

CHAPTER I

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction to Continuing Professional Development

Continuing Education or Continuing Professional Development is the way that helps professionals to upgrade their skills and knowledge related to their field of work. The lifelong learning in the form of continuing professional development (CPD) has become the need of every professional. One such profession is a dental profession, having amalgamation of art and science. It is desirable for the dental practitioners to maintain their competency and upgrade their skills and knowledge for benefit of the public and profession. Dentistry as a profession is evolving rapidly and continuously in technology and research. There are ever-increasing expectations from the demanding patients hence the practitioners needs to keep pace with newer trends to live up to these expectations. Since there is a constant evolution of treatment options and therapeutic concepts with newer dimensions added to the professional skills and knowledge, the obligation to guarantee an up-to-date and quality dental care would be a priority for each and every dental practitioner.

1.2. Curriculum planning for Continuing Education

The Continuing education, just as other disciplines of education, should have a curriculum and prescribed standards to be maintained. The planning of curriculum in education is a continuous dynamic process and should always commence with research. This is aptly applicable for Continuing Dental Education, where the dentist is free and capable to select the subject of interest, instructor of choice, duration and frequency of participation. The preference and choice of learner plays a pivotal role in this type of

Education, except in the situations of compulsory continuing professional development wherein it is mandated by the regulating or licensing body to do the courses recommended or certified by it. The challenges in present time are the substandard and inappropriate programs run in the unorganized manner resulting in wastage of time, financial and human resources.

1.3. Need Assessment for Continuing Education

The need assessment is a primary and fundamental step in planning process for any continuing professional education. Preferably assessment of the needs should be done both at the start and at the end of planning. When performed at the beginning, it helps in formulating the learning objectives. At the end of the planning process it acts as a vital tool for introspection, whether the activities planned and executed fulfilled the learning objectives or not. The learning needs can be broadly measured as the Real need and the felt need. The real need is the existing deficit in a person, groups, institutions, or society that may or may not be acknowledged by those having the need. It is usually recognized and determined by an objective observer apart from other stakeholders. The Felt need is a deficiency noticed by a person himself or herself, a group, or an institution. Here the educational preferences are given by stakeholders themselves and hence is associated with higher level of commitment and motivation. The felt need may or may not be a real need. These felt or perceived needs may be identified through the surveys with open or closed ended questionnaires or interviews with the prospective participants like dental practitioners in this case (**Peterson, 2004**). But the best way to identify the real needs is through the strategies of objective evaluation like audits, performance testing, and observations of patients. Some of the countries like United States, United Kingdom, Canada and some European countries have made the continuing professional development as a mandatory prerequisite for renewal of

practicing license. Such CPD programs in these countries are recognized and accredited by the respective governing body (**Schleyer T, 2002**). They record the involvement of participants and monitor the quality of programs. It is observed that the policies in Asian countries are more relaxed. In India there are discussion and recommendation of mandatory CPD. Though it is not uniform all over the country, the final decision is left to the discretion of regulating state council. Some of the State dental councils have made it mandatory to have some prescribed CDE point before renewal of their annual registration. In United States there is a Continuing Education Recognition program (CERP) by American Dental Association for recognition standards and procedures for different CDE programs (**ADA CERP, 2016**). In India there is deficiency of such framework or uniform guidelines on which the continuing education programs should be run.

1.4.Continuing Education Overview

Continuing Education is a form of post-secondary education, to obtain either the auxiliary certifications, or as requisite licensing credits mandated by various governing bodies. Almost any professional can undergo continuing professional development programs for personal or professional up-gradation; engineers, nurses, doctors are the professionals who have to undergo these kinds of courses for their professional upgradation. This form of higher education is targeted exclusively to the adults who have already attained their college or university degree.

In 1907, University of Wisconsin–Madison was the first academic institution in the US to offer a formal continuing education program. The Empire State College, in 1969, as a unit of the State University of New York, was the pioneer in the United States to exclusively focus on delivering higher education to adult learners. The University of

Florida created its own Division of Continuing Education in 1976 and offered most of the courses in evenings or on weekends to accommodate the schedules of working students (Schugurensky, 2009).

Various bodies, such as institutions & universities, professional bodies and associations, private companies, and even individuals, may deliver Continuing Education. Universities also provide postgraduate degree, diploma or certificate courses in various fields such as clinical skills and research. Continuing professional development is a systematic way of learning to ensure the professional competence, up-gradation of knowledge and enrichment of skills and practical expertise, through structured / formal learning activities or self-directed / informal learning activities.

