



Children Discover  
Arts & Crafts  
through ...

# Workshop-classes



Division of Arts  
and Cultural Life



UNESCO  
Associated Schools Project  
Co-ordination Unit

Children Discover  
Arts and Crafts through...  
Workshop-classes

# Preface

*What began as a report on an innovative Interregional Project on Education and Craft Professions has turned into a moving story about a new partnership, formed with the help of the UNESCO Associated Schools Project, between young students and crafts men and women.*

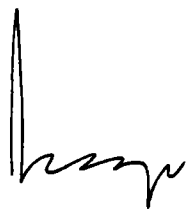
*As we turn each page the story unravels. In most cases, simple curiosity or a vague interest in crafts is transformed into enthusiastic participation, passion and pride. By leaving their classrooms and going to the craftspeople's workshops, pupils and students learn about the life styles and often difficult working conditions of those who perpetuate and develop the skills inherited from their ancestors.*

*Much more quickly than expected, the young people reached out to touch the potter's wheel, the hand-carved wooden stools, and soon the craftspeople were passing them their tools, explaining how to use them. And from these exchanges sprang not only a greater knowledge and awareness of traditional crafts but also a new respect for those who dedicate their lives to them.*

*A partnership had begun. The craftspeople shared their expertise and their love of their crafts. The young people offered their interest, appreciation and involvement. Teachers and parents together rejoiced at what the young people were able to produce under the guidance of the craftspeople.*

*We hope that you will enjoy their story and that steps may be taken in your own countries to initiate similar partnerships between young people and artisans in the interest of preserving an important strand of our cultural heritage.*

Federico Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Federico Mayor', located at the bottom of the page.

## Acknowledgements

*We would like to express our gratitude to all those who have contributed to the success of this project:*

- The National Commissions of UNESCO, UNESCO Associated Schools and artisans of the following countries : Bulgaria, France, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Jordan and Nepal.*
- The Société d'Encouragement aux Métiers d'Art (SEMA), and particularly, Mme Sabatier, general commissioner.*

***The UNESCO interregional project for Arts and Crafts Awareness Workshop-classes was awarded the Arts and Crafts Medal by SEMA in 1995.***

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**Craftsmanship, the union of hand and mind, reintroduces a human and aesthetic dimension and gives deeper meaning to individual expression.**

## **A worldwide project**

Down the ages, arts and crafts have always played an important role in society. They reflect the historical, economic and artistic development of a country and express a society's ethnological characteristics, such as traditions and customs, clothing and everyday objects. Now, however, with the arrival of high-tech industry and technology, the future of arts and crafts seems gravely threatened. A number of centuries-old marvels such as glass-making, basketry, lace-making and pottery, to name but a few, are gradually being replaced by standard, soulless mass-produced goods made of plastic or other synthetic materials. Our cultural roots, respect for the past and aesthetic sense are gradually fading away.

Actions and campaigns are needed if **the disappearance of arts and crafts** is to be stopped or even reversed, unemployment eliminated and the status of arts and crafts increased. It is also a matter of protecting our heritage and encouraging creativity in both young people and adults.

In France «arts and crafts awareness workshop-classes», a project that seeks to make arts and crafts known to and appreciated by the young through weekly visits to a workshop, has been a great success. It is an educational project sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Industry and Land-Use Planning, with responsibility for trade and crafts, in collaboration with the Société d'Encouragement des Métiers d'Art (S.E.M.A.).

In light of the excellent results so far obtained in France and the priority UNESCO gives to promoting arts and crafts everywhere, it has been decided to launch an interregional project in the framework of both the Associated Schools Project and the World Decade for Cultural Development for which UNESCO is primarily responsible within the United Nations system.

This UNESCO pilot project has been launched jointly by the Education Sector (Section for Humanistic, Cultural and International Education) and the Sector for Culture (Division of the Arts and Cultural Life).

The Associated Schools Project, which now includes more than 4 000 schools in 136 countries throughout the world, seeks to promote international education.

Making pupils more aware of their own and other people's culture is one of the four Associated Schools working themes.

The World Decade for Cultural Development, proclaimed for 1988-1997 by the United Nations General Assembly, has four main goals which correspond exactly with the «arts and crafts awareness workshop-classes» project:

- taking the cultural dimension of development into consideration;
- affirming and enriching cultural identities;
- broadening participation in cultural life;
- promoting international cultural co-operation.

This was how an interregional project for arts and crafts awareness workshop-classes came to be included in the Approved Programme and Budget.

This innovatory project, designed to build bridges between craftspeople, children and teachers, has the following goals:

- ◆ **Enhance the status** of arts and crafts in the eyes of pupils, teachers and parents.
- ◆ **Make pupils aware** of the historical, cultural, professional and aesthetic value of the crafts which are part of their country's cultural heritage.
- ◆ **Stimulate pupils' creativity** by teaching them a craft.
- ◆ **Bring about dialogue** and close collaboration between craftspeople and children.
- ◆ **Teach children about**, and compare the value and practice of, crafts in other countries by exchanging video-cassettes and notebooks written by the children with their teacher's help.

## **Meeting people and their work, a factor in the socialization and development of the individual**

Craftspeople are creative artists of everyday life. Their work is part of folk memory, born of centuries of know-how, the product of a multitude of gestures by means of which the exact art of things has been transmitted from generation to generation.

Craftsmanship needs time and roots. Craftspeople always bear witness to their regions and communities. Each object they make is a **sign of recognition**. It suggests its place of origin and carries the mark of local traditions in its materials, aesthetic values and symbols. Far from being limited to its practical use, it is part of the **collective cultural identity** and emphasizes the correlation between people and places.

Contemporary western designers are attracted by this **combination of function and poetry**, and are increasingly producing limited series of decorative objects in association with master glass-makers, cabinet-makers and potters. This is reflected in the proliferation of decorative arts galleries in great capital cities.

Both industrialized and developing countries are anxious to preserve their arts and crafts. There are many examples of craftspeople now dead whose craft is lost forever after it was handed down from generation to generation because there was no one to pass it on to.

According to a book published in 1962, in Tamil Nadu, Southern India, alone, nine hundred families were at that time still producing figures of Hindu divinities by *cire perdue* casting. The process was accompanied by spiritual, moral and religious rites, according to the rules laid down in the Brahminical texts, the *silpashastra*. Thirty years later, the number has now considerably diminished.

With a view to defending and preserving craftsmanship throughout the world, UNESCO here describes the experiments of those countries which have already taken part in the interregional arts and crafts awareness workshop-classes.

The experiments in the various countries differ according to the commitment of those responsible, financial and technical resources available and the school's location, but they all open the school up to life. Not being purely academic and theoretical, the experiments have an undeniably **enriching and nurturing effect**.

Following the example of Africa (Ghana), Latin America (Guatemala), the Caribbean (Grenada), Asia (Nepal), the Arab States (Jordan) and Europe (Bulgaria and France), whose pioneering work is described in the following pages, UNESCO hopes to convince the various ministries, schools, craftspeople and other decision-makers of the efficiency and impact of this drive **to upgrade arts and crafts**, so as to initiate similar projects throughout the world.

The project has been introduced in each country with the assistance of the National Commission for UNESCO and in each school with the help of the national co-ordinator of the Associated Schools Project: The conception varies from country to country, adapting to local conditions such as the education system and the organization of crafts. In most countries national steering committees of teachers and craftspeople have been set up.

