Theories, principles and models of curriculum development

This handout will cover:

- The curriculum
- Stakeholders
- Programme models
- What influences your course?
- The hidden curriculum

- Process and product models
- Spiral model
- Linear model
- Reading list
- Website list

The text here is a brief introduction to a few theories and you are advised to research them further.

The curriculum

The term curriculum relates to everything which is educational and offered to learners in an organisation. It is not just a set of standards, a qualification, or a scheme of work. Think of it as everything which an organisation offers i.e. all the programmes, qualifications and support given to learners. This could include additional topics which will benefit the learners, such as maths and English. Stakeholders will have an influence on the curriculum.

Stakeholders

A stakeholder is a person or an organisation who has an interest in something, for example: an awarding organisation who will quality assure an accredited qualification which a centre offers. Stakeholders can affect, or be affected by the actions of those involved with the learners. It's important to work with stakeholders for the benefit of learners, and to be accountable, perhaps by supplying information and data to funding and external agencies.

Stakeholders in the further education, training and skills sector can include government departments such as Ofqual and Ofsted, who regulate and inspect accredited qualifications in England, funding agencies who provide money for training and assessment and local authorities, councils, employers or companies who your organisation associates with.

Stakeholders can also include anyone who has an interest in the learner, for example, employers, parents, guardians, carers and/or social workers. Don't forget that the main stakeholder is the learner.

The curriculum should always be fit for purpose. There's no point offering a particular course if there is no demand, or if it does not meet the needs of local employers and

learners. Once the content of the curriculum has been established, particular courses, programmes and/or qualifications can be offered. You can then create your scheme of work and session plans. Some curriculums are known as national as everything offered is the same nationally, no matter where the learners are studying

The curriculum is often based upon the needs of local employers. For example, if there are a few hotels in the area, then hospitality and catering would be a viable option to offer. Funding can influence what is offered, for example; money to offer employability, maths and English courses. Depending upon where you work, social, political and economic factors might influence the content of the curriculum.

Often, there are political factors which have an influence upon the way a curriculum is put together. For example, In 2015, David Sainsbury was asked by the government in England to chair a panel of experts to provide clear recommendations for measures that would improve and transform education. The Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education was published alongside the government's Post-16 Skills Plan in July 2016. The latter sets out the government's plan to support young people and adults to secure skilled employment, and to meet the needs of the economy (through T Levels).

As a result, young people should be given a choice at the age of 16 between two equally high quality options: academic and technical. The academic option is based around theoretical subjects and qualifications. The technical option is built around routes to skilled employment. Each route should be available through college-based courses or apprenticeships, so that young people can choose the mode of learning which suits them best. Some routes might also contain vocational qualifications which can be achieved in addition to the demonstration of skills and knowledge.

Programme models

Your programme will be based on the requirements of the curriculum. For example, the content of a qualification or an apprenticeship standard. Other subjects might be included, such as employability, or aspects of English and maths might be embedded. Or your course might be a 'bespoke' programme – created especially for staff at a local company.

Programme models are based on how the various aspects of the curriculum will be delivered and assessed. They can range from a few hours for a short course, to those taking weeks, months or years.

They could be offered at various times of the day or evening, and at various locations. For example, on-the-job, i.e. in the workplace, off-the-job, i.e. in a college, online, i.e. via an internet connected device, or near the job. An example of the latter

could be where trainee construction workers are undertaking some health and safety training in an onsite building near to where they are working.

Examples of programme models:

- bespoke training courses for particular employees, either on, off or near to the job
- blended learning which combines technology with traditional learning in any suitable environment
- classroom or workshop learning in a training organisation or the workplace
- conferences, events and seminars in locations such as hotels or specialist centres
- distance and flexible learning via an online or correspondence course
- evening classes in a community centre
- full time or part time attendance in a college, training centre, school, academy or university

What influences your course?

- Internal and external organisational requirements such as targets, budgets, regulations, policies and procedures.
- The requirements of the programme, job tasks or qualification content.
- The funding and time available.
- The environment, facilities and resources available.
- Learner needs.
- How aspects will be taught and assessed, and by whom.
- Time management – will anything need to be set as homework or uploaded to a resource website?
- Learners' age range, ability, prior knowledge, learning preferences and particular needs.
- Teacher's ability and knowledge – is any training required before a particular topic can be taught?
- The induction and initial assessment process (is it carried out prior to the programme starting or will it be during?).
- Do skills such as English, maths and ICT need to be embedded?
- Inclusivity and differentiation.
- Delivery style – face-to-face, blended, online, distance.

The hidden curriculum

You might have heard of the term 'hidden curriculum'. This includes the values, attitudes and behaviours of others which could influence those of the learners - they are 'hidden' as they are not explicitly taught. They are aspects which are not made

obvious, but are demonstrated by teachers and are visible in the learning environment.

