First National Conference on Design and Technology Educational Research and Curriculum Development (DATER 88)

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Introduction
The first National Conference on Design and Technology Educational Research and Curriculum Development was organised by, and held in, the Department of Design and Technology at Loughborough University of Technology on the 15th-16th April 1988. Judging by the comments during the conference and correspondence since, it was seen as a very important initiative and very successful first conference.

This brief article outlines the author's reasons for mounting this major new initiative, its structure and discusses the initial proposals received so far and plans for the future.

Background
The need for those working in education at all levels to have presented papers at a conference or published papers in refereed journals is increasing all the time. It is becoming a factor in promotion and more necessary if one is to attract curriculum development and research funding. Until the DATER 88 Conference at Loughborough, there was not a conference devoted to Design and Technology Education at which papers could be presented. There is not as yet a specific Journal for Research in Design and Technology. This may yet be one of the outcomes of the conference which are discussed below.

With the area of Design and Technology gaining in status and developing rapidly there is an ever increasing need to provide evidence to justify this support and evaluate the development. As Professor John Eggleston stated in his Keynote lecture at DATER 88, other areas of the curriculum, such as science, have the experience and personnel to take on such research. If Design and Technology does not become much more active in this area, science educationalists will design and carry out the major research in the Technology area.

Although the amount of research and curriculum development in Design and Technology is relatively small there is more going on to-day than ever before. We were very pleased at the number of papers which were offered for the DATER 88 conference considering the relatively short notice which was possible. In particular, we were interested to find work going on which we were unaware of. This supported our belief that there was a need to publicise and debate the curriculum development and research being generated in Design and Technology.

With this background the aims for DATER 88 were produced.

Aims of the Conference
1. To disseminate the growing research being undertaken in the curriculum area/s of Design and Technology.
2. To promote curriculum development in schools in Design and Technology.
3. To provide an opportunity for teachers, researchers, advisors lecturers and others working in the field to present papers and posters at a major conference.
4. To promote Design and Technology in Schools.
5. To provide an opportunity for those involved in curriculum development and research in Design and Technology to meet and exchange ideas.
6. To identify key areas for future research.
7. To produce a post conference publication to enable the information to be published to a wider audience.

Terminology — 'Design and Technology'
It was decided that the term 'Design and Technology' included in the title of the conference should include those areas of the curriculum entitled Design, Technology, Craft, Design and Technology (CDT), Design, Craft and Technology (DCT) and Design and Technology at all levels from primary to higher education.

Support
Before embarking on launching the conference, support was essential. First there was the need to identify that there was in fact a need for the conference and that support would be forthcoming from those working in Design and Technology. This was very difficult to determine but members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate provided valuable encouragement and advice.

A second requirement was funding both to keep the cost of the conference as low as possible for delegates and also to ensure that any loss would be covered. The decision to go ahead was taken as a result of obtaining the necessary support from Professor Brittan and the staff of the Department.

Many statements of support were received after the conference was launched for which we were most grateful. In particular we would like to thank the Smallpiece Trust and the DTI for the essential sponsoring of the event.

In the event the conference was oversubscribed for the facilities booked with over 130 bookings made and many further enquiries received which were too late to be accepted.

Conference Format
The conference format was based on one often used for research conferences. It consisted of one keynote speakers per half day with parallel sets of 15 minute paper presentations each followed by 5 minutes of questions. This format enables the delegates to listen to leaders in the field addressing important issues in the keynote lecture and then choose from a large number of papers those they wish to listen to. Twenty two papers were delivered at DATER 88 together with 5 keynote lectures. Abstracts of all the papers were presented in the pre-conference document to assist delegates to select those papers presentations they wished to attend.

Two speakers in the forefront of the communication and learning industry were invited to present papers in the area of Information Technology and Design.

The coffee/tea and lunch breaks were kept fairly long so that time was available for delegates to discuss papers with the authors or with each other.

Posters
The term poster, when used in research conferences of this type, refers to a method of communication research or curriculum development by text and graphics on a display board. An abstract for each poster displayed was contained in this publication.

Twelve posters were on display but despite a special time being set aside to discuss the posters with their authors,

the interest was not as large as had been hoped for. We hope that next time far more posters will be presented and that it will be seen as a very important aspect of the conference. It is certainly a good way for teachers to make their first presentation at such a conference.

Fringe
Times were made available outside the normal conference time for fringe activities that enabled individuals to present ideas and information which were not in a paper or poster format.

Commercial Exbibition
A commercial display by companies supplying the Design and Technology educational market was arranged. We were most grateful for the support given by these companies towards the conference.

Information Technology Exhibition
An invited small exhibition of Information Technology related exhibits was also set up to compliment the Information Technology papers.

The Future
The conference proceedings will be published as soon as possible. In the meantime readers will no doubt be interested to learn of some of the proposals coming out of the conference.

1. That there should be a regular conference on Design and Technology Educational Research and Curriculum Development.
2. That an interested group should meet to discuss the future of educational research in this area and advise on the next conference.
3. That a database be set up of all research and curriculum development being undertaken in the area of Design and Technology to enable researchers and teachers to assess existing work.
4. That an International Research Journal in Design and Technology Education should be established.

The Department of Design and Technology has agreed to organise the next DATER conference. It will be based on the experience and feedback on DATER 88 and we look forward to making contact next time with far more of those who are researching in this area. Should you wish to be informed about the next conference, please contact Mrs. Sue Beaumont, Department of Design and Technology, Loughborough University of Technology, Loughborough, Leics. LE11 3LY.

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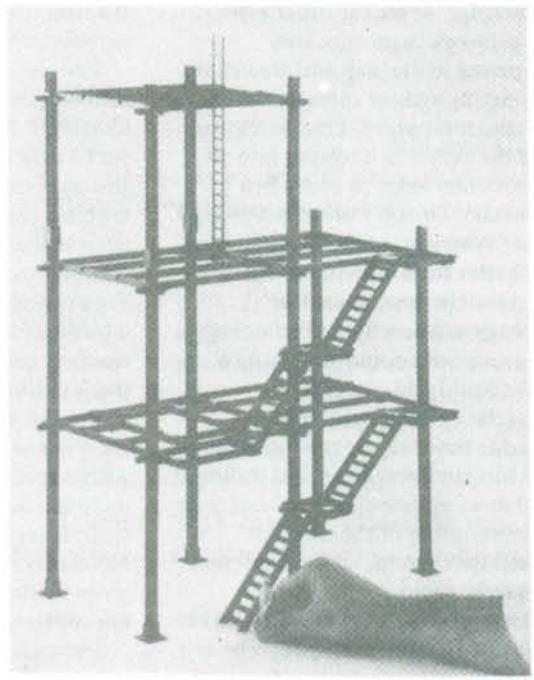

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