

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SCANS: OKLAHOMA
PERSONNEL DIRECTORS' PERCEPTIONS

By

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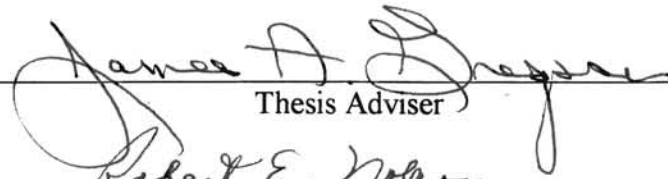
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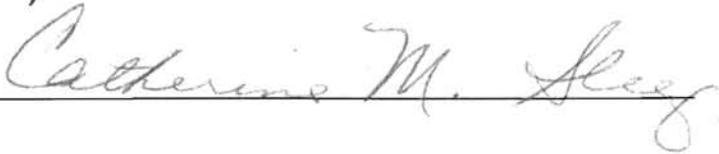
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to the 1991 Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) Report 2000, successful companies require enhanced employee performance. To increase the probability of future success, these companies are hiring individuals with diverse, high-performance skills. Employees with high performance skills render an immediate impact on organizational performance as well as increase individual productivity.

The SCANS report (1991) advised organizations desiring success now and in the future to adopt the practice of hiring employees with certain high performance skills. The SCANS report, using a nationwide survey of successful organizations, presented a list of five competency areas based upon skills these high performance employees possess. These skills, required by today's successful companies, must become the standard for tomorrow's companies in order to guarantee future economic growth for the United States.

SCANS Report Competencies and Skill Areas

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills was directed to:
Define the skills needed for employment; Propose acceptable levels of proficiency;

Suggest effective ways to assess proficiency; and Develop a dissemination strategy for the nation's schools, businesses, and homes. In fulfilling the first goal of this directive, defining the skills needed for employment, the Commission found five competency areas common among high performance employees.

These five competency areas as defined by the SCANS report (1991) are listed below. Following each competency area are the specific skills associated with that particular competency area. These five competency areas are graphically presented in Figure 1, Appendix A.

I. Resources: Identifies, Organizes, Plans, And Allocates Resources

1. Time-Selects goal-relevant activities, ranks them, allocates time, and prepares and follows schedules.
2. Money-uses or prepares budgets, makes forecasts, keeps records, and makes adjustments to meet objectives.
3. Material and Facilities-acquires, stores, allocates, and uses materials or sources efficiently.
4. Human Resources-assesses skills and distributes work accordingly, evaluates performance and provides feedback.

II. Interpersonal: Works with Others

1. Participates as Member of a Team-contributes to group effort.
2. Teaches Others New Skills.
3. Serves Clients/Customers-works to satisfy customers' expectations.
4. Exercises Leadership-communicates ideas to justify position, persuades and convinces others, responsibly challenges existing procedures and policies.

5. Negotiates-works toward agreements involving exchange of resources, resolves divergent interests .

6. Works with Diversity-works well with men and women from diverse backgrounds.

III. Information: Acquires and Uses Information

1. Acquires and Evaluates Information.
2. Organizes and Maintains Information.
3. Interprets and Communicates Information.
4. Uses Computers to Process Information.

IV. Systems: Understands Complex Inter-Relationships

1. Understands Systems-knows how social, organizational, and technological systems work and operates effectively with them.

2. Monitors and Corrects Performance-distinguishes trends, predicts impacts on system operations, diagnoses deviations in systems' performance and corrects malfunctions.

3. Improves or Designs Systems-suggests modifications to existing systems and develops new or alternative systems to improve performance.

V. Technology: Works With A Variety Of Technologies

1. Selects Technology-chooses procedures, tools or equipment including computers and related technologies.

2. Applies Technology to Task-understands overall intent and proper procedures for setup and operation of equipment.

3. Maintains and Troubleshoots Equipment-prevents, identifies, or solves problems with equipment, including computers and other technologies.

Statement of Problem

According to the SCANS report (1991) certain competency areas and corresponding skills are necessary for employment *regardless* of the position. While the SCANS report has identified a set of competency areas necessary for employment, it fails to provide a measurement of the importance of each of these competency areas. The SCANS report does not rank or measure the importance of a given competency area relative to the importance of other competency areas. The mastery of these competency areas is simply stated as a minimum requirement for entry level positions in the workplace.

While the competency areas and their general importance have been identified, little data has been collected regarding the importance *personnel managers* place on these competency areas individually and collectively. It is also important to know if personnel managers identify the same competency areas as identified by the SCANS report.

