**YGT episode 228**

You're listening to, you've got this episode 228. Welcome to you. You've got this, a weekly podcast for higher education professionals looking to increase their confidence and capacity for juggling the day-to-day demands of an academic life. I'm your host, Dr. Katie Linder. In this episode, I thought I would share a little bit about my process for recently taking a, another credentialing exam for becoming a certified professional in talent development.

So I thought in this episode, I would talk a little bit about what is this credential? How did I learn about it? How did I go about studying for the exam and what are the results? So, um, First of all, this is a credential that I learned about through one of my colleagues, Laura Pasquini, and she has actually blogged about this pretty significantly.

So I'm going to go ahead and link to her resources in the show notes, but Laura and I have known each other for a long time. And Laura, um, previously was an instructional designer, has since moved into industry and she had pursued this credential. And the way it was kind of initially first described to me was this is a credential that helps to translate skills that you might have in higher education into industry.

If that's kind of what your, your background and situation is because there's a lot of overlap between talent development and faculty development. So I was kind of drawn into it initially because of that, when I started looking at it, I thought, Oh, there's a lot of stuff in here that I already know. Um, and that's really a part of my background.

So for example, The, um, the kind of model that this is built around has three areas. One is building personal capability. One is developing professional capability, and one is impacting organizational capability. And each of these three areas has different kind of sub domains within it. So the one around personal capability includes things like.

Project management, lifelong learning, compliance, and ethical behavior, cultural awareness and inclusion, collaboration, and leadership, emotional intelligence and decision-making and communication. And then there's kind of like various things within each of those category. On the organizational capability area, you have things like business, insight consulting and business partnering, organizational development and culture.

Talent strategy and management performance improvement, change management, data and analytics and future readiness. And then in the developing professional capability part. And this is probably the part where I felt most aligned with. They have learning sciences, instructional design, training delivery, and facilitation technology, application, knowledge management, career, and leadership development.

Coaching and evaluating impact. Now I'm going to link to this model in the show notes, in case anyone wants to look at it in more depth. And one of the things that's kind of neat about the association for talent development, which was who created this model and who is offering this credential is they have given a bit of a self-assessment where you can kind of walk through the model and see, are there areas that you.

Feel pretty confident in, are there competencies that you want to further explore? So one of the first steps that I did when I was seriously thinking about taking this exam, Because I went through the self-assessment and I looked and kind of rated myself now, admittedly, this was not super helpful to me because I ended up scoring really high on the self-assessment, which, um, didn't didn't help me.

It didn't help me to understand kind of areas that I felt like, um, I needed to kind of do further study with on the exam, but the, um, association for talent development has a couple other tools that really did help me when I was putting together my study plan. The first tool is they have an outline of all the information that's covered on the exam.

And so you can look through and see, are there areas that just, when I read about these things, I don't necessarily know what they mean, and I might want to do a little bit of a deeper dive. Then they have a reading list that kind of aligns with those areas. And it allows you to pick certain readings, whether that's books or articles that you could then read to kind of further develop your knowledge in those areas.

So when I was putting together a bit of a study plan for this exam, I focused on a few different texts and, and this would be very personalized to you. If you decided to go in the direction of doing this credential, you'd really have to think about what's your background. You know, what do you have experience in?

But based on my experience, which is very heavy in faculty development, the areas I decided to focus on were, um, there was a book, the learner centered instructional designer. Which happens to be one that I contributed a chapter to. And so this was a great excuse to read it. There are a lot of instructional design theories and kind of jargon and vocabulary that I was never really formally trained in.

I feel like I have a pretty surface level understanding of instructional design and I've worked with a lot of instructional designers. I've researched instructional designers, but I really liked having a comprehensive overview. So I decided to read that book. Um, the association for talent development also has a book called the foundations of talent development, which I found to be really helpful because it did give me an overview of.

