



SOUTHAMPTON SOLENT UNIVERSITY
School of Media Arts and Technology

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Output and Reflection on Personal Skills and Activities

Assignment 1

Graduate & Professional Development

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Introduction

Within this work I will be studying how a small group, that I am a part of, will develop when given the task of creating and performing a presentation of a topic within a technical / scientific field. I will also be reviewing literature concerning small group development particularly the Tuckman model conceived by Bruce Tuckman in 1965. I will then be analysing what other contemporaries' views of the model as well as any other models that have since been made and how they compare to one another. Moreover, this will allow me to compare and contrast how the literature holds true to how my group develops.

Conclusively, I will be discussing why the Tuckman model did not align harmoniously with my group's development and why my group arguably gravitated towards other small group models.

Literature Review

For research into this topic, a report that I have used as a critical lens is the 'Developmental Sequences in Small Group Analysis' by Bruce Tuckman (1965). This report allows me to compare and contrast Tuckman's ideology with my findings as well as how his work compares to other literature.

While Tuckman updated his findings in 1977, his original 1965 paper nevertheless gives us the foundation of the idea of the stages that small groups will go through. The first stage is forming, in which the group will have a positive outlook at the task in hand. The second stage, storming, is where groups may struggle to be productive which can cause conflict. Then it is the norming stage which is the resolution of said struggles. Finally, it is the performing stage in which the team will ideally reach their goal. Although the majority of Tuckman's work focused mainly on therapy groups, it still allows us to build a framework of small group development. While it may not be fully applicable to all groups as there are unlikely to fully follow this model, it does ensure the groundwork for how groups will be expected to work together.

Moreover, along with the added adjourning stage, in which the groups reflects and departs was added by Tuckman & Jenson (1977) it could be argued that the full model, 'resonates with the processes observed in focus groups for research, particularly where participants do not already know each other, and has proved valuable in informing moderation techniques' (Ritchie et al, 2003, p. 215).

However, it could be considered that Tuckman's (1965) model has some blemishes and this has even been noted by his previously mentioned 1977 model designed by Tuckman & Jenson. In this paper, it is argued that there was an overrepresentation of the therapy groups within the findings due to the literature. Bonebright (2010) built upon this by arguing that the original model had been 'generalized well beyond its original framework'. The usefulness of Tuckman's model is ultimately limited for groups besides that of a therapeutic nature (Cassidy 2007). Other scholars have since tried to improve the Tuckman model, one of which is was designed by Maples (1988). She argued that the Tuckman model lacked an in-depth description and was ultimately deprived of a clear definition that hindered its use. The Maples (1988) model splits up the five stages into 20 sub-sections which supposedly eradicates the confusion concerning Tuckman's simplicity.

Another point to consider is that Weber & Karman (1991) believe that it is key for a member of the group to have a leadership quality and that it should become clear who the leader is within the forming stage. This is because it will be the leader of the group that will try to get the group to the performing stage as quickly as possible. They will also be the one that will try to resolve conflict within the second, storming stage; it is vital that the leader has good communication skills for this.

Another model to consider is Poole's (1983) multiple sequence model. This model is made up of three different threads which are task process, relational and topical focus. The key difference between the Poole and Tuckman model is that the Tuckman model is linear while the Poole model is not. A group does not have to follow a thread in a logical sequence but instead will move between threads due to breakpoints. These breakpoints are either: topic shift (in which there is a shift in focus within the group), a delay or conflict. These breakpoints are not certain to occur but rather Poole believes these are the only reasons that a group may change between threads. As the multiple sequence model is non-linear, it is therefore 'much more flexible than the phasic model [Tuckman model]. It presents a picture of three strands of activity developing simultaneously, but at uneven rates' (Poole 1983).

Methods

The aim of this study was to reflect and critically analysis the formation and development of a small group within a university. For this, my group had to research our chosen topic – the ethical and technical considerations of autonomous vehicles, and then present a presentation on our findings to the class. My group was formed of 5 students from Business Information Technology and Software Engineering courses and consisted of some people that I knew, and some that I did not.

