Our heritage and opportunity

This item was submitted to Loughborough University's Institutional Repository by the/an author.


Additional Information:

- This is an article from the serial, Design and Technology Education: an International Journal [© DATE]. It is also available at: https://ojs.lboro.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/DATE/

Metadata Record: https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/6345

Version: Published

Publisher: © Design and Technology Association

Please cite the published version.
This item was submitted to Loughborough’s Institutional Repository (https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/) by the author and is made available under the following Creative Commons Licence conditions.

For the full text of this licence, please go to: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/
In July this year I was fortunate to see one of my long-held ambitions beginning to emerge as a reality. www.dater.org.uk…an online hub with open-access research archives, together with an online conference and journal. The search facility allows the IDATER and Design & Technology Association International Research Conference and NADE journal archives, as well as this journal, and the Orange Series to be searched simultaneously. Further resources are being added, including all the back issues of the Journal of Design and Technology Education (1995-2004) and Design & Technology Teaching (1990-1995) in the near future. Permission has recently been granted by Trentham Books Ltd to eventually add all of the back issues of Studies in Design Education, Craft and Technology in its various guises back to 1968.

www.dater.org.uk was established by a partnership of the Library and Department of Design and Technology at Loughborough University and the Design and Technology Association. We are particularly indebted to the Library staff, who manage Loughborough’s Institutional Repository and Information Systems for its existence. But why did we call on their expertise to this extent? And what is the point of research archives?

Of course, some of the reasons are self-evident and amongst which are: supporting the work of researchers; making resources available to the tutors and students of courses related to design and technology; ensuring access to the contributions made by past and present researchers; striving to achieve greater visibility for the journal and conference; providing resources and opportunities in the format which emerging researchers have come to expect; and expanding the potential for international collaboration. As research becomes an increasing requirement of M-level teacher training (in England at least) and action research begins to reassert itself within the teaching profession, the demand for such open access resources and opportunities is also set to rise. Clearly these will have been contributing factors to my motivation to support this work, but, for me, notions of heritage and progress are at least as important. It is not so much a timeline which interests me, as a ‘conceptual history’ of educational developments in this curriculum area. The following passage was written by the late Professor John Eggleston in 1973 in his introduction to the International Perspectives of Design Education Conference that was held in that year.
After centuries of emphasis on the acceptance of knowledge and values the curriculum has in many areas now focused on creative and open-ended ‘discovery’ approaches. In no aspect of the curriculum has this been more in evidence than in the field of design, craft and applied science where the emphasis on discovery approaches, creativity, inventiveness and the development of new solutions has been given its widest rein. Although these papers are particularly concerned with this area of the curriculum, however, it is important to recognise that it is only a part of the total movement that, for instance, in Britain, has been concerned with the development of precisely those approaches in science, in the humanities, in language and communication and indeed in every other sector of the spectrum of knowledge.

Why has this come about? There are many reasons of which two are paramount. One is the new realisation that the environment, both public and private, is a matter in which the myriad of individual decisions is the key determinant. For many years we believed that decisions in this area were best left to the experts. Accordingly, we trained small numbers of highly selected designers, town planners, town and country planning officers, landscape artists and the like. We believed that with training the specialists would be able to make wise decisions and all that remained for us was to persuade, through education, the majority to respond to their wisdom. In the design subjects in particular we endeavoured to introduce the experts’ decisions to our children and encourage them to accept them. We took them to the Design Centre and allowed them to see the approved products which they may use in their homes. We took them to see the exhibition of the planning consultants for their city and taught them to respect the wise decisions made for the city and community. In design and craft education these considerations lead us almost directly to the problem in which the student identifies a problem, considers lead us almost directly to the problem in which the student identifies a problem, evaluates them and eventually reaches an acceptable contract into decision making processes and in doing so exercise responsibility in a participative society.

In such ways we become aware that we are more likely to achieve ‘good design’ in our environment if we recognise the participatory nature of the process. Simon Nicholson of the Open University has recently gone so far as to suggest in his ‘Theory of Loose Parts’ (Studies in Design Education, Vol 4, 2) that the more successfully designers create a ‘non-participant environment’ the more successfully will people attempt to participate in it, even to the extent of taking part in behaviour that is labeled a vandalism. The ‘structural modifications’ that take place in airport lounges and public conveniences help to make Nicholson’s point. Slowly we realise that an education designed to inculcate respect, to put young people on the receiving end of decisions is gradually giving way to an education in which young people may contract into decision making processes and in doing so exercise responsibility in a participative society.

