

Continuous Assessment Group (CAG) formation behaviors: a comparative study between behavioral and information technology group projects of second year undergraduates

SS Weligamage¹ and CR Thilakarathna¹

Students' group interaction is considered important to facilitate classroom teaching and learning activities and to motivate understanding of the university environment. Understanding by students of behaviors, attitudes and working patterns of their group members is a key factor in enhancing these interactions. Assessment group projects play a major role to develop students' individual skills such as leadership, organizing, presentation, report writing, time management and interpersonal skills. Enhancing interaction with a broader cross section of other students is important to develop interpersonal skills which are required to work with others, sharing ideas, mutual respect, and understanding different working patterns. This study was conducted with the objectives of identifying the students' group formation patterns, especially to identify the factors contributing to formation of student groups and to know whether their group formation pattern differ according to different group projects.

Two different course units, one Information Technology related and the other from behavioral sciences were selected for the study. Basis for assessment group formation, group size, type of assigned task, skills development requirement and evaluation methods totally differ between the selected courses. Data on second year accounting undergraduates of the University of Kelaniya were gathered from academic records, group records, surveys, and an observation of behavior during a one semester period.

Findings reveal that the majority of undergraduates work in the same group for the different assignment during the semester. Very few students like to interact or work with members from different groups. Group membership has a relationship with the place of stay of students during the semester. There is no male female interaction within groups. Significant differences in group-formation were found between the sub cultural groups, gender, academic performance, and type of residence. These patterns lead to reduce communication among students and contribute to continuation of the pre-existing divisions.

Key words: Group formation, Continuous assessment, Interaction, Group projects, Undergraduates performance, Higher education

¹ Department of Accountancy, Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka