STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS IN GROUP PROJECTS: THE IMPACT OF PEER ASSESSMENT, BASED ON BELBIN’S ROLES, ON WORK INPUT, STUDY ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING PROCESSES

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Abstract

Students' active participation in group work is an important aspect of their learning process, particularly today when varied study assessment is increasingly used and extensive final and semester projects carry strong weight in the assessment of student performance. Experience shows, however, that workload is unevenly distributed among members of work groups. This creates dissent among group members, reduces the quality of work and results in lower final grades. The problem can affect able students who receive lower grades than they otherwise would have and may, in addition, provide „stowaways“ with an easy path through their studies. For those reasons it is important to develop reliable methods of study assessment. Such an effort, however, is bound to involve stiff challenges; it is not merely that students have a tendency to allot high grades to their friends, nationality may be of importance, students may consult one another and some students are under the threat of bullying in the assessment process. To meet those challenges, a form of peer assessment was developed, in part based on Belbin’s role assignment and the assessment of group members’ workloads. Several versions of the peer assessment have been tested in approximately 20 courses at Bifröst University and the Faculty of Business Administration of the University of Iceland. Those refined methods take better account of individual students' contributions and quality levels than is the case with conventional peer assessment or basic forms of evaluation. The results show that application of reliable peer assessment also improves the quality of group work and constitutes a significant contribution towards students’ improved learning processes.

Keywords: Peer review, group work, learning, assessment, grading, Belbin.