Panelists

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Preamble

- The public expects that licensed and certified professionals are required to maintain competence.
- Systematic thought on construct definition for continuing competence is just beginning and needed for development of theory.
Preamble

- Consensus of research on effectiveness of continuing education is that it does not bring about continuing competence.
- Assessment and self assessment have been found to enhance relevance of continuing competence programs to participants.

- Some evidence shows that enhanced continuing education (with assessments) is effective.

Objectives

- Present the concepts and terminology of continuing competence as well as a framework for measurement.
- Describe the implementation steps for creating a continuing competence program.
- Summarize the application of these concepts through a case study.
Terminology

- **Maintenance of Proficiency** [College of Family Physicians of Canada]
- **Professional Development Program, Continuing Professional Excellence, Continuing Professional Development** [Various Engineering associations across Canada]
- **Practice Assessment** [College of Physiotherapists of Ontario]
- **Continuing Education** [Financial Planning Standards Council]

**Terminology**

- **Continuing Competence**
  - The ability to provide service at specified levels of knowledge and skill, not only at the time of initial certification but throughout an individual’s professional career. [*Certification: The ICE Handbook*]
  - The ongoing commitment of the individual to integrate and apply the knowledge, skills and judgment with the attitudes, values and beliefs required to practice safely, effectively and ethically in a designated role. [*Nursing Call to Action 2010*]

**Terminology**

- **Continued Competence**
  - Past activities which demonstrate that throughout a specified time period, and at a level at least equivalent to the minimal requirements for a particular level of certification/licensure, the candidate has integrated and applied the knowledge, skills and judgment with the attitudes, values and beliefs required to practice safely, effectively and ethically in a designated role and setting. [*Nursing Call to Action 2010*]
Terminology

- We all desire a program that promotes and encourages continuing proficiency, at a minimum.
- We measure what has already happened though . . . We measure that competence has continued at least up to the time of measurement.

Terminology

- Continuing v. Continued
  - Continuing implies the present and future.
  - Continued implies the past and present.
  - Words matter: the choice of term sets a temporal expectation.

Terminology

- Competence v. Competency
  - Competence speaks to the underlying capacity to perform at a specified level.
  - Competency refers to the demonstration of behaviour and is influenced by many factors.
  - Words matter: the choice of term sets the scope of expectation.
Terminology

- Ideal goal of most certification and licensure programs:
  - Competence that continues into the future.
- But, what do most programs actually measure?
  - Competency that has continued up to today.
  - Not necessarily wrong, but is it enough? And how does the measurement influence the practitioners?

Methods Used to Demonstrate Continuing Competence

- Activities
  - Academic Coursework
  - Independent Study
  - Research and Professional Writing
  - Presentation and Instruction
  - Professional Meetings and activities
  - Mentorship
  - Active employment
- Periodic recertification/re-licensure by exam

Methods Used to Document Continuing Competence

- Self-Assessments
- Enhanced CE - Assessments
- Employment – Actively Engaged
- Peer Reviews and References
- Portfolios
Self-Assessment

- Checklist, such as critical safety issues or common skills
- Guided self-reflection, often based on practice area, client type, or conditions
- Short tests focused on specific topics
Not measures, per se, this kind of device leads to goals set by the individual.

Measurement in Continuing Competence Programs and Standards that Apply

Enhanced continuing education (Continuing education courses that require passing an end-of-activity assessment)
Relatively in-depth training in a specific topic or skill with credit based on passing an end-of-course assessment
Curricular validity, psychometrics determined to address stakeholder expectations.

Measurement in Continuing Competence Programs and Standards that Apply

- Work products (e.g., portfolios)
- Case analyses
- Supervisory evaluations and/or references
Job relatedness, psychometrics related to subjective scoring (e.g., interrater consistency, passing standard).
Measurement in Continuing Competence Programs and Standards that Apply

Reexamination
- Periodic requirement to pass the entry-level examination
- Periodic requirement to pass examination whose purpose is to support renewal decision making

These are high stakes tests that must adhere to rigorous psychometric standards.

NCCA Standards

Standard 19
The certification program must require periodic recertification and establish, publish, apply, and periodically review policies and procedures for recertification.

Standard 19
Essential Elements
- The basis and purpose for recertification and all recertification requirements must be published.
- The rationale for the recertification time interval must be included in the policy.
- Recertification policies and procedures ...must be published and made available to certificants and the public.
NCCA Standards

Standard 20
The certification program must demonstrate that its recertification requirements measure or enhance the continued competence of certificants.

Standard 20
Essential Elements

• If the purpose of recertification is to *measure* continued competence of certificants, then the certification program must substantiate the validity and reliability of the assessment instruments used to measure continued competence.

