

Retraining at King Alfred's College

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This article sets out the structure of a course, directed to the retraining of qualified teachers, which has been devised to be adaptable to local conditions. It is delivered, at present, at two centres — the CDT Berkshire Centre, Brakenhale School, Bracknell and King Alfred's College, Winchester. It is not my intention to discuss the content base and its delivery in any detail — I believe it would be no different to the best practice elsewhere, but to observe and reflect on the defined course structure and its implementation in practice at one of these centres, King Alfred's College (KAC) where I am course leader.

For many years KAC has been a centre for the initial teacher training of, what was once Handicraft, now Design and Technology. The focus until very recently has been the secondary age range through the four year and two year B.Ed's. In 1987 a B.Ed in Primary Design and Technology commenced.

A retraining course for qualified teachers was commenced in 1980 and ran for three years in the form of a one year full time course, finishing when the two year B.Ed commenced. During 1986 discussions took place between the department and LEA advisers from Hampshire and Berkshire to plan a course that was largely part time in attendance and with a variety of stages of attainment.

The course that was developed and then validated by the college and by the DES is titled: CDT RETRAINING

COURSE FOR QUALIFIED TEACHERS OF OTHER DISCIPLINES and will be referred to as 'the course' in this article.

The aims of the course are:

- a) to retrain qualified teachers of other disciplines to Craft, Design and Technology
- b) to establish a flexible teaching force within secondary schools, enhancing in particular cross-curricular approaches and enabling schools to provide an adequate breadth of curriculum.

Course Structure

It is possible for a teacher to follow the course to three different stages — I, II and III.

Stage Three attainment is equivalent to a one year full time retraining course, representing fully qualified CDT status. Stage Two is viewed as conferring competence to teacher lower school CDT (11-14) whilst Stage One introduces the course member to the activities within CDT but confers a strictly limited qualification to teach parts of the subject.

Certificates awarded at Stage One or Two specify the areas of competence attained, and thereby restrict practice to those domains until extended certification.

Each stage of attainment requires a minimum number of days of attendance on the course, on teaching practice and in industrial placement. Central to the

rationale of the course is that these occur concurrently, thereby unifying these different perspectives. The industrial experience which by its nature cannot be concurrent in the same manner, is organised so that relative judgements can be made between the different placements, rather than one block placement.

Stage Three requires (a minimum of) 120 days on the course, 30 days of full responsibility for CDT classes and 10 days industrial placements.

State Two requires (a minimum of) 50 days on the course, 20 days of full responsibility for CDT classes and 5 days industrial placements.

Stage One requires (a minimum of) 30 days on the course, 10 days of full responsibility for CDT classes and 2 days industrial placements.

The term 'teaching practice' denotes placement in the teacher's own, or another local, school with an approved Head of Department or other experienced teacher of CDT to act as teacher-tutor, supervising and aiding the progress of the course member. This has always been viewed as a central learning component of the course.

Assessment

The course is assessed by means of:

- a display of coursework demonstrating practical skills
- reports from the supervising teacher-tutor
- a school practice file
- a journal

An applicant for the course must be a qualified secondary teacher with appropriate experience in secondary schools — normally not less than 5 years.

The award offered is a King Alfred's College Certificate of Further Professional Study, CDT Retraining, qualified by Stage 1, 2 or 3.

In September 1986 the two centres commenced their respective courses, based on one course document, using the variety of Stages in the document to cater for local conditions of finance and recruitment.

In Berkshire, at the Berkshire CDT Centre, Brakenhale School, Bracknell,

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10 Berkshire teachers set out for Stage One under the tutorship of Mr David Jones, then head of Faculty of Design, Brakenhale School, now CDT Support Teacher.

At King Alfred's 10 Hampshire teachers set out for Stage Two. It was planned that Stage Two would be attained in the first year and Stage Three in the following year. Therefore the one year full-time course would be replaced by a two year part time course.

The rest of the article is directed to this centre of the course.

Pattern of Attendance at KAC

Attendance at King Alfred's is a combination of full-time and part-time.

