DESIGNED TO WORK

An integrated approach to skills development

Suggested approach for developing and delivering an integrated training curriculum

1. A facilitating framework

The andragogical principles that are rooted in the integrated skills development approach have inspired the conceptual foundations and values underlying the curriculum framework. The curriculum framework and its underlying principles shape the development of the training curriculum and the teaching and learning strategies that will be implemented in the training project. As a guide, here are some of the principles to remember:

- The course design and development help provide training and learning activities within a vocational, specialized or skills training adapted to the basic skill levels of job seekers.
- The training project provides learners with the required support and takes into account some psycho-social barriers to learning and their difficulties with writing (teaching of success).
- The vocational training project favours practical activities and learning projects adapted to the labour market reality. The training approach is based on practice in close relation with the skills identified with the labour market partners. The learning environment helps recreate as much as possible the real work context, which includes performing tasks specific to the targeted occupation.
- The courses and activities are developed while constantly bearing in mind the way learning will be applied, both in training (scenarios) and in employment.
- We promote learning and skills building and integration. We seek to develop a training curriculum that strategically promotes the development of general skills in order to better support learners in their specialized training process.
- We seek to develop general skills in a transversal and fluid manner across all activities. (Example: a small group assignment can help develop the ability to communicate and to work with others.)
- We aim to show learners that vocational training is an important social integration and personal development path.
- We seek to get learners actively involved and make them take responsibility for their learning. We aim to take into account and reinvest learners' experiential learning. We build on learners' self-assessment ability, and we strengthen this ability by

encouraging moments of reflection about the learning made.

- Admission requirements are determined based on learners' skills profiles and not on their levels of educational attainment.

2. Implementing the competency-based approach in the intervention

Andragogical planning

- Instructors must also be aware of the andragogical principles of the curriculum framework and find ways to take them into account in the educational and learning planning.
- Although, in general, an instructor is responsible only for part of the training, it is important that all instructors be aware of the whole training project to better understand the distribution of training objects, markers, indicators and assessment criteria as a whole. Andragogical planning thus involves a good understanding of the training project andragogical model and the use of all documents and other resources available.
- The pedagogical planning process must begin with a careful study of the skills reference document and skills development sequence diagram. Instructors may wish to review all skills to be developed by the training project, in order to get an overall picture and better understand the relationships between general and specialized skills as well as the functional relationships that are presented there. Among other things, they must fully understand the general order of skills development and identify the skills that are prerequisites to others, those that have no strict prerequisite and those that can be developed simultaneously.
- Instructors may wish to organize the distribution of intervention fields among themselves: structuring training, identifying the main contents and identifying the main learning activities that each could apply. It is then a matter of establishing a chronological order for teaching the different objects, developing learning activities and producing learning materials. Instructors will have to establish the **chronological teaching order** that appears the most desirable and that is coherent with the whole project and compatible with the planned activities and sequences for all courses.
- Instructors must define the main criteria, strategies and assessment approaches to implement. They must determine the most appropriate time to conduct assessments, select the types of assessment to use, identify measurable and observable tasks and activities, and develop assessment tools based on the selected criteria, in a way that is coherent with the whole project and compatible with the activities of all courses.
- Each instructor must plan the material organization of their teaching.

The various types of targeted skills

- Instructors must identify in the lesson plans (for all courses) the skills to be developed. The latter must correspond to the skills profiles targeted by the training project for the targeted employment sector.
- All types of skills (technical/specialized, generic, essential and second-language skills) will be taken into account in the lesson plans.

- The learners' needs in order to integrate the targeted workplace determine at which degree each type of skill will be developed and how each course will take it into account: instructors should know which place essential, generic, second-language, and technical/specialized skills occupy in each course in order to meet the learners' integration, communication and interaction needs in the workplace.

Learning by doing; skill development through skill application

- Instructors must create several practical activities that allow learners to **apply** and update the development of all types of targeted skills.
- Training and learning activities are made as close as possible of the work context in the targeted employment sector; learners gradually learn to behave as they would in the workplace (the most authentic andragogical learning contexts).
  - ➤ Training and learning approaches allow learners to make easy connections between the learning to achieve in the courses, and the tasks to perform and the skills required in the workplace.
  - ➤ Some training and learning activities allow learners to apply the skills to be developed in concrete situations (real work situations, scenarios, simulations, workshops/laboratories, etc.), in order to facilitate the transfer of learning in activities that are coherent with the training project purposes of workplace integration.

Integrated skills development

- The skills profile targeted by each course complements the skills profile targeted in the other courses of the training project.
- Training and learning approaches allow learners to **make easy connections between the learning to achieve across courses**. Some learning approaches are complementary between the different courses; these approaches are identified and prepared as a team.
- The development of all types of skills is covered as much as possible in the integrated training and learning approaches. Learning approaches that target more specifically technical and specialized skills development are developed in a manner to encourage the development of essential, generic and second-language skills that are naturally embedded, sometimes through tasks to perform within specific approaches. These learning approaches help observe more easily the evolution of basic skills development in an authentic task context.
- Each course includes activities or workshops targeting the development of generic skills (and some specialized skills); however, the development of these skills should be articulated for the whole training project.
- Training and learning activities for all courses promote the development of self-training and self-learning abilities in learners (learning to learn) in order to develop the generic skill of "continuous learning", which is of vital importance in today's workplace.

