

Commentary

Rethinking Assessment: Advancing Equity and Learning in Education: A Critical Analysis of “Ungrading: The Case for Abandoning Institutionalized Assessment Protocols and Improving Pedagogical Strategies”

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Received: November 15, 2023; Accepted: November 22, 2023; Published: November 29, 2023

Introduction

As the corresponding author of the article titled “Ungrading: The Case for Abandoning Institutionalized Assessment Protocols and Improving Pedagogical Strategies,” published in *Educational Science*, I would like to provide a comprehensive commentary on our work. It scrutinizes the flaws in our current assessment practices and proposes innovative approaches that promise a more inclusive, dynamic, and adaptable educational experience [1]. This commentary aims to shed light on the key points, methods, and implications of our study while offering insights into its significance and areas for further research.

Summary

In our article, we challenge the conventional grading systems prevalent in education and advocate for a paradigm shift towards assessing students based on improvement scores [1]. To demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach, we conducted a pilot study involving 40 students in a general physics class at a local Californian university. Our study primarily focuses on a Hispanic-descendant student group, with an average age of 22.5 years and a predominantly male composition. We administered both pre-test and post-test assessments, specifically the Force Concept Inventory (FCI), to establish a baseline understanding of force concepts and to gauge the impact of our instructional sessions on force. We subsequently calculated improvement scores for each student and converted them into a 0 to 30 grading scale using a modified formula that considers difficulty scores. Our findings indicated significant differences between baseline, actual, and new test scores, with the latter two demonstrating higher mean performance [1].

Critical Analysis

Strengths

- **Innovative Approach:** Our article presents an innovative approach to grading that prioritizes individual student progress, fostering a growth mindset and reducing competition.

- **Inclusion of Difficulty Score:** By incorporating a difficulty score into our grading formula, we introduce a nuanced perspective that acknowledges the influence of test difficulty on student performance.
- **Emphasis on Individual Growth:** We emphasize the importance of recognizing and celebrating students' individual growth, which has the potential to create a more positive learning environment.
- **Integrating Technology:** The article introduces the concept of using AI-powered adaptive learning tools to enhance the learning experience and address diverse learning needs.

Weaknesses

- **Limited Sample Size:** We acknowledge the limitation of a relatively small sample size, which may affect the generalizability of our findings to a broader student population.
- **Short-Term Focus:** Our study primarily focuses on short-term improvements within a single semester, and further research is needed to assess the long-term effects of our proposed grading changes.
- **Potential for Bias:** Despite our efforts to address bias, the modified grading formula may still introduce bias, potentially impacting the fairness of the grading system.

Engage with the Content

As the corresponding author, I fully endorse the argument presented in our article. Traditional grading systems often create unnecessary competition among students and do not adequately recognize individual growth. Shifting the focus to improvement scores aligns with our commitment to promoting a growth mindset and reducing student anxiety [1]. The insights from the use of technologies, the article reinforce the importance of using a variety of assessment methods to understand students' prior knowledge and address misconceptions. The proposed hyperflex learning strategy,

personalized learning, combining one-on-one peer interaction and self-paced online learning, presents an inclusive approach to supporting students with diverse learning paces. This strategy, enhanced by AI tools, offers a promising way to cater to individual needs effectively. However, I also recognize the limitations of our study, including the small sample size and the need for long-term assessment. These limitations provide valuable insights for future research, which should aim to address these issues and refine our proposed grading approach.

Implications and Significance

Our article’s emphasis on improvement scores has the potential to revolutionize educational practices, fostering a more inclusive learning environment and empowering students to take ownership of their progress. Recognizing individual growth and eliminating unnecessary competition are significant contributions to the field of education. The use of AI-powered adaptive learning tools, as highlighted in the section on new ideas, offers personalized learning experiences that can address individual student needs, identify challenges, and provide timely interventions. The reward system and the emphasis on questioning techniques further contribute to making learning more accessible, experiential, and equitable [1]. By considering these innovative ideas and incorporating AI tools, educators can create adaptable and inclusive learning environments that empower students to take ownership of their education and foster essential skills for lifelong learning.

Conclusion

Our article, “Ungrading: The Case for Abandoning Institutionalized Assessment Protocols and Improving Pedagogical Strategies,” offers an innovative perspective on grading. These methods foster student ownership of education, encourage active participation in their learning journey, and equip them with the skills and knowledge needed for lifelong success. While it has strengths in promoting a positive learning environment and recognizing individual growth, we acknowledge its limitations. We encourage further research to refine and validate the proposed grading approach, emphasizing the importance of ongoing dialogue about effective teaching and learning strategies.

Reference

1. Crogman HT, Eshun KO, Jackson M, Trebeau Crogman MA, Joseph E, et al. (2023) Ungrading: The Case for Abandoning Institutionalized Assessment Protocols and Improving Pedagogical Strategies. *Education Sciences* 13: 1091.

Citation:

Crogman HT (2023) Rethinking Assessment: Advancing Equity and Learning in Education: A Critical Analysis of “Ungrading: The Case for Abandoning Institutionalized Assessment Protocols and Improving Pedagogical Strategies”. *Psychol J Res Open* Volume 5(7): 1-2.