

Adapting to Change: A Qualitative Study on Continuous Professional Learning among Adult Learners

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the evolving dynamics of continuous professional learning (CPL) among adult learners in response to rapidly changing professional landscapes. The research investigates the motivations, challenges, and adaptive strategies employed by adult learners as they navigate the complexities of lifelong learning to maintain relevance and competence in their respective fields. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 23 adult learners from various professional backgrounds who have engaged in CPL programs. The study adopts a thematic analysis approach to identify key themes such as the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in learning, the importance of self-directed learning, and the barriers faced, including time constraints and access to resources. Additionally, the study delves into how technological advancements and evolving industry standards are influencing the need for continuous learning. Findings highlight that while adult learners are motivated to pursue professional development to stay competitive, they often struggle to balance learning with work and personal commitments. Participants also emphasized the importance of flexible and accessible learning platforms to accommodate their diverse needs. The research offers insights into how institutions and policymakers can support adult learners through tailored programs that promote flexibility, accessibility, and relevance in professional learning. These findings contribute to understanding how CPL can be effectively integrated into adult learning environments to foster adaptability in an ever-changing world.

Keywords: Continuous Professional Learning, Adult Learners, Lifelong Learning, Adaptability

Introduction

The rapidly changing landscape of professional environments demands that individuals continuously adapt their knowledge and skills to remain relevant and competitive. The concept of continuous professional learning (CPL) has become increasingly important in this context, as industries undergo digital transformation, and the nature of work evolves. Adult learners, defined as individuals who engage in educational activities beyond traditional schooling, face unique challenges in balancing personal and professional commitments while

pursuing lifelong learning. This study aims to explore the experiences, motivations, and barriers faced by adult learners as they engage in CPL programs, with a focus on how they adapt to change in their professional landscapes.

In the 21st century, CPL has shifted from being a desirable trait to a necessary one, driven by advances in technology, the global economy, and the increasing complexity of the workplace. Recent studies have demonstrated that professionals in nearly every field are required to regularly update their skills to keep pace with technological advancements, regulatory changes, and emerging best practices (Sangster & Davison, 2023). The pressure to remain competitive in such dynamic environments leads many adult learners to seek out CPL opportunities, often facilitated by educational institutions, professional organizations, and online learning platforms.

For adult learners, CPL offers a pathway to enhance their employability, maintain professional licenses, or transition into new roles. However, the motivations behind pursuing CPL are not always uniform. Research suggests that adult learners are driven by a variety of factors, ranging from the need for career advancement to personal satisfaction and the desire for intellectual growth (Jansen & Schäfer, 2022). Understanding these motivations is essential for designing effective CPL programs that meet the diverse needs of adult learners.

Lifelong learning, which encompasses CPL, refers to the ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for personal or professional reasons. As globalization and technological advancements reshape the workforce, lifelong learning has gained prominence as a way to foster adaptability, resilience, and innovation (Green & Miller, 2022). Adult learners, who may have different educational backgrounds, work experiences, and life stages, engage in lifelong learning for various reasons. Many seek to enhance their professional qualifications, while others aim to remain engaged in their communities or pursue new interests.

The adult learning process, however, is distinct from that of younger learners. Knowles' (1984), theory of andragogy emphasizes that adult learners are self-directed, draw on their personal and professional experiences, and are goal-oriented in their learning. Moreover, adult learners often face specific barriers, including time constraints, financial limitations, and a lack of institutional support (Blaschke, 2022). These challenges necessitate the development of CPL programs that are flexible, accessible, and tailored to the needs of adult learners.

One of the most significant drivers of CPL in recent years has been the rise of technology. The digital revolution has transformed how knowledge is accessed, shared, and applied in professional settings. Online learning platforms, webinars, and virtual workshops have made CPL more accessible to adult learners, particularly those who may be balancing work and family responsibilities (Khan & Hossain, 2023). These technological advancements also allow for a more personalized learning experience, enabling adult learners to engage with content that is directly relevant to their professional development.

However, the integration of technology in CPL is not without its challenges. A study by Singh et al (2022), highlights the digital divide, which continues to affect access to learning opportunities, particularly for adult learners in rural or underserved communities.

Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological change can lead to skill obsolescence, requiring learners to continuously update their knowledge to stay competitive. This creates a cycle in which adult learners must constantly adapt to new technologies and methodologies, underscoring the importance of developing CPL programs that are flexible and responsive to the needs of learners.

Motivation plays a critical role in the success of adult learners in CPL programs. Adult learners are typically driven by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as the desire for personal growth, professional advancement, and the acquisition of new skills. Intrinsic motivation, which refers to the personal satisfaction and intellectual curiosity that learners derive from learning, has been shown to be a strong predictor of engagement and persistence in CPL programs (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2023). On the other hand, extrinsic motivation, which includes financial incentives, career progression, and professional recognition, also influences adult learners' decisions to pursue CPL.

Despite the importance of motivation, many adult learners face challenges that can hinder their ability to engage in CPL. Time management is a significant barrier, as adult learners often juggle multiple responsibilities, including work, family, and other personal commitments (Carrillo et al., 2023). Additionally, financial constraints can limit access to learning opportunities, particularly for those who must pay for courses, materials, or certification fees out-of-pocket. Institutions offering CPL programs must consider these factors and create supportive environments that foster motivation while reducing barriers to participation.

While the benefits of CPL are widely recognized, adult learners face several barriers that can impede their ability to participate in learning programs. Time constraints are perhaps the most common challenge, as many adult learners must balance the demands of full-time employment with family and personal obligations. Research by Carrillo et al (2023), indicates that adult learners are more likely to drop out of CPL programs when they are unable to allocate sufficient time for study. Additionally, learners who lack employer support or face rigid work schedules may struggle to participate in CPL opportunities.

Financial barriers also play a significant role in limiting access to CPL. Many adult learners, particularly those who are self-funded, may find the cost of tuition, materials, and certification prohibitive (Schönbrodt et al., 2022). This is especially true for learners from lower-income backgrounds or those in industries that do not provide financial support for professional development. In response to these challenges, many organizations and educational institutions have begun offering free or low-cost CPL programs, often delivered online to increase accessibility. Another barrier is the lack of institutional support for CPL. Although many employers recognize the importance of professional development, not all organizations provide the necessary time, resources, or incentives for employees to engage in learning activities (Jansen & Schäfer, 2022). This can lead to a situation where learners must pursue CPL on their own time and at their own expense, which can be discouraging and lead to lower participation rates. To overcome this barrier, organizations need to create cultures of continuous learning by offering flexible schedules, funding for courses, and recognition of professional development achievements.

Despite the barriers, many adult learners successfully adapt to change through various strategies. Self-directed learning, a key component of andragogy, allows adult learners to take ownership of their educational journeys by setting their own goals, identifying relevant resources, and managing their time effectively (Blaschke, 2022). This approach empowers learners to tailor their CPL experiences to meet their specific professional and personal needs. In addition to self-directed learning, adult learners benefit from peer support and collaborative learning environments. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2023), emphasize the importance of communities of practice, where learners can share knowledge, experiences, and challenges with their peers. These communities foster a sense of belonging and encourage learners to engage more deeply with their CPL activities. Mentorship is another valuable strategy, as experienced professionals can provide guidance, feedback, and encouragement to those who are navigating new learning experiences.

Finally, flexibility in learning formats is critical to supporting adult learners in CPL. Online courses, micro credentials, and modular learning allow learners to engage with content at their own pace, making it easier to fit learning into busy schedules (Sangster & Davison, 2023). These flexible options also enable learners to focus on specific skills or knowledge areas that are directly applicable to their professional goals, increasing the relevance and impact of CPL. The need for continuous professional learning has never been more pressing, particularly as industries evolve and the global economy becomes more interconnected. Adult learners face a range of challenges in pursuing CPL, including time constraints, financial barriers, and a lack of institutional support. However, through self-directed learning, peer support, and flexible learning opportunities, many adult learners are successfully adapting to the demands of lifelong learning. This study seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on CPL by exploring the experiences of adult learners, their motivations, and the strategies they use to overcome barriers. By understanding these dynamics, educational institutions and organizations can develop more effective CPL programs that support adult learners in their pursuit of professional growth.

