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Preliminary Observations of an evolutionary Design and Technology curriculum: A Worrying Trend?

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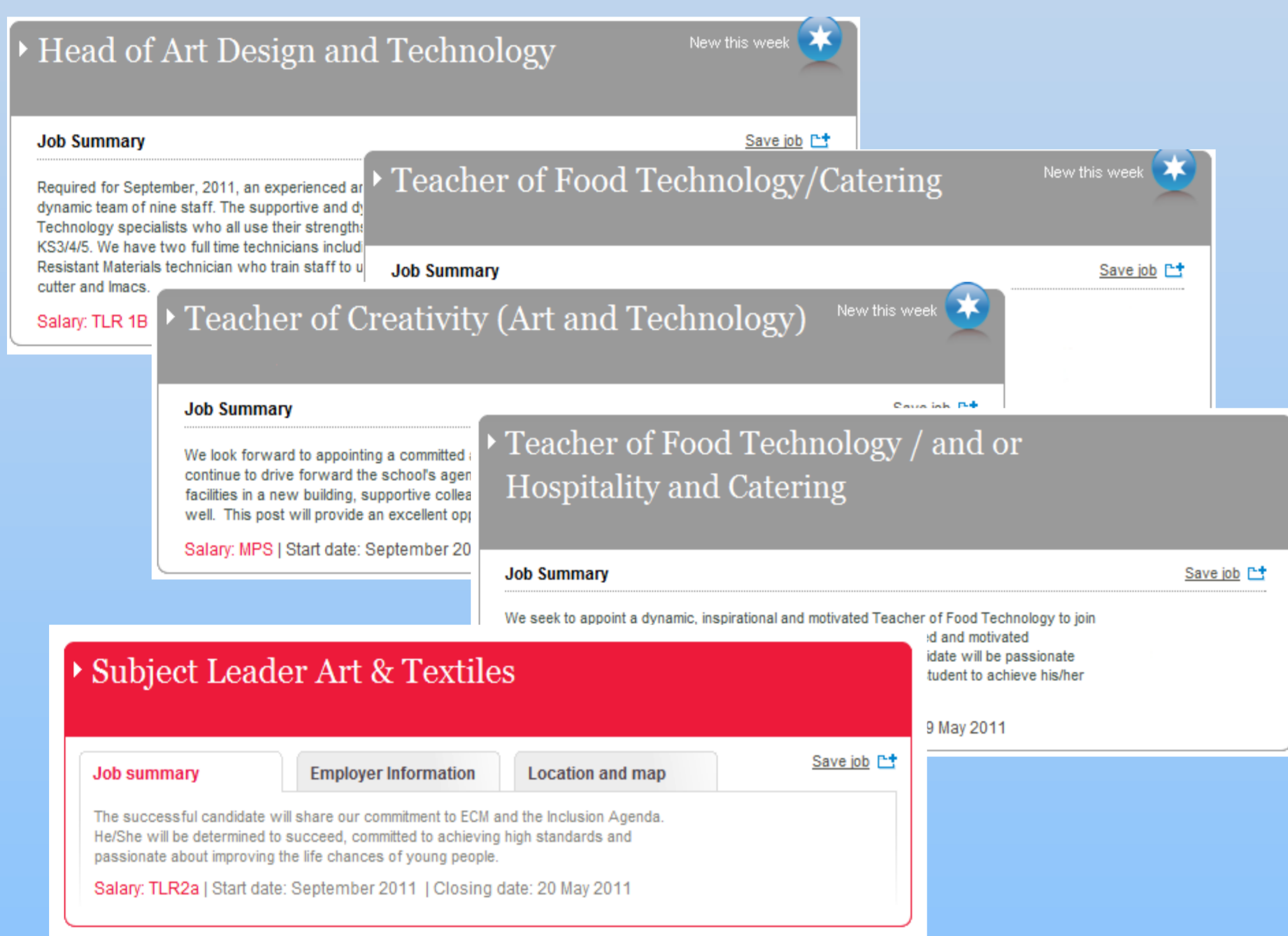


Edge Hill University

Introduction

This poster presents the preliminary findings of senior lecturers working within two large Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers in North West England. Derived during professional discourse and email conversation, the work presents observations by the authors that relates specifically to the changing nature of design and technology in some secondary schools in the training providers' geographical location.

Initial findings support other research (Hughes et al. (2010), (2011)) into the evolving nature of design and technology in today's economic and political climate which has examined aspects of the evolution of textiles technology within the secondary school curriculum.



Content taken from TES Jobs, Date Accessed: 18th May 2011

Methodological Approach

The methodological approach adopted in the study which brought these findings to a position of prominence (Hughes et al 2010, 2011) has been constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, (2005) (2006)). This approach was chosen because it allows for simultaneous data gathering and analysis, a strategy which helps develop an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation through the systematically building up insights throughout the research process.

The work presented for this element of the research draws upon empirical data gathered through a combination of professional discourse, email and face to face conversation with a small number of design and technology practitioners.

Content and discourse analysis has been used to place the work in a methodological context (Prior, 2003), (Berelson 1952), (Foucault 1969) and conversation, discourse and document analysis (Rapley, 2007).

“Food Tech is way too difficult for one of my groups. Thought I would consider other options. If the Catering SOW is still available I would love to take a look”

Content taken from the TES Design and Technology Online Forum,
Date Accessed: 14th May 2011

Discussion

The data presented is supplementary to another study (Hughes et al, 2010) which sought to bring to the fore the location issue of textiles technology, which in many schools in England is moving from design and technology and is being taught through the art and design curriculum. The work presented here highlights two further 'shifts' in the delivery of the design and technology curriculum in English schools:

- (i) Graphics / graphic products, its delivery and its current position within the design and technology curriculum
- (ii) Food Technology and the trend to deliver a catering focussed curriculum

During professional discourse evidence has come to light which may potentially challenge the security of graphic products as a subject which is currently located within design and technology. Findings by the authors note the relocation of graphics into art and the appointment of art trained staff to deliver the area within the art department. Furthermore the authors also make note of a significant 'shift' in many secondary schools in relation to the teaching of food technology, which at Key Stage 4 in particular, a considerable number of secondary schools is being replaced by the delivery of catering, from discourse with a small number of staff this appears to be as a result of pressure to achieve better examination results rather than the delivery of a quality curriculum.

These 'local' findings are further supported by evidence gathered via the analysis of published content. It appears to the authors that whilst limited there is initial evidence to support that the curriculum is being designed

Potential Areas of Future Study

The findings presented here are designed to create a focus for discussion and debate and it is hoped that potential further collaborative work will explore and report upon this phenomenon. It is accepted that these are early findings, conceived from discourse relating to a small sample. The authors also note that these observations are against a backdrop of exceptional circumstance and changes currently taking place within the UK educational system, and as such may not be considered to be the 'norm'.

However it is argued that the consequences of the 'actions' of which the preliminary findings are presented here, unless challenged may have far reaching consequences for the future of design and technology its individual constituent subject areas.

“can I just say that i think it is great that you are all doing catering - it is soooooo much better than food tech.”

Content taken from the TES Design and Technology Online Forum,
Date Accessed: 14th May 2011

