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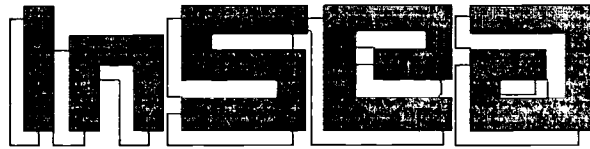
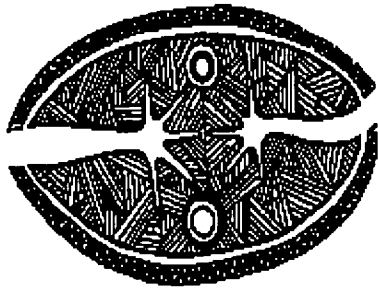
ED 455 146

SO 031 941

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TITLE Enabling or Constraining: Standards Based Assessment in Art Education in New Zealand.
INSTITUTION Australian Inst. of Art Education, Melbourne.
PUB DATE 1999-09-00
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual World Congress of the International Society for Education through Art (InSEA) (30th, Brisbane, Australia, September 21-26, 1999). This paper has been assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australian Council for the Arts, its art funding and advisory body.
AVAILABLE FROM Australian Institute of Art Education, C/Suite 125, 283 Glenhuntley Road, Eisternwick, VIC 3185, Australia.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Art Education; Educational Change; *Evaluation Criteria; *Evaluation Methods; Foreign Countries; High Schools; *National Standards; *Student Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS *Artistic Evaluation; Educational Issues; *New Zealand

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate the New Zealand assessment and qualifications reforms at the senior secondary school level within the political contexts of educational reform of the 1990s and the resulting effect for assessment in art education. These reforms involved a swing to an outcomes based model of assessment and the resulting qualifications were structured into a series of levels, described as "The Framework" (Ministry of Education, 1994). The development of The Framework and standards based assessment systems in New Zealand gave rise to a dramatic polarization of views that occurred between various educational groups and exposed a basic conflict of interest as to how assessment should be managed and how inclusive it should be. Standards based assessment is defined as that which measures the performance of a learner against set standards of achievement or competence; unit standards are descriptive statements of what an individual should know and be able to do. A table shows comparisons of art assessment at the senior secondary level (15-18 years old) under both traditional and standards based assessments. Contains a 21-item bibliography. (BT)



“Enabling or Constraining: Standards Based Assessment in Art Education in New Zealand”

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**Proceedings from the
InSEA 30th World Congress
“Cultures and Transitions”**

**21-26 September 1999
Brisbane Australia**

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**This project has been assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the
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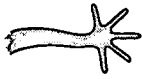
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ENABLING OR CONSTRAINING: STANDARDS BASED ASSESSMENT IN ART EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND

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The framework had the potential of inducing a major revolution, in which access to learning and certification becomes democratised as never before. (Capper in Peddie & Tuck 1995:43)

This paper aims to investigate the New Zealand assessment and qualifications reforms, at senior secondary school level, within the political contexts of educational reform of the 1990's and the resulting effect for assessment in art education. These reforms involved a swing to an outcomes based model of assessment and the resulting qualifications were structured into a series of levels, described as " The Framework" (Ministry of Education, 1994). The development of the Framework and standards based assessment systems in New Zealand gave rise to a dramatic polarisation of views that occurred between various educational groups and exposed a basic conflict of interest as to as to how assessment should be managed and how inclusive it should be (Codd in Peddie &Tuck, 1995). Standards based assessment is defined as that which measures the performance of a learner against set standards of achievement or competence. Unit Standards are descriptive statements of what an individual should know and be able to do. The senior secondary level in New Zealand generally covers students aged 15 to 18 years of age.

