



**SOME THEORETICAL ISSUES ON DEVELOPING THE CURRICULUM  
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER TRAINING AT UNIVERSITIES  
ORIENTED TOWARDS APPLIED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE**

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*<https://doi.org/10.51453/2354-1431/2024/1254>*

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**Article info**

*Received: 25/4/2024*

*Revised: 15/5/2024*

*Accepted: 25/6/2024*

**Keywords**

*Curriculum, Early  
childhood teacher,  
University of  
Education, Applied  
professional practice*

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**Abstract**

The development of training curriculum plays a crucial role in improving the quality of education at universities. This study provides an overview of the fundamental theoretical issues surrounding the development of early childhood teacher training curricula oriented towards applied professional practice. Through theoretical research methods such as analysis, synthesis, and generalization, it is shown that curricula oriented towards applied professional practice are developed based on surveys of early childhood education institutions, assessments of training needs, and the establishment of professional and competency profiles for workers. The curriculum development process involves the participation of stakeholders, including early childhood education employers, scholars, alumni, lecturers, and students. The research outcomes serve as a reference for policymakers and administrators in shaping educational strategies at universities today.

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## MỘT SỐ VẤN ĐỀ LÝ LUẬN VỀ PHÁT TRIỂN CHƯƠNG TRÌNH ĐÀO TẠO GIÁO VIÊN MẦM NON Ở TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC THEO ĐỊNH HƯỚNG NGHỀ NGHIỆP ỨNG DỤNG

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*<https://doi.org/10.51453/2354-1431/2024/1254>*

### Thông tin bài báo

*Ngày nhận bài: 25/4/2024*

*Ngày hoàn thiện: 15/5/2024*

*Ngày chấp nhận đăng: 25/6/2024*

### Từ khóa

*Chương trình đào tạo, giáo viên mầm non, trường đại học sư phạm, nghề nghiệp ứng dụng*

### Tóm tắt

Phát triển chương trình đào tạo có vai trò quan trọng trong việc nâng cao chất lượng đào tạo ở trường đại học. Nghiên cứu khái quát các vấn đề lý luận cơ bản về phát triển chương trình đào tạo giáo viên mầm non theo định hướng nghề nghiệp ứng dụng. Bằng các phương pháp nghiên cứu lý luận như phân tích, tổng hợp, khái quát hoá cho thấy chương trình đào tạo theo định hướng nghề nghiệp ứng dụng được phát triển dựa trên việc khảo sát cơ sở giáo dục mầm non, đánh giá nhu cầu đào tạo, thiết lập hồ sơ nghề nghiệp và hồ sơ năng lực của người lao động. Chương trình có sự tham gia của các bên liên quan, trong đó có nhà tuyển dụng giáo dục mầm non, nhà khoa học và cựu sinh viên, giảng viên và sinh viên. Kết quả nghiên cứu là tài liệu cho các cấp quản lý trong công tác hoạch định chính sách giáo dục tại các trường đại học hiện nay.

### 1. Introduction

The curriculum is a blueprint describing the objectives, learning outcomes, content, methods, teaching organization formats, and assessment approaches for evaluating results. The quality of each discipline's curriculum determines the quality of education and is influenced by resource factors and the curriculum development process. Curriculum development is a regular, continuous activity that includes renewing, supplementing, adjusting, improving, and evaluating the curriculum to ensure its effective implementation.

To effectively carry out these tasks, lecturers must excel in the stages of developing teacher training curricula, particularly in developing teaching curricula, to enhance teaching quality and organize teaching and training methods suited to the current conditions of each institution, the competencies of lecturers, and the learning abilities of students.

Developing teacher training curricula oriented towards professional application evolves over time and depends on factors such as technological advancements, changes in public education levels,

or specific demands of the graduate labor market. Such development helps lecturers and institutions align teaching and training with real-world needs and the professional demands of students, ensuring graduates meet employers' requirements. This paper summarizes and analyzes some basic theoretical issues related to developing early childhood teacher training curricula at universities, providing reference materials for educational administrators and strategic planners in management work.

