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A Study of Instructor Grading Philosophies and Practices in Undergraduate Courses at Western Michigan University

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A STUDY OF INSTRUCTOR GRADING PHILOSOPHIES AND PRACTICES IN UNDERGRADUATE COURSES AT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

by

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One affliction that higher education in America seems to suffer is grade inflation. The grades are getting comparatively higher with a "B" becoming the modal grade. The findings in the Michigan State University report (1974) show that the overall average increase in GPA between 1960 and 1973 was .4 of a grade point. An average GPA in 1960 of 2.5 was an average GPA of 2.9 in 1973.

Is grade inflation evidence that students are smarter than ever before? Unfortunately, no report can support this assumption. George Will (1975) argues that the real reasons for grade inflation are economic and cultural. He contends that easy grading attracts students; high enrollments help departments compete for university funds. In addition, easy grading has been necessary to accomodate many of the students swept into universities by affirmative action programs.

Generally universities have a five letter (A, B, C, D, and F) undergraduate grading system. The main purpose of recording grades in any college is to keep a record of the student's performance. The record of the student's performance is a major criterion for the decision of awarding a degree in most colleges.

Dressel (1961) believes that credits and grades constitute the major evaluation of the learning which takes place in almost every university. Evaluation involves judging the worth of an experience,

idea, or process. The judgment presupposes standards or criteria.

Universities try to maintain the standard of the official five letter grading system. However, it is difficult to expect uniformity of grading practices among various individual instructors, because professors exercise virtually absolute power in awarding grades and use the power in reference to varying standards. Concerning the standard and the awarding of grades, the norms of privacy prevail, and each faculty member is on his own. The generalizations that can be stated in regard to grading are few and leave much to the instructor's judgment. Professors assign grades on the basis of widely differing criteria as they see fit.

One of the causes for grade inflation may be that there is a discrepancy between official policy and the individual practices of some of the faculty. Travers (1950) believes this discrepancy limits the value of grades as a criterion for assigning a degree. Faculties do not agree on the meaning of grades as defined by the university. When agreement on standards of grades does not exist, grades cannot be expected to reflect much value as a sort of currency at institutions.

Some faculties seem to have confidence that the grades they assign reflect the amount of knowledge the student has acquired. Others seem to have no confidence in grades and would like to do away with them. Still others appear to feel great ambivalence. They consider grading necessary but do not believe that the grades they assign adequately reflect the student's performance.

If the grading system is to be meaningful, some kind of agreement on grading standards should be reached. Otherwise, there is little

value in the university keeping an official grading policy: it might better be reformed or abolished. The uses and abuses of the conventional grading system should not be determined by rumor. As long as faculties and administrations have institutionalized grades as the only formal means by which student performance is evaluated, and since grades have a very powerful impact upon the student's career, the grading system should be saved by utilization of a commonly agreed upon standard among instructors.

The purpose of the study is to investigate which philosophies and attitudes infleunce faculties when assigning grades, and the criteria and factors faculties consider as bases for determining grades.

Summary

It was the purpose of this chapter to state the problem and the purpose of the study.

Chapter II will present a selected review of the literature related to this study. The major divisions in the review include Academic Standards and Grading, an Evaluation of the Student's Performance in Higher Learning and, a Summary.

Chapter III will present the procedures used in the study. The major divisions of the chapter describe the Subject of study, the Survey method, the Sample and Divisions and Data analysis.

Chapter IV will present the results of the survey in three sections: Educational Philosophy, Class Conduct, and, Grading Practices.

Chapter V will present the Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations resulting from the investigation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to present different opinions on grading practices relevant to the investigation. The materials were organized in terms of (1) academic standards and grading, (2) evaluation of the student's performance in higher learning, and (3) a summary of the literature.

Academic Standards and Grading

Grading has been the subject of a continuing debate since the turn of the century. At one pole some academicians advocate abolishing the grading system; at the other, some insist on maintaining a stricter grading system. There is also a tendency by some to maintain a degree of balance between the two extremes.

"The nature, extent, and role of evaluation practices in any institution depend on the educational philosophies of the faculty, the administration, and to some extent, the constituency supporting the institution" (Dressel, 1961, p. 19).

In institutions of mass higher education, the conflicts between the claims of traditional culture and egalitarian values have often been revealed. Some academicians have complained about the dilution of academic quality by an emphasis on mere quantity. Riesman, Gusfield and Gamson (1970) studied institutions of higher education in regard to

conflicts between academic standards and mass education. They report that the difficulties that colleges have experienced indicate how wide the gap is between the dream of education for all and reality. Some of the students come to school not for their own learning, but to get a degree. They have not been prepared adequately for academic pursuits nor are they inspired to seek help. It has never been a simple task to teach a poorly motivated, incompetent student body.

According to Trow (1973) in institutions of mass higher education, standards become variable. They differ in severity and character in different parts of the institution. There tend to be different criteria of achievement. Those different criteria are eventually reflected in grading practices.

The following section deals with some notions on grading in reference to philosophies of education. Dressel (1961) proposes three contrasting patterns of thinking about education which relate to educational evaluation; they are: traditionalism, eclecticism and relativism.

The Traditionalists

According to Dressel (1961), the traditionalists are oriented to the past, believing that all significant truth and value have been isolated and presented by the great minds of bygone ages. Such education is regarded as appropriate for an elite group of students.

Dressel states that evaluation in such a program--or for any individual holding this conception of education--is highly subjective. The traditionalists emphasize oral and written procedures which are

likely to be both cumulative and comprehensive in nature.

Persons who belong to this school of thought tend to severely criticize current lax grading practices which they see as causing grade inflation in universities. A columnist, Will (1975) condemns some professors' soft attitudes toward grading practices. He contends that the most important cause of grade inflation is a general collapse of confidence in the very idea of academic standards. John Silber (1974), President, Boston University, argues that the market-place of ideas is corrupted by a variety of ideologies that are not necessarily academic. In the same way, some faculties are becoming quite permissive in the matter of grading. He states that it is not unusual for a professor to begin the year by announcing to his students that no one will receive less than a "B" in his course. Silber believes that students are performing at different levels, and the university has a responsibility to identify and record those levels. He concludes that egalitarian attitudes are examples of academics who refuse some parts of their duties, and by negligence or deliberate action disrupt the market-place of ideas.

Flemming (1973) criticizes the assumption that the educational world would be improved if we never made any comparison between individuals and if our records reflected nothing more than a kind of equality among all students. He believes that when we act as though all students are equal, we deceive only ourselves. He urges educators not to be deterred by a misplaced sense of egalitarianism.

Discussing standards, Barzun (1970) believes that teacher standards dwindle with every compassionate excuse from the student.

He grants that high performance in academic work is a very special gift. He states: ". . . don't be ambitious for academic honors without having the talent, and don't try to lower the demands of academic performance so that you can claim academic rewards" (p. 12).

Comparing the natural scientists' and the social scientists' attitudes toward the grading system, Riesman, et al. (1970) contend that the natural scientists tend to be the traditionalists. The natural scientists think that they should not show warmth and intimacy to students. A personal relationship with their student is not their concern in the academic world. This is a rather damning, and possibly erroneous, generalization. Riesman, et al. (1970) write that they fear a certain loss of academic discipline and standards. They blame the social scientists whom they accuse of attempting to attract students by emphasizing the worth of all students. The natural scientists believe eliminating those who do not achieve excellence is a way of improving the quality of contributions in the field.

The University of California, Berkeley Report (1968) cites an opinion of a defender of the conventional grading system. Opposed to ideas that try to emphasize the student's inspiration for learning, the defender argues that the teacher cannot measure inspiration directly. The instructor can only measure performance on a test of some sort, against more or less well-defined standards, where an academic course is precisely a formal preparation for a formal test and evaluation. During the University of California, Berkeley study period, there were a great number of letters from faculties defending letter-grading as preferable in principle to the visible alternatives such as a pass/fail system.

One of the severest critics of current grading practices is the Chairman of the California State Colleges Board of Trustees, Karl L. Wente. He insists that what we need is uniform and meaningful grading standards on all campuses.

The Eclectics

"Pluralism in value, particularly the continuing conflict between the absolutists and the relativists, tends to make scholarly objectivity the supreme value" (Dressel, 1961, p. 21). Dressel describes the eclectic as oriented to the present. The society is pluralistic, and many disciplines and professions are currently taking shape. The eclectic does not perceive the great old truths as definitely as do the traditionalists.

Evaluation in such a program, or for any individual holding the eclectic view, tends to focus on the mastery of a body of factual knowledge and less certainly, but possibly, on the intellectual skills needed to deal with it. Because of the pluralistic nature of the society and the range of views found in college faculties, most colleges operate on an eclectic basis. Dressel concludes that the range of positions within this compromise posture is great, as revealed by the extent of indulgence in educational experimentation and research. Voluminous research and studies in the academic society do not necessarily mean high quality of contributions to the academic world in a stricter sense, nor do they improve the current status of education.

Mollenberg (1973) thinks that typically, the individual who

has struggled with the questions of how, why, and even whether one should grade the progress of students, has emerged with a number of compromises that are not totally satisfying but seem preferable to any of the available alternatives. As a possible choice, the individual who holds a compromise posture is trying to concentrate on status measurements at the close of a course rather than upon changes resulting from it. Those faculties generally attempt to obtain reasonably valid and objective decisions which are free from arbitrary and capricious action.

Miller (1974) also believes that probably the largest group within the university faculties and students is located in the middle ground between the vigorous abolitionists and vigorous retentionists. This group believes that some form of assessment must persist. They point out that the society requires some differentiation of ability and achievement, and until the society itself radically changes, this has to be accepted. Even though they have a sense of uneasiness about what they are doing, they believe that some kind of evaluation is inevitable, and they desire a valid and reliable grading system.

