FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

INDIVIDUALIZING INSTRUCTION FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS: AN APPLICABLE COMPETENCY BASED TRAINING MODEL

Edward L. Meyen and Reuben Altman[1]

INDIVIDUALIZING INSTRUCTION FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

For years teachers of handicapped children have been encouraged to individualize instruction as a means of meeting the needs of their children. They have been told to select materials and methods which are geared to the specific learning styles of individual pupils. Task analysis, behavioral objectives, prescriptive teaching and individual instruction are among the descriptors which presumably represent the essentials of good teaching. Certainly, children vary in their capability to learn just as they vary in preferred modes for learning and motivational status. These differences are routinely acknowledged and demands are made upon teachers to accommodate them through the methodologies employed in the classroom. Why isn't the same logic applied to the teacher as a learner? Adults also vary in learning rate, interests, background, experience, motivational patterns and preferred learning modes. Why must the young adult studying to be a teacher be treated as if all education majors are alike, plan to do the same things and learn best in the same manner?

Historically, teacher training has probably been the most predictable experience in a professional's life. One enrolls in a college which trains teachers, one spends two years taking a general program of rather discrete courses including, perhaps, *French, Earth Science, Political Science* and *Physical Education Activities*. As a sophomore, one takes *Introduction to Education, Educational Psychology* and *Survey of Special Education*. From there one works through a series of methods courses which culminate in student teaching. Of course, one's supervising teacher has followed the same training path.

This image of teacher training is not presented as a straw man ripe for dismemberment. It is presented to elucidate one problem inherent in our traditional teacher training programs. Teachers are justifiably indoctrinated in the faith that good teachers individualize instruction according to the learning characteristics of their students. They are even assured that individualization can be achieved with minimal resources if they are efficiently creative. Yet, despite these ministerings, few teacher trainers themselves have

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invested in efforts to individualize their training programs to the needs of their pre-service teachers. All students take the same courses in approximately the same order and in the same amount of time. The only variance has been in terms of grades; and our colleagues in Arts and Science often question whether we really differentiate in the grades we award.

If the philosophy implied in prescriptive teaching, task analysis, specification of behavioral objectives, and so on, is valid for teaching children, is it not equally appropriate for adult learning? If the answer is "yes," then the mandate is clear. But even if one questions this logical progression from classroom instruction to teacher training, there remains an irrefutable albeit intuitive justification for individualized teacher preparation programs. The expanding body of knowledge relative to the role of imitation in learning and our recognition of the difficulty in undoing learned patterns of behavior in adults strongly suggest that we provide teachers in training with the opportunity to model those behaviors they will be expected to manifest in their classroom.

The old cliché that "we teach as we were taught" is a circular route which eventually brings us face to face with our protégés. Individual teacher trainers are capable of breaking this cycle only to a limited degree. In contrast, departments of education in colleges and universities can make major contributions through adopting alternative teacher training strategies.

Competency based teacher training is the byword in teacher training today. Everyone either versed or involved in teacher training is using the term with broad abandon. Whether this emphasis on competency based training is a fad or a serious and commendable attempt at change is incidental to the observation that options are being considered and that the one tract approach is being challenged.

Interestingly enough, if we examine the major principles of competency based teacher training, they clearly parallel the principles of good teaching we have been instilling in our pre-service teachers for years. For every good classroom instructional practice, there is an equivalent principle in competency based teacher training (CBTT). Figure 1 graphically parallels seven exemplary principles.

Thus, the steps inherent in developing CBTT are closely related to the steps inherent in developing good instruction for students. This is not to imply that all CBTT programs are good or that all professors are sufficiently competent in developing instruction to carry out these tasks in the process of developing a competency based teacher training program. There is ample evidence to suggest that many professors find these tasks difficult. They may lack the skill, personal fortitude or commitment to CBTT necessary to delineate in "nitty-gritty" terms the specific objectives and subsequent instructional activities. Few teacher training departments invest in curriculum development beyond what professors do in organizing their courses. To assume that the experiences which culminate from courses designed by professors planning in isolation reflect a curriculum development effort is probably naive.