1.5. Continuing Medical and Dental Education

The profession of dentistry is changing very fast. Driven by patient's desires to enjoy optimum oral health, function and esthetics, dentistry is witnessing a rapid and continuous development of better materials as well as techniques. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in dental profession is highly essential to constantly appraise the skills and knowledge in order to stay proficient to accomplish their true potential. Continuing Professional Development helps the professionals to maintain the highest standards of clinical practice through continuous learning and improvement.

Similarly, the format which provides continuing education to the medical practitioners to upgrade their knowledge and skills about the recent and emerging areas of medicine to maintain competency in their respective field of practice, is termed as Continuing Medical Education. These programs may be in the form of live didactic lectures or workshops, articles in journals or periodicals, online programs, podcasts or any other form of Information & Communication Technology (ICT). There is a process of

research, development and review of the programs in continuing medical education by the experts before they are delivered to the practitioners in the field of their respective specialty. These activities are planned and executed by different bodies, including Professional associations, Medical education departments, Private and Government Hospitals, teaching institutions like medical colleges, nursing colleges and universities, and various online courses **(Al-Jarallah K and Premadasa IG, 2003)**.

1.6. Adult Learning concept in Continuing Education

Continuing Professional development mainly falls into the domain of Adult Education. Over the past decades there is a gradual change in the concepts of Adult Education to lifelong learning. When we talk of the Adult learning there is an inter-relationship between the Education, work and socio-demographic parameters. The adult learning signifies different models and theories for explaining the different methods and situations that helps in optimized learning past secondary school education **(Merriam, 2001; Smith and DeFrates-Densch, 2009; Yang, 2003)**. Learner's willingness-to-learn, self-directed learning, active participation in the process of learning and a specific focused approach to the skill and knowledge acquirement plays a very important role in Adult learning. Active learners' involvement in securing and grasping the latest knowledge and dexterities is pivotal to the entire adult learning theories **(Kolb, 1984)**. The reflection and self-assessment of the knowledge or skills mastered **(Schon, 1988)** are the paramount in the concept of Adult learning.

The various adult learning techniques are very effective in moulding the learners' knowledge and skills, beliefs and attitudes because of implementation of the novel and unique techniques.

Adult learning theories describes the ways in which the adults assimilate knowledge, skills and attitudes. Adult learning plays a very important role in our higher education system in general and medical education in specific.

1.7.Global Higher Education System

The higher education system at the national level, their shapes and sizes, have been among the concerns for the policies on higher education amongst the developed nations worldwide for past few decades (**Papadopoulos G, 1994; Lengrand P, 1970**). Today the higher education in these countries is at definite crossroads of internal dynamics and external expectations, and is shaped by pragmatic interests and impact of community at large, managements in their supervisory as well as steering positions, higher education institutes and their faculties, last but not the least learners. They fascinate all the stakeholders as they see a continuous development and growth of higher education. But it is also accompanied by an endless debate about its desirability, and an enduring uncertainty or dynamics – where the magnitude of homogeneity or heterogeneity is constantly changing through general structural changes, and by consolidating the positions of these higher education institutions on the world ‘map’.

The continuing professional development in general and the continuing dental education specifically has been an area interest for the researchers for a very long time in various middle-eastern and western countries. The main reason is these programs play a very vital role in raising the standards and dynamicity of the professions there. Continuing professional development in India has evolved over the period with advancement of the higher education structures in the country. In western world the Governing bodies and Councils have regularized and regulated these programs like ADA-CERP in United States. There are periodic checks and reviews of these programs

wherein these professional development programs are modified as per the need of the practitioners and emerging trends in the field. However, very limited information is available on continuing professional education amongst general practicing dentists in India. There is a lack of any published data regarding the need assessment of the Practicing dentists in India and about the mechanism for accreditation/recognition of the Professional Development courses in India.

1.8. Need for research on this topic

Assessment of current status of Continuing Dental Education is an effective and systematic approach to analyze the state of knowledge, skills, interests and the problems faced in order to design the effective professional development program. Hence out of the concern to know about the current status and preferences for continuing dental education among dental practitioners in India, this study was planned to assess the current status of Continuing Dental Education amongst the practicing dentists in state of Gujarat. A survey of this kind could provide a useful baseline data for future studies on Continuing Dental Education as well as information for the formulation of continuing professional dental education by institutions and professional bodies. This research also attempts to come out with the recommendations for continuing professional development among the dentists in India.