

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) FOR THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN SOUTH AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

The South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) took a principled decision during a meeting on 23 and 24 July 2003 to adopt continuing professional development (CPD) as a requirement for registration to practise. This decision has positioned and committed social service professions amongst many other professions, nationally and internationally, to continue their professional development through “the systematic maintenance and improvement of knowledge, skills and competence throughout a professional’s working life” (Butler, 2003:18).

The premise of CPD is that no qualification or professional registration can guarantee that an individual’s proficiency will be maintained for the rest of his/her professional life (HPCSA, 2005). The underlying principle is that clients, service systems and the community have a right to services provided by competent and skilful practitioners (AASW, 2004/5). CPD is thus in keeping with a commitment of a professional body such as the SACSSP to equity and justice for vulnerable and disadvantaged people in society (AASW, 2004/5).

Butler (2003:2) asserts that the professional imperative for CPD is intrinsic motivation which is based on professional ethics. This implies that professionals have moral obligations to, amongst others, employers, regulatory and professional bodies, government in terms of the implementation of social service policies, and to the broader society (Butler, 2003:18). Ethical practice requires consistent and ongoing commitment from all concerned to update and develop the knowledge, skills and ethical attitudes that underpin competent practice. This perspective protects the public interest and promotes the wellbeing of all members of South African society (HPCSA, 2005).

The SACSSP’s view of CPD as an ethical as well as statutory obligation is aptly captured in the way that the CPD policy (2009) defines CPD:

A statutorily determined process that requires persons registered with the SACSSP to obtain a specified number of points annually in order to maintain ethical and high-quality service by attending or participating in activities of a professional nature in order to remain registered with the SACSSP.

The implementation of CPD for social service professionals is guided by the *Policy on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of persons registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions* (SACSSP, 2009).

Currently only social workers and social auxiliary workers are registered persons with the SACSSP and hence the focus of this article. However, CPD will also apply to other social service professionals who will fall within the ambit of the SACSSP once their professional boards have been established under the auspices of the SACSSP and their registration becomes functional.

The CPD policy has been shaped by wide consultations and the research findings of the pilot implementation of the 8th draft policy. The SACSSP ratified the 9th draft CPD policy on 19 March 2009 subject to a few minor amendments, which culminated in the final, 10th draft of the

CPD policy (July 2009). This final draft came into effect for registration purposes on 1 April 2010. Rules related to CPD will be published in the *Government Gazette* in terms of the Social Service Professions Act, No 110 of 1978, as amended.

This article presents the background and CPD brief; the process that was followed in formulating the final CPD policy; the key content of the CPD policy; and concluding remarks on CPD in general and social service professions specifically.

CPD BACKGROUND AND BRIEF

At a meeting that was held on 21 February 2001 the SACSSP considered the matter of continuing professional development as a requirement for social workers to remain on the Register for Social Workers. A decision was taken to investigate the implementation of a compulsory CPD system that is linked to the practitioner's registration status with the Council. This decision paved the way for a consultative approach in the drafting process of the CPD policy.

On 12 June 2002 the SACSSP conducted a workshop in collaboration with the then Joint Universities Committee for Social Work (JUC) (now the Association for South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI)) and with representatives of all major stakeholders in the social services sector to explore (1) the implementation of a system of CPD for persons currently registered with the SACSSP, and (2) the way in which such a process should be taken forward (SACSSP, 2002).

During this workshop, attended by 32 representatives from various stakeholder groups, a CPD Task Team¹ was constituted and mandated to oversee the drafting and piloting of the CPD policy and compile a policy for the implementation of CPD for the social service professions. In turn, the CPD Task Team mandated a smaller task group, referred to as the CPD Small Task Team, to start the drafting process. In the years after the CPD Task Team was constituted on 12 June 2002 nine CPD drafts appeared as the consultations, piloting and research processes unfolded, and comments and research findings were consolidated into the final (10th draft) CPD policy in 2009. Between June 2002 and July 2009 the CPD Task Team conducted its business through ongoing electronic medium discussions and 13 face-to-face meetings.

