



### **Resource Review**

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<b>Name of reviewed item:</b>	The Problem of Assessment in Art and Design
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### **Review:**

I was eager to review this book as it relates directly to some work I am currently undertaking within the School relating to the assessment of students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels across all programmes; which will lead to recommendations for School assessment and feedback practices. I was hoping for a review of assessment in Higher Education, the current issues and controversies, a philosophical discussion around the whole area of assessment and some practical hints on improvements to both assessment and feedback practices.

I was a little disappointed to discover that the book's focus is on compulsory and post-compulsory education, but not including Higher Education. Chapters one to five give an historical overview of art and design education, focusing on assessment throughout the main phases of primary, secondary and further education and chapter six discusses portfolio development in art education. It was not until chapter seven onwards that the philosophical issues raised had particular resonance for assessment in Higher Education. On the surface, therefore, it did appear to be a book aimed at those studying to become art educators working within nationally defined qualification systems. It did, however, provide an excellent overview of assessment practices that students encounter prior to entering an HEI, and therefore would be of use to anyone who works with first year students, to gain a better understanding of their prior assessment experiences and therefore expectations.

This is an edited book and the chapters have been primarily assembled from previously published papers in the *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, between 1999 and 2006. There are notes on the contributors, although Dennis Atkinson has been overlooked.

In chapter 1, Rachel Mason and John Steers give an overview of the development of the GCSE in Art and Design and the relationship between classroom practice and assessment criteria/practice and the modular approach to these qualifications, particularly the GCE A/AS level examination (which is discussed in more detail in chapter 4). The second part of the chapter presents and discusses research and its effect on policy in art and design assessment and suggests areas for further research, focusing on the relationship between teaching and assessment.

In the following four chapters the remaining areas of art and design education are explored in terms of their historical development and their current status in terms of teaching and assessment. Gill Hopper in chapter 2 examines primary education, Hardy in chapter 4 discusses the AS level Art and Willerton in chapter 5 provides an overview of vocational qualifications in art and design. Rayment and Britton in chapter 3 report on some research they undertook with 11-18 year olds investigating the relationship between the Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT) and GCSE Art marks. They found an association between the measure of attainment in GCSE Art and the CAT scores, which was to be expected.

All chapters are written in a lively and engaging manner, giving an indication of the 'political' debates in their area and leaving the reader in no doubt as to the views of the author. Having studied education I could personally relate to these debates and had a lot of sympathy with their views and obvious frustrations with the system. Much of the information was not new to me, but it would provide a good overview of the development of educational thinking leading to the current education system in art and design for those colleagues who have limited knowledge and/or experience of the current educational system. Throughout seminal works have been cited and the main government reports into art and design education have been referenced. For each chapter there is a comprehensive notes and reference section so all works can be easily followed up.

Cho in chapter 6 reports on the use of portfolios as an assessment tool in teacher education in California. This is the oldest article in the book, dating from a paper published in 1999 and although useful to those involved in art and design teacher education, did not take account of the extensive amount of work that has been undertaken in this area subsequently. This chapter felt a little 'out of place' as all other chapters are discussing assessment in art and design, not assessment in teaching art and design. I would prefer to have seen a chapter on assessment of art and design in Higher Education here, then the whole of the educational spectrum would have been covered giving the book a wider audience.

The final three chapters are broader and more philosophical in their treatment of assessment in art and design and the discussions can be directly related to some of the issues in higher education. In chapter 7, Hickman takes us back to basics, questioning the role and purpose of assessment drawing out the relevant issues and discussing them in relation to schools. Cunliffe in chapter 8 discusses the effect of the current assessment procedures on meta-cognition, particularly enabling students, through assessment, to take responsibility for their own learning and assessing that learning, thereby giving agency for the learning to the student rather than the teacher. He argues that the current methods of assessment are not enabling students to learn how to regulate their own learning, but that they are teacher regulated as opposed to those that aim to develop self-regulated learning. This has particular resonance to one of the aims of higher education, to produce independent lifelong learners. The final chapter by Atkinson discusses assessment as a discursive practice, that can be considered as an apparatus of visibility and surveillance, making visible both student's and teacher's pedagogized identities and

thereby marginalising some students. He also discusses the words used in assessment criteria, particularly the words *accurately* and *accuracy*.

Throughout the book the relationship between learning and assessment is explored and at the end of most of the chapters recommendations are given for further work, research or changes to the curriculum.