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Theme paper: Students, Teachers and Service Users theme (Lifelong learning).

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**Title:** Finding their way: An examination of the lived experience of nurses gaining access to and completing CPD.

**Key words:** Lived experience of CPD, Evaluation of CPD experience, Chain-of-Response model, Lifelong learning.

**Summary:** This paper explores the lived experience of nurses undertaking Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in England. The aim of the research on which this paper is based was to gain an understanding of the lived experience of undertaking CPD from the qualified nurses own perspective. The work builds upon recent work by Bahn (2007a, b), Tame (2009), Balls (2010), Ellis and Nolan (2005) and Drey et al (2009).

**Methods and Methodological approach:** A descriptive phenomenological approach was utilized to explore the experience of qualified nurses. Data were collected through unstructured in-depth interviews and participants were followed up six months later by a semi structured telephone interview. The interview process was developed from Wengraf's (2001) work in order to ensure data collected was derived from the participants experience rather than influenced by questionnaire or structured interview. Data was analysed using Giorgi's (2009) modified Husserlian approach and Cross's (1981) Chain-of-Response (COR) model.

**Results:** Data analysis showed how some participants had greater success at accessing and completing CPD than others. Three constituents were identified arising from the data which described the participants' journey. They were the First Steps, Undertaking CPD and Where Next? Issues around access to CPD, the quest for graduate status, protected study time, coping with learning and teaching strategies / technologies and dissemination of learning were identified as key issues within the student experience.

Participants who described access to supportive networks and a high degree of control over their work and personal lives were more successful in accessing and completing CPD. The role of others in providing support was seen as crucial and the term Influential Helpful Other is proposed to describe those individuals who gave active support to empower the nurse in their CPD journey.

Critical areas in the data were around the negotiation and interaction between employer and nurse about shared goals for CPD, a discussion on commitment and support while undertaking CPD and a consideration of evaluating the outcome of CPD for both the individual and the organisation. Developed from the findings the modified Chain-of-Response model is proposed for use in post-registration CPD in nursing as a model to facilitate closer employer / employee interaction through the CPD journey.

**Conclusion:** This study adds to the knowledge about the experience of undertaking CPD and has relevance for educational providers of CPD and health service employers. Significantly the issue of dissociation between the individual nurses' aspirations and practice needs were highlighted and the modified Chain-of-Response model is proposed as a possible approach to bridge this gap.

How this work contributes to knowledge development in this theme. This work:

- Explores from the participant's perspective the lived experience of undertaking CPD
- Identifies the need for evaluation of CPD experience and learning gained by nurse and manager
- Identifies the role of networks, personal autonomy and role of others in enabling successful participation

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