To effectively prepare for employment, job seekers need to understand the competency areas personnel managers value and the importance of these competency areas relative to other competency areas. Individuals who want to maximize their employment opportunities need to know what competency area(s) carry the most weight in obtaining employment and keeping their job once employed. To better serve their

constituencies, educators must be aware of *and adopt into curriculum* these same competency areas.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to identify how personnel managers in Oklahoma rate the importance of those competency areas deemed critical for employment by the SCANS report (1991). Specifically, the primary objectives of this research study are:

1. To determine the extent to which personnel directors find the competency areas identified by the SCANS report (1991) necessary for employment.
2. To have personnel managers rate the importance of specific competency areas and related skills as identified by the SCANS report (1991,1993).

Assumptions

This study examines personnel directors' perceptions of the importance of the competency areas identified in the SCANS report (1991). The assumption is made that the research tool accurately measured these perceptions and contained no statements which evoked biased responses. Furthermore, the assumption is made that the personnel directors' responses were truthful and accurately reflected their opinions and actual practices used in the hiring process.

Scope and Limitations

Generalizations should be limited to the perceptions of personnel directors in Oklahoma. The study results can not be generalized to other locations. However, the

results can be generalized to the theory. The information compiled from this study can provide insight relative to work place competency areas currently required and those applicable in the future. This study is limited by the data gathering method in the stratified random survey approach.

This study compares perceptions of competency areas by personnel managers in the workplace context relative to the competency areas determined necessary for employees by the SCANS report (1991). The workplace context for this study was manufacturers and processors in Oklahoma. One hundred of these organizations were selected from the 1992-93 Directory of Manufacturers and Processors for participation in the survey.

Definitions

The following definitions were used in this study:

Competency Areas- Those five competencies identified by the SCANS report (1991).

Skills-Those skills listed under the five competency areas listed by the SCANS report (1991).

Personnel Directors- Those persons in charge of hiring personnel for their respective organizations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review has been divided into two components. The first component, submitted from the perspective of employers, contains a discussion of the present state of employee preparedness as well as desired skills. The second component discusses the necessity of instruction of the SCANS report (1991) competency areas and implementation of this instruction in educational institutions from the perspective of researchers and educators.

Employers

Business and industry representatives express considerable dissatisfaction with the general level of preparedness of prospective entry-level employees (Carnevale, Gainer, and Miltzer, 1988; Committee for Economic Development, 1985; Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, 1994.) This body of literature has suggested that more than half of all high school graduates leave school without the skills required to find and keep a good job. These requisite skills include problem solving, decision making, dependability, maintenance of a positive attitude, cooperativeness, and affective skills and traits. Absent from this list of skills is job specific technical skills.

Busse (1992) supported the findings reported in the above literature, and also noted that specific occupational skills are less crucial for entry-level employment than other attributes. According to Buck and Barrick (1987), employees must also have interpersonal skills to perform jobs regardless of the business or industry. The Commission on the Skills of the American Work force (1992) found that there was a wide range of concerns covered under the blanket term of "skills." The Committee for Economic Development (1985) identified specific attributes for entry-level employment including responsible attitudes toward work, the ability to communicate well and the ability to continue to learn.

Research is also available on job skills for employment. Natriello's (1989) study on the needs expressed by employers for entry-level job qualifications suggest that: (a) employers place greatest importance on employee attitudes; (b) Employers emphasize basic skills over job-specific skills; (c) Employers deem it important for workers to have an understanding of the work environment.

Young (1986), in his review of three studies, stated that the studies yielded remarkably consistent results on the question of those skills most needed by employees. The traits Young's research found necessary for employees were: social skills, positive attitudes about work, and basic communication skills. Moreover, the literature reviewed for this thesis suggested employers not only *desire* but *require* applicants to have these skills.

According to Gregson and Bettis (1991) and Herr and Johnson (1989), employers often discharge or fail to promote most employees because of behaviors reflecting an inadequate work value or attitude rather than because of a deficiency in job

skills or technical knowledge. Gregson and Bettis (1991) and Kazis (1992), reported many employers focused on the insufficiency of affective employability skills. While businesses everywhere complained about the quality of their applicants, few talked about the specific kinds of skills acquired in school. The primary concern of more than 80 percent of employers was in being able to find workers with a good work ethic and appropriate social behavior. Examples of these included: reliability, a good attitude, a pleasant appearance, and a good personality. Specialized or highly technical skills were not stressed in the studies and were, in fact, usually de-emphasized.

Teaching SCANS Skills

After reviewing over 100 studies on identifying the characteristics and skills desired by employers, Sherer and Eadie (1987) stressed that it was necessary that schools provide the basic employability skills for students and adults in order for them to have the necessary skills to handle complexities in their jobs throughout their careers. Gregson (1992) stated that employers find far too many entry-level job applicants deficient in employability skills and want public schools to place more emphasis on developing these skills. Since employers value employability skills even more than job specific technical skills, it is understandable that employers are distressed to find so many entry-level applicants lacking these skills. Educational reform and restructuring is one way to close the gap between the interpersonal skill requirements for entry-level employment and the interpersonal skill levels of entry-level applicants (Stasz, 1993).