During the 1980's New Zealand began to explore alternative forms of assessment, including criteria based methods which used grades related to criteria, rather than the traditional methods of awarding percentage marks. A decade later, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority was established and charged with developing a framework of national qualifications in secondary and post secondary education and training based on:

- a single, seamless structure of programmes from schools to tertiary institutions
- blurring of distinction between the traditional divide of academic and vocational learning
- flexibility and removal of time constraints in beginning and achieving qualifications
- recognition of prior learning
- outcomes based assessment which resulted in units of learning (unit standards)
- teacher professionalism and autonomy to determine process and content
- teacher autonomy in making assessment judgements
- quality control with schools being registered as providers and teachers programmes moderated

This move to standards based assessment was a decisive move from a norm reference base in New Zealand. In opting for standards based assessment, New Zealand was falling into line with a number of other countries. Tuck in Roberts (1997:167) draws attention to the revival of competency and criterion referenced assessment in a number of Western countries, including Australia (via the Department of Employment, Education and Training), Scotland (Scottish Vocational Educational Council) and the United Kingdom (National Council for Vocational Qualifications). The direction of these reforms were set within New Zealand government policies of economic restructuring based around free market principles and can be seen in the following government statement:

Investment in developing skills and knowledge - whether by individuals, firms or the Government - is therefore critical. Students and employers need a way of measuring the skills and knowledge that their investment has achievedqualifications need to match employers' and labour markets requirements as closely as possible, and be accessible to the widest range of students.increasingly, they also need to reflect internationally valued skills and knowledge, recognising that we operate in a global economy and marketplace (Ministry of Education:1997)

The influence of Government in assessment reform is acknowledged by Peddie (1998:463) and he describes the emergence of conflicting directions within the reforms as "the Qualifications Authority's dream" as opposed to the "governments agenda". He argues that while a primary goal of the reforms was in line with Government wishes, and moves in many overseas countries to move to a standards based model, the Authority did see that

a standards based approach could enable more students to experience success in assessment. A basic was that students would not fail but would have further opportunities to reach the standard required and be awarded credit which was in direct opposition to the traditional "one shot" examination.



The Qualifications Authority wanted to shift teachers thinking from process to outcome, from norms to standards, and from passing and failing to competence and mastery. This view also reflected the position of teacher organisations like the PPTA, who had argued against the notion of a one - shot, norm referenced examination system since the 1960's. (Peddie,1998:465)

However, the Governments "agenda" established a link between outcomes based assessment and moves to increased accountability requirements of the state. Peddie(1998:466) makes the point that from the beginning there was a tension between Government and senior officers in the Authority and that "while some appeared at times to accept the notion of inevitability of their role in furthering the governments economic purposes, they also strongly believed that a better education system would result". Assessment is a contested area and as well as the Government and the Qualifications Authority, there were other stakeholders including private and state schools, the teacher union, employers, parents, and students involved. All parties had much at stake and their interests and needs conflicted. The influence and power of assessment and qualifications in learning is an area that is often underestimated in education. Phil Capper, Past President of the Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA) describes this as:

Educational qualifications are not just a formal system for the recognition of competence. They are more importantly a currency, possession of which bestows social status and wealth. The New Zealand Qualifications Framework is a fundamentally new way of doing this; and the tensions associated with its introduction are more about the profound changes in the allocation of power and status than they are to do with technical problems. (Capper in Hood,1997:106)

The Post Primary Teachers Union had long been critical of the role of current traditional gatekeeping assessments and examinations and the scaling methods used to limit the numbers of students allowed to pass. Dr Richard Benton, of the Council for Educational Research presented a paper at a PPTA conference arguing

the victims of this system are the disadvantaged - the 60% of Maori Children and the 25% of other New Zealanders who leave school each year with no qualifications.we should be working for an assessment system which is fair, just and emphasises success. (Benton1987:5)

Benton draws attention to the traditional New Zealand assessment system which uses a system of norm referencing to rank students and scale their marks. Other critics of this system, calling it "elitist and undemocratic" are Hughes and Lauder, (1990). However there are also those who defend the system as a means of ensuring a high standard of excellence and rigour. These include Elley(1995), Irwin(1995)and Codd(1995)who continue to acknowledge the worth of norm referencing and the need for validity and reliability to support the notion of excellence and competition. Elley(1996) underlines the basic tension between the government "agenda" and the reformists "dream" as the conflict between high stakes, gatekeeping purposes, and a philosophy which supports individual student growth in learning.

