

## FRANKFURT, BILLIG AND CHOMSKY ON MISEDUCATION

Igor Rižnar  
University of Primorska, Slovenia  
igor.riznar@guest.arnes.si

### Abstract:

Three sources represent the basis for this article: first and foremost, Frankfurt's essay *On Bullshit*, which was first published in the *Raritan Quarterly Review* journal in 1986 and as a book that became the *New York Times* bestseller in 2005; second, Billig's thought provoking *Learn to Write Badly: How to Succeed in the Social Sciences* published in 2013, and, last but not least, Chomsky's writing and interviews, which provide a penetrating insight on how schools in many countries miseducate students.

According to Frankfurt, bullshit reigns supreme: "One of the most salient features of our culture is that there is so much bullshit". According to Frankfurt speech emptied of all informative content "is unavoidable whenever circumstances require someone to talk without knowing what they are talking about". His essay represents the most rigorous and linguistically sophisticated scrutiny of bullshit. For Frankfurt, the essence of bullshit is the "lack of connection to a concern with truth – this indifference to how things really are".

Billig's book analyses two things: the conditions under which academics in social sciences are working (massive expansion of higher education institutions, the number of students and teachers, self-promotion, competition between disciplines, which are divided into smaller and smaller circles) and the linguistic nature of their work (technical terminology becomes superior to ordinary language, noun-based style of writing i.e. reification and nominalization, passivization, etc.), which are, to some extent, responsible for the overproduction of bullshit.

For Chomsky education systems should be geared towards encouraging active exploration, independence of thought and a willingness to challenge accepted beliefs. In the article, we present Chomsky's views on the purpose of education, good teaching, testing, education reforms, inquiry as a key classroom activity, the role of information technology, critical thinking, rote learning practices, and, last but not least, indoctrination.

*Keywords: academic discourse, academic writing, bullshit, higher education, pseudo-teaching*