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# UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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After completing this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the concept of curriculum;
- define curriculum;
- describe the level of curriculum planning;
- explain the factors/issues influencing curriculum development;
- discuss types of curriculum;
- enumerate curriculum components; and
- explain the process of curriculum construction.

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In today's world of rapidly shifting resources and fast development of technology has affected curriculum development. Nurse educators must be cognizant of the implications of technology in Nursing education. Universities and Nursing education programmes that expect to survive must respond to the needs of the consumers and communities. Nursing Education is an instrument to bring about desired change in Nursing practice with curriculum as it is instrumental to achieve the goals of Nursing Education, that is to bring change in Nursing practice according to the changing needs of society and learner, utilizing available knowledge which is appropriate and communicable.

Resources in health care system are rapidly changing the focus of Nursing Education and Nursing educators will have to develop flexible curriculum so as to provide cost effective quality programme to diverse population of students. Thus the challenge before nursing educators and administrators is what learning experiences need to be selected for imparting education to nursing students at various levels of courses, so that the desired outcomes are possible with minimum time and resources. This necessitates to devote sufficient time for curriculum planning in Nursing.

## 1.2 CONCEPT, DEFINITION AND LEVEL OF CURRICULUM PLANNING

Curriculum development is planned as per the levels and group for whom it is being planned. In the following text you will read about the broader concept, definition and levels of curriculum planning.

### 1.2.1 Concept of Curriculum

The term "curriculum" is derived from the latin word "currere", which means "run". Thus curriculum means a course to be run for reaching a certain goal or "destination" here education is imagined as a race, with its aim as the goal and curriculum as the course leading to that goal. So the term "curriculum" came to signify a group of subjects or courses of study, arranged in particular sequence, for instructional purpose in school.

A curriculum is more than just a syllabus or a statement of content. A curriculum is about what should happen in a teaching programme—about the intention of teachers and the way they make this happen. This extended vision of a curriculum is illustrated in Fig. 1.1.

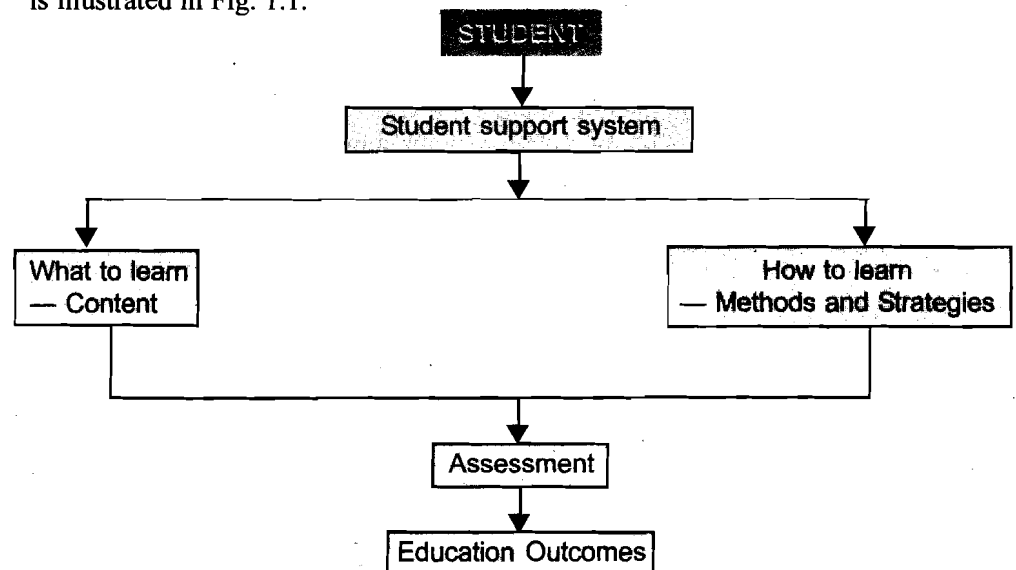


Fig. 1.1: Extended vision of a curriculum

Thus the curriculum must include all the subject matter, teaching strategies, learners experiences and assessment of students, which a particular school or college of Nursing Plans for its students and which is developed by the members of its own curriculum committee.