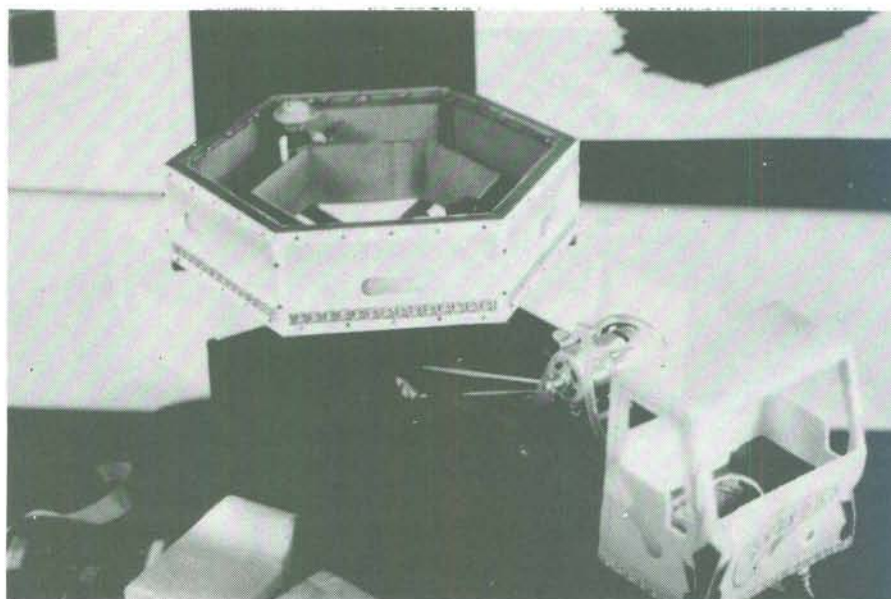
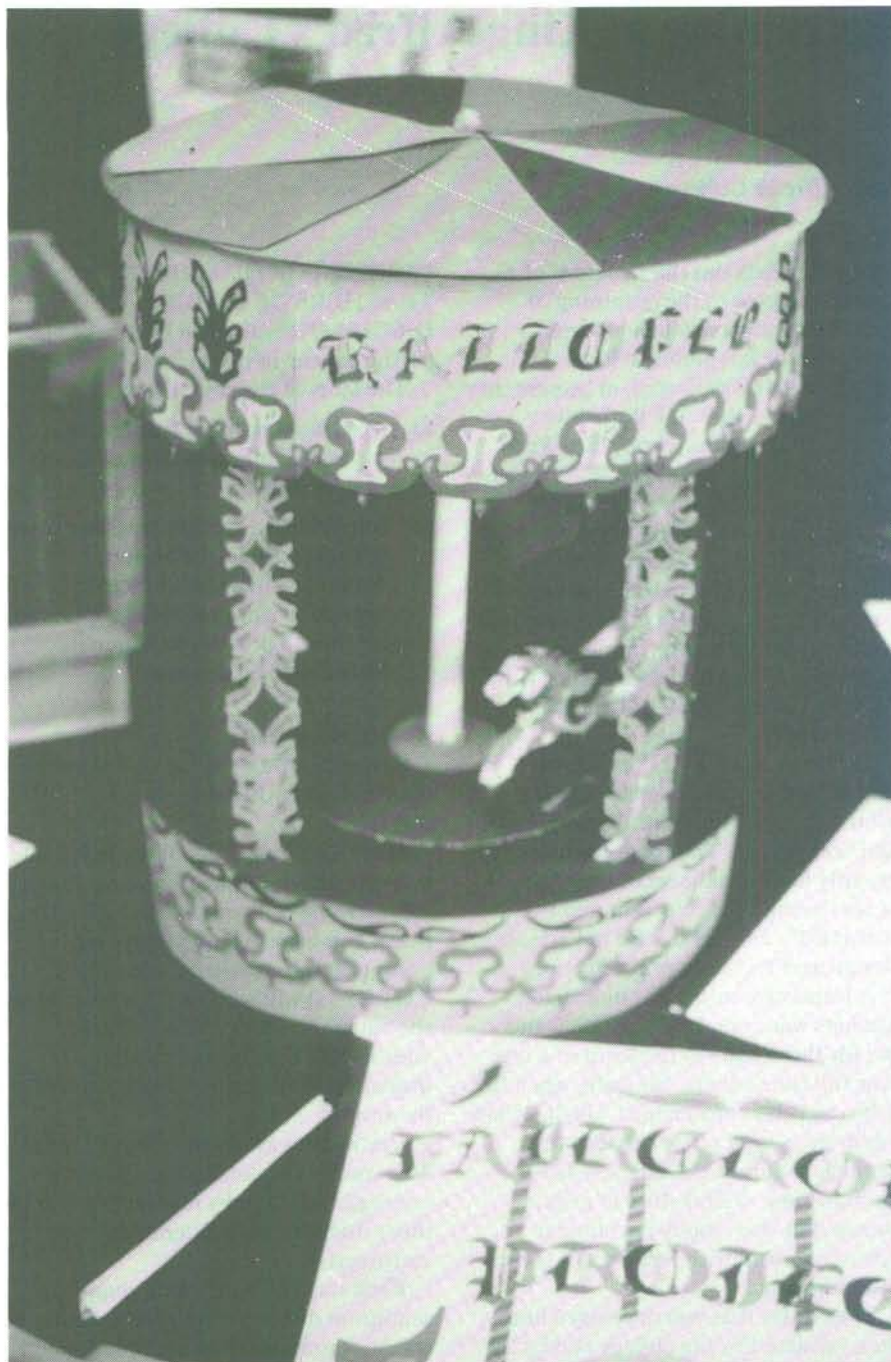
Stage II

