

Competencies Defined, the Components and Characteristics

The competency based approach is an approach that integrates the knowledge, know-how and attitudes in the solution of real-life problems. This approach seeks for linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the language.

Definitions of the Concept

1. Schneck (1978) views the CBA as an outcome based instruction that is adaptive to the needs of students, teachers and the community. Competencies describe the students' ability to apply basic and other skills to situations that are commonly encountered in everyday life. Therefore, the competency based approach is based on a set of outcomes that are derived from an analysis of tasks typically required of students in life role situations.
2. Mrowicki (1986) holds that competencies consist of a description of the essential skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours required for effective performance of a real world task or activity. These activities may relate to any domain of life.
3. To Savage (1993) the competency based model was defined by the U.S. office of Education as a performance based process leading to demonstrated mastery of basic and life skills necessary for the individual to function proficiently in the society. It is therefore a functional approach to education that emphasizes life skills and evaluates mastery of those skills according to actual learner performance.
4. Richards and Rodgers (2001) hold that the competency based approach focuses on the outcomes of learning. It addresses on what the learners are expected to do rather than on what they are expected to learn about. The CBA advocates defining educational goals in terms of precise measurable descriptions of knowledge, skills and behaviors that students should possess at the end of a course of study.

Components of the Competency Based Approach

Weddel (2006) outlines the components of competency based education and says that the approach consists of the following:

1. An assessment of the learners' needs
2. The selection of the competencies
3. The target instruction
4. An evaluation of the competency attainment

Features of the Competency Based Approach

The competency based approach is characterized by the following:

1. The Outcomes are made explicit a priori, specified in terms of behavioral objectives, the students clearly know what behaviors and skills are expected of them,
2. The contents are based on the learners' goals, i.e. outcomes or competencies, (Task- or performance-centered orientation. The focus is on what the students can do with the language and certain behaviors instead of knowledge of the language),
3. The approach makes use of an unlimited variety of instructional techniques and group work,
4. A focus on successful functioning in society which means that language is taught in order to prepare the students for the different demands of the world,
5. A focus on life skills to determine that language is always taught as a medium of communication in concrete tasks in which specific language forms/skills are required,
6. The approach makes extensive use of texts, media, and real life materials adapted to targeted competencies,
7. The instruction or teaching is paced to the needs of the learners, (student-centered instruction) (no time based instruction),
8. Continuous and ongoing assessment (Students' being pretested and posttested to determine the skills they lack before instruction and to ascertain the achieved the necessary ones).