**Cunningham** has put curriculum as a tool in the hands of the artist (the teacher) to mould his material (the pupils) according to his aim and objectives in his studies (the school).

Another concept of curriculum development is that it is a plan of logical sequence of correlated and integrated subjects, which students may pursue in the attainment of a given goal.

According to the **modern concept curriculum**—does not mean only the academic subjects, traditionally taught in schools but it includes the sum total of experiences that pupil receives through the manifold activities that go on in the school, in the classroom, library, laboratory, workshop, play-grounds and in the numerous informal contacts between teachers and pupils. In this sense, curriculum touches the life of the students at all points and help in the evolution of a balanced personality.

**Thus a curriculum is a systematic arrangement of the sum total of selected learning experiences planned by a school for a defined group of students to attain the aim of particular educational programme. It is commonly formed as a “Programme of Studies”.**

You have seen curriculum is intimately related with education. While education is a process, curriculum is a means to the process. While education is learning, curriculum signifies situation for learning.

Let us see how is curriculum defined.

### **1.2.2 Definition of Curriculum**

There are many definitions of the word curriculum. Three of the following definitions are accepted widely and used in Nursing:

- Curriculum is a formal plan of educational experiences and activities offered to a learner under the guidance of an educational institution. It is more structured in schools and more flexible in higher education.
- A curriculum is a systematic arrangement of the sum total of selected experiences planned by a school for a defined group of students to attain the aims of a particular educational programmes. (Florence Nightingale International Foundation)
- A composite of the entire range of experiences the learner undergoes under the guidance of the school. (Lamberston Education for Nursing Leadership)

Curriculum is viewed from a variety of perspective ranging from narrow and circumscribed to broad and encompassing.

Review of literature revealed that common components in the definition of curriculum included the following.

### **1.2.3 Components of Curriculum**

Curriculum is planned for a particular educational programme. Hence, curriculum invariably includes:

- i) The statement of philosophy of the educational programme. You have read about the philosophy of the educational programme and Nursing in Block 1 of this course.

- ii) The statement of objectives of the educational programme.
- iii) Total duration of the educational programme with break up of hours for theoretical and practical courses and supervised clinical experience and clinical practices, if any.
- iv) Learning experience for theory, practical and clinical component with their respective objectives, courses of studies, placement sequences and learning situations.
- v) Instructional methods or methods of teaching for the theoretical, practical and clinical component of the educational programme.
- vi) Programme of evaluation to ascertain effectiveness of the educational programme through curriculum evaluation (covers evaluation methods, plan and schedule of evaluation and use of results of evaluation).

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## **1.3 LEVEL OF CURRICULUM PLANNING**

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The construction of curriculum is the responsibility of the school or college of Nursing. Just as the Philosophy, resources and other conditions vary from one school to another, so will the curriculum. The common element in all the curricula in one state or country will be the requirements laid down by the statutory body (INC) in the form of syllabus.

Curriculum can be planned at three different levels as follows:

### **1.3.1 The Societal Curriculum**

The societal curriculum refers to the curricula or parts of curricula, which are planned for a large group or class of students, such as the baccalaureate curriculum for basic nursing. It is the curriculum, which is planned by groups outside of an educational institution.

### **1.3.2 The Institutional Curriculum**

The institutional curriculum is one planned by a faculty for a clearly identified group of students who will spend a specified time period in a particular institution. It is this that is generally referred to when one speaks of a curriculum in a particular school.

### **1.3.3 The Instructional Curriculum**

The instructional curriculum consists of the content (subject matter and learning activities) planned day by day and week by week by a particular teacher for a particular group of students.

#### **Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) Define Curriculum.

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- 2) List the basic components of curriculum development.

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## 1.4 TYPES OF CURRICULUM

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Curriculum may be of different types to suit the requirement of the course. Let us now proceed to discuss about the types of curriculum.