This article will proceed to detail the curriculum development process undertaken in establishing one competency based training program currently functional at the University of Missouri—Columbia. For the past three years our Special Education Curriculum Training Center (SECTraC) has been involved in the development and implementation of a competency based training program to prepare curriculum consultants capable of enhancing instruction and facilitating curriculum development for exceptional children. In contrast to providing direct services to children, these consultants function as support personnel for teachers and administrators in general and special education who are responsible for making decisions affecting the education of exceptional children. While this curriculum development effort was not geared toward an undergraduate teacher training program, our experience indicates that the processes employed are directly applicable.

Figure 1

Seven Parallel Principles of Good Classroom
Instruction and Competency Based Teacher Training

Principles of Good Classroom Instruction	Principles of Competency Based Teacher Training
1. Basic skill identification	1. Competency identification
2. Organization and sequencing of curriculum content	2. Competency organization
3. Task analysis to determine prerequisite skills and requirements for instruction	3. Specifications process to reduce competencies into training components
4. Developing units or other structural approaches to instruction	4. Module development activities
5. Grouping for instruction and classroom management techniques	5. Module management options alternative to traditional lecture model
6. Evaluating pupil progress through achievement assessment	6. Evaluating trainee competence through performance assessment
7. Reporting pupil progress	7. Providing feedback on performance to trainees

Because as much variance as commonality define the few existing systematic efforts at designing competency based training programs, we will clarify our development activities with the following outline indicating the nature of the training program for which we were striving. Specifically, we were committed to developing a training program in which

1. the curriculum is based on specific competencies rather than on general descriptions of content to be taught.
2. the competencies are identified systematically through empirical research rather than being based on assumptions.
3. the emphasis is on situation and process variables instead of on organizational models, such as special classes, itinerant teachers, etc.
4. major consideration is given to determining the appropriate setting for the development of the identified competencies, i.e., campus-based or field-based settings.

5. the mode of instruction is modular in nature and modules are designed for maximum generalizability to other training programs.
6. criteria are established for evaluating performance and trainee performance is the primary vehicle for assessment.
7. trainees are allowed to specify their own training goals through a graduate nondegree program with advanced degree options.
8. time is a variable rather than a restraint, i.e., trainees progress through modules at a rate commensurate with their ability and available time.
9. the role of a faculty member is one of curriculum developer, evaluator and instructor in the sense of facilitating learning rather than disseminating information.

The following sequence of development processes undertaken in designing this training program is elaborated within the context of the seven principles of competency based teacher training listed in Figure 1.

COMPETENCY IDENTIFICATION

The identification of competencies is obviously a crucial step in moving to a competency based program. Two techniques were employed in generating our initial pool of 400 competency statements: (1) structured interviews, and (2) literature reviews.

Thirty educators employed in administrative or instructional positions in Iowa, Kansas and Missouri were interviewed. The interviewees were six special class teachers employed by local districts, six district level special education administrators, three intermediate district level administrators, two state agency administrators, two district level special education consultants, three intermediate district special education consultants and six Instructional Materials Center consultants. All interviews were recorded via audio tape and analyzed by project staff for competency statements.

The literature search was initiated through the ERIC system. Projects relevant to the broad spectrum of consultive functions and curriculum development were reviewed, and a supportive library search using a variety of indexes followed. This extensive review encompassed the literature from general education, special education and industry. Special attention was given to (1) consultant functions independent of professional affiliation, (2) educational consultant functions, (3) special education support service functions, and (4) the literature pertaining to performance-based training models. Additional competencies resulted from application of the Competency Organization and Generation Model described in the next section.

COMPETENCY ORGANIZATION

As a means of organizing the identified competencies and assessing representativeness of items, the three-dimensional model represented in Figure 2 was designed to serve as a frame of reference. Each competency was assigned to the appropriate cell designated by the three dimensions of the model: (1) process skills, (2) areas of responsibility, and (3) situations.
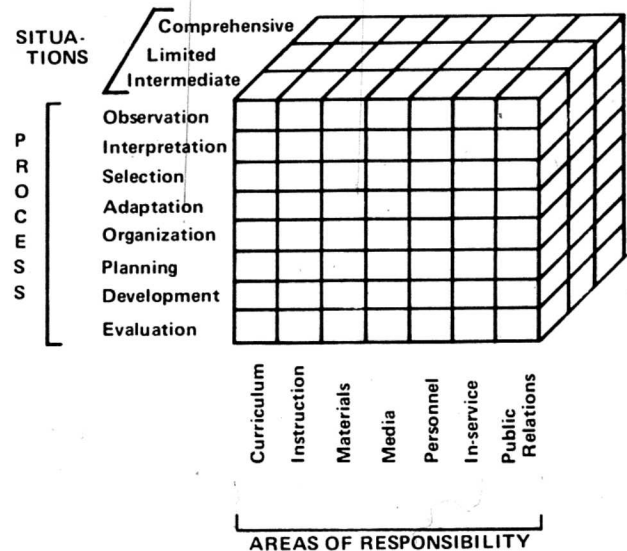
Process Skills

The selected processes were considered to be generic skills applicable to the role of a curriculum consultant.