As the need to preserve and promote arts and crafts in every country is generally accepted, we will now go round the world to look more closely at how a harmonious union of hand and mind can best be ensured by education and craftsmanship.



*From the Atlantic coast to the East African lakes, and all along the basin of the River Congo, some of the most important centres of figurative art in the continent are to be found in central Africa. Numerous ethnic groups have produced an astonishing variety of styles.*



*Students carefully take notes on the art of basket-weaving*



*Students practise making the traditional hairstyle «Oduku»*

The experimental South Labadi School, usually known as the «Osu primary school», was set up in 1954 in the small fishing village of Osu. Today it has 987 pupils and 20 teachers. The school was proud to be chosen for the UNESCO pilot project, which was carried out in close co-operation with the Accra National Cultural Centre, 4 km from the school.

After visiting all the workshops in the Centre and in the village of Hwanabanya, 24 children between 10 and 13, including 9 girls, divided into six groups, chose the craft they wanted to learn from **six disciplines: making tom-toms, carving stools (seats have a social role in Africa), weaving local cloth, hair-plaiting («Oduku»), basketry using cane and palm leaves, and pottery.**

By leaving the children free to choose for themselves, Mrs Juliana Darko, the teacher, and Mrs Cecilia Essilfie, the Head, are ensuring that the pupils will see that they pass on the cultural heritage they value most. The same process is followed for each discipline: observing and learning about the history of the craft, familiarization with the various tools, their names and uses, then practical work on the raw materials. Back to the classroom after seven weeks of very detailed study, the pupils tell each other what they have learned, thus strengthening their cultural identity on the basis of all their codified rites. At the Accra National Centre, two of the six groups did two ancient traditional types of woodworking, the making of stools and tom-toms, both of which reflect a culture with a great number of rites.

*Some of the results of the students' efforts...*



**By exploring a living material,** the pupils of the Osu primary school are discovering the qualities and significance of wood from every angle.

Each species of wood has its specific qualities and beauty, and by studying all its possible applications and especially by touching it, the little apprentice artisans understand what their ancestors must have felt when they carved mahogany seats or hollowed out guava trunks and gourds to make tom-toms. With Mr Amaglo they repeated the ancient gestures, coated animal skins with ash, after carefully removing the fur, then wetted them and sewed them stretched over the drum fitted with wooden pegs. For seven weeks the future musicians vibrated to the rhythm of their country. Although tom-toms are no longer used to transmit messages in Ghana, they can still be heard in churches at the funeral of a chief, a mother or her children, and even in some schools.

One of the pupils, Nyumutei Padi, wrote in his exercise book: «All the children in the school play tom-toms. They are also used in churches to beat time for the



*Exhibition of tom-toms produced by the students.*



*Girls modelling the « ODUK » hairstyles and Kente cloth.*

prayers at festivals and funerals».

Thanks to the workshop-classes, the experimental South Labadi School has reintroduced the tom-tom to call the children together. Far more melodious than a strident bell, the tom-tom also has an emotional connotation, enriched by each child's part in making it. While local craftspeople are pleased that the bell has been replaced by a traditional instrument, some find it difficult to accept that the children are now able to maintain and repair the tom-toms themselves.

But there is no danger of competition: as is well known, skills are only acquired through years of work. After an experiment of a few months, only the children who have found it really rewarding will take up the torch. What could be more satisfying for a craftsman than the certainty that he will be able to pass his skills on?

Teachers are well aware of the fact, confirmed by the cognitive sciences, that **learning is not the result of simple practice nor of an accumulation of knowledge. It is a progressive construction**, requiring at least two complementary approaches in which the learner's motivation plays a decisive role. By going beyond the context of the school, the child is placed before a concrete example which is part of a tangible contemporary reality.

With weaving, the pupils realized that it would take time to learn to use the loom. In Ghana traditional textiles have complex, highly symbolic and significant designs and combinations of colours. Not everyone was able to make the piece they wanted, but later their interest in the beauty and symbolic meaning of weaving led the school to employ a craftsman who now teaches the art to other schools.

One of the Ghanaian pupils, Fitzgerald Quartey, was amazed: «Weaving is a very long process. It can take a month to learn



*A stool-maker initiating students to his craft.*



*Stools made by both students and craftspeople.*

to use the loom and it can take four years to produce a perfect piece in some cases. It's slow, but thrilling».

At the meeting-point of ethnology and aesthetics, the Osu experiment has also revealed the artistic importance of African seats, showing how the carvers represented the practical, ritual and ceremonial functions of each kind of seat. Ritual and ceremonial seats reflect the special view their creators had of man and the world. This is also true of everyday seats, whose aesthetic aspect helps to strengthen collective identity and plays an important social role, even if it is not always consciously perceived by the community.

This is a teaching project full of different interesting aspects, which makes it possible to develop skills such as information retrieval and processing of all sorts (figures, texts, graphics), a spirit of research (decision-making, curiosity, precise observation, critical spirit), communication with others at work and, when the work is finished, thinking about techniques, appraising ancient customs and traditions and observing the know-how of one's ancestors.

### **AFRICAN SEATS: ETHNOLOGY AND AESTHETICS**

*It is nearly a century since Matisse, Braque, Vlaminck and Picasso were inspired by «Negro art» and revealed it to the Western artistic consciousness. But attention and admiration were concentrated on works such as masks, ceremonial head-dresses, statuettes of ancestors and religious objects evoking supernatural beings and forces.*

*Everyday African objects, such as furniture, hollowware, fabrics, tools, etc., were rarely regarded as being of aesthetic interest. It was not until the exhibition of African Furniture and Household Objects mounted at the Indianapolis Museum of Art (United States) in 1980 that the public became familiar with these very simple objects which have an exceptional richness of form and power of expression.*

*No other non-European civilization has such a diversity of seats. These are in fact the most important item of African furniture because of their social function. Each person is entitled to a seat of a precise form which situates him in his ethnic group. It is a personal possession which attests his rank. In addition to many tribal stools which are valued for their simple lines and ritual seats decorated with symbolic representations, there are ceremonial stools, chairs made for heads of families and elders, and the thrones and ceremonial seats of tribal chiefs and kings.*

*The seat still retains its highly symbolic function. One of the Ghanaian pupils, Raphael Allassani, explains in his notes : «After a dispute between two partners, one can give the other a seat as a sign of peace and forgiveness». Here, as elsewhere, in addition to being functional, crafts are also a language.*

# Central America

## Guatemala

*In this largely agricultural country the main industry is textiles, which began thousands of years ago with the Maya, one of the most representative peoples of the continent. With six million inhabitants, 50 per cent of whom are Amerindians, Guatemala has less difficulty than other countries in preserving its crafts because its indigenous population is less subject to foreign influence and is attached to its traditions and the related crafts.*



*Both boys and girls learn the delicate art of weaving.*

In north-west Guatemala, in the village of Chiyax in Totonicàn province, the mixed rural Tecun Umàn school follows the rhythm of the predominant culture of the originally Quiché Maya region. In this village of 8,500 inhabitants at the foot of the mountains, weaving and woodwork are the main crafts. Totonicapàn is the main centre for the manufacture of folk woodenware. Small guitars are made of white pine or cajeta, painted with anilines, varnished and strung with iron wire. These very popular toys are sold at almost all the fairs in the country. The name cajeta derives from the fact that this wood is used to make oval polychrome boxes for sweetmeats.

For six months 25 pupils, aged between 10 and 12, actively immersed themselves in Maya art. They did not simply wear traditional clothing but by weaving brightly coloured strips or painting little wooden boxes they learned the ancient techniques and practices involved in its production. The children were divided into two groups and, with their teacher and two craftswomen, chose the raw materials, prepared them and the tools and then tackled aesthetic problems such as deciding what colours and patterns to use.

### **A link between school, parents and artisans**

At first for three hours a week, then for three hours a day for six days, the children were immersed in the philosophical spirit of Maya art as they learned to make boxes and textiles. The parents were proud to see that their traditions were considered important for future generations and were fully supportive of the project. They were now ready to take part in other projects for transmitting skills in collaboration with the school, where it is so much easier to get certain messages across without seeming to be a hardline conservative!

If you ask at what school traditional artisans learned how to conceive these marvels of creative imagination, the answer is that there was no such school.

Today we are amazed by these works of art in archaeological museums. Painters, sculptors, stylists and others have drawn inspiration from them, penetrating the mystery of these artisan's great Art, an innate, ancestral

# Central America

## Guatemala



*Students, teachers and craftspeople at the start of the Project.*



*Starting from scratch....*



*Children quickly learn a new craft.*

art, simple, beautiful and perfect as nature, from which they learned everything.

By bringing the local people into the school for the final exhibition or cultural tours, workshop-classes forge a link between school, parents and artisans, even if the latter are often illiterate.

Whether because of this difference between the literate and the illiterate, or because of the change of situation discussed in the following paragraph, the pupils and the two craftspeople had difficulty getting on at first.

It is the meeting of children and creators which gives art classes their special characteristic. Meeting artisans in their daily life, in their working environment, brings children up against unfamiliar modes of representation. As they do so, they discover in the same way as the artisans new modes of expression and become familiar with new practices, materials, tools and media. The shock to their senses and sensitivity may encourage them to invent, but may also sometimes block them psychologically. This rejection of dialogue calls for a great deal of understanding on the part of the teacher-craftspeople. If they are dealt with patiently, the children's problems are easily solved.

The originality of cultural classes is that children bring their practical intelligence into play. Teaching through awareness-heightening makes it easier **to go beyond socio-cultural differences**. In a stimulating environment, children learn to surpass themselves by using abilities different from those traditionally used at school. If this experiment, which enables them to make qualitative progress, is to be successful, it must be conducted by artisans who have teaching skills and can combine teaching with humour and tolerance. It is not enough for them to be masters of their art, they must also appreciate the children's sometimes disconcerting spontaneity.

# Central America

## Guatemala



*They are proud of their beautiful creation.*



*Students with their diplomas.  
The students become quickly involved in craft-making.*

When attending a workshop, where adult-child, teacher-pupil relationships are different, children have to learn to be more self-reliant and responsible. Preparing them for this new situation achieves one of **the goals of art workshop-classes, which is to act as a catalyst for their work when they return to school, and to forge genuine mutual respect and appreciation between children and artisans, thereby creating solidarity where nothing existed before.**

One of the **problems encountered** was that the dates originally set had to be postponed because of school holidays and agricultural work that required the children's help.

### Results

With the help of local craftspeople, the project introduced a new teaching approach that strengthened Maya culture and put it at the centre of the curriculum. The pupils were as proud as their parents and received certificates for their successful participation in the experiment.

This form of learning brought out the important role the school can play in enhancing the status of, and promoting, traditional arts and crafts. Some of the recommendations for future action are as follows:

- the need to set up other similar projects;
- the decentralization of decision-making and financing to start them up;
- contacts with non-governmental organizations, working directly with local parents' and teachers' organizations;
- enhancing the status of Maya civilization with the help of UNESCO and, especially, the indigenous population.



*The art of weaving transmitted from one generation to the next.*

# Central America

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## Guatemala

### TEXTILES, OR THE SKILL OF WEAVING

Weaving seems to have appeared simultaneously in different parts of the world. Techniques of interweaving flexible materials (leather, wicker, wool and vegetable fibres) were known in earliest antiquity to most civilizations. Strongly rooted in the tradition of every civilization, weaving corresponds to **ritual values**. Two major practices existed side by side for a long period: horizontal and vertical weaving. The repetitive nature of the operations made it easy to adapt the horizontal loom to mechanized civilization. The first mechanical looms simply added power (water, steam or electricity) to the classic loom. Modern looms have gradually changed the process itself (combining warp and weft weaving, doing away with the shuttle, etc.). Producing fabric by the metre has increased profitability but has meant that the product loses a great deal of its character. The present taste for different types of hand loom can be explained by the need, setting aside considerations of cost, to go back to the charm of items which are works of art in themselves (clothing, panels, tapestries).

The pedal loom used at the Tecun Umàn school in Guatemala is a vertical loom composed of a frame with four wooden uprights; most fabrics made on this type of loom are knotted.

The variety of Guatemalan weaving consists in the finish and texture of the various garments made and used in the country. Patterns and colours reveal where the fabric was made. Marbled fabric (tie and dye) is common to several groups and is still part of the heritage of the vast region of Tonicapàn, known for its subtle decorations consisting of rows of anthropomorphic figures, plant and floral motifs and complex legends or inscriptions identifying the garment's owner or place of origin. Wide skirts and petticoats and the belts worn by many Guatemalans are made using this technique.



# The Caribbean

## Grenada

*The tropical nature and human kaleidoscope of the Caribbean make it a fascinating region even though the rapid growth of tourism has changed the cultural and natural landscapes, especially in the smaller islands and along the coast of the Greater Antilles. Although crafts are still practised and their products are to be found every day in the markets, a number are in danger of disappearing.*



*Enthusiastic teachers surrounded by their enthusiastic students  
Who motivates whom?*

On the small island of Grenada, the «pearl of the Caribbean», four Associated Schools adopted the UNESCO project. Initially, only one school was to participate, but enthusiasm was such that, after a rigorous selection process, 80 pupils aged between 10 and 12 were chosen. Each child explored one of the following: **bamboo or straw basketry, soft toys, pottery, woodwork and weaving, depending on local material and technical support available.**

### **Enthusiasm goes to the people's heads**

At the Saint Patrick Anglican school, the first to start the project in January 1993, Norbert Mark, the teacher, chose basketry so as to transmit to 20 pupils his long experience of the craft, the raw material for which were abundantly available. Enthusiasm was such that in the end three other teachers were to participate fully. The high degree of creativity and innovation shown led to much richer relationships between pupils and teachers, thus proving that **to have enthusiastic classes, enthusiastic teachers are required.**

This experiment reveals the importance of the role and attitudes of teachers. Teachers need to be trained to run innovative projects like this one successfully.

# The Caribbean

## Grenada



*Total involvement  
in the art of basket-making.*

Assisted by professionals from the art department of the National College of Grenada, the teachers sometimes found it difficult to get the programme going because it was difficult to find competent artisans able to abandon their livelihood for poorly paid teaching work. Although the purpose of workshop-classes was not always fully understood, and they began rather late in the school year because of the pupils' difficulty in choosing an activity without taking its gender aspect into account, they, nonetheless, were a great success with children and parents and also with teachers, even if some of them were inadequately prepared.

As workshop-classes involve pupils and teachers in a type of activity and a creative approach very different from the usual routine of school life, the partnership between the different actors must aim at complete synergy.

### **Partnership in complete synergy**

The partnership forged between the school and the bodies with recognized skills (sometimes quite rare) defines a new relationship between the school and society. Teachers are not in their usual position in the classroom; they give the necessary freedom to their cultural partners for there to be an exchange with the pupils. For artisans, it is also a new experience to allow the class into their workshop and accept the consequences. There must be a dialectic exchange. The children also realize the extraordinary nature of this new situation. With the artisans they have come to see, they discover other ways of learning and their questions give their hosts food for thought.

All children have a vital need to develop through creativity. Aggressive, even violent, behaviour can change as a result of activities that call for creativity. It matters little whether they draw, decorate or make models, what they need is to be able to express their imagination, which is always ready to burst forth and is especially well nurtured in group work. Some works express a degree of brutality. The role of the adults is then to explain and to tone it down.

An orphanage in Grenada took part in the UNESCO project. Its director especially emphasized the children's wholehearted interest in the programme. After the eight-month experiment their concentration had improved and they were less unruly.

Artistic expression channels some pupils' excessive energy and transforms it into a positive force. The financial rewards were another positive aspect: basketry provided a windfall income for these needy orphan children.

The example of Grenada brings out the importance of the profound motivation required for the preparation on which the success of the interregional UNESCO project depends.

### **The teaching process**

The pupils were taught about the historical and cultural values of each craft. They learned that pottery was made by the first inhabitants of Grenada, the Amerindian Arawaks and Caribs. Examples of their work are still being unearthed today and some are exhibited in the national museum. As for the craft itself, they learned by doing. «Learning by doing» is the traditional



*A craftsman works with the children.*

method of training craftspeople in Grenada. Whether they were dealing with the theoretical aspects of wood-carving or making pottery, the children were encouraged to innovate and create their own designs to decorate their work, rather than simply follow traditional patterns.

### **The impact of the project**

The teachers in the four Associated Schools are all prepared to repeat the experiment and are now pursuing the UNESCO objectives that they have not always developed sufficiently, such as putting the theoretical, historical and cultural aspects back in the local, everyday context. They hope to extend this fascinating type of project thanks to the end-of-project exhibition of the children's work and a video broadcast on national television. The talents of a very young child should be used during his first years at school. In nursery school, the child already displays great powers of fancy and imagination. When he works with a material, his whole body is involved. Understanding, in the full sense of the term, is the result of total sensory apprehension of the work which is coming into being. The child develops fully by using his mind and his senses of touch, sight and hearing. During the project the children's attitude to crafts underwent a positive change as they became aware that they were an inherent part of their country's cultural traditions. They were so deeply committed to the project that there were no disciplinary problems.

### **Results**

One school is still visited every week by one of the artisans who gives free advice on basketry.

Far from ending after the exhibition, the project was imitated in other schools on the island. The Constantine Methodist School chose an original

recycling project. The children made woven baskets from bits of carton, and stuck white cotton wool on fizzy drink bottles to make imaginary animals.

Here as elsewhere parents and other members of the community were very much impressed by the positive results of the experiment. The artisans were amazed at the interest shown by children and their desire to experiment and innovate.

Mr Crispin, the Secretary-General of the Grenada National Commission for UNESCO, concludes his report by pointing out that the imagination of small children will inevitably contribute to a revival of the local crafts on which the country's economy greatly depends with the increasing development of tourism.

### **WICKERWORK, OR MAKING PLAITED OBJECTS OUT OF VEGETABLE FIBRES AND STEMS**

*Since the earliest times, organic materials such as shoots of trees, bushes, plants, leaves, fronds, reeds and stems have been used to weave shelters and other basic everyday items. Wicker is the material experienced basket-makers prefer. Great skill is needed to plait it. It is complicated to use: there are a lot of joints, the diameter of rods varies according to length and the colours are less uniform than those of cane, hazel or chestnutwood. Rushes are easier to manipulate. If the plaits are to be regular, rods must be very **carefully chosen** according to thickness. The pupil must therefore make his selection, handling them very **carefully** as they are very fragile.*

*Seated by the rods as they are being soaked, not far from a tap and a basin in which to immerse the objects during fabrication, the pupil must take special care during the delicate parts of the process, such as bending the sides of the rods after the base has been woven and before making the borders, as wicker snaps without warning. The work requires strong arms and **agile** fingers. Wickerwork is above all a matter of **manual dexterity** and does not require much special equipment: a pair of secateurs for cutting rods, a knife to sharpen the ends, an awl to prepare and facilitate the passage of the sides, and a mallet. Using natural raw materials gathered in the forest, easy for any child to find, and a few tools, Norbert Mark shows the children that they are **able to produce on their own**. He also makes them aware of the close links between artisans and their environment.*

*The Nepalese have been carving wood, sculpting stone and painting frescoes and canvases for nearly a thousand years. They also excelled in architecture and created new, original forms in which wood-carving predominates. This art is displayed especially strikingly on the pillars of palaces, temples and houses, on door and window frames and the cantilevers and joists that support temple roofs. In temples the mark of the artist is perceptible not only in the paintings but also especially from the little wooden and metal reliefs, canvases and hangings that decorate them.*



*Windows of Katmandu*

### **Kathmandu, the town of two thousand temples**

The last paradise on a human scale before the summits of the Himalayas, Kathmandu radiates a thousand-year-old spirituality. In the crowded alleys between palaces and pagodas, the Hanuman Dhoka Palace and its superimposed roofs, the Kumari monastery, the Temple of Bhimsen and the Royal Sanctuary of Taleju are marvellous traces of a centuries-old art. Seven kilometres from Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, or the city of the pious, is an unspoilt medieval town with superb monuments, among its show pieces are the streets of potters and weavers.

Immersed daily in the world of art, the Nepalese cannot be indifferent to the cultural heritage bequeathed by their ancestors. Although the ancient crafts are under threat, independent craftspeople are reviving them, thus beginning a new phase in the development of Nepalese art.

In order to describe to the world the various craft activities of this legendary country with a thriving tourist industry, secondary pupils from two of the best Nepalese schools explored the various resources of their heritage by means of **study-visits to temples, towns of architectural interest and various centres of craftsmanship.**

### **Observation, practical work and case notes**

In Kathmandu, in collaboration with their school heads, Mr Dhruba Bahaduv Shrestha of Tribhuvan Adarsha boarding school (Pharping) and Mr Gambhir Man Maskey of the Viswo Niketan secondary school (Tripurreswor), pupils and teachers from the two schools produced a video and a fabulous, abundantly illustrated 60-page album to record a very special year. The pupils introduce their schools - Tribhuvan Adarsha, situated at the foot of a wooded hill near the village of Pharping, 18 km south of Kathmandu, and Viswo Niketan, situated on the banks of the River Bagmati in the heart of the town since 1946. They then explain what was their purpose: to halt the



*Straw artworks displayed at the Blue Star Hotel.*



*A close look at the intricate work of a wood-carver*

visible decline of crafts and transmit a new image of arts and crafts to future generations, one of respect and appreciation. Not having the financial resources to invest in the advertising campaigns so freely talked about, they have found the outlet they needed in the interregional project on education and arts and crafts. By holding an exhibition showing the diversity of Nepalese craftsmanship in the entrance hall of the Blue Star Hotel, they have helped to raise the status of arts and crafts which are sometimes little appreciated in the huge tourist bazaars.

Through observing the various stages in the production of an earthenware pot, the 36 pupils, aged 10 to 15, not only learned **new words and technical expressions**, but also became aware of the difficult life of potters, who are often very poor and illiterate. In the course of their visits to the Pachpanna Jhyale Darbar Place in Patan, a town of particular historical and architectural interest, the bamboo furniture factory in Balaju and various craftspeople's workshops, they came to appreciate the **wealth of Nepalese crafts** and the many **export possibilities** they provide.

Accompanied by ten teachers they visited the Palace of 55 Windows in Bhaktapur where they observed its religious, highly symbolic character, the forms and lines of the splendid statues, the painted doors and the famous Golden Peacock made by one of the most famous craftspeople.

**The historical, artistic, mythological and social revelations** of this foray into the craftspeople's world put school into a new perspective. The interaction of the various disciplines with everyday life shows both children and parents that school can be a place capable of **blending into everyday life**.

With wood-carving, the pupils learn new words (gouges are used to shape the wood and include gouges with a bend in the handle, firmers and cold-chisels). They can use these new words to impress adults.

Visiting museums, sites, monuments and buildings gives a better understanding of the craftspeople's role in the process which produces the object, the finished product and national heritage.

Heritage classes enable young people to discover the riches of a site, its environment, the historical and artistic events that have marked it and its existence today.

Children must be helped to:

- **absorb** the continuity of history up to their own lifetime;
- **visualize** the tangible references in historical and technical chronology;
- **discover** man's universal roots;
- **evolve** their own criteria of comparison and judgement.

There is a wide variety of actions connected with heritage teaching. They range from contact with a historical monument to an industrial heritage, by way of archaeology, ethnology, fine arts and the environment. These approaches should help young people to absorb knowledge learned at school by applying it to an understanding of the environment.

After the visits and excursions the pupils also appreciated the production of dolls, wooden objects, models and basketry. A large exhibition of their work was held at Viswo Niketan School.



*Students admire the work of a bamboo craftsman.*



*Boys carrying a bamboo umbrella.*



*Children admire the work of a potter and become interested in his way of life.*

### **The challenges**

The successive dynasties that made their capitals in the Valley of Kathmandu left a rich heritage. Sometimes, however, children and their parents regard wood and clay crafts as outmoded. This project made them reconsider their judgement and recognizing the value of these age-old crafts as they worked on them in their spare time.

### **The results**

Their direct contact with craftspeople made the pupils appreciate the latter's true worth. They understood them better as a result of taking an interest in their lives and getting to know them. In addition to the things they made themselves, they took home a number of objects made by the craftspeople. The craftspeople were encouraged and pleased by the children's interest, which made them feel appreciated.

The results of the experiment were presented by Mr Dhruva Bahaduv Shrestha at an international conference held in November 1994 at the University of Wisconsin (United States). In view of the enthusiasm many participants expressed, we can only hope that it will give rise to other similar projects.

#### THE MAGIC OF LIFE-GIVING EARTH

*Pottery is probably the oldest and most universal craft. Clay is, after all, earth and is found in one form or another on every continent. Pots, vases, dishes and all sorts of hollow-ware have been made in every age and society.*

*The most primitive and **instinctive** way to make a pot is to hollow out a cavity with the thumb in a small ball of clay, then reduce the thickness of the sides by repeatedly pressing with the fingers in a slow spiral movement. A thick bowl is obtained very quickly. After a few trials, **using only their fingers**, the students started to use the wheel.*

*The potter's wheel is very ancient and is found in different forms all over the world. It is **simple** to use, always **spectacular**, but the secret of throwing, if there is one, lies in the number of hours of practice. The idle observer watching the potter «raise» a regularly shaped vase in a few minutes may think it is easy, but when he/she tries him/herself he/she realizes that the potter's **skill** is the fruit of 10, 20 or even 30 years of practice. The students **learned not to be discouraged** by repeated failure: only **determination** and **perseverance** will lead to good results.*

*Learning to knead the clay, then positioning the ball on the centre of the revolving table, drawing it up into a cone, turning it with one or both hands, removing the pot, wetting it enough while it is drying, **cleaning** the kiln, **creating** an original decoration, all these stages require **patience, dexterity and clear thinking**.*



*Taking its name from the archetypal sacred river of Jordan, a country shaped by an age-old history which has nourished western thought for 20 centuries and seen the flowering of Islamic civilization, Jordan is a paradise for archaeologists*



*Weaving, pottery or basket-making, students always prefer working in groups.*

On the East bank of the River Jordan more than 50 km from Amman, the Salt Girls Secondary School was one of the first UNESCO Associated Schools in the country.

After visiting specialized crafts centres, the Salt Crafts Centre, the Archaeological Museum and the National Pottery Centre, 24 girls aged between 13 and 14 each chose one of the traditional arts and crafts of the town of Salt: pottery, weaving and basketry, **the raw materials** of which were readily available and **sophisticated technology** was not required. After gathering theoretical information and making contact with the craftspeople available and willing to teach, the girls worked in the workshops. They also watched several films and went to a large number of exhibitions in hotels, museums, at the Nour Al-Hussein Foundation and the local pottery factory.

### Tradition and innovation

Each girl made one or more items of pottery, weaving or basketry and recorded her impressions in a notebook. Using manual looms, the girls **gave continuing life to age-old gestures** which might otherwise be forgotten because of the wide use of the electric loom; they **also learned about the great changes in the use of colours, designs and yarns over the centuries**. They used wool, cotton and silk to weave rugs, belts and bags in sober colours. Watching the video, one can read the **satisfaction** on the faces of the young weavers when their piece comes off the loom. The **exultation** comes later, when with the last scissor-cuts the piece is finished and ready to join the basketry and pottery for the final exhibition. During the basketry lessons, the girls knelt in a circle round the craftsman who held the ends of the reeds with his bare feet and gradually wove them in concentric movements.

**In order to live, human beings need to exist in the eyes of other people. For them, craftwork represents a place more than an art.**

In tradition-respecting countries where there are a large number of single-sex schools, craftwork is abolishing the traditio-



*Sitting in a circle, students in Salt are initiated one by one into the art of basket-weaving.*

nal division between so-called male and female tasks. In groups at school girls and boys together can learn embroidery, weaving, pottery and woodworking. Emphasis is laid not only on manual work; the girls link their practical activities to theoretical studies.

The **ethnological aspect** (the traditions and customs of this ancient region with its great cultural heritage) is dealt with in history lessons; in geography lessons **specific regional features** are discussed. In addition to the theoretical approach, by learning a craft the pupil acquires basic knowledge by means of the senses, materials and gestures adapted to tools and techniques. Surrounded by new sounds and smells,

and the kind attention of the craftspeople who are delighted by their interest, the young learners enrich their mother tongue by learning the craftspeople's specialized technical vocabulary which has far more impact than when it is taught at school.

There is at present a revival of arts and crafts in Salt. Dilapidated premises are being turned into workshops and several young people in the village have chosen to take up ancient crafts by undertaking long but stimulating apprenticeships.

These studies strengthen cultural identity and at the same time open up **dialogue between the generations**, creating a new solidarity between young and old, rich and poor.

*The iconostases of churches, decorated with exotic birds, interlaced with flowers and leaves, figures of pagan or Christian inspiration, or the suns decorating the ceilings of the houses of rich merchants of the age of national awakening, show that Bulgaria has a very ancient wood-carving tradition.*

*Two Bulgarian teachers present an artistic group effort of their students: a panel made from bright-coloured strips of cloth.*



Thirty-two pupils from school 119 in Sofia aged 10 to 14 were supervised by four teachers from the Secondary School for Applied Arts. The two themes, a decorative, limewood ceiling and an ornamental panel made of textiles of different widths and colours, were chosen as reflecting Bulgaria's turbulent history.