### 1.4.1 Subject Oriented Curriculum

In this type, the teaching-learning experiences and evaluation are subject based. Most Nursing curriculum fall under this category. Nursing student has to pass through various subjects or disciplines before successfully completing the course. Fragmented learning, piece-meal approach to learning are some of the problems with this type of curriculum. System based curriculum has been designed to rectify some of the deficiencies mentioned above. Hence the teaching-learning experiences and evaluation are system based. For, e.g., students learn all about musculo-skeletal system including clinical and therapeutic aspects before moving onto another system.

### 1.4.2 Competence-based Curriculum

This is also known as task oriented or activity based curriculum “what should a learner be able to do and what S/he should learn during the course?” is the basic question that drives the making of such a curriculum plan. The focus is on the tasks that a successful graduate Nurse need to do later as a competent professional. The tasks could be of cognitive problem solving skills, definitive communication skills or mixed type encompassing more than one domain. Nursing curricula need to adopt this approach more widely.

### 1.4.3 Experience-based Curriculum

In this type curriculum learner is placed in the natural setting of the community. Perhaps community oriented nursing education is an ideal method of educating learners.

### 1.4.4 Core Curriculum

Core curriculum is defined as essential or key aspect of a subject or discipline covered in the curriculum for the study and mastery by all groups of students with the same level of learning. Core curriculum is about the competencies required of all students and here students study an area in depth e.g., Nursing process, quality assurance, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation are some of the topics of core course.

#### Nature of Nursing Curriculum

Let us learn what kind of curriculum we have in Nursing.

The curriculum in nursing is like any other curriculum, in addition it reflects health, and it is health oriented, but flexible to meet the changing needs of the people in the health scenario, it is geared to shift its emphasis in terms of National Health Policy and goals and meets the primary health care needs.

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## 1.5 FACTORS/ISSUES INFLUENCING CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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To plan and develop meaningful curriculum faculty must closely examine and analyze various forces that provide direction for curriculum changes. Factors/issues affecting curriculum are discussed in the following paragraphs.

### 1.5.1 Philosophy of Nursing Education

Philosophy of nursing education is the vital factor in the curriculum as its forms the basis for the final selection of aims and objectives of the curriculum. To determine what changes are desired involves value judgements and is influenced by the underlying philosophy of the curriculum.

### 1.5.2 Educational Psychology

Educational Psychology provides the background for the principles of learning. There are individual differences among students, and the principles of educational psychology help in the selection and organization of learning experiences for students.

### 1.5.3 Social Changes

Social change has been brought about largely by the advances of science and technology, resulting in urban-industrial culture, which has brought in many health problems and they need to be taken into account while developing curriculum as they have implications for nursing practice.

### 1.5.4 Epidemiology

Epidemiology is the study of the description and determinants of the state of health and illness in human populations. Epidemiology provides nursing faculty with systematic ways to understand pattern of disease i.e. Characteristics of people at risk, environmental factors and shift in demographic characteristics of the population.

In nutshell, nurse educators should develop curriculum that matches global characteristics. Nurse educators attuned of prevailing and visionary thinking can shape the future through progressive curriculum.

### 1.5.5 Population Explosion

Population explosion has led to the paucity of resources and it has brought about shift in the age structure towards elderly, which results from improved interventions for health and longevity, as well as decline in fertility rates and fewer births. Issues surrounding geriatric and small family norms are important areas, which need to be incorporated in curriculum.

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## 1.6 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION

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The success of a curriculum depends on certain principles, which need to be born in mind while developing a curriculum. These are:

- i) **The purpose of Educational Objectives of the Programme should be fulfilled.**

In nursing curriculum especially, it is essential that the purpose of capacity building for performance of the appropriate and relevant tasks demanded of the job responsibilities of the prospective nurses be attained.

- ii) **The educational objective should be stated in clear, unambiguous and behavioural terms, which should be achievable and measurable.** The development of objective will be discussed in Unit 2 of this block.

- iii) **The third principle is that the students and teachers of the particular educational programme should have a clear perception of the expected results** i.e., objectives as well as purpose of the educational programme.

