

Multicultural/Anti-Racist CDT

George Antonouris
Trent Polytechnic

Throughout the country teachers and teacher educators are attempting to develop multicultural/anti-racist education in many areas of the curriculum. This paper presents work being done at Trent Polytechnic in the hope that it will offer issues for discussion and even guidelines for action. We accept that these examples are not extensive and well-developed but feel that such an important approach should be tackled *now* and widely debated as a matter of urgency. Perhaps, readers to this journal will contribute actual illustrations of successful work with pupils as well as continue the dialogue concerning the importance of the multicultural and anti-racist perspectives to CDT.

At the Polytechnic in Nottingham tutors try to permeate all teacher education courses with the Swann philosophy of 'Education for All' but also give final year B.Ed students a special unit entitled 'Multicultural and Anti-racist Topics' where future CDT teachers join secondary-based Home Economics and primary school trainees to prepare practical exercises for classroom use. Our objective is to develop CDT as one of many subjects aiming to increase cultural understanding and combat racism in Britain. It will be a recurring theme that knowledge transmitted to pupils in any classroom should be reflective of different ethnic groups of Britons who are not perceived as immigrants or strangers but Asian Britons, or whatever. Ultimately, it is hoped that participants in CDT classes will gain a feeling of achievement when they evaluate the quality of construction and the aesthetic appeal of the final product as well as pride in the development of their own cultural awareness and understanding of racial issues within a particular region and the country as a whole.

In order to prepare future CDT teachers for this approach we present them with the guidelines reproduced below, supplemented by general discussion papers (Antonouris, 1986 1987).

The Guidelines

1. Global Perspective

CDT could focus on non-European

crafts, designs and technologies as well as European ones; black African and Asian achievements in these areas could be stressed as well as white British and American.

If young people are continually bombarded with achievements of white Britons and Americans, then they will think that African and Asian races are inferior and perhaps should be treated as second-class citizens. CDT can play its part with all other school subjects in counteracting any feelings that African and Asian civilisations are inferior to white European societies.

2. Regional Perspective

Teachers could examine the local and regional ethnic mix and emphasise crafts, designs and technologies of ethnic minority groups which have communities in local towns and cities. For example, Nottingham has thriving communities of Asian Britons, Afro-Caribbean Britons, Cypriot Britons, Polish Britons (Antonouris, 1986d). These groups comprise peoples who are bi-cultural and their cultures may have some distinctive crafts, designs and technologies which could be used in classroom teaching. The idea is to extend knowledge and understanding of different cultures within this country through the use of their cultural achievements and this means that all schools, irrespective of racial intake, could benefit from such curriculum practices. Local community organisations and representatives would probably help with materials, ideas and resources. Perhaps, ethnic minority group members would even be prepared to come into CDT lessons to help with specific projects.

3. Multi-Ethnic Focus

Worksheets, displays, photographs etc. could show examples of black and white Britons who live, work and interact together in this country. In short, a visitor to any CDT classroom should be able to look around at the displays and see proof that Britain is a multicultural society and this would be reinforced when content and resources were examined.

4. Respect for Persons

Teachers should ensure correct

pronunciation and spelling of people's names. In addition, names on workcards, displays, posters could represent the whole population which not only includes Peter and Jane, Janet and John but Costas and Maroulla, Vijay and Meena, Ajit and Ravinder, Azam and Parveen.

5. Positive Action

We are asking all CDT teachers to take positive action to introduce crafts, designs and technologies from around the world with special emphasis on those ethnic minority cultures found in Britain. By exposing youngsters to this diversity, CDT teachers can help appreciation of pluralism and growth of harmonious relationships between races and cultures.

The Approach

What we suggest to future CDT teachers is that they take the three components of their subject as represented by Grant (1982) in figure 1 but start with the 'Values' section focusing on inter-cultural understanding and combatting racism rather than remain at the stages stressing knowledge or essential skills required to fulfil the design task. For us, the knowledge-base of CDT should reflect a clear moral commitment to equality of opportunity, fairness and justice with the design process and technological solutions revolving around this perspective. (Figure 2).

Using the guidelines and the Grant approach, students have prepared a number of topics, two of which are summarised below and offered as illustrations of what we consider to be good multicultural practice. It is hoped that such examples will act as a stimulus to discussion concerning what are appropriate CDT activities and a spur to increased journal contributions on the social responsibility of schools to educate *for* a multicultural and *against* a racist society.

Topic One

Jewellery

The topic has the following design brief: 'You are to design and make a piece of jewellery, the shape, material and colour of which is to be based on a design from a culture of your choice'. Twelve to thirteen year old pupils are given help in

their investigation of non-European cultures which will involve both teacher and taught doing research at county, local and school libraries and perhaps include an approach to ethnic minority communities and support services in the Local Education Authority. After this initial research pupils working in groups focus on the function of the product they have selected to examine, and its size, shape, appearance. Slowly, they work towards its construction and the techniques and technology needed to realise the project. Design specifications are prepared and the task is completed. On completion, a technical and social evaluation is made with analysis of the design and construction process being linked with discussion on the social significance of the finished artefact. Discussion could involve traditional CDT issues of investigation, planning and realisation, but there will also be the addition of social issues stressing inter-cultural similarities, cultural differences, racial prejudice and discrimination.

