THINK-VALUE-COMMUNICATE-LEAD (TVCL):
A Framework for Developing Family Professionals

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ABSTRACT. The increasing emphasis on assessing the quality of educational programs and ensuring a positive job outlook for graduates, coupled with the persistent identity issues of family science programs, points to the need for a flexible yet comprehensive tool for framing and advancing family science curricula. The purpose of this paper is to describe THINK, VALUE, COMMUNICATE, LEAD (TVCL), a curricular revision process used to define student learning objectives and tie program level assessments with course level assessments within undergraduate family and community services (FCS) programs. The process, driven by the question "What do we want an FCS graduate to look like?", addresses the progression of course material, redundancy and gaps in the curriculum, consistency across course sections, and the empowerment of students in their own learning. This TVCL process is described along with practical implementation strategies that can assist other family science programs in their own curricular revision efforts.

Historically, family science programs prepared students for positions in either higher education or early childhood teaching. In 1987, Brock identified the need for more professional training in family science programs. He also identified the need for a new type of helping profession focused on prevention and education, and since then family science programs have taken their place in preparing family service professionals and family life educators. Indeed, over 125 academic family science programs are now approved to grant certification in family life education (CFLE) with the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR, 2013). However,

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family science programs still suffer from identity issues and students still have trouble explaining their discipline, questioning what they can do with a family science degree. To effectively prepare students for prevention work with families, students need an appropriate blend of knowledge, skills, and experience (Ballard & Taylor, 2012). Over the years, many have advocated that this blend of knowledge, skills, and experience occur in a logical progression of sequenced courses (Keim, 1993; Smart, Keim, Pritchard, & Herron-Miller, 1995), but ultimately, we still need to determine what we want our family science graduates to look like, how we can design programs that allow us to achieve this, and how we will measure our success.

The purpose of this paper is to describe a curricular revision process that was used to define student learning objectives and tie program level assessment with course level assessment within an undergraduate family and community services (FCS) program at a southeastern university. The program, the largest of nine programs in the department, allows students to choose from two tracks: Child Development/Early Intervention or Family Studies. The curriculum for the family studies track is approved for the CFLE credential through the NCFR. The program consistently has over 200 majors, and graduates approximately 40-50 students each semester.

This paper will first describe the TVCL model and the process used by the FCS faculty. It will then review literature that helped to answer the question that drove this curriculum revision process: "What do we want a Family and Community Services graduate to look like?" Next, this paper will outline the ways in which the FCS faculty have addressed the following objectives for the curricular revision process: (a) to ensure effective progression of course material, (b) to facilitate consistency across course sections, (c) to avoid redundancy in the curriculum, (d) to identify and address gaps in the curriculum, and (e) to empower students in their own learning.

Think, Value, Communicate, Lead

Think, Value, Communicate, Lead emerged through a Title III grant to the University from the United States Department of Education that specifically provides support to strengthen institutional programs. The primary goals of the university-wide grant were to develop new or align existing planning and assessment mechanisms to enhance student learning and to develop strategies to improve students' persistence, retention, and graduation rates. A working group of six individuals representing institutional assessment and four different academic disciplines was formed. The first author, representing the College of Human Ecology, was a member of this working group.

Developing assessment systems must begin with the end in mind (Banta, Griffin, Flateby, & Kahn, 2000). In this case, the end included some common expectations for what students

should know and be able to do when they graduate from ECU. Therefore, the working group focused their efforts on designing an assessment tool to frame the student experience using four core attributes: Think, Value, Communicate and Lead (TVCL). These four attributes were adapted from general competencies and learning outcomes developed at Valencia College (http://valenciacollege.edu/competencies/). The TVCL matrix, which was the result of this work, was adopted because of its alignment with the university's strategic plan and the flexibility with which it can fit any discipline across the university. Strategic plans are important for providing overall direction for a university, but often do not translate easily into learning outcomes. Additionally, students and faculty alike might not be able to easily recite key components of a strategic plan as it relates to desired outcomes. Conversely, "TVCL" is easy to remember and to understand in terms of what is expected of all university graduates. The expectation is that students will be able to think, to value, to communicate, and to lead in ways that are specifically defined for their discipline. Many skills such as critical thinking and communication are necessary for all graduates, but may be nuanced to fit the demands of various disciplines. The TVCL matrix provides faculty an opportunity to think about and discuss what these four attributes look like within their specific program and to design their own TVCL matrix.

