
Case Study

A Two-Year College Perspective

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Several years ago, faculty at some colleges and universities began to explore the use of case studies in technological education. It began as an accident. Faculty had been conducting internships in local industries and while on-site, they discovered many activities going on in the workplace for which there was no instruction in academic programs. This discovery crossed all disciplines. For example, one faculty member returned from an industry experience to exclaim, “At first, when I observed the work that was taking place, I thought ‘... there is no mathematics being used here’, but then after a while, I realized there was mathematics being used, it just wasn’t the mathematics we were teaching”. As a result we began to look for effective methods to bring these workplace experiences to students. Case studies proved to be an excellent approach, thus the journey to develop cases and methods for using cases in technological education was started. As we worked with the expert learning scientists, we discovered that the use of cases, when implemented properly, could have a dramatic affect on the learning of content as well as critical thinking abilities. We had always assumed that cases should be limited to senior project or “capstone” experiences for students. After all, we thought that students needed to know considerable content before they could actually solve a case or gain anything from the case experience. We learned however, that technological case studies can be an excellent vehicle for learning content. Students learn content through discovery and retain much more of what they learn. As a result, we now believe the use of case studies should begin early in a program of study and continue throughout the program.

Please visit “The Case Files” website at www.nsti.tec.tn.us/seatec to find sample cases and other resources on the use of case studies in technological education.

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Ms. Rogers serves as lead principal investigator for a major curriculum model development project funded by the National Science Foundation, Advanced Technological Education program. She serves on several advisory boards.