Team effectiveness essay sample

The revolution of team has been an attractive subject to researchers, management, economists and psychologists. In addition, the bulk of empirical evidence indicates that the role of teamwork is significantly dominant in modern organisations, that is to say, management has relied on teams increasingly because of its implicit outcomes. This recognition of the importance of teams for achieving companies' targets or tasks has changed the attention of research from an initial focus on individuals characteristics to a broader focus on the fundamentals of teamwork effectiveness in a wide range of different types of team such as work teams, parallel teams, project teams, and management teams (Cordery, 2002).

It is no doubt that the performance of teams takes account of success or failure in business strategies. Therefore, the controversial discussion in most of the studies is about the substantial factors improve the effectiveness of teams in contemporary organisations in order to approach goals and enhance competitive abilities. Several performance-related elements are addressed, including work design, group composition, task characteristics and interdependence, and the organizational context.

These include a framework for management to operate a team to perform well such as teams should know how to access tasks intellectively and achieve it at an appropriate level of performance; utilise suitable knowledge and skill to overcome confliction, difficulties, and problems; managers should apply good strategies and clear directions for teams in the work.

To the extent of academic theories and empirical researches, this study will identify the possible factors which can have vital influence on the

development of teamwork efficacy. In the first sector, in the perspective of work design, the paper will just focus on the impact of autonomy on the quality of teamwork. Next, it will draw attention to the function of training into utilizing the benefits of autonomy while implementing teams.

Concentrating on the theory of interdependence, the next phase will discuss about the considerable influence of rewards system on workers' motivation, especially in team practices. In terms of team composition, the paper will identify the relationship of the diversity of the workforce, team characteristics, and the relationship conflict with team performance in model organisations. Then, the study will turn to the vital role of KSAs in terms of fostering the abilities of team members and improving the outcomes of workgroup.

FACTORS INFLUENCING TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

1. Team autonomy, interdependence, rewards and performance

In academic taxonomy, autonomous teams can be named as ' self-management teams' and ' empowered teams' who basically work reciprocally or have high interdependent jobs (Guzzo and Dickson, 1996, p. 324). They have enough discretion or adequate authorities to approach their tasks and taken responsibility for the outcomes of their work such as designing plans, making schedules, and making decisions in accordance with economic benefits. Likewise, Banker et al (1996) also describes autonomy in a wide range of job design is related to the team effectiveness because it provides the opportunity for workers to make their own decision based on the collective advancement of teams and companies.

Therefore, autonomous concept is deemed to bring positive outcomes for organisations such as employees' satisfaction, commitment, productivity. With s respect to the study by Cordery et al (1991), it differentiates two types of workgroups compromises self-managing teams and traditional teams. The report shows that the former teams had priorities to make decision for such things as assigning tasks between members, and allocating work.

On the contrary, the latter was not given such good authorities. As the result, the autonomous work groups were concerned with higher level of satisfaction, commitment, and positive attitudes than traditional work groups after 12-month experiment. However, the proportion of absenteeism and turnover were oppositely higher in the modern framework than traditional model.

It is, however, different in the study of Weisman et al (1993) found out that nurses who were given discretion or self-management practices used to be associated with lower turnover. Moreover, there is a mounting body of research which assumes that self-directed teams seem to have lower levels of absenteeism and higher proportion of positive behavioral consequences because the useful interaction of members in the teams in order to force them strictly to have full and on-time attendance which managers do not succeed completely through companies' policies to conduct the progress of teams (Barker, 1993; Wall et al, 1986; Beekun, 1989).

Cohen and Bailey (1997) point out the drawback of the negative result in the study of Cordery et al is that they did not pay attention on the substantial

factors of plant overtime and the obvious distance from home to work of employees. As Sundstrom et al (2000) explain that different types of teams have been influenced differently by the framework of work design, especially autonomy, for instances, Kim and Lee (1995) concludes that autonomy is basically associated with performance of project teams, while the others found out it has positive outcomes in service teams.

Clearly, the research of Guzzo and Dickson (1996) also claims that the impacts of discretion, self-management, self-directed, and decision-making are dependent on such important factors as the fundamental system of the workforce and organisations, especially reward policies, and shared-information frameworks. Generally, an appropriate reward system which is based on team-performance not individual may reduce the conflict between members or management and workers, hence, the consequences of better productivity are explicit under specific circumstances. In addition, the framework of shared- information which supports workers technologies or conditions to approach each other and achieve the tasks significantly.