Problem Statement

The 21st century has seen unprecedented changes in the workforce, with many traditional industries undergoing transformations due to automation, artificial intelligence, and other technological innovations. According to Kearney and Smith (2024), professionals across sectors are increasingly required to engage in lifelong learning to keep pace with these advancements. Jobs that once required static skillsets now demand ongoing education, and CPL has become an indispensable tool for both personal and professional development.

However, the need for CPL goes beyond just keeping up with technological change. As noted by Nelson and Ramirez (2024), globalization has resulted in a more competitive labor market, where individuals must distinguish themselves by acquiring new skills, certifications, and qualifications. This makes CPL essential not only for career advancement but also for job security. Despite the evident demand for continuous learning, adult learners—who are often balancing work, family, and other responsibilities—struggle to access or engage in CPL opportunities effectively. Adult learners experience a unique set of challenges that complicate their participation in CPL. Time constraints are a significant issue, as many adults are employed full-time and must balance their professional responsibilities with personal and family commitments. According to a recent study by McBride and Turner (2024), time

management was one of the most commonly cited barriers to engaging in professional development activities. Adult learners often report difficulty in finding time to attend classes, complete assignments, or engage in self-directed learning, especially when these activities are not flexible or designed with their schedules in mind.

Moreover, financial constraints present another significant barrier. While some organizations offer support for professional development, many adult learners must finance their own education. The cost of tuition, materials, and certifications can be prohibitive, particularly for individuals who are already juggling financial responsibilities such as mortgages, student loans, or childcare. Edwards and Patel (2024), highlight that the high costs associated with CPL deter many adults from pursuing learning opportunities, even when they recognize the potential long-term benefits. Additionally, adult learners often encounter issues related to access. In rural or underserved areas, the availability of CPL programs can be limited, and online learning—while increasingly popular—may not be a viable option for all due to technological barriers. Despite the growing prevalence of digital learning platforms, individuals in areas with poor internet connectivity or those lacking digital literacy skills may find it difficult to participate in online CPL (Harrington & Lee, 2024). These access-related barriers exacerbate existing inequalities in education, as adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are often the ones most in need of skill development but are the least able to access it.

While many adult learners face substantial barriers, motivation remains a key factor influencing their engagement with CPL. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play a role in driving adult learners to pursue professional development. Intrinsic motivation, such as personal fulfillment or intellectual curiosity, often encourages learners to engage deeply with their studies. On the other hand, extrinsic factors, such as career advancement, salary increases, or meeting professional requirements, can also compel individuals to participate in CPL programs (Chen & Davis, 2024). However, motivation alone is insufficient when learners lack the necessary support systems. Research by Watkins and Harris (2024), shows that institutional support, including flexible schedules, financial assistance, and mentorship opportunities, significantly impacts an adult learner's ability to succeed in CPL. Many adult learners report that they feel overwhelmed by the demands of both work and study, and without adequate support, their motivation can wane. Employers play a critical role in this process, as those who foster a culture of continuous learning and provide tangible resources for professional development see higher engagement rates among their employees.

Despite the clear demand for CPL, many programs are not designed with the specific needs of adult learners in mind. As noted by Jackson and Brewer (2024), a one-size-fits-all approach to professional learning often fails to address the diverse backgrounds, learning preferences, and time constraints of adult learners. Traditional classroom-based learning models may not be suitable for adults who require flexible, modular, and self-paced learning options. Furthermore, there is a lack of integration between professional development programs and real-world applications. Adult learners often express frustration when CPL courses do not directly relate to their job functions or career goals (Huang & Mills, 2024). This disconnect can lead to disengagement and dissatisfaction, reducing the perceived value of CPL. Therefore, there is a pressing need for CPL programs that are not only flexible but also relevant, practical, and immediately applicable to learners' professional contexts.

Limitations

This study on continuous professional learning (CPL) among adult learners faces several limitations. First, the qualitative nature of the research, while providing rich, in-depth insights, limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. The sample size, though sufficient for qualitative analysis, may not capture the full diversity of adult learners, especially those from different cultural, socioeconomic, or geographic backgrounds. Additionally, the study relies on self-reported data from participants, which may be subject to biases such as selective memory or social desirability. Another limitation is the focus on specific CPL programs, which may not represent the wide range of learning opportunities available. Lastly, the study primarily examines adult learners in professional contexts, potentially overlooking those who engage in CPL for personal development or non-career-related reasons. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating larger, more diverse samples and mixed-method approaches for broader applicability.

