Rethinking peer assessment to develop intercultural competence in student group work

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Rationale for research

- Importance of international students to UK HE

- Need for cultural competence in group work

- Little knowledge of students working within diverse cultural groups and language barriers (Kratzke and Bertol, 2013)

- GCU London – 88% non-UK

Data - qualitative

✣ Analysis of reflective writing – 28 MSc students - Bangladesh, China, Germany, India, Italy, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Tanzania, US, Venezuela, Vietnam

✣ Focus groups – 17 MSc/ MBA students – China, Columbia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, Portugal, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Thailand

Common issues

✴ Lack of cohesion - Kimmel & Volet, 2010

✴ Attitude and responsibility – 'I had to be more patient'

✴ Conflicts - Robbins and Fredendall (2001) - homogeneous groups happier, have less conflict – 'you learn a lot from conflict'

✴ Communication – 'sometimes perceived as too tough or aggressive'; 'even how we write and construct our sentences'

✴ Leadership – 'the dream of everyone working in a group is that we will do everything together'

Cultural differences

✢ Practical issues - 'as we all are international student, one of them had visa problem and another one had to fly back home (family issues)'

✢ Language problems - 'four of my group members were using foreign language outside of English language in discussion which left me lack of understand what they were discussing'

✢ Lack of prior experience - '[I] did not feel too comfortable with people of different ethnicity'

✢ Different approaches – 'the way [Asian] people settling the mission were totally unlike with the European so it triggered many kinds of disputes'

✢ Plagiarism – '[other] members just copy and paste the references as their works'

Peng et al's (2009) Framework of Intercultural Competence

✦ Awareness - 'the atmosphere … is more open'; 'different way of thinking'; 'I think it might be a personality problem'

✦ Attitudes - 'it makes you think even more creatively. It makes your connections grow wider'

✦ Skills - 'I need to improve my negotiation skills'; 'You learn to be more understanding and you learn to listen'

✦ Knowledge – ''I like the stories they share'; 'every culture has a particular way of doing it and you cannot change that about a person'

Positive reflections on intercultural group work

✴ 'My exposure of diversity ... help me to bright my mind'

✴ 'My communication skills and leadership skills have improved because I related with people of different ethnicities and countries'

✴ 'There is strength in numbers and diversity'

✴ 'Listen[ing] to more people's cultural stories can help me to widen my horizon and understand more about this world'

Peer Assessment Intervention for Group Self-Management vs Peer Marking

- Peer Assessment Tool to manage experience in international groups
  - Open collaborative process that requires communication
  - Self-management of group dynamics to overcome negative impacts
  - Enhancing positive learnings resulting from interaction with peers
  - <u>NOT</u> pure assessment/ post-hoc anonymous scoring of peers
- Identified existing best practice as starting point for pilot
  - 6 criteria that students collaboratively agree balance of contribution
  - Resulting tally is used to weigh tutor mark of group assessment by agreed individual contribution
- Gather student feedback to inform further intervention
  - Relevance of existing best practice criteria
  - Benchmark themes from initial qualitative findings

Quantitative indicators for peer assessment update

Original Peer Assessment Criteria	Relevance (5 strongly agree, 1 strongly disagree)	Ranking (1 top, 6 bottom)	Weighting
Attendance	4.5	2.2	18%
Ideas	4.3	2.5	21%
Research	4.6	2.3	23%
Group Process	4.5	2.9	14%
Supporting Others	4.4	4.7	12%
Contribution	4.4	4.6	13%

- Perception of weighting, ranking and relevance of original 6 criteria skewed

- Divergent interpretation of reflective concerns raised from original qualitative data

	Plagiarism	Time together	Leadership	Deadlines	Language	Conflict	Attitude to Task	Communication
Preference A	36%	29%	36%	71%	57%	43%	57%	43%
Indifferent	29%	29%	43%	14%	36%	43%	29%	21%
Preference B	36%	43%	21%	14%	7%	14%	14%	36%