In variable aspects of work design, interdependence is deemed to have a crucial influence on team performance under the condition of that every member in the teams is given the same level of autonomy, especially task interdependence. Importantly, the autonomous level of individual and team autonomy is related to the proportion of task interdependence because they link to task interdependence in different ways. With the respect to the finding of Langfred (2005) illustrates that team autonomy and performance are a positive relationship under conditions of high task interdependence and

inversely negative relationship under conditions of low task interdependence.

On the other hand, the linkage of individual autonomy and performance is positive with low level interdependent task and negative with high level of interdependent task. As Cordery (2002, p. 331) defines that interdependence includes task and outcome interdependence, in which the former is about the reciprocal working conditions in the task performance, while the latter is concerned about the factors affect task motivation such as rewards received by one individual relies on the performance of others in the group.

Evidently, the finding of Janz et al (1997) shows that interdependence is likely associated with the positive measurement of team performance and member's motivation as well as satisfaction. Additionally, Wageman (1999, p. 134) reveals the interactive relationship of outcome interdependence and group performance, but task interdependence (may be named as goal interdependence) is the measurement of collective output, regardless of whether rewards are attached to goal approach.

Although the interaction of interdependence and autonomy is important and quite effective, but once implementing teamwork, management should consider more about the structures, size, characteristics, and types of team to monitor the best efficacy in the progress of task performance under conditions of an appropriate reward system.

With regards to rewards policies, there is a heated controversy of how to implement rewards suitably to teamwork system. Some research demonstrates that team-based reward can encourage the motivation of

employees to cooperate each other in order to achieve successfully the organisations' tasks. As Haines and Taggar (2006) concludes that it plays an important role on improving self-directed among teams, enhancing their own skills, and increase the level of flexibility in groups. However, the other commentators cite that team-based reward can bring disadvantages to organisations such as failure in business strategies, the reduction of cooperation and the unfairness to high performing members because of de-recognition of individual differences, and the encouragement of free riding.

Although an individual will perceive team-based reward with a high performing attitude, they may be also satisfied and motivated by such unfair reward because he or she believe in the positive ability only inside teamwork, in other words, self-effective for workgroup. In addition, the trust of members in the value of teamwork through reward system can replace the thinking of individualism by collectivist which has a big effect on the development of perceives task interdependence.

That is to say, reversely, the higher productivity the teams create, the higher performance-related reward they receive. Moreover, to conduct the best reward or teamwork strategies, management should consider about the other elements such as team composition, especially diversity workforce, and team characteristics in relation to the effectiveness of teamwork which the paper will discuss below. 2. Diversity workforce, and team characteristics

Base on the nature of positive research, the diversity of workforce provides organisations such a dynamic workgroup with different backgrounds, ideas, knowledge, information, languages, and intellect. Furthermore, Cordery

(2002) states people who have the same backgrounds, and culture used to be attracted each other, so it can improve communication and cohesiveness in the groups. However, there are also opposite debates which concern the disadvantages of diversity workforce such as communication, conflict and commitment (William and O'Reiley, 1998).

Some researchers have found out both weaknesses and strengths of functional diversity in the workplace, such as Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1990) state that it has positive effect on the growth of sales in company, but unclear relationship between the diversity and financial performance in top management team tenure. Therefore, several studies cite that the impacts of diversity are operated by specific factors, especially team characteristics. The indication is that managers should build teams based on the nature of individual differences.

As Wagemen (1999) suggests that employers should chose the team members under consideration of personality characteristic, the combination of task and outcome interdependence to shape with business strategies in organisations. Cordery (2002) also discuss about the different roles of team members in the tasks such as ' plant' people who are creative, dynamic and able to solve problems, while ' monitor' people who are calm, strategic and have high ability of situations' analysis.

The combination of these two types of people can push the work straightforward and help teams make decision accurately together. In other words, they are complementary. With respect to the team personalities' model of Driskell et al (2006), the study begins with the linkage of five

personality traits (includes emotional stability, extraversion, openness and experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) and team effectiveness. They draw attention to the differences of people personalities and analysis the particular trait of every characteristic. For example, in terms of agreeableness side, in which there are three kinds of people, includes cooperative, competitive and individualist traits.