For four weeks in September the course is organised and staffed by the LEA(s), in consultation with the College. The course members are introduced to the philosophy of the subject and its delivery through visits to schools — primary and secondary, where good practice is taking place, and through project work undertaken by the course members themselves.

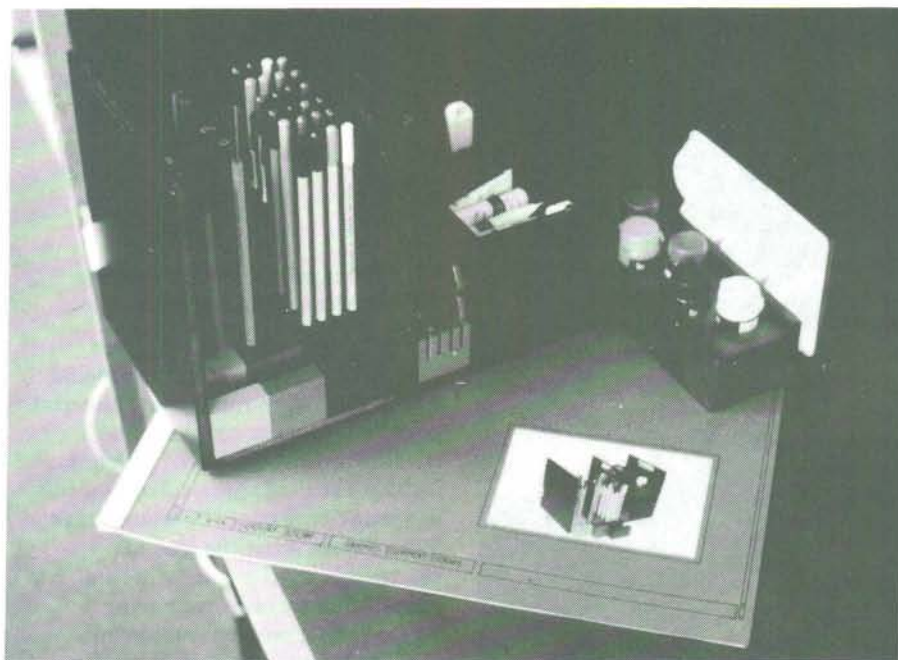
This is on a part time attendance pattern of two days per week.

They then come to College for four weeks full time. The focus here is on the need to gain confidence, within a workshop environment, in the working and use of a number of materials and technologies, with great emphasis placed on the appropriateness to schools, and the methodological implications of these activities. This full time 'immersion' period is seen as essential, so that course members not only gain this initial competence and greater confidence in themselves, but to enable the majority of the course members to return to their schools to take some involvement with the delivery of CDT in their own institution.

For the remainder of the Autumn term, for the whole of the Spring Term and the majority of the Summer Term, the course reverts to the earlier pattern of two days per week. The final two weeks of the Summer Term are full time, the first of which is the industrial placement.



Fairground Ride Project



Graphics Container in MDF

Stage III

The course continues on a similar basis except that the full time College elements are slightly different. At the commencement of the year, two full weeks are spent at College, and at the end of the year three weeks, the first week again being the industrial placement.

Recruitment and Progression

1986 Cohort (First year of course)

Ten commenced the course but one course member's school was unable to meet the minimum time for the CDT teaching practice requirement and the course member withdrew during the Spring Term. The remaining nine passed Stage II and continued to Stage III. All were from Hampshire: two women and seven men.