1. *Observation*: Pertains to the skill of observing the behavior of others and recording appropriate data.
2. *Interpretation*: Involves drawing conclusions from the meanings of events, statements, actions, and materials.

Figure 2

Competency Organization and Generation Model

3. *Selection*: Refers to identifying tasks, events, products, and processes relative to specific criteria.

4. *Adaptation*: Refers to modifying material or procedures to meet the requirements of a given situation.

5. *Organization:* Pertains to skills relative to management, establishing procedures and structuring tasks.

6. *Planning*: Relates to the process of making decisions and formulating criteria.

7. *Development*: Involves responsibility for carrying out specific steps leading to the constitution of a project or an operational process.

8. *Evaluation*: Pertains to assessing processes, products and events.

Areas of Responsibility

Areas of performance and/or knowledge considered essential to the role of a consultant were included in this dimension.

1. *Curriculum:* The emphasis in this area includes primary responsibilities for developing curriculum.

Pertinent are competencies relative to working with other personnel in making decisions on content, developing procedures for implementation, assessing what is currently being done and orienting teachers and administrators to the necessity of investing in curriculum for exceptional children.

2. *Instruction:* The instructional area entails teaching methods, classroom management, techniques for structuring the classroom milieu and significant didactic interactions of pupil-teacher, pupil-pupil, pupil-material and pupil-environment.

3. *Materials:* The utilization of materials most effective for attaining the objectives of the curriculum is the basic feature in this area. This necessitates knowledge of available materials as well as familiarity with the intended uses of these materials relative to learner characteristics and curriculum content.

4. *Media:* For purposes of this model, media has been limited to modes other than print for presenting instruction to learners individually and in groups. Also included are technologies in the form of CAI, teaching machines and video taping.

5. *Personnel:* The major resource available to a person fulfilling the role of curriculum consultant is represented in the knowledge and skills possessed by other personnel. Much of his effectiveness will depend on his ability to communicate with colleagues, identify persons with relevant skills and structure situations which engage staff in curriculum development activities.

6. *In-service:* In-service is defined as a change agent role in upgrading the curriculum development skills of the staff and involves the employment of in-service training as a means of implementing curriculum changes.

7. *Public Relations:* Public relations identifies those functions related to communication within and outside the school. It implies both dissemination and salesmanship.

Situations

Recognizing that the competence required to function as a curriculum consultant might be dependent upon the particular situation in which a person is employed, we added three levels of programming.

1. *Comprehensive (Local) Program:* This level refers to programs which offer an array of special education services. In general, financial and manpower resources are available for curriculum development.

2. *Limited (Local) Program:* This level is characterized by insufficient special education services and/or limited financial resources. There is a general lack of activity in curriculum development for exceptional children.

3. *Intermediate District:* While there may be qualitative differences in this type of program, the major difference is in relation to the organizational structure. An intermediate district typically requires the consultant to work with teachers employed by several local school districts. Under these conditions, the consultant has less control of resources and must be capable of giving leadership to several autonomous local programs.

Application of this Competency Organization and Generation Model afforded the elimination of redundancies and promoted comprehensiveness of items. After a preliminary field test, the universe of competencies had been reduced to a final representative sample of 100 competency statements. These 100 items were incorporated into a rating scale and submitted to 720 persons in 11 Midwestern states representing a random sample of school districts selected on a stratified basis according to size. Each respondent held one of the following nine positions in regular and/or special education: superintendent, psychologist, principal, curriculum consultant, speech and/or hearing clinician, special education consultant, director of special education, special education teacher or regular elementary teacher.

The two types of responses were elicited for each competency statement:

1. *Importance*—Each competency was rated on a 5-point scale from very important to definitely unimportant relative to its perceived importance in carrying out the role of a curriculum consultant.