- iv) The fourth principle is that the learning activities to provide learning experiences related to the theoretical, practical and clinical component and should be in conformity with the educational objectives of the programme.
- v) The fifth principle is that the teaching-learning activities should relate to class room activities, clinical fields and community.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Define Core Curriculum.

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- 2) Explain the Principles of Curriculum Construction.

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## 1.7 STEPS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

There are four steps in curriculum development which you would study in sub-sections 1.7.1, 1.7.2, 1.7.3 and 1.7.4. Let us first discuss what are some of the important features of curriculum development and how do we identify the needs for development of curriculum leading to development of philosophy of curriculum.

### a) Important Features

You have studied the principles of curriculum construction in the previous section. In this section we are going to discuss the steps involved in developing or constructing a curriculum. In this context, however, it is important for you to bear in mind the following features:

- A well thought of and a planned curriculum helps to realise the educational objectives.
- The educational system leading to the development of health personnel, at all levels, must be re-examined within the context of the needs of the country concerned.
- The members of the health team must be trained specifically for the tasks they will have to perform, taking into account the circumstances under which they will have to work.
- The subjects and activities in the curriculum should be such as to gear towards capacity building of the students in areas of preventive, promotive, case and problem solving.
- In order to keep up-to-date with the modern trend and changes in the health field it is essential that the curriculum undergoes revision over a period of time based on periodic evaluation.
- A curriculum should be prepared from social view point and since society is not static, its needs are also not static and so the curriculum development is an ongoing activity.
- The construction of the nursing curriculum is the responsibility of the nursing school; its sources, philosophy, need and other conditions vary from one school to another so also the curriculum.
- The core content will be common to all the curricula in the state or country prescribed by a statutory body like the Indian Nursing Council in our country.

However, it must be noted, the syllabus lays down the minimum required by law and in constructing their own curricula, the schools can add as much as is required to meet their own particular objectives. Therefore, the curriculum includes all the subject matter and experience which a particular school of nursing plans for its own students and which is developed by its own curriculum committee.

#### **b) Identification of the Curriculum Need**

A range of approaches can be used to identify the curriculum needs.

- The wise-man approach is that the senior teachers, nurse practitioners from different specialty backgrounds reach a common consensus about what is expected of the young graduate nurse and the competencies gained from the training programme.
- The views of the senior health professionals are sought.
- A study of errors in practice areas are identified where the curriculum is likely to be deficient.
- Critical review of the research studies, on patient satisfaction, job satisfaction, hospital infection to be done. So as to identify areas where there are gaps in nursing practice.
- Obtain feedback from health professionals and community regarding major health problems.
- Review of book and journals on scientific advances.
- National health policy
- Job description or task analysis
- Indian Nursing Council's regulations.

The information collected through the various sources will contribute for the task analysis for which the nurses need to be prepared. These two processes together determine the needs and purposes of establishing a particular nursing education programme.

Next question comes what do they learn? That is through the:

#### **c) Formulation of Philosophy of Nursing Education**

The programme must integrate the Philosophy and learning outcomes (objectives) of the programme within the curriculum as there is a close relationship between the Philosophy and the curriculum. Philosophy sets the goals (e.g., what is expected of a nurse after the successful completion of a programme) through the implementation of curriculum we achieve the goals set (to bring about a desired change in the behaviour of student nurse). It is important that faculty must have broad based agreement on the philosophy because such agreement is fundamental to the consistent interpretation, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum.

To formulate a statement of Philosophy the staff should hold discussions and come to unanimous decisions as to what is desirable and feasible in the interest of the students, school and profession.

Philosophy needs to be stated in clear, concise terms and relate to curriculum. **Following is a sample statement of Philosophy and subsequent planned activities** to attain the goal hidden in Philosophy. You may refer Block 1 of this Course (BNS-111).



We believe that the basic course in Nursing should prepare nurses for first level positions in Nursing, both in hospital and in the community.

