

## **Integrated Studies: The Craft Dimension**

*A consideration of the 3 Curriculum Units of the Schools Council Integrated Studies Project that have just been published by the Oxford University Press together with a teacher's guide, slides and tape.*

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All societies, so the argument runs, have a technology. All technology involves design. All design raises social issues of purpose and use. Thus to understand an artefact, in any full sense, is to gain an insight into a society in a particular place, and at a particular time. The Integrated Studies Project has had a central interest in man and society, and hence has been concerned among other things with what Bruner distinguishes as one of the five key humanising forces distinguishing man from the animals: man the tool maker and user. Such an issue has been seen as multi-dimensional – an axe, for example, can be studied in the context of warfare, ritual use, nature and availability of materials used, organisation of manufacture, techniques involved, design and decoration. Expressed in school terms, a number of school subjects can contribute to the desired understanding, and motor skills will be involved as well as cognitive ones. Organisationally, all this points to a team-teaching approach.

None of the units being published are focussed primarily on man as tool-user, but it is an important dimension of all of them, and would be open to considerable extension if a craft teacher were a member of a team. The units are:—

### **Unit One: Exploration Man**

This is an introductory unit with a double interest: people finding out, and finding out about people. A possible sequence is discussed. It begins by asking pupils to use senses to explore the immediate environment and to learn about themselves and other people. This leads to looking at different school subjects as specific tools of enquiry. Finally possible ways of grouping subjects and using them co-operatively are considered. Among the eight subjects which it feels pupils need to be introduced to is “technology”, which is referred to as: “An emerging area of concern in schools. At the moment, the stress may be either on understanding the advanced industrial society in which we live, *or* on pupils’ own experiments in applied science and solving practical problems *or* on making things in wood, metal *or* plastics.” That is, it is regarded as an important area involving the physical sciences, and the social sciences as well as arts and crafts.

This unit offers no materials, but a series of wide-ranging suggestions for pupil activities.

### **Unit Two: Communicating with others**

This unit explores the range of ways by which men can communicate with each other (words, gestures, sounds, forms, line, colour), and continually relates human expression to the different social contexts in which it takes place.

Among the issues raised are problems of communication, children’s own development of language, and the inter-relation of the arts in an historical period.

Students of design may probably find most mileage for them in two topics;

lettering and symbols. As well as a look at the history of writing, pupils are encouraged to undertake "linguistic field-work" in their own district, looking at the lettering and motifs of tombstones, street signs, posters and trade marks. Symbols are introduced (alongside contrasting approaches such as that of the naturalist) through the examples of the bird and the horse. These sheets have a high proportion of pictures over against text, with examples chosen deliberately from different parts of the globe and from both the past as well as the contemporary world. Pupils' follow-up activities, it is hoped, may include expressive work in a range of media.

### Unit Three: Living with others

This unit aims at developing pupils' insights into man's social organisation through comparisons between four different communities:

1. Their own — a 20th century industrialised society
2. Two island societies:
  - (a) The inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha
  - (b) The Dyaks of Borneo
3. Imperial China — an "historical civilisation".

In each case comparisons are focussed on homes, family, education, law and order, work and leisure, beliefs. Throughout there is concern to introduce pupils to the basic concepts and working methods of the social sciences.

This enquiry may well be one of those in which design teachers have most to give to their colleagues. This would certainly be true on two aspects: house forms, and the tools and artefacts of each society studied. For houses, the sheets offer both pictures and some description (though more about use rather than construction) of the croft-like stone house on Tristan; the Dyak long-house (with all the complex inter-family unit this implies); and a range of Chinese houses — cave dwelling, courtyard farm, and the elegant, single-storey, varnished wood structure of the mandarin. In addition, pupils will also be expected to study examples from their own local district. As for tools and artefacts, a full sheet is devoted to Chinese technology, looking at different uses of the wheel, and how techniques of irrigation met an urgent need of survival. Two further sheets of special interest are one on Dayak crafts — textile patterns, jade necklaces, bamboo tobacco pipes with incised designs, wooden shields, weapons, drums and slit gongs, — and one on the Chinese dragon symbol, with its changing meaning and design, expressed in a range of materials (bronze, lacquer, embroidered silk paper — cut or folded or painted, jade and ceramics), and used in a different context of ritual, rank, or festival.

The mention of "sheets" raises two questions: What is their actual format? And — to be hoist on an appropriate petard — is the design appropriate for intended use? Items which were used singly during trials have been incorporated into large folding sheets. These eliminate the possible loss of single items by pupils of the age range and they bring



items on one topic significantly together. Different ways of folding exploit the chance to show sequences and to enable contrasting viewpoints to be placed side by side. It is hoped that this format will support a stress on pupil enquiry, facilitate activities in small groups, and be useable in mixed ability situations. Possible approaches and follow-ups are discussed in the accompanying *Teachers' Guide*. And a general introduction to Integrated Studies can be found in the first half of the booklet *Exploration Man*.

Simply to stress, however, points in the units which craft teachers could fruitfully develop is to evade a basic consideration. Will the organisational arrangements in a given school enable the craft teacher to contribute in this way? It is by no means unlikely that the time-table will have put craft subjects into a quite separate area from the "humanities", which may itself be limited to history and geography. On the other hand it would not necessarily be an answer to the problem to have a large area of time allotted to the "humanities", and regard "humanities" as almost everything, craft included.

It may be wiser to begin with 3 broad desirables, and to leave schools to discuss their own ways and means:

1. That teachers from all subjects taught in the school should be invited to contribute to the *planning* of a thematic enquiry, whether or not they are to be full members of the team.
2. That it should be possible for a teacher, who was not a member of the team, to join in the enquiry for a limited time at an appropriate point (e.g. give illustrated talk one afternoon).
3. That the workshops/art studio should be sometimes available, with specialist teacher present, to enlarge the possibilities of pupil follow-up work.

If all these were in some measure satisfied then certainly the materials of the Integrated Studies Projects could be happily exploited to ensure that for pupils, in Bruner's words, tools "take on their proper meaning as amplifiers of human capacities and implementers of human activity", and thus must be seen as "embedded in a program of use".