

The Junior High School of which I have been Head for over fourteen years was, for many years, a girls' grammar school and as such had no facilities for the practical skills of woodwork and metalwork. When the school began to develop into a mixed 6 fe comprehensive school in 1971, we had no facilities at all for six months, then very basic provision for woodwork in one of the boys' new changing rooms. The following year we were able to offer both metalwork and woodwork in an adapted Music Room, but it was not until 1973 that the open-plan Design and Technical Studies block was ready for occupation.

From that time the work began to develop as Design and Technical Studies, but still for boys only, but before long the Head of Department was beginning to press for girls to be given the opportunity to study the subject too. If he had not, the Equal Opportunities Legislation of 1975 would have forced such considerations upon us! Consultation with Heads of all departments concerned with the teaching of practical subjects resulted in our rejecting the 'circus' arrangement followed by many schools, partly because of the unequal teaching facilities between the various departments and partly because none of us felt that the short period normally allocated to each subject under such a scheme allowed the pupils to have a meaningful experience of the subjects. We, for the time being, have settled upon a scheme which allows all pupils a very free choice of subject in the third year. It can be stated here that at the age of 14+ all our pupils proceed to the Senior High School with no interruption of syllabus.

The number of girls opting for Design Studies was at first very small (especially in contrast to the number of boys choosing Home Economics!), but in the last five years the numbers have steadily increased, no doubt encouraged by the high success of some girls at Ordinary and Advanced Level and in national competitions such as the Design Council Awards, Young Scientist of the Year, Young Engineer for Britain and the Home and Hardware Exhibition Awards. As in any subject, numbers fluctuate from year to year, but in the current academic year the number of pupils opting for Design Studies and for Technical Drawing (a separate option) see table.

From conversations with my colleagues I understand that the percentage of girls studying CDT is well above the national average. If we do find a satisfactory solution to the on-going organisational problem of how to extend their experience, I believe that even more girls would elect to follow the course.

At this point I should like to acknowledge the constant support and encouragement which we have received from our local Adviser for Art and Design, Mr R.W. Hart, and from Her Majesty's Inspectors for Craft, Design and Technology.

Over the last nine years I have watched the Curriculum development in this subject area with

# Design and Technical Studies for Girls - A Head-teacher's View

| Year | Subject           | Boys | Girls | Girls % |
|------|-------------------|------|-------|---------|
| 3    | Design            | 57   | 20    | 26      |
|      | Technical Drawing | 69   | 21    | 23      |
| 4    | Design            | 39   | 10    | 20      |
|      | Technical Drawing | 26   | 3     | 10      |
| 5    | Design            | 46   | 12    | 20      |
|      | Technical Drawing | 24   | 6     | 20      |
| 6    | Design            | 3    | 4     | 57      |
| 7    | Design            | 3    | 0     | 0       |

Total number in each of the Year groups 3, 4, 5 = 180 pupils.

great interest and have talked to pupils about their work. Thus, gradually, I have formulated an opinion about the modern approach to Design Studies and its educational value for secondary school pupils, both boys and girls.

Craft, Design and Technology places its students in problem solving situations which are intellectually stimulating. To resolve these problems the students must develop research skills (including the recognition of the 'blind alley'), must be able to discuss the problem by both written and spoken word, thus developing vital communication skills, and must be able to accept and to use constructive criticism, and possibly to work as a member of a close-knit team. Once a satisfactory solution has been reached, the student must attain a high standard of graphical and verbal presentation to communicate the solution to others by a written project, and must further have good practical skills enabling him/her to manufacture the product to a satisfactory standard. That girls have these powers and can develop the practical skills has been proved. They may even have some advantage over boys in that adolescent girls are often more mature, more

conscientious and careful, and more committed to study than teenage boys. Certainly they become deeply involved – and may even need counselling not to forget the demands of other subjects in their curriculum!

Pupils of below average ability do have problems with the Design approach, and for them a closely structured course is necessary with simpler problems to solve. Some of these pupils have good practical skills, but they are less prepared to spend time at home on the theoretical aspects of their projects.

Perhaps my appreciation of the development of CDT for girls reflects my own interest in this field. Certainly I am envious of the opportunities girls now have! More seriously, in this age of high technology Britain can not afford to overlook the potential expertise of girls. Conversely, boys in today's world need to have a practical and theoretical understanding of basic Home Economics, for increasingly the traditional male and female roles are being broken down. Schools must give a positive lead in this widening of employment opportunity and domestic competency. If we do not, we fail the pupils in our charge and the nation which entrusts them to us.

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