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"INDUSTRY FUNCTION" APPROACH TO
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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The author^{1/} has conducted research which appears to indicate that it may be advantageous to use an "industry function" approach rather than the traditional "job title" approach for the development of vocational education programs for preparing workers for employment in agricultural industries. The "industry function" consists of closely related activities which contribute to this achievement of a specific purpose of an industry. In each agricultural industry functions such as: sales, service, processing, transportation, office service, research, public relations, purchasing, and maintenance could be studied.

Research has indicated that similar businesses under different managers make assignments to personnel that vary considerably in requirements even though the primary job descriptions are identical. Furthermore, many industries do not have job descriptions for technicians, and for those that do, the technician activities are numerous and diverse. Research has indicated that "job titles" are usually not available for off-farm agricultural occupations. Other studies have also indicated that the amount of time devoted to the use of agricultural competencies varied widely when "job titles" were used.

^{1/} Albracht, James J., "A Process for Determining Vocational Competencies for the Performance of Essential Activities for Sales Personnel in the Feed Industry and the Loci at which the Competencies Could be Taught." Michigan State University 1966. This study was supported by a grant from the U.S. Office of Education, Contract No. OE-6-85-014, under provisions of Section 4 (c) of the Vocational Act of 1963. Unpublished doctoral dissertation.

It has been found that "job titles" are often out-of-date, are frequently ignored by the supervisor, and unions often object to the performance of work that is not given in the "job title" descriptions. The preparation of "job title" descriptions is time consuming and costly.

Research by Clark^{2/} indicated that industries could be analyzed by functions and activities in a satisfactory manner. Representatives of the industry who are responsible for the performance of the activities which are essential for the performance of the function of an industry effectively indicate which competencies are essential for the performance of various activities.

The process of consulting the representatives to determine the vocational competencies which are essential for the performance of activities of an industry function can be rapidly completed at a minimum of cost. The process is also easily completed because of the specificity of the competency for the performance of a particular activity of a particular function. The generalities which are often involved in the case of varying job descriptions with the same "job title" are avoided.

Figure One is an example of the "industry function" approach.

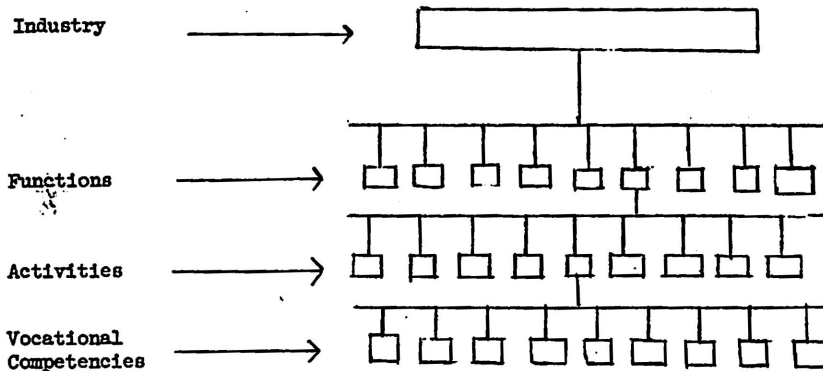


Figure One

^{2/} Clark, Raymond, Vocational Competencies Needed by Workers in Non-Farm Agricultural Occupations. E. Lansing, Michigan, Michigan State University, June 1964 (mimeo)

The local curricula director along with the agriculture teacher and the local advisory committee make the determinations regarding the vocational competencies which are to be included in the specific curriculum. The vocational competencies are the knowledge, understandings, or abilities needed to perform the essential activities in an industry.

Table Two indicates a procedure for the "industry function" approach

Steps	Examples
1. Select the industry to be served by the local educational program.	Feed industry
2. Select a function(s) of the industry which was selected in Step 1.	Sales function
3. Select the activities which are essential for the performance of the activities selected in Step 2.	Sells feed to the producer
4. Select the vocational competencies which are essential for the performance of the activities selected in Step 3.	Ability to determine rations for specific livestock (poultry) uses

Figure Two

Wherever possible, the competencies should be clustered so that group classes could be conducted. The competencies which are not common to several students will need to be taught on an individual basis.

Many of the same vocational competencies could be involved in the performance of several activities and several functions for more than one industry. It might be possible for a student to be qualified for the performance of several activities and functions in more than one industry.

It appears that the "industry function" approach for determining vocational education curricula has merit, and eliminates some of the problems involved in the "job title" approach. The process involved determines the vocational competencies which are required for the performance of specific activities and specific functions of an industry.

The findings constitute a basis for organizing educational programs to prepare students for occupations in an industry. After the individual student programs have been determined, efforts should be made to cluster the vocational competencies so that the most

effective instruction is provided.

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