

Study on Theory of Group Development; Groups and Teams

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Abstract: This paper traces the evolution of Group development Theory beginning with the seminal work of Tuckman and thereafter. It gives an understanding how groups are formed and what stages of development they go through to accomplish their goals. It also gives an understanding of Gersick's punctuated equilibrium, that significantly impacts the pace at which groups' work, towards accomplishing their task. The paper also distinguishes between groups and teams. It gives an understanding of the theoretical development of group work process focussing on natural groups. The paper would kindle interest for empirical study of group development in natural groups in corporate environment

Key Words: Group development, Teams, Punctuated Equilibrium, Tuckman

I. Introduction

Formation of groups and their development in achieving tasks has provided an interesting arena of study. This paper traces evolution of theory on group development, and also discusses the difference between groups and teams. The paper helps to understand the steps in group formation, the transition that happens as groups move towards completion of task, and also captures the distinction between groups and teams.

Tuckman's Evolution Of Group Development Process

The best known framework on group development was developed by Tuckman (1965). Tuckman examined 50 research papers broadly covering therapy groups, T-groups, natural groups, and laboratory groups. Based on his examination of past studies, Tuckman studied the group development from two perspectives:

- i. Interpersonal group activities
- ii. Group task activities.

In group interpersonal activities Tuckman developed a sequential progress beginning with testing and dependence, intragroup conflict, development of group cohesion, and functional role relatedness; while in group task activities the sequential stages are: Orientation to the task, Emotional response to task demand, Open exchange of relevant interpretations, and emergence of solutions.

Tuckman postulated that the group development consisted of 4 stages, viz., Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing.

Tuckman's study suffered from certain limitations in that the past studies had more therapy groups and less of natural groups. Further the studies were not subject to much quantitative rigour.

Further Study On Group Development Process

Tuckman along with Mary Ann Jensen (1977) studied papers on group development of the past 10 years to check their four step group model theory. They examined Science Citation Index 1965 and Social Science Citation Index 1970, and examined 57 related articles. Only Runkel's (1971) study set out to test Tuckman's hypothesis. Lucoursiere (1974) added a stage called termination, and Spitz and Sadock (1973) identified a stage called termination. Yalom (1970) had a four stage model ending with termination stage. On a review of all these studies, Tuckman decided it appropriate to add the 5th and final stage to his model - adjourning.

Perfect Equilibrium In Group Development Process

Gersick study (1988) presents a new theory, on what significantly impacts the pace at which groups' work, towards accomplishing their task. He studied eight groups across six organisations. Gersick analysis of data showed that the group had a dramatic or revolutionary change in its pace of work, almost exactly at the midpoint. Till the midpoint the group is in a state of inertia, staying with the framework developed in the very first meeting. He saw a corollary with the concept of punctuated equilibrium in natural history – Eldredge & Gould (1972). The limitations of the study include the fact that it evolved a new hypothesis, and there was no empirical testing involved; the influence of environment as a trigger on the group activity was noticed, but was

not studied in depth; finally, the model would only fit teams that have an ability to change the course mid stream.

The research by Romanelli and Tuckman (1994) was to empirically test punctuated equilibrium model in organisations, postulated by Gersick (1988). Until this study only case histories of organisations like AT&T, General Radio, Citibank, and Prime Computers, were used to validate Gersick study. The hypothesis that organisational negative performance would result in revolutionary transformation could not be substantiated. Otherwise analysis of data showed that change in environment, change in CEO brought about drastic changes in most parts of the organisational activity involving structure, strategy, and power distribution. Thus, Gersick's model of punctuated equilibrium was empirically tested and validated. The limitation of the study is that the research on the model should be carried out in a more stable environment, as this study of minicomputer producers was carried out amidst changes in technology and high competition. While looking at performance and revolutionary transformation, the study had used market share as a criteria – future research should look at profitability.