Matrices are a common tool in the curricular revision process that have been used in a number of disciples including information science (Noll & Wilkins, 2002), psychology (Levy, Burton, Mickler, & Vigorito, 1999), nursing (Heinrich, Karner, Gaglione, & Lambert 2002) and engineering (Crismond & Adams, 2013). A matrix represents a single-table format that acts as an integrated framework to link learning goals and outcomes, in order to enhance the learning and teaching of a discipline (Crismond & Adams, 2013).

Matrices are an example of a three stage backward design process of curricular revision such as that developed by Wiggins and McTighe (1998). The first stage of Wiggins and McTighe's backward design process is to "Identify Desired Results" (p.9) which is achieved through the TVCL Matrix by providing a framework to define the meanings attributed to "think," "value," "communicate" and "lead" through the lens of a specific discipline. "Stage 2 – Determine Acceptable Evidence" (p. 12) is achieved through the matrix by providing a means to determine if the required knowledge and skills (i.e., the broad educational goals of the program) are actually being accomplished by the course objectives (Levy et al., 1999). The matrix also incorporates a pool of possible pedagogical concepts (Alkin, 1973) which encompasses "Stage 3 – Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction" (p. 13) of the backward design process (Wiggins & McTighe).

Matrices can help to improve undergraduate student learning and the student experience by clearly setting expectations for courses or programs, documenting the progression of course objectives towards programmatic student learning outcomes, and documenting and disseminating student learning outcomes assessment data. Although curriculum revision, curriculum mapping

and Matrices are not new concepts, the TVCL matrix provides a fresh approach that is flexible and easy for all stakeholders to use.

Ongoing needs assessment and curricular review are imperative to providing quality and cutting edge programs that meet the needs of stakeholders, including families and employers as well as students (Wang & Ashcraft, 2012). The FCS program underwent significant curricular revisions in the early and mid-2000s in which required core courses were designed based on the skill expectations and needs for family professionals in non-profit and state agencies and organizations, as determined through informal communication with community partners and intern supervisor evaluations. These revisions resulted in a structured sequence of five courses with progressively more complex and challenging service-learning or community engagement components and content leading to a capstone internship experience. Specific skills incorporated into the core courses included measuring program outcomes through the construction of logic models, developing and implementing programs, planning and organizing fundraising activities and events, and grant writing.

Although the knowledge and skills incorporated into the curriculum at that time continue to be important, there were concerns about redundancy and gaps as well as a desire to ensure that students were getting all that they needed from the program in order to be successful in working with children and families. Another concern was adherence to the curriculum as planned. As with any curriculum, over time there is curricular drift or a widening gap between the planned and approved curriculum and the curriculum that is actually taught (van der Mortel & Bird, 2010). Finally, there are changing needs of families based on societal, political, and economic shifts as well as research advances, which in turn shift employment opportunities and employer needs. For all of these reasons, the timing was right for the FCS faculty to embrace and pilot the TVCL model to see if an already strong and competitive family science curriculum could be made even better. The process of developing our own FCS matrix (see Appendix A) started by taking a macro-approach to answering the question "What do we want an FCS graduate to look like?" which is also the first step in a backward design process of curricular revisions (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). This first step started by examining the needs of various stakeholders and reviewing relevant literature.

What Should an FCS Graduate Look Like?