Over the centuries a large number of historical buildings were destroyed in Bulgaria, which was for many years under Turkish domination. By emphasizing external and internal architecture, the teachers linked craftsmanship to aesthetic rather than functional values. They did not, however, overlook the **practical aspects** as they chose the themes according to the children's age and the time available, which varied as a result of strikes which upset the smooth running of the project.

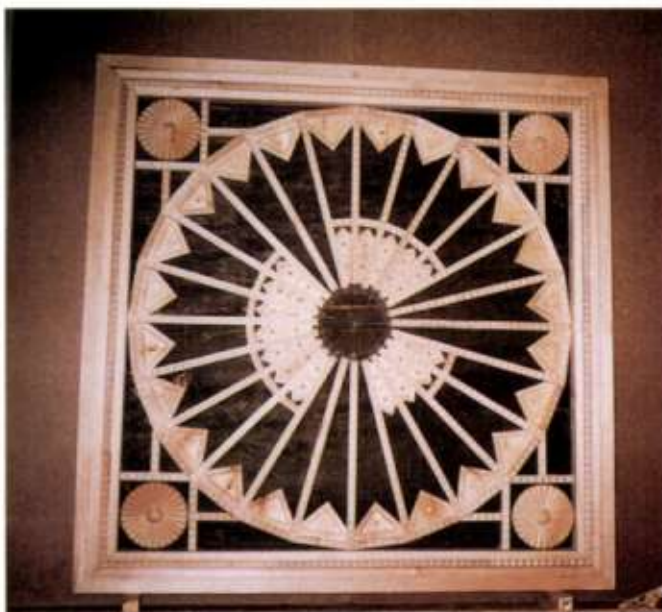
### **Group work by children of different ages**

In choosing a ceiling and a decorative panel the teachers were highlighting composition itself, rather than woodcarving or weaving. The idea of producing two large works was to show that children of different ages could work together to enhance the school aesthetically, and later perhaps their own homes. This type of work involves **learning to respect other people**. A feature of the workshop is that everyone teaches the others what he or she knows.

Teamwork teaches children that individuals are complementary in a common project. The criteria for evaluating skills are therefore different from those usually applied in schools.

With the aid of visits and reading, the pupils study the principles of composition in detail and understand, not always without difficulty, that **the choice of forms is partly dictated by the technology**.

Bent, curved, notched or plaited, wood, like stone, retains its special characteristics and cannot be worked against the grain. The cabinet-maker does not choose oak to make the feet of a chair because he knows that, although oak is very strong,



*Different stages of a wooden panel made by students*

beech, which is less strong, is nonetheless better for this use. Village wheelwrights, who used three different types of wood to make a wheel, knew that only acacia could take the strain placed on the spokes, whereas it was unsuitable for the hub.

Craft classes promote a practical approach to art and culture. Meeting craftspeople and looking at their work, the past and present traces of a living culture, encourages pupils to act: **they can see and do**. From being the passive spectators of hitherto inaccessible activities, they become involved in creative processes. It is essential to define their place and role in advance so that they can deploy personal skills and know-how, find their own place or make a statement by doing things they have never done before.

Children have a taste for effort, which they long to satisfy. They also need to be stretched by the difficulty of the task required of them.

When the children who took part in the pilot scheme were put in new situations, they revealed aspects of their personality neither they nor their teachers had seen before. This break with the usual school routine is a genuine education of the eye and ear, and in awareness of time and space, and gives the pupils other references with which to find their bearings in their environment. It enables them to surpass themselves and to build new relationships with other people and the world which they would not necessarily have developed without this experience «in the field».

**The fundamental role of the heritage,**

a dynamic concept which makes it possible to find a national identity based on the past, and to understand the present in order to prepare for the future, must take the pupils' level



into account if it is to achieve its goals. The tangible components of the heritage reveal new aptitudes:

- the **pleasure** of learning,
- the clues that make it possible to read and **understand** the facade of a building, a landscape or a sculpture,
- **rediscovering** one's own environment,
- the **possibility of new types of exchanges** with adults, parents and teachers, and other young people.

**The workshop is first and foremost a window on the world**, a lighthouse with a huge sweep turning at the tempo of our age. As a cog in the administrative machine, the school has still not caught up with the child's new needs. Children are ready to understand, perceive and feel all new forms of creation. Why not therefore introduce them at school very early on? After the experiment in Sofia, some of the pupils decided they wanted to make a career in arts and crafts and will be sitting the competitive entrance exam to the Sofia School of Applied Arts.

### THE BEAUTY AND VERSATILITY OF WOOD

*A noble natural material, wood has been highly valued down the ages for its many properties and multiple applications. No material, neither synthetic nor natural, will ever replace it - the atmosphere it creates is inimitable.*

*Carpentry is one of the oldest crafts. Felling trees, removing the branches, tying them together at their tops to form a cone and filling the interstices with smaller pieces of wood, leaves and mud, is the basis of the primitive dwelling. Wood with its thousand changing colours lives and breathes throughout the universal history of architecture: pillars for a house made from local tree trunks, a roof and ceiling made of pieces of wood radiating from a «key»; it can be mortised or lashed together for a bamboo palisade, stripped of its leaves, or braced to make a tie-beam.*

*In the Dark Ages when forests still abounded throughout Europe, a large number of churches, villages, bridges, houses and palaces were made of timber. The craft reached a high degree of perfection, but fire and war have destroyed its traces. When iron appeared with the industrial revolution, many carpenters gave up, and were unable to pass on their skills. After lying dormant for long, woodwork is being revived. Modern architects, tired of concrete and glass, are turning to more natural materials. The list of examples worldwide is long; all good architects turn to the magic of wood at one time or another. Studying the woodwork of their ancestors, the 32 children in Sofia saw that while tastes have changed over time, the ways of dealing with wood, touching it and revealing its qualities have barely changed at all. Tools are more efficient, but the feeling remains the same.*

# Europe

## France

*With a worldwide reputation - embroiderers in haute couture, goldsmiths, makers of porcelain, glassmakers like Daum and Gallé, or cabinet-makers - craftsmanship in France, as in other western countries, will disappear altogether if nothing is done to rescue and restore the pride of a nation: unique skills enriched over the centuries.*