Gregson (1992) and the RAND Corporation (1993) demonstrated that employability skills and traits are amenable to being taught. Gregson and Bettis (1991)

found that in successful classes, instructors taught work values and attitudes similar to what students would experience in the work place.

Despite this knowledge regarding the importance of these skills, the Commission on the Skills of the American Work force (1992) stated that America may have the worst school-to-work transition system of any advanced industrial country. McKinney (1981) asserted that to enhance job placement the following must occur:

1. Students must have a positive work attitude.
2. The students must have a solid foundation of basic computation and communication skills.
3. The students must have good interpersonal skills.
4. The students must have developed a basic understanding of, and the skills required for, working in the occupation with appropriate tools and equipment.

RAND (1993) researchers pointed out that if the persons responsible for education policy focus on the use of an effective instructional model, regardless of setting, they can leave open more options for improving instruction for all students in many different types of programs. The RAND (1993) report also stated that employability skills are best learned when they are included among instructional goals and taught explicitly.

Rosove (1982) wrote that work is of central importance to the well being of people in society. Workers take a large part of their identification from their work and therefore the work forms a significant part of their self concept. There is a strong ethical and practical imperative facing all of those who help prepare people for the labor market

to ensure that they are well prepared to enter the work force. Bhaerman and Spill (1988) found that when carefully structured and thoughtfully conceived, employability skill development enables all individuals, young and old, to develop needed self confidence and motivation, to successfully meet the challenges of work, to survive and, most important, to flourish.

The SCANS report (1993), Teaching the SCANS Competencies, addressed how schools can enable students to acquire the SCANS skills. The report stated that skills are not used one at a time in the workplace in isolation from the other skills. Effective performance depends on the ability to use all the skills as needed to do the job. In the SCANS report (1992), Learning a Living, a major emphasis was placed on teaching skills in context. This means placing learning objectives within real environments rather than insisting that students first learn in the abstract what they will later be expected to apply. Moreover, focus should be placed on students becoming more active in their own learning.

The SCANS report (1992) recommended full implementation of the following actions by the year 2000.

Reinventing Schools

1. Workplace know-how (the SCANS foundation and workplace competencies) should be taught along the entire continuum of education, from kindergarten through college.
2. Every student should complete middle school (about age 14) with an introduction to workplace know-how

3. Every student by about age 16 should attain initial mastery of the SCANS know-how.

4. Every student should complete high school sufficiently proficient in the SCANS know-how to earn a decent living.

5. All federally funded programs for youth and adults, including vocational education programs, should teach the SCANS know-how.

Fostering Work-Based Learning

1. Federal, state, and local agencies should incorporate SCANS workplace competencies into their own employee programs.

2. Private-sector work-based training programs should incorporate training in the SCANS workplace competencies.

3. Coalitions of businesses, associations, government employers, and labor organization should teach the SCANS competencies to the current work force, including employees of small businesses.

Reorganizing the Workplace

1. The vast majority of employers should adopt the standards of quality and high performance that now characterize our most competitive companies.

2. Firms should develop internal training programs to bring employees to the proficiency in the SCANS competencies needed for high-performance work organizations.

Restructuring Assessment

1. A national education-based assessment system should be implemented that will permit educational institutions to certify the levels of the SCANS competencies that their students have achieved.

2. Public and private employers should define requirements for higher-level competencies.

3. Employment-based assessments should permit diagnoses of individual learning needs.

Although competency areas as outlined in the SCANS report (1991) appear to play a major role in acquiring and keeping a job, the importance personnel directors place on these competency areas and corresponding skills in relation to other competency areas and corresponding skills when hiring personnel has not yet been examined in the literature. This information would be essential to applicants applying for jobs and educators preparing students for the workplace. Knowing the degree of emphasis placed on these competency areas would give applicants and educators a better indication of what is needed to prepare for entrance into the workplace and to be successful in their jobs once hired. If the SCANS report (1992) competency areas are to be implemented, it is important to know if personnel directors are defining competency areas in the same way as the SCANS report and what emphasis should be placed on each competency area.

Summary

A review of the literature revealed areas of consensus among employers and scholars. Primarily, employers and scholars agree that potential employees do not possess the competency areas and corresponding skills necessary for success in the workplace. These necessary competency areas are not job or technology specific but consist of general skills relative to problem solving, data gathering, information processing, and interpersonal skills.

