

Professional development

Introduction

Professional development refers to the gaining of, and expanding existing skills and knowledge in order to improve one's performance at the job as well as attain personal and organizational goals. Moreover, professional development programs and trainings instill leadership qualities and traits, and refine existing ones, in employees and trainees. This is true in all fields and professions, ranging from schools to clinical practitioners to business organizations.¹

Professional development seeks to refine, fine-tune and train the human resource of the organization primarily, so that the functions and workings of the organization improve themselves. This happens through a continual focus on organizational functions and roles of the employees, as well as their job descriptions and expectations. This includes a primary focus on communication, emotional intelligence, teamwork, coaching and training internally, and leadership.²

Communication refers at its core to the sending and receiving of messages and information across the organization, internally as well as externally. Professional development ensures that employees are capable of understanding the context of information sent and received, and can send feed-back. Moreover, it also makes sure that the noise-level in the communication process is reduced or neglected professionally, and that information passes across and through the organization without hindrance. Moreover, professional development also allows employees to deal with conflicts and resolve them ethically and professionally. Trainings and programs under the flag of professional development allow employees and trainees to understand and identify the reason of the conflict instead of the symptoms, and work mutually towards resolving them. Another one of the prime areas of focus for professional development is the emotional intelligence and the reliance on the same of the employees. Emotional intelligence refers to a capacity of an individual to control and influence one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others. This trait is important to develop and refine because it allows effective leadership in situations of chaos and conflict, and allows employees to negotiate and perform ethically and consistently. Team-work is also an important area of focus in the professional development course and training. Organizations today focus on achieving goals through team work, which is more prized than individual effort. Professional development allows individuals to understand different team dynamics and different roles that are expected to be played as a team-member. As such, trainees are also made aware of different forms of teams and how teams form and disband, and different team expectations and member performances. This is important for an organization to know because employees are expected to work with more than one team, often simultaneously, within one productive year of the organization. Professional development also allows in-house trainers and managers to be aware of different training styles, and different trainings that the employees frequently need. This familiarizes them with the training needs and methods, and allows them to arrange for in-house or out-house trainers and facilitators to allow maximum productivity.³ Leadership development and styles, and incorporation of the same in different situations by different people also come under the program of professional development, and are important because it allows effective guidance for the organization.⁴

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Professional development likewise is important and integral in the field of dental schools as well.⁵ Dental schools and clinics continue to have programs, trainings and seminars on professional development.⁶ It provides the essential qualities that a dental practitioner needs today: the ability to lead, follow, understand, communicate and negotiate.⁷ Professional development at dental schools foremost seeks to achieve a change in the mentor-student relationship and the mentor leadership style. From being a dictator leader, professional development helps mentors and teacher achieve a charismatic leadership style.⁸ This makes the teacher transit into becoming instructors and leaders.⁹ Second, professional development involves the social construction of professional-practice expectations through mentoring, peer sharing and critique, and systematic induction.¹⁰ The process of professional development grooms students, and inspires and encourages them, giving way to the development of the dental leaders of the future.¹¹ Professional development and leadership programs have had a positive impact on an individual's personality and confidence. They have allowed them to not only study, but also practice the profession with more diligence and devotion.¹² It is, therefore, essential to have development programs and trainings for dental students as well as practitioners as it allows them to understand and maintain balance between research, teaching and professional practice of the field.¹³ Furthermore, these programs and trainings prepare the individuals for the real world and harness their expectations.¹⁴ Lastly, professional development also allows the revamping and the improvement of curriculum in dental schools.¹⁵ This change may be achieved by taking on board all faculty members, and allowing everyone to have a say in the new curriculum, and openly criticize or appreciate it. This will improve it as well as integrate all faculty members in the implementation of the curriculum.¹⁶

Conclusion

It is, therefore, essential to have continual professional development, in dental schools and clinical dental practices, as is important for all other fields. Continual professional development ensures learning at all stages of education and practice. It gives way to a revised and updated understanding. The refresher of curriculum, along with teaching techniques allows better learning and application of taught concepts and knowledge.¹⁷

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Conflicts of interest

Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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