For the research and the creation of the presentation, my group created a slack group to allow us to converse and keep everyone up to date. This was also used with the intention of using it for qualitative data. Furthermore, we created a trello group which we used to give tasks out and give clear points to identify what stages need doing. Each member chose a specific area to research for autonomous vehicles which were: legal, ethical, technical, social and business aspects - the area that I chose was the professional and business aspects. When each of us had completed it, we then sent our slides to a member who would then put them all into one collective presentation. To do this we could have also used cloud storage such as OneDrive or Google Drive in which we each attach our work however we felt that this would be unneeded and so we simply emailed to one member who then in return would upload the finished presentation to our slack group.

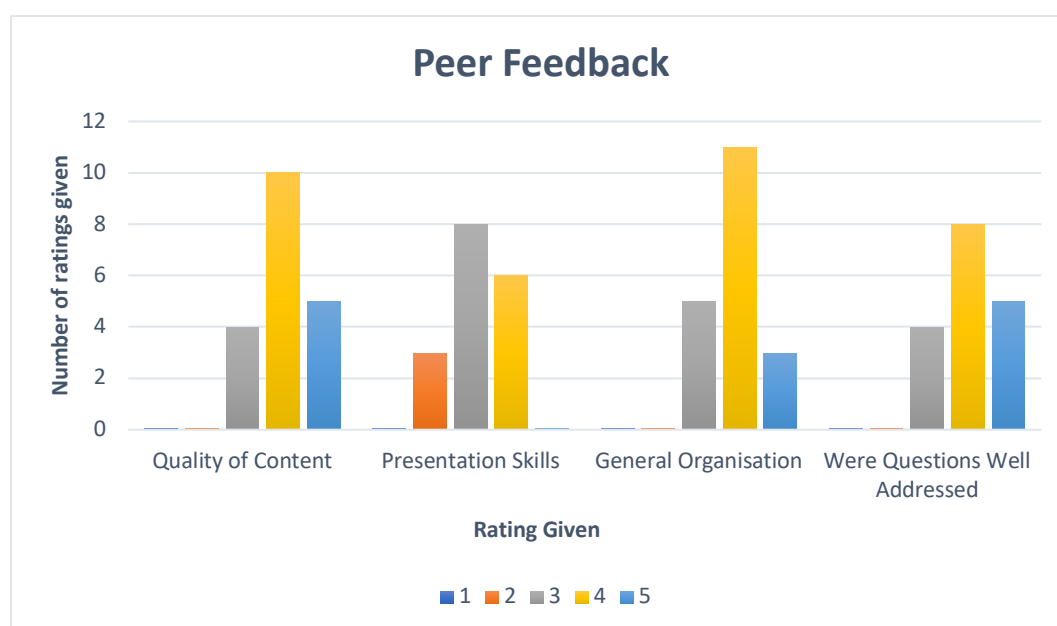
For the feedback, we used our peers to give both qualitative and quantitative data due to the fact that it will 'provide the most informative, complete balanced and useful research results' (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2002, p. 318). After we had finished our presentation, a questionnaire was made for the group members to take to reflect on how we felt we performed on the task as a group. This ensured us that we had both first party and third-party feedback.

Results

Peer Feedback

Figure 1 shows a bar chart of the quantitative ratings that were given by our peers during the presentation. This allows us to understand which areas of the presentation went well and which did not.

Figure 1



Group Questionnaire

Concerning the group questionnaire, this would be considered the adjourning stage according to the Tuckman model. Within the results, all members believe that in hindsight we should have collaborated in person more often to benefit the presentation this is shown as one member said “I feel as we should have spent more time working together rather than individually” although another member believed that they preferred splitting up the responsibilities.