**Actions/Planned Activities**

The curriculum should emphasize preventive, promotive and rehabilitative aspects of health throughout in the hospitals, community, school environment and provide facilities to put these principles into practice. The curriculum should plan and provide learning experiences in all major clinical areas of Nursing in the hospital and in the community.

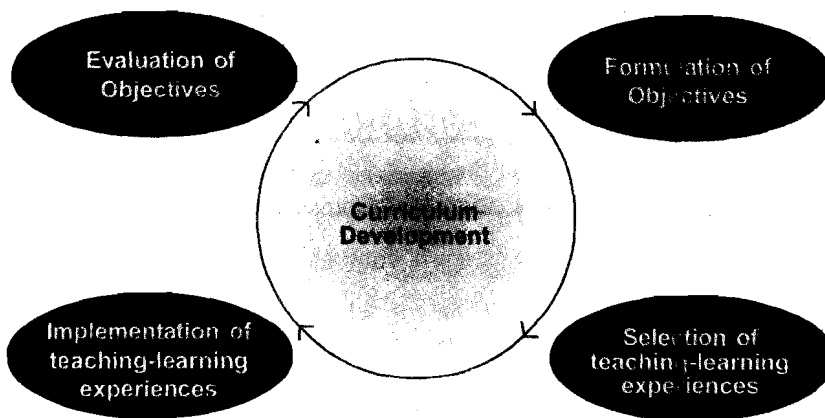
Once the philosophy of an educational programme is established, the next step in the curriculum process would be to formulate educational objectives/outcomes.

**1.7.1 Steps of Curriculum Development**

Curriculum development has four major steps as described below:

- i) Formulation of educational objectives (which will be based on philosophy of nursing education.
- ii) Selection of Teaching-Learning experiences
- iii) Organisation of Teaching-Learning experiences and
- iv) Evaluation of Learning Objectives/Outcomes

All these steps are inter-related which are discussed with the help of diagram as given in Fig. 1.2.



**Fig. 1.2: Steps of curriculum development**

**Formulation of Educational Objectives/Outcomes**

Educational objectives/outcomes must be consistent with philosophy of the educational programme and Institution.

When identifying educational objectives/curriculum outcomes, faculty must have an understanding of the qualities and characteristics they want the graduates of nursing programmes to possess on graduation for competent Nursing practice. Educational objectives must be stated in behavioural terms and be clear and concise and keep pace with the ongoing changes in health care. Educational objectives are the road maps and may be equated with the trip's destination. The objectives are three types general objectives, intermediate objectives and specific objectives.

Once the objectives are spelt out, the next step is to decide, how do they achieve learning objectives/outcome.

This question leads to the decision on the following:

- Time** : Time allotment, sequencing of topics and subjects.
- Duration** : Balancing of various subjects and the duration of nursing education programme.
- Scope** : Depth and breadth of study, i.e., deciding on weightage and time allotment for theory, practice and evaluation.

### **1.7.2 Definition of Learning Experiences**

Learning experiences may be defined as deliberately planned experiences in selected situations where students actively participate, interact and which result in desirable changes of behaviour in students.

**Selection of Learning Experiences** are integral part of curriculum and courses.

Faculty need to select instructional strategies that match the objectives/outcomes of the curriculum so as to facilitate the student's acquisition of the desired knowledge, competencies, behaviours specified by the curriculum.

Selected learning activities should be appropriate for the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of students. Active engagement of students in their own learning have positive benefits for students and faculty must integrate critical thinking skills into the activities so as to maximize student learning.

Since the knowledge is very vast and it is not possible to learn everything the teacher must select what is essential for the student to learn in a programme and in a particular course of study i.e. anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, etc. To make content is graded in three broad categories.

For instance:

- i) **Essential or Must Learn:** Basic Nursing principles in carrying for an unconscious patient for students of GNM Programme. (Medical Surgical Course)
- ii) **Desirable–Useful to Learn or Preferable:** Complications of unconsciousness.
- iii) **Additional or Supportive:** Nice to learn, computer technology for GNM.

**Must learn** is the target. These form the content, which every student must learn and the teacher must stress the learning of these when s/he is teaching.

