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ABSTRACT

Described are various development aspects of a competency assessment model for use in special education teacher training programs. Problems (such as differences regarding acceptability of existing evaluation procedures) with means and criteria for evaluating students are listed. It is noted that a competency assessment model should provide for the development of competency assessment instruments, the collection of student performance data, and guidelines for the organization and analysis of resulting data. Competency assessment needs are seen to fall into two categories: needs that can best be met only after acquiring data, including determination of assessment reliability and validity; and needs which can be met prior to acquisition of data, including the development of instruments, procedures, and a data management system. (SB)

TOWARD A COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT MODEL

(Revised)

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TOWARD A MODEL FOR COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT

Introduction

As Joe Gilmore has indicated, in 1972 the New York State Board of Regents mandated that teacher education programs become competency based. Implicit in that mandate, and later made explicit by the State Education Department, Division of Teacher Education and Certification, was the need to specify not only the competencies to be attained by students; but the conditions, procedures and criteria pertaining to the assessment of competencies. While teacher education programs generally have course outlines with objectives that can be translated into competency statements, examination of means and criteria for evaluating students reveals such common problems as:

1. subjectivity
2. lack of instruments
3. lack of criteria
4. areas where little or no evaluation occurred
5. differences regarding acceptability of existing evaluation procedures
6. varying degrees of explicitness regarding evaluation
7. lack of a systematic way of managing competency assessment and resulting data
8. lack of both human and material resources to plan and implement a sophisticated assessment system

Purpose

Because of the above inadequacies, one objective of the Plattsburgh project is to develop resources that may lead to some improvement in competency assessment. An initial need involves the planning of an overall competency assessment program. The development of a planning model seems essential to the Plattsburgh project, and will hopefully be worth sharing with other CBTE programs.

Considerations for a Competency Assessment Model

Such a model ought to respond to the following concerns:

1. It should provide for the development of competency assessment instruments.
2. It ought to provide for the collection of student performance data, and of data regarding perceived adequacy of instruments and procedures.
3. It ought to provide guidelines for the organization and analysis of resulting data for two broad purposes involving evaluation of students and evaluation of program.
   a. Uses of data for evaluation of students:
      1. determination of student competence in reference to stated criteria.
      2. feedback and advisement for students.

b. Uses of data for evaluation of the CBTE program:

1. determination of reliability
   - of instruments and procedures
   - of student performance over time
   - of evaluator judgement
2. determination of validity
   - competencies associated with successful practicum performance
   - competencies associated with program graduates who are designated as effective teachers
   - degree to which assessment instruments and procedures measure given competencies
3. determination of criteria
   - quantitative performance standards
   - qualitative performance standards
   - measured relationships between student attainment of criteria and later in-service performance
4. interpreting competency data
   - as a function of internal program evaluation and review
   - to support registration with SED
   - in support of requests for special funding

The particular manner in which these concerns are addressed is also a matter of importance. The intent of competency assessment is not only to amass evidence, but to communicate this evidence in meaningful ways to such

diverse parties as students, consortia, SED and funding agents. Facilitation of communication beyond the local level calls for a commonality of terminology and concepts.

The Evaluation Training Consortium of the University of Virginia offers a national frame of reference for program evaluation and competency assessment. ETC has provided training and technical assistance in the use of the Discrepancy Evaluation Model (DEM) to special education teacher preparation programs throughout the country. Moreover, the Division of Personnel Preparation (BEH) has sponsored and is intimately familiar with DEM.

Additionally the DEM is sufficiently flexible for application to any uniquely local assessment concerns.

For these reasons the CBTE project at Plattsburgh has adopted the general frame-of-reference of the DEM.

Table 1 presents a general summary of competency assessment considerations in the DEM format of inputs, processes and outputs.

Special Education CBTE Project
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CONSIDERATIONS FOR COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT

INPUTS	PROCESSES	OUTPUTS
1. Competencies to be assessed	1. Procedures for developing instruments	1. Instruments
2. Instruments	2. Develop data collection schedules and procedures	2. Collection of data on: a. student performance b. assessment instruments c. assessment procedures
3. Data	3a. Analysis of individual student data 3b. Analysis of group data	3. Results of data analysis: a. regarding individual students - feedback on competencies attained - academic advisement/ decisions b. regarding program - assessment reliability - assessment validity - competency validity - qualitative and quantitative adequacy of criteria - reporting to: SED for registration consortium and administrators for program review/ modification external funding agents in support of proposals

Table 1

Considerations for Feasibility

Since most teacher preparation programs lack the time and material resources to comprehensively meet all assessment needs at once, there seems to be a need for selectivity. The ordering of priorities and the acknowledgement of limitations may help view the overall task with a realistic perspective.

The array of competency assessment needs seems to fall into two somewhat overlapping categories. In the first category are needs that can best be met only after acquiring data. These include determination of assessment reliability and validity, as well as the specification of adequate criteria. The second category of assessment needs includes those which can be appreciably met prior to acquisition of data. The latter needs include such matters as developing instruments, procedures and a data management system.

Regarding needs that can best be met after acquiring assessment data, some feasibility considerations are:

1. To accept best guess statements of criteria that can be met within the scope of program resources.
2. To settle for the consortiums' judgement of construct validity.
3. To acknowledge the inability to determine reliability without extensive data and sophisticated instrumentation.
4. To view the need for scientific objectivity as one which can be met in an evolutionary manner.

5. To plan for storage and retrieval of data in a manner that will facilitate the eventual answering of questions pertaining to reliability and validity.
6. To view early reliability and validity data as formative evaluation feedback rather than as a summative judgement of adequacy.

Feasibility considerations for meeting assessment needs prior to data collection include:

1. Utilizing existing instruments wherever possible, such as tests of academic knowledge and practicum observation rating scales.
2. Where competencies have an inherent developmental sequence, assessment data may be required only at the end of the sequence, with informal unrecorded assessment occurring at earlier stages. An example of this would be assessing competence in instructional planning.
3. Where the need for instrument development is overwhelming, efforts may focus on a limited number of competencies or assessment questions that are considered to be of critical importance to students and program.
4. Both instrumentation and data management may be simplified if instruments are designed to assess clusters of competencies. For assessment purposes, competencies might be clustered according to the time at which they are to be measured, or according to content relatedness. Such clustering should help to reduce the total num-

ber of instruments and the amount of time devoted to assessment and data handling.

5. To avoid being unnecessarily trapped in data shuffling, a simple but adequate student data form is required. It should have space for all data and identification needs to avoid the regrets of hind sight, but should be easy for students, faculty and cooperating school personnel to understand and use. One such form should suffice for each course or competency cluster. Summarization of group data can be easily be handled by clerical staff if forms for this purpose are similar in layout to the individual student progress record.

Conclusion

We will undoubtedly need to work long and hard to achieve adequate understanding and evidence of competence; but if we can use CBTE to improve teacher preparation and to enhance the education of exceptional children, the effort will be justified.