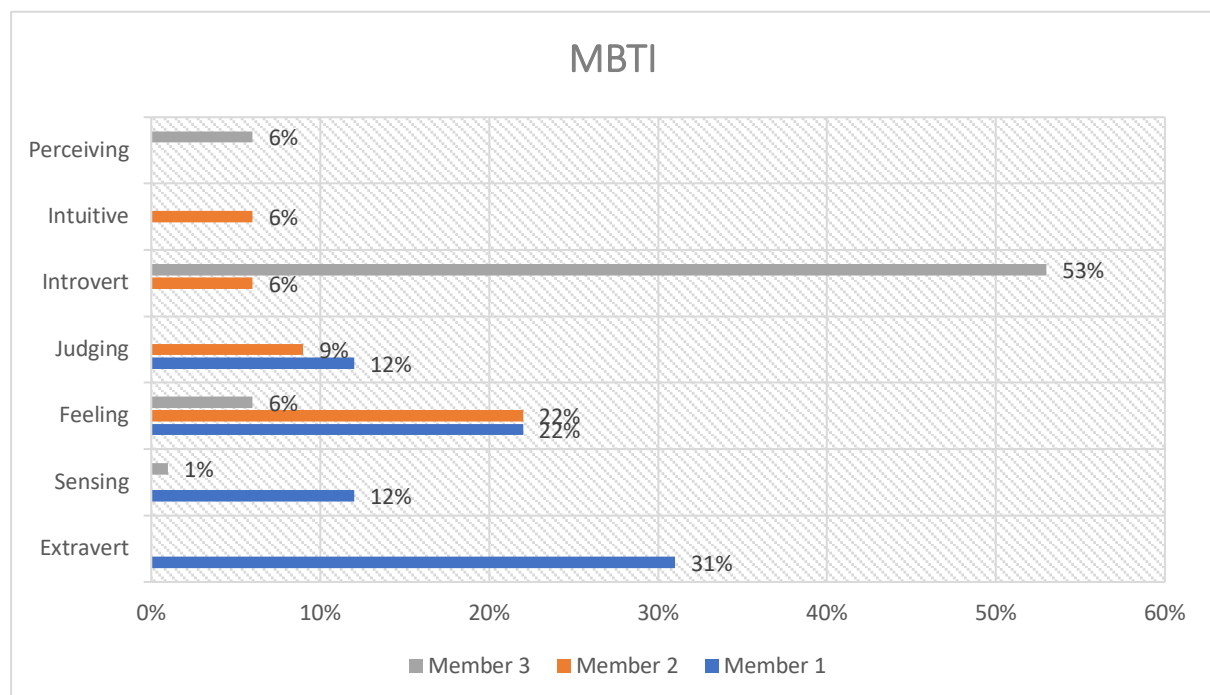
Slack & Trello conversations

Regarding the slack conversation, there was no cause for concern throughout our project as there was never any true conflict between group members which goes against the Tuckman model. From the beginning, one group member essentially became the designated group leader who became the one who would organise the presentation. In regard to the Trello board, it was merely used to give an agenda for the group to focus on.

Myers Briggs Indicator Test

Part of my group also took the Myers Briggs Type Indicator test (1962) to attempt to see how each of our personalities either clashed or aligned. The quantitative output is shown in figure 2.

Figure 2



Discussion

On one hand it could be argued that my group did meet the objective as our presentation did obtain results that suggest the presentation did its job. This is shown by the fact that we consistently achieved a four rating from our peers. Furthermore, the praise given within the general comments of the peer feedback was largely devoted to the belief that the presentation was informative as well as being well organised although it arguably could have been more efficient to reduce the length of the presentation.

On the other hand, there are clearly areas that the presentation could be improved upon. The area which predominantly stands out is our presentational skills which received our lowest ratings when compared to other areas. The majority of criticism within the general comments was concerning the poor presentational skills – as one peer wrote “speaking towards the wall not the audience” and that the presentation needed “more eye contact”. This can be further backed up by the self-feedback questionnaire in which all group members believe that meeting up and practising the presentation as a group would be a huge benefit to the performance.

When comparing my group’s development to the Tuckman model (1965), they do not align in full. The main distinction between the two is that my group never truly experienced the second, conflict stage.

