

## บทวิจารณ์หนังสือ

### **Mastering Assessment: A Self-Service System for Educators (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)**

**By W. James Popham.**

Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon, 2012

บทวิจารณ์โดย ชญาตา วิริยะ

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The author, W. James Popham, is an expert in the field of educational testing. He has taught at the University of California, Los Angeles, for 30 years. Besides teaching, he wrote more than 30 books, 200 journal articles, 50 research reports, and 175 papers. Some examples of his most recent books are *Mastering Assessment: A Self-Service System for Educators*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (2012), *Classroom Assessment: What Teachers Need to Know*, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. (2010) and *Unlearned Lessons* (2009).

This new edition of *Mastering Assessment: A Self-Service System for Educators* is organized in a box set of fifteen booklets. Each booklet is approximately 25-30 pages long and each has the same pattern; front and back cover, author's preface, anticipated understandings column, illustration, charts, cartoons, word bubbles, recap and wrap-up, glossary terms, and references. This makes it easy to read and follow.

The booklets are *Appropriate and inappropriate tests for evaluating schools*, *Assessing students' affect*, *Assessing students with disabilities*, *Assessment Bias: How to banish it*, *Classroom evidence of successful teaching*, *College entrance examinations: The SAT and the ACT*, *Constructed-Response tests: Building and bettering*, *How testing can help teaching* *Interpreting the results of large-scale assessments*, *Portfolio assessment and performance testing* *Reliability: What is it and is it necessary?*, *Selected-Response tests: Building and bettering* *The role of rubrics in testing and teaching*, and *Test preparation: Sensible or sordid? And Validity: Assessment's cornerstone*.

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After reading through the box set of fifteen booklets, my first impression of this publication is how creative it is. First, this book surprises the readers with its format of a box with fifteen booklets inside. The booklets are arranged by topics, which make them easier to read and follow. By arranging topics in this way, firstly, it avoids the boredom of having to read through a thick textbook. Secondly, it helps the readers to really understand the content in the books because of the small wrap-up column which is provided in each booklet. It seems as if he did not just write the book for himself, but really took considerable trouble to help readers to understand it. Moreover, due to the fact that he used to be a public school teacher, he used examples of his own experiences throughout the book to give teachers the feel of how things can work in an actual classroom. There is one statement that fits this situation and explains why his book is really so appealing, which is, “when the nation has the same standing point, the nation will rise”. This is what I think Popham is trying to do. He is trying to show that he is in the same position as his readers. I don’t think many authors are capable of doing this. As for his text style, he wrote the book in a conversational style. This is the highlight of the book, because it not only makes you feel like you are close to the author, but it makes you feel like you are in a coffee shop with him discussing current assessment issues. Furthermore, the texts are part of a System for Educators, so educators at all levels will probably find something useful. However, like everything in life, if there is white, there is black.

I assume that the main target for these booklets is the US market. Many of the examples are used specifically for the US so they cannot be generalized to anywhere else. For instance, the first series of booklets; *appropriate and inappropriate tests for evaluating schools*, is specifically related to elementary and secondary education in the US rather than to other contexts. For example, it can be seen from one of the columns of *The Arrival of ESEA* (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) and *College Entrance Examination: The SAT and the ACT*, whose focus is not relevant to any other areas than the USA. The same problem arises in the booklets on *how testing can help teaching*, *selected-response test: building and bettering and test preparation: sensible or sordid?* The examples used refer to typical situations in the US.

It is not only the content that specifically focuses on the situation in the USA, but the language as well. Popham’s language is quite informal and difficult because the author uses a lot of jargon, slang, idioms and colloquial language. I would assume that native or native-like readers would find this book easier to read. Although Popham intends to write this book in the form of a colleague-to-colleague conversation, I believe that readers of these books do not have the same background of assessment as the author even though they are all teachers. Moreover, from my point

of view, language does not only reflect a specific culture, but also a specific culture is reflected in the language. Therefore, some of the cartoons in the book are not necessary and some others may confuse the reader about the author's message.

Even though Popham's book covers all of the significant issues in assessment including all technical issues, I found that I could not find much on rubrics and grading nor examples of assessing assignments. The book is, of course, direct and to the point. However, I personally think that it would be more effective if there were more assignments and rubrics provided. The content mainly covers general issues of assessment. Throughout the booklets, Popham uses his own experiences and his current situation, which make it even harder for one to generalize and to understand if one is not at the same level as the author.

Some flaws aside, this book is a compelling read. After reading this box set of booklets, readers will be ready to further reflect on today assessment issues as these booklets provide recommendations for future research topics and discussions at the back. I recommend readers read *Mastering Assessment: A Self-Service System For Educators* as a set, not as separate items. I am certain that teachers and educators in the area of teaching will find this book useful. Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to W. James Popham for shedding so much light on the field of assessment.

