Benefits of Continuing Professional Development in the Visual Communications Sector in Ireland

Con Kennedy
Dublin Institute of Technology, info@conkennedy.ie

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Benefits of Continuing Professional Development in the Visual Communications Sector in Ireland

By
Con Kennedy

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Professional Design Practice.

School of Art, Design and Printing, Faculty of Applied Arts, Dublin Institute of Technology, 2009.
Abstract

This research is concerned with identifying the benefits of Continuous Professional Development for the Visual Communications sector in Ireland, with the aim of establishing what benefits exist for both the employee and employer. Research is undertaken to identify CPD programmes that currently exist in other industries in Ireland for the purpose of establishing commonalities and how this may apply to the Visual Communications sector. This is achieved through a combination of literature review, desk research, surveys of employees and employers in the Visual Communications sector and a number of semi-formal interviews with representatives from various industry sectors with established CPD programmes such as Design Ireland, Engineers Ireland and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland.

The main points of the literature review include defining the term Visual Communications and elaborating on sectorial breakdown and comparing the Irish sector with international markets. The term Continuing Professional Development is also defined and existing CPD programmes in Ireland are identified and discussed in context of their relevance to the Visual Communications sector. Main issues regarding CPD are outlined, in terms of models of CPD, the benefits for industry and barriers that hinder participation. Government and Education policy on CPD is also investigated.

The primary research data is gathered in the form of semi-formal interviews and surveys. Through careful analysis this information is used to validate the information and data uncovered from the literature review and offers a number of perspectives into the benefits of CPD in various industry sectors in Ireland.

The main points regarding benefits to participation in CPD are outlined and recommendations are made for encouraging greater participation are made and the need for partnership between industry and education in developing a meaningful CPD programme is discussed.
Acknowledgments

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<tr>
<td>APEL</td>
<td>Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning</td>
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<td>AIGA</td>
<td>American Institute of Graphic Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEDA</td>
<td>Bureau of European Design Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>CARB</td>
<td>Chartered Accountants Regulatory Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
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<td>CPE</td>
<td>Continuous Professional Education</td>
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<td>DBI</td>
<td>Design Business Ireland</td>
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<td>DIT</td>
<td>Dublin Institute of Technology</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<td>EGFSN</td>
<td>Expert Group on Future Skill Needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDBA</td>
<td>Graphic Design Business Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Produce</td>
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<td>GVA</td>
<td>Gross Value Added</td>
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<td>ESRI</td>
<td>Economic and Social Research Institute</td>
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<td>FETAC</td>
<td>Further Education &amp; Training Awards Council</td>
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<td>HEA</td>
<td>Higher Education Authority</td>
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<td>HETAC</td>
<td>Higher Education and Training Awards Council, Higher Education Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>IADT</td>
<td>Institute of Art Design and Technology Dún Laoghaire</td>
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<td>Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland</td>
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<td>IEI</td>
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<td>ILA</td>
<td>Individual Learning Accounts</td>
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<td>IOB</td>
<td>Institute of Bankers</td>
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<td>LIA</td>
<td>Life Insurance Association</td>
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<td>LLL</td>
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<td>NCC</td>
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NCPP  The National Centre for Partnership & Performance
NFQ   National Framework of Qualifications
NHS   National Health Service
NQAI  National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
OECD  Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RICS  Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
RIAI  Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland
RPL   Recognition of Prior Learning
SFA   Small Firms Association
SME   Small to Medium Enterprise
TNP   Training Networks Programme (Skillnets)
UK    United Kingdom
VEC   Vocational Educational Committee
1.0 Introduction
1.1 Background

As an active participant in the Visual Communications industry, whose career has developed over the past fourteen years, continuous training has always been a necessary component in the maintenance of competencies and skills required of a Visual Communications designer. This maintenance of skills usually takes the form of training courses which are mainly related to the introduction of new software, new versions of existing software or quality assurance and procedures such as ISO 9001/2000.

Such instances are not limited to personal experiences, through informal dialogue with peers and colleagues in the Visual Communications sector, it would seem that self-initiated training is an integral part of maintaining skills and competencies, career development and progression of the individual. It would therefore seem logical to assume that there is a potential target market interested in participating in developing skills and competencies through some form of Continuous Professional Development programme specifically aimed at the Visual Communications sector.

There are a number of existing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes in other professional industries, such as architecture, healthcare, banking, accountancy and engineering and these programmes are recognised by these sectors as being of great importance to developing the industry: benefiting both the member companies and individuals involved.

Many of the CPD programmes in other professions are developed by the relevant representative body in partnership with businesses and employees in the sector and in some cases, third level education institutions. A number of these bodies formally recognise learning undertaken by the individual through CPD.

1.2 Research Question

How can a Continuous Professional Development programme benefit individuals and companies providing design services within the Visual Communications sector?
Research is undertaken to establish what other industries have introduced and developed Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes, how these programmes function and what are the identified benefits to their relevant sector. The purpose of this research is to identify what the Visual Communications industry can learn from other sectors. How can the industry implement such findings effectively. Research also includes an investigation into the benefits of CPD for the employee and employer, what barriers may exist to hinder participation in CPD and what types of CPD models exist.

Research also includes an investigation into the benefits of CPD for the employee and employer, what barriers may exist to hinder participation in CPD, motivation for engagement in CPD and what models of CPD that exist.

1.3 Aim

The aim of this research is to establish what benefits exist for both the employee and employer in the Visual Communications sector for participating in Continuous Professional Development. Research will be undertaken to identify what CPD programmes currently exist in Ireland in other industries and how these function; ascertain what models of CPD exist; identify any skill deficits that exist in the Visual Communications and recognise what barriers exist to hinder or prevent participation in CPD.

1.4 Objectives

As a means of answering the research question and attempting to address the over all aim, the following objectives need to be achieved:
1. Define the term Visual Communications and compare the Irish sector with other countries
2. Identify what skills are required in the Visual Communications sector and identify what, if any skill gaps exist in the sector
3. Define the term Continuing Professional Development and Investigate the various models of CPD
4. Identify existing CPD programmes in other industry sectors and how they function
5. Investigate the benefits to employer and employee that CPD can offer and what barriers hinder participation in CPD
6. Research Irish Government policy on CPD
7. Analyse this information and make recommendations where applicable for the Visual Communications sector

1.5 Rationale

This study seeks to establish what benefits exist for the Visual Communications sector in Ireland for participation in CPD. Therefore the study starts by establishing an overview of the sector in order to frame the research. This is achieved though desk research and reviewing the current literature relevant to the field of Visual Communication. The term Visual Communication can cover a wide number of design disciplines, this needs to be clearly defined for the purpose of this research. An investigation into how various Educational Institutions and Industry Bodies define and scope what Visual Communications is will be undertaken and this will be compared to literature on the subject to establish commonalities.

Visual Communication designers require an number of skills and competencies to be effective in what they do for their clients, therefore this research identifies what these core skills are and investigates if any skill deficits exist within the Irish Visual Communications sector.

The term Continuous Professional Development also needs to be defined and discussed in the context of this dissertation. Existing CPD programmes in Ireland are researched and how other industries define Continuous Professional Development is established and is compared with relevant literature on the subject. Research is carried out to identify what motivates the individual to participate in CPD and establishes what barriers exist to hinder or prevent that participation. Irish Government and Educational policy on CPD is investigated and discussed.

1.6 Context

The research involves organisations in other industry sectors who develop and implement CPD programmes in their sectors. This research is undertaken in the interest of stakeholders in the Visual Communications industry, including: employees; design agencies; owner/managers; employers, Education Institutions; students and graduates and industry
representative bodies such as the Institute of Designers in Ireland, Design Business Ireland, Institute of Creative Advertising and Design and Design Ireland.

The industry should have an interest in this study, as establishing how participation in CPD can have a positive effect on the industry and its service offering to clients. For the Employer, the value of this research is in identifying how investment in CPD can lead to greater productivity, better skilled and flexible staff. For the Employee, how participation in CPD can lead to improved competencies, skills and knowledge and greater opportunities for career progression.

The value of this research for Education institutions is in identifying a role that Educational institutions have in certification and accreditation of CPD programmes. Through this forge better links with an industry that they are supplying with graduates and gain a better understanding of what skills and competencies are required of graduates working in the Visual Communications sector. In a similar way, for Professional Bodies, establishing what role they have in developing, promoting and implementing a sector specific CPD programme.
Literature Review
The ultimate goal of a literature review is to bring the reader up to date with current literature on a the research subject and forms the basis for another goal, such as future research that may be needed in the area.

The critical review of this literature discusses the main themes of defining what *Visual Communication* and *Continuing Professional Development* is. The research aims are to investigate what the benefits to the Visual Communications sector in Ireland Continuing Professional Development can offer through the consistent improvement in skills and competencies and identify skill gaps in the Visual Communications sector which can be improved through CPD participation.

This literature review starts with defining the term Visual Communication and investigates the demographics of the sector in Ireland and compares this information with the sector internationally. This section also identifies what skills are required for working as a Visual Communications sector and identifies any skills deficits in the industry.

The next section discusses and defines what Continuing Professional Development is and how professional bodies in other industries in Ireland implement and facilitate their CPD programmes, with the view to establish types of CPD used in other professions. This chapter also explores the benefits of participation in CPD programmes, motivation and barriers to participation, the various examples of models of CPD.

Following from this, the next section examines the current Irish Government and Education policies in relation continuous learning and the role state bodies plays in the development and implementation of CPD.
2.0 Visual Communications industry in Ireland
2.1 Introduction
This section begins by defining and discussing the term Visual Communication and drawing upon appropriate references from industry and education to determine the size and capabilities of the Irish Visual Communication sector. This information is then compared with the sector internationally any similarities or differences are highlighted for the purpose of establishing how the sector is performing in comparison with other countries. This section also discusses the skills and competencies required to be a Visual Communications designer and what skills and competencies are required to be an owner/manager of a Visual Communications company. The purpose of which is to establishing if any similarities or differences in these skill sets exist. This is necessary to determine a set of core skills required by the industry and assess if any of these skills need improving or developing.

2.2 Definition of Visual Communication
The Institute of Designers in Ireland (2008) states that Graphic Design and Visual Communications are different terms that identify the same discipline, defining it as “an immensely broad field of practice, which knowledge and information is communicated primarily a visual form through the use of texts and images” (IDI 2008 p.10).

American Institute of Graphic Arts (2009) defines graphic design as communication in a visual form and graphic designers not only work with drawn, painted, photographed, or computer-generated images, but they also design the letterforms that make up various typefaces. Designers create, choose and organise these visual elements including typography and images to communicate a message in a process which combines creativity, art and technology.

The various Education institutions defines Visual Communication in similar ways, but with subtle differences. The National College of Art and Design (2009) defines Visual Communication as a design discipline which is a:

Conceptually-based, problem-solving practice, embracing many sub-disciplines in the combination words and images in an variety of media to communicate a message.

(NCAD 2009)
The key elements of Visual Communication identified by a number of Educational institutions in Ireland are: graphic design, typography, illustration, packaging design, photography and the moving image and that Visual Communication designers are employed by design consultants and studios, book and magazine publishers, multimedia and web design companies, advertising agencies and production departments in the printing industry. (Cork Institute of Technology 2009; Dublin Institute of Technology 2009; Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology 2009; Limerick Institute of Technology 2009; National College of Art and Design 2009)

The literature indicates that Visual Communications is a multi-skilled, multi-facetted design discipline concerned with the communication of a message in a visual form. Visual Communications is the convergences of ideas, concepts, experiences, knowledge and information in a media which can be read, viewed or understood. Visual Communication therefore is primarily associated with the generation of two dimensional images and can include graphic design, information graphics, drawing, illustration, typography, photography, motion graphics and video images, colour and form and solely relies on vision to communicate its message.

There seems to be a consensus internationally on defining Visual Communications as a term. The University of the Arts London Central Saint Martins stating that it:

    Embraces typography, advertising, photography, moving image, drawing, print-making, illustration and interactive design” and that graduates are expected to gain employment in ‘a range of fields including advertising, television, film, exhibition design, printing, education, and publishing (books, magazines, CD-ROMs or web sites).

(2009)

Ravesnbourne College of Design and Communication (2009) asserts that graphic design explores the creation of visual materials are problem solvers, balancing creativity and flexibility to solve a client's brief and graduates are expected to gain employment in companies that offer print design, corporate identity and branding, editorial design and design management services.
Enterprise Ireland (1999) defines Visual Communication as an area of design which specifically relates to corporate identity, graphic design, advertising (design concepts) front-end multi-media design, production, communication delivery systems and design management. The European Commission (2009) defines graphic design as being central to Visual Communication, particularly in the creation and reinforcement of identities and brands, whether at level of the organisation itself (corporate identity) or at the level of its products, services or environment.

According to Shaughnessy (2005) graphic design is a non-verbal medium and that graphic design is expected to communicate without the benefit of written or spoken commentaries describing the designer’s intentions. Newark (2002) states that term Graphic Design was coined in 1922 and that a graphic designer is “someone who is always making sense of her material and mediating it through the forms and codes of visual language” (p.14). Heller (1997 p. XI) defines graphic design “as a critical masses of form and style”.

The research indicates that the terms Visual Communication and Graphic Design are often interchangeable and are used to describe the same discipline. There are commonalities in the definition of the terms Visual Communication or Graphic design that centre around communicating a message in a visual form. For the purpose of this dissertation the term Visual Communications is used throughout this study.

The literature also indicates that the set of core skills required for competency in the Visual Communication industry are wide and varied. Therefore it is reasonable to assume, without practice, skills could become impaired and therefore in an industry which is constantly evolving in terms of cultural references, with new media and new technologies constantly being introduced, there is a need for the continuous updating of these skills.

Having established what is meant by the term Visual Communication for this study the next section explores the current status of the Visual Communications sector in Ireland.
2.3 Visual Communications in Ireland

There is currently no substantive research specific to the Visual Communications sector in Ireland, however Enterprise Ireland (1999) indicates that in 1999 there were approximately 400 design consultancies practicing in Ireland and as with the trend in other European countries, by their nature they are small enterprises, with an average of 10-12 staff each and these companies tend to be owner-run. At the time the total turnover of the Irish design sector was €279.34 million (Ir£220 million). Although this research looks at the Irish design industry as a whole, 78% of the total income in the sector was from Visual Communications companies. Of the 3700 employees in the sector, 69% worked in Visual Communications companies (Enterprise Ireland 1999. p 9,76-79). Therefore it is reasonable to assume from this data that the Visual Communications sector in Ireland represents the largest proportion of the design disciplines in terms of employee numbers and value (see fig. 1).

![Turnover in Irish Design Sector](image)

- **Visual Communications Sector**: 22%
- **Rest of Design Sector**: 78%

**Total: €279.34m (Ir£220m)**

![Employee numbers in Irish Design Sector](image)

- **Visual Communications Sector**: 22%
- **Rest of Design Sector**: 69%

**Total: 3700**

**Fig. 1 Visual Communications Sector in Ireland**

*Adapted from: Enterprise Ireland (1999) Opportunities in Design.*
Enterprise Ireland (1999) identifies two distinct segments within the Irish design sector, namely, *Design Practices & Consultancies* with employees and *Design in Industry* with an in-house design facility. Both of these segments are further divided into sub-disciplines of design (*see fig. 2*). Visual Communication designers who work in *Practices & Consultancies* and *Design in Industry* are working in different segments of the same design discipline and therefore the same competencies and skills are required for successful fulfillment of client briefs and objectives, although an emphasis on particular skills may vary.

![Design Practices](image1)

![Design in Industry](image2)

*Fig. 2  Design Services Sector in Ireland
Source: Enterprise Ireland (1999) *Opportunities in Design.*

Intertrade Ireland (2009) indicate that the design sector is broken down into three distinct groupings of Design Consultancy, those working as designers as in In-house function (Design in Industry) and individual sole traders/freelance designers. (*see fig. 3*).
In the past decade the design sector in Ireland as a whole, has grown by just 12% (Intertrade Ireland 2009) and currently employs 5,100 staff, with most design companies employing between 2 and 5 staff (see fig. 4) suggesting that the majority of companies operating in the sector are small enterprises. However, in the past 10 years the services sector in Ireland as a whole, grew in excess of 100% (CSO 2008). The chart below relates to research from the memberships of key representative bodies that support the Irish design sector: the Institute of Designers in Ireland (IDI), the Graphic Design Business Association (GDBA), the Institute of Creative Advertising and Design (ICAD) and the Interiors Association (IA). Membership of these organisations includes sole traders and design consultancies as well as in-house designers (Intertrade Ireland 2009, p.7). The majority of which represent the Visual Communications sector, with the exception of the membership of the Interiors Association and certain sections of the membership of the Institute of Designers in Ireland, suggesting that Visual Communication represents the largest proportion of the design services sector in Ireland. According to Intertrade Ireland (2009, p.11) the sector has an estimated turn-over of €465 million.

Fig. 3  Breakdown of Design Firms by type (Republic of Ireland)

It was estimated by Enterprise Ireland (1999) that by 2003 the design sector would have a workforce of in excess of 8,000 employees, an expected increase of 216% on the 1999 numbers (see fig. 5) and with an estimated turnover of €635 million (Irl£500 million), more than doubling the sector in terms of value and employment. In the UK, the design sector grew by almost 50% from 2003 to 2004 (EC 2009). The figures suggest that in the previous decade the design sector in Ireland has underperformed both in terms of estimated growth and of value. In comparison to the UK, this could potentially be perceived as a serious underperformance of the Irish design sector as a whole, especially in light of the unprecedented economic growth witnessed in Ireland in the past decade.
2.3.1 Comparison with Other Countries

The design sector in Ireland appears to be small, when compared with other countries. In May of 2008, the entire workforce in the Republic of Ireland stood at 2,108,507 with the design sector employing 5100. This would equate to a representation of 0.24% of the total workforce and a turnover of €465 million, which represents 0.28% of Gross Value Added (GVA) (Intertrade Ireland 2009, p11). In August 2008, the workforce in the United Kingdom stood at 29,420,000, with the UK design services sector employing 185,500, equating to a representation of 0.63% of the total workforce, with a turnover (Euro equivalent) of €11.6 billion, or 1.04% of GVA (Intertrade Ireland 2009, p.11).

In terms of make up, Europe wide there is a similar picture with the Visual Communications sector being dominated by micro-enterprises and self-employed individuals. Each member State defines the design sector slightly differently and therefore little data on the sector currently exist that are comparable across countries.
A number of studies have been conducted on the economic importance of design, concentrating either on its micro-economic effects, i.e. on the performance of companies that use design, or on the macro-economic effects. Studies on the economic importance of the design sector specifically are rare, due to a lack of comparable data.

(EC 2009 p.25)

In Germany there are 8,400 graphic designers, in Sweden 3,000 and Finland 1,500. The average number of employees per design business in the UK was 3.2 in 2004 (excluding the owner), in Sweden the average number of employees is 2.2. These figures would seem to corroborate Enterprise Ireland’s (1999) and InterTrade Ireland’s (2009) research in terms of design consultancies being small enterprises.

In 2003, the economic weight of the design industry in Europe as a whole represents 2.6% of EU Gross Domestic Produce (GDP), with a turnover of €650 billion. The sector grew 12.3% more that the general economy from 1999 to 2003 (EC 2009 p.26).

In the United States there are about 261,000 graphic designers, which represents 0.17% of the total workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009). As with Ireland most graphic designers work in specialised design services which include advertising and related services, printing and related support activities or the newspapers and magazine publishers. Other designers produce computer graphics for computer systems design firms or motion picture production firms. A small number of designers also work in engineering services or for management, scientific, and technical consulting firms. About 25% of designers in the United States are self-employed (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009).
Design consultancies and practices in Ireland and internationally tend to be very small enterprises in terms of staff numbers. In the past decade there has been and unprecedented growth in the Irish economy, however the design sector has grown marginally in this period. From the figures in the Intertrade Ireland report (2009) in comparison to the UK, it would seem that the design sector in Ireland is also financially underperforming and is far from achieving the estimated growth that was forecasted by Enterprise Ireland in 1999. In the UK, the number of employees in the design sector is almost double that of the Irish design sector and almost 4 times the GVA (Intertrade Ireland 2009). This poor performance in the Visual Communications sector in Ireland would suggest that sector may lack certain skills which could be contributing to this underperformance.

Having defined the term Visual Communications for the purpose of this study and identified the general nature of work conducted by companies operating within the sector as well as broadly establishing the current status of the Visual Communications sector in Ireland and internationally, the following section investigates what skills are required when working as a Visual Communications designer and seeks to discover if weaknesses in skills and competencies have been a factor in the poor growth in the sector in Ireland.
2.4 Skills and Competencies

Previous research findings identified that many design business in Ireland small enterprises and are usually are owner-run (Enterprise Ireland 1999) and when compared with international markets, the sector here seems to be underperforming in terms of its value and size (Intertrade Ireland 2009). Therefore, this section investigates the various skills required for both working as a Visual Communicator and for managing a Visual Communication business. This section will establish if a different set of competencies are required for being a Visual Communications partitioner than that of a Visual Communications business owner and will identify any skill deficits in the sector.

This is a necessary function of the study in order to identify the value of Continuing Professional Development in terms of identifying the range of skills which can be serviced and improved upon through engagement in CPD.

Skills and Competencies required of a Designer

Minale (1996) suggests that for those individuals who work as Visual Communication designers, their core competency can be summed up in one word - Creativity. Creativity has long been articulated as what designers and visual communicators do (Glaser 2000, Shaughnessy 2005; NCAD 2009; Ravensbourne College 2009; and European Commission 2009). Conley (2004) elaborates on the purpose of creativity to include ‘coming up with new and valuable ideas’, ‘building brands’ and ‘helping clients to innovate’ (p 45).

Conley (2004) suggests there are seven abilities required by all designers including visual communicators:

- Understand the context or circumstances of a design problem and frame them in an insightful way
- Work at a level of abstraction appropriate to a specific situation
- Model and visualise solutions even with imperfect information
- An approach to problem solving that involves the simultaneous creation and evaluation of multiple alternatives
- Add or maintain value as pieces are integrated into a whole
• Establish purposeful relationships among elements of a solution and between the solution and its context
• Use form to embody ideas and to communicate their value

Acquisition of these ‘creative’ competencies are usually achieved through initial training received at third level college (Conley 2009). These competencies include creativity, problem solving skills, understanding and analysis of information and visualisation skills. Such skills reflect the competencies identified earlier within the literature regarding Visual Communication.

Skills and Competencies required in Business
Much of the literature differentiated between core design skills and those required for running a business are different from that of a activity of design and being a designer. These business skills include:
• Management and leadership skills
• Project management
• Verbal communication skills
• Understanding your market and your competition
• Understanding the customer’s needs
• Professionalism and being a businessperson
• Finance, financial planning and understanding pricing structures
• Strategic development and Planning for long term growth of a company
• Promotion of the value of design
• Developing a client relationship
• Being multi-disciplinary
(O’Kane 2002; Foote 2002; Best 2006; UK Design Council 2007a).

Designers and design consultancies trade on their primary talent of creativity and design practitioners tend to choose to enter the industry based on their personal creative impulses rather than entrepreneurial or business drive. The result of this is the creation of a sector that critics sometimes refer to as an underdeveloped cottage industry. Like any other business, a design consultancy has to be profitable in order to survive and grow (Design Council UK 2009).
According to Conley (2004), relevance of skills that relate to activity designing are different from skills required for managing a business and therefore this makes it possible to distinguish a ‘Designer’ from a ‘Business Person’.

Design competencies are about creativity and problem solving, where the competencies required for running and managing the business of design are a different set of skills and therefore are distinct from creative skills. The design process (see fig 7) requires many skills, which are employed at various stages in the development of a design solution. This diagram shows the various skills and competencies required for working in the Visual Communications sector that were identified in the literature and where these may be potentially utilised in the process. There is a common ground identified in the set of competencies required for running a business, these centre around generic skills such as communication, marketing, strategic planning, management and professionalism.

![Diagram of Design Process and skills required](image)

Fig. 7  Design Process and skills required
The literature would indicate that because many design companies are formed by designer and not business people, this would therefore suggest that design business owner may potentially lack certain business skill, as their core competency is creativity.

Having established that a different set of skills are required or the activity of designing than for running and managing a design business, the next section outlines and discusses any identified deficits of skills and knowledge in the Visual Communications sector. The purpose of which is to address these skill deficits through CPD in order to improve the skills base in the sector.

2.5 **Skills deficit within the Visual Communications Sector**

Over the past ten years there have been two significant reports on the design services sector in Ireland. These two reports (Enterprise Ireland, 1999; Intertrade Ireland 2009) identified a number of key competencies that require improving in the sector. According to Enterprise Ireland (1999) those who commission design seek quality, creativity and professionalism in the process and delivery of design solutions, however, the design sector struggles to deliver this (Enterprise Ireland 1999). Other skill gaps that were identified included: business administration, strategic development, communication, weaknesses in marketing of design services and team-working (Enterprise Ireland 1999). This suggests that the sector lacks certain skills centering around management, communication and professionalism.

Intertrade Ireland (2009) states that 52% of design companies lack sales skills, 47%, 43% lack qualified staff and 56% site a lack of understanding from clients of the value of design. Companies who with an in-house design facility fare slightly better (*see fig. 8*).
Research carried out by the UK Design Council (2007) in the design services sector has similar findings (See Fig. 9). This research indicates that designer’s professional skills needed to be improved. These areas include: entrepreneurial development of businesses; better communication skills to explain their work and the value of design to existing design buyers and strategic skills to enable designers better understand business drivers and markets.

Fig. 8 Skill gaps in Irish Design sector
Source: Adapted from Intertrade Ireland (2009).

Research carried out by the UK Design Council (2007) in the design services sector has similar findings (See Fig. 9). This research indicates that designer’s professional skills needed to be improved. These areas include: entrepreneurial development of businesses; better communication skills to explain their work and the value of design to existing design buyers and strategic skills to enable designers better understand business drivers and markets.

Fig. 9 Which skills do designers lack the most
Another identified weaknesses in the design sector is a poor understanding of clients needs (Intertrade Ireland 2009). This issue was also raised in the 1999 report where it was stated that there is a tendency within the Irish design industry to operate on a project-by-project basis, which can hinder long-term relationship building with clients (Enterprise Ireland 1999, p.30).

In a report published by Forfás (2006) in relation to the digital media industry in Ireland, the key findings and recommendations were:

- Non-technical skills such as project management, sales and marketing, communication and interpersonal skills are increasingly important
- “Ramping-up” of skills is required to stimulate overseas investment and to boost the indigenous industry. Specific proposals for achieving this include:
  - Creative courses (film making, design etc.) should incorporate more training in the use of technology
  - Course curricula should incorporate practical, industry-oriented elements
  - Closer links between colleges and the industry through mechanisms such as structured work placements and internships for students (Forfás 2006).

This report identified a number of similar skill deficits in the Digital Media industry that were also identified in the Visual Communication sector (Enterprises Ireland 1999, Intertrade Ireland 2009). Having identified a number of areas of skill weaknesses in the Visual Communications sector, the next section take a more in-depth look at the implications of these issues.

### 2.5.1 Areas of Skill Improvement

EGFSN (2007a) suggests that there is a growth in knowledge based jobs and that manual labour is being increasingly displaced by knowledge-rich employment. Evidence indicates that the kinds of higher-level jobs generally associated with a knowledge economy are also requiring proportionately more skills of a generic nature (Department for Trade and Industry 2003; EGFSN 2007a, 2007b; Engineers Ireland 2008; FÁS 2008). Therefore, there is an increasing emphasis on individuals gaining or improving on generic skills (EGFSN 2007a).
Areas of skill deficits specific to the Visual Communication sector in Ireland are, however, more precise and relate to lack of communication skills (Enterprise Ireland 1999; Design Council 2007; Intertrade Ireland 2009), entrepreneurial, management and business skills (Enterprise Ireland 1999; Design Council 2007a) and skills that relate to marketing design services (Enterprise Ireland 1999; EGFSN 2007a).

**Generic Skills/Soft Skills**

The EGFSN (2007a) states that *generic, horizontal, basic, soft, key, transferable, employability* are among the more common classifications used when broadly referring to combinations of skills and personal attributes which are deemed essential to be effective in the workplace of the 21st century. The Expert Group also stated that conceptual/thinking skills like collecting and organising information, problem-solving, planning and organising, learning-to-learn skills, innovation and creativity skills, systematic thinking should be included in a generic skills portfolio and categorises generic skills as follows:

- **Basic/fundamental skills**: literacy, using numbers, using technology
- **People-related skills**: communication, interpersonal, team-working, customer-service skills
- **Conceptual/thinking skills**: collecting and organising information, problem-solving, planning and organising, learning-to-learn skills, innovation and creative skills

Generic skills apply to all industries, although, not specific to the Visual Communications sector this would suggest that improvement in generic skills may benefit the Visual Communications sector also.

**Communication Skills**

A number of barriers to achieving additional business growth in the Irish design sector were identified by Intertrade Ireland (2009), in particular the lack of experienced staff and availability of specific skills. However, the lack of understanding of the scope and value of design services among clients was seen as the most significant factor holding back business growth.

The communication gap that exists between the design sector and its clients is acknowledged. Only 58% of respondents (to a survey of 405 Irish SME’s) believed that the design industry communicates the value of design to business well. (Intertrade Ireland 2009 p.28)
Designers need better communication skills to explain their work and the value of design to new and existing design buyers (Enterprise Ireland 1999; Design Council 2007b; Intertrade Ireland 2009). This is particularly acute amongst clients who perceive design as a ‘commodity’ as opposed to a process that can have an impact at a strategic level (Intertrade Ireland 2009). Clients have remarked that design consultants predominantly present the creative side of a proposal and that rarely any effort is made to profile the value-added case for design in terms of potential cost savings, performance improvement etc. (Enterprise Ireland 1999). This suggests that poor communication skills could be a factor inhibiting growth in the sector and the long-term development of client relationships.

Over half of designers surveyed by the UK Design Council identified the ability to communicate the value of design to business as a key challenge for the industry (Design Council & DBA 2005). Best (2006) argues that verbal communication skills for negotiation and presentations is required by all designers and managers.

Designers need to communicate skills to explain concept rationale which are being developed for the client, how the clients business objective are been realised through the proposed solutions and the value of design for the clients business.

Professional Skills
The literature indicates that design companies are typically formed and run by designer, not business people (Enterprise Ireland 1999, Design Council 2007a) and that design companies grow and are judged by creative reputation, not whether they are profitable (Design Council 2007a).

Research carried out by the UK Design Council (2007b) found specific areas where designers’ professional skills are in need improvement. These include entrepreneurial business skills to help designers set up, develop and manage their own enterprises and leadership skills to grow their businesses. Many Irish design consultancies are owner-managed and there is a a lack of business professionals employed in the sector (Enterprise Ireland 1999). Best (2006) states that there is a need for design companies to have business skills such as: strategic vision, planning
for long term growth of a company, promotion of design and management and leadership skills.

Enterprise Ireland (1999) identifies that the Irish design sector takes an ad-hock approach to many of these including promotion and marketing of design services and businesses in the sector tend to work on a project-by-project basis with clients rather than fostering long-term relationships. Designers often feel the need to control all aspects of the project, when in fact, their core competence is in creativity and not in implementation (Enterprise Ireland 1999).

The Irish design sector has a reputation for missing deadlines, running over budget and lacking administrative skills (Enterprise Ireland 1999). Project Management skills in the design sector tend to be weak and this has contributed to a lack of professionalism (Enterprise Ireland 1999, Intertrade Ireland 2009). It appears that there is also no evidence of long term planning in the Irish design sector (Enterprise Ireland 1999) and this failure in planning is again highlighted in the 2009 report where it is states that “there is no significant evidence of consistent planning in design businesses. This will inhibit further growth in a significant proportion of the businesses” (Intertrade Ireland 2009 p.31).

Best (2006) identifies that project management is a competency required for the success of any design business. Currently, the design sector in Ireland seems focussed on late stage design activities, in particular, styling and graphic design (Intertrade Ireland 2009) this relates to a distinct lack of planning within the design industry (Enterprise Ireland 1999). Design consultancies are also poor at building and nurturing client relationships when compared to the marketing services sector and tend to operate on a project basis Enterprise Ireland (1999). This weakness results in design practices not fully realising their full potential from repeat business (Enterprise Ireland 1999).