Topic 2

Racial similarities

This topic asks participants to 'design and make a system or device which will show that racial differences, as opposed to cultural ones, are only skin-deep'. It assumes that 'as members of contemporary and future society we should be able to show that the colour of a person's skin does not have any relation to the abilities of the person concerned' and focuses directly on the racial dimension in society. It is a clear attempt to face issues of prejudice and could act as a vehicle for anti-racist education. When this task was attempted at one of our sessions, CDT students designed and constructed a light box that could show X-ray photographs of people from different racial groups, and so help illustrate similarities rather than differences between people. Naturally, solutions will depend on the specific abilities and age of pupils, but whatever devices are designed they could be decorated with rangoli and other patterns readily available from the regional groups around the school. Our students have included Asante and Hausa decorative motives and used patterns based on

Muslim and Hindu cultures. The list of questions below aims to stimulate investigative skills and encourage search for multi-ethnic knowledge within the framework of the values suggested in this article. Hopefully, responses to the first question asking 'what is your device supposed to do?' will include extending inter-cultural knowledge and understanding, combatting prejudices and stereotyping, opposing racial abuse and discrimination.

Analysis of the Problem

Consider the following:—

Function & Purpose

- > What is your device supposed to do?
- > Who will use it?
- > Which areas of similarity should you consider? (Physical, Intellectual, etc).
- > How often will the device be used?

Materials

- > Are the materials you need appropriate to the solution?
- > Could you use cheaper materials without spoiling your solution's function?
- > Are the materials you need available? (Cost?, Time?, etc).

Facilities

- > Processes available in the school workshop?
- > Appropriate surface finishes?

Environment

- > Where will the device be located and used?
- > Storage?
- > If appropriate, durability of components?



The POLYTECHNIC, WOLVERHAMPTON

IN NEED OF REFRESHMENT & NEW CURRICULUM DIRECTIONS?

Hundreds of Craft, Design & Technology Teachers have benefited from our One Term Curriculum Development Course since its introduction in 1982. This full-time course operates within the Design & Technology Centre on the Dudley campus of the Polytechnic. It aims to explore the wider spectrum of Design & Technology activity and to develop professional management skills. There are four main areas of study. *Managing the CDT Department / Design Education in Practice / Design & Communication / Technology.*

**Accommodation is available close to the
Design & Technology Centre**

Information from Paul Wareing, Castle View, Dudley, DY1 3HR

Ergonomics

- > Dimensions?
- > Who will use the device and what shape is it?
- > How is the device to be used? (Picked up, Held, Moved, etc).

Costs

- > Limit on initial production costs?
- > How much will components cost?
- > Any maintenance required? (If so, detail)
- > Cost of power supply? (Batteries, etc).

Aesthetics

- > Is the device pleasing to look at? (Remember who will be using the solution).
- > If appropriate, is the solution acceptable to hold? (Feel, Surface finish, etc).

Safety

- > Is the user completely safe from injury when operating the solution? (No bare wires, all moving parts guarded, etc).

Time

- > Deadline date?
- > How many lessons?
- > Homework time?

Conclusion

The approach taken throughout the course is labelled 'World in our Region' because it stresses that examples of crafts, designs and technologies should reflect locality-based ethnic communities originating from different parts of the world but now settled in the region. Topics focus on clothing and fabric design, toys and games, pottery and ceramics, architecture and buildings, religious and non-religious decorative artefacts, interior design, appropriate technology in energy (wind, water, solar) and agriculture. The course follows carefully the 1985 Swann philosophy which urges teachers to 'acknowledge the reality of the multi-racial context in which we now live, recognise the positive benefits and opportunities which this offers all of us, and seek to build together a society which both values the diversity within it whilst united by the cohesive force of common aims, attributes and values which we share' (p.7). It is too early to tell how successful we have been but we have at least made an attempt to involve CDT in the vital task of permeating the whole curriculum with a pluralist perspective celebrating cultural diversity and confronting racism.

References

- Antonouris, G. (1986a) Just Checking: How to look objectively at your classroom material and teaching practices to ensure a multicultural approach. *Child Education*, January, pp.26-27.
- Antonouris, G. (1986b) Developing multicultural education in all primary schools: some suggestions. *Primary Contact*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp.45-50.
- Antonouris, G. (1986c) Multicultural Education and the Home Economics Teacher. *Multicultural Education Review*, No. 6, Summer/Autumn, pp.26-29.
- Antonouris, G. (1986d) Exploring community interests and identities. *Community Education Network*, Vol. 6, No. 6, June, p.2.
- Antonouris, G. (1987a) Multicultural Education at the Danesbury Junior School. *Primary Teaching Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, February, pp.122-127.
- Antonouris, G. (1987b) Reflecting Cultural Differences. *Modus*, Vol. 5, No. 2, March, pp.75-76.
- Antonouris, G. and Wilson, J. (forthcoming) *New Dimensions in Topic Work*, Cassell
- Grant, M. (1982) Starting points. *Studies in Design Education, Craft & Technology*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp.6-9, Winter.
- Swann Report (1985), *Education For All*, HMSO.

The BLACK and WHITE Media Show Book

Handbook for the study of
Racism and Television

Edited by
John Twitchin

NEW FROM TRENTHAM BOOKS

The Black and White Media Book sets out the why, what and how of deconstructing the effects of TV on children and adults. It is a comprehensively annotated resource book on anti-racism for teachers and trainers.

Though it's hard to believe, the average child spends 30 hours per week in front of the television — as much time, or more, as in the classroom. The average adult watches 'the box' for about 28 hours a week. So how does this powerful image-maker represent black people to its largely white audience?

John Twitchin produced the series *Case Studies in Multi-Cultural Education* for the BBC, and the film *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, both widely used in inservice education, and edited the BBC book *Multi-cultural education; views from the Classroom*. He is also the producer of the acclaimed and provocative *Black and White Media Shows* for BBC1.

Available from Trentham Books Limited,
151 Etruria Road, Stoke-on-Trent,
England ST1 5NS

ISBN 0 948080 09 4
PRICE £9.95