## **2. Literature Review**

The term "curriculum" originates from the Latin word *currere*, meaning "to run" or "to run a course." Traditionally, the curriculum is defined as "a course." According to Phenix (1962), "the curriculum includes the entire body of knowledge provided by subjects." Tanner (1975) defines the curriculum as "guided and planned learning experiences with predetermined outcomes formed through systematically establishing knowledge and experiences under school guidance to develop learners' continuous social and personal competencies." Author Ralph Tyler asserts that a curriculum consists of four fundamental elements: objectives; content; methods or processes; and evaluation of learning outcomes.

Nguyen Huu Chi (2002) describes the curriculum as a systematic presentation of a comprehensive plan for educational activities within a specified timeframe, outlining the learning objectives that learners must achieve while clearly defining the scope and depth of the content, tools, methods, organization, and evaluation approaches to achieve these objectives. He emphasizes that a curriculum may include: needs; purposes and goals; content; methods; organizational formats; and evaluation methods for training outcomes.

To ensure early childhood teacher education graduates meet innovation requirements, teacher training institutions must continuously

review, adjust, and develop application-oriented curricula aligned with the practical demands of educational innovation. Some researchers have highlighted that developing teacher training curricula in an application-oriented manner is "a developmental approach that equips students with broad foundational knowledge and the ability to shift careers within the labor market, meeting the demands of educational reform post-2018." To achieve curriculum development objectives, solutions must include changing the perceptions of administrators and lecturers, enhancing human and financial resources, and establishing coordination mechanisms between pedagogical universities and general schools in curriculum development (Nguyen Thi Tinh, Ha My Hanh, 2014).

In response to societal demands for teacher training in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, most teacher training institutions are currently basing curriculum design on scientific, theoretical, and practical foundations, incorporating the experiences of advanced education systems in developing teacher training curricula. The focus is on competency-based curriculum development, meeting professional standards and output requirements (Ton Quang Cuong, 2018).

Early childhood teacher training curriculum development follows various approaches depending on the development level of each nation. In developed countries, these curricula are developed based on national qualification frameworks, which clearly define the competencies learners should achieve upon completing a course or profession at the college level. Competencies are determined based on professional profiles and worker capacities, established through participation by employers, training institutions, and government agencies. Application-oriented curricula meet the demands and requirements of the labor market.

### **3. Research Methods**

This paper employs a combination of theoretical research methods, including analysis, comparison, and classification, to synthesize and analyze theoretical issues related to developing early childhood teacher training curricula in universities under an application-oriented approach.

### **4. Results**

#### **4.1. Curriculum**

According to the Dictionary of Educational Science, the term “curriculum” is defined as: “An official document that stipulates objectives, goals, requirements, knowledge and skills content, the overall structure of subjects, classroom planning and practical exercises for each academic year, the ratio between subjects, between theory and practice, as well as regulations on methods, approaches, facilities, certificates, and graduation standards for educational institutions” (Bui Hien, 2001).

A curriculum serves as a comprehensive design of the activities within a training process for a specific course or type of training. It clearly determines the overarching objectives, components, core content, training methods, organizational forms, overall training schedules (plans), as well as the requirements for assessment and evaluation during and at the end of the training program (Pham Hong Quang, 2013).

The framework curriculum or general curriculum refers to a design that reflects the overall structure of time allocation and core components, serving as the foundation for developing curricula for specific groups, disciplines, or professions at various educational levels and types of training. The framework curriculum includes core, fundamental (mandatory) content corresponding to a defined duration, ensuring alignment with the training objectives and qualification standards. From a process perspective, the curriculum can be seen as:

1. A part of the body of knowledge transformed through the design phase,

2. The definitive learning outcomes achieved by students at the end of the course the educational product,

3. A process of implementation (Pham Hong Quang, 2013).

Thus, the curriculum or syllabus not only reflects the training content but also serves as a comprehensive document or blueprint that encompasses all components of the training process, including conditions, methods, implementation procedures, and evaluation to achieve the training goals. The vocational education curriculum specifies the goals of vocational education, defines standards of knowledge and skills, and establishes the scope and structure of vocational education content, along with methods and forms of educational organization, and evaluation criteria for learning outcomes across subjects, disciplines, professions, and educational levels. It ensures articulation and consistency with other educational curricula.

