

**Fundamental Aim of Education:  
Locating Its Criteria via Philosophical Inquiry**

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**Abstract**

Educational discourse is replete with ‘aims-talk,’ i.e., there is a manifold of proposals, pronouncements, and positions on answering this perennial question: *what is the fundamental aim of education* (hereinafter FAE)? But instead of attempting to answer it directly, which is a substantive question, a more foundational issue is raised and answered in this paper, viz., the meta-question *what set of criteria must be used to determine whether something is a tenable fundamental aim of education?* It is done so through a *philosophical reconstruction* of the works of selected philosophers of education on the issue of the aims of education, and the output is a set of ten (10) criteria. A putative FAE that satisfies these ten criteria qualifies for the label fundamental aim of education. Also, two supplementary justifications are argued that support the tenability of the proposed ten criteria, namely, through the notion of *fundamental needs* and the *viability meta-criterion*. In addition, this work can be used in assessing the existing FAEs of the Philippine basic educational system because *it is one thing to declare them as is, and another to declare them with the provision of robust justifications* (of which the ten criteria can serve to be so). Lastly, the study, though theoretical in nature, will greatly aid the teachers on the ground by equipping them with a set of criteria that can aid them in deciding whether what their school administrators, local experts, or certain politicians are claiming to be the fundamental aims of education are actually so. Being able

to articulate their preferences with corresponding robust justifications (of which the ten criteria can serve to be so) is none other than teacher empowerment.

*Keywords:* fundamental aim of education, criteria, justification, philosophy of education, philosophical inquiry