Comparison of Employability Skill Subjects Taught Statewide to Junior and Senior Programs in a Vocational School

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Abstract

Vocational school employability instructors across the state of Ohio participated in the study. Sixty-eight surveys were sent out to 58 vocational schools and skill centers across the state of Ohio. Thirty-eight surveys were returned. The purpose of the study was to determine the level of compatibility between ITAC competencies and what Ohio vocational teachers said they were teaching and what the researcher was teaching in her classes. The results of the survey indicated that subjects most frequently being taught matched those expected by employers in the Integrated Technical & Academic Competencies (ITAC) and suggested by the state of Ohio.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to all Defiance College students who have accepted the challenge of writing a Master's Capstone experience and the faculty and staff who have helped them achieve their goals.
Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge all the people who lent their support, guidance, and effort toward the successful completion of this project. Sincere appreciation is expressed to my advisor, Dr. Suzanne McFarland, for her direction and encouragement from the project's initial stages to its completion. My husband is to be commended for his patience and encouragement during the preparation and completion of this project. Sincere gratitude is also expressed to my children, my parents, my mother and father-in-law, and the rest of my family whose encouragement and understanding served as an inspiration toward the accomplishment of this important educational goal. Thanks also to the vocational teachers across the state of Ohio who took some of their valuable time to answer my survey. Most especially, to God, for His guidance and help at those times when it was most needed.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Employers want employees with a foundation of basic employability skills. Lankard (1994) mentioned that young people lack the discipline and don’t want the “dirty jobs”. This type of attitude needs to change in order to be open to incorporate employability skills to make students more employable. (Lankard, 1994)

In order to enhance employability skills, courses are taught to help high school students gain these skills. These courses are part of all Ohio vocational school preparation.

“Employability skills can be defined, as skills that are not job specific, but are skills which cut horizontally across all industries and vertically across all jobs from entry level to chief executive officer.” (Sherer and Eadie, 1987, p. 16)

Additional readings define employability skills as the preparation or fundamental skills, which a person should build job-specific skills on and can be used in a variety of occupations. (Cotton, 2001)

The United States Department of Labor conducted a study to see what potential employers expected of recent high school graduates. The study was conducted by interviewing employers across the United States during a twelve month period. The report yielded a general outline of what employers expected entry level employees to have.

Ohio has developed guidelines for vocational schools called the Ohio Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies (ITAC). This document spells
out for Ohio's vocational teachers the competencies that should be covered in their courses.

Statement of Problem

This study was done in order to determine the level of compatibility between the ITAC competencies and what Ohio vocational teachers were teaching, and what the researcher was teaching in her classes.

Specifically, the questions that were answered include the following:

1. Were Ohio vocational teachers following the Ohio Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies? (ITAC)

2. Was the researcher's curriculum following the ITAC competencies?

Definition of Terms

SCANS—The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills: report on how schools prepare young people for work. (1991)

Employability Skills—skills that are not job specific, but are skills which cut horizontally across all industries and vertically across all jobs from entry level to chief executive officer. (Sherer and Eadie, 1987, p. 16)

ITAC—Integrated Technical & Academic Competencies: a resource for planning programs by integrating academics and technical competencies.

Vocational School—a school that trains in a skill or trade to be pursued as a career.

Limitations

The first limitation was that the answers were given from the teachers' perspectives only as opposed to what employers throughout the state of Ohio
were looking for in a recent graduate. While these surveys were sent out with the hope that all teachers would respond, this researcher could not predict how many would be returned.

The second limitation was that this researcher could not talk to a respondent if a question arouse as to the subject taught by that teacher unless the respondent chose to put his/her name and contact information on the survey.
Chapter II: Review of Literature

The purpose of the study was to determine the level of compatibility between the ITAC competencies and what Ohio vocational teachers were teaching, and what the researcher was teaching in her classes.

Specifically, the questions that were answered include the following:

1. Were Ohio vocational teachers following the Ohio Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies? (ITAC)

2. Was the researcher’s curriculum following the ITAC competencies?

Chapter II will briefly review studies about employer needs and perceptions of worker skills as well as information about the practices involved in teaching employability skills.

