DESIGNING THE CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMME

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A curriculum – or what is offered/taught and how - includes

▶ consideration of the **context** and the needs of the **target audiences**;

▶ the **learning outcomes** you would like to achieve;

▶ the **content** i.e. the topics to be covered; and

▶ the **approaches** you will use to offer this content.

Using these steps to design a short course will help shape what it possible.

But first you need to be clear about the structure into which you are designing your courses.

Structure

Our programme runs over three weeks, with a number of courses being offered at the same time in parallel sessions. In 2016 we offered 16 courses in three weeks between 20 June and 8 July; seven courses were held in week one, four in week two and five in week three.

This means that some participants may have had to choose between two courses scheduled at the same time - and indeed the 1995 evaluation noted that we should 'improve scheduling as some courses, which are equally important, run parallel to each other'. This is unavoidable, however, as each participant will prioritise different course combinations – and our scheduling is often determined by lecturers' availability. As we repeat many of our courses each year, these participants may well have an opportunity to do the course they missed in the following year.

Most courses are five days long, held from Monday to Friday from 8h30 to 17h00. In order to work at a deeper or more advanced level on some of the issues, however, we sometimes offer courses

▶ over ten days instead of five; and

▶ at an intermediate and/or advanced level – to indicate a progression as well as the level of difficulty.

In 2016, one course - Monitoring and Evaluation of Primary Health Care Programmes - was offered over the extended ten days.

We do not offer courses in the evening nor over weekends as these times would not suit our primary audience. They may be options in your settings, however. As noted in Chapter 4, choosing a time that suits your participants and your staff is a crucial foundational factor in putting a programme together.

The context and the needs of the target audiences

What and how you offer the material in your courses will be informed by both your local health context as well as by who you intend as your target audiences.

The assumptions you make about both should inform your design – and in turn, the description of the course you design should attract your target audience. These are dealt with extensively in chapter 2 above, so will not be addressed again here.

The learning outcomes

Learning outcomes focus the aims of the course by defining what knowledge and/ or skills and/or values and/or attitudes you ideally want participants to have after they have attended the course. These need to be focussed and feasible in the short time available – in our case five days. Outcomes can also be used to guide what might be assessed – on the understanding that what is taught might be learned!

Our short course programme does not include any formal assessment, however, as it sees no benefit in doing so for these kind of short courses. Assessment would require a much tighter operation, and time spent on assessment would take away valuable teaching time, which is not in our interest. In addition, the participants would focus on performance and achievement rather than on the messier process of learning.

Being clear about your main learning outcomes is very important if you are to avoid getting side-tracked by a range of issues that may well be equally interesting, however! We express these in terms of what course participants should know and do by the end of a course. So, for example the outcomes for our course on Qualitative Research Methods (mentioned above) are that:

'Through participating in the course, you should be able to:

▶ *Further explore the theoretical underpinnings and perspectives of qualitative research.*

▶ *Debate the purpose and key characteristics of qualitative research methods.*

▶ *Identify and develop research questions which are best addressed by qualitative methods.*

▶ *Differentiate selected qualitative approaches appropriate to health care settings and explore what they bring to a qualitative research study.*

▶ *Critically engage with strategies to enhance the quality (rigour) of qualitative research studies.*

> ▶ *Discuss ethical considerations in qualitative research.*
>
> ▶ *Engage in practical exercises to hone data collection and data analysis skills.'*

Another example would be the outcomes for our course on Health Committees:

> *'By the end of this course participants should:*

▶ *Understand the concept, value and role of community participation in improving health service responsiveness to the communities served.*

▶ *Understand the health service's role and that of health care providers and managers in helping the realisation of health rights in South Africa.*

▶ *Understand the health service manager's role in facilitating meaningful community participation through health committees.*

▶ *Understand the capacity building and technical support needs for maintaining effective community health committees.*

▶ *Be able to initiate and maintain meaningful dialogue that fosters community participation through health committees.'*

Outcomes inform the content you offer in order that the participants might realise these aims.

