

20.1.2025

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**Title**

The futility of attempting to codify academic achievement standards / D. Royce Sadler

**Publication year**

2014

**Source/Footnote**

In: Higher education. - 67 (2014) 3, S. 273 - 288

**Inventory number**

36057

**Keywords**

Qualitätssicherung

**Abstract**

Internationally, attempts at developing explicit descriptions of academic achievement standards have been steadily intensifying. The aim has been to capture the essence of the standards in words, symbols or diagrams (collectively referred to as codifications) so that standards can be: set and maintained at appropriate levels; made broadly comparable in different specified contexts; and generally shared and understood better by assessors, academic program directors, students, employers, quality assurance agencies and the public at large. The scale of this practice ranges from rubrics for single assessment tasks to national standards statements used as academic performance benchmarks for graduates from academic programs. A critical analysis shows that the underlying assumptions of this process are fundamentally flawed. Codifications are inherently incapable of meeting the requirements because key terms lack the necessary attributes. A fundamentally different material form of representation is therefore necessary if the original intentions are to be realised. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Sadler, D. Royce, E-Mail: d.sadler@uq.edu.au