

Empowering Autonomy: Exploring Students' Perceptions of Peer and Self-Assessment in Self-Regulated Learning

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Abstract

The success of peer and self-assessment is heavily dependent on the students who actively participate in the assessment processes. It is, therefore, very necessary to consciously consider their preferences, choices, and levels of readiness in order to enhance the effectiveness of these strategies. In this qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study, a criterion sampling technique was employed to select 15 Ghanaian students to explore their perspectives on both self-assessment and peer assessment. The findings of the study indicate that students view peer and self-assessment as beneficial for (a) fostering learner responsibility and ownership; (b) enhancing learning engagement despite time constraints; (c) deepening insight into the assessment process; and (d) building assessment literacy and diagnosing learning needs. In addition, students acknowledged that peer and self-assessment encouraged them to become more reflective, improved their ability to give and receive constructive feedback, and strengthened their collaboration and interpersonal skills. The study's conclusions suggest that teachers should encourage students to participate more actively in peer and self-assessment activities. When carefully guided, such practices not only improve academic performance but also foster sustainable assessment, self-regulated learning, and the development of lifelong learning skills essential for success in higher education and beyond.

Introduction

In educational systems around the world, student-regulated methods of instruction, learning, and assessment are becoming more and more popular. It is often acknowledged that assessment plays a crucial role in determining students' values and study habits (Boud, 1990; Carless, 2022). Boud (1990) asserted that assessment has two interrelated functions: it enhances learning quality and certifies performance or knowledge. The distinction between formative assessment, which attends to students' immediate learning requirements, and summative assessment, which assesses success at the conclusion of instruction for social accountability, reflects these two goals. However, students must actively participate in the process for assessment to support learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Wiliam, 2021). Peer assessment (PA) and self-assessment (SA) are two alternative methodologies that have been highlighted as ways to encourage student agency, responsibility, and reflection in this context (Sambell & McDowell, 1998; Etsey & Gyamfi, 2017; Andrade & Brookhart, 2020; Yan & Brown, 2023).

The learner-centred education paradigm, which transfers accountability from teachers to students, serves as the foundation for peer and self-assessment. According to Logan (2009), these strategies help students become more adept at critical and reflective reasoning and boost their confidence as collaborators, learners, and assessors. Peer and self-assessment are essential parts of higher education because they help students develop transferable abilities that go beyond academic content. Self-assessment is the term used to describe how students evaluate their own performance or abilities, frequently based on how well they believe they are able to apply their knowledge and skills in various circumstances (Mousavi, 2012; Panadero et al., 2016; Yan, 2022). In contrast, peer assessment is students assessing the performance or work of peers who are comparable to them in order to ascertain

its quality, worth, or accomplishment (Topping, 2009). Peer assessment can offer external standards for self-reflection, and vice versa, thus even though the two processes are different, they are connected. When combined, they strengthen engagement, encourage accountability, and strengthen the idea that students may guide their education to reach more ambitious objectives (Yorke & Longden, 2004; Seifert & Feliks, 2019; Yan & Brown, 2023).

The beneficial effects of peer and self-assessment on student learning are supported by a substantial body of research. According to studies, these techniques foster a self-regulated learning environment where students not only finish assignments but also edit and polish them in accordance with clear standards (Cheng & Warren, 2005; De Grez, Valcke, & Roozen, 2012; Kearney, 2013; Harris & Brown, 2018; Andrade & Brookhart, 2020). Peer feedback improves students' comprehension of assessment criteria, fosters deeper learning, and motivates thoughtful reflection on one's own performance (Logan, 2009; Carless & Winstone, 2023). According to De Grez and colleagues (2012) and Double, McGrane, and Hopfenbeck, (2020), students who participated in peer evaluation saw noticeable gains in their learning outcomes. Peer assessment has been associated with more favourable attitudes towards learning, more motivation, and increased self-confidence in addition to academic advantages (Planas Lladó et al., 2013; Topping, 1998; Double, et al., 2020). Additionally, self-assessment has been linked to increased problem-solving skills, judgement accuracy, and learning ownership (Boud & Falchikov, 1989; Dochy, Segers, & Sluijsmans, 1999; Harris & Brown, 2018). Specifically, by assisting students in recognising their knowledge gaps and locating relevant resources, self-assessment promotes metacognitive development. Peer and self-assessment have been commended for their inclusivity and empowerment in addition to their cognitive and academic advantages. Self-assessment, according to Bourke and Mentis (2011), guarantees that students' opinions are heard when making decisions regarding their education, increasing access to worthwhile learning opportunities. This is consistent with Topping's (2003) focus on presenting students as active participants in their education as opposed to passive learners. As students grow less reliant on outside opinions, this type of involvement eventually promotes learner autonomy and the ability to pursue lifelong learning (Topping, 2003; Winstone et al., 2022).