**Useful to learn** need the same emphasis on learning and should not be given more emphasis in the examination only.

**Nice to learn** teachers can direct the students how to learn and from where to learn.

### **1.7.3 Organization of Learning Experiences**

Once the learning experiences have been selected the next step is sequencing or placement of learning experience. Should be done in a manner that leads to a gradual progress from simple to complex. Concrete to abstract and from normal to abnormal (Refer Block 1 of BNS-111).

Keeping these maxims in mind,

- organization and sequencing of theoretical experiences
- organization and sequencing of supervised and guided experiences in arrangement of students rotation in hospital and community practical.
- organization and sequencing of teaching learning methods.

Learning experiences need to be integrated so that student see interrelation in various subjects that leads to life long learning or holistic learning.

### **1.7.4 Evaluation of Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

The last step in the curriculum process is evaluating planning system of evaluation that include:

- Purposes of the test
  - Formative
  - Summative
- Timings of various tests
- Duration of tests
- Frequency of tests
- Criteria for pass and fail and grading of students.

You will be learning all these steps of curriculum development in detail in the subsequent units.

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## **1.8 REVISING A CURRICULUM**

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In view of advances in medical sciences and technology, changing pattern of disease, occurrence of new diseases (HIV etc.) and changing socio-economic realities, a curriculum gets outdated within a few years. Periodic updating of a curriculum is necessary. Evaluation of curriculum helps in inquiry based curriculum reference.

The following sources can be utilized to gather opinion on an existing curriculum:

- Student opinion during the course and at the end.
- Self assessment of the outcome and impact of the existing curriculum.
- Professional evaluation done systematically by curriculum specialists on all aspects of the curriculum including its input, process, outcome and impact.

Using the results of curricular assessment, the following decisions could be taken:

- Redefining curricular objectives.
- Introduction of newer topics and skills.
- Deletion of obsolete or irrelevant topics and skills.
- Improving teaching learning experiences.
- Modifying duration, timing and sequencing of subjects.
- Modifying evaluation system.
- Assessing the need and scope for introducing new courses.

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## **1.9 LET US SUM UP**

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In this unit you have read about curriculum and definition according to different authors, curriculum components were reviewed, levels of curriculum planning is explained briefly. Types of curriculum is discussed.

The impact of various forces/issues on curriculum development is discussed and principles of curriculum construction also have been explained.

We have concluded in this unit the discussion on the process of curriculum development also. We hope after reading this unit you would be able to apply the knowledge while developing curriculum for the nursing.

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## **1.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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### **Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) There are many definitions of the word curriculum. Three of the following definitions are accepted widely and used in nursing.
  - Curriculum is a formal plan of educational experiences and activities offered to a learner under the guidance of an educational institution. It is more structured in schools and more flexible in higher education.
  - A curriculum is a systematic arrangement of the sum total of selected experiences planned by a school for a defined group of students to attain the aims of a particular educational programmes. (Florence Nightingale International Foundation)
  - A composite of the entire range of experiences the learner undergoes under the guidance of the school. (Lamberston Education for Nursing Leadership)

Curriculum is viewed from a variety of perspective ranging from narrow and circumscribed to broad and encompassing.
- 2)
  - Statement of Philosophy and objectives.
  - Duration of the programme showing theoretical and practical how.
  - Learning experiences.
  - Method of Instruction.
  - Evaluation of students.

### **Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) Core curriculum is defined as essential or key aspect of a subject or discipline covered in the curriculum for the study and mastery by all groups of students with the same level of learning. Core curriculum is about the competencies required of all students and here students study an area in depth e.g., Nursing process, quality assurance. Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation are some of the topics of core course.
- 2) The success of a curriculum depends on certain principles, which need to be born in mind while developing a curriculum. These are:
  - The purpose of educational programme should be fulfilled.
  - The educational objectives should be stated in clear, unambiguous and behavioural terms.
  - The students and teachers should have clear perception of the expected results.
  - The learning activities should be in conformity with the educational objectives of the programme.
  - The teaching-learning activities should relate to the class room, clinical fields community.