

**WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
RESEARCH FOCI DEFINED BY AN EXPERT PANEL**

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Introduction

Research in any field tends to reflect the nature of what are perceived to be important issues facing that field (Pucel, 1995). Career and Technical Education (CTE), formerly known as Vocational Education, has evolved in role, function, and practice throughout history. The Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE), in the United States, and the International Vocational Education and Training Association (IVETA), internationally, both strive to create a competitive workforce by supporting the advancement of vocational training. Research and contributions to the literature related to vocational education and career and technical education is often divided by the context divisions from the ACTE and limited in scope to the educational context interests of the authors.

Over the years, the face of career and technical education has changed through policy and practice. The need to revise or eliminate outdated curriculum and develop new programs to meet the emerging work of family trends is a seemingly endless occurrence (Rojewski, 2002). The use of new technologies on the production line and in the office and influence of the workplace and markets that are so pervasive that one can argue that there is a qualitatively different occupational structure than a decade earlier (Rosenfeld, 1987). Increasing complexity in all facets of work, family, and community life coupled with the persistent calls for educational reform over the past several decade's present challenges to professionals in career and technical education (Rojewski, 2002). Based on the changing needs of education and research related to career and technical education, a formal research agenda is needed for the profession, which is not divided but unified and specific. Vocational education badly needs new models and new visions of how it can adapt to the new economy (Rosenfeld, 1987). In a recent study, Gemici and Rojewski (2007) contend that the recent emphasis from the federal government on scientifically-based research (SBR) as the research paradigm for federal funding, has direct implications for career and technical education research.

Conceptual Framework

Few descriptive frameworks for career and technical education exist (Rojewski, 2002). The conceptual framework for this investigation has been developed from studies conducted by Buriak and Shinn (1989, 1991), Silva-Guerrero and Sutphin (1990), and Radhadkrishna and Xu (1997).

Methods

A qualitative methodology was utilized in the study through the implementation of the Delphi Technique. The initial instrument was an open-ended question that solicited responses about critical research topics for CTE from the expert panel. Panelists for this investigation were drawn from the Association for Career and Technical Education membership divisions, business, industry, government, policy makers, and international vocational education stakeholders. The Delphi process for this investigation consisted of five rounds. Rounds one through three focused on developing a CTE research agenda, and rounds four and five focused on developing the research agenda topics into a logic model. The subsequent instruments used during the study

included Likert-type scales and rankings designed to collect data on issues relating to research in career and technical education and international vocational education.

Findings/Conclusions

The data collected yielded a listing of the critical research topics as defined by the panel of experts. The findings from the study will be presented in graphic form for dissemination to the profession. The preliminary findings suggest a great need for developing research programs with high impact and previous studies have also expressed a need for relevant, timely and focused research for the profession.

Implications/Importance of the Study

The educational importance of this study is grounded in the fact that focused research in career and technical education and international vocational education will allow future planning and funding of research that is relevant across the profession. New technologies have produced a broad dissemination of cultural and economic information and have had a profound impact on human culture in all areas as we approach the realization of an interconnected global village (Shim, 1998). A need for a relevant and forward research agenda exists for the field of Career and Technical Education (CTE).

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