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Summary

National Education Standards – an Instrument for the Education System Efficiency Control, an Improvement of the Quality of Teaching or Standardisation of Personality Development?

Slavica Bašić
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb, Croatia
Department of Pedagogy

The paper starts by analysing the oxymoron *education standards*, an oxymoron devised to attract attention and focus it on a new type of standards, different from other pedagogical standards because they refer to the output and precisely determine the structure of that output at the national level (competence models, test tasks). The concept of education standards is analysed critically with a view to provoking a professional and pedagogical discussion on whether such a definition of goals in education will really create a new culture of teaching and learning or only direct the education system towards rationally planned entrepreneurship, make certain forms of technologically secure teaching absolute and impoverish students spiritually.

The aim of the paper is not to challenge the need to set (and control) education standards, but to reflect upon students' achievement standards (the output paradigm) as an economic and functionalist instrument for system efficiency control and emphasise the pedagogical point of view (yet unseen) in terms of standards of *conditions for learning in school*, *standards of pedagogical action*, *standards of general school conditions* or *standards of system conditions*. The dominant idea advocated by those standards is that the conditions and models of working and learning in schools should be meaningfully and systematically improved, which implies investing in material conditions in schools, in the quality of the learning experience, and in self training and self-organised learning, especially when it comes to educators (teachers and professors) as the main agents of all education system reforms and co-creators of a new teaching and learning culture.

Key words: education standards, standardisation of education, competence, quality of teaching, testing, criticism of education standards