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AUTHOR MacFarland, Thomas W.
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ABSTRACT This investigation was conducted to determine whether or not a difference in attitude towards competency-based education exists between vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors. The investigation was conducted by distributing a 15-statement survey to the 140 faculty members at Coconut Creek High School, Coconut Creek, Florida. Forty-six of the surveys were returned (32.9 percent); 16 surveys were returned by vocational instructors and 30 surveys by non-vocational instructors. The null hypothesis stated that there would be no significant difference between vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors at the school concerning their attitudes toward competency-based education. Chi-square tests were used to compare data results. A significance level of .05 was used. After analysis of the data, the null hypothesis was confirmed (i.e., both vocational and non-vocational teachers were very much in favor of competency-based education). Based upon the results of this investigation, the following recommendations were made: (1) conduct similar surveys in other Broward County High Schools to broaden the base of the survey; (2) investigate the strength of vocational instructors' convictions towards competency-based education; and (3) investigate the general willingness of vocational instructors to conduct competency-based education inservice programs. (Author/KC)

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AN ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARDS
COMPETENCY BASED EDUCATION: VOCATIONAL
INSTRUCTORS VERSUS NON-VOCATIONAL
INSTRUCTORS.

SOCIETAL FACTORS AFFECTING EDUCATION

by

Thomas W. MacFarland, Rank I
Coconut Creek High School

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this investigation was to determine whether or not a difference in attitude towards competency based education exists between vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors. The investigation was conducted by distributing a fifteen-statement survey to the faculty at Coconut Creek High School, Coconut Creek, Florida.

The Null Hypothesis was stated such that there would be no significant difference between vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors at Coconut Creek High School concerning their attitudes towards competency based education. Chi-square tests were used to compare data results. A significance level of .05 was used. After analysis of the data, the Null Hypothesis was confirmed.

Based upon the results of this investigation, the following recommendations are provided:

1. Conduct similar surveys in other Broward County High Schools to broaden the base of the survey.
2. Investigate the strength of vocational instructors' convictions towards competency based education.
3. Investigate the general willingness of vocational instructors to conduct competency based education inservice.

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Investigation

As an instructional method, competency based education is gaining increased acceptance. Yet, many teachers have not been properly instructed in the use of competency based education. One group of educators who have received competency based education training, however, are vocational instructors; traditionally, competency based education has been the instructional system stressed in vocational teacher education programs. As such, the purpose of this investigation was to determine if there is a difference in attitude towards competency based education between vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors.

Investigational Method

This investigation was conducted by distributing a fifteen-question attitudinal survey to secondary level vocational and non-vocational instructors. The survey covered a wide spectrum of factors associated with the use of competency based education as an instructional method.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Competency based instruction and minimum competency testing are societal factors in education that are receiving increased attention. Private industry and the general public are demanding that the educational community be able to certify that high school graduates are able to meet minimum competencies necessary for adulthood.

To facilitate the attainment of necessary skills, competency based education is being introduced as a method of instruction. Before introducing a new instructional method, however, it is best to determine initial attitudes to see if the new phenomenon will gain ready acceptance and use.

Expectations tend to be self-fulfilling. Attitudes commonly predict either the success or failure of events. Thus, teacher attitudes towards competency based education may be of prime importance as to whether or not competency based education will be successful. Competency based education has not yet been fully mandated. Even so, there is apprehension among secondary educators that competency based education will be forced upon them. Jaeger and Tittle (1980: 159) cite Bardon and Robinette as mentioning that one positive outcome of minimum competency testing has been the alleviation of stress due to the unknown. The same would likely apply to competency based education. The competency

movement is receiving greater acceptance; teachers may be better off just because a feared event becomes actuality.

Gray (1980:2-3) identifies minimum competency tests as those tests where

The passing score is set by state authorities, and it is not "curved"; that is, the passing mark does not depend on how well all students perform. The cut-off is fixed in advance, and students either pass or fail.

Gray (1980:1) also states that schools in over 80% of the states are using some form of minimum competency testing. The public view is that social promotion eroded the standard high school diploma, and that minimum competency testing will restore value to the standard high school diploma. Johnson (1984:66) cites the following to support this opinion

Promotion from grade to grade based on examinations and not on "social" promotion is favored by a substantial majority (75%) of survey respondents. This view is shared by parents of school children and by those who have no children in school (Gallup, 1983).