Employers want entry-level employees to have a variety of basic, higher-order, and affective employability skills. (Cotton, 2001)

While students can have job skills that are specific to the jobs they are applying for, having the basic employability skills are also of value. (Cotton 2001, p. 5) also stresses that, “Industrial education teachers in the secondary schools must not forget that there is a great need for preparing young people in their respective classes with good work habits. Students need to be taught such things as honesty, punctuality, regular attendance, productivity, and conscientiousness.”

Many employers are discouraged with the basic skills and work ethic young employees have. (Lankard, 1994) Younger workers have no respect for authority, are not willing to change, have poor customer service, and do not want
to do the “dirty” jobs. (Lankard, 1994) Employers are looking for the experienced worker who has basic employability skills to offer. Employers desire good work experience, verbal and math skills, and interpersonal skills. In order to create these skills, Lankard (1994) suggested areas of basic skills, technical skills, and apprenticeship programs to be given to orient new potential employees. Educators are trying to satisfy the need for entry level employees with the proper basic and employability skills.

The state of Wisconsin’s Department of Public Instruction suggests an outline of Core competencies for their school systems. (Wisconsin, Appendix A, p. 19) The competencies that are suggested to be covered are resources, interpersonal, information, systems, and technology. In addition to students mastering the competencies associated with these areas, they may apply for certification in the employability skills area as long as they met the requirements of the application. (Wisconsin, Appendix F and G, pgs. 26-30) The certification requires them working in the work field of choice with a mentor. The role of the mentor is to guide students as they learn and use basic employability skills. Teachers who implement this type of certification must be certified as a Department of Public Instruction instructor who will “work with students, their parents, and employers to implement the program”. (Wisconsin, p. 7)

Michigan’s Department of Education has a complete listing of content standards and benchmarks for employability skills called *Career and Employability Skills*. In this model, career planning starts at the elementary level and is continued through high school. Areas in the high school guidelines
include organizing career information, applying decision-making and analyzing information.

The Conference Board of Canada as part of Aspect (a community based training facility in Canada) developed a training manual that is to be used as a guide for teaching employability skills. The manual contains sixteen modules that cover different aspects of employability skills including, introduction to employability skills, self awareness, self esteem, communication, goal setting, problem solving and decision making, anger management, conflict resolution, feedback and criticism, assertiveness, learning styles, next step planning, stress management, time management, money management, and labor standards and human rights. “This curriculum is being used with a multitude of client groups ranging from youth at risk to high school students to older workers” (Canada, p. 1)

Other states, including Florida, have created similar programs and materials. For example, Florida Works Career Building Skills Curriculum follows a ten module systems, in which similar topics to the Canada program are covered.

SCANS or Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills also play an important role when covering the Core ITAC's suggested by the state of Ohio because they contain the same themes. The following list displays the five competencies that the United States Department of Labor identified in SCANS as subjects to be covered.

1. Resources: Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources (related theme: ITAC Strands 5 and 6)
2. Interpersonal: Works and others (related theme: ITAC Strand 4 and parts of Strand 2)
3. Information: Acquires and uses information (related theme: ITAC Strand 1)
4. Systems: Understand complex inter-relationships (related theme: ITAC Strand 2 and parts of Strand 4)
5. Technology: Works with a variety of technologies (related theme: ITAC Strand 3)

In order for the student to master competencies in the subjects listed above, he/she must have basic skills (reading and math), thinking skills (solving problems and reasoning), and personal qualities (self esteem, self management, and honesty).

Unfortunately, "SCANS estimates that less than half of all young adults have achieved these reading and writing minimums; even fewer can handle the mathematics; and, schools today only indirectly address listening and speaking skills." (SCANS, p. xi)
This project is an attempt to ensure that students, at least in our vocational schools, will have the necessary employability skills before they enter the workforce.

Summary

The literature indicates that employability skills are not job specific. They are skills that can be used across all jobs. They can be referred to as generic skills or key skills that are needed to function in a job situation. In an attempt to help students learn and use these skills, states have created curriculum guidelines for their teaching and assessment.

Chapter III describes the procedures and instruments used to collect data and information about the degree to which Ohio’s vocational teachers and following Ohio’s ITAC competencies to help students gain employability skills.
Chapter III: Methods & Procedures

The purpose of the study was to determine the level of compatibility between the ITAC competencies and what Ohio vocational teachers were teaching, and what the researcher was teaching in her classes.