Professors who are concerned with valid and reliable ways of grading wonder if some of their students enjoy more advantageous circumstances than others in dealing with subject matter. Some students have stronger academic backgrounds than others. Advantages that stem from innate traits or habits acquired through earlier learning, are likely to be deciding factors for effective learning. These are realities which trouble the aware instructors who are taking grades seriously. But similar problems exist in almost any area where human achievement is evaluated. Mollenberg (1973) contends that the injustices in the

universe are not generally subject to significant amelioration by artificially inflating course grades. Therefore, the majority of teachers accept the compromise involved and assign grades on the basis of their best estimates of achievement. Mollenberg concludes that knowledge of relative performance, whether positive or negative, is both humane and essential to the welfare of the individual as well as to society.

The Relativists

"Educational experiences for the relativist are not viewed as limited solely to the academic type of course and program which is the preoccupation of traditionalists and eclectics" (Dressel, 1961, p. 23).

Dressel defines the relativist as oriented to the future. This is not because he ignores the present nor discounts the lessons of the past, but because he believes that each individual and society must seek its own truths and values which are always relative to the time and conditions. Furthermore, the relativist views education more definitely than do others as an instrument for progress and improvement.

Evaluation must furnish evidence of change in individuals and relate the change to the educational program in such a manner as to suggest how it may be improved. Evaluation is not simply a basis for a decision; it is itself a significant and necessary educational experience. The educational experience inculcates the habits, attitudes and skills necessary if students and faculties alike are to increase their capacity for making these decisions. Planned

flexibility and adaptation, rather than uniformity are needed in grading practices.

Under such an educational philosophy, some educators call grading meaningless, harmful and unnecessary. They suggest that the university ought to abolish grading systems. For the relativist, "the grading system is a nightmare" (The University of California, Berkeley, 1968, p. 96).

Based upon the study of Kansas University, Becker, Geer and Hughes (1968) insist upon the total abolition of the grading system. Becker, et al., state that students perceive grades as the chief form of institutionalized value and the institutional basis of punishment and reward in academic pursuits. Yet faculties assign grades in reference to different standards. Grading is not consistent from one class to another. The "A's" a student may receive from one faculty member may not reflect a higher quality of work than a "B" from another faculty member. Some faculty are likely to devalue the grades entirely in a casual and irrational manner. To the student, grades are a serious matter. When a professor gives a student a higher grade than he deserves, the student may congratulate himself on his luck but may also respond with uneasiness because the very act by which he profits also serves to devalue all grades. When this happens on any large scale, the grading system is valueless as a measure of student worth.

Mollenberg (1973) contends that a strategy sometimes adopted by those who wish to abolish grades, is that of blanket grading, or, the awarding of very high grades. Such strategies sometimes are adopted with the deliberate intent of sabotaging the grading system, while

others use high grades to avoid the unpleasant task of giving low grades.

Not simply because they are trying to avoid facing an unpleasant moment, but because they hold different pedagogic goals, some faculties are opposed to the conventional grading system. Focusing on the conflicts over pedagogic goals between fields, Riesman, et al., (1970) notice that the social scientists show a tendency of personalistic relations with their students, while the natural scientists disregard personal characteristics of their students. The social scientists want to relate to students' feelings more intensely. One social scientist faculty member states, ". . . we are asking students to come over to our [the faculty's] world" (Riesman, et al., 1970, p. 165). He states that his educational ideology is engaged in a process of acculturation. Instead of simply covering the field, he sees his primary function as the demonstration of the way he deals with the problems, and hopes that his students will follow his approach in dealing with their problems in the future.

The social scientists rely much more on grades used as rewards than as punishments. "Students should be intrinsically motivated to work; if the students were not, the threat of poor grades would not help" (Riesman, et al., 1970, p. 179). They believe in the students' potential to become self-starters and to work out of internalized curiosity and interest. They prefer not to fail many students in order to maintain standards as do the natural scientists. They argue that grades are abused to generate single replicates in miniature of an undesirably competitive society. They propose the abolition of grades.

"Seen by their colleagues as lacking standards, the social scientists in a sense had very high standards--but not the conventional ones. They held up a much more difficult model for average students from non-intellectual backgrounds" (Riesman, et al., 1970, p. 186). It is not easy to lead the student to the totality of student growth in which intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, and other developments are inseparable.

In summary, the traditionalists tend to insist on keeping strict grading practices and a uniformity of practices to maintain conventional academic standards. The relativist tries to emphasize individual worth among the students and refuses to make judgments based solely upon academic achievement. Even though the traditionalist and the relativist might rationalize their views on the grading system, to some extent both of them are likely to be caught in the trap of reality. That reality is to educate a mass student body, not a highly select, elite group, nor just a few students.

Based upon their own reading of college histories, Riesman, et al., (1970) state that American colleges have never been strictly elitist, nor, with rare exceptions, have they shared an insular cohesion. ". . . the United States has not had a self-conscious, national elite, trained in the same schools and colleges and sharing the same cultural style and conviction" (Riesman, et al., 1970, p. 4). Higher education in the United States has never been a monopoly of the well-born. Schooling in America is believed to be a basic mechanism by which equality of opportunity can be guaranteed to every citizen. Students do not seem to think being in college as being prestigious nor do they seek the

academic atmosphere for their own pleasure. "We have expanded to mass higher education without many ideas about how to reach the unprepared students who are simply there as bodies or absent as semi-truants" (Riesman, et al., 1970, p. 10).

Bonthius, et al., (1957) note that some students go to college not to be exposed to ideas, to develop their abilities and personalities, nor to get an education, but rather to work out grades and credit hours and to get a degree. Some students are only concerned with getting a passing grade and not pouring out energies for learning. Bonthius, et al., suggest that as the student population increased, these objectives came to accompany mass education. Because of open door policies and special programs for disadvantaged students, the characteristics of student bodies have changed. Unless the objectives of higher education itself are reconsidered, the demands of the traditionalist and the relativist might be far from the needs of the learners. As one of the sources for establishing the purpose of higher learning, the needs of the learner should be taken into account.

Since there are no absolutes in the realm of grading, opinions concerned with grades can very greatly. However, it is merely a cliché to say that there is no way of evaluating human performance. Sooner or later, the student is to face society, to be selected, and sorted out. As long as the society continues to be competitive and selective, professors will continue to be asked for comparative evaluations among students. The only choice rests on how to do a better job of grading.

Evaluation of the Student's Performance in Higher Learning

This section deals with methods of evaluating student's performance

in institutions of higher learning. The first question to be considered is why the evaluation of the student's performance is needed. The second question is what factors are to be included in the judgment of grading.

Ebel (1974) lists the most common criticisms of grades, reporting that they are labeled meaningless, educationally unimportant, unnecessary, and even harmful. He argues that many of these criticisms are naturally inconsistent, others are not supported by experience and experiment, and still others are inaccurate or irrelevant.

Ebel presents three reasons for grading. First, grading systems exist because most educators recognize that effective learning requires the active participation of the learner. As most teachers know from their own experiences, differential grading does tend to motivate and direct study and to provide tangible and prompt rewards for the efforts expended. Second, high grades and effective learning are not alternative goals. They are closely parallel, if not identical. When properly given by a reliable and fair assessment, high grades report success in learning. Grades provide a concise summary of some of the needed information. Ebel believes that the remedy is not to eliminate grades, but to do a better job of grading.

Barzun (1970) contends that performance is one of the fundamental needs of man. The contrived tests and grades of the school years should do nothing else but develop and certify this profoundly human act--fulfillment. "We must therefore show the young of any age that the need for examinations is in <u>them</u>, and is not artificially imposed by some hostile authority outside" (Barzun, 1970, p. 4).

Barzun believes that a measurement enables the student to compare his performance with his fellows and enables the teacher to gauge the success of his own endeavor. He questions the idea of competing solely with oneself and developing at one's own pace. Developing at one's own pace is never practical, even for the solitary child with a tutor. He believes that teaching is always a push of some kind, a demand and a discipline.

Dressel (1961) argues that ideally, grades should be related to achievement standards, but no really satisfactory way has been found to accomplish this. He contends that the only reasonable position is that there is no simple relationship between the distribution of grades given by teachers and their standards. When agreement on standards does not exist, grades cannot be expected to enforce the standards. The most urgent matter is to seek some agreement on standards among professors, realizing that absolute standards for evaluating human performance will never be determined. A comparatively more valid and reliable way of evaluating the student's performance should be attained through common agreement among professors.

Hiner (1973) compares the basic types of grading systems that are criterion-referenced, norm-referenced, effort-grading, blanket grades, and no grades. He looks at those systems, considering the tension between equality and achievement in American culture.

In criterion-referenced systems, a student's grades are based on the way in which his achievement level relates to some absolute standards established by the professor. Student achievement is also important in a norm-referenced system, but it is evaluated and rewarded in terms

of its relationship to the performance of other students, not according to some absolute standard. By its very nature, this system encourages competition.

Against the competitive nature of the norm-referenced system, proponents of the effort grading system generally accept the assumption that although students are not equal in their basic ability and former experience to achieve or compete, every student can be expected to be able to make an effort to learn. Therefore, in the effort grading system, a student's grade is not based on his performance or how it relates to the achievement of his peers, but rather on how hard he tried. Blanket grading represents still another step toward the egalitarian end of the continuum. This system is relatively rare and usually exists as a form of protest against the more achievement-oriented system. The most egalitarian approach to grading is not to grade at all. Some professionals speak out for the total abolition of grades as does Becker, et al. (1968).

Austin (1971) believes that criterion-referenced and norm-referenced grading systems are the most common types. Even under these systems, some professors make modifications by attempting to create an academic safety net to prevent the less able student from falling below the academic poverty level. Those modifications would save mediocre students on academic performance, otherwise they are likely to fail to make grades at a strict level of expectation. Above this academic safety net, at least, achievement remains the primary criterion for making distinction among students.

Because of the comparative nature of evaluation, when any instructor

adopts a norm-referenced system, he must make a judgment as to whether he has a heterogeneous or a homogeneous student population. When he judges that he has a homogeneous group, he will be reluctant to follow a norm-referenced system in the assignment of grades and will not attempt to make comparisons between students. However, at an institution that receives almost all applicants who desire to come to school, the instructor may assume a fairly random sampling of students. In this case, professors can make some comparisons between students and adopt a norm-referenced grading system. Riesman, et al., (1970) cite one faculty member's judgment concerning student characteristics at his institution: "Since this is a mess, not an honors college, this has to be taken into account" (Riesman, et al., 1970, p. 170).