At a more strategic level, designers need skills to enable a better understanding business drivers and markets and to work with senior management across a range of industries and disciplines. Buyers of design note that design consultancies have little concept of the strategic importance of design for a company and are unable to communicate design’s role within the strategic planning process. (Enterprise Ireland 1999).
Experience of working in multi-disciplinary teams is also needed as it develops a greater depth of knowledge about design in relation to other business disciplines. (Enterprise Ireland 1999, Design Council 2007b). The UK Design Council (2007a) recommends training in business skills for senior staff and directors.

As identified in the previous section the lack of professional skills in the Irish design sector is a major factor contributing to the poor growth seen in the previous decade. If this is not addressed, this skills deficit will continue to inhibit growth in the sector. Lack of planning and project management would also seem to be a consideration for the poor development of long-term client relationships and in turn, poor growth of business in the sector.

**Marketing and Sales Skills**

The marketing of any product or service is an important factor for the growth of any business, however, the literature would suggest that many design consultancies market their business on an ad-hoc basis. Marketing efforts are limited to brochures, cold-calling, direct marketing, workshop participation and advertising (Enterprise Ireland 1999).

There is an acute problem in relation to marketing and sales staff in Irish SMEs who have been recruited from technical backgrounds, who have inadequate, if any, formal training in marketing and sales. There is a requirement for a greater provision of tailored training programmes which are sector-specific and highly targeted. There is also a need for Higher Education Institutes to align their marketing and sales curricula closely to the needs of SMEs (EGFSN 2007a). Irish SMEs need to understand the importance of marketing and sales capabilities for future success. In particular, successful innovation will hinge on the ability of firms to utilise customer and market knowledge in the development of products and services which meet customer needs (EGFSN 2007a).
2.6 Summary

The literature suggest that Visual Communications is a term used to describe a design discipline primarily concerned with communicating a message in a visually form and that the skills required of Visual Communicators is wide and varied.

The Visual Communications sector in Ireland and internationally is typically made up of small businesses and therefore, may have limited resources at their disposal. The cost of staff training and loss of revenue to the company with the absence of staff at training courses could be a significant issue for the participation in CPD. The literature indicates that design companies usually run by designers and a different set of skills and competencies are required for being a designer than that of being a design business owner.

There are a number of identified skill deficits in the design sector such as the inability to explain the value of design to the client and a lack of communicating and marketing of design services for winning more business. The two reports on the design sector in Ireland indicate that in the ten year period between the reports, little has changed in terms of improving on the identified skills deficit in the sector. This would suggest that the failure of the sector in addressing the issues of skill deficits could have been a contributory factor in the poor growth in the Visual Communications sector, when in the same period of time the Irish economy has seen unprecedented growth.

It is clear from the literature that the design services sector in Ireland still needs to improve upon on many skills, in particular communication with clients, marketing of design services, project and design management, strategic planning and team working. Theses skill deficits may in the past have been a contributory factor in poor growth in the design sector and unless these issues are addressed in a significant and meaningful way will continue to inhibit the growth and development of many design businesses in Ireland. This would suggest that there is a need for a structured programme of Continuous Professional Development for the Visual Communications sector to address identified areas of weakness in skills.
The Irish design sector needs to strengthen in terms of: design excellence; business effectiveness and marketing skills. Providing opportunities for designers to acquire key business and strategic skills can potentially have a positive impact on the growth of individual businesses and the industry as a whole.

Having established areas of skill weakness in the Visual Communications sector, the following section explores and defines the term Continuous Professional Development, with a view to exploring the potential benefits there are for participation in CPD and barriers can make participation difficult.
3.0 Continuing Professional Development
3.1 Introduction

The previous section identified skill deficits in the Visual Communications sector and clearly indicates that there is requirement for a development of skills and competencies. A decade had passed between the publication of two reports on the Visual Communications sector and the same skill deficits would seem to be still effecting the industry. This would seem to indicate that the sector has yet to address the issues surrounding known skill discrepancies.

Enterprise Strategy Group (2004) states there is now an emphasis on knowledge as key component in enabling Ireland’s economic development and training systems are required to produce the necessary skills to drive successful enterprises.

Therefore the following section investigates current definitions of what constitutes Continuing Professional Development and draws upon examples from a number of varying industries for the purpose of establishing any common trends. This section continues with an exploration of the various relevant models of CPD with the view to establish which model of CPD, if any, is best suited to the Visual Communications sector. Finally, a number of professional bodies in Ireland who facilitate CPD programmes in their relevant sector are identified for the purpose of gaining an understanding of benefits of CPD in their sector.

3.2 Continuing Professional Development - Current Definitions

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) can be defined as the conscious updating of professional knowledge and the improvement of professional competence throughout a person’s working-life. It is a commitment to being professional, keeping up-to-date and consciously seeking to improve. CPD is the key to optimising a person’s career opportunities for today and for the future. It focuses on what you learn and how you develop throughout your career (Chartered Institute of Professional Development 2009). The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors define CPD in a more detailed manner by means of explaining each word:

**Continuous:** Because learning never ceases, regardless of age or seniority

**Professional:** Because if it is focussed competencies in a professional role
Development: Because it is the goal to improve personal performance and enhance career progression (RICS 2009).

CPD can also be referred to as Continuous Professional Education (CPE) and Lifelong Learning (LLL) (Knasel et al 2000). Madden and Mitchel (1993) define CPD as the maintenance and enhancement of knowledge, expertise and competence of professionals throughout their career according to a formulated plan. Jones and Fear (1994) state that the purpose of CPD is to promote effective performance at work. This form of learning can either be certified by an awarding body or simply a conscious commitment from the individual for continuous improvement and learning. Lifelong Learning has been defined by the European Commission as:

All learning activity undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skill and competencies within a personal, civic and/or employment related perspective

(Taskforce on Lifelong Learning 2002 p.6)

According to the HEA (2009), lifelong learning will ensure that up-skilling of all individuals is facilitated. As such, the individual will maintain a relationship with education throughout their lives. According to the National Competitiveness Council (2009) lifelong learning equips adult learner with the knowledge, skills and personal and moral attributes that are necessary to support a socially inclusive society, underpinned by economic development, high employment and living standards.

Wood (cited in Ryan 2003) states that from the 1980’s, Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists in the UK have had to demonstrate professional competencies in practice though Continuing Professional Development. The healthcare profession was one of the first industries to adopt CPD as a method of maintaining and improving professional competencies.

CPD has gained prominence in the last ten years in the healthcare sector as organisations demanded flexibility from their workforce. In the UK, the then Labour government published their agenda “The New NHS: Modern Dependable” which targeted professional education bodies to develop an infrastructure to facilitate CPD (Barr 2000). The development of CPD in
other professions is of interest to this research, as this can potentially be used as a benchmark for the development of a CPD programme specific to the Visual Communications sector. As with the Visual Communications industry, in other industries, individuals are expected to demonstrate professional competencies and maintain those competencies. The literature would indicate that the healthcare profession has developed and utilise a CPD programme for those particular reasons.

The benefits of CPD have received interest from many industries seeking to improve standards and quality. The main reason for this growing interest according to Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment is:

...the realisation that developed economies are moving into a post industrial phase where the emphasis is increasingly on the ability to continuously acquire knowledge, skills and competencies in an environment of constant change. The concept of ‘work for life’ is increasingly supplanting that of ‘a job for life’.

(2002, p.5)

This suggests that in any industry, including Visual Communications, because of a shift towards the knowledge economy, the workforce will be required to continuously gain and develop new knowledge and skills in order to maintain professional competencies to help ensure for companies remain competitive. In the past decade the Visual Communications sector in Ireland has failed to improve on identified skills deficits. With the move to a knowledge based economy, the sector will not only need to address known skill deficits but also acquire new skills. Therefore the following section discusses relevant models of CPD programmes which may be of interest to the Visual Communications sector.

3.3 Models of CPD

A number of recognised models of CPD have been identified within the literature. This section discusses a number of models that are relevant to the this study and pertinent to the Visual Communications sector. According to Kennedy (2005) CPD can be structured and organised in a number of different ways and for a number of different reasons. While most CPD experiences might be considered as means of introducing or enhancing knowledge, skills and attitudes, it cannot be assumed that this is uncontested. Eraut (1994) suggests that it is not merely the type of professional knowledge being acquired that is important, but also the
context through which it is acquired and subsequently used that actually helps us to understand the nature of that knowledge.

An increasing amount of literature focuses on particular aspects of CPD, however there is a little information on the comparison of CPD models (Hoban, 2002). Analysing the means through which CPD is organised and structured may help gain an understanding of the motivation behind CPD and the nature of professional knowledge itself, these findings are of particular interest in formulating judgements on the value of CPD for the Visual Communications sector.

**Training Courses**

There is strong evidence to suggest that training courses broadly to account for the majority of CPD activity across all sectors (Little 1994; Kelly and McDiarmaid 2002). Approximately 250,000 (41%) of all employees in Ireland attended training courses during 1999. Employees in larger companies are more likely to receive training and a higher proportion of females than males attend training courses. Employees spent 1.4 million days on training courses; the equivalent of 2.4 days per employee. Two-thirds of training course time was delivered through internally-managed courses. Of the externally managed courses, private training organisations were by far the largest providers (Dept of Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002).

This model of CPD supports a skills-based, technical view of training whereby CPD provides the learner with an opportunity to update their skills in order to demonstrate their professional competence. It is generally delivered to the learner by an expert. While the training can take place where the participant works, it is most commonly delivered off-site (Kennedy 2005). Although, training courses have been acknowledged as an effective means of introducing new knowledge, this method of CPD can provide an opportunity for dominant stakeholders to control and limit the learning programme and can place the learner in a passive role as recipients of specific knowledge (Hoban 2002). In this sense training courses cater for a limited, predefined types of learning and may not cater for all learners who are seeking improvement in a particular competency. As training courses account for the majority of CPD
activity in Ireland and it is important place this in context that this is only method of delivery of CPD and therefore, may potentially have its drawbacks.

**Work Based Learning**

In-company training is a response to the immediate training needs of business (ACCEL 2008) and can be seen as a component of Continuing Professional Development (Taskforce on Lifelong Learning 2002). Work based learning is defined by Boud and Solomon (2003) as a class of programmes delivered in the work place that are designed to create new learning opportunities. Work based learning programmes can meet the needs of the learner and contribute to the long term development of the individual and company alike. According to Boud and Solomon (2003) Work Based Learning is an attempt to engage seriously with economic and social education demands and provides the possibilities for a new education. Work Based learning is of critical importance when Ireland is struggling to retain competitiveness (ACCEL 2008).

Boud and Solomon (2003) state that all work based learning programmes share six characteristics:

- Partnership between education institution and industry - required to enable infrastructure and support learning
- Contractual relationships between learner and organisation - learners negotiate plan to meet their responsibilities
- Programme is delivered to meet the needs of the work place and the learner
- Identifying where the individual wishes to engage in learning rather than being based on existing qualifications of learner
- Learning projects should be undertaken in the workplace - orientated to the challenges of work and future needs
- Framework of standards is key element in quality assurance and work based training must be accepted as a formal qualification

Skillnets have implemented a work based learning programme in Ireland called the Training Networks Programme (TNP) since 1999. The TNP manages 123 networks across a variety of regions and sectors and have trained over 15,000 workers in Irish companies (ACCEL 2008).
The concept of ‘in-company’ training is particularly successful and encouraged high levels of participation (ACCEL 2008) and initiatives such as Skillnets TNP ensure maximum involvement by companies in vulnerable sectors (ACCEL 2008).

According to Boud & Solomon (2003), the following are required for work based learning to be successful:

• Identify learning needs of the individual
• Any new learnings undertaken by the individual must build on existing knowledge and lead to new levels of accomplishment
• Recognise new knowledge gained by the learner
• Have learning equivalence of awards in terms of standardising of academic qualifications
• Standardise the practice of learning

Much learning is unplanned and is not included in formal education, however learning in this manner is regarded as being of great value as it contributes to important education and social outcomes and is of central importance in work based learning and the understanding of issues driving organisational learning (Boud & Solomon 2003). Work based learning needs to benefit both the employee and company, with the employee gaining knowledge and skills and the company benefitting through the application of knowledge and skill (Accel 2008). The provision of workplace-based learning, fitted around working hours, needs to be actively promoted (Forfás 2009a).

Work based learning offers an alternative way of facilitating learning, other than through training courses. Learning in this manner may offer certain advantages over training courses as work based learning is normally delivered in an environment which can be both comfortable and familiar to the learner. This method of learning also offers and opportunity to participate in CPD training without the inconvenience of having to travel to external training centres. This would suggest that a work based learning programme could be advantageous for the Visual Communications sector as employers do not have to facilitate leave of absence for employees to attend off-site training.
Mentoring and Coaching

Mentoring and coaching both usually involve one-to-one sessions and it is easy to confuse the two. In fact, the two approaches have different goals, relationships and time frames. Mentors are long-term career advisors with experience of the mentee’s industry or company. Coaches, on the other hand, are impartial guides to improved performance as they help clients move towards solutions to specific issues, often within a set timeframe, and then leave (Design Council 2007c). Attempts to distinguish between the two suggest that coaching is more skills based (Rhodes & Beneicke 2002), where mentoring also implies a relationship where one partner is novice and the other more experienced (Clutterbuck 1991).

Downey (2003) states that the coach does not need to impart knowledge, advice or even wisdom, what a coach must do is to speak and act in a way that others learn and perform at their best. This non-directive approach helps individuals to learn for themselves. Whitmore (2002) defines coaching as unlocking a person’s potential to maximise their own performance and helps them to learn rather than teaching them.

Peer coaching and mentoring can often be found within the workplace and can occur on an informal, spontaneous bases or as part of a structured scheme (Sutherland 2003). According to Rhodes & Beneicke peer coaching is:

A confidential process through which two or more colleagues work together to reflect upon current practices; expand, refine and build new skills; share ideas; conduct action research; teach one another, or problem solve within the workplace.

(2002 p.298)

In the workplace, mentoring often takes the form of apprenticeship, where inexperienced staff learn skills, and the political and social ways of the firm help integrate a new member of staff into the company network. (Design Council 2007c). A mentor is traditionally someone with more experience than the learner, they are senior and trusted confidants who help more junior professionals with their career direction. Mentors help their protégés work out where they want to go and how to get there with mentors sharing their own insights (Design Council 2007c).
Mentoring and coaching both involve an equitable relationship, allowing for the two individuals involved to discuss possibilities, beliefs and hopes. Depending on the matching of those involved, the mentoring/coaching relationship model can support either a transmission view of professional development, where individuals are initiated into the status quo of the company by their more experienced colleagues or a transformative view where the relationship provides a supportive, but challenging forum for both intellectual and affective interrogation of practice (Kennedy 2005). In order for the coaching/mentoring model of CPD to be successful, participants must have well-developed interpersonal communication skills (Rhodes & Beneicke, 2002).

The literature would suggest that Mentoring and Coaching have their benefits and that each can be employed in different ways for the purpose of improving skills and competencies. Mentoring assumes that expertise already exists and offers a greater control over knowledge gained by the mentee. Mentoring is also relevant to specifics of the job, can be more cost effective that hiring an external trainer and can be utilised for the purpose of indoctrinating staff into company culture and values. Coaching, on the other hand may have associated costs, however, the Coach is an independent thinker and may offer new insights for the company. In coaching, the learner has the greater control over knowledge and there may be a value in the professional skills learned through coaching.

Many designers acquire their skills by learning on the job and that learning from others is a factor in the training of designers (Enterprise Ireland 1999, Dept. Enterprise and Employment 2002, Design Council 2008) and one important benefit of learning this way is in the sharing of perspectives and experiences, giving encouragement to others in the form of peer learning (Boud & Solomon 2003). With this type of learning, the more experienced member of staff initiates the novice into the profession. This initiation, while including support for the novice in gaining and using appropriate skills and knowledge, also conveys the social and cultural norms within the company (Kennedy 2005). This would suggest that designers in senior positions in the Visual Communications industry, may themselves require training in mentoring and coaching skills for the purpose of helping develop the careers of junior staff and may suggest a need for training in communications skills to facilitate this.
This evidence would suggest that in an industry which already has a culture of mentoring/coaching such skills should be developed further. As indicated by the UK Design Council (2007c), mentors are senior members of staff who disseminate knowledge and experiences to junior staff for the purpose of aiding their career development and that this type of learning is invaluable. For mentoring or coaching to be successful in the Visual Communications sector, a number of skills are required, including communication skills as a competency that has already been identified as weakness in the sector (Enterprise Ireland 1999; Intertrade Ireland 2009).

**Community of Practice**

There is a clear relationship between communities of practice and the mutually supportive and challenging form of the mentoring/coaching model previously discussed. The essential difference between the two is that a Community of Practice generally involves more than two people, and would not necessarily rely on confidentiality (Kennedy 2005).

Wenger (1998) argues that, while we are all members of various communities of practice, learning within these communities involves three essential processes:

- Evolving forms of mutual engagement
- Understanding and tuning [their] enterprise
- Developing [their] repertoire, styles and discourses

Central to Wenger’s argument, is a social theory of learning, which recognises that learning within a community of practice happens as a result of that community and the interactions that take place are not merely a result of planned learning, such as training courses. However, according to Kennedy (2005) the participants’ awareness of the existence of the community is central to their internalisation of such learning. Depending on the role played by the individual as a member of the wider team, learning within such a community could be either a positive and proactive or a passive experience, where the collective wisdom of dominant members of the group shapes other individuals’ understanding of the community and its role.

Boreham (2000) considers a social conception of learning in relation to the healthcare profession, he argues that:

> When the professional activity is collective, the amount of knowledge available in a clinical unit cannot be measured by the sum total of the knowledge
The value of learning lies in the unique combinations of several individuals’ knowledge and this acts as a powerful system for the creation of new kinds of knowledge (Boreham 2000). Wenger (1998) argues that a community of practice should create its own understanding of the joint enterprise, therefore allowing the members of that community to exert a certain level of control over the agenda. For professional learning to take place within this context, it should be neither a form of accountability nor of performance management. Communities of practice can potentially serve to maintain dialogue in an uncritical manner, in certain circumstances they can also act as powerful sites, where the sum total of individual knowledge and experience is enhanced significantly through a collective endeavour (Kennedy 2005).

In relation to CPD, the Community of Practice model may be of benefit to larger companies within the Visual Communications sector i.e. companies with greater staff resources, although according to the findings in the previous chapter, these companies are limited in numbers. Lack of confidentiality amongst participants in the Community of Practice model may hinder individuals inputs. This model seems to be informal and unplanned, and similar Mentoring and Coaching, may already be occurring within companies in the Visual Communications sector. Further research, beyond the scope of this dissertation would be required to ascertain if Community of Practice exists within the Visual Communications sector in Ireland, how they function and to what benefit they serve.

**Deficit model of CPD**

Professional development can be specifically designed to address a perceived deficit in performance which may be developed within the context of performance management review (Kennedy 2005). Rhodes & Beneicke (2003 p. 124) point out that performance management can be viewed as a means of raising standards or ‘as an element of government intervention to exact greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability’. Performance management requires someone take charge of evaluating and managing any change in the individual's
While the deficit model uses CPD as an attempt to remedy perceived weaknesses in the individual, Rhodes & Beneicke (2003) suggest that the cause of poor performance is not necessarily related to individual, but can relate to an organisational and or management practices. According to Kennedy (2005) attributing blame to an individual for poor performance and viewing CPD as a way of remedying weaknesses, suggests a situation whereby collective responsibility is not considered, i.e. that the workplace itself is not considered as a possible reason for the perceived failure of the individual to demonstrate their professional competencies.

Boreham (2000) argues that effective collective competence is dependent on leadership which promotes three particular conditions, these include:

- Making collective sense of events in the workplace
- Developing and using a collective knowledge base
- Developing a sense of interdependency

This argument is clearly at odds with the principle of the deficit model which seems to attribute blame for perceived underperformance on the individual and fails to take due cognisance of collective responsibility and partnership of learning between employee and employer. Evidence also suggests the Deficit model requires additional resources from management to identify any deficit in performance and implement a programme to deal with these issues. In a sector which has limited resources in terms of staff numbers, it may not be feasible to implement a Deficit model of CPD in the Visual Communications sector due to additional resources required for this particular model.

**Cascade Model**

The Cascade model of CPD involves individuals attending training events and then cascading or disseminating the information to colleagues (Kennedy 2005). Day (1999) discusses a case study in which the cascade model was employed by a group of teachers as a means of sharing
their own (successful) learning with colleagues. The group reported on what they had learned, but ‘no detailed consideration was given to the very principles of participation, collaboration and ownership which had characterized their own learning’ (Day 1999, p.126). This would indicate that in the cascade model, the individual disseminates fact about learning to their colleagues and there is little or no emphasis on how they learned. The Cascade model neglects to consider the range of learning contexts and assumes that knowledge is the important part of the process and not necessarily the context in which it is gained or used (Eraut 1994).

Solomon & Tresman (1999) suggest that one of the drawbacks of this model is that what is passed on in the cascading process is generally skills-focused, sometimes knowledge-focused, but rarely focuses on values. Therefore, it could be argued that the cascade model supports a technicist view of learning, where skills and knowledge are given priority over attitudes and values.

This suggests that in this model of CPD only the learned facts are communicated to colleagues and not the process of learning and discovery. Value of the learning activity is not seen as a priority of the by the learner when disseminating learned information to their colleagues and therefore it could be argued that this model of CPD can only have limited success. However, as indicated, because the technical aspects of learning through the Cascade Model, what is being communicated to colleagues is technical-factual learning and such may be of benefit to colleagues learning through dissemination of information, e.g., learning of software packages. As with the Community of Practice model, designers in Visual Communications may be already learning from colleagues in this manner, as it is indicated in the literature that designers tend learn in the workplace.

**The Transformative Model CPD**

The Transformative model of CPD involves the combination of a number of processes and conditions, i.e. aspects of which are drawn from other models of CPD (Kennedy 2005). In this sense, the Transformative model is not a clearly definable model of CPD in itself, but rather recognises the range of different conditions required for transformative practice.
Hoban (2002) provides an interesting perspective on this idea of CPD as a means of supporting educational change. He draws comparisons between the knowledge focused and contextually void model of a training approach with the context-specific approach of a communities of practice model that does not necessarily embrace new forms of formal knowledge. He suggests that what is really needed is not a wholesale move towards the learner centric, context-specific models of CPD, but a better balance between these types of models and the transmission focused models of learning such as training courses and seminars. Hoban’s (2002) description does not however, include Communities of Enquiry, which might be based on partnerships between learners, academics and other organisations and which can involve both the context, and the knowledge required for real and sustainable knowledge change. Such communities take ‘enquiry’ as opposed to ‘practice’ as their unifying characteristic, thereby asserting a much more proactive and conscious approach than is necessarily the case in Communities of Practice.

According to Nieto (2003) the key characteristic of the transformative model is its effective integration of the range of CPD models, together with a sense of awareness of issues of power, i.e. whose agendas are being addressed through the process. While examples of this model might not be much in evidence, except for limited small-scale research activities it features increasingly in academic literature. Nieto (2003) seems to be providing an alternative solution to the constricting nature of standards, accountability and a performance management agenda, arguably the transformative model of CPD could be described as a poststructuralist approach to CPD (Kennedy 2005), in a sense, having no formal programme of learning.

However, an explicit awareness of issues of power means that the Transformative model is not without tensions, Kennedy (2005) believes that the Transformative mode actually relies on tensions. Only through the realisation and consideration of conflicting agendas and philosophies, can real debate occur in among various stakeholders of CPD. This might lead to Transformative practice.
This section has identified many types of learning programmes which fall under the remit of CPD. However each model outlined has its benefits and drawbacks. There is strong evidence to suggest that multi-faceted approach to CPD with context specific learning which is delivered in a number of ways may suit the Visual Communications sector. This Transformative approach to CPD combining many types of learning activities from the traditional training courses to mentoring and communities of practice may offer a flexible way of maintaining professional skills and competencies.

The next section examines how CPD is currently being implemented in Ireland and explores what the benefits are for individuals and companies in participating in CPD.

### 3.4 CPD in Ireland

In Ireland there are a number of professional bodies that facilitate CPD programmes for their membership. Some of which include: the Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland (RIAI); MyCPD; the Bar Council of Ireland; the Institute of Civil Engineers of Ireland; the Institute of Geologists of Ireland; the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (ICAI); the Irish College of Psychologists; the Small Firms Association and Design Ireland though the Design Ireland Skillnet. The following section investigates how some of these CPD programmes function and how their programmes may be of benefit to similar programmes in the Visual Communications sector.

**Design Ireland Skillnet**

Established in 2000, Design Ireland is a broad coalition of the Irish design industry and is supported in partnership with the Institute of Designers in Ireland (IDI), the Graphic Design Business Association (GDBA) - now known as Design Business Ireland (DBI), the RIAI, the Institute of Creative Advertising and Design (ICAD) and representation of the government of Ireland through Enterprise Ireland (Design Ireland 2009).

Part of Design Ireland’s objectives are to encourage a positive understanding of design in Ireland and to facilitate Continuous Professional Development courses through collaboration with Skillnets. Skillnets was established in 1999 and is a publicly funded enterprise-led body
dedicated to supporting the development of *workplace learning* as a strategic response to the challenge of sustaining and increasing competitiveness (Skillnets 2007).

The Design Ireland Skillnet was formed in 2004 with the specific purpose of increasing training opportunities in the Irish design industry and provides bespoke and specialised training courses and networking events for it’s members (Collier Broderick 2009). Appendix 1, p.181 provides a full list of training courses provided by Design Ireland Skillnet. Members consist mainly of small companies, although there are some medium and large companies which make up part of the organisations membership.

The Design Ireland Skillnet is funded by member companies and Skillnets through the National Training Fund from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Design Ireland 2009). However, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment have significantly reduced the budget to the Skillnets Network (Irish Times 2009) and therefore has jeopardised the future of the Network. This indicates that the development and implementation of CDP programmes requires a stable infrastructure and method of funding to ensure stability and continuity of training.

Design Ireland was formed as part of the recommendations of the 1999 Enterprise Ireland report and has specific objectives for developing skills and competencies in the design sector to international best practice, improving professionalism in the industry and to enhance the business development capability of smaller design consultancies (Collier-Broderick 2009).

In 2008 Design Ireland Skillnet provided training in 35 subjects to it’s membership. These training courses included soft skills, technical skills and management skills, specifically developed for the design sector. The Mid Term Evaluation report on Design Ireland Skillnet states “given the current economic challenges there is likely to be an opportunity for training soft skills related to sales and marketing as well as skilling designers to multi task” (Collier-Broderick 2009. p.5). This would suggest that there could be a potential increase in training required by the membership of Design Ireland.
With the increase in globalisation and the shift toward the services sector (Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002) designers are presented with the challenge in balancing IT assisted services and staff assisted services (Collier Broderick 2009). In response to this Design Ireland Skillnets have provided other learning opportunities to its membership including presentations and exhibitions and the introduction of two certified programmes, the part-time MA in Professional Design Practice through the Dublin Institute of Technology and the Certificate in Sustainable Design through the Carlow Institute of Technology (Collier-Broderick 2009).

As Design Ireland is an umbrella body representing a number of different design disciplines, it would be most appropriate body for the delivery of CPD in the Visual Communication sector. Design Ireland’s links with Skillnets and the RIAI make it unique in terms of knowledge base for the continued development and delivery of CPD to the Visual Communications sector. However, with the reduction in funding of Skillnet and therefore, Design Ireland, its future looks unlikely (Irish Times 2009). This would suggest that as a representative body, Design Ireland was over reliant on funding (at least in part) from a sector which has limited resources as was identified in the previous chapter.

By and large, Design Ireland Skillet delivered CPD to the design sector though Training Courses. The literature suggested that although training courses accounted for the largest proportion of CPD activity, this model of CPD can have disadvantages when compared with a more flexible model.

**Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland CPD**

The RIAI, founded in 1839 is the representative body for the architectural profession in Ireland. Member’s qualifications are recognised by the Government, Courts in Ireland and by the European Union as the required standard for the practice of architecture. Members of the Institute are required to maintain a high standard of professional competency through the programme of Continuing Professional Development facilitated by the Institute. The RIAI defines it’s CPD as:
The systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and
skill and the development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of
professional and technical duties throughout the practitioner’s working life.
(RIAI 2009)

The Institute's involvement with architects begins at student level and continues throughout
the practitioner's career with continuous support advice and backup. Since the introduction of
RIAI CPD in 1998 the Institute's policy for all members of the Institute on CPD has been that
members shall take reasonable steps to maintain appropriate level of professional skills and
can advise members on how to fulfill their CPD obligations (RIAI 2009). RIAI CPD can
range from formal activities such as designated CPD event to informal activities such as
reading technical literature. A full list of activities which constitute RIAI CPD can be found
in Appendix 2, p.182. The focus of the Institute’s training lies in the areas of industry
methods, construction techniques, trade skills and legislation (RIAI 2009).

Each member of the Institute is responsible for their own determination for what amount of
CPD activity is necessary to maintain their professional competence on their chosen career
path. Any CPD activity undertaken by members must be deliberate, focussed and planned
with an educational view in mind. Members are advised and encouraged to develop a
personal CPD strategy and keep written records of all CPD activity undertaken.

The RIAI provides it’s members with a range of training courses and seminars to enable them
to maintain professional competency and skills. The Institute believes that effective CPD
results in better quality buildings, more consumer protection and client satisfaction, better
career satisfaction and progression for the employee and more successful architectural
practices (RIAI 2009). The RIAI would seem to have adopted a Transformative model of
CPD, where a combination of formal and informal activities are used to improve professional
competencies in the sector.

The RIAI’s knowledge in development and implementation of their CPD programme can
play a pivotal role as a working model for the development of similar programme for the
Visual Communication sector. As a founding member of Design Ireland, the RIAI are
strongly positioned in terms of sharing of knowledge and best practice for delivery of CPD within the Visual Communications sector.

**MyCPD**

MyCPD is an e-learning website developed for the delivery and maintenance of CPD requirements from members of the Institute of Bankers (IOB) and the Life Insurance Association (LIA). Access to the MyCPD training programmes are available to accredited members of the IOB and the LIA as a convenient way for members to meet their CPD obligations (MyCPD 2009). Members of both the IOB and the LIA are required to undertake both formal and informal CPD activities. MyCPD is delivered on-line in a series of learning modules and designed so the individual can meet their formal CPD hours irrespective of their geographical location.

Modules are designed and implemented with the intention of convenience which facilitates learning at the individuals own pace. These modules are developed to assist the individual user in keeping up-to-date with current market practices, products and legislation (MyCPD 2009). Informal CPD hours are accumulated by the individual's attendance at events organised by the Institute of Bankers and the LIA, these include seminars and lectures and events are run nationwide.

There are 21 modules provided by MyCPD some of which includes: financial services; legal & ethical issues; Pensions & investments and Insurance. A full list of MyCPD modules are detailed in Appendix 3, p183. Areas for training fall largely in the areas of financial legislation and the introduction of new products and services in the sector.

MyCPD serves as a model for the delivery of CPD through distance learning as a method of maintaining professional competencies. This can facilitate the individual learning at their own pace and in their own time and charges the individual with the personal responsibility for undertaking new learnings. The MyCPD model offers the flexibility of Transformative CPD, with the passive learning experiences delivered through Training Courses.
With designers tending to opt for self-teaching method as opposed to allocating time and resources for CPD (Enterprise Ireland 1999) the flexibility of the MyCPD model facilitates learning at any time. With limited resources in the Visual Communications sector the MyMPD e-learning model may offer a solution to the issue of time management and may facilitate learning for companies of limited resources. The cost loss of revenue to the company associated with the absence of staff at training courses could also be reduced as employees could participate in CPD either in the workplace or on their own personal time.

**Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland CPD**

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (ICAI) was established in 1880 and is the largest accountancy body in Ireland with a membership exceeding 17,000. The activities of the Institute and it’s members are governed by bye-laws and rules relating to professional and ethical conduct. Under the bye-laws of the ICAI, members are required to maintain professional competencies. Rule 2.1 (c) of the ICAI bye-laws states that members shall:

> Maintain their professional knowledge and skill at the level required to ensure that a client or employer receives competent professional service based on current developments in practice, legislation and techniques.