The respective CPD policy drafts were developed through various phases within a process which was informed by narrow and wide consultations. The SACSSP has continuously reported on the progress on CPD in newsletters, the website and provincial and regional meetings.

The consultations were undertaken in a participatory and transparent manner that included training institutions, major stakeholders in the social services sector, the constituency and other professional statutory bodies. The process also involved extensive internal consultations with the PBSW and the SACSSP. In the first phase the SACSSP wanted to solicit support in principle for CPD. The second phase was aimed at broad consultations on the 5th draft of the CPD policy, which was the first draft to be released by the CPD Task Team for comments. The third phase coincided with the provincial meetings, where the key findings of the quantitative

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research of the pilot implementation of the 8th draft of the CPD policy were presented and discussed. The research findings and the comments from provincial meetings culminated in the 9th CPD draft policy, which once again involved consultation and informed the final CPD policy (draft 10).

In addition to consultations, the process also included an in-depth literature study of CPD policies and guidelines of other professions, including the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) (2005); Engineering Council of South Africa (2005); South African Veterinary Council (2005) and the Australian Association of Social Workers (ASSW) (2004/5), and ongoing consultations with the HPCSA. All this provided valuable lessons in developing a unique CPD policy for social service professions.

CPD PROCESS

The development of the CPD policy incorporated two parallel processes. The one process focused on the different phases in developing the final CPD policy and the other process was directed at the accreditation of CPD group activities as submitted by service providers.

The CPD Approval Panel is responsible for the accreditation of CPD activities. For purposes of compulsory implementation of CPD, the Approval Panel is a body appointed by the SACSSP tasked to certify that activities and providers meet the required criteria for CPD purposes. The Approval Panel is constituted of a maximum of five experts in the profession, of which at least one shall be a member of the relevant professional board (SACSSP, 2009).

For purposes of the pilot project, the Approval Panel constituted four members of the CPD Task Team. The first step for the Approval Panel was to develop application and accreditation procedures. The Approval Panel met for the first time on 29 September 2003 and by the end of July 2009 had held 44 meetings to evaluate applications for the awarding of points for CPD activities. From 2003 to 31 July 2009 891 group CPD activities submitted by various service providers were approved. Service providers included employers, organisations, universities, individuals and professional associations.

The process in developing the CPD policy unfolded in the following phases.

Phase 1: Promoting and adopting CPD

During the first half of 2001 training institutions and schools of social work were requested to provide input on the need for, and ways to implement and structure, a CPD system (SACSSP, 2001). A similar request was put forward to organisations and employers of social workers and social auxiliary workers. The closing date for this survey was 31 May 2001. The main objective of the initial consultations was to promote CPD to social workers and social auxiliary workers, and to get their commitment in principle to adopt CPD and to participate in the drafting process of the policy.

The majority of training institutions and organisations were in favour of implementing a CPD system. Feedback indicated their view that not only will CPD ensure the maintaining and enhancing of professional standards, but it could lead to personal growth and development of the practitioner. The outcome of this survey was presented at the JUC conference held during September 2001 (SACSSP, 2002).

The first CPD draft, dated 26 August 2002, was electronically debated amongst members of the CPD Task Team. This process continued through three additional drafts, which appeared in September 2002 (second), January 2003 (third) and February 2003 (fourth).

Phase 2: Broad consultation

The 5th CPD policy, released by the Small Task Team in April 2003, was the first draft to be circulated for broad consultation to stakeholders, the constituency and prospective providers, and was followed up with a workshop for CPD service providers which was held on 6 August 2003. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss the policy and views on the application and accreditation procedure to implement the CPD policy.

