

No doubt readers of the Journal will have heard of the death – just before Christmas – of John Eggleston. It is a moment to pause and reflect on the career of a consummate professional; who was in at the birth of design and technology and who continually sought (and fought) to promote the best interests of the subject. I do not intend that this editorial should be a traditional obituary. Rather it is a personal statement of appreciation of his impact on design and technology generally and on my work in particular.

John's first major impact on design and technology arose through his direction of the Schools Council Design and Craft Education Project in the late 1960s and early 1970s. There were elements of that work that were genuinely visionary, and that provoked some fundamental rethinking of pre-existing craft traditions in order to make way for design and technology. John's project team at Keele University (in line with the 'Project Technology' team directed by Prof. Harrison) was increasingly recognising 'design and make' projects as the core activity of the emerging subject. At that time the subject was variously titled 'design', 'craft and design', 'technology', 'science and technology', 'design and technology'. While the Project Technology team emphasised the centrality of technological systems within this project activity, John's focus was consistently on getting to grips with design processes. And the more his team got to grips with design activity as a means of teaching and learning, the more they began to wrestle with the problem of relating an abstracted 'design process' to a model of assessment.

One of his most influential strategies was to create a pilot 16+ CSE examination in association with the North Western School Examinations Board (NWSEB). As he was subsequently to write:

'It may be argued that external examinations at 16+ exert too powerful an influence as determinants of the curriculum, and that freedom from such examinations would enable greater variety and more exciting work to be undertaken ... (however) ... While industry, parents and students alike value examinations ... they will continue as a major control mechanism of the contents and attainments of secondary education.' (Schools Council, 1974: 38)

John understood how schools work. He knew that the model of design that his research team was beginning to articulate would get nowhere without the external stamp of approval that, in the British context, could

only be provided by an examination. 'A Course of Studies in Design' was the answer they developed and piloted in 1970 in association with the NWSEB, and it contains some absolutely seminal material about teaching and learning designing.

With the 20:20 hindsight with which most of us are gifted, there are several features of this articulation with which we might now wish to argue. But as a product of its time (1970) it was quite remarkable. For in addition to the description of the process, there were three additional things for which this initiative deserves recognition as one of the great landmarks in the development of design and technology.

First, having established and formalised the process of designing through a series of 'stages' (investigation, brief, etc.), the project team went on to translate it into a model for assessment. Each stage of the process became – in turn – the focus of explicit assessment on a sliding scale from 0 (no real attempt) to 5 (comprehensive grasp of the capability). The final mark (out of 25) was therefore seen as a measure of whole capability. Again, their approach might now seem commonplace and even somewhat naive, but it was the first time it had been done in a formal CSE examination. For the first time it became possible and legitimate to assess the whole process of design and development that pupils pursued over an extended period. At a time when most project work assessment (e.g. in metalwork) was solely about the quality of manufacture, this scheme required teachers to make judgements about pupils' grip on the whole process of design and development, including manufacture.

Second, and despite John's comments that examinations '...will continue as a major control mechanism of the contents and attainments of secondary education...' the Course of Study in Design deliberately avoided the specification of course content. As the course booklet explained:

'It is not therefore possible to itemise a syllabus for practical work under headings of specific knowledge or motor skills because these may vary according to the individual needs of candidates and the requirements of different design problems...' (North Western Secondary School Examinations Board, 1970: 2)

This was brave stuff. One might almost say that the course was so focused on the process of designing that it was content-free. In reality, however, the scheme allowed schools to link design project assessments within this course to the 'theory' papers of pre-existing

Prof Richard Kimbell

*Technology
Education Research
Unit, Goldsmiths
University of London*

courses – e.g. in domestic science. Nevertheless, the Keele team had seen and expressed the logic of the situation. If the process of designing is to be the core concern – then the content must be a secondary matter; a follower not a driver.

Third, the Course of Study in Design grappled with the pedagogic issue of helping teachers to teach design processes, using a ‘project book’ which was designed to take pupils through the process step-by-step. For each of the steps in the process there was a page in the book, and each amounted to a list of questions that pupils ought to be thinking about at that point in the process. So (for example) when pupils were ‘investigating’ for the design of playground equipment, they had to think about:

What social factors affect it? e.g. does it involve one person or more? What are the relationships? What material factors are involved? e.g. must they be light? How strong must they be?

But when pupils were making their solution, the booklet steered them to different questions:

In which order shall I make the pieces? Will I need any special materials not in stock? How long should it take to make each part? (North Western Secondary School Examinations Board, 1970: 3 and 6)

Taken together, this pilot examination represented a giant leap forward from the world of craft teaching and its single minded assessment of making skills. Students were being empowered to originate and pursue their own designing/making tasks, often derived from outside the school. And the breadth of what was seen to be encompassed within the ambit of ‘design’ was reflected in one of the books written by the project team: ‘You are a designer.’ (1974)

We are all designers. We design things to use, things to eat and things to do. When you are working out how to make a kennel for your dog, or the best way to redecorate your room, you are designing. And when you plan how you are going to spend your weekend – the meals you would like to eat, the clothes you will buy – you are designing.

Through this project and its associated publications, John made a huge contribution to the establishment of design and technology. Not only did he create a founding rationale (and that in itself was a major contribution), he also created models of classroom practice

and approaches to assessment that have echoed down the subsequent generations.

As a young teacher at the time of John’s original research, I used his pilot examination quite shamelessly as a precedent to support the launch of a similar CSE in ‘Design’ through the South Western CSE Examinations Board. And in the department I was running at the time, we made equally extensive use of an adapted form of the questioning booklet to support students through the activity.

Several years later – in the late 1970s – I was struggling to write my first book about design teaching and learning. I wrote to John in his capacity as a Routledge series editor and I enclosed a first draft of my precious (and very naive) master-work. He wrote back with a series of very supportive and helpful suggestions – and in the subsequent year I rewrote the whole thing. I sent it back to John and the process was repeated (I think) four times. I remember being amazed at the time and effort that John was prepared to devote to helping a stranger to get a book published. In the end it emerged (in 1982) as *Design Education: The foundation years*. It is a book I am still proud of, but I am all too aware of the fact that it would never have seen the light of day without an enormous amount of support from John.

And this is probably John’s lasting contribution to design and technology. Not just his pioneering research, but through his journal editing, through his publishing house, through his examining, through his visiting professorships, through his work for DATA and through his general professional commitment to design and technology, he enabled so many others to find their feet in the field and begin to make their own contribution. John Eggleston will be sorely missed.