

# Issues in Education

Ratnawati Mohd Asraf

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*Ratnawati Mohd Asraf*



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## TABLE OF CONTENT

1. Ibn Khaldun on the Role of Knowledge, Skills, and Values in the Rise and Fall of Civilizations: Implications for Muslim Educators in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
*Siraje Abdallah Ssekamanya* 1
2. The Concept of Literacy  
*Kamal J. Badrasawi & Noor Lide Abu Kassim* 21
3. Character Development and Islamic Civilization in Uganda: Implications for Muslim Educators  
*Ssekamanya Siraje Abdallah* 35
4. Education for All and Children's Right to Education in Malaysia  
*Zaleha Kamaruddin, Ismail Sheikh Ahmad, and Syahnaz Sulaiman* 53
5. Balancing Cultural Plurality and National Unity Through Education: The Case of Malaysia  
*Rosnani Hashim* 75
6. Standards in Education  
*Noor Lide Abu Kassim* 99
7. Standards in Education: The Meaning of Grades  
*Ratnawati Mohd Asraf* 121
8. Standard Setting Methods  
*Noor Lide Abu Kassim and Ahmad Zamri Khairani* 137
9. Islamic Higher Education: Ensuring and Maintaining Quality  
*Ratnawati Mohd Asraf* 165
10. Quality Assurance in Higher Education: A need for Students' Direct Involvement  
*Mwebesa Umar* 177

# STANDARDS IN EDUCATION: THE MEANING OF GRADES

**Ratnawati Mohd. Asraf**

## **Abstract**

*This paper raises the issue of "The meaning of grades." Specifically, it discusses the aim or aims of grading, the basis on which grades are given, the issue of grade inflation, and "grading on the curve"; and relates these issues to the question of standards in education. Finally, it proposes the basis on which grades should be assigned and argues for justice and fairness in our giving of grades.*

During my junior year in college, a math instructor had set 93 percent as the minimum for an A. I had a 93.5 average but received a B. When asked, he informed me there were too many As in the class and so he moved the standard up to 94. I never forgot that incident. (Dockery, 1995, p. 34).

The experience that Dockery (now an associate professor of education) underwent, is not unique. It does, however, raise a few questions: Is it just to change the criteria for awarding a grade after that criteria had been conveyed to students at the beginning of the semester? On what basis should instructors assign grades? What is the meaning of a letter grade?

"The meaning of grades" is an issue that merits serious discussion as it is closely tied to our notions of "standards" and "excellence", and what we want our students to achieve. Grades provide an important means for "stimulating, directing, and rewarding the educational efforts