DACUM PROCESS

From: Hogan, C. F. 1999, Facilitating learning: practical strategies for college and university, Eruditions, Melbourne, Australia.

AUTHOR/BACKGROUND

The DACUM Process was developed at the University of British Columbia and was originally used in the Hospitality and Tourism fields. It has been used successfully in Technical and Further Education and Curtin University of Technology in Western Australia. The School of Management and Marketing has utilised DACUM to involve specialists from the community in the design of the "Facilitation and Group Process Skills" and the "Cross Cultural Communication" units at post graduate level.

PURPOSE/RATIONALE

The introduction and changes in technology impacts on job roles all the time. As a result it is difficult for human resource managers and developers to update learning mechanisms to enable employees to cope with these changes. The DACUM Process is used when a need is identified for a new training program or for the revision of an out-dated one. The process may also be used to generate job descriptions or to generate information for positions that are becoming multi-skilled.

WHAT IS THE DACUM PROCESS?

DACUM stands for Developing a Curriculum. It is a process in which a group interacts to develop a set of behavioural objectives related to a specific job or occupation. The end products of the process are:

- a skill inventory and behavioural objectives for a specific job
- information which may be used for performance appraisal systems or competency profiles
- useful data for human resource managers which learning booklets may form the basis of future courses.

SIZE OF GROUP

Between eight and fourteen people are desirable to enable maximum participation and to ensure a representative sample of people.

Participants need to be selected according to the following criteria. Ideally they should be people who:

- have full-time involvement in the occupation
- are articulate and open-minded
- are forward thinking
- can be present throughout the whole workshop

ADVANTAGES

The process has a number of advantages:

- it is quick and economic

- it can be implemented by a small number of industry representatives

- it requires active involvement of representatives for the "client" department

- it is a method that HR managers can use to become more responsive to the specific learning needs of different departments
- as opposed to the questionnaire method, it allows practitioners to discuss and reach a balanced consensus. The outcomes will probably be better than the responses of a person working in isolation
- by focussing on specific job skills and essential enabling knowledge the resultant skill profiles are an excellent source of information for the workers themselves; supervisors, managers and trainers.

DISADVANTAGES
Unless special precautions are taken, difficulties may arise from:

- the facilitator: he/she must be proficient in terms of group handling skills and be conscious of the need to suppress personal biases
- the participants: the group must be current representatives of the position under study. Preferably they should be forward thinkers as narrow perspectives should not be allowed to dominate the group.

THE FACILITATOR
This role is critical. The person needs to be:

- familiar with the DACUM Process
- a competent and confident facilitator
- preferably uninvolved in the job area under discussion

The role of the facilitator is to:

- direct the flow of the meeting
- ensure maximum coverage of the job under discussion
- ensure that all participants are encouraged to contribute
- help the scribe when necessary

SCRIBE
This person is responsible for writing competencies and objectives in large letters exactly as they are stated.

VENUE LAYOUT
Preferably chose a venue away from the usual work area of the participants. This helps to eliminate interruptions. A room with a large uninterrupted wall is required to display "cards" that refer to the competencies identified as the workshop progresses.

TIME
Workshops vary between half to full day depending on the nature of the job being analysed. It is the human resource manager's responsibility to get the wording of the specific job content and behavioural objectives tightened up after the workshop.

MATERIALS
Butcher paper, cards 200 mm x 100 mm minimum, felt pens, masking tape, blu-tac

STAGES
Introduction
It is useful if the facilitator:

• runs an appropriate ice-breaker

• explains the purpose of the workshop

• asks participants to suspend all knowledge of current training programs

• explains the rules of the brain-storming process
The DACUM Process consists of five phases and it is helpful if the facilitator explains these to the participants at the start. They are:

• introduction and orientation
• agreement of the span of the position to be analysed
• identification of main areas of competence
• identification of behavioural objectives
• analysis of data gathered.

Agreement of the Span of the Position to be Analysed
It is necessary for participants to focus on the range of position to be discussed, eg if considering the field of sales and marketing the position under discussion may be a "sales clerk" therefore the competencies needed should be basic and very different to those of, say, a "marketing manager" or "customer contact manager".

Identification of General Areas of Competence
Participants are asked to generate the range of general competencies and enabling knowledge required by sales clerks. Cards are labelled and placed with the blu-tack vertically down the left side of the wall facing the participants.

Sales Clerk :
Area heading
• Written Expression
• Oral Expression
• Numeracy Skills
• Computer Skills
• Interpersonal Skills
• Selling Skills

Identification of Behavioural Objectives

If members find this is difficult it may be easier to ask the group first to list the tasks which sales clerks are required to perform. These tasks could be noted on butcher paper, eg *TASK* - receive telephone orders, check stock availability, write order.

WRITTEN EXPRESSION	Write order	Spell technical terms correctly
ORAL EXPRESSION	Discuss order with client	Handle difficult clients assertively
NUMERACY	Add and subtract	Check costs
COMPUTING	Key board skills	Check stock
INTERPERSONAL	Speak courteously	Speak clearly
SELLING	Determine clients needs - close sale	Ask clarifying questions

Analysis of data gathered

The cards are carefully gathered at the end of the session and details are typed. The human resources manager may need to check the objectives. A detailed job profile can be developed and supervisors can assess the skills of all their sales clerks (it may also be useful for sales clerks to do a self-assessment and check their self perceptions with those of the supervisors). See appendix 1. The data generated may indicate areas for:

• course development
• on the job training
• development of self-paced learning materials
• industry involvement and recommendation of relevant changes to TAFE and University courses.

REFERENCES

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