Notwithstanding these advantages, the literature regularly mentions difficulties and restrictions. Students occasionally voice concerns about the fairness or competency of their peers, raising questions about the authenticity and veracity of peer criticism (Boud & Holmes, 1995; Wen & Tsai, 2006; Andrade & Brookhart, 2020). Students may overmark classmates to avoid conflict or disparage them for personal reasons, which can lead to issues of grade inflation or deflation (Vickerman, 2009). Additionally, students could find it difficult to consistently apply evaluation criteria without enough instruction, which could lead to inaccurate assessments (Topping, 2009). If self-assessment isn't scaffolded by teacher guidance, the hazards of overconfidence or self-criticism can undermine accuracy and restrict its usefulness (Boud & Falchikov, 1989; Yan, 2022). Another drawback is that earlier research focused too much on comparing teacher and student ratings to confirm reliability rather than examining the wider developmental effects of peer and self-assessment (Topping, 1998; Andrade, 2019). Although these analogies are helpful, they run the risk of ignoring the main goal of these tactics, which is to promote introspection, accountability, and a deeper level of learning engagement. Formative uses of peer and self-assessment are especially

beneficial since they promote active engagement without the stress that comes with summative grading, as Logan (2009) noted. Formative use can help students better understand how learning objectives, instructional content, and assessment tasks align when it is properly integrated (Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2002; Vu & Dall'Alba, 2007; Wong, 2017; Yan et al., 2020). When considered collectively, the literature shows that self-assessment and peer evaluation have great potential but also need to be used carefully. Training, precise standards, and encouraging classroom settings that allay students' fears and maintain equity are essential for success. More importantly, since students' willingness to actively participate impacts how effective these tactics are, it is imperative to understand their perceptions.

Although there is a great deal of research, the most of it comes from Western and Asian contexts, where resource availability, cultural values, and educational traditions are very different from those in Africa. Higher education in Ghana is changing, with a greater focus on learner-centred and interactive methods. However, the institutional and cultural characteristics of Ghanaian institutions, such as resource limitations, exam-driven systems, and hierarchical teacher-student relationships, may have an impact on how students view and interact with peer and self-assessment. Nevertheless, empirical studies that examine the viewpoints of Ghanaian students are scarce. This difference is crucial because the benefits and concerns identified in other regions may not be easily translated into the Ghanaian context. The current study seeks to fill this gap by investigating Ghanaian students' perspectives of peer and self-assessment as methods for improving learning. By setting the analysis within Ghana's higher education system, the study hopes to add context-specific insights to the larger discussion on sustainable and student-regulated assessment processes. The findings will help to shape policy and practice in Ghana and elsewhere, promoting reflective, independent, and lifelong learning.

Literature review

Students' Perceptions of Peer and Self-Assessment

Students reported feeling more confident and knowledgeable about the subject matter after participating in peer assessment procedures that involved marking essays or written assignments. They also recognised the complexities involved in assessing their own and their peers' work. Vickerman's (2009) study, which examined the opinions and experiences of ninety-nine level-two undergraduate athletes, supported this view. It involved two annotated bibliographies being assessed formatively by peers. The study demonstrated that students occasionally participated in a mentally demanding task that deepens their comprehension of the subject at hand when they assess their classmates' work. Approximately 60% of students believed that their assessments, as well as those of their peers, had given them a better understanding of the formative assessment process.

The 48 participants in Falchikov's (2005) study believed that peer and self-assessment required them to think more critically, learn more effectively, and be more organised than specific tutor-based assessments. Peer, self, and teacher assessments of essays were paired with formative and summative experiences for the study's participants. Falchikov (2005) stated that having an outline to help with essay

writing and being more aware of the advantages of reading a peer's essay are two features that stand out the most. To validate the findings of earlier research, Hanrahan and Isaacs (2001) conducted a study on students' perceptions of their own and their peers' assessments. Five (5) of the 233 students were registered in a third-year tertiary health psychology course, and their assessments consisted of a 1,500-word study paper. More information about the advantages and disadvantages students see in peer and self-assessment is available in Hanrahan and Isaacs' (2001) qualitative research. Based on inductive content analysis, these authors evaluated students' perspectives. They identified eight main dimensions: difficulty, improved understanding of marking, discomfort, productivity, implementation issues, reading other people's work, empathy development, and motivation. Hung (2019) and Lindblom-Ylänne, Pihlajamäki, and Kotkas (2006), who engaged 15 law students in a formative activity focused on peer and self-assessment of essays, corroborated these findings. Although it was challenging for students to critique a peer, they generally considered the peer and self-assessment process to be effective. They believed that peers provided a fair assessment of their essay (Gyamfi et al., 2022).

