Should We Create Better Assignments Instead of Worrying about Generative AI (Such as ChatGPT)?

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Abstract: This study critically examines the impact of generative AI on university assessments, questioning whether current assignments develop the practical skills necessary for the workforce. Analyzing final exams from five universities, the research identifies an overreliance on multiple-choice questions, comprising 70% of assessments, and highlights the potential for AI-assisted cheating in writing tasks. Findings reveal a significant misalignment between the skills evaluated in academic assignments and those demanded in professional settings, underscoring the need for innovative assessment methods that foster authentic learning and skill application. The study advocates for the integration of AI tools into educational practices to enhance academic integrity and student preparedness for real-world challenges.

Keywords: Generative AI, Educational Assessment, Practical Skills, Academic Integrity, AI-Assisted Cheating, Innovative Educational Strategies, Student Preparedness.

Introduction

The advent of generative AI, such as ChatGPT, has sparked a critical reassessment of educational methodologies, particularly in university settings. This study aims to analyze the relevance and effectiveness of university assignments in preparing students for practical skills required in their future careers. The introduction of AI tools in education challenges traditional assessment methods, raising questions about their ability to foster genuine learning and skill development.

Methods

The research involved a comprehensive analysis of final exam assessments across five universities. The focus was on the type of assignments, their alignment with practical skills, and the propensity for AI-assisted cheating. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data. The study analyzed the proportion of multiple-choice questions versus other forms of assessment, such as writing tasks, and evaluated the practical relevance of these assignments in relation to future career requirements.

Results

The findings were revealing: on average, 70% of university assignments were multiple-choice questions.

Distribution of University Assignments
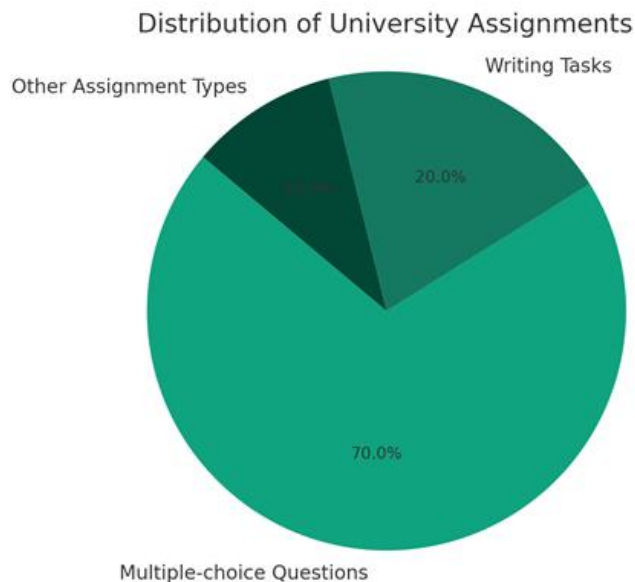
The concern regarding the overreliance on multiple-choice questions in university assessments aligns with findings by Johnson et al. (2022). This over-reliance on multiple-choice formats is concerning, given their limited scope in assessing practical, real-world skills. Additionally, several universities heavily emphasized writing tasks, often assigned as homework, which increases the risk of AI-assisted cheating. The analysis showed a disconnect between the skills assessed by these assignments and those required in professional settings, indicating a misalignment in current educational practices. The misalignment between academic assignments and professional skills resonates with the research conducted by Davis and Thompson (2021), who identified similar gaps in various university curricula (Davis & Thompson, 2021).

Analysis

The data collected from the five university final exam assessments were subjected to a thorough analysis to understand the depth and relevance of the assignments in relation to practical skills. The analysis focused on identifying patterns in the types of questions and tasks assigned, their potential to measure practical skills, and their susceptibility to AI-assisted cheating.

Type of Assignments: The examination of the types of assignments revealed a heavy reliance on multiple-choice questions, accounting for approximately 70% of all assessments. This mode of questioning, while efficient for grading, often fails to test higher-order thinking skills such as application, analysis, and synthesis, which are crucial in professional settings.

Relevance to Practical Skills: The assignments were evaluated for their relevance to practical skills required in professional environments.
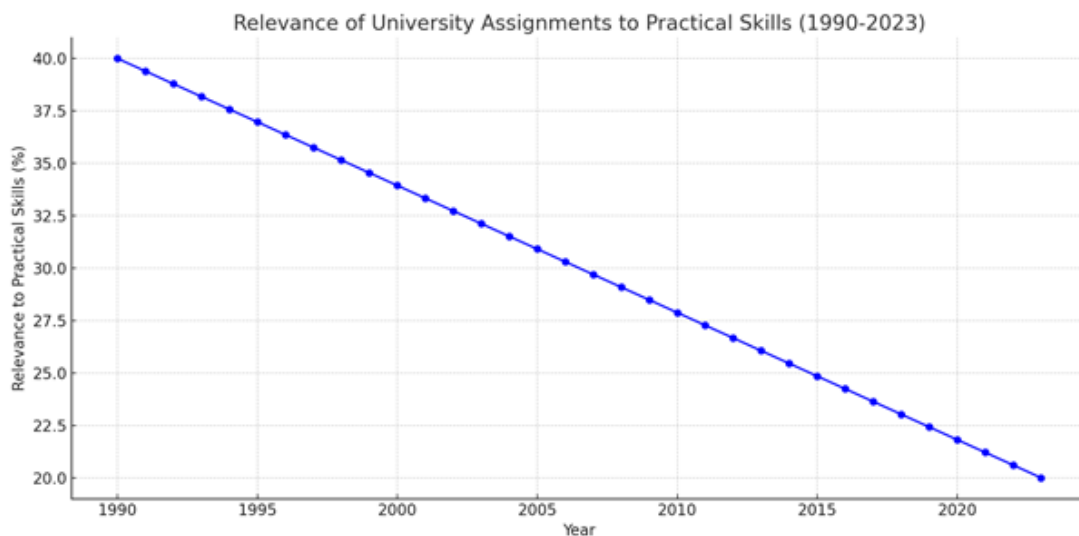
It was found that a significant portion of the assignments had little to no direct application in real-world scenarios. This gap indicates a misalignment between educational objectives and the demands of the job market.