At the beginning of the development, we did experience a forming stage as we were all beginning to work out the roles and responsibilities for each of us, this is when we decided upon who would research each sub-topic. We did not elect a leader for our group although one began to show leadership qualities as they ensured the group knew their roles and kept every member up to date; the difference between my group and the Tuckman is that the leader was not out rightly decided but was rather implicit. It could be speculated that this is the case due to one member being seen as an extrovert compared to the rest of the group (Myers 1962). As mentioned before, my group never truly experienced any conflict and so we essentially skipped over both this and the following stage as we had to reason to follow the norming stage since there was no conflict to resolve. We then proceeded to the performing stage in which we began to collect each member’s work and create a joint presentation that had all our research.

It could be argued that one of the main reasons that my group did not fully follow the Tuckman model was because we didn’t consistently collaborate but instead split the work and research each sub-section independently and we only collaborated when we put the presentation together. Had we worked through each section as one unit, then it could be argued that we would have followed the Tuckman model closer. Furthermore, as Weber & Karman believe having a leader figure is vital within the model and without a true out and out leader, this could be what further deviated my group from the model.

Additionally, my group did not follow the model linearly as we moved between different stages. This occurred when one member was unable to be at the presentation and so my group then had to split up the legal aspect portion of the presentation. At this point, it could be considered that my group reverted back to the first stage as we then had to reassign some roles.

It could be considered that my group in fact gravitated more towards the Poole (1983) model. The reason for this is that we followed the task process thread as analysed the task and set our aim. We also followed the topical focus thread as my group encountered issues, namely re-assigning the legal aspects, which we then cleared up. Poole believes that the topical focus issues are not necessarily a negative influence on the development (unlike the storming stage) as it can be positive as the resolution can be cooperative. However, my group did not follow the relational thread as we did not promote members' relationships in ensuring we can work more effectively as a group. Nevertheless, we did experience breakpoints as we had to re-examine our work.

Conclusion

The Tuckman (1965) model can be used for studying the development of small groups however the model is considerably generic in its stages, not to mention rigid, and so it will not be applicable to all small group developments. Nevertheless, the framework is able to be used as a basic foundation – but ultimately this is what the model is limited to. It is clear that the Tuckman model is not flawless as other contemporaries, as well as Bruce Tuckman himself, have remarked upon blemishes that occur within the work.

To say that my group did not follow the Tuckman model perfectly is not the case as we only partially followed it due to no palpable conflict occurring. It is plausible that there are other models that my group leaned towards e.g. Poole's 1983 model although, as with the Tuckman, we did not completely adhere to that model either.

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Appendix

Mobile:
Email:

Professional Profile

I am a committed and driven Business Information Technology student in my second year at Solent University. Through my education I have developed a sound understanding of business and analytical skills as well as a decent comprehension of programming skills. Within University I have improved upon my organisation and time management skills to ensure that I produced my assignments on time and to a good standard. I am looking forward to gaining experience to enhance and develop my knowledge.

Education and Qualifications

Studying BSc	Business Information Technology Solent University 2 nd year
A Levels	History, IT, Law (B, C, D) & Economics (AS) 2017 As well as a business entrepreneurship workshop.
11 GCSEs	Including Mathematics, English, IT, Creative IT & Business 2015

Skills gained

Coding skills include:

- HTML incl. CSS & Java
- Python
- SQL

Other Experience

2017 – Current (Off-term Times) | Factory Worker | Complete Pool Controls

Within this job I learnt to be efficient when individually or within groups which allowed me to improve on my communication skills. I also had to be able to work towards deadlines and possess time management skills.

Other Key Skills

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| ➤ Microsoft Office | ➤ Business Intelligence & analytical skills |
| ➤ Independent & teamworking abilities | ➤ Entrepreneurship skills |

Interests Include:

- Football (both playing and watching)
- Travelling
- Visiting art museums

Social Media Profiles

- [Twitter](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Behance](#)

REFERENCES ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST