

Creativity across the curriculum

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Background

Many primary schools are moving into more cross-curricular, topic-based work and the researchers, both Design and Technology specialists, felt this presented an opportunity to consider the way(s) in which this related to other government initiatives concerned with creativity and a more active approach to children's learning.

The aim of the project was to research the opportunities presented within the primary school curriculum for the development of what might be termed 'designerly' thought and action. This was seen as vital to the needs of an information-rich, knowledge transfer society, moving into what Pink (2005) has called *The Concept Age*.

The idea was to see how schools and teachers were understanding, reacting to, and implementing the idea of design across the curriculum.

The project was intended to be a lever into a substantial bid for external funding. Co-operation had been obtained from external partners, including the National Association for Primary Education. This would hopefully lead to Masters level accreditation for teachers engaged in high level reflective practice.

Approach/methodology

The first stage of the project was intended to be exploratory, to develop research instruments which could discover and define the range of designerly opportunities offered to children in primary schools. This would facilitate initial recommendations to primary schools for developing children's designerly thought and action.

The second stage of the project involved working jointly with partnership schools to collaboratively develop strategies that could enhance children's learning.

Year 3 students visited schools and carried out structured interviews and observations and also obtained information from their placement schools. This was undertaken and written up as their own individual projects but also fed into the overall project.

Outcomes

It was clear that teachers in school thought that most designing activity took place in Design and Technology but when they were asked to think more widely they could see opportunities across the curriculum.

The shape and direction of the project meant that the students gained an insight into the research process as much as the topic of the research itself. For example, if a student set out to interview the Design and Technology co-ordinator in schools but a small school did not have a co-ordinator, that would be seen to impact upon the results because the person interviewed would be involved in many things and might have a different view to others.

The project funding supported a terminal conference. This allowed teachers from participating schools to come and listen to speakers and be involved in workshops and so develop new perspectives.

Apart from the opportunity to discuss and debate these topical issues, Year 3 students were involved in the organisation of the national conference and thus had the opportunity to develop skills to enhance their employability.

As well as the development of teachers in schools, this project has provided the opportunity for the researchers to further develop their own research interests.

A conference which looked at creativity across the curriculum was held in June 2009.

The project has led to a number of conference papers and publications, including Parkinson E (2010) 'Back to the Future: Where next in a world of cross-curricular education?', *Design and Technology: An International Journal*, 15(1) p16-23

Enhancing RIT

The students involved in the project have enhanced their research skills and had the opportunity to be involved in a major topic issue. By working and discussing the research with teachers in schools they have also been able to share information about designing in the curriculum.

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