Based on the above studies, some preliminary observations can be summarized as follows: Although scholars have diverse perspectives on the curriculum, they share common points: the curriculum is not merely equivalent to the content that needs to be taught; it is an open system that extends beyond the school setting, involving multiple contributors. The curriculum has broader, more diverse, and flexible connotations compared to our traditional understanding of the curriculum as a document issued by the Ministry of Education and Training, which prescribes: the position of subjects, requirements, detailed content, implementation timeline, and implementation guidelines.

In summary, the curriculum for a particular discipline is a comprehensive design of the activities within the training process, which

stipulates the objectives; specific bodies of knowledge, competencies, and qualities; the primary training methods and organizational forms; the structure of subject content; the distribution of training time between different knowledge blocks, theory, and practice; the training schedule; and requirements and methods for assessment and quality evaluation.

#### ***4.2. Developing Teacher Training Curricula***

The development of teacher training curricula is a continuous process aimed at the constant improvement of the curriculum. From this perspective, the curriculum is not a static entity designed once and used indefinitely; instead, it must be developed, supplemented, and refined according to changes in the level of scientific and technological development, achievements in science, technology, and innovation, as well as labor market demands. In other words, when the training objectives of the national education system change to meet societal needs, the curriculum must also be adjusted accordingly. This is a continuous process, requiring the curriculum to be perpetually developed and perfected.

The main principles for developing teacher training curricula include: ensuring the training objectives; adhering to the structural and content requirements of the educational level; ensuring the separation of content into knowledge blocks and levels; distinguishing between cognitive abilities, thinking skills, and operational competencies (skills and techniques); ensuring the quality of training; guaranteeing the efficiency and effectiveness of the training process; and ensuring the pedagogical nature of the curriculum.

Thus, the development of a curriculum can be understood as a continuous process of improving the training curriculum, which encompasses both the creation of new curricula and the revision of existing ones. Additionally, the term “development” is used instead of “construction,” “design,” or “compilation” because “development” inherently

implies continuous change and supplementation. Development is a cyclical process, where the endpoint serves as the starting point for further improvement, ultimately resulting in a new and increasingly effective curriculum.

The development of curricula plays a crucial role in achieving the objectives of teacher training—producing individuals who possess the ability to apply knowledge, think critically, and solve problems. Therefore, teacher training institutions must achieve the goal of producing graduates who possess the qualities and competencies required to be responsible citizens committed to the cause of education.

The aforementioned studies have consistently emphasized the necessity of developing curricula that support Vietnam’s socio-economic development.

#### ***4.3. Teacher training curriculum with an application-oriented professional orientation***

Application-oriented professional education is a form of training that emphasizes the development of professional competencies and skills. A distinctive feature of this type of education is the close connection between training institutions, teaching staff, and the end-users of the training results. Application-oriented professional education is developed based on labor market surveys, evaluation of training needs, and the establishment of professional profiles and competency frameworks for workers. Therefore, the outstanding advantage of this curriculum is a high employment rate for graduates immediately after graduation; businesses can employ this workforce directly without the need for further training, saving societal resources (Ha Quang Tien, 2017).

The teacher training curriculum with an application-oriented professional orientation is developed based on labor market surveys, training needs assessments, and the creation

of professional and competency profiles for student teachers. This curriculum requires the participation of relevant stakeholders, including educational administrators, employers, and alumni. The teacher training curriculum is also benchmarked and compared with similar curricula domestically and internationally to meet the demands of global integration. Consequently, the outstanding advantage of this curriculum is a high employment rate immediately after graduation; employers can use this workforce directly without the need for additional training, saving societal resources (Nguyen Danh Nam, 2019).

Research findings show that the application-oriented professional teacher training curriculum is based on professional competency frameworks and developed through practical observations at educational institutions. The curriculum reflects an integrated approach that combines theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, and essential social skills. Activities include practical exercises, project design, experimental techniques, internships/job placements. The curriculum encourages student-centered and active learning methods, as well as integration. Specialized subjects account for 50% of the curriculum, while soft skills, such as communication and social activity skills, make up significant portions. Practical work, experiments, field trips, internships, and graduation theses account for 25–40% of the total hours. Student assessments include practical components alongside basic theoretical evaluations (Nguyen Danh Nam, 2019).