When the professor has confidence in his judgment that the student body is a heterogeneous group, ". . . undoubtedly the use of the normal curve as a guide would make all marks more objective, more comparable from department to department and from college to college" (Lamson, 1940, p. 500).

However, it is necessary to be cautious when using the normal curve. Dressel (1961) points out that there is the recurring misconception that a "normal distribution" defines the percentage of students. Some instructors use the word "normal" as only remotely related to the normal distribution as precisely defined by a statistician. McCormick (1932) offers two precautionary measures in the use of the normal curve in the distribution of marks. First, students should not be graded solely on the basis of their class work. Such arbitrarily assigned proportions obviously cannot indicate whether or not students are

achieving according to their native abilities. Second, each class should not be taken as a sufficient unit. The reason is that the standard of achievement and difficulty of tests must be kept constant from class to class in order that the distributing factors which must be monitored may be detected and controlled. It can be shown that there is a wide disparity of grades given in different sections of the same course. And some instructors are shown data about the scatter of their grades in comparison with the performance of their students in other courses. This evidence raises at least a possibility that professors might be arbitrary.

Another area of disagreement with regard to grading involves the factors upon which a grade should be based--written tests, written reports, class participation, and the like. Absence, poor attitude, and non-participation in class are considered by some professors as behaviors contributing to a low grade. What proportions are given to examinations, quizzes, and written papers is another debate. Travers (1950) believes that, in general, marks based on tests and examinations are likely to be more reliable and provide better measures of achievement than those based on other types of observation.

It is Chansky's (1973) view that courses exist for different reasons: to develop general competencies; to identify the exceptionally talented; and, to guide individual student growth. He asserts that grading plans should evaluate student accomplishment according to the purpose of a specific course. When the student's primary motive in taking a course is the development of social competencies, it is appropriate to grade using a pass/fail system. When the main motive is to demonstrate

excellence, as it would be early in training, high performing students must be distinguished from average or low performing ones. Thus it is appropriate to grade on a five-letter system. Standards exist for making these judgments. When the main motive is student growth, since there are no standards for evaluating performance in such courses, students cannot be graded.

Grading systems exist not only for the report of student performance, but also for the enhancement of effective learning. High grades and effective learning are closely parallel. The remedy for current grading practices is not simply to eliminate grades. The issue is how to improve grading practices. Lamson (1930) urges professors to seek more reliable, fair, impartial, and impersonal grading systems. He makes several recommendations: (1) Faculties must formulate a philosophy of marks, including the meaning of a mark; (2) Faculty members must set clear-cut standards for each course that are easily comprehensible to the student; (3) Faculties should state explicitly to students the proportional weight accorded each element in the final mark; and, (5) A flexible curve, based upon the curve of probability, should be a guide in the assignment of marks.

Specifically, the instructor must have: (1) a rationale for his judgment based upon the factors involved--examinations, class participation, written papers, etc., and (2) the weight each contributes to the final grade should be clarified to the student. Evaluation should be related to the objectives of each course, and because courses vary in nature and purpose, uniformity in grading cannot be expected.

Summary

This chapter has presented a review of the literature which focused upon differing opinions of grading practices. The materials were presented in terms of: (1) academic standards and grading, and (2) evaluation of the student's performance in higher learning.

The next chapter will present the procedures used in the implementation of this study.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of the problem, the sample, the method used, and data analysis. A brief summary will complete the chapter.

Review of the Problem

The purpose of the study was to investigate the philosophies and attitudes faculties use when assigning grades, and the criteria and factors faculties consider as the basis for determining grades. The purpose of the study was translated into the following questions: what is the faculty's view of educational philosophy and how do they conceive of knowledge; how do the faculty members conduct classes: how do they view the purposes of grading; what do the faculty members think of standards of grading; how do the faculty view the student population; who do they think should uphold academic standards; what are the criteria faculty set when assigning grades; what kinds of systems do faculty members use when assigning grades; how do faculty members rank factors that contribute to a student's final grade; how do faculty members perceive the meaning of the grade; and, does the faculty member have confidence in the current grading system?

The sample

Ninety faculty members were selected from the Colleges of Arts

and Sciences, General Studies and Education. The sample included thirty members from areas of Teacher Education, Psychology, and Communication Arts and Sciences; thirty from the area of the natural sciences including Chemistry, Biology, and Mathematics; and thirty members from the area of the humanities including History, English, and the Humanities Division.

The sampling procedure was based on an assumption that instructors from each area might represent a specific attitude toward the grading system that reflect their pedagogical goals. It was assumed that those from the natural sciences might be more objective and that differences in student performance could be identified on the basis of quantitative measurement. It was further assumed that those in the area of the humanities and the social sciences utilized a variety of ways of assessing student performance which would be more likely to be subjective.

When selecting an individual instructor from each department, the grading history of each instructor was used. The five highest graders and the five lowest graders in each department were selected based on the ranges of GPA shown in Table 1.

This reference was based on grades given in the Winter semester 1975 from data supplied by the Office of Institutional Research.

A questionnaire was sent to each of the selected faculty via campus mail. A response of approximately 70% was arbitrarily set as a goal. Personal visits and phone calls were made to remind those who had not responded. The final sample cosisted of sixty-two faculty members in the manner shown in Table 2.

Table 1
The Range of GPA by the Sampled Faculty Members

Department	High Graders	Low Graders
History	3.11 - 3.59	1.74 - 2.32
English	3.58 - 4.00	1.91 - 2.31
Humanities	3.24 - 3.83	2.09 - 2.38
Biology	3.25 - 4.00	1.71 - 2.53
Chemistry	2.76 - 3.87	1.33 - 1.84
Mathematics	3.32 - 4.00	1.54 - 2.08
Teacher Education	3.75 - 4.00	1.86 - 3.14
Psychology	3.29 - 4.00	2.62 - 3.25
Communication Arts and Sciences	3.82 - 4.00	2.37 - 2.93

Table 2
Number of Faculty Members of Different Subject Field, Academic Rank, and, Graders Completing the Questionnaire

Subject Field	Number	Rank	Number	Graders	Number
The natural sciences	23	Professor	19	High	32
The social sciences	24	Associate professor	24	Low	30
The humanities	15	Assistant professor	17		
		Instructor	2		
Total	62		62		62

*The range of "high" grader is from 3.15 to 4.00; the range of "low" grader is 2.43 to 3.25 in the final sample.

Method

The questionnaire mailed to the faculty was organized under the

following topics:

(1) Educational philosophy

(2) Class conduct

(3) Grading practices

a. Purpose
b. Standards of grades
c. Student characteristics
d. Academic standards
e. Criteria
f. Grading systems
g. Factors
h. The meaning of the grade
i. General attitudes

The questionnaire consisted of twenty-six statements and five questions. The statements were to be rated from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The numbers of statements and questions for each topic above were as follows: five statements on educational philosophy; five statements and one question on class conduct; and, sixteen statements and four questions on grading practices.

Analysis of the data

The primary analysis required the use of the descriptive statistics. The mean was computed for twenty-six statements, the percentages were computed for four questions, and the mean rating and rank order for the other. A Chi square test was used to determine the significance of the differences between groups for each of the thirty items, and one-way analysis of variance was used to test significant differences in priority ratings. The statistical significance test level was set at the .05 for all of these analyses. The variable used in these analyses were subject field, academic rank, and "high" and "low" grader.

Summary

This chapter has presented a review of the problem with a specific focus on the procedures used in conducting and reporting the study. The review of the problem, the sample, the method, and analysis of the data were described. Chapter IV will present the results of the study.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to report the analysis of the data collected using the Grading Philosophies and Practices Survey. The chapter is divided into three sections which report and analyze data on Educational Philosophy, Class conduct, and Grading Practices. In these three sections, che data will be analyzed as follows: (1) mean ratings for the total sample; and, (2) mean ratings for each variable such as subject field, academic rank, and "high" and "low" grader in comparison.

Educational Philosophy

In constructing the survey instrument, five statements were developed which related to a range of educational philosophies and conceptions of knowledge. Table 3 shows the statements as they appeared on the survey instrument. The Table also presents the mean ratings obtained for each statement.

Items 9, 25, and 26 relate to educational philosophy such as eclecticism, relativism and traditionalism. These items received a mean rating of 3.00, 3.09 and 3.11 respectively. These responses suggest that the faculty members do not hold an extreme position relative to any particular educational philosophy represented by these statements.

Table 3
Mean Ratings of Statements on Educational Philosophy

Item	Statement	Mean
9	In general, education consists of bringing the student into brief contact with a wide range of courses to provide some breadth.	3.00
25	Education is viewed as an instrument in which each individual must seek his own truths and values, which are always relative to the times and conditions.	3.09
26	Education consists of bringing the student in contact with the writing of great minds of the past.	3.11
11	I conceive of knowledge as process.	3.77
18	As I help students acquire knowledge I conceive of knowledge as product.	3.02

Items 11 and 18 relate to a perception of knowledge. Item 11, which describes knowledge as a process, received a mean rating of 3.77, which seems to indicate that faculty members agreed with the concept of knowledge as process. Item 18, which describes knowledge as product, received a mean rating of 3.02. This suggests that faculty members neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

The sample was divided into subject field groups in order to examine differences. Table 4 shows some differences in mean ratings by each group on the five items which related to educational philosophy and concept of knowledge. However, the Chi square test disclosed no statistically significant differences at the .05 level.

The sample was also divided by academic rank. Table 5 shows that there were some statistically significant differences between

Table 4
Mean Ratings of Statements on Educational Philosophy
by Subject Field

Item	The Natural Sciences	The Social Sciences	The Humanities	X^2
9	2.95	2.91	3.20	3.03
25	3.00	3.35	2.79	9.44
26	3.19	2.95	3.23	11.38
11	3.31	3.78	4.01	11.89
18	3.41	2.91	2.57	10.23

*The critical Chi square value is 15.51, d.f.=8 at the .05 level.

academic ranks on items 25 and 18 at the .05 level. Items 9, 26 and 11 did not show any significant difference at the .05 level. The difference here seems to indicate that those at the higher ranks are more likely to view knowledge as a product than are those at the lower ranks.