The first characteristic whose is willing to cooperate with the others to achieve the tasks without the consideration of their own benefits, whilst the last one tends to maximize their own benefits without the consideration of the others in the group. In addition, if there are too many competitive traits in one group may create the situation of strong competitive behaviors. Therefore, understanding workers' behaviours, attitudes, and characteristics is not easy but crucial to the appropriate establishment of the groups to fit with organisations' tasks and targets. Furthermore, the conflict in diversity workforce is one of the heated topic in modern organisations because it leads to a loss of attribution, productivity, and performance as a whole.

The finding of Jehn (1997) reveals the problematic association between conflict types and group effectiveness, particularly group performance. Evidently, lower performance group has higher level of conflict relationship; but high performance group has lower level of hostile relationship. Moreover, the degree of conflict generates the consequences of performance. If emotional conflict has a bad influence on team performance, high conflict can guide members to focus on a wrong side and make wrong decisions during the tasks.

To solve these problems, it seems to be that training and improving knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are the better solution for organisations in contemporary economies. 3. Training and KSAs

Although team members' personalities are crucial in the establishment of group structures and composition, KSAs should be paid attention to specifically. A KSAs system which is management can lay their influences on, but the characteristics' elements seem to be stable and not easily influenced. There are some empirical research has shown the impact of the specific skills and additional skills on the efficiency of teamwork.

The studies in the communication sector illustrated the positive linkage of communication and team performance (Federman and Siegel, 1965; Krum and Farina, 1962; Oser et al, 1996). Likewise, Tanenbaum et al (1997) also demonstrates the support of the specific skills such as leadership on team effectiveness. Sout et al (1997) find out that training can help people enhance the context skills to analysis the cause of problems and overcome these issues well.

The task for training in teamwork is that how to apply a suitable training program to the teams? What kind of skills and knowledge that workers need to study for their workgroup? It is said that employers can lose the cost of training if they do not know what specific skills employees need. In addition, if employees can apply these skills studied straight away in the works, they will forget it immediately. These problems are not about capital loss but also time loss. Therefore, the research of Stevens and Campion (1994) depict a KSAs requirement of teamwork which is included interpersonal KSAs (conflict

resolution, collaborative problem solving, and communication KSAs) and self-management KSAs (goal setting and performance management; planning and task coordination KSAs).

He explains that team members need to know how to interact positively with their peers, so it is essential for them to increase their own interpersonal knowledge, and skills such as communication, hostile reduction. In his point of view, KSAs training is the key factor to upgrade the position of teamwork to ' a better team player' in the future. Furthermore, there is another suggestion that management should support modern technologies such as communication networks, and online courses for employees once implementing teamwork or training in order to bring into play the best function of these processes.

CONCLUSION

Theoretical research has illustrated different guidelines for management to implement teamwork successfully, but in terms of empirical, it is difficult to access the entire context inside the framework. Being a manager should know which one is the most adequate variable that he or she can apply to practice. This paper just focuses on how to motivate team members to access effectiveness through autonomy, interdependence, rewards system, conflict solution, team composition (team characteristics) and training (KSAs). There are some analyses below:

Firstly, although autonomy is important in the performance of teamwork but it does not mean that giving autonomy is the best solution for improving the effectiveness because of the consideration of the differences of team size,

team types and organisations' tasks. Therefore, management should establish clear and engaging direction to operate the right application on the right task and the right team.

Secondly, providing a suitable training for employees is a key to increase the positive influence of autonomy. Training and learning can provide such appropriate skills for team members to know how to work like a team or succeed interdependent jobs during the task. Furthermore, when they know how to do task interdependence, they can avoid conflict in the work and achieve the task effectively.

Finally, the composition of the teams also plays a vital role on the success of teamwork models, especially in this modern economy that has a high level of diversity in the workplace. If the manager cannot put a right person in the right position or monitor the specific role of every member in the team, he or she may lose the benefits of the implementation of teamwork as a whole. The mistake of the arrangement of team composition can reduce the commitment, satisfaction, and productivity in the workgroup; in the meantime, it can increase the level of conflict between members in the team.

