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Combining student-generated digital videos and intercultural group assessment to foster Education for Social Justice in Business and Management Schools: Transforming students' learning experience

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Track: Learning & Knowledge

Summary: (150 words)

Student-generated videos as a new form of assessment aim to increase student engagement in Higher Education (HE). Intercultural assessment also aims to promote Education for Social Justice (ESJ) among the diverse student cohorts in today's multilingual higher education. The current study explored 180 undergraduate students' perceptions of the use of a combination of intercultural group assessment (IGA) and student-generated videos (SGV) aimed at increasing students' intercultural competence and engagement. Students often complain about lecturers' use of monotonous final written assignments that discriminate against certain students, i.e. international, mature, multilingual and low-achieving students. The findings showed that IGA provided students with an opportunity to develop their intercultural competence, negotiation and teamwork skills. In addition, many SGVs demonstrated high levels of creativity and critical thinking. The paper provides recommendations for the successful integration of video with intercultural group assessment in business schools to promote ESJ and highlights implications for theory and practice.

Key words: International students, Higher Education, student-generated digital videos, learner attitudes, Education for Social Justice in assessment, undergraduate students, intercultural awareness, student learning experience.

Word Count: 2770 words (excluding tables and references)

Introduction (792 words)

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The current paper explores the use of two emerging assessment methods: the use of student-generated videos and intercultural group assessment as two innovative assessment approaches aimed at promoting Education for Social Justice (ESJ) in Higher Education (HE). In response to emerging active learning strategies, business school lecturers are asking students to produce videos instead of boring written assignments (i.e. reports), as learners often complain that they (i.e. international students) are disadvantaged when their performance in a module is judged solely on their writing skills. The learning benefits of multimodal video production are manifold, especially in management education, where students need to develop various professional skills, i.e. effective communication and interpersonal skills. Video production promotes critical thinking and problem solving, encourages collaboration and negotiation among team members, and promotes interaction and engagement among all learners regardless of their backgrounds, thus promoting inclusion (Schultz et al., 2014). In addition, when management students create videos as a form of assessment, they develop digital literacy, which is a valuable skill for business leaders.

The availability of simple digital technology, such as free video editing software (iMovie) and video-enabled devices (iPads), now allows us to easily incorporate video production as a learning and assessment tool. To improve student engagement, critical thinking, collaboration and deeper learning in undergraduate Business Management (BM) courses, an innovative and powerful assessment technique using student-generated videos was designed, piloted and implemented. The student-generated videos replaced traditional report/essay writing and had a stronger focus on research, data analysis, reflection, critical thinking, creativity and application of theory to practice. The researcher invited students to use existing BM diversity management theories in the BM classroom and to prepare their videos using an innovative video assessment strategy. The student-generated videos were designed to encourage critical thinking, collaborative learning, negotiation, creativity, research and student engagement with BM diversity issues. It is widely accepted that assessment of learning is a critical component of education and that assessment guides student learning by shaping study habits and approaches to learning (Earl, 2012). Consequently, improved design, piloting and implementation of effective and innovative assessment techniques is expected to lead to improved academic performance and enhance student motivation in higher education.

In addition, group assessment, which invites students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to work together, remains a controversial issue in higher education institutions (HEI). In the UK, HEIs are increasingly focusing on internationalisation and the simultaneous use of English as a medium of instruction (Strauss and Young, 2011). As such, there is a need for departments to undertake curriculum reform to reflect the diverse student populations and needs (Leask, 2009). This is particularly evident in higher education in the UK, where international student numbers have increased significantly due to the influx of European and overseas students over the last two decades. This paper reports on an investigation of students' perceptions and experiences of intercultural group assessment, combined with video as a form of assessment, where group members come from culturally and linguistically diverse

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backgrounds, in the context of a UK university. More specifically, the study focuses on learners' perceptions of similarity or difference and related behaviours that may support or challenge intercultural interaction, learning and ESJ.

Many researchers have previously explored students' perceptions of intercultural group work, discussing the cultural, linguistic and pedagogical opportunities offered by the interaction involved, but also the challenges students often face when engaging in this learning opportunity. Students in higher education seem to be divided in their attitudes towards this innovative teaching and assessment method. There are students who see no point in engaging in such activities, believing that they are not successful and do not reflect what happens in the workplace (Strauss and U, 2007). However, other students have highlighted the benefits of teamwork as it engages them in authentic teamwork, negotiation and problem solving, preparing them for their involvement in large multinational companies where they are likely to work as part of large multicultural and multilingual teams (Montgomery, 2009).