*Students in action...*



*With the help of the craftsman and under the teacher's supervision...*

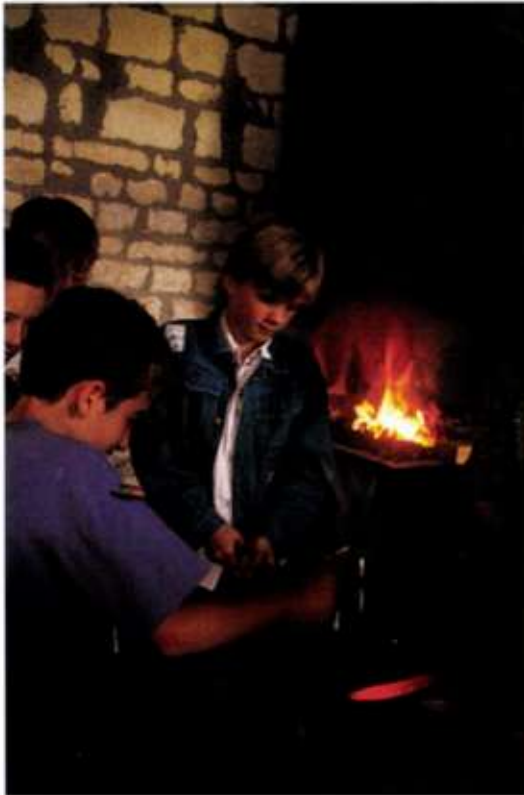
The State-sponsored Société d'Encouragement des Métiers d'Art (S.E.M.A.), which started the arts and crafts awareness workshop-classes, provides support in a number of ways for creative exploration and helps to disseminate information. In order to avoid craftsmanship becoming a matter merely for archaeologists in future decades, and to provide facilities for the study of contemporary crafts, and their social and economic conditions and role in present-day society, S.E.M.A. takes part in many trade fairs, organizes thematic exhibitions at the Galerie Pleyel in Paris, training courses and seminars, and publishes a monthly magazine. Recognizing the value of craftsmanship as an artistic tradition and a form of creation bearing witness to the historical past, S.E.M.A. naturally tries to heighten the awareness of an ever-increasing public. While achieving very positive results, it has realized that many of its activities amounted to preaching to the converted. To develop awareness on a national scale it is now trying to teach children about arts and crafts. In order to reach all levels of society it has decided to set up educational projects in schools, «Arts and crafts awareness workshops».

### **Enriching the school's cultural dimension**

S.E.M.A.'s «Arts and crafts awareness workshops» began in 1990 with 18 experimental workshops.

The workshop is held for two to three hours a week over a period of 10 to 12 weeks. It is more than simply a place for practical work; its activities fit into and complement other school subjects.

During the experiment carried out with Jean Maugeais, the craftsman in wrought iron, in Antony (Essonne), the programme of the Blanguernon School CMI class (nine-year olds) included the theme of the tree in several subjects: in **science** (the tree: living being, living environment), **civic education** (environment), **mathematics** (taking measurements, making gauges, etc.) and **history** (studying Medieval guilds).



(Photos p 33-34 - Editions Morelle Hayot, Château de Saint-Rémy-en-l'Eau.)

The project also found a place in the broader **local context**, as the Antony Town Council made a special effort to develop and publicize its parks by publishing two brochures. The departmental General Council sent all the pupils in the department a magazine about trees.

The project has also a **national and even international dimension**, at a time when environmental problems are becoming increasingly important.

In addition to practical work in the workshop, corresponding to the school curriculum, arts and crafts workshops may also include visits to monuments, which place the craftsman's work in a tangible environment. The CMI class of the mixed school in rue Lacordaire in Paris worked with the gilders Fabrice and Robert Gohard to produce a board decorated with gold leaf, and then visited Amiens Cathedral and other monuments to see the restoration work carried out by the Gohard gilding workshop.

By learning a very painstaking art, children enter a professional world usually quite foreign to them. This helps to develop their creativity and above all makes them aware that the hand must be guided by the mind, and that thought, investigation and creative work must precede any form of production.

The success of the initial experiment with a few arts and crafts workshops led the French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and that of Trade and Craftsmanship, joint initiators of the operation, to increase the number of experiments in subsequent academic years: there were 32 in 1992, 48 in 1993 and in 1994 more than 60 throughout the country.

Following this success, the Craft Directorate suggested that awareness-heightening workshops be extended to secondary school pupils. With this in view, an agreement was concluded with the Direction des Lycées et Collèges to organize «cultural classes» in secondary schools. Based on the widely used primary school model of nature classes on the spot, six sites were prospected in 1994. This model consists of total immersion in a region with a strong craft tradition. For a week, groups of two or three children discover the craftsman's working environment. In 1993 in Mirecourt, a town in south-west Lorraine, the centre of violin and bow-making in France, 19 nine-year-



old pupils from the school at Chajoux in La Bresse carried on the experiment begun the previous year. Local craftspeople showed them how to use chisels and planes; they discovered Mirecourt, the diversity of stringed instruments (violins, guitars, mandolins, etc.) and their various **cultural, aesthetic, economic and technical aspects**.

Pupils take part in social life and develop research skills to enable them to understand the laws governing stringed instruments. By building a spinet they create a useful work of art, **devise** its shape, colour and decoration and **learn the techniques**. The work continues when they return to La Bresse: selecting and filing the information collected, producing a newspaper, mounting a photo exhibition and performing a «mini-concert» with the instruments they have made.

*Wherever they are from,  
whatever the differences of race,  
tradition, geography or social system,  
craftspeople throughout the world have one  
thing, one gift, in common:  
they work, they create with their hands,  
guided by the ideal of beauty.*

# Promising results

**Personal development, social integration, the emergence of new abilities, citizenship-building, all result from the sensitive, practical approach to a cultural and artistic field.**

When at UNESCO in Paris one looks at the photographs of this collection of craft objects from all over the world, what is striking is the universal quality of craftsmanship. Making an everyday object, and the joy of giving form to a material, create a link between all the pupils which transcends any limited geographical and social considerations. The ingredients of this quality production are motivated children, skilled creators and enthusiastic teachers.

Between their first steps, when they are only spectators, and the perfection the pupils strive to achieve, it is easy to imagine the trial and error, hours of careful attention, the knowledge acquired, and probably also failures and setbacks, both for them and for the teachers and craftspeople, who are more than merely socio-cultural instructors; they agree not only to devote hours to other people's work, but also put up with being invaded by a horde of children who are not always disciplined or respectful.

However, craftspeople desirous of a degree of serenity can be reassured: the various experiments already conducted show that a difficult «problem» child changes his attitude in the workshop. If a child is interested in what he is doing he becomes a model pupil. **It must be remembered, though, that children have an attention span of only 20 minutes.**

In every country the organizers were pleasantly surprised by the success of the operation, heightened by general enthusiasm both during the project itself and at the end-of-project exhibition. They note however that **the success of workshop-classes is dependent on each participant's desire for success.**

## A positive partnership

If the project is to succeed, everyone involved must work together. The teacher must never feel «his» class has been «taken away» from him. The many problems encountered during the experiment bring out the fact that all those taking part play complementary roles. Meeting the craftspeople changes the teacher's status in the children's eyes. With these new partners the children explore latent potentials using their imagination in a new relationship with the raw materials. They no longer learn «from the top down» by passively absorbing the teacher's words, but by actively applying the notions involved and making them their own.

The smooth running of the various stages of the experiment can be ensured by providing all the teachers in the school, the pupils, parents and craftspeople with detailed **information about the project and its implications.**

When everyone understands all the project's positive aspects, each individual can help to develop new future directions:

## The craftspeople

The craftspeople soon discover the reality of school and the difficulties involved in teaching; they share the teachers' joys and disillusionment, enthusiasm and gloom.

Working with children is something quite new for them. Young people are especially gifted at leap-frogging over all logical barriers. From the very beginning the craftspeople discover all the possibilities afforded by the subconscious mind for creativity. They feel carried away by them, and see for themselves that the adventure has been successful because they have allowed them to take over.

With the children in their workshop, they can show them what they do and genuinely involve them in their activities. The «invasion» of their world is extremely rewarding both professionally and on the human level.

The children's curiosity, the relevance of their remarks and their approach to the profession give the craftspeople **a new perspective on their work and daily environment**. It raises their status that they are able to instil in the pupils pride in their work, a taste for the creative techniques peculiar to crafts and an understanding of the cultural dimension which is part of their history.

Every craft, because of the control of material and gesture it implies, involves a return to nature, the rediscovery of noble materials, and is part of humankind's increasingly felt need for creativity.

