Developing a Curriculum for Marine Mechatronics Technicians

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Developing a Curriculum for Marine Mechatronics Technicians

Abstract:

A growing trend within the U.S. Navy is to streamline operations by deploying ships with less sailors, who are more highly skilled technicians that are trained to do a wide array of jobs. Modern ships also include various automated systems that require more highly skilled technicians for maintenance. Outdated warship designs are now being replaced with industrial grade automation equipment. Such equipment is being used in warships that encounter harsher environments than what exists in the civilian industry. Hence, there is a need for training in regards to industrial grade automation equipment for military and civilian ship repair partners. Marine mechatronics technicians will be trained to maintain these modern complex warship systems. For that purpose, the team of marine mechatronics experts participated in a two day long DACUM workshop at a community college (blind review). The workshop’s main purpose was to identify all competencies, skills, tools, and behaviors necessary for the specific job of a marine mechatronics technician.

Introduction

Mechatronics, a term coined by Yaskawa Electric Corporation’s employee Tetsuro Mori in 1969, combines the technical areas of “mechanical” and “electronic” [1-3]. Mechatronics refers to the integration of design, technologies, and work processes [1, 4]. Various community colleges are adding programs focused on this emerging area, mainly driven by industry requirements and technology changes [1]. As identified by the Employment and Training Administration within the United States Department of Labor, the main Mechatronics Technical Competencies are related to four areas: Mechanical Engineering, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Systems and Process Control Engineering, and Computer Science. There are different critical work functions related to each one of these main areas [5]. Critical work functions of the overall job description include:

- Understand the necessary steps to plan, execute, and control a mechatronic system.
- Program, calibrate, configure, test, start-up, and operate a mechatronic system.
- Understand mechatronics as the integration of multiple disciplines in industrial processes.
- Identify major application areas for mechatronics.
- Apply mechatronics in various manufacturing, scientific, and technical applications.
- Abide by mechatronics industry codes, standards, and regulations.
- Research and apply emerging and future mechatronics technologies [5]

Figure 1 shows occupation specific competencies and industry sector technical competencies. They include various technical areas ranging from Programmable Logical Controllers (PLCs), Hydraulics, Pneumatics, Machining, power transmission, engineering graphics and geometrical dimensioning and tolerances, as well as topics related to electrical domain, such as circuits, schematics, motion control and troubleshooting [6].

![Occupation-Specific Competencies](image)

**Figure 1: Occupation specific competencies and industry sector technical competencies for Mechatronics [6]**

**DACUM Process for Marine Mechatronics Technician (MMT)**

Developing A curriculum (DACUM) is a widely used job analysis method of competence based education [7-9]. It is a pedagogical method that involves the use of a trained facilitator and a committee of 5-12 expert workers in a given occupation or area [6]. It is based on an assumption that the people who are working in a specific position can best describe the demands of that position [6, 10]. The DACUM method can be used as a starting point for curriculum development [10].
A DACUM panel was held at the Blind-Review Community College at City, State (blind review) from June 21-22, 2016. The panel included eight participants from various companies and educational institutions with the following job titles: Outside Machinist/Craft Instructor, Apprentice Instructor, Elevator Mechanics, Outside Machinist Apprentice, two Electrical Craft Instructors, a Career and Technical Education Teacher, and a former Navy electrician.

Before the panel began, it was discussed that the technician’s position in consideration is not entry level, and will have subordinates, to include mechanics, electricians, laborers, and apprentices. The panelist noted that the main obstacle is to merge all these different skill sets into one person, specifically the marine and electrical skills necessary to be a technician. It is hard to distinguish which of these skills they already have and which they will need to acquire. The MMT job description is geared more towards the position of an engineer. Specifically, someone who will oversee the electrical and mechanical technicians to make sure that both systems are working well together. The MMT position would be a supervisor, as noted by some of the panel members. On the job training should be the main component of this program because the learning has to happen on the job. The technician has to be involved in the production line, such as an apprenticeship program. Many times in apprenticeship programs, apprentices are assigned to work on mechanical, then electrical, and are exposed to different parts of both the mechanical and electrical sides. It is important to consider how much exposure they have to different areas; it can be dangerous if they just get introduction to specific area, but not a higher level understanding of that area.

Figure 2: Position of the Marine Mechatronics Technician within the organization
DACUM Research Chart for Maritime Mechatronics Technician (MMT)

The result of the DACUM process is given in Figures 3 and 4. The final result incorporate the concerns expressed by the participants, and it has been validated with all panel members before the finalizing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duties</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Research Assigned Shipboard Systems</td>
<td>A-1 Review work instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Evaluate Shipboard Systems</td>
<td>B-1 Obtain job-specific tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Troubleshoot Shipboard System</td>
<td>C-1 Identify work interference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Perform System Repair</td>
<td>D-1 Review troubleshooting results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Conduct Operational Testing</td>
<td>E-1 Review system TWD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Certify System Integrity</td>
<td>F-1 Perform certification test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Pursue Professional Development</td>
<td>G-1 Train on job-specific system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: DACUM Research Chart for Maritime Mechatronics Technician part 1
### Figure 4: DACUM Research Chart for Maritime Mechatronics Technician part 2

**Conclusion**

As a result of this effort, a curriculum map for the Marine Mechatronic Technician program will be established. Results of the DACUM workshop are presented in this paper. The DACUM workshop will be held at one different community college by the end of the project to verify and modify the research chart presented in this paper. Based on the DACUM research chart, existing courses and new educational modules are developed to match the needs of marine and naval
industries. This educational pathway includes efforts at three educational levels: high school through pre-engineering courses, an associate degree level program, and a bachelor’s degree program. In this way, mechatronics related job functions are split into different levels of difficulty. Introduction to Mechatronics modules are embedded into the course Engineering Studies in local Blind-review High School. Articulation agreement is currently being reviewed at the two institutions in this project, one community college, and one engineering technology undergraduate 4-year long program.

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References:


