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Simona Sava

Needs Analysis and Programme Planning in Adult Education

Barbara Budrich Publishers

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edited by
Regina Egetenmeyer

Simona Sava

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Contents

Preface 7

1. Introduction 9

2. The Importance of Needs Analysis and Programme Planning in Adult Education 13
2.1 Decisions of individuals to participate in adult education 14
2.2 The problem of needs in adult education 18
2.3 Needs analysis as a basis for programme planning 21
2.4 Typical challenges in performing needs analysis in adult education 23

3. Needs: Theoretical Considerations 27
3.1 Definition of needs 27
3.2 Theoretical understanding of needs 31
3.3 The concept of needs in adult education 35
3.4 Diagnosing needs 39

4. Fields of Needs Analysis in an Educational Context 45
4.1 The delineation of subjects 46
4.2 The individual as a subject 48
4.3 Communities or regions as subjects 51
4.4 Organisations or enterprises as subjects 54

5. Methods of Needs Analysis in Adult Education 59
5.1 Desk analysis 60
5.2 Field analysis 64
5.2.1 Trial and error 64
5.2.2 Survey methods 65
5.2.3 Individual techniques 67
5.2.4 Group techniques 69

5.3 Specific methods of investigating the training needs within organisations 73
5.4 Selection and combination of methods 77
5.5 Interpretation 81

6. Needs Analysis for Planning Educational Programmes 89
6.1 From needs analysis to programme planning 90
6.2 Structure and function of programme planning 98
6.3 Elements of programme planning 102
6.3.1 The basic data of the intended programme 103
6.3.2 Knowledge and capability of the programme planners 105
6.3.3 The basic rules, steps, and criteria of the planning procedure 106
6.3.4 Aspects to be planned 108
6.4 Problems of programme planning 116

7. Steps in Programme Planning in Adult Education 119
7.1 Goals and objectives 121
7.2 Didactic concepts for learning delivery 124
7.3 Evaluation and monitoring 129
7.4 Budgets and marketing plans 134

8. Conclusions 141

Annotated Bibliography 147

References 151

About the Author 155

Index 157

Preface

Needs analysis and programme planning are among the central responsibilities of full-time staff working in adult education institutions. In contrast to the school sector, adult education for the most part does not work with long-term fixed curricula. Rather, programmes are being planned and revised on an ongoing basis, and geared towards the needs of different groups. As adult education is – at least in principle – characterised by voluntary participation, it is essential to investigate the interests of potential participants. But adult education is not limited to individual needs and interests. Rather, adult education programmes are positioned in the context of the needs and interests formulated by national and international educational policies, research findings, the institutional mission of adult education providers, and, in some cases, the interests of institutional clients. Besides formulating needs and interests, it is the specific task of needs assessors to identify latent needs in society.

Within this context of different needs, it is obvious that needs analysis struggles with a lot of conflict areas, contradictions, and antinomies. While it is a challenge to identify needs in the first place, it is just as much of a challenge to find ways of addressing these needs. Adult education has to balance educational and economic goals. It has to deal with individual interests and the interests of society. Discrepancies may arise, for example, between the formulated needs of an institutional client and the perceived needs of the participants that institutional clients select for a course. All of these needs are present when adult educators are engaged in programme planning.

There are various ways to do needs analysis and to serve the needs that have been identified. In this volume, Simona Sava provides an introduction to needs analysis and programme planning in adult education. Hence the book is written not only for students but also for practitioners in the field of adult education. Therefore, Simona Sava introduces her readers to the discussion on needs and needs analysis in educational contexts, referring to both the European and the Anglo-Saxon discussion. Practitioners learn how needs analysis can be done in their daily work in adult education, and how they can use their results for programme planning. Readers of this study guide will notice that Simona Sava's perspective on adult education is informed by both theory and practice. As a professor at the West University of Timisoara, she is scientist. But she is also doing essential developmental work in adult education as director of the Romanian Institute of Adult Education. As a result, she combines theoretical and practical perspectives, serving as an expert not only in Romania but throughout Europe.

Simona Sava is devoted to the topic of needs analysis and programme planning within the European Master in Adult Education. She first taught this course in Germany during her stay at the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the University of Duisburg-Essen as a DAAD-guest professor in spring 2009. Since then, she has returned to Germany each year to teach this course. It is also among the courses she teaches at the West University of Timisoara, enabling her to evaluate her study guide with different groups of international students. A warm thank you goes to Simona Sava for contributing this volume to the *Study Guides in Adult Education* series.

Regina Egetenmeyer

1. Introduction

Needs analysis is an important issue wherever educational programmes are carried out that are designed to attract adults on a purely voluntarily basis, just by matching their interests and needs.

Such continuing education programmes are frequently perceived as unattractive and not sufficiently tailored to learners' needs and interests, which is why participation rates in adult education continue to be rather low. As a consequence, recent policy documents and messages (e.g. European Commission, 2008) stress the need for more systematic and in-depth studies about adults' continuing education needs, as well as the need for predictive studies about the future needs of the labour market, society, and (groups) of adults in order to be able to adapt educational programming to both of these needs.

Unfortunately, in a lot of adult education institutions, needs analysis is done in a non-professional manner, based more on the experience, feeling, and information of the programme planner. Conducting a needs analysis is often considered a costly, time-consuming, and unreliable activity; thus the 'trial and error' principle is still the most common approach when it comes to designing adult education programmes. Analysing needs may indeed be an unreliable activity unless it is performed by observing the requirements for rigorous qualitative analysis that any needs assessor should adhere to, including careful reflections on how the identified needs are to be prioritised and transformed into solution strategies. Moreover, the managers of an educational institution need to ask for such needs analysis; they have to accept and back the changes related to needs, because such decisions – like those related to public relations – are fundamental decisions that also serve to guide strategic management, and hence are the responsibility of the top management.

This book, therefore, is designed as a study guide accompanying the course on 'Needs analysis and programme planning', which has been delivered online and face to face to an international group of students in the European Master in Adult Education programme for several years. It aims to provide readers with suggestions on how they should act as needs assessors and programme developers. The book was further refined and improved by students' comments and feedback, as well as by discussions with colleagues from other universities and with practitioners. After all, needs analysis and programme planning is a very practical thing, which also has to be informed by research findings, however. This approach was also used for presenting the various issues and examples with regard to European adult education, even though the (rather limited) literature available in English mainly comes from adult education in the United States.

Adult education, as an academic discipline, has to address the issue of programme planning, as the education of adults is very much about organising educational provision in a managerial way – that is, to ensure a tailored, smoothly running programme, able to reach the envisaged learning outcomes, based on well-defined instructional and marketing plans, as well as well-designed delivery. Thus the book is geared towards postgraduate students preparing to become professional adult educators, as well as towards those intending to plan educational programmes for adults, or acting as middle/ top managers charged with such responsibility.

However, the study guide is not intended to provide a detailed review of the existing research on needs analysis; rather, its has been designed in a more didactic way, seeking to provide basic information to ground such a complex topic, with some suggestions for further reading. The focus is more on the relation, more on the link between needs analysis and programme planning, to raise readers' awareness of the multiple conditions that have to be taken into account while sorting and prioritising the data gathered from needs analysis and translating them into programme ideas. Thus the didactic concept behind presenting and discussing the various issues is to foster readers' understanding of the various aspects and types of needs, while progressively adding more information about how, where, from whom, and with which methods needs can be identified. The exercises and tasks are designed to be applied to the same target group. Progressively, from one chapter to the next, other reflections about doing needs analyses and then translating them into programme planning are added.

The book has two parts. Part One (Chapters 2 to 5) covers the various types of adult (learning) needs and provides hints (and methods) on how to identify, analyse, and address these needs. Beginning with the issue of needs analysis in adult education, the first part presents the typical challenges involved in performing such an analysis. It describes the contexts in which these needs can be identified, as well as the specificity of the determined needs, explaining the main methods of identifying them. Moreover, the first part involves theoretical considerations about the concept and types of needs, the diagnosing of educational needs, and their theoretical understanding.

Part Two (Chapters 6 and 7) focuses on how to develop programmes tailored to the needs identified, illustrating the necessary steps and the factors to be considered, in a practical way. The process of programme planning involves multiple factors, mainly related to institutional aims and capacities, which need to be taken into consideration when designing an educational programme for adults, both in the planning stage and in the stages of implementation and evaluation. Finally, the second part provides theoretical considerations and guidelines for the effective planning of educational programmes for adults.

Chapter 8 offers a number of conclusions, highlighting once more the main issues and controversies about whether or not to perform needs analyses to inform programme planning, pointing out the main ideas presented in the book. For further reflections, clarifications, examples, and points of view, references to important related works are provided in an annotated bibliography.

I would like to offer special thanks to Professor Ekkehard Nuissl at the University of Duisburg-Essen, the coordinator of the European Master in Adult Education programme and chair of the DAAD Programme, for his friendly and constructive feedback while reviewing this book; to Regina Egetenmeyer, the coordinator of the study guide series, for her patience and support while I struggled with dividing my time between other commitments and the finishing of this book; to Carsten Bösel, the copyeditor, for his effort to put my manuscript into 'readable' English; and mainly to my family, for their big understanding and support.

2. The Importance of Needs Analysis and Programme Planning in Adult Education

Needs analysis is both a task and a procedure linked to one of the main characteristics of the field it is set in: freedom of action. The primacy of free action is the premise of the possibility that needs analysis should actually lead to practical results or consequences. That does not necessarily mean that the individual or the organisation having a need must be able to act freely or enable others to act freely on their behalf. The main idea is that needs cannot be standardised or determined a priori by legal or regulative proceedings of any kind.

In capitalist terms, a very close connection is thus created between needs and demand. Demand, to some extent, is a 'manifest', recognisable needs situation already articulated in the market. It is of great importance to anticipate and match labour market and skills needs, and, consequentially, the need for adult and continuing education, in order to enable adults to cope with these needs and challenges.

The unforeseen 2008 financial crisis illustrates the limits of predicting the capacity of individual EU Member States and the European Union itself. The capacity to identify, anticipate, and match future skills and labour market and societal needs is a precondition for education and training systems to generate new skills, to help people re-enter the work force, to enable them to adapt to these needs, and to design suitable programmes in this respect.

Text box 1: 'Improving the Union's capacity for skills assessment, anticipation and matching'

Improving the monitoring and anticipation of labour market and skills requirements is necessary to help people return to the labour market, facilitate the matching with existing vacancies and orientate skill development in order to improve long-term job prospects. A substantial improvement in the Member States' and Union's capacity to forecast, anticipate and match future skills and labour market needs is a precondition for the design of efficient employment, education and training policies and individual career choices.

Source: European Union, 2008, p. 5

In addition, adults' reactions to all of these challenges, their awareness of the need for lifelong learning, and their motivation to engage in (continuing) education require a better understanding of the education and training systems, but also a proactive approach on the part of educational institutions, which have to be able to design efficient and attractive programmes that might stimulate, support, and keep adults learning. That is why, precisely in the field of education, the difference between manifest needs (e.g. of the labour market) and latent needs (e.g. of individuals) is of great importance. These two types of need will be explained in more depth later in this book.

2.1 Decisions of individuals to participate in adult education

Adult education is a voluntary activity; more precisely, participation in organised adult education is, as a matter of principle, based on free will. This is how adult education is different from formal education in all European countries. Participation in the formal education system is mandatory. Non-participation in mandatory educational measures is considered illegal in Europe, and parents who keep their children out of school can be subject to penalties. The basic idea of mandatory schooling resides in the social rule according to which children and young people should be educated until they have reached a certain degree of maturity, allowing them to be able to decide for themselves. Today, this degree of maturity has mostly been set at the age of 18. In most European countries, therefore, adult education is considered to start at this age. In other countries, this particular educational stage is considered to begin once the individual graduates from the formal school educational system (e.g. Italy, Romania), or once the individual graduates from a vocational school (e.g. Germany).

No matter how the starting point of adult education is defined, the following is always true of adulthood and adult activities: there are no legal obligations to participate in any organised educational measures. The independent and sovereign adult is a key Enlightenment idea, which continues to be embodied in the education system of every democratic European society.

Nevertheless, the aforementioned voluntary character of participating in organised adult education has certain limits once adult individuals set career goals for themselves that can only be achieved by complying with certain legal access rules (or other juridical standards). Admission into certain specialised professions (such as psychotherapist or civil law notary), for example, becomes possible only after having completed a professional degree (which is mostly academic) and only by following measures strictly linked to continuing education. Also, the practice of certain professions (such as medical licensure) is strictly linked to regular participation in specific measures of continuing education. Activities in fields such as health, safety, insurance, and banking are strictly related to and dependent on legally defined obligations to attend training programmes that belong to continuing education. This also applies to commercial activities, such as starting a business in a certain professional field where holding adequate credentials, defined by law and only to be obtained through continuing education, are required in many European countries. A special type of mandatory continuing education is more and more frequently found in the realm of immigration: in a number of European countries, migrants are required – under the threat of expulsion – to attend language-related continuing education classes (Immigration Act, 2004).

Access barriers to organisations (e.g. sports associations, companies) or to certain positions within organisations (e.g. trainer, branch manager) are often stipulated by corporate regulations. Big associations or organisations (such as churches, trade associations, unions, etc.) have their own internal training systems to prepare employees for mastering future or higher-level tasks. Nevertheless, individual or special obligations to engage in adult education may arise beyond what organisations offer in terms of standardised and systemic continuing education. Such cases are to be found in companies that require their employees to attend a certain continuing education measure unless they want to lose their eligibility for promotion or even risk losing their jobs.

The 'voluntary nature' of adult activities, therefore, needs to be considered in a more nuanced light even in adult education. In many ways, adult individuals are more or less ordered, notified, instructed, or asked to engage in a range of educational activities. Regarding the motivation to participate in adult education – an aspect directly linked to need – there is a heuristically meaningful difference, if only a rough one, between intrinsic and extrinsic motives. The variety of extrinsic requirements to be identified in continuing education, especially in professionally oriented continuing education, does not, however, call into question the principle of voluntary involvement. Adult individuals always comply with these requirements out of their own free will, so as to achieve, to fulfil, to experience, or to be able to do something.

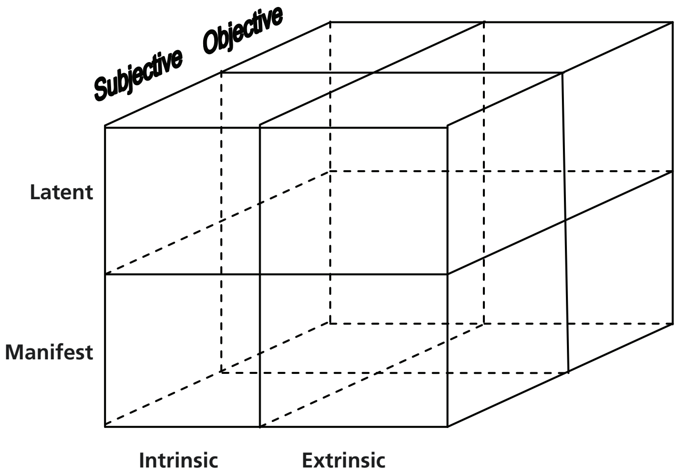
A difference between the intrinsic and extrinsic induction of need may also be found for supra-individual constructs such as associations, organisations, and companies. For example, a company might develop, in and of itself, a need to improve its leadership structure, to create more transparent ways of communication, and to increase production. Then again, that company might have an externally determined development need because of evolving markets, new technologies, and changes in clients' behaviour and demands.

Considering the relation between manifest and latent needs, as well as the one between intrinsic and extrinsic need in adult education, one can draw the conclusion that another difference has to be defined before raising the issue of need from an analytical point of view, namely the difference between 'subjective' and 'objective' need. The individual subject, the individual adult person, has a subjective need that can be induced extrinsically but, nevertheless, emerges from their own free will. This need does not always have to be manifest, it can also exist in its latent form until it becomes manifest in specific situations (e.g. when confronted with certain educational opportunities; cf. Chapter 4, but also Chapter 3, for conceptual clarifications).

This type of need, however, is not identical to the 'objective' need, which is always defined for a larger 'unit' and is oriented towards the requests and requirements of individual subjects. This 'objective' educational need is to be noticed in companies, regions, states, countries, and organisations – each featuring their own goals and standards, which are to be implemented, materialised, and approved by their members, inhabitants, and so forth. From one point of view, need is an individual category, providing information about subjective interests and goals; yet from another point of view, it is also a supra-individual category, determining a communication and tension ratio between the superior units and single individuals by using goal and target definitions (this differentiation is explored in more detail in Chapter 3).

Altogether, one can still determine a structural and control (or verification) frame as far as the existence of needs is concerned. Figure 1 shows the tri-dimensional nature of need and its conditions, depicted as a cube.

Figure 1: The cube dimensions of needs



Source: Author's own

For example, if a company decided to invest in developing its employees' language skills and offered to cover the language course costs for those interested, the employees actively looking for courses might be in the following situation: The objective need of the company interested in extending its business to the international market (and therefore needing linguistically skilled staff) is complemented by employees' latent need to improve their language skills – a need that can become manifest if they find a course that fits their schedules, training needs, and so forth. Likewise, the intrinsic need of the employee can become manifest through an extrinsic incentive, and thus one additional incentive (the financial one) can serve to re-activate an older interest in languages and make an employee actually go out and take a course.

However, besides determining the right dimension of a need in a given context, it is more important to be aware of the interaction of the various dimensions of a need, and, based on this interaction, to find the ways in which a certain need might be addressed, to stimulate it to become manifest.

2.2 The problem of needs in adult education

Issues of needs in adult and continuing education are raised in European countries as soon as the learning of adults, as an educational issue, becomes a matter of thinking, discussing, and political handling. Due to the fact that adult individuals are not legally required to participate in continuing education, the educational needs of these individuals are connected to their educational motives and interests, which represent the core of educational policies and educational practice. The difficulties regarding general continuing education in a national framework can be found on various levels.

First of all, throughout Europe, but especially in Romania, the need for continuing education has not yet been properly identified. Although there are a number of studies (see Boeren 2010, Manninen 2006, Reich 2006, the Eurostat *Adult Education Survey,* the *Labour Force Survey,* or the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALL), the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), and the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)) on how continuing education is valued by the population and how important people think it is to participate in continuing education, but the actual participation rates fall well below the values that might be expected from such positive attitudes. This also applies to countries with higher levels of participation in continuing education, such as the Scandinavian countries (see European Commission, 2011, pp. 35ff., with 2009 adult participation rates in continuing education varying between 31.6% in Denmark and 1.3% in Bulgaria). It is not very clear whether the discrepancy between the assumed importance of continuing education and the actual participation rate corresponds to the difference between manifest and latent needs, whether there is a lack of suitable programmes, or even whether there is a lack of adequate support and relevant possibilities.

Secondly, participation rates among the various population groups are uneven. Generally, similar tendencies are being registered throughout Europe, namely: the elderly, as well as socially and educationally vulnerable groups, quite rarely participate in continuing education. The same is true of special groups such as the long-term unemployed, the Romani, migrants, or women. Considering that this level of non-participation is both generally observable and quite stable, we may assume the danger or even the existence of social exclusion (see e.g. Aldridge & Tuckett, 2007; or Belanger, 2011, pp. 55–95).

Thirdly, the activities to be undertaken to address continuing education needs are very difficult to put into practice –not only because participation is voluntary but also because the range of educational provision is heterogeneous, as well as unpredictable and difficult to control. Issues regarding the development of continuing education programmes in certain regions or sectors, in a way to address existing need, have barely been solved at this point, and in practice are barely solvable.

Fourthly, the difference between the definition of a subjective need and the definition of an objective need is marked by the fact that even if the needs situation may be clarified analytically, any kind of 'regulation' or 'control' (cf. Chapter 7) that should equally address and include both needs categories will only be possible in an indirect manner. This indirect regulation implies motivation measures (incentives etc.) and is oriented towards the development of the subjective part withheld by the needs situation. In such cases, when there is a connection between subjective and objective needs, a 'must' is only efficient in the short term, or not at all in final situations, and, theoretically, extremely fragile.

Fifthly, proper capacity – that is, a definable amount of available material and immaterial resources – is necessary for analysing existing need. This is a typical problem in the field of continuing education, which is characterised by small educational institutions (i.e. small enterprises). Cooperative structures for common needs analysis have not yet been sufficiently developed between continuing education organisations throughout Europe. Moreover, there is the problem that needs analysis, performed at the appropriate quality standard, requires proper competence development, which is closely linked to empirical social research skills. Such skills, however, are to be found only to a very limited extent among the staff at continuing education institutions.

Finally, sixthly, there is the basic problem that education and adult education are not merchandise to be consumed like a refrigerator or a car. We may speak of education in terms of a combination between product and consumption, so that the resulting learning outcome might be called 'prosumption' – a combination of the product of the teacher and the learning product of the learner. The need to be aware of the special nature of the learning product is strictly linked to learners' biographical access, to the development of groups and cohorts, to available learning processes, and learning methods. The majority of the needs concepts currently applied in most other social sectors are too narrow in scope to be applied in the same way to the education sector.

Considering the six difficulties outlined above, it is necessary to discuss needs analysis in the field of education separately and in separate contexts. These multi-versioned interest positions in the field of education are opposed to needs in a number of evident ways:

- Continuing education providers want to recruit participants for their educational programmes and want to fulfil an organisational or a social educational contract (with churches, unions, etc.).
- Politicians want to control the evolution of skills among the population. They want people to keep up with social, technological, and scientific changes, and they want the achieved qualification and competence profiles to be transparent.
- Learners want to acquire useful or interesting information, something to help them advance personally, as well as something that matches their competencies and abilities.

This means that even the definition of the need that all educational efforts are oriented towards varies according to the interests it is based upon. There is diversity not only regarding the categorical definition of need (subjective/ objective), but also regarding the interest-based identification and assessment of the need that is to be met. This is clearly to be noticed in companies and organisations, which define their goals according to their respective interests.

At the macro level of European policy, agenda setting influences not only the Member States but also educational providers, companies, and all other relevant stakeholders. EU policy documents, such as the example below, not only point out the importance of needs analysis for providing proper and attractive educational programmes, they also mention the target groups, as well as the types of interventions and actions to be carried out.

Text box 2: European Council conclusions on a renewed European agenda for adult learning, Brussels, 17 November 2011

Recognises that (p. 6)
. . . Implementing the Action Plan has also highlighted the difficulty of adequately monitoring the adult learning sector, due to a lack of sufficient statistical data and evaluation of policy measures. Evidence-based policy-making in the field of adult learning calls for comprehensive and comparable data on all key aspects of adult learning, for effective monitoring systems and cooperation between the different agencies, as well as for high quality research activities.

ANNEX

European Agenda for adult learning Priority areas for the period 2012-2014
. . .

– Stimulating demand, and developing comprehensive and easily accessible information and guidance systems, complemented by effective outreach strategies aimed at raising awareness and motivation among potential learners (p. 13)…
….

5. Improving the knowledge base on adult learning and monitoring the adult learning sector

Member States are invited to focus on (p.18):

- Participating actively in and implementing key messages resulting from major international surveys and studies such as the Adult Education Survey (AES), the Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS) and the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC).
- Stepping up efforts to collect sufficient baseline data on, for instance, participation, providers, financing, the outcomes and wider benefits of learning for adults and society, and extending the data coverage to the age-range beyond 64 in keeping with the prolongation of working life.
- Strengthening the monitoring and impact assessment of the development and performance of the adult learning sector at European, national, regional and local level, making better use of existing instruments where possible.
- Intensifying research and in-depth analysis of issues relating to adult learning, extending the range of research to include new fields and encouraging more interdisciplinary and prospective analysis.

Source: European Council, 2011.

2.3 Needs analysis as basis for programme planning

For the aforementioned reasons, needs analysis is the foundation of the pedagogical work in adult and continuing education. Needs analysis belongs especially to the field of macro-didactics, but also, in part, to the field of meso-didactics. Usually, it does not have too much to do with micro-didactics – that is, the concrete interactions that occur in learning and teaching processes. Needs analysis is a supportive and controlling element in the field of aims structuring.

At the macro-didactic level, needs analysis is performed to create a sound basis for curriculum and programme planning, and to establish the link between content-related issues concerning educational provision and the interest-related dispositions of prospective students. Moreover, needs analysis is important for creating a 'level of competence' in the relationship between contents and learners. As such, needs analysis is an instrument for allocating trainers, including their systematic selection based on relevant qualifications.

The role of needs analysis has to be modified depending on the specific context (see Chapter 4). Four different characteristics of needs analysis may be identified:

- Needs analysis in adult education organisations is meant to address the market of potential participants and to relate to the organisation's programme planning. Needs analysis is, normally, less aim-oriented in this case, but more inductively oriented towards the interests of the learners.
- Needs analysis in organisations and companies is related to a more restricted organisational context, which has a well-defined target group and describes the need in terms of the discrepancy between the 'must-situation' and the 'as-is-situation' within the company. An important confinement of the needs analysis approach is the definition of the organisation's aim.
- Needs analysis in regions. In this case, needs analysis is useful to a range of actors who have to reinforce their contribution to a geographically defined general system. Here, needs analysis is a discursive and cooperative procedure that allows for the further development of such structures (mostly in cooperative networks).
- Needs analysis at the state level. Here, we speak about preparing data and making them available to the state to enable an efficient and effective programme setting. Needs analysis, in this case, is oriented towards the market of education providers and recipients as a general system.

Sometimes, needs may also be formulated and pointed out by researchers arguing for a certain need on the basis of scientific data derived from diagnostic studies. Such studies also serve as the basis for evidence-based policy making.

The implementation of needs analysis, differentiated according to organisational contexts, is subjected to various verification questions that turn the role of needs analysis into a procedurally manageable and evaluable one. The verification questions are:

- What is the role of needs analysis in the specific organisational context? Is needs analysis important? Is needs analysis performed before, during, or after programme planning? Which aspects of need is it oriented towards?

- Who is performing the needs analysis in the organisational context? What are the status, competencies, and interests of those persons and organisational units performing the needs analysis?
- How mandatory is needs analysis while it is being performed? Is it a prerequisite for the activities occurring within the organisational context?
- To what extent are the actors within the organisational context required to appropriately and meaningfully implement the results of the needs analysis during their programme planning activities?

These verification questions show that performing and assessing a needs analysis in specific organisational contexts is not something that will automatically produce useful results. For needs analysis to have a valuable impact on the evolution of the organisation and its programme planning, it has to be concrete, time matching, and widely accepted. Chapters 6 and 7 provide more detailed descriptions of the relation between needs analysis and programme planning, explaining the way the findings from the needs analysis process are translated into planning programmes.

2.4 Typical challenges in performing needs analysis in adult education

In all European countries, adult education faces similar challenges, regardless of the degree to which the continuing education sector has evolved. This fact is related to the role of needs analysis and its implementation. These challenges can be described as follows.

Firstly, the lack of available data on adult learning and its quality is a common concern at the European level as well. In fact, the European Commission's 2006 communication on adult learning devoted a special message to indicators and benchmarking:

> Further research and analysis is needed and will have a key role to play in making use of the statistics available and in exploring crucial issues like the returns on formal, non-formal and informal learning and the general role of informal learning in adults' lives. More focus on trends and forecasts is needed in order to be able to support policy making and programme design. (European Commission, 2006, p.9)

Secondly, there is hardly any clearly formulated concept regarding the connection between needs analysis and programme planning. Even in cases where elaborate needs analysis procedures are in fact applied, their relation to programme analysis – that is, the transfer of needs analysis results to programme planning – is often not consistently and systematically structured. The stage of the conceptual linkage of needs analysis and programme planning (see Chapter 7) is, as such, an important integrated part of the professional further development of adult education activities based on ascertained needs.

Thirdly, the resources necessary for performing a proper needs analysis do not exist; neither are they included in current budgets. Needs analysis requires staff time, materials, development, and interpretation. These resources, however, are not considered to be part of an institution's regular operations; neither is it considered important to provide employees with appropriate training to help them acquire the necessary skills.

Fourthly, the selected methods of needs analysis (e.g. survey, inquiry, statistical analysis) used during programme planning and institutional development are often found to be incompatible: they follow different time patterns, and the needs categories used are not sufficiently harmonised with the programme planning categories they are based upon.

Fifthly, there is only little knowledge about available and also pragmatically applicable methods of needs analysis in continuing education organisations. This raises the issue of employee qualifications and the need for professional development efforts in the field of continuing education.

Sixthly, organisations often receive insufficient support during the performing of needs analysis and its proper implementation in programme planning activities. The basic idea, according to which the general organisational activities are to be concentrated on satisfying strictly defined needs, is honoured only in few cases. Therefore, it is frequently the case that specific programmes or specific organisational units are based on the results of needs analysis, whereas the organisation as a whole does not address these needs consistently and systematically.

Seventhly, it has often been argued that the impact of needs analysis on the concrete teaching activity, that is, on the micro-didactic level, is too small. There are lots of cases in which learners in continuing education organisations are not even familiar with the results of the needs analysis. And even if learners are indeed presented with these results, they often refuse to accept them or regard them as not being implementable at the micro-didactic (teaching) level. The qualification and competence issue is, again, being raised here, and may be encountered as a more or less serious issue, depending on the specific country or continuing education organisation.

The pursuit of needs analysis and programme planning is – according to the aforementioned issues – a matter of great urgency, but also a matter of great difficulty. Performing needs analyses on a broad scale is not only the task for particular continuing education organisations and training institutions (such as universities, further education institutions) but also, to a large extent, a task for those actors who are responsible for the systematic evolution of adult education.

Exercises and tasks

Exercise 1

Based on the example provided at the end of Section 2.1, try to think of other examples from your line of work, or from your own experience with situations that helped transform latent needs into manifest needs. Also, you can reflect on an educational need you have in mind, trying to differentiate it according to the various dimensions discussed in this chapter.

Exercise 2

To what extent does the voluntary nature of people's involvement in adult education play a role in demand analysis? (Keep in mind the connection of supply and demand and the principles of market freedom.)

Exercise 3

To what extent does the planning of an education programme require data from a demand analysis? (Keep in mind education targets, financing, and profile building.)

Task 1

Discuss the extent to which the six issues mentioned in Section 2.2 apply to your country. Find a study in your native language regarding the need for continuing education in your country, and analyse it based on the tri-dimensional needs perspective presented here (see the cube with the various needs dimensions) and also by referring to the six issues listed above.

Task 2

Read the European Commission document listed below and discuss the sectoral skills needed in your field, as well as the 'soft competences' and their implications for the needs of continuing professional development.

European Commission. (2008). *New skills for new jobs: Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs*. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union (COM (2008) 868 final). Available at http://eur-lex.europa.eu

Task 3

Explore the website of the European Commission, especially the section on 'Lifelong learning policy/Strategic framework for education and training'. The archive features the most important legal and political documents related to all areas of EU education and training policies since 2000, and also the ones related to adult learning:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28_en.htm

Compare the needs identified in the policy document covering 'Education and training 2010' against those mentioned in 'ET 2020' (see references below). Are there any differences in the needs defined in these two policy documents? You might also compare, for instance, the key competencies identified in the 2000 *Memorandum on lifelong learning* and in *New skills for new jobs (2008)* or in *The key competencies for a changing world* (2010) – or you might want to use other reference criteria.

European Council. (2009). *Council conclusions on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020')*. (C2009/C 119/02). Available at http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:119:0002:0010:EN:PDF

3. Needs: Theoretical Considerations

3.1 Definition of need

Webster's *Encyclopedic Dictionary* (1989) defines five meanings of the term *need*:

(1) a requirement, necessary duty or obligation, or a lack of something wanted or deemed necessary (e.g. to fulfil the needs of the assignment); (2) urgent want, as a something requisite; (3) necessity arising from the circumstances of a case; (4) a situation or time of difficulty, exigency; (5) a condition marked by the lack of something requisite (e.g. the need for leadership). (p. 956)

Based on these more general meanings, in their attempts to define the concept of (educational) need, the literature is replete with definitions describing need as follows:

Keyword: Definitions of (educational) need

Need . . .

