

Art and Design in a Multicultural Society

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The Art and Design in a Multicultural Society (AIMS) project is based in the Leicester Polytechnic Centre for Postgraduate Studies in Education and is part of a long-standing concern in the Centre for cultural diversity in art and design. In 1982 a Local Education Authority Research Assistantship was allocated to the Centre to undertake a particular research project into the development of art and design curricula for schools which recognised both the multicultural nature of art and design and the multicultural nature of the schools' populations. Chris Toye was appointed as a Research Assistant to carry out the project and registered for a research degree with Brian Allison and Martyn Descombe as Director of Studies and Research Supervisor respectively. The research project reported here continued through from January 1983 to December 1985.

The aims of the research project were fourfold:

1. To identify the ways in which art and design curricula and practices provide for multicultural populations.
2. To identify the range of attitudes in art and design departments in schools towards cultural pluralism in relation to curriculum goals.
3. To consider the relationship between schools' art and design curricula, curricular identities as manifested in the arts forms of ethnic minorities and children's learning experiences.
4. To identify significant issues within art and design education in a multicultural society as a basis for determining guidelines for curriculum development and implementation.

The *programme of research* was planned to consist of five related elements:

1. A survey of pertinent literature published in this country and abroad including examination syllabuses and curriculum guidelines and frameworks.
2. A local survey of art and design provision in Leicestershire secondary schools specifically related to:
 - a) cultural mix in the school populations.
 - b) cultural concerns as shown in the art and design curricula in schools.
3. A survey of arts activities in ethnic minority communities in Leicester; the significance of visual arts forms in terms

of religious and cultural identities; and attitudes of ethnic minority group parents and community leaders to the content of art and design activities in schools.

4. Using case-study approaches and employing observation, questionnaire and interview strategies, to carry out surveys of:

- a) pupils' attitudes to school art and design experiences in relation to cultural values and beliefs.
- b) teachers' attitudes to the employment of art and design forms as embodiments of cultural values and beliefs.

5. On the basis of the outcomes of 1, 2, 3 and 4 above, to develop empirically determined curriculum guidelines and assess their significance in terms of:

- a) teacher attitudes
- b) parental attitudes
- c) pupil attitudes

This proved to be an ambitious project but despite some setbacks, such as that caused by the teachers' industrial action during 1985 which impeded the development of a curriculum development group, the team succeeded in accomplishing the part of the research project planned for the three year period and produced some valuable results.

The outcomes of the research project are of three kinds. First, the project promoted the multicultural perspectives in art and design education through a variety of activities both within the county of Leicestershire and beyond. Extensive networks and links have been fostered which will have lasting benefit for the Polytechnic and for teachers and others engaged in similar work in Britain and other countries.

Second, the research project contributed to the development of a wide range of resources and teaching materials which will be of value to art and design educators endeavouring to give a multicultural dimension to their teaching.

Third, the outcomes of the research will make a contribution to the theoretical and empirical bases for curriculum development in art and design education for a multicultural society. The dissemination of some of the findings has already been made through various forms of publication.

The research contributed to and was facilitated by a number of other activities, events and exhibitions which took place in the Centre under the aegis of the AIMS project. Particularly noteworthy was the work of the distinguished Nigerian sculptor, Emmanuel Taiwo Jegede, who was Non-European Artist-in-Residence for six months during 1985 with funding from East Midlands Arts Association.

Surveys carried out as part of the Research

School Examination Survey: a photographic record of GCE/CSE art examination displays in six Leicestershire schools to determine the extent to which the work produced within examination syllabuses reflected the cultural diversity of the school populations.

Curriculum Policy Survey: a survey of initiatives in the development of multicultural art and design courses in Britain and overseas to identify examples of good policy and practice. This survey also gathered policies relating to multicultural education generated by local education authorities in England prior to the publication of the Swann Report.

Schools' Survey: a survey conducted through questionnaires covering all head teachers, heads of Design faculties and art and design teachers in Leicestershire to investigate developments in multicultural education and to determine the extent to which cross-cultural reference played a role in art and design teaching.

Ethnic Minority Arts Survey: a photographic record of a number of exhibitions in England of the work of ethnic minority artists and of community arts activities in Leicester to determine the extent to which cultural minority artists and groups are active in the visual arts. The survey was also undertaken to show the ways in which the art work embodies values and beliefs different from those of the western European tradition.

Imagery in the Home Survey: a photographic survey of art, craft and design objects in the homes of ethnic minority homes in Leicester in order to identify and describe the visually symbolic and aesthetic environments which constitute the everyday

experiences of many ethnic minority children and can differ substantially from those of the western European culture. The outcomes of this survey have been developed into an exhibition with a detailed catalogue explaining the cultural and religious significance of the objects in the homes. The exhibition was developed in conjunction with the SCDC 'Arts in Education' project and assisted by a grant from the East Midlands Arts Association. The exhibition is expected to be launched in the Autumn, 1986.

Pupils Survey: a questionnaire and interview survey of the reactions of secondary school pupils in Leicestershire to a display of culturally diverse objects in order to determine their receptiveness or resistances to learning about the visual arts forms of different cultures.

Parents Survey: a survey, similar to the pupils survey and using the same display of art objects, of the reactions of both majority and minority culture parents to their children learning about the visual arts forms of different cultures.

The visual materials produced by the surveys have been catalogued and are housed in the Resources Centre in the Centre for Postgraduate Studies in Education. It is hoped that they will be of interest and accessible to teachers and others interested in multicultural education. The results of the curriculum policy and schools survey were reported in the AIMS report 'Art and Design in a Multicultural Society: policy and practice'. The reports of the other surveys are in preparation for publication.

Street Scene Competitors *Design Council*

The Automap electronic information system, designed by Nicholas Dobson, studying at Ravensbourne College of Art and Design, is a free-standing unit providing an electronic display of maps and information, particularly useful for tourists and foreign visitors. The unit is made of concrete and glass reinforced plastic with top and bottom lighting.

The information available is from an underground British Telecom line linked to a central computer, enabling regular updating of travel information.