2. *Trainability*—Each competency was assigned one of 3 ratings relative to its recommended mode of training: OC = best developed through on-campus curriculum; JT = best developed through on-the-job training and experience; SG = not amenable to training, a matter of self-growth and personal maturity.

Finally, as part of our competency organization efforts, a Cluster Analysis was initiated. Project staff identified five functions which appeared to be central to the role of a curriculum consultant and five contexts generic to each function. These functions and contexts are presented in Figure 3 which illustrates the model used for clustering

Figure 3

Competency Statement Item Numbers
in Function-Context Designations Resulting from
Consensus Criterion of Four of Seven Judges

CONTEXTS	Curriculum	Instruction	Materials and Media	Communication Processes	Support Systems
FUNCTIONS **Evaluating**	1, 4, 6, 18, 86	27, 44, 45, 85	53, 54, 55, 60, 68	81, 91, 96, 97, 98	20, 72, 74, 92
Developing	2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 90, 99	19, 26, 52, 100	61, 64	93, 95	73, 75
Training		28, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 48, 50	39, 56, 62, 63, 66, 69	36	
Advising	3, 5, 25	37, 40, 41, 42, 46, 47, 49, 51	57, 59, 67, 70	84	21, 38, 82
Serving as **Liaison**				71, 78, 79, 80, 88, 89	14, 23, 77, 87, 94

competency statements. Seven judges with expertise in curriculum development were selected from various parts of the country to apply a modified *Q*-sort technique to cluster the 100 competencies within this Function by Context matrix.

The categories of the Function Dimension were defined as follows:

1. *Evaluating:* Those items which involve exploring current conditions, identifying problems, analyzing processes and programs.

2. *Developing:* Those items which involve developing policies, products or programs, organizing and directing programs or processes, translating information into usable form, adapting knowledge into practice.

3. *Training:* Those items relating to planned activities or procedures aimed at developing particular skills and/or understandings on the part of others.

4. *Advising:* Those items relating to assisting persons by providing information, demonstrating and sharing of ideas intended to help in decision making, the solution of a particular problem or the improvement of a particular practice.

5. *Serving as Liaison:* Those items relating to assisting in communication between groups and securing support and assistance from others.

The categories for the Context Dimension were defined as follows:

1. *Curriculum:* Those items which relate to the identification, evaluation and sequencing of a curriculum content, plus those which pertain to the process of curriculum development.

2. *Instruction:* Those items which relate to teaching methods, techniques, classroom interactions, pupil performance and classroom management.

3. *Materials and Media:* Those items which relate to teaching materials, audiovisual equipment and technologies for instruction.

4. *Communication Processes:* Those items which primarily focus on the interaction between professional groups, interpersonal and intrapersonal relations, communications beyond the school district, structures of groups.

5. *Support Systems:* Those items which are concerned with establishing resources and policies relevant to educational programs, e.g., research support, in-service training, better facilities, consultant services, etc.

An item was placed in a cluster if four out of the seven judges placed it in a particular cell. Each item was required to receive four or more votes for a particular function as well as for a particular context. For example, an item placed in the Evaluating/Curriculum cluster received four or more votes in the context dimension of Curriculum and four or more votes in the function dimension of Evaluating.

SPECIFICATIONS PROCESS TO REDUCE COMPETENCIES INTO TRAINING COMPONENTS

Figure 4 illustrates the four-level task analysis describing the specification process employed in reducing competencies to behaviorally stated objectives. The first two levels of this specification process are inherent in the clustering process previously described. Steps III and IV represent expansion stages carried out by project staff in cooperation with consultants from the field.

Step I–Cluster: A cluster represents a group of competencies judged to be interrelated. Twenty function-context clusters were empirically identified with each cluster considered a module topic.

Step II–Competencies: Each competency was placed in a particular cluster by the Q-sort technique previously discussed. These competencies were then reduced to 3 or more competency components as a means of clarifying their meaning and intent.

Step III–Competency Components: This step represents the first level at which project staff utilized their collective judgment in breaking down the competency statements into more specific elements. The competency components are brief descriptive statements written in a general objective format from the perspective of the trainee.

Step IV–Instructional Objectives: This step represents the most specific level in the specification process. Each competency component was analyzed into a series of behaviorally stated objectives. These objectives are then used as the basis for designing the instructional activities constituting a module.

MODULE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Having identified through the specification process the behavioral objectives defining the modules, we proceeded to design appropriate instructional activities. These performance-based activities were designed to bring about and demonstrate achievement of each identified competency. In order to avoid unnecessary duplication of existing instructional resources appropriate to achieving our specified behavioral objectives, a continuing extensive search of literature, products of funded projects and commercially produced instructional resources was initiated. Where these available resources are appropriate to project goals, they are acquired and integrated into instructional activities.

While our primary aim is to utilize wherever possible existing instructional materials in module development, a

Figure 4

Competency Specification Process

Step I CLUSTER	
Step II COMPETENCIES	
Step III COMPETENCY COMPONENTS	
Step IV INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES	
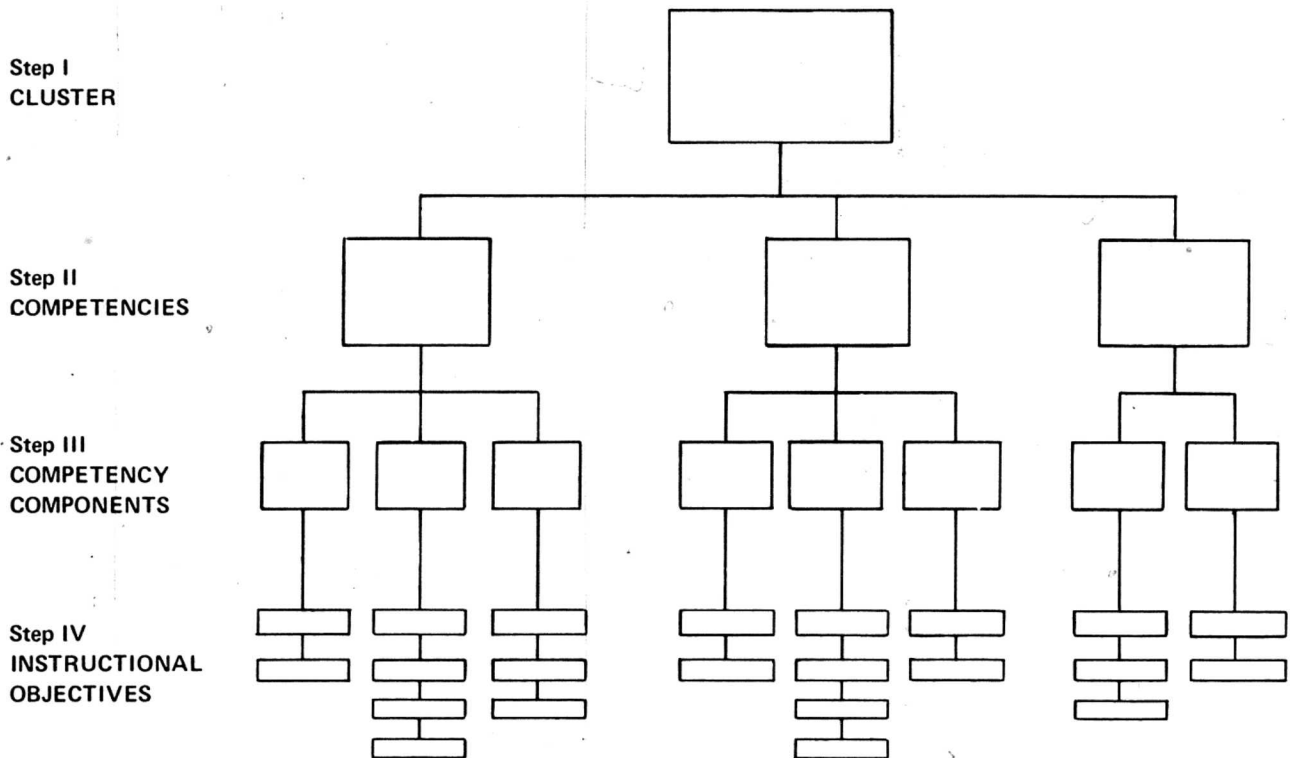
variety of material needs have been identified which are unique to our training program. Included here are materials which convey substantive information as well as materials allowing for competency demonstration by trainees. These materials have been designed and developed as required and include unpublished manuscripts, slide presentations, workbooks, cassette tapes and audio-visual materials. In those cases where it was judged that SECTraC staff expertise was not sufficient in a particular subject area encompassed by specified competencies, one or more experts were contracted with to develop performance-based instructional activities according to the specifications provided.