Within this context of assessment reform, many of the changes of position and direction are reflected in shifts in art education assessment methods. These shifts, in assessment methods for art, from old to new can be seen in the following table which compares traditional forms of art assessment with the new standards based approach.

Table 1: Comparisons of art assessment at senior secondary level

TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT			STANDARDS BASED ASSESSMENT	
School age	Qualification	Assessment method	Qualifications	Assessment Methods
15-16 years	School Certificate Art (National Award)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Folio & workbook Internal assessment by teacher Unscaled since 1987 mean 54/55 - Ranked % marks Externally moderated (<i>teachers marks are changed</i>) 	Level 1 unit standards in 2D, 3D & Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards based Internally assessed External moderation (<i>teachers assessment unchanged</i>) unscaled Reassessment
16-17 years	Sixth Form Certificate Art (National Award)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> folio, exhibition etc Grades awarded 1 to 8 Art not always receive top grades Marks scaled 	Level 2 unit standards in Painting, Print, Pho, Design & Sculpture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards based Internally assessed External moderation (<i>teachers assessment unchanged</i>) unscaled Reassessment
17-18 years	Bursary & Scholarship Ptg, Print Sculpture, Photography & Design (National Award)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Folio's externally examined Criteria are "very good, good, adequate, less than satisfactory, poor" Final marks as % Top 2-3% achieve scholarships Mean in mid 50's& Marks scaled 	Level 3 Unit standards Painting, Print, Pho, Design & Sculpture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards Internally assessed External moderation (<i>teachers assessment unchanged</i>) unscaled Reassessment

The comparative table above shows that New Zealand art assessment systems have traditionally focussed on summative, gatekeeping assessment practices, which take the form of national examinations. Although in an international scene, the place of assessment in art has been debated and at times the two have been seen as incompatible (Eisner, 1996) New Zealand art educators have long recognised the high stakes involved in assessment and art has been part of a traditional system, which has advantaged the subject and provided status and recognition. This has resulted in large numbers taking the subject at secondary school level and academic recognition of art qualifications for entry to universities and polytechnics. The methods of assessment for these art examinations at years 11, 12 and 13 are outlined in the table above and are largely characterised by students preparing folios of work. However in all of these examinations the results are norm referenced, using statistical methods to maintain careful control over the mean to ensure that approximately 50-55% of students pass while the rest fail. Boughton (1996:8) argues that grading and marks are "the reduction of complex judgements about the value of a students achievements into a single letter or numerical statement. The grade itself provides no clue as to the reason it was awarded."

In keeping with the Qualifications Authority "dream" the table shows what effect the reforms in assessment would lead to for art education. One intended advantage for students was the shift away from marks and grades to descriptions of performance outcomes intended to make assessment requirements more transparent and accessible for students. For each activity the teacher also writes an assessment schedule based on the standard which clearly sets out what the students need to do, and produce, in their studio work. The assessment schedule also contains judgement statements, which describe the quality and level of the student performance expected. An example of this is the difference between the simple and minimal criteria of "satisfactory" used at present for a competent year 13 performance, to descriptions of performance seen in the following part of a unit standard

Element 2 Use a Methodical approach to drawing study founded in established practice

2.1 Drawings record and order pictorial information for development

2.2 Drawings identify related pictorial options for development

2.3 Drawings show decisions made and steps taken in the study of subject matter and in the development of pictorial ideas (NZQA, 1997, Unit standard 9066)