… is 'a gap between "what is" and "what should be"'. (Witkin et al., 1995, cited in Altschuld & Witkin, 2000, p. 4)

… is 'a gap between real and ideal that is both acknowledged by community values and potentially amenable to change'. (Reviere, 1996, cited in Altschuld & Witkin, 2000, p.4)

… may be different from such related concepts as wants ('something people are willing to pay for') or demands ('something people are willing to march for') (McKillip, 1987, cited in Altschuld & Witkin, p. 4)

… is 'an innocent appearing, four letter word, but probably the most deceptively complex, basically significant, and far reaching in its implications for all the major terms in the vocabulary of the adult educator'. (Leagans, 1964, cited in Pearce, 1995, p. 408)

… is 'the difference between an individual's current state of knowledge or skill and a specified norm'. (Tyler, 1949, cited in Pearce, 1995, p. 408)

These definitions illustrate the fact that the notion of need can have multiple conditions, and that need may be described from multiple perspectives. Defining a need is related to the context that has created the respective need, as the difference between the existing situation and the desirable situation. This desirable situation is not always precisely defined, however; the standards to be described are often vague, elusive, and changing; as a consequence, so are the related needs. Identifying needs is a process of describing the 'problems' of a target population and possible solutions to these problems.

The impact of globalisation is being universally discussed, including the challenges and demands of the dynamic knowledge-based society that individuals have to cope with. The attempt of *coping with* is, in other words, the (educational) need for further learning and training that might enable individuals to adapt to the new challenges. The challenges and the characteristics in this general context have sociological, economic, psychological, and educational connotations.

From a *sociological* point of view, one can refer to the specific needs of a group or social class, in relation to the socio-cultural characteristics of the groups the individuals belong to. Some of the aspects specialists should be aware of while trying to identify and understand the (educational) needs of the social group they are targeting include

- social aspects such as the division of work, social mobility, the relations among different ethnic or religious groups, mechanisms of social pressure (ranging from systems of prejudices, stereotypes, standards, and symbols to propaganda, manipulation, persuasion, fashion, etc.)
- social changes and their implications at the macro and/or micro levels (e.g. the sovereign debt crisis, supranational structures such as the European Union, etc.)
- social discourse (e.g. equality of opportunity in accessing education)
- mass communication with its implications
- the demographic structure of participation in continuing education
- the profile and organisational identity of adult education provision.

A proper understanding of the social context and the conditions influencing people's attitudes, motivation, and continuing education decisions requires an understanding of the general culture and the larger societal context, as well as an understanding of the micro-socio-cultural characteristics of the social groups that are being targeted.

From an *economic* point of view, the conditions and discourses affecting the demand for continuing education include the changing competency profile in relation to the dynamic of (labour) market needs, the financial support put in place by certain policy measures, the efficient use of resources, return on investment, the development of human capital, the attitude of employers towards workplace and organisational learning, and so on. An individual's income and financial status are strong preconditions of their power to buy educational goods.

The *psychological* connotations include support for explaining and understanding the way adults learn; their motivation, interests, expectations, and attitudes towards learning and personal development; their perspectives on and constructions of reality; and their psychological profile as a basis for understanding their learning behaviour.

The *educational* definition of needs refers to the goals and to the 'out-to-be' level of competence an adult has set for him/herself. Ways of defining the needs of individuals include being aware of the benefits of learning for improving their life condition, and supporting them in reflecting on what they already know and are able to do, and on what they still have to learn to reach their professional and personal goals (see also 2.4).

Needs do not have to be seen only as a gap, as something missing, as deficiencies between two states (the existing condition and the desirable condition). Doing so would mean working from adult learners' weaknesses when developing educational programmes. Instead, the discrepancies between the two states can be seen as the basis for asset building by emphasising learners' strengths to stimulate higher goals and improvements.

To understand and define needs, therefore, we have to take into account the contexts and factors producing them. Analyzing them is largely known as *needs analysis*.

Needs analysis (NA) is the 'process of identifying gaps or discrepancies between present and more desirable states of affairs, conditions or outcomes' (English, 2005, pp. 422–426). NA can be understood as

> the process of identifying and evaluating needs in a community or other defined population of people. It is a systematic set of procedures undertaken for the purpose of setting priorities and making decisions about programmes or organisational improvement and allocation of resources. The priorities are based on identified needs. (Altschuld & Witkin, 2000, p. 9)

Need analysis focuses on the future, or on what should be done, rather than on what has been done.

The related term *needs assessment* refers to evaluating the identified needs and to deciding, with respect to planning activities, which are the most important. Do any of the needs conflict with other needs? Is there consistent agreement across all levels of the target groups about the relevance and importance of the needs? Needs assessment is viewed as an essential task that leads to the development of relevant, responsive, and carefully focused programmes for the target group. As Kettner, Moroney, and Martin (1999, p. 10) point out, 'accuracy and skill in matching needs to services or programmes come from solid, thorough work on *problem* analysis'.

In adult education, we have to match societal perspectives on *problems* with individual perspectives, thus a more differentiated and in-depth understanding of the generation of needs is necessary. As Kettner et al. (1999) point out:

> There are four different perspectives from which we look at need: *normative need* (as defined by experts in the field), *perceived need* (as seen by those experiencing the need), *expressed need* (as evidenced by those who seek out programmes or services), and *relative need* (needs and resources in one geographic area compared with needs and resources in another). (p. 10)

If we look at need from the individual versus social perspective, we can differentiate between subjective need and objective need. *Subjective need* refers to the individual aspect of needs (or what in German is called *Bedürfnis*). Subjective need is frequently not articulated, not known, and more subtle, even as it is a perceived need. To turn such a need into a concrete *demand*, into an expressed need – that is, to encourage adults to actively look for educational programmes that might help them overcome their need, or become aware of it in the first place, is quite often the task of the educational providers of services or programmes. Counselling services can help adults become aware of their needs. Even if adults are aware of their educational needs, most of the time they do not go to the next step of looking for programmes to attend. Sometimes it requires a marketing strategy to convince these adults of enrolling, or even to create a need for the educational good one sells. Of course, it is much easier to offer a programme for adults who are aware of their needs and able to express them, than to offer a programme targeted at unknown or more subtle needs, and to meet the challenge of transforming them into expressed needs.

We should also keep in mind that subjective need can change quite often. Trying to get different perspectives on it, from different stakeholders, might therefore help us to get a wider, more objective picture of it. Also, when needs are being determined, it is essential to distinguish between *needs, wants,* and *interests*:

> Needs refer to something considered necessary or required to accomplish a purpose. Wants, on the other hand, are considered desirable or useful, but not essential. Interests indicate an individual's concern or curiosity about something. It is not unusual for individuals to confuse needs, wants, and interests. Therefore, extension personnel undertaking efforts to assess target population needs should ensure that they understand the meaning of 'needs'. (McCaslin & Tibezinda, 1996, n.p.)

Objective need refers to the social aspect of needs (*Bedarf* in German). Objective need is usually a market-oriented, articulated need, which means that educational programmes are easier to provide. Objective needs are normative needs, generated by the regulations of the market. For instance, the regulations for continuing professional development (for teachers, doctors, and other regulated professions) are a normative need requiring professionals to attend further education programmes. Also, if EU policy documents state that Member States must 'increase possibilities for adults to go one step up and achieve at least one level higher qualification' (European Commission, 2007, p.8), with a special focus on the low-skilled, then the policy measures adopted to meet such demand create the framework for overcoming that normative need. Furthermore, normative need supposes to meet predefined standards (occupational standards, for instance, ensuring that vocational programmes impart the competencies required by the competency profile), which makes it easier to structure educational programmes.

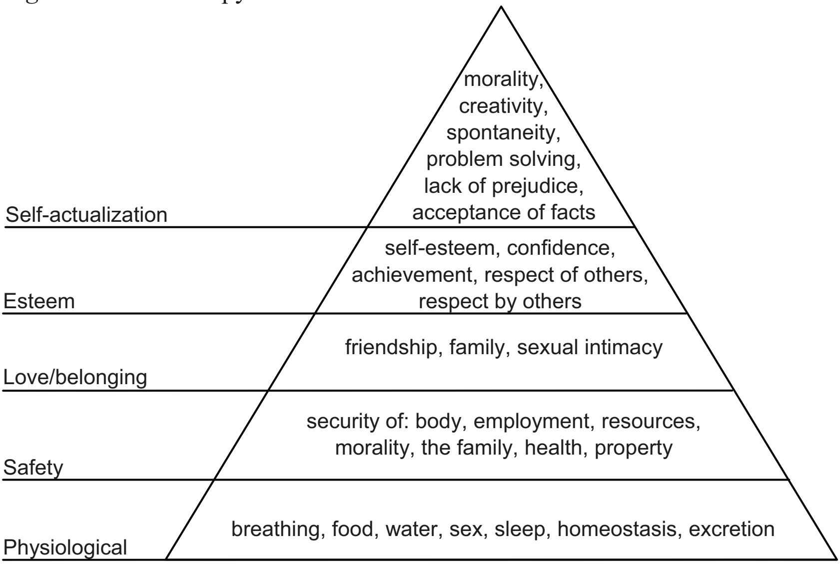
We can talk about relative need (which is also a social need) when, for instance, City A was nominated to become the European capital of culture for a given year. In that case, the resources and needs for providing public service employees with additional language skills, for example, would differ from the needs of City B, which is experiencing the closing down of a major factory and also has a need for foreign language training because a multinational company might make an investment and hire some or all of the former factory employees.

To these more differentiated facets and conditions of needs, other explanatory aspects will be added in the following section that will help us understand the essence of (educational) need. The focus will be on the various interpretations of the action mechanisms of different conditions that lead to a need.

3.2 Theoretical understanding of needs

Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is often cited in the discussions about the need concept. According to this hierarchy, people become aware of their needs in a prescribed manner, from the lowest and most fundamental need(s) to the highest, and only when the more basic needs have been satisfied can higher ones be attended to.

Figure 2: Maslow's pyramid of needs



Source: Factoryjoe, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, 2009, available under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported license at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow's_hierarchy_of_needs

Maslow proposes three principles of operation for these needs:

> (1) gratification of the needs at each level, starting with the lowest, frees a person for higher levels of gratification; (2) those persons in whom a need has been satisfied are best equipped to deal with deprivation of that need in the future, and (3) healthy persons are those whose basic needs have been met so that they are principally motivated by the need to actualize their highest potentialities. (Boone, Safrit, & Jones, 2002, p. 143)

Based on this general classification of needs, we may approach the more specific adult learning needs by referring to an old but still useful classification by Canadian educator Roby Kidd. In *How adults learn* (1959), Kidd classified adult needs into: (1) health, (2) family and friendship relations, (3) socio-civic relations, (4) consumer aspects of life, (5) occupation, (6) recreation, and (7) religious and philosophical needs (Kidd, 1959, cited in Mazmanian, 1977, p. 4). This classification is also useful to distinguish between the different types of programmes, within different dimensions of adult education. If Maslow sees needs as differentiated at multiple, hierarchical levels, Kidd distinguishes between complimentary needs that cover all dimensions of an individual's life.

However, besides this different classification of adult needs, it is also important to know how adults learn, and how they motivate themselves to learn (going back to the perceived and expressed needs of adults) to better understand the factors that bring them to participate in adult education. There is a variety of theories explaining this, ranging from Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, which explains how adults learn to cope with social change in an adaptive or transformative way, or, by reflections at the meta level, in an expansive way (Y. Egestrom), to Knowles's humanist theory, or Kolb's experiential theory, which is sometimes also called a constructivist theory (see also Rogers), or to more recent theories emphasising the social conditions of learning, explaining how an adult learns to become a person in society (Jarvis). For a synthesis of these learning theories, see Illeris (2009) or Belanger (2011).

If these are needs of individuals (or small groups), situated at the micro level, one should be aware that there are also needs of society, at the macro-level, or needs of an organisation, at the meta level. We may even differentiate needs related to processes (efforts and activities) or resources (inputs).

Thus, for a better theoretical understanding of the various *factors* determining participation in adult education, practitioners offering educational and training programmes for adults should be aware of the various studies measuring such factors and showing the trends in participation rates (see the studies done by OECD, Eurostat, UNESCO, NIACE, and others, synthesised by Belanger, 2011, pp. 57–74).

There are different approaches for identifying needs: a *functional perspective* that assumes needs can be identified objectively and that they are measurable, but also an *empowerment perspective* which is based on a subjectivist world view where social reality is constructed and constantly changing (Pearce, 1995). The functional perspective includes all the systematic techniques, and quantitative investigation methods (see Chapter 5), whereas the empowerment perspective may sometimes involve any process that gathers data from learners or others in a position to offer an opinion about needs, interests, desires, or wants – all of which seem to be considered needs assessment, even though many of these produced fundamentally different kinds of information for the planning process. Thus, when doing *formal (*and systematic) needs assessment, planners tend to follow a functionalist approach, whereas they tend to embrace a subjectivist perspective when doing an *informal* needs assessment. Need has both a quantitative and a qualitative dimension, with each of the two perspectives described above addressing one of them.

Keyword: Functional perspective

This approach has been the most prevalent in North American adult education and training. Variously labelled rational, technical, or positivist, the functional view assumes that needs can be identified objectively and that they are measurable . . . . The functional approach is based on scientific empiricism – the idea that knowledge and the need for it are objectives that can be empirically discovered. In adult education practice this view draws to a great extent on the work of John Dewey, who applied the logic of science to education. Education is helping people to solve problems through the scientific method. It assumes that the source of knowledge lies outside the learner and that educators must help people access that knowledge. This is the kind of knowledge that is often labelled 'how-to'. In this approach, your determination of the programme needs will focus on what people need to know in order to do something better than they are doing it now.

Source: Pearce, 1995, p. 406.

The empowerment framework relies on the subjectivist paradigm, which suggests that social reality is constructed and constantly changing, with each individual having a different (but equally valid) perception of it, and constructing it by his or her reflections. Within this approach, Pearce argues that determining needs is a process. The empowerment approach is employed in diverse areas of education, such as feminist pedagogy, environmental education, citizenship education, and political education. The (critical) social reflection theories of Freire, Habermas, Brookfield, and others are the basis for this approach, which stresses the importance of open (egalitarian) dialogue and communicative methodology, which also helps people discover their needs.

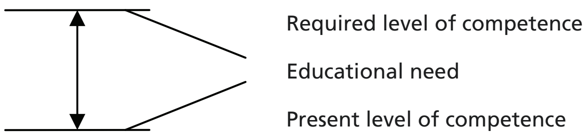
The qualitative statement implicitly requires the labelling of the situation as a problem to be ameliorated. Quantification or tabulation of the problem is intended to categorise and aggregate, to quantify the amplitude of the need for a group of people (see also Chapter 5). However, while translating the problem into a need, we should keep in mind that theorists differ in their interpretation of the same data about the problem. This fact raises suspicions about the reliability and validity of the data used to determine a need. Programmers play a central role in operationalising the concept of need (assessment). Their beliefs and values form the basis for their professional decision-making, and influence the ways they understand and implement the process of determining needs.

Whether we use a quantitative or a qualitative approach to understand the need (or, better, a combination of the two), a functionalist or an empowerment one, the reliability and validity of the needs identified will always depend on the available data, but also on the 'filters' that programme planners are using when understanding and interpreting the data. The time and resources for carrying out the needs assessment, in a formal or informal way, are another crucial factor.

3.3 The concept of needs in adult education

All the general considerations presented above can be applied to *educational need* as well. Malcom Knowles defines educational need as 'something a person ought to learn for his or her own good, for the good of the organisation or for the good of society' (cited in Mazmanian, 1977, p. 6). It is the gap between his or her present level of competence and the higher level required for effective performance, as defined by that individual, the organisation, or society.

Figure 3: Kowles's illustration of educational need



Source: Knowles (1970), cited in Mazmanian, 1977, p. 6

The what-ought-to-be level can be determined from social norms, research findings, and value judgements by adult educators and the leaders of the target public. For gaining a better understanding of the educational need of individuals, in close relation with the motivational factors that help a latent need become an expressed need, it seems useful to also take into account the four categories of (educational) need derived by McClusky. According to McClusky, need implies the existence of a desirable condition. With respect to the individual's efforts to adapt to societal and context challenges and to reach this desirable condition, several needs, drivers, or even motivational factors, may be distinguished:

Keyword: Categories of educational need

McClusky identifies four categories of (educational) need: 1) coping needs, 2) expressive needs, 3) contributive needs, and 4) influence needs.
Coping needs refer to that group of requirements that must be met in order for individuals to keep up their adequate social adjustment, psychological health, and physical well-being.
Expressive needs refer to those activities that individuals engage in for their own sake, that is, activities undertaken for their own reward and enjoyment.
Contributive needs are those which assume that adults (especially older adults) have a need to give back to the community, a need to be useful to others, and a desire to be wanted.
Influence needs are those needs that affect the quality and direction of adults' own lives.

Source: Mazmanian, 1977, p. 5

However, any specialist performing a needs analysis should be aware that many important variables in the assessment of social or educational needs are difficult to measure. It is difficult, for instance, to determine the level of mental health of senior citizens, or to determine the life experience, and possibly the negative educational experiences, of hard-to-reach adults; it is even difficult to identify their literacy level, as a lot of them use a wide range of strategies to hide their illiteracy. Neither is it easy to measure the current status or real educational interests of less educated adults in a valid or reliable way, as we don't know how honest they are when questioned about their relationship to learning (e.g., When was the last time you attended a course, and on what topic?) or their learning interests. If asked at various times to prioritise the courses they would choose from a list of educational options according to their needs and interests, they are likely to come up with different priorities each time. Also, quite often, adults are not able to identify their own learning needs, or knowledge deficiencies.

In addition, going back to the abovementioned distinction between needs, wants, and interests, and how easy it is to confuse them, or to the distinctions between different types of needs, it can be noticed how long it often takes individuals who have identified a certain educational need to actually address that need by taking a suitable course.

For instance, when someone is experiencing a problem, that individual (or group of people) has a need. Sometimes, the need is obvious: a low-qualified adult has to attend an educational programme to earn a certificate without which he or she cannot get the better paid job at a higher level, since that job requires having that particular certificate. Even if that person had the necessary skills, he or she could not formally perform them. At other times, the need is more subtle and more difficult to meet – for example, the need to increase your confidence in your own capacity to learn.

Acquiring missing competencies, however, should not be seen only as a recuperative intervention, but also as a developmental one. For instance, a ‘pre-retirement education’ programme prepares adults for a future developmental phase, whereas a literacy programme has a more remedial purpose. Both the needs and assets of a target audience are determined through *situational analysis*, that is, by identifying their present situation, their possible situation, and their ideal situation. Assessing student needs is the process of determining the presence or absence of the factors, conditions, resources, services, and learning opportunities that students *need* in order to meet their education goals and objectives within the context of an institution’s mission. The situational analysis can also be related to what Havighurts (1952, see Boone, Safrit, & Jones, 2002, pp.143–145) has called a ‘developmental task’: a certain period in an individual’s life, and the level of maturity reached. However, the adult educator has to make sure that the desirable level of competence is within learners’ capabilities.

This last statement can also be very much related to the didactic aspects of the programmes delivered, which takes us to another perspective of needs in adult education: the ones that can be ‘created’ or influenced by educational provision. Thus we can define different didactic levels of needs that can arise even while an adult is already enrolled in a certain course:

- A socially determined need arises when adult students compare themselves with their classmates or in their everyday environment, and envision a desirable level of competence.
- A content-related need arises in response to new information presented in the course.
- Teachers, in their role as facilitators, may also help adult students identify their educational needs in a more systematic way.
- At other times, simply defining the aims of the course may help adult students become aware of the fact that their own aims and possible ways of accomplishing them coincide with the goals of the course.
- Successfully graduating from the programme can encourage adult learners to set higher aims for themselves and to formulate other educational needs.

However, one should be aware that in teaching-learning contexts, teachers often assume their own teaching aims to coincide with the needs and the interests of their students, which is mostly not the case. That is why, in an adult education setting, it is essential to do at least two things: to make an initial needs analysis (i.e. to identify students' educational level, their previous experiences, their expectations, and the compatibility of course contents and students' capabilities) and to negotiate these contents, as well as the ways of addressing students' needs during the course (for more details, see Chapter 7 on the implementation of educational programmes).

So far we have described how learners' needs can be identified, and how they can be influenced by different educational settings. From the perspective of the adult education institution, however, it is also important to identify needs and the niches that can be targeted within the community (see 6.1). An adult education institution can draw on multiple sources for identifying educational needs:

- being familiar with their competitors' programmes, problems, and needs
- being aware of development trends in the community (For instance, if a major investor is about to create a lot of jobs in the area, adult education institutions should use the opportunity to provide matching training programmes to prepare people for their new tasks.)
- reading the local media, including job advertisements and the skills needs identified in these ads
- being familiar with the demographic structure of the population, their educational habits, and so forth.

Most of the time, adult education institutions tend to rely on their experience and know-how while planning the course they will provide. In addition, they often belong to a range of professional networks and exchange experiences with other institutions about course offerings and solutions for meeting or creating demand for specific courses.

Also, adult education providers are aware of the fact that adult education deals mostly with non-formal, non-compulsory education, catering to very diverse and most often non-expressed needs, which makes motivating adults to participate even more challenging.

The different types of adult educational need vary according to the sector or dimension of adult education: it is much easier, for example, to identify adult educational needs related to the professional context, where they are more or less regulated, than it is with adult education designed for personal enrichment. These different fields are explained in more detail in Chapter 4.

3.4 Diagnosing needs

At the end of the previous section, we pointed out possible sources for gathering data that might be used for diagnosing needs. Gathering such data requires different types of studies, all of which are typical of educational marketing:

- *studies on needs*, designed to clarify the educational products and services most suitable for addressing the social, economic, and developmental needs of communities, social groups, or business organisations
- *positioning studies*, designed to determine, as precisely as possible, the share of market already occupied by other offers, and to identify their specific features (e.g. target groups, target sectors, professional specialisations, etc.)
- *market studies*, designed to identify:
    - the organisations and institutions that regulate and control the field
    - the providers of educational services, with their actual and potential clients
    - the buying power of the potential clients
- *studies of implementation*, trying to identify the possibility of implementing a new educational product.

Irrespective of the study format carried out, or the types of data collected (or a combination of them), some data are essential for properly diagnosing need:

- demographic characteristics of the target community, including data about its homogeneity/heterogeneity
- institutional structure of the community: the organised social relationships people tend to create to help meet their needs
- social stratification, as well as socio-cultural and economic class differentiation
- value system: factors that are given high priority by the community
- power structure: key persons within the community who are in control and can make things happen
- ecology: the spatial distribution of people in the community, transportation, housing areas and patterns.

Such data help us get a better insight into the community for which we are designing a programme. Even if courses are primarily geared towards individuals, it important to keep in mind that these individuals are members of their respective community, and that factors that concern the community they belong to should be taken into consideration if the programme is to be successful, as such contextual factors can hinder or stimulate participation.

Care should be taken to select data that can be analysed and presented, and that are relevant to the needs of the target audience. Some guiding questions can be used by adult educators to identify, analyse, and present the right kind of data to point out the significance of the situation for a given problem or need (Boone et al., 2002, p. 145):

- Does a need really exist?
- What is the basis of the need? What is the etiology of the need, what are its causes?
- How widespread is the need? How many persons are affected by the need?
- What is the relative importance of the need? In what way is this a social or economic need (or both)? What are the factors influencing the need?
- How do people feel about the seriousness of the need?
- What are the potential consequences to the people if no effort is made to fulfil or meet the need?

To make sure that it is a real need, adult educators have to collect facts and opinions from as many different individuals and groups of people as possible – including service providers, community leaders, and those affected by the problem, as well a variety of other interested groups. Even if the main focus should always be on the direct beneficiary, a number of different need levels can be differentiated according to the various target groups.

Keyword: Levels of need

Level 1 (*the primary level*) consists of those individuals who would be the direct recipients or receivers of services. The services will be a result of a programme developed to resolve a high-priority need. Examples of these target groups would be students, clients, patients, customers, and so on.

Level 2 (the secondary level) is composed of individuals or groups who deliver services to Level 1 (and sometimes Level 2 is used to refer to a treatment provided to Level 1 target groups). Examples would be teachers, social workers, counsellors, professionals, librarians, policy-makers, administrators, and others.

Level 3 (the tertiary level), which is substantially different from Levels 1 and 2, focuses on resources and inputs into solutions. Examples of this level of need are buildings, facilities, classrooms, transportation systems, salaries, and benefits, programme delivery systems, working conditions, and the like.

Needs analysis should always be directed toward Level 1 target groups. Level 1 individuals and groups are the very reason for the existence of Levels 2 and 3, and not vice versa. In education, social work, health care, and most other fields, Level 1 needs are the 'raison d'etre' for service deliverers and delivery systems. Therefore, the initial data to be collected or that which are readily available from databases and other existent sources should provide insights into the problems faced by Level 1 target groups.

Source: Altschuld & Witkin, 2000, p. 9

Also, we have to make sure that the problem or need is clearly defined and subjected to other possible interpretations. For instance, if we seek to address the problem of unemployment, whom do we take into consideration: do we limit our analysis to unemployed individuals receiving social benefits, or do we also cover the long-term unemployed, or those who were never employed in the first place (e.g. farmers in rural areas)? We might also include individuals who work part-time, or only sporadically. General agreement has to be reached in all terms in order to arrive at a shared definition of the problem and of the target population. The demographic characteristics of the target population also have to be identified to gain as much in-depth understanding of their needs, capacities, motivation, and experiential background as possible (see also Kettner, Moroney, & Martin, 1999, pp. 28–37).

Finding out more about how people feel about the urgency of their need helps us get some idea of whether the problem is widely recognised, whether people are aware of it, and whether we can rely on potential community support for later actions. We can also determine whether it is a felt (immediate) need or a basic, long-term need. Also, we should keep in mind that need is elastic: it might change over time, and so might the related demand. That is why programme planners tend to focus on long term needs, rather than on immediate ones.

The target populations and their leaders make the final judgement about educational needs and the measures that will fulfil those needs. Thus, interfacing with leaders of the target population in diagnosing needs is a successful practice, which serves to ensure their support and acceptance, as well as the general legitimisation of the programme. As Boone et al. (2002, pp.147) have pointed out, 'experience has shown that many leaders represent specialised interests and can or will speak only for a specific interest group', so adult educators must determine who among them are the best spokespersons for the target population. There are different techniques for getting data from them, ranging from interviews and surveys to community study, observation, focus groups, checklists, questionnaires, and the like (see Chapter 5).

Returning to the various perspectives on needs presented in Section 3.1, we can regard the views of the community leaders as perceived need. Trying to identify community resources means gathering data about relative need, but also, to a certain extent, about expressed need (e.g. enrolment in other educational programmes in the community), or about normative need (e.g. the influence of the value system on perceived needs). Normative need implies the existence of standards or norms established by authority or common consensus against which the quantity and quality of an educational programme is measured. The normative perspective on need allows programme planners to generate objective targets in shaping their programme and its delivery (e.g. standards for accrediting a programme or an education provider).

It is obvious that a good diagnosis of needs should be informed by data from all four perspectives, from all levels of needs related to the target groups and other interested people, and also from the larger context of the community.

It should be mentioned, however, that it has been a common practice among many adult educators and their organisations to first define what *they* felt were the target population's needs and then to offer a prescribed programme such as a lecture series, workshop, conference, or course. As a result of this top-down process, target populations frequently tend to be quite critical of the predetermined need and the prescribed programme, sometimes rejecting them outright. This top-down approach is perceived to be tailored more to the mission and philosophy of the adult education organisation, or to policymakers' agendas, than to local, individual, or community needs. Examples of courses that were developed and marketed without seeking prior input from those toward whom the course was directed can be found at all kinds of adult education providers, even including the universities.

Sometimes, only little needs analysis is done, in a more or less (in)formal way, and with the limited resources programme planners have at their disposal. They might be using only one or two data sources, depending on the context of the programme to be launched (field of study, experience delivering it, etc.), meaning that not all levels of needs analysis are covered, sometimes not even including representatives of Level 1. It very much depends on the available data, the 'in-house style' for carrying out needs analyses, the existing resources in this respect, the course to be delivered, and so on. The following chapter will provide more insights into the specific characteristics of different fields and the needs they are generating, as well as the clarity of expressed needs. Chapter 5.1 contains more detailed considerations about how needs analysis is integrated into programme planning. Finally, to learn in a concrete way how needs are diagnosed, please perform Task 3 at the end of this chapter.

Exercises and tasks

Exercise 1

What is the difference between individual needs and social needs (keeping in mind the question of who determines something and in whose interest)?

Exercise 2

How relevant is the hierarchy of needs and demands for the development of education programmes? (Consider Maslow's hierarchy of needs and describe the level at which educational programmes and educational needs come into play.)

Task 1

Please identify an adult education target group of your choice and give examples of what might be a *normative need*, a *perceived need*, or an *expressed need* in that specific case, based on the differentiations provided in Section 3.1. Please reflect on how you might learn about the unknown needs of those adults.

Task 2

With respect to your chosen target, please reflect on the kind of data you should collect to diagnose the normative, perceived, expressed, or relative perspectives of their needs.

Task 3

Invite one or two practitioner/s responsible for needs analysis or programme planning at an adult education institution (e.g. a VHS, vocational centre, etc.) for a 20–30 minute discussion. Try to find out more concrete facts about their way of identifying needs and how they use the results of their analysis for programme planning. The idea is to identify their ways of needs analysis as a prerequisite for professional programme planning.

Possible questions include:

- What is meant by the term *needs analysis* (NA) in the everyday practice of your institution?
- Do you do NA on a regular basis? How often? To what extent? Who is doing it?
- Does your organisation have a specific 'in-house style' for carrying out NA? Can you describe it?
- What kind of difficulties do you have in conducting NA? Regarding content, finances, other resources, support?
- What procedures and instruments of NA do you use? Which are suitable for you and why?
- How do you deal with multiple data sources?
- How do you communicate the findings of your NA to your institution?
- What role do NA findings play in the process of programme planning? How are they implemented there?
- Does your organisation monitor the relation between NA and educational programmes? Is there an evaluation process in place, and if so, what kind of process?

4. Fields of needs analysis in the educational context

Needs analysis – which is usually a transversal system – differentiates into various fields. In the previous chapter, we have pointed out the way educational needs can be diagnosed, mainly at the individual and community level, through different types of studies. Depending on the conditions prevailing in the particular field, individual elements of the needs analysis are more or less viable, individual indicators and aspects are more or less important, and individual instruments are more or less reasonable. In this chapter, we will extend our analysis of the various sources for identifying needs at different levels (ranging from individuals to organisations or communities/regions – each of them seen as a 'subject', as an identity with a certain specificity and educational need), bringing into the theoretical discussion different aspects that interact in the production of a need, or determine the way the need is expressed or manifested.

The fields of needs analysis are defined with a view to the subjects who have a need or who are assumed to have a certain need. By the same token, the definition of 'subject' needs to be approached in a pragmatic manner; the subject, from the perspective of a needs analysis, is that natural person or form of organisation who or which is capable of having a need in the first place. In this sense, the subject in a needs analysis is also the actor who articulates needs and is able to implement them in a certain action. 'Subject' in the sense intended here means a delineated unit capable of acting and reasoning.

Because they are the most active subjects in the execution of educational processes, the three most important actors in the articulation of needs are (1) individuals, (2) local communities and regions in which educational processes are initiated, and (3) enterprises, which have to specify, in concrete terms, appropriate categories of needs in their strategic and operative management.

These three subjects are presented in detail in the following, to a certain extent serving as an example of other conceivable actors, such as associations or other institutions. This presentation is preceded by a section in which different types of definitions of 'subject' are discussed in the context under examination.

4.1 The delineation of subjects

Whenever we speak of subjects, we encounter the difficulty of defining what we mean by 'subject'. This difficulty is found in the notion of *delineation*. The question of 'inside' and 'outside' is of central importance in needs analysis. If one doesn't have a precise idea of the subject of needs, it is not possible to identify those needs and analyse them.