Another area of consensus between the two groups related to the lack of training provided within the educational infrastructure in these skill areas. While educational institutions excel in teaching the more “tangible,” job specific skills, those skills relative to thinking skills and social, “people” skills are basically ignored. These skills, thinking and social, hold the key to success in the workplace. While the SCANS Reports provide a deluge of information regarding the specific competency area and skills required and the methodology to use in teaching these competency areas and skills, the importance of these competency areas and skills relative to each other has not yet been evaluated.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify how personnel managers in Oklahoma rate the importance of those competency areas deemed critical for employment by the SCANS report (1991). The means used to accomplish this task were described in this chapter.

The Population

A random sample of 100 organizations selected from the 1994-95 Oklahoma Employment Security Commission directory of organizations and companies was used in this survey. The sample of 100 organizations was selected from a total population of 3,800 listed in the directory. Microsoft ACCESS was used to randomize the population sequence. The sample was then systematically compiled by choosing every 38th entry from the top of the list to the bottom. The operational status of the organizations chosen was then verified with the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission. If a chosen organization was no longer functioning, the next organization listed in the directory was substituted in the sample. The personnel directors of the chosen organizations were surveyed for data collection purposes.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed by randomly arranging the SCANS report (1991) competency areas via the corresponding skills needed for employment. For each competency area, the corresponding skills (as given in Figure 1, Appendix) were listed *with no reference to the corresponding competency area*. These skill statements were then randomly arranged and a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale placed beside each skill statement. This allowed for individual ranking of that particular skill's importance without a denoted relationship to any particular competency area. This step was taken as it provided a means to limit any bias which may be associated with any particular competency area if so labeled.

A structured survey questionnaire using the 5 point Likert-type scale for measurement was selected because it provided an accurate and uniform way to rate responses, allowing each personnel director to answer the same questions. This was important because the perceptions implied by the personnel directors needed to be gathered about the same subject matter, rather than unrelated areas. A group of experts consisting of human resource professionals reviewed the questionnaire for the applicability and clarity of the questions as established by the SCANS report (1991).

Data Collection

The data collection process for this study was reviewed and approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on October 9, 1995. Based on this approval, the survey questionnaires were mailed to the selected organizations. A

letter accompanying the survey assured participants that their names and their company's names would not be used in the report. A pre-addressed stamped envelope was included for returning the questionnaire. Reference numbers were recorded on each survey to allow for later referral. Organizations that did not return their questionnaires on a timely basis were identified using the reference numbers and a follow up letter sent to encourage return of the questionnaires. After two weeks, a telephone call to the organization was utilized to encourage participants that did not respond to the follow up letter.

The information collected was compiled to ensure confidentiality of the participants. Responses were sorted by question only. A composite of the individual responses was reported. However, individual response sets were not reported because the patterns of response might reveal the identity of specific personnel director(s).

Statistical Method

The data analysis of this study was descriptive in nature. Mean ratings for the skills statements were calculated by computing the arithmetic averages for responses to individual questions. The variance was calculated for each response to show variability. The averages for each skill statement were then grouped by competency areas and averaged to obtain a grand mean for the competency. The return rate on the questionnaire did not allow for statistical inferences to a larger population.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to identify how personnel managers in Oklahoma rate the importance of those skills deemed critical for employment by the SCANS report (1991). A random sample of 100 organizations was selected from the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission Directory of Organizations and Companies. A questionnaire using randomly selected skills needed for employment identified in the SCANS report (1991) was used to collect data. This chapter will explain the collection process and give the results of the questionnaire along with a description of the analysis of the data.

Dispersal of Questionnaire

In November of 1995, a questionnaire, explanatory letter, and self-addressed stamped envelope were mailed to 100 randomly selected organizations. A total of 39 questionnaires were returned within the two weeks allowed for response. After two weeks, a follow up letter was sent to encourage those organizations which had not completed the questionnaire to do so. These organizations were identified by reference numbers placed on each mailed questionnaire corresponding to the randomly selection

organization. The use of the follow up letter resulted in the return of three additional questionnaires. After two more weeks, a telephone call was placed to persons at non-respondent organizations which resulted in the return of one more questionnaire. The return of 43 surveys result in a 43% return rate.

The follow up procedure described in the above paragraph was adopted in order to achieve the highest response rate possible. The most important difference between a good survey and a poor one, according to Fowler (1988), is the extent to which the researcher makes contact with the non-respondents. This survey utilized his recommendations regarding follow-up with letters and follow-up telephone calls to non-respondents.

The basic design of the research instrument was kept relatively simple so as to encourage response while collecting as much data as possible. The first section of the questionnaire asked participants to rank the 20 listed skills (derived from the competency areas given in the SCANS report (1991)) as being "Most important," "Very important," "Important," "Less important," and "Not as important" by circling the appropriate numbered response (See Appendix B). A five point Likert-type scale was used and each column assigned a weight value as follows: most important-1, very important-2, important-3, less important-4, and not as important-5. These values assisted the researcher in being able to determine an average value of importance for each skill. The closer this mean lies to the low end of the 1 to 5 scale indicates a higher level of importance given the use of 1 as indicative of "most important." Therefore, the lower the mean, the higher the value given to the related skill. See Table I for a list of the 20 skills and their mean value.