What was some of the language and kind of priorities of things that talent development professionals are thinking of when they're really coming more on the industry side of things. And this book is, um, it's kind of like a textbook. I mean, it's, it's pretty dense, but I actually really enjoyed it. So that, that said something to me as I was reading it and just really getting into the topics that I was like, okay, this is actually something I want to pursue because I find this information really interesting.

Another couple of books I read that were really very within the talent development field, as there's a book called the art and science of training, and then another book called four levels of training evaluation, which again, super fascinating to me. I mean, whatever that says about me, I found these things to be really interesting.

They were directly applicable to my current work. I could see them directly applying to work that I'm going to do in the future. Um, so that was really good. Like, I, I really enjoyed digging into those and I'll link to all of these in the show notes, in case you want to take a look at any of them. I also decided to read a book called design for how people learn, which also kind of tied in with the instructional design pieces that I wanted to brush up on.

And then I also read a compilation on emotional intelligence and leadership, um, from Harvard business review. Now I've talked about in the past emotional intelligence is an area that I don't feel like I have, um, kind of natural abilities in. I feel like I have learned abilities. And so it was really helpful for me to do a little brush up on that.

And then the last book that I decided to pick up is called the fifth discipline, the art and practice of the learning organization. And this really helped me to kind of approach things from more of a. Systems thinking perspective because that book has really focused on systems thinking. So it allowed me to kind of back away from, um, the kind of more detailed stuff that I was looking at and kind of have a more forest approach.

If you think about like the forest for the trees, I was backing off and kind of looking at the forest as a whole versus digging into some of the individual trees that some of the other books were allowing me to do. So I started to, um, think about taking this exam. I think I scheduled it in the very beginning of 2021, and I gave myself about six weeks, uh, to study.

And part of that was, I did feel pretty confident about a lot of the material. And I felt like my background in faculty development gave me a lot of hands-on experience with things like training. And I just had finished that project management exam and there was some project management stuff in here too.

So I felt like if I read these books, I would probably be in a good spot. So, what I did was I literally broke down the books chapter by chapter and I assigned myself different chapters in different weeks. And I gave that deadlines just to make sure I was going to meet the deadlines before I had to take the exam.

And I actually recently blogged about this. I wrote a blog post called assigned readings, which basically talked about how up until this point in the year, I've read about 20 books. Um, and part of the reason for that is because I'm assigning myself reading and making sure that I'm really. Finding time to fit it into my schedule in a way that really works for me.

So I was able to assign myself all of the reading and I actually ended up finishing it a little bit early, which gave me about a week to just kind of process the information before I actually took the exam and sat for the exam. Now the exam itself. Um, in addition to kind of an annual membership that you would have for the association for talent development, I think all together, the exam and the membership were around a thousand dollars.

Um, maybe a little bit more, maybe a little bit less. I can't. Yeah. I can't remember. Exactly. Um, and so it's an investment just like PMP is an investment. Um, I did not feel like I needed to purchase an official training course from ATD. I did not feel like I needed to purchase specific, um, books or readings from them.

Um, the foundations of talent development book that I mentioned, I had actually gotten that a year or two back as, uh, a holiday gift. It was on my Amazon wishlist. So I had all of these books, I wasn't going out and really purchasing more. Although actually, I think I did purchase the fifth discipline about the learning organization.

So there were a couple that I purchased, like on Kindle, but a lot of the stuff I happened to have, and so I was really kind of cobbling together, a set of study materials from things that were already available to me. And then I just worked my way through them. Now I think that part of what gave me a little more confidence about this exam versus the PMP exam is that I felt like I had a lot of applied background that I knew the language and it wasn't as much of a.

Translation as what I was doing in the PNP, um, versus with this exam, there was a lot of stuff that the language crosses over when you're talking about learning theory and things like that. It's, it's kind of across the board, you're using the same language and that was really helpful for me. So the exam itself is proctored.

And if you listen to them previous episode on taking the PMP, you know, that I was pretty anxious about it and I like didn't get a good night's sleep the night before. And it just, it wasn't a good situation. Well, when I took the CPTD exam this time, I w it was much better. I knew what to expect. I knew what the Proctor situation was going to be.

