Team Adaptation Processes in Different Contexts

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Organizations rely on teams for a large variety of tasks. With the organizational climate becoming more complex, teams often encounter novel and complicated situations in which they cannot rely on routines, but have to develop new strategies. The goal of this research is to understand what processes teams use in non-routine situations, how those processes materialize in teams' behavioral dynamics, and how effective they are for team adaptation.

Although research on team adaptation has made considerable advanced in the last decade and has identified several team processes important for adaptation (Maynard, Kennedy, & Sommer, 2015), various aspects of team adaptation still remain elusive. For example, literature has primarily focused on the plan execution phase of team adaptation (Maynard et al., 2015), in which primarily action processes such as monitoring progress are of importance. What processes team engage in during, 1) the assessment of the situation, 2) the formulation of the plan, and 3) team learning from the non-routine situation (Burke, Stagl, Salas, Pierce, & Kendall, 2006), has been mostly unconsidered (Maynard et al., 2015). However, different phases of adaptation might require teams to show different adaptation processes.

Additionally to the phases of team adaptation, the origin and the severity of the adaptation trigger are relevant for what team processes are adaptive (Christian, Christian, Pearsall, & Long, 2017; Maynard et al., 2015). For example, researchers who made a distinction between adaptation triggers that are external or internal to the team, found that action processes and transition processes, such as monitoring progress and planning respectively, where primarily

influential for adaptation to an external trigger, but not as effective for adaptation to internal adaptation triggers (Christian et al., 2017). Maynard and colleagues argue that in case of an internal trigger - which they called teamwork-based adaptation triggers - interpersonal processes might be primarily important. Moreover, they add that the severity of the adaptation trigger might influence whether teams engage in a transition phase involving planning.

As described above, literature on team adaptation makes a clear distinction between action, interpersonal and transition processes. This is based on work of Marks and colleagues (2001), who suggested that teams go through consecutive transition and action phases, whereby they plan and execute the plan respectively. In addition, teams can engage in interpersonal processes such as affect and conflict management, in order to assure that team interaction runs smoothly.

However, while this distinction is made quite clearly in the team adaptation literature, the amount of research on all three team processes is unequal. As Maynard and colleagues state in their review on team adaptation: "It becomes clear that researchers have almost exclusively envisioned team adaptation as adjustments of action processes" (Maynard et al., 2015), thereby disregarding transition and interpersonal processes that teams engage in (Marks, Mathieu, & Zaccaro, 2001). However, the limited studies that have examined transition and interpersonal processes in teams have found that these processes are of great importance to team adaptation (Lepine, 2005; Lepine, Jackson, Mathieu, & Saul, 2008). For example, teams engaging in plan formulation tend to perform better than teams who do not engage in such behavior effectively (Lepine et al., 2008). Additionally, one study showed that teams that stated they engaged in more pleasant interpersonal conversation tended to perform better than teams that did not (Lepine, 2005)

Yet what remains mostly unexamined is how these team processes take shape in different phases as well as how the source of the adaptation trigger, internal or external, and the severity of the trigger influence the occurrence and effectiveness of the processes. Some evidence that these situation characteristics matter comes from two studies. First, one study showed that plan formulation, a transition process, is primarily helpful for team adaptive performance when teams engage in this process earlier rather than later (Waller, 1999), thus arguing that teams should engage in the formulation of the plan, before starting with the execution processes, in order to be adaptive (Frick, Fletcher, Ramsay, & Bedwell, 2017). Secondly, another study on dyads showed that plan formulation during a non-routine event was almost not present in adaptive teams(Lei, Waller, Hagen, & Kaplan, 2016), thus arguing that transition processes might primarily be important during other phases or in less extreme situations.

However, more research is needed to advance theory on the roles of specific team adaptation processes during the whole cycle of team adaptation. The current proposed study will aim to address this by examining the appropriateness of specific processes in different phases, and with different adaptive triggers varying in the source (external vs. internal) and in severity, using experimental vignette methodology (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). Therefore, several scenarios, which differ in 1) the source of the adaptation trigger, 2) the phase, and/or 3) the severity of the adaptation trigger need to be designed and examined.

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