

# ***Review of School Based Assessment (ROSBA): Discussion Papers*** Queensland. Board of Secondary School Studies, 1986-1988

## **Overview of the document**

A series of 21 papers developed between 1985 and 1987 examining issues underlying criteria- and school-based assessment.

## **Keywords**

Assessment; Radford; standards-based assessment; formative assessment; summative assessment; comparability; curriculum; reporting.

## **List of Discussion Papers**

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## **Summary of Contents**

### **DISCUSSION PAPER 1: ROSBA'S FAMILY CONNECTIONS (5 pages)**

- *Abstract:* "The Radford scheme belonged to a family of procedures known technically as "norm-referenced" assessment. The current system, called ROSBA, focuses on criteria and standards and belongs to the "criterion-referenced" family. In this Paper, something of the similarities and differences between these two families are outlined. It is also shown how ROSBA differs from the criterion-referenced testing movement in the U.S.A."
- The paper is organised under the following headings:
  - Norm-referenced assessment
  - Criterion-referenced assessment
  - Criteria and standards distinguished
  - Standards-based assessment and Radford

- Standards-based assessment and the criterion-referenced testing movement.

#### **DISCUSSION PAPER 2: THE CASE FOR EXPLICITLY STATED STANDARDS (3 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “Nine reasons for making criteria and standards explicit are outlined in this paper. The first six set out general benefits of being specific; the final three make a case for having explicit statements incorporated into syllabus documents.”

#### **DISCUSSION PAPER 3: A STANDARDS SCHEMA (5 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “This paper presents a model for pegging standards along different criteria or performance dimensions relevant to a particular subject area. The model stands in contrast with mastery – learning forms of criterion-referenced assessment. It shows also how standards can be combined for the award of exit Levels of Achievement.”
- Written by Marilyn McMeniman, January 1986.

#### **DISCUSSION PAPER 4: DEFINING ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS (6 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “Statements of the five achievement levels (VLA, LA, SA, HA, VHA) constitute an important element of school Work Programs under ROSBA. In this Paper, some of the things to avoid in writing good achievement level statements are outlined. The treatment is necessarily general, but the broad principles are applicable to all subjects in the curriculum.”

#### **DISCUSSION PAPER 5: SUBJECTIVITY, OBJECTIVITY, AND TEACHERS’ QUALITATIVE JUDGMENTS (7 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “Qualitative judgments play an essential role in the assessment of student achievements in all subjects. This Discussion Paper contains a definition of qualitative judgments, a discussion of the meanings of subjectivity and objectivity, and a statement of certain conditions that must be satisfied if qualitative judgments are to enjoy a high level of credibility.”

#### **DISCUSSION PAPER 6: FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT- A COMPLEMENTARY APPROACH (4 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “This paper attempts to describe where formative and summative assessment might most efficiently be applied under ROSBA. It touches also on one of the major concerns of ROSBA, that summative assessment of students should not rely solely or even principally on one-shot examinations. In support of this concern, a rationale is presented for a series of student performances being used as the basis for judging whether summative assessments accurately reflect the real capabilities of students.”
- Written by Marilyn McMeniman, January 1986.

#### **DISCUSSION PAPER 7: MATHEMATICS CRITERIA FOR AWARDED EXIT LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT (12 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “This paper is about the criteria for judging student performance in mathematics at exit. The particular mathematics course considered is the current Senior Mathematics, although much of the paper has relevance for Mathematics in Society, and for Junior Mathematics. The first part of the paper considers some problems associated with current assessment practices, in terms of the syllabus and school translations of it. Then some contributions from different sources to the search

for criteria are discussed. In the third section criteria are defined, and along with standards, organised as a possible model for awarding exit Levels of Achievement. The final section of the paper contains a discussion of the model and some possible implications. The model itself is included as a separate appendix.”

- Written by Janice Findlay, January 1986.

#### **DISCUSSION PAPER 8: DEVELOPING AN ASSESSMENT POLICY WITHIN A SCHOOL (8 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “This discussion Paper contains a number of guidelines of potential interest to teachers and school administrators who wish to develop an internal school policy on assessment. The five principles outlined relate to the quantity and type of information required, the structure of subject in the curriculum, and the needs of students and parents for feedback. The Paper concludes with suggestions for two quite different ways of responding to a desire for reform.”
- The five principles are:
  1. Information Need
  2. Triangulation
  3. Subject Structure
  4. Pedagogical Needs
  5. Reporting.

#### **DISCUSSION PAPER 9: GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR ORGANISING CRITERIA (6 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “Criteria are, by definition, fundamental to a criteria-based assessment. This Paper outlines a conceptual framework for organising criteria, using a particular subject as an example. It also shows how student achievement can be recorded using criteria.”

#### **DISCUSSION PAPER 10: AFFECTIVE OBJECTIVES UNDER ROSBA (5 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “Affective objectives have to do with interests, attitudes, and values, and constitute an important aspect of education. They have implications for teaching, learning, the curriculum, and the organisation of schooling. Whether they should be assessed, either at all or in specified areas, is an issue worthy of some discussion. In this Paper, it is argued that affective responses should not be incorporated into assessments of achievement.”