A study on the development of an application-oriented professional literature training curriculum highlighted that: “Application-oriented professional curricula are designed using a competency-based approach: educational institutions serve as platforms for developing students’ professional potential. Upon graduation, students possess a broad academic foundation and

high adaptability to career transitions in the labor market” (Nguyen Thi Minh Nguyet, 2021).

Based on the above studies, we conclude that an application-oriented professional teacher training curriculum is: “A curriculum with the goal of enhancing learners’ professional competencies by designing curricula centered on labor market needs. The curriculum is developed using a competency-based approach, integrating knowledge, skills, and attitudes, reducing theoretical learning time, increasing practical and experiential activities aligned with the chosen specialization, and enhancing students’ professional competencies, preparing them to enter specific professions immediately after graduation”.

#### ***4.4. Developing the early childhood teacher training curriculum at universities with an application-oriented professional orientation***

Curriculum development is a continuous process aimed at the ongoing improvement of training programs. The development of early childhood teacher training curricula can be approached in various ways depending on the level of development in each country. This curriculum development approach meets the needs and requirements of early childhood education institutions. Based on document research, we define the concept of developing early childhood teacher training curricula as: “The curriculum is developed based on surveys of early childhood education institutions, assessments of training needs, and the establishment of professional and competency profiles for workers. The curriculum involves stakeholders, including early childhood education employers, scientists, alumni, lecturers, and students.”

The early childhood teacher training curriculum at teacher training institutions reflects an integrated approach, combining theoretical knowledge with practical training and soft skills development, with a strong emphasis on students’ professional practice. The scientifically designed course system

ensures continuity and progression, transforming competency profiles into pedagogical activities that integrate teaching and learning processes to help students achieve expected learning outcomes. In addition to traditional theoretical assessments, student evaluations include practical components in early childhood education institutions. These assessments measure students' ability to apply professional skills, utilize equipment, and perform effectively in real-world early childhood education environments (Nguyen Thi Minh Hue, 2020).

The application-oriented professional curriculum is modular in structure, providing a body of knowledge and skills that contribute to developing students' competencies at various levels. Modules designed to develop the same competencies are arranged in a progressive order, from basic to advanced. Lower-level competency modules are taught first, followed by higher-level modules. To achieve a specific competency level, students must complete supporting modules, prerequisite modules, basic modules, specialized modules, and partially specialized modules before participating in capstone projects (student projects) or professional internships. Projects and internships are interconnected to allow students to practice their competencies in various professional scenarios.

Curriculum development is implemented through collaboration among groups, including employer representatives, curriculum development teams, expert advisory teams, and implementation/coordinating groups (Pham Hong Quang, 2013).

#### ***4.5. Developing the teaching curriculum for early childhood teacher training at the university level with an application-oriented professional orientation***

A teaching curriculum is a comprehensive plan of teaching and learning activities over a specified period. It outlines the learning objectives that students need to achieve, clearly defines the scope and depth of learning content, and specifies the tools, methods, organizational approaches, and

assessment forms needed to achieve the stated learning goals. Thus, the fundamental components of a teaching curriculum include: objectives, teaching goals, learning content, methods, organizational forms of teaching activities, and forms of assessment for learning outcomes.

Developing the teaching curriculum for early childhood teachers with an application-oriented professional focus reflects an integrated approach where theory combines with practice and soft skills training, with an emphasis on students' professional practice. The courses are scientifically designed, ensuring continuity and progression, transforming competency profiles into pedagogical activities that integrate teaching and learning processes to help students achieve expected learning outcomes.

The development of such a curriculum enables graduates to meet professional standards in qualities and competencies and respond to the ever-changing societal demands.

Developing the teaching curriculum within the early childhood teacher training program at universities using an application-oriented professional approach involves designing competency-based course syllabi. This is a process of adjusting, supplementing, updating, and renewing parts or the entirety of the teaching and learning process based on program and course learning outcomes. It incorporates the participation of stakeholders and ensures a balance between theoretical learning and practical application, integrating professional skills training to develop students' competencies in line with the practical demands of their careers.