1987 Cohort

With the introduction of GRIST, funding restricted the scale of the recruitment and six commenced the course. They all passed Stage II and are now engaged on Stage III of the course. All are from Hampshire: one woman and five men.

1988 Cohort

This September the course not only increased in size with an intake of fifteen course members, but it has moved from a single LEA source (Hampshire) to being multi-LEA in composition — Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Wiltshire.

An additional and very pleasing aspect of the composition of the new intake is the very high proportion of women — 47%. This is the highest

proportion of any intake on this or any other course in the department.

Recruitment for a 1989 intake is already planned by at least one LEA.

Observations

In addition to this factual account of the structure of the course, which may be of interest to others who are planning or engaged in similar ones, I offer some subjective observations on the course from my perspective as Course Leader.

A very immediate observation is the diversity of backgrounds of the course members — a rich source of stimulus and experience, not only for the other course members but tutors as well. This wealth, taken as a whole, appears substantial but it can easily obscure individual starting points which are considerably less strong. Consequently, it has been found advantageous by the course team that at the commencement of new topics no significant base level of skills or knowledge should be assumed.

The diversity of subject and interest backgrounds is matched by the diversity of school situations that the course members work within. The teaching practice requirement requires careful negotiation between Headteacher, Head of Department (or Faculty), course member and possibly the LEA Adviser. This requirement is made very clear through the course literature and at interview, reinforced by the obligation for the application to be endorsed by the Head Teacher. However it has been found that sometimes this requirement has to be restated in the early stages of the course.

It would appear that the diversity of school situations is a function of the

course member's time table and the quality of the CDT department. The time table can range from situations where the course member is supernumerary and can therefore observe and learn from the whole range of activities of the department with a gradual taking on of full responsibility, to one where the requirement is just met, with the course member having significant existing subject, pastoral or examination responsibilities.

Departments can be different not only in their perception and implementation of the best philosophy of CDT, but in sheer scale; some allowing the course member to experience a wide range of knowledge, skills and teaching styles, others experience a more restricted range. An extreme, but not unfamiliar example, is where there is no CDT department in a school. A course such as this allows the school to enter this new area of the curriculum without additional teacher appointments. This situation is common in girls' schools, from which course members, both at KAC and in Berkshire, have been and are drawn. The course member will be in fact the catalyst for change. In these circumstances, support must be provided, either by an adjacent school or by the LEA through, for example, teacher-advisers.

The course recognises and regards it as important that teachers should have some understanding of the nature of industry to inform their teaching, so that the experiences children receive in schools can be related to the world of employment beyond school and to the working of design and technology in a wider context. It is intended that this is achieved through the industrial placements, each of one week's duration.

In the space of a week's placement there are limits to what can be achieved, but it appears that worthwhile insights are gained into the following:

- The structure of the company — its markets and purposes.
- The variety of forms of employment offered.
- The demands made of employees.
- Working conditions and relations between employees.
- The control systems for design,



financial and manufacturing aspects of the company.

The assignment resulting from placement consists of a folder including a brief diary, any appropriate material collected from the company and a report, the final section of which should include a critical appraisal of how this new experience could be related back into schools. After the second placement, relative comments and judgements are expected having experienced a previous placement.

There have been a wide spread of placements, from a small architect's office to extremely large multi-nationals. It is impossible to generalise about their efficacy, sometimes the restricted scale of the placement is compensated by aspects being seen in depth and immediacy, whilst the larger scale can have a wider range of activities but these are seen solely as a fleeting observer rather than, at best, participant.

The one consistent response from the course members has been that they have gained greatly from this opening of horizons, the making of future contacts and not least enjoyment of these placements.

In the four areas of assessment (a display of coursework demonstrating practical skills, reports from the supervising teacher-tutor, a school practice file and a journal), the most accessible to the course members is the display of course-work. This constitutes all work done on the course whether two or three dimensional including examples of designing/making, documentation and software. All assessments are intended to be formative through the year except this final, summative display.

With regard to their work in schools, during the first year the monitoring and assessment of performance on teaching practice, through observation and the teaching practice file, is the sole responsibility of the teacher/tutor. As the course members are already fully professional teachers in their own subject area, with possible social as well as professional links to their newly defined assessor, potential exists for difficulties to which course tutors must be sensitive.



