Education Policy

Improve comparability rather than abolish school grades

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At a glance

- Apprenticeship-training companies can no longer rely on grades from compulsory school.
- The problem isn’t the grades themselves, but their lack of comparability.
- Training companies need fair and comparable performance assessments. The canton of Zug is now taking an important step in this direction.

The debate over school grades continues to be emotionally charged. In the process, the real challenge is being lost sight of: School evaluations today are often only comparable to a limited extent. In our dossier, we pointed out as early as 2024 that companies offering apprenticeships can no longer rely on grades from compulsory schooling. As a result, various education experts and policymakers misinterpreted this information and called for grades to be abolished entirely, arguing that the business community cannot rely on them. But this conclusion is incorrect. Future apprenticeship supervisors need reliable and transparent assessments of students' performance. These are also necessary for selecting suitable apprentices.

The Canton of Zug is now shifting the debate from ideology to performance measurement. What matters is not whether grades are given, but whether performance is assessed in a meaningful, fair, and comparable way. This is precisely where the Zug reform comes in, with mandatory grading for exams and semi-annual benchmark tests. Standardized performance assessments help teachers better evaluate students' performance in a cross-comparison. A prerequisite for this is that all teachers participate. Grades must not be a matter of teaching style or personal preference.

This is particularly crucial for vocational training. Training companies must be able to assess what skills and knowledge young people actually bring to the table. If school evaluations are meaningful and comparable, companies can rely on them more heavily and will need to conduct their own assessments less often. This benefits both the young people and the companies.

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