

Factors influencing users' perceptions on workplace-based formative assessment: a grounded theory study

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Background: Workplace-based formative assessment (WBA) has met with mixed reactions from users in postgraduate medical education. Users' perceptions about WBA tend to be negative. Consequently, its learning value has yet to reach its full capacity. In this study, we explored which factors influence users' perceptions about formative WBA.

Methods: We conducted a constructivist grounded theory study with focus groups in the interuniversity General Practitioners' Training in Flanders. Focus groups were administered online and asynchronous due to COVID-19. The main questions of the focus groups were open-ended. In total, 3 homogeneous focus groups with GP trainees (n=6), GP trainers (n=7), and GP supervisors (n=9) took part in this study. Data analysis followed the stages of open, focused, and axial coding.

Results: Three predominant categories of factors were identified in the data: 1) users' engagement and agency in the assessment progress, 2) users' conceptualization about their own role in the curriculum, and 3) users' entrustment and their relationship with each other. These categories are interrelated in a mutual way. Negative users' perceptions were more prevalent, when users faced barriers in one of these three categories.

Conclusions: By mapping the factors influencing users' perceptions, our findings might facilitate changing the negative perceptions about workplace-based formative assessment and improve its educational value in medical curricula.

Key words: workplace-based assessment