

Problem-Based Learning: To Test or Not to Test

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Purpose

- University of Kansas School of Medicine (KUSM) adopted a new curriculum in 2017
- Active, competency-based and excellence-driven (ACE) curriculum focuses on achieving cognitive integration of clinical and basic sciences
- Problem-Based Learning (PBL) was maintained in the ACE curriculum providing a rich environment for translating basic science principles into clinical context
- PBL content was included in summative examinations to assure student engagement

Methods

- Established goal of PBL in curriculum is to facilitate student development of clinical reasoning skills, promote development of self-directed study skills, improve depth and focus of knowledge acquired and foster development of team skills.
- PBL sessions follow a traditional format
- PBL attendance is required
- Students are assessed on PBL competency achievement by faculty PBL facilitators, with an emphasis on critical thinking and working within a small group as a team
- Multiple choice questions based on objectives from PBL sessions were added to course summative examinations.
- Feedback was obtained from faculty and students

Results

- PBL cases and format were well-received by students and faculty
- Required attendance and summative exam questions facilitated student engagement
- PBL summative questions identified as a source of anxiety for both students and even more so for faculty
- Students focused on identifying course objectives for PBL sessions which inhibited the desired development of critical thinking, problem-solving and team-work skills.

Discussion

- Students and faculty view PBL favorably
- Overarching goals for PBL in the curriculum were re-examined
- Inclusion of PBL objectives on summative exams was re-examined
- Methods to maintain student engagement in PBL were re-examined

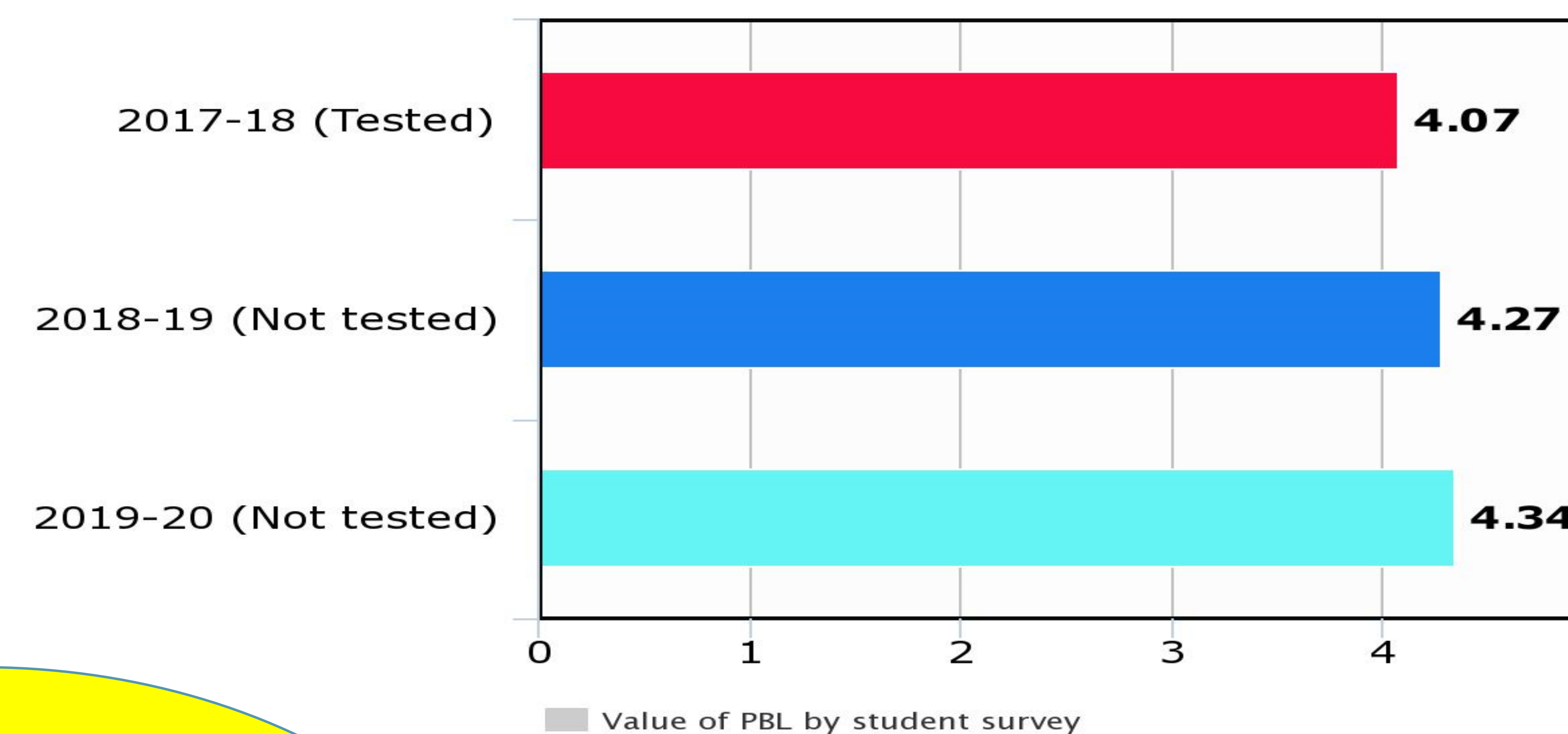
Conclusion

- PBL case objectives are no longer tested on summative examinations
- PBL attendance is required to facilitate student engagement
- Objectives of PBL sessions are based on learning self-directed study skills and team interaction rather than course content

Tested
Our PBL leader helps direct us to the objective without blatantly telling us what they are. This is extremely beneficial so we don't waste time researching and studying information that is irrelevant towards the future exam.

Tested
PBL sessions are engaging and help us apply the material to the real world. However, PBL adds another variable to the exam- I am not always sure if my PBL group properly covered all of the required material before an exam.

Not Tested
The PBL sessions were my favorite part of this block. We got to dig into so many different topics. I enjoyed the freedom of discussing whatever our small group found relevant



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