Overview of DACUM Job Analysis Process

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What is DACUM?

DACUM (Developing A Curriculum) is a quick yet highly valid job analysis technique. The DACUM process is used to determine the competencies that should be addressed in a training curriculum for a specific occupation. DACUMs are used to develop job profiles for all types of occupations, including top-level managers and specialized jobs. This cost-effective and efficient technique has been validated through research and compares very positively with other job analysis methods.

DACUM is based on three premises: (1) expert workers can better describe their job than anyone else, (2) any job can be effectively described in terms of the competencies or tasks that successful workers in that occupation perform, and (3) the specific knowledge, skills, attitudes and tools required by workers in order to correctly perform their tasks can also be described.

What is the DACUM Process?

Fundamentally, the DACUM process is brainstorming in a well-organized, step-by-step manner. The process requires a panel of 5 to 9 expert workers in the occupation being analyzed, a qualified DACUM facilitator, and a recorder. Although some jobs can be analyzed in one working day, it is better to schedule at one and a half to two days, especially for more complex jobs. The panel members must be articulate workers who are considered outstanding in their occupation, with highly-developed technical knowledge and skill. A facilitator specifically trained in the DACUM process is essential for valid and usable outcomes. The facilitator must be able to elicit specific task statements, deal with conflict and debate when the panel is reaching consensus, and continually forge ahead in order to complete the process.

During the DACUM work session the facilitator systematically guides the panel members through brainstorming and consensus-reaching discussions to describe their job in terms of main duties and specific tasks. Since the specific tasks are the competencies necessary to do the job, it is critical that they be described accurately and precisely. The panel members also agree on the relevant attitudes, knowledge, and skills as well as the primary tools of their job. The recorder writes the duties and tasks on large index cards that are taped or pinned to a wall facing the panel. This storyboarding process is essential to successful DACUM profiles because the cards are replaced, reworded, and rearranged until the panel members agree that it is an accurate profile of their job

What is the Result of a DACUM?

The result of the first part of the DACUM process is a chart or profile that shows the duties and tasks performed in the occupation. The profile also lists necessary worker traits and attitudes, general skills and knowledge, and the tools and equipment the worker uses. Research indicates that DACUM profiles not only cost less than conducting job inventories by mail, they also produce more valid results.

The DACUM process is not complicated, but the development of a quality training program entails additional steps. Once a DACUM profile is developed and reproduced on paper, it should be validated by having other expert workers and supervisors review it for completeness and accuracy. The validation process can include a variety of criteria, but some of the most useful are criticality of the task, frequency that the task is performed. and need for training this task. The specific tasks that should be included in a training curriculum are one of the outcomes of the validation.

To provide useful information for curriculum development or any other uses of DACUM profiles, the validations should be targeted to the intended use of the DACUM profiles. For example, if a profile is to be the foundation for a jail assistant administrator training curriculum, the reviewers should be selected from the jail system or systems that will actually use the completed program.

The next step after validation is task analysis. Through task analysis, ideally conducted jointly by expert workers and curriculum developers, each task is further analyzed and broken down into sequential operational steps. These steps describe exactly how to accomplish the task and should include the specific knowledge, skills, tools, and equipment needed to perform the task. The

completed task analyses become the foundation or outline for developing the training curriculum.

What Are Other Uses of DACUM Profiles?

In addition to curriculum development, DACUM profiles can be used in several other ways. They are used (1) to develop accurate job descriptions, (2) to evaluate if existing programs provide training for the competencies needed for today's jobs, (3) as a pretest to determine the training needs of staff, (4) to develop competency-based post tests for training, (5) to develop auxiliary components to the training program such as computer-based training and video tapes, and of course (6) as the foundation for developing a complete training program for a specific job in the correctional system. Additionally, DACUM profiles are used (1) for developing performance evaluations, (2) for making career decisions with information about specific occupations, and (3) for new supervisors/managers' understanding of what their employees do or should do on the job.

The Academy uses the DACUM process to analyze key correctional jobs. Several DACUM profiles have been completed (see list). DACUM profiles provide a foundation for developing seminars and other Academy activities. Copies of the DACUM profiles developed by the Academy are available from the NIC Information Center.

Caution - Remember this!

IMPORTANT NOTE: The DACUM PROFILES do not breakdown a job far enough in terms of tasks and sub-tasks for FTO topic identification, nor do they include the steps required for task accomplishment. They will, however, provide a starting "snapshot" concerning a given job. If you are using a DACUM-type process for identifying FTO program topics for entry level correctional officer, you will need to continue to facilitate the incumbent panel until, perhaps, more than 500 gross tasks ands sub-tasks are identified. Later, these will need to be refined, using frequency and criticalness, into the core tasks of the job.

NIC DACUM Profiles (See above caution)

1988
Community Corrections Administrator
Jail Administrator
Warden/Superintendent

1989
Institutional Department Head
Correctional Trainer

1990
State Director of Correctional Education
Education Director of Correctional
Facility(ies)

1991
Correctional Educator
Training Program Manager

1992
Healthcare Supervisors
Correctional Officers
Director of Correctional Industries
Correctional Attorneys

1993
Security Director
Public and Media Information Director
Administrator Substance Abuse Services

1994
Juvenile Facility Administrator
Juvenile Detention Director/Supervisor
State Director Juvenile Corrections Services
Juvenile Probation Director
Regional Field Coordinator

1997
Community Corrections Professional III
Jail Primary Booking Officer
Training Administrator
Community Resource Liaison

2001
Detention Facility Inspector

The NIC Information Center has copies of the above DACUM profiles.

NIC Information Center
1860 Industrial Circle, Suite A
Longmont, CO 80501
(800) 877-1461

The Training Resource Center of Eastern Kentucky University also has the above job profiles as well as more than 170 other DACUM profiles downloadable from their website at *www.trc.eku.edu/dacum/archive.shtml*