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16 Peer and self-assessment for student-led activities

Interdisciplinary skills:	collaboration, reflection
Characteristics:	authentic assessment, assessment of group work, self-regulated learning
Roles:	self-assessment, peer assessment
Purpose:	of learning, as learning
Course:	Education Development and Social Justice
Program:	MSc in International Development Studies
Institute:	University of Amsterdam (NL)
Study load:	168 hours
Group size:	25 students
Year:	first-year master's students
Lecturer:	Mieke Lopes Cardozo

If your aim is to develop your students as agents of change, then this will have consequences for what and how you teach. The lecturer in this example developed a learning strategy according to her pedagogical beliefs. The students in the course co-create their own learning activities and are (partly) responsible for their own and their peers' assessment. This allows students to have agency over their learning progress.

About the course and assessment

Brief description of the course

Starting from a critical theoretical and historical perspective, students in this course critically assess the past and present global governance of education processes and both dominant and counter-hegemonic policy repertoires. Students explore a critical view on educational change – and education as a mechanism for potential societal change – as a complex relation between macro-level policies and micro-level policy translations into practices, influenced by historical and larger

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socio-economic, socio-cultural, and political transformations. Using co-creation, teachers and students introduce and analyze key theoretical lenses, main concepts, and current debates and controversies in the field of education and development from a transdisciplinary, relational, gender-aware, and multi-scalar perspective while paying specific attention to non-hegemonic and decolonizing theories and resources. Students are encouraged to take an active part in co-creating this collective learning space, making joint decisions on relevant case studies and contributions. Together, teachers and students learn about the reproductive and transformative power of education and examine educational change as a process of convergence, struggle, and debate about aims, curriculum, knowledge, methodologies, and practices. Students develop their own positionality in these debates, enhancing their debating and negotiation skills and networking opportunities through interaction and dialogue with practitioners and policymakers in the field. The course design is inspired by the lecturer's engagement with regenerative development and living systems thinking (Regenesis, 2020).

The intended learning outcomes of this course that are addressed in this example

The student is able to:

- critically reflect on their own educational trajectory (prior to and throughout this course) and assess their (individual and group) contributions to the co-created learning space in this course

Description of the assessment

The assessment of this course consists of three parts.

Activity	Open for improvement	Counts for	Role
Group roleplay	Each student participates in a group roleplay	40% of final grade	teacher-led assessment
Student-led learning activity	Each student chooses to contribute to *one* group student-led activity • a student-led studio (creative and engaging exercises connected to key readings/ themes), or • the design and facilitation of the roleplay	30% of final grade	self-assessment peer assessment
Individual reflection document	Each student creates an individual assessment and reflection essay to reflect on their own learning, the process and outcomes of the group work, and the transformative potential they see for education	30% of final grade	self-assessment teacher-led assessment

As an individual exercise for this course, students are invited to develop a reflection document in which they assess their own learning as well as the process of teamwork in the groups. This exercise is meant to allow students to reflect on:

- their personal purpose for joining this course and how they organize their own learning;
- the quality of their contributions (both individual and group) to the co-created learning progress of the group;
- the process of their own learning trajectory (prior to this course and within this course).

Students are asked to provide a suggested grade range for the roleplay (group grade), the student-led activity (group grade), and the self-assessment reflections (individual grade). The suggestions are taken into consideration by the lecturer when grading the work.

Assessment materials

Students use the task cycle and guidelines for peer assessment and self-assessment of the student-led activities.

The task cycle (based on Regenesis, 2020)

This task cycle can help you to *design* your group-led activity (the studio, the design of the roleplay, or any other task you are working on such as your essay or planning an important meeting). You are encouraged to use this task cycle to reflect on the process of design and implementation and to evaluate the process and outcomes afterwards.

As a team, start by defining the collective purpose of your task by formulating it in the following way:

- To… (describing the task),
- In a way that… (this reflects the benefit of the process to the group),
- So that… (this reflects the benefit of the outcome for the group, the broader field, and any other specific audience).

Then consciously formulate the desired product (what will be produced?), followed by the process (what methods and means are needed to accomplish the product?), and the functioning capabilities (what knowledge, skills, material, and resources are needed?). Be as specific as possible.

Peer and self-assessment guidelines

Students use the task cycle exercise above to reflect on their own learning and the process of group work. They are free to use it in a (creative) way that makes sense to them. Based on their reflections, they are invited to indicate a grade range for the activity that they were involved in as well as for their own reflection exercise. This suggestion is taken into account by the lecturer when doing the final grading.

