
These writers prefer the judgmental to the operational (CBTE) view of assessing teacher competence. They give six reasons for their preference.

Operational vs. Judgmental Assessment of Teacher Competence

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MOST advocates of Competency-Based Teacher Education (CBTE) have recommended the identification of teacher "competencies" in prespecified lists of observable behaviors. These advocates point out that establishing behavioral criteria has the considerable advantage of allowing observers to agree that a criterion of competency has been reached by a teacher or student teacher. This definition will be referred to as the *operational* view of competence. It will be argued that this view leads to impractical and even harmful practices.

Moreover, this is not the only definition of competence. In this article, an alternative approach to the education of teachers and the assessment of teacher competence will be advocated—the *judgmental* approach. It is offered, not to create semantic confusion, but to challenge the notion of an exclusive tie between competence assessment and CBTE.

The judgmental view is in many ways more traditional; it accompanies any teacher training activities—including study of the disciplines and guiding educational theory, acquisition of knowledge, development of specific skills, practice in real and simulated classrooms, and a range of work judged as

most valuable and appropriate by experienced teachers and teacher educators. It calls for improved assessment of teacher competence—coordinated assessment based on observation by professors, teachers, administrators, citizens, and students—with little prespecification of teaching skill, but with great attention to what these different observers perceive as competence in day-to-day and special assessment situations. The results of the assessments of these observers are summarized in ordinary language, readily understandable to those local personnel who need to know about teacher competence.

The operational view of competence stresses prespecification, analysis, and objectivity. Howsam and Houston, authors of the prime reference book on CBTE, prefer to speak of "competency":

The word *competency* has been chosen to indicate an emphasis on the "ability to do," in

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The judgmental view of competence depends on a variety of judges evaluating the performance of a student teacher.

contrast to the more traditional emphasis on the "ability to demonstrate knowledge" (1972, p. 3).

In a similar vein, the authors of the Final Report of the Committee on National Program Priorities in Teacher Education (CNPTE) reserved the term "competency-based teacher education" for programs which accept measures of "the effects of training on a teacher's behavior under actual classroom conditions" (1971, p. 5) as measures of teacher effectiveness. They regard CBTE as a technical term excluding teacher education efforts that emphasize other measures of competence.

The CNPTE report pointed out that its criterion of effectiveness is

... highly useful in teacher education programs since one may observe teachers to determine explicitly whether they evidence the behaviors which a particular preparatory program claims to be producing (p. 35).

Competence is thus more reliably measured. The security offered by this increased reliability of measurement lies at the heart of many of the advantages claimed for CBTE. And, it is true, observers can be reasonably

certain whether or not student teachers master the behavioral tasks they are assigned.

What Are the Critical Measures?

But there are problems with determining which teacher competencies to prespecify. Ideally, the list must be short because the development of specific instructional programs and criterion tests is expensive and because training to *mastery* is time-consuming. But the list must emphasize the range of skills valued by experienced teachers and administrators, since they will need to use the CBTE assessments in selection and continuing professional education. Furthermore, reports of percentage scores on behavioral specifications are not immediately useful to district personnel. Whether or not such scores correlate with teaching success or indicate appropriate further training is a matter yet to be verified.

The problems of behavioral specification have been inventoried by Eisner (1967, 1969), Broudy (1972), and others. In brief, they doubt that many important educational objectives can be stated behaviorally, that

difficult-to-state objectives will survive in the presence of a surfeit of highly explicit objectives, or that criterion-testing situations approximate the life uses of learning. Can a "critical list" of immediate goals facilitate the pursuit of long-range goals by young men and women—differing greatly in background, talent, and aspiration—destined for classrooms and communities differing in history, custom, and expectation? The advocates of CBTE suggest that there are certain important behaviors which must be mastered by all teachers. Stake (1973) argued that there are none.