Specifically, the questions that were answered include the following:

1. Were Ohio vocational teachers following the Ohio Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies? (ITAC)

2. Was the researcher’s curriculum following the ITAC competencies?

The following describes the methods to answer these questions.

Participants

Surveys were sent to 68 vocational teachers in 58 vocational schools in Ohio. These 58 schools were spread geographically across the state.

Instruments

The survey was designed to parallel the guidelines in the ITAC competencies and allow teachers to indicate if they used this guideline. There were 19 questions on the survey.

Questions 1 through 7 asked information about the teachers including number of years teaching, education background, working in industry, job title/work assignments, updated with current industry trends, how are they updated with current industry trends, and if Junior and/or Senior level courses were being taught.

Question 8 asked what subjects were taught and if there were any additional subjects taught that were not listed.
Questions 9, 11, 13, 15, and 18 asked for "yes" and "no" answers. Questions 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, and 19 gave room for elaboration. For example, question 9 asked if the teacher used guest speakers and question 10 would ask them to elaborate on what subject areas the guest speaker was used in. Question 11 asked if videos were used and question 12 asked them to elaborate on what subject areas the videos were used in. Another example was question 13 that followed a similar format and asked if technology was used in the classroom and what software was used were in question 14.

Questions 15, 16, and 17 asked if the teacher used the internet within their instruction and how it was used most for instruction. To complete the questions in the survey, question 18 asked if simulations were used and question 19 asked what types of simulations were used.

Procedures

The survey, with an accompanying cover letter, was mailed to 58 Vocational Schools in Ohio with an attention line to employability skills teachers within that school. Since the survey took 20 minutes or more to fill out, the teachers were asked to fill out the survey when they had time and return it by the deadline date which is indicated on the survey. The surveys could be marked in pen or pencil using a check mark in boxes provided and space was provided to write in answers and return it in the provided stamped, returned envelope. After the surveys were returned, the data was compiled and coded to determine response patterns.
Based on the review of literature, it is expected that the majority of the vocational teachers surveyed will be teaching to what the ITAC states as well as to what is in the SCANS report, or state curriculum. In addition, the study will compare and contrast the various subjects already utilized by vocational teachers.

Timeline

The survey was sent to the vocational schools in middle November. The teachers were asked to respond by December. This was decided upon by the researcher to allow enough time for the mail to arrive to the target audience and to give the instructors enough time to fill out the survey according to their schedule; but not to give too much time so the survey would not be pushed aside.

Data Analysis

The surveys were coded by answers. Following this, graphs and charts were made from the data to answer the research questions. Chapter IV describes these results.
Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to determine the level of compatibility between ITAC competencies and what Ohio vocational teachers were teaching, and what the researcher was teaching in her classes.

Specifically, the question's that were answered include the following:

1. Were Ohio vocational teachers following the Ohio Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies? (ITAC)

2. Was the researcher's curriculum following the ITAC competencies?

To answer these questions the responses were compiled and the following were taken from the questionnaires returned.

Participants

Surveys were sent to 68 vocational teachers in 58 vocational schools in Ohio. These 58 schools were spread geographically across the state. Thirty-eight of the 68 vocational teachers responded and returned the surveys. The questionnaire asked respondents to give their number of years of experience, their education, and whether the respondents taught junior or senior level classes or both. The following is a review of these characteristics.

Question one asked the respondents how many years they have been teaching. This question required a direct number of accumulated teaching years. Responses were coded by a grouping of years. Each response was then put into the appropriate group. Figure 1 will demonstrate the group divisions and number of teachers in each group.
Respondents were asked to give their educational background. Thirty-two of the thirty-eight respondents had Bachelor of Science degrees. Twelve, of the thirty-two with Bachelor of Science degrees, had masters in education and two had masters in guidance counseling. Three of the thirty-eight respondents had a Bachelor of Arts degree. One respondent, with a Bachelor of Arts degree, had a master's degree in guidance counseling. The remaining three respondents indicated they had an associate degree and some college courses.

The respondents also gave information regarding their specialization area in vocational education. Following is a list of the Career Cluster ITAC areas and a grouping of each response the teachers gave.

