

Proponents of 'total-approach' non-modular structures designed to facilitate the education of young designers and teachers tend to regard alternatives to such well established procedures as some sort of heretical fantasy.

It is the contention here that not only is a modular structure a viable alternative it is in some respects desirable for certain kinds of work. More, it offers a developmental model which may well prove to be more capable of response to social change, student needs and technological advance than other systems.

First a little background to the debate

Following the DES circular 7/73 requiring Local Authorities to ensure that any intending teachers should meet people other than teachers teaching them how to teach, Cheshire County Council, in consultation with the colleges concerned, decided to amalgamate Crewe College of Education and Alsager College of Education and encourage the development of diversified work. Faced with a situation where no Polytechnic or University was located in the County with which a link might have been made for its Colleges of Education, the County's decision had an air of rational inevitability about it.

Although the two colleges concerned represented very different traditions (Crewe was established in 1908 and was for many years a women's college; Alsager was one of the brasher new colleges established after the war when teacher shortage was paramount), both had been addressing themselves separately to the need to diversify their intake and to consider suitable structures to allow this to happen. A considerable degree of unanimity was shown to exist therefore when the two colleges were formally amalgamated in 1974. A faculty structure, for instance, had been mooted which was ultimately instituted.

Diversification of an institution at any time demands a re-examination of structures and procedures. Moreover diversification together with amalgamation and latterly retraction caused by the DES reduction of the numbers of initial teacher training places, necessitated a radical re-think on a massive scale.

The guiding principles for the debate on such changes as were being seen to be necessary were both the result of constant internal debate and such inferences and suggestions which could be drawn from the Government White Paper — 'Education — A Framework for Expansion'. This optimistic document spelt out its intention that the former Colleges of Education should so re-organise their resources as to be able to make a significant contribution to the provision of higher education of the following decade.

It would have been naive to have looked for clear directives in the White Paper. Nevertheless certain key issues may be gleaned which had a bearing on developments at Crewe + Alsager.

For instance with regard to 6th formers it is argued:

A Modular Approach to the Education of Design, Craft and Technology Teachers:

An Analysis of New Developments at Crewe and Alsager College of Higher Education

1. A minority will always be catered for by the Universities in studying in depth some specialist subject to the top of their bent. In no way should the new diversified Colleges of Education attempt to attract this kind of student.
 2. That some would respond to an opportunity to develop what Robbins called 'general powers of the mind' over a wide field.
 3. That some would welcome the opportunity to discover where their real interests and abilities lie.
 4. That some have specific careers in mind, and many more believe that a higher education will enhance their career prospects
- and
5. The great majority legitimately expect their higher education to be *relevant* — i.e. to prepare them to cope successfully with the problems that will confront them in their personal social and working lives.

There is a need therefore, it is argued, in the light of this wide range of motivation for additional provision of a higher education structure which would be characterised by its wide and flexible choice of courses. Such a structure might well be achieved by a system of units and credits. The White

Paper goes on to suggest that coherent courses could be designed which

- 'would draw on a number of related disciplines, would reflect individual needs, and which would, whilst not being narrowly vocational, have a high relevance to the field of work'.

It is also suggested that courses constructed on a unit basis could have sufficient flexibility of content and timing to allow students to change, or gradually evolve, both academic and vocational commitments.

The College took note of these recommendations and at the same time entered into active discussion as to the desirability of building all future developments on the then new Diploma of Higher Education. This new qualification, reflecting as it did a recognised national need for a 'high-achievement' two year qualification, seemed to present an answer to at least some of the College's problems. Further, despite its somewhat equivocal tone the joint UGC/CNAA 'Guidelines for Diplomas of Higher Education' appeared to interested observers in the College to be nudging Institutions in very similar ways to the White Paper.

'In future, we believe, it should prove increasingly possible for an individual to enter or leave at pre-determined points of this spectrum (of qualifications) and at times to suit himself during his career. The use of modular teaching programmes is one way of achieving this goal; if used unwisely it may lead to programmes that lack coherence; because it offers advantages of flexibility of choice and operation, we nevertheless cautiously recommend it for the consideration of institutions wishing to proceed to the Diploma of Higher Education'.