Promotion from grade to grade should be based on mastery, not on age (Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 1983).

Although there is widespread disagreement in the educational community as to whether or not minimum competency testing will increase the worthiness of a high school education, there can be no disagreement over the fact that minimum competency testing is with us and will continue to be with us into the foreseeable future.

If attitudes in education are cyclic, then minimum competency testing can be viewed as being on the conservative side of the educational pendulum. Not only has private

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industry and the general public demanded it, but minimum competency testing is now being viewed favorably by leaders within the educational community. This view is perhaps best represented by quotes from the following professional organizations (Johnson, 1984:66)

Placement and grouping of students, as well as promotion and graduation policies, should be guided by the academic progress of students and their instructional needs, rather than by rigid adherence to age (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Every state should establish rigorous standards for high school graduation, and local school districts should provide rigorous standards for grade promotion. We should curtail the process of social promotion (National Science Board, 1983).

While the reasons for declining student attainment of basic skills and competencies are legion, traditional educational delivery systems are frequently mentioned as a prime cause for this fact. Blank (1982:9-10) mentions the following as factors contributing to lowered student competencies

A small percentage of students (typically 10% or so) really master the training tasks at a high level of proficiency. Up to 90% of students graduating may be only minimally competent.

Heavy reliance on lectures (sometimes several hours long) as a teaching method leads to student dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and discipline problems.

There seems to be a lack of well developed, appropriate curriculum materials and instructional media in use today. Many instructors tend to teach "off the top" with little planning.

Students receive little or no immediate, periodic feedback through the learning process so they can correct their learning mistakes as they go.

There is an over emphasis on theory, memorizing facts and terms, nice-to-know knowledge and background information and not enough emphasis on learning how to actually perform tasks needed on the job.

Programs are many times unable to respond to the unique learning requirements of students with special needs such as the educationally disadvantaged, the handicapped, and others.

Because traditional instructional systems have met with perceived unfavorable results, many educators are looking for alternate instructional systems. One instructional system that is gaining acceptance is competency based education, an instructional method traditionally used both by the United States military and by vocational education for their training programs.

Blank (1982:9) identifies competency based education as an instructional system characterized by the following: objectives are based solely on specific, precisely stated student outcomes; students are provided high quality, carefully designed, student-centered learning activities, media, and materials designed to help them master each objective; instruction is self-paced (within reason) so that the student fully masters one objective before moving on to other objectives; and, students are expected to perform each objective to a high level of proficiency that is preset before receiving credit. Concomitantly, Finch and Crunkilton (1979:224) highlight the importance of systematization to competency based education; delivery and management are more efficient and effective when systematization is central to the curriculum.

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Naturally, any instructional system will have as many variations as its practitioners. Even so, Blank (1982:7) states that competency based education is generally synonymous with the following terms: systems approach to education; personalized system of instruction (PSI); performance based instruction; criterion referenced instruction (CRI); learning for mastery (LFM); objective referenced learning; individualized instruction (II); programmed instruction (PI); self-paced learning; and, instructional systems development (ISD).

Obviously, there are many variations to competency based education. Whatever its form, Gray (1980:3) perhaps best synthesizes the impact of competency based education (in opposition to minimum competency testing)

In pure form, competency based education defines competency objectives and then proceeds without allegiance to traditional teaching methods or to such conventions as fifty-minute classes, five-day weeks, and one hundred and eighty-day school years. In other words, competency based education can imply a wholesale redesign of schooling, while minimum competency testing requires only that the existing system pay more attention to marginal performers and help them accomplish more.

Accordingly, there are many benefits to be had by using competency based education as an instructional system. Monjan and Gassner (1979:42-44) cite the following as advantageous to students when competency based education is used: faculty are better able to select appropriate teaching strategies and evaluate alternate teaching strategies; faculty have clearer communication with students and administrators; faculty are able to make better judgments

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concerning instructional needs, and faculty are better able to determine if objectives are actually being met.