Table 5
Mean Ratings of Statements on Educational Philosophy
by Academic Rank

Item	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor	X^2
9	3.17	3.09	2.65	2.00	7.86
25	3.18	3.00	2.88	5.00	23.44*
26	3.35	3.38	2.56	2.50	16.68
11	3.83	3.48	3.93	5.00	12.11
18	3.06	3.52	2.59	2.00	21.65*

*Chi square value is significant at the .05 level.

On item 25, which referred to relativism, those holding the academic rank of professor rated the item at 3.18, those holding the academic rank of associate professor rated the item at 3.00, those holding the

the academic rank of assistant professor rated the item at 2.88, and the instructor group rated the item at 5.00. These ratings indicated that professors and instructors were inclined to agree with the relativist's viewpoint, while associate professors and assistant professors neither agreed nor disagreed with this view.

The sample was again divided to compare those classified as "high" and "low" graders. Table 6 indicates that a statistically significant difference was not found between "high" and "low" graders at the .05 level for any of the items on educational philosophy.

Table 6
Mean Ratings of Statements on Educational Philosophy by "High" and "Low" Graders

Item	High	Low	X^2
9	2.83	3.07	3.75
25	3.20	2.97	3.80
26	2.90	3.35	6.05
11	3.84	3.73	0.61
18	3.06	3.00	0.81

*Critical Chi square value for "high" and "low" graders is 9.49, d.f.=4 at the .05 level of significance.

Class Conduct

The second area of interest was class conduct. Five statements and one question were developed which referred to student and teacher relations, to the function of a professor, and to class activity.

Table 7 shows the five statements with item numbers indicating the order of their appearance on the instrument. The mean ratings for the total sample are also shown. In general, faculty members tended

to agree with all of these statements. That is they agreed that the function of a professor was to interact with students and to assist them in learning.

Table 7
Mean Ratings of Statements on Class Conduct

Item	Statement	Mean
3	I think that any interaction between teacher and student affects students' values and personalities.	3.64
4	The primary function of a professor is to inform the student directly about principles, concepts and other kinds of subject-matter.	3.31
15	The primary function of a professor is to encourage the student to develop ease in a variety of intellectual skills.	3.56
8	My class activity focuses completely, or nearly completely, on intellectual or impersonal concepts.	2.93
17	My class activity involves a significant amount of attention given to knowledge as it relates to personal values and attitudes.	3.35

Item 3, which describes the student and teacher relationship received a mean rating of 3.64. The faculty seemed to agree with the notion that interaction between teacher and student affects students' values and personalities.

Items 4 and 15, related to the function of a professor, received mean ratings of 3.31 and 3.56 respectively. The faculty tended to agree that the primary function of a professor is to inform the student directly about principles, concepts and other kinds of subject matter. Also, some faculty members agreed that faculty are

supposed to help develop intellectual skills among their students.

Items 8 and 17, which describe class activity--whether the focus is on the cognitive or the affective domain of knowledge--received mean ratings of 2.93 and 3.35 respectively. The faculty disagreed that class activity focuses completely on the cognitive domain, while they agreed slightly with the statement on the affective domain.

The sample was divided into subject field areas to investigate any differences in rating between groups. Table 8 shows that there were two items with statistically significant differences between subject field groups at the .05 level.

Table 8
Mean Ratings of Statements on Class Conduct
by Subject Field

Item	The Natural Sciences	The Social Sciences	The Humanities	x^2
3	3.81	3.70	3.29	8.69
4	3.67	2.58	3.73	15.03
15	3.68	3.32	3.73	4.37
8	3.96	1.96	2.87	31.77*
17	2.57	3.78	3.93	18.41*

*Chi square value is significant at the .05 level.

With regard to item 8, which refers to the notion that class activity focuses on the cognitive domain, the natural sciences rated the item at 3.96, the social sciences gave a mean rating of 1.96, and the humanities show a mean rating of 2.87. These results suggest that the natural scientists agreed with the notion, while the social scientists disagreed.

The statement that class activity focuses on the affective domain,

item 17, was given a mean rating of 2.57 by the natural scientists, a rating of 3.78 by the social scientists, and a rating of 3.93 by the humanities faculty members. The social scientists and the humanities faculty members seemed to agree that their class activities focused on the affective domain, while the natural scientists disagreed.

When the sample was divided into different academic ranks (Table 9) differences were not found at the .05 level. And, when the sample was again divided into "high" and "low" graders, Table 10 again shows that differences were not found at the .05 level.

Table 9
Mean Ratings of Statements on Class Conduct
by Academic Rank

Item	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor	X^2
3	3.59	3.68	3.71	4.50	7.01
4	3.39	3.39	3.06	1.50	18.72
15	3.56	3.52	3.50	4.50	8.51
8	3.11	3.09	2.65	1.50	10.23
17	3.33	2.96	3.47	5.00	20.06

*Critical Chi square value for academic rank is 21.03, d.f.=12 at the .05 level.

Table 10
Mean Ratings of Statements on Class Conduct
by "High" and "Low" Graders

Item	High	Low	X^2
3	3.86	3.62	3.96
4	3.20	3.17	6.40
15	3.70	3.41	2.10
8	2.84	3.00	5.89
17	3.45	3.21	0.71

*Critical Chi square value for "high" and "low" graders is 9.49, d.f.=4 at the .05 level.

A final question on class conduct was concerned with the primary class presentation method. Table 11 shows the percentage that responded to each of the methods of class presentation

Table 11
Percent Using Class Presentation Methods

Method	Number	Percent
(1) Lecture	13	21
(2) Discussion	15	24
(3) Laboratory	4	6
(4) Out-of-Class assignments	3	5
(5) Other	27	44
TOTAL	62	100

This table shows that the lecture method was used by 21%, the discussion method by 24%, laboratory and out-of-class assignments were used by 6% and 5% respectively. The remaining 44% of the respondees reported some combination of two or three methods. The majority of the faculty reported using a combination of lecture and laboratory or discussion methods in teaching their classes.

The sample was again divided into three subject field areas in order to examine any differences between them.

Table 12 shows statistically significant differences among subject fields at the .05 level. Among the natural scientists, the lecture method was used by 48%, the discussion method by 0%, the laboratory method by 4%, out-of-class assignments by 0%, and other methods by 48%. Among the 48 responses on other methods, faculty members reported combinations of two or three methods. Some combined all of the above methods, others used the combination of lecture, discussion and laboratory. Still others reported the combination of

Table 12
Percent Using Class Presentation Methods
by Subject Field

Method	The Natural Sciences	The Social Sciences	The Humanities
(1) Lecture	48	4	7
(2) Discussion	0	38	40
(3) Laboratory	4	13	0
(4) Out-of-Class assignment	0	8	7
(5) Other	48	38	47
TOTAL =	100	101	101
N =	23	24	15

*Chi square=26.12, d.f.=8 which is significant at the .05 level.

lecture and laboratory, and combinations of lecture, laboratory and out-of-class assignments or reading.

Among the social sciences, the lecture method was utilized by 4%, discussion by 38%, laboratory by 13%, out-of-class assignments by 8%, and other methods by 38%. Among 38% responses on other methods, some faculty members reported combinations of the above methods.

Among the humanities faculty, the lecture method was used by 7%, discussion by 40%, laboratory by 0%, out-of-class assignments by 7%, and other methods by 47%. Among responses on other methods, almost all of the 47% reported a combination of lecture and discussion, or the use of out-of-class assignments.

In comparing fields, it was apparent that the natural scientists concentrated on the lecture and laboratory methods, and that the social scientists and the humanities faculty used a combination of discussion and lecture methods.

When the sample was broken down into different academic ranks (Table 13) significant differences were not found between ranks at the

.05 level.

Table 13
Percent Using Class Presentation Methods
by Academic Rank

Method	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor
(1) Lecture	21	29	18	50
(2) Discussion	26	17	24	0
(3) Laboratory	0	13	6	0
(4) Out-of-Class assignments	5	0	12	0
(5) Other	47	42	41	50
TOTAL =	99	101	101	100
N =	19	24	17	2

*Chi square=8.09, d.f.=12 which is not significant at the .05 level.

The sample was again divided into "high" and "low" graders. Table 14 failed to indicate significant difference among methods of presentation between "high" and "low" graders at the .05 level.

Table 14
Percent Using Class Presentation Methods
by "High" and "Low" Graders

Method	High	Low
(1) Lecture	19	23
(2) Discussion	34	13
(3) Laboratory	6	7
(4) Out-of-Class assignments	6	3
(5) Other	34	53
TOTAL =	99	99
N =	32	30

*Chi square=5.2, d.f.=4, which is not significant at the .05 level.

Grading Practices

A third and major area of concern in this study was grading practices. In constructing the survey instrument, the purpose of grading, standards of grades, student characteristics, academic standards, criteria used in grading were considered and included in the following manner: (1) two statements (5 and 23) were developed which related to the purpose of grading; (2) two statements (12 and 16) related to standards of grading; (3) two statements (22 and 6) related to student characteristics; (4) two statements (20 and 14) related to academic standards; and, (5) three statements (24, 2 and 19) related to criteria of grading. Three questions regarding grading systems, factors and criteria of grades were also included. The mean ratings of each item for the total sample are shown in Table 15.

The Purpose of grading

Items 5 and 23, relating to the purpose of grading received mean ratings of 2.94 and 3.58 respectively. The faculty members were inclined to disagree with the statement that the purpose of grading is to stimulate student motivation. However, they agreed with the statement that the purpose of grading is to describe performance levels to the student.

Standards of grades

Item 12 states that a college or department must have a common agreement regarding standards of grading. This item received a mean

Table 15
Mean Ratings of Statements on Grading Practices

Item	Statement	Mean
5	A primary purpose of grading is to stimulate student motivation.	2.94
23	The primary purpose of grading is to describe performance levels to the student.	3.58
12	A college or department must have a common agreement regarding standards of grades.	3.20
16	In order for each student to know what is expected of him it is necessary to hand out a written statement of standards for each class.	3.58
22	I rank the student population at this university as an average college group on the basis of performance.	3.40
6	I judge the student population at this institution as a heterogeneous group on the basis of academic ability.	3.90
20	Each term it is necessary to adjust the content and level of academic material to the nature and level of the student.	3.08
14	Assigning low grades to those who cannot make the grade is a way of upholding academic standards.	3.69
24	I would give a higher grade to one from a disadvantaged background who tries hard but achieves only on a mediocre level than to one from an advantaged background who performs well with little effort.	1.87
2	An outstanding student is likely to emerge with a better mark than another student through examinations that focus evaluation on specific levels of performance.	4.29
19	An outstanding student can be identified because of a broader understanding of relevant issues.	3.75

rating of 3.2, which indicates that the faculty members were inclined to agree slightly with the notion.

Item 16 describes the necessity of distributing a written statement of standards for each class. This item received a mean rating of 3.58, which indicates that the faculty agreed that it is necessary or important to hand out a written statement of standards for each class.

Student characteristics

Item 22, relating to student characteristics, received a mean rating of 3.4. The faculty considered the student population at Western Michigan University as an average group on the basis of performance.

Item 6, asking whether the student population at Western Michigan University was a heterogeneous group, received a mean rating of 3.9. The faculty agreed that the student population is a heterogeneous group on the basis of academic ability.

Academic standards

The items that were used to check for attitudes toward academic standards were items 14 and 20. Item 20 received a mean rating of 3.08 and item 14 a mean rating of 3.69. The faculty members were apparently divided in their opinions about the matter of the adjustment of academic material to the nature and level of the student. On item 14, however, they agreed with the statement that assigning low grades to those who do not achieve at a satisfactory level is a way of upholding academic standards.

Criteria of grading

The items which relate to criteria of grading, items 24, 2 and 19 received mean ratings of 1.87, 4.29 and 3.75. The faculty members apparently disagreed that student efforts should have an effect on the assignment of grades. Rather, they believed that examinations which focus on performance were better criteria for grades. The

criterion "a broader understanding of relevant issues" also could be supported by the faculty members.

An analysis of the difference among subject field groups was also conducted. Table 16 shows that there were some differences among the three groups.

Table 16
Mean Ratings of Statements on Grading Practices
by Subject Field

Item	The Natural Sciences	The Social Sciences	The Humanities	X^2
5	2.96	2.88	3.00	5.92
23	3.86	3.61	3.13	10.47
12	3.59	2.92	3.07	17.53*
16	3.32	3.71	3.27	10.23
22	3.17	3.50	3.60	13.27
6	4.39	3.70	3.47	13.42
20	1.95	3.71	3.33	26.39*
14	3.91	3.29	4.00	14.26
24	1.43	2.35	1.80	16.50*
2	4.50	4.09	4.27	10.33
19	3.95	3.78	3.36	16.79*

*Chi square value is significant at the .05 level.

On item 12, relating to standards of grades, the natural sciences rated the item with a mean of 3.59, the social sciences 2.92, and the humanities 3.07. It appears that while the natural scientists agreed with that notion, the social scientists and the humanities faculty neither agreed nor disagreed with it.

On item 20, which describes the adjustment of academic material to the nature and level of the student, the natural sciences had a mean rating of 1.95, the social sciences 3.71, and the humanities 3.33. The natural scientists disagreed with the statement, and the

social scientists and the humanities faculty agreed.

On item 24 which describes student efforts as they relate to the assignment of grades, the natural scientists provided a mean rating of 1.43 and the humanities faculty 1.80. The social scientists had a mean rating of 2.35. The natural scientists and the humanities faculty strongly disagreed. The social scientists were more inclined to simply disagree with the statement.

Item 19, which related to a criterion of assigning grades, identified some differences between subject fields. The natural sciences had a mean rating of 3.95, the social sciences 3.78 and the humanities 3.36. The natural scientists and the social scientists agreed with the statement that an outstanding student can be identified because of a broader understanding of relevant issues; the humanities faculty was less inclined to agree with these statements. No significant differences were not found at the .05 level for any of the other statements.

Table 17
Mean Ratings of Statements on Grading Practices
by Academic Rank

Item	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor	X^2
5	2.74	3.25	2.88	1.00	28.16*
23	3.58	3.78	3.25	4.00	6.62
12	3.22	3.42	2.71	4.50	4.50
16	3.00	3.67	3.59	4.00	18.52
22	3.21	3.39	3.53	3.50	9.51
6	4.58	3.83	3.35	3.00	27.06
20	3.11	2.63	3.18	4.50	17.95
14	3.84	3.83	3.35	3.00	16.19
24	1.74	1.78	2.00	3.00	130.88*
2	4.59	4.30	4.12	3.00	4.69
19	3.76	3.70	3.71	4.00	9.47

*Chi square value is significant at the .05 level.

When the sample was divided into different academic ranks, there were only two statistically significant differences at the .05 level between academic ranks. These differences were on items 5 and 24. On item 5, the faculty holding the rank of professor rated the item at a mean of 2.74; those with the rank of associate professor at 3.25 and those with the rank of assistant professor at 2.88. The instructor group had a mean rating of 1.00. Professors and assistant professors tended to disagree with the statement that the purpose of grading is to stimulate student motivation. Instructors strongly disagreed with that notion, while associate professors were inclined to agree.

On item 24, which refers to student efforts and the assignment of grades, the professor group rated the item at 1.74, the associate professor group at 1.78, the assistant professor group at 2.00, and the instructor group at 3.00. Professors and associate professors strongly disagreed. Assistant professors disagreed. Instructors neither agreed nor disagreed. On other items, no significant difference between groups was found at the .05 level.

The sample again was divided into "high" and "low" graders. Table 18 does not show significant difference between "high" and "low" graders at the .05 level for any of the items.

Item 28 on the survey instrument asked what system the faculty sampled used to assign grades. Table 19 shows the percent of the total sample utilizing each system.

These data indicate that the faculty's own experience is used by 41% of the sample, an absolute scale is used by 25%, the normal

Table 18
Mean Ratings of Statements on Grading Practices
by "High" and "Low" Graders

Item	High	Low	X^2
5	2.97	2.77	3.22
23	3.44	3.79	3.13
12	3.87	3.57	5.53
16	3.65	3.27	2.25
22	3.52	3.27	7.34
6	3.90	3.97	2.45
20	3.03	2.97	0.48
14	3.41	4.00	6.44
24	1.90	1.83	3.15
2	4.43	4.14	2.35
19	3.73	3.76	1.19

*Critical Chi square value for "high" and "low" graders is 9.49, d.f.=4 at the .05 level.

Table 19
Percent Using Various Grading Systems

Grading System	Percent
(1) Absolute Scale	25
(2) Normal distribution curve	18
(3) Standards from own experiences	41
(4) The students' judgments on their own performances	0
(5) Other	16
TOTAL =	100
N =	61 (No Answer=1)

distribution curve is used by 18%, and the students' judgments on their performances was not marked by anyone.

Among a 16% response on item other, some faculty reported using some combinations of items 1 and 3 or 1 and 2. Others used the combinations of 3 and 4, mentioning a contract system which involves

student and instructor concensus on criteria and negotiatied activities.

Table 20
Percent Using Various Grading Systems
by Subject Field

Grading System	The Natural Sciences	The Social Sciences	The Humanities
(1)	39	21	7
(2)	30	13	7
(3)	30	38	64
(4)	0	0	0
(5)	0	29	21
TOTAL =	99	101	99
N =	23	23	14

Chi square=16.06, d.f.=8, which is significant at the .05 level.

The sample was divided into three subject fields in order to examine the differences among them in rating for each item. Table 20 shows that there were some statistically significant differences in grading systems between subject fields at the .05 level. These data suggest that the natural scientists depended upon the absolute scale, the normal distribution curve and standards from their own experiences. Among the social scientists, item 3, standards from own experiences, had the highest percentage, 38%; the absolute scale received 21%, and the normal distribution curve received 13%. The remaining 29% explained some combinations of items 3 and 4, or, indicated that they used a contract system between the teacher and student.

In the humanities, the faculty's own experiences had the highest percent with 64%, and both the absolute scale and the normal

distribution curve had 7% each. The remaining faculty who answered on the other system as 21% did, responded with combinations of items 1 and 2 or 1 and 3 or 3 and 4.

Table 21
Percent Using Various Grading Systems
by Academic Rank

Grading System	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor
(1)	21	35	18	0
(2)	5	26	18	50
(3)	63	26	41	0
(4)	0	0	0	0
(5)	11	13	24	50
TOTAL =	100	100	101	100
N =	19	23	17	2

Chi square=8.96, d.f.=12, which is not significant at the .05 level.

In Table 21 the sample was divided into different academic ranks. This table fails to indicate statistically significant differences among academic ranks at the .05 level.

The sample was again divided into "high" and "low" graders (Table 22). Significant differences at the .05 level were not found between "high" and "low" graders.

Another concern was how various factors contribute to a student's final grade. Item 31 on the instrument asked the faculty to rank some factors in the order that they contributed to a student's final grade.

Table 23 shows mean ratings of grading factors and rank order. The first rank was major examination, the second term reports, the third, daily or weekly tests, the fourth written assignments. Factors, class

Table 22
Percent Using Various Grading Systems
by "High" and "Low" Graders

Grading System	High	Low
(1)	23	26
(2)	13	23
(3)	55	27
(4)	0	0
(5)	10	23
TOTAL =	101	99
N =	31 (No answer=1)	30

Chi square=3.21, d.f.=4, which is not significant at the .05 level.

Table 23
Mean Ratings of Grading Factors and Rank Orders

	Mean	Rank
(1) Daily or weekly tests	1.92	3
(2) Written assignments	2.03	4
(3) Class participation	2.07	5
(4) Major examination	1.29	1
(5) Term reports	1.88	2
(6) The student's attitude and effort	2.20	6
N =	59 (No answer=3)	

participation and the student's attitude, were the fifth and sixth.

The sample was divided into subject field groups to investigate any differences among them.

Table 24 shows mean ratings of grading factors and rank order. The F - Test does not indicate statistically significant difference among subject fields at the .05 level.