I had a great night's sleep the night before, you know, I just didn't have the same experience at all. So that felt really good. Although I will say after the exam, my partner said, let's not do any more of those because it stresses me out. Like he gets stressed when I have to take a proctored exam because you're not supposed to have any noise in the background.

He has to like, not come in the room where I am like, it's, it's kind of stressful for him. So I was like, okay, I don't, I don't feel like I'm going to take a proctored exam for a while. So in this particular exam, you have a set of, um, multiple choice questions. There's 90 of those. And then you also have this set of more like situational questions where they give you a scenario and then you have to choose, like, what are the things that you would do in that scenario?

And you can choose more than one thing. And then once you say, you know, what you would do in that scenario that you click next and it gives you like another layer to that scenario and it can have up to three to four layers. So you're kind of like, um, it's almost like a branching kind of situation where it's like, you know, based on what you're being told in the first part of the scenario, it could impact what you do in the second part of the scenario.

And then the third part of the fourth part of the scenario. So at the end of the 90 multiple choice questions, you have 10 of those scenarios that each have multiple parts, and you do have a 10 minute break in the middle of the exam, which I basically took to just get up and like quickly run to the bathroom and come back.

Like I just wanted to have this thing be done. Um, I think that with these kinds of things, when I'm ready and I feel like I'm, I'm ready to take the exam. I just kind of want to get it over with, um, and, and know my results. So I started the exam and I would say it probably took me about two hours.

Altogether to do all of the questions you get a full three hours. So I was working a little bit ahead of the schedule. Another really big difference between this experience. And the one that I had for PMP is with PMP. I was doing a lot of simulations and I was using like a training simulator. There's not one of those for the CPTD exam.

So really you're just studying and then taking the exam and, and they have some practice questions on their website. And I did pass that. Um, when I, when I took the practice questions, but it's not a full exam, there's not multiple options to kind of train yourself within an exam environment. So, um, I went into this kind of like hopeful, but really not sure how it was going to go.

So similar also to the PMP exam. And I will go ahead and link my, my recent podcast episode, where I talk about those results as well. In case you want to kind of hear that in combination with this kind of debriefing experience, when I was in the exam itself for PMP. I didn't know how I was doing. I really had like, no sense, no confidence of like, if I was passing, if I was not passing and I ended up passing that exam, um, and with a relatively high score, which surprised me with this exam, I had the same experience.

Like I was in it and I was like, well, I'm, I'm taking my best. Yes. I mean, it was like an educated guess of what I thought the answer should be. And I, I felt relatively confident. I would say there were a lot of questions where I was able to discount at least 50% of the choices in terms of the multiple choice.

And then I would just kind of go with whatever was left, but it was kind of a tricky exam. I mean, it's definitely not. Easy, um, to take an exam, especially if I hadn't done the studying, I th I'm not sure I would have passed it. Um, if I hadn't read these other books and really kind of thought about it from these other angles, and there were definitely like, um, Taxonomies and structures, talent development, like different levels of evaluation and things like that.

That if I hadn't known those things, I wouldn't have known how to answer a lot of the questions. So, um, I would definitely recommend reading the foundations of talent development and the four levels of training evaluation. If you're planning on taking this exam, um, both of those things were really helpful to me.

Now, even with the study that I did, there were a couple of questions that mentioned things. I had no idea what they were. Um, I, it was like, you know, so-and-so's principles of, of XYZ. And I was like, I've never heard of that. Um, and, and maybe I read about it and just forgot, but there's going to be stuff on the 6:00 AM that if you're not coming out of this field, and if you're not, you know, really taking, you know, more formalized training or classes, you know, to study for the exam, there's going to be some stuff that you probably don't know.

And you're just going to have to take your best guess. So, how did it go? Well, at the end of the, the exam, when I took the PMP, there was a, uh, immediate, like screen that showed up that was like, congratulations, you passed the PMP. So it was like this automatic, you knew, I assumed that that would be the case for this exam.