The supporting NZQA Assessment Guide for teachers emphasises the need for students to be considered in the process, and "able to understand the criteria to be applied and to contribute to the planning and accumulation of evidence" (NZQA, 1998:10). Another major shift was that students would no longer be competing with each other in a nationally scaled and rank ordered exercise, but would be able to show more of their work in process and be judged against described and agreed on standards of performance. The judgements made to award achievement in a unit standard are based on a single level of competency as opposed to levels of marks and grades. Students also have on going opportunities to rework and produce more practical work in areas where they do not reach the standard, as opposed to summative, end of year folio presentation. Art teaching has some advantages within this process as we are used to formative assessment processes and seeing all the work that students do as evidence. Unlike many other subjects we do not rely on test situations. Gardener in Boughton et al (1996:24) emphasises the need to encourage "shifts that value direct observation of student performance". Once the system was fully in place, students would also have the flexibility to work up or down to levels of

achievement appropriate for them rather than being constrained by the age group examinations, which exist present. This flexibility would also enable students to achieve credits when they had achieved the standard rather than having to wait until end of year assessments.

For art teachers, other advantages would include more professional autonomy in designing courses and content as well as having control over assessment decisions which were not subject to scaling or adjustments through existing moderation systems. The Authority also resourced these new assessment systems with teacher professional development training days and a comprehensive assessment guide which contained exemplars of good planning practice, activities and assessment schedules. The manual also contained coloured photocopies and descriptions of work which met the standard and work which did not.

The support of the Post Primary Teacher Association to reform assessment and qualifications generally reflected teacher opinion. In particular, traditional art assessment had been a hot bed of controversy amongst art teachers with dissatisfaction at all senior levels since the early 1980's. While it is impossible to describe these concerns in any more detail within the context of this paper, art teacher criticism of senior examinations have centered around fluctuating preferences of external examining teams, so called "hidden agenda's" of examiners, regional mark shifts which seem to suddenly occur against regional trends, unexpected and poor performances of students which were inconsistent with teachers usually accurate predictions and an extreme dissatisfaction with the grade allocation to art students at form 6. Despite this dissatisfaction, art teachers were suspicious of the proposed reforms and reluctant to embrace the changes. Their opposition centred around the idea that there was a "government agenda" which embraced industry driven initiatives and they were not persuaded by the Authority's concept of a "dream" of forward thinking reforms. As a result the unit standards for practical art were among the last to be developed and involved a process that took near four years to complete. Part of this delay arose when the reforms were used to bargain politically by the PPTA union during 1996. An embargo was placed on further development and implementation of Unit Standards until a breakthrough was achieved with teachers pay claims. The art standards were finally published in early 1997.

In practical terms teachers also argued issues of workload, the potential lowering of standards due to a competency model rather than excellence, unnecessary bureaucracy and paperwork, difficulties of moderation between schools as well as resourcing and professional development needs. All of these issues were acknowledged by the PPTA in their Framework inquiry, *Te Tirou Hou*, of 1997. Shona Hearn, a past president of the teacher union acknowledged that teachers were feeling overwhelmed by the new demands and she claimed that "training, resources and time were critical to the successful implementation of any new assessment system" (Hearn in Peddie, 1998:469).

Eisner in Boughton et al (1996:10) questions whether standards based assessment "can allow for diversity of student responses or multiple solutions to artistic problems". The New Zealand standards do attempt to allow teachers the freedom to apply the standards to their own community contexts, areas of expertise and they are able to assert their own professionalism in making judgements. The standards intend that assessment encompasses an holistic approach to the students' work with the description, "a body of work" being used to describe the foundation for making judgements (NZQA, 1997). Teachers, however, in New Zealand did question whether the structure of unit standards in art would result in the atomisation and fragmentation of content. Tuck warns that standards instruments

could create a set of demands which teachers regard as arbitrary and constraining rather than reasonable and liberating and which have the unintended effect of deskilling the teacher. Under such a regime teachers will perceive that they have lost a degree of professional autonomy, in that their primary responsibility will be the delivery of a narrow and restrictive range of goods and services, the nature of which has been determined by others (Tuck, 1996:75).

