Chapter 7
Critical Components of Curriculum Development for Career and Technical Education Instructors in the United States

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ABSTRACT

Developing curriculum(s) requires instructors to take into several factors. These factors can be viewed as critical components of curriculum development for career and technical education (CTE) instructors. Without adequately addressing critical components such as curriculum history, curriculum theory, curriculum philosophies, curriculum processes, curriculum implementation and evaluation, CTE instructors will fail to develop sound/meaningful curriculum(s). This article attempts to discuss those critical components in order to help instructors in the field. As curriculum development in the United States is characterized by both centralization and decentralization, it is essential that CTE instructors should be equipped with necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to develop practical curriculum(s) that they can use to benefit their own teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Career and technical education is about preparing people, young and old, for the world of work. Those who seek a teaching credential in CTE plan to teach their own occupational skills to younger generations of learners. Naturally, learning to develop a sound and meaningful curriculum will be the very first step towards securing a teaching credential. A teaching credential will equip those aspiring instructors with skills and knowledge to teach others in the field. However, given their prior occupational experience, those with occupational knowledge, skills and attitudes may not be necessarily successful instructors in CTE. As noted by Mager (1997), “though it is a remarkable accomplishment to have developed the skills and knowledge needed to be considered competent in
one’s craft, those skills are not the same as those
needed for teaching that craft” (p. vii). He further
analyzes that “just as an ability to make a tuba is
not the same as an ability to play one, an ability
to play one is not the same as an ability to teach
someone else to do likewise” (p. vii).

In order to teach others (pedagogical mode of
instruction) or to help others learn (andragogical
mode of instruction) (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson,
2005), a critical success factor is to learn
to develop a sound and meaningful curriculum.
Without a curriculum, what would we expect
those with teaching credentials in CTE to teach
or to help others learn in the field? As a common
Chinese proverb goes, without rice, even the
cleverest housewife cannot cook (Yuan, 2007;
as cited in Wang, 2008, 2009, p. 1). Similarly,
Westerners posited that knowledge of curriculum
is, by definition, central to the professional teacher
and an essential orientation for all professional
responsible beginners (as cited in Print, 1993, p. 1).

The special characteristics of CTE education
require curriculum developers to follow as many
models as possible to design sound and meaningful
curricula. Simply putting together instructional
materials would violate instructional design that
must be aimed at aiding the process of learning
rather than the process of teaching (Gagne, Wager,
Golas, & Keller, 2005). Indeed, a curriculum is
aimed at “intentional” learning as opposed to
“incidental” learning. The target goals and desired
learning outcomes guide the design and selection
of learning activities (Gagne et al., 2005). Gagne
(1985) defines learning as a process that leads to
a change in a learner’s disposition and capabili-
ties that can be reflected in behavior; curriculum
development must aid this process so that students
can acquire skills valued in the world of work
by studying the sound and meaningful curricula
created and taught by professional teachers with
prior occupational skills and knowledge.

This article will shed light on relevant informa-
tion from curriculum history, curriculum theory,
philosophies of curriculum development, cur-
riculum processes to curriculum implementation
and evaluation so that those who seek a teaching
a teaching credential in CTE will have enough
confidence to blend curriculum development
with their prior occupational knowledge and
skills. With adequate coverage of these essential
aspects, teachers of CTE will be able to develop
sound and meaningful curricula that will bear the
basic needed characteristics.

**Curriculum History**

As noted by Glatthorn, Boschee and Whitehead
(2006, p. 33), “understanding the history of cur-
riculum development is useful for both scholars
and practitioners. It results in a deeper awareness
of the extent to which curricular changes are often
influenced by and are a manifestation of larger
social forces.” Glatthorn et al. (2006) further
indicated that understanding the history of cur-
riculum development offers a broader perspective
from which to view so-called innovations and
reforms, which often seem to reverberate with
echoes of the past. Towards this end, Glatthorn
et al. (2006) prepared a time line (Table 1) that
reflects the major curriculum theory and practice
of the past century plus a decade.

While it is not the intent to discuss all the
theories and practice, two theories have greatly
influenced and shaped curriculum development
in CTE. Progressive functionalism was character-
ized by the confluence of two seemingly disparate
views: the progressive, child-centered orientation
of the followers of John Dewey and the func-
tional orientation of curriculum scientists. For
Dewey (1944, pp. 318-319):

> An education which acknowledges the full intel-
lectual and social meaning of a vocation would
include instruction in the historic background
of present conditions; training in science to
give intelligence and initiative in dealing with
material and agencies of production; and study
of economics, civics, and politics, to bring the
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