What are the Learning Values of Grades?
Exploring Grading Policies in Canada and China

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What is in a Grade?

- Grading is the process of summating student achievement using a numerical or ordinal scale.
- Making judgments about student learning.
- Grades are used to make public statements about student achievement.
- One of the most high-stakes classroom assessment practices, affecting self-perception, motivation, prioritization of curriculum expectations, parental expectations, and social relationships (Brookhart, 2013).
What is in a Grade?

- Increased use of grades **across educational systems** due to globalization, immigration, and internationalization.

- Used for **high-stakes decisions** - the primary decision-making indicator of whether to accept Chinese students into Canadian schools and universities.

- However, grades are **not consistently** constructed or valued across educational systems.

- Understanding differences in the **learning values** of grading across these two countries is important to assist in valid interpretations of student achievement.
Purpose

- To investigate the validity of grades by examining the policies, practices, values and consequences of teacher constructed grades in two distinct learning cultures: Canada & China.
YEAR 5
What validity evidence supports alignment of grading policies, practices, values, and consequences?
– Construct dual validity arguments followed by cross-argument analysis to compare Canadian and Chinese grading contexts

YEAR 4
What are the consequences of grade use on students?
– Survey of consequences on students’ motivation and learning (in total n=2000 students at Grades 6, 9, & 12)

YEAR 3
How do teachers, students, parents, and principals interpret the learning values of grades?
– Survey of stakeholders’ perceptions of grading values (in total n=20 schools: 1 principal, 30 teachers, 300 students and parents, per school)

YEAR 2
How do teachers construct grades?
– Focus group interviews of elementary and secondary teachers’ grading practices (in total n=120 teachers in 20 schools)

YEAR 1
What are the historical and contemporary grading policies?
– Scoping policy review of national, provincial, and school district grading policies in Canada and in China
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Why Grading Policies?

- To account for the socio-culturally-based policies, practices, values, and consequences that influence grading within and across learning cultures.

- Grading policies are intended to provide theoretical and practical guidelines to educators about assessment and grading practices.
Policy Data Sources - Canada

- Publically accessible policy documents on Canadian MOE website
- A total of 19 grading and assessment policy documents from 10 Canadian provinces and 3 territories
Policy Data Sources - China

- Policy documents (n=13)
  - Curriculum documents (n=3)
    - Discussion papers (n=26)
Analysis Methods

- Policy documents were thematically analyzed in relation to:
  - Grading purposes
  - Methods for generating grades
  - Grading in relation to formative and summative assessment
Key Learning: Canada

- Monitoring and reporting was the most common purpose for assigning grades.
- Northern communities (YK, NWT, Nunavut) emphasized community members as users of grading information and the need to have assessments reflect their communities and cultures.
- Grades are reported differently across Canada at both the elementary and secondary levels with different reporting processes by ministries, school boards, or schools.
- Teacher-centered approach to grading process is still emphasized across Canada.
Key Learning: Canada

- Large-scale assessments are frequently included in final grades at the secondary level (range: 10-50%)
- Generally across Canada, non-achievement factors are reported separately from grades (i.e., learning skills)
- Tensions between formative and summative assessments evident in documents, boundaries still blurred
Key Learning: China

- Grading policies driven by the educational philosophy, Comprehensive Quality Education (CQE), derived from a Confucian Heritage Culture

- CQE promotes moral character, physical and psychological health, and aesthetic performance in addition to the traditional academic achievement

- Grading purposes, grading methods, and grade uses all centre around CQE

- Formative assessment is emphasized and encouraged to be incorporated into students’ final grades

- Grades include a mixture of achievement and non-achievement factors (e.g., attendance, effort), and the target of assessment is the learner as a whole vs. academic learning alone
## Comparative Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>Grading Focus</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>Driven by measurement theories</td>
<td>Focus on separate grading of achievement and non-achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Driven by educational philosophy</td>
<td>Focus on combined grading of achievement and non-achievement</td>
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<td>General</td>
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