While each of our modules is represented by a cluster of competencies, the primary units of instruction occur at the competency level. Each competency clustered into a particular module designation is recognized as a Module Element. A separate Trainee's Manual and accompanying Instructor's Manual is developed for each of these Module Elements or competencies.

Thus, each training module consists of the following:

1. A *Specifications Manual* which reports the results of our specification process—the breakdown of each competency in the module into competency components which are, in turn, reduced to behavioral objectives. The Specifications Manual also includes a narrative summation of the rationale and content of that module.

2. A *Trainee's Manual* for each competency or element comprising that module. Consequently, there are from 1 to 11 Trainee's Manuals developed for each module. The Trainee's Manual directs the trainee to the enabling activities developed to impart the skills and abilities necessary for him to successfully demonstrate competence at each behavioral objective

specified. The enabling activities are developed at the behavioral objective level. Whenever supplementary materials or other resources are utilized, the enabling activity is coded to a resource file identified in the Trainee's Manual. In addition, because enabling activities are geared to the highly specific behavioral objectives, the Trainee's Manual includes the substantive information and knowledge base required to place the independent enabling activities within a meaningful context for the trainee.

3. An *Instructor's Manual* for each competency or element comprising that module. The Instructor's Manual incorporates all the information, instructional directives and resource references reported in the Trainee's Manual. In addition to replicating the Trainee's Manual, the Instructor's Manual reports the evaluation criteria by which trainee performance is to be assessed.

4. *Resource Files* which supplement the Trainee's Manuals. Resource Files are utilized to accommodate those materials required for trainee learning and experience which are not amenable to inclusion in the Trainee's Manual itself. These Resource Files contain reprints of published and unpublished papers, manuscripts prepared by SECTraC staff, audio, visual and audiovisual materials (including those commercially available, products of other funded projects and those designed and developed by SECTraC), various report forms, instructive questionnaires, and so on.

MODULE MANAGEMENT OPTIONS ALTERNATIVE TO TRADITIONAL LECTURE MODEL

As is true in the elementary classroom, one of the more significant problems which must be coped with is the delivery of instruction. One important prerequisite to a good delivery system is the packaging of instruction in a format which allows for individualized and close monitoring by the instructor. The classroom teacher plans centers, utilizes workbooks and employs a variety of self-tutorial options in his instructional program. These techniques coupled with systematic evaluation procedures and extensive knowledge of his pupils enhances his efficiency in implementing effective grouping and management techniques. Competency based training modules hold a similar potential. The module format makes the close monitoring of the trainee's program a reasonable process and creates the conditions necessary for feedback to trainees.

In contrast to some concepts of modular instruction in which a module is defined by one behaviorally stated objective, one activity and one criterion measure, our modules view this triad as one activity and incorporates a series of such activities into larger and more comprehensive modules. Similarly, rather than allowing trainees to establish their own training pattern by moving from one objective to another at their own discretion, they must satisfactorily complete a competency component or a cohesive series of objectives before progressing. Our experience suggests that this practice makes the monitoring of progress a less complicated task for both the instructor and the trainee. It also provides greater control over the order of experiences encountered by the trainee promoting a more meaningful sequencing of knowledge and skills.

Before delineating the process employed in the SECTraC project for managing its module options, a few comments are in order regarding the availability of instructional resources and the milieu essential to such a program. Because students are required to spend considerable time working independently or in small groups, the availability of working areas is exceedingly important. The typical classroom is not conducive to module work without modifications. We have established a training facility with the following features: (1) study carrels wired for media, (2) a work and conference area, (3) storage facilities, (4) file cabinets in which resource files are stored, (5) a telephone for exclusive use by trainees, and (6) the constant availability of audiovisual equipment. Trainees are given complete control of this room including the option to decorate as they wish. The room is reserved for trainees and is accessible 24 hours a day.

Another important aspect of resource availability is to be certain that their entry into schools for field-based activities is assured. This does not mean that all arrangements are made in advance for trainees. Since our goal is to prepare curriculum consultants, part of our instructional activities involve preparing trainees to communicate with school personnel and gain access to school facilities.

