

BICC to hold CPD courses for architects

by Denis H. Camilleri

THE need is being felt for CPD courses for professionals to be held regularly, and it is being proposed to hold them on a quarterly basis.

These will consist of one-day courses held at the Building Industry Consultative Council's (BICC) Lija premises, for a maximum of 30 participants at a time. The first course dealing with "Eurocode 2 – Design of Concrete Structures" is scheduled for November 15.

These courses, which are supported by the Chamber of Architects and Civil Engineers, would deal with the nine structural Eurocodes, which are envisaged to be mandatory on the profession in eight years' time. Eurocodes offer the opportunity of harmonised design standards for the European Construction market and the rest of the world.

To achieve this, the construction industry needs to become acquainted with the Eurocodes so that maximum advantage can be taken of the opportunities.

Besides engineering topics the BICC envisages future CPD courses dealing in architectural theories and valuation principles. These are to be brought in line with European estate valuation and appraisal standards, for adoption within both EU member states and the developing markets of central and eastern Europe.

Concurrently with these courses, the BICC is offering a two-year Construction Middle Management Certificate course on a once weekly basis, in conjunction with the Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering, a three-month masons' course (two days per week), and various tradesmen's courses in conjunction with the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC).

Periti (architects) need to keep up with developments in the profession

and the construction industry. The pace of change is such that it is not longer enough to rely on the results of initial education, however good.

There is a need for continuing commitment to enhancing skills and capability during the whole of a professional career. It is the responsibility of each individual architect to take on this form of CPD for his or her own benefit.

Before defining CPD it is worth pointing out that professional devel-

opment can now be split into two areas: Initial Professional Development (IPD) which bridges the gap between the educational base and attaining professional qualifications, and Continuing Professional Development, which applies post-professional qualifications.

Definition of CPD

CPD is defined as "the systematic maintenance, improvement and

broadening of knowledge and skill and the development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties throughout the practitioner's working life."

Attaining a professional qualification is not the end of the road and is just one stage in the process of life-long learning. A professional needs to change and develop to remain competitive in an evolving industry.

The Chamber of Architects and Civil Engineers recognises the obligations of the profession in respect of CPD: "Warranted members shall

have a duty to update and broaden their professional knowledge and skills on a continuing basis."

It is the Chamber's intention to ensure that its members remain at the forefront in maintaining and developing their professional competence for their own benefit and for that of society. Members should also help to further the formation and professional development of other members and prospective members of the profession.

Architects must compare themselves with other professionals and accept that as business develops and changes, they must keep abreast of those changes and expand their knowledge to maintain the appropriate professional standards.

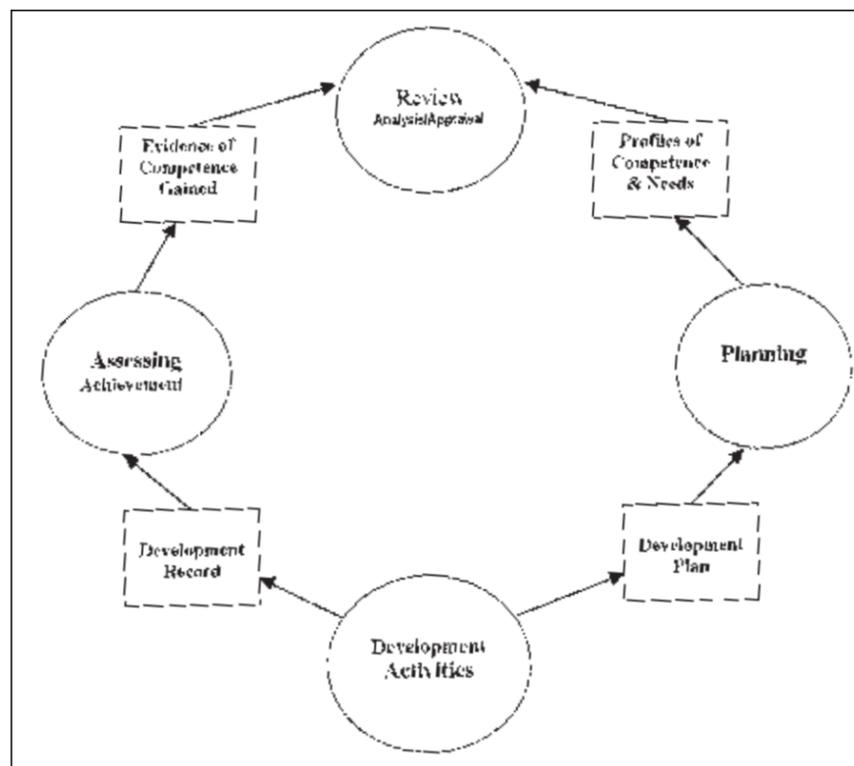
Rapid developments in technology, increased competition and the opening of new markets have placed even greater emphasis on the need to be well informed and professionally competent.

CPD is of benefit to the individual, employer and society in general.