The sample was divided into academic ranks. Table 25 shows that

Table 24
Mean Ratings of Grading Factors and Rank Orders
by Subject Field

Factors	The Natural Sciences	Rank	The Social Sciences	Rank	The Humanities	Rank
(1)	1.74	3	2.52	4	1.15	1
(2)	2.00	4	2.52	4	1.23	2
(3)	2.04	5	2.00	2	2.69	6
(4)	1.04	1	1.46	1	1.46	3
(5)	1.39	2	1.46	6	1.46	3
(6)	2.30	6	2.23	3	2.23	5

F value is 1.67 which is not significant at the .05 level.

mean ratings of factors and rank order by academic rank.

Table 25
Mean Ratings of Grading Factors and Rank Orders
by Academic Rank

Factor	Pro-fessor	Rank	Associate Professor	Rank	Assistant Professor	Rank	Instruc-tor	Rank
(1)	1.89	5	1.87	3	1.56	1	5.50	6
(2)	1.61	3	2.09	5	2.38	4	3.50	5
(3)	1.83	4	2.30	6	2.38	4	2.50	3
(4)	1.06	1	1.52	1	1.69	2	2.00	1
(5)	1.50	2	1.83	2	2.38	4	2.50	3
(6)	2.17	6	2.00	4	2.50	3	2.00	1

F value is 3.63 which is significant at the .05 level.

One-way analysis of variance indicates that there was a significant difference between academic rank at the .05 level. Professors and associate professors ranked major examinations and term reports as higher priorities, while they gave factors such as the student's attitude and effort and class participation lower ranks. Assistant

professors and instructors gave higher ranks to the student's attitude and class participation.

The sample was divided into "high" and "low" graders to investigate the difference between them on grading factors. Table 26 shows mean ratings of factors and rank order.

Table 26
Mean Ratings of Grading Factors and Rank Orders
by "High" and "Low" Graders

Factors	High	Rank	Low	Rank
(1)	1.48	2	2.39	6
(2)	2.03	4	2.04	3
(3)	2.29	6	2.07	4
(4)	1.42	1	1.21	1
(5)	1.84	3	1.96	2
(6)	2.13	5	2.29	5

F value is 0.27, which is not significant at the .05 level.

The F - Test disclosed that statistically significant differences were not found between "high" and "low" graders.

Item 29 on the instrument was developed to investigate the criteria set by the faculty to judge student performance.

Table 27 shows overall percentage responses to each item for the total sample. Mastery of course objectives received the highest percentage, 31%, and item 3 on the quality of work done by the student received 29%. Item 5, skill in using knowledge learned, was noted by only 8%. Item 8, other, was noted by 29% of the sample. Most of this latter group indicated that they used some combinations of each item.

When the sample was divided into subject fields to investigate the differences among them, Table 28, a statistically significant

Table 27
Percent Choosing Grading Criteria

	Criteria of the Grade	Percent
(1)	Mastery of course objectives	31
(2)	Amount of progress in student's performance	3
(3)	Quality of work done by the student	29
(4)	Quantity of work done by the student	0
(5)	Skill in using knowledge learned	8
(6)	Intellectual honesty and integrity	0
(7)	Potential ability shown by the student in the course	0
(8)	Other	29
	TOTAL =	100
	N =	26

Table 28
Percent Choosing Grading Criteria
by Subject Field

Item	The Natural Sciences	The Social Sciences	The Humanities
(1)	35	42	7
(2)	0	8	0
(3)	22	25	47
(4)	0	0	0
(5)	4	4	20
(6)	0	0	0
(7)	0	0	0
(8)	39	21	27
TOTAL =	100	100	101
N =	23	24	15

Chi square = 16.25, d.f.=8, which is significant at the .05 level.

difference between groups was found at the .05 level.

In the natural sciences, items 1, 3, and 8 were checked by 35%, 22%, and 39% of the faculty respectively. Item 8, other, was noted by 39%. In the social sciences, item 1 which related to mastery of course

objectives received the highest percentage at 42%; item 3 received 25% and item 8, 21%. Among the 21% respondents on item 8, some reported combinations of two or more methods. In the humanities, item 3, which related to the quality of work done by the student, received the highest percentage, 47%. Next orders were items 8, other, and 5, skill in using knowledge learned which received 27% and 20% respectively.

The sample was divided by academic rank (Table 29) and by "high" and "low" graders (Table 30). An analysis of differences between each of the groups using the Chi square test does not reveal significant difference among academic ranks or between grade groups at the .05 level.

Table 29
Percent Choosing Grading Criteria
by Academic Rank

Item	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor
(1)	26	33	35	0
(2)	0	4	6	0
(3)	42	21	24	50
(4)	0	0	0	0
(5)	5	4	18	0
(6)	0	0	0	0
(7)	0	0	0	0
(8)	26	38	18	50
TOTAL =	99	100	101	100
N =	19	24	17	2

Chi square=8.61, d.f.=4, which is not significant at the .05 level.

Table 30
Percent Choosing Grading Criteria
by "High" and "Low" Graders

Item	High	Low
(1)	34	27
(2)	3	3
(3)	25	33
(4)	0	0
(5)	13	3
(6)	0	0
(7)	0	0
(8)	25	33
TOTAL =	100	99
N =	32	30

Chi square = 2.64, d.f.=4 which is not significant at the .05 level.

Five statements and one question were developed in order to investigate some general attitudes toward grading practices. The first three of the statements related to whether or not the faculty had confidence in the current grading practices. Statement four related to the meaning of a "B" grade, and the final statement asked the predictive value of grades in relation to further academic success. The mean rating for each of these statements are shown in Table 31. Items 7, 1, and 21 which related to whether the faculty had confidence in grading practices, received a mean rating of 3.53, 2.14 and 2.80 respectively. The faculty apparently had confidence in current grading practices. They disagreed with the statements that were critical of grading. Item 10, which related to the meaning of a "B" grade as an average grade, received a mean rating of 1.97 which indicates that faculty members strongly disagreed with that statement. Item 13, which states that grades have a predictive value in relation to further

Table 31
Mean Ratings of Statements on General Attitudes Toward Grading

Item	Statement	Mean
7	I believe that the grades I assign accurately reflect the amount or level of knowledge the student has acquired.	3.53
1	I despise grades and would like to do away with them.	2.14
21	I am ambivalent when it is time to assign grades. I do not believe that grades adequately reflect student ability.	2.80
10	A "B" grade means to me average performance for an undergraduate course.	1.97
13	Grades have a predictive value in relation to further academic success.	3.50

academic success, received a mean rating of 3.50. The faculty thus agreed that grades do have predictive value.

When the sample was divided into subject fields to investigate differences among them, (Table 32) there was only one item which

Table 32
Mean Ratings of Statements on General Attitudes Toward Grading by Subject Field

Item	The Natural Sciences	The Social Sciences	The Humanities	X^2
7	4.09	3.04	3.46	15.56*
1	1.68	2.68	2.00	12.25
21	2.09	3.57	2.67	14.19
10	1.74	2.39	1.67	8.53
13	4.00	3.17	3.27	12.56

*Chi square = 15.51, d.f.=8 which is significant at the .05 level.

provided statistically significant difference at the .05 level among subject fields. That was item 7 which dealt with confidence in grading

practices. The natural scientists strongly believed in the grades they assigned, while the social scientists were less inclined to agree and the humanities faculty generally agreed with the statement.

When the sample was divided into different academic ranks (Table 33) a difference in ratings was found on only one statement.

Table 33
Mean Ratings of Statements on General Attitudes Toward Grading by Academic Rank

Item	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor	X^2
7	3.53	3.65	3.31	2.00	10.83
1	1.63	1.78	2.82	4.00	20.26
21	2.33	2.46	3.65	4.50	12.88
10	1.63	1.96	2.35	2.00	11.02
13	3.79	3.79	3.12	1.00	25.78*

*Chi square value is significant at the .05 level.

On item 13, which states that grades have a predictive value in relation to further academic success, professors and associate professors agreed with the statement; assistant professors did not agree with it and instructors strongly disagreed with the statement.

The sample was then divided into "high" and "low" graders, (Table 34). This table shows that there was a statistically significant difference between "high" and "low" graders at the .05 level. The "high" graders tended to agree with the meaning of a "B" as an average, while "low" graders strongly disagreed.

The faculty were asked to propose a grading system in item 30. The result of the item is shown in Table 35.

Table 34
Mean Ratings of Statements on General
Attitudes Toward Grading by "High" and "Low" Graders

Item	High	Low	X^2
7	3.58	3.45	2.58
1	2.16	2.14	3.22
21	2.74	2.73	6.58
10	2.26	1.77	11.94*
13	3.38	3.63	3.00

*Chi square value is significant at the .05 level.

Table 35
Percent of Proposed Grading Systems

Grading System	Percent
(1) The conventional grading system	48
(2) A pass/fail grading system	15
(3) No grading system	3
(4) Other	34
TOTAL =	100
(No answer = 1) N =	61

The conventional grading system received the highest percent of responses, 48%. Among the responses to the item, other was 34%. Some faculties proposed a combination of the conventional grading system and a pass/fail grading system; others proposed a pass/fail grading system coupled with departmental examination. Still others proposed plus/minus with each letter grade, percentile grades, or a numerical system from 0-100 with no letter grade.

The sample was compared by subject field group, academic rank and graders. Table 36 shows the percent of responses to each of the

Table 36
Percent of Proposed Grading Systems by
Subject Field, Academic Rank and "High" and "Low" Graders

Grading System	Subject Field: The Natural Sciences	The Social Sciences	The Humanities	Rank: Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor	Graders: High	Low
(1)	70	21	57	53	48	41	50	52	43
(2)	4	29	7	11	17	18	0	19	10
(3)	0	4	7	0	4	6	0	3	3
(4)	26	46	29	37	30	35	50	26	43
TOTAL =	100	100	100	101	99	100	100	100	99
N =	23	24	14	19	23	17	2	31	30
No answer =			1		1			1	

Chi square values for each variable are 14.79, 2.65, and 2.15 with d.f.= 8, 12, 4 respectively, which are not significant at the .05 level.

proposed grading systems for each group. The Chi square test was conducted to identify any differences. Significant differences were not found at the .05 level.