Revised Peer Assessment

- Revision of Criteria
  - Reduced 6 to 5 criteria
  - Regrouped content to address weighting/ ranking imbalance
  - Revised grouping to capture student concerns
- Extended brief description
  - To reduce ambiguity of interpretation
  - To extend (understanding) of scope of criteria

Original Peer Assessment Criteria & Description
Regular attendance at group meetings
Contribution of ideas for the task
Research, analysing & preparing material for the task
Contribution to co-operative group process
Supporting & encouraging group members
Practical contribution to end product eg, writing, presenting making materials, etc

Revised Peer Assessment

⚜ **Attendance** of meetings was deemed relevant but in a world of virtual What's App group meetings, physical meetings does not capture the notion of adhering to deadlines or responding to communications something that emerged from the qualitative evidence. Thus the criteria's description was slightly broadened and named → **Work ethic**.

⚜ Contribution of **ideas** scored the lowest relevance but received some of the highest ranking and weighting. Although being important, *different ideas* was also identified as one of the top three challenges. Therefore, the criterion was updated to → **creative process** to incorporate some of the **supporting others** elements.

Revised Peer Assessment

✣ The criterion **research** scored the highest relevance, second highest ranking and highest weighting. In consequence the revised → **professionalism** criterion focused on the conduct of the research and preparing material i.e. more explicitly addressing student concerns of originality and academic honesty, quality of work, behaviour in meetings etc. Interpretations relating to material preparation is now included in the → **assessment production** criterion.

✣ Contribution to the cooperative **group process** scored second highest in relevance but third lowest in terms of weighting. Thus the revised criterion → **group management** was maintained but now includes elements of communication with others, leadership etc. – all items that emerged as challenges from qualitative evidence.

Revised Peer Assessment

- **Supporting others** scored the second lowest relevance, lowest ranking and lowest weighting. Considering the importance of ideas on one hand yet ideas also being one of the biggest challenges, supporting others and encouraging other ideas became part of the revised → **creative process** criterion.

- Although the outcome itself was deemed of second lowest relevance, second lowest ranking and second lowest weighting, **practical contribution** on the other hand qualitative evidence suggests that different levels of commitment and effort in output drafting and assessment production is of great concern. Thus the updated criterion → **assessment production** now includes some of the preparation and drafting material from the former **research** criterion.

Revised Peer Assessment Tool

Revised Peer Assessment & Criteria
Work ethic – this is about meeting the standards the group has set (e.g. attending meetings; adhering to deadlines; responding to communication from team members)
Professionalism – this is about how you have behaved and the standard of your contributions (e.g. how you have acted in meetings; the quality of your work; taking responsibility for originality and academic honesty; co-operating with others)
Group management – this is about how you have helped the group to function (e.g. managing group differences such as languages; building relationships; organising the process or timescales; supporting group members; communicating with the team; leadership and guidance)
Creative process - this is about how you have enabled new ideas (e.g. producing original ideas and alternatives; encouraging, challenging, developing, refining or merging the ideas of others)
Assessment production – this is about your contribution to the outcomes (e.g. presenting; creating slides; creating a draft; editing or combining others' work)

Tool Box

❉ Materials curated and adapted to support use of Peer Assessment Tool

❉ Structure/ Process focused (standard) tools

  ❉ First Meeting – agreeing roles, setting timeline, reviewing peer assessment criteria with question prompts

  ❉ Supplemented with Agenda and Minutes templates

❉ Appreciation of diversity, understanding each other, recognising challenges throughout the process

  ❉ Reflection

Reflection and Outlook

* Instructor View
  * Peer Assessment tool mostly self-explanatory to students
  * Use of peer assessment tool to defuse group tensions without having to understand all nuances of the dynamics within the group i.e. instructor becomes a facilitator of reflection using the peer assessment criteria rather than making a judgement call from the outside
* Videos
  * Recorded students talking about group work experience
  * Currently editing and to be used as "peer advice" for students about to embark on a group project to increase engagement with Tool Box
* Peer Assessment
  * Second stage qualitative data raised further suggestions to update peer assessment e.g. remove the work assessment to avoid confusion

Thank you!
Any Questions?

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