#### **DISCUSSION PAPER 11: AFFECTIVE OBJECTIVES UNDER ROSBA (5 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “School-based assessment in Queensland means that teachers have responsibility for constructing and administering assessment instruments, and for appraising student work. But because certificates are issued from a central authority, the assessments must be comparable from school to school. In addition to being school-based, the ROSBA system is criteria-based as well. It is argued in this Paper that using uniform criteria and standards across the state allows for variety of approach in assessment and helps to achieve comparability without destroying the autonomy of the school.”

#### **DISCUSSION PAPER 12: DEFINING AND ACHIEVING COMPARABILITY OF ASSESSMENTS (7 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “Four interpretations of comparability are identified and discussed in this Paper: comparability among subjects, students, classes, and schools. The last of these,

comparability among schools in each subject, is a crucial concern in a school-based assessment system in which certificates are issued by a central authority. Only when the Levels of Achievement have consistent meaning across the state can public confidence in the certificate be maintained. It is argued here that achievement of comparability is fully compatible with the concept of teachers as professionals, and with accountability of the profession to the public at large.”

**DISCUSSION PAPER 13: TOWARDS A WORKING MODEL FOR CRITERIA AND STANDARDS UNDER ROSBA (7 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “This paper is concerned with clarifying the use under ROSBA of the terms ‘criterion’ and ‘criteria’ and with arguing the case for specifying standards within this nomenclature. A model is then presented of how criteria and standards might ideally operate under ROSBA.”
- Written by Marilyn McMeniman, January 1987.

**DISCUSSION PAPER 14: CRITERIA AND STANDARDS IN SENIOR HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (10 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “This paper is concerned with the assessment of students’ global achievements in Senior Health and Physical Education. It examines the notion of global achievement in the subject and suggests the criteria and standards by which the quality of student performance can be judged. It also suggests specifications for awarding exit Levels of Achievement which reference the standards schema.”

**DISCUSSION PAPER 15: IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE THROUGH ASSESSMENT (5 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “Two basic assessment mechanisms through which the quality of student performances can be improved are feedback and information supplied about task expectations prior to performance. In this paper the complementary nature of these two mechanisms is examined, while feedback is analysed to indicate the value of certain forms of feedback over others. The paper complements and further develops some ideas concerned with formative and summative assessment presented in an earlier Discussion Paper.”

**DISCUSSION PAPER 16: A PATHWAY OF TEACHER JUDGMENTS: FROM SYLLABUS TO LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT (6 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “This paper traces the decision-making process of teachers which allows information about student achievement within a course of study to be profiled over time. It attempts to place in perspective the different levels of decision-making and identifies the accountability of such judgments within the accreditation and certification process.”

**DISCUSSION PAPER 17: ASSESSMENT OF LABORATORY PERFORMANCE IN SCIENCE CLASSROOMS (7 pages)**

- *Abstract:* “Laboratory activity in high school science classrooms serves a variety of purposes including psychomotor skill development and concept introduction and amplification. However it does not by itself provide sufficient experience that the learning outcomes are direct in the case of concept development, or of a high order in the case of psychomotor skill. This paper sets out a schema of global outcomes which

might provide a more realistic framework for decisions about students' laboratory performance at the end of a course of study. The use of the schema within the total course of study to award an exit Level of Achievement is also discussed."

**DISCUSSION PAPER 18: PROFILE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (7 pages)**

- *Abstract:* "The record of student performance over a course of study provides a summary of information from which ultimately a judgment is made by a teacher on an appropriate exit Level of Achievement. This summary, determined from and including qualitative and/or quantitative statements of performance, captures sufficient information to indicate standards of achievement. The judgements of standards attained are referenced initially to interim criteria at the end of semester, and finally to global criteria at the completion of a course of study. The design characteristics of a format to profile records of student performance are discussed."

**DISCUSSION PAPER 19: PRINCIPLES FOR DETERMINING EXIT ASSESSMENT (6 pages)**

- *Abstract:* "Six key principles underpin exit assessment. They are continuous assessment, balance, mandatory aspects of the syllabus and significant aspects of the course of study, selective updating, and fullest and latest information. These principles are explained in some detail and related to courses of study."
- Written by Jan Findlay, March 1987.

**DISCUSSION PAPER 20: ISSUES IN REPORTING ASSESSMENT (4 pages)**

- *Abstract:* "This paper is about some of the issues associated with reporting in schools. Provided are a number of suggestions which may form partial solutions to problems which arise."
- Written by Jan Findlay, March 1987.

**DISCUSSION PAPER 21: THE PLACE OF NUMERICAL MARKS IN CRITERIA-BASED ASSESSMENT (6 pages)**

- *Abstract:* "Numerical marks form the currency for almost all assessments of student achievement in schools, and the use of them is rarely if ever challenged. In this paper, a number of assumptions underlying the use of marks are identified, and the appropriateness of marks in criteria-based assessment is examined. The conclusion is drawn that continued use of marks is more likely to hinder than to facilitate the practice of judging students achievements against fixed criteria and standards."