As motivation, interest, and action-oriented structures, 'needs' (subjective need) refer to an 'inside-out' process, which evolves internally in a variety of individual processes and is then directed towards the outside. Subjective needs are mainly related to physical living beings, as for example the needs of people to feel well and to be happy. Viewed outside-in, a subject may have a 'need', which, however, although it is considered to be a need from an 'objective' perspective, is only a 'sub-need' or 'partial need' from an inside perspective. It is particularly difficult to delineate the subject when the acting subject is ambiguous in terms of its external and internal structures. This generally does not appear to be the case when it comes to individuals, but as we shall see, delineation problems may crop up here as well. This problem is obvious, however, in the case of subjects such as regions or businesses, which either lack clear boundaries or are linked to the outside world in a myriad of ways.

Furthermore, delineation is of special interest because analysing the environment also plays an especially pivotal role in needs analysis. Acting subjects will not develop a need unless they have a clear perception of change and impact processes in their environment. With respect to individuals, this means growing into a world in which they not only assume ever more responsibility but also perceive ever new, ever different types of activities (e.g. with schoolchildren, parents, employed persons, etc.). Looking at the environment, it is important to recognise the boundaries between the subject and the environment and define these boundaries in terms of their mode of function (i.e. permeability, interlinkage, etc.)

There are individual indicators with which to describe, in a very general fashion, how needs develop within subjects. The most important indicators here are the question of involvement of individual parts of the subject (the keyword being 'participation'), the question of responsibility for individual decisions (the keyword here being 'decision') and the question of action, in particular the articulation and satisfaction of needs (the keyword here being 'action').

Regarding participation, the manner in which the individual parts of the subject are involved is of paramount importance. The level of participation can vary considerably. It can range from information on the process of needs analysis and the specification of needs all the way to joint counselling services on needs and decisions on needs. Depending on the form the subject takes, boundaries are conceivable and necessary here, but also the processes that make participation possible. The 'corporate identity', the authenticity and coherence of acting subjects, largely depends on whether and how participation of individual parts is arranged.

This applies similarly to decisions: the question as to whether the decision is made jointly or by mutual agreement, whether it is binding, and what impact it has is of prime importance in both specifying needs and satisfying those needs.

Finally, the action is of significance: what follows from the decision to specify certain needs? Which individual subject (or which part of the subject) acts in what manner, in which periods of time, and at which points in time, and towards whom? Especially in the area of education, such decision-making processes are often less stringent than they could reasonably be expected to be when it comes to specifying and satisfying needs.

In specifying needs, a special role is assigned to the question of how the target corridor of the subject is demarcated, to what extent the individual elements agree on the target and how coherently it fits with the specification of needs. The target corridor of an acting subject is thus defined more broadly than the goal, as a guidance option over time is included in the definition of the corridor. The target corridor derives from the later adjustment of the target-oriented action of the subject, which is influenced by an analysis of the environment. In this process, actors may identify their own needs, which are added to the previously specified needs – this is the case especially with regard to the definition and attainment of the target.

The analysis of needs is a spiral-shaped process for all subjects – a process in which it is necessary to constantly provide new accents and focuses regarding the target to be reached and the ongoing analysis of the environment of the delineated subject.

Keyword: Delineation

The delineation of subjects is essential for defining and analysing needs. Subjects can be defined at various levels. In the case of universities, for example, possible subjects may include the departments, the faculties, the whole university, the universities in one region, or the universities throughout the country. Departmental needs are different from the needs of the entire faculty; very often, their needs compete with those of other departments. The delineation of subjects is not only valid and necessary for needs analysis but also for organisational development, corporate identity, and strategic as well as operational management.

4.2 The individual as a subject

The individual, the learning subject itself, is always at the forefront in the field of education. Success in the field of education is measured in terms of whether it is capable of improving learning by individuals and groups of individuals wherever possible, while further improving quality. For individuals, questions relating to needs analysis are therefore always embedded in the general objective of education: helping people develop into mature, fully developed human beings.

Especially in the area of adult education, research on the needs of individuals has fanned out considerably. Very intensive research has been carried out regarding questions relating to motivation, interests, expectations, and targets (see Chapter 3). Findings produced by research – for example, that motivations do not occur singly, but rather always in a package, or that needs are in some cases articulated, but are more frequently only latent (which is to say they remain unspoken) – serve as common foundations in educational work with adults. In particular, preoccupation with so-called 'latent needs' – focusing on groups of persons who are less active in the area of education and are frequently disadvantaged – has generated considerable research in the area of adult education.

The realisation that there is a difference not only between intrinsic and extrinsic motives but also between intrinsic and extrinsic needs plays a special role here Two different words are used in German to describe this distinction: *Bedarf* designates extrinsic needs which come outside-in, whereas *Bedürfnis* denotes intrinsic needs which come about inside-out (see 3.1).

Needs emanating from the inside come about through interests in learning such as, for instance, the desire to converse in a foreign language, to educate one's children better and in a more deliberate, conscious fashion, or to change one's behaviour in a partnership and in one's social environment. Intrinsic needs are often also implemented in cultural, political, and general learning processes relating to the fields of art, sports, and general education. Extrinsic needs among individuals are induced through requirements emanating from the outside – at a company, for instance, where learning is required in order to adapt to new technological environments. Moreover, needs emanating from the outside include those which result from the fact that certain 'desirable' modes of life and career plans are linked to certain activities such as, for instance, studying at a private school, completing a post-doctoral thesis, obtaining a license to practice medicine, and so forth. Here, needs relate to standards which have been imposed externally. These are frequently referred to directly as 'qualification needs'. But external needs are also implied by the new concept of competences, for instance in the area of international trade and commerce, where needs now include 'intercultural competences', which, up until now, have not existed in this form as a qualification structure.

The analysis of the educational needs of individuals is based on whether needs emanate from the inside or the outside. Needs emanating from the outside arise from a combined analysis of individual desires and interests, accompanied by an examination of requirements imposed externally. Here, it is of interest to find out in each particular case whether there is a divergence between requirements and desires, whether a disparity exists at the level of objectives, or whether there is a mismatch at the level of that which is possible. In many instances, the needs requirements directed at individuals do not necessarily coincide with their prerequisites and possibilities. Staff development strategies at companies take this very seriously, which is why they take into account a so-called 'analytical loop' (see below in Section 4.4). In the process of staff development, procedures are also commonly used which structure the process of accommodating individual desires with requirements imposed from the outside.

With respect to individual needs, the question as to whether these are latent or manifest is of special importance. The manifest educational needs of individuals generally express themselves in the direct search for appropriate, organised programmes or, alternatively, in targeted, self-organised learning. Here, processes aimed at analysing needs generally only make sense if they focus on the 'fit' between articulated (which is to say, manifest) needs and the learning opportunities available. At the same time, the field of adult education has seen the emergence of 'educational counselling', which, in a nutshell, seeks to specify the educational needs of the individual through a dialogue on how this individual educational need can be met by filtering the supply of information available. When people have an interest in language learning, for instance, educational counsellors examine the language prerequisites they already have, the motives that underlie their language-learning needs, the robustness of these motives, and the specifics relating to their interest in language (e.g. communication, grammar, basic structures, etc.).

Analysing latent needs is more difficult. In this case, a very psychologically oriented approach is needed with which to assess an individual's ideas about their need for education – ideas which are only present in a rough form and are generally unarticulated and very imprecise. Here as well, counselling systems have developed a wide variety of procedures in order to help people explore their latent individual needs. Latent needs generally do not guide the behaviour of people directly and for this reason presuppose a certain predictive assumption as to what the needs of people could be.

Individuals themselves generally only have a very underdeveloped repertoire of tools with which to conduct a needs analysis. So far only very few attempts have been made to train people to identify their own needs; with these attempts constituting exceptions (e.g. the 'learning-to-learn' pilot programmes initiated several years ago to help train people to learn to identify their own needs). Thus, external support is usually available here to help people analyse their needs. These presuppose, however, that the identification of objectives and the definition and delineation of a target corridor continue to lie in the decision-making domain of the individual.

Keyword: Learning needs

Learning needs are the main topic in the education of individuals. This term is very often used synonymously with terms such as *motive*, *interest*, *expectation*, or *reason*. Individuals' needs and motives are closely linked to their situation, their biography, and the societal context in which they live. Participation in adult education, for example, is a 'complex bundle of diverse, sometimes contradictory and unconscious needs and expectations, challenges and hopes, primary and secondary drivings' (Nuissl, 2008, p. 16). In the educational context, it is mostly not possible to ask individuals directly about their subjective needs. To find out about those, it is often necessary to use a combination of raising their interest in and acceptance of education along with applying analytical approaches.

4.3 Communities or regions as subjects

The community or regional structure as a subject specified by needs is increasingly moving into the nexus of interest in the fields of political science and sociology. Models have been tested in many programmes, especially in the field of education, on how regional educational needs can be determined and satisfied through actors in a region working together. Regional needs for education are often, as it were, described using categories such as 'density of continuing education' or 'basic supply'.

It is more difficult to specify boundaries for community or regions than it is to do so for individuals. Different reference systems are conceivable with regard to the boundaries of a region (and a local community as well). Thus regional boundaries may derive from the administrative boundaries of a district (e.g. a 'county'); this is where the possibilities for political action and the delineation of the boundary coincide. Often, however, there is some degree of overlap with adjacent regions as a result of cultural, social, economic, and historical linkages. These constitute other possibilities for defining regions. Thus there are regions which can be explained in terms of certain geographic features (this is particularly evident in the case of valleys and islands), regions which are based on economic integration (e.g. urban agglomerations surrounding major cities or regions where certain types of production dominate, such as the coal fields and steel manufacturing in the regions of Saarland (Germany), Lorraine (France), and Luxembourg). In addition, there are regions which have formed historically – for instance, smaller states which crystallised in the Middle Ages and have been preserved down to the present day in the form of hereditary monarchical structures, and which often also differ from their proximate environment in terms of religion and culture. Nowadays, we also speak about cross-border regions, set by geographic and cultural proximity (see Committee of the Regions). Social regions can also be described – for instance, residential areas in which migrants from certain regions tend to be concentrated. The definition of a region thus always depends on the underlying objective, on what is to be attained through the region, or what is to be achieved with a regional approach. In the field of education, this is generally the question of how an improvement and boost in quality on the supply side of education can be attained through interaction between a wide range of actors.

Similar to learning organisations and learning enterprises (see below in Section 4.4), regions are in this sense structures which not only offer a framework for people to learn, but which also 'learn' themselves. Regions learn in order to ensure that they remain viable in economic and social terms, to ensure a certain living and employment standard among their populations. Continuing education is always part of this effort – so that a region can maintain and further the qualifications of its working population. This is even more necessary where safeguarding and guaranteeing jobs, and training potential especially, are mainly necessary for young people. By the same token, much depends on how the various actors behave towards one another in a region. A region learns and develops through the institutions, organisations, and so on which exist in a region interacting and working in a targeted manner. At the same time, the supply and demand sides (this is interesting in the needs analysis) should be viewed from a broad perspective which can still be shaped by the actors (see Sava, 2008, pp. 69–78).

So continuing education is connected to various needs in a region. That is why networks of actors need to emerge in the respective regions, creating structures among themselves as a basis for a regional continuing education landscape with suitable centres working on a professional basis. The common tasks of these actors in the region emanate from interaction in the creation of programmes, counselling activities, the provision of information, quality assurance, curriculum development, and the coordination of corresponding planning efforts. Above all, the interaction between actors in a region is concentrated on a joint analysis of needs, based on which the required steps can be taken to ensure the further development of regional educational programmes.

So-called 'networks' usually come about in order to approach this interaction between actors in the region in a systematic, targeted, and structured manner. These networks coalesce around a nucleus of educational facilities, in particular continuing education facilities. Cooperation takes place here in a targeted manner with the aim of satisfying needs in the region in an appropriate manner. There are essentially three target complexes along these lines in which actors in the region interact:

- The first complex of objectives lies in the definition of existing and future fields of business; the issue here is whether the facility expands the spectrum of its content, whether it addresses new groups of participants, or whether it is to forge ahead into previously untapped areas such as, for instance, business enterprises. This complex of objectives must consequently be involved in cooperation with other facilities, as it affects all continuing education facilities.
- The second complex of objectives relates to increasing the efficiency of one's own work, reducing costs, and, in the broadest sense, creating synergy effects within the region.

- The third complex of objectives relates to professionalism and quality assurance in the broadest sense. It ranges from the joint development of programmes and joint quality-control procedures all the way to cooperation in the continuing education of teaching staff.

In addition to the joint provision of information, advertising, and communication, which in a 'learning' region usually takes the form of networks, the task in particular here is also to jointly analyse needs. The less is known about existing needs in a region, the more inefficient the work of regional educational facilities is bound to be. Generally, facilities arrange to perform joint needs analyses in the region. While this is less expensive, it is not always useful, especially when it is only performed by one facility. Because needs are changing at an ever quicker pace in regions, the results produced by these analyses are often vague. Nor are they particularly precise in terms of the techniques which they use to measure needs. Many ideas in regional cooperative ventures and networks therefore address the question as to how robust needs analyses are when they are used to support decision-making in the coordination of programmes – for instance, how to avoid a duplication of programmes.

On the other hand, the different types of facilities which cooperate at the regional level (educational facilities, primary and secondary schools, cultural facilities such as museums, administrations, etc.) produce new and expanded possibilities for analysing needs. Thus, for instance, different types of facilities and organisations can analyse needs structures in the transitions from the educational to the employment system much more effectively when they cooperate than when they do not. In such cooperative structures, the analysis of the number and type of competences required in the labour market can be explored jointly with actors engaged in the educational process while analysing their interests and perspectives. Although the basic problem is creating a fit between the employment and educational system, the impossibility of planning competences that will be required in the future, as well as the time dilatation between competence, needs, and the identification and production of competence, cannot be remedied. However, cooperation tends to produce significantly better results going in this direction.

The criteria of participation, responsibility, and decision-making are of tremendous importance, especially if the region is characterised by democratic and open systems. Conflicts are particularly likely to occur in such cooperative structures in 'learning regions' when the interaction between the actors is not structured in a participatory manner, or when responsibilities and decisions (and the degree to which they are binding) are not clearly spelled out. For this reason, there is a major discussion (Nuissl, 2008) over the appropriate form and mode of work for networks in regions, and over the fact that such networks basically no longer fulfil the philosophy of a learning region when they become a 'closed shop' or a mega-enterprise competing with other regional providers.

The common analysis of needs in the region obtains its synergetic relevance by virtue of the fact that it typically involves analysing the needs of a wide variety of individual actors (enterprises use a different procedure in their analyses of needs, for instance) – that the multiplicity of needs analysis approaches also promotes synergies. Needs analysis is also of key importance to the subject of 'learning regions' (or 'learning communities'), in particular as far as the interaction of actors is concerned.

Keyword: Region

In the social sciences, the term *region* is a construct that can be applied to a range of realities. Education and learning are understood to be key factors promoting the development and value of a region. It is a task for communities and regional bodies to push for more and better opportunities for learning and qualification in their respective area, since it is obvious that the structure of educational systems is a crucial factor for the development of regions (Nuissl, 2008). 'A learning city, town or region recognises and understands the key role of learning in the development of basic prosperity, social stability and personal fulfilment, and mobilises all its human, physical and financial resources creatively and sensitively to develop the full human potential of all its citizens. It provides both a structural and mental framework which allows its citizens to understand and to react positively to change.' (Longworth, 2006, p. 23)

4.4 Organisations or enterprises as subjects

The analysis of needs in enterprises (and other organisations) involves not only the analyses of how educational needs are identified, but also very generally speaking the analysis of how needs are identified in the market. This at the same time in particular involves the procedure for determining the need for the products or services offered by enterprises. In order to remain viable, enterprises have developed a wide variety of procedures with which to analyse needs out of their profit maximisation processes, which not only explore the market for the sale of their own products and services, but also seek to anticipate the future development of the market. This includes, for example, well-founded predictions of people's attitudes towards the aesthetic aspects of products, their ability to handle new technologies, or the extent to which products fit into newly evolving family and social structures. In some cases, an analysis of future needs has become the foundation for a flourishing enterprise. One example here is Microsoft, which at a very early stage in an emerging market anticipated the need for networked communications structures involving an ever growing number of computers.

Questions relating to the analysis of educational needs crop up for companies in particular when this involves their own human resource development. The results produced by more detailed market analyses feed into the analysis of needs relating to a company's own staff. Generally, the development of new products, the penetration of new markets, or an increase in sales of existing products come along with requirements for staff to get more training and competence for the jobs they are doing. In addition to the organisational analysis of the developmental plan, or changing schemes such as job rotations, new job profiles, and the like, we can define two other levels when identifying the educational needs of an organisation: the level of occupational or group analysis, and the level of individual (see Palos, 2007, pp. 59–71). Depending on the way the different needs identified are addressed, we may differentiate between:

- more or less structured training, at the border between mentoring, coaching, or informal/peer learning, and habits – that is, the learning potential of the working environment
- specific training, designed to provide staff with new skills, or to upgrade their knowledge and competencies. Irrespective of whether employees receive in-house training or participate in an external programme, this type of training may be regarded as planned and organised staff development. This approach can cover a continuum, from being part of the company's general staff development strategy down to an individual agreement with a single employee, as part of their continuing professional development.

Keyword: Staff development needs

Staff development needs in enterprises and organisations can be differentiated according to various perspectives: they can represent *present/actual needs* (related to the existing level of competencies), or they can represent *anticipated/perspective needs (*related to changes planned for the future). Companies may carry out a *deficiency*-oriented needs assessment, focused on the discrepancies between actual and perspective needs, or an *opportunity*-oriented needs assessment, focused on the discrepancies that might appear in the future, requiring proactive solutions (Palos, 2007, pp. 63–65).

Corporate efforts to turn staff upskilling and training into an ever more important and expanding part of human resource development have intensified since the beginning of the 1990s. This goes not only for large enterprises, in which further education has traditionally been an element of human resources development, but also for small and medium-scale enterprises, which particularly rely on the development of competences and qualifications of their staff in order to remain viable.

The complex paths from needs to interests, programmes, implementation and correction, all the way to learning as a follow-up to what has already been learned, are particularly evident within enterprises. Generally, it is staff developers at companies who also actually guide this complex process. Their special fields of activities include needs analysis and the determination of training needs at the company, consulting of management staff regarding training needs, consulting of participants in training processes, and ensuring the success and the review of training activities.

The circular process of needs analysis at companies usually begins with an analysis of targets versus the current situation. The analysis of targets is based on the results of the market analysis and the steps required to strategically position the company in the market. The requirements which apply to the qualifications profile of employees are derived from this target-oriented description of the future of the enterprise (see Roberts, 2006, pp. 481–489). Thus, for instance, the creation of a new product with improved sales opportunities is associated with new skills requirements applying to staff, which must be met by also instituting measures internally at the company. The analysis of the target versus the current situation accordingly produces an identification of needs for the staff at the company emanating from the outside, which only very rarely conforms to the needs structure emanating from inside the company.

The complexity of needs analysis for training processes at companies arises from the fact that specified requirements and existing qualifications cannot be linked with particular individuals but only with the staff as a collective. Hence, not only are educational training programmes and processes to be derived from the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the target versus the current situation as it bears relevance to subsequent action – consequences for the staff-related and organisational structure of the company are to be derived here as well. In many cases, a new layout for departments and working groups results from analyses of needs at companies, as do transfers of persons and continuing education programmes for individuals or groups of employees. The complexity of interrelationships in company structures makes it necessary for analyses of training needs to be understood not as a task of the human resources department or human resource development, but rather the entire company and its management. It is along these lines that procedures and tools which can be used to analyse existing needs must be properly combined and modified.

Of all the subjects of needs analysis, companies have made most progress in developing procedures for the analysis of needs – in particular through the adaptation of market analyses. They also pursue the narrowest and most target-oriented spectrum of needs analysis as extrapolated from the objectives of the company, however. Research and development on how to make companies' analyses of needs effective have also progressed, especially with respect to training and continuing education and training questions.

Exercises and tasks

Exercise 1

To what extent are the education needs of individuals contradictory? (Generally, keep in mind the relation between individual and society, as well as the question of interests mediating between them.)

Exercise 2

What is the difference between 'organisation' and 'region' with regard to demand analysis? (Consider the differences in structures, procedures, and forms of organisation.)

Task 1

You are responsible for staff development or continuing education and training in an organisation. How do you determine needs? Which are the implied postulates or profile settings (interests) that guide your identification of needs?

Task 2

You work at an adult community centre. Please have a look at the programmes your institution is offering and identify the need that each programme is, or may be, connected to. Which target population within the community are you addressing? Is the profile of the adults participating in the programme the same as that of the adults you were planning the courses for? To help you complete this task, you can have a look at the online course catalogue of any adult education institution (e.g. a people's university).

5. Methods of Needs Analysis in Educational Context

In the third chapter, we have discussed formal and informal needs analysis, mentioning that carrying out a proper needs analysis depends very much on the resources we can put into such process, which can be costly and time-consuming. It also depends on programme planners' skills in using different investigation methods. Moreover, we made a distinction between the functionalist approach and the empowerment approach when doing needs assessment. We compared these approaches with carrying out quantitative or qualitative research.

Indeed, the needs analysis process can be easily compared to a scientific study, and programme planners, more than any other practitioners in adult education, have to master the methods for analysing data (in this case about needs), which closely resemble social science research methodology. Please note that this chapter, which sets out to present the various methods of investigating needs, is not intended to provide a research methods compendium. (A separate volume on research methodology is scheduled to be released as part of the study guide series.) The focus will be more on giving a brief description of each method, explaining the kind of data that each method is suitable for.

There are different ways of classifying the methods for identifying needs (see Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Bryman, 2008). From the vast variety of available classifications, we will use an integrated one, based on two classification criteria: data source and the number of people studied:

- *primary data* collected through field research. The information about needs is collected directly from the people affected by the respective need. Depending on the number of people studied, there are individual and group techniques.
- *secondary data* collected mainly through desk research of materials and studies with existing data.

The logical sequence is to begin with the less costly data collection method – studying existing documents – to get a better idea of the problem, its facets, and its magnitude, and to try to define the target population and its characteristics. This can be complemented by small-scale informal discussions. After that, the range of the investigation is defined, and field research begins. In the following, the various data collection techniques for carrying out a needs assessment will be presented according to the logical order of the investigation.

(Training) needs investigations conducted within organisations or enterprises are a special case, because they are job-related and performance-oriented, and the potential participants of the training programme are known from the outset. These data collection techniques will also be presented briefly, since many training programmes are run on the job.

Whatever technique (or combination of techniques) one might choose, one must always be careful to collect the right data, from the relevant group, to make sure that the real need is identified. At the end of the chapter, we will give a few thoughts to assuring the validity and credibility of the data collected.

5.1 Desk analysis

Desk research refers to the extensive study of existing written documents that provide information related to our topic. These written sources provide the so-called 'secondary data', that is, information gathered for other purposes than immediate or first application. Secondary data sources include census reports, previous studies, (research) reports, monographs, (Internet) databases, media surveys, administrative records, and all other types of written documents from which we might get clarifications regarding the problem at hand.

Census reports. These data provide aggregate international, national, and community statistics on important sectors such as population, housing, education, health, and labour, as well as on the demographic characteristics of the target group (see, for instance, the 2010 Eurostat *International Labour Force Survey*). Census data are a rich source of information about people's political and legal groupings. These data can be summarised and compared in ten-year intervals to illustrate trends in people's personal, social, and economic characteristics. If census data are recent, they can be used to identify general areas of concern in the community and should serve as a good starting point for assessing needs. For example, if a high percentage of the population at a certain age is unemployed and without a qualification, this points to a need for training and qualification. These statistics can also provide data about market size and structure.

Every national institute of statistics provides such data. Eurostat, the corresponding institute at the European level, develops methodologies for assuring the comparability of data by running the same research in all EU Member States, providing reference data sources for all policy documents and reports. In a similar way, such data are available at the regional and local levels, and specialised institutions provide their census reports on a regular basis (employment offices, for example, keep up-to-date records about the dynamics of the job market). Such data are available on the Internet, or they can be obtained directly from the source.

Previous studies. These reports include studies done on groups as well as individuals. Although the issues studied may not be exactly the same as those of the needs assessment, there is always a chance that another development agency has been involved with similar kinds of issues. Such secondary, 'ready-made' data can be easily used, even though the programme planners often ignore them, confusing the specificity of the data with accuracy. For instance, if an extensive study investigating the interests of the whole community in attending courses at a people's university in a neighbouring town is available, the same institution in a different town can use these findings instead of conducting another (expensive) investigation, just for the sake of investigating its own community. Not only can these studies be useful, they often provide the most efficient and effective strategy for assessing needs when time and resources are a factor.

Research reports are a special type of expert data source, providing interpretations of the data along with the methodology used for collecting them. Such previous studies, even if they have been done for comparative, ameliorative, or prospective purposes, are valuable sources. The studies published on the Eurydice, OECD, CEDEFOP, and UNESCO portals, or on other relevant international organisations' websites, are important reference materials for any practitioner and specialist in adult education. For instance, a prospective (Delphi) study (see www.qf2teach.eu – a project coordinated by the German Institute for Adult Education, running such research between 2009 and 2011) on the competencies practitioners will need in ten years' time is useful information when designing professional development courses for this group.

As a first step in needs assessment, local libraries and archives should be searched. The time spent in libraries finding, reading, copying, and searching digital databases or other available materials is usually thought of as the core task of desk research. The key skill needed for effective desk research is 'finding sources and recognising their relevance' (Birn, 2003, p.18). When searching for previous studies, one should not forget about non-conventional sources of reading materials such as government departments, NGOs, and other local development agencies. Most organisations of any size collect information from a range of sources and a variety of purposes. Such *in-house sources* should be known before going anywhere else.

The in-depth monograph study is a special type of report, which is not always available, as substantial funding and resources are required to design and conduct such a study. If a monograph study does exist, however, it is a rich source of qualitative data, identifying the relative and perceived needs of a community, its traditions and mentalities, as well as its history. Such reports are good for providing expert opinions regarding the problems and prospects upon which needs assessments could be based.

Online databases. Searching online is increasingly becoming the most common way of gathering information. Online databases are a quick, cheap, and easy-to-access source of all kinds of information, specialised or public, often featuring tools for storing and structuring information, keeping records, and so forth. The benefits of searching electronically with the help of keywords are enormous: it saves a huge amount of time and work that could otherwise not even be afforded.

Product details. Desk research sources on product details include advertising brochures (e.g. about the programmes at other institutions), flyers, review articles, virtual learning platforms, newsletters, advertising campaigns, (learning) resource packages, DVDs, and the like. Performing a content analysis of such products can provide a large spectrum of information.

Media news. Press articles (e.g. about major investments plans likely to produce a need for employment-related competencies), advertisements (about available jobs, or about the offers of competitors), articles in specialised reviews (e.g. with news about other technologies and related needs for continuing professional development), press reviews (of specialised books), and interviews (e.g. with community leaders) are valuable sources of inspiration. They help the desk researcher find out about needs indirectly, and to stay up to speed with the evolution of needs and possible solutions for fulfilling them.

Administrative records and reports. Both government and non-government organisations maintain records on their activities. Most organisations also publish their activities on a quarterly or annual basis. When accessible, relevant organisational records and reports should be perused as one source of data for assessing needs. For instance, the activity reports of the (national) employment office can show the extent to which different active labour market measures are used (e.g. training courses for unemployed individuals), as well as the number of trained unemployed adults per type of course. The annual report of the ministry of education is another rich source of information. The so-called 'progress reports' towards achieving the Lisbon targets are a special type of report, published by the European Commission (for the most recent one, see European Commission, 2011), featuring comparisons of Member States' and the Union's performance versus their global competitors as the main indicators and benchmarks.

Policy documents. As sources of normative needs (and of expressed needs, used as arguments for introducing new stipulations or policy measures), policy documents set the market demand, as well as the frame for fulfilling the addressed needs. They set developmental trends and a framework for provisions by suggesting policy measures and methodologies of implementation; they create needs, but often stipulate ways of fulfilling them with the help of the support mechanisms proposed.

Desk research can be also needed for supporting the use of other methods. For instance, significant desk work is needed to combine the contacts found in various sources, or for compiling probability samples from published lists.

Regardless of whether we use service statistics (as a reference for expressed needs) or resource inventories (for normative needs), or whether we extrapolate from existing studies (which might explain perceived or relative needs, or even identify respondents' perception of need, or identify barriers to participation), desk-researched data are not infallible. It is up to the expertise and professional judgment of programme planners to evaluate the credibility and relevance of sources and data, especially if they have to pay for getting access to data presented in certain studies and reports. Sometimes, expert and professional judgment might guide the evaluation of the credibility and relevance of the sources. Such specialists are likely to be most familiar with existing surveys and relevant research in their area of expertise, and are usually in the position to propose specific strategies and to suggest reasonable levels of intervention and service provision. However, expert judgment also has its subjective limits.

The obvious advantage of desk analysis is the availability and accessibility of data. It is clearly more economical in terms of resources and time to rely on existing data than to collect new data using special surveys. Needs assessment based on available data, however, requires a critical analysis of the data, which, after all, were collected for other purposes. The main limitation concerns the credibility of the data and the fact that the real problem might be minimised, as discussed above.

5.2 Field analysis

Field research is mainly aimed to investigate the needs of the direct beneficiary, at need Level 1, but the other two levels can be addressed as well. The field analysis methods are the core of the needs assessment investigation if we decide to do it in a systematic way and to obtain data directly from the source.

5.2.1 Trial and error

Going by *trial and error* is one of the most common methods of needs analysis. The programme planner is asked to improve something in the institution's existing course offerings. He or she might *feel* that the interests or demographics of the region have changed, but in the absence of empirical evidence or studies, that is just his or her observation and feeling. The programme planner may notice the increasing number of migrants in the region, for instance, and decide that something should be done for them.

Even if there is no articulated need, programme planners might believe there should be one. For example, programme planners in young democracies might think that people would like to know more about how to build a strong public opinion, control politicians, and act against corruption. To meet the hidden need of knowing more about the workings of democracy, adult education institutions might offer suitable programmes, mainly in years before elections. It would be difficult to do an investigation. Then, a new programme is introduced which planners believe may meet the need of the target group – this is the *trial* part. Since the programme is publicised everywhere, it is a kind of questionnaire. The empirical investigation consists of the distribution of the programme as a marketing instrument. So, programme planners try to address the presumed needs in this way, and then wait to see if people sign up for the programme or not.

Normally, when the programme is offered for the first time, participation is rather low. Whether the decision to run such a programme was an error or not usually becomes clear in the first few days, when investigating the needs and expectations of those who did show up for the course. Even if it turns out be an error, the programme may be given a second try, since it always also involves the opportunity to talk to the beneficiaries. Trial and error is a cheap method of needs analysis, the most concrete and most frequently used one, even for new programmes or existing ones that have been revised.

5.2.2 Survey methods

Survey methods are also among the most commonly used methods for investigating educational needs. ‘The broad area of survey methods encompasses any measurement procedures that involve asking questions of respondents. A “survey” can be anything from a short paper-and-pencil feedback form to an intensive one-on-one in-depth interview.’ (Trochim, 2006, n.p.) There are roughly two types of surveys: questionnaires and interviews.

Which survey type to use depends on the time and resources available, the extension of collecting additional needs data from the target group, the methodological options, and the methods to be selected, as well as the size of the sample to be investigated. The data can be collected either from each individual of the sample or from a group of them. It is estimated that ‘60 to 70 per cent of the investigation methods used for needs assessment consist of surveying’ (Altschuld & Witkin, 2000, p.53). Every research method has its limitations; a synthesis of the advantages and disadvantages of survey methods is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The pluses and minuses of survey methods

Issue	Questionaire			Interview	
	Group	Mail	Drop-Off	Personal	Phone
Are Visual Presentations Possible?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Are Long Response Categories Possible?	Yes	Yes	Yes	???	No
Is Privacy A Feature?	No	Yes	No	Yes	???
Is the Method Flexible?	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Are Open-ended Questions Feasible?	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Is Reading & Writing Needed?	???	Yes	Yes	No	No
Can You Judge Quality of Response?	Yes	No	???	Yes	???
Are High Response Rates Likely?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Can You Explain Study in Person?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	???
Is It Low Cost?	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Are Staff & Facilities Needs Low?	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Does It Give Access to Dispersed Samples?	No	Yes	No	No	No
Does Respondent Have Time to Formulate Answers?	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Is There Personal Contact?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Is A Long Survey Feasible?	No	No	No	Yes	No
Is There Quick Turnaround?	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

Source: Trochim, 2006.