After outlining the advantages, the authors discuss how self- and peer assessment could be viewed negatively. Students have complained about the lack of impartiality in assessments made by their peers and how this kind of assessment has harmed their relationships with peers in many instances (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001; Kearney & Perkins, 2014; Lindblom-Ylänne, Pihlajamäki & Kotkas, 2006; Andrade, 2019). According to a study conducted at the University of Málaga in Spain with 340 students enrolled in different degree courses and four distinct subjects, students were expected to self- and peer-assess their solutions to practical exercises and issues as part of a formative and summative peer-assessment process, they occasionally also perceive a disadvantage in their inability to present a defence of their work to the assessor (Kearney & Perkins, 2014; Andrade, 2019). Students who have engaged in peer and self-assessment essay activities have also brought attention to the challenge of this kind of work (Brown & Harris, 2013; Winstone et al., 2022). Moreover, there is often a discrepancy between students' assessment favourites and their views on the suitability of peer assessment. Topping (2009) observed in his study of peer and self-assessment that students' acceptance of these methods is not influenced by their understanding of the proven validity and reliability of the assessments. Their interaction with their peer and self-assessment colleagues is one of the most crucial factors. Students often adjust their grades based on the situation and their interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, during the entire procedure, their perception may alter.

Adopted from Ndoye (2017)

According to Ndoye (2017), students' perceptions of peer and self-assessment mechanisms enhanced their learning through feedback, collaboration, and a supportive learning environment. These mechanisms should not be viewed as distinct from one another or as separate from the processes that students appear to use to develop a sense of accountability for their learning. Instead, it is essential to view them as all being interdependent and interconnected. Put another way, in a supportive learning environment, each participant values collaboration and sees themselves as a resource for their peers.

This will determine whether or not they are willing and eager to seek feedback. Similarly, students' perceptions of a supportive learning environment are influenced by the provision of feedback and the community's capacity to work together and support one another. Collaboration willingness also depends on one's sense and conviction that other community members are eager to aid and support one's educational endeavours. Students' feelings of accountability for their learning may also grow as a result of these mechanisms working well together. In turn, attitudes towards utilising the so-called resources will be influenced by this sense of accountability for one's education.

Methods

Design and approach

To capture the core of a phenomenon by examining it from the viewpoint of individuals who have directly practised it, a qualitative transcendental phenomenological method was employed in this investigation. (Teherani et al. 2015). In this case, the phenomenon under investigation was students' perceptions of themselves and peers' assessments. When attempting to comprehend "how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others," Patton (2002) contended that a phenomenological approach is suitable (p.104). The most suitable qualitative design to employ was a transcendental phenomenological approach since the objective of the study is to understand students' perceptions of peer and self-assessment.

Participants and sampling

To choose students as respondents, the authors employed the purposive criterion sampling technique. The authors identified and selected participants who had knowledge of or experience with the phenomenon of interest, specifically peer and self-assessment, using the purposive criterion sampling technique (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The purposive criterion sampling technique was employed in addition to knowledge and experience, due to the participants' willingness and availability, as well as their ability to express their insights and experiences in a clear, expressive, and meaningful manner. A total of fifteen students (15) representing various demographic groups were chosen from one Ghanaian college of education, Wesley College of Education. A summary of the participants, along with some important demographic data, is included in Fig. 2.

Instrument

The authors conducted an in-depth, unstructured, open-ended individual interviews with participants, based on their availability, to discuss their experiences with self- and peer assessments. The authors asked a question in the individual interviews to get the participants to think carefully about how they assess themselves and their peers. The authors wanted to know how the participants felt about the extent to which they thought their own and their peers' assessments helped them learn. The individual

interviews lasted an average of 25 minutes. To achieve validity and reliability of the interview guide, the authors sort the trustworthiness, credibility, consistency/dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the interview guide used for the study.

Data analysis

Transcripts of the interviews were entered into the qualitative analysis programme MAXQDA Analytics pro-2022. The same 15 interview transcripts, representing 67% of the total dataset, were independently examined by the authors using a general classification approach based on our primary areas of concentration. To review and classify the data, each of the first analysts followed a standardised process that involved reading and rereading the transcripts. This procedure was carried out to enhance the validity and dependability of the coding. As recommended by Cohen's kappa, the authors examined, assessed, compared, and calculated the inter-coder reliability of the coding strategy. Based on Cohen's kappa, the inter-coder reliability was determined to be 0.72, indicating good agreement between the authors' rating and coding (Landis & Koch, 1977). The authors also applied the coding system to analyse the entire data set.