Form 1: peer and self-assessment for the student-led studio or design team for roleplay, and the final roleplay	
Your name:	
Group members' names for student-led activity:	
Group members' names for roleplay:	
Reflections on the learning as part of group work in two teams • What was your team's collective purpose for the student-led activity? (To… so that… in a way that…) • What was the desired outcome of your group work? What methods and means did you work on to support this desired outcome? • What was your unique contribution to the learning process? How did you relate to others in their learning process and contributions? • What was most challenging in the teamwork, and how did you (yourself or collectively) resolve this? • What did you appreciate most about the teamwork in these two teams?	
Suggested grade range for your group (student-led studio or design team of the roleplay):	
Suggested grade range for your roleplay team:	

Form 2: Self-assessment of your learning during the course	
In your reflection here, please consider the following questions: • What was *your* purpose for joining this course? (To… so that… in a way that…) • Reflect on your key motivations for joining this course. How do you experience this sense of motivation/drive now? • What key capabilities did you aim to develop, and how much of your aims have you reached? • How did you feel about your own learning process when you started the course, and what has shifted in you throughout the duration of this course? • What do you aim to work on moving forwards?	
No suggested grade needed here, but you are encouraged to express in one word how you would characterize your own learning during the course.	

Form 3: Reflection essay on your understanding of the transformative potential of education for development and social justice, drawing on resources and reflections from the course	
In this part of the individual exercise, you are invited to reflect more deeply on the contents of the course and how these had an impact on your understanding of the transformative potential of education in terms of addressing social injustices or fostering equity, inclusive development, and diversity. Make sure to refer to at least five of the required resources we worked with in this course. You are free to bring in additional (academic or non-academic) relevant resources to support your reflections:	
Intended grade range *for this course* at the start of this course	*Please indicate the grade you intended for this course at the start (see first survey) and, if you wish, any reflections on this retrospectively.*
Suggested grade range *for this peer/self-assessment and reflection essay*	*Please indicate here the grade range for this entire document (steps 1, 2, and 3). Please note that this will count for 30% of the final grade.*

Experiences and insights of the lecturer

Mieke Lopes Cardozo

The reason for using the assessment method

Based on the research and teaching I have done over the years, I have come to realize the transformative power of education but also the fact that most education systems and the cultures and structures we are in do not always allow for that potential to take place. My drive behind experimenting at first and now further refining and exploring these alternative forms of teaching and assessment is really to allow student agency to become something more meaningful: to step away from assessment forms that are very technical and standardized and measure certain skills and to widen the view of what university education can bring. If our program claims to develop agents of change later on with our graduates, then how do we actually do that through our education?

The topic of this course is very suited for this type of unique assessment because we study education as a source of social justice and transformation. For me, this has been a path – and will be a path for many years to come – to try to explore how to walk the talk, that is, not just reading about social justice and education for transformation or the negative impact education may also have in reproducing inequalities, for example. So it is walking the talk and stumbling upon obstacles and failing as we go along and having the courage to feel vulnerable as a lecturer. I try to make this transparent as well, especially with the roleplay. If the roleplay design team doesn't do their work, then no one in the course has a final assessment moment. It could completely collapse, actually. Of course, I have a backup plan because I have done roleplay for many years and I can roll out one of my roleplays and let people do that, but it wouldn't be the same. I think we should dive into the deep end with everyone, and it is that shared responsibility that makes a difference and builds agency.

Reflections on the assessment method

I always try to take the comments from the students from that year and use that in the redesign of the course together with a student that is assisting me in the course. There is always a student voice from the start that can help me to translate the feedback from the previous year in the course manual and hold me accountable. For me, it's important to keep in mind the learning objectives: what is it that this course wants to create, and how do we balance the different aspects?

Advantages and disadvantages

One of the benefits is that grading is a lot more fun and more engaging. The disadvantage is that it takes time, because I also write short personal reflections for each student. It is a challenge of the overall course, and I reflected on this in class. This course used to be 12, then 10, then 9, and now 6 Eurepean Credits. Because it's such short timing, it is quite hard to do full justice to this process of reflection and feedback. Also, some students stated that they appreciated the feedback on the studios, but I wasn't able yet to give individual feedback to everyone.

The student perspective

For me personally, the course is incredibly engaging, it's something you can get really passionate about, you can get really into this roleplay. I also appreciate the freedom and the fact that students are encouraged to showcase what they're good at. In the studios or the roleplay, if you're good at public talking that is great, but maybe you're good at designing group activities or group work. Formal assessment can be discouraging for people if you're not good at something and everybody is looking at you.

I understand the decision for student-led studios and roleplay but both of them being group grades, there're always some problems or disadvantages for group work. I personally like to work in groups, but sometimes I want to completely do my own thing and own my product.

The self-assessment was very challenging, because I can be really hard on myself. It was a bit weird for me to grade myself. I talked to classmates and they were all struggling with suggesting a grade. Everybody wants to suggest a good grade because the lecturer is going to take that into account. But did you actually do that well? And how can you know how you did? It is just being very self-reflective and honest about how you participated in class. I think it is nice, but being self-reflective is also difficult.

Key advice

- Make students co-responsible for learning activities and assessment. Trust that it will bring out the best in them and that you can let go of what happens in the classroom. Rely on your skills and experiences as a teacher to improvise and to just be there.
- It takes more time for the lecturer to do co-creation, but the key here is preparation. Make sure there is enough time to prepare and to engage students in the process even before the first class starts.

Further reading

Regenesis: Institute for Regenerative Practice. (2020). https://regenerat.es