

7-14-2000

The Evaluation of Education Systems: Insecurity Through Testing?

Editor

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp>

 Part of the [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), [Defense and Security Studies Commons](#), [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [Other Education Commons](#), and the [Other Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Editor (2000) "The Evaluation of Education Systems: Insecurity Through Testing?," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 2, Article 4.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol9/iss2/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Bulletin of Political Psychology by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact commons@erau.edu.

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: The Evaluation of Education Systems: Insecurity Through Testing?

Author: Editor

Volume: 9

Issue: 2

Date: 2000-07-14

Keywords: Education, Security

Abstract. This article describes some fallacies in a common approach to employing the testing of students in evaluating education systems.

One index of security for a nation-state and non-state political actors is to possess an appropriately educated base of members. Although there are schools of thought (dependent on political system, political and religious ideologies, and outright racial and ethnic biases) that an appropriate education for some population segments denotes a purposefully inferior one, usually the political goal is to help as many students as possible be all that they can be. A corresponding political belief is that the quality of an education system is exemplified by how many students become all they can be or within limits what they want to be.

One route to assessing what students have become or are becoming and, thus, the quality of their respective education systems is to test students for what they have academically achieved--a route that is undergoing one of its recurrent crests of popularity and political support in the United States. In fact, meeting the expectation that all or most students must pass the same test of expected proficiencies per grade level is being raised as the Holy Grail of quality education. However, this Holy Grail only seems fit to meet the dashed hopes and even to generate the concomitant, if unwitting, damage of Utopian delusions.

First of all, different assessment methods will be more or less accurate for different students. Applying the same method to everyone ensures overexaggerations and underexaggerations of competence. And even if one type of error statistically cancels out the other in aggregate, there will still be many students who will be misclassified.

Second, the notion that there are the same core competencies for all students needs to be carefully critiqued. Twenty-first century vocational opportunities seem to offer many different routes to success with differing competencies associated with each. Moreover, there seems to be only the most fragile demonstration that core competency success is significantly correlated with many variants of life success.

Third, core competencies are most often conceptualized as content areas--e.g., historical "facts," or rote procedures--perhaps, because they are easier to measure. Yet, 21st century vocational opportunities seem to require as many, if not more, process as content competencies-e.g., learning on the job, novel problem solving, critical analysis, and empathy.

The reliance on the same assessment methods, the same core competencies, and competency content over process has led and continues to lead to an inappropriate classification of a "fast-track" versus a "slower-track" student. In actuality, there are many different tracks. And for each of these tracks, different segments of students can be "fast" or "slow."

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Moreover, an overwhelming number of educational institutions offer the same pedagogical approach to virtually all its students--save, perhaps, for very small numbers of students deemed to be the "very fast" and the "very slow." Given that there are a variety of possible pedagogical approaches--each optimal for various students--it should be immediately obvious that many of the slow and slower can become fast and faster (as identified through appropriate assessment methods), if "one size fits all" is left on the scrap heap of history.

Thus, the quest to strengthen the educational component of a political entity's security is an important and admirable one. However, there is much in the common approach of testing to evaluate education systems that threatens this quest. Policymakers seeing beyond education policy as a political issue should take note. (See Berliner, D.C. (1997). Educational psychology meets the Christian Right: Differing views of children, schooling, teaching, and learning. *Teachers College Record*, 98, 381-416; Chaney, B., Burgdorf, K., & Atash, N. (1997). Influencing achievement through high school graduation requirements. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 19, 229-244; Griffith, J. (1997). Linkages of school structural and socioenvironmental characteristics to parental satisfaction with public education and student academic achievement. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 27, 156-186; Reich, R.B. (July 11, 2000). One education does not fit all. *The New York Times*, p. A 31; Sedibe, K. (1998). Dismantling Apartheid education: An overview of change. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 28, 269-282.) (Keywords: Education, Security .)