

Chapter IX

Supporting Arguments for Including the Teaching of Team Competency Principles in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

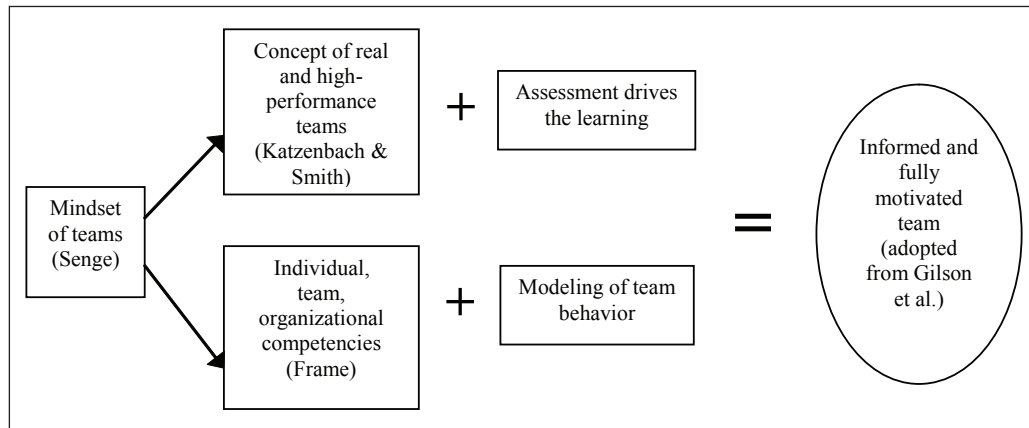
For optimum workplace effectiveness in knowledge-intensive industries in which principles of knowledge management need to be applied, it is necessary to take into account not only the competencies of individuals themselves but also the competencies of the teams in which they must operate. Although the incorporation of various types of group work into pedagogies is already widespread within institutes of higher education, many examples fail to embrace a rationale for, or the potential benefits of, multiple contributor environments. We present in this chapter arguments for including the teaching of team competency principles in higher education, supported by an original multi-dimensional team competency teaching model, a taxonomy for assessing team competency levels and an example of the implementation of these principles.

INTRODUCTION

Though the importance placed on knowledge is increasingly being recognized, applications of

knowledge management principles are still inconsistent, the topic and even its definitions are still being widely interpreted (Von Krogh, Ichijo & Nonaka, 2000). The complexity of problems in our

Figure 1. Multi-dimensional team competency teaching model



knowledge society requires that problem-solving activities be shared across disciplinary, cognitive, geographic and cultural boundaries (Leonard-Barton, 1995), with Jewels and Underwood (2004, p. 1) synthesizing these and providing a definition of knowledge management as *the collection and processing of disparate knowledge in order to affect mutual performance*.

It is expected that when most graduates enter the professional workplace, their ability to work as a team member will contribute to the team's immediate levels of productivity. Assumptions could once be made that graduates would enter a university or the workforce with an adequate degree of 'teamness' or team competencies acquired through a childhood of formal and informal team activities (such as sport). Over many years, team competencies were practiced and developed by the individuals themselves: they did not require teaching intervention of any kind. However, the advent of computers and the Internet has impacted on social activities of children, along with the already felt impact of television. It appears less time is now spent in team sport activities, and when considered cumulatively over a period of many years, such children are now entering universities less skilled in team competencies.

Coupled with the increased need for team skills in the information age, as outlined further in this paper, we believe that it is important to attend to the development of team skills in training and university curricula.

Though various types of group work have already been incorporated into higher education pedagogies, many examples fail to embrace the potential benefits of multiple contributor outputs in knowledge-intensive environments. While perhaps being ideal candidates to capitalize on the benefits of knowledge-sharing behaviors, higher education, has generally not realized its potential. There has, according to Senge (1992), never been a greater need for mastering team learning in organizations.

Team learning is vital because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations (p. 10).

Until we have some theory of what happens when teams learn (as opposed to individuals in teams learning) ... Until there are reliable methods for building teams that can learn together, its occurrence will remain a product of happenstance (p. 238).

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