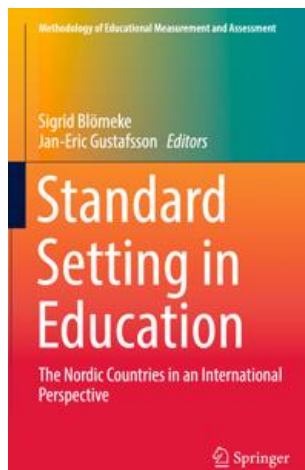


Book Review: Standard Setting in Education: The Nordic Countries in an International Perspective

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Overview:

"Standard Setting in Education: The Nordic Countries in an International Perspective," edited by Sigrid Blömeke and Jan-Eric Gustafsson, is a comprehensive exploration of the methodologies and implications of standard setting in education, with a focus on the Nordic countries. The book is a part of the Methodology of Educational Measurement and Assessment series, which aims to collate key contributions to the fast-developing field of education research. It serves as an international forum for theoretical and empirical studies exploring new and existing methods of collecting, analyzing, and reporting data from educational measurements and assessments.

Structure:

The book is structured into three main parts:

- 1. Fundamental Questions in Standard Setting:** This part discusses the international evidence on methodological issues in standard setting, providing fresh perspectives on the state of research.
- 2. Standard-Setting in the Nordic Countries:** This section documents and critically discusses the standard-setting practices in the Nordic countries, offering insights into the experiences and challenges faced by these nations.
- 3. New Methodological Approaches to Standard-Setting:** The final part presents innovative methodological approaches to standard setting, exploring new procedures and methodologies.

Content:

The book begins with an introduction by the editors, explaining the need for discussing standard-setting in education, particularly focusing on the Nordic countries. It sets the stage by describing the objectives of the book and providing short summaries of all 17 chapters.

Summary of Key Arguments by Parts and Recommendation

Part I: Fundamental Questions in Standard Setting

- This part delves into the foundational aspects and validity of standard setting in education, emphasizing the reasonableness and arbitrariness inherent in defining performance standards and associated cut scores.
- It critiques the post-hoc nature of current technical practices and advocates for a more content-focused, criterion-referenced, and proactive approach to standard setting.
- The chapters in this part discuss the balance between policy-making and research, exploring the role of standard setting procedures in defining minimum passing scores and identifying the potential threats to validity in the widening use of a test beyond its original intended purpose.

Chapter Highlights:

1. **Chapter 2** by Michael T. Kane discusses the inherent arbitrariness in standard setting, comparing it to the medical context, and introduces the idea of upper and lower bounds wherein a standard could be set.
2. **Chapter 3** by Mark Wilson and Maria Veronica Santelices argues for a developmental learning progression perspective on standards and emphasizes the importance of establishing meaningful formative and summative feedback.
3. **Chapter 4** by Hans Anand Pant, Simon P. Tiffin-Richards, and Petra Stanat applies Kane's interpretive argument approach to standard setting in Germany and emphasizes the need for a balance between policy-making and research in standard setting.

Part II: Standard-Setting in the Nordic Countries

- This section provides a comprehensive overview of the experiences, variations, and challenges of standard setting in the Nordic countries, including Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.
- It explores the practical and political implications of norm-referenced standards and provides insights into the variations in outcomes of standard setting processes and test difficulty in these countries.
- The chapters in this part critically discuss the implications and repercussions of the outcomes of standard setting on the educational ecosystem in the Nordic countries.

Chapter Highlights:

1. **Chapter 7** likely discusses the challenges and experiences of standard setting in Denmark, focusing on computer-based adaptive testing.
2. **Chapter 8** probably explores the experiences with standards and criteria in Sweden, providing insights into the country's approach to standard setting.
3. **Chapter 9** and subsequent chapters in this part would delve deeper into the experiences of other Nordic countries, discussing the variations and implications of standard setting in these regions.

Part III: New Methodological Approaches to Standard-Setting

- The final part of the book introduces and explores innovative methodological approaches to standard setting, such as the Data-Driven Direct Consensus (3DC) Procedure.
- It discusses the role of professional judgment in equating exam standards and explores the provision of Performance Level Descriptors to standard setters.
- The chapters in this part aim to provide fresh perspectives and solutions to the challenges in standard setting, offering new avenues for research and implementation in the field of educational measurement and assessment.

Chapter Highlights:

1. **Chapter 15** introduces the Data-Driven Direct Consensus (3DC) Procedure as a new approach to standard setting.
2. **Chapter 16** explores the use of professional judgment to equate exam standards, providing insights into the role of expert opinions in standard setting.
3. **Chapter 17** and subsequent chapters likely discuss other new methodologies and approaches to standard setting, focusing on their applications and implications in the field of education.

Recommendation:

I highly recommend "Standard Setting in Education: The Nordic Countries in an International Perspective" to educators, policymakers, researchers, and students in the field of educational measurement and assessment. This book is particularly beneficial for those interested in understanding the complexities, methodologies, and implications of standard setting in education, with a special focus on the experiences of the Nordic countries. The book's comprehensive exploration of the foundational principles, validity discussions, and innovative methodologies in standard setting makes it a valuable resource for individuals seeking to gain in-depth insights into the field. The critical examination of existing methodologies and the introduction of new perspectives provide a balanced view, making it suitable for both novices and experts in educational research. The meticulous structure, diverse range of topics, and in-depth analyses and discussions presented in the book offer a multifaceted exploration of standard setting in education, making it an essential read for those interested in the future directions and ongoing developments in this field. The book's strength lies in its comprehensive exploration of the validity of standard setting and its critical examination of existing methodologies. It successfully combines theoretical discussions with practical examples, providing a balanced view of the subject. The exploration of new methodological approaches in the final part of the book is particularly noteworthy, offering innovative solutions to the challenges in standard setting. However, the book could benefit from a more extensive discussion on the implications of standard setting on students and educators. While it does touch upon the repercussions of the outcomes of standard setting, a more in-depth exploration of its impact on the educational ecosystem would have added another layer to the discourse.

Reference

Blömeke, S., & Gustafsson, J. E. (2017). *Standard setting in education: the Nordic Countries in an international perspective*. Springer International Publishing. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-50856-6>