Ethical issues

The college of education that was chosen for the study gave its ethical approval for this investigation. Furthermore, the authors obtained students' permission before conducting interviews and informed participants of their right to retire from the study when they so wish. The authors also made sure that participants' data privacy and confidentiality were upheld. No outside party was able to hear the participants' voices on tape because the consent was audio-captured. The information gathered was only used for this study. Pseudonyms have been used to represent original names for privacy purposes. Strong passwords were used to safeguard the interview data during storage and transmission.

Findings

After the interview data had been analysed, four main themes emerged: (a) fostering learner responsibility and ownership; (b) enhancing learning engagement despite time constraints; (c) deepening insight into the assessment process; and (d) building assessment literacy and diagnosing learning needs.

Fostering learner responsibility and ownership

Fostering learner responsibility and ownership was the predominant perception that students in this study had with peer and self-assessment. Most students (n = 12) indicated that engaging in peer and self-assessment helps them understand their performance or abilities, highlights any shortcomings in their knowledge or areas of weakness, and informs their further learning. For example, two participants indicated;

“Through self-assessment, I get the chance to step back and evaluate my work more objectively. It’s a helpful way to become more aware of my strengths and weaknesses, and it makes me take more responsibility for my learning process.” (p. 10).

“When we assess ourselves, we see where we’ve gone wrong – and that matters. Teachers sometimes react like we should know everything already, but we’re not robots. Learning’s even harder when the teaching isn’t clear.” (p. 5)

Students acquire the skill of consistently assessing the calibre of their work to enable prompt and effective improvement through peer and self-assessment based on these responses. Allowing students to have an eye on their learning, not depending on teachers for feedback thereby giving them control of their learning, through peer and self-assessment, may also help them become more realistic about their performance.

Enhancing learning engagement despite time constraints

Students (n = 8) hoped to incorporate peer and self-assessment in their subsequent writing task, suggesting that while peer and self-assessments may require time, they both enhance students’ learning. Two participants said that;

“I think self-assessment really helps with learning. It makes me reflect on what I’ve learned in the course and how much I’ve progressed. Peer assessment is also useful because it helps point out mistakes I might have missed in my work or exams. The only downside is that both take quite a bit of time.” (p.4)

“I think peer and self-assessment make us pay more attention in class, since we know we’ll have to evaluate ourselves or others. But they can take time, especially because you need to really understand the task to assess it properly.” (p. 2)

While students expressed some doubts, their responses overall indicate a favourable view of using both peer and self-assessment in their assignments.

Deepening insight into the assessment process

Students (n = 10) indicated that peer and self-assessment helped them develop a deeper understanding of the assessment process. During peer and self-assessment, when students evaluated their work, they compared it with that of their peers. This helped them identify their weaknesses and provided them with many viewpoints and examples to help them improve their assignments. Students were pleased to have the opportunity to refine their assignments and expand their portfolios after this assessment, before submitting them in their final version. Two participants said that;

"It helps me become more aware of what skills and standards are actually being used to assess our work." (p. 5)

"It gives us a chance to actually practice evaluating assignments, which helps us better understand how grading works." (p. 7).

Peer and self-assessment, as described by students, serve as tools for active participation in the evaluation process. They not only improve students' understanding of assessment criteria and procedures but also develop essential skills in providing and accepting constructive feedback a critical component of lifelong learning.

Building assessment literacy and diagnosing learning needs

A group of students (n = 10) reported that engaging in peer and self-assessment contributed significantly to the development of their assessment skills. As their understanding of assessment criteria and expectations deepened, students found it easier to identify gaps in their learning and formulate targeted strategies for improvement. According to their reflections, these assessment practices enabled them to recognise specific weaknesses in their work and determine the necessary steps to address them. Four participants said that;

"The topics we assess are often similar, so once you've evaluated your own work, it becomes easier to assess someone else's." (p. 1).

"When we look at each other's work and point out what might be missing, it helps us think more critically. Getting feedback from peers gives us different points of view and helps us accept mistakes as part of learning." (p. 15)

"My classmates' feedback was really helpful. I made changes to my assignments after each peer review, and I think my work could've been even better if we had done more of them." (p. 13)

"Through peer and self-assessment, we were able to notice our own shortcomings and see how we could improve or approach things differently." (p. 9)

Through peer and self-assessment, students developed better assessment skills, became more aware of what they needed to improve, and learned how to find the right resources to support their learning as highlighted in their comments.