1. Arts & Communication (1)
2. Business & Management (17)
3. Environmental & Agricultural Systems (1)
4. Health Services (2)

5. Human Resources/Services (9)

6. Industrial & Engineering Systems (7)

Question seven of the survey asked if the respondents taught juniors (grade 11), seniors (grade 12), or both Junior and Senior students. Nineteen of the respondents taught both junior and senior students with no indication of how they divided the subjects taught. Nine teachers taught juniors only and four teachers taught seniors only. Two teachers indicated they worked with kindergarten through grade 12 covering the subjects of career education. One teacher indicated he/she taught adults.

Overall, the largest group was group 5 which had 21 to 25 years of experience. The largest specialization group was in business and management with 17 respondents. The business and management group had a representative, at least one or more, in each of the years of experience grouping. Group 4, 16 to 20 years of experience, and group 5, 21 to 25 years of experience, had 4 respondents each.

ITAC Strands & SCANS Competencies

The remaining questions of the survey, related to the ITAC, were assigned ITAC, Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies, Strands and related SCANS competencies; refer to Appendix A for a copy of the survey. The ITAC Strands are as follows:
SCANS or Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills also play an important role when covering the core ITAC’s suggested by the state of Ohio because they contain the same themes. The following list displays the five competencies that the United States Department of Labor identified in SCANS as subjects to be covered.

1. Resources: Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources (related theme: ITAC Strands 5 and 6)
2. Interpersonal: Works and others (related theme: ITAC Strand 4 and parts of Strand 2)
3. Information: Acquires and uses information (related theme: ITAC Strand 1)
4. Systems: Understand complex inter-relationships (related theme: ITAC Strand 2 and parts of Strand 4)
5. Technology: Works with a variety of technologies (related theme: ITAC Strand 3)

Next, participants were asked to indicate which topics or strands of the ITAC and SCANS competencies that they taught.
What They Teach

The survey was analyzed to determine the ITAC Strands and SCANS Competencies that were taught by the survey respondents. Two lists of pre-selected subjects were given. Additional space was provided for the teacher to write topics not listed.

These responses were classified by subjects by the strands of the ITAC and the competencies from SCANS. Figures 3 and 4 show the percentage of ITAC Strand or SCANS Competency taught.

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<tr>
<th>Group in Group</th>
<th>Number of Years Experience</th>
<th>ITAC Strand</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.** Percentage of teachers, who indicated they taught each ITAC Strand, by experience grouping.
Figure 4. Percentage of teachers who indicated they taught each SCANS Competency by experience grouping.

The respondents in group one, 1 to 5 years of experience, covered 100% of each ITAC Strand and 100% of each SCANS competency. Two of the four teachers responding gave additional topics or supplements they taught their students. The additional topics or supplements covered were personal finance, skills for living, stock game, and a business project "Mean Jeans".

The respondents in group two, 6 to 10 years of experience, covered part of the ITAC Strands and part of the SCANS competencies. ITAC Strands 1, 3, and 4 were covered at 83% and Strands 2 and 5 were covered 100%. ITAC Strand 6, which covers managing resources was at 67%. The subjects in question 8 on the survey that the respondents taught at 67% were taxes, home buying, and consumer credit.

The corresponding SCANS report competencies were covered part of the time. SCANS competencies 3, 4, and 5 were covered at 83% and competency 2 was covered at 10%. SCANS competency 1, Resources, was covered at 67%.
The additional topics or supplements covered were shadowing, goal setting, sexual harassment, ethnic-cultural diversity, and lifelong learning.

The respondents in Group 3, 11 through 15 years of experience, covered part of the ITAC Strands and part of the SCANS report competencies. ITAC Strands 2, 4, and 5 were covered at 100%. ITAC Strands 1 and 3 were covered at 89%. Strand 6, which covers managing resources, was at 56%. The subjects in question 8 on the survey that the respondents taught at 56% were taxes, home buying, and consumer credit. The additional topics or supplements covered were decision making, balancing work and family, and citizenship.

The corresponding SCANS report competencies were covered part of the time. SCANS competencies 2 and 4 were covered at 100% and competencies 3 and 5 were covered at 89%. SCANS competency 1, Resources, was covered at 67%.

