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29/4/13

To the Education and Innovation Committee
Queensland Parliament

Re Inquiry into assessment methods in maths, chemistry and physics

As your inquiry is about how school subjects are assessed, you may be interested in a few comments from an ex school student. I completed year 12 in 2010, and am now in my third year at university. For my QCE I studied six authority subjects, including a maths and a science.

My school subjects were all marked using the standards in the syllabus. That made perfect sense. With the descriptors from the syllabus on my tests and assignments I could see why I was given certain grades. I could see what standard I had reached, and what I needed to do to progress to a higher grade. A simple numerical grade does not give this kind of support or explanation. It also doesn't tell me how the teacher made the judgment, or whether the marks gained were for recall of content, or for higher order thinking.

How work is assessed is explained in school. We have a number of tests and assignments, for which we receive a grade in each criterion. At the end of the course the results we have in the different criteria (i.e. As, Bs, Cs, etc.) determine what overall level of achievement we receive. That has always been clear. It is also stated in the syllabus, which any member of the public can download from the QSA website.

You seem to be making a big fuss over a few maths and science subjects. What makes them so special, or problematic? All other subjects at senior level are assessed in the same way, using criteria and standards in syllabuses. I don't hear massive uprisings from people concerned with these subjects. Are you not getting the issues a bit out of proportion?

I notice that you are having a forum of "academic experts". My question is: what would academics know about what happens in schools, or better still, what should happen in schools? If your academics are not in the field of education, chances are their only expertise is in their own subjects, and what they think of the results of first year students. If they don't like students' knowledge or results, they should change the entry requirements to their courses.

Yours faithfully



Kristan Ford

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