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Discussion

Regardless of the small sample size, the findings from the study contribute significantly to the growing body of research on peer and self-assessment in educational contexts. According to students' generally favourable opinions of these assessment techniques, they can be very useful instruments for encouraging learning, self-reflection, and responsibility if used properly. To successfully adopt such assessment methods, educators must have a thorough understanding of these perspectives. The study lays the groundwork for a more thorough investigation into how students perceive peer and self-evaluation about their education. According to the results, students generally had a positive opinion of peer and self-assessment, acknowledging its value in identifying areas that needed improvement, expanding their understanding of the evaluation process, encouraging accountability, and highlighting knowledge gaps. These results are consistent with earlier studies (Lew, Alwis, & Schmidt, 2010; Li, 2011; Planas Lladó et al., 2013; Zekarias, 2023), which highlight the benefits of such assessment strategies.

Students' appreciation of peer and self-assessment for recognising areas in need of development was one of the most significant results. This result is concordant with Panadero et al. (2016, 2017), who highlighted that these kinds of activities help students analyse their own and their peers' work critically, which improves self-control and metacognition. Similar to this, Dochy et al. (1999) contend that self- and

peer evaluations encourage a deeper engagement with learning objectives in addition to highlighting knowledge gaps. Students' appreciation of peer and self-assessment for deepening their comprehension of the evaluation process is another noteworthy finding. By participating in these assessments, students become active participants in the assessment cycle rather than passive recipients of the teacher's judgement. According to Kearney and Perkins (2014), this change helps students become more assessment literate by giving them the tools to evaluate quality and apply criteria, thereby preparing them for lifetime learning.

The results also highlight how self- assessment and assessment by peers promote responsibility and accountability. Students become more aware of their performance and more dedicated to delivering high-quality work when they are given the responsibility of evaluating themselves or their peers. This is in agreement to the findings of Li (2011) and Ndoye (2017), who noted that these methods foster a sense of autonomy and ownership in learning, which is crucial for student-centered education. Additionally, students acknowledged that self- and peer evaluations aid in identifying knowledge gaps, which lends credence to the notion that formative assessment is a feedback-rich process (Planas Lladó et al., 2013; Winstone et al., 2022). Learning becomes more focused and individualised when students use evaluation criteria to determine both what they already know and what they need to learn. Crucially, these results support Zekarias's (2023) observation that when peer and self-assessment are organised and directed by explicit rubrics or standards, students see them favourably. Without this kind of direction, kids can feel insecure or think these approaches are unjust. Therefore, how well teachers scaffold the process and prepare students for these roles is a major factor in the success of peer and self-assessment.

The findings also align with the conclusions of Sandvoll (2014) and Yan et al. (2020), indicating that the influence of peer and self-assessment on student learning is significantly contingent upon how these practices are introduced and facilitated. To enhance students' involvement in higher-order learning, this study employed a combination of peer and self-assessment as formative assessment techniques, also known as assessment for learning and assessment as learning. According to Nulty (2011), this method fosters the development of a cooperative learning environment, where education is viewed as a socially constructed process that relies on shared responsibility and active peer interaction. The self-regulated learning lens can also be used to analyse the study's findings. Self-directed learners actively initiate and manage their learning processes, in contrast to dependent learners who primarily rely on parents, teachers, or other authorities. These pupils assume personal responsibility for learning new information and abilities, as noted by Zimmerman (1989). These students possess self-regulated learning dispositions that enable them to identify their own learning needs and apply remedial measures effectively. Improved comprehension of the course objectives, growth in assessment literacy, and the ability to develop strategic plans to close identified learning gaps all contribute to this process. Students who exhibit self-regulation by controlling their motivation, conduct, and thought processes, as well as by reflecting on their learning objectives, typically perform better academically, according to Banarjee and Kumar (2014) and Yan and Brown (2023).