During the development period of the CPD policy 19 information and consultations sessions were held between 2003 and 2008 to inform stakeholders and constituencies on CPD and also to receive inputs to further shape the development of the CPD policy. The information and consultations targeted service providers, prospective service providers, CPD participants and employers. In addition, numerous written submissions were received. Although the information and consultation meetings were mostly focused in Gauteng and Northern Cape, where the CPD policy was piloted for research purposes, feedback was received from all the participants throughout South Africa who voluntarily participated in piloting the CPD policy.

From the above information and consultation sessions, valuable inputs on the CPD policy in its respective draft formats were received, which culminated in three further CPD drafts, i.e. draft 6 (June 2003), draft 7 (July 2003) and draft 8 (September 2003).

Phase 3: Pilot of CPD policy and research

On recommendation of the CPD Task Team, endorsed by the Professional Board for Social Work, the SACSSP resolved that the 8th draft policy be implemented, on a voluntary basis, as a pilot project. More than one thousand practitioners signed up for participation throughout South Africa. However, only two provinces were selected, i.e. Gauteng and Northern Cape, to conduct research on the feasibility and content of the policy. The two provinces were selected in order to incorporate the broad spectrum of CPD challenges in both rural and urban-based work settings. The pilot project ran from August 2003 to 31 December 2004 and participants had to submit CPD portfolios of evidence of CPD points by 15 February 2005 (SACSSP, 2004). The qualitative phase of the research was conducted over a two-year period, 2005-2006, and the data analyses were done mainly in 2007.

Phase 4: Provincial meetings

Nine provincial meetings took place between 19 March and 6 June 2008. The provincial Departments of Social Development assisted the SACSSP with logistical arrangements for the meetings.

A staff member of the SACSSP and the chair of the CPD Task Team attended all provincial meetings. In addition, at least one SACSSP and PBSW member from the respective provinces attended the meetings. The meetings were facilitated either by the Registrar, President or a member of the SACSSP, or a person from the Department of Social Development.

The aims of the provincial meetings were to provide an overview of the CPD process and draft policy; present the key findings of the quantitative research findings on the evaluation of the implementation of the 8th draft of the CPD policy; and finally consult on the key aspects pertaining to CPD (SACSSP, 2008).

Phase 5: Final CPD policy

The integration of the research findings and the comments from the provincial meetings gave birth to the 9th CPD draft policy, which was once more widely consulted on before it was

adopted by the PBSW and ratified by the SACSSP in March 2009 on provision of a minor amendment, which culminated in the final (10th draft) CPD policy in July 2009.

CPD POLICY FOR SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSIONS (SACSSP, 2009)

The key elements of the Policy on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of persons registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) are outlined below.

Value and purpose of CPD

The underlying value of CPD is to maintain professional standards that promote excellence in practice. This value supports the purpose of implementing a compulsory system with which all persons registered with the SACSSP must comply.

The purpose of CPD is to ensure that registered persons retain and continuously develop their attitude, skills and knowledge to maintain professional standards and ethics that promote excellence in practice by enabling them to:

- build knowledge, skills and competencies;
- provide services that are relevant and appropriate, especially in the South African context;
- improve service delivery to individuals, families, groups, communities and organisations;
- facilitate reflective practice;
- keep abreast of current trends, research and developments in the profession;
- assert their professional view in multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary contexts;
- function effectively as a member of the multi-disciplinary team;
- keep motivated to continue with practising the profession;
- be supported by and network with other professionals;
- reduce occupational stress; and
- create opportunities to develop their own business in providing CPD activities.

Points and criteria for CPD activities

All registered persons (excluding learners) are required to obtain a minimum of 20 CPD points annually. There are two broad categories of CPD activities, i.e. individual and group. CPD points will be required in a mixed format of individual and group activities; however, there is no prescription regarding the number of points to be obtained in a specific category.

Each CPD activity is accredited on merit and a specific number of points are allocated to the activity linked to the criteria and within the indicated range of CPD points. CPD points are only allocated on completion of the CPD activity. A maximum of 10 accumulated points may be forwarded to the next year for a maximum period of one year.

