

Why We Should Stop Grading Students on a Curve

In an article by Adam Grant, he noted that the problem with the American Higher Education is the 'Grade Inflation'. The grade 'A' were in a realm in most of the Universities including Harvard University. But there was an opposite problem, which is termed as 'Grade Deflation', where 10% of students used to get A, next 30% of students used to get B and so on. So there came a goal to fight grade inflation but due to forced grade, allows for only seven out of 10 students to get A's but remaining three of them also would have mastered the material, but will be unfairly punished. The grading systems were analyzed by two economists, Pradeep Dubey and John Geanakoplos who concluded that a forced grade curve is a disincentive to study and supported the absolute grading. The main argument against grade curves is that they create an atmosphere that's toxic by pitting students against one another. He is against the contrary view like plenty of people believe in the opposite view that the world is a zero-sum game and that colleges should reflect that reality. He gave a good insight on takers and givers by saying that the Takers believe in a zero-sum world, and they end up creating one where bosses, colleagues and clients don't trust them, whereas the Givers build deeper and broader relationships. He also noted that his students were intent on networking, but regarded their own in-class peers as competitors. He also noted that the competitive culture people would fall into a pattern of "cutthroat cooperation". He started his experiment by giving unusually tough exams and graded them in a different way by denoting an example that if the highest mark was an 83, he would add 17 points to everyone's score so that one student's excellence will not hurt another's grade. He followed a different way of giving the multiple choice questions, which followed the pattern of the game show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?". Here, the student who picks the toughest question can assign his/her classmate who may be knowing the answer and if that classmate got the answer right, they would both earn the points. By this way, he was trying to build a collaborative culture with a reward system where one person's success benefited someone else. As a result, the average scores of the students were 2 percent higher than the previous year's, and not because of the bonus points. He believed in team work, where one person in a team need not want to know everything, as the other person, who may be an expert would help him and do the work, which shows the features of personal and professional relationships. By his better way of giving professional relationship, students took initiative and made their work feasible and congenial. Because of this, the students showed the best results. He also noted some points on depression and anxiety that prevail among the students in colleges, thereby the college officials are trying to deal with a substantial suicide risk among students and growing rates of depression and anxiety. He suggested about the campus mental health which would improve the student's thoughts. He finally concludes by saying that it is better to be with classmates who have their peers on their back, rather than as people who might stab them in the back.