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Continuing Competency: A Critical Component of a Certification Program

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Certification is the Hot “Credential” of the Year!



WHY?

Employers Value Certification

- Competencies are generally more valid and transparent because of employer engagement
- Quality certifications are time limited and require “re-certification”
 - Mandatory updating
- Certification can be taken away from an individual for being unethical or incompetent

In a Climate of Life-Long Learning Where Technology and Knowledge is Changing at a Rapid Rate. . .

- Re-certification becomes as important as the initial certification process
- Most research has been via survey asking individuals to self-report what has contributed to their learning
- As important as re-certification is, we know very little about what contributes to individuals remaining “competent in their profession”
- Recently, Oklahoma physicians convinced their legislature that they should not have to maintain specialty certifications from the Board of Medical Specialties
 - **Why did this happen?**
 - Requirements became too demanding
 - Physician did not see the relevance of the requirements
 - Physicians felt it had little to do with “competence” in their practice
- We are throwing the “kitchen sink” at “competence” without having the research to back it up

What Methods Do Certification Bodies Use to Document “Continued Competency”?

- Continuing professional education
 - Often not specifically related to current practice of the individual
 - Individuals couldn’t apply the knowledge in their work environment
 - Often not specifically related to job analysis “competencies”
- Examination – often inappropriately giving the same initial examination
- Portfolios
 - Always a question of “who did it?” and “who can verify the work?”
- Continuing practice in the field
 - Many certification bodies don’t require that the individual actively practices in the profession
 - If you take professional development courses, you can be “re-certified”
- No felonies
- Continued good health to physically perform the job

Informal Learning in the Workplace

- Many professionals find that the workplace is where most continual learning occurs
- This is supported by survey research projects
- Learning experiences at work:
 - On-the-job problem-solving requires new knowledge and skills
 - Colleague interaction
 - Reading resources that are immediately available

What Do We Know About a Work Environment that Facilitates Informal Learning?

It is complex with many factors affecting informal learning:

- **Psychological**
 - Learning is enjoyable and non-threatening
 - One must “learn” to be a self-directed learner
 - Success breeds success – competence is key to intrinsic motivation
- **Social**
 - The more interactive the person is with others, the more opportunities for learning exist
 - It takes good communication skills and observation skills
 - Role models are important – Social Learning Theory
 - “Caring relationships”
- **Cognitive**
 - Ability to “question” and “problem solve”
 - Ability to “search” and “access” information
- **Physical-Environment**
 - Introducing “novelty” into the environment
 - Resources are quick, close, and easily accessible
 - Resources are written more in a “problem focus” format

Examining the Issue

- If the work environment is a major contributor to “continued competency,” how should it be used in the re-certification process of certification bodies?
 - Tomorrow, Workcred will bring together a task group to study this issue
 - The focus will be on creating sociological and anthropological research models to begin developing a deeper understanding of “continued learning” in the workplace
 - If you are interested in joining this research effort, please let me know

for more information

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