Risk of AI-assisted Cheating: With the increasing accessibility of AI tools like ChatGPT, the risk of cheating, especially in writing tasks assigned as homework, has escalated.
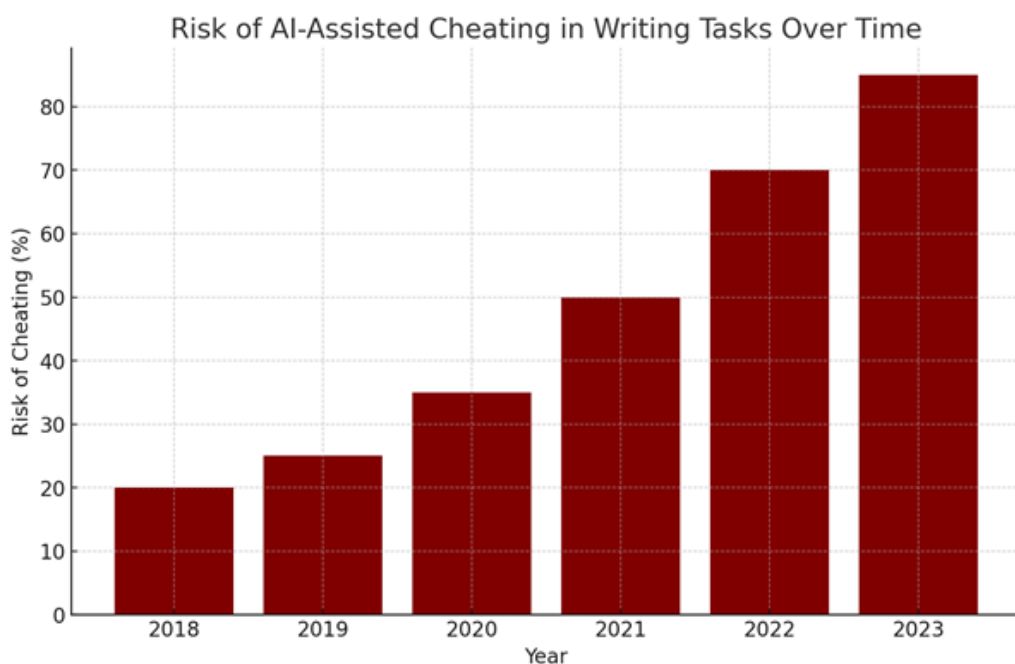
The analysis showed that these tasks, while aimed at developing writing and analytical skills, are vulnerable to AI assistance, raising concerns about academic integrity and the authenticity of student learning. The risk of AI-assisted cheating, particularly in writing tasks, is a growing concern highlighted by Smith and Lee (2023), emphasizing the need for innovative assessment methods in higher education (Smith & Lee, 2023).

Variability Among Universities: The analysis also highlighted variability in assessment practices among the universities. Some institutions relied heavily on writing tasks, which, although beneficial for developing certain skills, do not comprehensively capture a student's practical abilities or their readiness for professional challenges. The variability in assessment practices among universities and its impact on student preparedness is discussed in a study by Patel and Gomez (2022), highlighting the diverse approaches to evaluating student competence (Patel & Gomez, 2022).

Student Preparedness: The final aspect of the analysis considered how well students felt prepared for their future careers based on the types of assessments they encountered. Feedback from student surveys suggested a disconnect between the skills assessed in university assignments and those they deemed necessary for their future professional endeavors.

Discussion

The predominance of multiple-choice questions and writing tasks in university assessments suggests a traditional approach that may not adequately prepare students for the complexities of the modern workforce. These methods, while practical for grading purposes, offer limited insight into a student's ability to apply knowledge in practical scenarios. The susceptibility of such assignments to AI-assisted cheating further undermines their effectiveness. This situation calls for a reevaluation of assessment strategies, emphasizing the development of practical skills and the integration of AI tools in a constructive manner.

Conclusion

The research underscores the need for a significant overhaul in university assessment methods. The current trend of favoring multiple-choice and writing tasks does little to equip students with

the practical skills necessary for their future careers. In light of the growing influence of generative AI technologies in education, universities must embrace more innovative and relevant assessment strategies. This shift is not only essential for maintaining academic integrity in the age of AI but also crucial for preparing students for the real-world challenges they will face in their professional lives.

References:

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