Teamwork effectiveness assignment

Introduction Despite the idea that teams are not always effective than individual working alone, several modern and prudent organizations realize that the best way to achieving business goals, effectively and efficiently, is to organize work in definable units by pulling together various talents and skills. This paper will discuss the question whether individuals become more efficient when working in teams. Also, a number of theories of team development will be examined and applied to analyse a practical case study to provide a better understanding in how teams can be established effectively.

Literature review Team effectiveness It has been noticed that although positive impacts of teams are addressed in many laboratory studies, most of them suggest either null or negative ones (e. g. , Mitchell 1982; Mudrack 1989; Steiner 1972; Widmeyer, Brawley and Carron 1992; Worchel, Cooper and Goethals 1991; Summers, Coffelt and Horton 1988; Tziner 1982). They have argued that teams cost more resources and often more time than individual because teams generate more demands for communication, more meetings to be held and more conflicts to be resolved.

There is also the danger of compromise and decisions being made in line with the " highest common view" (Widmeyer, Brawley, and Carron 1992) and the phenomenon of the so-called risky-shift (Kogan and Wallach 1967). Moreover, the efficiency of teams problem solving depends somewhat on the types of tasks assigned (Thorndike 1938). This means there are some tasks which are handled more effectively by individuals rather than teams. Further, the strong and consistent evidences relating to the efficiency of teamwork are not revealed in the deep examination of empirical field research (e. . ,

Beekun 1989; Hackman and Morris 1975; Macy and Izumi 1993). Allen and Hecht, indeed, concede that " overall, the evidence regarding the effectiveness of teams must be described as modest, at best" and the obvious mismatch between " this evidence and the enthusiasm with which team are greeted" (2004, p. 444). This point is also confirmed by other researchers (e. g. , Naquin and Tynan 2003). All these arguments indicate the fact that working in teams is not necessarily more effective than working individually.

However, and critically, it must be accepted that there are various situations facing organizations in which they do not have any other possible approaches to get the work done rather than teamwork. As Chong (2007) put it: {draw: frame} Mullins asserts that some particular jobs can be carried out only via the combined efforts of numerous individuals working together (2004, p. 527). Many projects within the workplace or at school are too large or complex for one individual to complete alone.

For example, giant projects such as Sydney Opera House or Paris Eiffel Tower are not possible to be finished by only one individual. Further, teams, to a large degree, are more effective than individuals working alone at specifying problems, generating alternatives and selecting from those alternatives thanks to varied backgrounds, talents and perspectives of team members (McShane and Travaglione 2007, Mullins 2004, Robbins et al. 2004, Wood et al. 2006).

Another concern is that " people potentially have higher motivation to complete complex tasks in a team because the effort-to-performance

expectancy would be much lower if performing the entire task alone" (McShane and Travaglione 2007, p. 268). {draw: frame} Improving team effectiveness IPO perspectives A majority of research examining the variables that impact team performance has been considerably affected by the IPO (input-process-output) framework and several key inputs and process factors appear to be connected to team effectiveness (Williams and Allen 2008).

Input variables The most common discussed team input factors include characteristics of team design and team composition. Team design variables such as task interdependence and team size are suggested to be critical to team effectiveness. For instance, the task interdependence indicates the extent to which team members need to interact in the process of implementing their jobs (Wageman 2001). Highly interdependent tasks can increase member motivation and team performance because they enhance " member's sense of responsibility and ownership over the work" (Robbins et al. 004). On the other hand, team composition addresses the relationship between team performance and variables involving member's personality and skills, and team diversity. Stevens and Campion (1994) argue that each team member needs to have three types of skills to work efficiently (technical expertise, problem solving and interpersonal skills) while Barrick et al (1998) and Wright and Neuman (1999) believe that personal characteristics such us extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional ability contribute considerably to team effectiveness.

In terms of team diversity, Williams and O'Reilly (1998) and Riordan (2000) concede the relative effectiveness of team diversity depends on the

situations. Specifically, the team with high diversity of its members about skills, demographic, ethnicity and values is more effective on complex tasks requiring innovative solutions, whilst the one with lower diversity is more suitable for tasks requiring high degree of cooperation and coordination (Behfar et al. 006). Team process variables According to IPO perspectives, team output (effectiveness) is determined considerably by process factors including member commitment to a common purpose, creation of team goals, team efficacy, conflict levels and social loafing. It is suggested that a common and meaningful purpose can make teams more effective by providing members with direction and guidance under any situations (Hess 1987; Scott and Townsend 1994).

This common purpose then should be translated into particular and realistic performance goal to promote clear communication among team members and to maintain focus on getting results. Moreover, team goals should be challenging to increase effectiveness on those criteria for which they are set (Weldon and Weingart 1993). In respect of team efficacy, Phillips, Hollenbeck and Ilgen (1996) argue that " self-efficacy is importance because it leads to setting higher level goals when initial goal levels are accomplished and boosts persistence when goals are challenging".

Yet, most studies examining the connection between team efficacy and team performance failed to recommend the ways for building efficacy at the team level (Kozlowski et al 1996). On the other hand, it is asserted that conflict within a team is not always negative in that it encourages discussion, stimulates critical analysis of problems and alternatives and can help to

obtain better team decisions (Jehn 1997). Yet, not all kinds of conflicts can improve team effectiveness.