Similarly, lecturers see teamwork as merely a trend (Strauss and U, 2007), whereas others have pointed out that it can be beneficial for learners by increasing interaction, commitment and interpersonal skills (Joyce and Elliot, 2007). Scholars also claim that learners can gain more benefits when they engage in intercultural group work voluntarily and unintentionally. In summary, the current study will examine the impact of student-produced video assessment and intercultural group assessment on BM undergraduate students' attitudes towards learning and assessment, to unravel the benefits and challenges of these two methods, and to provide insights into students' views on the use of these two approaches in undergraduate HE classrooms to enhance student motivation and promote social justice for all students, including low-achieving, neurodiverse and international students.

Research focus, rationale and questions (206 words)

BM students in higher education are expected to develop a wide range of skills, including problem solving, creative thinking, digital literacy, collaboration and negotiation. However, many BM graduates lack these skills and may struggle to find a career-enhancing position. As BM educators, it is vital to improve our students' academic performance, but also to develop their communication skills, flexibility and patience, and to encourage deeper learning through assessment. The current study explored how the use of student-generated digital videos and intercultural group assessment can support undergraduate students both in terms of promoting sustainable learning and developing their digital skills, but also in terms of providing emotional support and a sense of community when they are at risk of isolation as international or multicultural students. Finally, it aimed to explore the perceived benefits and challenges that BM students faced when using these innovative assessment strategies in their classes. Based on the findings of this study, a number of recommendations are made on how university lecturers can support their local and international multicultural students and promote sustainable learning and development to transform the student learning experience in business schools.

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Research Methods (422 words)

A mixed-methods, semi-experimental design was used to investigate the perceived impact of group use of student-generated videos using their padlets (iMovie) and intercultural group assessment on 180 undergraduate BM students (volunteers - randomly selected). The students attended one 3-hour session per week as part of a module and were asked to prepare a video in groups of 4 students (at least 1 local in each group) in week 8 (12 weeks in the academic term) as one of the two assignments [video (40% of the overall grade) and written (60% of the overall grade) in week 12] they had to submit. They were also asked to write a short reflective report to capture how they worked together as a multicultural and multilingual team. Student focus group data was collected to provide a more in-depth exploration and qualitative triangulation (Stake, 2005) with the findings from the student reports. Qualitative data from student focus groups and student reports were analysed by the researcher using QSR NVivo 9. The researcher analysed all data using thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017) to identify patterns in the data and used these themes to inform the research. She also had an assistant who analysed 10% of the data, which was randomly selected to increase the reliability of the analysis. The researcher and her assistant identified and agreed upon themes that addressed the research questions of this study.

Students attending most Western higher education institutions are more burdened than at any time in history. Students are trying to cope with significant financial pressures, working part-time or full-time to survive, and trying to study at the same time. Many of them also have caring responsibilities (Goldrick-Rab and Stommel, 2018). There has been a worrying increase in the incidence of mental health problems worldwide, particularly in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic (Oswalt et al., 2020), particularly among first-year students, women, older students and those who do not identify as heterosexual. The latter cohort in particular are at significant risk of feeling minoritised and excluded (Yang et al., 2021). Traditional methods of teaching and assessment in higher education do not meet the needs of this diversity. The questions that we, as HE educators and educational researchers, must seek to answer are many.

The main aim of the current study was to answer the following research questions:

- What are undergraduate BM students' perceptions of student-generated video as an assessment method that promotes ESJ?
- What are undergraduate BM students' perceptions of intercultural group assessment as an assessment method that promotes ESJ?

Preliminary analysis and initial findings from phase one (917 words)

All students who participated in this study were required to write a report reflecting on their experiences with video and intercultural group work as forms of assessment. They also took

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part in regular focus group discussions in which they discussed their challenges and highlighted the benefits they gained from their experience. Finally, they offered suggestions for improvement to their lecturer, who wanted to ensure that their voices were heard.

