Chapter VII

Justifying
Technology Studies

Introduction

Why should we teach technology in the schools? What is the reason for accommodating technology in the school curriculum? Why should we have to justify existence? Are the public schools an appropriate institution for developing economic human resources? Should students be taught to think critically about technology? Is the technology laboratory or workshop the place in the school where the students can "put it all together"? Will technology studies lose its identity in an alignment with math and science? Should technology studies serve to remedy long-standing inequities in technology? Should technology studies be aligned with ecology and sustainability? Is the future engineering education? These are some of the primary questions that impinge on the direction of technology studies in the schools. Throughout the 20th century, technology studies expended an inordinate amount of energy justifying itself. At times, it seemed as though this subject was trying to be all things to all people. In this chapter, we make the case that there is one, and only one, persuasive justification for the inclusion of technology studies in the schools. That justification is the content of technology. No one will buy all the things to all interest groups' justification anymore.

No longer does technology studies have to shift its identity from situation to situation, appearing avocational in one place, vocational in another, and academic in a third.

No more does technology studies have to take a subservient role to other subjects by appearing in integrationist garb, serving to provide applications or relevance to apparently irrelevant endeavors in the schools. No more does technology studies have to be cobbled together from the remnants of the past. The days of doing summersaults and cartwheels or drawing sophisticated flow charts to demonstrate why technology should be included in the K-12 curriculum are over. Activities, projects, and the orientation of practice derive from, and lead toward, the progressive understanding of technology as a social force and social product. They derive from and lead toward established content of technology.

Technology studies is *not* justified by the mere fact that we use technology; nor is it defined by an appeal to technical skills. Technology studies is justified by a theory of practice, about, through and for technology as explained in Chapter VI, and by the all-important imperative of understanding and directing technology in all of its manifestations.

While the primary justification for technology studies in the schools is the content of technology, secondary justifications are still important. Technology teachers may not have to justify their subject inasmuch as they will have to politick for their subject. This chapter describes ten of the more significant secondary justifications for the inclusion of technology as a school subject (Figure 1). Most technology teachers choose three or four of these secondary justifications to emphasize at any given time with their students. Some of the justifications contradict others.

Figure 1. Justifications for technology studies
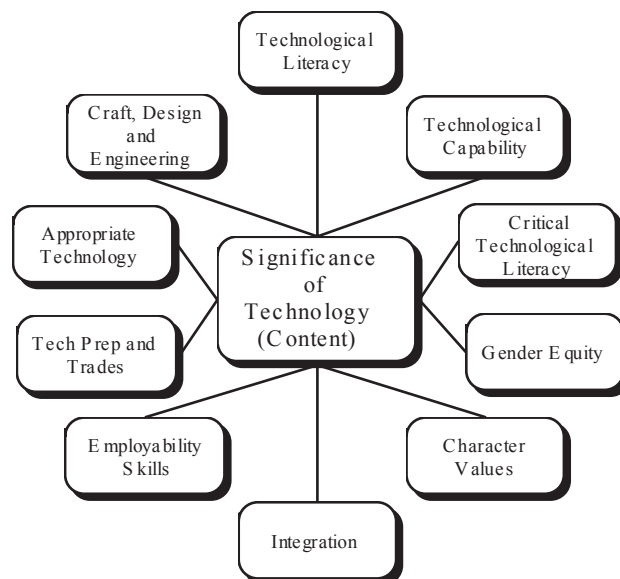
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