The respondents in Group 4, 16 through 20 years of experience, covered part of the ITAC Strands and part of the SCANS report competencies. ITAC Strands 2, 3, 4, and 5 were covered at 100%. ITAC Strand 1, Solving Problems and Thinking Skillfully, and Strand 6, Managing Resources were covered at 80% each. The subjects in question 8 on the survey that the respondents taught at 80% were home buying, taxes, economics, consumer credit, and entrepreneurship. The additional topics or supplements covered were non-traditional jobs, diversity in the workplace, total quality improvement, and how to be successful in life. The corresponding SCANS report competencies, for Group 4, were covered part of the time. SCANS competencies 2, 4, and 5 were
covered at 100% and competencies 1, Resources, and 3, Information, were covered at 80%.

The respondents in Group 5, 21 through 25 years of experience, covered part of the ITAC Strands and part of the SCANS report competencies. ITAC Strands 2, 3, and 4 were covered at 90%. ITAC Strand 1, Solving Problems and Thinking Skillfully, were covered at 70%. The subjects in question 8 on the survey that the respondents taught at 70% were time management, critical thinking, economics, and conflict resolution. The additional topics or supplements covered were insurance, AIDS, drugs, STD's, abuse, and sexual harassment.

The corresponding SCANS report competencies, for Group 5, were covered part of the time. SCANS competencies 1, 2, and 4 were covered at 100%. SCANS competencies 5, Technology, were covered at 90% and competency 3, Information, was covered at 70%.

The respondents in group 6, 26 through 30, years of experience, covered 100% of each ITAC Strand and 100% of each SCANS competency. The additional topics or supplements covered by the respondents were manager skills, sanitation and safety, insurance, buying a car, banking services, and renting an apartment.

Overall, as shown in figures 3 and 4, Groups 1 and 6 taught at 100% of the ITAC Strands and SCANS Competencies. Groups 2 through 5 taught only part of the ITAC Strands and SCANS competencies. ITAC Strand 5 and SCANS Competency 2 were taught at 100%, while ITAC Strand 2 and SCANS
Competency 4 were close to 100%. It was also apparent ITAC Strands 1 and 6, and SCANS Competencies 1 and 3 needed to be implemented more.

How They Teach

The remaining questions, 3 through 6 and 9 through 19, were to give the researcher information on the different methods, in which the respondents presented the ITAC Strands and SCANS competencies to their students.

Question 3 asked if the respondent worked in the industry. Eighty-seven percent responded yes, which is 33 of the 38 respondents. Question 4 asked the respondents if they did work in the industry, what their job title/work assignments were. The answers ranged from various office work, owner/manager, health care field, maintenance/industrial, daycare, art coordinator, real estate agent, carpenter, and auto technician.

Question 5 asked the teachers if they kept updated with current industry trends. As shown in figure 5, ninety-two percent, 35 of 38, of the respondents replied yes to question 5.

![Figure 5](image)

**Figure 5.** Respondents answering yes to keeping up with industry trends.
Question 6 asked the respondents if they did keep up with the industry trends and how they kept up. Reading was the highest rated category to keep up with the trends. The respondents kept up by reading magazines, newspapers, periodicals, newsletters and trade journals. The second highest category was the business or trade. The respondents kept up by talking with business people, going to workshops or in-services, going to trend shows, and visiting the businesses. Other categories that were mentioned were working in the summer, continuing their education, joining professional organizations, using the computer for research, reading labor market studies, and owning their own business.

Question 9 asked if the teacher used guest speakers to supplement their teaching. As shown in figure 6, thirty-one of the 38 respondents, 82%, answered yes. The type of subjects (question 10,) they covered with guest speakers were career development, vocational area career development, insurance, economics, abuse, and drugs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guest Speakers</th>
<th>Subjects Covered</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 Yes</td>
<td>Career Development 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 No</td>
<td>Vocational Area 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 No Ans.</td>
<td>Insurance 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan a Career Day 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economics 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drugs/Abuse 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6.** Teachers responding to using guest speakers and the subjects covered.

Question 11 asked if the teacher used videos to supplement their teaching. As shown in figure 7, twenty-nine of the 38 respondents, 76%, answered yes. The types of video, in question 12, the respondents covered were
career development, vocational area career development, personal development and motivation, entrepreneurship, and job interviewing and job applications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Videos</th>
<th>Subjects Covered</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Yes</td>
<td>Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 No</td>
<td>Vocational Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 No Ans.</td>
<td>Personal Development &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Interviewing &amp; Application</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7. Teachers responding to using videos and the subjects covered.