Different interests

As noted above, we at the UWC SOPH have a clear set of values and approaches that informs our work and for which we are known. In addition the kinds of courses we offer and their intended outcomes clearly reflect our expertise and interests.

Being clear about who you are and what you offer is important, as this may differ from some of your participants' interests and approaches. Once you have identified your assumptions about the participants and designed a course that you think may be useful, your job is to deliver the course you advertise within the values and approaches you outline - in ways that make them as accessible as possible to all participants.

Issues to consider
While designing the course: ▶ Given the identity and interests of your university unit, are you wanting to offer a set of courses that have social influence? And /or are you wanting to support the current system to do its job better? And/or are you wanting to be seen as a centre of technical excellence?

> ▶ What are the main points <u>you as convenors</u> want the participants to learn (what are your aims)? How might this affect what you offer, in the curriculum – and how you offer it?
>
> **Relationship between interests**
>
> ▶ How does your unit want to relate to the 'needs ' of the participants and those suggested by the public health issues? Are your aims and your participants' aims the same? If not, is this a problem? If so, what do you want to do to address this difference?
>
> ▶ If you want to meet some of these needs, does this match your expertise? If not what will you do?
>
> ▶ If you want to addresses the issues but not meet the needs per se, how will you market it so that people come nonetheless?
>
> ▶ If you want to present new ideas that are not necessarily part of contextual or participants' 'needs' - can you manage the risk of doing so?

Topics and content

The topics we address in our short course programme are based on

▶ what we are best able to offer, and

▶ what we think are most needed.

In addition, we offer some courses because we have an interest in influencing the participants' approach to an issue or how services are offered etc.

In the past eight years, the Winter School courses we have offered have covered the following topics:

▶ Primary health care and restructuring the health services

▶ Maternal and child health policies and programmes

▶ Epidemiology and control of HIV and tuberculosis

▶ Epidemiology and control of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in the era of antiretrovirals

▶ Epidemiology and control of non-communicable diseases

▶ Experimental epidemiology – clinical and field trials

▶ Rational medicines use

▶ Promoting rational medicines use in the community

▶ Medicines supply management

▶ Alcohol problems: Developing multi-faceted programmes for communities

living with alcohol

- ▶ Diet and disease

- ▶ Current thinking and practice in health promotion

- ▶ Health promoting schools: Putting vision into practice

- ▶ Health promoting settings: A partnership approach to health promotion

- ▶ Counselling behaviour change using motivational interviewing

- ▶ Community participation in health

- ▶ Health committees: A vehicle for providers and communities to realise the Right to Health

- ▶ Monitoring and evaluation of primary health care programmes: I

- ▶ Clinical trials and indigenous herbal medicine

- ▶ Research, health and ethics in the African context

- ▶ Survey methods for health research

- ▶ Qualitative research methods

- ▶ Quantitative research methods

- ▶ Health systems research II

- ▶ Introduction to health policy and systems research

- ▶ Introduction to complex health systems

- ▶ Understanding and analysing health policy

- ▶ Urbanisation and health in developing countries

- ▶ Globalisation and health: Key aspects for policy makers, managers & practitioners

- ▶ Health management

- ▶ Planning human resources for district health systems

- ▶ Information systems for human resources for health

- ▶ Using health information for effective management: Intermediate course

- ▶ Use of information for hospital management

- ▶ District health information system 2 – web based: Foundation course

Repeating the same course each year, and improving it each time, is certainly an effective use of your resources – but it can also serve to ensure that, for example, a whole layer of staff within a health service are exposed to the same course. The slight changes in some of the titles above indicate the ongoing development which we employ as part of our short course programme.

Ultimately what you offer must suit your unit - and you should offer it in the best way that might meet a group of participants' needs.