Relationship conflicts are almost always dysfunctional. On the subject of social loafing variable, if teams are to be effective, the tendency that individuals hide inside a group has to be undermined by " holding teams accountable at both the individual and team level" (Robbins et al. 2004, p. 291). There are many ways to reduce social loafing such as " forming smaller teams, specializing tasks, measuring individual performance and increasing job enrichment" (Woodman and Sherwood 1980).

To sum up, IPO perspectives can help us understand how teams can be managed effectively, but they fail to address the importance of contextual factors, such as resources, organizational policies, leadership, communication system and especially cultural factors that may affects the team's performance. The concern about how IPO variables affect team's effectiveness across different cultural contexts should be taken into account by future research. Non-IPO perspectives As mentioned above, teams have been mostly and primarily analysed within the IPO framework.

For several reasons, however, its dominant position in the team literature is beginning to be challenged. In particular, it is argued that the IPO perspective has not adequately addressed the dynamic and temporal features of teams nor given adequate attention to the importance of contextual variables in examining team effectiveness (Ilgen et al. 2005). Considering context Robbins et al. argue that team effectiveness is influenced considerably by four contextual variables: " adequate resources,

effective leadership, a climate of trust and a performance evaluation and rewards system" (2004, p. 88). For instance, to evaluate the role of adequate resources, Robbins et al. suggest that " all work teams rely on resources outside the group to sustain it" and so " a scarcity of resources directly reduces the ability of the team to perform its job effectively" (2004, p. 289). Meanwhile, interpersonal trust among team members is also essential to a high-performance team in that it stimulates coordination and reducing the demand to observer each others' behaviours. The dynamic and temporal nature of teams Marks et al. 2001) argues that rather than considering the IPO model as being relevant to whole life cycle of the team, teams should be thought as going through set phases. The most well-known of studies about temporal nature of teams are those of Tuckman (1965), who identified the phases as forming, storming, norming, and performing. Other studies have focused on the relationships between team members and argue that group cohesiveness is important for team success (cited in Sapsed et al. 2002). Implications Case study summary {draw: frame} Case study *analysis This paper will examine the case of Antar automation project based on both the IPO and non-IPO perspectives towards team effectiveness. In terms of IPO perspectives, it is indicated that the team led by Rob Dander involves a number of flaws relating to both input and process factors that contribute significantly to its poor performance. Firstly, the team was based on unsuitable individuals who were lacking the skills and knowledge, technical expertise, necessary to accomplish the team's objectives.

Particularly, the team was required to create computerized simulations, but none of the team members had ever dealt with the programming language

that was needed to perform their jobs. Although three young employees were left to learn model building, they felt hard to acquaint themselves with the new language under the pressure of project's deadline and expectations. This is to say that low productivity was not only due to inexperienced members, but also because they were not given enough time to develop new skills. One factor that should be criticized here is leadership skills of Rob Dander.

Rob failed to help team members learn necessary skills. He was the only one of the group who knew well about the LATOC, but he decided to leave his subordinates to struggle with that complicated language by themselves. He failed to become adept at creating learning environments fostered communication and innovation. Edmondson et al. (2004) put it: " the most successful teams had leaders who actively managed the groups' learning efforts. Teams that most successfully implemented the new technology shared three essential characteristics.

They were designed for learning; their leaders framed the challenge so that team members were highly motivated to learn; and an environment of psychological safety fostered communication and innovation". Moreover, Rob maintained a very loose connection with assistants as he spent only a few moments during the project to discuss with them about the problems occurred. This to some extent indicates that Rob was unable to help the team to build trust and inspire teamwork, as well as to define goals, develop plans and solve problems effectively.

Consequently, the three assistants lost their focus by trying to develop a model that had become far too cumbersome and uneconomical to complete their original assignment. Further, there was, to a large degree, also the sign of social loafing from Rob as he let the task done mostly by other three members without considerable involvement on his part. He tended to exert less effort when working in this automation project to keep energy for other four projects which he was responsible for at the same time.

His tendency of social loafing was also supported by the ORD procedure which allowed project managers to hand over the project to assistants. This absolutely leaded to his poor performance which then inhibited the team's effectiveness. However, it should be recognized that the main causes for the low effectiveness of the team are not only unsuitable individual members, poor leadership, and social loafing, but also some other contextual factors such as organizational policy and inadequate resources. The automation project team was not provided with adequate facilities to carry out their task.

Their project room was simply furnished and they also felt inconvenient as they had to travel frequently to computer lap which was located in another building of Operational Research Department (ORD). This might affect negatively the mood of members and reduce the ability of the team to perform its job effectively. At the mean time, the ORD reward policy was based too much on the individual performance and this could inhibit the motivation for team members to work hard together in support of group-level accomplishment.

As Wood et al. put it: " groups can suffer if goals and rewards are focused too much on individual outcomes" (2006, p. 199). Recommendations {draw: frame} Conclusion The increasing importance of teamwork in today business activities has forced organizations to find the best ways to build effective teams rather than considering if teams are more effective than individuals working alone. The paper has reviewed several theories about teamwork on both IPO and non-IPO perspectives.

These theories have been then applied to examine a practical case study of Antar automobile project team. The analysis of the case study illustrates the fact that team process can impact team effectiveness and can be influenced by team leadership and contextual conditions. In particular, team leadership and contextual factors are key leverage points for shaping input and process factors, and so shaping team effectiveness. Therefore, a combination of both IPO and non-IPO perspectives is highly recommended as a best way for organizations in examining and building teams.