The ETF Model for Continuing Professional Learning and Development (CPLD) in the Further Education and Training sector

The purpose of the model is to communicate the characteristics of planned, formal continuing professional learning and development (CPLD). It expresses the key features which should be incorporated into its design, so that teachers and trainers have the best opportunity to change their practice effectively and intelligently. The ETF will use it as a guide when commissioning CPLD programmes. It can also be used by anyone else engaged in CPLD, to help them ensure their work has impact and is evidence-informed.

Continuing professional learning and development in the sector
The further education and training sector is characterised by diversity: of teaching roles; of organisations undertaking teaching and training; of curriculum content, both academic and technical; of curriculum levels, from pre-entry to levels 5-7 and, finally, diversity of learners across age ranges and qualification histories. This heterogeneity demands an intelligent balance of principles-led design and open-minded responsiveness to context.

Continuing Professional Learning and Development (CPLD) in the FE sector is about being able to help teachers to make permanent positive changes in their contextualised practice and equipping them, in turn, to manage change in the contexts they teach and manage within.

Evidence for the CPLD model
CPLD in the sector can take many forms: face to face or online, on and off the job, individual coaching or group training sessions. As in other sectors, CPLD in FE should be planned, continuous, supported by institutional leaders and evaluated. Planning, evaluation and support are the features that make learning formal rather than informal and accidental. The use of professional standards and frameworks is a helpful underpinning for CPLD, as this reinforces the climate in which it takes places – referencing national benchmarks, expectations and professional behaviours all support positive development.

The research literature and accounts of practice tell us that the most effective CPLD is that which creates a supportive emotional climate for learning; includes relevant and timely content; teaches new skills; and allows these to be deliberately practised (Korthagen, 2016). As part of an evidence-informed cycle, it should be planned, continuous, supported by institutional leaders and evaluated. Planning, evaluation and support are the features that make learning formal rather than informal and accidental. It is best linked to a whole institution culture of improvement, sometimes called a ‘whole organisational approach’. It is further enhanced when practitioners are given the opportunity to evaluate the impact of their learning on their practice and knowledge, at different levels from individual to organisational. This embedded evaluation approach is thus part of the learning that enables sustained change. (Guskey, 2000).
## The CPLD Model

The following table acts as a guide to ensure the standards we expect when commissioning training and development are clearly met by our partners, and form part of the contractual expectations of being an ETF delivery partner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The ETF CPLD will:</th>
<th>The reasons for this are:</th>
<th>To achieve this principle, partners will:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Set clear expectations</td>
<td>Practitioners can accurately assess whether the CPLD will meet their needs. The effectiveness of the CPLD can be meaningfully assessed.</td>
<td>Provide pre-course materials that accurately reflect the content and delivery of the course ensuring participants arrive prepared and ready to learn.</td>
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<td>2. Use appropriate facilities and materials that engage and motivate practitioners to learn and develop</td>
<td>A conducive and inclusive learning environment optimises the scope for learning and maximizes equality of access.</td>
<td>Arrange spaces of adequate size, well equipped with relevant technology. Set a facilitative, enabling atmosphere and adapt to individuals. Ensure that materials reflect and appreciate the diversity of FE.</td>
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<td>3. Be focused on learner outcomes</td>
<td>Evidence shows that more effective CPLD has a clear focus on learner outcomes</td>
<td>Keep a clear focus on how the CPLD will help participants bring about sustained changes to their practice which will have clearly defined beneficial effects on learner outcomes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Model effective teaching practice</td>
<td>The medium is a part of the message</td>
<td>Ensure that all materials and trainers are informed by a high level of knowledge and understanding of effective pedagogical principles and practice (these may change over time and should be systematically reviewed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Be designed with reference to Professional Standards or the Leadership Excellence Framework</td>
<td>It supports a strategic, career-long approach to CPLD and the attainment of professional statuses – QTLS and ATS.</td>
<td>Plan training and development so it is mapped to the Professional Standards and make explicit to participants which ones they are working on.</td>
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|   | Support participants to: | More effective CPLD is not a ‘transmission model’ but is a complex interaction of feedback and improvement cycles, where participants take ownership of their own development aims and their achievement. | 1. Set outcomes, aims and objectives so that participants can reflect upon and gauge their progress against these.  
2. Plan development so that practitioners become confident with the tools and strategies they can begin to use, including being able to use data and evaluate evidence and other sources of innovation.  
3a. Ensure that opportunities are provided for participants to critically evaluate the professional learning, informing construction of future programmes and activities.  
3b. Use embedded evaluation approaches that encourage practitioners to assess their skills and knowledge prior/at the start and after the course, and understand next steps |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 1. measure their progress  
2. reflect on their learning  
3. plan ‘what next’? | Evidence shows that more effective CPLD is collaborative in nature. |  
Ensure that participants can engage, share and collaborate as part of the training and development. Identify opportunities for working in collaborative networks, including online. |
| 7 | Encourage collaboration and sustainable relationships for continued learning | Evidence shows that more effective CPLD is collaborative in nature. | Design intervention programmes that are evidence informed, delivered and reviewed by staff with relevant and up-to-date teaching and training expertise. Construct development activities based on current research findings about what constitutes effective and impactful teaching, learning, assessment and leadership. |
| 8 | Be sound in its evidence base, informed by effective practice and research | Evidence shows that more effective CPLD is based on robust, recent and relevant research / evidence | Make host organisations aware of the aims and content of the CPLD and secure support from management of the participants. |
| 9 | Encourage continuous change in practice to improve learner outcomes | Evidence shows that more effective CPLD has the active ongoing support of host organisations. | Provide opportunities for practitioners to consider the relevance of the CPLD to their teaching specialism or role. Provide opportunities for practitioners to consider how they organise and sequence learning of knowledge and skills in their specialism. Enrich trainer knowledge so that it is current and responsive to curriculum changes. |
| 10 | Enhance and extend specialist knowledge | Evidence shows that more effective CPLD is subject specific. | The ETF must be able to evidence value added to participants and their learners as a result of its publicly funded programmes.  
Embark on development activities with commitment to evaluating impact aligned to the ETF’s evaluation framework, currently embracing aspects of the Kirkpatrick, COM-B and Guskey frameworks. |
| 11 | Be designed to enable practitioners and others to assess and evidence changes in their knowledge, practice and skills | The ETF must be able to evidence value added to participants and their learners as a result of its publicly funded programmes. |  
Embark on development activities with commitment to evaluating impact aligned to the ETF’s evaluation framework, currently embracing aspects of the Kirkpatrick, COM-B and Guskey frameworks. |
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<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td>Have opportunities for deliberate practice</td>
<td>Evidence shows that more effective CPLD contains opportunities for participants to engage in deliberate practice of the new skills and techniques learnt.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td>Be sustained over time</td>
<td>Evidence shows that more effective CPLD is sustained over time.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td>Utilise the ETF branding and relevant material</td>
<td>It assists with the profession’s awareness of the ETF. It provides reassurance of quality.</td>
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Evidence Informed Practice and the CPLD model