Other Studies On Group Development Process

Heinen and Jacobson (1976) evolved a model for organisational task group - Forming, Differentiation, Integration, and Full Maturity. Industry task groups have group goals as well as larger organisational goals set as direction for them. Jacobson model identified organisational task groups with members active participation, communication, leadership influence, different role structures, group goals, rewards and sanction, and external relations. Three phases of group development are identified with the third phase being the most engaged phase.

Gersick changed the understanding of group development with his proposition of perfect equilibrium and midpoint transition. Linear progression models on group development tend to follow a gradual pattern, logical sequence, and become more effective over time. The paper by Chang, Bordia, and Duck (2003) reconciles perfect equilibrium model of Gersick and integrative model of Wheelan, taken as a representation of linear models. While the Gersick approach looked at tasks over time, integrative model looked at overall development of the group. Gersick model would only apply to groups that have a leeway to modify their course midway, whereas integrative model applies to all group situations. The results confirmed that simulated groups followed both linear model and perfect equilibrium model. Further research should streamline coding system and introduce interventions that promote socioemotional developments in simulated work groups.

Bushe and Coetzer (2007) explain how traditional theory of group development fit task groups, and discuss two key sequential phases of membership and competence. The paper says that group development theories are prescriptive and development in the theories actually refer to team effectiveness. When membership of a group is complete then focus shifts to competence that helps to achieve the group tasks. The findings of this research show that groups that have established membership phase show a greater cognitive congruence between as is status and the ideal status of the group development. The traditional theory helps to support further research on group effectiveness.

Current research argues that the most prominent models of group development (the linear stage model and the punctuated equilibrium model) are simply different lenses for studying the same phenomenon. Bushe and Coetzer argue that the two models are distinct (groups do not simultaneously follow both models) and that the key to understanding their use lies in routines. They studied six newly formed groups whose members came from the same organization that worked on similar projects over a seven-week period. Three groups worked nonmediated and three groups used a collaboration technology that was new to them. The three nonmediated groups followed the punctuated equilibrium model and the three collaboration technology groups followed the stage model. They argue that groups that enact the shared routines common in their organizations will experience a different group development path than those groups whose shared routines are disrupted and which must adapt to a new technology. When group members enact shared routines (which they may share due to having a common organizational culture), they can quickly begin work, and group development follows the punctuated equilibrium model. When groups cannot enact shared routines, they must first negotiate how they will work before work can begin, so group development follows the stage model. Thus, the introduction of new collaboration technology (or any new technology or work process) influences how group development occurs.

Two commonly accepted theories of group development are the Tuckman model (Tuckman; Jensen, 1977) and the Punctuated-Equilibrium model (Gersick, 1988). Critiques of both are that they assume linear development and that they fail to account for outside influences. In contrast, Tubbs (2004) suggests that group development should be viewed from a systems perspective. The paper Monica and Dennis proposes an integration of two group models entitled the Punctuated-Tuckman. The proposed model is designed to integrate elements of the Tuckman model of group development, the punctuated equilibrium model of group development, and systems theory. This proposed model could assist educators, theorists, and practitioners of group development to more clearly understand the process by which groups develop.

II. Conclusion On Group Development Process

Distinctly there has been focus on how the groups evolve and another set which focuses on how the group looks at accomplishing the task. The challenge with the punctuated equilibrium model has been the limited number of empirical studies. Tuckman's theory also suffers the same way, in that the study of natural groups in corporations has been limited.

Groups And Teams:

Introduction

It is useful to first establish an understanding of the different research traditions and literatures surrounding groups and teams. Teams usually involve field studies in real-world and organisational settings, whereas group studies are conducted in controlled research laboratories, often using experimental designs (Paulus Van der Zee, 2004). Popular press has echoed this division by juxtaposing empirical group literature in opposition to popular angles on teams (Kayser, 1994). In the social psychology literature, chapters on groups and group dynamics rarely cover teams (e.g. Baron Kerr, 2003; Thibaut, 1959). Likewise, organizational and management literature hardly features group chapters (e.g. Swezey Salas, 1992). While this tendency certainly paints an imbalanced and mutually exclusive picture, it is true that teams mostly occur in organizational settings, whereas groups naturally form in various other contexts apart from the organizational one, such as religious faith groups or sports fans.

