

Lesson D3–3

Identifying Occupational Competencies

Unit D. Employability in Agricultural/Horticultural Industry

Problem Area 3. Gaining Employment

Lesson 3. Identifying Occupational Competencies

New Mexico Content Standard:

Pathway Strand: Employability and Career Development

Standard: XIII: Know and understand the importance of employability skills.

Benchmark: XIII-A: Know the standards and qualifications that must be met in order to enter a given industry.

Performance Standard: 1. Discuss employability in a given industry and factors that effect it in order to evaluate salaries and opportunities. 3. Identity and demonstrate positive work behaviors and personal qualities required to uphold quality standards.

Student Learning Objectives. Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

1. Explain the importance of occupational competencies in gaining employment.
2. Describe the use of task analysis.
3. Describe occupational competency needs in gaining occupational preparation.

List of Resources. The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

Recommended Resources. One of the following resources should be selected to accompany the lesson:

Morgan, Elizabeth M., et al. *AgriScience Explorations*, Second Edition. Danville, Illinois: Interstate Publishers, Inc., 2000.

Schroeder, Charles B., et al. *Introduction to Horticulture*, Third Edition. Danville, Illinois: Interstate Publishers, Inc., 2000.

Other Resources. The following resources will be useful to students and teachers:

Biondo, Ronald J. and Charles B. Schroeder. *Introduction to Landscaping: Design, Construction, and Maintenance*, Second Edition. Danville, Illinois: Interstate Publishers, Inc., 2003.

Chronicle Agricultural Occupations Guidebook. Moravia, New York: Chronicle Guidance Publishers, Inc., 1997.

U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration Staff. *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*. Indianapolis, Indiana: JIST Works, Inc., 1991.

List of Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities.

Writing surface
Overhead projector
Transparencies from attached masters

Terms. The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

Attitude
Employability skills
General education
Human relations skills
Knowledge
Occupational competencies
Skill
Task analysis
Technical skills

Interest Approach. Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

This approach focuses on having the competencies to perform the duties of horticulture occupations. Begin by asking “Why do employers hire employees?” The short answer is “To have workers.” A better answer is “To have people who are capable and can carry out the work that they are to do.” Ask, “Why is it important for an employee to be productive?” Various answers may be given, such as “To keep from getting fired,” “To make more money,” and “To get a good recommendation to move to another job.” The most important reason is to make money for the employer. Without an employee being productive, the employer is not getting return on what the employee is being paid. This may be a difficult point to get across. Ask students to share examples that explain this. To get started, use the example of two floral designers (named Sally and Jennifer) who work at the same flower shop. Sally makes five arrangements each hour; Jennifer makes three each hour. Which designer is most valuable to the employer? Why?” Move from the interest approach into the objectives for the lesson.

Summary of Content and Teaching Strategies

Objective I: Explain the importance of occupational competencies in gaining employment.

Anticipated Problem: How are occupational competencies important in gaining employment?

- I. **Occupational competencies** are the attributes that enable an individual to perform the duties of an occupation. Competencies in an occupation tend to be similar regardless of where the occupation is carried out.
 - A. Occupational competencies can be divided into three important areas.
 1. Knowledge—**Knowledge** is the information that a person has acquired and can recall to use in performing an agricultural/horticultural occupation or in other ways. It is the ability to read, write, do arithmetic, communicate, use agriculture/horticulture, and other abilities. Some individuals might say that knowledge is “stored information.”
 2. Skill—**Skill** is the capacity to perform activities that typically require a high degree of development in manipulative areas, such as the skill to do a bark graft, perform a mathematical calculation, or use a global positioning system.
 3. Attitude—**Attitude** is how a person mentally feels about something. Attitudes are kept internally but are evident by how we relate to people, go about work, use resources, and view work. Attitudes are demonstrated by smiles, friendliness, honesty, and productivity at work. People are said to have “good attitudes” or “bad attitudes.”
 - B. Individuals need to possess occupational competencies in order to get a job.
 1. An individual who has developed occupational competencies should have the capacity to perform an occupation for an employer.

2. Having good competencies gives an individual an advantage over a person who has few competencies when looking for a job.
3. An individual with competencies will require less training to be a productive employee.

Use discussion and presentation approaches to cover this objective. TM: D3–3A may be used to outline the content. Role playing might be used in the classroom to illustrate an employer interviewing a person with the needed competencies and another person who has few occupational competencies. The teacher will need to contrive the situation ahead of time and provide the students involved in role playing with information. Here is what is needed: three individuals, an employer who has a job opening that requires a person with specific occupational competencies, a person with occupational competencies by virtue of education and experience, and a person without occupational competencies and little specific training. Select an occupation found in the local area that has competency requirements, such as a landscape installer, floral designer, or wholesale florist. After the role playing, have members of the class critique what they observed and who they would hire.

Objective 2: Describe the use of task analysis.

Anticipated Problem: What is task analysis and how is it used?

II. **Task analysis** is the process used to identify occupational competencies.

- A. Task analysis involves carefully studying what a person does at work in an occupation.
 1. The activities of an individual in an occupation are determined by observing the work performed in the occupation, interviewing people employed in the occupation, interviewing supervisors of people employed in the occupation, and gathering information in other ways. Several sources are needed to produce an accurate task analysis, though observing one individual is quite helpful.
 2. The units of work needed in an occupation are listed. The major units are competencies. The units of work that can be clustered with a competency are subcompetencies. A competency may have two or more subcompetencies that make up the overall competency. Subcompetencies are sometimes known as tasks.
 3. Have one or more individuals who are employed in the occupation, are personnel directors, or are otherwise qualified to do so, review the list of competencies and subcompetencies and suggest improvements.
- B. People trained in vocational education development often study occupations to identify competencies. Students can do their own competency studies by observing a person at work in an occupation and making a list of what the individual does.
- C. Task analysis provides information that is useful in gaining the education and training needed to enter an occupation.
 1. Individuals use task analysis to help acquire the skills they need.
 2. Educators use task analysis to develop curriculum to prepare people to work in occupations.