Literature Review

Continuous professional learning (CPL) has emerged as an essential factor for individuals and organizations adapting to the rapidly changing demands of the workforce. This adaptation is particularly significant for adult learners, who engage in CPL to enhance their skills, maintain relevance, and contribute effectively in dynamic work environments. Various studies emphasize the importance of CPL, especially as industries evolve due to technological advancements, economic shifts, and global trends (Smith et al., 2021). The intersection of adult learning theories and professional development strategies provides a foundational framework for understanding how adults adapt to change in their learning processes.

The foundation of CPL for adult learners is rooted in adult learning theories, such as andragogy and experiential learning theory. Knowles' (1980), theory of andragogy highlights that adults are self-directed learners with a wealth of prior experience, which they bring into the learning environment. This perspective is crucial for CPL because adult learners often approach new learning experiences with a strong desire to solve immediate work-related problems (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Similarly, Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984), emphasizes that learning is a cyclical process involving concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. These theories suggest that continuous professional learning for adults is an iterative and reflective process, where previous knowledge and experience guide new learning (Jackson, 2021).

One of the primary drivers for adult learners to engage in CPL is the need to adapt to technological changes (Brown & Green, 2021). The rapid integration of digital tools across industries has made it necessary for professionals to continuously upgrade their technical skills (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2021). Similarly, globalization and evolving job markets require adult learners to develop new competencies, such as digital literacy, critical thinking, and complex problem-solving skills (Coffield, 2022). Research indicates that adult learners in professional settings are more likely to pursue CPL when they perceive a direct correlation between new learning and career advancement (Wright & Lee, 2022).

The motivations for engaging in CPL also vary by profession. For example, educators often engage in continuous learning to keep up with new pedagogical practices and curriculum changes (Hill et al., 2022). On the other hand, healthcare professionals must regularly update

their knowledge to meet the ever-evolving medical standards and protocols (Bailey et al., 2021). These varying motivations underscore the importance of context-specific learning opportunities tailored to the unique needs of different professional sectors (Chambers & Liu, 2021). While the importance of CPL is widely acknowledged, there are several barriers that adult learners face when engaging in professional development. Time constraints are one of the most common challenges, as adult learners often balance work, family, and other responsibilities, making it difficult to prioritize learning (Mackay et al., 2021). Additionally, financial constraints and limited access to quality learning resources can hinder participation in CPL programs (Johnson et al., 2021). Organizational culture also plays a significant role in shaping how professionals engage in CPL, with research indicating that a supportive learning culture within an organization facilitates greater participation in continuous learning (Jones & Reeve, 2022).

The rise of online learning has been a game-changer for continuous professional learning, especially for adult learners. The flexibility offered by online platforms allows professionals to engage in learning at their own pace and convenience (O'Neill & McMahon, 2022). Research shows that adult learners appreciate the ability to access digital learning materials and participate in virtual workshops or webinars that fit their schedules (Johnson et al., 2021). Moreover, online learning environments often provide opportunities for collaboration and peer-to-peer learning, which are critical elements of adult learning (Clark & Mayer, 2022). However, online learning is not without its challenges, including the need for digital literacy and access to reliable internet infrastructure, which can be problematic for learners in rural or underserved areas (Williams et al., 2021)

The concept of lifelong learning is intrinsically tied to CPL. Lifelong learning extends beyond formal education, encompassing informal and non-formal learning experiences that occur throughout an individual's career (Schuller & Watson, 2021). The emphasis on lifelong learning has been growing as employers recognize the value of a workforce that continuously adapts to new challenges and opportunities (Hodgson & Spours, 2022). Organizations are increasingly offering in-house training, mentoring programs, and external learning opportunities to support their employees' professional development (Tynjälä & Häkkinen, 2021). These initiatives reflect a shift in organizational strategy, where continuous learning is no longer an optional activity but a necessity for maintaining competitive advantage (Clarke & Winch, 2022).

