



Motives and activities for continuing professional development: An exploration of their relationships by integrating literature and interview data



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SUMMARY

Background: To effectively enhance professional development, it is important to understand the motivational factors behind nurses' engagement in particular types of learning activities. Nurses have various motives for professional development and utilise different learning activities. Not much is known about how these relate.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between nurses' motives and activities for continuing professional development, by examining in which types of learning activities nurses engage, with which motives, and whether certain motives are associated with certain learning activities.

Design: A qualitative study using semi-structured interviews.

Settings and Participants: Twenty-one nurses in academic and general Dutch hospitals participated.

Methods: Interview data on nurses' learning biographies were analysed using a literature-based framework on motives and learning activities for continuing professional development. As recent classifications of nurses' motives for professional development were absent, the literature was reviewed for motives, using three databases. The interview transcripts were analysed for motives, learning activities and their relationships.

Results: Nine motives and four categories of learning activities for continuing professional development were delineated. Increasing competence was the primary motive that stimulated nurses to engage in self-directed learning during work, and in formal learning activities. To comply with requirements, they engaged in mandatory courses. To deepen knowledge, they registered for conferences. To develop their careers, they enrolled in post-graduate education. Five other motives were not mentioned as frequently.

Conclusions: Specific motives were found to be related to engagement in particular learning activities. Nurses could use these findings to increase their awareness of why and how they develop professionally, and managers and human resource development professionals could develop approaches that would better suit nurses' needs.

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Introduction

Continuing professional development (CPD) of nurses is crucial to maintain a competent, motivated workforce, and to provide safe patient care. There is a growing notion that employees act strategically in this professional development (Poell and Van der Krogt, 2014a). Professional development is largely influenced by employees' values, norms, attitudes and competencies (Davis et al., 2014; Poell and Van der Krogt, 2011). 'Acting strategically' does not imply that employees always

plan their CPD deliberately; however, they learn by using methods that suit their interests and goals, and choose how to engage in what is afforded them (Billett, 2006, 2010). This notion is confirmed by Poell and Van der Krogt (2014b), who found that nurses created individual learning paths; they engaged in learning activities around a theme they deemed relevant. Even when engaging in mandatory learning activities, people can exercise agency by engaging superficially or wholeheartedly in learning (Billett, 2006). Gradually, employees learn to strategise by choosing those CPD activities that best suit their motives (Poell and Van der Krogt, 2011).

Research on how nurses align their CPD activities with their motives for CPD is limited. Studies have shown that nurses have varied CPD motives including career advancement and core skill retention (Tassone and Heck, 1997; Nolan et al., 2000; Griscti and Jacono, 2006; Brekelmans et al., 2015), and develop through a broad range of CPD activities (Estabrooks et al., 2005; Berings, 2006; Eraut, 2007). Some

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Table 1
Framework on CPD motives and learning activities based on the literature.

Motives	Description
To increase competence in present job	To keep up to date, improve knowledge and competence to optimise proficiency in current work.
To deepen knowledge	To seek knowledge for its own sake, to satisfy an inquiring mind and to deepen knowledge.
To enhance career development	To increase possibilities to move sideways into a new area of work, through extended nursing roles or another nursing specialty, or to other jobs within or outside nursing.
To comply with requirements	To meet expectations, comply with policy or formal requirements of an authority, such as the employer and the professional body.
To supplement gaps in prior education	To supplement narrow or unsatisfactory previous education.
To increase self-esteem	To boost self-esteem and increase self-confidence during practice.
To get relief from routine	To prevent becoming 'stale' and bored, and get a break from the routine of work or home.
To build a professional network	To meet and interact with other professionals in order to share knowledge and build professional networks.
To improve health care	To enable service development and improve healthcare at the ward.
CPD activities	Description
Learning from organised learning activities	Formal learning activities at the ward, hospital, or outside the workplace setting. These includes conferences, postgraduate education, clinical teaching sessions, (online) courses, etc.
Learning from experience	Knowledge and skills gathered through experiences on the job. Learning happens as a by-product of working.
Learning from social interaction with colleagues	Learning with and from peers, students, and other healthcare professionals through exchange of knowledge, consultation, feedback, and observation.
Learning from consulting media	Self-directed learning through media including the Internet, books, journals, protocols, etc.

studies mention a relationship between CPD motives and CPD activities. Bahn (2007a) for instance, described how nurses use mandatory sessions to keep up to date, engage in informal learning activities to enhance knowledge, and enrol in continuing education because they feel that they are lagging behind new entrants. Others investigated nurses' motives for specific learning activities, such as a post-registration degree course (Dowswell et al., 1998) or a Master's programme (Watkins, 2011). However, to our knowledge, no study has explicitly examined the relationship between various CPD motives and different CPD activities.