Issues of ensuring consistency in applying the standards between schools was also an area challenged by teachers and the teacher union. As Boughton (1996) argues it is extremely difficult to clearly state standards in art education. This dilemma was recognised in New Zealand in 1995 at an Education Forum where it was stated that "in practice, the standard of achievement required for the award of credit will not be clear or explicit, as is often stated officially, but will be embedded in the moderation process" (Irwin, Elley, Hall, 1995:iii). To try and define outcomes and standards which are embedded in the experience and institutional memory of teachers is a very difficult task and in New Zealand this has resulted in a complex moderation system. This requires teachers to define outcomes and standards in detailed context and content by writing assessment activities and assessment schedules which are moderated against the Unit Standard outcomes by an appointed moderator before the unit can begin in the classroom. This is known as pre assessment verification. After the teacher has assessed the students work, particular samples are looked at by the moderator to verify the teachers judgement. It is significant in this process that the teachers judgements are not changed although if disagreements arise between schools and moderators there are systems to follow this up the following year. This part of the Framework structure, in particular, has become very time consuming, cumbersome and constraining for teachers.

An emerging issue within the reforms was the shift to competency based achievement rather than levels of merit & excellence. In the context of art assessment teachers were anxious that the high standards of performance achieved through the competitive and ranked examination systems would be diluted and result in mediocre performance and a lowering of standards overall. Critics of the Framework from the University sector and Private School system in New Zealand also argued that the reforms were an attack on academic values. However, the Authorities "dream" of creating a more democratic assessment system which would enable more students to achieve success and qualifications has resulted in a dilemma concerned with how "the value of qualifications tends to diminish as more students achieve them" (PPTA, 1996:6)

This is a central issue in the debate about assessment reform, which involves unpicking our attitudes to assessment and raises issues about the purposes and functions of assessment in education. This dilemma may also go some way to explain why the private schools in New Zealand were so strongly opposed to any moves to change the assessment structures from a ranked, norm referenced and exclusive system into one that is standards based. Statistics developed by Hughes and Lauder(1990) show that there is a relationship between socio economic background and examination success. They argue that the systems of privilege, which operate in capitalist societies, are supported by the examination systems. Tuck agrees with this relationship and explains

it would not be in societies interests if every pupil came out with identical profiles of achievement. The result of this underlying tension between those in education who wish to respond to the needs of individual learners and the demands on education to be involved in sorting and allocation is quite obvious: the espoused clean division between criterion referenced and norm referenced assessment is muddled (Tuck,1995:60)

Recent research by Fitzimmons (1997) into the effect that the Qualifications Framework has had in schools for teachers and students found that teachers in the study were slow to shift from a test and examination based culture to one based on described standards as seen in the following statements:

some teachers like it (unit standards) and some don't. The teachers who do, they just like to stick with the sixth form assessment so that people once they fail, teachers say oh well they failed. They should have worked harder - you know how some teachers think

and

It comes at a very bad time in terms of teaching. Pay is low, morale is not very good and they don't want to work hard at the moment. I think they secretly like examination system because it is simplistic and easy to deal with (Fitzsimmons, 1997:35)

This philosophical and educational debate about the nature of examinations, assessment and qualifications, polarised views on the reforms. Tension developed between State and private schools with the private schools maintaining a very conservative position. They preferred a traditional examination system in which they performed well. Many state schools however felt that the assessment and qualifications reforms served the needs of their students and opened up qualifications pathways that had not existed before. A state secondary school Principal who was interviewed commented that the move to standards based assessment " levelled the playing field" between high and low socio economic schools. He argued that the conservative position of the more elite schools was adopted by many single sex schools as well. This group were able to present this conservative position to the Minister of Education through their position of influence on the Secondary School Board of Studies and were also able to fund and commission the Education Forum and overseas writers to develop reports to discredit the reforms. Although the teachers union, the PPTA supported assessment reform they were faced with growing concerns about industrial issues of workload and pay scales for teachers. They commissioned a report on the reforms called Te Tirou Hou, and this coincided with the private schools lobby movement. Thus groups, that were historically opposed, appeared to be on the same side.