Faced with this welter of advice leavened by almost continuous internal discussion and debate, the College found itself uniquely placed to rationalise the whole spectrum of its academic work and organisation. Uniquely in that at the time three significant and contemporaneous decisions were taken:

1. The amalgamation of the two Colleges of Education.
2. The diversification of the student intake
3. The total re-appraisal of general aims and objectives of all courses and course structures necessitated by switching from Keele University as our validating body and turning to the Council for National Academic Awards.

A fourth factor which in 1974 was just a bit of unpleasant noise in the system manifested itself later as the stringest cut-back in initial teacher training numbers became known.

The College then, in the last three years, has been re-organised and restructured in the light of amalgamation, diversification, revalidation and retraction!

This massive rationalisation led the College planning teams to accept, with certain reservations, a 'modular' solution as most applicable to its needs.

In that common usage of the metaphor 'module' suggests a unit which can be assembled with other

units in any configuration, the Crewe + Alsager structure is not strictly modular. The College has limited the ways in which course units can be put together to form programmes of study. This was seen to be necessary if a credible resolution of the tension that exists between the non-wholly compatible qualities of flexibility and breadth on the one hand and academic depth on the other was to be a distinct characteristic of the structure.

A course unit consists of 90 hours contact time plus an additional 90 hours of student 'private study' time.

In order to complete a Diploma of Higher Education, a student chooses twelve course units during the two years of the programme — normally six in each year. A Dip HE programme must contain at least two distinct patterns which are constructed by assembling clusters of course units which are coherently connected by content or theme. The College was anxious at the outset to avoid over-weighting students' programmes in favour of coherence and depth against flexibility and width and consequently set the maximum size of a course pattern at 8 course units. The minimum size of a course pattern is 4 courses. Thus students are able to choose programmes either fully constructed from course patterns or containing a mixture of course patterns and other supplementary courses chosen either from areas cognate with a course pattern or from other areas, which for reasons of personal vocational or academic interest they feel motivated to explore.

Diagram 1 illustrates the way in which Dip HE course programmes may be constructed. It is worth remembering that the Dip HE now forms the first two years of all degree programmes in the College and has, at the same time, been designed to be a discrete qualification in its own right. Diagram 2 shows the relationship between qualifications in the College.

As was anticipated prior to amalgamation the new College opted for a Faculty structure and five were ultimately formed. These are:

Faculty of Social and Educational Studies
Faculty of Environmental and Scientific Studies
Faculty of Humanities
Faculty of Professional Studies

and Faculty of Creative Arts

This latter consisting of 6 areas of study

Dance
Design, Craft & Technology
Drama
Music
Visual Arts

and

Communication Studies

An important feature of the grouping of the Creative Arts study areas is that although all subjects can readily be seen to be connected with each other in a variety of ways — Music with Drama, Dance with Music and so on — some subjects — or better subject areas or fields of study, such as Design & Technology and Communication Studies

Staff and students working on a visual arts course project in Delamere Forest, Cheshire



Face to face communication in the studio



are markedly interdisciplinary in character. Elements and themes from these areas clearly have innumerable implications for our personal social and cultural lives and thus generate course patterns involving elements variously combined from the Faculty of Creative Arts and from other faculties.

It is within this complex interrelated framework of study that the intending craft teacher now finds himself. It is interesting to note, in the interests of determining similarities within the Faculty, that three of the underlying principles traditionally associated with education of young design/craft teachers remain pertinent across the Faculty. These principles, variously described and delineated, might conveniently be presented as three sets of relationships: The relationship between

- a. Theory and practice
- b. The aesthetic and the technical and
- c. The affective and the cognitive

Take the first of these – the relationship between theory and practice. We would distinguish between two kinds of theory:

1. 'Workshop' theory which is essentially a matter of 'know-how' in which practice begets theory and theory informs and refines practice so that each is necessarily and inextricably involved in the other
- and
2. 'Academic' theory by which we mean such studies as philosophy, psychology and sociology which we regard as liberalising elements within our course patterns which help to provide a context to our work.