Some more details about these techniques, which can be applied to individuals or to groups of people, or to both, can be found in any book about research methods (see e.g. Bryman, 2008; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

Besides surveying methods, some other frequently used methods are introduced below, pointing out their strengths and limitations. Their potential for carrying out quantitative and/or qualitative identification of needs is pointed out as well.

5.2.3 Individual techniques

Individual techniques involve collecting data about each single subject of the sample, by either asking, observing, or testing them.

Interviews. The interview involves asking in-depth questions in order to better understand the individual's points of view. The set of questions to be asked can follow a structured or semi-structured grid. Open-ended questions give the individuals more room to develop their idea (mainly when it is about sensitive issues); they are more natural, but also more difficult to transcribe and code. The interview can be used as a technique in its own right, or to accompany a questionnaire to find out more about the answers provided in the questionnaire. Moreover, it is an appropriate technique when the subjects do not know how to write. Adults without a formal qualification, for example, may not be able to answer questions about their literacy level directly. However, if probed about their schooling and further non-formal training on the job, they may provide insights into their everyday activities, their existing knowledge and experiences, and therefore their needs. If respondents are unavailable for face-to-face interviews, they may also be interviewed via telephone or even via VoIP services such as Skype (depending on their digital competencies and equipment).

In needs analysis, the persons to be interviewed might be chosen according to different criteria than those usually applied in educational research, as these persons should be *key informants* – able, by their expertise or critical position, to represent a community (or to influence it). 'Examples include teachers, religious leaders, grass-roots workers, and traditional and political leaders, (main employers, and community) leaders. Key informants are particularly useful if the needs assessment has to be done fast, using a limited budget'. (McCaslin & Tibezinda, 1996, n.p.) *Interfacing with leaders* is a must, not only for the sake of getting accurate data but also for gaining acceptance, legitimisation, and support from them. Continued interaction also remains crucial as programme planning gets underway. The interview can be used both in quantitative and qualitative research, offering the possibility to explore some of the respondent's issues and points of view in depth. The disadvantages of this technique include the time needed to transcribe and analyse the data, the difficulty of getting access to relevant individuals, their availability, or the trust involved in this kind of communication (see Table 1).

Questionnaire. A questionnaire is a set of questions given to a sample of people. The purpose is to gather information about their attitudes, thoughts, behaviours, and so forth. The researchers compile the answers in order to know how the group as a whole thinks or behaves. For example, an institution concerned about the fact that adults are less and less interested in its courses and programmes may use a questionnaire to find out about their opinion and interests.

This needs assessment technique tends to be more structured than interview schedules and can be administered by direct field operators, by phone, mail, e-mail, online, or in group settings, using structured questions, such as open-ended questions, fixed choices/pre-coded questions, or scales. Questionnaires are typically used when investigating a large group of people, in a large area, for getting specific information at a relative low costs.

While traditional hardcopy questionnaires sent out by mail tend to disappear, online questionnaires are becoming more popular, and have the advantage of being more convenient for people to answer and submit. In addition, it is easy nowadays to set up an online data base (using 'Googledocs' or other applications). So once the answered questionnaire has been submitted, it can easily be transferred to the data base to be analysed. Both ways of administering questionnaires might be limited by low response rates, which is why the people investigating the needs of the potential participants often try to access them directly, for instance at educational fairs, adult learners' week, conferences, workshops, or other events, collecting answers while the people are there. A short, concise questionnaire is more likely to answered 'on the spot'.

Since the wording of a question and the selected response mode can influence the way people answer the question, questionnaires must be designed with great care. There are different types of questions, each with advantages and disadvantages, either with respect to gathering data or with respect to transcribing and analysing them. Moreover, there are different ways of scaling and codifying responses. The research literature (see Bryman, 2008; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000) gives plenty of examples of the way questions and answers should be formulated, along with criteria for choosing among the different options. In response to a question about people's interest in a new course, for example, respondents' answers will vary depending on the way the question is phrased. An open-ended question such as 'Why would you attend this course?' will yield different answers than a question asking for a 'structured response' such as 'Can you give me two reasons for attending this course?' Yet another type of response can be generated by enumerating some predefined options and asking respondents to tick one or three answers, or to rate or prioritise them.

Moreover, to ensure the reliability of the data, and hence to be more confident when generalizing their findings, survey designers should make sure that a group of people (random sample) is addressed. The average return rate with questionnaires administered by mail is about 20 per cent. In such a situation, it is important to check whether the sample is still representative of the target population. Some classifications do not consider a study to be valid unless 50 per cent of questionnaires were returned.

Web surveys are rapidly gaining popularity. They have major advantages in terms of speed, cost, and flexibility, but also have significant sampling limitations. The most often used application of this method is sending out a questionnaire by e-mail to a random sample of persons. While this is time saving, it is also quite risky because of the low response rate.

Observations. Observation, whether done in a structured way (using observation grids, rating forms, checklists, or observation schedules) or in an unstructured way (by informal observation), is a valuable method for gathering data. A lot of observation happens in the classroom, but also on field trips, or on the Internet (people being asked to keep diaries). This technique can be used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

Tests. Administering tests to individuals is meant to determine their skills and knowledge level, their abilities and interests, attitudes and aptitudes, as well as their personality traits. This method is used to determine the training need of each individual test taker. There is a wide variety of tests available, and they are mainly used in organisational settings to obtain a more precise identification of employees' training needs. Tests are also used in the counselling process to help adults find out more about their interests and capabilities to be able to have further options regarding their career paths and related training needs.

5.2.4 Group techniques

Group techniques (e.g. focus group, nominal group, panel discussion, consensual group, Delphi method, public hearing, or community forum) involve gathering data from more people at the same time. The data is collected mainly orally, from their interaction and discussions, but may also be collected in writing. Written responses are more common when opinions are asked from individuals (even if the technique is considered a group consultation, as with the Delphi technique described below), whereas it is quite rare for group consultations, held as a group, to result in a written document. A good moderator, able to assure competent leadership, should have several personal attributes, including familiarity with the group dynamic, good listening skills, well-developed written and oral communication skills, a sense of humour, and good knowledge of the topic of discussion.

The *Focus Group Interview* is one of the most often used group techniques, involving a structured discussion among a group of usually six to eight people (groups can be larger, depending on the format and scope of the group interview). The moderator asks questions, encouraging the participants to talk and give feedback to each other. There are many variations of this technique, ranging from the way it is moderated to the way the discussion is structured, or the way the group is set up.

‘The method is particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way. . . . Group discussion is particularly appropriate when the interviewer has a series of open ended questions and wishes to encourage research participants to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities’. (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299–302)

The group discusses a common topic, under the direction of a moderator. The interpersonal communication can help participants become aware of more hidden messages, like values, cultural variables, power interests, or non-verbal communication (beliefs, real interests, engagement, etc.), as well as wider knowledge and experiences. The method can work with homogenous or heterogeneous groups (with their advantages and disadvantages regarding experiential background and diversity of points of view).

Running a focus group interview requires a *questioning route* to be developed in advance, based on the objectives of the needs assessment. Since participants are encouraged to interact freely, as they would in everyday communications, such prepared questioning routes help keep the discussion, which tends to go in different directions, on topic. As already mentioned, it is important to define criteria for recruiting participants.

Another important factor for the success of focus group discussions are the moderating skills of the researcher, as already discussed. Moderating is the process of keeping the discussion on track. Sessions should be relaxed, and may last one to two hours, with participants sitting in a circle.

The data gathered from a focus group discussion is more of a qualitative nature, and can be recorded and transcribed like any other qualitative self-reporting data, by drawing together and comparing discussions of similar themes, examining how these relate to the variables within the sample population. The data coming out of focus group discussions are seen more as solutions to the listed problems, because the focused interaction between participants is used to achieve seven main aims:

- To highlight the respondents’ attitudes, priorities, language, and framework of understanding;
- To encourage research participants to generate and explore their own questions and develop their own analysis of common experiences;

- To encourage a variety of communication from participants – tapping into a wide range and form of understanding;
- To help to identify group norms and cultural values;
- To provide insight into the operation of group social processes in the articulation of knowledge (for example, through the examination of what information is censured or muted within the group);
- To encourage open conversation about embarrassing subjects and to permit the expression of criticism;
- Generally to facilitate the expression of ideas and experiences that might be left underdeveloped in an interview and to illuminate the research participants' perspectives through the debate within the group. (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 300).

Group data are neither more nor less authentic than data collected by other methods, but focus groups can be the most appropriate method for researching particular types of question, investigating perceived needs, and understanding the nuances of the problems and needs identified.

A similar concept, the *panel discussion,* is a group discussion involving six to eight persons (or even more), all experts on the topic, possibly even coming from different areas of the problem, who carry on a guided and informal discussion in front of an audience as if the panel were meeting alone. There are different ways of moderating the discussion. The most common one is to begin by having each participant give about five minutes of input on the topic introduced by the moderator, and then, based on the idea launched, to have a second round of questions addressed to them by the moderator. In the third phase, the questions can be taken from the audience.

In a way, this method combines the advantages of expert groups and public hearings, because the programme planner doing the investigation can get information about different perspectives on the need both from experts and from a larger population belonging to the target group. What is challenging about panel discussions is to find suitable and competent panellists who will not monopolise the panel by delivering extended exposés of their expertise on the topic, but adapt to the group and the audience. In a *community forum,* or a *public hearing,* an interested audience is gathered to ask questions about a proposed problem. This is a way of identifying the type of audience that has that need, as well as the various facets of the need.

A *consensus group* is a type of group discussion, similar to a focus group, in which participants try to form a consensus on an issue. In contrast to surveys, which seek to identify differences between people, this technique seeks similarities. That is why it can be used while trying to prioritise the needs identified and to integrate them into programme planning.

Delphi. The Delphi method was originally (in the 1950s) designed to predict military scenarios on the basis of sound expert assessments (the name 'Delphi' refers to the Oracle of Delphi in ancient Greece). 'In this technique, people with exceptional knowledge about a given subject area are involved in repeated questioning and feedback, using written questionnaires, until a consensus is reached on the subject.' (McCaslin & Tibezinda, 1996, n.p.) Today, the method does not only serve prognostic purposes but is also applied to programme evaluation or planning, in accordance with the needs and views expressed by the experts participating in the Delphi study. The Delphi method consists of questioning the expert group in a structured manner, usually in two or three waves. The selected experts give their written feedback on the questions and statements presented to them. (Sometimes, in a preliminary phase, they can be consulted with open-ended questions about the topics to be included in the questionnaire). Based on their feedback, the instrument is redesigned, and re-submitted to them for review. This procedure can be repeated once more, after a while, to check whether the experts still adhere to their position or changed their minds. If the experts continue to disagree, a new wave is needed. Sending the questionnaire separately to each expert helps avoid direct confrontation between them in case of disagreements. Also, requesting answers from the distance helps avoid travel costs. However, the problem of declining response rates from one wave to another is a clear limitation of this way of asking for expert opinion.

A typical adult education institution is less likely to carry out such a needs assessment method, but a big institution, with dedicated expertise, interested in innovative programmes based on prognostic studies and the analysis of trends, will go for such investigations, even they take more time and need to be run in several waves. For the practitioners, it is important to know about the specifics of this method, to understand the underlying facts while reading a Delphi study report, to be able to design training programmes for various types of people involved.

The Nominal Group. This technique uses a group of five to nine experts on the given subject to generate possible items and to set priorities in conducting a needs assessment. It is a type of group discussion in which participants work independently (on paper) at first, then present one idea at a time to each other. The ideas are presented in a round-robin fashion. Then the participants are encouraged to seek clarification of any of the ideas listed. They are allowed to express their reasons for agreement or disagreement about each item. Then the ideas are rated as priorities, for instance by voting on the three most important ideas. The rating is useful when there are difficulties in identifying or prioritising needs, or in identifying and evaluating options.

Informal Group Methods. As the name might suggest, this method refers to information gathered during talks and discussions, to observations taking place in a non-structured way, at a variety of social meetings or events. In this case, the information about needs is generated incidentally, in side conversations. People with the same concerns meeting each other at an event very often fall into discussions related to their professions or to the ideas and problems that brought them together. Valuable ideas or information can be generated this way, by simply listening to the 'right' people, or by trying to get their points of view in an unstructured, ad-hoc interview during such meetings. It is well known that more important things can be gathered during conference breaks than during the planned activities of the conference. Based on this fact, the open forum method was developed.

There are other methods to be used while doing a needs investigation, even on a smaller scale (e.g. case studies). There also variations of the methods described. For instance, there are semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews, intensive interviews, qualitative interviews, in-depth interviews, focused interviews, oral history interviews, life history interviews, and so on (see Bryman, 2008, p. 196). But, as mentioned above, this book is not the place to look at all these methods in detail, as there is a large amount of educational research literature with detailed explanations about how to plan, carry out, pilot, and design instruments, as well as how to collect, analyse, and interpret the data gathered. (See, for instance, Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008; or Bryman, 2008, including an excellent accompanying online resource at www.oxfordbooks.co/uk/orc/brymansrm3e.)

5.3 Specific methods of investigating training needs in organisations

Almost all of the methods described above can also be used for investigating needs in organisations. But there are some specific methods that are related to organisational training needs, which are job-related and performance-oriented. Moreover, when investigating the training needs of organisations, the context is better defined, the area of investigation is better differentiated, the target size is clear, and the needs to be addressed are different. Basically, there are two types of needs assessment: *deficiency-oriented needs assess-*

ment, related to actual discrepancies between the employees' actual competencies as measured against their expected performance, and *opportunity-oriented needs assessment*, related to the future development of the organisation or to the prospective careers of individuals within the organisation. The levels of investigating needs are slightly different, as their focus is more on organisational concerns. The following levels may be differentiated:

- the organisational level: the focus is both on the inside of the organisation (i.e. needs related to its performance targets and development plans) and on the outside of the organisation (i.e. needs related to the market). At the organisational level, the information gathered about the organisational environment is related to the organisation's policies and strategic business plans, its structuring (structure chart, communication flow, rules, culture and climate, etc.) and functioning, its resources, and the like.
- the operational or job level: the focus is on job descriptions and performance standards, but also on strategic job analysis, related to its dynamic or restructuring.
- the group level: the focus is on the performance of the team or department, on solving conflicts, on the group's relations to the other teams and structures of the organisation.
- the individual level: the focus is on identifying employees' existing level of knowledge, skills, and the related needs for training. Most of the time, the needs analysis starts at this level, and the trainings are mainly intended to improve the competency level of individuals.

At the organisational level, the common methods for needs assessment are similar to the ones described above (e.g. analysis of existing documents, interviews with key informants, attitudinal surveys, focus groups, nominal groups, questionnaires, etc.). It is mainly at the individual level where need assessment methods in organisations differ from those used at educational institutions. Each employee of an organisation is evaluated at least once a year in a systematic way, and this evaluation serves as the main source of identifying needs.

Individual assessment can be performed using a combination of different methods (see Palos, 2007, pp. 74–91):

Self-evaluation. Information about an individual's perception of their own needs or learning interests, but also on their difficulties, dissatisfaction, challenges, strengths and weakness, and so on can be obtained in a structured way (e.g. by filling in a questionnaire, or by analysing personal daily records) or by interviewing, which can be done in a written or oral way, one-on-one or in a group. The advantage of this method is that it involves the employee in defining their training needs, but it has also the disadvantage of identifying personal interests (rather than the needs), not needs from an organisational point of view.

Analysis of the products of the activity. This method is focussed on the final result, not on the process. By comparing the product against a predefined standard, missing parts or deficiencies can be identified.

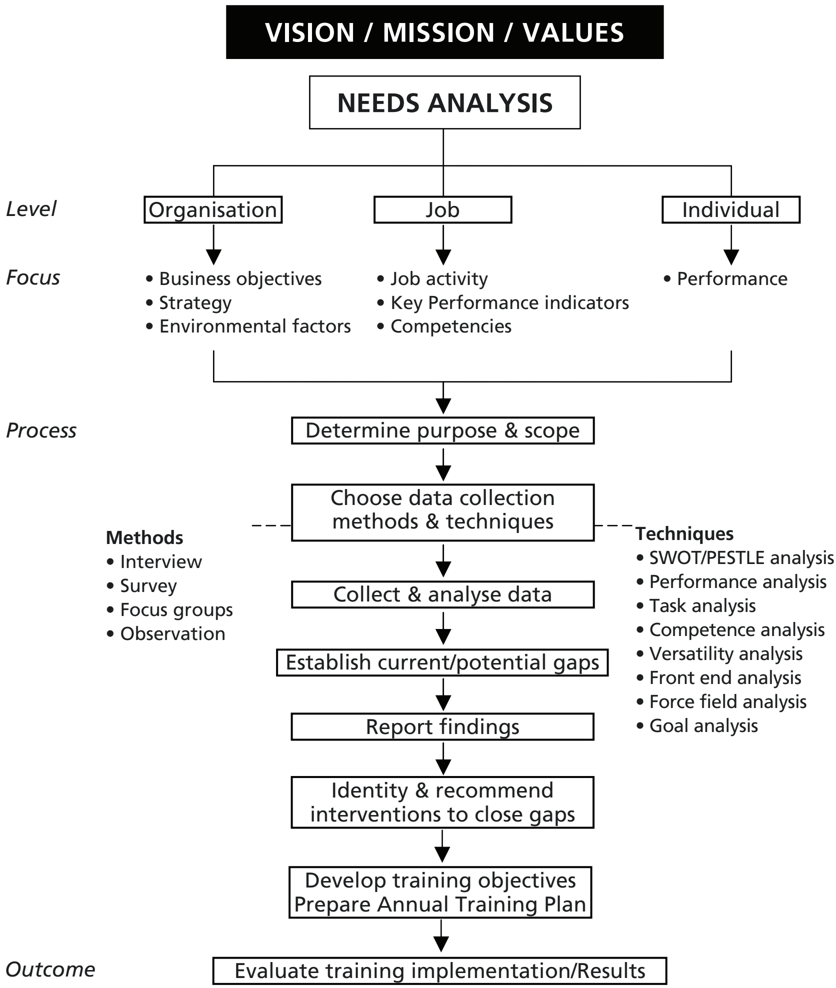
Evaluation done by supervisors. Getting feedback from supervisors is a good method of getting valid information about an employee's training needs, as supervisors not only know the challenges of the job and the expected level of performance, they also know the actual performance level of the employee. Similarly, evaluations done by peers or co-workers can offer information about an employee's competencies, albeit mainly about that person's 'soft' skills.

Simulation of performance. This method allows for observing and evaluating an employee's behaviour in relation with their ability to solve concrete tasks and to cope with a given situation. Having the advantage of a controlled environment, simulations allow for identifying the areas of current activities where deficiencies occur. It can be done using role-playing, a study case, or a 'basket with exercises', accompanied by structured observations on the content of the activity, and on the employee's behaviour while performing the activity. A variation of this method is the technique of critical incidents, focused on identifying efficient or inefficient behaviour in a critical situation, and then, through a structured interview, to determine the causes of the respective performance.

The personal development (career) plan. Doing a personal development plan starts with an analysis of the employee's current situation and of their identified needs for development. Regardless of whether it is about upgrading existing knowledge and skills, improving the actual performance, or about addressing further training needs in preparation for a higher-level or different job (as an opportunity need, based on individual that employee's potential and future career plans), the personal career plan is designed for a longer period of time. Periodical assessments are done against this plan and usually agreed upon with the manager.

Other methods for identifying employees' needs, such as psychometric tests, questionnaires, and the like have already been described. Another specific method related to the organisational context concerns job analysis, not only in relation with job content and performance standards, but also in relation with the context of performance, and against the regulations on continuing further training for updating knowledge and related skills (see Roberts, 2006, pp. 478–487). A lot of other organisation-related techniques, designed to scan the organisational internal and external context, have been developed. Among such developers are the training and consulting companies providing staff development trainings. The SMR Group, for example, a human resources consulting firm based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, has developed an integrative scheme (see Figure 4) that combines the various issues of needs analysis in organisations, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, in a systematic way.

Figure 4: SMR's learning needs assessment framework



Source: SMR HR Services, 2008

In the business sector, which is very performance-oriented, very sophisticated techniques, tests, and methods for identifying on-the-job training needs have been developed. The related organisational learning, workplace learning, and training programmes have their own dynamic, formats, and degree of sophistication. When doing a Google search on the Internet using keywords such as 'needs analysis', 'needs assessment', or even 'educational needs analysis', most of the results will come from the business world.

5.4 Selection and combination of methods

The concepts of need and needs assessment are complicated and value laden. The meanings of needs will vary from one stakeholding group to another. Data regarding needs are collected from a variety of groups and individuals by different methods (surveys, small and large group techniques, existing data bases and records, etc.). The needs assessor then must analyze such data, interpret them, and create, if possible, a holistic and meaningful picture of needs. This is not easy to achieve, and there are not many concrete illustrations in the literature of how to proceed in such situations. (Altschuld & Witkin, 2000, p. 4)

Considerable know-how is required to design reliable and valid survey instruments, and to decide which method of investigation is the one most suitable for capturing the essence of the real need from the relevant target audience. Rossi and Freeman (1993, p. 84) suggest that qualitative data are useful for determining the nature of the need, whilst quantitative data are necessary for determining the extent of the need. As mentioned in Section 5.3, quantitative data can be obtained from structured surveys, key informant surveys, structured interviews, data from official public sources and documents (e.g. census reports, other surveys and reports), tests, job analysis, and the like. Qualitative data can be gathered from semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups, focus groups, case studies, nominal group technique, informal group events and public meetings, and the like (see Cohen et al., 2000, p. 392).

When planning a needs analysis, it is important, first of all, to decide on the purpose of the analysis and on the definitions of needs that are to be used. Possible purposes include developing responsive programmes, generating awareness of programmes, satisfying official mandates, aiding in improved programme decisions, and promoting citizen participation and action. Regarding the focus of the needs analysis, needs for future planning and development will tend to focus on aims and goals, whilst needs analysis that is undertaken to identify discrepancies will tend to focus on content, implementation, and outcome. Then, the goals and objectives for the needs assessment have to be defined, explaining what is to be found out about and from whom, and also how the target audience is to be involved in the setting of goals and objectives.

Once these aspects are clear, one can select the approach to be used for collecting the information, the methodology, sampling, instrumentation, data collection and analysis procedures, as well as the criteria to be used for judging the size, scope, extent, or severity of the need. Also, the way the results are going to be reported and used will influence the research process, mainly in its final stage. Once the whole concept of the needs analysis process has been determined, the design of the instruments and procedures can follow. As McCaslin and Tibezinda (1996, n.p.) point out, when designing needs assessment instruments,

> it is usually best to keep the process simple. Long and complicated instruments discourage responses. Additionally, short instruments are less expensive to produce, distribute, collect, and analyse. Once a draft instrument has been prepared, it should be checked against the original purposes, goals, and objectives to make sure that nonessential information has not been included.

This can be done by pilot testing the instrumentation and procedures. But it is not our intention here to provide a step-by-step explanation of how to do a needs analysis, as these steps are basically the same as in any scientific investigation or educational research. Our focus is on which investigation methods to choose.

The matrix of factors influencing the selection of the best method illustrates that the decision-making process is a complex one. In choosing and designing an investigation and the related instruments to be used in a community or target group, attention needs to be given to:

- the kind of information that will help in the decision-making
- the purpose and nature of the investigation to be conducted to gather that information
- the way this information will be used
- how the needed information will be collected
- what is supposed to be measured
- how the results should be analysed
- the costs to design and conduct the assessment
- the identification of key ‘leaders’ or ‘target group knowledgeables’ from whom input must be obtained in the design and conduct of the survey
- the identification and selection of potential respondents.

Also, when selecting a method, some more considerations have to be taken into account:

- the accessibility of the target population: do we know the people, do we have their contacts (e.g. it is difficult to obtain a list of people with HIV, even if the hospital keeps the records, due to privacy rules)
- the literacy level of the target population (e.g. can we use questionnaires, and if so, how should they be administered)
- specific language issues (e.g. if we address the migrant population, what about their language skills)
- geographic coverage and restrictions
- the difficulty of measuring important variables of educational needs: how do we determine current status regarding literacy level, basic skills, mental health, drug abuse, family violence, and so on? If multiple methods are employed to ascertain current status, vastly different estimates of baseline conditions often are observed, influencing our understanding of what is really happening, and its amplitude. For instance, if we measure family violence only by taking into account the records of the hospitals, the police, and NGOs supporting victims asking for help, the predicted number of cases will seriously fall short of the actual number (see Altschuld & Witkin, 2000, pp. 45–47)
- the difficulty of assuring the validity and reliability of the measurements of the actual status of the needs. For instance, when asking people (via survey, interviews, or observations) about different aspects that are meant to identify their existing soft skills, their responses may vary so much over time to make it almost impossible to develop a clear and reliable picture of their current status.
- The different methods combined to determine current status provide different information, from sources that sometimes do not agree (e.g. when using different methods to determine the need for further staff training with regard to existing competencies, the points of view of the employers/supervisors and those of the employees can turn out to contradict each other).
- methodological issues regarding sampling, type of questions and the length of the instruments and time needed for applying them, scaling, avoiding false respondents, content that can be asked, and the like
- administrative issues such as costs, facilities, time, and personnel.

As Altschuld and Witkin (2000, p. 85) observe:

> Multiple methods could triangulate on a single aspect of needs assessment, or they could complement each other, so that one method would fill in the data that another does not provide. Furthermore, they could be sequenced so that one would be employed first, leading to a more well-developed second method.

The second method may include using an interview, collecting more details that can be used in constructing a questionnaire, or the other way around: using the interview as a cross-check *after* administering the questionnaire, and to get more clues about certain aspects, to find out if something is a real need or just a wish, and so forth. But since qualitative needs analysis data is difficult to generalise and can provide plenty of information that is difficult to sort and master (or even coded into categories), quantitative data are needed as well.

However it must be borne in mind that any collection method (interview, questionnaires, focus groups, etc.) produces individual data that are often impossible to relate to each other due to differences in quality. For instance, persons in an interview might articulate themselves differently regarding a certain topic (e.g. definite learning interest) than respondents answering a questionnaire with predetermined response categories. As tempting as it may be to trust the validity of data combinations, there are definite risks involved. When collecting data ('field research'), it is generally a good idea to concentrate on a single, clearly developed and precisely defined collection method and synchronise findings in secondary analysis ('desk research'). This procedure is especially important when needs assessors do not have any detailed knowledge of existing empirical social research, as often is the case. Once again, the apparently imprecise method of 'trial and error', the one that is used most frequently in practice, proves to be very reliable, its main disadvantage being that it requires more resources than other methods.

Keyword: Multiple data sources

Case study: Multiple data sources are in partial agreement with some independent findings, and a few major findings are in disagreement.

Discussion: This situation is probably the one most frequently occurring in needs assessments in which multiple methods have been used, and data have been collected from multiple constituencies. Sometimes it even might be worse, with data not only in disagreement but conflicting.

Actions to be taken:

- First, analyse the data by looking for needs on which all the methods have produced findings that are in agreement, strongly indicating the same needs.
- Second, look for results in which there is some degree of agreement across most of the methods, and analyse the importance of the results that are in conflict for the related need.

- Third, if there are sources in conflict, then make efforts to understand and resolve the issue. For example, if two groups provide quite different answers on a survey in relation to a specific area of need, ask questions such as what is known about the respondents that might help in explaining the conflicting results.
- Fourth, consider the quality of the data produced by each source, making a judgment if more faith should be placed on some results than others. This is the way you choose on which data to rely, if the data provided by different sources are in conflict.
- Fifth, when results from different methods are not in agreement, but the methods were reasonable and conducted in appropriate ways, include the needs derived from each separate method in the report, describing the results with a direct discussion of the different needs that were found. (Altschuld & Witkin, 2000, pp. 95–96)

5.5 Interpretation

In interpreting the data collected by the demand analysis, two issues are particularly important:

- First, data reliability and range need to be verified for each method.
- Second, the data need to be interpreted to provide a reasonable base for further programme planning.

The verification of data reliability and range corresponds with the criteria of 'validity' and 'reliability' in empirical social research. These two criteria simply imply that data ought to actually express what has been assumed and that they are universally valid (not only in a specific case). Questionnaire-generated data supposedly showing the intention of a large proportion of participants to learn about management cannot be regarded as valid. The term 'management' is too broad and may conceal different concepts of learning interests and learning needs. For instance, it can imply business management, management of a family household, or project management; it can imply various management functions such as personnel management, budget planning, marketing, and so on. Also, it is unclear whether survey participants are concerned with the acquisition of management competences or the acquisition of knowledge about management. That is why a questionnaire that has established a need for management learning by using a predetermined response category does not provide valid data. When constructing a survey instrument of any kind, therefore, the potential validity of the data collected needs to be considered.

The same applies to the criterion of reliability. The most common error when conducting a demand analysis is developing an idea about the specific features of groups, regions, or institutional links. Often, people (e.g. programme participants) are questioned about their learning interests without being defined and structured as 'samples' of a greater commonality. Those statements are of little use in terms of their reliability with regard to further programme planning. Consequently, it is important to define a frame to guarantee that the data collected are reliable. In using this frame, the data should also be retrievable in case of a corresponding offer.

The prevailing assumption is that validity and reliability are best achieved in combining data that has been collected using multiple procedures of demand analysis – that is to say, by 'triangulating' them, as explained in the previous chapter. Linking data collected with various survey instruments is certainly a good option for covering eventualities. Sometimes, however, it is not easy to combine data from different sources, especially data collected from qualitative data sources, and even more, to generalise them.

Text box 3: Guidelines for analysing qualitative data

Altschuld and Witkin (2000, pp. 87–89) suggest the following guidelines for analysing qualitative data collected for NA purposes:

1) Each qualitative aspect of the NA should be carried out independently of other parts of the study and by individuals who are independent from others involved in data collection, if possible . . . . [to reduce] contamination in the data and its subsequent analysis.
2) The qualitative data should be collected and analyzed by needs assessors who are members of a team. . . . [They] should compare, discuss, and synthesize the separate analyses. In essence, this is a form of an independent verification of the analysis . . . .
3) Use standard procedures for analyzing the data, initially looking for main categories, regularities in those categories, overarching or explanatory themes, and so forth.
4) Examine the data (the categories, the explanatory themes) in regard to the emphasis of the NA. Ask yourself questions such as the following: Are some needs clearly indicated? Are some needs being inferred? What information in the data set supports those needs and helps to explain the nature of the needs or problems?
5) Start a process of comparing the results from the qualitative and quantitative data sources in regard to the specific emphasis of the NA. . . . [For instance, first] carefully examine the results from each method. Next, starting with one method, key supportive data from each major

finding [are] summarized and placed on a separate sheet of paper. Then the results produced by the next method are similarly perused to see if they corroborated the individual findings from the first method. The supportive data are entered on the same sheet, and the process is repeated for the third method. Unique findings from the second and third methods are similarly entered on separate sheets, and the process is repeated in regard to corroboration of results as well as identifying unique findings from each method. Lastly, the summaries [are] again reviewed to see if there are any other patterns that seem to occur across the data. In a sense, this is a constant-comparative process conducted across methods, rather than within one qualitative data set ….

6) Provide the opportunity for the needs assessor and the needs analysis committee to discuss the findings in a group session. This will allow all parties to question results, understand the reasoning underlying them, debate, and arrive at a consensus.

7) If time is available, the needs assessor might conduct a peer debriefing or a form of a member check process. A peer debriefing entails that an uninvolved peer, especially one who is familiar with qualitative analysis, is asked to review how the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted, as well as the overall extent to which the findings seems reasonable and warranted. Analogous debriefings can be conduced with a few key stakeholders or other peers if feasible….