But is it true that *any* learnings are critical, necessary, essential? . . . From a technical point of view, our research findings do not support "criticality," i.e., that for any given long-range goal there are certain specific, critical intermediate goals. As a matter of personal preference, anyone may want to declare some learnings [to be] critical. . . . They believe certain things are important enough to label them "critical." They cannot, however, demonstrate that those things are critical [on the grounds that] they are universally desired or because they are the only good way to attain a specific long-range goal (p. 28).

These objections to behavioral specification raise doubts as to whether *any* preconceived list of competencies—even if unanimously approved by the faculty of a teacher education institution—would constitute an appropriate course of study for any particular *individual* student teacher. Most CBTE programs are said to be individualized; this is true only by a particular definition. We recall the distinction, recently restated very lucidly by McClellan (1972), between (a) individual choice of institutionally approved goals (and the pacing of progress toward them), and (b) individual choice (and pursuit) by the student of his *own* goals. CBTE programs are generally individualized in the sense of the first definition. Furthermore, CBTE competencies, by the nature of the philosophy, the technology, and the language, are but a few of the competencies to which teachers, as persons, aspire.

Several recent writers, among them Katz (1971), Feinberg *et al.* (1973), and

Atkin (1973), have argued that it is harmful for central administrations and agencies outside the school to take over curricular and moral responsibilities that once belonged to teachers. There are grounds for criticizing many teachers as insufficiently responsible, but the present authors believe that improvement will come with reward and opportunity for taking responsibility. It will not come by increased imposition of rules and statements of standards. The most serious objection to the operational view is that it fosters the belief that what a teacher should be is for outside experts to decide rather than for teachers themselves to decide. The imposition upon teachers of an orthodoxy of competence reflected in the operational view should be resisted.

Choices That Teachers Make

Of course, no one should be indifferent to the competence choices that teachers make. Interested persons must have the opportunity to express their satisfactions and dissatisfactions. A comprehensive assessment procedure will provide opportunity for those who are concerned about good teaching to pass judgment on what individual teachers are doing.

The judgmental view of competence depends on a variety of judges evaluating the performance of the student teacher. Many different groups will have legitimate claims upon teacher competence; individuals have differing ideas about what good teaching is. Peers will differ from parents, parents from students, students from administrators and teacher educators, and there will be differences among individuals within these groups: each professor has his models, and each student teacher his intents. The differences among their perceptions are not discrepancies to be resolved or compromised; they are facts to be learned.

Teacher education institutions and the student teachers themselves have joint responsibility for seeing that information about teacher competence is solicited from a sufficient number and variety of observers, and for seeing that appropriate situations are

selected for observation. This is not to say that professors should not have preconceptions as to what should count as desirable competences; they should. And they should be ingenious in arranging situations in which students can demonstrate these competences, as well as competences valued by others. Colleges and other agencies should provide situations where teachers—whether in training or not—could voluntarily present themselves for observation and assessment in circumstances that simulate a variety of important obligations and problems in the schools.

No one observation should be considered highly reliable. Observations need to be cross-checked and, when possible, probed. This approach does not call for less measurement than the operational approach, nor is the responsibility for measurement taken more casually. The gathering of judgments of teacher competence requires skill in administration and measurement. With it, the resulting collection of observations can be reliable, relevant, comprehensive, and usable.

To conclude, it has been argued that there is no exclusive tie between the operational approach to assessing teacher com-

petence and CBTE. Before accepting such a tie, teacher educators should pause and reflect upon the judgmental view. We prefer it for six reasons:

1. It draws upon the acuity and values of relevant people without requiring prespecification or operationalization of their ideas of competence.
2. It does not give all its allegiance to behavior as the language most appropriate for expressing educational goals.
3. It permits the initiative in setting standards and choosing teaching strategies to remain with the teacher being assessed.
4. It does not place a grave restriction upon teacher education activities or upon the competences to be stressed.
5. It allows assessment to occur without disengaging the teacher from the complexities of educative acts.
6. It yields reports in language commonly used by teachers and administrators.

The operational approach will be preferred by some because it yields demonstrably reliable scores, reflects more favorably on various administrative agencies, and requires a thorough revision of the curriculum. It has its values. The issue needs debate.

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