

Supporting students to become critical self-reflectors to enhance their competencies for the workplace

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What was the research aim?

To explore what final year BSc Public Health & Health Promotion students' views were in relation to critical self-reflection (CSR) of their assessed facilitated brief intervention workshops.

Introduction

When entering university, one of the most important challenges that students face is the fact that they have moved away from instructor-based learning to a more self-directed, independent learning style¹ According to Rusche & Jason (2011)²:

"critical self-reflection not only improves students' critical thinking skills but also helps students develop self-knowledge. . [It] compels students to interrogate their beliefs and perspectives on reality by acknowledging how they influence, and are influenced by, their social realities". (pp. 339-340)

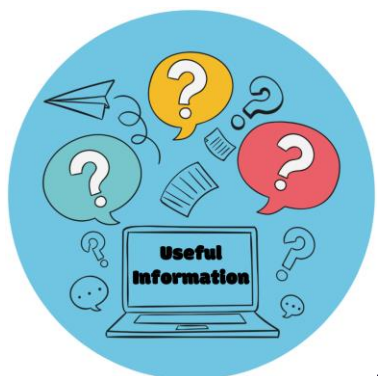
How was 'student voice' captured?

Students conducted assessed topic-based health promotion brief intervention workshops for a final year module entitled 'Topics in Health Promotion'. Consenting students' views on participation in critical self-reflections post assessment was evaluated. Critical self-reflection (CSR) refers to the process of questioning one's own assumption, presuppositions, and meaning perspectives³.

Student views were gathering using the 'Mentimeter' app allowing for student anonymity. All responses were transcribed verbatim, and analysis was conducted using Braun & Clarke's Six Step Thematic Analysis Framework⁴.

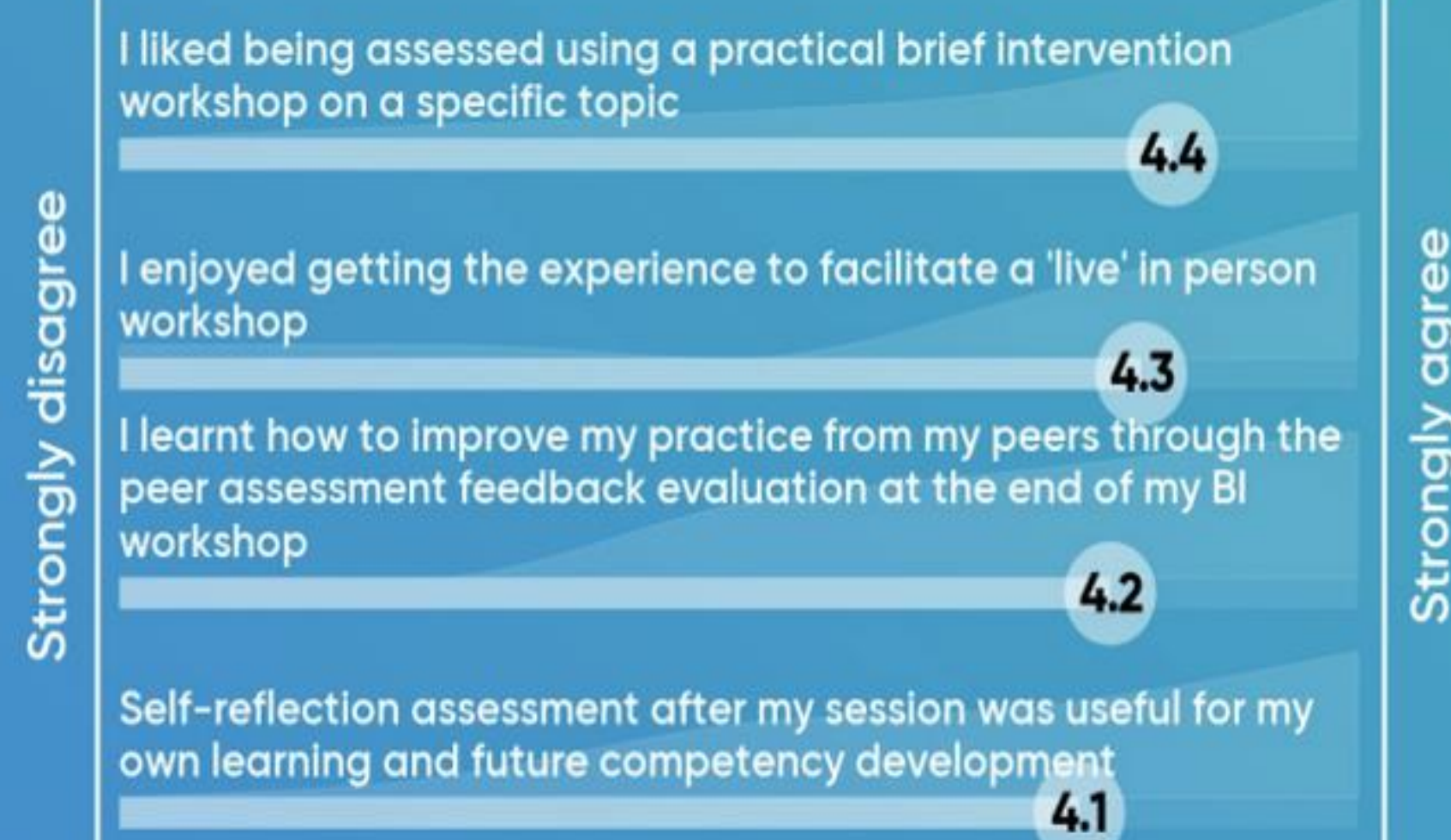
Results/Findings: Giving students a 'voice' in their own learning

