



## SEQUENCING CURRICULUM



The acquisition and mastery of new knowledge and skill takes place in a predictable sequence. In-service curricula should follow this sequence to develop, present, and support learning.

### **LEVEL I: AWARENESS**

Level I provides the broad overview of the problem or need, describes the scope of the information, and clarifies the proposed objectives, or desired ends, of the training. This provides trainees with a conceptual framework within which to organize the new information and frames the questions in the context of the trainees' jobs. Presenting and clarifying the rationale for the training also enhances motivation to learn.

- Training method: Initial presentation of information creates a broad overview of the content to be trained. Exercises can draw out and help the trainer determine what trainees already know about the topic.
- Best outcome: Trainees may be able to feed information back, but will likely not yet be able to use it in changed form or apply it. They should be able to identify the issues, describe their importance, and state the reasons for needing to know the content.

### **LEVEL II: KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING**

Level II provides comprehensive, factual information about the topic and links the information and concepts into a congruent and integrated cognitive system. It includes two sub-stages: knowledge and understanding.

Knowledge refers to a body of concepts, principles and acquisition of factual information. Understanding requires more than just retaining and repeating information. Understanding includes knowing the meaning of the concepts and the relationships between conceptual elements (e.g., how they fit together and support or contradict one another). When one understands, one is able to accurately interpret and generalize the information to other problems or settings, and to cognitively manipulate the information to solve problems.

Understanding has an emotional component. When training content references situations and circumstances learners have experienced, drawing parallels between learning content and personal experiences can expand and deepen their understanding.

- Training methods: Exercises and group discussion promote exploration and consideration of the information from several points of view, and in light of trainees' pre-existing beliefs. Challenges from the trainer will illuminate potential contradictions in the content, enabling trainees to deal with and resolve them.

- Using and manipulating the information increases the trainees' familiarity with the concepts, promotes the identification of linkages between the elements, raises issues not previously considered, and supports retention.
- Best outcome: Trainees will be thoroughly familiar with the elements of the content and their relationships to each other, and to previous knowledge. Trainees should be able to cognitively manipulate the information, use it to solve problems, and generalize the concepts to new situations.

### **LEVEL III: APPLICATION TO THE JOB**

Level III answers the questions "What's the point of my knowing and understanding all this? How am I to use it?" The ways in which the knowledge and skill are to be applied in the worker's job activities are identified and fully described. This usually includes defining the worker's role and responsibilities, describing the steps in the process of implementing the task, and identifying how the knowledge or skill may need to be modified for use on the job, particularly to overcome potential barriers to implementation in the work setting.

When learners have already acquired the prerequisite skills to perform an identified job task, knowing how and when to apply them can promote a change in behavior.

- Training method: Group discussion, presentation, simulations, case examples and demonstration to clearly describe, define, and refine the trainees' conceptions of their job responsibilities and steps in implementing new knowledge or skill.
- Best outcome: Trainees should be able to define the job expectations and articulate the kinds of skills they will need to develop in order to perform these expectations. Where trainees already have the skills, learning how they should use them will often be adequate to promote job behavior change.

### **LEVEL IV: SKILL ACQUISITION**

Level IV includes development and refinement of the capacity to actually perform specific behaviors to completed job tasks or activities. Skill development is highly dependent on practice, coaching feedback, technical assistance, support, and proceeds in stages from modeling to mastery to proficiency to habituation.

- Training method: Demonstration, modeling, experiential exercises, practice with group, trainer feedback, and self-assessment opportunities.
- Best outcome: Trainees should be able to perform the desired abilities at some level. Proficiency is generally attained only after on-the-job practice and feedback.

Not all curricula will teach all areas of the content to the fourth level. The level of depth to which each knowledge or skill is to be taught will be determined by the importance of the content area for job functioning and the amount of time that can be devoted to training the topic. Levels should not be skipped or shortened to accommodate limited

training time. Proper sequencing is essential to ensure thorough acquisition of the knowledge and skill.

Competency language should reflect the level of depth to which the content should be taught. For example, (Level I) "Worker is aware, is familiar..." (Level II) "Worker knows/understands..." (Level III) "Worker knows how to ....." (Level IV) "Worker is able to..."

*Developed by Judith S. Rycus, Ph.D., MSW. IHS 1994, handout for "Training of Trainers on Curriculum Development".*