



Continuing Professional Development in the third sector

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Introduction

This project will use action research to look for the perceptions and barriers to accessing continuing professional development (CPD).

The main aim of the project is to propose ideas for further research to adapt the current training framework



Research Questions

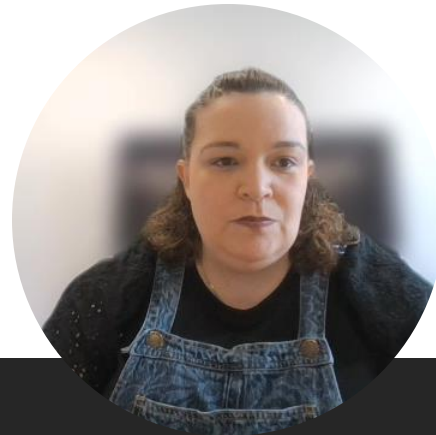
The project has two research questions that it aims to answer:

1. What are the perceptions of the current members of staff regarding the current training and continuing professional development accessibility.
2. What could be done to reduce the barriers to further training and continuing professional development.



Methodology

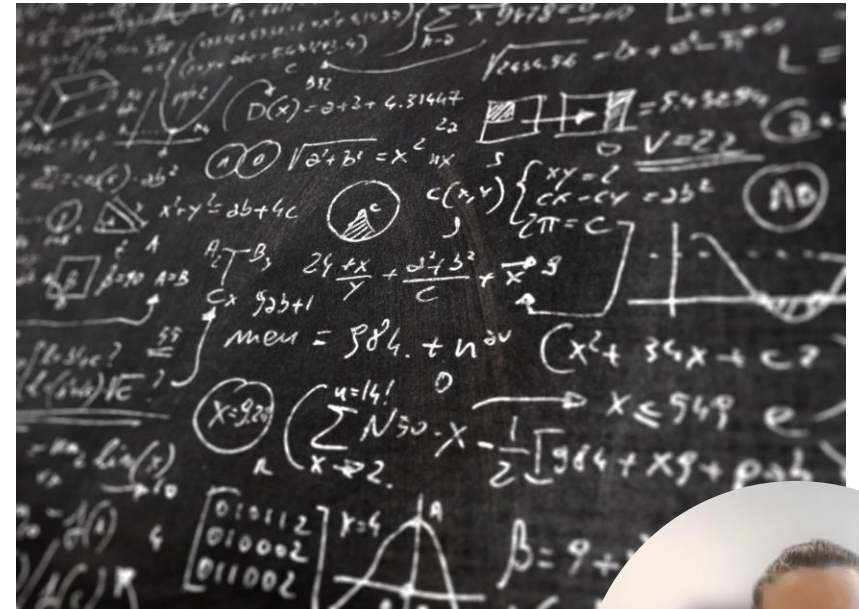
- ❑ This project used action research to undertake the research.
- ❑ Action research is a form of systematic enquiry for practitioners to evaluate their own practice. (University of Bristol, 2024).
- ❑ Action research is usually cyclical in nature with the main driver being to improve professional practice and the development of professional knowledge (McAteer, 2013).
- ❑ This project aimed to use a literature review and Gibbs reflective cycle (1988) in order to propose recommendations for further research.



Issues with Research

This project initially intended to carry out primary research by using online questionnaires sent out by email to my colleagues at Thrive WA.

The ethics committee had approved the research in principle pending minor changes to the form, however, due to delays submitting the ethics form. Primary research could not go ahead due to time constraints.



Literature Review- CPD

Adult learning contains a vast number of activities, formal or informal which equips staff with basic skills for professional development (UNESCO, 2015)

CPD is the general term used to describe any learning activity that is seen to enhance skills and abilities (CPD UK 2020).

CPD can consist of several different activities which includes, attending training courses, mentoring, reading books and articles and even watching relevant television programmes (Freidman 2012).

There are several recommendations for the number of CPD hours that a profession needs to achieve, for instance, VAWDASV workers need to log 35 hours a year (VAWDASV 2016) registered Social Care Wales practitioners need to log up to 90 hours (Social Care Wales 2016)



Literature Review- Third Sector

There are approximately 200,000 third sector organisations in England and Wales, employing over 1 million people and supporting 4.3 million volunteers (The Community Foundation 2022.a.)

The Third Sector is a vast area of expertise, and many employees demonstrate transferrable skills, which is not often recognised by formal qualifications, however, the third sector should play an important role in recognising and certifying formal and informal learning (Di Rienzo, 2020).