Group activities

A group activity is any organised event, either face-to-face or via any electronic means where at least three people are grouped or assembled for purposes of sharing information, building knowledge, developing skills and/or influencing of attitudes on the subject of professional interest. Group activities include conferences, workshops, small group discussions and information sessions.

Group activities require approval from the Approval Panel as CPD activities prior to the commencement of the CPD activity. Submission of CPD points for credits for registration purposes is done by the participants as part of their portfolio of evidence.

CPD point allocation for group activities is based on the following criteria:

- Level of participation;
- Level of knowledge;
- Level of skills development;
- Duration of activity.

These criteria are applied within a range of levels as indicated in Table 1.

TABLE 1
RANGE OF CRITERIA FOR GROUP ACTIVITIES

Criteria	Range
Level of participation	Passive listener to active respondent
Level of knowledge (Bloom, 1956)	Basic information Understanding Application Analysis Synthesis Evaluation
Level of skills (Simpson, 1972) development	Perception Preparing for action Guided response with others' assistance Responding habitually Performing difficult tasks automatically Altering responses to fit new situations
Duration	½ day to full day 1 hour to two hours

The following group activities will be recognised for CPD points:

Conference/Congress/Symposium is a large gathering of people who meet in a local, regional, provincial, national (South African) or international context to discuss a particular issue of concern reflected in a specific conference theme and sub-themes.

Workshops refer to intensive study/work/discussions based on sharing and participation and non-credit-bearing short courses of no more than five days per CPD activity on a particular topic with the purpose of analysing existing knowledge and creating new ideas and knowledge, skills and competencies to address policy, practice and educational challenges.

Small group discussions include a minimum of three persons with a minimum duration of one hour and a maximum of two hours focusing on a relevant topic, which may include policies, legislation, book reviews, journal articles, case studies, sharing of best practice models and group supervision. Group supervision will only be considered for CPD points if it is planned, focused and structured with educational objectives on specific topics and/or aimed at skills development with clear evidence of participation. Small group discussions may include in-service training if it has an educational and development focus in a particular field of practice submitted in a programme format. Small group discussions may occur face-to-face or via an internet discussion group.

Information sessions assemble people to share information on a particular topic and/or consult stakeholders on new policy, procedures or guidelines to improve professional standards and practice with a minimum duration of one hour and a maximum of three hours.

The CPD points in Table 2 reflect the range of points that the CPD Approval Panel may allocate based on the abovementioned criteria.

TABLE 2
CPD POINTS FOR GROUP ACTIVITIES

CPD Group Activity	Range of points
Workshop Maximum 5 days	2-5 per day
Small group discussion Minimum: 1 hour Maximum: 2 hours	2 per hour 1 Hour: 2 points 2 Hours: 4 points
Conferences	2-4 per day
Information sessions Minimum: 1 hour Maximum: 2 hours	1.5 per hour 1 Hour: 1.5 points 2 Hours: 3 points

Individual activities

Individual activities refer to activities where a person is involved on an individual basis in an activity and the onus lies entirely on the individual to convince the Approval Panel of the relevance of the activity for CPD points. No external CPD accredited provider is involved. Individual activities include self-study, formal learning programmes, external examination, short learning programmes, paper presentations, research, authorships, peer reviews, policy analysis, membership and personal wellness. CPD activities of other professions may be recognised for points. The onus is on the registered person to prove the relevance of the activity for CPD points. The CPD Approval Panel reserves the right not to allocate points.

Individual activities are defined as follows:

Self-study of scientific articles and books which require reflection on scientific articles/books either according to a questionnaire in the particular journal (if available) or a guideline of the SACSSP.

Formal learning programme includes a whole qualification on any relevant topic related to the working environment with proof of registration, progress and successful completion of a whole qualification. For studies towards a master's qualification, points will be allocated for a maximum of three years, and towards a doctoral programme for five years. For a postgraduate diploma points will be allocated for a maximum of two years. Additional points will be allocated on successful completion of a qualification.