REFERENCES

1. Baker, J. R (1993). ' Tightening the iron cage: concertive control in self-managing teams'. Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol 38, No. 3, pp. 408-37. 2. Beekun, R. I (1989). ' Accessing the effectiveness of socio-technical interventions: antidote or fad?'. Human Relations, vol. 42, no. 10, pp. 877-97. 3. Cohen, S. G, and Bailey, D. E (1997). ' What makes teams work: Group

effectiveness research from the shop floor to the executive suite.' Journal of management, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 239-290. 4. Cordery, J. L., Mueller, W. S, and Smith, L. M (1991). ' Attitudinal and behavioural effects of autonomous group working: A longtitudinal field study. Academy of management Journal, Vol. 34, pp. 464-76. 5. Cordery, J, (2002) Team working. From: Warr, P, psychology at work, 5th edition. Pp. 326-350. London: Penguine. 6. Driskell, J. E, Goodwin, G, F, Salas, E., O'shea, P. G (2006). ' What makes a good team player" Personality and team

effectiveness'. Group dynamics: Theory, research and practice, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 249-271. 7. Eisenhardt, K. M, and Schoonhoven, C. B (1990). ' Organisational growth: linking founding team strategy, environment, and growth among U. S. semi-conductor ventures.' Administrative Science Quaterly, Vol. 35, pp. 484-503. 8. Federman, P. J, abd Siegel, A. I (1965). Communication as a measurable index of team behavior. Wayne, PA: Applied Psychological Services Science Center. 9. Guzzo, R. A, and Dickson, M. W (1996). ' Teams in organisations: Recent research on performance and effectiveness.' Anuual Revolution Psychology, Vol. 47, pp. 307-38. 10. Haines, V. Y, and Taggar, S. (2006) ' Antecedents of Team reward attitude'. Group dynamics: theory, research, and practice. Vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 194-205. 11. Janz, B. D, Colquitt, J. A, and Noe, R. A (1997).'Knowledge worker team effectiveness: The role of autonomy, interdependence, team development, and contextual support variables.', Personel Psychology, Vol. 50, pp. 877-904. 12. Jehn, K. A (1997). ' A qualitative analysis of conflict types and dimensions in organizational groups.' Aministrative Science Aquterly, Vo. 42, pp. 530-557. 13. Kim, Y., and Lee, B. (1995). ' R and D project team climate and team performance in Korea.' R&D management, Vol. 25, pp. 179-197.

14. Krum, R. L., and Farina, A. J. (1962). Effectiveness of integrated flight simulator training in promoting B-52 crew coordination. Wright Patterson Air Force Base, OH: Aerospace Medical Research Laboratories. 15. Langfred, C. W, (2005).'Autonomy and performance in teams: the multilevel moderating effect of task interdependence', Journal of Management, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 513-529. 16. Oser, R. L., Prince, C. W., Morgan, B. B., Jr., and Simpson, S. S (1991). An analysis of aircrew communication patterns and content. Orlando, FL: Naval Training System Center, Human Factors Division 17. Stevens M. J, and Campion M. A (1994) ' The knowledge, skill, and ability requirements for teamwork: Implications for Human resource management', Journal of Management, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 503-530. 18. Stout, R. J, Salas, E., Fowlkes, J. E (1997) ' Enhangcing teamwork in complex environments through team training', Group Dynamics: Theory, research, and Practice, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 169-182. 19. Sundstrom, E., Mcintyre, M, Halfhill, T., and Richards, H., (2000). ' Work groups: from the hawthorne studies to work teams of the 1990s and beyond.' Group dynamics: Theory, research and practice, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 44-67. 20.

Tannenbaum, S. I, Smith-Jentsch, K., and Behson, S. (1997). Training team leaders to facilitate team learning and performance. In J. A. Cannon-Bowers and E. Salas (Eds.), Decision making under stress: Implication for training and simulation. 21. Wageman, R. (1995). ' Interdependence and group effectiveness.' Administrative Science Quaterly, vol. 40, pp. 145-180. 22. Wageman, R. (1999). ' Task design, outcome interdependence, and individual differences: their joint effects on effort in task-performing teams (Commentary on Huguet et al., 1999)', Group dynamics: Theory, Research and Practice. Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 132-137. 23. Weisman, C. S, Gordon, D. L,

Bergner, M., (1993). ' The effects of unit self-management in hospital nurses' work process, work satisfaction, and retention.' Medical Care, Vol. 31, no. 5, pp. 381-93. 24. Williams, K. Y, and O'Reiley, C. A (1998). ' Demography and diversity in organisations: A review of 40 years of research. In Staw, B. M and Cummings, L. L (Eds), Research in organizational behavior, 20: 77-140. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.