The aim of the study was to explore how CPD motives relate to CPD activities. We investigated (1) which types of CPD activities nurses engage in, (2) with which motives they do this, and (3) whether certain motives are associated with certain learning activities. This was achieved by analysing interview data on nurses' learning biographies using a framework of CPD motives and activities that was based on the literature. This paper thus attempts to synthesise and combine studies on motives and learning activities. This knowledge adds to our understanding of why nurses engage in certain types of learning activities and could help organisations to gear CPD approaches to suit nurses' needs better.

Review of the Literature

To be able to analyse the data of the interview study, we developed a framework on CPD motives and activities based on the literature.

CPD Motives

As there are no recent classifications of nurses' motives to engage in CPD activities, we searched the literature for empirical studies on CPD motives. The literature search was performed in July 2014 using three databases: CINAHL, PubMed, and Web of Science. Search terms used were *nurs** AND motives (OR motivation OR motivational orientations OR reasons) AND continuing professional development (OR CPD OR continuing education OR CE OR continuing nursing education OR CNE). We focussed on the titles and abstracts, and did not limit our search to a specific time frame. To be eligible for inclusion, publications must have reported (1) on motives for CPD, (2) on an empirical study, and (3) in the English language. Studies on students, midwives, and staff development specialists were excluded. The search returned 278 publications, which were screened for relevancy. Twenty-two articles met the inclusion criteria. Most of the excluded literature used the word motives and CPD or their synonyms in the abstract, without

studying nurses' motives for CPD. The majority of the studies ($n = 17$) had quantitative designs using questionnaires. Four were qualitative, using individual or focus group interviews, and one had a mixed approach. To develop a framework on CPD motives, the first author listed the motives mentioned in each study in a table: motives in the quantitative studies were taken from the instruments used, and motives in qualitative studies were derived by coding the texts for CPD motives. Then, the authors grouped these motives into categories of similar motives. We derived nine categories of nurses' motives to engage in CPD activities. An overview of each category and its description is given in Table 1, and of the supporting studies in Table 2.

Our classification of nine motives is largely based on two scales: the Education Participation Scale (EPS) and the Participation Reasons Scale (PRS). The EPS, consisting of six categories of motives, was developed in adult education by Boshier (1971, 1977). The PRS was developed by Grotelueschen et al. (in DeSilets, 1995): they expanded on the EPS and reoriented it into a professional context. They changed, for instance, Boshier's category of *social welfare* ('to become more effective as a citizen of this city') to *professional service* ('improve my individual service to the public as a nurse'). Eight of the 22 studies made use of one of these two scales.

The literature shows that nurses' motives to engage in CPD activities have varied natures. First, they differ in terms of content. Motives such as 'to increase competence' and 'to deepen knowledge' are directed primarily towards the present job, whilst 'to enhance career development' focusses on future tasks. These motives have a professional nature, whilst others, such as 'to increase self-esteem' or 'to get relief from routine' are more personal. Generally, professional motives seemed to have primacy over personal motives. O'Connor (1979, 1982), in her two studies of 843 and 1152 nurses, concluded that the desire to improve professional knowledge had the strongest influence on participation in continuing education programmes. This was confirmed by Dealy and Bass (1995); similarly recent studies corroborate that the need to expand professional knowledge is a major reason for nurses to engage in CPD (Ryan, 2003; Murphy et al., 2006; Ni et al., 2014).

Second, motives differ in terms of locus. A distinction is often made between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivation relates to genuine interest in the activity itself, whilst extrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity because of external factors. Extrinsic motivation is considered non-autonomous; however, self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) posits that extrinsic motivation can vary in its level of self-determination. The least autonomous extrinsically motivated behaviours serve to satisfy an external reward or demand, whereas in the most autonomous form, external regulation is fully

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