

DESIGNED TO WORK



An integrated approach to skills development

Suggested approach for developing a curriculum framework based on the competency-based approach.

This curriculum framework should be designed by an andragogical committee, ideally consisting of the project manager or coordinator, a specialist in the targeted occupation and an experienced basic skills instructor.

Andragogical considerations and issues:

- Designing interventions and educational practices that facilitate intervention with job seekers with various skill levels and profiles, but similar socio-professional integration needs.
- Developing a curriculum framework by including conditions that facilitate the integration of job seekers in the training project.
 - The training project quickly leads to employment; training period is predetermined (9 months or less).
 - The training project includes one or more forms of recognition by the labour market, training institutions and government authorities (e.g., professional qualification).
- Associating, in one single intervention, general skills and specialized skills development: Is it possible to design a curriculum framework that illustrates that general skills play a fundamental and strategic role in acquiring and developing specialized skills in order to support the performance of tasks in entry-level jobs for the targeted occupation?
- Reconciling the andragogical approaches specific to the identity and mandate of each training partner in order to come up with a vision or approach that is consistent with the training project as focal point.

1. Implementation

Step 1: First curriculum component - skills development sequence and training structure

- Based on the skills reference document, the andragogical committee determines what are the relationships between the skills to be developed. Here, it is a matter of understanding which skills are prerequisites to developing other skills, which ones have no strict prerequisite, which ones can be developed simultaneously, etc. The committee makes a diagram illustrating that sequence.
- Based on the skills development sequence diagram, the committee establishes the training and learning structure. This overall structure gives an initial idea of the curriculum. Then, the committee must verify the skills organization logic.¹
- The committee then determines the training durations that will be retained for developing and learning each skill. This duration must include the time spent on theoretical training, practical learning and learning assessment related to each skill.
- Once we have the skills development sequence diagram and the training durations, we can develop the first curriculum framework component that presents skills in a logical development order and the anticipated training durations for each of them.² The skill thereby forms the basis of training organization and management.

Note : In a context where the andragogical committee works from existing training curricula, it must be determined how much these curricula need to be modified (and integrated if there are more than one coming from the various partners) in order to ensure that a new integrated and adapted curriculum is tailored to the skills development sequence developed.

Step 2: Validation and recognition

- The committee validates the coherence of the first curriculum framework component and its educational feasibility with the training partners. The views on coherence and feasibility can focus on specific aspects:
 - the respect of a logical learning complexity progression in the skills development order presented;

¹ The diagram illustrating the training sequence helps take into account, for a given skill, the learning already done, the learning made simultaneously and the learning still to come. The positions taken will significantly affect all subsequent andragogical choices.

² A detailed document called "Training Curriculum" will be developed by the team of instructors while developing and delivering course content. The Training Curriculum helps describe in detail the training process and specify teaching, learning and learning assessment procedures.

- the internal coherence of skills; the existence of functional and relevant relationships between skills;
- the training duration assigned to each skill;
- the feasibility of translating the first curriculum framework component into a potential training curriculum; or to adapt existing curricula accordingly;
- the overall coherence, etc.
- The validation of the first curriculum framework component with employers helps ensure the coherence of skills articulation with the occupation tasks and work situations. Furthermore, it helps explore, with the workplace and training partners, the implementation of a form of recognized certification for the nature of the targeted intervention (professional qualification or certification recognized by employers, ministries and institutions), which represents a major andragogical issue.

Step 3: Second curriculum component - continuing the development of the curriculum framework by including a learning outcome reference document built on the previously identified tasks and skills

- The andragogical committee develops a learning outcome reference document. This document lists the targeted learning as well as how it contributes to achieving different development goals: professional, personal and academic development.
- The andragogical committee determines how the intervention will allow learners to apply their learning. The training project is as close as possible to the work context in the targeted employment sector; learners gradually learn to behave as they would in the workplace (the most authentic learning contexts possible). The project regularly allows learners to apply theoretical learning in concrete situations, the skills to be developed (real work situations, scenarios, workshops, laboratories, etc.). Learning outcomes must therefore reflect the andragogical strategy of learning application that is prescribed in the competency-based approach.
- At this stage, it is also a matter of seeing how general skills will be strategically integrated in the training, in order to support learners in their training process. Learning outcomes will have to be identified accordingly.

Note : In a context where the andragogical committee works from existing training curricula, it must be determined how much the learning outcomes of these curricula need to be modified in order to ensure that the learning outcomes of a new integrated and adapted curriculum are tailored to the previous andragogical choices.