Peer and self-assessment are valuable tools in this context, enabling students to take charge of their education by recognising their areas of weakness, devising solutions, and working together with peers. This opinion was supported by study participants, who stated that these evaluation techniques helped them identify areas where their work needed improvement (Panadero et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2020). Ndoye (2017) continued to suggest that the study's findings might be interpreted through the lens of lifelong learning. These assessment procedures empower students to take charge of their education and foster their growth as self-sufficient, lifelong learners. Students gain important reflective and evaluative skills through self- and peer assessment, including problem identification, information gathering, analysis, judgment formation, and solution implementation. These skills are crucial for both academic success and dealing with real-world issues (Boud & Falchikov, 2006; Boud & Molloy, 2012; Dochy et al., 1999; Li & Zhang, 2020; Carless, 2022). This aligns with the concept of "sustainable assessment," as described by Boud (2000), which involves evaluation that supports current learning while also preparing students for future demands on their time (p. 151). As a result, peer and self-assessment are genuine and useful methods for encouraging lifelong learning. However, how well students participate in the process and how much both teachers and students embrace and respect these approaches will determine their effectiveness.

Conclusion and implications

This study expands on current research on peer and self-assessment by setting it in Ghana's higher education and teacher-training contexts, where empirical research has been sparse. While much of the research is based on Western and Asian educational contexts, this study offers context-specific insights into how Ghanaian students evaluate these practices in an exam-oriented and teacher-dominated culture. The findings show that Ghanaian students see peer and self-assessment as valuable methods for increasing their learning and reflection, as well as for developing autonomy, accountability, and critical feedback skills. Importantly, the study illustrates how these practices might increase assessment literacy among pre-service teachers, providing them with pedagogical methods to transmit to their future classrooms. By doing so, the study adds to the larger African debate on learner-centered assessment and provides evidence that peer and self-evaluation can facilitate long-term and participative learning even in resource-constrained settings. This study contributes significantly to worldwide research while immediately affecting policy and practice in Ghanaian higher education and teacher education.

According to Bruner (1966) Carless and Winstone (2023), learning is essentially an interactive process in which students build upon their existing and past knowledge to create new ideas and concepts. Because students passively listen and respond without properly applying new information, learning often remains superficial. Since higher-order thinking requires active mental effort, many students tend to avoid it. Peer and self-assessment, on the other hand, are effective instruments for promoting deeper cognitive engagement, inspiring students to exercise critical thinking and apply what they have learnt in relevant circumstances. These evaluation procedures foster reciprocal interdependence rather than reliance and independence, promoting in-depth learning and teamwork.

Students have expressed concerns about inconsistent evaluation practices, despite this potential. The results of this study support the concept of sustainable assessment, indicating that teachers must continually incorporate peer and self-evaluation into their teaching practices to promote lifelong learning skills (Tavsanli & Kara, 2021; Yan & Brown, 2023). Teachers must make a conscious effort to create learning environments where collaboration is valued and group projects are encouraged to achieve this goal. Additionally, teachers must carefully plan processes and activities that promote collaborative learning if they want to optimise the advantages of peer and self-assessment. The calibre of the input these tests produce is a crucial part of this procedure. Setting precise and unambiguous standards for useful feedback is crucial. By doing this, students are better equipped to work together, grow as individuals, and assume greater responsibility for their own education.

Although the favourable results are clear, the limited sample size means that care must be taken when interpreting these findings. It's possible that the opinions offered don't adequately represent the variety of experiences found in various settings, academic levels, or fields. Additionally, studies (Lew et al., 2010; Yan & Brown, 2023) have highlighted difficulties including presumption, a lack of objectivity, and uneasiness when assessing peers. These issues were not particularly represented in this study, but they could still be drawbacks of such approaches. However, the results provide a crucial basis for further investigation. Larger-scale research might examine if such favourable opinions are true in a variety of educational contexts and how students' attitudes are influenced by cultural background, topic matter, and teacher preparation.

Originality statement

This study contributes significantly to the subject of assessment in higher education by investigating Ghanaian students' perceptions on peer and self-assessment using a transcendental phenomenological approach. While prior research has shown that peer and self-assessment can improve student accountability, reflection, and engagement, few studies have looked at these practices in Ghana's higher education context. This work is unique in that it is contextualised and draws on students lived experiences to provide nuanced insights into how assessment techniques are seen, implemented, and valued in non-western educational contexts. The study uses criterion sampling to involve 15 students, capturing authentic perspectives that give information on the cultural and institutional variables influencing attitudes towards peer and self-assessment. The findings add to current information by addressing not just the well acknowledged benefits of responsibility, engagement, and assessment literacy, but also the challenges of time restrictions, preparation, and the need for cautious facilitation by teachers. This study is unique in that it focusses on long-term assessment techniques that promote self-regulated and lifelong learning, highlighting peer and self-assessment as effective strategies for empowering students in resource-constrained educational situations. It so bridges theory, practice, and context in a meaningful manner.