And that is not what happened. It took me to like a Pearson survey, which I took and, and then it closed out and like, I didn't get the results. And I was like, What does that mean? Like how do I find these results? Like, I had no idea where to go to get this information and I thought it was kind of immediate.

So I was, I was a little confused and a little concerned, actually that I had somehow, like not ended the exam correctly and I was going to have to take it again. Or like, I, you know, this proctored exam business is just, if you're not doing it all the time, or if you don't have a lot of experience with it, it can definitely be nerve wracking.

So I'm like waiting in my email to see like, is an email going to come through that tells me this. I find a section of the ATD website that does show me results, but nothing is coming up yet. And then all of a sudden I get this email and I'm like, okay, let me look at the email. And I did indeed. Pass this exam.

They gave me a score. I have no idea what it means. I have to look it up. Like, I'm not sure, you know, what the overall score is. So I need to kind of look at this and see, I it's possible. I kind of pass this by the skin of my teeth. I don't know. It doesn't really matter. I'm just really excited that I passed.

The exam. Um, and then I'm able to kind of move on from this particular credentialing experience. And so once you pass the exam, you do have, um, kind of recertification things that you can do over three years. They want you to collect a certain number of what they call points, which is basically just time you're spending on, um, continued professional development in this area.

And I need to look into that a little bit more just to kind of see what that looks like, but you do get an official badge. You do get to put these like, kind of, um, this acronym after your name, CPTD, to say that you are a certified professional in talent development. And, um, it just feels like a huge weight off that.

I pass this on the first try, because whenever I go into these exams, I did the same thing with the PMP. If I'm really, I don't want to be. Cocky. I don't want to be like overly confident and then just like crush myself if I don't pass this thing on the first attempt. So I always go into it basically telling myself it's okay.

Like if you don't pass it on the first round, You can pay to take it again. And yeah, you usually do have to pay to take these things. Again, it's not as much, you're not paying the same amount, but you are paying money for the opportunity to take it again. So obviously I don't want to do that. I want to actually just pass it and be done, but I also try to remove that pressure for myself of just saying like, it's okay.

Like you can take it, you can see how it goes. So it's an, it's an extra even kind of more of a relief when I do pass these because I'm preparing myself to not. So then when it does happen, I'm like even more excited that it has happened. So I hope this is kind of interesting and useful for some of you. I know some of you listening have kind of thought about taking this exam.

I've heard from some people who have been asking me some questions about it. So, um, I would encourage you to explore the association for talent development website. I'll link to a bunch of stuff in the show notes. So you can kind of take a look at some of these things, um, and see if this might be a fit for you.

I think if you're thinking about. Taking kind of a transition or a leap into industry from higher ed and you want to work in the realm of like learning and development or leadership development or talent development. This seems to be something that would show up in terms of like, um, like position descriptions and things like that, they would be looking for this kind of credential.

And so I think that that's something else to consider is just, if this could be like a next professional step for you, for me, I felt like this paired really well with the PMP, um, that I just completed. I think it also really pairs well with the disciplined agile, um, training that I did. And I can say, um, this is probably the last credential that I'm going to pursue for a little while.

I also recently finished my yoga teacher training the 500 hour and in the middle of a meditation training. Um, but other than that, like no exams in my future, you know, this is really kind of me wrapping up. I think that season for myself. And so it feels really good to have that be done. So I'll link to a bunch of stuff in the show notes.

I welcome your questions. You can always email me at hello at Dr. Katie linder.com. You can tweet to me at Katie double underscore Linder, and you can connect with me on Instagram at Katie underscore Linder, any way you contact me. I'd always love to hear from you. And especially if you've done this credential.

If you're thinking about doing this credential, have half a day answer any additional questions you might have. Thanks so much for listening.

Thanks for listening to this episode of you've got this show notes and a transcript for this episode can be found at Dr. Katie linder.com/podcast. If you found this episode helpful, please also consider rating and or reviewing the show in iTunes. Thanks for listening.