The ability of adult learners to adapt to change is largely influenced by their learning environments, motivation, and the availability of support systems (Taylor & Laros, 2021). Research suggests that adult learners who are given opportunities for self-directed learning and reflection are better equipped to adapt to changes in their professional environments (Brookfield, 2021). Furthermore, the role of mentors, peer networks, and professional communities has been highlighted as crucial for fostering an adaptive learning culture (Lave & Wenger, 2021). These support systems not only provide guidance but also encourage collaborative learning, which enhances the overall learning experience for adults.

Research Questions

a) How adult learners perceive and experience the process of adapting to changes in their professional environments through continuous learning?

b) What are the key factors that influence adult learners' engagement in continuous professional learning, including motivations, challenges, and support systems?

Research Objectives

a) To explore how adult learners perceive and experience the process of adapting to changes in their professional environments through continuous learning.

b) To examine the key factors that influence adult learners' engagement in continuous professional learning, including motivations, challenges, and support systems.

Research Methodology and Data Analysis Plan

This qualitative research adopts a phenomenological approach to explore how adult learners adapt to change through continuous professional learning (CPL). The study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges in navigating their professional development journeys. Phenomenology was chosen as it allowed for a deep exploration of the subjective meanings that individuals attach to their experiences, making it well-suited for examining the complexities of CPL among adult learners (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research used purposive sampling to select participants who have engaged in continuous professional learning within the past five years. This ensured that the selected individuals had relevant experience in adapting to change through CPL. The study included 23 participants from diverse professional fields to capture a wide range of experiences based on saturation level of the data. These participants were drawn from various sectors, including education, healthcare, and technology, to provide a holistic view of how different professions engaged with CPL.

Semi-structured interviews were prepared for the primary method of data collection. This approach allowed for flexibility, enabling the researcher to probe deeper into participants' experiences while adhering to key thematic areas (Smith et al., 2021). Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was conducted via video conferencing. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent for accurate transcription and analysis.

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes that emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The researcher followed an iterative coding process, starting with open coding and moving towards axial coding to develop core themes. Ethical considerations, such as confidentiality and informed consent, were strictly adhered to throughout the study.

Data Analysis and Findings

The thematic analysis of data from 23 respondents identified six key themes that reflected the challenges, motivations, and strategies adult learners employ in engaging with continuous professional learning (CPL) in a changing professional environment. The findings offer insights into how learners adapt to the demands of professional growth and technological evolution while navigating personal and professional responsibilities.

1. Motivations for Continuous Learning

A significant theme that emerged from the analysis was the strong motivation to engage in continuous professional learning as a way to remain relevant in a fast-changing job market.

Many respondents noted that the increasing pace of technological advancements, industry-specific innovations, and changing job roles drove them to pursue CPL to stay competitive. Several participants cited career progression as a primary motivation, with CPL offering opportunities for promotion or new roles that required updated skill sets.

For instance, one respondent working in the healthcare sector mentioned that *“with new medical technologies and treatments being introduced every year, I feel it’s essential to keep learning, or I’ll fall behind.”* Similarly, respondents in the education and technology sectors emphasized the importance of staying current with industry trends to avoid career stagnation. Personal development and the desire for lifelong learning were also reported as intrinsic motivations, as some learners viewed CPL as an opportunity to challenge themselves and grow intellectually.

2. Challenges of Time Management

Time management was identified as one of the most significant barriers to engaging in CPL. Most respondents, particularly those balancing full-time jobs, family responsibilities, and other commitments, expressed difficulties in finding the time to participate in structured learning activities. This theme was particularly prevalent among respondents who were parents or caregivers, as they faced additional challenges in allocating time for both family duties and professional development.

One respondent shared, *“It’s tough trying to juggle work, kids, and studying. By the time I get home from work and deal with everything at home, I barely have the energy to focus on my courses.”* Many participants echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that while they recognized the importance of CPL, the demands of everyday life often left little room for formal learning. As a result, some learners opted for shorter, more flexible learning options such as webinars, online courses, or workshops that fit around their schedules.