Students' attitudes towards video as a form of assessment that promotes social justice

Students enjoyed using video as an assessment technique because they felt it developed their critical thinking. The public nature of the assignment forced students to consider the issues and benefits associated with the responsible use of information. In their reports, they discussed several examples of this decision-making process during group and class discussions, as students made decisions about how to include information and clips or parts of interviews in their videos.

Students also noted that video production was a valuable way to engage and prepare them to become advocates for social justice. For example, it encouraged them to 'construct their own public language for participating in and shaping public discourse' (Lens, 2002, p. 51). Because of their radically public nature, videos are an extension of this skill. When students met, they made a series of compositional choices and edited from existing videos, images and ideas to produce a coherent argument about, for example, the place of different corporate diversity policies in public discourse. It follows that the students who created the videos took an active role in understanding how videos and documentaries can influence change in business management. Students also noted that, as members of a team with students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, they were able to reflect on their own practices and recognise the benefits that diversity can bring to teams and organisations.

Students were also able to engage with the materials in a personal way, which led to a better understanding of the subject and the ability to connect people to the policies (Chapin, 2010). Experts suggest that video can be a particularly effective pedagogical tool due to its ability to humanise abstract theories and debates (Belk et al., 2018), and students saw this happening in the class presentation. The videos generated a rich conversation within the class about the diversity management policies of various prestigious companies. They would not have engaged in a similar way if they had only read articles and prepared a traditional - sometimes monotonous - written report.

However, some students (i.e. mature students) found the whole process challenging. They were able to overcome their challenges by receiving support from their peers as well as from their tutors. In the end, they were grateful for the opportunity to improve their digital skills and learn so much about diversity management. They were also very proud of their final results.

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Students' attitudes towards intercultural group assessment that promotes EDI and social justice

In relation to their work and assessment as members of an intercultural group, the students initially indicated that they preferred to work with members from similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds due to the 'language and 'culture' barrier, but as they engaged in the intercultural group work they realised the benefits of working as part of a diverse group and emphasised how important it was for them to develop their intercultural awareness, negotiation and tolerance as they would be expected to work in multinational groups in the future as business managers. One of the main reasons they had chosen to study this BM degree was to secure a career-enhancing position in a prestigious multinational company. Domestic students seemed to be even more aware of this need, as they could not speak another language well and were not involved in working in multicultural groups. However, some local students noted that international students used to work in their own language because they could not understand local students who spoke so fast. They also lacked the confidence to express themselves in English. Local students recognised this as they had to find a way to work together and develop the skills necessary to work harmoniously with other members of a diverse team.

Some local students also noticed that international students did not know the English language and did not know the conventions of academic writing. This meant that local students had to support them and spend a lot of time in peer mentoring. They also felt that some international students brought cultural elements into the team, e.g. a Greek student wanted to take the initiative and be a leader, as men in their country tend to be leaders in the house. However, the students were able to work out their differences as they needed to in order to complete their task. They concluded that this reflected the reality of their future workplace.

In conclusion, the results of the current study showed that the students enjoyed their involvement in video and intercultural group work as assessment methods because they found them interesting. They were able to develop various professional skills and prepare themselves and their peers to become successful business managers by being more tolerant, embracing diversity and promoting inclusion for all students regardless of their backgrounds, tastes, needs and preferences. They faced many challenges, but felt that they had only grown stronger and learned valuable lessons that would help them in their future careers.

Theoretical contribution, practical significance and implications

- Implications for research (54 words)

The study was limited in its focus on students' perceptions of the two assessment methods. Although perception appears to be a strong predictor of which assessment techniques students find beneficial to their learning and academic success, further research is needed to explore the impact of these two assessment techniques on student performance and motivation.

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- Implications for practice (631 words)

The current study enabled the researcher to observe the implementation of video and intercultural group assessment and to explore students' perceptions of these two innovative approaches. As some students (i.e. mature students) faced several challenges due to their underdeveloped IT skills, we believe that lecturers should make use of equipment and training services available from their campus libraries or digital technology centres. They should also provide support through academic mentors, teaching assistants and success coaches who can help these learners develop their digital skills outside the classroom.