8) On the basis of the prior seven steps, compile the final report on needs and give all members of the needs analysis committee time to review it before distributing it to decision makers and concerned stakeholders.

The second aspect following data collection is the aspect of *interpretation*. There is no automatism leading from data collection to programme planning. All collected data, despite their verified validity and reliability (verification taken for granted) first need to interpreted to see whether they are suitable for the programming to be established. Generally, articulated or established education needs can be addressed by programmes in various ways.

In the example above, the education need 'management' is to be met with a consecutive course system, a training programme, job shadowing, online learning, and a platform for discussion – in many cases with all of these methods and others in combination. The background of the articulated need for education has to be assessed to gain more precise ideas for the organisation of suitable provisions.

This background consists of the state of motivation, the context conditions, and primarily possibilities of use. The motivational setup often depends on respondents' biographies, their affiliation with certain social groups, and on regional and cultural factors. Depending on the group, collected needs can be socially desired, and not at all in accordance with individual interests. They can be assumptions about the general need for education, despite diverging personal interests. The context conditions concern people's lifeworld, their financial resources, and the support they are likely to receive as learners. Therefore, education needs may emerge that cannot be realised in the scope of the individual's environment, a fact that equally applies to financial opportunities. Education needs can also be analysed even if they are not acknowledged at the time of the survey. Finally, methods of usability also play a role. Although need is drafted as a situation that is to be achieved and understood at the individual level, it is possible that the aspired educational goal does not match a person's range of options. People might express an interest in gaining management competences, for example, even though they are aware that they may never be able to use these competencies because they will never obtain a managing position.

Thus it is important for the interpretation of data to place them in a context specific to a group of people, and to define a level for the didactic realisation of need. In addition, data about needs coming from different sources might be very diverse, which is why criteria for prioritising these needs are needed. The priority-related decisions are influenced by factors such as: How much do we know about the general problem area, the quality of the information available about needs, the organisation's motivation to deal with the problems and take risks, or the degree to which the need is amenable to the solution proposed by the organisation? A variety of techniques can be used for objectively prioritising the needs identified, using explicit or implicit criteria of interpretation. Altschuld and Witkin (2000, pp. 105–133) describe some of the most commonly used techniques – techniques most of use intuitively when deciding on priorities in everyday life:

The simple approach to setting needs-based priorities is easy to apply and appropriate for small decision-making groups, not for complex situations. Procedures include simply ranking needs in a list, or using the rule of three (the top three priorities to be chosen by the members of the needs assessment committee), paired comparisons, zero-sum games (each person is given so many votes that they can apportion to needs in any fashion the wish), 'Q' methodology, or other similar techniques for sorting needs into groups of the most important to the least important ones.

The multiple criteria approach, defined by Sork in 1995 (quoted in Altschuld & Witkin, 2000, pp. 110–116), is based on two basic criteria for prioritising needs: *importance* and *feasibility*. To determine the importance of various needs, they are to be prioritised on a scale from 1 to 5 (with 5 representing greatest importance, and 1 lowest importance) according to aspects such as:

- the number of individuals affected
- their contribution to organisational goals
- urgency – that is, whether a need has to be fulfilled immediately, or whether it tends to resolve itself over time
- the magnitude of discrepancy – the larger the discrepancy between current status and desirable status regarding an area of concern, the greater the importance
- instrumental value – the extent to which resolving a need in this particular area has a positive effect on a need in another area.

Feasibility criteria concern educational efficacy (i.e. the degree to which an educational intervention can contribute to reducing or even eliminating the need), the availability of resources, and the commitment to change within the organisation. These criteria are also to be prioritised on a scale from 1 to 5. Finally, the sum of all the weighted ratings regarding importance and feasibility is considered for the final overall rank.

Disaggregated decision-making approach. This technique, in contrast to techniques using summarised ratings, is used to judge each component of a criterion, such as importance or feasibility, separately, going from the highest to the lowest. Next, each need is rated in terms of the ordered components, one component at a time. If, for instance, the component 'number of persons affected by the need' was given the highest rank, then only the needs that had ratings averaging 4 or above on that component would be eligible for continuing in the prioritisation process. Thus some needs would be eliminated from further consideration at this time. Needs that passed this first screening would be examined in terms of the next highest-ranking component of importance. The screening process continues the same way, and only the needs that remain at the end of the five screens would be considered to be of high importance. This technique has the advantage of providing clear and well-organised steps, simplified and easy to explain to others, allowing for a concentration on only one aspect at a time. Fragmenting the decision in this way also has a disadvantage, however: it is possible to lose sight of the interactions between what are often related components of the criteria for setting priorities.

The *risk assessment approach* is based on comparisons between current status and desirable status, observing the discrepancies against a benchmark. The question is: To what extent does a discrepancy contribute to a problem, or what is the risk of not meeting the need? Risk assessment is used in areas such as rehabilitation and corrections, health, or education (e.g. when working with at-risk students). Sometimes, risk is viewed in terms of solutions more that in terms of needs. Risk consists of multiple factors that, if looked at cumulatively, will help identify individuals who are at a higher risk (e.g. of dropping out of school, of not being integrated, of becoming a re-offender, etc.). When setting priorities on a scale from 5 (highest risk) to 1 (lowest risk), therefore, it must be decided (see Altschuld & Witkin, 2000, pp. 129–130):

- Is this need really worth the effort? Will clients suffer that much if we do not attend to it? (Worthwhile effort risk)
- What are the short-term/ long term economic consequences for the organisation of not attending to the need? (Short-term/long-term economic risk)
- Will the risk increase with the passage of time? (Greater time risk)
- What is the likelihood of new developments or programs decreasing the level of risk? (New developmental risk reduction)
- What are the short-term/long-term negative political consequences of not attending to the need (will our organisation lose political support)? (Short-term/long-term political risk)
- Will our competitors be in a stronger position if we do not attend to the need? (Competitive risk)
- Will attending to the need be disruptive to the internal operations of the organisation? (Internal disruptive risk)
- Will the culture of the organisation be unable to adjust and buy into the need and changes necessary within the organisation to meet it? (Internal morale risk).

Other types of risks might be added to this list, depending on the situation of the target group and the factors that influence their situation. After all, this technique must always be judged in relation to that specific group and context, and the data cannot be generalised.

Causal analysis, sometimes employed in needs assessments, will tend to reveal potential risks in resolving a need. Strategic planning, which is closely related to needs assessment, necessitates that threats external to the organisation be delineated.

On the other hand, these levels depend on providers' educational principles and their options for taking action in terms of developing programmes. They need to be specified in the context of programme planning. Details on how to translate interpretations of need into strategies for addressing those needs will be provided in the next chapter.

Exercises and tasks

Exercise 1

Which different methods of analysis (possibly in combination) do you consider to be suitable for identifying the educational needs of unemployed persons? (Keep in mind the relation between individuals, job markets, and regions.)

Exercise 2

Which technique(s) would you use for prioritising the needs-related data you have generated by employing your method(s) of choice in the previous exercise? What might point towards the risk assessment approach?

Task

Find a relevant national study on participation in adult education in your home country, and use it to identify needs trends and the reasons for participation of a certain target group you intend to design a programme for (you might consider the target group already chosen for the tasks in previous chapters). Based on this desk analysis, do you have enough arguments for the programme you intend to propose, or do you need to collect other data? If so, from where, and how?

6. Needs Analysis for Planning Educational Programmes

So far in the book we have concentrated on the problem of identifying and analysing needs, on understanding the contexts that produce those needs, and on listing various methods and ways of carrying out a needs analysis. Once needs have been identified, they are sorted, prioritised, and translated into educational programmes designed to meet them. However, the nature of the programmes to be planned very much depends on the institution's identity and capacity – conditions that are complex and diverse, as will be shown later in this chapter.

We now enter the second part of the book, which explores the elements to be taken into account and put together during the programming process. The process of planning programmes is to be regarded as a holistic approach, not limited only to the planning as such, but covering the whole programme, with its design and implementation, with its monitoring and evaluation. In this first chapter of the second part of the book, we will look at the process of programming, while Chapter 7 will focus on the concrete process of planning programmes.

There are different ways of planning programmes, as well as different types of programming behaviour, depending on the personal grid of the programme planner or the emphasis placed on content, on the target group, and on the didactical principles of the institution and its settings. Planning programmes for adult learners is like building a complex puzzle, with multiple elements to be articulated into a coherent concept and format, in spite of different interests, different views, maybe incomplete data, new facts, and so on. Problems may always occur, and everybody knows that the best plan may not accomplish the planned objectives, as unforeseeable happenings and new facts can affect its outcomes. But in spite of this, practitioners and researchers have been continuously improving the engineering of programme planning, and different (interactive) models of programme planning have been designed. Some of them will be presented in this chapter, as well as a number of instruments for doing so.

6.1 From needs analysis to programme planning

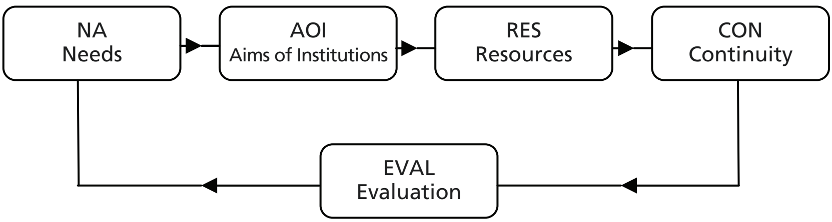
Needs analysis is an extremely important means in the field of adult education. Adult learning, after all, is voluntary, and learning opportunities have to match the interests and needs of adult individuals – otherwise they will not participate. On the other hand, programme planning does not only build on the results of needs analysis. There are some other important factors to be taken in account whenever a programme is planned. The main factors, mostly related to the institution, are:

- working field and goals of the institution
- resources: financial restrictions, availability of teaching staff
- continuity of the programme and its content
- evaluation of the programme.

Although needs analysis findings are thus only one factor in a setting of five, they are the most important and initial one. In some approaches, institutional aims are seen as the most important factor. This makes sense, since no institution is going to offer something that is not in the corridor of its aims. On the other hand: no matter how well a given programme fits an institution's aims, it will never be successful unless it is also attractive to prospective adult students.

The transition from needs analysis to programme planning is a linear process, in which the abovementioned factors are differentiated, discussed, and applied carefully in a consecutive way (see Figure 5):

Figure 5: Factors in programme planning



Source: Author's own

The process does not end once a programme has been planned, however. Rather, the evaluation done at the end ensures that a new process is started, in cyclical fashion, with the evaluation serving as a preliminary part of the next needs analysis.

Needs analysis (NA)

While reflecting on needs analysis as a basis for programme planning in Section 2.3, we listed a few questions to be considered from the institutions' point of view. Picking up on these considerations, we might say that before doing any systematic needs analysis, we have to clarify whether we really need that kind of analysis and whether we have the resources for doing so, as it can be a costly and time-consuming process. We need to be clear about the purpose of the analysis, about why it should be done, and about the ways in which the results of the analysis will be used.

First of all, is the purpose of the investigation worth using valuable resources? Theorists tend to argue for its importance, pointing out that 'the needs assessment process can feed a well-organized and pertinent flow of information into the overall management decision process. It can show what the actual demand . . . is and what potential demand might be.' (Kettner, Moroney, & Martin, 1999, p. 46) Investigating needs is also one of the most frequently used ways of linking the organisation with its audiences; of scanning, analysing, and understanding the external organisational environment, as well as potential audiences and their respective stakeholder groups; of identifying and ranking target publics to be served by the adult education institution, based on its mission; and of getting their larger acceptance and support. Needs analysis can provide useful information as long term goals, as well as resources we can rely on or attract from the community are reviewed. It can also help us with doing initial marketing and advertising for our programme, with raising awareness, and with getting preliminary support. Moreover, it can serve as an early warning system regarding potential changes in demand Kettner et al. go on to argue that 'once the key data sources are identified and data collection systems are organized, all four perspectives on need can be incorporated in a low-cost and efficient manner' (ibid.)

Some others tend to say that the analysis phase is a critical step in programme planning, which helps to correctly diagnose the problem and identify the correct intervention. All of the three phases that follow (design, development, and implementation-evaluation-maintenance) depend on the correctness of the analysis, so it may well take up one third of the programme time (Roberts, 2006, p. 478). In relation with the other phases of programme planning, needs assessment can be also seen as a systematic process for establishing priorities and making decisions regarding programme planning, development, and operations. It also provides a realistic basis upon which to plan, budget, direct, and evaluate an effective programme. Needs assessment as a process of determining whether gaps exist between 'what is' and 'what should be' in terms of programme outcomes, also helps determine the priority of the related needs.

Once needs are identified, the way they might be prioritised can be decided by identifying criteria against which potential solution strategies can be assessed, and by analysing the cost to meet each need versus the cost for ignoring it, and selecting the most important needs (problems or opportunities) for reduction or elimination). In such an approach, needs are 'gaps in results rather than gaps or deficiencies in processes or resources' (Leigh, Watkins, Platt, & Kaufman, 2000, p. 88). Also, the identified needs are translated into learning objectives and an objectives hierarchy, as well as, related to it, a possible outcomes hierarchy, checking whether they match the institution's aims and capability.

In practice, the subjective filter of the programme planner and the organisational characteristics and constraints mostly have a strong influence on the decision about whether or not to go on planning a programme (unless the programme has been requested by an external group that will form the potential audience). The first question programme planners need to ask themselves is: Do we think this is a worthwhile programme? This question carries most weight because it filters the programme idea through the personal beliefs and values of the programme planners, but also through their personal experiences and knowing-in-action, which makes them feel comfortable or not with the programme idea. Answering 'yes' (meaning the programme fits our values) enables planners to review the other questions, whereas saying 'no' (meaning the programme conflicts with our values) will more likely lead to more reasons against planning the programme.

This personal filter sometimes affects the diversity of the programme offerings, imposing negative constrains that can make some stakeholders criticise the adult education institution for not covering the interests of all groups of adults to an equal extent, and for not being responsive enough to different social changes. For instance, if the demographic structure in a certain community has changed because immigrants have come to form an important minority group, programme planners might not be quick enough in offering programmes that are of interest to people coming from other cultures.

Usually, a variety of solution strategies can be derived from the needs identified. To be able to pick the right one, criteria for rating solution strategies have been developed (see the approaches for prioritising needs presented in the previous chapter). Possible criteria, which can also be organised hierarchically in the order of their importance, might include (see Altschuld & Witkin, 2000, p. 141): characteristics of the strategy, population(s) served, staff training required, evaluation data supporting effectiveness, space and equipment needed, start-up costs, continuing costs, advantages and disadvantages, fit with our situation, benchmarks, and the like. Some of these criteria are related to the institutions' specificity, which will be analysed in more detail in subsequent sections.

Working field and aims of institutions (AOI)

The work settings of educational institutions are diverse: corporate sector, public schools, colleges and universities, non-profit organisations, religiously affiliated bodies, vocational centres, and so forth. The range of programs delivered by them ist also diverse: literacy programmes, recreational programmes, continuing education programmes for the professions etc. As a consequence, the institution' aims are also very diverse, in line with different corporate identities and with different trends following terms of institutional development and action. The programme planners, while deciding whether or not to go ahead with planning a programme based on the needs identified, continue with the second question: Does this programme fit the goals and mission of the organisation I work for? This is a question that requires an answer in the affirmative unless the providing organisation wants to risk its credibility and identity, or even the quality standards of provision.

Institutional aims include different types, depending on target groups, contents, institutional context (enterprise); they may be ideological (church), structural (folk high school), or economic (private institutions). Before being able to perform a needs analysis adapted to an institution's identity, therefore, it is essential, first of all, to define and analyse the aims of institution. An adult education institution, while deciding which programmes to offer, should review their feasibility by going through a needs analysis process tailored to its institutional focus and main aims.

Thus needs analysis processes will vary depending on whether the main aim is based on target groups or on economic considerations. Normally, the needs analysis should be done in accordance with the aims. For example, if you have the structural aim to provide a region with sufficient educational programmes, you should carry out a needs analysis concerning regional needs, including all groups of the population, and all types of educational and training content. If you have target group-oriented aims (e.g. if you are a trade union-affiliated institution), or if you offer courses for basic adult education with a focus on low-skilled people, then the needs anaylsis should be oriented towards the special needs of that target group.

Generally, there are five purposes for delivering education and training programmes in relation with the target group (Caffarella, 2002, p. 10):

- to encourage continuous growth and development of individuals
- to assist people in responding to practical problems and issues of their everyday life
- to prepare people for current and future work opportunities
- to assist organisations in achieving desired results and adapting to change
- to provide opportunities to examine community and societal issues, foster change for the common good, and promote civil society.

Such aims can be found to a certain extent in all educational programmes, as part of the institution's educational mission, and they should not be seen as contradicting other institutional aims, such as economic aims. Needs analysis simply has a different focus.

When analysing the relation between needs analysis and economic aims, therefore, one should keep in mind that this is more about finding the right programme fees to attract the targeted participants than it is about an institution's desire to maximise profits. At the end of the day, however, every adult education institution has an economic aim as well, because it is part of a competitive market and needs to generate revenue. Consequently, the economic aims of an institution have to be defined by deciding whether to collect moderate fees from a large group of people or high fees from a small group (e.g. for an English course for those who are interested in a more effective and attractive teaching system, and willing to pay a high fee).

Normally, the needs analysis is based on the aims of the institution, even in adult education, but there is the general idea to use needs analysis to improve the range of your programming. In two cases, there is more to it: first, if needs analysis is expected to reveal some innovative aspects, then the goal of needs analysis is to identify innovative elements, making it more open. The other case is when you want to enlarge the market for the content you would like to offer. This is the main aim whenever you start an adult education institution. In an established institution, this aim makes sense as well, whenever we do not only want to renew, update, and improve the existing offerings, but enlarge and innovate them by pushing for new aims.

Unfortunately, adult education institutions largely dependent on the market and therefore tend to offer mostly what is 'in vogue' and afford less and less to offer programmes in line with their original values and stated beliefs. The programmes they offer sometimes are far removed from their identity, or so diverse as to raise doubts about the quality of provision. For instance, more and more people's universities or cultural houses also offer vocational courses, because funding is more secure. The questions arising from this include: Can we afford to do it? What are the resources with which to do it? From where do they come? This question can be addressed both in relation to the process of needs analysis itself and to programme offerings.

Resources

Resources include the financial resources, the availability of the teaching staff, and the logistic arrangements (materials, infrastructure, equipment, etc.) needed to plan and run a programme.

The aspect of *financial resources* is mainly an aspect of existing financial resources and needed financial resources. Existing financial resources refers to possible investments in new programmes. They consist of financial and material resources (houses, machines, etc.). The available investment has to cover all the costs that occur before the new programme starts; only after it has started and participants have paid their fees is new income available to fill the budget. Since, in almost all cases, courses are planned during programme breaks, the financial resources have to cover people's salaries and the expenses related to the building for at least two to three months.

In the planning process itself, the financial factor plays an important role, of course. Funding is needed to cover the costs of the planned programme. To do this in a professional way, three aspects of costs need to be differentiated: the type of cost (e.g. staff, material), the cost-generating unit (e.g. which department), and costs related to the product (e.g. a programme brochure).

To give an example: the course catalogue – still the main marketing instrument for adult education programmes – is a publication (type of cost), it is produced in the public relations department of the institution (cost unit), and it is related to all courses, meaning that course fees have to reflect their part of financing the course catalogue, even though the cost occurred in a different department.

This shows that there are different types of costs occurring for a specific offering. The first level involves costs directly related to the offering, which normally means materials, teacher salaries, room costs, and other expenditures like heating and light. The second level includes the first level and adds all the costs linked to the activity of offering a course, such as curriculum design, programme planning, brochure publication, and marketing for the new programme. The third level includes the two other ones, and adds to the institution's administrative costs, such as overhead costs for the financial department, management, and public relations, as well as maintenance costs, and costs like information, administration, and lobbying.

In adult education institutions, course revenues very often do not cover the full costs up to the third level. They are often calculated at the first level, as the minimum level of costs. But since all expenses of the institutions have to be covered, courses offered for low or moderate fees need to be combined with high-price options. In adult education, this is called the 'Robin Hood principle', which stands for taking from the rich and giving to the poor. Some programmes, mainly in the fields of political education, literacy, and so forth, are not self-supporting and require additional funds. Courses that generate revenue in an acceptable way are traditionally courses in vocational training, health, ICT, and (sometimes) languages.

Planning a programme always means finding an acceptable balance between high-price and low-price offerings. This also involves reaching a compromise and an agreement amongst the programme planners: very often, representatives of the high-price segments wish to keep the money for improving their programmes, for enlarging the markets, and so on, and not to subsidise other segments of the institution. The limits of the Robin Hood system are ingrained in the structure and culture of adult education institutions, in the loyalty of the programme planners, and in the clearness of the aim.

Staff planning is an important part of programme planning. Normally, the staff at adult education institutions consists of full-time staff (programme planners employed on an unlimited contract) and part-time staff, such as teachers hired on a freelance basis. In many cases, the ratio between the first and the later group is 1:10, or even up to 1:20. Since the full-time programme planners have to plan the programme, they also have to recruit the teachers for the programme. In many cases, teachers renew their existing contracts and stay on for a new course. The challenge of implementing new segments of the programme always involves the challenge of contracting new staff, since qualified instructors are often hard to find. In many cases, teachers are found in schools, enterprises, cultural institutions, and so forth. The problem is normally to find the people who are both experts in their field and good teachers. Such people are especially difficult to find in the country side and in rural districts. Another aspect is the competition for qualified teachers, since other adult education institutions are interested in these teachers too, especially in highly sought-after areas like health or ICT. The salary of the teachers on contract is determined by the value of the course and the course fees participants are paying when they enrol. This very often varies from one segment of a programme to another. The planning process also has to provide precise policies as to how much and how teachers will be paid to avoid problems between them and the institution, and amongst themselves. This is also true in case teachers submit course proposals to adult education institutions, which happens quite often in bigger cities and in regions with a high density of cultural, educational, and political activity.

Finally, *logistic resources* also influence the amount of programmes to be offered, which always depends on the existing number of rooms and facilities, on whether or not rooms may be rented from other institutions, on whether the institution has branch campuses in remote areas to be closer to local residents, and so forth.

Continuity

The issue of continuity concerns both programme contents and their consistency with the institution's identity and mission.

Continuity with respect to an existing adult education institution means that only part of an older programme is changed to a new one or is due for an expansion. This may happen in part for pragmatic reasons (a huge amount of work is involved in creating a new programme, especially a bigger one, and it cannot be done every year), but also for reasons related to the institution's corporate identity, its image, aims, and its relations with its clients. Clients expect the institution to offer certain courses from one year to the next; programme continuity thus reflects the reliability of an institution in the expectations of participants. Normally, not more than 10 per cent of the existing programmes are revised or added to the portfolio from one year to the next; about 30 to 40 per cent are changed and revised over a period of three to four programme cycles. It can be expected that the new programme will only be partly different from the former version.

The decision to continue a programme for the next year also depends on the evaluation of the programme run. The evaluation gives information about participants' level of satisfaction; it includes their feedback regarding the aspects to be improved but also legitimates the continuation of the programme or the decision to start a new one, in line with the interests expressed by the learners for further attending programmes at the institution. Thus the evaluation is part of the needs analysis, 'closing the loop' in the process (see Figure 5) and preparing for starting a new needs analysis cycle.

Keyword: Steps in the design and implementation of the programme

After combining the institutional factors (aims, resources, and continuity) with the needs identified, and setting the priorities and the decision for going further into planning the programme, further procedural steps are to be followed in the design and implementation of the programme:

1) studying and analysing the hierarchies of needs, objectives, change strategies, and outcomes
2) incorporating these findings into incrementally designed plans of action
3) identifying, mobilising, developing, and deploying the resources needed to implement the plans of action
4) marketing the planned programme and its plans of action
5) monitoring the implementation of the plans of action
6) providing reinforcement and feedback to learners, teachers, and other volunteer resource person involved in implementing the planned programme and its plans of action
7) using findings of formative evaluations and other evaluative feedback to make needed changes or adjustments in plans of action. (Boone, Safrit, & Jones, 2002, p. 47)

6.2 Structure and function of programme planning

Programming in adult education is a macro-didactic process that has as its primary objective a planned change in the programme, concerning adult learners, the system of educational provision, content, and programme structure. As a secondary objective, programme planning aims to continue successful parts of the existing programme into the future. The third objective is to reflect on the quality and performance of the existing programme (evaluation). The proactive and future-oriented process of programming aims to provide a logical and rational framework for guiding the effort of giving meaning to the work of adult educators, for starting to work towards conditions that ideally might exist.

The function of programme planning is to provide a transparent, coherent, and reliable basis for the programme, a clear (cognitive) legitimate road map. This not only means that contents and target groups have to be conceptually put into a programme structure, it also means that the topics have to be clear; that staff has to be recruited; that rooms, times, and materials have to be available; that advertising has to be done accordingly; that the enrolment procedure and the time schedule (semester, trimester, etc.) have to be fixed; that the budget has to be calculated; and that a monitoring system has to be implemented. Programme planners must thus face the major challenge of translating the expressed needs of learners into a meaningful programme design and developing effective strategies for its implementation – anticipating also how it will be evaluated in terms of its effectiveness. The following aspects are to be addressed while designing a training programme:

Figure 6: Elements of programme planning

Source: PinkDew Limited, 2009

This means covering all of the five stages of a conceptual model for programming (see Boone et al., 2002, pp. 71–77), from planning to design and implementation, all the way to evaluation and accountability. In the past, only the planning stage was considered, but the whole process has to be programmed from the very beginning. Thus the structure of the programmes covers five different parts, grouped in three sub-processes. The concepts and procedural tasks subsumed under each provide a holistic systems approach to programming and planned change, as illustrated in Table 2:

Table 2: A theoretical approach to programming: A conceptual programming model

Planning		Design and implementation		Evaluation and accountability
The organisation and its renewal process	**Linking the organisation to its publics**	**Designing the planned programme**	**Implementing the planned programme**	
• Understanding the functions of the organisation: – Mission/ vision values – Philosophy – Goals/objectives • Understanding the organisational structure: – Division of responsibility – Inter-organisational relationships – Lines of communication – Expertise and resources • Understanding the organisations' management/ supervision; – Personnel appraisal – Staff development – Evaluation and accounttability • Understanding and appreciation of the organisation's culture • Understanding, and acquiring the skills needed to implement, the programming process • Sensitivity and commitment to continuous organisational renewal	• Scanning and interpreting the organisation's external environment • Study, analysis and mapping of the organisation's current and emerging publics and stakeholders based on its mission and resources • Identifying and ranking target publics to be served in priority order based on mission and resources • Identifying formal and informal leaders of target publics and spokespersons of stakeholder groups • Interfacing and dialoguing with formal and informal leaders of target publics and spokespersons of stakeholder groups • Engaging these leaders and spokespersons in the collaborative identification, assessment, and analysis of needs specific to the target public	• Translating expressed need(s) into macro-need(s) and connecting needs hierarchy • Translating macro-need(s) into macro-objective(s) and connecting objective(s) hierarchy • Specifying general educational strategy(ies) and connecting change strategies hierarchy • Specifying macro-outcome(s) of the planned programme and connecting outcomes hierarchy	• Developing incremental plans of action derived from the planned programme to implement it • Developing the following through on plans to identify, recruit, and train leader-learner resources and procure other resources needed to implement plans of action • Developing and implementing strategies and techniques for marketing the planned programme and its plans of action • Monitoring, through formative evaluations and other means, the implementation of plans of action and reinforcing the teacher-learner transaction • Processing and using programme feedback obtained through planned and ongoing formative evaluations to make changes in plans of action and the planned programme	• Determining, measuring, and assessing programme outcomes and impacts • Determining, measuring, and assessing programme inputs and determining cost effectiveness • Using evaluation findings (i.e. lessons learned and outcomes/ impacts achieved) for programme revisions, organisational renewal, and accounting to the target publics, the organisation, funding sources, the governance body, and the profession

Source: Boone et al., 2002, p. 73

The conditions of the organisational context highlighted in the previous section have their effects upon different kinds of programming behaviour. The various programming approaches might generate different types of programmes: in general, one related to the content, and one related to the target groups. It is very rare to find a programme which is related to the available staff and its interests. Formerly, this used to be often the case in universities, when professors proposed courses that matched their research interests. Actually, the structure of the programme can be dominated by each of the three corners of the didactic triangle: teacher – content – learner.

In the first case, with respect to content, an immanent building up of the content and its specificity can be observed, actually evolving into a coherent curriculum. In foreign language instruction, for example, it is common to start with courses for beginners and then to follow up with a more advanced course, and so on. Programme structure here is defined by content structure, leaving programme planners with the decision of where to end and where to start a course, and how to define the boundaries of the content. Of course, such decisions are also influenced by learners' needs insofar as we want course contents to match their needs. Thus the specificity of the content and its limits are defined with regard to the learners: up to which level would they like to go (e.g. studying a foreign language only for vacationing purposes or for the job, taking general English or specialised English classes, etc.) and how much time are they prepared to spend (e.g. hours per week, etc.). A programme is content-oriented also whenever it defines specific courses for special purposes, such as technical English for car making enterprises.

Needs analysis is important also in this type of programme structure, even though it is more content-oriented than learner-oriented: to provide reliable data for the needed levels of courses and for special needs. It is also important for getting information about dropout rates, which are normally higher in curriculum-based courses than in target group-oriented segments of the programme.

In the second case, concerning the target group, it is highly important whether the target group is broadly or narrowly defined. Institutions with a target group-oriented programme try to cover all of their needs in order to reach their aims on the one hand and retain the clients on the other. Thus the programme has a broader thematic approach, with a more target group-specific focus in each topic. Migrants, for example, are addressed by offerings in language, culture, vocational skills, consumerism, everyday life, and the like, each differentiated according to the origin of the migrants.

Needs analysis is highly important in this type of programme structure. Without needs analysis, it is impossible to build up a target group-oriented programme.

Normally, the programme at an adult education institution – at least at a bigger adult education institution – mixes both types of programme structures. In pure form, one can find the first type in academically organised institutions, and the second one in institutions working for enterprises or churches.

In the third case, it is the teacher who comes to propose a programme because he or she has an idea. Frequently, freelancers will approach adult education institutions trying to 'sell' their idea. The programme planner's decision to accept it or not is determined by organisational constraints and the extent to which the proposed course caters to the interests of the institutions' target groups.

All of the three types of a programme's contextual conditions are combined in a particular way if we plan to deliver an international course. For instance, if we plan a course for the continuing professional development of adult educators (the so-called Grundtvig G3 courses), course contents should be designed to attract people from all over Europe to register, irrespective of their cultural, professional, or educational background. Even in this case, one of the first items on the forms of the database where the course is to be registered, on applications for official course accreditation, or on EU funding requests is 'needs analysis' – readers, evaluators, grant makers, and interested participants need to be convinced that the course might cover real needs. On the other hand, the idea for such a course can be developed within a Grundtvig multilateral project and proposed by a team of experienced teachers proposing. The fact that the course will be taught by an international team of teachers is a major selling point for prospective participants.

6.3 Elements of programme planning

Programme planning, unless it starts from the very beginning (e.g. when establishing a new adult education institution), can be described according to the same general structure as all product developing activities in quality management concepts (the programme is the product): input, throughput, and output. In a very simple way, the input consists of the existing programme (if it does exist) and the needed data (see 6.1), the throughput consists of the elements and instruments of planning, and the output consists of the new programme including its monitoring and evaluation system (see 7.4). This chapter is about the elements and instruments of the planning process.

The elements of the planning process consist of

- the basic data of the intended programme
- the knowledge and capability of the programme planners
- the basic rules, steps, and criteria of the planning procedure
- the aspects to be planned.

6.3.1 The basic data of the intended programme

The basic data needed to plan programmes are those data which define the input and the throughput of the planned programme from the point of view of the institution. Related to this, there are different types of basic data that have to be decided upon before programme planning may begin.

