

Thitirat Thanomsing (tthanoms@lhup.edu)
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Will Standards, National or State, save public education?

From the Deborah Meier's article, *Educating a Democracy*, which discusses standards and the future of public education. There is no question that the context and environment in which public education operates is in a period of significant change. Public expectations are shifting as labor markets restructure and the role and scope of governments are challenged. These changes give rise questions, such as, the central purpose of public education, changing institution frameworks and governance structures, the role of the general public in this process of change etc. Therefore, this paper will discuss some of the points that will influence standards and the future of public education. Due to I have no experience regarding the US school enough. If I misunderstand some points, I would prefer to correct this paper again.

According to the article, the U.S. economy was extremely at risk because of bad schools. Public education was initially blamed for this reason. *A Nation at Risk* was launched against dumb teachers, uncaring mothers, social promotion and general academic permissiveness. Thus, Standards-based reforms aim to reform schools by focusing on test scores, conceals the fact that these reforms are the result of the deepening economic inequality and racial segregation that are typically couple with authoritarianism. At the current time, in the U.S., public attention focuses on standards based education reform in response to the high expense and poor outcome of schools. After I have explored the Pennsylvania State Standards from the previous lesson, I found that the standards provide the guidelines of what should be taught in local schools, in

each grade. As a result, teachers are able to use the state standards to design their lesson plans, and curriculums. The standards were also adopted to show students' performances as well as teachers, school districts and states' educational program.

As a matter of fact, Traditional education is usually the absence or target of destruction by Education reform. Many students graduated from this education by lacking basic reading, writing and math skills. Although, many parents and conservative citizens prefer retaining time tested methodology, traditional methods must be transformed to a high performance system. Therefore, States' educational governments have to determine standards for needs of states' members to be uniform. Students in state should receive the same education whether they are racial or ethnic-minorities, lower socioeconomic status, disable and handicapped.

In currently, number of significant educators are raising their voices against standardized testing, particularly high-stakes tests. I do agree that high stakes tests are overshadowing and do not adequately reflect the standards. National Standard Education should also offer multiple definitions of a well-educated instead of a single definition because of lacking any skills. Accordingly, some students may want rigorous academic of Sciences, and some may want Arts. Although, standards are said to be neutral with respect to the teachers' role, we still could say that Standards limit meaningful learning and tend to narrow curriculum and instruction, because teachers unavoidably have to use teaching techniques such as repetitive drill-and-practice, since they need to prepare students for the tests. This method does not support students to design their own learning, have a chance to play a role in formulating questions, creating projects, and so on.

However, some aspects of standards-based reform have come under scrutiny. Some education researchers such as Harvard's Gary Orfield disagree that all students must pass a rigorous test just to get a high school diploma. Some state standards have themselves been criticized for either not being specific as to academic content, or not implementing curricula which follow the new standards. Advocates of tradition education believe it is not realistic to expect all students to perform at the same level as the best students, nor to punish students simply because they don't perform as well as the most academically talented.

I believe that the national or state standards can and will save the public education, if they reflect the views from a consensus of broad-based groups of educators and parents rather than only a few members of the state board of education. In my opinion, the issue isn't standards or no standards, but what kind of standards the public school should have so that we remain a healthy democratic society.

Eventually, I believe that standards are necessary in public education, but must be used to deepen and broaden young people's habits of mind, their work, and their work habits. And while different schools can select a different way of describing and exhibiting their standards, they need to consciously construct their standards in ways that give school's purpose and coherence. This way they will commit themselves to achieving the standards. Also the students need to understand the standards and their rationale. Students must see school as not just a place to get a certificate, but a place that lives by the same standards it sets for them.

Reference:

Orfield, Gary. "Losing Our Future: How minority Minority Youth Are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis"/ February 24, 2004

<<http://www.urban.org/expert.cfm?ID=GaryOrfield>>

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<<http://www.bostonreview.net/BR24.6/meier.html>>