Our management process can be described briefly as follows:

1. Each trainee is provided the trainee manuals previously described. These contain all the information and directions needed to progress through the activities.
2. Currently, each trainee who enrolls in a module attends a weekly seminar. The seminars form an experience which parallels the general intent of the module but does not duplicate the module activities.

They are enrichment in nature and primarily serve to facilitate communication.

3. Each trainee is responsible for maintaining a notebook in which he files responses and products resulting from activities.

4. Periodic individual conferences are scheduled between trainees and instructors to discuss and assess his progress. If the trainee fails to meet criterion on any activity, the remediation is negotiated with the instructor.

5. The student retains a copy of all responses and thus after successfully completing a module has both the trainee's manual and the correct responses. This is equivalent to an instructor's manual and becomes his personal reference.

EVALUATING TRAINEE COMPETENCE THROUGH PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Structured trainee assessment begins immediately upon acceptance into the SECTraC program. In order to assure maximum efficiency in trainee passage through the program, to avoid superfluous learning experiences and to encourage use of alternative entry points into modulized instruction, a global assessment instrument was developed to facilitate determination of each trainee's strengths and weaknesses in light of his own career goals. This instrument includes the completion of a comprehensive vita detailing the trainee's academic and field experience as well as his estimate of his effectiveness in each work setting. In addition, each trainee evaluates his own competence at each of the identified 100 competencies determined to be essential for curriculum personnel working in the area of special education. This information is evaluated in terms of the trainee's specified training goals during one or more orientation conferences held with each trainee prior to entrance into the module.

All instructional activities comprising modules are performance based. The nature of the observable products varies with the knowledge or skill being trained and varies from written reports to the instructor, to oral presentations to school personnel, to completing various questionnaires, to consulting with local school district personnel on curriculum development projects. The evaluation criteria are equally variant but, in all cases, are specified in the instructor's manual. Performance evaluation also occurs at the several module levels analogous to the specification process. Generally, performance evaluation at the behavioral objective and competency component levels of specification occur via direct interaction of the trainee

with the instructor. At the more global competency and cluster levels of specification, performance evaluation is generally associated with the successful performance of authentic field-based efforts relative to curriculum and instruction for exceptional children.

PROVIDING FEEDBACK ON PERFORMANCE TO TRAINEES

Like most competency based training programs in modular form, an integral part of the SECTraC program is feedback to the trainee regarding his performance of instructional activities. Unlike other competency based programs in which individual behavioral objectives constitute separate modules amenable to computerized instruction and immediate feedback, our more comprehensive modules require greater variability in both the nature and temporal aspects of feedback to trainees. For example, if the instructional activity involves working with teachers to identify priorities for curriculum development, the significant feedback will not occur until after the trainee has developed a procedure for working with teachers and carried through on the objective in the form of an in-service workshop.

The management procedure already described for our training program actually provides three built-in trainee feedback mechanisms. First, the periodic conferences between the trainee and the instructor which may be initiated at any time by either participant assures a continuing and individually tailored feedback system. These conferences usually emphasize recently completed instructional activities discussing both strengths and weaknesses of trainee performance, but may involve discussion of any concerns relative to trainee progress. Of course, the communication system here is a two-way channel; and trainees use these conference sessions to report their reactions to instructional activities which becomes valuable input for the instructor in reviewing and revising the module.

The second and third feedback mechanisms provided by SECTraC module management procedures are the seminar experience and the intertrainee communication ged by their cooperative use of the described room which, in effect, serves as their base of operations. Both these feedback opportunities involve group interaction and reaction with the primary distinction being that the seminar is a relatively structured group session with the instructor interacting, in contrast to the more informal and continuous communication taking place between trainees. .

SUMMARY

A single competency based teacher training model may not emerge from the current experimentation in higher education. However, the concept of focusing on specific teaching skills and providing training alternatives to students, coupled with the practice of allowing students to progress at a rate commensurate with their abilities and the resources available to them, should evolve in some form as a major characteristic of teacher education in this country.

This paper presents the SECTraC project at the University of Missouri—Columbia as a prototype model having applicability to teacher training. Although the SECTraC project is designed to prepare curriculum consultants for special education at the graduate level, the processes employed in researching competencies, specifying program content and designing modules are applicable with modification to pre-service teacher training programs.