TABLE I
LIST OF THE SKILLS, THEIR MEAN VALUE AND THEIR
STANDARD VARIANCE

No.	List of Skills	Mean	Variance
1	Selects goal-relevant activities...	2.60	1.435
2	Participates as member of a team...	1.86	1.075
3	Acquires and evaluates information...	2.58	0.868
4	Knows how social, organizational and technological...	2.97	0.689
5	Chooses procedures, tools or equipment...	3.02	1.118
6	Uses or prepares budgets, makes forecasts, keeps...	3.16	1.139
7	Teaches other new skills...	2.72	0.825
8	Organizes and maintains information...	2.46	0.826
9	Distinguishes trends, predicts impact on system...	2.93	0.971
10	Understands overall intent and proper procedures...	2.51	1.636
11	Acquires, stores, allocates, and uses materials..	2.74	1.052
12	Works to satisfy customer's expectations...	1.79	1.836
13	Interprets and communicates information...	2.14	1.599
14	Suggests modifications to existing problems...	2.51	1.065
15	Prevents, identifies, or solves problems...	2.67	0.891
16	Assesses skills and distributes work accordingly...	2.51	1.160
17	Communicates ideas to justify position...	2.74	0.956
18	Uses computers to process information...	2.88	1.200
19	Works toward agreements...	2.90	1.229
20	Works well with men and women...	2.20	1.264

The highest value given by the participants was for question number 12 “works to satisfy customer’s expectations” with a mean value of 1.79. Question 2 , “Participates as member of a team; contributes to group effort,” followed with a value of 1.86. Question 13 “interprets and communicates information” ranked third with a value of 2.14. The skills given the lowest values were number 6 “uses or prepares budgets, makes forecasts, keeps records, and makes judgments to meet objectives” with a value of 3.16, number 5 “chooses procedures, tools or equipment, including computers and related technologies” with a value of 3.02, and number 4 “knows how social, organizational and technological systems work and operates effectively with them” with a value of 2.97. The skills and how they rank according to their means are listed in Table II.

Table III places the individual skills and their mean value under their corresponding competency area. The competency area mean was calculated by averaging the mean scores of the individual skills in that competency area. Due to the 1 to 5 number value assigned for each rating of “most important” to “not as important,” the lower mean indicates more importance given by the respondent to that particular skill and corresponding competency area.

Listed below are the competency areas ranked according to their mean:

1. Interpersonal = 2.37
2. Information = 2.51
3. Technology = 2.73
4. Resources = 2.75
5. Systems = 2.80

TABLE II
 SKILLS RANKED FROM MOST IMPORTANT TO NOT
 AS IMPORTANT BASED ON MEAN VALUE

No.	List of Skills	Mean	Variance
12	Works to satisfy customer's expectations...	1.79	1.836
2	Participates as member of a team...	1.86	1.075
13	Interprets and communicates information...	2.14	1.599
20	Works well with men and women...	2.20	1.264
8	Organizes and maintains information	2.46	0.826
16	Assesses skills and distributes work accordingly...	2.49	1.160
10	Understands overall intent and proper procedures...	2.51	1.636
14	Suggests modifications to existing systems...	2.51	1.065
3	Acquires and evaluates information...	2.58	0.868
1	Selects goal-relevant activities...	2.60	1.435
15	Prevents, identifies, or solves problems...	2.67	0.891
7	Teaches others new skills...	2.72	0.825
11	Acquires, stores, allocates, and uses materials...	2.74	1.052
17	Communicates ideas to justify position...	2.74	0.956
18	Uses computers to process information...	2.88	1.229
19	Works toward agreements...	2.90	1.229
9	Distinguishes trends, predicts impact on system...	2.93	0.971
4	Knows how social, organizational and technological...	2.97	0.689
5	Chooses procedures, tools or equipment	3.02	1.118
6	Uses or prepares budgets, makes forecasts, keeps...	3.16	1.139