External examination refers to practitioners assessing postgraduate studies.

Short learning programmes refers to all short programmes, whether credits are awarded or not, and are inclusive of credit-bearing skills programmes and non-credit-bearing short courses.

Two short learning programmes are distinguished:

- A *short course* is a type of short learning programme through which a learner does not receive credits towards a formal qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF);

- A *skills programme* is occupationally based and when completed will accumulate credits towards a qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Paper presentations include a written paper presented in a plenary or breakaway session, guest lecturer at a higher education institution, introductory presentation in a panel session, poster presentation, web-based presentation or video production. Paper presentations include the preparation, presentation and facilitation of a discussion.

Research refers to an investigation by one or more persons into a particular field or area of practice to obtain facts that will inform practice and improve service delivery, and which culminated in best practice models and/or publications (individual activity).

Authorship entails publications in books, in scientific or practice journals, authored as a sole author, a co-author, editor or contributor. It also includes training manuals and protocols.

Peer reviews involve commenting on the professional activities and work of colleagues upon formal request, including monographs, manuscripts and book reviews, amongst others.

Position paper/legislative and policy analyses entail responding in writing to policies and legislative issues reflecting a critical analysis in order to influence or shape policies and legislation.

Membership includes evidence of being a registered and active member of any international, national, regional or local organisation which protect and promote the professional interests of the profession and professionals. A maximum of two points per person will be allocated for membership.

Personal wellness refers to a structured programme that is considered by the CPD Approval Panel as contributing to the individual's ability to cope more effectively with the demands of the profession.

The requirements and points for individual CPD activities are indicated in Table 3.

**TABLE 3
INDIVIDUAL CPD ACTIVITIES**

INDIVIDUAL CPD ACTIVITIES		
CPD activity	Requirements	Points
Self-study - Scientific articles - SACSSP Newsletter - Books	Submission of completed questionnaire	1 1 5
Formal Learning Programme	Proof of registration and progress	10 per annum
	Proof of relevant whole qualification	10 on completion
External examination (Applies to practitioners)	Proof from HEI	MSW dissertation: 4 Doctoral thesis: 6
Paper presentations - Conference presenter - Plenary - Breakaway group	Written submission	8
		6

INDIVIDUAL CPD ACTIVITIES		
CPD activity	Requirements	Points
- Guest lecturer at higher tertiary institution	Written submission	6
- Panel session	With introductory presentation	4
	Without introductory presentation	2
- Poster	Visual presentation	4
- Web-based	Visual presentation	4
- Video production	Visual presentation	6
Research		
- Best practice model	Written submission	10
- Publication (see “authorship” points below)		
Short learning programme (Based on level, duration and relevance)	Proof of successful completion	
- Short course		5-20
- Skills programme		5-20
Authorship		
- Book [<i>On publication</i>]	Proof of publication	Sole author: 30 Co-author: 15 Editor: 20 Contributor: 10
- Scientific Article [<i>on publication</i>]	Proof of publication	Sole author: 10 Co-author(s): 5
- Professional/practice article [<i>on publication</i>]	Proof of publication	Sole author: 5 Co-author: 2.5
- Training manuals/ protocols	Independent peer review <i>or</i> employer’s report	Author: 10 Co-author: 5
Peer reviews		
- Manuscripts	Invitation and acknowledgment of task completed	2
- Research proposals		2
- Monographs		4
- Book reviews		5
Position paper/legislative and policy analyses	Proof of written submissions	1-4
Membership (Maximum of 2 points)	Proof of current membership	
- Professional Association		1
- National/ provincial/ regional social service structure		1

INDIVIDUAL CPD ACTIVITIES		
CPD activity	Requirements	Points
- National/ international professional bodies - Union		1
Personal wellness	Proof of provider, programme and duration	1-2

There may be instances of a specific individual activity not included in the list of activities of the SACSSP's CPD policy, but the activity may warrant consideration for the allocation of CPD points. In such cases the registered person should compile a substantial motivation and keep it in her/his portfolio of evidence.

