

Altruistic Uses of Socio-scientific Capital: A Pro-ecojustice Pedagogy

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Many societies around the world need to become more critical and activist, particularly in monitoring actions of powerful socio-economic entities — including governments, corporations, transnational trade organizations, think tanks, entertainment conglomerates, banks, individual financiers, etc. — and, where they perceive risks to wellbeing of individuals, societies and environments, develop and implement plans of action to try to bring about a better world. Key elements of power in this regard appear to be fields of science and technology (and, likely, other related fields, like engineering and mathematics) — which are essential instruments of wealth concentration and, associated with that, various personal, social and environmental harms. Science education in many places in the world has, for several decades, explored mandates for educating youth about relationships among fields of science and technology and societies and environments (STSE). While such education can contribute to development of critical and activist societies, there have been tendencies to emphasize controversies (e.g., as socio-scientific issues) and personal decision-making — which seem to limit critique and, moreover, socio-political actions. For about the last decade, however, the ‘STEPWISE’ framework has been used as a basis for curriculum development, field-testing and research in science and technology education to understand its potential for encouraging and enabling students to develop and implement informed plans of action to address problems they perceive. In this address, successes and struggles of this framework are reviewed — in light of cases of STEPWISE in practice and through various theoretical lenses. After particular focus on apparent opposition from neo-liberalism-informed networks of entities, possible approaches are considered for mobilizing perspectives and practices that might contribute to personal, social and environmental wellbeing.