The first decision concerns the volume of the programming. Volume refers not only to the mere number of offerings, programmes, instructors, teaching hours, and prospective participants, but also to the total workload that has to be put into the planning process and into the operation of the programme as such. The workload depends, of course, on the number of offerings, but also on the course topics, the facilities to get participants to the offers, the relation of the new offerings to the former ones, and so on. The higher the need for updating and revising contents, the more teaching hours, materials, and activities are needed to reach potential participants, and the larger is the volume of the programme. A simple example: a literacy course with six participants involves a higher workload than a beginners' course in English with 25 participants. The decision in the adult education institution can be made in different ways: it can be a top-down decision (e.g. the manager of the institution decides on each department's share in the entire programming, whereupon each department comes up with proposals to fill their allotted share) or a bottom-up decision (e.g. each department is invited to come up with their own ideas and proposals, based on the market they know, or the interests they have, and the decision is made from among these different proposals). The top-down way of deciding is more a strategic one, having the advantage of saving time and being clear-cut, whereas the bottom-up way of deciding is more democratic, having the advantage of motivating and involving the staff, and making them responsible for what they are proposing. The best way is a mixture of both, combining a structured vision with using the creativity, involvement, and responsibility of the department staff once they follow their proposals.

The second decision concerns the *duration* of the programme. If the adult education institution has been operating for a while, this is not a new decision. It is usually based on traditional schedules and pragmatic considerations; that is why adult education institutions tend to offer their programmes in a semester or half-year format. But the decision has to be made nonetheless; some programmes, after all, are longer than one semester. In such cases, it is always a difficult decision to make, especially with regard to the continuity of the programme, if it is broken into several parts because of holiday breaks. Institutions also need to identify the periods of the year during which people are more likely to attend, also with respect to the topic: do people want to use the summer for going on holidays, or are they more likely to attend a summer programme as a way of spending their holidays. Usually, the academic calendar at adult education institutions follows the academic calendar at the formal educational institutions.

The third aspect concerns the *area in the region*. The area in the region is normally important for adult education institutions primarily designed to the serve the needs of a specific region. For example, folk high schools offer programmes for the city or for the region surrounding the city. In this case, they have to consider the size and structure of the target population, (to determine where to advertise programmes), the traffic situation (when do people come to the course, and which bus or train connections are available), and the topics related to the needs of the region. It is like in the mass media, where you have local newspapers. Normally, adult education institutions serving a larger region have branch offices in remote villages or at different locations around the city. Otherwise, they would have a hard time reaching out to people from the entire region. It is difficult to combine educational concerns with regional concerns. For example, if you offer English for beginners in the centre of the town, it is difficult to get people from rural areas to attend. So you have to offer the same course in the village as well. Then you have two different offerings, which brings up the question regarding their comparability in terms of quality: are the two courses identical in the way were developed and with respect to teacher performance, structure, materials, facilities, and the like? They are two programmes, part of the institution's entire range of programmes, which are difficult to combine in terms of capacity, resources, and the like, but also with regard to the quality aspect and the educational aspect. The regional aspect is like a matrix combining the content and the region, and you have to find a balance between them.

The next basic data concern the *teachers*: how many teachers do we have, for which qualifications and competencies do they stand, how much money do we pay them, and so forth. Do they hold advanced degrees and qualifications, and are they associated only with your institution, or also with competing institutions? The teachers in adult education institutions, mainly freelancers and part-timers, are on the one hand an asset of the institution, but on the other hand they are far removed from the programme planner. This creates certain problems for the frame you have to plan, which is why the planning process has to be informed by data teacher availability

Another basic data source concerns the *target group*: you might address all the target groups you want to address, but you have to look at the region you are planning programmes for: which target groups are there, how many individuals are involved, and what are their structures, specifics, and needs? If you want to deliver a virtual course, you can find target groups more easily than if you have a regionally restricted programme. Target groups have to be taken into consideration in terms of their size and specific needs, and here again, needs analysis is very important.

Other basic data concern the *competitors:* who else in the market is working in the field, offering programmes like yours? Here you have to decide what to do: whether to run the same programmes, trying to take segments of the market away from your competitors, or whether to focus on segments of the market not taken by others, without strong competition, working more or less alone.

Available resources are another important type of basic data at the beginning of the planning process: how many rooms are available, how much do they cost, where in the region are you providing courses, where are they located, which facilities are included, and so forth.

Didactic principles are another important type of basic data: you will not normally offer everything as an adult education institution – you have a certain corporate identity, your principles, and your public image. Thus you have to concentrate on the main ideas and goals your institution stands for, and deciding, according to these principles, which offerings might fit your profile and which might not.

6.3.2 Knowledge and capability of the programme planners

As far as the knowledge of programme planners is concerned, it is very important that they are competent and knowledgeable about the subject matter and the target groups, and that they are able to propose attractive and customised programmes to potential participants. This means not only mastering the latest developments in a certain field or discipline, but also being familiar with demographic developments and changes in people's interests and preferences regarding study methods and habits. It means knowing about demographic changes in the area where programmes are offered, being able to adapt them to new groups coming into the region (e.g. migrants).

Concerning the capability of the programme planners, it is important to recruit a body of teachers who not only master their material but are also able to work with adult learners. They should have a certain degree of experience and continuity working for the institution, and be loyal to the adult education institution and its aims.

Moreover, the staff needs to be competent in the field of teaching methodology. Usually, adult education institutions face the problem of having teachers who are well known and qualified in their respective fields but do not have the pedagogical and didactical competencies required for dealing with adults. Thus you have to be aware of the necessity to provide further training for certain groups of your staff, while also taking advantage of their subject matter expertise and their relations to certain target groups. Rather often, you will find that a lot of participants only come to a course because of a well-known specialist teacher who is related to their group – an attitude known as peer orientation. Of course, you can build on the fact that a teacher is part of, or at least very fond of, a certain group.

In addition, you have to decide on the extent to which you are going to involve the learners themselves in the planning process. The advantage of involving them is a higher level of creativity, a higher level of identification of the learners with the organisation, thereby ensuring their loyalty to the institution and its aims. Moreover, involving learners in the planning process is likely to generate more empathy and a better understanding of their problems and needs. However, doings so requires a bigger planning effort on behalf of the institution; the discussion will be different, not so professional, and so on. Nevertheless, the involvement of the learner in the planning process is a much appreciated approach in adult education institutions.

6.3.3 The basic rules, steps, and criteria of the planning procedure

Rules: Each organisation sets its own internal system of rules for internal organisational decisions. Such rules can include, for instance: bringing programme planners and teachers together; balancing the offerings of different sectors of the institution, ensuring a certain degree of flexibility, installing quality assurance mechanisms, connecting educational principles to economic constraints, and so on. Some of these rules can be seen as embodying (implicit) principles or the institution's philosophy, others are explicitly written out, serving as an 'internal audit', as reference standards to guide the planning process.

Steps: The first step(s) when planning a programme are taken rather early, long before the programme is scheduled to be launched. The planning process may start with a paper sent in by senior management, or with a meeting of the department staff, a list with milestones and procedures for time planning, with an agenda of what is to be done in which period, who is to be in charge of what, when decisions need to be made, and so forth. Institutions acting in an organised way usually issue such agendas to each department or programme planner to make sure that deadlines are met, points at which all the negotiations need to be concluded and consensus be reached. It is important not only to clarify the agenda, including individual 'to do' items, but also the various ways in which people get involved: who acts when, and with which degree of authority and competence, at each level?

The *criteria* for discussing and deciding on the programmes that are to be selected need to be very clear and transparent. Such criteria are related to organisational identity, policy, and constraints. They may include the institution's image and aims, people's needs, available resources, and the like, to help planners make a rational decision between different proposals. The prioritisation of ideas and proposals has to be made according to objective criteria, in a rational, not arbitrary way. As the interests of each department are different, and a balance between the various segments of the forthcoming programme needs to be found, it is the task of management to develop or identify criteria against which potential solutions can be assessed, sorted, and selected. Resolving conflicts between ideas, departments, and people, but mainly between educational and economic concerns, is a task an institution has to cope with each time a decision is made about the final structure and content of the whole programme. As the arguments in negotiations are mainly subjective, such criteria are very much needed. Also, management has to decide which criteria are more important than others by creating a hierarchy of criteria.

Criteria also have to be established regarding the *flexibility* of the programme: how flexible is the programme; what can be changed according to which rules; under which conditions may a programme be replaced by another; and the like.

6.3.4 Aspects to be planned

The planning process consists of going through all the components of a programme and finding the right solution and shape for each component, articulating a coherent concept about how the programme will look like, and designing a plan for its implementation. The main components to be considered while planning the programme are the following.

Curriculum planning: content, format, size, structure, and so on. The most important component of curriculum planning is content, because that is the essence of the programme. It is crucial therefore to define which elements of the content will be used, in which order, and up to which level. As mentioned earlier, programme planners have to establish the boundaries of the programme. If, for instance, they are planning an English course for beginners, then it is important to clarify, in a vertical manner, the course contents that beginners have to master at this level, and where the intermediate or advanced level should start. Moreover, it needs to be defined, in a horizontal manner, how a general English course for beginners is different from an English course for beginners working in trade, for example. Content planning, therefore, making up the core of the programme, is to be done carefully, to make sure contents are neither too dense or insufficiently structured, nor insufficiently adapted to the aims of the programme or the needs of learners. These content-related aspects have to be decided in a clear and professional manner, and they are bound to come up in any programme.

Time schedules: how many hours per course, when to offer the course, for how long, and so forth? So you have to decide whether to run a course for ten, twenty, forty, or sixty hours – a decision that is influenced, on one hand, by content-related needs (what is the minimum amount of time needed to learn something), and, one the other hand, by learners' needs (how much time will a learner be prepared to invest in this topic), as well as the institution's needs (which activities have to be planned, what is the minimum number of paid hours it takes to deliver the content, how to arrive at an acceptable income for the teacher, and how to cover the institutional costs for delivering the programme).

Schedule: at which time of the day, on which days of the week, and how many times per month should the course be delivered? Should it be offered as a block course on a weekend, or during the week, or should it be offered on an ongoing basis, once or twice a week? The decision depends on various factors: the specificity of the content, the needs and specificity of the target group (their daily programme), the available rooms, and the like. One of the most important references is the target group and their availability for attending the course. For instance, if we offer a course for homemakers, late mornings, when the children are at school, would be an appropriate time for them to attend, because the evenings are usually busy with preparing dinner, taking the children to bed, and so on. In contrast, if we offer a course for people working, would 5:30 pm be an appropriate time, immediately after work – or do they need some rest first, and prefer to start later? The same goes for senior citizens: it is important to figure out a convenient time for them to attend. These are crucial aspects, because you need to be familiar with learners' daily lives and needs.

When addressing special groups, you need to know which special groups to address and why – is it because of the institution's educational goals, or because you have discovered extra needs for this group, or because there is extra (public) funding available for meeting the needs of underserved groups (e.g. migrants)? In any case, you need to know about their special characteristics, how to address them in a convincing way in your promotional materials, and what kinds of offering they might find appealing.

One of the most challenging aspects in programme planning is writing advertisements and announcements (in the programme brochure). To do so effectively, you need to decide which information to provide and in which format, style, and structure. A checklist is needed, containing the basic information to be covered. In fact, such checklists are needed throughout the planning process to keep all aspects in mind, and to prepare a professionally planned programme. Normally, it takes a professional editor to make sure the writing is done in a consistent style, following the same format, and so on.

Determining costs and fees is another element to be planned. It is to be decided if, for instance, there is a standard fee for each programme, or whether fees should vary, depending on contents, teachers, facilities, or the method of instruction. For example, the fee for a course than includes an excursion might differ from the fee for a course that is delivered only within the institution's classrooms. Likewise, fees may differ if external (public) funding is available, possibly involving tax reductions. Public funding is often available for courses geared towards the needs of disadvantaged groups (e.g. illiterate persons, unemployed persons, migrants, etc.), sometimes involving lower taxes. But generally, when fixing course fees, it needs to be decided according to which principles and economic restrictions the fees will be determined: it is common to offer discounts for special groups or situations (e.g. for adults taking multiple courses at the same time, for families attending courses together, for paying the entire fee at once, or for registering early), or to offer discounts for special purposes or contents (e.g. offering a promotional price for a course run for the first time, or offering lower fees than competing providers to attract clients).

Marketing strategies are also part of the planning process, because if we want not only to plan a programme, but to make it real, in the sense that people actually come, then the marketing strategy has to be created when planning the programme. Having a clear picture of the target audience in mind, including their living and working contexts, will help make the programme more participant-oriented, and thus constitutes the first step of a marketing strategy. Designing the market strategy to promote the product involves building a promotional budget and determining how that budget will be spent, deciding on the promotional materials (brochures, flyers, etc.) and channels (Internet, radio, television, community forums, newspapers, etc.).

Which further advertisement/counselling activities are needed? In some cases, if you have special programmes for groups that are difficult to reach, mostly outside educational settings, then special promotional efforts, along with counselling services, are needed to motivate them to enrol. Recruiting adult students from groups that are difficult to reach and normally do not take part in educational programmes, such as migrants, illiterates, low-skilled persons, and the like, requires dedicated advertisement and counselling activities.

The enrolment process is a very important and concrete activity to be planned, as various aspects have to be determined here. First of all, the period for enrolment has to be defined, as people are more or less likely to register in certain periods of the year. The duration of the registration period is also important, as well as the method of registration (online, at the institution, in person, etc.), and related activities (e.g. in combination with a placement test or a required counselling session with the administrative staff doing the registration, or with teachers or specialised staff).

Defining the responsibility of teachers, programme planners, and administrative staff is another aspect that needs careful planning, with clearly structured rules and procedures, so everybody knows who is in charge of what and when, and what can be delegated to whom, for the programme generally and for each course. What happens, for example, if a teacher is ill and cannot show up for the course, while students are already waiting in front of the classroom?

Unexpected problems may occur even for courses that have been perfectly planned. That is why it is important to have clear rules for troubleshooting. For instance, if there is an established procedure for students to submit complaints (an important aspect of quality assurance), troubleshooting means finding out about the nature of the problems, the reasons why they have occurred, and to have rules in place for solving them: who is in charge of problem solving, and what is that person's authority to make decisions? This has to be settled before courses of any kind can be offered.

Evaluation procedures. Early on in the planning process, programme planners have to decide upon and develop a system for evaluating courses, teacher performance, learning outcomes, and so forth, using a variety of instruments (e.g. questionnaires, interviews, group discussions, tests, etc.). Each single programme has to be evaluated to determine: did we reach our aims, to what extent did we do so, and so on (see 7.3).

All of these aspects have to be combined in an agreed-upon format, a concept emphasising the different approaches in the decision-making process and the solutions that were found for each programme.

The various ways of putting together the elements of programme planning are known as *programme planning models*. They consist of the ideas and approaches that programme planners use when putting the various parts of a programme together to ensure their coherency and smooth operation, as well as successful outcomes. Some follow a linear approach – that is, a step-by-step, sequential order – until the process is completed. This is mainly a beginner's approach, or one used by those delivering in-house training packs, or working in a very rational organisational setting. Other approaches address different components simultaneously, integrating elements or components and decision points, according to the various planning situations.

Boone et al. (2002, pp. 15–41) list 13 models of programme planning, each of them emphasising different stages of programme planning (planning, design, implementation, evaluation) or focusing on one of the components listed above. The difference between these 13 models is more one of putting the emphasis on one component rather than another, based on each author's philosophy and the purpose(s) for designing those models, than one of substance. More or less, all the models try to map the context and the needs of the learners, and to adapt to them so as to be useful in almost any adult education context. Most of the models express concern for careful design. From among all of them, we found the 'Interactive model of programme planning' (see Text Box 4) to be the most comprehensive and flexible, as it allows for starting with the planning from any part of the abovementioned categories.

Text box 4: Interactive Model of Programme Planning

A checklist for planning programmes:

Discerning the context

- Be knowledgeable about the people, the organisation, and the wider environmental contextual factors.
- Be well-informed about the issue of power dynamics in planning.
- Cultivate and/or enhance negotiation skills required to navigate situation in which power in a central issue.
- Ensure that beliefs and actions being displayed in one's practice are ethical.
- Know and be able to access sources of information about the context of planning situations

Building a solid base of support

- Ensure support from key constituent groups and other stakeholders.
- Cultivate continuous organisational support by establishing structural processes that work.
- Promote organisational culture in which formal, hob-embedded, and self-directed learning activities and continuous learning are valued.
- Obtain and maintain support from the wider community through formal and ad-hoc groups and boards.
- Build and sustain collaborative partnerships with other organisations and groups.

Identifying programme ideas

- Decide what sources to use in identifying ideas for education and training programmes.
- Generate ideas through a variety of techniques.
- Be aware that highly structured needs assessments are not the only way to identify ideas fro education and training programmes.
- Ensure you can defend why a highly structured needs assessment is warranted, and choose and/or develop a model for conducting this assessment that is appropriate to the situation.
- Consider contextual issues that do or might effect how ideas for programmes are generated.
- Be aware that in most planning situations programme planners cannot use all of the programme ideas that have been identified.

Sorting and prioritizing programme ideas

- Be knowledgeable about how priority ideas are defined, and what typical issues and problems are that call for interventions other than education and training programmes.
- Analyze and sort the programme ideas into two piles – those appropriate for educational activities and those that require alternative interventions.
- Select people who will do the actual prioritizing process.
- Be well-informed about two qualitative and quantitative approaches for prioritizing ideas.
- Use systematic methods for prioritizing programme ideas.
- Be familiar with alternative interventions and how they are selected and implemented.

Developing programme objectives

- Write programme objectives that reflect what participants will learn, the resulting changes from that learning, and the operational aspects of the programme.
- Ensure that both measurable and non-measurable programme outcomes are included.
- Check to see whether the programme objectives are written clearly so they can be understood by all parties involved.
- Use the programme objectives as an internal consistency and "do-ability" checkpoint.
- Negotiate changes in programme objectives among the parties involved with the planning process.

Designing instructional plans

- Develop clear and understandable learning objectives for each instructional session and ensure they match the proposed learning outcomes.
- Select and organise the content based on what participants "must learn".
- Choose instructional techniques that match the focus of the proposed learning outcomes, that the instructor is capable of using, and that take into account the backgrounds and experiences of the learners and the learning context.
- Select and/or develop instructional resources that enhance the learning effort.
- Choose and assessment component for each instructional segment.
- Use instructional assessment data in formative and summative ways for both instructional and programme evaluation.
- Prepare clear and concise instructional plans.
- Make the instructional process work by ensuring instructors are competent and caring.

Devising transfer-of-learning plans

- Be knowledgeable about the major factors that influence transfer of learning.
- Decide whether transfer-of-learning strategies should be employed before, during, and/or after a programme.
- Determine the key players who should be a part of the transfer-of-learning process.
- Teach learners, supervisors, and other interested parties about transfer-of-learning strategies and techniques.
- Choose transfer strategies that are most useful in assisting participants to apply what they have learned.
- Select and/or assist learners and other to opt for transfer-of-learning techniques that are the most useful to them in applying what they have learned.
- Negotiate and change the content, skills, and/or beliefs that are to be transferred.

Formulating evaluation plans

- Develop, as warranted, systematic programme evaluation procedures.
- Use informal and unplanned evaluation opportunities to collect formative and summative evaluation data.
- Specify the evaluation approach or approaches to be used.
- Determine how evaluation data are to be collected.
- Think trough how the data are to be analyzed.
- Describe how judgments are made about the programme.

Making recommendations and communicating results

- Examine programme successes and failures, and formulate programme recommendations.
- Tell the story well through carefully crafted programme reports.
- Select the format for the report.
- Time the release of the report when the audience is most likely to review it.
- Follow up with appropriate individuals and groups.

Selecting formats, schedules, and staff needs

- Choose the most appropriate format or combination of formats for the learning activity.
- Take into account the desire to build a community of learners.
- Devise a programme schedule.
- Identify staff requirements.
- Determine whether internal staff and/or whether external consultants are required.
- Make careful choices about instructors and/or learning facilitators.

Preparing budgets and marketing plans

- Estimate the expenses for the programme, including costs for the development, delivery, and evaluation of the programme.
- Determine how the programme is financed, and estimate the programme income.
- Manage the programme budget, and keep accurate budget records.
- Develop contingency budget plans for programmes that are scaled back or cancelled.
- Be able to pay the bills for the programme by managing the income side of the budget.
- Build and maintain programme credibility, success, and market niches when marketing programmes.
- Conduct a target audience analysis.
- Use already existing data or generate contextual information to help frame the marketing plan.
- Select and prepare promotional campaign.
- Ascertain and strengthen your promotional assets and capabilities.

Coordinating facilities and on-site events

- Obtain suitable facilities, and arrange for instructional materials and equipment.
- Make sure facilities meet all requirements for allowing access for people with disabilities
- Oversee all of the on-site programme arrangements.
- Create a positive climate for learning from the moment the participants arrive.
- Provide systems for monitoring programmes.
- Gather data for programme evaluations.
- Give recognition to programme participants, and thank both staff members and participants for being part of the programme.
- Tie up all loose ends after the programme is finished.

Source: Caffarella, 2002, pp. 23–24

6.4 Problems of programme planning

All of the problems that may arise in planning processes generally may also arise when planning programmes for adult education institutions. They can be listed as follows:

- lack of data ('flying blindly')
- unforeseeable circumstances (illness, weather, traffic, earthquakes, etc.)
- not reaching calculated aims (mainly money, number of participants)
- new facts (e.g. new competitors)
- wrong planning input (capacity, resources, time)
- lack of balance in the offering (content, target groups, calculated income).

Lack of data ('flying blindly'): A lack of data can normally be avoided if there is sufficient overview of the data needed. Normally, programme planners have an overview of the data needed based on their experiences with previous planning processes, which proved which data are needed, and how they should be used. But sometimes new data are needed (e.g. when a new programme is introduced to a new segment of the market, or for a new target group), data that cannot be determined based on experience. Sometimes data are missing simply because they are not available, for example updated data on target groups, relevant competitors, the development of the labour market, and so on. However, the programme has to be planned despite this lack of data. In such cases, the data have to be estimated: the higher the level of experience, the better the estimate. Normally, an institution with many years of experience in adult education has such expertise, including an in-house style of stocking and predicting data, as part of its quality management system.

Unforeseeable circumstances (illness, weather, traffic, earthquakes, etc.): It is difficult to enumerate all the unforeseeable happenings that can influence the planning and operation of adult education programmes. These unforeseeable circumstances start with the staff (they might get ill, leave the institution, have tensions amongst each others, etc.) and continue with natural disasters, like severe weather, environmental catastrophes, and acts of war or terrorism, which may keep people from participating. Very often, unforeseeable circumstances also include economic developments, such as the recent economic and financial crises, which lead to a decrease in people's participation in adult education programmes. Finally, unforeseeable happenings include the political and practical contexts of educational provision, like elections, new administrations, new regulations and political measures, traffic, and the like.

Failing to reach the calculated aims (money, number of participants): failing to accomplish one's envisaged aims is not a problem; in fact, it is more or less the norm with adult education institutions. The reasons for this are manifold, ranging from the unforeseeable events to over- or underenrolment in certain programmes, or programmes not meeting expectations, not delivering the promised benefits for learners, not allowing for enough flexibility and adaptation to meet learners' needs, leading to dropouts, and so forth. The best way of dealing with the prospect of not reaching the calculated aims is to plan them within a corridor, in a flexible way, by making a mixed calculation for best and worst case scenarios, as extremes between which the middle has to be achieved.

New facts (e.g. new competitors): An important source of problems is the emergence of new competitors. Sometimes, new competitors may withdraw a lot of participants from one's own adult education institution by providing new and innovative offerings. Since normally the offerings of new competitors are not known when planning one's own programme, there is a certain degree of uncertainty regarding direct competitors. New facts might also include changes in the legal framework, for example a new law defining the adult education programmes eligible for public funding, which may have been reduced compared to previous versions. New facts are also related to events that occurred immediately after the planning process ended, and thus could not be taken into account while planning the programme (e.g. a terrorist attack or an act of shocking violence, changing the political agenda and priorities). New facts occurring after the planning process typically affect programmes on policy, health, and business, redirecting the interest of possible participants towards other topics.

Wrong planning inputs (capacity, resources, time): Wrong planning inputs are even worse than a lack of data input. Not having reliable data is something to be dealt with during the planning process as a real point of uncertainty. Wrong planning inputs, in contrast, are normally discovered after the planning process is finished and when programmes a running. Problems then may occur because of wrong planning regarding teaching, resources, capacity, finances, materials, available time, facilities (rooms), and the like.

Lack of balance in the offerings: Quite often, there is a lack of balance between the existing offerings regarding the content, the target groups, or the calculated income. The abovementioned 'Robin Hood principle' only works if there is a reliable system for calculating the income to be expected from low-price and high-price offerings, as well as from high-demand and low-demand offerings. Without such balance, the programme might fail, leading to financial problems, a loss of participants, or the failure to reach a certain target of participants. All of these problems can be avoided by using quality-oriented planning processes. In these processes, the commonality of using mixed reliable data for analysing the divergent situations and for setting aims is be clarified with the help of monitoring systems and checklists, which are used during the planning process. In all of these cases, staff guidance is needed as well to make sure that the aim of planning successful programmes is shared by everybody, and to help avoid unprofessional behaviour among the staff. This means, at the same time, that the whole planning process has to be guided and run as a mixture of formal directives and creative collaboration – a rather complicated but also challenging idea of human resource management.

Exercises and tasks

Exercise 1

Make your own ‘to do’ list or matrix containing the aspects to be considered, solved, or clarified while doing programme planning.

Exercise 2

The head of the department of civic education argues for offering a course on human rights, which ‘has always been’ part of the programme and is a core expression of the institution’s mission. That course, however, has never attracted more than five or six participants each time. The head of the ICT department thinks that a new course on social media would attract loads of people, mainly from the age group of 16 to 30, which has been less covered by the institution’s portfolio. According to which criteria will it be decided which of these two courses will be chosen?

Task

Write down a list of possible criteria according to which the offerings of different departments are to be chosen for the final programme of an institution. Analyse a catalogue of programme offerings of an adult education institution near you and find out if your criteria can be identified as working for the chosen courses in that institution’s portfolio.

7. Steps in Programme Planning

The main goal of programme planning is, in simple terms, the planning of an educational programme. 'Educational programme' means a number of provisions and offers of teaching-learning processes for adults. In very rare cases, it is the planning of a complete programme, either for an institution or for a certain type of content, such as a newly offered foreign language. In most cases, it is the continuation of an existing programme into the next educational term, which might be an academic year or a semester, or a two-year planning period, and rarely longer than that. This means that programme planning is an ongoing activity in educational institutions for adults, as ongoing as the institution's teaching activities. Programme planning and teaching do need a coherent connection to save experiences, to improve quality, and to build on good practice.

Programme planning can therefore be described as a circular activity producing remarkable new data in each round (e.g. in terms of needs analysis, see Chapter 6). In that sense, it is a type of future-oriented management.

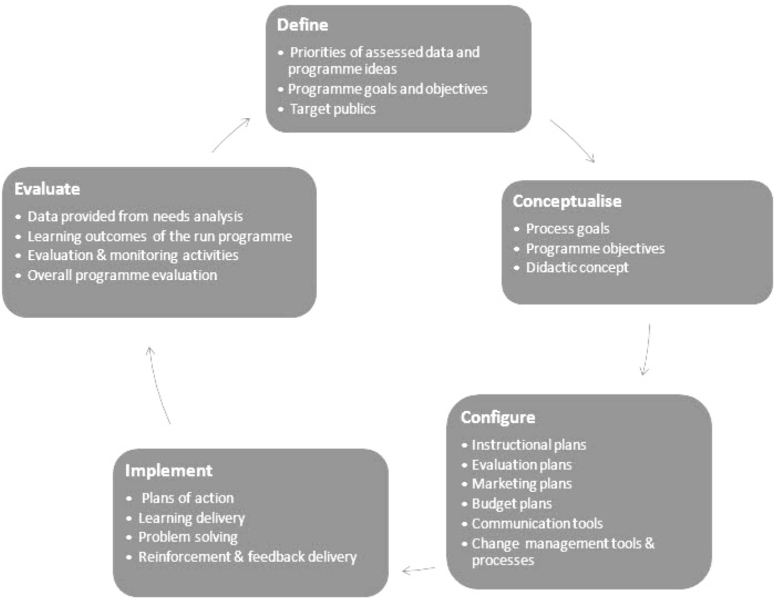
1. The first step is evaluating the running programme (if the programme to be planned is a continuation of an existing one). This evaluation might be done in different ways, but it has to be done (see 7.3).
2. The second step is taking into account new reliable data like the results and findings of the needs analysis.
3. The third step is conceptualising the continued programme, including changes (e.g. with regard to demographics), expanding target markets (e.g. offering a new foreign language), new resources (e.g. new media), discontinued programmes (e.g. courses with a decreasing number of participants), or changes in the financial framework (e.g. fewer government grants).
4. The fourth step is configuring the new programme (which can be only partly new). About 10 per cent of a programme changes from one year to another; about 30 per cent in a five-year term; and about 70 per cent in a

ten-year term. A long-term analysis of the programmes at adult education institutions (e.g. the German *Volkshochschulen*) shows that there is a strong tendency to continue a well-accepted core programme.

5. The fifth step is putting this revised programme into practice with all its concrete and organisational details. The output of the process of programme planning is a new programme, which traditionally is advertised by a widely circulated brochure as well as a media and public relations campaign.
6. The sixth step is the running of the programme, including its evaluation, which leads back to the first step again – half a year, one year, or two years later.

The whole process can be visualised as follows.

Figure 7: Steps of programme planning



Source: Author's own

After going through this chapter, you should be able to organise and carry out a process of programme planning, based on a more concrete idea about the things that need to be done in this respect.

7.1 Goals and objectives

Defining the aims and objectives of the programme means making explicit: a) the results to be achieved, b) how they will be achieved, and c) the outcomes of the programme, in terms of learning outcomes or competencies the learners will have acquired by the end of the programme.

With regard to programme ends, Kettner et al. (1999, pp. 97–100) distinguish between: *programme outcome goals* (the overall results formulated as ends, or expectations about the programme, explaining more generally why the program is worth doing), *process objectives* (means and specific activities that will represent further refinement of details about programme implementation), and, at the third level of specification, *programme objectives* (or operational objectives), including a clear statement of the anticipated results to be achieved through the training programme, as well as strategies and milestones. These objectives are the basis for the instructional plans and for the benchmarking against which the programme will be evaluated. In practice, very often only the programme goals are formulated, as general desiderata, usually as part of the organisation's mission statements, and the operational programme objectives, including a specification of the learning results.

Table 3: Examples of formulating objectives

Objectives/ different types of programmes	**Programme goals (general outcome)**	**Process goals (focused on programme operations)**	**Programme objectives (focused on participant learning)**
Second chance programme	The central goal of this programme is to ensure that graduates are able to master the 8 key competencies at Level 2 EQF, and mainly to read and write at a level sufficient to carry out their roles as workers, parents, and contributing members of the community. In addition, the second chance to education programme, Level 2, will provide them with the qualification on …, at Level 2 NQF (National Qualification Framework), allowing them to enter a vocational high school.	To establish a training programme for supervisors within the training company for content-embedded literacy in the workplace	To provide support for low-skilled adults in order to help them: (1) become aware of the benefits of learning and of their strengths, the things they already know and are able to do, to reflect on the learning embedded in their everyday life; (2) express their feelings about the conditions and difficulties they encounter, as well as about their progress; (3) transfer their learning to the workplace and vice versa; (4) get the missing knowledge, skills, in order to meet the competency level required for general schooling.
On-the-job training programme	The goals of the training programme for senior employees (soon to be retired) are: (1) to introduce senior staff to the values of the green economy; (2) to enable these employees to change their work roles and functions; (3) to provide them with the coaching skills needed to train new hires in the light of green economy values; (4) to assist the overall organisation to adapt to changing markets, products, and ways of operating in a low-carbon economy.	To find the most convenient training provision, by asking for training offers able to provide experienced trainers for the topics of intergenerational learning, green economy, coaching.	To provide the training programme to all senior staff interested in continuing to work at the company after retirement as coaches, but also, upon request, to other senior employees interested in becoming coaches, enabling them to: (1) demonstrate that they know how to use the training package, (2) find the appropriate transfer-of-learning approaches for embedding green values in the existing work systems.