(ICAI 2008)

The ICAI CPD programme is implemented, developed and certified though the Chartered Accountants Regulatory Body (CARB). CARB Guidelines on CPD (2009) states that Accountants must undertake CPD to maintain the knowledge required for Chartered Accountants to function effectively in their chosen area and that Continuing Professional Development is critical for these expectations to be met. Members of the ICAI can meet their CPD requirements in one of three ways:

- Input-Based approach
- Output-Based Approach
- Combination of Input and Output Based approach

The **Input Based** approach allows members to establish a set amount of learning activity and maintain competence (CARB 2009). ICAI members are required to achieve a minimum of 20 hours of structured CPD learning activities with a further 50 hours of un-structured CPD
Learning activities per annum to maintain their professional competence. There is also required of ICAI members to achieve a further minimum of 10 hours structured CPD learning activities in each area of service practice (ICAI 2008). This can include one or more of the following:

- Audit/Accountancy
- Investment Business
- Insolvency Practice
- Tax

The **Output Based** approach requires members to develop by way of outcomes ensuring that he/she develops and maintains professional competencies (CARB 2009). Members must periodically provide evidence to the governing board of the ICAI that the individual has maintained and developed their professional competency (ICAI 2008).

The **Combination Based** approach requires members to combine elements of **Input** and **Output** approaches. ICAI members can combine the traditional structure of a specified hours spent on CPD activities with a system of focussing CPD activities on the development of the individual’s skills and their ability to perform in their current role (CARB 2009).

Participants in the ICAI CPD programme are required to formally record and maintain records of all CPD related activities undertaken and compliance maintained by the individual by the submission of records annually to the governing board. These records may be periodically inspected (ICAI 2008) for the purpose of validating and verifying the maintenance of the individuals competencies.

The focus of the ICAI’s CPD is on technical skills, generic skills and introduction of new legislation and is delivered in a Transformative model of CPD which combines training courses, seminars, work-based learning and mentoring with a formal method of recording leaning inputs. This model also focusses on specific areas of specialisation for the individual where. Members of the ICAI are expected to maintain a general level of competencies, but are also required to undertake specific learning relating to their area of expertise.
This combination approach to CPD, coupled with specific learning outcomes should be of interest in the development of any structured CPD programme in the Visual Communications sector, in terms of the diversity of design disciplines within the sector that were identified in Chapter 1. This combination approach facilitates not only a general maintenance of skills and competencies through CPD but also allows for further skills to be developed according to any speciality areas that the learner may have.

**Engineers Ireland**

Engineers Ireland is one of the county’s oldest professional bodies, originally founded in 1835, Engineers Ireland represents 24,000 members in various engineering roles and organises CPD activities for the purpose of keeping it’s membership up-to-date with all aspects of the profession. These activities include: lectures; debates; discussions; papers; seminars; conferences and training courses. Their CPD training programmes provides core training that is essential for the development of the professional engineer (Engineers Ireland 2009). The CPD standards are designed to support Lifelong Learning by stimulating and recognising good organisational practice in areas of professional development and best practice. See Appendix 4, p.184, for the specific aims of Engineers Ireland’s CPD. The focus of Engineers Ireland CPD is on diverse areas such as mentoring and coaching, technical skills, software training, project management, organisational management and legislation.

Working closely with Universities and Institutes of Technology, Engineers Ireland ensures improvement in quality of engineering education in Ireland (Institution of Civil Engineers of Ireland 2007). Engineers who graduate from 2013 onwards wishing to become Chartered will require an accredited Masters Degree (Institute of Engineers in Ireland 2008).

According to Engineers Ireland, CPD improves the country’s competitiveness by upgrading the skills set of the workforce (Engineers Ireland 2009). CPD activities for members of Engineers Ireland are monitored by it’s CPD Standards Committee and current developments in CPD are being focussed on small an medium sized enterprises. Engineers Ireland believe that CPD can make an enormous contribution to the sector and the economy as a whole.
(Engineers Ireland 2008). The delivery of CPD by Engineers Ireland is through training courses and seminars.

Engineers Ireland CPD focusses on small and medium size enterprises. The Visual Communications sector in Ireland is predominately made up of similar sized companies, Engineers Ireland’s approach and delivery of CPD is pertinent to this study. Their programme of CPD is delivered in partnership with a number of educational institutions, which gives weight to certification and awards received by the individual and assures high standards of knowledge, skills and competencies gained.

Having reviewed a number of CPD programmes in Ireland, the next section of the literature review explores reasons for undertaking CPD to identify the benefits for both the individual and the Visual Communications company. Barriers that prevent participation in CPD are also considered. These findings are to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the positive and negative aspects of CPD.

### 3.5 Continuing Professional Development in Practice

Continuous professional development is a fundamental component of lifelong learning. The type of CPD that is sought depends on the individual’s goals and aspirations and can be linked with the strategic visions of organisations and managers’ needs, therefore CPD initiatives need to be strategically aligned to company mission and goals. CPD needs to be designed and delivered with the aim of helping staff to achieve their departmental as well as personal goals, therefore increased involvement by line managers and employees is a positive development in terms of ownership of the training and learning. By adopting a strategic approach to training and development rather than an unplanned and ad hoc one, CPD becomes more targeted, measurable and effective (Small Firms Association 2009a). However, increased flexibility in terms of training delivery may need to be expanded to facilitate participant’s different learning styles as well as lifestyle (Small Firms Association 2009a). This would suggest that CPD is a principal part of professional learning for the maintenance of skills and commences and must be developed in partnership with employees and employers. The literature indicates that a more strategic and planned approach to CPD could
increase the effectiveness of training and that the understanding of motivation in an important component of this effectiveness. It would also seem that CPD may have to be delivered in a flexible model to facilitate how the individual learns and their particular lifestyle.

For CPD to be implemented successfully, it must take place within a framework of partnership between the trainer, employer and employee. This relationship must be characterised by trust between all stakeholders so that training does not simply reflect the views of the employer, common of interest must be identified and worked towards. The Small Firms Association (2009a) take the view that training and development is about making a difference to a companies bottom line, both in terms of how people feel about their jobs and in performance and productivity.

The Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (2002) also recommends that CPD is developed as a partnership with all stakeholders to ensure that knowledge, skills and competence necessary to complete tasks associated with specific occupations are identified. This would, according to the Taskforce, facilitate access to Recognition of Prior Learning and increasing transfer and progression opportunities for learners (Dept Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002).

The Taskforce also recommends that quality standards such as FÁS’s Excellence Through People and Engineers Ireland’s CPD model should be promoted as a model of best practice standards in enterprises and organisations (Dept Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002). However, for this to be a success, further progress is required in developing a culture of continuous learning in Ireland, which incorporates employee participation and training and development practices (Accel 2008).

The literature would suggest that for CPD to be development successfully, there needs to be excellent communication between all stakeholder in terms of expectations and understandings and that partnership and trust is a key component in the development of any CPD programme. An industry developing CPD should look at best practice models developed in other industries to assess how these models of CPD have been developed and implemented. It
is also clear that more needs to be done in terms of communicating the purpose and value of CPD to employees.

The UK Design Council states that Visual Communication designers do less job related training than many other industries (see fig. 10), although in-house design teams utilise more external training provision in the form of courses than other design businesses, on the whole designers tend to learn through informal coaching and mentoring at their place of work (see fig. 11) (Design Council 2007b).

![Proportion of Job Related Training](image)

Fig. 10 Proportion of Job Related Training
Source: Design Council (2007b) High-Level Skills for Higher Value
The UK Design Council (2009) state the particular strengths and weaknesses of any given design consultancy or staff team will determine what type of CPD would be most suitable and beneficial, although there’s almost always room for some improvement in skills.

Design consultancies need to give serious consideration to addressing the weaknesses in their skill base through the participation in CPD (Enterprise Ireland 1999). Dealing with this skill weaknesses issue will require a substantial increase in the level of CPD participation, despite the fact that design is one of the most highly educated industries, with 41% of designers having degrees or higher level qualifications (Design Council UK 2007b).
3.5.1 Reasons for CPD

Increasingly, high performing organisations today are recognising the need to use best training and development practices to enhance their competitive advantage. Training and development is an essential element of every business if the value and potential of its people is to be harnessed and grown. There is a clear link between well designed and strategic training and development initiatives and the profitability of business (Small Firms Association 2009a).

The Expert Group on Futures Skill Needs (2009) estimates that the labour force in Ireland is projected to grow to about 2.4 million by 2020. Approximately 1.4 million of the current workforce will still be in the labour force in 2020 and that all occupations will become more knowledge-intensive, resulting in many cases, a rise in the requirement for qualifications and technical knowledge (EGFSN 2007).

There is widespread agreement about the need for Ireland to up-grade its skills supply to meet future needs (EGFSN 2007a; FÁS 2008). It is also acknowledged, that the availability of skills have been amongst the key factors in Ireland’s recent economic prosperity (EGFSN 2007a; FÁS 2008). The supply of educated and skilled labour continues to play a central role in efforts to establish Ireland as a knowledge-based economy and minimising future skill imbalances is of vital importance for the economy (FÁS 2006). Older cohorts of the Irish workforce remain less qualified than the OECD average (Forfás 2009a) which would indicate that these individuals within the Visual Communications sector would require up-skilling and therefore need to engage fully with a CPD programme. This would suggest that a significant number of Visual Communicators currently working in the sector will need to attain additional qualifications and new knowledge and skills to maintain professional competencies.

Anne Heraty, Chairperson of the EGFSN said:

Creative skills are crucial to the Digital Media industry. While technology and the associated technical skills are key drivers of the industry, they are a complement to creative ability and not a substitute for it.

(Forfás 2006)
Current demographic trends throughout Europe indicate there is a decline in new entrants to
the labour force and consequently there will be need to rely more on the existing population
of workers (Dept. Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002), consequently there will be more
reliance on current employees already in the Visual Communication sector.

Designers need to maintain and develop capabilities in the face of extraordinarily rapid global
change (Design Council 2007b). If this is not achieved there a real risk that the Visual
Communications sector will fall behind other nations as competitors increasingly exploit their
creativity and innovation (Design Council 2007b). In order to remain competitive and to ensure
high calibre staff are attracted and remain within organisations, companies need to ensure that
the training and development of employees is an issue which is taken seriously (Small Firms
Association 2009a). The UK Design Council (2007b) recognises the fact that designers need
CPD, however the sector currently lacks the infrastructure to support skills development.

EGFSN (2007a) have identified Ireland’s current skills profile and provide a strategic vision
with specific objectives for the future skills requirements of the country. Their 2007 report
formulates a plan for how this can be achieved (Forfás 2007c). This strategy is to set out clear
long-term objectives for training requirements needed to develop Ireland as a knowledge-
based, innovation-driven economy with a highly skilled workforce. Part of the objectives
identified, is by 2020, 48% of the workforce should have a third or fourth-level qualification
(Forfás 2007c, Forfás 2007d).

The main characteristic of knowledge economy is a workforce that has the capacity to
analyse, structure and process information, be able to face complex situations, with problem-
solving processes in any context. If Ireland is to develop a competitive advantage in the
transition to a knowledge economy, the country requires greater skill profile than we currently
have (EGFSN 2007).

The increasing importance of knowledge-based economic activities has led to a continuing
increase in the level of skills demanded by employers and as companies react to an ever
changing market, career jobs are scarcer and individuals experience more frequent changes in
jobs over the working life. The consequence of this, is the shelf-life of skills is shorter (OECD 2007).

In the knowledge society a continuous learning attitude is needed and professionals will be more focused on learning processes than learning contents. Content is constantly changing with less and less reference to a specific discipline and skilled and high level workers have to acquire trans-disciplinary visions and competencies.

(BEDA 2004, p.46)

The EGFSN (2007a) expect that the greatest increase in employment will be in the professional service sector, which includes Visual Communications and that employees in all industry sectors will increasingly require range of generic and transferable skills, including people-related and conceptual/thinking skills. Work will become less routine, with a requirement for flexibility, continuous learning and individual initiative (EGFSN 2007a).

According to EGFSN (2007a), by 2020, approximately 500,000 individuals currently within the workforce will need to progress by at least least one level on the National Framework of Qualifications over and above their current level of education and training. In addition to moving people’s skills up a level, it is important that those in the labour force keep their skills up-to-date. This is true even for those who will remain in the same occupation, this may not necessarily mean moving up a level, but rather may involve undertaking new learning at the level they are already at. This learning should lead to accreditation in the form of minor or special purpose awards in the National Framework of Qualifications (EGFSN 2007a).

This suggests that the Visual Communications sector in Ireland is in need of a focussed CPD programme to address the issues of skill deficits highlighted by Enterprise Ireland (1999) and Intertrade Ireland (2009) for the sector can remain competitive in the face of global change and a shortage of new entrants into the workforce. Any programme needs to be delivered strategically and targets specific areas needing improving as well as a general up-skilling of designers. This requirement to enhance the skill level of the working population presents a substantial challenge as Ireland’s participation rate in continuous learning is relatively poor (EGFSN 2007, Forfás 2009a).
With increasing skill demands on workers, the literature clearly indicates the need for further development of the skills base in the Visual Communications sector in Ireland, however, with generally low participation in CPD activity in Ireland and lack of a formal CPD programme specific to the Visual Communications sector will be challenging to implement and deliver in an industry with limited resources.

The former Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin T.D. said that Forfás identified “central challenges in ensuring a continuing supply of the skills needed for our future competitiveness and prosperity” (Forfás 2007c).

The employment profile of Irish enterprise is changing with an increased emphasis on transferable, soft skills including communication, interpersonal, team working and customer service skills. Skills in creativity, design, problem solving and innovation that are essential for high productivity will be necessary for Irish companies to compete successfully in EU and global markets (Forfás 2009b). Solving the skills deficit identified in the literature is pertinent for the long term success and development of the Visual Communications sector.

The challenge that faces Ireland is to ensure that skills continue to be one of the key areas of competitive advantage. Investment in people and in their continuous training will be essential to the growth of the Visual Communications sector. The sector will need to maximise the contribution of the entire workforce by addressing skill needs. This challenge can be met with the proactive involvement of employers, individuals and Government, together with education providers and professional bodies, thereby ensuring that Ireland continues to compete with the strongest economic performers (Forfás 2007d). Increasingly, high performing organisations are recognising the need to use best training and development practices to enhance their competitive advantage. Training and development is an essential element of every business if the value and potential of it’s people is to be harnessed and grown. There are clear links between well designed and strategic training and development initiatives and the bottom line within the business (SFA 2009).
As previously identified that the Visual Communications sector is underperforming when compared to the rest of the economy and is similar sectors internationally. The literature suggests that to address this poor performance, the sector requires highly trained designers to increase productivity, profitability and development of the sector. A partnership between all stakeholders is required to develop a meaningful strategy with the purpose of improving the skills and competencies of the sector.

Having identified the reasons for participation in a CPD programme in the next section investigates the benefits to continuous training for both the employee and employer.

3.5.2 Benefits to CPD

The EGFSN (2007a) states that human capital development is inextricably linked with productivity growth and improvements in living standards. This productivity can be achieved through investment in training and that employers, employees and the economy as a whole benefit from investments in education and training (EGFSN 2007a).

Skillnets (2007b) state that there is an identified need for the enhancing of skills and achieving best practice competence within industry and this may involve sector-based partnerships for training between employees and enterprises. This suggests that there are benefits to participation in CPD for all stakeholders, namely, employer, employee and trainers.

Participation in education and training has an unambiguously positive impact for employees, firms and the economy in general (EGFSN 2007a). Training benefits both business performance and personnel (Skillnets 2007b), with the greatest impact for companies who take part in training were, improved employee satisfaction, enhanced quality, increased competitiveness and more effective teamwork (see fig. 12). This suggests that the benefits to CPD are not only financial, in terms of profitability of the Visual Communications company and wage increase for the individual, but also a greater sense of individual satisfaction and interaction with colleagues.
FÁS (2008) suggests that aside from the long-term benefits of CPD include up-skilling of existing employees, training and productivity, CPD can help to reduce the risk of company closures and redundancies. However, due to a lack of recognition of the positive impact CPD has employees and firms do not always participate in CPD to their full potential. According to EGFSN (2007a), this justifies State intervention in the market for education and training.

In the UK the Leitch Report (2005) estimated that through up-skilling an additional 3.5 million adults from the lower end of the skills spectrum an average annual net benefit of 0.3% of GDP. It is also estimated that improvements in intermediate and higher end skills would deliver average annual net benefits of 0.4% and 0.45% of GDP respectively, this increase is primarily due to greater levels of productivity (Leitch 2005). Each employer who invests seriously in the area of training and development will reap the benefits of an enriched working environment with higher levels of staff retention as well as increased productivity and performance (Small Firms Association 2009a).

**Benefits for the Individual**

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2002) states that benefits to the individual learner include: an opportunity for self-realisation, achievement and an enhanced sense of self-worth; with an increased employability either internally (with current company) or externally (career progression in other companies or sectors). In-company qualifications systems have

![Fig. 12 Benefits to Participation Skillnet Training](image)

Source Skillnets 2007b
been identified as being good for individuals and companies. Skillnets for example, reported higher levels of staff retention when qualifications were gained through CPD (Skillnets 2006a).

According to Blundell et al (1999) there are significant returns to investment in formal training for the individual, where higher earnings in the range of 5-10% have been observed. There is limited evidence on the returns to training in Ireland but studies indicate that it is positive (Denny & Harmon 2000).

Blundell et al (1999) states that individuals benefit from training through:

- Increased earnings
- Greater likelihood of promotion
- Reduced probability of unemployment
- Reduced likelihood of quitting

According to the Small Firms Association (2009a) career progression is an increasingly attractive or even basic requirement for many employees. This would suggest that self-realisation and achievement is a fundamental goal of the individual and that these goals can be achieved though the participation in CPD.

**Benefits for the Company**

The literature suggests that for companies, CPD has a positive impact on productivity, although the magnitude of the impact varies and depends to a large extent on education and training. A workforce that is better educated and trained can produce higher value goods and services, and is more likely to be innovative (EGFSN 2007a). The NQAI (2002) identify benefits for the company include: increased productivity; a greater variety of awards or qualifications for their staff and a way of up-skilling staff for a changing industry environment. Evidence from the UK found that an increase in the proportion of employees trained in a production sector industry (from 10% of employees to 15%) was associated with a 3% increase in value added per worker. Studies also found that the productivity effect of training exceeded the wage effect, suggesting that a portion of the productivity gains accrue
to the firm (Deardon et al 2000). This indicates that participation in training is linked to
greater productivity and value for the company.

Although there is no specific research of the Visual Communications sector, training projects
 piloted by Skillnets (2006c) have produced positive measurable returns. Diageo measured a
121% return on investment on a tailored cross-skilling training programme, while Lionbridge
Technologies measured a 32% return on a management and supervisory skills training
programme and Laepple recorded a 150% return on a safety training initiative. Skillnets
(2006c) have piloted training programmes in small and medium sized enterprises and
recorded positive returns on investment in CPD and a more highly skilled workers which are
more likely to adapt to change and to be a direct source of innovation. Although, no similar
studies exist the Visual Communications sector, but these figures indicate significant returns
on investment in training for companies for participate in CPD.

Skillnets (2006a) found that benefits for companies in training continuously training their
staff included:
- Increase in productivity
- Increase in sales
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Improved team working and staff morale

Employers who invests seriously in CPD reap the benefits of an enriched working
environment with higher levels of staff retention as well as increased productivity and
performance (Small Firms Association 2009a).

In more than 80% of CPD courses provided by Design Ireland Skillnet, at least 80% of
participants stated that there had been some change in skills, knowledge and attitude (see fig.
13). In more than 50% of courses over 80% of participants stated that they retained their
skills and knowledge following the course and were able then to apply their new skills and
knowledge in the workplace (Collier Broderick 2009) again, benefitting the employer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Number of Programmes</th>
<th>% showing &gt;80% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 13  Summary of Change in Skills, Knowledge and Attitude on all Programmes
Source: Collier Broderick 2009

Participants also responded positively on the importance of certified training, with two thirds stating that there had been a change in their skills and knowledge since participating in Design Ireland Skillnet. Participation in training contributed to making training a long term strategic aim for most of its members (Collier Broderick 2009).

Keeping up to date with the latest trends, software packages, technology, legislation, learning best practice approaches within the sector, generating business contacts and business development ideas was stated by more than 90% of members as the main benefits from participating in the Design Ireland Skillnet. (Collier Broderick 2009).

The skills and knowledge gained through Design Ireland Skillnet learning events and activities has a great impact on quality within almost all of it’s member companies, with strong greater employee satisfaction being reported by 40% of members (see fig. 14) (Collier Broderick 2009).
Fig. 14  Impact of Participation in Design Ireland Skillnet
Source: Collier Broderick 2009.

Design Ireland Skillnet indicates that there are similar benefits to the design sector as seen in other industries as a direct result of participation in CPD. These include: increased competitiveness; employee and customer satisfaction; better staff retention and improved team working.

The Design Council UK (2007a) states that design consultancies will need to continue to develop both the business and creative skills of their directors and staff. By consciously developing a range of complementary business skills such as strategy, planning and communications, individuals and companies can improve their long-term prospects, as well as their day-to-day contribution to the design studio. The benefit for companies in investment in CPD is a more adaptable, capable and multi-skilled workforce, better able to present to clients, understand complex interdisciplinary projects and deal with key business issues (Design Council UK 2007a).
Worker autonomy, self-managed teams and even a high-wage strategy depend on having staff who not only are empowered to make changes in products and processes but also have the necessary competencies to do so (Pfeffer 1994). Companies make the mistake in up-skilling both managers and workers but do nothing to empower workers to utilise their skills. Under such circumstances, it is little wonder that training has no apparent effect. (Pfeffer 1994).

There is strong evidence to indicate there are many benefits for participation in CPD for both the designer and the design company. For the company these benefits include a more flexible and multi-skilled staff, greater productivity, increased sales, better staff retention and higher levels of customer satisfaction. For the individual, benefits include a better sense of achievement and self worth, increased employability or likelihood of promotion within current employer, increased earnings and better retention of skills for all involved.

People with higher ability and with higher educational attainment are more likely to participate in training (NCPP/ESRI 2004). It would seem that companies and individuals who understand the benefits to training participate more often in training and better engagement with training leads to an increase training participation. As indicated by Collier Broderick (2009) there have been significant increases in training by member companies of the Design Ireland Skillnet directly because of their participation in that CPD programme. However, the membership of the Design Ireland Skillnet only represents a small number of Design Consultancies in Ireland.

Having identified the benefits of participation in CPD for both employees and employers in the Visual Communications sector, the following section investigates factors which potentially may hinder participation in CPD.
3.5.3 Barriers to CPD participation

People who are motivated to improve will become more profitable, faster. Yet employers don't invest in training because they don't think their people will stick around for long and their investment will walk out the door when they leave. On the other side, employees don't see any investment in development for themselves so think their employers don't care and move onto the next job. For an industry that trades on its visionary ability, this is the kind of lack of vision that's holding back growth in the design sector.

Julian Grice (Design Council 2008 p.3)

Irish participation in CPD is relatively poor (see fig. 15) (EGFSN 2007, Forfás 2009a, HEA 2009) issues such as cost, time and facilitation need to be addressed to encourage greater participation. Therefore CPD needs to be seen in the context of a partnership between employer and employee and the State (Dept Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002).

In 2004, the participation rate for Irish adults (aged 25-64 years) in education and training was estimated at 7%. This compared with an EU(25) average of 10% and participation rates of between 25% and 36% among our Scandinavian neighbours (HEA 2009). This remains below the Lisbon target of 12% (Forfás 2009a). As noted by EGFSN (2007, p.6) “Ireland’s relatively low participation rate in continuous learning is a cause for concern”.

![Fig. 15 Participation in lifelong learning in the European Union, 2004](source HEA 2009)
This would suggest that there needs to be a greater emphasis on promotion the values and benefits of CPD that the labour force can up-skill and continue to be gainfully employed in a ever changing market.

A lack of formal CPD programme in the Visual Communication sector is currently a barrier to achieving change and it is more acute with smaller businesses showing the lowest levels of participation in training. Arguably, these smaller businesses are most in need of support to develop business acumen, especially in the context of global competitiveness (Design Council UK 2007b).

Obstacles facing those who may wish to engage in CPD are considerable - time pressures, family commitments and financial barriers, together with an education system that is largely created and developed to meet the needs of young people (McManus 2006). Similarly, Intertrade Ireland (2009) state that 50% of respondents to a survey cited lack of time and a further 25% cited costs as the main barriers. This suggest that CPD is not considered a priority within the Visual Communications sector. However, when placed against the threat from emerging markets and the need to improve strategic or business skills within the sector, CPD may need to be prioritised in the future (Intertrade Ireland 2009). As Ireland has a low uptake in CPD, any barriers which prevent or reduce participation in CPD need to be minimised or removed to encourage greater participation.

Skillnets (2009) suggests that some barriers to participation in CPD are realistic, while others are based on false perceptions. These include HR staff not understanding the value of return on investment in training or having the skills necessary to apply the process of training within their scope of responsibilities. The Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (2002) recommends that Enterprise Ireland develop a coherent support mechanism for companies who have identified up-skilling needs and a willingness to address those needs. This would suggest, that there is greater state intervention required in the development, implementation, promotion and delivery of CPD in all industry sectors, including the Visual Communications sector.
There is little sign of a culture of CPD in the Visual Communications sector and design businesses are generally poor at developing their Staff (Design Council UK 2007b). Although change is starting to happen, the design sector is an industry that learns primarily on the job and where formal training and development is the exception rather than the rule (Design Council UK 2007b). There may be a tendency to lessen the focus on upskilling and CPD in the current circumstances of rapidly rising unemployment (FÁS 2008), however, it is the skills base of the workforce that is attributed to Ireland’s recent economic growth (FÁS 2006).

Financial Barriers

In 1999 Irish companies spent €364 million on training. This figure includes labour costs of trainers and participants, this represented 2.4% of the labour costs of the employee with the average expenditure on training courses per employee was €600 and €1450 per person trained (Dept Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002). These figures would seem to indicate that the cost associated with training is a significant barrier for many companies.

According to Skillnets (2008a), in Ireland, small and medium enterprises have been either unable or unwilling to bear the related cost of CPD and training. Co-investment by the State and the EU, better training methods and the emphasis on certification is helping to alter this situation, but companies still need to see the benefit for the time and money invested in CPD (Skillnets 2008a). Design Ireland Skillnet through its provision of funded training has made participation in training available where 70% of members would otherwise not have been able to participate due to financial costs associated with staff training. (Collier Broderick 2009). This subsidised funding is a significant step towards increasing the likelihood of participation in CPD as it reduces the burden associated with the cost of CPD for both employer and employee.

The EGFSN (2007a) holds the view that the most effective way to ensure flexible and responsive provision of training may be to empower individuals and enterprises through subsidies. Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs), are a mechanism which allows a tripartite alliance of employers, employees and the State to contribute to individual savings schemes which can only be used for up-skilling purposes. Pilot ILA schemes have been introduced in a
number of countries, including Canada, the US and the Netherlands (EGFSN 2007a). The introduction of ILAs can potentially ease the burden of cost of training and up-skilling of the individual. Further research into mechanisms that encourage participation in continual learning, such as ILAs, paid learning leave, time management and co-financing, should be conducted (EGFSN 2007a).

Currently, full time students at third level in Ireland receive free fees, however, part-time and post-grad students are required to pay fees. The inequitable treatment of part-time students in higher education needs to be addressed as an important part of broadening access to opportunities within Lifelong learning according to Forfás (2009a). This means that, for those who do not have financial support but do want to engage in professional development, their options are limited. However, this issue can be addressed through subsidising post graduate degrees for those wishing to further their study while at full time employment, equally subsidising training courses will ease the financial burden on the employer (Collier Broderick 2009).

The EGFSN (2007a) state that provision of subsidies (including ILAs) or other incentives should be introduced to encourage learning of those currently in employment. Individual Learning Accounts and paid learning leave are flexible ways of incentivising individuals to meet their CPD requirements (FÁS 2008) and the Government should commit to the introduction of statutory paid learning leave for all workers (Dept Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002).

This would suggest that one way forward for the development of CPD in the Visual Communications sector is through financial subsidies which would reduce cost burden the employer. The introduction ILAs could prove a flexible incentive way to encourage the individual's engagement with training by spreading the costs of training over a period of time. The literature also indicates a typical percentage of the employees labour costs that is associated with the cost of their training, if employers were to treat this as an overhead, it could therefore be possible to factor the cost of staff training into the companies cost structure.
Time Management Barriers

The single biggest challenge to companies and individuals seeking participation in CPD training is time constraints (ACCEL 2008). The issue of time is a significant barrier for those already in employment who wish to engage in CPD activity.

Some individuals participating in CPD activity have found it difficult to organise their time and are not sufficiently motivated to spend, what is seen as their personal time for the benefit of the company. (Skillnets 2008a). Butler & Hope (1995 p.32) state that: “successful time management boils down to doing things of value that help you achieve your goals”. Therefore the problems of time management, motivation and the communication the benefit of CPD need to be addressed to encourage greater participation. The literature would indicate that these problems can be potentially solved through partnership and dialogue between all stakeholders.

The Civil Service provide learning leave for its staff to facilitate sitting of exams. A maximum of five days study leave is available to the individual per year for approved courses. In 2001, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, approved 40 individuals, out of approximately 987 total staff, for paid educational leave amounting to 223 days in total. The issue of learning leave is complex, involving balancing costs and benefits to the individual and the employer. The introduction of Learning leave must be seen in the context of the cultural shift within private sector companies (Dept Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002).

The absence of learning leave creates a conflicting force which can prevent individuals availing of CPD opportunities. This is a particular difficulty for those in employment with fixed holiday periods which may not coincide with examination timetables or training programmes. There are also growing difficulties which individuals have in reconciling work and family life (Dept Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002). The Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (2002) is of the opinion that this the introduction of a code of good practice in relation to learning leave could have some benefit exerting moral pressure on employers, however, it believes that the effects of a code of practice would, at best, be limited as companies most likely to adopt a code would be those who already had good practice in
place, while less progressive employers were least likely to do so. Employer representatives on the Taskforce expressed strong opposition to the introduction of statutory paid learning leave for a variety of reasons including impact on costs and a particular concern regarding the issue of releasing staff members in terms of loss of efficiency, productivity and customer service. They noted that the impact on small businesses would be proportionately greater. (Dept Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002).

Learning outside of the workplace tends to be seen as benefiting only the employee, with the provision of learning leave being seen by the employer as a cost. The Taskforce of Lifelong Learning (2002) believes that a strong case exists for the introduction of a learning leave entitlement which would be underpinned by statute. In providing paid learning leave, the employer would incur both direct and indirect costs associated with the individual's training (Dept Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002).

Given Ireland’s drive to become a more competitive, knowledge-based economy, a wider perspective on CPD and its benefits needs to be adopted (Dept Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002). Further promotion of these benefits needs to be undertaken if there is to be greater participation, the introduction of statutory paid learning leave would directly benefit the Visual Communications sector where previously discussed, with the sector being made up of small companies there is productivity loss while the staff members are on training courses. According to FÁS, finding ways to increase training essential (2008).

It is also important to recognise that the benefits of the learning to all the stakeholders in terms of increased standards of knowledge, skill and competencies. All of which can be applied to grow productivity and competitiveness within companies. The growing sophistication of work and workplaces means that employees need to become more skilled and adaptable (Dept Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002).
Skillnets (2008a) state that reduced barriers to learning employers can encourage the use of informal learning and creating a culture of learning and peer support. Making it easy to learn and providing recognition for learning is important. Other strategies include:

- Weekend and night courses
- Out of hours self-paced learning
- Evaluated and validated learning outcomes

The literature may suggest a number of significant barriers that potentially can inhibit participation in CPD, therefore a cohesive strategy is required to address these issues from many fronts. For both the individual and employer, the cost of training can be potentially a barrier to participation in CPD. Currently, full time students attending third level college are not required to pay fees, where those seeking to further their education while in the workforce have to pay fees for part time and post graduate study. The ESFN (2007a) identified that 500,000 of those currently in workforce may need to increase their qualifications by 2020 and it is suggested that cost of attaining degree or higher status is currently a barrier to achieving this.

