

A Competency Based Approach to Housing Education

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Thirty housing educators and graduate students from thirteen states participated in a workshop, "Course and Program Development for Professional Housing Educators," conducted July 7-11, 1975, at Michigan State University. The workshop focused on the improvement of housing education through the application of principles of Competency Based Education. The workshop offered participants opportunities to experience Competency Based Education in action.

Using a variety of group process techniques and instructional method, three workshop leaders, Dr. Stephen Yelon,¹ Dr. Cass Gentry,² and Dr. John Casbergue,³ guided the participants through a series of steps which must be employed when implementing competency based education. This included first identifying competencies which participants regarded as important to the housing professional and then writing terminal and enabling competency objectives for housing education. Succeeding steps included conducting a task analysis germane to a specific objective of housing education; evaluating two scripted slide

presentations; evaluating teaching performances, and, in accordance with criteria inherent in the competency based model, evaluating the Housing Education curriculum at Michigan State University. Participants also were provided with management principles which, if employed, can enable educators to accomplish their educational objectives in spite of restrictions imposed by limited resources. These management principles pertained to interface analysis, communication network analysis, and flowcharting. Serving as consultants for housing education were: Bill Angel, University of Minnesota; Esther Knowles, University of Vermont; Dr. Gertrude Fish, University of Maryland; Dr. Maie Nygren, San Francisco State University; and Carol Wedin, Iowa State University. Curt Tuck, representing the Federal National Mortgage Association, also served as a consultant participant.

The idea for a workshop on housing education emerged, according to Dr. Gertrude Nygren, from conversations in which she was involved during the 1974 AAHE meeting at Boston and Durham. The workshop was conceived as a means of eliminating the need for each teacher or curriculum committee to "reinvent the wheel." It was initially anticipated, therefore, that the workshop would contribute toward the development of model curricula for housing education which could be adopted or adapted by educators or extension specialists. Also anticipated as an outcome of the workshop was the formulation on a regional basis of teams composed of workshop

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participants who would assist other housing educators in evaluating their curricula and in identifying gaps and irrelevancies. While the participants concluded they had gained many new insights about the educational process as a whole and about competency based education and that their experiences in the workshop had enhanced their appreciation for competency based education, at the conclusion of the workshop none felt sufficiently skilled in writing behavioral objectives to serve as a consultant for others. The workshop clearly demonstrated, however, that for curricula to be effective, identification of specific behavioral and attitudinal competencies expected of a professional person must be the first step. Other steps which must follow are:

1. Specifying terminal and enabling objectives in each of the three educational domains—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.
2. Conducting task descriptions and analyses which further requires identification of concepts, facts, skills, principles, and rules essential to each task.
3. Organizing and managing teaching strategies and materials within the constrictions of time and monetary resources in ways which will ensure acquisition by students of the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies initially identified.

In the concluding session of the workshop, the participants concurred that competency based education is a viable means of strengthening housing curricula at colleges and universities and that it might be possible for a group of dedicated housing education professionals, using a universally accepted listing of competencies, to develop competency based units and make them available to other educators. As a consequence of their experiences with competency based education, the participants drafted several recommendations, some of which they hope will be accepted and acted upon by the American Association of Hous-

ing Educators. Those recommendations having specific significance for AAHE are:

1. All American Association of Housing Educators who were participants at the Michigan State Workshop on competency-based housing education serve as members of an *ad hoc* committee to plan a workshop to be held before or after the American Home Economics Association Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota from June 21-to 25.
2. The format of the workshop be comparable to that used at Michigan State University with the first objective being to identify competencies needed by:
 - 2.1 various housing professionals — e.g. designers; finance consultants; government policy consultants, etc.
 - 2.2 a housing educator — i.e. a housing professional who will function as a secondary, community college, or college/university teacher, or who will function as an Extension Specialist.
 - 2.3 the consumer citizen — i.e. the person who will make a decision in the housing market and one who will make a citizen decision during elections or in relation to other community processes having import to housing.
3. The *ad hoc* Workshop Planning Committee investigate the possibility of AAHE and the Housing/Furnishings/and Equipment Section of AHEA jointly sponsoring as leaders for the workshop Dr. Stephen Yelon, Dr. Cass Gentry, and Dr. John Casbergue.
4. AAHE and the Housing/Furnishings/and Equipment Section of AHEA jointly develop a set of general housing competencies.
5. Effort be made to correlate competency based housing education with competency based education in other subject matter areas of home economics.