

Career and Technical Education Philosophy

= Personal Perspectives =

by

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Principles of Career and Technical Education

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Career and Technical Education Philosophy Statement

Career and technical education prepares learners with diverse backgrounds and experiences for gainful employment and lifelong learning. Via proactive mentality and a flexible, practical approach, it provides technical and academic skills students need for career success, playing a foundational role in the overall betterment of society and economy.

The role of our career and technical educator philosophy is to provide us with direction, values and benchmarks as we seek to accomplish our professional mission of leading our students to long-term career success. Our personal philosophy helps clarify what we need to teach, to whom, how and why.

What We Teach:

Career and technical educators aim to develop skills and knowledge for gainful employment. Our programs offer challenging, engaging, effective and relevant curriculum that includes technical knowledge, employability skills and academics foundational for our students' success in the real world of work. In this, we share responsibility with other educators for exceptional quality curriculum that creates learner readiness for higher educational levels, providing continuum in skills and knowledge development. Upon graduation our students are ready to fill job openings available in their field and to further their education for career advancement. In concordance with concepts found in the progressivist, reconstructionist and existentialist educational philosophies, our ultimate goal is to provide opportunities for students to discover individual potential, creativity and talent as a basis for continuous lifelong learning in a technological and global society. This means that our programs are in close correlation with the needs of the economy while also serving individual career goals. We believe that "vocational education provides an authentic learning climate because it is real and true to life", assuring economic vitality in our communities (Scott, 2008, p. 421) and being foundational for competitiveness in today's knowledge and service based economy. In flexible, flat organizational structures where teamwork,

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individual problem solving and decision making are essential, core abilities and strong academics become, as Barlow points out, a national concern (Scott, 2008, p. 421). Thus, we expand our content toward these topics, keeping focus on including what is truly valued by businesses and society. Our focal point remains, as in the past, satisfaction of genuine economic need representing a break-even point of must - have education.

Who We Teach:

Career and technical education's target audience is the available population seeking employment. We teach persons of different ages and gender, ethnic and religious backgrounds and various levels of experience who upon completion of our programs seek to secure employment within their field. As educators in a multicultural society, we understand the values and needs of our diverse learners and build career pathways that have long lasting impact on our society. Correlated with the existentialist philosophy, our role extends beyond the classroom to provide support and motivation for individuals in process of discovering their existential moment. We align our expectations with the students', acting consistently in support of their goals, advocate employment of women, minorities and older adults, and promote workforce diversity. We assess performance by asking graduate and industry feedback and commit to leading the change in societal attitudes. Student by student and course by course, we construct a better society, a stronger next generation and a more competitive future economy.

How We Teach:

Career and technical instruction is practical, applicable in the real world and inclusive of all learners. We create student focused learning communities in which all backgrounds and experience levels find their role and come together to build fruitful collective intelligence. Our instructional and assessment practices lead to student responsibility and accountability while addressing divergent ability levels and accommodating various cultural and economic backgrounds and individual success goals. We see

teaching and learning as an interconnected process in which the subject matter expertise is only the beginning, seeking to engage students and maintain the excitement for content through rich teaching methods incorporating modern technology, relevant academics and practical scenarios. Analytical and problem solving exercises advocated by progressionists construct learner knowledge and refine thinking, leading to amplified employability. Additionally, in concordance with our existentialist leaders, we aim to reach broad populations and to provide quality education accessible to all, having a “concern for the quality of human existence” (Scott, 2008, p. 411) and keeping in focus our learners’ socio-economic demographics and need for flexibility and cost effectiveness. Resulting from these philosophical beliefs is our strategy to employ distance delivery methods, give credit for prior work based learning and provide opportunities for acquiring skills via apprenticeships and mentorships.

Why We Teach

In alliance with career and technical education’s past and John Dewey’s progressive philosophy, we remain proactive in understanding how to stay impactful in reducing and preventing skilled worker shortages and preparing graduates who, via gainful employment, can accelerate our nation’s economic vitality. We feel that career and technical education, as a vital link between business, communities and education systems as well as between secondary and four-year postsecondary education, needs to stay focused on developing, in addition to technical and academic skills necessary for career success, learners’ characters, facilitating their growth in human relations and social citizenship. We conclude that career and technical education is a balanced mix of realism, pragmatism and existentialism in position to lead broad populations to success, playing a foundational role in the overall betterment of society and economy. Overall, our philosophy is aligned with achievement of student success and dreams in prosperous, globally competitive business communities.

References

Scott, J., & Sarkees-Wircenski, M. (2008). *Overview of Career and Technical Education*. Orland Park, IL:
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