To successfully deliver the ETF CPLD model, it is essential that there is a common understanding of how to be evidence informed – in the design of a programme, in delivery methods, and in the expectations of both trainers and trainees. This expectation underpins all educational and professional practice in the CPLD model.

The term Evidence Informed Practice (EIP) can be used to represent a wide variety of practices and ways of working, both at personal and institutional levels. This section seeks to establish how the ETF defines EIP, and how best to implement it.

The ETF expectations

1. The ETF seeks to ensure all work it commissions and delivers is based on the best available robust and credible evidence. This may encompass a range of approaches as diverse as the sector we serve.

2. It is an expectation that delivery partners and associates working with the ETF are aware of relevant up to date research and data related to the area in which they work. They must also understand how best to interpret or contextualise this information for their audience in an appropriate and effective way.

3. All delivery commissioned by the ETF must refer to or demonstrate use of evidence whether explicitly (via references and citations) or through supporting documentation available to participants and the ETF on request. Wherever relevant, ETF data and evaluation outputs must be used and referenced.

4. Delivery models must ensure participants are supported to reflect on their learning, question and evaluate how the programme can impact on their practice. This must wherever possible include reference to the Professional Standards or Leadership Competency Framework.

5. Internal and commissioned staff must support evaluation of programmes and incorporate lessons learnt. In this way, they will support the development of the ETF’s own evidence base of impact and effectiveness, including wider sources of data and research. Evaluation plans must be considered at the outset of any programme by internal and external partners.

*Education research is often emergent, and commonly contested. It is essential that the evidence base on which a programme is constructed is reviewed systematically to understand any challenges to accepted practice or current best evidence. Effective practice is often context-dependent, and we should not generalise its applicability. Therefore, the ETF will not usually publish lists of recommended researchers or publications as being ‘accepted practice’, unless clearly dated and demonstrating a snapshot of relevant learning at that time.*
The ETF Principles of Evidence Informed Practice

1. EIP is a cycle of professional learning where changing habits and improving learning is evaluated in order to inform planning for the next phase of training and development.

2. EIP is activity that is influenced by knowledge from research: ‘evidence informed’ rather than ‘evidence based’ because that term allows practitioners to exercise professional judgement.

3. EIP is about developing practitioners’ engagement with research, their capacity to appraise and aggregate evidence and to analyse its relevance to their context.

4. Key questions to inform decisions made about what intervention and implementation are:
   a) What problem is being addressed and how will we know if it has been solved?
   b) What does reliable external research evidence tell us about the proposed intervention?
   c) What does relevant practice evidence tell us about the proposed intervention?
   d) Have pertinent contextual factors been taken into account?

5. Time and space need to be allocated for research and opportunities to work collaboratively.

6. Leadership vision and support are key factors in the success of EIP as they help create the cultural, learning and organisational changes that are needed for an EIP approach to become embedded.
CPD or CPLD?

CPD (Continuing / Continuous Professional Development), has been a phrase used to describe staff development for many years. There are also similar phrases, for example PD (Professional Development), or PLD (Professional Learning and Development) which are used interchangeably (and accurately for some training expectations). The challenge with these terms is that they fail to fully capture the need for staff involved in CPD to learn new skills, reflect on them over time or share them with others, as exemplified in this framework. The addition of a learning ‘L’ to the model and the ETF adopting the idea of Continuing Professional Learning and Development seeks to drive a shift in our understanding of what good staff / organisational / personal development needs to be:

- Continuing (ongoing and reflective)
- Professional (related to a range of working practices, and situated in personal context)
- Learning (impacting new information or skill, with the opportunity to practice and learn more)
- Development (building on previous learning, and relating to a longer term ‘vision’ of the skills and knowledge being shared)

This small but fundamental change also reduces confusion as it has a very familiar sound to teaching staff in our sector – we are still referring to staff development activity, but framing our expectations more clearly.

For additional information

The ETF Professional Standards and supporting documentation

The ETF Leadership and Governance Excellence Framework

The ETF guide to Evidence Informed Practice

References and further reading


Janet Hamilton Broad (2016) Vocational knowledge in motion: rethinking vocational knowledge through vocational teachers’ professional development, *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 68:2, 143-160, DOI: 10.1080/13636820.2015.1128962 To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2015.1128962