3. Learner assessment: principles and conditions

An integrated assessment

- All targeted skills can be assessed at all times during courses and learning activities; observation and feedback activities can be carried out unexpectedly at different times of the project.
- Each instructor and practitioner should share the responsibility of developing and observing generic skills related with the targeted employment sector and supporting the employability approach.

Assessment conditions adapted to the training project andragogical principles

- **Intake assessments:** an initial assessment of some basic skills should be done before accepting learners in the program, in order to determine if they have a minimum level of these skills to participate and succeed in the program.
    - This level should be determined based on the skills profile of the targeted employment sector (skills gaps to fill) and the nature of the curriculum framework developed. An interview is suggested in order to identify if some psycho-social and situational barriers could affect participant success.
    - Initial assessment results can, on the one hand, help assess the participant's program eligibility. On the other hand, they allow instructors to get a better knowledge of the participants' basic skill levels and adjust pedagogical planning accordingly.
- **Ongoing learner assessment strategies:** Targeted skills are continuously assessed by specific assessment activities within each course and through other activities of the training project (work placements, integrated projects, etc.).
    - Ongoing learner assessment activities are planned according to the learning sequences proposed in the curriculum framework.
    - Assessment activities must reflect learners' progress and ability to transfer learning in concrete and real applications related to the training project.
    - Assessment and scoring conditions must be strategically developed in order to avoid difficulties with writing. Therefore, it is necessary to establish conditions for passing (criterion level, passing level) that can reconcile learners' basic skill levels with the administrative imperatives of each partner (service providers and funders) as well as employers' requirements.
    - All the targeted generic skills (and some technical skills) are strategically assessed at any time during each course and other activities of the training project.
- Ongoing learner assessment activities include frequent learning observations (application, transfer, progress, etc.). Learner observation processes are critical to the project, because they help do the following:
    - observing and documenting learning transfers and applications made in authentic situations (simulations, laboratories, work placements, practical assignments);
    - observing and monitoring individual needs;
    - ensuring that learners respect participation conditions;

o observing inappropriate behaviours for the training project and the workplace (report them if required).

4. Training strategies to support workplace insertion

- Courses make explicit links with work placements: courses identify the learning transfer objectives in the workplace and schedule assessment activities to observe learning transfers and the demonstration of the required skills.
- Work placements should include a workplace assessment mechanism; the training project includes an assessment device for learner skills (developed by the program), implemented by instructors, with the participation of employers (data collection; e.g., observation of participant).
- Work placements are supported by workplace support visits made by a program representative (instructor or coordinator) in order to ensure that the placement conditions allow learning transfer and demonstration of the required skills, as well as resolve conflicts if required.
- The project should provide a work placement guide including:
  o a placement contract signed by the learner, the employer and a program representative;
  o the conditions of a support mechanism for learners and employers during work placements;
  o a workplace assessment mechanism during work placements including an assessment device for learner skills (developed by the program; observation grid, etc.) and the active participation of employers and a designated instructor (data collection; e.g., observation of the participant);
  o a feedback mechanism for employers and placement participants, which help adapt the program to labour market needs, gather workplace materials facilitating learning material development, and recruit potential instructors or learners;
  o a workplace support mechanism after hiring; the program supports learners and employers during the year after hiring (follow-up, scheduled visits, etc.).

Example
Developing skill-related knowledge, know-how and behaviours in order to support task performance

Given the multidimensional aspect of skills, learning activities target the development of a range of knowledge, know-how and behaviours that support skill development.

Task performance scenario:
An office clerk who must serve a customer having difficulty understanding the invoice received.

Skills involved:
This task can involve generic skills (interactional skills, problem-solving skills, etc.).
This task can involve essential skills (document use, numeracy, digital technology, etc.).
This task can involve second-language skills (invoice in English).
This task can involve technical skills (effective application of the internal customer service protocol, more technical understanding of the billing system related to the nature of the service, etc.).

Knowledge, know-how and behaviours involved:

Examples of knowledge involved (savoir): understanding the importance of active listening and its methodology, good understanding of the company's billing system and tools, good understanding of the digital system for client files and billing systems, some knowledge of technical vocabulary in English, good understanding of internal protocols and procedures, etc.

Examples of know-how involved (savoir-faire): ability to follow the steps in the active listening approach, ability to parse a typical invoice and explain its content, ability to quickly access a client file in the computer system, ability to analyze an invoice in English and explain it in French, ability to apply internal protocols and procedures in context, etc.

Examples of behaviours involved (savoir-être): empathizing with customers who are experiencing problems, showing confidence in resolving problem situations, feeling comfortable in a computerized and digital work environment, showing openness to asking for help when part of a task requires the use of one's second language, ability to apply an internal protocol in a potentially delicate interactional situation, etc.