3. Learning Preferences and Flexibility

Flexibility in learning formats emerged as a key theme, with most respondents expressing a preference for learning opportunities that offered flexibility in terms of time, pace, and location. The majority of participants preferred online or hybrid learning environments that allowed them to balance their professional development with other commitments. Self-paced learning options, in particular, were seen as highly advantageous because they enabled learners to engage with course materials at their convenience without the pressure of adhering to strict deadlines.

One respondent working in the technology sector stated, *“I appreciate that online platforms allow me to learn at my own pace. I can fit my learning into my day whenever I have time, even if it’s just an hour in the evening.”* This preference for flexibility reflects a growing trend in adult education where learners, particularly working professionals, seek adaptable learning formats that align with their busy lives.

4. Impact of Organizational Support

The degree of support provided by employers played a critical role in influencing the extent to which respondents engaged in CPL. Participants who worked in organizations that actively promoted professional development through funding, access to learning resources, or

dedicated time for learning reported a higher level of engagement in CPL activities. For these respondents, the availability of organizational support facilitated continuous learning and made it easier to prioritize their professional development.

One respondent noted, *“My employer pays for all the courses I take, and they also give me time during work hours to attend workshops. That makes a huge difference in my ability to keep learning.”* Conversely, respondents who did not receive organizational support faced greater challenges in accessing CPL opportunities. These participants often had to pay for courses out of pocket or engage in learning during personal time, which added to the pressures of balancing work and life commitments.

5. Role of Peer Learning and Collaboration

Peer learning and collaboration emerged as important elements of continuous professional learning, particularly in environments where teamwork and knowledge sharing were emphasized. Several respondents described how learning from colleagues and engaging in group discussions enriched their learning experiences. Collaborative learning was particularly beneficial in applying new knowledge to real-world situations, as peers could share insights and strategies based on their own professional experiences.

For example, one respondent in the education sector stated, *“I learn a lot from my colleagues when we have discussions or work on projects together. We share different approaches, and that really helps me think about how I can apply what I’ve learned in my own work.”* Many participants appreciated the sense of community that peer learning fostered, highlighting that collaboration often provided opportunities for reflective learning and practical application of new skills.

6. Adapting to Technological Changes

A key theme that consistently emerged was the need for adult learners to adapt to technological changes within their industries. As industries across sectors become increasingly digitized, many respondents expressed the pressure to continuously update their technical skills. For some participants, this included learning how to use new software, understanding data analytics, or acquiring basic digital literacy skills, especially for those in more traditional industries.

One respondent from the financial services industry shared, *“Technology is constantly changing how we do our jobs. We need to learn new systems and tools regularly just to keep up.”* Another participant in the healthcare sector highlighted the impact of electronic health records and other digital tools on their daily work, noting that *“if you don’t stay current with these tools, it’s easy to fall behind.”* Adapting to technological changes was seen as both a challenge and an opportunity, with some participants feeling overwhelmed by the pace of change while others viewed it as a way to enhance their professional skillset.

The six themes identified—motivations for continuous learning, challenges of time management, learning preferences and flexibility, impact of organizational support, role of peer learning and collaboration, and adapting to technological changes—provide a comprehensive understanding of how adult learners engage with continuous professional learning while adapting to changes in their professional environments. These themes

highlight the diverse motivations and challenges adult learners face, as well as the importance of flexible learning formats, supportive organizational environments, and peer collaboration in facilitating continuous learning. As industries continue to evolve, the ability of adult learners to adapt to change through CPL remains crucial for their professional success.

Conclusion

This qualitative study explored how adult learners adapt to change through continuous professional learning (CPL) in response to evolving workplace demands. The findings highlight the complexity of this adaptation process, shaped by a combination of intrinsic motivations, such as personal growth and career advancement, and external factors, including technological advancements and industry-specific changes. The study identified several key themes: motivations for learning, time management challenges, the importance of flexibility in learning formats, the role of organizational support, peer collaboration, and the need to adapt to technological changes.

Participants emphasized the need for CPL to stay relevant and competitive in their respective fields, while also acknowledging the significant barriers posed by time constraints and competing responsibilities. The increasing demand for flexible, self-paced, and accessible learning options was a recurring theme, as these allow learners to balance their personal and professional commitments more effectively. Moreover, organizational support and peer learning emerged as crucial facilitators in the CPL process, enabling learners to apply new skills in a practical context. Adapting to technological advancements was identified as both a challenge and an opportunity, underscoring the need for continuous upskilling in a rapidly digitizing world.