Many employers have identified issues of time as preventing participation in CPD and in a sector dominated by small companies, the temporary loss of staff and therefore revenue for the company is a problem that needs to be addressed. The introduction of statutory learning leave and the example shown by the Irish Civil Service can potentially ease this difficulty for the employer and may motivate the individual to increase participation in CPD. Paid learning leave could also prove effective in reducing financial barriers to participation in CPD for both the individual and employer.

Having identified barriers to participation in CPD, the next section researches the individual motivation for participation in CPD programs. The purpose of which it to identify any specific areas that may need to be focussed on to increase participation levels.
Motivation for CPD

As with any type of learning, motivation plays a vital role in determining success (Moran 2000). Ericsson (1996) notes the remarkable ability of athletes, world-class musicians and chess grand masters to pursue a relentless programme of training activities, whether or not they feel like doing it. Howe’s (1999) analysis of creative people concluded that genius is not a gift, but rather a product of practice and perseverance. Therefore individuals need motivation for any type of learning to be a success and as such, beneficial for both the individual and the employer. Personal responsibility for continued learning should be encouraged, this in turn will build individual capacity to learn (Skillnets 2008a). Willingness to learn cannot be taken for granted and must be facilitated by companies and trainers and that short bouts of informal learning can lead on to more formal or structured learning, building motivation to continue around the learners needs (Skillnets 2008a).

Therefore a greater understanding of motivation of why the individual participates in CPD is required. This evidence suggests that initial participation in CPD leads to further engagement, in a sense, once an individual sees the benefits of CPD they are more willing to participate further. The literature also indicates that the willingness to learn is not necessarily intrinsic to the individual and perhaps more encouragement is needed for greater participation in CPD.

According to Moran (2000) there are two kinds of motivation: primary (biological) and secondary (psychological). Primary motivation consist of instinctive needs which must be satisfied for survival, eg. hunger, thirst and warmth. Secondary motives are learned desires which, although not linked with biological survival, influences our happiness and well-being. Most people have a desire to socialise with others (affiliation motivation), also they strive to attain success in some area of their lives (achievement motivation).

The notion of motivation is expand on by Cofer and Appley (1984) who describe motivation as as a complicated group of concepts that explain an individual purposeful aspects of behaviour. The motivation to seek CPD is internally and externally driven (Ryan 2003) and is described by (Klyczek & Gordon (1988) as being two-dimensional: either categorised as extrinsic, which
refers to behaviours that are rewarded externally, or **intrinsic**, where individuals’ behaviours produced satisfaction that does not depend on an external reward system.

**Extrinsic factors**
The importance of extrinsic motivators for individuals to embrace CPD is recognised by Grossman (1998). Funding remains one of the major obstacles to, and motivation towards to CPD (McCrea 1989, Dept. Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002, Forfás (2009a). Barr (2000) suggests that employers should cultivate a learning environment for CPD and in doing so accept partial responsibility for the financial costs associated with CPD, therefore indirectly minimising cost to the individual as an extrinsic motivator. The importance of observing levels of competencies is also highlighted by Pickersgill (1998) as an extrinsic motivation factor for participation in CPD.

The Leitch Report (2005) set out the incentives for driving up higher level skills and the benefits of involving employers in both defining need and delivering action on CPD in the workplace. A highly-skilled workforce drives innovation, leadership and management, enabling businesses to compete in the global economy and world class ambition requires increased engagement and investment from employers with higher education, to drive management, innovation and workforce development (Design Council UK 2007b).

**Intrinsic factors**
Intrinsic factors which include a desire for personal growth (Lathlean et al. 1986; Whiteley 1989) capitalising on existing knowledge to supplement professional competence (Dubin 1972) and assuring accountability for practice through renewed competencies (Fawcett & Strickland 1998). The demonstration of professional competence together with accountability for actions remains inextricably linked with CPD (Fawcett & Strickland 1998). O’Kell (1986) suggests that only truly motivated individual would learn without external pressure, because of the need for the individual to attain knowledge. Obsolete knowledge is viewed by Grant (1992) in preventing the guarantee of quality, therefore to maintain quality assurances for clients, knowledge, skills and competencies must be continuously improved upon through CPD.
As few adults are motivated to learn post third level education (Boud & Solomon 2003) the benefit for the learner must be clear in terms of employment sustainability. This according to Skillnets (2008a) is explained as: employability (the presence of skills and assets and how they are used), **job stability** (recognising the relationship between the characteristics of the job and the job holder), **job retention** (the ability to remain in work when circumstances change), **job mobility** (the ability to find new or better employment) and **occupational mobility** (opportunity to progress in pay, responsibilities or status).

Internal motivation (or push) is a desire to perform a task for its own sake rather than any obvious external reward where external motivation (or pull) refers to the desire to do something because it provides certain rewarding consequences (Moran 2000). Motivation problems are a powerful impediment to learning for people of all ages and abilities, positive reinforcement tends to motivate better than criticism (Moran 2000).

Porter and Lawler’s model of expectancy theory cited in Klyczek & Gordon (1988) is based on a process incorporating elements of, **effort**, **performance** and **reward**. This theory is based on expected outcomes and is dependent on individuals recognising their needs and effort required to achieve their CPD goals (see fig. 16). This suggests that through effort and understanding of achievable outcomes, that individual satisfaction can be achieved.

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Fig. 16   Porter and Lawler’s Model of Expectant Theory

Kline Leidy (1994) in citing Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theory assesses how behaviour is affected in accordance with two basic principles - the deficit and progression principles (see fig. 17). The deficit principle centers on individuals efforts to satisfy unfulfilled needs, while the progression principle indicates that an individual’s needs only become important to accomplish once all former needs are adequately satisfied. Therefore, as a result of the achievement of self-actualisation the individual’s appetite becomes stimulated to embrace further CPD (Billue 1988).

Therefore an knowledge of the both the individuals unfulfilled needs coupled with an knowledge of what has already been achieved can lead to a greater understanding of personal motivation. Both Porter and Lawler and Maslow’s models discuss various theories of motivation and an understanding of the motivations of the individual need to be fully understood so as to maximise the uptake in CPD activity. This literature suggests that the issues of motivating staff is a complex one. However, there needs to be an understanding
from all stakeholders in CPD to what motivates the individual to learn and maintain skills and competencies. Employees need to understand what their own personal motivations are and employers need to understand how to motivate their staff to continue to maintain their professional competencies.

Barriers which hinder motivation, such as time and financial issues need to be resolved in partnership with all stakeholders. Reward as a potential motivational factor may need to be adopted by employers to encourage staff to engage with training to benefit the company. Reward could be financial, greater responsibility, new duties or promotion within the company.

The next section looks at certification of learning outcomes as a reward that may potentially motivate the individual to engage in CPD. The following section also looks at the role that Educational Institutions and Professional bodies may have in the certification of learning outcomes.

3.5.6 Certification of CPD participation

A certified CPD is a model of CPD that relies on, or emphasises, the completion of award-bearing programmes of study usually, though not exclusively, are usually validated by Universities and this external validation can be viewed as a mark of quality assurance (Kennedy 2005). This section discusses the role that education and professional bodies have in certifying and accrediting CPD programmes. Currently provision of training courses and programmes for practitioners is patchy and sometimes difficult to find, as no central advice or quality assurance or certification exists (Design Council 2007b).

FÁS (2005) supports the certification of CPD and state that the FETAC certification model provides useful options for certification of soft skills programmes within a work-place context (Skillnets 2008a). The Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (2002) recommends that the NQAI, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, should move swiftly to develop and implement a comprehensive framework within which there is provision for appropriate recognition of knowledge, skills and competencies of all learners.
The employment environment is changing and with the establishment of the NFQ, there is now a move towards State recognition for all education and training awards. The inclusion of awards achieved through training in the framework will provide recognition in a national context. Therefore, an increased recognition for learners attaining awards and increased opportunities for transfer and progression. The inclusion of such awards will also provide an element of external quality assurance and scrutiny on the processes of the awarding bodies (NQAI 2002).

The relationship between academia and enterprise is a critical success factor for Ireland’s competitiveness and developing many and relationships between all stakeholder will have a long-term impact in this area. (Accel 2008).

Certified training is considered very important to employees and businesses by 20% of Design Ireland Skillnets members, approximately 70% consider it somewhat or very important (see fig. 18) (Collier Broderick 2009).

![Fig. 18 Importance of certification /formal qualifications](source: Collier Broderick 2009)

The recognition of formal qualifications is an essential element of a framework of Lifelong Learning. It is through qualifications that we value and recognise learning and qualifications and this can act as a gateway to additional learning. According to the Department Enterprise
Trade and Employment (2002) the development of Lifelong Learning in Ireland has been held back due to the absence of a coherent framework of qualifications, this has now being addressed since the introduction the National Framework of Qualifications.

Educational Institutions

The literature suggests there is a need for greater links between the education sector and enterprise, focusing on both up-skilling the general workforce (Accel 2008). There are educational implications for CPD, such as demands on the learner and differing aspirations of learner, organisation or educational body (Boud & Solomon 2003) therefore CPD needs to be implemented in a structured approach with the partnership of all stakeholders including Educational Institutions for the certification and accreditation of learning outcomes (Skillnets Experience 2008a, FETAC 2009, NFQ 2009).

The importance of up-skilling workers has been identified by the EGFSN and recommends that specific initiatives be developed in collaboration with the third level education institutions (Dept Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002).

Traditionally, universities and third level institutes have found it difficult to be flexible in generating new training courses, which meet the needs of rapidly changing industries (ACCEL 2008). However, Design Ireland Skillnet in partnership with DIT and Carlow IT have introduced two certified courses in 2008. The first is a Masters Program Level 9 on the National Framework, specifically tailored to the needs of the Design Industry, the second is a Certificate in Sustainable Design Innovation from IT Carlow (Collier Broderick 2009).

The 2006–2007 Skillnet TNP facilitated the development and certification for new and existing courses recognised through NFQ awarding bodies (Skillnets 2007b). These included the development of Degree or Higher Degree Programmes such as an MA in High End Design by the Design Ireland Skillnet through DIT and development of an MA in Learning Development in partnership with the Irish Institute of Training & Development and certified through University College Cork. This suggests there is tripartite role between industry,
training networks and education institutions in the development and delivery of certified courses under the NFQ.

An example of this type of partnership is can bee seen with the DIT’s Professional Development Services (PDS) which aims to assist companies seeking CPD programmes in engineering and the built environment. The PDS provides a single, visible and professional conduit for industry and the professions to access and utilise the of expertise that exists within DIT. The PDSs actively seeks to establish external collaborations with industry and partnerships in the development and implementation of CPD (DIT 2009b).

The PDS recognises the importance and value of CPD provision, through identifying the needs of industry and professional sectors and has established a reputation for successfully organising and delivering valuable, relevant CPD courses for industry and therefore play a key role in their future growth and development (DIT 2009b). A full list of CPD courses provided by the PDS can be found in Appendix 5, p.185.

Other examples of educational institutions partnering with industry include University College Dublin’s College of Engineering, Mathematical & Physical Sciences who have adopted Engineers Ireland’s model of CPD in fostering creativity amongst its employees in its Advanced Research Centre at NovaUCD (UCD 2009). This suggests that educational institution are beginning to take a proactive approach to industry lead CPD programmes.

In the UK, the Design Council (2007b) have recommended the formation of a UK Design Academy to establish industry standards in professional practice, CPD and to provide intelligence for future skills development.

- A professional practice framework that recognises and promotes good design practice
- A professional development campaign to improve skills and increase the availability and take-up of high quality CPD.

The Design Academy will establish a collaborative, national strategy for design skills development and promote CPD in the design industry. Stronger links between the design
industry and education will result from the link between professional practice intelligence and curriculum development in schools, colleges and universities. The aim is to optimise the potential of foundation courses, foundation degrees, specialist diplomas, apprenticeship schemes and design degrees. The Design Academy will oversee the delivery of the CPD framework, ensure that professional practice development meets the industry’s skills needs and engage with designers, educators and design buyers. (Design Council 2007b).

The literature would indicate that industry, in partnership with Educational institutions developing specific CPD programmes is a positive step. This would validate any learning outcomes gained by the individual, which in turn offers quality assurance of learning and benefits both the industry and individual in terms of improved skill, knowledge and competencies, but also gaining a recognised qualification. The following section looks at recognising learning outcomes gained in the workplace as a method of progression to a formal qualification.

RPL/APEL
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) also known as Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) has become a means of gaining entry and obtaining credit expectance in higher education institutions in many countries (Mandel & Michaleson 1990; Evans 2000). The NQAI defines RPL as a way of identifying and validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes (DIT 2009c) and recognise RPL in terms of the NFQ where it is seen a giving access to awards. According to the OECD (2008) Ireland is the first stage of developing RPL and there is much capacity to deliver RPL in many areas of higher and further education and training. They also state the RPL has an important role to play in terms increasing education levels, up skilling and re-training those already in the work force. However, recognition of prior learning is an issue which needs to be further progressed (EGFSN 2007a).

Often individuals may be learning rich but qualifications poor (Dept Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002; Skillnets 2007b). Many Visual Communications designers have developed their skills through on the job learning, uncertified learning and self directed learning. It is important the approach to RPL be extended as fully as possible and not be
confined to formal learning which has already been the subject of existing awards. The NFQ must allow for the accreditation of this type of learning (Dept. Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002). As identified by Enterprise Ireland (1999) many designers learn on the job. RPL offers a way of recognising and validating these learning outcomes and experiences and in turn making it feasible to accredit these learnings in a formal sense.

With the need for up skilling of the workforce by at least 1 level on the NFQ (EGFSN 2007a), RPL offers a solution for certifying knowledge, skills and competencies gained from years of practical experience in the workplace, the advantage of RPL is it potentially makes it more attractive to older cohorts to re-engage with the education system for the purpose of gaining new certified qualifications.

Many learners have achievements that do not conform to standard entry requirement for university programmes and access for the accreditation of prior experiential learning is of utmost importance (Boud & Solomon 2003). The focus on learning outcomes is an emerging feature of European policy and is a key part of the emerging European Qualifications Framework as well as being an essential element of the NFQ (NQAI 2008). As part of the development of a European framework the principle of learning throughout life is the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning aim to make visible and to value the full range of knowledge and competences held by an individual, irrespective of where or how these have been acquired. The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning take place inside and outside formal education and training, in the workplace and in civil society. Identification and validation are key in enabling the transfer and acceptance of all learning outcomes across different settings. This learning does not result in a formal certificate or diploma, but it may provide the basis for such formal recognition (Council of Europe 2004a).

For RPL to become a reality, there is an onus on training providers to allow easy access to syllabi and individual modules, whereby individuals can fill gaps in their learning before seeking certification (Dept. Enterprise Trade and Employment 2002) and a functional framework must be in place (Council of Europe 2001) with priority for developing a set of common principles regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning (Council of
Europe 2002). Common principles are necessary to encourage and guide the development of high quality, trustworthy approaches and systems for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. It is necessary to ensure the comparability and acceptance of different approaches to learning and enable the transfer and acceptance of all learning outcomes across different settings (Council of Europe 2002).

The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning serves the needs of the individual learner, as it supports social integration, employability and the development and use of human resources in civic, social and economic contexts (Council of Europe 2004a). Identification of learnings also meet the needs of those individuals who seek integration or re-integration into education and training, the labour market and society (Council of Europe 2004a). The Irish Universities Association state that RPL allows mature and part-time students to build on their experience and knowledge for the purpose of gaining certification (DIT 2009c)

The report from the Council of Europe (2004b) states the following principles for recognising prior learning:

• **Individual entitlements**
  - The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should, in principle, be a voluntary matter for the individual.

• **Obligations of stakeholders**
  - Stakeholders, should establish competences, systems and approaches for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. These should include appropriate quality assurance mechanisms.

• **Confidence and trust**
  - The processes, procedures and criteria for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning must be fair, transparent and underpinned by quality assurance

• **Credibility and legitimacy**
  - Identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should respect the legitimate interests ensure the balanced participation of the relevant stakeholders.
Efforts to enable the accreditation of prior learning and a focus on helping individuals move up the qualifications ladder over a lifetime is needed (FÁS 2008). By doing so will aid transfer progression to recognised qualifications based on the recognition of prior learning of the individual.

**Professional Bodies**

Professional bodies have a key role in qualifying individuals to practice in professions and occupations. It is often qualification or recognition by such bodies which provides a licence to practice or public recognition as a practitioner in a particular field, rather than possession of an award from a public awarding body. Examples of which include Engineers Ireland, RIAI and ICAI. Professional bodies also play an important quality assurance role in relation to professional work, through means such as requiring or promoting updating of knowledge and skills through CPD, setting ethical standards and codes of practice, and operating disciplinary and complaints procedures (NQAI 2002).

Professional bodies in Ireland with specific reference to the Visual Communication sector in Ireland include: Institute of Designers in Ireland (IDI), the Design Business Ireland (DBI), the Institute of Creative Advertising and Design (ICAD).

**The Institute of Designers in Ireland**

The IDI is the professional body representing the interests of Irish designers. Its function is to promote high standards of design, to foster professionalism and to emphasise designers' responsibility to society, to the client and to each other. The Institute represents designers from different disciplines who practice in Ireland. Formed in 1972, the Institute is recognised at national, EU and international level as the representative body for the Irish design profession. The members, whether they be in private practice or in salaried employment, work in the fields of consumer and capital projects, interiors and exhibitions, textiles and fashion, all aspects of visual communication, new media, design (IDI 2009).
The Institute of Creative Advertising & Design (ICAD)

ICAD was founded in 1958 and it’s primary aim is to support creative excellence in Irish Advertising and Design and those working within the industry. ICAD exists for the greater good of the creative industry in Ireland and promotes creative excellence to the public, clients, press and government alike (ICAD 2009).

Design Business Ireland

DBI’s role is in developing an understanding of the effectiveness and value of design to Government, the Business Community and the Design Community itself through advocacy, education and debate. DBI fosters a spirited fraternity amongst its members, which facilitates an exchange of experience and knowledge, and assists them in managing a profitable business (DBI 2009).

At present, there is no formal grouping for professional bodies to ensure mutual recognition. In the UK, chartered status can be sought by professional bodies. There are no precise rules concerning eligibility for chartered status but the Privy Council in the UK lays down certain expectations which include:

• admission to full membership must be on the basis of a qualification in the specific discipline at first degree level or equivalent plus an appropriate period of professional practice
• support must be provided to those members to maintain the currency of their skills through participation in CPD programmes
• the organisation must be financially sound
• the organisation must hold a national profile within business and education
• the organisation must be the acknowledged professional body for the discipline it represents
• the organisation must uphold standards of professional conduct and practice (NQAI 2002)
The NQAI have sought and considered submissions from relevant stakeholders and met with a number of these on a bi-lateral and a multilateral basis concerning the recognition of the awards (or the learning outcomes associated with them) of certain awarding bodies which are not already recognised through the NFQ (NQAI 2008).

There is recognition from the NQAI that there are bodies who make awards in Ireland and which do not have formal recognition of the State. The NQAI notes that many of these bodies have been operating for many years and considers it very important that the learning outcomes associated with the awards that these bodies make can also be recognised in the context of the NFQ (NQAI 2008). Ireland is in a unique position in international terms in having State awards available for all provision of learning opportunities within the State and considers that no learning provider or non-statutory awarding body should feel excluded from working with the Awards Councils. Such providers and awarding bodies also have the opportunity of working with other State awarding bodies such as the universities and the Dublin Institute of Technology in delivering CPD programmes under the NFQ (NQAI 2008).

According to the recommendations of the NQAI (2008), the professional body itself would not be an awarding body, though they would set standards for the recognition of professional qualifications/titles and accredit/approve/recognise (there is no agreed single wording for this function) the awards of an awarding body and the learning programmes of a provider as meeting its needs as a professional regulator (in many cases, the awarding body and the provider would be the same body).

Practitioners in any given industry who undertake CPD courses will maintain a range of professional standards and knowledge. Some professional bodies stipulate that CPD training is undertaken as part of membership, although there are no such formal requirements in the Visual Communications sector (Design Council UK 2007a).

Some professional bodies provide membership or registration based on achievement of awards, in these instances the professional body does not make the award itself, but it recognises an award made by another awarding body following education and training,
provided by various education and training institutes. This practice is sometimes referred to as accreditation. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in Ireland and the Institution of Engineers of Ireland are examples of professional bodies in Ireland which operate in this way (NQAI 2002). The NQAI has put in place policies for the awards of some professional bodies to be recognised through FETAC and HETAC (Skillnets 2007b). The NQAI states the importance in avoiding multiplicity of awarding bodies and overlapping functions and that professional body should be subject to transparent quality assurance procedures It is view of the NQAI that all of the awards that are recognised through the National Framework (NQAI 2008).

Challenges do exist for mature learners in going forward for certification but these can be overcome by support and facilitation through the trainers. Internal certification is shown by the outcomes though formal recognition of the standard achieved. Where occupationally specific skills are obtained within a particular enterprise, it would be helpful if a system of internal awards was developed (Skillnets 2008a).

### 3.6  Summary

Continuing Professional Development is the means which individuals or member companies of a professional association maintain, improve and broaden their skills and knowledge to develop their professional lives. CPD includes certain programmes or activities which serve the purpose of equipping the professional with better skills and competencies in their respective fields of work.

Many organisations in other industry sectors in Ireland seem to have successfully developed and implemented well structured CPD programmes. These programmes are of benefit to both industry and the individual. The changing working environment means that CPD is necessary for the progression of the individual and the success of business to engage in a structured framework for the improvement and development of skills and competencies. Research would indicate overwhelming benefits to participation in CPD for both the individual and companies, however there are a number of significant barriers which need to be over come to increase participation in CPD.
The literature indicates that there are a number of professional bodies in Ireland who have developed and implemented CPD programmes with the intent of improving skills and competencies for their membership. Each of these organisations employ specific models for CPD, which has been developed with their particular sector in mind. Many of the identified models of CPD have their merit, though there is no specific model of CPD for the Visual Communications sector, the literature would suggest that the Transformative approach to CPD may best suit the sector as it offers many of the benefits and flexibility of other CPD models.

There are many benefits to engagement with CPD for both individuals and companies. These benefits include better skills and competencies, greater profitability for companies, higher earnings for the individual, better flexible staff, increased efficiencies and new business opportunities.

The research suggests that there are a number of barriers that can hinder or prevent participation in CPD and that Ireland has a particularly low uptake in CPD. These issues need to be addressed to encourage greater participation in CPD if the benefits are to be realised in the Visual Communications sector.

Having investigated CPD in industry, the following section researches what the Irish Government and Education policies are in relation to CPD and what role state agencies play in the development, implementation and certification of CPD.
4.0 Government and Education
Policy on CPD
4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to investigate Irish Government and State agencies policies on CPD to assess what role the state and its agencies play in the implementation of CPD programmes. Irish Government policies, the EU Lisbon Strategy, the Enterprise Strategy Group all conclude that Ireland's future must be a high skilled, knowledge based economy, and that a high level of education skill and ongoing lifelong learning and upskilling are required to achieve this. (FÁS 2005). There is no single entity in the State that hold sole responsibility for CPD, though Government policy on CPD and Lifelong Learning is expressed through a number of government departments, social partnership bodies and expert groups. Each of these State agencies have their own mandate and role, some of which overlap, in other cases these various bodies work in partnership with each other or in a consultative role. See Appendix 6, p.189 for a list of these agencies and their remit.

The following section discussed the role that major stage agencies have in terms of the implementation and development of recognised CPD programmes.

4.2 Department of Education

The Department of Education’s role is to provide high-quality education to will enable individuals achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society and contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development. The priorities of the Department are the promotion of equity and inclusion, quality outcomes and lifelong learning, planning for education that is relevant to personal, social, cultural and economic needs and enhancement of the capacity of the Department for service delivery, policy formulation, research and evaluation. The Department is responsible for providing the necessary education infrastructure to support the delivery of quality education at all levels and must identify, quantify and prioritise the need for educational provisions (Dept. of Education 2009).

There are a number of bodies under the aegis of the Department, including, Further Education and Training Awards Council, Higher Education and Training Awards Council, Higher
Part of the Department’s role is to provide the necessary infrastructure for lifelong learning, therefore it is of interest to this research. Through aegis the department there are a number of statutory bodies who collectively have a role to play in the implementation, development and certification of a CPD programmes. These bodies include the Higher Education Authority, the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.

4.3 Higher Education Authority (HEA)

The Higher Education Authority is the statutory planning and policy development body for higher education in Ireland and has wide advisory powers throughout the third-level education sector. The HEA is also the funding authority for the universities, institutes of technology and a number of designated higher education institutions.

The mission of the HEA is to foster the development of a higher education sector in Ireland, to make education accessible to all potential students and is recognised internationally for the high quality of teaching, learning and research (HEA 2009). The principal functions of the HEA are:

- To further the development of higher education
- To maintain a continuous review of the demand and need for higher education
- To assist in the coordination of state investment in higher education and to prepare proposals for such investment
- To allocate among universities, institutes of technology and the designated institutions the grants voted by the Oireachtas
- To promote the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education and democratisation of higher education.

The HEA is also the Irish contact point for a number of EU lifelong learning programmes and is developing a prominent role for research in facilitating the generation and exploitation of new knowledge (HEA 2009).
The HEA have a strategic role in the policy development for the Department of education, therefore are in a position to influence national and EU policy on lifelong learning.

### 4.4 Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)

FETAC is the national awarding body for further education and training in Ireland and founded as a statutory body in June 2001 by the Minister for Education and Science under the Qualifications (Education & Training) Act, 1999. FETAC's functions include:

- Making and promoting awards
- Validating programmes
- Monitoring and ensuring the quality of programmes
- Determining standards

FETAC gives individuals the opportunity to gain recognition for learning in education or training centres, in the workplace and in the community. Programmes leading to FETAC awards (at Levels 1 to 6 of the NFQ) are offered throughout Ireland by a range of providers in education and training centres, in colleges and in the workplace. These include:

- BIM
- Fáilte Ireland (CERT)
- FÁS and Teagasc centres, VEC's
- Adult and community education and training centres
- Institutes of Technology
- The workplace

The purpose of FETAC is to make quality assured awards in accordance with standards within the national framework, creating opportunities for all learners in further education and training to have their achievements recognised and providing access to systematic progression pathways. FETAC states that partnership with all stakeholders is essential to achieving success (FETAC 2009).
4.5 Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC)

HETAC is the qualifications awarding body for third-level education and training institutions outside the university sector and was established in 2001 under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999. It is the successor to the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA) and awards qualifications at all levels of higher education and training up to PhD level (HETAC 2009).

HETAC is a public body which exists to benefit learners and potential learners by:

- Setting standards, accrediting programmes and awarding qualifications at all levels of higher education and training
- Providing assurance to the public that programmes of higher education and training are above an acceptable threshold level of quality and that objective quality assurance processes are in place to meet the expectations of Irish Society and the International Community
- Delivering a quality improvement service to accredited educational providers so as to contribute to raising standards to increasingly higher levels

The main functions of HETAC include: the determination standards for higher education and training awards and the validation of higher education and training programmes; the monitoring of quality assurance procedures; the delegation of awarding powers to recognised institutions and ensuring that arrangements are in place in commercial education and training institutions to protect learners where programmes are validated by HETAC (HETAC 2009).

HETAC determines the standards of knowledge, skill and competence for education and training awards. Institutions recognised by HETAC validate their programmes against standards set by the body and therefore must be satisfied that the learner has achieve the standards of knowledge, skill and competence for the purposes of the award. The institute then informs HETAC that it has undertaken this process and satisfied itself accordingly. The Council, through a formal mechanism of an Order in Council, then delegates the authority to the institute to make the award. (HETAC 2009).
FETAC and HETAC both provide quality assurance in terms of educational standards, however they have different roles to play in terms of education and certification. HETAC is the qualifying body for education institutes outside the universities where FETAC provide the opportunity for validation and certification of learning in other locations such at training centers and the workplace. As such HETAC’s has an important role in certification at higher level awards where FETAC certify lower levels of education and training. This indicates that FETAC have a role to play in terms of certifying a formal CPD programme.

The following section looks at the the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and the National Framework of Qualifications in terms of their role in benchmarking knowledge, skills and competencies against defined outcomes and awards.

4.6 National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI)

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) is an agency of the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment with the responsibility for the development and maintenance of the National Framework of Qualifications. The authority also is responsible for the promotion and facilitating greater access to education and training, and for the progression of members of the workforce from one qualification to another (NQAI 2009).

In 1999 European Ministers of Education met to consider the challenges facing Higher Education systems. A document titled “The European Higher Education Area”, better known as the Bologna declaration, was the outcome. The Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (the Bologna Framework) was adopted by European Ministers for Higher Education in Bergen in May 2005. In November 2006, Ireland became the first European country to verify the compatibility of its National Framework of Qualifications with the Bologna Framework (NQAI 2009).

4.7 National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

The NFQ was proposed through the Qualifications (Training) Act 1999 as a framework for the development, recognition and award of qualifications in the state, based on standards of
knowledge, skill or competency acquired by learners. Amongst the key functions of the NQAI are the establishment and maintenance of a framework of qualifications for the development, recognition and award of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners (NQAI 2002).

The NFQ is a ten level system that incorporates awards made for all kinds of learning (see fig. 19) and is defined as the single nationally and internationally accepted entity through which learning achievements may be measured in relation to each other (NQAI 2002). The NQAI works in partnership with employees, employers and advisory bodies to ensure that the National Framework is fully relevant. To facilitate this the NQAI works in consultation with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) (NQAI 2002).

Fig. 19 10 Level National Framework

Source: National Framework of Qualifications (www.nfq.ie)
For each level of the NFQ, standards of knowledge, skill and competence have been set out, defining the outcomes to be achieved by a learner seeking to gain a qualification. The NFQ has been built around an agreed architecture, as a result of an extended consultative period with a range of stakeholders (NFQ 2009).

The Framework covers all stages of learning from the initial to the most advanced levels and has four classes of award-type, ensuring that the Framework can capture all types of learning undertaken by a learner and gives consistency across qualifications at a level on the Framework (NFQ 2009).

The National Framework plays a vital role for accrediting learning outcomes and facilitates learning progression through its 10 level structure.

**Learning Types Identified Under the NFQ**

According to the NQAI (2003a) awards under the NFQ are based on the expected outcomes of learning, inclusive of all education and training and are concerned with the knowledge, skill and competence that are expected from the learner who is to receive an award. All relevant and measurable learning should be covered in the framework and that collectively this is defined as ‘knowledge, skill and competence’ and the NQAI (2003a) have determined that there are three strands of learning outcome that will be used in setting standards for the NFQ are:

- Knowledge
- Know-how and skill
- Competence

**Knowledge**

The NQAI (2003a) defines *knowledge* as a form of learning outcome commonly identified with declarative knowledge. Declarative knowledge is the cognitive representation of ideas, events or happenings and can be derived from practical or professional experience as well as from formal instruction or study. Such knowledge has meaning outside any specific context of application or practice. Knowledge can comprise description, memory, understanding, thinking, analysis, synthesis, debate and research. Any new knowledge is not simply added to
the knowledge a learner has before, but is conditioned by the nature, richness and structure of one’s previous knowledge and furthermore serves to modify and restructure the latter, however partially (NQAI 2003a).

**Know-how and Skill**
Skill is the performance of a task that responds to or manipulates the physical, informational or social environment of the individual and is a goal orientated performance. Know-how underpins skill but is not identical to skill. Know-how is the procedural knowledge required to perform a task. Know-how may be accompanied, or supported by declarative knowledge, where a skill is acquired but, unlike procedural knowledge, this declarative knowledge is not an intrinsic part of the skill. Know-how may be measured directly or implied from performance. Skill can only be measured by performance (NQAI 2003a).

**Competence**
Competence is the practical application of knowledge and/or skill requires learning beyond primary acquisition. The unique characteristic of competence is the effective and creative demonstration and deployment of knowledge and skills. Competence draws on declarative and procedural knowledge, attitudes, emotions, values and sense of self-efficacy of the learner. Competence refers to the process of regulating the application of knowledge to a set of tasks and is usually acquired by practice and reflection. Competence also encompasses the extent to which the learner can acknowledge their own limitations and plan to transcend these through further learning. While basic knowledge and skills can be described more or less independent of context, for the description of competence it is essential to make explicit the range of contexts in which the learner can demonstrate their competence (NQAI 2003a p.22).