TABLE III
LIST OF SKILLS GROUPED BY COMPETENCY AREA
WITH MEAN SCORE BY SKILL
AND COMPETENCY AREA

Category	Mean for Skill	Mean for Competency Area
<i><u>Resources</u></i>		
1. Selects goal-relevant activities...	2.60	
6. Uses or prepares budgets, makes forecasts, keeps ...	3.26	
11. Acquires, stores, allocates, and uses materials...	2.74	
16. Assesses skills and distributes work accordingly...	2.51	2.75
<i><u>Interpersonal</u></i>		
2. Participates as a member of a team...	1.86	
7. Teaches others new skills	2.72	
12. Works to satisfy customer's expectations	1.79	
17. Communicates ideas to justify position...	2.74	
19. Works toward agreements...	2.90	
20. Works well with men and women...	2.20	2.37
<i><u>Information</u></i>		
3. Acquires and evaluates information...	2.58	
8. Organizes and maintains information...	2.46	
13. Interprets and communicates information...	2.14	
18. Uses computers to process information...	2.88	2.51
<i><u>System</u></i>		
4. Knows how social, organizational and technological...	2.97	
9. Distinguishes trends, predicts impact on system...	2.93	
14. Suggests modifications to existing systems....	2.51	2.80
<i><u>Technology</u></i>		
5. Chooses procedures, tools or equipment...	3.02	
10. Understands overall intent an proper procedures...	2.51	
15. Prevents, identifies, or solves problems...	2.67	2.73

Analysis of Findings

As mentioned earlier, the mean value for each skill was calculated. Using this mean value, the top three skills (derived from each competency area listed in the SCANS report (1991)) were listed. The bottom three skills were also given. The mean values for each skill along with the variance can be seen in Table I. The variance for each skill was calculated to show variability with a range of 0.689 to 1.599 for the 20 skills. See Table II for ranking of the skills by the mean values.

Table III was used to show where the skills fit under their respective competency areas. Table III also shows the mean value assigned to each skill. By calculating the mean and variance of each competency area, the researcher was able to determine whether a significant difference existed among them (See rankings under Table III).

In addition to ranking the competency area skills, respondents were asked to list any competencies that they felt were missing in the survey. They were also told to feel free to comment on any of the competencies listed in the questionnaire. Several respondents commented on the competencies as well as the survey itself. These comments provided insight as to the value given to the SCANS report (1991) competency areas as well as to the validity of research literature relative to the respondents opinion.

Some respondents indicated that employees need to understand how their job and the company is affected by profit and loss. Though other comments were provided, a common theme among them was that employees need to have basic “good” work habits- prompt and regular attendance, proper dress, and the ability to work well with others. As

one respondent stated, “. . . if they have the basics and work hard then (we) are willing to train them.”

The respondents commented that they are looking for employees that have the ability to be creative, embrace change, and have a positive attitude. They need to be able to make decisions and understand the human aspect of business, motivation, and team concepts. Employees need to be innovative, flexible, self starting and self disciplined, safety minded, educated and have the capacity for learning. One respondent stated that their organization had adopted a new focus in interviewing techniques that emphasized interpersonal skills over technical skills and experience in hopes of reducing turnover by employing highly trainable people with motivation. These comments supported information found in the literature and the basic premise of this thesis.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify how personnel managers in Oklahoma rate the importance of the competency areas deemed critical for employment by the SCANS report (1991). A structured survey questionnaire using the skills listed in the SCANS report was utilized to collect the data for the study. In the questionnaire, the participants were asked to rate each competency based on importance. A 1 to 5 Likert-type scale placed beside each skill statement allowed for individual ranking of that particular skill's importance. A total of 100 questionnaires were mailed with 43 completed and returned. The responses from the 43 questionnaires were tabulated and a mean and variance calculated for use in comparing these responses collectively and individually.

Conclusions

The results of this research indicate that the personnel directors surveyed consider the skills listed under "Interpersonal" in the SCANS report (1991) more

important than skills listed under the other four competency areas (i.e., resources, information, systems and technology). This finding supports research reported in the literature regarding the importance of interpersonal skills. The research also indicates that personnel directors identify the same competency areas and corresponding skills as used in the SCANS report.

While the SCANS report (1991) states that proficiency in all of the competency areas are necessary for employment, it appears that some competency areas (i.e., interpersonal) are more important than others. This indicates that implementation of education or training in this competency area should be addressed accordingly. This data does not infer that training in any particular competency area should be mutually exclusive but respective of the importance given by employers to interpersonal skills. It should be noted that the results of this study should be limited to this report and not used on a wider scale.

Recommendations

Based upon the results of this research inclusive of the SCANS report (1991), the researcher recommends the following:

1. Vocational, secondary, and higher education educators should place emphases on interpersonal competency area skills in the education process. With a realistic focus on the importance of these skills, graduates will face job interviews with more practical expectations as well as a higher level of preparedness. They will also increase their probability of success in the workplace thereby improving not only their chances of success in finding a job but in keeping that job and deriving satisfaction from

that job as well. Educators should also implement the SCANS report (1991) into their curriculum and use the information in this report to emphasize the other skills desired by personnel directors to further prepare their students for entry into the work force.

2. Government agencies, focused on preparing workers for entry/reentry into the job market, should develop programs which not only advance participants' basic technical skills, but allow for development of interpersonal competency area skills as well. This additional training and improvement of interpersonal competency area skills can provide a competitive edge to workers disadvantaged with regard to age, social status, and relative work experience.