3. Employers can use task analysis to design training for new employees.

Use discussion and presentation methods to achieve this objective. Task analysis is a fairly in-depth process that should be treated here in simple terms. Use TM: D3–3B to outline the content of the objective. Have students practice performing a task analysis on a horticulture occupation that is of interest to them. To get students started in using task analysis, use the example occupation of “horticulture teacher.” Form students into cooperative learning groups and have each group prepare a task analysis. Each group should provide an oral report to the class.

Objective 3: Describe occupational competency needs in gaining occupational preparation.

Anticipated Problem: What occupational competencies are needed to prepare for an occupation?

- III. The competencies needed to prepare for an occupation vary from one occupation to another. Occupations that are similar may have similar competencies.
 - A. The competencies needed for an occupation may be grouped into four areas: technical skills, general education, human relations skills, and employability skills.
 1. **Technical skills** are the skills specific to the particular occupation. Technical skills are those identified through task analysis generally associated with the occupation being studied. For example, a floral designer needs skills that people in other occupations would not need.
 2. **General education** is the preparation an individual needs that is not specific to a particular occupation. General education includes the ability to read, write, do arithmetic, and communicate. For example, a floral designer needs to be able to read, write, do arithmetic, and communicate.
 3. **Human relations skills** are the abilities to get along with other people. They include common courtesies that help people work and live together happily. For example, a floral designer works with other people and must know how to relate to them.
 4. **Employability skills** are the abilities to get and keep a job. They relate to being productive on the job. For example, a floral designer must be at work on time, stay on task, and follow the employer’s procedures.

Use class presentation and discussion approaches to cover the content of this objective. Use TM: D3–3C to outline the information about the four areas of competencies. Invite a floral designer to the class to explain how each of the four competencies relate to their profession.

Review/Summary. Use the objectives for the lesson as guides in reviewing and summarizing the content. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Have a local personnel director, school counselor, vocational counselor, or other individual who is qualified discuss occupational competencies or task analysis. If not previously done as a part of this lesson, have students perform a simple task analysis for a horticulture occupation that interests them. Pri-

vate counseling may be appropriate with students to help them identify the occupational preparation they need based on their tentative career goals.

Application. Students can apply the lesson as they plan their supervised experience or pursue part-time or full-time jobs in horticulture. The information can also be applied as student choose courses in high school that develop occupational competencies.

Evaluation. Assessing the extent to which the students have achieved the objectives can be based on student participation in reviewing and summarizing the lesson as well as attentiveness throughout. Enthusiasm for doing a simple task analysis can also be a part of evaluation. A written test can also be give. A sample written test is attached.

Answers to Sample Test:

Part One: Matching

1=d, 2=a, 3=b, 4=c, 5=e

Part Two: Short Answer

1. Occupational competencies are the attributes (or qualities) that enable an individual to perform an occupation. They are important because they indicate the kind of preparation an individual needs to enter an occupation.
2. The answer should include the general steps in task analysis identify the activities of individuals in an occupation, list the activities (units of work), cluster the activities to form competencies and subcompetencies, and have the list reviewed by people in the occupation, personnel directors, and other qualified individuals.
3. The four areas of occupational competencies are technical skills (skills specific to the occupation), general education (education not specific to any occupation, such as reading, writing, doing arithmetic, and communicating), human relations skills (abilities to get along with other people), and employability skills (abilities needed to get, keep, and advance in a job).

Test

Lesson D3–3: Identifying Occupational Competencies

Part One: Matching

Instructions. Match the term with the correct response. Write the letter of the term by the definition.

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| a. knowledge | d. technical skills |
| b. skill | e. employability skills |
| c. task analysis | |

- _____ 1. Skills specific to an occupation that require training to develop.
- _____ 2. Information that a person has acquired and can recall to use in performing an agriculture/horticulture occupation.
- _____ 3. Ability to perform activities that require a high degree of training and/or experience.
- _____ 4. The process used to identify occupational competencies.
- _____ 5. Abilities that help a person get, keep, and be successful in a job.

Part Two: Short Answer

Instructions. Provide information to answer the following questions.

1. What are occupational competencies? Why are they important?

2. How is a task analysis performed for an occupation?

3. List and briefly explain the four areas of occupational competencies.

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

Occupational competencies attributes that enable an individual to perform the duties of an occupation

Three areas of occupational competencies:

- **Knowledge**
- **Skill**
- **Attitude**

TASK ANALYSIS

Task analysis the process used to identify occupational competencies

Steps:

- 1. Observe, interview, and read about the units of work performed in an occupation.**
 - **Units of work are tasks or job duties.**
 - **The units identified should be common in an occupation regardless of where it is carried out.**
- 2. List the units of work.**
- 3. Cluster similar units of work, with lesser units under larger units.**
- 4. Have a qualified person review the list.**

COMPETENCIES NEEDED

Competencies needed for an occupation are in four areas:

- **Technical skills that are specific to an occupation**
- **General education ability to read, write, do mathematics, communicate, and other areas**
- **Human relations skills ability to get along with other people**
- **Employability skills abilities needed to get, keep, and succeed in employment**