##### ***4.5.1. The importance of developing early childhood teacher training curricula at teacher training colleges with an application-oriented professional orientation***

The primary goal of teacher training colleges is to train students to become early childhood

teachers. Therefore, the training curriculum must meet the criteria for the professional qualities, personality, and competencies of early childhood teachers as regulated by the Ministry of Education and Training.

Based on professional standards for teachers, the training curriculum at teacher training institutions must comprehensively design all activities of the training process. This includes descriptions of objectives, knowledge blocks, competencies, qualities, methods, organizational forms of teaching, training plans, and criteria for assessing training quality. These components specify the qualities and competencies that the training process must achieve, which also align with the program learning outcomes. This contributes to the success of training programs in meeting society's increasing demands.

Thus, for teacher training curricula to meet current societal requirements, they must be regularly reviewed, adjusted, and developed to meet the needs of employers.

#### *4.5.2. Process of developing early childhood education curriculum at teacher training colleges with an application-oriented professional orientation*

According to the ministry of education and training (2015), Ha Quang Tien (2017), and authors Lam Quang Thiep and Le Viet Khuyen (2018), the development of training programs in Vietnam generally includes the following elements: situation analysis, defining training objectives, designing the training curriculum, implementing the curriculum, and evaluating the curriculum.

Based on the characteristics of application-oriented programs, we propose the following process for developing early childhood teacher training curriculum:

- Step 1: Surveying and analyzing the needs of early childhood education institutions and stakeholders

To develop a curriculum for any training course, it is essential to evaluate the current curriculum while analyzing the specific situation to determine the training objectives. The program must align with the mission and vision of the educational institution, meet the educational goals set by the government, and address the requirements of the early childhood education sector in response to fundamental and comprehensive innovations in early childhood education. When starting the curriculum development process, faculty members in early childhood teacher training need to begin by surveying the labor market to identify and analyze the quality and quantity of demand. This survey should include all stakeholders, covering both public and private sectors. To conduct this step effectively, funding is required for surveys and investigations. The investigation period must meet quality requirements, with a minimum duration of two months. The survey results serve as a critical foundation for defining professional profiles.

- Step 2: Developing professional profiles, competency frameworks, and learning outcomes

Professional profiles are developed by specialized faculty based on survey results from stakeholders. These profiles identify job positions and the specific competencies that learners need to acquire. Professional profiles within the training program include basic information on tasks, knowledge, and skills required in the new curriculum. These profiles serve as a foundation for constructing the competency framework and defining the program's learning outcomes. The learning outcomes represent a set of core competencies from the competency framework that students must achieve. The competency framework, also known as educational goals or expected outcomes, includes competencies ranging from simple to complex, isolated to integrated, group work to independent decision-making, and problem-solving abilities.



The competency framework is built through surveys and social needs analysis, combined with consultation from education experts through workshops or direct interviews. This framework determines the competencies students must acquire upon graduation to meet employers' requirements. From the professional profile and competency framework, the training objectives are established, broadly describing the qualities and competencies that learners must achieve upon completing the course. These objectives are further specified into detailed documents, which form the program's learning outcomes. Application-oriented learning outcomes include four levels and must be clearly defined to cover both general requirements for teachers and specific requirements for each discipline that students need to fulfill after graduation. The program's learning outcomes represent the institution's brand through the employability of its graduates. These outcomes serve as both the goal and motivation for institutions to improve their training activities to meet the demands of early childhood education institutions.

Step 3: Analyzing initial conditions of students, lecturers, institutions, infrastructure, and legal frameworks

To implement and develop an application-oriented training curriculum, it is necessary to analyze the current status of infrastructure, human resources, student recruitment sources, and the existing legal framework. This analysis ensures the successful development of early childhood teacher training programs.