How much to include

As noted in the previous chapters, trying to convey too much material and going too fast may well result in participants objecting or, perhaps worse, their withdrawal or passivity – none of which make for good learning! So thinking you can cram a lot into the limited time and that talking fast will get more covered, is far from helpful! Participants need time to think, to examine what is offered and to decide about it.

So when designing a short course, less is more!

Summary of Issues to Consider:

DESIGNING CURRICULA
AROUND PARTICIPANTS' INTERESTS AND CAPACITIES

Who is your primary audience and what are their learning needs and objectives? What are your objectives? What attributes, competencies, concepts, outcomes and content do you want students to demonstrate as a result of working through your course or materials?

Step 1: Profile your primary target audience

To help you identify and profile your primary audience, think of a few 'typical' students who may attend your course.

Demographics:

▶   Who are your students, e.g. employed/volunteers? female/male? urban/ rural? youth / older than 35?

Needs:

▶   What are your student's needs/objectives?

▶   Why do they want to take your course? What is their motivation?

▶   (How might they differ from yours?)

Entry requirements:

▶   What are your entry requirements - e.g. is their experience or a level of proficiency that might be a prerequisite?

Assumptions:

What are the main assumptions you are making about students' starting points in relation to your course? For example:

- ▶ What do students already know about the content?

- ▶ What skills do they already have in relation to the content?

- ▶ What practical experience do they have which is relevant to the content?

- ▶ What relevant values, principles and attitudes are you assuming they have?

- ▶ What are their experiences of the learning process; and/or chosen teaching and learning modality?

- ▶ What is their current workplace situation? What data, personnel and other resources do they have access to?

Step 2: Determine the learning outcomes/objectives

- ▶ What do you want students to know, do, think, feel, value, as a result of studying the course or module?

- ▶ How will you link each learning outcome to your body of knowledge and to assessment (if applicable)?

Step 3: Identify the threshold concepts, core public health competencies and main attributes integral to your course

- ▶ Which core public health competencies are relevant to the course/module? How will you build these in?

- ▶ Which main attributes do you want students to develop?

- ▶ What are the essential ideas and concepts that students need to understand and internalise in order to proceed with content?

- ▶ What are the cross-cutting values and principles which underpin your curriculum and which must underpin your course? How will you build these in?

Step 4: Describe the body of knowledge/content of the course

- ▶ How will you allocate time across the content?

- ▶ How will you sequence the content and structure progression across the course?

- ▶ What type of activities will you use to facilitate learning on each topic?

Approach

What remains then, is HOW to offer this material to the proposed target audience.

Adapting university-based material for a more general audience requires skill and attention. Offering ideas to health practitioners or members of civil society organisations, most of whom will be mature adults, requires an approach that facilitates the ways in which they learn. In addition, participants will often come from different disciplinary discourses and styles – and with various work and life experiences. So it is not just about offering the material you already teach in a shortened way to a different audience but should take the diversity of participants' backgrounds into account.

In order to do this you may want to review your assumptions about the participants'

▶ language proficiencies (especially English in our case, as this is the language in which the courses are offered)?

▶ comfort with text – dense / accessible?

▶ comfort to speak in public?

It may also be important to think about whether gender and age may influence the media /ways of learning that your participants may be most comfortable to work with.

In short, however, adult learning courses should include a combination of at least presentations, discussions and group work – and visual and text-based aids are helpful.

The 2017 evaluators of our Winter School noted that

> *'For the most part, the courses are very interactive, with lecture time being limited and interspersed with hands-on activities and active learning approaches, following interactive and participatory methodologies. In many of the courses, group work is a core approach to encourage peer-learning, and engagement with the course materials. Because a number of the courses are team-taught, the fact that there are multiple instructors in the classroom during group work means that there is the opportunity for guidance from instructors to ensure that group-work remains on task and moving toward the designated learning outcome for the session.'*

Some of the factors regarding how you want your participants to learn could include

▶ What principles of design will you use to ensure you facilitate adult learning?

