

The National Curriculum Council and the Schools Examination and Assessment Council Update

In future editions of Design and Technology Teaching, officers from the NCC and SEAC will be writing about events and issues in technology education from their particular perspective. The Editorial Board is pleased at this official recognition of the influence of DATA and Design and Technology Teaching by agreeing to work with us, and we hope that it will be further encouragement for members to contact DATA with their views on current developments. We will keep the two organisations informed of what you say.

We hope that this arrangement will continue after the amalgamation of the two bodies as proposed in the recent White Paper.

Colin Monson, Principal Professional Officer for Technology at NCC, starts the series by putting the current revision of National Curriculum Design and Technology into perspective.

■ Design & Technology — background to the review

The recent decision to revise National Curriculum design and technology has, understandably, given rise to some uncertainty. It seems a good time to clarify the background to the revision, and to provide an outline timetable for the developments to come.

The present Technology Order became law in March 1990 and came into effect that Autumn. Since then, NCC has had a statutory duty to keep it under review. The monitoring of technology has taken a variety of forms. Particularly important has been the monitoring programme carried out by NCC during the first year of implementation (1991/92). Working with advisory staff in 6 LEAs, teachers from more than forty schools were observed and intensively interviewed, and their views and experiences analysed. This evidence was used to develop a series of questionnaires, which were answered by seven thousand teachers, in schools throughout the country.

During the analysis of the data from this research Kenneth Clarke, then Secretary of State, asked NCC to advise him on whether there was a case for revising the Order. Our own information from monitoring, along with HMI's findings, formed the evidence base for a series of Council debates in response to the Secretary of State's request.

These debates were wide ranging and intensive, aided by spirited discussion in the media and elsewhere. The purposes of design and technology education were discussed and the relationships between technology in education and technology in the outside world were carefully considered. Then, in the light of the problems observed by NCC and HMI, the Order was fully analysed to identify where improvements might be made.

Council was aware of the enthusiasm with which many people had greeted the Order, and of the work teachers had put into its implementation, particularly in view of the considerable difficulties which NCC had identified. Deciding between giving design and technology more time to settle down, or revising the subject early to provide more support to teachers in their work, was a difficult judgement to make. On balance, Council decided that an immediate revision of the Order would be of the greatest long-term

benefit to pupils and teachers alike.

In its advice to the Secretary of State, Council was very clear on the scope and purposes of the revision:

'We do not ...question the principles which underpin the Orders. The conceptual approach to the technology process which integrates analysis, problem solving, practical capability and evaluative skills will make an essential contribution to the education of all pupils as we approach the 21st century.

'Nevertheless, we consider that the programmes of study and statements of attainment do require fundamental revision to:

- reduce the complexity and weight of the requirements in the Order, particularly at primary level;
- introduce greater clarity and precision in both the basic concepts and particularly in relation to practical skills;
- introduce more flexibility and choice, particularly at secondary level;
- strengthen the links to the other Orders.

National Curriculum Technology: the case for revising the Order, NCC, May 1992.

John Patten, the new Secretary of State, accepted NCC's advice in June this year. An HMI Review Group, with members from NCC and the Curriculum Council for Wales, has been set up to revise the programmes of study for technology attainment targets 1-4, and to revise the existing statements of attainment and non-statutory examples. (The full terms of reference of the revision are given overleaf).

The review Group is now well into its work and has consulted on as wide a basis as the timescale allows. The group will report to the Secretary of State, probably in October.

Once the Secretary of State's proposals have been published, NCC will begin another of its statutory functions, by undertaking the public consultation on the proposals. Everyone concerned with school technology education is invited to respond. Many teachers will wish to do this via their LEA, school or subject

■ HMI Review Terms of Reference

1. To review the programme of study for attainment targets 1-4 of the Education (National Curriculum) (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study in Technology) Order 1990 so as to clarify what should be taught and in particular to ensure that the technical skills, knowledge and understanding of all pupils at all stages are developed through work with and in relation to construction materials and related components and systems.
2. To revise the existing statements of attainment and related non-statutory examples to facilitate the assessment of skills, knowledge and understanding acquired by pupils and of the quality of their work and what they produce, and in particular to:
 - identify and specify the skills and knowledge which pupils should acquire at each of the key stages, and indicate where appropriate how these could be developed through the range of technological activities.
 - identify and specify the range, depth and level of teaching and learning appropriate to the skills and knowledge at each key stage, so that progression is secured.
 - in the light of the above, to propose the apportionment of an appropriate range of materials and contexts across and within the four key stages; giving particular attention to reducing the complexity and amount of work required in each key stage, and to improving the manageability of the curriculum and assessment, particularly at the primary level
 - clarify how and when the skills, knowledge and understanding developed through other curriculum Orders should be made use of in technology (eg. mathematics, science and art);
3. To design a framework for short courses at key stage 4, which maintains the basic conceptual approach of the Order, but offers within it a range of choices able to meet the needs of pupils of different interests and abilities and flexible enough to permit extension into or combinations with other — particularly vocationally-oriented — areas of work or study.

association, but individuals are welcome to comment in their own right.

It is worth emphasising that every single response is read and recorded. In order to make large scale analysis possible, NCC works closely with the National Foundation for Educational Research to draw up detailed coding schemes which are used to summarise the replies to each question. Of course, some comments don't fit the coding scheme, and so there are procedures to ensure that these are not overlooked when the analysis is being prepared.

The results of the consultation are likely to be published in late Spring, followed by the draft of the new Order and then the final statutory Order. The new materials for your technology ring-binder will probably arrive in the Autumn of 1993, along with Non-Statutory Guidance from NCC to help with its implementation. Assuming everything goes according to timetable, the revised Technology Order will begin in Autumn 1994 for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, and for key Stage 4 a year later.

Single copies of NCC's advice to the Secretary of State can be obtained from: Information Section, NCC, 25 Skeldergate York YO1 2XL.