ACTIVITIES ACCREDITED BY OTHER PROFESSIONAL COUNCILS

Activities approved for CPD purposes by other professional statutory councils or professional boards may also be approved as relevant activities with a certain number of CPD points. The CPD Approval Panel will consider such activities in terms of their appropriateness for the professions registered with the SACSSP and the criteria.

In this category a registered person has two options with regard to the submission of the activity for CPD:

- Submission of the activity as an individual activity to be approved for the allocation of CPD points. Proof of attendance and the programme must be included in the portfolio of evidence, indicating the CPD approval number of the other professional council, as well as the number of CPD points that were allocated to the CPD activity. The Approval Panel of the SACSSP will then consider the relevance of the activity for the social service professional and allocate the number of CPD points that the person may obtain.
- The activity may also be submitted by the provider to the Approval Panel of the SACSSP for consideration, particularly if a number of social service professionals are likely to attend. The normal procedures will then be followed to approve the activity as a CPD group activity and to allocate the number of CPD points. It is important to note, however, that the points allocated will be in alignment with the SACSSP's CPD point system and not with the applying professional council's point allocation for the particular activity.

Application and registration requirements

Application and registration requirements apply to persons registered with the SACSSP, non-practising registered persons, first-time registrations, registered persons practising outside the RSA and restorations.

Persons registered with SACSSP

- Each registered person must maintain a portfolio of evidence of CPD activities to the value of 20 points for each financial year.
- This portfolio of evidence must be submitted only at the SACSSP's request, which will be based on a random selection. It is obligatory to begin accumulating CPD points from 1 April 2010. The first random selections for portfolio of evidence will commence after 1 April 2011.

- Submissions of portfolio of evidence will be in a cycle of three years.² Portfolios must provide evidence of accumulated points to the value of 20 points for each of the financial years from 1 April 2010.

Non-practising registered persons

When non-practising registered persons re-enter practice, they will be obliged to commence with the accumulation of CPD points in the year of re-entry.

First-time registrations

Anyone who registers for the first time in a particular year, with specific reference to the year after graduation, will be obliged to commence with his/her CPD programme in the year of registration. However, the person will only be required to submit CPD points for registration purposes in the following year.

Registered persons practising outside the RSA

Registered persons who are practising abroad are required to comply with CPD requirements.

Restorations

Any person whose name has been removed from the register will be obliged to commence with accumulation of CPD points in the year of restoration.

NON-COMPLIANCE³

The Approval Panel will investigate the reasons for non-compliance after which the names of non-compliant practitioners will be sent to the relevant Professional Board to follow up.

The Professional Board may take the following actions:

- A letter will be sent to the practitioner requesting a reason for non-compliance. The practitioner will be required to furnish the Professional Board with a letter of explanation within two weeks of receipt of the letter of enquiry;
- Should the explanation be acceptable, the practitioner will be given six months to comply with the CPD requirements. Evidence of such compliance must be received by the Professional Board within two weeks of the end of the six months period;
- Should the practitioner not comply with the requirement his/her name will be forwarded without delay to the Committee for Preliminary Inquiry to deal with the matter according to the Rules relating to the acts or omissions of a social worker, a social auxiliary worker or a student social worker, which shall constitute unprofessional or improper conduct and the Regulations regarding the conducting of inquiries into alleged unprofessional conduct (Social Service Professions Act, No. 110 of 1978 as amended).

Functions of stakeholders

Stakeholders in CPD include the SACSSP and Professional Board(s), the approval panel for CPD activities and providers of CPD activities.

² This means that each registered person will be required to submit a portfolio of evidence at least once in three years. However, due to the random sampling technique, a call for submission by registered persons may be more than once in the cycle of three years. Submission will therefore range from a minimum of one to a maximum of three in a cycle of three years.