For example:

If a teacher is well dressed in clothing which is suitable for the subject, this could give the message that they take pride in themselves. If rooms and corridors are untidy, with out of date posters on the wall, this could give the message the organisation isn't providing a positive learning environment. If an organisation uses sustainable products and has recycling areas for used paper, plastic and cardboard, this gives the message they care for the environment.

Other hidden aspects can include the policies and procedures of the organisation, i.e. how up to date and pro-active they are in supporting teaching, learning and assessment. The rules and routines which a teacher initiates can also have an impact, i.e. timekeeping, marking and returning work on time. If the culture of the organisation and its staff are not of a positive nature, this could impact negatively upon the learners and the learning taking place.

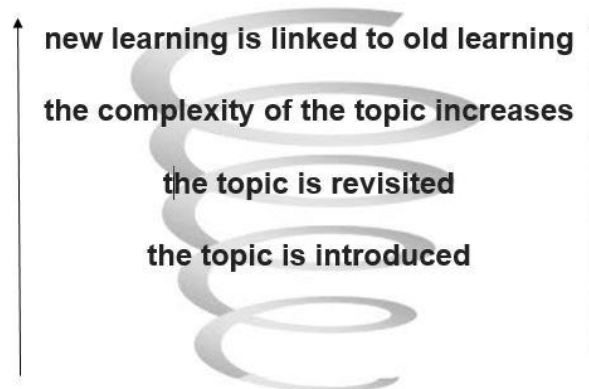**Process and product curriculum models**

These are two different models of delivery. The process model of delivery focuses on the content of the programme and other relevant aspects which could be taught. The product model focuses upon the content of a programme which must be taught - purely to reach a desired outcome e.g. to pass a test and gain a certificate.

The **process model** could be considered a formative model as it is linked to facilitating further learning along the way to achieving the required objectives, outcomes or tasks. This model adds value for the learner and to the learning process. A more holistic approach can be taken to the subject which is centred on the learner. It focusses on the content i.e. the learning experiences and activities taking place. Learning is different as it is tailored towards individual requirements. Learning is more valuable and meaningful. Teaching and learning activities can be more imaginative and cover additional topics.

The **product model** doesn't add any extra value for the learner as it is centred on the subject. It could be considered a summative model, as it is linked only to the required objectives, outcomes or tasks which the learner must achieve. It focusses on the outcomes i.e. objectives or tasks towards the end product - such as an exam or a test. Learning is similar no matter where the learner takes the programme. Learning is just a means to an end i.e. to obtain a pass in a test.

Spiral model

The spiral model, a theory put forward by Jerome Bruner in 1966, spreads the learning out over time, rather than concentrating it into shorter periods. It introduces topics in a simple way and then repeats them with increasing levels of complexity, starting at the base of the image. Bruner felt that the most complex material, if properly structured and presented, can be understood by any learner.

new learning is linked to old learning

the complexity of the topic increases

the topic is revisited

the topic is introduced

Key features of the spiral model are:

- the topic is introduced
- the topic is revisited several times throughout the learning process, allowing a logical progression from simple to complex ideas
- the complexity of the topic increases each time it is revisited
- new learning is linked to old learning (and vice versa) and put into context

Linear model

Establish the objectives or tasks → design teaching and learning activities → carry out the activities → assess learners and evaluate the process

The linear model, a theory put forward by Ralph W Tyler in 1949 assumes there is an agreed amount of knowledge that needs to be learnt. This knowledge is not repeated, like the spiral model.

The linear process goes through four stages:

1. establish the objectives or tasks
2. design teaching and learning activities to achieve the objectives or tasks

3. carry out the activities in an effective way to ensure learning takes place
4. assess learners and evaluate the process

This process starts and finishes without repeating any aspects.

Reading list

Bromley M (2019) *School and College Curriculum Design* Independently published

Bruner JS (1966 & 1974) *Towards a Theory of Instruction* New York WW Norton

Curzon LB & Tummons J (2013) *Teaching in Further Education* (7th Edn) London Bloomsbury

Gravells A (2017) *Principles and Practices of Teaching and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Petty G (2014) *Teaching Today: A Practical Guide* Cheltenham Nelson Thornes

Tummons J (2012) *Curriculum Studies in the Lifelong Learning Sector* Exeter Learning Matters

Tyler RW (1949 & 2013) *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* University of Chicago Press

Website list

Curriculum and qualifications - https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/curriculum-qualifications

Curriculum models - https://tinyurl.com/mr5rmhn

How to design a college level curriculum - https://www.pmexam.com/resources/design-a-college-level-curriculum/

Post 16 Skills Plan - https://tinyurl.com/h6ukgbf

Reading lists - https://www.anngravells.com/reading-lists/index

The Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education (Sainsbury Report) - https://tinyurl.com/zzkl9vu