How to measure the quality and effectiveness of professional development

Measuring the quality and effectiveness of professional development (PD) requires examining the inputs and the outputs. This holds true for PD activities that are single or series training events, single or series educational events (i.e., they carry academic credit) or peer-to-peer technical assistance.

*Input Assessment Questions*

When designing, planning or paying for PD activities, here are some questions that can be asked to improve quality prior to the training or TA taking place:

- Is the training, educational experience or technical assistance (TA) needed? Does it have a clear purpose with articulated learning objectives?
- Has a way been developed to measure whether the objectives have been met?
- Has the training, educational experience or TA gone through an approval process or is being offered by an accredited institution or organization?
- Is the training, educational experience or TA the most efficient, cost effective method to achieve the desired outcomes?
- Does the training, educational experience or TA support the participant’s PD plan?
- Does the training, educational experience or TA involve content consistent with state standards and other evidence-based practices?
- Does the training, educational experience or TA support the strategic plan of the participant’s organization?
- Does the training, educational experience or TA address the needs of the area or region where the training will take place?
- What “oval” in the system does the training, educational experience or TA relate to?
- Is the training, educational experience or TA a one-time event or a series, and is that a modality appropriate for the goals of this professional development opportunity?
- Is the training, educational experience or TA led by a trainer who has gone through a trainer approval process?
- Is the training, educational experience more than 4 hours of sitting time or does the TA have sufficient frequency and duration to achieve its goals?
- What competency areas related to relevant credentials and certifications does the training, educational experience or TA relate to?
- Does the training, educational experience or TA have adequate activities to aid skills and knowledge transfer to the workplace (e.g., on-site follow-up observation, homework, implementation plans, etc.)?
- What is the level of the training, educational experience or TA: progressing, skilled, or mastery?
- Does the training, educational experience or TA assess participant satisfaction?
- Does the training, educational experience or TA follow adult learning principles and include reflective practices?
Output/Outcome Assessment Techniques

Techniques and strategies to measure change in knowledge and skills, in degrees, certifications, credentials, and in behavior (implementation fidelity) as a result of PD:

Assessing changes in knowledge and skills.
- Pre/post test
- Post test
- Certification exam
- Self report on change in knowledge and skills (e.g., follow-up survey, training evaluation, fidelity checklist)
- 3rd party observation (e.g., training evaluation, fidelity checklist)
- Product development (portfolio, presentations, papers, quality improvement or transfer of learning plan)
- Formal evaluation (peer, supervisor, outside expert review)
- Discussion content analysis
- Interim assessments (quizzes, midterms)
- Product development (portfolio, presentations, papers, quality improvement or transfer of learning plan)

Assessing changes in degrees, certifications, credentials.
- Number of credentials
- Number of certifications (including licenses)
- Number of credits hours
- Number of degrees
- Number of credentials
- Grades or cumulative grade point averages

Assessing changes in learner behavior.
- Follow-up survey
- Document review
- Interviews
- 3rd party observation
- Implementation of quality improvement plan
- Peer review
- Peer monitoring
- Formal evaluation