Limitations and future directions

A small number of students from Ghana's Wesley College of Education participated in this study, which had a relatively small sample size. These restrictions unavoidably impact the generalisability of the findings. Future research might benefit from including a wider and more diverse participant pool to gain a more thorough understanding of students' perspectives on peer and self-assessment. However, as a phenomenological investigation, the study prioritises students' actual experiences over more general statistical conclusions, providing deep and comprehensive insights that surveys may miss, especially in remote assessment settings. This study makes significant contributions to enhancing teaching strategies, assessment design, and student learning experiences by examining how students understand and interact with peer and self-evaluation. Future research could employ a mixed-methods approach to expand on these findings and address existing limitations. This would enable researchers to produce more solid and transferable results by striking a balance between the breadth of quantitative evidence and the depth of qualitative data.

Declarations

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Data availability: The authors may make the interview data utilised in the study public upon reasonable request

Conflict of interest: The authors states that there were no financial or commercial relationships that could be perceived as a conflict of interest during the research.

Ethics approval and consent to participate: Ethical clearance was obtained from the appropriate institutional authority, and the study adhered to ethical principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to participation.

Consent to publish: Informed consent for publication was obtained from all participants. No identifying personal information is included in this manuscript.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The Research and Ethics Committee of Wesley College of Education granted approval for this study (Ref. No. WECE/Ethics/25/005).

Author contribution

EAQ: Conceptualization; writing—original draft; writing - review & editing

JB: Introduction; writing—original draft, writing - review & editing

AG: Introduction; writing - review & editing

GAM Methodology; writing - review & editing

GY: Methodology; writing - review & editing

KAB: Data collection and analysis; writing - review & editing

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Figures

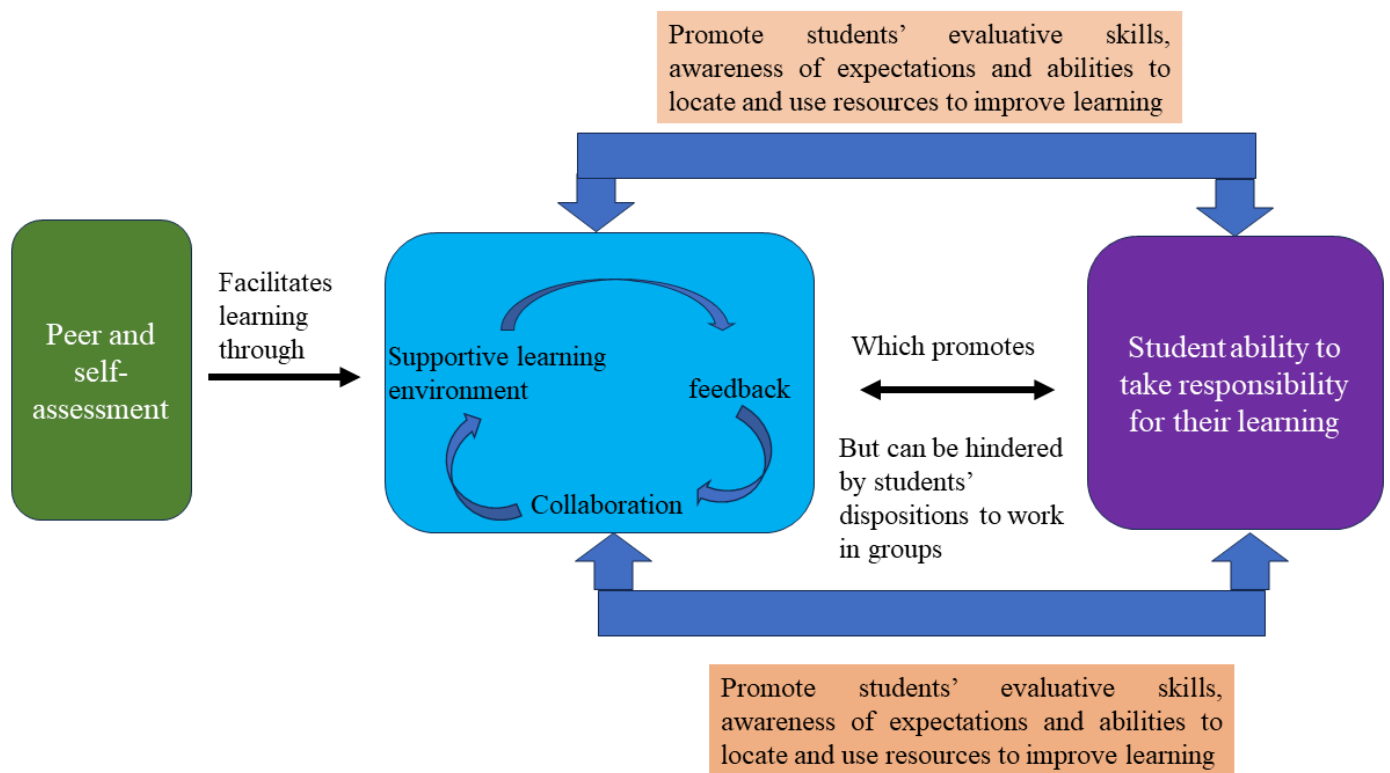


Figure 1

Visualisation of How Peer and Self-Assessment Contribute to Students' Regulated Learning