In the second year of the course, when the course member has developed greater confidence, there are regular visits by a KAC tutor. This allows the College to understand the environment that the course member develops in, strengthens the ties between the College and school and assists in moderation purposes. It is stressed throughout — to the course members, Head Teachers, and Heads of Departments, that these occasional visits by a KAC tutor do not negate, undermine, or reduce the influence of the teacher/tutor within the school. Their influence is direct and continuous which ours can never be. The visits are normally once a term. The tutor's comments resulting from these visits are discussed and negotiated with the course member and the opportunity is given for the course member to make his/her comments on the resulting tutor's observations. Also in the second year the in-school teaching practice assessment is done on a termly, rather than a yearly interval, allowing a progression of attainment to be clearly identified. The KAC pro-forma for this purpose remains unchanged.

The journal offers access to the course member's understanding of CDT. This normally includes a record of the course member's reflections on the College or Teachers' Centre based activities and assignments, and personal responses to design and technology in their world. It is not only a means of gaining an insight into the course member's intellectual progress on the course, especially with regard to the pedagogy and methodology of CDT, but also as a rich source of dialogue between tutors and course members.

It has been found that the balance between different levels at which course members work needs careful consideration. There is a very natural desire on their behalf for a very high proportion of their work to be schools directed — the immediate needs of their own CDT school practice and other demands that they know will be made upon them in school. Balanced against this is the tutor's belief that they should also work to extend their own level. It is important that the course does not confine itself to the immediate pragmatic daily needs of the school. CDT teachers should have that sense of vision of their subject and its

relationship to others, formed by designing as well as by reading, that will inform them when they must make curriculum decisions. This is especially important in a subject which, although having experienced fundamental change, will, I believe, experience it further, especially as the source of much of this change could be from outside the educational establishment.

One of the two aims of the course is to enhance cross-curricular links. For a course such as this, where the person is already coming from another area of the curriculum, then those links are easily recognised and established. Even if course members move wholly into the subject area of CDT then their own interests and connections with their previous area will stimulate these links. It must also be noted that not all course members move wholly into CDT but some retain their previous, sometimes considerable, subject responsibilities. Thus the course has not served to redirect their professional career as such, but to aid and inform their thinking and actions toward other areas of the curriculum, making links and connections, treating new ideas in a creative and sympathetic manner. I hope to pursue this question in more detail, with a survey, through the pages of a later edition of this Journal, indicating the areas that ex-course members are teaching, the degree of cross-curricular linking and the changes in teaching methodology. This will be based on not only the views of the course members, but Head Teachers and heads of Department.

Concluding Remarks

For the majority of us, when we move from a position of knowledge and skill amassed from a significant input of time and effort over a number of years, to a new area, a general lack of confidence may ensue. However exciting the new horizons may be, their range and scale may appear very intimidating.

This is possibly more true for CDT than some others, with its sheer breadth of subject matter, especially if you believe you must be an expert in all of them. If this assertion is justifiable, then it focuses on two aspects that require careful implementation. The course members must be supported in their early progress, and the concept of the

teacher, especially the CDT teacher, as the fount of all wisdom, must be quickly dispelled.

As an example of the recognition by tutors of course members' fears and misgivings, tutor evaluation of course members' project work has tended to be on an informal, one-to-one basis in the early part of the course, then when confidence has grown, the experiences of the course members, and perceptions and comments of the tutors, are shared as a group.

The difficulty with such a course is the conflicting demands made on the course member — College assignments, existing school responsibilities, both curricular and pastoral, and their own domestic situation. Some of this conflict could be reduced if their CDT teaching was conducted in another local school. This would mean that there was the potential for them to work in an environment where the best practice of CDT was taking place, and enable them to be freed from their existing subject responsibilities — an unrealistic goal in most cases, but a block release or exchange is being investigated at present for some course members.

I would assert that the strength and special potential of this retraining course is the manner in which the ideas and skills — cognitive, manipulative and methodological, explored and gained at College and in course members' schools have the potential to be so fully and actively integrated. The 'lead' time between theory and practice can be extremely short under these circumstances — tomorrow even! In contrast, the block practice as experienced on ITT and full time retraining courses does not allow this concurrency of experiences.

As with any new course there must be a degree of selective modification, but I believe that this course has made a substantial and significant start, indicated not least by the rising recruitment and wider range of participating LEAs.