Step 4: Continuing the development of the curriculum framework by including an assessment plan for learning and targeted skills

- The curriculum framework should provide for a learning and skills assessment plan that is coherent both with the competency-based approach and the previously identified skills profiles for integration in the targeted employment sector.
- The assessment plan must provide for different assessment strategies that are coherent and compatible with the learning outcome reference document, as well as its underlying training strategies and components.
- The assessment plan must also provide for assessment strategies that take into account the target clientele's skills profile. In this respect, the assessment plan:
 - also helps establish assessment conditions that are specific to job seekers in order to avoid certain difficulties with writing;
 - helps establish the conditions for passing (criterion level, passing level) according to the skills profiles of the targeted job seekers, taking into account the andragogical and administrative issues of each partner (service providers and funders).

The assessment plan must provide for different types of assessment:

- An intake assessment: An initial assessment of some essential skills or language skills should be done before accepting learners in the program, in order to determine if they have a minimum level of basic skills required to participate and succeed in the program.
- An ongoing assessment that should include:
 - a summative assessment component based on skills application in real tasks (observation in the workplace, in laboratories or in simulation activities);
 - an assessment of vocational or generic skills during all training project activities (systematic observations);
 - learner self-assessment activities;
 - a series of ongoing and formative assessment activities related to courses offered and important learning activities throughout the project;
 - if needed, a formal and specific summative assessment for an institutional qualification (e.g., provincial exam);
 - a portfolio to help document learning through reflective practice, assessment results, support documents, employment integration documents (e.g., résumé), etc.
 - a prior learning assessment recognition mechanism, if possible...

Step 5: Continuing the development of the curriculum framework by including a co-operative education mechanism

- The curriculum framework should provide for a co-operative education mechanism that is both coherent with the competency-based approach and that builds on the previously identified skills profiles for integration in the targeted employment sector.
- The curriculum framework provides for work placements:
 - Job shadowing programs are usually short and occur at the beginning or middle of the training.
 - Workplace integration or insertion placements³ are designed to give learners a first work experience and facilitate their workplace integration. These placements generally occur towards the end of training.
 - Placements with employers must allow learners to get work experience during the training period and the project staff to assess the transfer of the learning targeted by the training project in an authentic situation.
- The training project is in liaison with an employer network to allow learners to explore different work environments and experiences, and to make themselves known to potential employers. The training project explores with these employers the roles they could play in the training project:
 - proactive work placement opportunities for learners;
 - assessment role: assessing learning transfer in the performance of tasks in a work context during work placements;
 - potential job opportunities after the work placements.

³ Workplace integration placements allow learners to integrate, for a few weeks, a regular workplace where they will be associated with different professional tasks and will participate in performing them.

2. Example

Approach used by the Centre d'apprentissage et de perfectionnement of Hawkesbury ⁴

Integrating the right educational resources to develop targeted skills

Once the profile of skills needed to become a Food Services Assistant and to integrate that field of work was identified, the partners' challenge consisted of constructing an andragogical model allowing the development of multiple types of skills in an integrated fashion, in one single educational intervention, and in relation to the needs of the targeted job seekers and the nature of the occupation. The pursuit of this andragogical model involves a second level of integration: the establishment of strategic partnerships to ensure appropriate services are shared and offered in a simultaneous and integrated manner. At this second level of integration, the practitioners contemplated which strategic resources of programs and services available to partners must be incorporated in order for the intervention to ensure the development of the previously identified skills. How could the resources of these programs and services be integrated into a single intervention so they would allow for the development of all the targeted skills?

Designing training delivery

As noted earlier, the original Food Services Assistant certificate required 180 hours of theoretical training and 30 hours of on-the-job training; it targeted adults already working in this sector of activity. The certificate, which was offered in partnership, was adapted to an adult clientele with low literacy skills and no work experience in this field. The vocational component was spread out over 330 hours (150 hours were added to the original certificate) and 198 hours of general training were added to develop general skills and support the vocational component. Lastly, the on-the-job training was extended to 105 hours. The first Fast Track program to train food services assistants included therefore 22 weeks of theoretical and practical training, in the classroom and laboratory, and 3 weeks of on-the-job training. The classroom and laboratory training was spread over 4 days/week, for a total of 24 hours/weeks. The training was divided as follows:

Cours	Heures/semaine	Total
Volet professionnel (Introduction aux services alimentaires, Salubrité et sécurité, Préparation des aliments et équipements, Nutrition, Gestion des services alimentaires, Laboratoires, etc.)	15 heures/semaine X 22 semaines	330
Volet de formation de base (communication écrite et technologie informatique, soutien à l'emploi, préparation au stage, communication orale)	9 heures/semaine X 22 semaines	198
Total des heures de formation		528
Stages en milieu de travail		105
Total des heures d'apprentissage		633

⁴ "Towards an Integrated Model to Support the Literacy Development of Francophones in Canada"; FCAF-RESDAC, 2011.