Naturally, there are those in the educational community who do not feel that competency based education is the most appropriate instructional system. Grant, et al (1979:11-16) cite the following as negative aspects to competency based education: attention is shifted from the best students to the average and below-average students; student drop-out rates are high; faculty must spend an inordinate amount of time assessing students; faculty are commonly held overly accountable for student achievement; educational bureaucracy is increased; and, future underenrollment may force educators into a position where minimum performance becomes the norm in an effort to placate student consumers.

Finally, as an instructional system, competency based education must address the unique concerns of special needs students and minorities. Lazarus (1981:122) notes this concern when he quotes Brandwein

We are about to realize that there is nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of unequals--unequals in experience, history, and previous opportunity. In the coming years--no matter how long it takes--we will give each individual his or her due.

While in a reference specific to minimum competency testing, parallel concerns regarding competency based education and special needs students are raised by Lazarus (1981:120) when he refers to McClung and Pullin's possible policies regarding education's treatment of those with special needs: students

with special needs could be held accountable to the same standards as other students and the same diploma others receive would be issued to those who pass; students with special needs could be held accountable for ostensibly less demanding standards and the same diploma others receive would be issued to those who pass; and, students with special needs could be held accountable for ostensibly less demanding standards but they would then receive a diploma different than other students receive.

Faculty and administration at Coconut Creek High School (Broward County, Florida) recognize that competency based education, as a direct result of minimum competency testing, will be mandated in the foreseeable future. County wide curricular systematization is expected to become the norm; Broward County is providing educational leadership concerning curricular systematization.

Accordingly, the assistant principal for curriculum development at Coconut Creek High School as well as the present and former science department chairpersons have indicated the need for competency based education teacher training. Their feeling is that teachers can hardly be expected to maximize the use of an instructional system with which they have had minimal training. It is also recognized that the vocational instructors at Coconut Creek High School, due to their teacher education training, are collectively the faculty members most acquainted with competency based education. Thus, the reason for this investigation was to

provide useful information regarding teacher attitudes towards competency based education. From this information, administrators will be better able to determine whether or not the faculty requires competency based education teacher inservice, and if so, if vocational instructors are to play a key role in competency based education teacher inservice.

PROCEDURES

The survey population consisted of all instructors at Coconut Creek High School. This was a non-probability purposive sample. The variables were instructional responsibility (vocational instructor versus non-vocational instructor) and agreement or disagreement with survey statements.

The survey instrument, a fifteen-statement survey addressing a wide spectrum of factors associated with the use of competency based education, was developed from Blank's (1982:12-24) discussion of principles and myths concerning competency based education. To avoid potential bias due to wording, the frequency of positive or negative statements in the survey instrument was determined by coin toss. To assure validity, the survey instrument was reviewed by the assistant principal for curriculum development and by the present and former Science department chairpersons at Coconut Creek High School. The survey instrument is included in the appendix.

One-hundred and forty surveys, one survey for each faculty member at Coconut Creek High School, were distributed in mail slots on May 17, 1985. Surveys were returned until June 19, 1985, the last regular day of the 1984-1985 school year.

Scoring the Survey

The demographic data on page one of the survey instrument was used to segregate respondents into two groups based on instructional responsibility: vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors. After the instructional responsibility of each respondent was identified, responses were tabulated for each survey statement.

Statistical Procedures

In the treatment of the statistical data, a chi-square analysis for two or more variables was used for each survey statement to determine if there was a significant difference between vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors concerning their attitude towards competency based education. Contingency tables were developed using instructional responsibility as the independent variable and statement response as the dependent variable. A significance level of .05 was used. Following appropriate statistical procedures (Best, 1981:290), Yate's correction for continuity was used in each case where expected frequency counts were less than ten.

Research Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors at Coconut Creek

High School concerning their attitudes towards competency based education.

Alternate Hypothesis

There is a significant difference between vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors at Coconut Creek High School concerning their attitudes towards competency based education.

Assumptions and Limitations

1. The faculty at Coconut Creek High School is representative of all faculty at high schools in Broward County, Florida.
2. The survey is limited to faculty at Coconut Creek High School.
3. The sample is not random.
4. The survey instrument is appropriate for the researchable problem.
5. The degree of instructor agreement or disagreement with survey statements will not be determined.
6. Vocational instructors, traditionally, are more acquainted through professional training in competency based education than non-vocational instructors.

