

# Editorial

Throughout Britain the mood of confidence in Design and Technology education is rising. Teachers' meetings are enthusiastic; the atmosphere at this year's Design and Technology Show at the National Exhibition Centre was, at times, almost euphoric.

Yet alas, not all the signs are so encouraging. The Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) for Key Stage 3 Technology developed by Goldsmiths' College and Middlesex Polytechnic were regarded as a blueprint for outstanding creative work. Now both projects have been discarded by the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC). The SATs that had been produced and trialed will not be used and a contract to produce simpler, predominantly paper and pencil, tests has been issued.

The important Goldsmiths' team report on the long term project on *The Assessment of Performance in Design & Technology* has just been published and is to be reviewed in the next issue of *Design & Technology Teaching*. It notes that pupils produced more and better design and technology work under the controlled conditions of a formal test than during their coursework assignments and that the ten thousand 15 year old pupils surveyed produced far more work in the 90 minutes of the test activity than in double or treble that amount of time in their ordinary project work.

The recent HMI report on Technology at Kinghurst CTC, with one of the best-resourced technology faculties in the country, is depressing. It observed:

There is confused terminology in College documentation and significant areas of weakness in the teaching of designing and making. Lessons are not built around a clear rationale or structure; work in craft, design and technology is little more than a series of projects and offers little progression in skills or concepts.

But there is even more from HMI. A secret report, now going the rounds at the Department of Education and Science is

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# The Investigative Learning Process

believed to extend this criticism to the delivery of National Curriculum Technology in many schools nationwide.

All this evidence has now been 'augmented' by the report of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research by Professor Sig Prais (now restored to the world of SEAC) and Dr Elaine Beardsley who label much present work in the National Curriculum technology as 'Blue Peter' activity. They also argue, following visits to Germany, Holland and France, that workshop subjects such as Woodwork and Metalwork at Key Stage 4 and GCSE examinations should be restored rather than diminished. And a report making precisely this recommendation is expected to be released next month.

The most negative scenario is all too easy to imagine. It could involve the abandonment of Technology at Key Stages 1 and 2 in face of Government enthusiasm to simplify the primary curriculum and concentrate on the basics — reinforced by the difficulties primary teachers experience in delivering the subject as reported by the Exeter University study. Technology at Key Stage 4 could be eroded by schools and pupils using the opportunity to 'opt out' and by a return to basic vocational skills training programmes. Key Stage 3 Technology might remain but as a soft, symbolic component for younger secondary school pupils, based on paper and pencil activities rather than project work.

Such an outcome would be a tragedy — the unique and essential learning experience developed and fought for the teachers, researchers and HMI for the past 30 years could be lost. The prospect of producing a new generation of adults who understand and experience the intellectual, emotional and practical demands of design, manufacture and commerce and who can accord it the status it deserves will disappear.

It is not too late; DATA and *Design and Technology Teaching* believe high achievement in Design and Technology

can be seen in many primary and secondary schools — with impressive consequences. But to make this success widespread we require consistently high *quality* in the selection of curriculum, determined and demanding teaching, competent management and committed advocacy by schools and teachers who recognise and want the contribution of technology.

This issue of *Design and Technology Teaching*, like its new sister journal *Primary DATA* offers help and guidance in the search for quality.

It begins with an important paper by Sellwood describing the investigation learning process developed in the National Project on Practical Problem Solving 5-13 which he directed. It shows, in the clearest way, how the study of technology (and a range of other subjects) can become a quality learning experience. He offers the conclusion of the project in evidence 'What is required is an approach that is efficient and contains information about the processes and products of the educational experience and takes into account the principle of pupil self accounting.'

Bishop follows with a seminal article on an issue that all readers must now begin to consider — how National Curriculum Design and Technology can link with National Curriculum Art and Design at Key Stages 1 and 2. He outlines a strategy which could lead to mutual enhancement of both areas.

Claire presents an illuminating case study of William Burrough Primary School, Tower Hamlets. The study shows clearly how a through going child centred approach can deliver National Curriculum Design and Technology effectively and excitingly.

Weston, in a secondary school context advocates a team approach to delivering the full range of technology and argues that such an approach is essential to ensure quality across the Attainment Targets.

Pitt and Riggs and Conway in an important pair of articles explore the crucial but often neglected area of Values in Technology. Pitt makes a proposal for a clearing house for information on socially oriented projects to which many readers will wish to respond.

Finally, Medways's article on Technology and English will alert many readers to their vital, even centred contribution to the teaching of English in primary and secondary schools.

The issue concludes, as always, with an extensive selection of reviews, resource news and notes.

John Eggleston