Definition

From a social psychological perspective, a group can be defined as “two or more individuals who are connected to one another by social relationships” (Forsyth, 2010, p. 3). The size of a group ranges from very small numbers of people, such as dyads, to very large collectives, such as crowds, communities and nations (McGrath, Arrow, Berdahl, 2000; Simmel, 1902). Most groups tend to have between two and seven members (Forsyth, 2010; Hare, 1976). The web of social, interpersonal relationships at the heart of a group is based on connectional links between the individual members of that group (Forsyth, 2010; Levi, 2011). Accordingly, even though many groupings of people or collections of individuals may seem highly distinctive and unique at first sight, the links conjoining the individual group members embody the critical element that all groups have in common.

One particular form of a group is referred to as team. In general terms, teams are designated groups of individuals, which are supposed to form a unit that works together toward a common goal (Franz, 2012; Salas, Cooke, Rosen, 2008; West, 2004). More specifically, a team is “a distinguishable set of two or more people who interact, dynamically, interdependently, and adaptively toward a common and valued goal/object/mission, who have each been assigned specific roles or functions to perform, and who have a limited life-span of membership” (Salas, Dickinson, Converse, Tannenbaum, 1992, p. 4). Teams vary in size, but generally remain rather small and do not exceed 15 individuals (Guzzo, Dickson, 1996; Salas et al., 2008). These general definitions serve as an expedient point of departure for the following comparative examination of how groups are different from teams.

On a first note, teams possess important properties of a group in that they feature interpersonal relationships between the individual team members. However, in terms of orientation and function, teams can be considered a special kind of group, which has the function of making its members work together and is oriented primarily toward collectively achieving a particular goal or task (Kozlowski Ilgen, 2006; Sundstrom, De Meuse, Futrell, 1990). By contrast, a group might form based on general similarities of group members, who do not necessarily collaborate toward a shared task (Levi, 2011).

The structured, goal-oriented and task-focused nature of teams becomes clear when considering the example of a team of surgeons, surgical assistants and nurses trying to save a patient's life in the operating theatre (e.g. Catchpole, Mishra, Handa, McCulloch, 2008; Undre, Sevdalis, Healey, Darzi, Vincent, 2006). Here, a relatively small set of people come together and “dynamically, interdependently, and adaptively” (Salas et al., 1992) interact and react in concert according to the patient's situation. Saving the patient's life is the team's shared goal and upon its successful or unsuccessful completion, the team dissolves again. On the contrary, a family exemplifies the idea of a group in that the family is not necessarily working towards a specific common goal with an expected outcome. In a prehistoric context, families might be seen to have had the goal of surviving together and producing offspring. Thus, there might have been a shared, pragmatic goal but no higher entity or institution that expected a certain outcome of the group, as it is generally the case with a team (Franz, 2012).

Following this, an additional important difference between groups and teams emerges as teams often are subject to or part of a superior entity that defines goals and expects certain outcomes (Guzzo, Dickson, 1996; Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson, Jundt, 2005). Sometimes, the team itself resembles this superior entity, for example when a group of independent journalists or artists comes together to start a project without any commissioner or

contracting authority. Even in this case, there is a sense of expected outcome due to the very fact that the team has been formed in the first place. In addition to such formalized expectations, teams can experience varying performance episodes (Marks, Mathieu, Zaccaro, 2001), whereas groups are more stable and rarely have to 'perform' under time pressure. This illustrates the importance of the time factor in teams (Levi, 2011).

III. Conclusion

Groups And Teams

Theorists make a distinction between groups and Teams based on their orientation - Organisation Behaviourists or Social Scientists. Teams are groups with clear focus on task and mostly set in a formal way in corporations. Tuckman's theory applies to both groups and teams.

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