Summary

The results of the study were analyzed in three major areas. These were Educational Philosophy, Class Conduct, and Grading Practices. In addition, differences among responses were examined by subject field, academic rank and whether they were "high" or "low" graders. Chapter Five will present the Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations for the study derived from this investigation.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is the purpose of this chapter to present a summary of the study. The chapter also deals with the Importance of the Problem, the Findings of the Study, the Limitations of the Study, and the Conclusions.

Importance of the Problem

American universities have come under increasing criticism of late because of grade inflation. Generally higher grades would be justified by evidence that students are academically more talented than previously. The facts do not, however, support this assumption. "The Educational Testing Service reports that the national average on its scholastic aptitude test rose from 1955 to 1965 (before grade inflation) but subsequently has declined" (Will, 1975). While students' academic aptitudes are declining, their grade point averages are rising. It was believed that this discrepancy should be examined in an investigation which seeks to identify some causes of grade inflation: are the reasons to be found in grading philosophies subscribed to by professors, in class conduct, or in grading practices?

The purpose of this study was to investigate which philosophies and attitudes influence instructors when assigning grades, and the factors and criteria faculty members consider as the basis for determining grades. A selected review of the literature was presented in Chapter

II with special attention to educational philosophy and the need to evaluate student performance in institutions of higher education. Based upon this review of the literature, a questionnaire was developed, excerpting some expressions of opinion regarding grading practices. The survey procedures were presented in Chapter III.

Chapter IV presented the results of data analyses in three sections: Educational Philosophy; Class Conduct; and, Grading Practices. The data were analyzed and compared based on subject field, academic rank, and "high" and "low" graders.

Findings of the Study

Educational philosophy

Faculty members in the three subject fields were not significantly different in their views of educational philosophy. The only differences found were obtained in comparing academic rank, where two noteworthy differences were found at the .05 level of significance. Those were statements which referred to a relativistic educational philosophy and knowledge as product. Professors and instructors were inclined to endorse a relativist view, while associate professors and assistant professors were not.

Faculty members differed in their conception of knowledge as product. A significant difference was found at the .05 level among academic ranks. Associate professors endorsed the conception of knowledge as product while professors were ambivalent. Assistant professors and instructors did not endorse the view of knowledge as product.

Class conduct

In a second area, class conduct, the data were examined in terms of subject field, academic rank and "high" and "low" graders. The only significant differences found were in a comparison of subject fields. The issue was whether class activity focused on the cognitive domain or on the affective domain. Natural scientists agreed that their class activities focused on the cognitive domain, while social scientists disagreed with it. Social scientists and members of the humanities faculty agreed with the statement that their class activities focused on the affective domain.

A final question concerned the primary method of class presentation. When comparing subject fields, academic ranks and "high" and "low" graders, the only significant difference obtained was among subject fields. Natural scientists tended to utilize the lecture and laboratory methods more often while social scientists and members of the humanities faculty seemed to rely more on discussion or other methods. A high percent of responses on the item, other, suggests that faculty members could not amply answer the question by simply indicating one method, even though the question requested a primary emphasis: some faculty members reported that they used some combination of two or more methods. Natural scientists reported using a combination of lecture and laboratory primarily. Social scientists used a combination of lecture and discussion or out-of-class assignments.

Grading practices

In the third area of concern, grading practices, the same

comparative procedure was used, i.e., comparisons were made by subject field, academic rank and "high" and "low" graders. Data analysis indicated that four statements were assigned significantly different ratings by the subject field groups and two statements were assigned significantly different ratings by the academic rank groups. Significant differences were not found in comparing "high" and "low" graders.

Natural scientists agreed with the position that a college or department must have a common agreement regarding academic standards. Members of the hunanities faculty and social scientists were ambivalent. Significant differences were not obtained on this item when comparing academic rank and "high" or "low" graders.

Regarding academic standards, one statement explored the question of whether or not it is necessary to adjust the content and level of academic material to the academic aptitude of the student. Only the subject field groups reflected significantly different opinions. Natural scientists disagreed with any adjustment of academic material to the nature and level of student characteristics, while social scientists and members of the humanities faculty favored adjustment.

In the matter of criteria for determining grades, both subject field and academic rank groups indicated differences in criteria used. There were significant differences at the .05 level. Natural scientists and members of the humanities faculty strongly disagreed regarding student effort as a factor in assigning grades, while social scientists seemed to be ambivalent. On the same issue professors strongly disagreed. Assistant professors disagreed and instructors neither agreed nor disagreed.

Natural scientists and social scientists agreed with the statement that an outstanding student can be identified by a broader understanding of relevant issues. Members of the humanities faculty were inclined to neither agree nor disagree. There was a significant difference in comparison for subject field groups only.

On an issue of grades as a reward, only academic rank showed a significant difference at the .05 level. Professors and assistant professors tended to disagree with the idea that the purpose of grading is to stimulate student motivation. Instructors strongly disagreed. Associate professors were inclined to agree.

On the issue of grading system the faculty members use when assigning grades, the subject field groups indicated some differences in their grading systems. There was a significant difference at the .05 level. Natural scientists depended upon an absolute scale, a normal distribution curve and standards based upon their own experiences in almost the same degree. Neither the student's judgment of his/her own performance nor other systems were used by natural scientists. Members of the humanities faculty strongly depended upon their own experiences. Social scientists used standards from their own experiences and the student's judgment. Some social scientists reported the use of a contract system.

Concerning factors that contribute to a student's final grade, only academic rank among three variables indicated differences in using factors. There was significant differences at the .05 level. Professors and associate professors ranked higher priority on major examinations and term reports, while they gave factors such as the student's attitude and efforts, and class participation lower ranks. Assistant professors

and instructors gave higher priorities to the student's attitude and efforts and class participation.

On the question seeking what criteria faculty members use for determining grades, only the subject field variable disclosed a significant difference at the .05 level. Natural scientists used mastery of course objectives, quality of work done by the student and skill in using knowledge learned as criteria in a similar degree. Social scientists gave the highest priority to mastery of course objectives, and the next highest priority quality of work done by the student or some combinations of criteria. Members of the humanities faculty gave the highest priority to quality of work done by the student.

In order to investigate general attitudes toward the grading practices, five statements were developed. Natural scientists strongly agreed that they had confidence in the grades they assigned. Members of the humanities faculty moderately agreed with it, while social scientists neither disagreed nor agreed. A significant difference on the statement was found at the .05 level. None of the comparisons for academic rank and graders was shown to be significant at the .05 level.

On the issue of predictive value of grades in relation to further academic success only academic rank indicated that there was a significant difference in the perception at the .05 level. Professors and associate professors agreed with the notion of predictive value of the grade. Assistant professors did not agree nor disagree and instructors strongly disagreed.

"High" graders and "low" graders perceived the meaning of a "B" grade in a different degree. "High" graders disagreed with the

meaning of a "B" grade as an average grade, while "low" graders strongly disagreed. A significant difference was found at the .05 level.

The final question sought preferences among various proposed grading systems. The Chi square test failed to indicate any significant difference between the three variables at the .05 level of significance. However, in general the total sample proposed as follows: the conventional grading system, 48%; a pass/fail grading system, 15%; no grading system, 3%; and other systems, 34%. Among the respondents on item other, 34%, faculty members proposed a combination of the conventional grading system and a pass/fail grading system. Others proposed a pass/fail grading system with departmental examinations. Still others proposed plus/minus with each letter grade, percentile grades or a numerical system from 0-100 with no letter grade.

This summary of the study has been based upon the differences between three variables: subject field, academic rank and "high" and "low" graders.

Limitations of the Study

During the course of the data collecting procedure, it was noticed that some faculty members were very sensitive to the study itself. It was especially difficult to obtain responses from members of the humanities faculty. Analysis of the data was hampered by some answers on the questionnaire which were evasive and inconsistent when responses were compared with the actual grading patterns. It appeared that in some cases honest and sincere answers were not given to the questions.

This study was conducted at a critical time. Collective

bargaining had been recently certified on the campus and the university-wide study on instructors' grade point averages had been recently completed. Consequently some faculty respondents were reluctant to express their opinions on grading practices. Some faculty members were very defensive regarding their opinions and practices. Also, because this study examined the emotion-laden sides of grading practices, it was more difficult to elicit the faculty members' candid views. Therefore the study may have been limited by emotional responses.

In addition, some faculty members thought their grading practices were too complicated to be translated into simply enforced answers on the instrument, while some faculty members expressed bitter sentiments toward grading practices.

Conclusions

This section includes a description of the survey procedure utilized, a discussion of results of the data analysis performed, and suggestions for further research raised by this investigation.

Procedure

The data collecting procedure selected proved to be complicated. Only after visiting the offices of numerous faculty members who had not returned the questionnaire, and having received help from committee members who telephoned colleagues to urge participation, was a response rate of approximately 70% obtained.

To measure faculty views of grading practices, a survey instrument containing twenty-six statements and five questions focusing on

educational philosophy, class conduct and grading practices was developed. These three areas were submitted to cross analysis by subject field, academic rank, and "high" and "low" graders. It was assumed that the three variables might explain differences in opinions in the three areas of concern. The results of this study partially support this hypothesis. There were several significantly different views on the three areas within subject field groups. The academic rank variable was so weak in support that it proved to be a useful variable. Contrary to the hypothesis, "high" and "low" graders factor did not serve as a variable. Despite the evidence that the sample contained both "high" and "low" graders, responses from the two groups were not consistent in actual grading patterns, except to describe the meaning of a "B" grade as average. There might be underlying reasons for "high" or "low" grading practices, which this study did not deal with directly. Perhaps a department has a grading policy that gives higher grades to the students, because easy grading attracts students. High enrollments help departments compete for university funds. It is possible that some faculty members do not pay serious attention to grading practices.

Educational philosophy

There was no evidence to suggest that Western Michigan University faculty respondents subscribe to extreme positions in educational philosophy. Dressel's contention that "No attempt to describe the educational philosophy of any individual or of any particular institution could hope to achieve authenticity or acceptance" (Dressel, 1961, p. 19) is supported by this study.