This confusion and polarisation of views highlights the difficulty the Qualifications Authority had in turning their "dream" into a reality, as David Hood, a previous Chief Executive of the Authority, describes in his book " Our Secondary Schools Don't Work Anymore". Codd, McAlpine and Poskitt in Roberts (1997:172) develop a description of the confusion as a tension between educational ("dreams") and political approaches ("government agenda") stating that the "former is tied to a greater professionalism in education whereas the latter is squarely grounded in the New Right discourse of accountability, managerialism and market forces."

What we haveis a kind of Janus-policy shaped by conflicting political imperatives. Some elements of policy clearly point towards summative forms of assessment that would increase accountability, improve standards and be used for school comparisons and national monitoring. This could be called the marketisation imperative. Other elements , however, point just as clearly towards formative or diagnostic forms of assessment that would improve the quality of teaching, guide the learning process, and cater for the needs of individual students..... (Codd et al, 1995:33-34)

The private schools presented a third, traditional, conservative position. Their continuing opposition, as well as the Universities, Business Round Table and the PPTA inquiry, finally lead to a stalemate with the reforms and a

public review of the Qualifications Framework in 1997. The outcome of this Government review has been a
to yet another new assessment initiative called Achievement 2001, which will retain and incorporate examinations
into a standards based system containing competency, merit and excellence levels of performance. Unit
Standards will continue to be used by schools at this stage although their long term future is not clear. In
November 1997, the statistics of schools and institutions that had become involved showed that "over a quarter
of a million learners were hooked on to the Framework, of whom 20 per cent were Maori. Over Four million
credits had been awarded and just over 7,000 national qualifications. There were 10, 638 registered unit
standards and 382 registered qualifications".(Peddie,1997:467).

However within this wider context, art teachers have been slow to pick up Practical Art unit standards. According
to Bronwyn Taylor, the National Moderator:

the biggest problems seem to have been workload and a reticence on the part of teachers to work at defining what
is required for assessment. They see the Framework as cumbersome and are critical of the number and complexity
of forms to be used in the system. (Taylor,1998)

Taylor also refers to time constraints for teachers working with students on folio production for conventional
assessment and the extreme difficulties that rural and sole charge teachers' face with assessment requirements.
It seems that written activities and schedules are not tasks that art teachers have taken too readily and many of
them " prefer the freedom to change direction according to perceived need and have become accustomed to
helping students identify and meet their own goals for achievement" (Taylor, 1998:6).

These comments show that standards based assessment has not been embraced widely by art teachers despite
dissatisfaction with many aspects of the current systems at the senior level. Overall, teachers mindsets seem
slow to shift from a norm referenced examination system to one that could potentially open up more flexibility and
opportunities for students. The Authority's "dream" that Standards systems will make assessment, clearer, fairer,
more structured and transparent for learners has not been taken on board and further investigation would be
needed to determine if this is predominantly a workload issue or one of philosophy. Issues of excellence have
certainly been an issue and art teachers in New Zealand are proud of the achievement of students at the top end
of the performance scale. However we must not lose sight of the other 90 per cent of students who compete for
the remaining ranked positions and which at present means that only half of them will have positive learning
experiences and succeed.

During this period of assessment reform some of the high stakes issues and opposing interests of groups have
emerged. Tensions, confusion and problems however, will remain as long as the focus of assessment is geared
towards sorting students. Have we lost an opportunity to make assessment more democratic and accessible or
have teachers narrowly escaped from a bureaucratic, unwieldy and constraining system? Has the "dream" that
the Qualifications Authority envisioned been, not only subverted by conflicting Government policies, but also
subverted by other "agendas" of those who have their own narrow interests at stake rather than working together
towards a fairer national assessment and qualifications system for our students.

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