Students should also be encouraged to collaborate when using digital learning resources in libraries (Silfen and Zgoda, 2008). If class assignments link students with librarians or academic mentors, the work will enhance these relationships and provide students with opportunities to learn advanced information literacy and research skills. Campus libraries should also have a digital media lab with video cameras, computers with editing software, audio recording equipment, and staff willing and equipped to assist students. Lecturers can also ask for help from their library services. Many university libraries offer face-to-face or online classes or workshops on software, social media platforms and equipment available in the library. They also have video presentations and podcasts that students can use asynchronously. It is invaluable to have at least one class session in the library or online with instruction from library staff. This will reinforce the importance of these relationships and help students to identify who to contact for help and how to navigate the library system. Teachers should build time into the course for students to complete their research, gather and create their content, and design their video presentations. Ideally, the assignment will be discussed from the first day of the course and the teacher will include soft deadlines for different components of the project. This will force students to check in with the teacher, library staff and each other throughout the composition process.

As part of the check-in process, encourage students to reflect on and revise their video with an eye to their future role as advocates/consultants. Once students have a draft product, meet with each student group to review how they have framed their argument using empirical evidence, language and values (Greenbank, 2003). Also emphasise the importance of the public element of the video. By creating a public advocacy video, students contribute to an existing body of knowledge that benefits the profession as a whole, and they create a public identity for themselves that links them to the professional world (Jarvis, 2011). They also provide valuable feedback to the organisation, its leadership team and staff. The lecturer also encouraged the students to submit their video projects for presentation at the local campus-wide research conference and to share them with the HR managers of the respective organisations.

This study of students' perceptions of intercultural group assessment highlighted the impact of othering on students' choices and actions regarding group membership, and how group composition influences group activity and assessed performance. The finding that most domestic students preferred to work with students from the same cultural background initially

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supports the conclusion that those who benefit most from intercultural group work are those who appear to avoid it the most (Strauss, et al., 2011; Summers and Volet 2008). Although previous researchers have found that both international and domestic students avoid intercultural group work (Volet and Ang 1998), most international students with English as a second language in this study preferred intercultural group assessment. They stated that their main reason for coming to the UK was to meet new people, their cultures and ideas. This further supports that those with previous intercultural experience are more likely to engage in further intercultural cooperation (Summers and Volet 2008) and that domestic students tended to avoid it, at least initially (Cousin, 2012). These students were later convinced that they needed to develop their intercultural awareness by engaging in group work and solving any problems they encountered. This supports Montgomery's (2009) claim that there was a shift in students' attitudes towards valuing cultural diversity, probably due to this new assessment technique.

The lecturer was always present to listen to the students and to help them solve any problems they had with their participation in the group work. She used various awareness-raising activities and process-based requirements such as group contracts. Thus, the lecturer needs to explore students' previous experiences and help them to identify and eliminate their biases before engaging in group work. However, more research is needed to explore whether awareness-raising activities can reduce the influence of commonly held stereotypes and improve students' experience of intercultural group assessment.

In addition, teachers should find a way to assess both the product and the process of the assessment process and avoid assessing students' writing skills only through predominantly summative assessment tasks. Both formative and summative types of assessment for learning should be used to support peer learning/mentoring and to promote social justice for all students, including low-achieving and neurodiverse students (Montgomery, 2009; Carroll and Li, 2008).

Discussion and further development (192 words)

The current study has explored the use of video and intercultural group work as innovative forms of assessment that can promote social justice in multilingual and multicultural undergraduate classes in higher education. Although there are important benefits for students preparing a video as an innovative form of assessment, further research is needed to adequately assess student learning outcomes. Future research could include quantitative surveys to assess knowledge acquisition and qualitative methods to explore the process of video assessment preparation from the students' perspective. There are more opportunities to assess video within the curriculum of an MBA programme, linking the assignment and assessment to digital and social media literacy and core skills in other courses. Developing a course around video preparation is a departure from traditional modes of learning, but an important response to the profound cognitive shifts of students in the digital age (Tyner, 2014). Video assessment engages students and prepares them to be advocates for social justice. As students acquire knowledge of business management theories, in this case diversity management, they face the multifaceted challenge of providing information about a theory and potentially engaging in

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public discussion about its application in practice. Multimodal video preparation is a pedagogical shift based on constructivist learning theories that encourage collaboration and interaction between students. Video assessment addresses identified gaps in management pedagogy and allows students to gain valuable digital skills.

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