

Editorial

As *Studies in Design Education Craft & Technology* approaches its twentieth year, confident and assured of its standing and status, it is especially pleasing to record the abundant evidence that the subject area to which it has devoted its existence is prospering in similar ways. From the veritable flood of Ministerial speeches a recent pronouncement by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales is typical:

'Attitudes to craft design and technology in our schools are changing rapidly. It is now widely accepted in the education service that all young people should have some experience of CDT while they are at school. Our target must be to introduce all pupils in primary schools to the activities of designing and making, and to offer all pupils, girls as well as boys, a sustained experience of CDT in the secondary school.

CDT can bring together the practical application of science and mathematics, the skills of reasoning, the encouragement of aesthetic sensibility, the economic dimension and the practical skills associated with traditional and new craft subjects. It provides the opportunity to work in groups and to stimulate discussion among pupils and with teachers in a way which is scarcely paralleled and in ways which genuinely help to prepare pupils for adult and working life. When taught imaginatively it is amongst the most demanding and most rewarding of subjects in the curriculum.

I attach great importance to CDT as part of the preparation for living and working in a modern industrial society and I welcome the contribution that this conference will make to increasing awareness of this important subject'.

It is easy to become blasé, even cynical about prepared statements such as this. But if one has doubts about their importance one has only to remember how improbable such remarks would have been even ten years ago. The world has changed dramatically in favour of craft, design and technology.

This issue of *Studies in Design Education Craft & Technology* again presents a full spectrum of

developments at the forefront of craft, design and technology. We begin with a major study of language in Design and Technology by White, based on research just completed for the Assessment of Performance Unit at the National Foundation of Educational Research in England and Wales. Many craft, design and technology teachers have seen their subject as a vehicle to help pupils to become more fluent language users. White turns our perceptions of this process upside down illustrating:

'a simple but dramatic shift of emphasis from the model of the pupil as an empty vessel waiting to be filled with knowledge, and then asked to use writing as proof that sufficient saturation has been achieved, to the recognition that already as competent users of language, pupils are in possession of knowledge of their own and are able to use their language as a means of enhancing it. In this model of learning, writing has many functions. Interacting with talk, with reading, with developing thoughts, and finding expression in actions as well as by means of words on the page, in this context writing comes to serve a real communicative function'.

Two articles with special relevance for A level teaching follow. Norman offers a detailed analysis for teaching the crucial principles of mechanics in product design — the key area of most A level design and technology courses. Denton and Edwards look at the more general but equally crucial area of teaching coursework at A level. Both articles offer a range of practical suggestions which can hardly fail to make the work of students and teachers more interesting and enjoyable.

Addis takes us across the water to describe a remarkable initiative in developing design to the highest standards that has been growing in strength and place at Kilkenny for the past 25 years. It provides an outstanding model of design education in its fullest sense which will be of the greatest interest not only to our many Irish readers but also to all others who wish to see a thriving design and craft industry in the modern world.

Two articles on teacher training follow. Adamson and Shield consider the standing of the two-year training

course for craft, design and technology — a crucial avenue for many entrants to our profession. With their students they mount a spirited analysis of the academic and professional standards that are being achieved. Allison presents a detailed account of the new patterns of training in art and design — still an alternative and largely separate area of teacher education despite the close integration between craft, design and technology and art teachers in the schools. Many readers will learn much from Allison's contribution.

Finch and Burton offer a range of perceptive thoughts of skilled practitioners 'on the job'. They reflect valuably on some key dilemmas — on the nature of content and on linkages with industry — issues that exercise many readers. They are appropriately followed by a valuable essay by Ashton on the aims of craft, design and technology. He argues that the subject is becoming 'far too theoretical' putting itself into an 'intellectual straitjacket' and concludes with a plea to recognise practice as being of equal if not even greater importance.

A contribution by Garner and Norman on an important technical issue — the use of the Schools Information Retrieval (SIR) Project, a tool which could, in time, make a major contribution to the teaching of craft, design and technology concludes the articles.

As usual the issue includes reviews and an extensive selection of news and information for readers.

John Eggleston