Students' Perceptions of Critical Self-Reflection



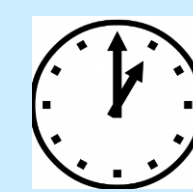
89.5% Found CSR useful

10.5% Did not find CSR useful



The two core themes that emerged were....

Time to reflect



Enhanced learning



Findings: What did students really think of critical self-reflection of their brief intervention workshops?

It was useful since it made me learn where 'stuff' should be improved for my learning....

Yes, it was good to reflect because it can feel very rushed in the moment, and you forget how it went so it was good to have the time to reflect and remember....

n=19
Final Year BSc
Public Health & Health
Promotion students
ATU, Ireland

Yes, after doing the workshop you begin to think what if I done this...should have done that. It gets you thinking afterwards

Yes, it was nice to sit down and reflect on my assessment

Being a Reflective Educational Practitioner.....

What's next?

- Binks and his colleagues (2022) outlined that formally and regularly identifying learning deficits, students may be more capable of addressing them and improve performance⁵.
- The power and importance of metacognitive thinking as developed by CSR cannot be underestimated:

"learning begins with metacognition, knowing one's own thoughts and reflection, which allows the individual to identify factors that influence one's own thinking" (p. 1)⁶

- The future of health promotion delivery will inevitably involve CSR of ones' competencies and facilitatory performances – being able to self-appraise oneself critically and constructively takes time but ultimately is a rewarding and positive part of becoming the 'best' health promotion practitioner one can be!
- Developing mechanisms to allow students to CSR more routinely throughout the semester will enhance this process.

The last word.....

Developing college students' critical thinking through reflective writing (with CSR being central to this process) shows that four prevalent changes may occur in students: self-worth, volunteerism, patience and gratefulness⁷ – now that must be a positive outcome!

Interested in reading more on this area?

1. HEA & QAA (2015) Effective practice in the design of directed independent learning. Available at: [Effective practice in the design of directed independent learning opportunities | Advance HE \(advance-he.ac.uk\)](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/effective-practice)
2. Rusche, S. N., & Jason, K. (2011). "You Have to Absorb Yourself in It": Using Inquiry and Reflection to Promote Student Learning and Self-knowledge. *Teaching Sociology*, 39(4), 338–353. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092055X11418685>
3. Mezirow, J (2006) An overview of transformative learning. In P Sutherland and J Crowther (Eds), *Lifelong learning: Concepts and contexts* (pp 24-38): New York: Routledge
4. Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3:2, 77-101, DOI: [10.1191/1478088706qp0630a](https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a)
5. Andrew P. Binks, R. Brock Mutcherson, Emily M. Holt & Renée J. LeClair (2022) A Simple and Sustainable Exercise to Enhance Student Self-Reflection on Error-Making, Focus Support, and Guide Curricular Design, *Teaching and Learning in Medicine*, DOI: [10.1080/10401334.2022.2033981](https://doi.org/10.1080/10401334.2022.2033981)
6. Colley, Binta M; Bilics, Andrea R. and Lerch, Carol M. (2012) "Reflection: A Key Component to Thinking Critically," *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*: Vol. 3: Issue. 1, Article 2. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2012.1.2> Available at: http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cjsotl_rcacea/vol3/iss1/
7. Hui-Chin Yeh, Shih-hsien Yang, Jo Shan Fu & Yen-Chen Shih (2022) Developing college students' critical thinking through reflective writing, *Higher Education Research & Development*, DOI: [10.1080/07294360.2022.2043247](https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2043247)