The research indicates that all learning outcomes are derived from knowledge, skills and competencies of the individual learner. Knowledge is acquired by the individual from their experiences, skill is a performance of a task with specific goals or outcomes using knowledge acquired and competency is the application of knowledge in a controlled and conscious way where the learner is self-aware of both their capabilities and limitations.
Division Learning Types Into Sub-strands

The NQAI (2003a) have identified a number of substrands within the main three strands of learning outcomes and these can be considered as component structures to learning. Substrands of learning are based on the concepts introduced in the understandings of knowledge, skill and competence. The main strands of learning outcome are divided into substrands as follows:

- **Knowledge**
  - breadth
  - kind
- **Know-how and Skill**
  - range
  - selectivity
- **Competence**
  - context
  - role
  - learning to learn
  - insight

Each substrand of learning outcomes are explained as follows:

**Knowledge: Breadth**

Knowledge outcomes are associated with facts and concepts and refer to knowledge of, or about, something. The more diverse, complex and varied the facts and concepts, the greater the breadth of knowledge. Breadth is be distinguished from the variety of different facts and concepts learned, which relates to volume (NQAI 2003a).

**Knowledge: Kind**

The representation of facts and concepts, including ideas, events or happenings and is cumulative. The more facts and concepts are layered on top of each other, and draw successively upon each other to construct meaning, the higher the level of learning. This process is typically associated with progressively greater abstraction from concrete phenomena into theory (NQAI 2003a).
Know-how and Skill: Range
Skills, in both their execution and the demonstration of underpinning procedural knowledge, encompass the use of many different kinds of device or processes that facilitates individuals having some effect on their physical, informational or social environment. These include cognitive and social processes as well as physical implements. Tools, and the skills to use them, range from commonplace or familiar to novel or newly-invented. The sheer number of skills acquired is a matter of volume, rather than of level. The diversity of skills contributes to differentiation in level. The completeness of the set of skills (and associated know-how) in respect of an area of activity is another feature that helps indicate the level (NQAI 2003a).

Know - How and Skill: Selectivity
The performance of tasks depends on the learner having an appropriate understanding of the environment in which the tasks are performed and self-awareness of his/her own abilities and limitations, while at the same time, correctly judging the fit between the demands of the task and abilities of the individual. Whereas the range of know-how and skill refers to abilities, selectivity refers to the judgement that the learner exercises in executing procedures, through selecting from the range of know-how and skills available to the individual in accordance with their understanding of the demands of the task (NQAI 2003a).

Competence: Context
Daily experiences (both social and civic) supply us with the context where knowledge and skill are utilised for practical purposes. These situations vary in complexity and in demands they place upon the individual. Highly defined and structured situations or contexts compel the behaviour of the individual and require lower levels of learning. The range of responses required and the extent to which a broader range or higher level of knowledge and skill have to be drawn upon also depends on how predictable the context is. Acting effectively and autonomously in complex, ill-defined and unpredictable situations or contexts requires higher levels of learning (NQAI 2003a).
**Competence: Role**

For many purposes joining and functioning within various kinds of group is a key component in deploying knowledge and skill effectively. Successful participation in a group requires the individual to adopt appropriate roles within that group and requires the application of social skills and an understanding. Higher levels of competency are associated with adoption of multiple roles as well as with those requiring leadership, initiative and autonomy. Higher competency is also associated with participation in more complex and internally diverse groups (NQAI 2003a).

**Competence - Learning to learn**

This strand encompasses the extent to which an individual can identify and acknowledge the limitations of their own current knowledge, skill and competence and plan to transcend these limitations through further learning. Learning to learn is the ability to observe and participate in new experiences and to extract and retain meaning from these experiences, while drawing on other aspects of knowledge, skill and competence. Learning to Learn places an emphasis on the relationship of the learners own learning processes (NQAI 2003a).

**Competence - Insight**

Insight refers to ability to engage in increasingly complex understanding and consciousness, both internally and externally through the process of reflection on experience. Insight involves the integration of the other strands of knowledge, skill and competence with the learner’s attitudes, motivation, values, beliefs, cognitive style and personality. This integration is made clear in how the learners’ interacts with social and cultural structures of their community and society, while also being an cognitive individual. A learner’s self understanding develops through evaluating the feedback received from the general environment, in particular, their peers and is essential of acting in a manner that is increasingly autonomous (NQAI 2003a).

For a full list of learning types identified by the NQAI and how they relate to award types under the NFQ can be found in Appendix 8, p.192.
4.8 Summary

The literature indicates that there is no cohesive Government body with the sole responsibility for the development and implementation of CPD in Ireland. However, the State is of the opinion that Ireland’s future is the knowledge economy, as such the country needs a highly skilled workforce. This can be achieved through CPD.

A number of state agencies can facilitate this continuous leaning, in particular FETAC, HETAC for the certification of learning outcomes and the NFQ for defining the knowledge, skills and competencies associated with those awards.

The NFQ identifies that learning is complex and various learning outcomes overlap. The three understandings of different types of learning outcomes are not to be interpreted as corresponding to sharply-bounded categories, rather, as overall set of knowledge, skill and competencies. The NFQ has a vital role to play in terms of identifying and validation of all learning types. The mapping of learning outcomes against standards on the NFQ has ensured a standard in which all learning types and outcomes can be benchmarked. Under the NFQ, learning at all levels is recognised. The frameworks is a way of measuring knowledge and competencies and ensures transfer progression for the individual from one level to the next. The NFQ defines what levels of knowledge, skill and competencies are required for certification and awards. The framework also helps the individual identify weaknesses in their own skills. From the point of view of implementing a CPD programme, the NFQ is vital for mapping knowledge, skills and competencies against identified weaknesses.
5.0 Research Design
5.1 Introduction

Crotty (1998) states that there are four basic elements that need to be considered as part of the research process (see fig. 20). These consist of the chosen research methods of gathering relevant data, the application or these methods is driven by the strategy in the form of a methodology that is linked to desired outcomes. Underpinning this strategy is a theoretical perspective that arises out of a philosophical stance that supports the logic of the process. This perspective is embedded in the nature of how knowledge is acquired, in the form of an epistemology. Therefore, any decisions made about these choices should be born out of the research question: How can a Continuous Professional Development programme benefit individuals and companies providing design services within the Visual Communications sector?

![Diagram showing the relationship between Epistemology, Theoretical Perspective, Methodology, and Methods.](image)

Fig. 20 Elements of Research

Having reviewed the available literature on the research topic this chapter outlines the way in which the research design has been developed, identifies the context for the study from a philosophical perspective and justifies the strategy adopted for the collection of primary data required in order to address the research question. This chapter also discusses the theoretical perspective which is embedded in a research philosophy. The methodology for providing a suitable strategy for this type of study is also outlined.
The first section explains the interpretivist nature of the study in relation to the topic. The perspective is then broadly located within an epistemological paradigm that is linked to the research question and the type of information being sought. Following on from this, the chosen methodology is justified based on a suitability and purpose. The rationale for mixed methods approach is under the remit of phenomenology is clearly explained.

Methods adopted in gathering relevant information are crucial to the success of any research project and methods chosen any research have to be justified by the researcher. The appropriateness of interviews and surveys versus case study methods for collecting primary information is discussed and the chosen methods of interview and survey is justified with reference to type of primary information being sought.

The process and procedures adopted in developing both interviews and surveys is fully outlined to ensure transparency of methods chosen and full interview transcripts can be found in Appendix 11, p.198 and Survey questions and data are presented in Appendix 12, p. 235 and 13, p.242.

Consideration is then given to any ethical issues pertinent to this study and scope of the research is clearly defined. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key points.

5.2 Theoretical Perspective
Saunders et al (2006) describes the interdependence between stages of the design process and the flow of research starting from research philosophy, developing the approach, which will be dictated by the strategy used. This is called the Research Onion. The strategy chosen for this study determines the methodology and the various techniques for collecting and analysing the data (see fig. 21).
Guba and Lincoln (cited in Saunders et al) state that:

Both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately with any research paradigm. Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system, or world view that guides the investigation, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways.

(2006, p.100)

The research has to start from a defined paradigm and adopt the most appropriate research philosophy according to the research question. A number of authors discuss the range of philosophical perspectives that constitutes the foundations of research. According to Creswell (1994) and Saunders et al (2006) these philosophical perspectives include:

- Epistemology, ontology, axiology each with their particular aspects: positivism, realism, interpretivism, objectivism, subjectivism, pragmatism, functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, radical structuralist (Saunders 2007)
- Qualitative and quantitative paradigms based on ontological, epistemological, axiological and rhetorical assumptions (Creswell 1994)
In order to answer the research question: How is a Continuous Professional Development Programme of benefit to individuals and companies in the Visual Communications industry in Ireland and to reach the aim of the research - to establish what CPD programmes currently exist in Ireland, how they function and how a similar CPD programme can benefit the Visual Communications sector, the research design reviews epistemological assumptions from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective.

5.2.1 Epistemology

Klein (2005, p.1) defines epistemology as an area of philosophy “concerned with the nature, sources and limits of knowledge”. Saunders et al (2006) states that epistemology is concerned with what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study. The main assumptions of epistemology are:

**Positivism**

The positivist position refers to a phenomena that observation will lead to the production of credible data. According to Remenyi et al (1998) in this view, the researcher is working with an observable social reality and the end product of such research lead to generalisations.

**Realism**

Realism according to Saunders et al (2006) relates to a scientific enquiry and that what our senses show us as reality is the truth. This theory is based on a reality of independent human mind. The critical realist’s position that the social world is constantly changing.

**Objectivism**

Gergen (1997) explains that on an epistemological scale, objectivism and constructionism are placed at opposite extremes. Objectivism “holds that all human knowledge is reached through reason, the human mental faculty of understanding the world abstractly and logically” (Thomas 2002, p.1).

**Constructionism**

Glasersfeld (cited in Gergen 1997, p.1) explains that in the constructionist viewpoint “the knower interprets and constructs a reality based on his experiences and interactions with
his environment”. Meaning is constructed as a result of contact between the individual and the world and the objects in the world (Crotty, 1998). A constructionist point of view suggests that there are multiple realities which, meaning that “researchers provide quotes to illustrate different perspectives” (Creswell et al. 2006, p.24).

**Subjectivism**
Subjectivism is a social phenomena which seems to stem from human consciousness (Crotty 1998). Subjectivism is the theory that reality is what we perceive to be real, and that there is no underlying true reality that exists independently of perception.

**Interpretivism**
Interpretivism advocates that it is necessary for the researcher ‘to understand differences between humans in our roles as social actors’ (Saunders, 2006, p.106). This is targeted to research among people as ‘social actors’ and emphasises that interpret everyday social roles, as well as interpreting the social role of others in accordance with our own set of meanings and understandings.

This study seeks to establish what the benefits are for the Visual Communications sector to participation CPD and therefore a subjectivism position suits the research aim. Benefits to CPD is subjective and have different meanings for different people, based on their own social realities and environment. Their understanding and knowledge of CPD arrives out of their own interpretations and priorities i.e. employers and employees and different industry sectors. The main purpose of the study is to interpret the data collected and develop meaning through useful insights to determine how CPD would be beneficial for the Visual Communications sector in Ireland.

### 5.3 Research Methodology

According to Saunders et al (2006, p.101) the research aims and objectives support the research methodology and underpin the work and methods which are used to collect data. Therefore the type of information being sought determines the most appropriate research methodology. There are two distinct research methodologies, these refer to quantitative and
Qualitative data. Saunders et al (2006) differentiates between the two by the emphasis on numeric or non-numeric information.

Quantitative is predominantly a term used for any data collection technique or analysis procedure that generates or uses numeric data, whereas qualitative is more concerned with information about things that are less easily understood with the use of numbers (Moore 2000) and refers to attitudes and opinions individuals have on a particular topic. Wisker (2001) states that qualitative research enables an easier understanding of meanings, beliefs and experiences.

To answer the research aims and objective, both qualitative and quantitative approaches have been adopted as there are different types of information being sought to ensure the research has a balanced set of findings with multiple perspectives.

Firstly, the study seeks to gather experiences and opinions of organisations who have developed and implemented CPD programmes. Secondly, the viewpoint of employees and employers in the Visual Communications sector in Ireland is determined.

According to Creswell (2007, p.57) a “phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon”. Phenomenological research is suited to a problem in which an understanding of several common or shared experiences of a phenomenon is sought. Therefore, it is important to gain an insight of existing experiences of CPD programmes in order to develop practices or policies that may suit the Visual Communications sector and benefit individuals and companies operating within it.

This research is carried out in a phenomenological vein, studying organisations who have developed and implemented CPD programs in their industry sector. By comparing individual organisation's interpretations and experiences of the CPD, a general understanding of these experiences is formed. Common definitions, processes, practices and approaches are identified. These may be used for the development of CPD programmes in the Visual Communications sector.
5.4 Research Methods

A number of research methods were considered for this study in order to appropriately gather relevant data for this study. These were: interview, survey and case studies. The aim of the primary research is to gather information regarding the experiences of organisations developing and implementing CPD in Ireland and gain and understanding of the benefits and methodologies employed by these organisations in the delivery of CPD programmes tailored for their specific sector. Each of the research methods under consideration has the potential to deliver the type of information sought and in doing so satisfy the research question. After examination of the advantages and disadvantages of all three methods, the interview and survey methods were chosen above case study. The reasons for this decision are discussed in the following section. A number of authors suggest that the combination of methods research balances academic research and aids a clearer understanding of the results (Jensen 2002; Wimmer and Dominick 2000).

Desk Work

Saunders et al (2006) states that there are two main reasons for reviewing the literature. Firstly, preliminary search helped generate and refine the research ideas and secondly the critical literature review is foremost in demonstrating awareness of the current state of knowledge in the subject of the research, as well as in placing the research in the wide context of this subject.

There is little point in reinventing the wheel… the work that you do is not done in a vacuum, but build on the ideas of other people who have studied the field before you. This requires you describe what has been published, and to marshal the information in a relevant and critical way.

(Jankowicz 2005, p.161)

The themes reviewed in the literature have framed the study, defined terms of knowledge and identified themes and concepts that should be investigated as part of the primary research.

Case Study Method

Yin (2003) states that there are three different methods of case study which cater for various types of research questions. Firstly exploratory, which acts as a pilot study to the research
question, descriptive which provides narrative accounts and finally explanatory which is concerned with validating theories. The exploratory model is considered for this study to explore the use of CPD to improve the skills, knowledge and competencies of designers working in the Visual Communications sector and develop recommendations for the implementing a CPD programme in the sector

**Advantages**

According to Yin (2003) the case study method has a unique ability to provide rigorous information on a specific situation. In this research the case study could provide extensive insight into a limited number of selected cases where the value of a CPD programme is effectively measured. Schramm (cited in Yin) describes:

> The central tendency among all types of case study, is that is tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions; why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result.

(2003, p.12)

Typically, data resulting from case studies is easy to interpret and can be accessible to a wide audience (Cohen et al. 2000). This could increase the accessibility of the research results to all stakeholder concerned with the development of a CPD programme.

**Disadvantages**

There is an argument that questions the reliability of the case study method as data is sourced from a limited number of studies (Yin 2003). Multiple case studies are considered more robust, however it “can require extensive resources and time beyond the means of a single student” (Yin, 2003, p.47). A single case study leads the researcher to rely solely on one source of information and therefore, is of considerable risk should the research fail or return with unreliable data, leaving the researcher with unanswered questions (Yin, 2003). Other disadvantages according to Denscombe (2007) is that the case study method can lead to generalisations of findings and therefore can lack a degree of rigour.

Multiple case studies may ensure validity of information, however it is not possible to undertake multiple case studies in the timeframe available. Access to case studies in live
industry situations would be difficult and would involve a lengthy time commitment. Therefore, the use of case study was not pursued as part of this dissertation.

**Interview Method**

Kvale (1996) defines the research interview as an interpersonal situation, where two participants converse about a subject of mutual interest. An interview allows the “participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations form their own point of view” (Cohen et al. 2000, p.267).

**Advantages**

Interviews are particularly suited for studying people’s understanding of the meaning in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world.

(Kvale 1996, p.124)

The interview method is suitable for obtaining the perspectives from representative bodies of their experiences in developing and implementing CPD programmes in Ireland. The interview method alone can provide sufficient data to inform the research question, as Cohen et al. (2000) argues “interviews can be used as the primary means of gathering research information”.

An important advantage of in-depth interviews (Wimmer & Dominick 2002; Denscombe 2007) is the wealth of detail provided. According to Gunter (2002) face-to-face interviews offer the best response rate of types of interviews, can be controlled by the interviewer and can be useful for probing on specific issues.

**Disadvantages**

Interviews are not suitable for situations where the study seeks to predict the behaviour of larger groups as large sample sizes make the process prohibitively long (Kvale 1996). The time consuming nature of the transcription phase and the subsequent analysis also limits studies with limited resources or narrow time frames (Kvale 1996). These problems do not adversely effect
this research as a representative sample of the target group is quite small. Another hinderance of the interview method is in the transcription of recorded interviews where:

The problem with much transcription is that it becomes solely a record of data rather than a record of a social encounter...frequently it is the non-verbal communication that gives more information than the verbal communication.  
(Cohen et al. (2000 p.281)

In certain interview situations this perhaps, is an issue. However as this study seeks to gain an understanding of a organisation’s perspective on CPD, rather than the view of an individual, it is not considered problematic. Other disadvantages of the interview process can be expense, location (if travel is involved) and the potential for interviewer bias (Gunter 2002), the interviewer should not use language that is leading or suggesting bias (Wisker 2001). Hart also indicates the potential for bias in interviews when stating that “In research the tools or instruments we use to make measurements and observations need to be free of bias as possible” (2005 p.346).

Another difficulty with interviews is that interviewees may not say exactly what they think and the interview can be affected by the interaction of the interviewer and the interviewee (Jensen 2002; Desncombe 2007).

According to Hart (2005, p.305) if the research is to be seen as credible in terms of influence and use, it should refrain from ‘taking sides’ or ‘holding on to values’ (see fig 22). Therefore careful attention must be paid to the analysis and interpretation of collected information. As well as conducting this research I am a Visual Communications practitioner and will have my own personal values. Therefore, there is a potential for unintentional bias. While my own personal views may provide insights, this should not attempt to seek the answers that I may wish to find and answers should emerge naturally from the analysis of collected information. This will be continuously monitored during the research process.
The Interview method of gathering information on experiences is appropriate for gathering insights from the interviewee on their experiences of participating and developing CPD programmes for their particular industry sector. This method also offers the opportunity to gather in-depth perspectives from multiple participants within the allocated timeframe.

**Survey Method**

According to Gunter (2002) quantitative research is measured numerically. One well known quantitative method is conducting a survey “to explore relationships or degrees of association between variables” (Gunter 2002, p.214). For this research, a survey was developed to find out what attitudes individuals within the Visual Communications sector in Ireland had towards CPD. This survey was undertaken with two distinct categories, namely, employees and owner/managers within the sector.

**Advantages**

The advantages of conducting a survey, according to Gunter (2002) is that it saves costs while reaching a wide geographical area, the participants can answer the questions at their own pace and it avoids any temptation of interview bias.
Disadvantages

Gunter (2002) suggests that the disadvantages of surveys are that there is no guarantee that the surveys will be completed and there may be a delay in receiving the responses as surveys may trickle back. There is no one available to clarify questions for respondents if parts of the survey are not understood and there is no control over how respondents complete the survey – or if they will answer all of the questions. To minimise the risk of misinterpretation of questions, both surveys were first piloted.

The following section discusses in detail the process and sample techniques used in both interviews and surveys undertaken as part of research into the benefits of CPD for the Visual Communication sector.

The Interview Process

Kvale (1996) explains that there are three stages in constructing an interview, firstly knowledge of the subject matter must be accumulated, secondly the purpose of the interview must be formulated and finally, the interview techniques must be decided upon and applied. Findings within the literature regarding CPD has provided knowledge of the area. This is of utmost importance in order to engage meaningfully with the expertise level of interview participants.

Interview Sample and Profiles

Wisler (2001) states that a sample is a selected group upon which the researched is carried out on and is chosen to represent a small part of a larger group. The criteria devised for selection for possible respondents were: an industry representative body; had background in developing and implementing CPD programme; and that they were Irish. Contact was made to an number of these identified industry bodies and a some of which agreed to participate in the research. Six potential interview candidate organisations were selected for their recognition in the area of developing, managing and implementing CPD programmes in their specific industry sector (see fig. 22).
The interviews were designed to take approximately 30 minutes. A list of questions was developed to guide the interviewer (see Appendix 10, p.195). The questions covered specific issues relating to CPD that were uncovered in the literature review and also included general questions concerning CPD. Questions were designed to be open ended, therefore allowing the individual in the interviewee to freely express ideas and responses. When required, the interviewer probed deeper with supporting questions to achieve a greater detail of information and clarification of the response from the interviewee.
Interview Technique

The semi-structured interview involves the interviewer determining a set of themes to be addressed and a set of corresponding support questions. “There is an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subjects.” (Kvale 1996 p.124). This method was chosen, as it facilitates the questioning to be adapted to the individual experiences and understandings of the interviewees. This is important for this study as the participants come from industry backgrounds with differing experiences. Each interview participant has the responsibility for management of CPD programmes in their organisation and therefore have considerable experience in the area.

Purpose of the Interview

The purpose of the interview is to gather data relating to the experiences of organisations development of CPD in their particular industry, with cognisance of perceived benefits and barriers to CPD. Specifically, the interviews sought to build on the information ascertained from literature by gaining specific insight into CPD in Ireland. The interviews aim to examine why each of these organisations implemented a CPD programme and how it is structured, perceived benefits and barriers to participation and how learning outcomes are validated.

Questions

Once the purpose of the interviews was established, themes were devised and finally the questions which exemplify these themes, were drafted. The themes broadly reflected categories uncovered in the literature review and referenced the research objectives. The purpose of the questions were to establish what background circumstances which lead to the development of CPD in their particular sector and how these CPD programmes are structured. Information on perceived benefits for all stakeholders in the participation of CPD was also sought as was identifying barriers to participation in CPD, how skills have augmented in the sector since the introduction of CPD and to what importance their sector places on certification or accreditation of learning through CPD.
The questions were redrafted on a number of occasions and the participants answers were anticipated to ensure that the interview would return suitable information. Questions were evaluated with a colleague who has had considerable experience in formulating questions for data capture and surveys. The number of questions was limited to six with a number of supporting questions to aid further investigation of the main question.

**Initial Contact**

Of the six potential interview candidates identifies, initial contact was made in four cases, via email (see Appendix 9, p.194), two other potential candidates (Design Ireland and Small Firms Association) were initially contacted by telephone. From this group, five agreed to an interview. Three interviews were conducted due to other commitments by candidates.

**The Interview Situation**

The interviews were held at the participants offices. Each interview took between nineteen and thirty two minutes to complete. Interviews were recorded digitally on an iPod and later transcribed (see Appendix 11, p.198 for full transcriptions). Kvale (1996, p.127) states that “The interviewees should be provided with a context for the interview by a briefing before and a debriefing afterward”, therefore at the start of the meeting the purpose of the interview was explained to the interviewee, the topic of the dissertation and main objectives were also described. The interviewees were asked if they had any questions before commencement and permission was obtained by the researcher to record before commencing the interview.

During interviews the order of the questions was altered to reflect the participants response. Kvale (1996) states that it is the interviewer’s ability to sense the immediate meaning of an answer and the horizon of possible meanings that it opens up. Although the questions were devised in advance, the interviewer endeavored to ensure that the delivery and tone of the questions remained conversational and informal. Kvale (1996) states, once the interviews are completed, the participant should be given the opportunity to cover other areas before bringing the interview to a close and ending recording.
Analysis
Miles and Huberman (cited in Cohen et al., 2000) indicate that there are many ways of generating meaning from interview transcriptions including:

- counting frequencies of occurrence
- noting patterns and themes
- clustering - setting items into categories, types, behaviours and classifications.

The three interviews were transcribed, analysed and cross referenced with hand written notes taken during interviews. The responses are organised by theme and salient points, overlaps, and unanticipated observations are identified.

Survey Design
The survey was written with closed questions that requested the participant to represent his or her opinion. The survey was formatted on-line to expedite its distribution to the intended target audience and as a convenient way to collect data both statically and graphically as part of the primary research. A full list of survey questions and responses can be found in Appendix 12, p.235 and 13, p.242.

Purposeful Sampling
Purposeful sampling, according to Gunter (2002, p.216) is used when “it is essential that the sample is selected according to a specific criterion”. Two separate surveys with similar questions were developed. One survey was aimed at employees in the Visual Communications sector and the other was aimed at Visual Communication Business owners/managers, this also included Sole-Traders and Freelance Designers working in the Visual Communications sector in Ireland. The purpose of undertaking surveys were to identify opinions relating to CPD from the Visual Communications sector and to ascertain if there were any difference of views expressed by the two groups of survey participants.

Pilot Survey.
The surveys were piloted in August 2009 with a number of colleagues and former employers known to the researcher. The purpose of which was to ascertain if the survey functioned correctly and that there was no ambiguity or misunderstanding of the questions.
Implementation

In August 2009, the final survey was distributed to thirty five members of the Institute of Designers in Ireland that were either Visual Communication company owners, Freelance-Designers or Design Managers. The survey was also sent to all members companies of the DBI. The employee survey was emailed to one hundred and twenty Visual Communication members of the Institute of Designers in Ireland. The responses to there survey were ten Visual Communication company owner/managers, representing a 35% response and fifty-eight Visual Communication employees representing 48% response.

Reliability and Verification of Primary Data

As qualitative data is affected by the subjective nature of respondents views, validity should be seen as a matter of degree (Cohen et al. 2000). The transcriptions were taken from digital recordings with accuracy and care to ensure reliability of meaning intended by the interviewee. The researcher is aware of the dangers of allowing personal bias to interfere with interpretation of data. The data collected from the interviews was of direct relevance to the research objectives and the participants each proved to offer valuable information. The content of the three interviews produced a valid representation of the benefits and barriers to participation CPD. The information gathered from interviews was then cross referenced and compared with the research from the literature.

Robson (1993, p.231) states that there is a high probability in the reliability of surveys by presenting respondents with a standardised series of questions. Survey questions were developed after, identifying key themes from the literature, careful wording and piloting. Prior to publishing the survey the researcher sought advice on preparing the survey questions from a colleague who had considerable professional experience in the area and surveys were piloted before publication. In relation to surveys, Robson states that:

Small-scale surveys...are usually less complicated to set up and are acceptable when there is no intention or need to make a statistical generalization to any population beyond the sample surveyed

Data obtained from surveys gave an insight on the attitudes towards CPD from the Visual Communications sector and was of direct relevance to this study. This information was compared with key themes identified in the literature and interviews conducted.

5.5 Ethics

According to the ESRC Research Ethic Framework:

Research staff and subjects must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved.

(2005 p.1)

With a awareness of the moral issues that typically arise at various stages of research and particularly in interviews, ethical questions were considered from the start of the study. The first issue is objectivity of information, given the qualitative nature of interviews, it is important to establish an accurate transmission of information from all sources. During the interviews clarification was sought on answers given by the interviewee to ensure that there was no misinterpretation of any responses given.

The privacy of participants needs to be considered particularly in a semi-structured interview where some issues may cover confidential matters. Although confidentiality could not be maintained in this situation, the purpose of the interview and questions were made clear prior to recording and all interview participants were assured that no information would be included in this study without prior their consent. All interview participants were offered a copy of their transcript, however, no interviewee sought copies of their transcript.

According to Kvale (1996) qualitative research involves more that ethical knowledge and cognitive choices; it involves the researcher’s sensitivity and commitment to moral issues and actions. It is important understand the role of a researcher and awareness of the ethical implications of the research. The researcher has a scientific responsibility to contribute positively to the field of research and confer equal importance to particular issues, without ignoring some findings and emphasising others. The researcher is also responsible in relation to the subjects remaining unbiased and refraining from interpreting the interviewees’ perspective.
Kvale (1996) explains that “ethical decisions do not belong to a separate stage of interview investigations, but arise throughout the entire research process” (p.10). This begins with considering who the study will benefit (Kvale 1996). This study can be of potential interest to the Visual Communications industry in Ireland, by providing insights to the benefits associated with participation in CPD.

Secondly Kvale (1996) explains the importance of obtaining informed consent from participants based on an understanding of the research being undertaken. Kvale (1996) explains that “informed consent entails informing the research subjects about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design” (p.112). Interview participants were initially contacted by email or telephone and invited to participate in the study. Survey participants were contacted by email. The research question was outlined to all ensuring that all participants understood the focus of the research.

Another ethical issue raised by Kvale (1996) concerns the accuracy of interview transcriptions. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and each interviewee was offered the opportunity to review the transcribed interview, none of which elected to receive transcriptions. The researcher cross-checked transcriptions with original recording to ensure accuracy.

5.6 Scope

This study set out to establish how a Continuous Professional Development programme could benefit the Visual Communications sector in Ireland. The scope of the study was further narrowed by focusing on the approaches to CPD taken in other industry sectors and seeking opinions on the attitudes towards CPD from two identified groups within Visual Communications sector in Ireland. This facilitated the study to include a realistic and achievable sample size while remaining representative.

The research was conducted using mixed methods. Three semi-structured interviews permitted interviewees to express their opinions, understandings and beliefs but also reveal the context and factors that led to the formation of CPD programmes in their sector. Interviews also highlighted what the perceived benefits are in the participation in CPD,
identified barriers to participation in CPD and also gave insights into how the skills have changed within their particular sector since the development and introduction of CPD. Surveys permitted respondents in the Visual Communication sector to convey attitudes towards CPD and revealed what the sector perceives as benefits to CPD. Surveys also identified perceived barriers to participation in CPD and the value the sector places on Certification of learning outcomes.

Kvale (1996) states that researchers should “interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know” (p.101). Although the timeframe of this research restricted the number of interviews to three in-depth face to face interviews. This was considered to be an adequate representation the views of professional bodies who develop and implement CPD programmes in Ireland and allowed for rich data collection with sufficient time remaining for planning and analysis. Kvale states that:

A general impression from current interview studies is that many of them would have profited from having fewer interviews in the study, and from taking more time to prepare the interviews and to analyze them.

(p.103)

5.7 Summary

The research process started by defining the research philosophy and approach, then a clear research design and analysis of which methods suit the purpose of the research (see fig.23). This research is based on the subjectivism epistemological position as the research seeks to understand the viewpoints of organisations who implement CPD. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methodology enabled a better understanding of the benefit, barriers and reasons for engaging in CPD.
The interview and survey methods were chosen as it offers the opportunity to gather in-depth insight from multiple participants within the allotted timeframe. Semi structured interview technique was chosen as it allowed the questions to be adapted to the individual experiences related by the candidates. Surveys were chosen as an efficient way of gathering data from a number of participants in the Visual Communications sector. Information gathered in this way gave an understanding of the sector's view to the benefits and barriers of participation in CPD.

The research was conducted considering ethical issues such as objectivity of information, privacy of participants, confidentiality and researcher’s role and responsibility. A number of measures taken to ensure validity of this research and ethical issues arising from the study were handled with due care and consideration. The scope of the study was narrowed by focusing on benefits and barriers to CPD. The study was also limited to examining CPD activities in Ireland and how this may benefit the Visual Communications sector.

The findings and analysis of the interview and survey data are discussed in the next chapter.
6.0 Presentation and Analysis of Primary Data
6.1 Introduction

The previous section justified the chosen research methods of semi structured interviews and surveys and located the study within a subjective epistimiology. The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse the data gathered using the research tools and cross referencing this information with findings from the literature review.

The first section presents the data from the three semi structured interviews under relevant themes and this information is analysed and cross referenced against findings from the literature review. The purpose of which is to identify any common themes or patterns form the information gathered.

This is followed by the presentation of survey findings from both employees and owner/managers in the Visual Communication sector, these findings are then analysed against data collected in the literature review and semi structured interviews.