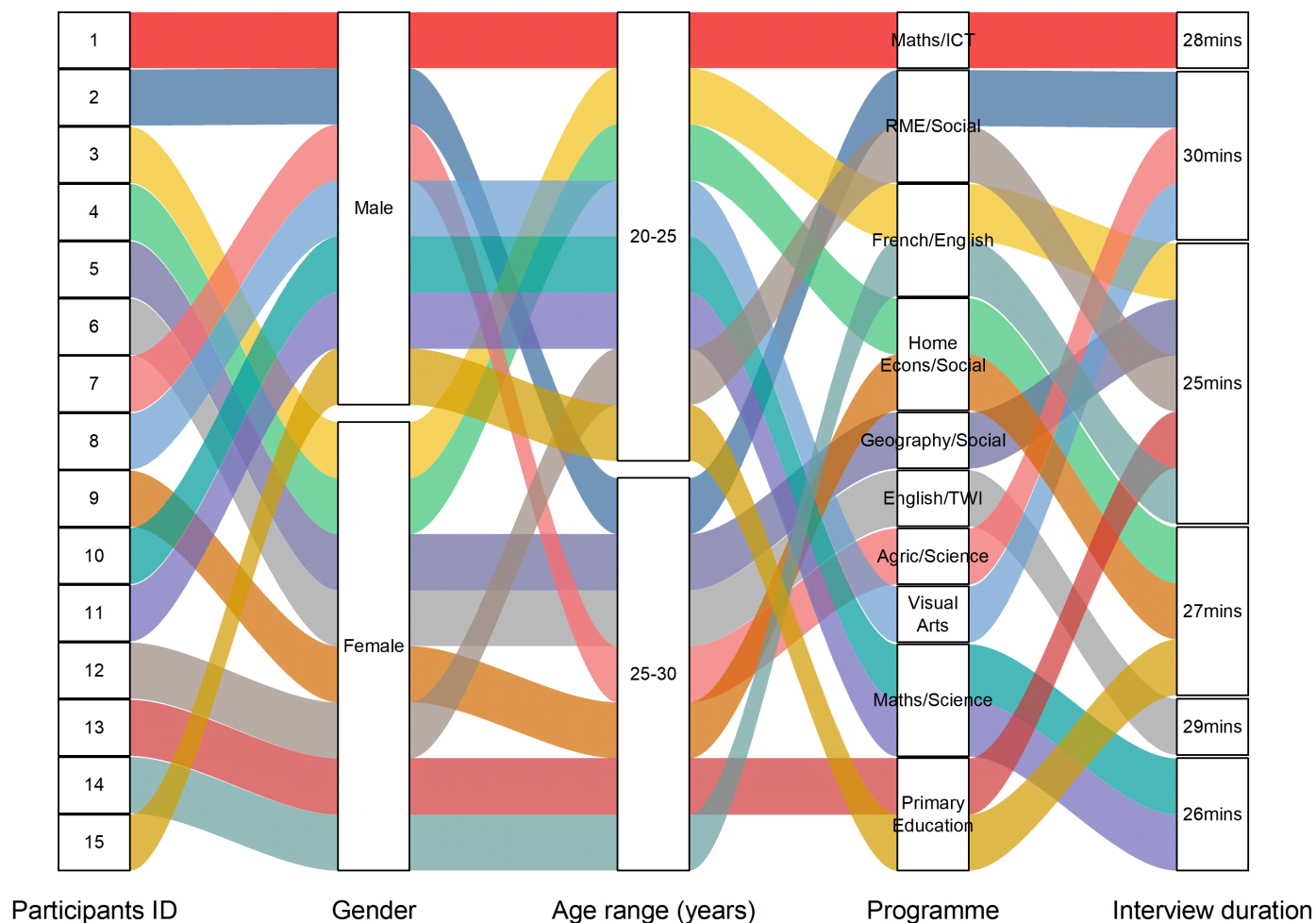


Figure 2

Demographics of participants

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