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Competency based education can promote development of a positive self concept in students.

Competency based education: catalyst for reform

by Howard D. Hill

For nearly a decade, competency based teacher education (CBTE) has been widely discussed among those whose major commitment is the preparation of teachers. Its strongest supporters view it as an agent for educational reform and as a vehicle for bringing more humanistic attitudes to evaluation of student performance. Detractors of competency based education attack it as being anti-intellectual and costly, as well as providing the means for dehumanizing education.

This paper presents a rationale in support of the competency based approach as a method for improving teacher training and educational programs. Before examining some underlying assumptions of competency based education, a definition is in order. According to McCleary, the term "competency based education" is used with such abandon that there is danger of its usefulness being destroyed. Unfortunately, the term has as many meanings as there are people presenting themselves as "experts" in the field. Hamilton provides the following definition of CBTE:

"This approach can be defined as one which specifies objectives in explicit form and holds prospective teachers accountable for meeting them. Teacher competencies and measures for evaluating them are specified and made known in advance of instruction."

This same method is then utilized by "competency" trained teachers in working with students and is generally referred to as competency based education (CBE). The above definition is congruent with that proposed by many writers in the field and will provide a point of focus for this paper.

Many of the criticisms waged against the competency based approach are not really justified. For example, some studies comparing the traditional vs. the competency based approach in working with academically disadvantaged students have yielded results strongly supportive of CBE in specific areas of student achievement. Far from dehumanizing education, a competency based
An additional advantage to CBE is that it is one of the few curricular frameworks where there is a built-in potential for self-correction through feedback. A combination of product and process evaluation can be used to assess a CBE program’s effectiveness.

In summary, benefits of competency based education include:

- The students know what is expected of them.
- The specificity of objectives can lead to improved evaluation procedures.
- Learning activities can be self-paced and individualized, leading to increased student independence.
- The teacher can more easily become a true facilitator of learning.
- The individual student competes with himself rather than other students.

Competency based education, if given a chance, may provide the most viable agent for reform of our educational system that has been proposed to date.

References

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