One of the primary determinants of what students should look like upon graduation is employment requirements and expectations. Consequently, curriculum revision must consider the needs of one of the primary stakeholders, the eventual employers (Noll & Wilkins, 2002). Employers tend to value a blend of skills, knowledge, and experience in employees (Schumacher, 2009; Taylor & Ballard, 2012). In a study of family agency directors, 45% ranked

skills and knowledge equally, while a comparable number (43%) reported that skills were more important than knowledge (Taylor, 2009). Group projects, service learning, and internships can provide the experience that is a vehicle for integrating skills and knowledge (Taylor & Ballard, 2012). In particular, experience working with diverse populations in a community environment is beneficial for family professionals (Taylor & Ballard, 2012).

Darling, Fleming and Cassidy (2009) investigated core competencies needed for entry-level family life professionals through a survey of family life educators. The content areas (including strategies for applying the content) ranked most highly by family life educators were human growth and development, internal dynamics of families, and family resource management. In comparison with non-certified professionals, those professionals who were certified family life educators (CFLE) placed greater emphasis on human growth and development, internal dynamics of families, family resource management, family life education methodology, interpersonal relationships, and human sexuality. When provided a list of common FCS course content rather than specific CFLE content areas, community agency directors perceived courses covering Family Stress/Crisis; Working with Parents; Family Violence, Power, and Conflict; and Parent-Child Relationships to be most beneficial (Taylor, 2009).

Personal attributes are also important for graduates seeking employment in the family science field. Research on hiring practices of community agency directors suggested that energy, passion, motivation, professionalism, and a positive attitude were considered to be important attributes (Taylor, 2009; Taylor, Ballard, & Woodruff, 2013). These personal attributes also may help family professionals to connect with families and to stay energized about remaining in the profession.

Myers-Walls, Ballard, Darling and Myers-Bowman(2011) developed the Domains of Family Practice model which used journalistic questions to distinguish the boundaries among three family practice roles: family life education (FLE), family therapy, and family casework. Myers-Walls et al. identified the purpose of FLE as "To increase knowledge and develop skills so families may build on their strengths to function at their optimal levels" (p. 370). In order to successfully fulfill this purpose, FLEs require skills in assessing family needs and setting goals on the basis of family needs and strengths, as well as the ability to develop and implement programs that teach individuals and families the knowledge and skills that strengthen families (Myers-Wall et al., 2011).

In order for family life educators to connect with the target population and convey information in a meaningful way, interpersonal relationship skills are essential. Indeed, community agency directors identified interpersonal skills along with oral and written communication skills, flexibility, teamwork skills, ethical decision-making, and problem solving skills as all vital to success (Taylor et al., 2013). Finally, fundraising and grant writing, general

leadership skills, and program evaluation were all skills identified as needed for work in non-profit administration (Wang & Ashcraft, 2012), an area in which many of our graduates find themselves.

Overall, it is clear that family professionals should be adept in both interpersonal and intrapersonal communication skills in order to genuinely and respectfully relate to their clients, assess needs, and effectively deliver educational programs. These professionals should also be equipped with knowledge and skill in the ten CFLE content areas (see http://www.ncfr.org/sites/default/files/downloads/news/FLE_Content_Areas_2011.pdf for a description of the 10 CFLE content areas) as well as skills in program development and evaluation, fundraising and grant writing, and leadership (Darling et al.,, 2009; Myers-Wall et al., 2011; Taylor & Ballard, 2012; Wang & Ashcraft, 2012). The question then is how to ensure that we are preparing family professionals with the desired knowledge, skills, and experience?

The FCS TVCL Matrix

The FCS (Family and Community Services) program area faculty and authors of this paper held a day long retreat in January 2012 in order to begin the process of developing our own TVCL matrix (see Appendix). In order to further examine the desired attributes of an FCS graduate and to apply the information reviewed in the previous section of this paper to our particular program, the group had a brainstorming session using large post-it paper and markers. Generated ideas were categorized into the key portions of the core learning matrix as developed by the university committee, including THINK (content knowledge and skills), VALUE (core values necessary in FCS), COMMUNICATE (communication skills), and LEAD (necessary leadership skills and experience). This part of the process involved much healthy discussion and debate.