All this has led to a new kind of education in the design subjects; an education that is related to the environmental context of a technological society and which also helps the individual to relate positively and actively to it. It is an education that, above all else, sees a path to participation through the use of materials. By using them as a vehicle of expression the individual is able to communicate, to stake a claim and to participate in the decision making processes of his society and community. In design and craft education these approaches, creativity, inventiveness and the applied science where the emphasis on discovery and craft curricula from Canada, Australia, Scandinavia, United States and Britain that are to be discussed at this International Design Education Conference. They characterise the Schools Council Design and Craft Education Project that is based at Keele University.

(Eggleston, 1973:5-7)

At the time this was written I was just completing my undergraduate degree and contemplating a teaching career. I didn’t read these words then, but I certainly recognise their ethos. Education in this curriculum area was to be radical, an agent for change towards participation in a democratic society. This is our heritage from those who were the pioneers of design education across the world. How much progress they made towards such goals, and whether we are continuing to make progress towards them are the fundamental matters to consider. Such analysis probably needs to await the passage of time, as it is difficult to
achieve the required academic detachment whilst we
remain in the midst of the action. However we can at least
frame our actions in the context of our heritage, and this is a
process that the online hub should help to support.
Searching the research archives provides a route to exploring
our heritage, and the online conference and journal
opportunities to participate and contribute to the on-going
conversations that are the building blocks of the ideas
culture in which design education continues to develop.

Kay Stables’s paper in this issue of the Journal is the written
version of the 2008 John Eggleston Memorial Lecture, which
was given at the recent Design and Technology Association
International Research Conference held at Loughborough
University. It addresses many key issues and perhaps
foremost amongst them is the nurturing of the designerly
aspects of being human. It is rightly noted that the idea of
being designerly as an innate human potential is well-
supported in the literature, and, crucially, demonstrates the
progress that has been made in developing such potential
through design and technology education. Understanding
the meaning of designing (or the designerly) as a
fundamental human capability is central to the development
of the conceptual foundations of design education. There is
a sense in which this paper is both demonstrating the
evolving ideas culture and indicating some measures of
progress, and, consequently, a well-judged and fitting tribute
to the contributions made by John Eggleston.

Similarly, Paul Black’s paper is the written version of the
Research Keynote presentation, which he gave at the same
conference. This provides an authoritative account of the key
role that formative assessment can play in design and
technology education and the key strategies for its
successful implementation. He discusses the key roles that
rich questions, open discussion, appropriate feedback and
self and peer-assessment can play, and the formative use of
summative assessment. The selection of tasks and the
nature of their assessment remain as key issues in the
nurturing of the designerly and this paper makes a significant
contribution towards improved understanding in these vital
areas.

Richard Kimbell’s Reflection concerns another of the
perennially problematic areas of design education’s ideas
culture; the relationship of the outcome and the processes
of designing. As becomes apparent in reading this piece,
designing processes are complex and can be understood at
many levels. What people see and remember are the
designed objects without necessarily fully appreciating how
they came into being.

In their paper Richard Moalosi and Olefile Molwane discuss
the challenges facing teachers in the teaching of design and
technology education in Botswana’s primary schools. These
challenges have parallels in many other countries around the
world, and there is something to learn from each of these
different experiences. In Botswana, design and technology
has become part of the wide-ranging Creative and
Performing Arts (CAPA), which also comprises of elements
from Art and Craft, Home Economics, Business Studies,
Physical Education, Music, Drama and Dance. With the
requirement that CAPA is taught through an integrated
strategy and the limited national support, this is both a rich
and challenging context.

In recent times it has almost seemed to be assumed that
once a website has been provided to deal with an issue that
it has then been satisfactorily resolved. Certainly for
sustainable design, this is not the case. Numerous websites
have been developed at considerable cost, and yet
instances of credible sustainable designing remain in the
minority. Peter Simmons reports here some of his findings
concerning sustainable design and website use amongst
AS/A2 level design and technology students’ projects. The
outcomes are not encouraging for those of us who advocate
sustainability as being a key aspect of designing. For the
majority of students, there seemed to be a clear indication
that they would (only) follow the Awarding Bodies
guidelines, and the importance of their role in defining the
context for the students’ designing is evident.

This issue also contains a review by David Spendlove of
Research Design Learning: Issues and findings from two
decades of research and development by Richard Kimbell
and Kay Stables; a review by Stephanie Atkinson of
Analysing Best Practices in Technology Education which was
edited by Marc de Vries, Rod Custer, John Dakers and Gene
Martin; and a review by Andy Mitchell of A Practical Guide to
Teaching Design and Technology in the Secondary School by
Gwyneth Owen-Jackson.

References:
Eggleston S J (1973) ‘An International Perspective on
Design Education’. In A R Pemberton and S J Eggleston
(Eds) International Perspectives of Design Education,
University of Keele, Studies in Education, Driffield,
Yorkshire.

E.W.Norman@lboro.ac.uk