verbal and non verbal presentations academically and in the work place, this will significantly help me to develop as a management professional.

responses which will improve and build on presenting a professional face for the company and minimise internal errors/misunderstandings.

2. Suggest we work on our heritage building register profile: to make new connections with suppliers and potential clients, presently no other external means of advertising is employed; building on the register entry, the next suggestion would be to put together a 'business card website' to showcase our more recent project examples.

This will could effectively target clients looking for our skill set and experiences in renovating and converting traditional and listed buildings, leading to not only increased cash flow, but enhanced reputation/examples of work.

3. Conduct post mortem session with the team, regarding last tender bid submission; this is to establish where we could improve, regarding costs, analysis of initial package, choice of suppliers/subcontractors regarding provision of quotes and finally brief

	examination of tender law/processes: the net result is to provide a collectively derived protocol for the team to work with, for forthcoming tender submissions, to improve on our previous response and hopefully be successful in the next round.
Has anyone else gained from your professional development? How? 1.By choosing to re- train, the knowledge and new skills I am bringing into the company, can be utilised to make improvements regarding quality management, project management and general presentation, this has a knock on effect in helping to attract new clients and business connections with other professionals (see section 2), by enhancing our general competency and in doing so increasing our wider company reputation. 2. My External Mentor has to review his own CPD practices, as part of his own ongoing professional development and has been found it useful as a starting point to observe my own (and on-going) process in gathering	What arrangements will you make to next review your professional development needs? I would like to review my professional years in Jan 2021,using the same format of a CPD log, reflective report with the addition of a keynote presentation, which I would like to deliver to individually to my mentor, CITB officer, Year Tutor, team mates and selected class mates, to gather feedback regarding rate of improvement, in delivering precise, focused presentations.

resources and evaluating and reflecting on experiences/evidence in order to undertake this particular assignment.	
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