▶

▶ Might there be any opportunities that would allow students to make choices and direct their own learning?

▶ How will you encourage students to move beyond what they know? How will you include opportunities for students to reflect on their prior knowledge and experiences and to compare it with what they are learning?

▶ How can you provide students with maximum opportunity to put new knowledge and skill into practice?

▶ Will there be a central project that runs across the whole course?

▶ Will you use group work for activities and exercises?

▶ How will you offer new information – through presentations?/ printed material? / audio-visual material?

▶ In what format will you offer course materials, given your participant profiles? How can this be done most efficiently and cost-effectively?

▶ Will they do written work? If yes, will this be alone or in groups?

▶ Will you send out pre-reading?

Teaching and learning resources

Learning materials

Learning materials are an intrinsic part of course design and implementation.

Aware that we cannot cover all the content we would like to within the five days available, we compile files of information that are used in the course as well as act as a resource after the course.

This sometimes comes in the form of a CD / USB stick onto which we have copied substantial resources - as this reduces printing costs. We only do this where the audience are likely to have access to computers however – and therefore are unlikely to do so for a course where the majority of participants are community-based, for example.

It is also important to keep copyright issues in mind when distributing materials. Wherever possible we make use of open access materials.

We seldom send out pre-reading – but this is certainly an option.

Course participants revealed in the 1995 evaluation 'how much they valued reading materials prepared for them'. They added 'that the reading load was heavy was obvious, but many participants, particularly those from the field, said this was their only resource material'.

Accessing online

Our short course programme is offered face-to-face and we do not offer the courses online or as self-study modules. This professional development programme is premised on interaction between participants which is often best done face-to-face - in addition to which having to attend a course protects the time for learning, rather than having to fit a self-study course into a daily work schedule.

We could put some materials online, however – assuming everyone has easy and continual access to computers and the internet.

Library

Our short course participants no longer have access to the university library – and we do not have a dedicated public health resource centre. In the early days they were invited to use the university library facilities but it became clear that the library was 'underfunded and not updated in public health references'. The 1995 evaluation added that this 'forced the staff to employ a 'do it yourself' approach to putting reading materials together' – and indeed the course 'readers' have become one of our programme's hallmarks.

Audio-visual support

Our School is well-equipped with up-to-date data projectors and we have a large computer lab where online courses can be taught. That being said, we have a utilitarian approach to the use of audio-visual support and only use it to support what we are doing: we do not think the medium is the message! We are very comfortable using low-tech supports like flipchart paper and felt-tip pens, coloured cards, drawing pins and notice boards.

Supplementary activities

In some cases it can be useful to include a site visit in a course - going to an area or facility to see practically what is being discussed. These will incur costs and can take quite a lot of work to organise, however, so their value must be assessed. While it can be very stimulating and enjoyable, they are not intended as a special treat so much as an educational opportunity.

For example, the health promotion courses have always included a visit to one of Cape Town's informal settlements in order to get a first-hand sense of challenges and opportunities for health promotion interventions. This then provided the foundation for discussions in class. The keynote speaker at the graduation in 2013 - Dr Sharmila Mahtre, from the IDRC (International Development Research Center, Canada) - commented:

"A ride in a bus to a community-based organisation was transformed into a discussion where Winter School students had to identify all of the positive and the negative things that they saw that affects the health of the communities. I was extremely impressed by the breadth of what they saw! From broken toilets, the smell, to people helping people. But I also saw that the participants went beyond identifying- they started to do an analysis and develop an understanding of what was affecting health.

"And then they took it a step forward, which I found impressive. They talked as individuals about what they can and cannot do. I share what one of the participants said to me: 'I have known some of these things but now I know how important they are. And I also know that I am important in improving the lives of people.'"

Acknowledgement

From the beginning of our short course programme, we have given participants an attendance certificate at the end of the course – and continue to do so.