³ With acknowledgement to the *Continuing Professional Development Guidelines for the Health Professions*, 21 June 2005.

SACSSP/Professional Board

The SACSSP will accept responsibility for the following:

- Establishing a basic infrastructure to ensure an efficient CPD system;
- All administrative processes related to the CPD system;
- Determining the criteria for the approval of CPD points;
- Appointing and supporting the CPD Approval Panel in collaboration with the Professional Board;
- Promoting CPD;
- Monitoring and evaluating the CPD system;
- Quality assuring of CPD activities;
- Creating and maintaining an internal database of approved CPD activities and service providers. The delegated official allocated by the SACSSP will maintain a register with the particulars of each approved activity, the number of CPD points allocated to the activity and the approval number allocated to the activity by the SACSSP.

Approval Panel for CPD activities

- All activities and points must first be approved by the CPD Approval Panel based on the criteria and requirements for CPD points as articulated in the CPD policy.
- All approved CPD group activities will be allocated an approval number by the Approval Panel.
- The CPD Approval Panel may decline to approve applications if such applications fail to meet the criteria.
- When any disagreements arise between providers and the Approval Panel, the application for the approval of the CPD activity will be referred to the Professional Board for consideration during a full meeting of the Professional Board.
- The Approval Panel shall have guidelines for the approval of CPD activities and the allocation of CPD points.

Providers of CPD activities

- Prospective providers must submit applications in the format prescribed by the Professional Board.
- An activity is accredited for a period of one year.
- Applicants will be required to pay a set fee for the processing of each CPD activity. The prescribed fees are:
 - R100 for a CPD activity offered to practitioners at no cost to the practitioner;
 - R500 for a CPD activity offered to practitioners at a specified/registration fee.
- On completion of the activity, the provider must provide a certificate to the registered person, reflecting the approval number of the CPD activity, as well as the number of CPD points and the particulars of the person who completed the activity. This certificate must be kept in the registered person's portfolio of evidence.

For application forms and procedures to apply for the accreditation of CPD activities and submission of portfolio of activities by participants, see the *Policy on continuing professional development (CPD) of persons registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions* (SACSSP, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The CPD policy of the SACSSP is the result of a transparent, well consulted and research-based process. Social service practitioners had a window period of six years to voluntarily come on board with CPD before the commencement of compulsory CPD in 2010. They have been oriented and prepared to commit themselves to CPD in the belief that both they and the service beneficiaries will reap the benefits of ongoing learning and professional development.

During the development of the CPD policy, social service professionals became aware of the ethical obligations that underpin the preservation of their professional status (Butler, 2003:2). Although professionals have an ethical obligation to self-directed learning, it can never be their sole responsibility, which is contrary to Butler's (2003:2) argument that CPD is the professional's responsibility and "lies not with a regulatory authority" (Butler, 2003:2). CPD remains an ethical as well as statutory obligation (HPCSA, n.d.)

As indicated in the CPD policy of the SACSSP, various stakeholders have a role to play in the success of, and compliance with, continuing professional development. Without an effective CPD system it is not possible to have successful implementation of CPD. The SACSSP is thus challenged to provide a user-friendly and cost-effective CPD system that can support the compulsory implementation of CPD for all registered persons. Service providers are challenged to provide CPD activities that meet the goal of continuing education, i.e. the acquisition and maintenance of new, current knowledge, relevant professional skills and ethical professional attitudes with a benefit for the beneficiaries (HSPS, 2005). Finally, employers are challenged to facilitate access to CPD for employees.

The foundation for CPD, i.e. professional commitment, has been established throughout the development process of the CPD policy. The implementation phase of compulsory CPD from 2010 will yield evidence whether the enabling environment has been sufficiently prepared by the SACSSP, service providers and employers to facilitate the fulfilment of social service professionals' ethical obligation and professional commitment to CPD.

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