Title: Unconventional Assignments: Giving Students Voice, Choice and Responsibility

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What problem was addressed?

The Covid-19 pandemic lockdown has forced universities and medical schools to implement on-line teaching and assessment that are constructively aligned, enforce learning, are student-centred while simultaneously develop 21st century graduate attributes and critical thinking skills. A great concern in Obstetrics is that we are failing to achieve a remarkable improvement in Maternal Mortality which is a Sustainable Development Goal. Problems faced in Obstetrics are multifactorial, related to the individual, social circumstances, and public health issues. This problem presented an ideal learning outcome to allow students to express their novel, creative solutions.

What was tried?

As part of programmatic assessment (van der Vleuten, n.d.), medical students in their third year Obstetrics rotation were assigned a group project (Adam, 2019). They were instructed to watch a video[2] and to produce novel, creative solutions to the issues identified in the video. The format of the assignment was open to the students – however traditional essays and PowerPoint presentations were excluded. Submissions were peer-assessed. Each group assess five other groups' submissions (24 groups). Assessment was based on a rubric developed by the students and was based on three critical factors:

      1. Identification and expected solutions

      2. Novel solutions

      3. Creativity of submission

The acceptability and impact of this assignment was evaluated via information from semi-structured questionnaires.

What lessons were learned?

This assignment achieved the following:

      1. Teamwork/collaboration

      2. ICT-skill development

      3. Flexible, creative, critical thinking

      4. Knowledge application, integration and Self-directed learning

      5. Visionary leadership

      6. Fun while learning

This study demonstrated that students are able to collaborate and produce novel digital artefacts even in online environments, in large classes.

Questions:

    1. How can leadership and roles of group members be evaluated, especially with large groups?

    2. How else can creativity be introduced into online teaching in large classes?

References:

1. Adam, S. 2019. University of Pretoria. Faculty of Health Sciences. BBL-series. *Peer-evaluation and competency-based assessment*. https://youtu.be/JuLoOZZOMn8.

2. Why-Mrs-X-died https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gS7fCvCIe1k

3. Van der Vleuten, C. n.d. What is programmatic Assessment? https://www.ceesvandervleuten.com/publications/Programmatic-assessment/what-programmatic-assessmen