Second, we would all recognise the aesthetic object which is the result of skilful technique. The exercise of the technique may in itself be aesthetically significant – for example the movement of the artist/craftsman at work. In some of the work of the faculty, notably dance, the object of aesthetic interest includes the technique which creates it. At the same time we acknowledge the fulfilment of aesthetic criteria in arriving at some technical solution to a problem of mechanical efficiency.

Third, the mutual involvement of thought and feeling characterises all work in the field of the arts and crafts. The capacity to comprehend and articulate subjective and sense experience in perceptual terms is central to understanding and education in the arts.

An underlying, and widely held assumption in the Faculty of Creative Arts, is that the provision of a rich and varied cultural environment will provide 'sensory inputs' which must enhance the education of all. The degree programmes (BA Hons. Creative Arts and BEd) are designed to ensure that not only do students meet socially on a residential campus, their programmes overlap and intertwine. This is not only economically desirable but also ensures that differing views and attitudes are focussed on common problems. For instance an intending Craft teacher following a BEd programme will find himself on say a Visual Arts course unit working alongside students who are majoring in Dance, Music, Drama, Creative Writing and Visual Arts. Lest this sound hopelessly dilettanté, it should be remembered that the Creative Arts degree recruits only students who are able to demonstrate an ability and understanding of two art forms. As there are five art forms from which these two are selected then we have ten kinds of artist on this course. A further consequence of this spread of opportunity is that all students taking Visual Arts as a major programme will either be from Foundation Courses (the majority) or will have a demonstrable ability in that field. As Design, Craft & Technology students must take a Visual Arts course they are, perforce, brought into contact in the studios and workshops with talented colleagues.

It is important to remember that although each student selects 6 course units in each year of the programme, his ultimate career intentions have a

bearing on the choice he is allowed. For instance, the intending Craft teacher will be required to take 4 course units in Educational Studies over the first two years of his programme. Additionally 3 additional mandatory courses form the basis of his programme (See diagram 3).

Although the College has a long experience of training Craft teachers, these are still early days in this new system and many ideas have yet to be 'road-tested'. There is a general confidence that we have evolved a structure which will accommodate the educational needs of young people in the latter half of the twentieth century.

At the moment we can determine three main advantages in the new system.

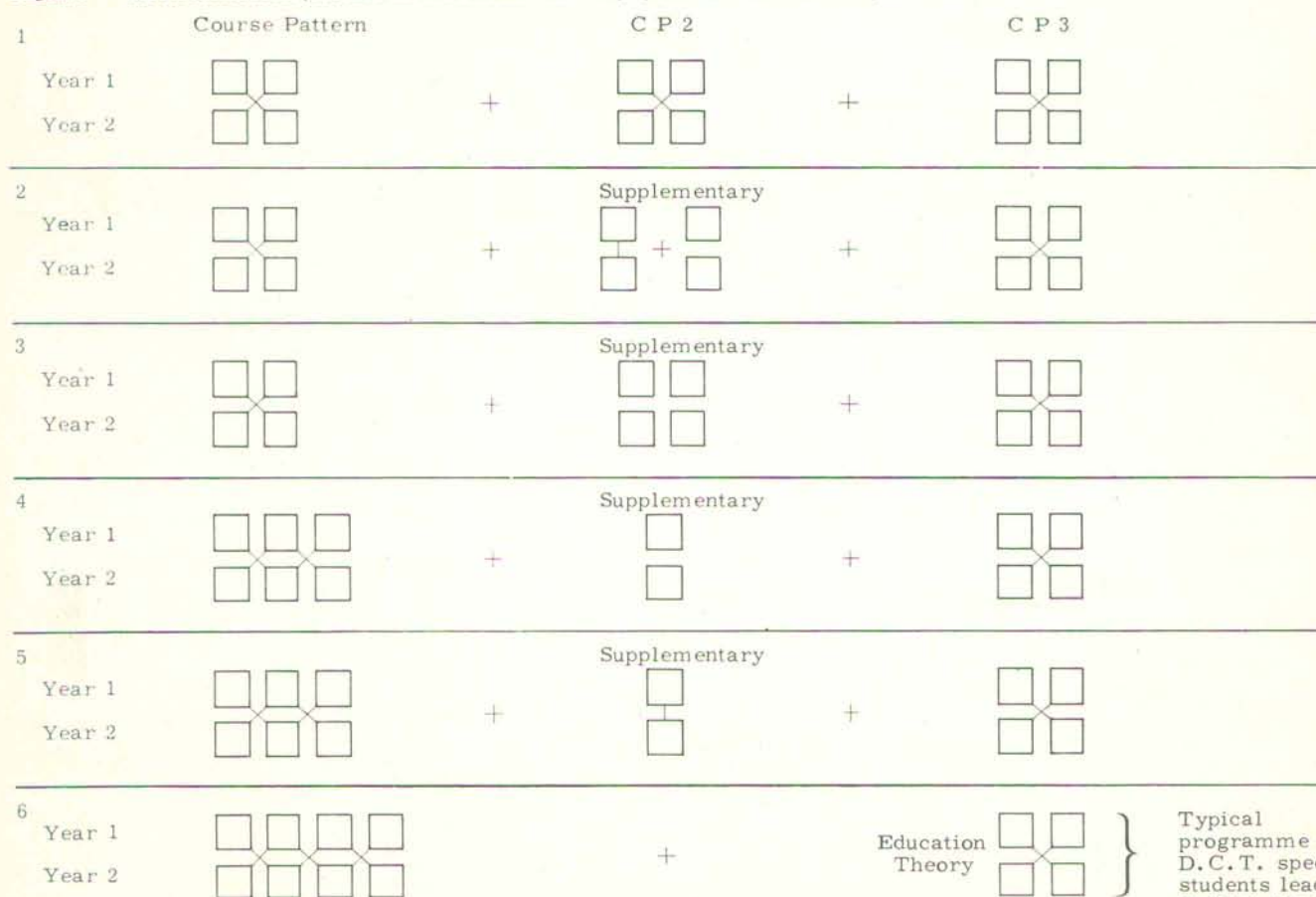
First, and possibly the most important in Art & Design education, is the requirement of all students in the Faculty to work together in workshops, studios and seminars and share experiences and views.