Class conduct

The results of the study, as expected, support the assumption that subject field groups differ in their approach to teaching. Natural scientists focused their class activities on the cognitive domain, while social scientists and members of the humanities faculty focused their class activities on the affective domain. Natural scientists utilized primarily lecture and laboratory methods as class presentation methods. Social scientists and members of the humanities faculty used discussion and lecture methods. One conclusion drawn from this study is that certain teaching methods are peculiar to certain subject fields and this may determine evaluation of student performance.

Grading practices

The total respondents consider student characteristics representative of an average and heterogeneous group on the basis of academic performance. This consideration might influence the faculty's grading practices. Natural scientists maintain strict and uniform expectations of student performance, while social scientists appeared to make adjustments according to student characteristics. Natural scientists strongly disagreed that it is necessary to adjust the content and level of academic material to the nature and level of the student population, while social scientists and members of the humanities faculty agreed. Consequently, while natural scientists appeared to be traditional and inflexible in their grading practices, social scientists seemed to be more adaptive to the current academic milieu.

Asked whether the faculty members consider the student's efforts

related to the assignment of grades, natural scientists and members of the humanities faculty strongly disagreed with considering student effort, while social scientists seemed ambivalent regarding the student effort factor. The professor and associate professor groups ranked major examinations and term reports as high priorities, while assistant professor and instructor groups gave higher priorities to students' attitudes and efforts, and class participation. One may speculate that the senior ranks naturally tend to support more traditional pedagogical patterns than do their juniors among the faculty. According to Travers (1950), in general, marks based on tests and examinations are more reliable and provide better measures of achievement than those based on other types of observation.

Concerning the criteria for determining grades, natural scientists gave almost equal weight to mastery of course objectives and quality of work and skill in using knowledge learned. Social scientists used the criteria, mastery of course objectives and quality of work done by the student. Members of the humanities faculty used quality of work done by the student primarily. Because of the different nature of courses and academic disciplines, faculty members are inclined to set different criteria according to their fields.

In regard to grading systems faculty members use when assigning grades, natural scientists depended upon an absolute scale, normal distribution curve and standards based upon their past experiences. Social scientists used standards based upon their past experiences and a contract system between the student and teacher. Members of the humanities faculty most frequently used standards based upon their prior

experiences. These responses raise some questions. When faculty members perceive student population as a heterogeneous group, the reliability of an absolute scale and standards based upon the faculty members' past experiences might be questionable. An absolute grading scale might impose a standard too high for every student in a heterogeneous group. Since the University does not maintain a strict admissions policy favoring highly talented, select students, those faculty members favoring a more traditional approach to a grading system might hold expectations too high for the heterogeneous and average student population at Western Michigan University. Standards based upon the faculty members' past experiences might be capricious and arbitrary. At an institution that takes almost all applicants into undergraduate programs, faculty members might assume that they receive a pretty random sample. It might be better to use a normal distribution curve as a guide to grading. At least professors could make some objective comparisons between students if a curve was used. Lamson (1940) contends that undoubtedly the use of the normal curve as a guide would make all marks more objective--more comparable from department to department and from college to college.

The total sample proposed a grading system as follows: 48% of the respondents proposed the conventional grading system; 15% a pass/fail grading system; 3% no grading system; and, the rest of the respondents proposed a modified conventional grading system or some combinations of the above systems. As noted in Chapter I, the University of California, Berkeley Report (1968) cited that a greater number of letters from faculties defended letter grading as at least

preferable in principle to the visible alternatives such as a pass/fail grading system. Faculty members at Western Michigan University did not propose a kind of radical change in grading practices. They preferred to defend the conventional grading system. This position might be related to the faculty members' attitudes toward grading practices. Natural scientists had strongly confidence in their grading practices, members of the humanities faculty had moderate confidence in their grading practices, and social scientists were ambivalent. When class activities focus on the cognitive domain, feedback instruments from class activities could be made in an objective and measurable way. Natural scientists had strong confidence in their grading practices. When class activities focus on the affective domain, feedback instruments from class activities are seldom made in a simple objective and quantitative way. Therefore, social scientists appeared to be ambivalent.

The perception of the meaning of the average grade differed between "high" and "low" graders. "Low" graders strongly disagreed with the meaning of a "B" as an average grade, while "high" graders disagreed with it. "High" graders and "low" graders perceived the meaning of a "B" grade to a significantly different degree. "Low" graders definitely did not perceive a "B" grade as average. "High" graders were somewhat evasive in expressing their actual performance in grading practices. "High" graders may confuse what they perceive and what they actually do when they assign grades. One might conclude, therefore, that there is a definite gap between perception and the actual grade practices among the "high" grading group.

Recommendations

The recommendations for further study of grading practices are: to conduct an item analysis on the instrument to increase reliability; to conduct complementary survey methods such as interviews; and, to develop more sophisticated questions in order to elicit more candid responses relating to attitudes toward grading practices.

September 17, 1975

Eun Kyung Oh
Educational Leadership Department
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49001

Dear Professor:

This questionnaire is the major instrument in a study of instructor grading philosophies at Western Michigan University.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the meaning of grades instructors are using when assigning grades, and what criteria and variables faculty members are considering as their bases for the judgment of grading. This is being done as part of the requirement to complete my doctoral program in Educational Leadership.

The questionnaire is being sent to a selected sample of the faculty who teach undergraduate courses at W.M.U.

No identification of individuals will be made in the report. Names are included only in order to relate information about individuals to the fields of subject-matter and rank.

Your response is appreciated. I am grateful for your help and urge you to complete the questionnaire and return it in the same envelope by no later than September 26 via on-campus mail.

Very sincerely yours,

Eun Kyung Oh

Eun Kyung Oh

Advisor,

William P. Viall

William P. Viall
Professor of Educational Leadership

UNDERGRADUATE GRADING PHILOSOPHIES AND PRACTICES

This ouestionnaire is in reference to undergraduate education only. Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with each of the statements from Strongly agree to Strongly disagree.

Name_____ Dept._____ Rank_____

SA: Strongly agree
A : Agree
N : None
DA: Disagree
SD: Strongly disagree

	SA	A	N	DA	SD
1. I despise grades and would like to do away with them.	-	-	-	-	-
2. An outstanding student is likely to emerge with a better mark than another student through examinations that focus evaluation on specific levels of performance.	-	-	-	-	-
3. I think that any interaction between teacher and student affects students' values and personalities.	-	-	-	-	-
4. The primary function of a professor is to inform the student directly about principles, concepts and other kinds of subject-matter.	-	-	-	-	-
5. A primary purpose of grading is to stimulate student motivation.	-	-	-	-	-
6. I judge the student population at this institution as a heterogeneous group on the basis of academic ability.	-	-	-	-	-
7. I believe that the grades I assign accurately reflect the amount or level of knowledge the student has acquired.	-	-	-	-	-
8. My class activity focuses completely, or nearly completely, on intellectual or impersonal concepts.	-	-	-	-	-
9. In general, education consists of bringing the student into brief contact with a wide range of courses to provide some breadth.	-	-	-	-	-
10. A B grade means to me average performance for an undergraduate course.	-	-	-	-	-
11. I conceive of knowledge as process.	-	-	-	-	-
12. A college or department must have a common agreement regarding standards of grades.	-	-	-	-	-
13. Grades have a predictive value in relation to further academic success.	-	-	-	-	-

	SA	A	N	DA	SD
14. Assigning low grades to those who cannot make the grade is a way of upholding academic standards.	-	-	-	-	-
15. The primary function of a professor is to encourage the student to develop ease in a variety of intellectual skills.	-	-	-	-	-
16. In order for each student to know what is expected of him it is necessary to hand out a written statement of standards for each class.	-	-	-	-	-
17. My class activity involves a significant amount of attention given to knowledge as it related to personal values and attitudes.	-	-	-	-	-
18. As I help students acquire knowledge I conceive of knowledge as product.	-	-	-	-	-
19. An outstanding student can be identified because of a broader understanding of relevant issues.	-	-	-	-	-
20. Each term it is necessary to adjust the content and level of academic material to the nature and level of the student.	-	-	-	-	-
21. I am ambivalent when it is time to assign grades. I do not believe that grades adequately reflect student ability.	-	-	-	-	-
22. I rank the student population at this university as an average college group on the basis of performance.	-	-	-	-	-
23. The primary purpose of grading is to describe performance levels to the student.	-	-	-	-	-
24. I would give a higher grade to one from a disadvantaged background who tries hard but achieves only on a mediocre level than to one from an advantaged background who performs well with little effort.	-	-	-	-	-
25. Education is viewed as an instrument in which each individual must seek his own truths and values, which are always relative to the times and conditions.	-	-	-	-	-
26. Education consists of bringing the student in contact with the writing of great minds of the past.	-	-	-	-	-

Please check one item for each of the following questions.

27. Which of the following methods of presentation do you use primarily to teach your undergraduate classes?

___1) Lecture
___2) Discussion
___3) Laboratory
___4) Out of class assignments
___5) Other_____

28. Which of the following best describes the system you use to assign student grades in your course?

___1) Based upon absolute scale
___2) Based upon normal distribution curve
___3) Based upon standards from my experience
___4) Based upon the students' judgments on their own performance
___5) Other_____

29. What is your major criterion in assigning grades?

___1) Mastery of course objectives
___2) Amount of progress in student's performance
___3) Quality of work done by the student
___4) Quantity of work done by the student
___5) Skill in using knowledge learned
___6) Intellectual honesty and integrity
___7) Potential ability shown by the student in the course
___8) Other_____

30. If you had a chance to propose a new grading system, what would you recommand?

___1) The conventional grading system
___2) A pass/fail grading system
___3) No grading system
___4) Other_____

31. Please rank these factors in the order that they contribute to a student's final grade in your undergraduate classes.

___1) Daily or weekly tests
___2) Written assignments
___3) Class participation
___4) Major examinations
___5) Term reports
___6) The student's attitude and effort

Thank you. Please return to: Eun Kyung Oh
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