

**The 2007 ACTER Presidential Address:
Strategies for Increasing the Scope and Impact of
Research in Career and Technical Education**

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The United States owes much of its success as a nation to the quality workforce which has been guided by research, and educated in our secondary, postsecondary, college, and university institutions. Unfortunately, changes in funding and institutional priorities continue to jeopardize the capacity of our academic communities to conduct research in career and technical education (CTE). Shifts in college and university CTE program foci, program downsizing and/or elimination, lack of properly supported graduate students and faculty, inadequate funding, diverging faculty/administrative professional roles and responsibilities, and the breadth of research foci continue to impact the scope and impact of CTE research. Career and technical education researchers have a history of conducting highly-regarded investigations that yield useful findings for addressing important concerns. However, despite current trends of reduced support and priorities for research, the changes in the workforce and CTE call for more research, not less. Several strategies can be implemented by the CTE research community to gain more support for future research.

Strategies to Strengthen the Support for Research in Career and Technical Education

Educational programming changes within institutions and government entities are occurring at an increasing rate in response to the changing workforce needs of employers. As a result, demands for accurate data to make informed decisions are causing institutions to rely more upon timely and focused research conducted by university, consultant, and institutional researchers and administrators who understand the context of CTE.

Support for additional research and researchers can be increased through increased educational efforts delivered through the CTE research community. The foci of the education and related efforts that can be conducted by researchers in the Association for Career and Technical Education Research (ACTER) include more instruction about and in conducting research; increasing research partnership arrangements; extending the awareness, impact, and application of research; and monitoring and promoting CTE research foci.

Engage in Creating Greater Demand and Uses of CTE Research Results

Changing conditions in the global economy, workforce and market issues, shifts in populations, and change in education policies are increasing in pace and frequency. Informed CTE researchers should communicate the need for related research activities, additional researchers, and the use of research results through outreach, instructional, and research activities with all stakeholder groups. Likewise, CTE researchers need to exert more positive influence upon the decision makers within stakeholder groups to establish and fund research personnel, functions, and activities.

Educate More Students and Workers about the Processes for Conducting and Using Research

Researchers and educators should use educational, work, and community settings as contexts to illustrate how CTE research can be used to address meaningful problems. The ACTER community also needs to develop age- and ability-appropriate instructional materials and technologies for teaching each of the paradigms of research to all levels of students. Easily accessible instructional materials for use by instructors in teaching youth and adults can also expand the number of people with greater knowledge, skills, access, and use of research outcomes and products. The research community must disseminate existing and create new and effective instructional strategies for educators and trainers who instruct pre-service students and incumbent workers. Finally, CTE researchers should develop and provide educators and trainers access to professional development activities and resources through presentations in courses and conferences as well as through use of low cost technologies including webinars.

Expand Partnering Activities

Funding for CTE research opportunities can be expanded through relationships and partnering activities developed with leaders of traditional and nontraditional educational institutions, industry and business, government agencies, and foundations. Career and technical education researchers can gain increased research funds and support by demonstrating flexibility and adaptability, and by collaborating with the leaders of funding agencies and other researchers who share common interests. Current CTE researchers can also have considerable influence upon the amount and nature of research within and outside of academic institutions. Faculty members should work together more strategically to ensure that sound policies and strategies exist to support successful research activities of graduate students, and junior and senior CTE faculty.

Extending the Awareness, Impact, and Application of Research

The value and importance of the research conducted within CTE can be heightened through the use of additional dissemination processes and strategies that satisfy the needs of more audiences. For example, research must initially be translated into concise and easily understood reports for all stakeholder groups. Leaders in the ACTER are already making efforts to have future research conference proposals include a short research briefing for sharing with policymakers and others. Finally, CTE research reports should be made available by the ACTER and other researchers through a variety of journals, magazines, websites, and multiple forms of downloadable files accessible through the internet.

The impact of CTE research can be further increased by ACTER representatives extending invitations to more stakeholder groups to view translated and research materials and/or participate in research presentations. For example, secondary, college, and agency representatives and CTE educators should be made aware of the ACTER conferences, publications, websites, and other events. Career and technical education and collaborating researchers can also increase the awareness and influence of research through presentations at other research conferences within and outside of CTE. For example, multiple venues are available to ACTER members in affiliation with other researchers at the American Education Research Association annual conference. Finally, directing organizations, students, workgroups, and others to original and translated CTE research reports increases the use and value of research. Many practitioners place considerable value upon quality research. Providing ready access to research will likely create additional opportunities for CTE researchers to interact with end-users.

Monitoring and Promoting the Career and Technical Education Research Agenda Foci

Researchers, research centers, and non-government organizations regularly publish research agendas for career and technical education. The contents of research agendas are secured using carefully conducted research procedures from informed and interested researchers, administrators, and other CTE experts in non-government organizations. In addition to addressing the requirements of funding agencies and sponsors, the agendas are useful in guiding the research efforts of graduate students, faculty, private research organizations, and others who seek annually to initiate or expand upon a topic or program of research. Stakeholders and members of the CTE research community will soon be receiving a copy of *The National Research Agenda for Career and Technical Education*. The Research Agenda is being finalized by researchers from the ACTER in cooperation with members of the ACTER leadership and the Research Committee of the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE).

Development, critique, promotion, and dissemination of research agendas are important if progress is to be made by researchers in addressing the key research foci that benefit the workforce and career and technical education. Members of the ACTER, Research Committee of the ACTE, and the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NRCCTE) communicate and collaborate regularly in critiquing, featuring, and updating the contents of their corresponding agendas. The research agendas are featured for easy access on websites for use by members, researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

In summary, the need for more career and technical education researchers is critical to address the current and emerging workforce issues. The foregoing strategies are but a few, among many others, that can be carried out by the ACTE members and leaders, and our colleagues. Together with our current researchers, and in collaboration with our emerging researchers, we can accomplish more!

Thank you all for the opportunity to serve as your President. It is now a memory filled with many new friends, experiences, and places that I will cherish for years! I hope you will agree that the efforts of our great ACTER Executive Board have added to your experience as an ACTER member or guest!