In an attempt to illustrate the need for change in teacher education, the authors have presented competency based teacher training in a format paralleling some essentials of good teaching. This approach was taken to accent the point that the curriculum development processes applied by teachers of children are applicable to program development in higher education. Just as is true in quality education for children, the emphasis in teacher education has to be on the learner as well as on the curriculum. Competency based teacher training models, if fully researched, may well serve to guarantee attention to the pre-service teacher as a learner.

ALERT

The 51st Annual International CEC Convention will be held in Dallas, Texas, at the Dallas Memorial Auditorium on April 22-27, 1973.

On May 1-4, 1973, the International Reading Association is holding its 18th annual convention at Currigan Hall in Denver, Colorado.

RESOURCE MATERIALS

BEYOND "COMPENSATORY EDUCATION"

The contributors to this book feel that "compensatory education" has failed to alleviate the problems of low-income and ethnic-minority children. They answer the question "But how can the nation's schools do any better?" in a collection of articles called *Beyond "Compensatory Education": A New Approach to Educating Children.* The articles propose a more productive approach to education than some of the current unsuccessful methods. They focus on the needs of Blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans and others in an effort to alert educators to some of the present incongruencies which presently exist between these children's homes and the schools they attend. Specifically, the book rejects the "melting pot" philosophy and advocates cultural pluralism to surmount the social impasse frequently faced by teachers and administrators today.

For more information, contact

The Council for Exceptional Children
1411 South Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 900
Arlington, Virginia 22202

LET'S TRY DOING SOMETHING ELSE KIND OF THING

Let's Try Doing Something Else Kind of Thing: Behavioral Principles and the Exceptional Child describes practical applications of behavioral principles which can be useful to teachers, teacher educators, and others involved in the education of exceptional children, both handicapped and gifted.

Contents include an examination of the development of the precision teaching approach, developing and measuring curriculum in the classroom, using precision measurement with parents in a community approach to mental retardation, and a discussion of ways in which behavior modification techniques can return special class children to the regular school program.

For further information, contact

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research & Development
1855 Folsom Street
San Francisco, California 94103

CLASSROOM FORUM

Edited by Norma M. Boekel

PROBLEM 25

I am the happy recipient of $300 earmarked to buy materials for my intermediate EMR class. Formerly, I relied on teacher-made materials for two reasons— limited money and limited materials available. Where can I receive help in making decisions concerning the wise use of this money?

Before you seek advice from anyone with expertise in instructional materials, take an inventory of the materials which you can borrow on a short-term or long-term basis from your school library, your local school district, or your regional or associate special education instructional materials center. Then, take a careful look at all those materials which you have made over the years as well as the commercial materials which are in your classroom. After noting these materials, consider the type of children in your class and any special needs you may have as a teacher of these children.

Now, you are ready to seek other suggestions. If you are fortunate enough to be near a regional or associate special education instructional materials center, ask either the librarian or the person who purchases the materials for the center to offer suggestions based on the information that you have gathered.

In addition, visit the exhibits of instructional materials at state and regional education meetings. These can offer a quick course in instructional materials which may not be available elsewhere.

Lastly, if the game "Selecto" is available from the local instructional materials center, you and a group of fellow teachers should make arrangements to play it. "Selecto" is a game simulation in which instructional materials are selected for a hypothetical class of special education children. If "Selecto" is not available, you may wish to request a copy from Rocky Mountain Special Education Instructional Materials Center, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado.

Our appreciation and a complimentary year's subscription go to Dr. Sandra K. Boland, Training Specialist, Rocky Mountain Special Education Instructional Materials Center, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado.

PROBLEM 27

I teach in a special education school that is not served by a speech correctionist. We have several children who display defective speech, resulting in frustration and sometimes rejection by their peers. Is it possible for classroom teachers, untrained in diagnosis and treatment, to help children overcome these problems?

All readers are invited to send their solutions to Problem 27. The May 1973 issue will summarize contributions by readers. Complimentary subscriptions will be awarded each month for the best solutions. Send your response to the Editorial Offices, *FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN*, 6635 East Villanova Place, Denver, Colorado 80222.

FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN back issues are available. Single copy of a back issue is $1.00, while ten or more copies of the same issue are 50¢ each.

FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN newsletter binder is now available for $3.50.