3. Assessment services and career counselors should utilize the results of this study when developing aptitude and placement tests. These organizations can provide counseling and/or training services which help rectify deficiencies and increase the employability of service users.

4. The public in general should be made aware of the importance of interpersonal competency area skills in obtaining employment. With the knowledge of this skill's significance, the general public would be more likely to accept and support training programs in the public sector (i.e., vocational and secondary education programs) which emphasize the development of interpersonal competency area skills.

5. Job seekers in general, regardless of experience and education, need to be aware of the importance of interpersonal competency area skills when applying for employment and participating in the interview process. This awareness would allow for a higher level of preparedness as well as more realistic expectations from the process. Also, through this cognizance, job seekers can perform a more accurate self-assessment

of skills and through this personal assessment determine if additional professional assessment and/or training regarding their interpersonal competency area skills would be conducive to finding employment.

The researcher also recommends that further study be conducted in this area and that the study be expanded to a larger scale to determine if the results of this study are generalizable for all areas of employment regardless of geographic location.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
COMPETENCIES EMPLOYERS SEEK
ACCORDING TO 1991
SCANS REPORT

Resources <i>Identifies, organizes, plans and allocates resources</i>	Interpersonal <i>Works with others</i>	Information <i>Acquires and uses information</i>	Systems <i>Understands complex inter-relationships</i>	Technology <i>Works with a variety of technologies</i>
Selects goal-relevant activities, ranks them, allocates time, and prepares and follows schedules	Participates as member of a team; contributes to group effort	Acquires and evaluates information	Knows how social, organizational and technological systems work and operates effectively with them	Chooses procedures, tools or equipment, including computers and related technologies
Uses or prepares budgets, makes forecasts, keeps records, and makes judgments to meet objectives	Teaches others new skills	Organizes and maintains information	Distinguishes trends, predicts impact on system operations, diagnoses deviations in systems' performance and corrects malfunctions	Understands overall intent and proper procedures for setup and operation of equipment
Acquires, stores, allocates, and uses materials or space efficiently	Works to satisfy customer's expectations	Interprets and communicates information	Suggests modifications to existing systems and develops new or alternative systems to improve performance	Prevents, identifies, or solves problems with equipment, including computers and other technologies
Assesses skills and distributes work accordingly, evaluates performance and provides feedback	Communicates ideas to justify position, persuades and convinces others, responsibly challenges existing procedures and policies	Uses computers to process information		
	Works toward agreements involving exchange of resources, resolves divergent interests			
	Works well with men and women from diverse backgrounds			

Figure 1. Competencies Employers Seek According to 1991 SCANS Report

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER AND INSTRUMENT

October 9, 1995

Attention Personnel Director:

My name is Ralph Shelton and I need your expertise. Much has been written about the knowledge and the skill needs of job applicants. In order to address these needs, we must have direct input from the people that are doing the hiring. At a time when high efficiency and productivity are essential, companies need applicants with the necessary skills and proficiencies to be productive.

As a graduate student at Oklahoma State University (OSU), I am interested in finding out what personnel directors want in today's applicants (entry level through professional). Your organization was selected as part of a random sample of organizations in Oklahoma to participate in this study. You will not be identified in any way. All information will remain confidential.

Please complete the following questionnaire and return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. The questionnaire should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

If you would like a report of the results when the study is completed, attach a business card with your survey questionnaire. If you wish to remain anonymous, you may send the business card separately for confidentiality purposes.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at (405) 547-5581, after 5:30 p.m. or at my office number, (405) 234-6043. Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Ralph D. Shelton
Graduate Student
Oklahoma State University

James A. Gregson
Assistant Professor
Oklahoma State University

Employee Competencies Questionnaire

Section 1

Directions:

Please rate the employee competencies as they apply to all jobs in your organization. Circle the number you feel most appropriate using the 1 to 5 scale on the right.

- 1- Most important
- 2- Very important
- 3- Important
- 4- Less important
- 5- Not as important

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------|
| 1. | Selects goal-relevant activities, ranks them, allocates time, and prepares and follows schedules. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 2. | Participates as member of a team; contributes to group effort. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 3. | Acquires and evaluates information. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 4. | Knows how social, organizational and technological systems work and operates effectively with them. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 5. | Chooses procedures, tools or equipment, including computers and related technologies. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 6. | Uses or prepares budgets, makes forecasts, keeps records, and makes judgments to meet objectives. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 7. | Teaches others new skills. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 8. | Organizes and maintains information. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 9. | Distinguishes trends, predicts impact on system operations, diagnoses deviations in systems' performance and corrects malfunctions. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 10. | Understands overall intent and proper procedures for setup and operation of equipment. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 11. | Acquires, stores, allocates, and uses materials or space efficiently. | 1...2...3...4...5 |