Overall, this study highlighted the critical role CPL plays in helping adult learners navigate change and maintain professional relevance. The findings suggest that creating supportive, flexible, and collaborative learning environments is essential to fostering lifelong learning and ensuring that adult learners can successfully adapt to the ever-changing demands of the workforce.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study the recommendations can be made to enhance the continuous professional learning (CPL) experience for adult learners. These recommendations are aimed at individuals, organizations, and educational institutions, highlighting strategies that can improve engagement, accessibility, and the overall impact of CPL.

Flexible Learning Opportunities

One of the major findings of the study was the significant challenge adult learners face in managing time, given the demands of work, family, and other responsibilities. To address this, it is crucial for educational institutions and organizations offering CPL programs to provide flexible learning opportunities. This includes offering self-paced, online, or blended learning options that allow adult learners to engage with course content at times that suit their schedules. Creating modular learning programs, where learners can take short, focused courses instead of long, semester-based programs, will help alleviate the time management issues that many learners face.

Additionally, incorporating asynchronous learning components, such as recorded lectures and self-study materials, can provide learners with greater control over their learning process. Flexibility in deadlines and course structures can also make learning more accessible for adult learners who have unpredictable schedules due to work or personal commitments.

Increased Organizational Support

Organizations play a key role in promoting continuous professional learning among their employees. One of the key findings of the study was the positive impact of organizational support on learners' engagement with CPL. Therefore, employers should take proactive steps to support CPL by offering financial support for training programs, providing paid time off for learning, and creating a culture that values professional development.

Organizations should also consider incorporating learning and development goals into employee performance reviews. This would encourage a culture of continuous learning where employees are recognized and rewarded for their efforts to upskill. Furthermore, organizations can offer in-house training programs or partner with educational institutions to deliver customized learning that aligns with organizational needs and employee development goals.

Development of Peer Learning and Collaborative Platforms

Peer learning and collaboration were identified as critical elements of effective continuous learning. Adult learners benefit from the exchange of ideas, shared experiences, and collaborative problem-solving with colleagues. Organizations and learning providers should facilitate peer learning opportunities by creating platforms where learners can engage with one another, such as discussion forums, group projects, or collaborative learning communities.

Mentorship programs can also be developed to support peer learning, where experienced professionals guide less experienced learners through their CPL journey. Peer learning environments not only foster knowledge sharing but also create a sense of community, which can enhance motivation and commitment to continuous learning.

Addressing Technological Literacy and Access

As technology continues to reshape industries, the ability to adapt to new digital tools and platforms is becoming increasingly important. This study highlighted that many adult learners struggle with technological changes, underscoring the need for targeted support in this area. Educational institutions and organizations should offer training programs focused on developing digital literacy and technical proficiency to ensure that adult learners can fully engage with new technologies in their fields.

Additionally, it is important to address issues of access. Organizations and educational providers should ensure that learners have access to necessary tools, such as computers, reliable internet, and software. For learners in remote or underserved areas, offering support such as subsidized equipment or access to learning centres can bridge the digital divide and make CPL more accessible.

Encouraging Lifelong Learning Mindsets

Finally, to ensure that adult learners continue to engage in CPL throughout their careers, fostering a mindset of lifelong learning is essential. This involves cultivating an intrinsic motivation for learning by emphasizing the personal and professional benefits of CPL beyond immediate job requirements. Educational institutions and organizations should promote the concept of learning as a continuous, self-driven process rather than a one-time activity.

Workshops, seminars, and coaching sessions that focus on personal development, reflection, and goal setting can help learners view CPL as an ongoing journey that extends throughout their professional lives. Promoting learning communities and networks that support ongoing development can also help sustain learners' engagement with continuous learning in the long term.

By offering flexible learning formats, increasing organizational support, developing collaborative learning opportunities, addressing technological literacy, and promoting lifelong learning mindsets, CPL can be made more accessible and effective for adult learners. These recommendations, if implemented, will help adult learners adapt to the demands of an evolving workforce and ensure their long-term professional relevance and success.

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