Only 45% of third sector organisations have a dedicated budget for staff training, only 60% offer flexible working and only 53% can support staff and volunteer development (The Community Foundation 2022 b.)



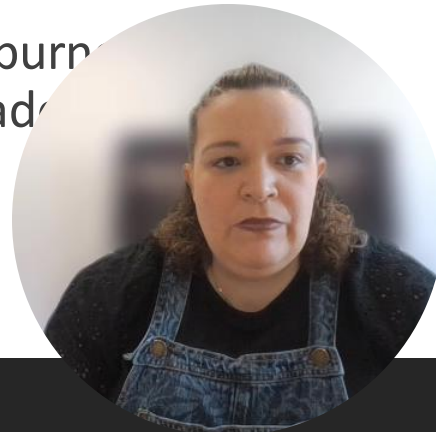
Literature Review- Barriers

Walker (2021) found that most organisations will have targets to meet for professional development but noted that the main barrier is staff cover while on training days.

The cost for some is a barrier, for instance in the USA teachers have a limited budget for training and have very little choice in what they learn (Zepeda 2019).

Freidman (2012), named four main barriers to CPD which included cost and time away from work. Freidman (2012) also noted that logistics such as location and even the lack of information about courses was a barrier for some.

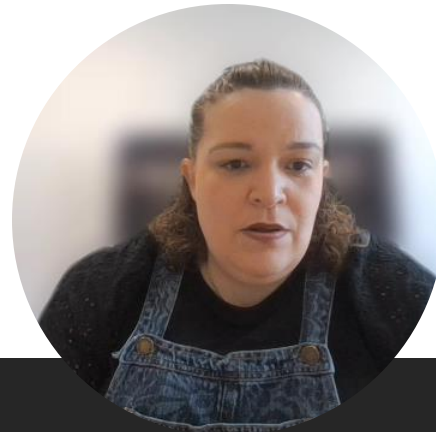
Time constraints regarding clinical work, administration duties, family demands and burnout were also barriers to accessing CPD and where events were held virtually, it often made learners feel disconnected (Okpalauwaekwe et al 2024)



Reflection Findings

CPD is the name given to any activity that provides adults in the work force additional education and training to ensure their skills are kept up to date (CPD UK 2020) and can consist of several activities such as reading, observation of other professionals, attending training courses or seminars (Friedman 2012).

There are several barriers to accessing CPD, with the main one being cost, with a number of pieces of research suggesting that budgets for additional CPD are limited or virtually non-existent (The Community Foundation 2022 b.) and time constraints around the working day and family also prevented some people from accessing CPD. (Okpalauwaekwe, et al., 2024).

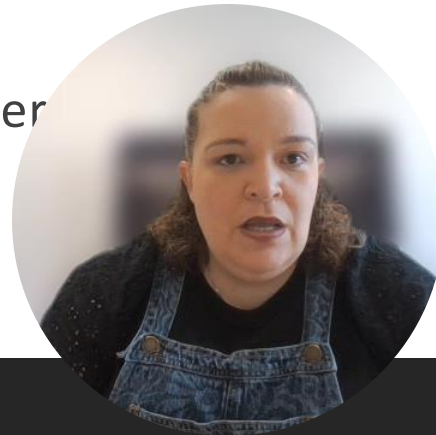


Recommendation for Further Research

Due to the limited secondary research on CPD within the third sector as the current research focused on “traditional” professions such as teachers, health care workers and social workers and the recommendation that the VAWDASV workforce engage in CPD hours.

The research currently has received approval from the ethics committee for primary data collection and therefore it would be my recommendation for the research to go ahead. The following timescale would be:

- By July 2025, the online questionnaires would be produced and sent out via email. Staff members would then have 14 days to complete the survey.
- By September 2025, the data is to be analysed and has the aim to show current barriers and will aim to propose solutions to ensure that all staff are accessing CPD.



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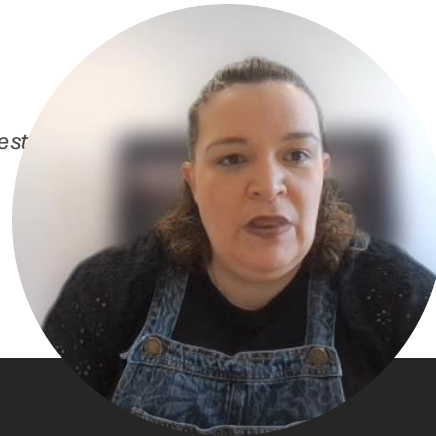
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Thank you