By scrupulously respecting ancient techniques, often handed down from father to son or mother to daughter, the craftspeople are in their modest way combating the standardization of the world and the general loss of identity.

This is what is at stake, a combination of mental stimulus and the continuation of a unique tradition. The craftspeople make objects one by one, thus giving them emotional force and individuality.

## The teachers

The workshop is above all defined as «what is not school». There are no punishments, no system of marks. The children do not systematically try to outdo each other. Nor do they worry if they fail to understand things as well as others. They simply want to make what they feel like making. **The result is mutual self-help**, and the contribution of the more gifted children is far from negligible. This mixture of abilities is an important principle which shows the children, who are sometimes behind academically, that one can be poor in one field but excel in another.

The experience changes the pupil-teacher relationship. One of its highlights is the discovery of previously unsuspected potential. Craftsmanship reveals aspects of the child's personality which do not always appear in academic work.

Furthermore, from a teaching point of view, **the activity increases the child's powers of observation, imagination, concentration, socialization and memorization**.

The results speak for themselves. Often, some of the children needed individual attention. The experiment strengthened the cohesion of the class group, and some children changed strikingly, becoming calmer and more balanced, or progressed academically. **The obvious non-academic nature of this type of class helps those who need psychological and academic encouragement**. All children, whatever their level, can find a place where they can express themselves, and many psychological blocks caused by academic failure will disappear.

## Advantages for both craftspeople and teachers

**Pleasure:** this is what teachers feel when they discover the power to «awaken» and motivate the children to learn. Craftspeople and teachers talk of their pleasure in seeing the children open up to communication and intellectual exchange as a result of the conditions they have created.

**Intellectual curiosity:** in interactive teaching, in which all points of view are expressed and brought together, it is not only the children who learn, but the adults too. By watching them at work, they discover how the children teach themselves. They also learn more about the subjects they themselves teach. the children's ideas and questions force adults to clarify their own ideas and conceptions, look for information and increase their own knowledge.

**Solidarity:** teamwork, essential here, develops solidarity among the adults. The teacher's traditional isolation from his/her pupils is broken; the risk represented by any innovation is shared, and responses to unknown factors and problems can be sought collectively.

**The mastery of one's craft:** the thought and explanation required to conceive, conduct and assess innovations give those involved the feeling that they have mastered their craft, and enhance its status in their own eyes by bringing out its supremely technical nature.

Taken in isolation, these projects are in no way extraordinary. What makes them exceptional is their number and the will to spread them worldwide. In order to implement such an educational policy, schools must be decompartmentalized, bridges must be built between them, and all the actors concerned brought into contact with each other.

# Methodology

## Running the project

We hope that the enthusiasm of all those who took part in the «schools and crafts» project will lead to many other similar experiments. The following suggestions are intended to encourage them and offer some practical help.

The initiative may be taken by primary school teachers, craftspeople, guidance counsellors, local authorities or parents, etc.

Calling in craftspeople in no way means that teachers are placed on the sidelines because they are not specialists. It is important from the outset to create the conditions for properly linking the cultural dimension and teaching. Partnership means accepting that different skills complement each other and guarantees that all involved should have the necessary qualifications.

### The choice of a craft

The choice will differ from country to country according to the historical and cultural importance and universal value of the craft. **It will also vary from region to region.**

Examples: pottery/ceramics, wickerwork, textiles (silk, lace, weaving), glass-making, stone-cutting, mosaic, leather or metal work, the making of musical instruments, and many others.

There are also **practical considerations** to be taken into account in the choice of the craft:

- the school's proximity to craftspeople's workshops so as to avoid long journeys and place the craft in its local context so that the children get to know their own locality better;
- the workshop's ability to receive children;
- craftspeople's availability and motivation to receive children and share their skills with them.

### Ways of implementing the project

Armed with the experience acquired by France where the «workshop-classes» started, UNESCO (Education Sector and Sector for Culture) prepared a document presenting the project and its goals to the six participating countries.

#### Preparatory phase

After accepting the interregional project, each country took measures to:

- Select a school and a nearby craft workshop. This was done by the National Commission for UNESCO and the national co-ordinator of the Associated Schools Project.
- Prepare a project. This was done in common by teachers and craftspeople.
- Complete a short form describing:
  - the school and class concerned;
  - the craftspeople and:
    - \*their premises, equipment and materials;
    - \*the safety arrangements essential for children.

The project itself.

The project's success obviously depends on mobilizing human resources and the interest and involvement of the children. From the outset, therefore, it is advisable to do everything possible to motivate everyone involved: teachers, craftspeople and also parents.

It is important to tell the other teachers in the school, the school board and the parents of the children about the project and how it will be implemented.

## Guidelines for the content of activities

The acquisition of a skill is not the goal of the crafts awareness workshops. They are not, however, intended to be mere exercises in manual work, but to introduce children to basic skills and knowledge. The historical and economic context, the ethnological aspects (traditions, customs, clothing, accessories), geographical location and the architecture of the workshop are all decisive factors in constructing an educational project.

In addition to visiting workshops, it is advisable to arrange for the children to visit other places, such as museums, sites and buildings, if possible in the company of craftspeople and parents, so that they gain a better understanding of the role and application of the craft in society.

Oral expression should not be forgotten, and naturally finds its place in exchanges about the various activities. The new specific technical vocabulary the craftspeople use enriches the learning of the national language(s).

## Implementation phase

Developing and carrying out the teaching project:

- **Learning about the craft at school:**

By preparing for their visits to the workshop the children learn about the chosen craft. Some pre-existing parts of the curriculum can be strengthened by a multi- or interdisciplinary approach involving subjects such as history, geography, art education, languages, economics (the impact of a craft on employment and markets), etc. Extra-curricular activities may also play a part.

- **Practical work** with the children in the workshop for a few hours, or half a day a week for a minimum of two to three months.

- **Keeping a notebook:**

Writing a «notebook» on the chosen craft: its history, place in modern life, function, aesthetic and cultural contribution, the manufacturing process, etc.

The children take notes throughout the project.

The final notebook may include about 20 pages with photographs, drawings and other illustrations.

- **Producing a video:**

If possible, a video (of about 20 minutes) on the whole project should be produced and then distributed to other schools in the country or even exchanged with other countries.

## Final phase

- **Publication and distribution** of the notebooks; exchange of notebooks (and video, if any) among participating countries.

- **Exhibition** in the school and in the community of children's and craftspeople's work and, if possible, a travelling exhibition.

- **Report on and assessment of the project** (through discussions or a questionnaire for teachers, craftspeople, etc.).

Publication of a feature on the project in the UNESCO Associated Schools Bulletin «International Understanding at School».

This interregional education and crafts project took place mainly within the framework of the UNESCO Associated Schools Project. Looking at all the evidence from various parts of the world which brings out the pupils' participation, interaction with craftspeople, enthusiasm for the work and pride in what they made, this new educational project was undeniably a great success.

Much remains to be done, however. The disappearance of arts and crafts is still worrying and it is essential that children and adults do all they can to preserve and extend them. It is therefore hoped that the UNESCO pilot project will serve as an example and lead large numbers of schools and local craftspeople to look again at arts and crafts. Upgrading the status of arts and crafts in this way gives children, the decision-makers of the future, a taste for, and appreciation of, craftsmanship and skills which will make it possible to preserve a rich local and worldwide heritage for present generations and those to come.

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