Second, the educational advantages are considerable. A student can delay his choice of career, change courses midstream, even transfer to another institution without loss of time. He has time to discover his strengths (and weaknesses) without jeopardising his career.

Third, and not inconsiderable are the economic advantages. By using course units across a variety of programmes the deployment of staff and physical resources can more easily be optimised.

In the final analysis, the quality of graduate we produce will be our only yardstick – the only one which finally matters. One thing is certain – if we do not produce Design, Craft & Technology teachers, who are at least as good as those we produced under the old system, the schools and their advisers will soon start hollering. We are determined not to let them down.

Diagram 1 DIP HE STRUCTURE (COURSE PATTERN ARRANGEMENTS) (POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES)



Education Theory } Typical programme for D.C.T. specialist students leading to B Ed & B Ed Hons

Also possible + , + + , + + and so on

Diagram 2 STRUCTURE OF THE DIP H.E. AND ITS RELATION WITH OTHER QUALIFICATIONS

Normally 2 'A' level
entry

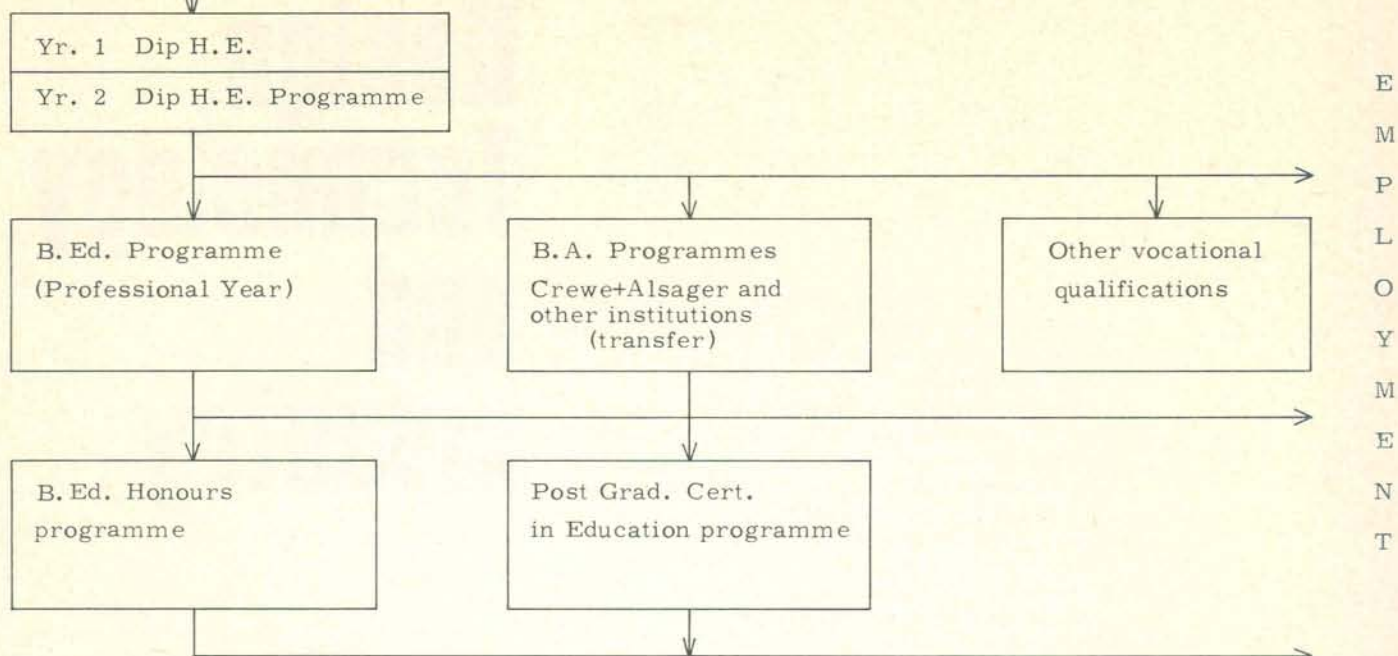
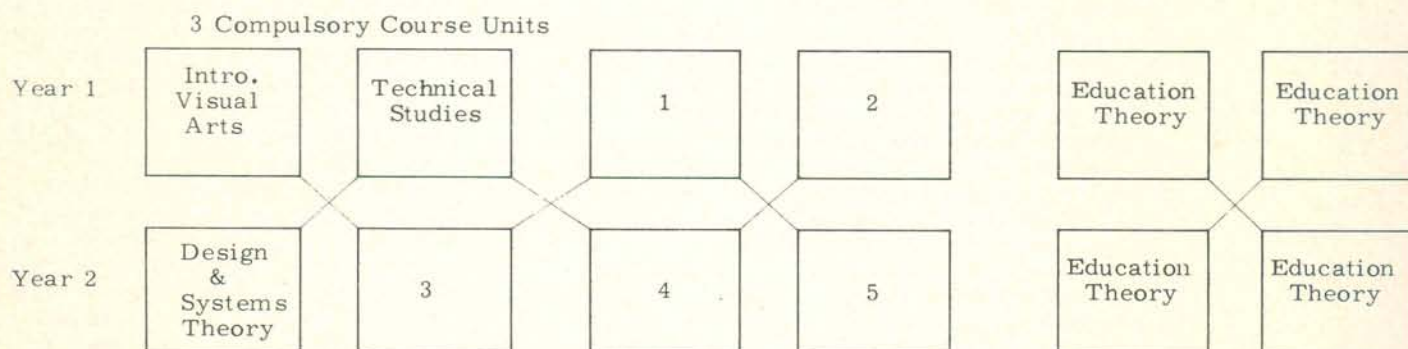


Diagram 3 DIP HE PROGRAMME FOR STUDENTS SPECIALISING IN DESIGN, CRAFT AND TECHNOLOGY LEADING TO B.ED. AND B.ED. HONOURS DEGREES



1 2 3 4 5 course units selected from:

Visual Arts
Silversmithing
Art & Design in Industry
Understanding Art & Design
Arts in the Twentieth Century
Systems Analysis
Organisation Theory

Experience in Perceptual Learning
Control Systems
Energy
Materials Technology
Technical Graphics
Designing and Making

NOTE: Year 3 is concerned with the theory and practice of Design, Craft and Technology in Schools.
Year 4 (Honours Degree) students are given the opportunity to extend work previously undertaken in Years 1 & 2.

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