Step 4: Developing curriculum content and selecting training methods

Based on the training objectives, the curriculum content is determined, and appropriate teaching methods, teaching aids, and assessment methods are selected. Using the training objectives derived from the analysis of the context and demand for early childhood teachers, faculty members discuss

and propose a list of topics and the curriculum's learning outcomes to answer the question: What knowledge, skills, personal qualities, and competencies should pedagogy students achieve upon graduation? The knowledge and skills framework focuses on the four core competencies for teachers (identification, design, implementation, and improvement) in both school and societal environments. This includes: Cognitive competence and knowledge of the discipline, professional competence and personal qualities, , competence in operating within school and societal environments. Based on the objectives, learning outcomes, general competencies of early childhood teachers, and the specialized competencies for the discipline, faculty members collaborate within subject groups to develop content, methods, curriculum plans, quality assurance requirements, and evaluation methods to ensure the curriculum meets its intended outcomes.

To develop an integrated curriculum, it is essential to reference both existing learning outcomes and career-oriented application standards. From there, the current curriculum's knowledge blocks are compared with the standards of a career-oriented application approach. Teaching content sequences are redesigned, and learning outcomes are matched with subjects. Skills and attitudes are integrated into the subjects. This ensures that knowledge and skills are not redundant across subjects. Courses from the old curriculum that do not align with the application-oriented standards are eliminated. After finalizing the curriculum, a workshop must be organized to evaluate it. This workshop should include all relevant stakeholders (faculty, students, employers, alumni, and experts). Feedback will be collected as a basis for refining and optimizing the curriculum.

Step 5: Implementing and executing the curriculum

The curriculum is put into practice and evaluated at every stage. The curriculum is piloted and implemented. Based on the curriculum design, faculty members need to identify their teaching objectives, select appropriate teaching methods, and adopt teaching strategies to ensure students achieve the desired learning outcomes.

#### Step 6: Evaluating and updating the curriculum

Evaluating the curriculum must be based on pilot results and broad feedback from educators, education experts, faculty, students, alumni, and employers. Curriculum evaluation is conducted through stakeholder workshops to review and adjust the curriculum to meet practical requirements. The evaluation and updating of the curriculum must be conducted every two years.

The main benefits of an application-oriented professional curriculum model are the connection between training institutions and employer requirements, thereby narrowing the gap between university training and workforce demands. This approach helps learners develop comprehensively and quickly adapt to constantly changing work environments. Under this career-oriented approach, curriculum development must rigorously adhere to processes: establishing learning outcomes, designing the curriculum framework, implementing it in practice, and evaluating both learning outcomes and the entire curriculum.

#### *4.5.3. The role of lecturers in developing early childhood teacher training curriculum with a career-oriented approach*

The primary role of lecturers in developing career-oriented curricula for early childhood teacher training at pedagogical universities includes: Lecturers, along with colleagues, participate in labor market surveys to determine training needs and identify the learning outcomes of the curriculum, ensuring that course modules align with these outcomes. Lecturers are responsible to their departments or subject teams

for developing course outlines for the subjects they teach. To fulfill this task, lecturers must participate in discussions with their subject teams on the steps for building a course outline, including: Defining course objectives, identifying learning outcomes for the course, determining the content that meets the learning outcomes, selecting and designing teaching and learning activities, choosing and applying teaching methods and instructional formats that achieve the desired learning outcomes, developing assessment rubrics for the course, identifying the necessary conditions for organizing and delivering the course, finalizing the course outline and gathering feedback from team members to improve the outline. Organizing teaching according to the finalized course outline, continuously collecting student feedback and using course evaluation results to enhance the curriculum annually after each training cycle, regularly self-evaluating their teaching process to adjust and improve course quality, utilizing evaluation results to further develop and refine the curriculum for the subjects they are responsible for, ensuring alignment with professional requirements.

## **5. Conclusion**

Thus, the study has outlined the fundamental theoretical issues regarding developing early childhood teacher training curricula with a career-oriented approach. Educational institutions must continuously update curriculum content by reviewing and supplementing it to meet societal demands for high-quality human resources. To achieve this, it is essential to rely on scientific foundations and learn from reputable educational institutions both regionally and internationally. This will equip lecturers and educational managers with the essential skills to build and develop curricula. Developing and enhancing curricula must be considered a fundamental task and a criterion for evaluating the professional competency of lecturers, as well as part of their mission in the new era.

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