Here are the benefits to the individual:

- CPD will maintain and enhance knowledge and skills improving work performance and confidence;
- Career prospects will be enhanced;
- CPD will focus an individual's career development allowing him/her to target specific areas for development;
- Individuals will have the skills to react to a changing profession more rapidly;
- Benefits to the employer;
- Employers will have a better skilled and more efficient work force;
- Staff will be more adaptable;
- Support from the firm as far as

(Continued on page 22)



THE process and the outcomes of the CPD cycle (model derived from the CPD Framework provided by the EUSCCIP – European Project for the Use of Standards of Competence in CPD for Construction Industry Practitioners, November 1997)

ROBERT MUSUMECI on public/private partnerships and their benefits to local councils – pages 26, 27

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Further training for architects

(Continued from page 1)

the employee's CPD is concerned will improve staff motivation and retention.

CPD activities

Attending courses is only one way of undertaking CPD. Although much value may be gained from investment in a tailored course based on organisation and business needs, there are other appropriate activities including:

- In-house presentations;
- Attending trade exhibitions and systematically gathering information and knowledge to develop as an engineer;
- Structural reading (test your understanding of the reading material);
- Work shadowing to add to your knowledge and expertise for routine tasks;
- Technical presentations;
- Writing reports/writing for publication;
- Preparation of CPD presentations to colleagues and other professionals;
- Exposure to new situations at work which require action;
- Participating in career conventions;
- Job secondment;
- Listening to training audio tapes and viewing CD Roms for research purposes and technical information;
- Participating in the Chamber's activities or membership of committees, where new initiatives and ideas are discussed;
- Sharing knowledge and expertise with others;
- Allied professions' events;
- Acting as a coach or mentor for a fellow professional;
- Lecturing at organised events;
- Research both on the job and for further qualification;
- Teaching (for those not in teaching posts);
- Self-study through reading text books or study packs;
- Validated and accredited qualifications;
- Formal distance and open learning courses; and
- Courses, conferences, seminars and workshops

How much CPD?

Learning should be an integral part of experience. Individuals need to use the demands and challenges of their job to improve and develop their skills and knowledge. Additional structured CPD is required to complement on-the-job learning.

The amount of CPD which should be carried out by an individual engineer depends on a number of factors; these include:

- The rate of change to the relevant technology;
- Changes in markets, legislation, etc;
- The specific requirements of his/her job;
- The career aspirations and age of the individual; and
- Recommendations of professional institutions

It is not sensible to lay down a prescribed target of CPD for all architects. It is the responsibility of every individual to determine, in conjunction with his/her employer, the appropriate amount of the CPD to be carried out.

In a structural way, review your past experiences and performances. Identify what competencies, skills, knowledge and understand you already have and what you need, taking into account your current and future job and career requirements and professional needs.

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is a

useful tool when undertaking a review. Periodic review will vary, but it should be done at least once a year.

Prioritise these identified needs, set target dates and identify appropriate development activities and commit the plan to writing in your Development Action Plan.

If necessary, also include any resources and support you may need to achieve your targets. Use the "Development Goals", "How will you measure a successful outcome?", and "What deadline have you set for meeting your targets?" sections of the Development Action Plan for this.

Ask yourself:

- "Where do I learn best." – Do you need peace and quiet or do you prefer a noisy background? You may prefer to learn at work, on courses, in a classroom, in a library, at home, or even on the journey to or from work;

- "What materials do I find most useful?" – Do you prefer to use books when you learn or a computer or study packs and guides, work-books or audio or video tapes?

- "What way of learning do I enjoy the most?" Do you prefer to learn by watching other people, listening to them, talking to them, or do you like to try things out for yourself? Do you prefer to work alone or in groups or through special projects and assignments?

The range of modes and materials available is vast and you should be sure to choose those that suit you best. Use the "possible activities" section of the Development Action Plan for this.

An important part of CPD is also the development of more general interpersonal and management skills that may be required by architects during their careers.

Therefore subjects such as management, communication, health and safety, finance, commercial matters, language skills, etc., can be equally valid topics for CPD if you consider they are necessary for your professional or career development.

Be sure to think about the resources available to you as this will affect your choice of activities.

Development activities may be structured, e.g. courses, seminars, workshops, conferences, service on committees and technical panels, distance and open learning packages and qualifications, technical authorship or preparation of lectures for organised events.

Development activities may also be unstructured, e.g. on-the-job research, experience of new and extended technologies, reading of books, journals and professional magazines and periodicals, experience in the workplace leading to a significant expansion of the engineer's knowledge base.

Assessing achievement

Reflect on your performance during development activities, particularly on those activities you have learnt most from and assess yourself in terms of new and improved levels of competence. Record your achievements against your development action plan and enter the details into your personal development record.

Once your targets have been met or circumstances require a change in targets or priorities, begin the review process again. CPD is part of a life-long process of learning and development and therefore the cycle is continuous. Periodic review will vary, but it should be done at least annually.

It is important to note that the most significant sections of your personal development record are the description of "Key Learning Points" and "Key Benefits" to you as an individual. CPD will work only if you make the effort. It is a personal matter which will help you develop your full potential and help you to prepare for and manage change more effectively.

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