In addition to the relevant research and models such as the Domains of Family Practice Model (DFP) (Myers-Walls et al., 2011), faculty used both the NCFR ten content areas (which provide the framework for the certification in family life education (CFLE)) and the core body of knowledge from the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) accreditation as guidelines in developing the THINK component of the matrix. It was then decided to separate "knowledge" and "skills" in the THINK component in order to better capture the desired qualities for FCS students; many of the skills resulted directly from Taylor's research (2009) with community partners. This research also contributed to the development of the COMMUNICATE component of the matrix. For the VALUE component of the matrix, we included the three virtues that are part of the ethical decision making process developed for family life and parent educators (NCFR, 2012). In addition to these three virtues (caring, prudence, hope/optimism), the faculty agreed that inclusion of respect would encompass an

appreciation of diversity and a nonjudgmental approach to working with individuals and families.

Finally, the LEAD component was developed from community partner input as well as our desire to create FCS professionals who not only lead in the workplace but within their communities. Best practices in teaching leadership include inviting guest speakers who are leaders in their field to present in class (Scheule & Sneed, 2001) and service-learning projects (Boyd, 2001). Followership and collaboration are important components of leadership (Astin & Astin, 2000) and are included in our FCS matrix. Well-structured service learning projects can provide opportunities for volunteerism in which students fulfill a "followership" role. For example, these followership roles may include supporting programs or events being led by their community partners. This collaborative approach allows students to engage in authentic and sustainable change which contributes to the development of transformational leadership (Gibson & Pason, 2003). Consequently, service-learning, along with other community-based learning strategies that can result in community engagement as well as overall leadership development (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacobson, Oravecz, Falk, & Osteen, 2011; Wurr & Hamilton, 2012), are captured in the FCS matrix. See Appendix for more detail on the specific FCS knowledge and skills included in the TVCL matrix.

Curriculum Mapping

The student-centered focus of TVCL contributes to an effective framework for curriculum mapping to ensure positive student outcomes. A curriculum map is a visual representation of the curriculum in real time with the maps being dynamic documents that can be revisited and revised as needed (Uchiyama & Radin, 2009). The TVCL process is strength-based in that it allows faculty to identify what they are already doing well; the matrix is the vehicle of capturing and depicting what has already occurred in the classroom. With this in mind, the next step in the process was for each FCS faculty member to think about courses they teach and, without looking at the course objectives, to identify the four most important things that students should learn from that course. These were shared and refined as needed. This exercise, which corresponded with steps 2 and 3 of Wiggins and McTighe's (1998) backward design process, helped the participants to think about the core essence of each course and those components that should be included regardless of who is teaching the course. The identification of these core elements of a course and how they contribute to the TVCL matrix can assist in adding comprehensive assessment at the classroom level to the broader program assessment process, while ensuring that the critical components of each course are intentionally addressed regardless of the instructor or course section each semester.

The next step in the process was to complete the matrix for each course as course maps that will contribute to the overall curriculum map. This involved identifying the components of TVCL that are included in the course and the level (see description of the four levels in the next section) at which it is covered. Although still a work in progress, this curriculum mapping has allowed the faculty to examine the progression of student learning, work toward consistency across sections, identify overlaps and gaps in the curriculum, and to empower students in their own learning. All tasks are consistent with step 3 of the backward design process "plan learning experiences and instruction" (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Additionally, completed course level Matrices demonstrate a progression of courses toward program level outcomes used in program assessment.

Progression of Course Material

Using our TVCL matrix, the FCS faculty identified four levels in the progression of learning our course concepts: introduction, reinforcement, application, and proficiency. Course material builds sequentially; the concepts are introduced and reinforced, with opportunities for students to apply the concepts and to ultimately achieve proficiency. The faculty were very thoughtful and intentional as to the meaning ascribed to each of the levels and as a part of the process, Bloom's taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2010) was used as a guide to define appropriate levels of learning in order to provide clarification for what constitutes each term. The definitions for these levels are as follows: introduction – acquaint students with new knowledge; reinforcement – augment, increase, strengthen and/or supplement existing knowledge; application – practice, utilize, operationalize and demonstrate knowledge; and proficiency – synthesize new and existing knowledge and experience while demonstrating competence and problem solving. These definitions provided consistency across courses and ensured that we were all "speaking the same language."

