Bridging Career and Technical Education (CTE) to Human Resource Development (HRD): Integrative and Analytical Comparison of Competencies between CTE and HRD Professions

Sang Hoon Bae*  
Ji Hoon Song**

For decades Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Human Resource Development (HRD) have coexisted within the same university academic departments. However, the relevance or proximity between CTE and HRD has continued to be questioned. Given that students enroll in workforce education programs to develop competencies to be successful workforce educators/trainers and that many higher education workforce education programs adopt competency-based education models, our study seeks to find the reason for the coexistence of CTE and HRD in the same university departments by examining the commonalities in competencies between CTE teachers and HRD professionals. An integrative literature review is primarily used for providing a rational framework through critical comparison, synthesizing, and conceptual reasoning. The research findings are presented, followed by practical and theoretical implications, limitations, and future research suggestions. The study found that almost identical competencies are required for both CTE and HRD professionals in terms of basic core competencies, areas of expertise, and roles of strategic partners in each context - school versus business settings.

[Key word] Career and Technical Education (CTE), Human Resource Development (HRD), Competency

* Office of the President  
** Oklahoma State University
I. Introduction

Among the institutions of the Big Ten Conference in the US, four have academic programs entitled Workforce Education and Development or similar names. All of these four institutions have an emphasis in both Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Human Resource Development (HRD). Although Workforce Education is not an officially endorsed umbrella concept that covers the CTE and HRD disciplines in the academic arena, it appears to be one of the commonly used university department titles where CTE and HRD are taught together. In Korea where education-related academic disciplines are usually taught in one department, the authors found an university department that operates academic courses to cultivate CTE educators as well as HRD professionals – i.e., the department of vocational education and workforce development in the Seoul National University. In addition, there is a government-sponsored research institution that pursues studies regarding CTE- and HRD-related issues - i.e., the Korea Institute of Vocational Education and Training (KRIVET).

Despite the decades of coexistence within the same university academic departments - especially in the US, the relevance or proximity between CTE and HRD has continued to be questioned. While the argument is cogent that CTE and HRD share the common mission of "improving the occupational status of the individual students and clients" and should be considered as a single professional endeavor (Gray, 1997), it is also increasingly evident that the two fields have been developing with distinct professional roles and under different institutional settings – public schools versus business and industry (Kuchinke, 2002). Above all, the biggest challenge to the CTE/HRD compatibility seems to be the common notion that education and business as different social institutions may not be well compromised (Kuchinke, 2004).

In light of the development of a comprehensive and integrated workforce education system, however, Kuchinke’s recommendation is noteworthy that "a further segregation of the two fields appears unwise" (Kuchinke, 2002, p. 112). Then, the question is how CTE can be integrated with HRD. More specifically, the current study concerns whether and how CTE teacher preparation can be compatible with HRD practitioner preparation in the university departments. Put differently, is it mutually beneficial for CTE and HRD to coexist under the common academic umbrella? We argue that it is unethical to place