As discussed the Research Design chapter, interviews and surveys were the chosen methodologies for undertaking primary research. Interviews took place with CPD managers from industry representative bodies who had specific responsibility for the development and implementation of CPD in their sector. Interview participants were Mr. Aidan Harney, Manager, CPD Accredited Employer scheme - Engineers Ireland, Ms. Becky Bristow, Director of Lifelong Learning - ICAI and Ms. Deirdre Doherty, Network Manager - Design Ireland Skillnet. Surveys were sent to owner/managers and designers from the Visual Communications membership of the Institute of Designers in Ireland.

The final section is a summary of the key points and themes identified form the literature review, interviews and surveys undertaken as part of the primary research in this study.
6.2 Research Method: Interviews

6.2.1 Can you tell me a little about the background to your organisation?

Purpose of the question.
The purpose of this question is to establish what the organisation’s role is for industry, its size and type of membership, areas of expertise within the sector and how and when the organisation was founded.

Key points in the answers
The three interviewees agreed that the primary role of their industry body was for the support and promotion of their industry sector. This support includes certain provisions, such as a commitment from the individual to maintain their professional competencies through CPD. The Design Ireland Skillnet was the only organisation interviewed that did not make CPD mandatory as part of their membership.

The membership numbers of Engineers Ireland and ICAI is significant with 18,000 and 24,500 individual members respectively. In comparison the Design Ireland Skillnet membership is relatively small at 500 companies.

All participants agreed that their particular sector have a number of key specialty areas. Both Engineers Ireland and ICAI have been in existence since the 19th Century, Design Ireland was founded in 2000.

Interpretation of the key points
The literature suggested that industry bodies have a key role to play in the development, implementation and certification of CPD programmes and this correlated with responses given by all candidates.

Two of the organisations interviewed have significant membership numbers, Design Ireland’s membership is the smallest with only 500 corporate members. This would suggest that there may be a critical mass required for the success of CPD in any given industry sector. The literature indicated that the design sector in Ireland is small and has grown
marginally in the past decade. Equally, the design sector in Ireland is relatively young when compared with Engineering or Accounting, who’s representative bodies have been in existence since the 19th century.

6.2.2 What were the circumstances which brought about the introduction and development of your CPD programme?

Purpose of the question.
The purpose of this question is to establish what the background circumstances were in the particular industry sector which lead to the development of CPD programme, how it was developed, what research was undertaken (if any) and if they are in receipt of Government support for their CPD programme.

Key points in the answers
A number of key reasons for the introduction of CPD in industry were given by the interviewees. The main reasons given was that each of the bodies had identified skill deficits in their sector and this needed addressing in order to maintain high standards of professional competencies within their sector. A number of the interviewees identified that the maintenance and upkeep of professional competencies through CPD was compulsory as part of membership. In the case of ICAI, regulation and legislation means that their membership is obliged to participate in CPD for improving professional competencies and for quality assurances.

Other key issues that were identified during interviews is the view that the development and introduction of CPD needs to be conducted in partnership with the membership of the relevant organisation. Harney explains:

We initially met with the employers and discussed how CPD would work, we listened to their feedback before implementing any programme and through this dialogue we establish a CPD Committee in each of the companies, their role is to promote CPD in the company, then a CPD policy is developed for that company.

(Appendix 12)

A number of the industry bodies interviewed consulted similar sectors internationally and sought best practice examples from these CPD programmes. Engineers Ireland researched
CPD programmes in both Europe and New Zealand. The ICAI consulted both universities and similar representative bodies in Ireland. Design Ireland conduct training analysis needs directly with the design services sector. Another point identified during interviews was the importance continuing updating the CPD programme itself. ICAI update their CPD programme bi-annually and all bodies referenced continual feedback from their membership as a key component in developing CPD programmes.

Only one organisation of those interviewed (Engineers Ireland) are in receipt of state support for the development of their CPD programme. ICAI felt that support received from Skillnets did not suit the demands from their membership and expectations of CPD.

The level of admin that they [Skillnets] required soaked up far too much resourcing. It’s done very civil service, we were very commercial about what we do in CPD and our members weren’t interested in non-business skills, non-technical skills so we actually gave the grant back..... it was a big lesson for us in the difference between civil service versus how we work but we can’t work at that slow pace - we just can’t. It’s not commercial.

(Bristow, Appendix 12)

Interpretation of the key points

All of the interview participants identified that the main reason for introduction of CPD was because of a known skill deficits in their sector and this needed to be address in order to maintain high standards of professional competencies. Participants also identified the importance of research into CPD models running in similar sectors to establish best practice in development of their own CPD programme and once implemented, programmes require constant updating in order to satisfy industry demands and maintain professional competencies.

Only Engineers Ireland are currently in receipt of Government support for their CPD programme. Until recently Design Ireland received funding from Skillnet, however, this no longer applies and alternative funding sources will need to be sourced if training programmes are to continue in the Visual Communication sector. This would suggest that organisations should not necessarily rely on state funding for the development of CPD, partnering with state organisations may hinder the success of CPD programmes, as suggested by ICAI and therefore, membership of professional organisations may have to share the costs associated with CPD.
6.2.3 How is your CPD programmes structured?

Purpose of the question.

The purpose of this question is to establish how the CPD programme is structured in terms of: learning; types of learning offered; level of hours required to maintain competency levels and quality controls in terms of validating the individual's learnings.

Key points in the answers

Many of the interviewees cite that their programmes are structured around a framework that aids delivery and implementation of CPD.

[We] put in place a flexible framework, which was developed in partnership between Engineers Ireland, companies and individual membership. This was seen as an extremely important step to ensure everyone was bought along with the development and implementation of the CPD. That was we could achieve agreement on the purpose and type of CPD suitable for all stakeholders

(Harney, Appendix 12).

All interview participants point out that their programmes are developed in partnership with their membership, ensuring that the organisation delivers a relevant CPD programme to their industry sector, ensuring that professional competencies are maintained. Doherty describes the current status of CPD in the Visual Communications sector:

The [Design Ireland Skillnet] CPD programme is industry led... the steering committee will meet occasionally and we will actually look and address proposals within the industry, will address the needs of the industry, will conduct evaluations, will conduct training needs analysis and will respond to those requirements... so it really has to be the design sector leading the Skillnets

(Appendix 12).

Both Design Ireland and ICAI indicate that a continuous assessment of skills in the sector is required so that the structure of CPD can be adapted to meet the needs of both the membership and industry.

The majority of training undertaken by the membership of all organisations is through training courses and other events such as seminars and networking opportunities. However, Engineers Ireland and ICAI, identified informal learning as a constituent part of CPD. Bristow states:
I’ve come from a technical background, the critical thing about my job right now would actually be managing people and I had no formal training in it. So it’s compulsory in here if you’re a director or a manager to go on the diploma in managing people. And my entire department is I’d say easily 40 percent more productive because I did management training, because I know how to get the best out of them.

(Appendix 12)

Membership both Engineers Ireland and ICAI are required to record formal and informal CPD hours, and in the case of ICAI, members with areas of specialty have to undertake further CPD. There is no requirement of the Design Ireland membership to record any CPD or learning hours.

Sector participation in CPD is considered high by Engineers Ireland and ICAI, however, Design Ireland indicate that participation in CPD is low, this is seen as problem by Doherty, when stating:

If you look at the actual size of the sector and the numbers of designers in our sector as a bigger picture, I would rate it as quite poor really.

(Appendix 12)

**Interpretation of the key points**

Each of the interview participants identified the importance of a partnership framework for the development and implementation of CPD and these programmes are developed to meet industry needs.

All participants identified that training courses accounted for the majority of training undertaking by their membership. The literature identified that training courses made up the vast majority of CPD activity and was an effective method of introducing new knowledge. However, the literature also suggested that training courses offered a narrow type of learning where dominant stakeholders can control the type of learning received. Although, all participants identified other events, such as seminars and networking as being part of CPD, only Engineers Ireland and ICAI recognised informal learning, such as mentoring and peer coaching as also being a constituent part of CPD. This suggests that organisations may not be utilising alternative CPD models as methods of delivering new learning experiences.
Both Engineers Ireland and ICAI require members to formally record CPD hours, there is no requirement of the Design Ireland membership to record CPD or learning hours, therefore it is difficult to gauge the level of commitment to CPD or learning gained through CPD in the Visual Communications sector. Low participation in CPD in the Visual Communication sector was identified in the literature as being a significant barrier to improving on skills and competencies.

6.2.4 What are the benefits to CPD?

Purpose of the question.
The purpose of question this is to establish what the benefits are for all stake holder in the participation of CPD.

Key points in the answers
All participants identified overwhelming benefits to participation in CPD. For the individual, the key points discussed were, improved skills, better career progression, increased job satisfaction, greater employability and an opportunity to gain new skills.

I would see a huge level in skills and competencies and that again would be in terms of quality and creative enhancement and again would extend to best practice on a national and international level, and that would you know dilute right down to the client. If you are providing a skilled workforce you are providing better services, wider products and services.

(Doherty, Appendix 12)

For employers, CPD ensures that they have competent staff, greater productivity, more flexible staff, doing things in a better way, increased business opportunities, greater staff retention and reduces the risk of bad advice given to clients. Harney states for companies, benefits to participation include:

Being more competitive, better skills amongst the staff, a better more flexible workforce, entry into new markets and improved recruitment and retention of staff.

(Appendix 12)
Both ICAI and Deign Ireland identified that benefits to CPD extend beyond industry and have shared benefits for the client.

[We] make sure that [the membership] now getting the most up to date best quality service and it reduces the risk of bad advice.  
(Brisow, Appendix 12)

[CPD is] beneficial to the employee and the employer and to your client.  
(Doherty, Appendix 12)

All organisations indicated that since the introduction of CPD the skills and competencies in their sector had improved. ICAI believes that their membership now have a wider skills base, Engineers Ireland indicate that aside from greater technical skills, their membership now have better communications skills since the introduction of CPD, Design Ireland suggests that there is better creativity and quality amongst their membership since the introduction of CPD.

**Interpretation of the key points**

The universal benefits to participation for companies and individuals identified in the literature was also communicated by each of the organisations interviewed. Interview participants also indicated that benefits to CPD go beyond the sector and actually effect positively on the client and end user.

**6.2.5 Are there any barriers to participation in CPD?**

**Purpose of the question.**

The purpose of this question is to establish if there are any barriers to participation in CPD programmes and if so, what can be done to remedy this.

**Key points in the answers**

Overwhelmingly all respondents cite cost as the major factor in hindering participation in CPD.

The biggest barrier would definitely be cost and more so now I’m afraid with the lack of funding to Design Ireland, but definitely cost is a huge barrier.... with cutbacks in training budgets it means that there is a lack of government funding to Design Ireland.  
(Doherty, Appendix 12)
In response to the challenge of costs and companies reducing or removing budgets allocated for training, ICAI are dealing with this issue in a number of ways. These include: restructuring costs associated with training events; offering members deals on training and the introducing a new E-learning facility, similar to the MyCPD model, which is not only cost effective for the organisation and membership, but also offers a solution another barrier to participation in CPD, time management.

Issues of time management and the impact of the loss of productivity within companies while staff attend CPD events was highlighted of a number of interview participants

If you are a sole trader, small one and two sized businesses, I mean it’s time out of your output, time out of your working hours, contact hours. So time is a huge barrier as for a lot of people.

(Doherty, Appendix 12)

Time management issues are not exclusively a problem in the Visual Communications sector, as indicated by both Engineers Ireland and ICAI:

There is the issue of time management, releasing staff for training courses, training courses coinciding with work deadlines etc and of course managing the work-life balance.

(Harney, Appendix 12)

Time out of work is a big deal. Even if people have the time, they’re afraid to be away from their desk, to be seen to be away from their desk.

(Bristow, Appendix 12)

Another barrier to participation in CPD is discussed by both Engineers Ireland and Design Ireland is a lack of understanding or appreciation in the value of CPD from their membership. However, both Design Ireland and ICAI indicated that their memberships who are already participating in CPD readily understand its value in terms of increased skills and competencies and the issue is with the members who do not see the benefits to participation in CPD.

Interpretation of the key points
The literature indicated costs associated with CPD is a significant barrier to participation in CPD and this issue was reiterated by an number of interview participants and they indicate
that issues of cost are being exacerbated by the current economic conditions in Ireland. The literature suggests a number of ways of dealing with costs associated with CPD, these include; funding subsidies and the introduction on LIAs. Only one organisation interviewed introducing ways of making participation in CPD more cost-effective for it’s membership.

Both the literature and Interviewees identify time management as a significant barrier to participation in CPD and loss of productivity while staff attend CPD events. The issues relating to the Visual Communication sector as identified by Enterprise Ireland (1999) tends to be the small size of the companies in the sector and the lack of staff resources.

6.2.6 Is you CPD certified?

Purpose of the question.
The purpose of this question is to establish if Certification of learning through CPD is important and which awarding body certifies the CPD programme.

Key points in the answers
According to the interviewees an emphasis is placed on certification and accreditation of CPD for the purpose quality assurance and is achieved in a number of ways. Design Ireland Skillnet certify most of their CPD though training providers which are in turn certified by software manufacturer. Design Ireland also offer Masters programmes which is are accredited at a Level 9 on the NFQ. These programmes were developed as a response to the sectors needs at a higher level and are accredited though the HEA and DIT.

Similarly Engineers Ireland ensure standards through their Register of Training Providers, this ensures that CPD is delivered to the highest standards. Many of Engineers Ireland’s training providers are in turn certified through FETAC, HETAC or FÁS.

ICAI are in a unique position, where they are in effect an Educational body and therefore can issue formal qualifications through HETAC and NQAI.
Design Ireland suggest that for an employer accreditation gives them a higher status through their employees skills and competencies and that this has reciprocal effect outside of the design community in terms of reaching the client though better skills and competencies.

**Interpretation of the key points**
The interviewees and literature indicate that certification and accreditation ensures that learners are achieving CPD at an agreed standards and that it offers a level of quality assurance to the learning outcomes. Certification can be achieved directly though the representative body or indirectly through approved vendor or Educational Institution.

6.3 **Research Method Two: Surveys**

6.3.1 **Levels of Industry Experience**

The purpose of this question is to ascertain breakdown of levels of practical experience from employees working in the Visual Communications sector and to gain an insight to how long respondents from the Employers survey have been trading as a business.

**Key points in the answers**

![Pie chart for employees]

![Pie chart for employers]

**Interpretation of the key points**

The respondents from the employee survey would indicate that levels of practical industry experience in the Visual Communications sector seems to be evenly divided between the four categories. However, there is a slight bias towards junior and senior respondents in this survey. From the employers perspective, survey results would indicate that just over two
thirds of Visual Communications companies have been established for ten years or more. This would suggest that the majority employer respondents have been operating their design business during a period that identified poor growth in the design services sector in Ireland.

6.3.2 Participation in CPD activities in the previous 12 months?
The purpose of this question is to establish if there has been participation in CPD by respondents in the previous 12 months.

Key points in the answers

![Employees](image1)

![Employers](image2)

Interpretation of the key points

There is contradiction in answers given to this question by both groups of respondents to the surveys. Employees indicate that approximately 64% have participated in CPD activities in the previous 12 months, compared with employers, who indicate that 60% of their staff have participated during the in the same period.

6.3.3 How many design/creative staff are there in your company?
The purpose of this question is to gain an insight to the typical numbers of staff employed in Visual Communication companies.
Employers

Interpretation of the key points

Employer respondents indicate that 80% of the companies in the Visual Communications sector have between 1 to 4 design staff. This supports secondary data, that the Visual Communications firms are predominately micro-enterprises and as such have limited staff numbers and resources.

6.3.4 How many CPD activities have you undertaken in the past 12 months?

The purpose of this question is to gain an understanding of the frequency of participation in CPD by employees in the Visual Communication sector.

Employees

Key points in the answers
Interpretation of the key points
The survey results indicate that the majority of employee respondents, almost 86%, attended between 1 to 2 training courses in the previous 12 months. The literature indicated that Ireland has a particularly low participation in CPD and the Visual Communications sector more so.

Two of the three professional bodies interviewed for this study make recommendations of a minimum number of formal CPD hours required to maintain skill and competencies. With individuals in the Visual Communication sector attending only one or two training courses per annum, this would suggest that the sector needs to increase participation in CPD to maintain professional skills and competencies.

6.3.5 Who paid for your CPD?
The purpose of this question is establish who covers the financial cost associated with CPD.

Key points in the answers

![Pie charts showing cost coverage by employees and employers]

Interpretation of the key points
The literature and interviews indicated that costs associated with training needs to be overcome to increase participation in CPD. Survey respondents indicate that employers are still covering the cost of training in the vast majority of cases. Employers indicated that in 85.7% cases they covered 100% of the costs associated with training. Survey respondents who were employees indicate that their employers cover the cost in 56.5% of the time and in 38.4% of
cases the employee covered the costs of training personally. This suggests that employers are having to cover the majority of the financial burden in the majority of cases. The literature suggested that subsidised funding and the introduction of Individual Learning Accounts (LIA) may ease the financial cost associated with CPD participation on the employer.

6.3.6 Would you like to participate in more or less CPD to maintain your skills and competencies as a designer?

The purpose of this question is identify if employees in the Visual Communication sector have motivation for engagement in CPD for the purpose of maintaining professional competencies.

**Key points in the answers**

![Pie chart showing 93.8% want more and 1.7% want less CPD]

**Interpretation of the key points**

The majority of employee respondents clearly indicate an interest in increasing participation in CPD for the maintenance of competencies. This suggests that employees in the Visual Communications sector have the motivation for participation in CPD.

6.3.7 What types of CPD have you participated in the past 12 months?

The purpose of this question is identify what types of CPD activities are being pursued by employee and employers in the Visual Communications sector.
Key points in the answers

Interpretation of the key points

Results from both employees and employers in the Visual Communications sector almost mirrored each other. From employees, 81% stated they participated in software training, where 83.3% of employers stating their staff had participated in this type of training. Other types of training undertaken were presentation skills, management and communications skills. However, the uptake in these types of training is much lower than software training. Technicals skills seem
to be high in the Visual Communications sector, however the literature indicated that the sector is falling short in terms of skills in management and communication. Although these survey results would suggest that there is beginning to be a shift towards addressing this skills deficit, more needs to be done to improve skill deficits identified in the literature.

6.3.8 Do you consider there are any benefits to participation CPD?
The purpose of this question is establish if the Visual Communications sector identifies any benefits to participation in CPD.

Key points in the answers

![Pie chart showing employees' benefits](chart1)

![Pie chart showing employers' benefits](chart2)

**Interpretation of the key points**
The both groups of survey respondents clearly indicate that participation in CPD has perceived benefits.

6.3.9 Which do you see as appropriate benefits to CPD?
The purpose of this question is gain a more detailed picture of what the Visual Communications sector view as specific benefits to participation in CPD.
Key points in the answers

Interpretation of the key points

There was an almost universal recognition by survey respondents to the benefits of CPD. Employers indicated that their staff had better skills and competencies as a result of CPD. Other benefits indicated included increased productivity, better staff retentions and increased competitiveness. Employees indicated that benefits of participation in CPD included better skills and competencies, offering new services to their employer, increased productivity and
flexibility. These results corroborate with findings gathered during the literature review and interview stages if this study.

6.3.10 Would you consider that there are barriers to participation in CPD?
The purpose of this question is to establish if there are perceived barriers within the Visual Communications sector to participation in CPD.

Key points in the answers

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<th>Key Points</th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Employers</th>
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<tr>
<td>Interpretation of the key points</td>
<td>The majority of both survey respondents clearly identified that there were perceived barriers to participation in CPD.</td>
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6.6.11 If yes, which of the following apply?
The purpose of this question is to gain a more detailed picture of what employees see as specific barriers to participation in CPD.
Respondents to both surveys indicated an overwhelming recognition of barriers to participation in CPD, 84.5% of employees and 80% of employers surveyed indicated that there was some barriers hindering participation in CPD. By far the biggest perceived barrier from both employee and employer is the costs associated with CPD. Employers also indicated that loss of productivity while staff were at attending CPD activities, motivating...
staff to participate in training, workload and scheduling were also significant factors to be considered. These perceived barriers were also highlights in the literature and interviews.

A significant number of respondents to both surveys indicated a belief that there was limited types of training opportunities available. This would suggest that respondents may not be recognising informal learning in the work place, such as mentoring and peer coaching as a valid method of CPD or they may be unaware of the training, that has, until recently been provided by Design Ireland Skillnet. The literature indicated that Design Ireland Skillnet provided training specifically developed for the design sector in 35 subjects including soft skills, technical skills and management skills.

6.3.12 If identified barriers were removed would you participate more or less in CPD?
The purpose of this question is gauge if employees are willing to engage further in CPD once perceived barriers are removed.

Key points in the answers

Interpretation of the key points
Unanimously, employers stated that if perceived barriers were removed they would increase their participation in CPD, 88.7% of employees indicated that they would do the same. This would suggest that there is an interest in CPD for the maintenance of skills and competencies.
in the Visual Communications sector, but more needs to be done to encourage greater participation.

**6.3.13 Would you consider CPD for the maintenance of skills and competencies as important?**
The purpose of this question is identify the levels of importance employees in the Visual Communications sector places on CPD

**Key points in the answers**

![Pie chart showing employees' responses](chart1.png)

**Employees**

- 93.8% Yes
- 1.7% No

![Pie chart showing employers' responses](chart2.png)

**Employers**

- 100% Yes

**Interpretation of the key points**

Both employee and employer respondents view CPD as being of importance for maintenance of professional competencies.

**6.3.14 In terms of learning through CPD, is certification (eg City and Guilds, FETAC, 3rd Level Institution etc) important for validating/accreditation of learning outcomes?**
The purpose of this question is establish what importance employees in the Visual Communications sector places on certification or accreditation of CPD.
Interpretation of the key points

Respondents to the previous question perceived CPD as being of importance for maintenance of professional competencies. However, the sector does not place the same value on accreditation or certification of learning outcomes, 80% of employers and 53.4% of employees do not see certification as important for validating learning outcomes.

This would suggest that the Visual Communications sector does not see the value certification for quality assurances of learning outcomes. The literature and Interviews suggested that communicating the value of CPD is an issue that needs to be resolved in order to increase participation.

6.4 Summary

The primary research indicates that one of the significant roles that industry bodies have, is in providing support and promotion of their industry sector and that this can be achieved through individual member's commitment to maintain their professional competencies through CPD.

The size of the membership would seem to be a key factor in the success of CPD in any given industry, with two of the interviewees having a substantial membership when compared with the membership of Design Ireland. However, industry bodies, regardless of their size, have a key role in the development, implementation and certification of CPD. Each of the interviewees indicated that CPD was introduced to counter act identified skills deficits in
their sector and to maintain high standards of professional competencies. They also indicated that since the introduction of CPD, the skills base in their sector have not only improved but become more broadly based, suggesting that there is more flexibility of skills.

All respondents support the view that CPD programmes need to be developed in partnership with employees and employers and that the framework of CPD model needs to be both flexible to change with industry needs. The chosen CPD model needs to be continuously updated to ensure that the industry body delivers a relevant CPD programme for their sector.

Interviewees suggest a varying level of state support for CPD programmes. The literature review suggested that the development and implementation of CPD programmes requires greater state support.

Both the literature and interviews indicated that the majority of CPD is delivered thought training courses and other events such as seminars and networking opportunities. However, the literature indicated some reservations about the use of training courses and that they may not deliver effective training.

The literature and interviews identified overwhelming benefits to participation in CPD. These include: better, flexible skills and competencies, career progression, greater job satisfaction and employability, increased business performance and opportunities, greater staff retention and a less likelihood of clients being given poor advice.

A number of significant barriers to participation in CPD were uncovered in the research. Including costs associated with CPD, time management issues, loss of productivity while staff are attending CPD activities and a lack of understanding of the value of CPD.

All interview participants placed high importance in certification and accreditation of learning outcomes through CPD, indicating quality assurances as a benefit. However, survey respondents from both employees and employers is the Visual Communications sector do not
seem to place the same level of understanding of the benefits associated with certification and accreditation as representative bodies
7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations
7.1 Introduction

This study aims to establish what the benefits are for participating in Continuous Professional Development for both the employees and employers in the Visual Communications sector. This study starts by defining the term Visual Communications and identifies what skills are required of a Visual Communication designers and identifies any skill deficits that exist in the Irish sector. Research is undertaken to identify a number of CPD programmes in other industries in Ireland and how they function. This study also establishes a number of models of CPD and identifies a number of barriers that hinder or prevent participation in CPD.

This chapter draws conclusions from the study to in order answer the research question, findings are connected with information gathered from the reviewed literature, answers given by interviewees and from survey results conducted with employees and employers in the Visual Communications sector in Ireland.

7.2 Conclusions

The most significant points ascertained from the research are summarised and outlined below to give and overview of the research finding.

- Visual Communications is a term used to describe a design discipline primarily concerned with communication in a visual form. It is a multi disciplinary business requiring a number of skills and competencies which are continually changing and therefore need maintenance.

- The Visual Communications sector in Ireland and internationally is typically made up of small owner-run businesses that are usually formed by designers. Different set skills are required for being a designer than being a design business owner. Design skills identified centre around creative competencies where skill required of a design business owner relate to professional and management skills. There are however, skills common to both designers and design business owners such as communication and problem solving skills.
• The Visual Communications in Ireland has under performed in the previous decade when compared to the rest of the economy. A number of skill deficits in the design sector have been identified as a factor in this poor performance. Little has changed in terms of improving on the known skills deficits and these issues seem to be continuing to have negative effect in the sector.

• Skill deficits identified in the Visual Communication sector in Ireland relate to professional skills, and are considered to be: poor project management skills; business skills; lack of understanding of marketing; poor communication skills; weak customer service skills; poor team-working and a failure to understand client objectives.

• CPD defined as a deliberate and conscious attempt by an individual to improve and broaden their skills, knowledge and competencies for the purpose of developing their professional career. CPD programme activities serve the purpose of better equipping the professional with the skills and competencies in their respective fields of work. The changing working environment means that CPD is necessary for the progression of the individual and the success of business.

• The literature indicated a number of varying models of CPD, although there is no specific model of CPD for the Visual Communications sector, the literature would suggest that a Transformative approach to CPD may best suit the sector as it offers of the benefits and flexibility from a combination of other CPD models. Training courses by far accounts for the largest amount of CPD activity, although there are other activities that make up CPD, there seems to be little awareness of this in the Visual Communications sector.

• Many industry bodies in Ireland seem to have developed and implemented CPD programmes that are a benefit to both industry and individuals. Each of these organisations employ specific models of CPD which have been developed specifically for and in partnership with, their particular industry sector.
• Research would suggest unambiguously positive benefits to participation in CPD for both the individual and companies. Benefits identified in the literature and through interviews and Surveys include: better, flexible skills and competencies, career progression, greater job satisfaction and employability, increased business performance and opportunities, greater staff retention and less likelihood of clients being given poor advice.

• A number of significant barriers exist that hinders participation in CPD. The main barriers identified in the literature, interviews and surveys are; cost, time management and understanding value of CPD. The issue of costs associated with training includes the financial cost of training to the company, the loss of efficiency, revenue and profitability for the employer while staff are absent at training are considered to be a significant factors in hindering participation in CPD in the Visual Communications sector. Small and medium sized companies seem to be either unable or unwilling to cover the costs associated with CPD. Time management was cited as another barrier, where individuals have found it difficult to organise their time and are not sufficiently motivated to spend, what is seen as their personal time for the benefit of the company. For the employer, the issue of time management centers around workload, scheduling, absence of staff and the view that learning outside of the workplace tends to be seen as benefiting only the employee.

• Lack of understanding the value and purpose of CPD was also highlighted as a potential barrier to participation. A lack of formal CPD programme in the Visual Communication sector is currently a barrier to achieving change and and design businesses are generally poor at developing their staff. A clearer understanding of motivation of individuals and companies to engage in CPD is required.

• The research would indicate hat there are opposing views towards certification and accreditation of learning through CPD. The literature indicates that the FETAC certification model provides useful options for certification within a work-place context and with establishment of the NFQ, there is a move towards State recognition for all education and training awards. Interviews conducted with representative bodies express the importance placed on certification, however survey respondents from the Visual Communications
sector do not see certification as important and therefore more needs to be done at industry level to communicate the values and importance of certification of leaning in terms of benchmarking standards in training and education and validating learning outcomes.

- Development of the NFQ is a positive step for aiding certification of CPD as the framework covers all stages of learning, captures all types of learning undertaken by the individual and gives consistency across qualifications at a levels.

- There is no cohesive Government strategy on CPD. The literature suggests that there is a greater need for links between education and industry, focusing on up-skilling the workforce. RPL has can become a method of accrediting knowledge and skills gained in the workplace and can be used as a way of gaining entry ton higher education institutions.

- Professional bodies have a role in qualifying individuals to practice in professions and occupations. The NQAI recognises that some bodies make awards in Ireland and which do not have formal recognition of the State and indicates that these awards can be recognised in the context of the NFQ. Some professional bodies stipulate that CPD training is mandatory as part of membership, there are no such requirements in the Visual Communications sector.

### 7.3 Recommendations arising from CPD in Ireland

Continuation Professional Development programmes exists in a number of forms and there would seem to be universal benefits to participation in CPD. However, there needs to be a greater promotion of the benefits to CPD to encourage greater participation from the Visual Communication sector, as participation in CPD in Ireland is low and is a cause for concern.

Any barriers preventing the participation in CPD need t be remove or at least minimised. In the current economic climate it would seem unlikely that the state or employers are willing to subsidies all or part of the costs associated with CPD and training. However, a number of mechanisms can be employed by the state to encourage individual participation. Introduction of statutory paid learning leave could eat the burden on both employees and employers in seeking time to engage in CPD and the the loss of revenue to the employer associated with
absent staff at training. Individual Learning Accounts could be introduced to ease the long-term cost to the individual and employees.

With the demise of Design Ireland as a body who facilitated CPD and Training in the Visual Communication sector, this would leave a major gap in the provision of training for the maintenance of professional competencies in the sector. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that this now calls for a partnership between the IDI, ICAD and the DBI with the Dublin Institute of Technology’s Professional Development Service or similar third level institution could potentially fill the void left with the cessation of Design Ireland. Engagement between industry and education will also benefit the certification and accreditation of learning outcomes, meaning that a greater emphasis will be placed on a formal CPD programme in the Visual Communication sector.

Further research is needed to determine how learning is achieved in the Visual Communication work place. The literature indicated that many designer learn their skills in the work place and with the recognition of RPL a progression method, it would seem that there is now a greater emphasis on informal learning. It is reasonable to assume that there no benchmark exists to measure informal learning and that learning this way will vary from company to company, therefore, this would suggest that training in mentoring and coaching skills would be a requirement for senior designers and owner-managers in the Visual Communications sector to improve on and somewhat standardise learning in the work place.

7.4 Summary

Continuing Professional Development is necessary for the maintenance of professional competencies. The literature, interview and survey findings findings indicate many benefits associated with the participation in CPD for both employees and employers in the Visual Commination sector. However, there is very low participation in CPD from the Visual Communications sector in Ireland. The lack of a formal CPD programme along with other barriers would seem to be contributory factors in the low engagement with CPD. Research suggests that with the removal of such barriers the sector would be willing to participate more in CPD for the maintenance of professional competencies.
Bibliography

Publications


**Articles**


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Reports


Websites


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National College of Art and Design [online] available from: www.ncad.ie/faculties/design/viscom.shtml accessed on 15/05/09.