Definition of Terms

1. Competency Based Education: an instructional method where: objectives are based solely on specific,

precisely stated student outcomes; students are provided high quality, carefully designed, student-centered learning activities, media, and materials designed to help them master each objective; instruction is self-paced (within reason) so that the student fully masters one objective before moving on to other objectives; and, students are expected to perform each objective to a high level of proficiency that is present before receiving credit.

2. Non-Vocational Instructor: any instructor who is not a vocational instructor.
3. Vocational Instructor: any instructor who teaches more than fifty-percent (50%) in a vocational subject area and/or any instructor who is certified in a vocational subject area.

RESULTS

Of the one-hundred and forty surveys that were distributed, forty-six were returned for a completion rate of 32.9 percent. Sixteen surveys were returned by vocational instructors, and thirty surveys were returned by non-vocational instructors.

Instances occurred, however, when respondents purposely left selected statements unanswered. Accordingly, for specific survey statements, observed frequencies do not always equal forty-six; the total number of respondents. A summary of responses is presented in Table 1.

As mentioned, chi-square tests were performed upon the data. Best (1981:287) relates that chi-square

is not a measure of the degree of relationship. It is merely used to estimate the likelihood that some factor other than chance (sampling error) accounts for the apparent relationship.

For each survey statement, the computed chi-square was less than the criterion chi-square (3.841 at the .05 level with one degree of freedom). Thus, for the entire survey, there was no significant difference between vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors concerning their attitude towards competency based education. For each survey statement, the Null Hypothesis was confirmed. The results of the chi-square tests are presented in Table 2.

Table 1
Summary of the Survey

Statement	Vocational Instructors		Non-Vocational Instructors	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
1	4	10	7	21
2	3	13	3	27
3	13	3	18	10
4	12	4	22	7
5	16	0	28	2
6	4	12	14	15
7	6	10	17	13
8	15	1	20	8
9	4	10	6	23
10	3	13	3	26
11	1	15	4	25
12	11	4	13	14
13	16	0	21	7
14	16	0	25	5
15	5	11	13	16

Table 2
Results of the Chi-Square Tests

Statement	Chi-Square
1	.015
2	.144
3	.711
4	.089
5	.088
6	1.459
7	.863
8	1.897
9	.035
10	.113
11	.076
12	1.575
13	3.072
14	1.519
15	.327

Criterion chi-square equals 3.841
Calculation of chi-square includes Yate's Correction

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted to examine the attitudes of vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors towards competency based education. Survey statements three, four, five, eight, and twelve were worded in a positive manner towards competency based education. Both vocational and non-vocational instructors were in agreement with survey statements showing a positive attitude towards competency based education. Survey statements one, two, six, seven, nine, and ten were worded in a negative manner towards competency based education. Again, both vocational and non-vocational instructors responded favorably towards competency based education by disagreeing with those survey statements. The last three survey statements, statements thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen, are neither favorable nor unfavorable towards competency based education. Instead, the three statements address direct societal concerns associated with the use of competency based education. Once again, both vocational and non-vocational instructors were in agreement regarding their attitudes. As previously stated, for each survey statement, there was no significant difference between vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors concerning their attitudes towards competency based education.

Although the Null Hypothesis was confirmed, a trend by vocational instructors indicating a greater predisposition towards the use of competency based education as an instructional method may be an issue. Specifically, the sixth survey statement, "Competency based education is not an appropriate form of instruction for my classes," was upheld by only twenty-five percent of the vocational instructors who completed the survey. Seventy-five percent of the vocational instructors who completed the survey expressed an opinion that competency based education was an appropriate form of instruction for their classes, yet, only 51.7 percent of the non-vocational instructors expressed a similar attitude. Recalling that teachers are now accepting competency based education, whereas before it was an unknown, feared phenomenon (Jaeger and Tittle, 1980:159), it is perhaps not surprising that non-vocational instructors may be beginning to recognize the merits of competency based education. Vocational instructors may, due to their teacher education training, have an earlier predisposition towards competency based education.