Source: Author's own

Programme objectives, focused on what participants are expected to learn, as individuals and as a group, and focused, therefore, on the changes occurring in their behaviour, are to be formulated in a SMART way (meaning that they should be *specific, measurable, achievable* in a given time frame*, realistic,* and *transferable*). This means that by using active verbs designating clear behaviours and measurable achievements, one can notice the extent to which it was a successful programme. However, not all of the outcomes are visible or measurable; nor may all of the outcomes be anticipated. Therefore, in constructing programme objectives, it is important to be flexible in terms of re-negotiating and re-shaping those objectives, so as to be able to highlight unanticipated but important programme outcomes (Caffarella, 2002, p. 159).

In terms of programme management, it is important not only to be clear about the measurement criteria, but also to incorporate specifications about the people responsible for carrying out those measurements. In addition to the primary aim of planning (i.e. creating a new programme), there are secondary aims, which are more related to the general strategic management of the institution as a whole. One of the most important aims here is the involvement of the staff. Since the programme is the most important (or even the only) ‘product’ of an educational institution, it is crucial to make the entire staff identify with it. The ideas, the experiences, and the aims of the responsible staff members have to be included in the ‘production’ of the programme – much more so in an educational institution than, for example, in a company producing washing machines or cars. In educational institutions, it is the ‘software’, the communication, the creativity, and the commitment of the people that make a high-quality product. Involving the staff in the definition of programme objectives helps programme planners define objectives in more realistic and practice-oriented terms rather than from behind their desks.

In adult education institutions, involving the staff gets more complicated as more teachers are only employed as part-timers or freelancers, working for the institution only for a few hours a week. Very often, the organisational structure consists of a smaller group of full-time employees, who are mainly involved in programme planning and programme operation, and a much bigger group of teachers, who are only responsible for one or two courses in the whole programme. The programme planning, therefore, also needs to include those teachers to ensure that teaching (i.e. the micro-didactic level) is consistent with the meso-didactic programme.

For example, if one of the main programme principles is the dialogical teaching method, combined with the use of new media (mainly the Internet), then it has to be compulsory for teachers to adhere to this principle. Agreeing on a principle like this is one of the secondary elements which have to be addressed in the process of programme planning, together with all of the staff members engaged in the matter. It also means, as part of the programme objectives focused on programme operations, locating and securing adequate equipment by the time the programme starts, and it might also mean analysing and developing the media competencies of part-time and full-time staff.

The previous example is also relevant with regard to process objectives, in order to ensure the prerequisites for successfully implementing the programme are met. But it is the programme objectives that are most important for ensuring the internal consistency of the learning programme; they are helpful for matching instructional and evaluation plans, which provide further details about programme objectives.

7.2 Didactic concepts for learning delivery

Education and training programmes for adults come in all shapes, sizes, and formats. They range from one-hour lectures or skill sessions to weekend seminars, highly intensive residential study programmes at corporate training centres, one or two years of university study, or (weekly) vocational programmes, delivered face to face, in a blended way, or entirely online.

Also, the format of the programme can range from a study circle ‘course’ to a highly structured, syllabus-based programme. Reading groups or study circles offered at a university of the third age (U3A), for example, primarily use an open discussion format, with no set parameters, because the members of such groups tend to enjoy the open-ended way of learning. In this case, the institution’s intervention is mostly related to fostering such gathering and sharing of ideas in a free format, whereas for other types of courses, the opposite kind of intervention is needed. Even with study circles, some adults might prefer a more formal approach, involving moderators and structured discussions, the role of the facilitator of the group being different. In contrast, most training programmes, such courses, workshops, seminars, peer coaching – designed for small or large groups of adults, for a large general public, or for a very specific one – require tight scheduling and planning for each session.

Designing curricula and educational concepts means creating a format for the interaction between learners and teachers, including the logistic infrastructure (i.e. traditional classroom or virtual learning platform, didactic materials and equipment, learning resources, etc.). Such design can be done by a programme developer, or a team of experts, consisting of a subject matter specialist, an education and learning specialist, and an educational technologist (in case of virtual delivery), coordinated by the institution’s programme planner. Every institution can have a standardised form to use when designing the format of a programme, also providing the information to be printed in the promotional brochure, as well as the information needed for the monitoring team, or for securing the logistic infrastructure.

Here we will not describe how to create a detailed didactic concept for a programme or a learning unit, as this is the part of a different volume in the study guide series. However, the main factors concerning the learning context, as well as their implications for the managerial aspects and the decisions regarding the design of the course or programme need to be pointed out. Chapter 6.3 provided a synthesis of the elements of planning a programme, as well as the aspects to be planned. When reflecting on the details of those programmes in greater depth while designing the didactic approach, the following aspects should be addressed:

- *Learning objectives and learning outcomes:* formulated in operational terms, with concrete behaviours to be measured. In the previous section, we made a distinction between different programme aims and objectives, at different levels of generality. This aspect concerns the concrete level of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be acquired by the learners at the end of each learning unit or the course as a whole.
- *Learners:* how many are they, what is their educational, cultural, and professional background (what previous knowledge, skills, and experiences related to the course do they have), what expectations do they have, to what extent do they meet various learning prerequisites (e.g. digital skills for activating the learning platform, or self-directed learning techniques), and so on. Depending on the number of learners signing up for the course, some reconsideration of the didactic approach might be needed, as dealing with small groups of adults is different in many ways (e.g. teaching methodology, classroom space, etc.) from dealing with large groups.
- *Content*: Depending on the type of content (i.e. abstract or concrete, level of complexity, addressing cognitive or procedural aspects, etc.), it is likely to be taught in various ways, using a range of methodological tools, aids, and techniques. Teachers need to decide whether to divide it into separate units, which teaching aids to use (e.g. study guides, visual aids, simulations, etc.), whether to use an experiential approach or a problem-based one, or whether to present content by demonstrations, by debating, or discovering, and so on. The same content can be made accessible and easy to understand and retain in very different ways.
- *Learning context*: Where does the learning take place (e.g. in a museum, at a swimming pool, in a conference hall, online, at the workplace, in a

library, in a café, in a forest, or inside a regular classroom), and which didactic approaches are suitable for this context?

- *Didactic strategies:* What methods are to be used and combined (Does the range of methods and techniques take into account the different ways in which learners process information?), how should learners be grouped (Do we need more rooms for working groups?), and what materials (e.g. handouts, equipment, books, maps, etc.) are needed? Are there logistical constraints? The methods to be used are selected in accordance with the learning objectives, the degree of involvement expected from participants, the specificity of the content, and so forth. For instance, for acquiring knowledge, methods such as explanations, panels, group discussions, debates, case studies, (a)synchronous online forums, and the like are more suitable, whereas for acquiring skills, methods such as exercises, simulations, games, demonstrations, observations, problem-solving exercises, reflective practice, role playing, drawing, and the like are more suitable (see also Caffarella, 2002, pp. 175–178).
- *Human resources*: Do we need a team of teachers for each module, or do we promote team-teaching? Are the teachers able to use new technologies and to transfer into practice the interactive didactic approach, or do they need further training? Are they able to moderate online forums? Do they have time available? Do they feel comfortable using a variety of techniques, and are they able to build up an engaging learning community?
- *Schedule/time frame*: The schedule depends very much on the different course formats that were chosen and combined. Decisions have to be made regarding the time during the day (in the morning or in the evening, how many hours per day) and the week: how many times per week, and whether the course should be run on a weekly basis (for one semester or more) or as an intensive course (e.g. on a single weekend, as a one-day conference, as a residential course, a two to three-weeks summer/winter camp, etc.); whether online courses and forums should be combined with face-to-face one-day day or weekend meetings, and so forth. It is important that the schedule is set at the beginning of the course for the whole course, including the evaluation, so that students have an overview on what will be expected from them, by when, and how they should plan their rhythm, participation, days off from the job, and so on. It is also important to know whether the schedule permits flexibility: can absences be made up for by attending a different course, with a different group, and what is the minimum attendance requirement, if in fact there is one.
- *Evaluation:* As mentioned before, the details of how the evaluation will be performed (by a written or oral exam, a presentation, a portfolio, or a

research paper etc.), when (on an ongoing basis or only once, at the end of the course), based on which criteria, and by whom (e.g. only by the institutional teaching staff or by an external body) are important aspects that students have to know about at the beginning of the programme. Also, it is important for them to know what kind of certificate they will obtain after passing the exams and graduating successfully. For more details on the issue of evaluation, see Chapter 7.3. Furthermore, if these aspects concern the evaluation of the learning results, they also include planning the overall programme evaluation, the evaluation of the learning resources, and the prerequisites needed for successful implementation.
- *Format of the programme:* The programme format is chosen based on the number of students and the time they are available, the learning site (e.g. at the workplace, in a conference building, at an outdoor location, etc.), the types of tasks, the facilities and the limits of technological delivery, the didactic concept likely to produce the highest retention rate, and the like. When deciding on one format or another, any additional costs both for the institution and the students have to be taken into account as well (for residential programmes, but also for face-to-face ones).

Text box 5: Types of instructional formats

1) individual formats: apprenticeship, coaching, computer-based technologies, interactive tutorials, self-directed learning, on-the-job training, mentoring, practical supervision, etc.
2) small group formats: seminars, workshops, field visits, support groups, study circle, reading groups, labs, networks, etc.
3) large group formats: conferences, theatre, educational tours, lecture series, exhibits, residential learning, etc.
4) distance learning formats: audio/video-conferences, blended learning, broadcast and cable television/ radio, learning platform, correspondence study, learning packs, etc.
5) community learning formats: community resource centres, community development, groups of local initiative (community action groups), learning campaigns, popular theatre, learning cities/ regions, and virtual communities.

Source: Caffarella, 2002, pp. 288–291

For each learning unit, teachers need to translate these aspects into detailed instructional plans, to be used as roadmaps assisting them with keeping focused while teaching the course. The instructional plans will depend very much on the teacher's teaching style, on their experience, and on the actual group of learners, as well as on the teacher's beliefs, values, and preferred didactic approach.

But before any concrete didactic interaction between the teacher (generically called 'teacher' for our purposes, even if he or she is a keynote speaker or the moderator at a conference) and the learners can take place, all aspects of the programme to be run have to be carefully reviewed and revised, if necessary, to make sure every aspect is well planned. For instance, depending on the chosen format and the size of the group(s) interacting in the plenary and in working groups, the space facilities have to meet the demands of combining large group interaction with simultaneous small-group interaction, both in terms of room size, easy-to-arrange furniture, equipment, and so on.

Once the didactic approach has been determined (which can be revised, of course, due to logistic constraints, costs, etc.), and while preparing and organising all the aspects of course delivery, there are several aspects that need to be clarified, as the best programme planning cannot anticipate the unforeseen events and circumstances occurring during programme implementation (Sava 2003, pp. 250–263; Sava 2007, pp. 294–296):

- The course registration system needs to provide information early on about start dates, location, course hours, payment methods, attendance policies, required equipment, and the like. Also, the data collected on the registration form should at least include participants' contact details so they can be informed about unexpected happenings while the course is run.
- Responsibilities of the course team: coordinator (supervising the teaching and support staff), teaching staff and tutors (in the case of online delivery, for instance), course administrator (secretary), people responsible for the facilities, for delivering course materials, for equipment, for organising face-to-face meetings, for administering the website, and so on.
- Preparing course facilities and premises (e.g. renting spaces in other institutions, placing schedules on each door, placing functional equipment and facilities in each room, renting hotel rooms, making contracts with institutions delivering course materials or food, making contracts with publishing houses for the printed materials, ensuring the qualitative functioning of the local centres, etc.)
- Communication tools during the course (where to get further information, from whom, how, who informs the students about unexpected or new things, etc.)
- Monitoring and motivating students during the course, building up the learning community

- Installing a system for monitoring the course staff, for paying them, collecting their feedback, linking them, and so on
- Access to other facilities (library, resource centres, cafeteria, parking, etc.)
- Providing information during the course via schedules, course materials, support staff, feedback, details about the evaluation (where and when the final exam will take place, needed preparation, when and how the results will be available, further activities, etc.)
- Providing information at the end of the course about certification, further training opportunities, further services to support the transfer of learning, employment opportunities, and the like
- Putting problem-solving procedures in place (e.g. disagreements between staff and learners, complaint management, re-scheduling due to objective reasons, etc.)
- Putting quality assurance procedures in place

These aspects need to be introduced into the evaluation and monitoring plans as well. They have to be performed before, during, and after the programme to make sure that useful suggestions for improvement are collected in due time. Other aspects that need to be taken into consideration will be presented in the next section.

7.3 Evaluation and monitoring

The increasing demand for evidence of 'value for money' – that is, evidence of the efficient use of the public or private funds, and of the performance of educational programmes – puts increasing pressure on educational institutions to evaluate and monitor their programmes. On the other hand, the team designing and running the programme, together with the organisation's management, also have an inherent interest in finding out how the programme performed and what needs to be improved, which of the organisation's capacities and services need to be enhanced. Moreover, in a competitive market, with an increasing fight for shrinking public money, in which funds go to 'high performers', the evaluation and accountability of the programme need to be planned and conducted more carefully, and increased evaluation expertise is needed, to highlight the strengths of the programme versus those of competitors, to ensure an increased quality of delivery, and thus to attract clients.

Keyword: Evaluation and accountability

Two distinct but connecting dimensions – *evaluation* and *accountability* – emphasize the importance of obtaining hard evidence to verify the achievement of intended outcomes defined in the planned programme and its plan of action, and reporting these outcomes and the resources used in producing them to all significant stakeholder groups (i.e., the target public(s), the adult education organisation, funding source(s), governance group(s), and the profession).

Evaluation is defined as a process in which adult educators engage to measure the outcomes achieved through the planned programme, and to determine the relative effectiveness of inputs and costs incurred in producing these outcomes. To measure and evaluate the outcomes/ impacts achieved in the implementation of the planned programme, adult educators will need to implement five processual tasks: (1)reclarify the intended outcomes as displayed in the outcomes hierarchy of the planned programme and select and use the appropriate measurement tools to assess the progress attained in achieving these outcomes; (2) assess causal relations with respect to causes (inputs) and effect (outcomes) and determine the approximate costs incurred; (3) review the implementation of learner objectives in the objectives hierarchy with respect to intended outcome specifications as compared to input/ outcome associations; (4) review the translation of objectives within their hierarchy in relation to deficiencies incorporated in the needs statements in the needs hierarchy; and (5) assess long-term programme impacts with respect to the attainment of the intended macro-outcomes. . . .

Accountability refers to the process whereby the adult education organisation and its practicing adult educators are held accountable for planned programme outcomes and the effectiveness and efficiency of their efforts in producing the intended outcomes. Accountability always involves external imposition of expectations and demands for evaluative evidence. To demonstrate accountability, adult educators are encouraged to implement three processual tasks: (1) report outcomes and impacts achieved . . . to significant stakeholders, including the learners and the leaders of the target publics; (2) analyze and assess the AE organisation's functions, structure, and processes in relation to feedback obtained in their implementation of programming process to determine where changes need to be made to increase its effectiveness; and (3) recommend means by which the AE organisation, through renewal, might better adapt to serve the educational needs of its target publics. (Boone, Safrit, & Jones, 2002, pp. 48–49)

The evaluation interacts with all of the other components of the programme, being part of it from the (pre-)planning stage through its implementation and conclusion. Therefore, the design of the evaluation needs to be carefully planned. The evaluation design involves the specification of (Wholey, Hartry, & Newcomer, 2004, p. xxxxv): (1) the evaluation questions; (2) the data to be collected and analysed in order to answer those questions; (3) the estimated resources needed (costs, time, logistics, human resources); (4) how the evaluation information will be used, for what purposes (e.g. for the re-accreditation of the programme, as a performance audit, as a 'learning strategy' to identify ways to improve the programme, to highlight the institution's competitive edge in rankings, or to identify the results, the impact, the outcomes, the secondary effects, etc.). In addition, a comprehensive evaluation design has to cover aspects like: determining who is carrying out the evaluation, and for whom; clarifying the focus of the evaluation, defining from whom, where, and how the data will be collected (using which techniques), when, to which degree of detail, what kind of data, in what format, and how the data will be analysed afterwards. Once it has been specified how the data were collected, criteria need to be defined against which to judge the programme, as well as ways to use the evaluation data effectively (see also Caffarella, 2002, pp. 230–234).

However, even if a systematic evaluation is planned for the programme as a whole – that is to say, from its conception until its conclusion – evaluators have to take into consideration that not all of the aspects can be easily identified, evaluated, measured, and quantified, and that not all of the evaluation data can be collected and provided in time. The evaluation itself may produce secondary effects, and may have its own sources of error (e.g. due to contextual factors). It may even be the case that the conceptualisation or implementation of the intervention turns out to be inappropriate (Wholey et al., 2004)*.

Thus logic modelling is a useful strategy for identifying programme components and outcomes, as well as critical contextual factors affecting programme operations. Putting together elements like resources, activities, outputs, and short/medium/long-term outcomes helps explain the expected programme performance, and arrive at a shared understanding of it. If these are the basic elements against which the programme is to be evaluated, the evaluative approach(es) may vary, as the evaluation can be done ex ante (through an evaluability assessment), during (e.g. through an implementation

* Wholey et al. (2004) identify 27 of such 'pitfalls of evaluation', occurring before data collection begins, during and after data collection (pp. 549–569). See also Love, 2004; McLaughlin and Jordan, 2004; Poister, 2004; Wholey, 2004.

evaluation, performance monitoring, or in-depth evaluation), or ex post (e.g. through impact evaluation). For instance, an evaluability assessment can serve to clarify whether a given programme design is realistic, and help programme planners improve it in case its goals are not well defined and plausible (or not adapted to reality) for the resources allotted, or in case not all of the programme's components are well articulated and understood by everybody. Also, such an evaluation explores which forms of evaluation would be most useful. Each time we start a new programme, scheduled to last for several years, such an evaluability assessment is needed.

A programme can be well designed and still fail during its implementation unless a systematic evaluation is performed, either to check progress, or to change direction. Even if it is about an in-depth evaluation (of the process), or about performance monitoring and assessment (more focused on results), the 'technology' of programme delivery has to be reviewed. 'Performance monitoring connotes an ongoing system of measurement and feedback of programme operations and results, usually through the use of administrative information systems and performance indicators.' (Love, 2004, p. 67) Implementation analysis can be either a formative one, aimed to improve the programme while it is running, or it a descriptive one, providing details about the implementation of the programme, details that can be compared with standards, or pre-designed outputs or outcomes. Such an evaluation can help us identify learners' satisfaction and behaviour, their learning results, and changes in their behaviour, but it may also be a system evaluation, providing feedback on the effectiveness of the programme planning and the implementation process, the efficiency of the use of resources, and so on. The review is either done by the people involved in the programme (as an 'ethnographic' analysis), or by a professional expert. The scope of the evaluation determines the amount of data to be collected.

The *techniques* for data collection are very diverse, depending on the data to be collected and on the type of evaluation. They range from questionnaires, tests, and product reviews all the way to focus groups, observations, simulations, self-assessments, organisational or community records, documents analysis, cost-benefit analysis, story-telling, field notes, and the like. The data collected can either be used to conduct a quantitative or a qualitative analysis, at all levels, from participant learning to programme operations, or at the organisational or societal level (see Caffarella, 2002, pp. 249–256, for concrete examples of the methods to be used and the data to be collected, both for qualitative and quantitative purposes). Depending on the complexity of the data to be analysed, it may be necessary to use statistics, regression analysis, or cost-effectiveness/ cost-benefit analysis.

Table 4: Approaches to programme evaluation

Approach	Description	Sample questions	Who is responsible	Data collection techniques/ type of data to be collected
Evaluation at the end of the programme	Focus on different aspects: 1. results of the learners in the final examination 2. participant reactions and satisfaction 3. outputs (e.g. a new support service) 4. teacher feedback 5. outcomes (increased transparency, productivity, social action, etc.)	– Did participants like the programme? – What knowledge or skills were best achieved or understood? – How was the new service received by the students? Was it worth the cost of setting it up? – Which difficulties did the staff have to cope with? What are their recommendations for further improvement? – What overall impact did the programme have on learner's achievements, and on the organisation as a whole?	Programme coordinator Teachers Professional/ expert reviewers	Written questionnaires (quantitative data) or (telephone) interviews (qualitative data) or group discussions Tests (quantitative data), product/ documents analysis, observations Cost-benefit analysis, organisational documents and records, interviews (quantitative and qualitative data) Self-evaluation, reflection logs, focus groups, story-telling (qualitative data) Interviews, focus groups, record keeping, cost-benefit analysis etc. (both types of data, but more qualitative ones; report for the sponsoring bodies). The medium-term impact will be measured one/ 'n' month(s) later.

Source: Author's own (see also Caffarella, 2002, pp. 239ff.)

In most cases, the evaluation is done backwards, in a retrospective way, which is why its usefulness is sometimes questioned, due to effects produced on the programme running and being evaluated. But at least for the needs analysis component, it can be prospective as well (this situation can also be encountered when trends can be observed based on the data analysed, or when recommendations can be given for future programmes).

The analysis ends with making judgments about the programme. Such judgments are based primarily on the criteria set for the performance of the programme. But sometimes predetermined standards are difficult to differentiate, because outcomes are often hard to quantify. In such cases, asking participants about their opinions and perceptions, their self-reflections, and their own criteria can be more effective than using predetermined standards.

While making judgments, attention must be paid to the fact that the evaluation can be painful, and that sanctions have to be taken with caution. The judgments are complemented by recommendations regarding the continuation or improvement of the programme. This aspect is usually missing in the evaluation, but it should be part of it. Furthermore, in the post-phase evaluation, the so-called post-programme evaluation, the effects of the programme are measured to identify its medium-term and long-term impact. Such data are needed to make an argument regarding the programmes' effectiveness and impact to a variety of stakeholders so that the programme can prove its value for money to the relevant bodies.

A well-designed evaluation plan has to demonstrate its usefulness (e.g. by gathering data about the programme in time, allowing for efficient interventions for improvement, and communicating data of interest to different stakeholders), feasibility (realistic, adequate to the context of the programme, flexible, cost-effective), propriety (respecting ethical and confidentiality issues, data protection policies, and the feelings and attitudes of the ones being evaluated), and accuracy (using objective, well-defined standards, trustworthy data, being planned to minimise errors of evaluation and disturbing factors, allowing for correct judgement, etc.) (Caffarella, 2002, p. 235), ensuring that unnecessary data are not collected, and that the effort of data collection and analysis is not out of proportion.

7.4 Budgets and marketing plans

An educational programme may have a very well-articulated concept, and quality assurance procedures in place, but its success depends very much on revenues and financial constraints. As it becomes more and more difficult to secure the financial resources, with adult education institutions having to rely to a larger extent on the money they bring in from sources other than public ones, it has almost become a must to attract more fee-paying students, and to convince employers and other sponsoring bodies to invest. As institutions cannot afford to deliver programmes with negative balances of income, a careful calculation of the budget is needed, as well as successful marketing plans, able to attract clients. In a competitive market, and given the voluntary nature of adults' participation in educational programmes (especially in general programmes, where potential participants are not affiliated with the sponsoring organisation), it is important to communicate to various organisations and publics what the programmes are about, to convince them of the importance and usefulness of these topics, and to develop and maintain the credibility that will ensure adequate participation.

Generally, adult educators are reluctant to draw up budgets, considering themselves not competent in this matter. Nevertheless, they need to know the nature of the expenses needed, and that information is provided by a specialised department of the institution which produces a form for adult educators to fill in, differentiating the types of costs occurred.

There are three main categories of costs for each programme: development costs, delivery costs, and evaluation costs. To these costs, the general costs of the institution, related to the utilities needed for maintaining the building(s), the transversal costs (marketing, administration and accounting, public relations, library, website and digital infrastructure, overheads, printing, and other common services provided) have to be added. Each category includes costs related to the staff (internal and external, not only the teaching staff, but also the IT specialist, administrators, support staff, management and programme planners, etc.), instructional and promotional materials (differentiated by type of materials), equipment (for general use, but also special equipment for use in courses, together with other tools), facilities (special services, social/ entertainment areas, library, parking, etc.). Depending on the course format, other direct costs may be added to this list: travel, food, accommodation, renting, learning platforms, and the like.

Keyword: Types of costs

Direct and indirect costs: Direct programme costs are funds actually spent to support programme activities (teaching and support staff salaries, production and copying of instructional materials, equipment, translations, learning platforms, travel, etc.). Indirect costs are those expenses not attributable to individual programmes but necessary to maintain the programme as a whole (space, utilities, management and administration, insurances, equipment, overheads, design, marketing studies and campaigns, etc.). Sometimes, direct costs can become indirect costs, and vice versa, depending on the programme and the facilities of the organisation. For instance, if courses are delivered inside the institution, the costs for the rooms are indirect costs, whereas renting out course space in other buildings would be a direct cost. The same can be said about equipment, learning platforms, and so on.
Fixed and variable expenses: Fixed expenses are those items that usually remain stable, regardless of the number of participants or whether the programme is actually held or cancelled (e.g. marketing, development costs), whereas variable costs are those that depend on the number of participants who sign up for the course (materials, travel, meals, etc.). Development costs are direct costs, covered over a few years programme operation, not only during the first year. The boundary between these types of costs is also variable regarding staff. For instance, even though staff costs are usually considered fixed expenses, they can become variable expenses if the fee increases with the number of participants, for example.
Profit. Profit refers to making money. The (long term) overall profitability of the organisation is another aspect to be added here.
Return on investment (ROI): ROI describes the profits (or savings) that programme activities generate in relation to the total programme costs. A negative ROI means that the organisation is not making enough of a profit to justify the expenditure required for the programme. The more positive the ROI percentage, the better it is.
Cost-benefit analysis. The costs of education and training programmes are related to the benefits they produce. These benefits are spelled out in monetary terms to determine the economic viability and efficiency of a programme. The cost side of the equation is often easier to count than the benefits one, as benefits are often difficult to quantify and account for in financial terms (see also Caffarella, 2002, pp. 305–307).

When calculating programme budgets, it is important to differentiate between:

- programme funding: This depends on the type of institution (for-profit versus non-profit), and its policies and regulations (e.g. whether programme fees are charged or whether there are organisational subsidies, public funds, sponsorship funds, grants, auxiliary sales and financial promotions, or miscellaneous incomes such as fundraising, royalties, in-kind contributions, etc.).
- the accounting system: costs per unit, per hour, per participant, or costs per travel and subsistence, or the way budget records are kept, how the cash-flow is ensured
- recovery and risk costs (e.g. when a programme has to be cancelled because the minimum number of participants has not been reached, or due to other objective reasons; or when the costs exceed the projected budget, or when revenue is lower than expected). Strategies need to be put in place for reducing costs (e.g. shorten the programme, employ less expensive formats and materials, introduce other schemes for supporting participants' attendance, reducing the number of staff or facilities, considering subcontracting options, etc.), including the option of modifying contracts with participants or sponsoring bodies.

Carefully budgeting revenues and expenses is vital for the organisation. Since many budget items depend very much on the number of participants that will sign up for the programme, a careful financial and marketing strategy is to be put in place when determining course fees, payment policies, and special promotions. We need to decide whether to ask for high fees, or require a minimum enrolment figure, whether to offer packaged fees for groups or members of the institution, and the like. All of this depends very much on the participants' profile, on additional sources that might have been secured, and so on. The marketing strategy has to be designed accordingly.

The aim of the marketing strategy, in simple terms, is to make a programme visible, widely known, and attractive in order to ensure adequate participation. Just as with any other good or commodity that people have to pay for, adult education organisations have to create a need for their 'product': it has to convince consumers of its value, trustworthiness, importance, and usefulness – in other words, convince them to actually purchase it. To create the image of a credible, attractive, and useful product, the marketing campaign has to highlight the success of the programme (stories told by the former participants, for example, have been shown to have the highest impact, as they are addressed directly to their peers, to future participants, making for a credible source of information), but also to be very familiar with the addressees, their interests, and needs in order to build a message that will match their experiences and desires.

In Chapter 3.4, while listing the various marketing studies for diagnosing needs, we pointed out the approaches for finding out not only about target group needs but also about how these needs are addressed by competitors (e.g. by *positioning studies),* noticing the solutions they developed to address a similar audience. Such *market studies* are needed not only to identify a market niche but also to find out how potential clients may be attracted, and thus how parts of the market already occupied may be (re-)claimed. Thus an analysis of the wider context, including one's competitors, but, more importantly, the potential audience, is ensured by monitoring competitors' websites and advertising channels, by conducting focus groups or interviews with former and potential participants to find out which messages and advertising channels have an impact on them (i.e. analysing the target audience), by surveying databases and sources that provide additional information about the target audience (e.g. its size; people's educational, social, and professional background; constraints on their attendance; location; special requirements; attitudes; motivation for enrolling in the programme, affordable costs, etc.), and by approaching individuals and corporate clients.

A good picture of the potential audience and their life contexts allows marketing specialists and programme planners to create a convincing description of the product (i.e. one that matches the audience's needs), to determine where to place and promote the product, and to point out solutions that may help potential participants overcome constraints and barriers to participation (e.g. costs). The 'four P's' – product, price, promotion, and place – are the four key aspects of the marketing mix that need to be sorted out.

The available channels for promoting the programme, as well as the promotional materials and strategies, are diverse and well known. The range from brochures, flyers, websites, audio and video spots, newspapers and magazine announcements, postcards, catalogues, posters, e-mails, and the like all the way to more sophisticated instruments like 'testing' sessions, storytelling, celebrating success, exhibitions, personal sales, articles, student forums, and so on. Nowadays, the tools for media communication are becoming more sophisticated and widespread (e.g. social media like Facebook, Twitter, etc.), allowing us to keep a better record of their target audience penetration and reach (e.g. by using a special software, we can track our promotional e-mails and find out how many recipients have opened it in the first place, have followed the embedded links, or downloaded the brochure).

But for all of the sophistication of today's promotional channels and strategies, they will not do any good unless we have a convincing product –

one that can be communicated simply and in visually appealing ways with the help of designers, graphic artists, and communication experts, who can make the product 'speak' to the audience, using fewer words and more powerful images that emphasise its benefits in an energetic way.

To do so, professional marketing specialists need to be contracted, creating expenses that have to be considered while making the programme budget. In a competitive consumer market society, however, professional marketing is essential: even if the programme is well designed, addressing educational needs in an admirable way, it might fail to attract the targeted audience unless it is well communicated.

Exercises and tasks

Exercise 1

Try to formulate the didactic approach for one of the programmes presented as examples in Chapter 7.1 (or for another programme you are more familiar with – possibly even a programme you recently attended). Completing the following form (you may add or delete individual aspects, as you see fit) [see also Caffarella, 2002, p. 302, for variations of the exercise]:

Title:

Date and time (you may use a separate column for the estimated time allotted to each learning unit):

Learning objectives	Content heading	Instructional techniques	Resources and equipment needed	Room(s)/ space arrangements

Assessment plan:

Teachers:

Format:

Exercise 2

Suggest two alternative formats for the abovementioned course, and give arguments to support your choices.

Exercise 3

Does the form provided for completing the first exercise need to be adapted if we plan a face-to-face course taught on a weekly basis, or a series of monthly conferences in a museum, including the occasion of launching new exhibitions? If so, please explain how.

Task

Please create a marketing plan for a course or programme of your choice (describe it briefly), explaining which channels for disseminating information about the course you consider to be most effective for reaching your target audience.