Appendices
## Appendix 1 - Training programmes delivered by Design Ireland

**Skillnet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Title</th>
<th>Nos. of participants</th>
<th>Times Ran</th>
<th>Type*</th>
<th>Duration Days</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>S</td>
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Notes: *S = Soft Skills, T = technical, M = Managerial
Appendix 2 - RIAI formal CPD recommendations

The RIAI can make recommendations to it’s members regarding the amount of formal CPD activity they should undertake. These may include:

- CPD designated RIAI events
- Educational events run by a recognised educational body or professional organisation
- Attendance of appropriate conferences, seminar and workshops

Members of the Institute are expected to maintain a pattern of professional study and development throughout their career. Which may include formal CPD activity like:

- Case studies
- Peer review
- Primary research
- Distance learning

And informal CPD activity like:

- Study Tours
- Site visits
- Writing books and articles
- Reading books, journals and technical literature
Appendix 3 - Modules provided by MyCPD

- Anti Money Laundering
- Collective Investment Schemes
- Conduct of Business Rules
- Consumer Credit
- Credit Lending
- Ethics in Financial Services
- Financial Mathematics
- Financial Services Ombudsman
- General Insurance Products & Services
- Household Insurance
- Housing Loans
- Introduction to MiFID
- Life Assurance
- Liability Insurance
- Motor Insurance
- Protection Needs
- Regulations of Financial Service Providers
- Risk & the General Insurance Market
- Securities & Markets
- Small Self Administered Pension Schemes
- Succession Act & Estate Planning
Appendix 4 - Aims of Engineers Ireland’s CPD

Specific aims of Engineers Ireland’s CPD is to ensure their members are:

- Up-to-date technically
- Well rounded professionally
- Capable of handling responsibility and taking initiative
- On-par with best international performance
- Value as an engineer is retained in a rapidly changing marketplace

(Engineers Ireland 2009)
Appendix 5 - CPD Courses provided by DIT Professional Development Services

Property and Construction

- DT140 Decorative Plasterwork
- DT146 Woodcutting Machining
- DT147 Wood Turning
- DT149 Site Management

Engineering

- DT030 Engineering - Foundation Programme
- DT039 MMA and Oxy-Acetylene Welding
- DT040 Gas Shielded Arc Welding
- DT041 MMA Advanced Plate and Pipe Welding
- DT047 Pneumatics
- DT048 Hydraulics
- DT052 Electrical Systems
- DT055 Computer Aided Manufacturing
- DT057 Flight Operations Officer (Dispatcher) Programme
- DT059 Jet Engine Overhaul Procedures
- DT060 Basic Aeronautical Knowledge Category A
- DT061 Basic Aeronautical Knowledge
- DT063 Private Aircraft Pilots' License Theory
- DT064 Motor Cycle Studies
- DT070 Road Transport Studies
- DT075 Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs)
- DT076 Introduction to Computer - Aided Draughting
- DT153 Domestic Oil Fired Programme
- DT156 Co-ordinate Reference Systems for Spatial Information
Business
- DT335 Advertising (Creative or Executive)
- DT334 Diploma in Marketing (MII)
- DT334 Foundation in Marketing (MII)
- DT334 Graduateship in Marketing (MII)

Tourism and Food
- DT239 Evening Course in Diet, Nutrition and Health
- DT418- Professional Baking - Bread 1
- DT418- Professional Baking - Bread 2
- DT418- Professional Baking - Cake 1
- DT418 - Professional Baking - Cake 2
- DT418 Professional Baking-Morning Goods & Pastries
- DT418 Professional Baking - Tarts and Pastries
- DT418 - Professional Baking - Sweetbreads 1
- DT418 - Professional Baking - Sweetbreads 2
- DT407P Cocktail Making
- DT407P Aesthetics for the Culinary Arts 1
- DT407P Food and Beverage Service Operations
- DT407P Food Photography
- DT407P Food Product Development
- DT407P Gastronomy 1
- DT407P Kitchen and Larder 1
- DT407P Kitchen and Larder 2
- DT407P Kitchen and Larder 3
- DT407P Major Hot Kitchen 1
- DT407P Major Larder 1
- DT407P Major Pastry 1
- DT407P Major Pastry 2
- DT407P Wine Studies
- DT407P Advanced Wine Studies
• DT444P Introductory Nutrition
• DT444P Introduction to Culinary Science
• DT445 Bartending Supervision
• DT452 Managing Hygiene and HACCP for Hospitality
• DT487 Meat Management
• DT407P Services Marketing
• DT449 Performance Management Skills
• DT450 Management Principles
• DT454 Revenue Management
• DT457 Introduction to Marketing
• DT459 Becoming A More Effective Manager
• DT489 Meat Apprentice

Teaching and Learning
• DT537 Drama in Education - Intermediate

Computing and Information Technology
• DT456 Computer Applications/Data Summary
• Short CPD courses

Energy
• The Building Energy Rating Assessor Course

Law
• DT535 Foundations in Law - Civil and/or Criminal Law Litigation
• DT536 Continuing Professional Development - Short Law Programmes

Music
• A001 Vocal, Instrumental and Musicianship Tuition
**Medical**

- DT240 Cellular Pathology and Histology - Introduction
- DT241 Medical Records and Patient Services Management

**Bio Pharmaceuticals**

- DT201 Manufacture of Medicinal Products
- DT276 Pharmaceutical Validation Technology
- DT233, DT237 Pharmaceutical Quality Assurance
Appendix 6 - Government Bodies which form Policy on CPD

Forfás
In 1994 the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment established Forfás as the national policy advisory body for enterprise and science (www.forfas.ie).

The functions of Forfás are to:
Provide independent research, advise and support in areas of enterprise and science policy
Ensure that coherence of polices across all development agencies support enterprise
Provide research and administrative support to independent advisory groups which include:
• Advisory Council for Technology and Innovation
• Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
• Management and Development Council
• National Competitiveness Council

FÁS
FÁS is the National Training and Employment Authority in Ireland and was founded in 1998.
The Authority’s functions include:
Training and employment programmes
Employment and recruitment services
An advisory service for industry
Support for community based enterprise programmes
(www.fas.ie)

FÁS have identified eight high priority goals one of which is workforce development for the upgrading of competencies and qualifications of the national workforce by the provision and facilitating target training programmes and services to employees and employers (FÁS 2009).

National Competitiveness Council (NCC)
The NCC is a Social Partnership body which reports to the Taoiseach on key competitiveness issues facing the Irish economy. The NCC makes recommendations on policy actions to
enhance the competitiveness of the national economy. The goals of the NCC are to provide the Nation with an opportunity to improve living standards, raising incomes, gains in productivity and helping the export sector (NCC 2009).

The NCC have called for a renewed emphasis on strengthening and reforming education and training systems as part of a broad effort for economic growth.

National Competitiveness Council Chairman, Dr Don Thornhill, said

“As knowledge and creativity increasingly become the basis of competition, high skill levels are vitally important to economic performance, living standards and social inclusion. Without a world class education and training system Ireland will have great difficulty in succeeding in the face of intensifying global competition". (NCC 2009).

**Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN)**

Established in 1997 the EGFSN advises the Irish Government on the current and projected skills needs for the economy and other labour market issues that effect our employment and economic growth. The EGFSN reports to both the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Minister for Education and Science. FÁS provide the EGFSN with data, analysis and research while Forfás proved research and secretariat support. The EGFSN is managed by Forfás (www.skillsireland.ie).

The functions of the EGFSN include:

- Skills foresight and benchmarking
- Strategic advice on building skills through education and training
- Data collection and analysis on demand and supply of skilled labour
- Influencing and monitoring implementation

(EGFSN 2007)
Appendix 7 - Bodies under the Aegis of the Department of Education

- Advisory Council for English Language Schools
- An Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta
- Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education
- Commission on School Accommodation Needs
- Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies
- Further Education & Training Awards Council
- Higher Education and Training Awards Council
- Higher Education Authority
- Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann
- Integrated Ireland Language and Training Ltd.
- International Education Board - Ireland
- Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology
- Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences
- Léargas – The Exchange Bureau
- National Adult Learning Council
- National Centre for Technology in Education
- National Centre Guidance in Education
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
- National Council for Special Education
- National Education Welfare Board
- National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
- Residential Institution Redress Board
- Royal Irish Academy of Music
- Royal Irish Academy
- State Examinations Commission
- The President's Award – Gaisce
- The Teaching Council
Appendix 8 - 10 Level grid NFQ

<table>
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<th>Knowledge Breadth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrable by recognition or recall.</td>
<td>Concrete in reference and basic in comprehension.</td>
<td>Mainly concrete in reference and with some comprehension of relationship between knowledge elements.</td>
<td>Mainly concrete in reference and with some elements of abstraction or theory.</td>
<td>Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant depth in some areas.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>level 3</th>
<th>level 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate basic practical skills and carry out directed activity using basic tools.</td>
<td>Demonstrate limited range of basic practical and cognitive skills and tools.</td>
<td>Demonstrate limited range of basic practical and cognitive skills and tools.</td>
<td>Demonstrate a moderate range of practical and cognitive skills and tools.</td>
<td>Demonstrate a broad range of specialised skills and tools.</td>
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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perform processes that are repetitive and predictable.</td>
<td>Perform a sequence of routine tasks given clear direction.</td>
<td>Select from a limited range of procedures and apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems.</td>
<td>Select from a range of procedures and apply known substitutions to a variety of predictable problems.</td>
<td>Evaluate and use information to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to varied unfamiliar problems.</td>
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<tr>
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<th>level 4</th>
<th>level 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act in closely defined and highly structured contexts.</td>
<td>Act in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts.</td>
<td>Act within a limited range of contexts.</td>
<td>Act familiar and unfamiliar contexts.</td>
<td>Act in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs; identify and apply skill and knowledge to a wide variety of contexts.</td>
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<th>level 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act in a limited range of roles.</td>
<td>Act in a range of roles under direction.</td>
<td>Act under direction with limited autonomy, function within familiar, homogenous groups.</td>
<td>Act within considerable amount of responsibility and autonomy.</td>
<td>Exercise some initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities, join and function within multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence Learning to Learn</th>
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<th>level 3</th>
<th>level 4</th>
<th>level 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learn to sequence learning tasks, learn to access and use a range of learning resources.</td>
<td>Learn to learn in a disciplined manner in a well-structured and supervised environment.</td>
<td>Learn to learn within a managed environment.</td>
<td>Learn to take responsibility for own learning within a supervised environment.</td>
<td>Learn to take responsibility for own learning within a managed environment.</td>
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<table>
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<th>Competence Insight</th>
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<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialised knowledge of a broad area.</td>
<td>Specialised knowledge across a variety of areas.</td>
<td>An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning.</td>
<td>A systematic understanding of knowledge, at or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning.</td>
<td>A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of a field of learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant underpinning theory.</td>
<td>Recognition of limitations of current knowledge and familiarity with sources of new knowledge, integration of concepts across a variety of areas.</td>
<td>Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas (some of that the current boundaries of the field(s)).</td>
<td>A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning.</td>
<td>The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy review by peers.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrate comprehensive range of specialised skills and tools.</td>
<td>Demonstrate theoretical, creative or conceptual skills and tools across an area of study.</td>
<td>Demonstrate mastery of a complex and advanced conceptual skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional advanced technical activity.</td>
<td>Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry.</td>
<td>Demonstrate a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials which are associated with a field of learning, develop new skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulate responses to well-defined abstract problems.</td>
<td>Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes.</td>
<td>Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing.</td>
<td>Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning, develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques.</td>
<td>Respond to abstract problems that expand and redefine existing procedural knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities, transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical or creative skills to a range of contexts.</td>
<td>Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts.</td>
<td>Use advanced skills to conduct research or advanced technical professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making, transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts.</td>
<td>Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill-defined contexts.</td>
<td>Exercise personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent contexts.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise substantial personal autonomy and often take responsibility for the work of others and/or for allocation of resources, form and function within, complex and heterogeneous groups.</td>
<td>Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes; take significant supervision responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work.</td>
<td>Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners/lead multiple complex and heterogeneous groups.</td>
<td>Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity.</td>
<td>Communicate results of research and innovation to peers, engage in critical dialogue/lead and originate complex social processes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn to evaluate own learning and identify needs within a structured learning environment; assist others in identifying learning needs.</td>
<td>Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group.</td>
<td>Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically.</td>
<td>Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing, academic/professional development.</td>
<td>Learn to critique the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express an internalised, personal world view, reflecting engagement with others.</td>
<td>Express an internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others.</td>
<td>Express a comprehensive, internalised personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others.</td>
<td>Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them.</td>
<td>Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and lead action to change them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 9 - Initial Contact With Potential Interviewees

Dear __________,

I am currently undertaking a Masters Degree in Professional Design Practice in the DIT and I'm writing my dissertation on CPD in the Visual Communications sector.

As part of my primary research I wish to conduct a number of interviews with bodies such as __________ to discuss the development and implementation their CPD programmes.

I would be grateful if someone, with specific responsibilities for your CPD programme could make themselves available for a short interview to facilitate my research.

Kind regards,

Con Kennedy MIDI.
Appendix 10 - Interview Questions

Q1. Can you tell me a little about the background to your organisation?
The purpose of this question is to establish what the organisation’s role is for industry, its size and type of membership, areas of expertise within the sector and how and when the organisation was founded.

Support Questions
• What role does your organisation play?
• What types of companies or individuals make up your membership?
• Are there any areas of speciality amongst your membership?

Q2. What were the circumstances which brought about the introduction and development of your CPD programme?
The purpose of this question is to establish what the background circumstances were in the particular industry sector which lead to the development of CPD programme, how it was developed, what research was undertaken (if any) and if they are in receipt of Government support for their CPD programme.

Support Questions
• What research was undertaken before hand that helped develop CPD which is suitable for your industry sector?
• What literature/CPD models were consulted in the development of your CPD programme?
• How many companies make up you organisation's membership?
• How individual employees companies make up you organisation's membership?
• When developing your CPD programme what Government, Financial or Industry support did you receive?
Q3. **How is your CPD programmes structured?**

The purpose of this question is to establish how the CPD programme is structured in terms of: learning; types of learning offered; level of hours required to maintain competency levels and quality controls in terms of validating the individual's learnings.

**Support Questions**

- How is your CPD programmed delivered? (eg seminars, distance learning, forma/informal learning hours etc)
- What types of training programmes are offered to members through your CPD?
- What level of commitment is required of the individual in terms of expected learning hours to maintain competencies in your CPD?
- How is the learning of the individual recorded, measured, evaluated and validated through your CPD?
- How long has your CPD been running?
- What percentage of individual members and companies of your organisation participate in CPD?
- How successful would you rate this uptake?

Q4. **What are the benefits to CPD?**

The purpose of question this is to establish what the benefits are for all stake holder in the participation of CPD.

**Support Questions**

- For member companies?
- For individuals?
- For the clients of member companies?
- How have skill levels changed within your membership since the introduction of CPD?
Q5. Are there any barriers to participation in CPD?

The purpose of this question is to establish if there are any barriers to participation in CPD programmes and if so, what can be done to remedy this.

Support Questions

• For the company members?
• For the individual member?
• What importance does your membership place on CPD?

Q6. Is your CPD certified?

The purpose of this question is to establish if Certification of learning through CPD is important, which awarding body certifies the CPD programme and is standards are used for awards.

Support Questions

• If not why?
• If so, what is the benefit of Certification for members and individuals?
• Who certifies your CPD?
• How are standards benchmarked?
• What feedback mechanism is there in place from participants in your CPD that might be used for the review of certification standards?
• What quality assurances do you have with regard to training standards?
Appendix 11 - Interview Transcriptions

Date of Interview: 23/07/09
Time: 2pm
Duration: 19 minutes
Institution: Engineers Ireland
Location: 22 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.
Interviewee: Adrian Harney
Title: Manager, CPD Accredited Employer Scheme

CK: Can you tell me a little about the background of Engineers Ireland, in terms of it’s role, the types of companies and it membership?

AH: Well, Engineers Ireland is one of the oldest professional bodies in the country, we were founded way back in 1835 when we were called the Society of Civil Engineers. Our role is basically to promote Engineering at a national level and to ensure our members adhere to professional standards set down by Engineers Ireland. We have a number of different types of membership, including Fellow of Engineering Ireland, Chartered Engineer, Associate Engineer and Engineering Technician.

CK: How many members does Engineering Ireland Have?

AH: Well, 24,500 and growing, thankfully!

CK: Is that individual members?

AH: Yes

CK: Out of that number, how many would be corporate membership?

AH: We have about 112 companies who have been accredited through our CPD programme,
with a further 200 in the process of gaining accreditation, or at various stages in the process of completing their accreditation through our employer scheme. We also have about 16,000 Engineering Technicians.

**CK:** What were the circumstances which brought about the introduction and development of your CPD programme?

**AH:** Well, it was our former President, Michael Higgins who, back in 1999, saw the value in the maintenance of knowledge and competencies for engineers of all levels. And it was through his initiatives which brought about the introduction of our CPD programmes. Engineers Ireland believe that engineering professionals should actively engage in CPD to maintain their professional capabilities.

**CK:** Was there any research undertaken before hand that helped developed Engineers Ireland’s model of CPD?

**AH:** Yes. We initially looked at CPD programmes in similar organisations, like the Institution of Civil Engineers in the UK and other engineering organisations in countries like Germany and throughout Europe. We also looked at Australia and New Zealand to see what was being done over there in terms of CPD. Interestingly we found in Europe the model of CPD is to encourage individuals to participate in programmes, where in Australia and New Zealand CPD is targeted at a corporate level. So we adopted the southern hemisphere approach to CPD for want of a better word!

**CK:** That’s very interesting. So rather than the employee asking to be trained the employer actively encourages their staff to participate in CPD.

**AH:** Yes, you will find that many employers have a policy on CPD and is actively encouraging their staff to participate and as Engineers Ireland see it, employers hold the key to effective CPD.
CK: How is the CPD programme facilitated?

AH: We initially met with the employers and discussed how CPD would work, we listened to their feedback before implementing any programme and through this dialogue we establish a CPD Committee in each of the companies, their role is to promote CPD in the company, then a CPD policy is developed for that company. Member companies have to have a performance management system in place before they are accredited, this includes an analysis of the training needs for that company and from that a targeted CPD programme developed and implemented.

CK: When developing your CPD programme did Engineers Ireland receive and support or funding from the Government, State agencies or industry?

AH: Yes, we got a lot of support and funding thought the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment as the development and implementation of Engineers Ireland’s CPD was seen as helping develop the country as a Knowledge Economy.

CK: How is Engineers Ireland’s CPD programme structured?

AH: The first thing we did was to put in place a flexible framework, which was developed in partnership between Engineers Ireland, companies and individual membership. This was seen as an extremely important step to ensure everyone was bought along with the development and implementation of the CPD. That was we could achieve agreement on the purpose and type of CPD suitable for all stakeholders.

CK: How was this agreement reached?

AH: Initially we agreed a contract between Engineers Ireland and employees. The next step was to agree accreditation on what the goals of the organisation was. The a review was undertaken to analyse the CPD systems and practices required before implementing the CPD programme.
CK: Are members required to have particular goals in terms of learning hours required by Engineers Ireland to maintain competencies through CPD?

AH: Yes, all members are expected to carry out a minimum of 40 hours per year as part of formal CPD training hours. Or 5 working days.

CK: When you say 40 formal hours, are members required to carry out any informal CPD?

AH: Well, Engineers Ireland only record the formal hours. The usual model of CPD is the 70/20/10 breakdown, where 70% of the total hours of learning naturally occurs in the workplace, where staff are learning continuously. 20% of learning would be thought mentoring from a co-worker, again, this would naturally occur on a day-to-day basis in work and the 10% would be the formal recorded CPD hours.

CK: How are formal hours recorded?

AH: It depends on the size of the company. Typically smaller companies submit their CPD records on paper and the larger companies complete the process on-line.

CK: In terms of learning, what would Engineers Ireland consider as begin part of CPD?

AH: We would consider a number of various learning types as being constituent parts of CPD. These include training courses, classroom training, attending lectures, computer based training, relevant postgraduate academic courses, site visits, technical reading, mentoring or if you are a member of a local GAA club and you volunteer, provided you are doing engineering work as part of volunteering your time, that too can be considered part of CPD. Some of our own members do a lot of charity work in the third world, again provide the work they are doing abroad for charities is engineering work that can be considered part of formal CPD.

CK: What percentage of your membership engage with CPD?
AH: About 85%

CK: And how successful would you rate this?

AH: Very successful. We’ve very pleased with the level of participation in CPD.

CK: Can anything be done to improve on this rate?

AH: Probably not. We consider this to be a very high rate of take up of CPD and those who are not fully engaging in CPD are individuals who are either at director level within in companies and are not practicing engineers as such or those who are close to retirement and are more interested in playing golf!

CK & AH: (Both Laughs)

CK: Would Engineers Ireland consider that there are any benefits to CPD?

AH: Yes, definitely. We see many benefits to CPD. We see CPD as being good for all, the industry, the companies, the individual members and for the nation.

CK: What benefits have Engineers Ireland identifies for companies?

AH: Yes, for companies there are a number of benefits, including, being more competitive, better skills amongst the staff, a better more flexible workforce, entry into new markets and improved recruitment and retention of staff.

CK: And the individual?

AH: Again, there a numerous benefits for the individual that includes better skills, competencies and knowledge, better career progression helping engineers move up the career
ladder, better employability and recognition in the workplace by advancing in professional status. CPD also offers the opportunity not only improve on existing skills but a chance to learn new ones too. And CPD also allows engineers and technicians take personal responsibility for their own professional development.

**CK:** On the point about skills, has there been a change in skills and competencies amongst engineers since the introduction of CPD?

**AH:** Yes, definitely. 20 years ago, engineers required to only be technically proficient at what they do. Now engineers not only need those skills but they also need to be adept communicators, they need to be aware of legislation and have management skills fro running and developing their businesses. Engineers also need to have skills in public relations, some may call it spin but you need to be able to communicate with the media these days.

**CK:** Would Engineers Ireland be aware of any barriers that might hinder participation or uptake in CPD?

**AH:** Yes there are a number of barriers alright, for both companies and the individual, which mainly center around three issues. Firstly there is the issue of time management, releasing staff for training courses, training courses coinciding with work deadlines etc and of course managing the work-life balance. Then there is issues around communicating the value of CPD in terms of how it can benefit the company and the individual. And finally there is the cost issue associated with the training of staff.

**CK:** Can anything be done to reduce or minimise these barriers?

**AH:** It’s hard to say. In relation to costs, thankfully all fees are kept to an absolute minimum through government funding and co-funding from Engineers Ireland, meaning that there is a saving to the employer there, but in the current climate it’s becoming more and more difficult for companies to justify the costs of training their staff.
CK: Is your CPD accredited or certified in any way?

AH: Yes, what we do is to accredit the employer though our CPD Accredited Employer standard which denotes that the organisation has good systems and practices in place which allows its engineering staff to grow, learn and develop, throughout their career.

We also have a Register of Training Providers, which is a key component of our CPD Programme. The Register facilitates both companies and individuals, to identify relevant and high standard learning opportunities. Engineers Ireland endorses training providers with the title of Registered Training Provider on the basis that they meet the criteria of adequate quality assurance procedures, which ensures that courses and events are well managed and consistently well presented. And many of these vendors are accredited through either FETAC, HETAC or FÁS.

CK: Is accreditation important to your members?

AH: Yes and it is becoming more and more important for there reasons just mentioned, namely quality assurances and achieving a high standard of learning.

CK: Aidan, many thanks for your time

AH: A pleasure.
Date of Interview: 07/08/09

Time: 5pm

Duration: 32 minutes

Institution: Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland

Location: Burlington House, Burlington Road, Dublin 4.

Interviewee: Becky Bristow

Title: Director, Lifelong Learning & Support

CK: Many thanks for seeing me, Becky.

BB: No bother.

CK: First question is really if you could you tell me a little bit about the background of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in terms of its role in society, the type of companies and the type of membership that the Institute has.

BB: Okay. Institute of Chartered Accountants is the professional body for a specific type of accountant, being a chartered accountant. That is someone who must be apprenticed to a firm for a minimum of three years in order to get the practical experience. It’s been around since 1888. We’ve got 18,000 members. It’s an all-Ireland body and its purpose has changed. The biggest focus is still twofold, one being the education of accountants. We provide the training in the exams to become an accountant. The secondary is the regulation; we self-regulate. We do have an independent body called Chartered Accountants Regulatory Board but that was formed two years ago. So it’s education and then monitoring of members is the main functions.

We provide continued professional development and provide publications, various support for members. Members are split at the moment; 40 percent in what we call practice so they’re in accountancy practices giving advice to people. And the other 60 percent are in what we call industry so they’re an accountant working in, say, you’re being an accountant in a bank or maybe running your own company.
Splitting that whole 100 percent, about 30 percent would be what we could call small enterprises, be it the small accountancy practice or small business.

CK: And are there any specialty areas within your membership?

BB: Well, we’ve broken it down into 16 different categories. The ones that spring to mind are. I can give you a list later if you like?

CK: Please.

BB: We have audits, tax, financial services, corporate finance, public sector, academia, consulting, IT. That’s only eight, I’m aware of that but I can give you the list of career areas. Accountants end up in everything because they’re in every type of business and it’s primarily a business qualification so you find that people use it as a jumping off point. Rather than spending their life working as a typical accountant, they would use it to go into all kinds of business.

CK: So that you gain new skills, skills, perhaps for your CPD to go on to do something else maybe?

BB: Yes, very much so. Or they may just veer away and as I say people running their own business. They may be managing directors but their core training was as an accountant.

CK: You were saying about that the chartered accountant. Are all accountants have to be chartered or are there other bodies?

BB: There are other bodies. There’s the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants; they’re a global body. You have the Certified Public Accountants. You have those all over the world but there’s an Irish body that stands alone and then there’s what we call the industry accountants which is Certified Management Accountant.
We like to think of ourselves as the preeminent accountancy body. Chartered Accountants have been around the longest with the hardest exams. We’re the only ones who enforce you going through a work contract to make you have the practical experience, so we’re a bit snobby of that. It’s hard to become a chartered accountant.

CK: There’s a certain eminence to becoming a chartered accountant?

BB: We like to think so. It’s not like -- and each to their own because I happen to be a member on one of the other bodies and my CEO would say, “Look. If you’re working at McDonald’s you can become an accountant with them because you just have to go through the exams; whereas, with us, you couldn’t. You have to be a graduate and you have to, you know, do your three and a half years work experience.”

CK: There’s a certain level of progression to go through before you can become a chartered accountant associate.

BB: Yes. I’m not saying we’re better. It would be how we brand ourselves.

CK: What was the circumstance which brought about the introduction of your CPD program?

BB: It only became mandatory in the ‘60s and I can’t give you an exact date, I’m sorry because it’s an argument that goes between 65 and 68, and there’s no one still working here.

CK: But, your CPD is it has been around for a long time?

BB: It has been around and It’s been compulsory for a long time. It did exist before that. We provided bits of training courses before that but it became compulsory then so we started providing a big program. It was -- became compulsory as a quality assurance thing when
regulation started to pick up, when in general in the economy, financial regulation started to come in.

If you think of the Irish state and how it progressed, if you think of us in the mid to late ‘60s, we might’ve had a bit of banking regulation and a bit more governmental regulation. So in line with that, they said, right, well, it’s not just a little club anymore. We got to make damn sure we are continuing to provide quality, and one way of doing that is making compulsory to keep your skills up to date.

**CK:** Do you know if there was any research taken beforehand?

**BB:** I’m sorry I don’t know.

**CK:** Or, perhaps is there any international models of CPD that might have been looked at as you had gone along to continue to develop your own CPD?

**BB:** I can tell you in the last couple of years, I can’t tell you but the history I couldn’t point anyone who’d been around, sorry. But I certainly know my predecessor plus myself would continually look around best practice models, what’s going on with other institutes, accounting, other bodies, what’s going on in universities, the marketplace. We are involved in the governance bodies that would, be researching this stuff. So, because we have changed our model quite significantly in the last two years that we used to CPD used to be how many hours have you done called the input basis.

**BB:** Are you familiar with this input basis?

**CK:** Yes.

**BB:** Well, we moved to offering members output last year because we looked at it and we said, well, best practices that it’s you measure what you’ve gotten from us, not the many how many hours you put in.
But fundamentally, our members are accountants and the like members so we decided to offer them both. They could choose which way they do it. So the research is continual. The program is updated every six months. We issue an annual program, like I will start planning 2010 next week. We’d look at what’s popular, what’s changed in the market, what new rules have come in, we’ll refresh the program. And then as things change or come up, we’ll add to it, so. And we change methods of delivery. We are going a little bit more online and we’re trying to blend the way we do it because it doesn’t suit everyone. I find a lot of people have questions they want answered and that’s why they come.

So they still like the face to face. We changed locations; we changed the time of day, you know. It it’s constantly evolving, not spectacularly so but it’s not like, oh, we just wrote a master’s program, that’ll die a death.

I was going to do. but it turns out one of my managers is doing it instead and it suits me that he’s doing masters in education in DCU so I’m feeding off his knowledge of what’s the cutting edge practices out there going on. So, we have our eye on the world.

**CK:** When you have developed or currently developing your CPD model, do you get any government or financial support in any way?

**BB:** No, and we used to. No now. We don’t want any interference in our program how we do it. Sorry. Last year, we had Skillnets it was a trial. It did not work out from any perspective. The level of admin that they required soaked up far too much resourcing. It’s done very civil service, we were very commercial about what we do in CPD and our members weren’t interested in non-business skills, non-technical skills so we actually gave the grant back. Just said, “Look, gave it a go.” And also it was a big lesson for us in the difference between civil service versus how we work but we can’t work at that slow pace - we just can’t. It’s not commercial.
CK: Is this because the industry is changing, so often in terms of legislation and client expectations?

BB: Yeah. We need to be able to go with the market, so as of now, no, we have no external funding. We will not be seeking it again.

CK: Is the ICAI CPD being funded by the membership then?

BB: Yes, its funded by people attending the courses.

CK: So the fees that they would pay to.....

BB: To attend the course. Yes, so CPD is self funding and makes some profit because we also offer free places to members in difficulty and we would make sure our program runs all over the country and some of those would make a loss but on balance, the program makes money.

CK: And how is your CPD program structured?

BB: We look at the core skill areas, so those 16 I mentioned and say, right, these are the core areas we need to make sure we have something in. So we break it down and say this is the broad spectrum of membership and look at the things that were popular in the last few years plus things that have changed in the marketplace and we go out to members and talk to them and find out what they want. So we do a broad draft ourselves and tapping in on a lot of technical stuff. In here, people are doing different things. They’ll give me ideas with various committees and then most of the summer is spent researching. And that is meeting members for different reasons and tapping into their brains; what’s going on, what would you like a course on?

CK: So there’s a good continuous feedback between yourselves and membership?
BB: That’s it.

CK: Is this to find out exactly what they want and then delivering CPD for their needs?

BB: That’s exactly it. We do a draft a bit ourselves but if you take a draft program and flick it out to people and say, “Could you comment,” you’ll get nothing back. People are busy. But if you have a conversation -- and we run a lot of events and we have all sorts of profile things and myself and the CPD manager, Dervla, make sure we go to them and we talk to people. And we have an agenda. I will get people pitching for training for us and I will meet anyone who has -- doing a technical pitch so don’t waste my time with the non-business skills because I can get those forever. And even if I’m not interested, I’ll pick their brains on what’s going on out there.

CK: I see.

BB: I’ll get them to propose courses or whatever, so it’s an ongoing thing and we keep a little file of ideas. Does that make sense? But it’s structured around these 16.

CK: The structure around the needs of the career requirements of your membership?

BB: Yeah.

CK: And how is the program delivered?

BB: Predominantly face to face so we have training rooms in here but also then when we would hire hotels or a venue around the country, we’d engage a presenter or presenters on the topic and they go and they do it; very, very traditional stuff.

CK: Yeah. So it is mainly seminar-based, training courses, that sort of thing?
BB: Mainly seminar based. Our big thing is to make it practical and case studies, because people can sit around and read rules for themselves. So the idea is to generate conversation, whatever. They vary between two to three hours or a full day. There used to be longer ones; we’d cut them right back because people don’t want to be out of the office that long.

And we do some online training. Each CPD which is we basically we record some seminars and we purchase other ones from other people, so people that have gone out and developed law courses or the non-technical ones or whatever that are suitable, we buy those in and we just sell them along with a small profit.

We are moving to new premises in a month’s time and we’ll have the capability to broadcast our lectures live and record them from the Web.

CK: It’s a streaming medium?

BB: Yeah. So we do also, sometimes, do online tutorials. We have diplomas as well. They’re quite a different animal. They’re very interactive in the classroom and then the home assignments and then they’ve -- we will video, do Webinars, you know, that they can access at different times. Some people study by distance so they can tap in and see what the lecture was like where they can send in questions, but a connecting of time with the tutor. So I would say predominantly seminar-based though.