Question 13 asked if the teacher used technology in their classroom. As shown in figure 8, twenty-five of the 38 respondents, 66%, answered yes. The types of technology, in question 14, the respondents used were interactive or demos, Microsoft suites, internet, a resume program, Word Perfect, and Ohio Career Information Systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Software Used</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 Yes</td>
<td>Interactive/Demos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 No</td>
<td>Microsoft Suites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet (for research)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Resume Program</td>
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<td>Word Perfect</td>
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<td>Ohio Career Information Systems</td>
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<td>Other Used</td>
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<td>5 No Ans.</td>
<td>3</td>
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Figure 8. Teachers responding to using technology and the software used.

Question 15 asked if the teacher used the internet within their instruction. As shown in figure 9, 19 of 38 respondents, 50%, answered yes. The types of internet instruction (question 16,) that were used were interactive/demos, research, and Ohio Career Information Systems.
Figure 9. Teachers responding to using technology within instruction and how it was used.

Question 17 asked the teachers to list any web pages they used. Among those listed were news sites, college sites, and government sites.

Question 18 asked if the teacher used simulations to supplement their lessons. As shown in Figure 10, 15 of the 38 respondents, 39%, answered yes. The type of simulations, in question 19, used were interviewing, family financial management, job search, Money Smarts, office simulations, Junior Achievement, vocation related, conflict resolution, role playing, banking, and Mean Jeans (a small business simulation.)

Figure 10. Teachers responding to using job simulations within instruction and what simulations were used.

Overall, there were a variety of ways the respondents selected to cover various topics in the ITAC Strands and SCANS Competencies. It was interesting to see that 92% felt it is important to keep up with industry trends and over 50%
of the guest speakers chosen covered topics of career development and vocational field.

How Aligned Is the Researchers Practice to Surveyed Respondents?

The researcher's practices, when compared to the ITAC Strands and the SCANS report competencies, are covered to a degree. Question 8 asked what subjects were taught to the students. Even though the ITAC Strands and SCANS competencies were covered, there were some topics within the areas that were not expanded upon. Some of the topics were home buying, critical thinking, letter writing, and entrepreneurship.

Summary

The data confirms that the top subjects being taught are expected by employers according to the SCANS report and in the Integrated Technical & Academic Competencies, ITAC, and suggested by the state of Ohio. The subjects include: ethics on the job, interview skills, job search techniques, teamwork, resume development, and career planning. The subjects, on the average, are being covered at 86%. The data also confirms that the Groups 1 and 6, the least experienced and most experienced, are covering all of the requested ITAC Strands and SCANS Competencies. ITAC Strand 5 and SCANS Competency 2 were taught at 100%, which is expected by the state of Ohio and employers.

Chapter V will offer discussion describing the meaning of findings, summary, and the recommendations and conclusions of the research.
Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of the study was to determine the level of compatibility between the ITAC competencies and what Ohio vocational teachers were teaching and what the researcher was teaching in her classes.

Specifically, the questions that were answered include the following:

1. Were Ohio vocational teachers following the Ohio Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies? (ITAC)

2. Was the researcher’s curriculum following the ITAC competencies?

This chapter will attempt to recap the researchers findings by describing the following subheadings: meaning of the findings, summary, recommendations, and conclusions.

Meaning of Findings

The results indicated that 100% of the ITAC Strands and SCANS Competencies were covered by Group 1, teachers with fewer than six years experience, and Group 6, teachers with over 26 years of experience. In this case, the group with the most experience and the group with the least experience covered 100% of the ITAC Strands and SCANS Competencies.

In some cases the participants did not provide enough information for the researcher to know exactly how to classify the activity. For example, the participants were asked to give an explanation to a yes or no question; instead, it was left unanswered. Without additional information, percentages or averages were not inclusive to the actual number surveyed. Additional question stems...
should have required more detail and should be altered if used again for future research.

In another case, four of those surveyed did not fill out the survey completely. The participants left questions 9 through 19 unanswered. These questions were on the back of the questionnaire. Without this additional information, percentages or averages were not proportional to the actual number surveyed. The questionnaire should have required the participant to complete all questions and to give a direction of completing both sides of the questionnaire.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of compatibility between the ITAC competencies and what Ohio vocational teachers were teaching and what the researcher was teaching in her classes. The questions that were answered include the following: (1) Were Ohio vocational teachers following the Ohio Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies? (ITAC); (2) Was the researcher's curriculum following the ITAC Competencies.