The endpoint of our undergraduate program is the capstone internship which allows students to develop and demonstrate proficiency in critical areas. It was important to ensure that intentionally guiding students towards proficiency in the content areas, in values, and in skills identified in the TVCL matrix would result in a skill set desired by our community partners. Therefore, the internship evaluation form was adapted to reflect the TVCL matrix content areas, values, and skills. A draft of the new evaluation form was sent to community partners who frequently supervise our student interns, and their input was solicited with regard to whether this updated form accurately captured what they desire in a strong intern and potential entry-level employee. The feedback of the community partners was very positive overall, and their suggestions for improvement were incorporated prior to the TVCL evaluation form being adopted at the end of the fall 2012 semester.

Consistency across Sections

With progressive levels of learning established, it is essential that content that is to be introduced in a certain course is consistently presented in all sections of that course and that the most important concepts are taught across all sections within our department. The TVCL process can facilitate this needed uniformity across multiple course sections. "Marriage and Family Relations" is an introductory course required of all Child Development and Family Relations (CDFR) undergraduate majors and CDFR minors, and is a popular elective. There are many different instructors (including adjunct instructors and graduate students) and the course may have as many as seven or eight sections. Consequently it is important, yet challenging, to assure that this course is consistent across sections. The TVCL matrix guided the discussion of "Marriage and Family Relations" which led to course revisions (including rewriting of the syllabus and course objectives), providing for consistency of learning activities. Although it was important that the material covered be consistent, it is also important to note that faculty retained academic freedom by being given discretion in how they presented the required material.

Avoiding Redundancy

In addition to addressing the progression of students and assuring consistency of material across sections, the TVCL matrix can help programs avoid redundancy across required courses and be more intentional about the content of each course. With a desire to address employer needs (e.g., Taylor, 2009; Taylor et al., 2013) and improve our students' skill set, we had an existing course entitled "Theory and Practice in Family and Community Services" which was revised as a result of this TVCL process. The course had become a repository of knowledge, theory, and skills that did not seem to fit any other course in the curriculum. When addressing this course using the TVCL matrix, faculty decided that they were guilty of the "kitchen sink approach" with a lot of duplication and inefficiencies. Faculty moved some material to other courses where there was duplication (or where it fit better) and refocused the course on grant writing, fundraising, and a few other key components that fit with the progression of student learning and the course objectives. Now, not only do students learn more with less duplication and repetition, but faculty members gain greater enjoyment from teaching the course.

Identifying and Addressing Gaps

Mapping the core courses with the TVCL matrix allowed faculty to better assess gaps in the curriculum. Sharing the matrix with students provided an opportunity for them to identify areas they felt could be strengthened in their coursework. For example, students indicated that they wanted more knowledge in family process and the application of this knowledge, including skills in approaching, communicating, and working with families. Consequently, using the Domains of Family Practice Model as a guide, a current course is being revised to address the

why, what, how, and when of three major domains of family practice (family life education, family therapy, and family casework) (Myers-Walls et al., 2011), allowing students to apply information about current family issues to their future work with families. Students will now be able to learn about the specific issues that families face, such as divorce, while at the same time learning the role of collaborating family professionals in addressing these issues. For example, for a family going through divorce, family life educators may conduct divorce education or parenting coordination; marriage and family therapists may provide therapeutic interventions for the couple and the family; and family caseworkers may coordinate services for the new single mother or for a child who is in the middle of a custody battle. Students may take on one or more of these roles and apply knowledge and skills to the issue through case studies, role play, or problem-based learning. Redesigning this course is addressing gaps identified by the TVCL matrix as well as providing an opportunity for students to better understand the roles that they might assume in working with families and collaborating with other family professionals.