CK: What level of commitment is required of your individual members to maintain their CPD?

BB: They have very specific CPD requirements. Literally, they have CPD regulations.

CK: Without being specific to the sector or just generally to your membership?
BB: It is generally to the membership but there are four specific areas. If you specialize in the areas of tax, investment business and solvency or audit, you must do 10 additional hours in each of these areas that you’re practicing.

CK: How many hours of CPD are the ordinary membership expected to undertake?

BB: The ordinary member would have to do....now, if we’re talking on input basis

CK: Yeah.

BB: 20 structured and 50 unstructured. You know, verified, you’re familiar with it?

CK: Yeah.

BB: That’s great, okay. So 20 verified and 50 unverified.

CK: 50 unverified, plus another 10 on top for your specialist area?

BB: That’s it. So the minimum for everyone is the 70. If you say, for example, in accountancy practice and you happen to specialize in tax, you have to make sure that on top of that 20 you had an extra 20 specific -- 10, excuse me, specifically on tax. And if you happen to give advice on all four areas then you have....

CK: You have a lot of homework to do!

BB: You have a lot! Yeah, you do!

CK: How are those 20 hours recorded?

BB: We have a form online that they can download and fill in. They can either fill it in by hand and post it back in or they can my understanding that they fill in. They don’t submit it to
me; they submit it to our regulatory board who every year, say, “In order to renew your membership, you must declare that you’re up to date in your CPD”. My understanding is it literally is completely declaration with some minimal information and if they’re selected for audit, they will then be given a separate form which must detail at what they’ve done and provide back with evidence that they’ve done it.

CK: The hours checked and it’s verified?

BB: It is. Not everybody. I think the the ultimate goal is 10 percent of the membership per year but at the moment, we’re only at five percent, which is still quite a lot.

CK: But the verification it’s good quality assurance?

BB: Yeah. Well, there is an international oversight body which would say you need to be heading towards 10 percent per year.

CK: And approximately what percentage of your membership would complete CPD programs every year?

BB: We worked this one out recently. I’m just trying to think. Last year, we had 9,000 people come on courses, not all of our members though and some people came twice, and I think we worked out that -- we got 4,500 individual members courses last year, so 4,500 out of last year where the membership was 17,000. You have to do the maths....it’s a quarter!

CK: About 25 percent?

BB: Which is actually a huge hit rate because a large part, I’d say 15 percent of our membership are people in what we call the big four accountancy practices and they provide all their own in-house training. So they would rarely come to us for training. So we were really thrilled with that hit rate. There are other providers, you know. Not everyone in the membership has to come to us for their CPD.
CK: And do you think anything could be done to increase that level of uptake?

BB: Yeah. We think and we are dropping our prices and we’re more and more advertising that we will tailor or make training packages for individual firms or companies, and that has really picked up this year. People are carping on, “Well, if I’ve got four accountants, why am I sending them off in different courses? Why don’t you just get them in for a day, package it all up and that’s half the price of the same amount of courses?”

CK: And you’re probably getting better feedback and better one-to-one relationship which your membership is that way as well?

BB: Definitely, they’re delighted that’s served.

CK: And what benefits to your members would the ICAI see to participating in CPD?

BB: It keeps their professional skills up to date because on your own, you can’t keep up. You know, you’re trying to buy whatever you’re exposed to and you could miss all sorts of things. So it is quite literally keeping your skills up to date. But, also you can put it on your CV and not just for external job hunting; for internal or for promotions and say, “Look. I’m, you know, I’m very up to date in these areas and it’s not just my basic skills. I am learning more.” And if you do want of our, diploma programs, they’re very much designed to get you at the proper level. It’s not maintaining or just moving your skills on but it actually. They are literally designed to jump you up and you could say, “I have a qualification in corporate finance. I can now work on this or work in this area.”

CK: So you would say career progression would be a benefit to individuals?

BB: I would say it does have a big impact, the career progression, and we would see that now with the unfortunate turn in the market. We have members who are losing jobs; they are changing jobs. They’re coming to us saying, “Could you give me a list of the courses I did
last year because I want to stick it on my CV?” So they’re starting to see the value from that perspective.

And just myself, when I worked in - actually, I specialise in tax and I remember doing a course on buying and selling a business and I had only ever looked at it from a tax perspective. When I did the course, I realized, oh, my goodness there’s all sorts of legal angles to this that I didn’t consider. So it does, it gives better rounded skills and it allows people to progress. The big thing that people love about CPD is they network with other people.

That’s an angle we really push. We often have drinks. After our full days, we would always have meals but we’d always have wine and cheese.

**CK:** Yes. There’s a social aspect to it as well.

**BB:** Yeah. The social plus they do learn from other people because they do tend to talk about the topic because they wouldn’t be among social, you know! Or ask questions or make very worthy business connections.

**CK:** In terms of the employers are there any benefits there to them, for your members participating in CPD?

**BB:** To the employers, it’s making sure they’ve got competent professionals. You know, your skills do go stale. They just do. The nature of what accountants do is the rules are changing all the time and particularly advising and their clients want different things or different things happen in the market. You’ve got to keep up to date so if the employers want that person being at their most productive or bringing in money or producing things in a better way, they need to put the time and money into keeping that person trained. A better trained person works better.
I’ll try and give a personal example, although I’ve come from a technical background, the critical thing about my job right now would actually be managing people and I had no formal training in it. So it’s compulsory in here if you’re a director or a manager to go on the diploma in managing people. And my entire department is I’d say easily 40 percent more productive because I did management training, because I know how to get the best out of them.

CK: So they’re benefiting from your knowledge?

BB: So my employer is benefiting from having invested in my training by the fact that I’m now exceeding goals or bringing in more money because I can’t do that by myself. I had to manage a team to improve.

CK: But also the team is more productive because the skills that you gained through CPD?

BB: Without a doubt, without a doubt my employer has benefited by those couple of days they’d sent me off to do that more than any other training I’ve done. Was that -- and it’s such a fundamental skill to my current role.

CK: In terms of from the clients, what benefits would they see from your members participating in CPD?

BB: Well, they make sure that they’re now getting the most up to date best quality service and it reduces the risk of bad advice. That’s the really critical thing behind CPD, okay, if you’re not prepared to take personal responsibility for making sure you’re as good as possible, we’re making it compulsory.

And there’s a huge thing for us around the brand name Chartered Accountants. That’s actually what we spend most of our money on - it’s defending the brand. You know, between advertising and prosecuting people who have -- I don’t want to mention names but just big
names in the paper that we are going after and to defend the brand. So if you’re not keeping your skills up to date, you denigrate the brand, Chartered Accountants.

So the benefit to the client is that they know it’s compulsory to CPD that a chartered accountant will be regulated and made to keep up to date so they would -- they have some sort of quality assurance by going to a chartered accountant.

**CK:** And would you say the skills and competencies have changed within the sector since...I know you’re saying your CPD has been running for long time...but would you see changes in their skills and competencies in an individual over their career?

**BB:** Absolutely. Accountancy has become so broad even that nature of I say we’ve identified broadly 16 career areas that we can fit most people into, people nowadays see an accountant not as that person who goes and keeps their books, who does their tax returns. They see them as a business advisor, as people who can -- and people who can run a business. You know, I say being an accountant I lived in Australia for a couple of years. It never ceased to amaze me that the people would think accountants can do anything in business. They see them as this merely -- so the skills have had to change with that.

And our syllabus for training students has changed massively. We’ve just launched a brand new what we call competency based. So instead of, “Oh, you have to learn of these subjects and regurgitate it back,” it’s now all completely integrated and you must be able to advise from a business perspective, not just what are the rules and how I feed them back to you. We’re trying to train them as being an all-around business person.

**CK:** So they’re getting wider skills and better skills since participating in CPD?

**BB:** Yes, without -- yeah.

**CK:** And would that be measured in any way?
BB: Well, it starts at student level. We’ve changed that and obviously that’s measured through exams. We only measure it if they’re doing a qualification of this. So if we give out a certificate or a diploma, we obviously have to assess them.

On a seminars, no. That’s very much self assessment. So if we’re handing out a piece of paper that says they had to do home assignments and for the certificates and the exams for the diploma.

CK: Would you be aware of any barriers that might hinder participation in CPD?

BB: At the moment, money, hugely. People are not used to paying for it for themselves. The companies have stopped paying. Time out of work is a big deal. Even if people have the time, they’re afraid to be away from their desk, to be seen to be away from their desk. When it was very, very busy, they were afraid to be away from their desk because it was so busy so it -- cost is the first issue; time is the next one. And then how much do they personally value it or think they need to do it. So it’s like you said about there are a certain number of people who are really engaged and bought into it, and there are people who go, “On ground, I don’t need to do it.”

CK: And do you think any of those barriers can be overcome?

BB: We are working on all of them. I see -- I would think all barriers have to be overcome in some way. You can’t do it for everybody.

BB: The first one, yeah, where we are doing all sorts of things on the pricing between just dropping cost, running some free events, cheap events. And bundling in two for ones and matching it up with other things they’ve done or whatever, so we’re really --

CK: You mentioned e-learning earlier, would that reduce the cost?

BB: Massively.
**CK:** And the time input from the individual?

**BB:** Well, I mean, well, that’s it. I mean an hour of eCPD is probably half the price of an hour of face-to-face training, and I suspect that when we go to our new premises that the live feed may be free as an add-on and it will save us money because it saves us having to go to Letterkenny to do the thing. And losing money on it so we’re better off.

**CK:** And is it’s becoming more cost effective. A benefit for yourselves as well as your members.

**BB:** Yeah, and it’s a lovely thing to offer members and if they want the face-to-face to ask the questions, well, they’re just going to have to come in and pay the money then!

So we are really aware of the pricing and we’re just trying different things. It’s not as simple as just drop it for everything. We are trying like a scale of prices for different things so that people who are really stuck, they can find something.

And on the time away from people’s desks, again, we’re running some more stuff in before-work breakfast seminars and after-work some things in Saturdays that if people are really keen or conscious of it, there are options that aren’t during office hours.

**CK:** Yeah, so it doesn’t interfere with the working day and such.

**BB:** That’s exactly it. Most people prefer to go during the working day but if it’s a bad one for them, we’ll do some in the morning. Again, it’s just a variety. And if they don’t think they need to do it, well, that one is sort of being handled for us by the regulator who writes them fairly strict letters going, “It is your obligation, you will be removed from membership,” which really upsets people because they leverage off by saying, “I’m a chartered accountant.” This is how they get their salary.
CK: As you’re saying they’re denigrating the brand.

BB: That’s it. And they know that we will -- if an employer or perspective employer rings us up, we will say whether they’re an up to date member or not. It’s as black and white as that and we’ve had a case of someone who had passed our exam but hadn’t paid to be admitted as a member so technically they’re not a member, and we told the employer that. We just go with the facts. If they haven’t filled in their CPD return, if it’s just a question of having paid for your fee for the year, we ring the person first and say, “This employer has come and said this. You know, you do realize your membership lapsed because you haven’t paid the fee or have it up to date. If you give a commitment to getting it up to date, we’ll tell them you’re an up to date member.” You know, it is all in favor of the member but they can’t abuse the brand name.

CK: Absolutely not! And what importance would your membership place on CPD?

BB: It’s like that thing of it depends on who’s bought into it and who’s not. The people who understand, who really understand what it is and that it does give some sort of quality assurance are really positive towards it because they’re the people who understand that it’s not about going to courses. I actually do most of my CPD by doing my job, you know, by keeping up to date. It’s not really difficult to keep up to date. And they’re the ones, the very diligent people are the ones who get pissed off with people who bring the brand name because they were sloppy or you know.

So I would say you probably have, if you have to get each person to respond and say “Are you bought into CPD or not?”, you’ll probably have about half going, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, it’s a good thing; it’s grand.” And then you’d have about 40 percent of people going, “I don’t know. I don’t care one way or the other. Sure, I don’t have to do it and I don’t really understand” You know what I mean? It’s a really middle ground. And then you have 10 percent going, “I think it’s awful. I think it’s a load of crap. You shouldn’t have to tell us what to do.” It’s very hard to tap into that.
**CK:** Would you think that would be an issue that the fact that they’re required to put in X number of hours in CPD that that might be they’re resenting the fact that they have to --

**BB:** Yeah, they don’t like being told what to do. Yeah, they particularly don’t like our regulator because our regulator is a pit bull and known for that. And that is what is driving the quality up. I have a lady I work with who is a solicitor who represents accountants who are in trouble for whatever reason like with the revenue or whatever. And she said very few of her clients are chartered accountants because they’re so scared of their own regulator.

It depends on the sector of the membership. You’d have a good half of them going, “Yeah, it is a good thing. It’s sensible,” and 40 percent going, “Yeah, whatever.” Yeah. Oh, I could probably turn it around a bit if I explained to them what it was but that 10 percent.

**CK:** That sticky 10 percent!

**BB:** They often have -- and they often have issues that have nothing to do with CPD anyway.

**CK:** Yeah, just using it as an excuse to make an issue.

**BB:** Yeah.

**CK:** And the last question is basically, is your CPD accredited or certified in any way?

**BB:** Yes. And you’re going to be surprised by the answer! We are established under the Royal Charter. And then in 1966, we were incorporated into Irish legislation and we are effectively an educational body, so we have the right to issue qualifications. Now, they have to go through a certain process but we have the right to issue certificates, diplomas, chartered qualifications. It’s a bit dodgy on the degree or masters’; we’re not sure about that. We’re not sure we want to go down that road, but technically it looks like we could.
And you’re aware of HETAC?

CK:  Yep!

BB:  HETAC and NQAI and all of that kind of thing. We have had some of our qualifications pitched to that so that they are internationally recognised and at what level and there’s layers; people can tax and even things like that. But some of our stuff we don’t bother because we don’t particularly want it to fit into that like the diplomas, our members want short and sweet. We do six weekends; they get their diploma. That’s never going to - it’s only 60 hours whereas you do like 200 hours to get a university diploma or HETAC- recognised diploma.

CK:  On your HETAC-recognized diplomas, what weightage would that be on the NFQ?

BB:  Oh, all our stuff is level nine. The post-graduate because it’s -- because to be a chartered accountant, 99 percent of them have to be graduates. There is another sneaky way in but it works because you could come through from school to accountant technicians into chartered accountancy. But chartered accountancy has been accepted as being a post-graduate level, level nine. So that means -- and our diplomas are to extend their skills beyond that but they’re not as high as doctorates.

CK:  That’s great. Many thanks for your time.

BB:  Not a bother.
CK: Deirdre, many thanks for seeing me.

DD: Not at all Con.

CK: The first question is basically can you tell me a little about the background of Design Ireland in terms of its role, the types of companies that it represents and its membership?

DD: No problem. Little bit of background information on Design Ireland; it was established in 2000, I suppose really as a result of a particular report that was commissioned by the Government to review of the Irish design consultancy sector, opportunities in design, strategies in the growth of design sector in Ireland, and as a result of that Design Ireland was set up as a broad based coalition of all the affiliated bodies, the Institute of Creative Advertising of Ireland, the Institute of Designers in Ireland, the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland, and at the time the GDBA (Graphic Design Business Association). And out of that it set certain objectives and activities to address certain remits within the sector and one of them being the provision of continuous development within training so that’s really where the main primary role then proceeded from 2000.

CK: And when did the training actually begin through the Design Ireland Skillnets?

DD: Well the training began through the Design Ireland Skillnets in late 2003. Design Ireland applied for funding for the Skillnets initiative as a result of lack of funding from the membership. Initially the funding was set up through the different affiliated bodies and that
dried up and I suppose they wanted to access a structure in place for the provision of continuous development within training. So they applied for funding in late 2003 and we began training in early 2004.

**CK:** In terms of the type of membership that’s in the Design Ireland Skillnets, how is that made up like in terms of numbers, is it individuals or is it corporate membership?

**DD:** The Skillnets is made up of currently about 500 companies, small I suppose when you think of the scale of the sector itself and the majority of those companies I’d say, 70-80% are small to medium sized, basically 1-2 to maybe a maximum of 9. 10% made up of more bigger corporate companies like big design practices, Douglas Wallace, O’Mahony and Pike, but really they are just a minority in the membership.

**CK:** And out of that 500 companies approximately how many within Visual Communication companies do you know?

**DD:** Really I’d say Visual Communication would be a huge portion really, the percentage there I’d say about 70%, 70-80%.

**CK:** And out of those 500 companies any idea how many employees in total would be in your membership?

**DD:** In the membership? Employees, well if we look at sort of out of the 500 companies the numbers that would have trained with us, so that we have actually recorded as trainees from our 500 members, would be a total of 900.

**CK:** Is that a total of 900 individuals trained since 2004?

**DD:** That would have been 900. No! Actually that would have been 900 from 2006-2007.
CK: What were the circumstances which brought about the introduction and the development of the Design Ireland Skillnets CPD?

DD: I suppose well again just referring back to this report you know there was... it highlighted major skills gaps and Design Ireland was set up, it was one of the objectives to address the professional development within the sector and to enhance that skill set and I suppose to address the major skills gaps and then that report really highlighted the shortfall of skills within our sector and if we were to compete at any way nationally or internationally we really to had to address that skills gap. So with that recognition and when they identified that I suppose it then looked at how do we address, how do we actually generate funding to provide that for the sector? And out of that was the borne the Skillnets in terms of the application of funding.

CK: And what were the skills gaps identified in that report?

DD: The major skills gaps identified were soft skills, managerial skills, and business model competitiveness. Again a big gap between kind of the creative artistic skill set which has been addressed, it’s a very qualified sector the design sector, the designers in the industry are very qualified in their own specialised niche area, be it graphics, architecture, fashion, textiles, not able to address the issues of actually running a business, of actually managing a project or a business in itself and the staff and leadership, sales and customer service, these were the skills gaps that were identified and that was applicable across the board.

CK: Was there any research undertaken beforehand to help develop the CPD model?

DD: Well at the time in line with that report, that was commissioned by Enterprise Ireland, there would have also have been some research carried out by Design Ireland and that would have first of all in connection with its affiliated bodies, going to each body and sort of like addressing the issues within their memberships, but also conducting training needs analysis across the sector and looking for sort of feedback and response to what the industry really required.
CK: And was there any literature consulted?

DD: No, apart from that report, Opportunities in Design.

CK: And when developing the CPD what Government financial or industry support did you receive?

DD: Actually just the fund that was applicable to Design Ireland, we didn’t actually receive any development grant in supporting that application that has actually subsequently changed. If now you were applying for funding through the Skillnets initiative you would actually receive a development grant, we didn’t at the time, so it was quite limited.

CK: Ok. And how is the CPD programme structured through the Design Ireland Skillnets?

DD: Well the CPD programme is structured in... it’s industry led and basically it’s made up of clustered enterprises volunteering to actually sit on a committee and that committee are really the advisors and they drive the project and they will meet occasionally, managed by myself as the network manager, the steering committee will meet occasionally and we will actually look and address proposals within the industry, will address the needs of the industry, will conduct evaluations, will conduct training needs analysis and will respond to those requirements. So it’s really driven by a steering committee, it is industry led so it really has to be the design sector leading the Skillnets.

CK: How is the Design Ireland Skillnet programme actually delivered?

DD: In a number of ways really, I mean it varies from one day training... one day training certificates in technical skills to workshops seminars and these can branch out between one and two different levels to like a group of seminar dates, to a weekend course run over maybe three weekends, something like Prepare a Artwork for Printing in Griffith College, and suite of different types of training days in addition to our CPD programmes themselves.
CK: What types of programmes are offered through your CPD?

DD: It breaks down really into; as I said a suite of sort of technical training skills but also soft skills, so these two streams really then we again dilute further down. So the technical skills would really address… the majority of them would be for Graphic Designers I suppose and Architects, who have a huge sort of need and huge requirement, and we would cover everything from anything to do with Visual Communication, Graphics, Architecture, very little in terms of fashion and textile, and print.

CK: Would that be software led training?

DD: Software led training yeah, software led training.

CK: And in terms of the soft skills?

DD: Soft skills then really initially we had set up a diploma which was recognised by the Institute of Commercial Management in London and this was to address a set of modules that again, to address the skills gap in the industry, and these modules covered everything from customer service, leadership, management and marketing, and again just coming back to that skills gap, how to effectively run a cost effective business you know, and these skills were just lacking completely in the design sector.

CK: What level of commitment is required from the individuals partaking in CPD in terms of hours and that kind of thing?

DD: Well there isn’t really a level of commitment as such, I mean once you engage in the training it’s up to yourself to actually. So, it’s not actually compulsory like with other sectors, where it is compulsory for certification. So it is up to yourself, however I suppose within the different memberships of the different affiliated bodies it would be recognised that the training is available and should be accessed.
CK: So for example would the training delivered through the Design Ireland Skillnets be recognised as part of the RIAI CPD?

DD: No, we certainly had looked at that and we were going down that sort of route, but unfortunately it didn’t materialise. But that really is the way it should have moved, it should have.

CK: And how is learning recorded or evaluated through your CPD programme?

DD: We have a number of tools in place, in the last couple of years actually we really improved our operational system to address this. The evaluation and feedback and just to ensure that we were effectively analysing and responding to the industry. So, at the end of a training day or a programme or a weekend or a module of a CPD programme we’ll evaluate and we will ask for feedback and we will get our participants to actually fill out information and it’s sent directly to us. We’ll also occasionally send out surveys on training needs analysis to the industry periodically just again to keep refreshed with what changes have taken place in the sector, and we will invite... also with the introduction and launch of quite a sophisticated web-based site last year we invited our participants or our members to actually comment on blogs.

CK: So you’re getting feedback all the time?

DD: Continually.

CK: You were saying about 900 employees since 2006-2007 have been trained through the Design Ireland Skillnet, how successful would you rate that uptake?

DD: Well, I suppose in terms of the percentage of membership in our affiliated bodies it’s quite a successful number if you look at the sort of the membership numbers for each of these organisations. However in a bigger scale of things if you look at the actual size of the sector
and the numbers of designers in our sector as a bigger picture, I would rate it as quite poor really.

CK: And do you think anything can be done to improve that?

DD: I think there’s a huge amount of tasks that could be completed, yes there definitely is. Again it comes down to raising awareness and exposure for the Skillnets, a lot of designers weren’t aware we were there and providing that service, and that I would say is a result of Skillnets, you know they needed to market us and the individual design organisations didn’t actually address it with their members as much as they should have I think really that information should have been fed down, it should have diluted right down to the individual sole trader or HR, but through the affiliated bodies and I’m afraid it wasn’t as effective as we had initially set out.

CK: Are there any benefits to CPD that Design Ireland would see?

DD: Definitely huge benefits to CPD, I mean my experience as network manager of the Skillnets I’m working with the industry. I would see a huge level in skills and competencies and that again would be in terms of quality and creative enhancement and again would extend to best practice on a national and international level, and that would you know dilute right down to the client. If you are providing a skilled workforce you are providing better services, wider products and services, so you are engaging with clients you know, so again it’s right down to sort of outside of the sector.

CK: And since the introduction of the Design Ireland Skillnets has the skills in the sector changed in any way?

DD: I would definitely say there has been a huge improvement in terms of the skill set. I mean again if companies have engaged and they are training continually and they appreciate you know the benefits of it, it just means huge benefits to their training force, workforce, and as I said to the client. Sorry coming back to the question again.
**CK:** I was just asking if and how the skills and competencies have changed within the design sector since the start of Design Ireland Skillnet training?

**DD:** Of course! There has been huge changes in terms of what was just, first of all the offerings that were there to the sector and back in 2000 when this report was commissioned, just what’s available actually through the initiatives skill set, I mean the fact that it’s cost effective and you know, in terms of economies of scale and that we do have a wide range or wide suite of training and particularly as it’s quite a, like a fast-paced industry, and particularly because we have identified this gap in skills and if companies can appreciate it and have a mindset that you know they really do need to train, then they will realise that there is that gap and they do need to address it.

**CK:** Sure, and would Design Ireland Skillnets be aware of any barriers that might hinder such participation in CPD?

**DD:** Oh God yes, the biggest barrier would definitely be cost and more so now I’m afraid with the lack of funding to Design Ireland, but definitely cost is a huge barrier.

**CK:** Would that be cost to the individual or to the company?

**DD:** Cost to the individual and, both. I mean it would be applicable to both. To companies with cutbacks in training budgets it means that there is a lack of government funding to Design Ireland and also I suppose in terms of the numbers training, there’s always going to be again back to the volume and scale, and for the individual definitely, it’s a cost that they have to take on themselves and so that’s a pressure on a small sized medium company.

**CK:** And any other barriers besides cost?

**DD:** Time; certainly if you are a sole trader, small one and two sized businesses, time, I mean it’s time out of your output, you know time out of your working hours, contact hours.
So time is a huge barrier as well for a lot of people. And I would say, which I certainly experienced, another barrier is a sort of a mindset you know, a lack of understanding and appreciation of CPD and that to me was a huge challenge actually as network manager because apart from sort of the obvious reasons, I think a lot of people just really needed that mindset, really need to kind of engage and shortsightedness really you know, it’s a very qualified sector, they may not actually identify that there’s a skills gap with themselves, so as a result will not pursue anything in terms of training.

**CK:** So would you say there needs to be a cultural change within the sector to engage further with CPD?

**DD:** Completely, yeah definitely a cultural change is warranted and I suppose again that comes right down to the organisations, it needs to feed into the industry, the member companies need to engage in CPD.

**CK:** What importance does the membership of the Design Ireland Skillnets place on CPD?

**DD:** Well for us huge importance. Again when Design Ireland was set up it was you know, probably it underpinned the foundation of Design Ireland in a sense, it was a huge remit that we would provide you know, provision of CPD and for Design Ireland as we are that sort of umbrella organisation it meant that we were reaching out to all the affiliated bodies, all the design organisations, so for us it was one of the most important activities of the company.

**CK:** But from the membership point of view?

**DD:** For them it’s certainly I suppose again looking at the sort of the numbers, the companies, our members, the numbers we have trained over the last three or four years, for them it’s a huge change in knowledge, in attitude, in services they provide, and the feedback again comes right back to analysing this data, analysing and evaluating the training. We continually receive this information back that it has increased their knowledge, their training
skills, and it just means that again it’s beneficial to the employee and the employer and to your client.

**CK:** So would you say that those that have engaged in training through the Design Ireland Skillnets would see it as an important thing?

**DD:** Oh yeah, would see it as huge value, it adds value, completely.

**CK:** And is your CPD certified or accredited in any way?

**DD:** Yeah, we have various different programmes running and schedules and training. A lot of our technical training would be sort of certified by the product, Adobe or Microsoft, whereas our CPD programmes, the two main sort of CPD programmes which was a response to the sector in a sense of that higher level, are accredited at a Level 9 status on the National Framework of Qualifications. So I suppose really there’s a certification with every training day, but more of them are recognised in the NFQ.

**CK:** And out of the ones that are Level 9 recognised by the NFQ, are they certified through any educational body?

**DD:** Yeah, HETAC would have been the body that would have been applicable for both of our Master programmes and the Higher Education Authority. We would have had to again adhere to standards by all statutory bodies, so you know, that quality assurance is in place and is there to ensure I suppose that the qualifications are matched at home and abroad.

**CK:** So there’s is international recognition?

**DD:** Completely, an international recognition. DIT would be its own national awarding body for one of our Masters Programmes.

**CK:** Would you see any benefit to certification for individuals and employers?
DD: Individuals and employers?

CK: Yeah, like would they see the certification of the Masters programme as being an important thing?

DD: Hugely. For individuals definitely, it just means on a scale I suppose you know, it’s much more competitive for them and you have to keep that very competitive and professional edge in the industry. For an employer definitely accreditation gives them a different higher profile, a status through their employees and the employer. And again it dilutes right outside of the design community in a sense of it’s reaching the client.

CK: And finally what quality assurance do you have in place with regard to training standards that’s delivered by Design Ireland Skillnets?

DD: Quality assurance, well it can differ, depending… for the Masters, both of our Masters programmes that again is covered by all the statutory bodies.

CK: By HETAC.

DD: By HETAC and again it’s monitored on the National Framework of Qualifications and all those standards are in place. At a lower level quality assurance is addressed by Skillnets Limited themselves will actually appoint external evaluators to ensure we are adhering to all the standards at statutory level, national level, and international level. So they are continually monitoring us, and ourselves we will continually keep in touch with our members and ensure that we are achieving all the standards and providing the service at that kind of high standard’s

CK: That’s great Deirdre, many thanks for your time.

DD: Not at all you are welcome.
Appendix 12 - Survey Questions and Results (Visual Communications Employees)

Q1. How many years experience do you have as a designer?

- 0-3 years: 27.6%
- 4-6 years: 25.9%
- 7-9 years: 19%
- 10 or more years: 27.6%

Q2. Have you taken part in CPD activities in the previous 12 months?

- Yes: 63.8%
- No: 32.6%
Q3. If yes, how many CPD activities have you undertaken in the past 12 months?

- 57.1%: 1
- 23.8%: 2
- 14%: 3
- 4.8%: 4
- 5.3%: More than 5

Q4. Who paid for this?

- 56.5%: My employer
- 8.7%: We shared the expenses
- 34.8%: I did personally
Q5. Would you like to participate in more or less in CPD to maintain your skills and competencies as a designer?

![Pie chart showing 93.8% prefer more CPD](chart1.png)

Q6. What types of CPD activities have you participated in the past 12 months?

![Bar chart showing percentages of participation](chart2.png)
Q7. Do you consider there are any personal benefits to your participation CPD?

Q8. If yes, which do you see as appropriate benefits to you?.
Q9. Would you consider there are barriers to your participation in CPD?

- Yes: 84.5%
- No: 15.5%

Q10. If yes, which apply?

- Cost of training courses to me: 58.8%
- Employer not releasing me for training courses: 56.9%
- Limited types of training available to me: 25.5%
- Location and access to training centres: 29.4%
- Timing of training courses clash with work: 37.3%
- Inability to participate in training: 5.9%
- Workload: 49.0%
Q11. If the above barriers were removed would you participate more or less in CPD given the opportunity?

88.7% More
11.3% About the same

Q12. Would you consider CPD for the maintenance of your skills and competencies as a designer important?

93.8% Yes
1.7% No
Q13. In terms of learning through CPD, is certification (eg City and Guilds, FETAC, 3rd Level Institution etc) important to you for validating/accreditation of learning outcomes?

- Yes: 53.4%
- No: 46.6%
Appendix 13 - Survey Questions and Results (Visual Communications Employers)

Q1. How many years has your company been in business?

Q2. How many design/creative staff are there in your company?
Q3. Have any of your design/creative staff taken part in CPD activities in the previous 12 months?

- Yes: 40%
- No: 60%

Q4. Who paid for this?

- The company: 85.7%
- The staff member: 14.3%
- Both: 0%
Q5. What types of CPD activities have your design/creative staff participated in in the past 12 months?

- 83.3% Software
- 50.0% Management
- 50.0% Communication Skills
- 33.3% Finance
- 33.3% Marketing
- 16.7% HR

Q6. In your opinion, are there benefits to CPD for your staff for your company?
Q7. If yes, which do you see as appropriate benefits for your company?

- Increased Sales: 20.0%
- Better teamworking: 30.0%
- Better staff retention: 40.0%
- Better skills and competences of staff: 100%
- Better productivity: 60.0%
- Offering new services to clients: 30.0%
- Being more competitive: 40.0%

Q8. In your opinion are there barriers to your staff participating in CPD?

- Yes: 80%
- No: 20%
Q9. If yes, which apply?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents for various barriers to CPD participation.]

- 87.5% for Cost of training to my company
- 75.0% for Limited types of training available
- 62.5% for Loss of productivity in my company with staff absence at training
dates
- 37.5% for Location and access to training centers
- 50.0% for Timing of training courses clash with working schedule
- 50.0% for Motivation of staff to participate in training
- 50.0% for Workload

Q10. If the above barriers were removed would like to see your staff participate more or less in CPD?

![Pie chart showing 100% preference for more participation in CPD.]

- 100% for More
Q11. Would you consider CPD for the maintenance of your design staff skills and competencies important?

Q12. In terms of learning through CPD, is certification (eg City and Guilds, FETAC, 3rd Level Institution etc) important to your company for validating/accreditation of learning outcomes?