Surveys were sent to 68 vocational teachers in 58 vocational schools in Ohio. These 58 schools were spread geographically across the state. The survey was designed to parallel the guidelines in the ITAC competencies and allow teachers to indicate if they used this guideline.

According to the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills report, SCANS, and in the Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies, ITAC, suggested by the state of Ohio, the data confirmed that the top subjects being taught are expected by employers.
Overall, the data showed the subjects as listed in the survey were being covered by 86% of the survey respondents. The data also confirmed that groups 1 and 6, the least experienced and the most experience teachers covered all the requested ITAC Strands and SCANS competencies. ITAC Strand 5, Planning and Managing a Career, and SCANS competency 2, Interpersonal: Works and Others, were taught by 100% of the respondents.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that any future research involving further explanation to the yes or a no questions be more specific to what the participant answer should include. The researcher also recommends keeping the survey to one page with no additional room for explanation, if possible. This would eliminate the possibility of the question being left unanswered or skipped.

For further research it is recommended that other teachers who teach employability as part of their curriculum research the benefits for using this information to improve their curriculum and whether it would help their students become more successful.

Conclusion

Getting our students ready for adult life and working in the "real world" is an exciting aspect of teaching and will challenge us to see each student as an individual with unique work force ideals. The literature indicated that employability skills are not job specific. They are skills that can be used across all jobs. The data from this study found that the top subjects being taught are those expected by employers in Ohio and suggested by the state of Ohio. The
study determined that the level of compatibility between the ITAC competencies and what Ohio vocational teachers were teaching was cohesive and with what the researcher was teaching in her classes.
References


Integrated Technical & Academic Competencies, Core ITAC Resource Unit, Center on Education and Training for Employment, 2002


Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, U.S. Department of Labor, What Work Requires of Schools, June 1991


Sherer, M., and Eadie, R., Employability Skills: Key to Success, Thrust 17/2 (1987), 16-17

Appendix A

My name is Tina Short, I am employed at Four County Vocation School near Archbold, Ohio. I teach Junior and Senior students World of Work and Employability Skills.

The following is a survey to be incorporated in my master’s project. The purpose of this study is to make a comparison of employability skill subjects taught statewide to junior and senior students enrolled in a vocational school and finding a scope to how the state administered curriculum is divided between the juniors and seniors.

Will you please help me by taking a few moments, fill out this survey, and return to me in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Please return by ____________ .

Answer the following questions by placing either a check mark in/on the box/line or by giving a short answer to the questions.

1. How many years have you taught? __________

2. What is your education background? __________

3. Have you worked in the industry?  
   [ ] Yes  
   [ ] No

4. If yes, what were your job title/work assignments? ______________________________________

5. Do you keep updated with current industry trends?  
   [ ] Yes  
   [ ] No

6. If yes, how do you keep up the the trends? ______________________________________

7. Do you teach Junior or Senior level courses based on career training and job development skills?  
   [ ] Junior  
   [ ] Senior  
   [ ] Both

8. What subjects do you teach your students? (Check all that apply)

   [ ] Resume Development  
   [ ] Taxes  
   [ ] Ethics On the Job  
   [ ] How to Handle Stress  
   [ ] Home Buying  
   [ ] Job Search Techniques  
   [ ] Career Planning  
   [ ] Time Management  
   [ ] Critical Thinking  
   [ ] Interview Skills  
   [ ] Letter Writing  
   [ ] Personality Development for Work  
   [ ] Economics  
   [ ] Consumer Credit  
   [ ] Entrepreneurship  
   [ ] Conflict Resolution  
   [ ] Teamwork  
   [ ] Technology in the Work Place

Additional Subjects Taught

____________________________________

____________________________________
Appendix A

9 Do you use guest speakers? □ Yes □ No

10 If yes, what subject areas do you use guest speakers?

11 Do you use videos? □ Yes □ No

12 If yes, what subject areas do you use videos in?

13 Do you use technology in your classroom? □ Yes □ No

14 If yes, what software do you use?

15 Do you use the internet within your instruction? □ Yes □ No

16 How do you use the Internet?

17 List the web page addresses you use the most.

18 Do you use simulations? □ Yes □ No

19 What simulations do you use?

Thank you for your participation in this survey. Please return by ________________.