- | | | |
|-----|--|-------------------|
| 12. | Works to satisfy customer's expectations. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 13. | Interprets and communicates information. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 14. | Suggests modifications to existing systems and develops new or alternative systems to improve performance. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 15. | Prevents, identifies, or solves problems with equipment, including computers and other technologies. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 16. | Assesses skills and distributes work accordingly, evaluates performance and provides feedback. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 17. | Communicates ideas to justify position, persuades and convinces others, responsibly challenges existing procedures and policies. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 18. | Uses computers to process information. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 19. | Works toward agreements involving exchange of resources, resolves divergent interests. | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 20. | Works well with men and women from diverse backgrounds. | 1...2...3...4...5 |

Are there any competencies you feel are missing in this survey? Please feel free to comment on any of the listed competencies.

Section 2

Please answer the following demographic questions by circling the most appropriate response.

1. Which of the following titles best describes your position?

- a. Vice President of Human Resources
- b. Human Resources Manager
- c. Personnel Manager
- d. Other: Please specify _____

2. What is your highest level of education?

- a. High School or less
- b. College degree
- c. Graduate degree

If you have a degree, please state the type (e.g., arts & science, agriculture, business, engineering, education, etc.)?

3. What is the primary economic sector of your organization?

- a. Manufacturing
- b. Service
- c. Construction
- d. Communications
- e. Agriculture
- f. Other: _____

4. What is the total number of employees in your organization?

- a. 99 or less
- b. 100-499
- c. 500-999
- d. 1000-4999
- e. 5000 or more

5. Would you, or someone in your organization, be willing to speak on this subject, conduct training seminars, be on advisory committees or participate in other activities related to this problem? Yes__ No__

5b. If yes, in which of the following capacities?

- a. guest speaker
- b. host field trip
- c. mentor
- d. advisory committee member
- e. Other: _____

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

A breakdown of the demographic data collected on the respondents preceded by the question asked (Section 2 of the questionnaire) is listed below.

1. Which of the following titles best describes your position?
 - a. Vice President of Human Resources: = 2
 - b. Human Resources Manager: = 16
 - c. Personnel Manager: = 2
 - d. Other: =23

2. What is your highest level of education?
 - a. High School or less: = 6
 - b. College degree: = 33
 - c. Graduate degree: = 4

3. What is the primary economic sector of your organization?
 - a. Manufacturing = 34
 - b. Service: = 2
 - c. Construction: = 2
 - d. Communications: = 1
 - e. Agriculture: = 0
 - f. Other: = 4

4. What is the total number of employees in your organization?
 - a. 99 or less: = 17
 - b. 100-499: = 15
 - c. 500-999: = 2
 - d. 1000-4999: = 5
 - e. 5000 or more: = 4

5. Would you, or someone in your organization, be willing to speak on this subject, conduct training seminars, be on advisory committees or participate in other activities related to this problem:

Yes = 17
No = 25

 - a. Guest speaker: = 6
 - b. Host field trip: = 3
 - c. mentor: = 0
 - d. advisory committee member: = 10
 - e. Other: = 3

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 10-09-95

IRB#: ED-96-033

Proposal Title: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE S.C.A.N.S.: OKLAHOMA
PERSONNEL DIRECTORS' PERCEPTIONS

Principal Investigator(s): James Gregson, Ralph Shelton

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
AT NEXT MEETING.

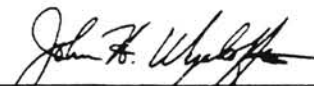
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A
CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD
APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR
APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval
are as follows:

Provisions received and approved.

Signature: _____



Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: November 6, 1995

VITA 2

Ralph David Shelton

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SCANS: OKLAHOMA PERSONNEL
DIRECTOR'S PERCEPTIONS

Major Field: Occupational and Adult Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Perry, Oklahoma, December 12, 1947, the son of James R. and Clara D. Shelton.

Education: Graduated from Perry High School, Perry, Oklahoma in May, 1965; received Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, May, 1969; completed requirements for the Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University in May, 1996.

Professional Experience: Technical Service Director for Charles Machine Works in Perry, Oklahoma from 1972 to 1977; Owner/Operator of heavy equipment and trucking firm, rancher in Perry, Oklahoma from 1977 to 1987; Senior Interviewer for the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission in Stillwater, Oklahoma from 1987 to 1990; Personnel Director for Mitchell Manufacturing in Stillwater, Oklahoma from 1990 to 1992; Senior Interviewer for the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission in Stillwater, Oklahoma from 1993 to 1995; Unemployment Insurance Field Tax Auditor for the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission in Enid, Oklahoma from 1995 to Present.

Professional Organizations: Member of Omicron Tau Theta, Advisory Board Member for Central Technology Center, Drumright, Oklahoma.