Standard 20
Essential Elements cont’d

• If the purpose is to *enhance* continued competence of certificants, then the certification program must demonstrate how the policy contributes to professional development of the individual certificants.
ISO 17024 Standards

9.6.1 The certification body shall have (a) documented procedure(s) for implementation of the recertification process, in accordance with the certification scheme requirements.

9.6.2 The certification body shall ensure during the recertification process that it confirms continued competence of the certified person and ongoing compliance with current scheme requirements by the certified person.

ISO 17024 Standards

9.6.3 The recertification period shall be based upon the scheme requirements. The rationale for the recertification period shall take into account, where relevant, the following:
   a) regulatory requirements;
   b) changes to normative documents;
   c) changes in the relevant scheme requirements.

ISO 17024 Standards

9.6.3 (cont’d) The recertification period shall be based upon the scheme requirements. The rationale for the recertification period shall take into account, where relevant, the following:
   d) the nature and maturity of the industry or field in which the certified person is working;
   e) the risks resulting from an incompetent person;
   f) ongoing changes in technology, and requirements for certified persons;
   g) requirements of interested parties;
   h) the frequency and content of surveillance activities, if required by the scheme.
ISO 17024 Standards

9.6.4 The selected recertification activity/activities shall be adequate to ensure that there is impartial assessment to confirm the continuing competence of the certified person.

ISO 17024 Standards

9.6.5 In accordance with the certification scheme, recertification by the certification body shall consider at least the following:

a) on-site assessment;
b) professional development;
c) structured interviews;
d) confirmation of continuing satisfactory work and work experience records;
e) examination;
f) checks on physical capability in relation to the competence concerned.

Implementation

• Whether implementing a brand new continuing competency program, or revising an existing one, there are steps to be followed that will increase the probability of success.
Implementation

• Define purpose
  - This is the most important and most overlooked step.
  - The purpose should be specific and endorsed by key stakeholders.
  - If done well, it will guide the decisions that must be made regarding policies and implementation of those policies.

Implementation

• Establish budget, time line, and team
  - Follow sound project management practices.
  - Do not underestimate the project.
• Establish communication plan
  - Prepare early for later releases.
  - The packaging will influence reception.

Implementation

• Draft/Revise policies
  - Set requirements consistent with level of performance dictated by competency profile.
  - Fairness and rigour are key here.
  - Plan for the exceptions.
• Validate policies
  - All who are impacted should get to voice their opinion.
  - Consider public exposure period.
Implementation

• Gain endorsement/ratification as necessary
  - When working across provincial or state borders, this can be time consuming and often the greatest challenge.
  - Keep the right people involved along the way.
  - If Board of Directors approval is necessary, consider having a Board member involved in the development process.

Implementation

• Build/Modify infrastructure for program
  - Prepare changes to databases, user interfaces, and websites.
  - Prepare new documentation and modify existing documentation.

• Launch program
  - Make sure the front lines are in the know.
  - Once live, check everything again.

Implementation

• Measure and refine
  - How do you know if you were successful?
  - Project management metrics are useful, but really the point of the implementation was to make a positive change in how effectively your professionals work with their clients.
  - Do not expect perfection out of the gate . . . Implement, observe, identify improvements in a continuous cycle.
Case Study

It all started with a question in an editorial.

“Once Certified Always Competent?”

Board’s question

Does continuing education maintain entry-level competence among ATs?

Starting Point
2002

• Board initiates task force.
• Task force recommends a longitudinal study.
• Study questions are developed.

Major Research Questions

• Among approved providers (APs) in Category A, what proportion of offerings is in each of the professional domains?
• What factors affect the selection of continuing education?
• What factors are associated with maintaining or enhancing competence?
• Does using the Personal Learning Plan (PLP) assist in maintaining competence among athletic trainers?

Final Question

Does continuing education maintain entry-level competence among ATs?
- Evaluation - comparison of self-assessment and results of an examination
Our Organizational Take-Away

Gaps, Flaws and Inconsistencies

- There is no clearly articulated theory of continuing competence.
- Lack of robust measures of on-the-job performance makes it hard to understand effectiveness of program components.
- Role of assessment(s) in continuing competence programs varies across disciplines.

Gaps, Flaws and Inconsistencies

- Legislation often does not impose continuing competence as part of the licensure process.
- Raising the bar on requirements to maintain credentials is often met with resistance.
- Participation in continuing competence programs is resource intensive, raising the question of who will pay, and how.
Gaps, Flaws and Inconsistencies

- Natural specialization in practice makes it hard to develop a one-size-fits-all approach.

Conclusion

The art and science of continuing competence programs is not yet at a desirable state. Nonetheless, the issue is of such importance to the integrity of your credential that we encourage all licensure and certification organizations/program to:
1) develop programs where none exist, or
2) evaluate whether your existing program is sufficiently rigorous and fits its purpose.

Resources/References

GO TO: www.credentialingexcellence.org/clear for copy of ICE documents


Questions?

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