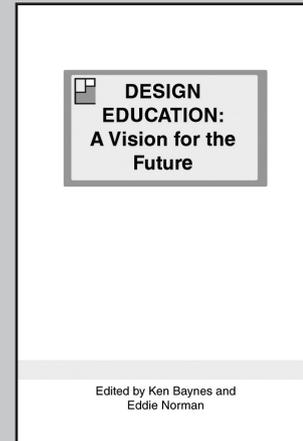


Review

Design Education: A vision for the future

Title:	<i>Design Education: A vision for the future</i>
Editors:	Eddie Norman, Ken Baynes
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The last few years have been a very difficult period for those involved in the Design and Technology education community. A change of government and a change of emphasis saw Design and Technology potentially marginalised in favour of a back to basics 'analogue curriculum in a digital age'. Creativity, Technology and 'Designerly Thinking' were certainly not part of a new 'rigorous' knowledge based curriculum. As a consequence the future of the subject looked uncertain as its place in the national curriculum appeared to be relegated to be a bit part, content free, player. It wasn't however only the national curriculum that was causing concern as it was also the raft of other significant rapid ideological changes that were also occurring at the same time such as the rise of Academies and Free Schools, the changes to the examination system, the removal of 'Qualified Teacher Status' requirements for certain types of schools and the continual attack on Higher Education Teacher Training, which all seemed to increase the vulnerability of D&T.

As the new draft curriculum emerged, the devil as always was going to be in the detail and as the detail finally materialised, the government's first attempt at drafting a new Design and Technology curriculum were laughable as well as insulting. The arrogance and ignorance of an out of touch government were enshrined in a pitiful new vision of Design and Technology and as a consequence a community responded. Orchestrated by the Design and Technology Association it seemed that anyone with an interest in D&T wanted to contribute to illustrate the folly of government thinking.

As a consequence *Design Education: A vision for the future* was one such 'angry, but measured response' to the Government's proposals. The book was put together and

edited very quickly by Ken Baynes and Eddie Norman as part of an academic response to the 'official vandalism' that was taking place. In addition to Ken and Eddie's important contributions, there was a valuable introduction from Sir Christopher Frayling followed by seven authors contributing to the seven key themes identified around which the future of Design Education could be framed. The central theme being that Design Education should be recognized as a third culture alongside the Sciences and the Humanities with its own epistemology and language.

In just over 100 pages the seven chapters touch on the key themes and inevitably given the speed at which the book was put together the responses are slightly disjointed. Nevertheless each chapter provides a valuable, important and most significantly a timely contribution given the context in which the book was established.

In reading the book it was like finding an old favourite pair of shoes that fitted incredibly well, were very comfortable but possibly a little out of date. I don't mean this in a disparaging way, quite the opposite. However in reading the book I was reminded of how strong and coherent the argument for Design Education had been particularly in the 1980s and 1990s but how in the last decade politicisation and performativity had become the new discourse of education. As such the arguments being made were clear, coherent, engaging and thoroughly convincing but sadly these are no longer the characteristics required when influencing government decision-making.

On reflection it seems that somehow we have lost a generation of academics, scholars and practitioners who needed to take on the Design Education argument and reframe it more assiduously in the political context of the

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new millennium. This could be why design and technology has ended up in the perilous position in that we lost a generation of voices who could articulate the centrality of Design Education in such a convincing way. Therefore Phil Roberts' cameo appearance, through his chapter on the aims of Design Education, both reminded me of how much ground we have lost and the chasm we have failed to fill.

The campaign to rewrite the new national curriculum appears to have been a relative success in that a redrafted version looks like it will be accepted. This was an important success for the Design and Technology Association and the supporters of D&T. However the efforts of all will be meaningless unless an entire community now delivers. As such using this book offers a starting point for revisiting the centrality of design argument and I would recommend that anyone interested in contributing to this argument should read this book.