8. Conclusions

Throughout this book, a lot of controversial aspects related to needs analysis and programme planning were introduced. My intention has been to convince readers that a proper needs analysis is essential for adequate programme planning, and to provide hints on how to do it more successfully. When summing up the main issues, there are a number of key questions that remain to be addressed:

1. *What is the relevance of needs analysis in adult education*?
Unless you have a need or desire to learn, you will not learn. This general truth applies even more to adult education, where participation is voluntary, but also to education in schools and kindergartens. It is easier to observe in the schooling system, where children are like sponges, not knowing too much, and interested in learning or not. But the older you get, the more difficult it is to notice whether or not you have a need for or interest in learning. Sometimes external stimuli make you aware of the need to refresh your existing knowledge and skills, or even create your readiness and motivation to learn, transforming latent needs into expressed needs. Needs analysis, by addressing all types of needs, not only helps identify their nature, but also to create needs, or to 'activate' perceived ones. Moreover, once adults have clarified what they need to learn, they are very selective, and not interested in learning something they do not need. Needs analysis thus 'feeds' the programme planning in at least two ways: by making explicit what the potential audience needs to learn, and by making potential participants aware of the need to attend the programme.

2. *How to define the category of needs?*
As with all important aspects in human life, there are additional aspects related to needs as well: motivation, interests, wishes, desires, and so on. It is always difficult to distinguish between them, and to find out whether something is really a need, or just a wish, while you are trying to do the needs as-

sessment. Whereas basic needs are clear (all human beings need water to survive, for example), the higher you go on the Maslow pyramid, the more needs are related to psychological aspects, and hence more complicated. Since the category of needs is complex, it is always necessary to define it in certain ways, in line with your (or your institution's) purposes: your definition of needs has to be concrete, not abstract, and relevant to teaching and learning; in other words, you need to define which aspects of needs are to be discovered. By identifying how well they are articulated (or by helping individuals articulate their needs by means of the questions asked), by stimulating them to turn latent needs into coherent (expressed) needs, by raising awareness and doing cross-checking, and by asking the right questions, needs assessors can find out not only what the needs categories are, but also how to address them. They can also determine whether something is really a need or just an adult's misleading conventional answer to the survey questions, because the needs categories have to be differentiated in a way to allow for employing a variety of perspectives to check whether something is simply a wish or a more coherently defined interest or need.

3. *How to get knowledge about needs?*
It seems there are two types of needs: articulated needs and unarticulated needs. Discovering articulated needs seems to be easy. However, people sometimes do not know their own needs very well and might articulate them incorrectly. So to sort out whether articulated needs are real needs, more in-depth discussions (interviews) are needed. We have to find out how someone's expressed needs fit into their life and career plans, and whether their options and goals are adequate and realistic given their existing skills and abilities. It is more difficult, of course, to learn more about hidden needs, which is why combining different methods and instruments to discover them is essential. Therefore, choosing the most adequate combination of methods to discover them (see Chapter 5) and to ensure the triangulation of findings is not the only competence the needs assessor should have. He or she must also be aware of the fact that the chosen methods are aimed not only to discover needs but also to raise people's awareness of their needs, or even to create those needs. This means motivating people to learn, providing perspectives on the learning process and its usefulness, so that hidden needs (e.g. the need of illiterate individuals to learn how to read and write) may be articulated and translated into concrete actions.

4. *Is doing needs analysis worth the effort?*
Performing a needs assessment requires work, time, and resources. Sometimes the decision whether or not to do so is a difficult one to make, since it

also involves decisions on the scope and the purpose of the assessment. Thus programme planners must find a good balance of what they need to know about needs; their expectations of the assessment must be clear and realistic: they must know whether it is really needed, what for, and what kind of data it should provide. They also have to be pragmatic and see their decisions as part of the wider strategic plan of their institution with its multiple aims. Since the decision to do a needs assessment belongs to the institution's management, sound arguments are needed to convince managers of its necessity.

5. *Why is needs analysis necessary for programme planning?*
It is necessary insofar as some needs analysis, professional or not, has to be done anyway at the beginning of the planning process in order to identify the possibility of implementing a new educational product. The question is: how professional does the assessment have to be? The decision can be pragmatic: it is not possible to base all parts of programme planning on needs analysis, and at least some parts of it should be based on existing needs (mostly assessed at the end of running programmes, or by desk research). Needs analysis may only be feasible if it can also be used for marketing purposes (e.g. for better understanding the target audience, their constraints and preferences with regard to certain course formats) and for awareness raising. Thus, putting needs analysis in a contextual frame by combining it with other events and organised activities can help to collect stakeholders' voices and identify their expectations, matching them, and reviewing the feasibility of the programme idea and format. For instance, organising a social event at the end of a programme to celebrate its success and to award certificates to successful learners, listening to their feedback, and inviting different stakeholders is a way of finding out what their real needs are, what options they have, and how to better fit and improve the actual delivery

6. How to implement needs analysis (as part of programme planning) in educational institutions?
Define the unit in your organisation where the needs analysis should be carried out. Normally, it should be done by all the different departments which are related to the teaching and learning, by a certain unit or team. There are reasons for concentrating the process in one unit: professional knowledge; resources; general prioritisation in line with the institution's aims, resources, and development strategy; cross-articulation between different departments in proposing a new interdisciplinary programme to create a need for other (less attractive) offers. (In some units, needs analysis is more important than in others: unlike foreign language courses, for example, civic education courses

do not attract people automatically, but language course participants may become aware of alternative offers with which to combine their language course.)

The entire activity of needs analysis in educational institutions is related to senior management, because it is crucial for all programmes and activities. Senior managers might delegate the task, but they should be aware of what has to be done in this respect, how, to what extent (e.g. including public relations), and at which budget. It means that all activities related to needs analysis and programme planning have to be conducted, steered, and decided upon by senior management.

7. Put everything in relation, into context
The extent to which needs analysis is necessary for programme planning, and the resources to be invested in this process are legitimate questions that should be addressed. Programme contents typically change by about 10 per cent each year; therefore only one mid-term needs assessment is needed, and it does not have to take place each year. Needs analysis can be linked to programme planning, but not one-to-one. There has to be a certain transfer that takes into account the whole corporate identity and the operational contexts, including similar programmes run by competitors.

8. How to turn needs analysis into planning programmes?
There are different ways of doing so, starting with identifying programme ideas, sorting and prioritising them in the discerned context, then building a solid base of support, and so on. The interactive model of programme planning presented in this book (see Chapter 6) provides some suggestions regarding the steps to be followed. The annotated bibliography also features some links to practical 'know-how' developed by a variety of professional associations (e.g. ASTD).

9. How to design an articulated concept of the programme to be planned?
We detailed these steps in Chapters 6 and 7, also pointing out the problems that programme planners have to cope with, and multiple factors that are interconnected in the 'matrix'. This concerns not only the didactic approach, but the managerial approach as well. As programme planning involves spending resources, it also concerns organisational capacity. Nevertheless, the evaluation part should not be neglected, mainly in pre-planning. The same goes for the involvement of the teaching staff, as they are important 'ingredients' when it comes to designing realistic objectives and formats. Here, staff commitment is crucial.

10. What is the competency profile of the programme planner?
It seems that the programme planner is an omnipotent employee: he or she should not only master the relevant research, needs analysis, and assessment techniques, but also have didactic skills, marketing skills, managerial skills, and so forth. In spite of working at the middle management level and performing a very complex task, he or she should not be afraid of it. It is more important to master team working skills, since professional needs assessors and marketing specialists can be hired from the outside, if only for the pragmatic purpose of carrying out the complementary services. However, programme planners should be open minded, critical thinkers, strategic thinkers, good team leaders, good networkers, and able to articulate and synthesise all the relevant aspects in this context.

Annotated Bibliography

Altschuld, J. W., & Witkin, B. R. (2000). *From needs assessment to action: Transforming needs into solution strategies*. New York: Sage.

The book was written by two US scholars experienced in performing needs analyses. It is not the first book of this kind they have produced together (see Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). It is a very helpful reference for needs assessors or senior managers in adult education institutions who are responsible for proposing educational programmes for adults. The book explores the conceptual aspects of needs and describes the process of needs analysis, illustrating the required activities and the methods to be used. The authors also point out how to prioritise the collected data and how to translate them into solution strategies, an aspect that is illustrated by a number of case studies.

Bee, R., & Bee, F. (2003). *Learning needs analysis and evaluation* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

The book explores the learning needs of organisations, explaining how they are related to 'Business needs: The driving force' (Chapter 1), and then how they are translated into (identified) training needs while translating business needs into action (Chapter 2). Once training needs have been identified (Chapters 3 and 4), the authors explain how to design the training, from planning (Chapter 5) to evaluation (Chapter 6).

Boone, E. J., Safrit, R. D., & Jones, J. (2002). *Developing programmes in adult education: A conceptual programming model* (2nd ed.). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

The book explores a theoretical approach to programming in adult education, introducing a new conceptual model, based on the main steps to be taken into account while making such an attempt: planning, design and implementation, evaluation and accountability (see Figure 7 in this book). The new conceptual model is meant as a step forward compared to existing programming models, which are reviewed by the authors, who also point out the major challenges that programmers have to cope with in adult education, even given the new theoretical perspective introduced here.

Caffarella, R. (2002). *Planning programs for adult learners: A practical guide for educators, trainers, and staff developers* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Printed in the United States, the book is a comprehensive and practical guide on programme planning. On more than 400 pages, the authors details all the components of the 'Interactive Model of Programme Planning', as presented in synthesised form in Section 6.3. Written with a well-structured didactic approach, the book features scenarios, exercises, chapter highlights, examples and useful charts, checklists, and so on, making it a useful 'bible' for all adult educators planning educational programmes for adults.

The American Society for Training & Development (ASTD), over the years, has developed a lot of practical publications such as guides, case study compendiums, handbooks, and the like on how to carry out needs assessments in an effective and rapid way, and on how to translate them into planned programmes, in organisations and companies, as well as in training centres. Some examples:

Susan Barksdale and Teri Lund have co-authored a series of "how to" books: *Rapid needs analysis* (2001); *Rapid strategic planning* (2002); and *10 steps to successful strategic planning* (2006). Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training & Development.

Using the dozens of tools, worksheets, job aids, exercises, tips, tools, checklists, and other easy-to-use and interactive learning aids and illustrative study cases included in these books, readers can find out in an accessible and pragmatic way how to rapidly analyse a request for a performance solution and recommend the best method to meet an organisation's business needs (2001); how to choose the right kind of intervention (including eLearning) and how to fit your choices into a well-thought-out workplace learning or classroom training scheme (2002); illustrating as well the process of strategic planning from beginning to end (2006).

Phillips, J. J., & Holton, E. F. (Eds.). (1995). *Conducting needs assessment: Seventeen case studies from the real world of training.* Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training & Development.

The book is a compendium of 17 case studies from both public institutions (e.g. the US government) and various private institutions and international companies. Each case presents the strategy, techniques, and methodologies that were used to determine the specific needs of the target group in the organisation.

Gupta, K., Sleezer, C., & Russ-Eft, D. (2007). *Practical guide to needs assessment* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: J. Wiley & Sons.

Three practitioners responsible for improving individual, group, or organisational performance inside companies (including multi-national ones) have compiled a practical and comprehensive guide for designing and implementing a training programme, based on assessing the development needs of the work force.

Barbazette, J. (2006). *Training needs assessment: Methods, tools, and techniques*. San Francisco: J. Wiley & Sons.

The book covers the essentials of needs analysis, from the emerging trainer's perspective, by providing the basic theoretic data, as well as practical illustrations about topics like: when and how to do a training needs analysis; using informal and formal analysis techniques; goal, task and population analysis; and how to develop and present a training plan for management approval.

McConnell, J. H. (2003). *How to identify your organization's training needs: A practical guide to needs analysis.* New York: AMACOM.

Divided into four parts ('Assessing your present training function', 'Planning and procedures for needs identification', 'Implementing specific methods to gather information', and 'Conducting needs analysis') this 350-page book provides a lot of tools (also included on a separate CD-ROM) for identifying the needs of both the organisation and its employees. They are presented in a step-by-step manner in order to design an effective training, adapted to the different scopes of training within an organisation (for newly hired, recently promoted, or just-transferred employees, or for those who need training as a result of changes in operations, technology, or systems in the company).

Danihelkova, H. (Ed.). (2003). *Management and evaluation of the course.* Ostrava: University of Ostrava.

The study guide is a collective effort by professors from two partner universities of a consortium setting up the European Master in Adult Education: University of Ostrava and West University of Timisoara. Developed within the Erasmus Curriculum Development Programme "Postgraduate Training for Adult Educators", the study guide is available as a resource at www.emae-network.org.

Wholey, J. S., Hatry, H. P., & Newcomer, K. E. (Eds.). (2004). *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

A comprehensive handbook of more than 700 pages, covering not only the managerial aspects of programme evaluation but also the research aspects. It is divided into four parts: 'Designing performance monitoring systems and evaluation studies', 'Practical data collection procedures', 'Analyzing evaluation data', and 'Getting evaluation results used'.

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About the Author

Simona Sava is a Professor of Adult Education at West University of Timisoara, Romania. In addition, she serves as the director of the Romanian Institute of Adult Education (IREA), providing teaching and training at the undergraduate and postgraduate level. She is also involved in research and project management.

With more than 15 years of experience in education, training, research, and programme management, Simona Sava is widely known as Romania's foremost specialist in the field of adult education and lifelong learning. She has spent her entire career in higher education, and has served as the scientific director and manager of an adult education research institute for over ten years.

Many times she has been invited by other European universities to teach as a guest professor (e.g. by the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany, January-March 2009). The European Commission has called on her as an expert to help implement the Action Plan on Adult Learning (since 2008).

Her publications include two monographs and more than 40 studies and articles; she has edited 11 books (some of them with international partners), and was involved in more than 30 international research and development projects.

In addition to her research, she works as a consultant, either for the national ministries of education and labour (e.g. helping them design an ICT strategy at the pre-university level, or supporting them with producing the national strategy for human resource development from a lifelong learning perspective), or at the European level (e.g. for the European Commission, in tender projects related to an employment strategy for integrating youths on the labour market, or related to strategies for going one step up into qualification, or for evaluating the impact of the Grundtvig programme on the in-service training of adult learning professionals).

Index

A
access barriers 15
accountability 99f., 129f., 147
accounting system 137
accreditation 102, 131
accuracy 30, 61, 134
Action Plan 20, 155
administrative records and reports 62
adult education 7, 9f., 13-16, 18ff., 22-25f., 28, 30-35, 37f., 41-44., 47-52, 56-59., 60f., 63f., 72, 83f. 86f., 90-98, 102-106, 111ff., 116ff., 120, 122f., 130f., 136f., 141, 143, 147, 151-155
adult education institutions 9, 96, 104
Adult Education Survey (AES) 18, 21
adult learning 23, 26, 32, 151f., 155
adult learning sector 20
Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALL) 18
advertisements 38, 62, 109
advertising 53, 62, 91, 99
advertising channels 138
agenda setting 20
aims of institutions (AOI) 93
Altschuld 27, 29, 41, 65, 77, 79, 81f., 84, 86, 92, 147, 151, 154
analysis of the products of the activity 75
anticipating 26, 152
approach 9f., 14, 22, 32-35, 42, 50ff., 55, 59, 78, 92, 99-102, 106, 111, 114, 124ff., 128, 131, 139, 144, 147f., 152, 154
assess 30, 50, 130
attitudes 18, 28f., 55, 67, 69f., 125, 134, 138
audit 107, 131

B
basic data 21, 103, 104f.
blended 124, 127
block course 108
Boone 32, 37, 40, 42, 98ff., 100, 111, 130, 147, 151
branch offices 104
brochure 62, 95, 109f., 120, 125, 138
Bryman 59, 66, 68, 73, 151
budgets 24, 115, 135f.

C
Caffarella 94, 115, 123, 126f., 131-134, 136, 139, 148, 151
capability 6, 92, 103, 105f.
capacity 13f., 19, 37, 89, 104, 116f., 144
catalogues 138
category 16, 81, 135, 141f.
census reports 60
certificate 37, 127
challenges 10, 13f., 23, 28, 35, 50, 74f., 147
channels 110, 138, 140
classification of needs 32
coaching 55, 122, 127
Cohen 59, 66, 68, 73, 77, 151
commitment 85, 100, 123, 144

communication 16, 23, 28, 50, 53, 67, 69ff., 74, 100, 123
community action groups 127
community forum 69, 71
companies 15f., 20, 22, 49, 55ff., 76, 148
competence 19f., 22, 24, 29, 35, 37, 53, 55, 107, 142
competency profile 31, 145
competent 69, 71, 105f., 113, 135
competitive risk 86
competitors 38, 62f., 86, 105, 116f., 129, 138, 144
complexity 57, 125, 132
concept 10f., 23, 27, 31, 34f., 49, 71, 78, 89, 108, 111, 125, 127, 134, 144
conference 42, 73, 125-128
content analysis 62
content-related need 37
contexts 7, 10, 19, 22f., 29, 38, 89, 110, 116, 138, 144
continuing education 9, 13, 15f., 18f., 21, 23ff., 28, 51ff., 57f.
Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS) 21
contributive needs 36
coping needs 36
corporate identity 47f., 97, 105, 144
cost-benefit analysis 132
course fees 109, 137
course revenues 96
creativity 103, 106, 123
criteria 26, 53, 59, 67f., 70, 78, 81, 84f., 92, 103, 106f., 118, 123, 127, 131, 134
curriculum 21, 52, 95, 101, 108

D

data collection 60, 78, 82f., 91, 131f., 134, 149
data coverage 21
decision-making 34, 47, 50, 53, 78, 84, 111
deficiency-oriented needs assessment 56, 74
delineation 46, 48, 50f.
delivery 10, 41f., 115, 124, 127ff., 132, 143
delivery costs 135
Delphi method 69, 72
demand 13, 21, 25, 28, 30f., 38, 42, 52, 57, 63, 81f., 91, 117, 129
design 13f., 23, 62, 72f., 77f., 87, 89, 91, 95, 98f., 111, 124f., 131f., 136, 144, 147, 149, 155
desk research 59, 62, 80
development costs 135f.
diagnose 44, 91
diagnosing needs 39
didactic levels of needs 37
didactic strategies 126
didactic triangle 101
difficulties 18f., 44, 73f., 122, 133
dimension of a need 17
dimensions 17, 25, 32, 130
direct and indirect costs 136
disadvantaged groups 109
disaggregated decision-making approach 85
discounts 109
distance learning formats 127
duration 104, 110

E

educational marketing 39
educational needs 11, 18, 27, 30, 36f., 43, 51, 54f., 77
educational programmes 9ff., 20, 29ff., 38, 42ff., 52, 89, 94, 110, 129, 135, 147f.
effectiveness 92, 99f., 130, 132, 134, 152
efficiency 52, 130, 132, 136
empirical investigation 64
empirical social research skills 19
employee 17, 24, 55, 74f., 145
empowerment perspective 33

enrolment 42, 99, 110, 137
enterprises 19, 45, 51f., 54, 56, 60, 96, 101f.
environment 37, 46f., 49, 51, 55, 74f., 84, 91, 100
equipment 67, 93, 95, 115, 124, 126, 128, 135f., 139
error 9, 64, 82, 131
ET 2020 26
European Agenda 20
European Commission 9, 18, 23, 26, 31, 63, 152, 155
European level 21
Eurostat 18, 33, 60f., 152
evaluation 11, 44, 63, 72, 74, 89-92, 97-100, 103, 111, 113ff., 119f., 124, 126, 129-134, 144, 147, 149, 151, 153f.
evidence 22, 64, 129f.
evidence-based policy-making 20
examination 46, 49, 71, 133
example 7, 10f., 15ff., 20, 25, 31, 37f., 43, 45f., 48, 50, 55, 61, 64, 67f., 71, 76, 81, 83f., 93, 95, 101, 103f., 108ff., 116f., 123f., 132, 136f., 139, 142, 143, 148
exercise 25, 43, 57, 87, 118, 139f.
exhibitions 138, 140
expectations 29, 38, 48, 50, 64, 97, 117, 121, 125, 130, 143
experience 9, 16, 25, 36, 38, 42f., 106, 116, 128, 155
experiential approach 125
expert opinion 72
expert reviewers 133
expressed need 30, 35, 42f.
expressive needs 36
external needs 49
extrinsic 16f., 48

F
Facebook 138
facilities 41, 52f., 79, 97, 103ff., 109, 115, 117, 127ff., 135ff.
factors 11, 29, 33, 35, 37, 39f., 54, 78, 84, 86, 90, 98, 108, 112, 114, 125, 131, 134, 144
feasibility 84f., 93, 134, 143
feedback 10f., 65, 70, 72, 75, 97, 98, 100, 129f., 132f., 143
fees 94ff., 109, 137
field research 59
field visits 127
financial 13, 17, 28, 54, 84, 90, 95, 116f., 119, 134, 136f.
financing 25, 95
fixed and variable expenses 136
flyers 62, 110, 138
flying blindly 116
focus group 69
formal (and systematic) needs assessment 33
format 39, 70, 77, 89, 104, 108f., 111, 114, 124, 126ff., 131, 135, 137, 140, 143f.
formative 98, 100, 113f., 132
'four P's' – product, price, promotion, and place 138
freelancers 102, 105, 123
full-time staff 7, 96, 124
functional perspective 33
funding 62, 95, 100, 102, 109, 117, 130, 137
future skills 13f.

G
goals 7, 16, 20, 29, 37, 77f., 85, 90f., 93, 105, 109, 121f., 132, 142
group analysis 55
group discussions 70, 111, 126, 133
group techniques 69
groups of local initiative 127

H
hierarchy of needs 31f., 43
holistic 77, 89, 99

I
impact 21, 23f., 28, 46f., 131-134, 137f., 155
implementation 11, 22ff., 38, 56, 63, 77, 89, 91, 98ff., 108, 111, 121, 127f., 130, 131f., 147
incentives 19
in-depth analysis 21
indicators 23, 45f., 63, 132
individual 7, 13-16, 18, 27, 28f., 32-37, 39-43., 45-51, 54f., 57, 59, 61, 63, 65ff., 69, 74f., 77, 80, 82-87, 90, 94, 105, 107, 114, 122, 136, 138f., 142, 148
individual formats 127
informal group 73
informal needs assessment 33
information and guidance systems 21
infrastructure 95, 135
in-house sources 62
in-house style 43f., 116
institution's identity 89, 93, 97
instructional plans 113, 121, 127
instruments 21
Interactive Model of Programme Planning 112, 148
interdisciplinary analysis 21
interests 7, 9, 16, 18, 20, 22f., 29f., 33, 36, 38, 42, 48f., 53, 56ff., 61, 64, 68ff., 74, 81f., 84, 89f., 92, 97, 101ff., 105, 107, 138, 141
International Labour Force Survey 60
interpretation 81
intervention 37, 63, 85, 91, 124, 131, 148
interviews 42, 62, 65, 67, 73f., 77, 79, 111, 133, 138, 142
intrinsic 16f., 48

J
job analysis 74f., 77
job descriptions 74
Jones 32, 37, 98, 130, 147, 151

K
Kettner 30, 41, 91, 121, 152
key competencies 26, 122
key informants 67, 74
Kidd, Roby 32
Knowles, Malcom 33, 35, 152

L
large group formats 127
latent 7, 14, 16ff., 25, 35, 48f., 141f.
latent needs 48, 50
leaders 35, 40, 42, 62, 67, 78, 100, 130, 145, 152
learners' capabilities 37
learning campaigns 127
learning cities 127
learning outcomes 10, 111, 113, 121, 125
learning packs 127
learning platform 124f., 127
learning regions 53
learning unit 125, 127, 139
learning-to-learn 50
lecture series 42, 127
levels of need 41
library 126, 129, 135
local centres 128
local communities 45
local level 21
logistic arrangements 95
logistic infrastructure 124
long-term need 42
low-price offerings 96

M
macro-didactic process 98
macro-didactics 21
manifest 13f., 16ff., 25, 49
manifest educational needs 49
Manion 59, 66, 68, 73, 151
market 9, 13f., 17, 22, 25f., 28, 31, 39, 53ff., 57, 61, 63, 74, 94, 103, 105, 110, 115f., 129, 135, 138f., 151f., 155

market analysis 56
market studies 39
marketing campaign 137
marketing mix 138
marketing plans 10, 115, 134f.
marketing strategy 30, 110, 137
marketing studies 136, 138
Maslow 31f., 43, 142, 153
matching 9, 14, 23, 26, 30, 38, 124, 143, 152
materials 24, 59, 61f., 95, 98, 103f., 109f., 115, 117, 124, 126, 128f., 135ff.
matrix 78, 104, 118, 144
Mazmanian 32, 35f., 153
McClusky 35f.
measurable achievements 123
Member States 13f., 20f., 31, 61, 63
Memorandum on lifelong learning 26
meso-didactics 21
methods of investigating needs 59
methods of needs analysis 24
milestones 107, 121
mission 7, 37, 42, 91, 93f., 97, 100, 118, 121
monitoring 14, 20, 89, 98f., 103, 115, 118, 125, 129, 132, 138, 149, 153
monograph study 62
Morrison 59, 66, 68, 73, 151
motivation 14, 16, 19, 28f., 41, 46, 48, 83f., 138, 141

N
national level 21
need 7-11, 13- 87, 89-112, 114, 117, 119, 121, 123, 125-131, 133, 135, 137-145, 147ff., 151-154
needs analysis 7, 9, 13, 21f., 24, 29, 41, 45, 54, 90f., 94, 101f., 141, 143f.
needs assessment 29, 33, 35, 59, 64f., 67, 73, 77, 78, 84, 86, 142ff.
needs assessors 7, 10, 80, 82, 142, 145, 147
networks 22, 38, 52ff., 127, 153
new skills for new jobs 26, 152
newspapers 104, 110
Nominal Group 72
non-participation 14
normative need 30f., 42
NQF (National Qualification Framework) 122
Nuissl 11, 50, 54, 153

O
objective 16f., 19f., 30, 42, 46, 48, 51, 98, 100, 107, 129, 134, 137
observation 69
occupational analysis 55
OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 18, 153
online 9, 58, 62, 68, 73, 83, 110, 124ff., 128, 152
on-site events 115
on-the-job training 77, 127
open forum method 73
opportunity-oriented needs assessment 56, 74
organisational context 22f., 75, 101
organisations 15f., 19f., 22, 24, 39, 42, 45, 51, 53f., 56, 60ff., 73f., 76, 94, 100, 112, 135, 137, 147f.
outcomes 21
outreach strategies 21
outside 34, 46, 48f., 56, 74, 110, 145

P
packaged fees 137
panel discussion 69, 71
participation 7, 14f., 18, 28, 33, 40, 46f., 53, 63f., 77, 87, 116, 126, 135, 137f., 141, 151, 153
participation rates 9, 18, 33
part-time staff 96
part-timers 105, 123
payment policies 137

peer debriefing 83
perceived need 30, 43
performance 21, 35, 60, 63, 73f., 77, 98, 104, 111, 129, 131f., 134, 148f.
performance monitoring 132
performance standards 74
performing 10, 23, 24, 36, 75, 145, 147
policy measures 20
previous studies 61
principles 25, 32, 86, 89, 106, 109, 123
prioritising 10, 73, 84, 87, 92, 144
problem analysis 30
problem of needs 18
problem-based 125
problem-solving procedures 129
procedures 23, 29, 44, 49f., 53f., 57, 65, 78, 82, 107, 110, 114, 129, 134, 149
process objectives 121, 124
product 19, 39, 56, 62, 75, 95, 102, 110, 123, 132f., 137f., 143
professional development 24, 31, 55, 61f., 102
profile 25, 28f., 56, 58, 105, 137
profit 136
programme developers 10
programme evaluation 127, 133f.
programme objectives 113, 121, 123f.
programme planner 9, 64, 71, 89, 92, 102, 105, 107, 125, 145
programme planning 7-11, 21-24, 43f., 67, 72, 81ff., 86, 89ff., 95f., 98f., 102f., 109, 111, 116, 118-121, 123, 128, 132, 141, 143f., 148, 153
programme planning models 111
programming process 89, 100, 130
promotional materials 138
promotional strategies 138
prospective analysis 21
providers 21
purposes 60-63, 72, 77f., 82, 94, 101, 109, 128, 131f., 142f.

Q

qualification 20, 24, 31, 49, 54, 61, 67, 122, 155
qualitative analysis 9, 83, 132
qualitative research 67
quality 19, 23, 36, 42, 48, 51ff., 80f., 84, 93f., 98, 102, 104, 106, 110, 116, 118f., 123, 129, 134
quality assurance 129
quantitative research 67
questionnaires 42, 65, 68, 72, 74f., 79f., 111, 132f.

R

raising awareness 91, 142
'ready-made' data 61
recommendations 114, 133f.
recovery and risk costs 137
recreational programmes 93
reducing costs 52, 137
reflections 9ff., 33f., 134
regional level 21
regions 16, 19, 22, 45f., 51-54, 82, 87, 97, 152, 154
registration system 128
relative need 30, 42
reliability 34f., 68, 79, 81ff., 97
research 7, 10, 19f., 23, 35, 48, 59-68, 70f., 73, 78, 80f., 101, 127, 143, 145, 149, 151f., 155
research methods 59
research reports 61
residential course 126
resource centres 127, 129
resources 19, 24, 29ff., 33, 35, 37, 41-44, 54, 56f., 59, 61ff., 65, 74, 76, 80, 84f., 90ff., 95, 97f., 100, 104, 107, 113, 116f., 119, 124, 126f., 130ff., 134, 139, 142ff., 154
return on investment (ROI) 136
revenue 94, 96, 137
risk assessment approach 85, 87
risk reduction 86

Robin Hood principle 96, 117
running programme 10, 119

S
Safrit 32, 37, 98, 130, 147, 151
sampling 69, 78, 79
schedule 108, 126
secondary data 59f.
self-directed learning 112, 125, 127
self-evaluation 74, 133
seminars 124, 127
situational analysis 37
size 61f., 65, 73, 78, 104f., 108, 128, 138
skills 13f., 17, 19, 20, 24, 26, 31, 37f., 55f., 59, 69f., 74f., 79, 100f., 112, 114, 122, 125f., 133, 141f., 145, 152
small group formats 127
social media 118, 138
socially determined need 37
societal needs 13
society 21
'soft' skills 75
sources for identifying educational needs 38
special promotions 137
specific needs 105
stakeholder 91, 100, 130
state level 22
statistical analysis 24
statistical data 20
steps 98, 107, 119f.
story-telling 132f.
strategic business plans 74
structure 16, 28, 31, 38f., 49, 51, 54, 56f., 61, 74, 92, 96, 98-102, 104, 107ff., 123, 130
studies on needs 39
study circle 124, 127
subject 14, 16, 45-48, 51, 54, 67, 72, 105f., 124
subjective 16, 19f., 30, 46, 50, 63, 92, 107
supply 25, 50ff.
support groups 127
survey 24, 65f., 68, 77ff., 81f., 84, 142, 152, 154
survey methods 5, 65

T
target group 10, 22, 28, 30, 41ff., 58, 60, 64f., 69, 71, 78f., 86f., 89, 93f., 101f., 104f., 108, 116, 138, 148, 153
targets 25, 42, 48, 56, 63, 74
teaching methodology 106, 125
teaching staff 53, 90, 95, 127f., 135, 144
techniques 33, 42, 53, 59f., 66, 69, 75, 77, 84f., 100, 112ff., 125f., 131ff., 139, 145, 148f., 151
tests 69, 75, 77, 111, 132
training needs 56f., 69, 73, 75, 147, 149
transfer-of-learning plans 114
transversal costs 135
trends and forecasts 23
trial and error 9, 64, 80
triangulate 79
Trochim 65f., 154
types of costs 95, 135f.

U
universities 10, 25, 43, 48, 93f., 101, 149, 155

V
virtual communities 127
voluntary 7, 14f., 19, 25, 90, 135, 141

W
wants 27, 30, 33, 36, 93
web surveys 69
websites 61, 138
Wholey 131, 149, 153f.
wider benefits of learning 21
Witkin 27, 29, 41, 65, 77, 79, 81f., 84, 86, 92, 147, 151, 154
workplace learning 77, 148
workshops 68, 124, 127