Empowering Students

The words "THINK, VALUE, COMMUNICATE, LEAD" are displayed throughout the building that houses CDFR and the FCS program. Consequently, our students had been exposed to the concept but did not initially understand the meaning behind it. In January 2013, the FCS TVCL matrix was presented to students in an upper level FCS course. To introduce the concept, students used multi-colored interlocking blocks to express what they thought an FCS graduate should look like. The four colors of the blocks represented one of the four attributes and students were instructed to conceptualize "Think, Value, Communicate, Lead" as it related to their "block students." This activity prompted students to think about the content they had learned in their courses and the way in which this content was delivered. They were then able to think about the content in terms of interlocking pieces and how these pieces fit together to contribute to the whole student.

The FCS TVCL matrix was then shared with the students and they were able to map individual success across the matrix by assessing their own level of competence for each component. After completing this in-class activity, students created bulletin boards in the classrooms relating to Think, Value, Communicate, and Lead. As a result of these activities, students reported that they finally "got it" and understood the rationale for courses and their sequencing. Student access to and knowledge of student learning outcomes at both the course and program levels will enhance transparency while improving student learning. In addition to seeing curricular connections, students were able to take ownership of their own educational experience. The TVCL matrix allowed them to share the vision of what an FCS professional looks like and how to personalize this vision to assess the program's fit with their own career goals.

Conclusion

Uchiyama and Radin (2009) found an increase in collaboration and collegiality as a result of their curriculum mapping process. Similar results were found in our experience; FCS faculty enjoyed the collaborative approach used in the TVCL model, as well as the stimulating substantive discussions relative to what students should learn and what information and methods are necessary to get them to that point. These discussions and the mapping process have led to revisions in teaching and learning strategies and the development of assessment strategies to improve undergraduate student learning. Faculty more fully understand what their students look like when they finish the program by mapping individual student success across the TVCL matrix. Not only does this matrix answer questions about student learning, but it clarifies the developmental process (e.g., introduce, reinforce) for mapping and sequencing the competencies, skills, and values needed for successful transition into professional life. It also equips faculty with an understanding of what students have experienced in previous courses, and can help students see curricular connections.

There is an increased emphasis in higher education on degree efficiency, the ability of graduates to secure jobs upon graduation, and program assessment. Within family science, the TVCL matrix can be used to increase the rigor and effectiveness of our programs. By identifying overlap, the curriculum can be streamlined to increase the efficiency with which students can complete their degree. The conscious focus on skill development allows students to be more desirable as they enter the job market. The TVCL matrix, a comprehensive one-page assessment tool for curriculum mapping, can be a useful framework to facilitate the achievement of these goals of degree efficiency, program assessment, and job placement, so that our graduates can make a positive difference in the lives of individuals, children, families, and communities.

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FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES CORE LEARNING MATRIX

COURSE:

I = Introduction   R = Reinforcement   A= Application   P = Proficiency

THINK

CORE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE:

	Basic Human Needs		Individual Well-Being		Family Well-Being		Community Well-Being		Cultural & Societal Influences
	Physiological needs		Human growth & development across the lifespan		Family communication & problem-solving		Intersection of individuals & families with community entities		Families and individuals in societal context
	Safety and security		Communication & problem-solving		Internal dynamics of the family		Role of public & private agencies		Diversity & global awareness
	Love and belongingness		Interpersonal relationships		Family strengths & resilience		Linking individuals & families to community resources		Technology & media
	Human sexuality		Individual strengths & resilience		Family traditions & cultures		Interagency collaboration		Laws & family policy
					Parent education and guidance		Awareness, understanding & utilization of formal & informal networks		Professional ethics and practice
					Family resource management				

CORE SKILLS & UNDERSTANDING OF DISCIPLINE:

	Technology		Family Life Education methodology: program development, implementation & evaluation		Research skills		Problem solving
	Resourcefulness		FCS as a profession		Critical thinking		Ethical thinking and decision-making

VALUE

	Caring		Prudence		Hope/optimism		Respect

COMMUNICATE

PROFESSIONALLY

	Written		Oral/presentation		Interpersonal		Virtual

LEAD

	Leadership roles		Followership roles		Community engagement		Self-awareness/ self-efficacy		Professionalism		Teamwork/ collaboration