

# **General Background on the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation<sup>1</sup>**

**James R. Sanders**  
**Western Michigan University**

The Joint Committee was created out of a task force that was appointed in 1974 when the APA, AERA, and NCME test standards were undergoing revision. There was a proposal in that revision process to include a section on the use of tests in program evaluation, and the task force was created to look at how that might be added to the test standards. The recommendation from that task force was that program evaluation is a lot bigger than just the use of tests. If we are to develop standards for program evaluation, we ought to be looking at a wider set of issues than just testing issues. Out of that recommendation came an appointment of a new committee from APA, AERA, and NCME to investigate the development of standards for evaluations. The first meeting of that new committee was in 1975. They elected Dr. Daniel Stufflebeam, who was one of three representatives of NCME, to chair that meeting. It was an illustrious group; I can remember Dr. Donald Campbell was representing APA and Dr. Egon Guba was representing AERA.

At the meeting there were three representatives from each of the three organizations. They decided then that there was a group of people in program evaluation who were not represented, and these were the people who use program evaluation in education settings. They are participants in the evaluation process and should have as much a say in standards as the groups represented there. So they voted to enlarge the committee from the three organizations to a group of 18 organizations. They had nine people already on the committee from three organizations, so they added nine more people to balance the technical perspective with other perspectives. A list of organizations was identified and invited to join this committee, and that was the beginning of the Joint Committee.

In 1981 the Joint Committee published standards for evaluations of educational programs, projects, and materials. They purposely stayed away from personnel evaluation and institutional evaluation because the area of personnel evaluation was just too controversial for the committee to handle, and they thought they needed to undertake a manageable task first before diving into controversial issues. With institutional evaluation they thought new standards would be redundant with what accrediting bodies were already doing.

In 1981 when the first standards were published, the Joint Committee decided that if the standards were to be kept current and maintained over the years, a continuing group was needed to monitor the use of standards, new issues, the need for revision, and to provide other support. Consequently, they voted to incorporate as a nonprofit organization that would be a continuing standard-maintaining and standard-setting group, modeled after CPA standards for accounting, where they have a similar independent body that monitors similar CPA standards.

The Joint Committee incorporated as a 501(c)(3) tax status organization, and developed By-Laws and Principles, to govern the organization. After that, they did decide to take on the task of looking at teacher evaluation and administrator evaluation in education and were able to

---

<sup>1</sup> Presentation at an invited symposium, "The Development of Standards for Evaluations of Students," at the 1999 Annual Meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education, Montreal, Canada, April 20, 1999.

secure funding from private foundations to support that work. In 1988 they published *The Personnel Evaluation Standards*.

In 1989, at the invitation of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the Joint Committee applied to become an accredited committee that would submit its standards for approval through ANSI. Such standards become American National Standards if they are approved by ANSI, and follow the Joint Committee Operating Procedures. This 1989 application to become an ANSI accredited organization was approved by ANSI and by the Joint Committee. As an accredited body, the Joint Committee submits its standards to ANSI for approval, and, if approved, they become American National Standards in international cooperation for standard setting as well as here in the U.S.

In 1988 the Joint Committee was looking at new directions in which it should be moving, i.e., issues that were on the forefront of evaluation and areas that needed standards. One discussion was that the Joint Committee ought to be thinking about revisions of the 1981 program evaluation standards, because of new methodological developments, such as qualitative evaluation methods and stakeholder involvement in evaluation. Another discussion was that the Joint Committee ought to be looking at evaluation of evaluations of student performance and student needs because there were a lot of issues that go beyond testing that ought to be addressed. Between 1988 and 1991 there were several position papers written to address these two potential projects, and the Joint Committee received foundation funding to support the revision of the Program Evaluation Standards. That funding set the direction of the Joint Committee through 1994 when they were published and submitted to ANSI as the first set of standards approved through their approval process. The Program Evaluation Standards became the first American National Standards that were published by the Joint Committee.

In 1995 the Joint Committee revisited the need for standards for student evaluations, and unanimously decided that it was still a pressing need. Funding was obtained in 1997 to undertake the development of this third set of standards that would complement the already published Program and Personnel Evaluation Standards.

The Joint Committee is the only professional forum in education that brings diverse perspectives to the table to discuss the practice of evaluation in education. It sets standards for those who design, commission, conduct, and use evaluation. It has given us a common language and conceptual framework to guide our evaluations and discussions about evaluation. It has helped us to improve the utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy of educational evaluation.

## References

Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1981). *Standards for evaluations of educational programs, projects, and materials*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1988). *The personnel evaluation standards*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994). *The program evaluation standards*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

*Special Issue of the Journal of Experimental Education* (Fall 1994). Volume 63, Number 1.