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Title: Rhetoric and Interpretation: The Values Students and Special Interest Groups Attribute to Design & Technology

Keywords in English:
Curriculum; design and technology; stakeholders; students; subject associations; values.

Abstract in English (300 words maximum that reflect the full paper):

This research compares special interest groups’ and students’ rhetoric about the value of Design & Technology (D&T) in England, specifically in relation to learning about technology, employment and creative endeavors.

Drawing upon the Design and Technology Association (D&TA) campaigns and interviews with students, I identify the values these two ascribe to D&T. These values will be compared with two sections of the English National Curriculum for D&T: firstly, the overarching aims, and secondly the purpose and aims of D&T (DfE 2014).

Analysis of the two groups’ values, using the two National Curriculum aims as a framework (DfE 2014), demonstrates a disparity between the two groups’ views of the value of D&T. Whilst D&TA and students advocate some of the values ascribed to D&T in the National Curriculum, there are noticeable differences. Generally, students place greater emphasis on D&T’s value to their everyday lives, future employment, and personal fulfillment, whereas the D&TA campaigns focus on how D&T engenders both personal and national economic benefits; creativity receives little mention from either group. These findings imply a discord between them about the contribution D&T makes to an individual’s education and future life.

By comparing the values of these two stakeholder groups, who have no direct power to influence the enactment of government policy (Williams 2007), this research provides an insight to some of the potential divergences that may occur as D&T teachers, who do have the power, interpret the National Curriculum using D&TA’s materials to advocate the value of D&T to their students. This research could help other special interest groups explore how D&T is valued and how they lobby government for future curriculum change.

The next stage to this study is to explore how the D&TA’s rhetoric about the National Curriculum, and the values discovered in this study, are enacted in classrooms.

Comments: Made minor changes to use of parentheses, comma, and sentence structure. Abstract must be edited by author to fit abstract word limit to be accepted. Key words must also be supplied.