Based upon the results of this investigation, the following recommendations are provided with respect to differences in attitudes towards competency based education between vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors:

1. Conduct similar surveys in other Broward County High Schools to broaden the base of the survey.

2. Investigate the strength of vocational instructors' convictions towards competency based education.
3. Investigate the general willingness of vocational instructors to conduct competency based education inservice.

Administrators may wish to further investigate teacher attitudes towards competency based education before it is implemented as a required instructional system. Furthermore, administrators may wish to concentrate their efforts on determining the degree of conviction vocational instructors have towards competency based education. As a corollary to that potential investigation, a willingness of vocational instructors to either conduct inservice or provide a role model for the use of competency based education may be determined. Whichever course is chosen, both vocational instructors and non-vocational instructors display a favorable attitude towards competency based education.

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APPENDIX

MEMORANDUM

TO: Faculty

FROM: Thomas W. MacFarland / Horticulture Instructor

SUBJECT: Competency Based Education Survey

Would you please take a few minutes of your time to complete the following survey? The purpose of this survey is to gather data concerning teacher attitudes towards competency based education.

For this survey, competency based education is defined as an instructional method where: objectives are based solely on specific, precisely stated student outcomes; students are provided high quality, carefully designed, student-centered learning activities, media, and materials designed to help them master each objective; instruction is self-paced (within reason) so that the student fully masters one objective before moving on to other objectives; and, students are expected to perform each objective to a high level of proficiency that is preset before receiving credit.

Competency based education is generally synonymous with the following terms: systems approach to education; personalized system of instruction (PSI); performance based instruction; criterion referenced instruction (CRI); learning for mastery (LFM); objective referenced learning; individualized instruction (II); programmed instruction (PI); self-paced learning; and, instructional systems development (ISD).

When completing the survey, please remember that competency based education is not synonymous with minimum competency testing. Competency based education is an instructional approach; minimum competency testing identifies the accomplishment of minimum criteria.

Please let me thank you in advance for your cooperation. If convenient, please return the completed survey by placing it in my mail slot as soon as possible. Your assistance will greatly facilitate the research for my doctoral program.

Class Schedule:

Is This Class
Competency Based?

Period 1: _____

Yes No

Period 2: _____

Yes No

Period 3: _____

Yes No

Period 4: _____

Yes No

Period 5: _____

Yes No

Period 6: _____

Yes No

Period 7: _____

Yes No

Is it required that your classes be
competency based?

Yes No

Number of years teaching experience: _____

Number of years using competency based education: _____

Area(s) of certification: _____

Highest degree earned: _____

Professional Competency Based Education Training:

College Yes No

Inservice Yes No

None Yes No

Other: _____

Considering Competency Based Education,
As Defined In The Cover Memo:

Please Circle Your Responses

- (01) Competency based education will raise student-to-teacher ratios.
Agree Disagree
- (02) Competency based education is inflexible concerning individual learning styles.
Agree Disagree
- (03) Competency based education motivates students to strive for their fullest potential.
Agree Disagree
- (04) Competency based education does not stifle instructor creativity.
Agree Disagree
- (05) Competency based education individualizes instruction.
Agree Disagree
- (06) Competency based education is not an appropriate form of instruction for my classes.
Agree Disagree
- (07) Competency based education is not manageable in terms of time and resources.
Agree Disagree
- (08) Competency based education addresses problem solving as well as basic tasks.
Agree Disagree

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Considering Competency-Based Education,
As Defined In The Cover Memo:

Please Circle Your Responses

- (09) Competency based education promotes a restrictive bureaucracy in all areas of education.
- Agree Disagree
- (10) Competency based education lowers standards so that most students can pass.
- Agree Disagree
- (11) Competency based education reduces student achievement because there is less student / teacher interaction.
- Agree Disagree
- (12) Competency based education increases learning efficiency; students learn more in less time.
- Agree Disagree
- (13) Competency based education requires students to take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Agree Disagree
- (14) Competency based education should include work / social skills (i.e., dependability, attendance, etc.) as a part of student evaluation.
- Agree Disagree
- (15) Competency based education should hold special needs students accountable to the same standards as other students.
- Agree Disagree

Thank you for your cooperation!