Team Effectiveness: A Case Study of a Fast-Growing Private Educational Organization in the UAE

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Abstract

This study attempts to investigate the effectiveness of grade-level teams within Emirates International Academy – EIA (pseudonym), a fast-accelerating private educational organization in the UAE, using a questionnaire survey. In order to determine the characteristics and elements of an effective team and, thus, formulate specific research questions, Mickan and Roger (2000) is adopted for further study and compared with other literature prior to conducting the empirical study. This research is quantitative in nature and arrives at conclusions in an inductive manner, thus generalize the findings on similar organizations operating in the UAE. It is observed that the grade-level teams within EIA achieve goals that link with the purpose of the Academy and most of the teams, in general, are effective but do not have sufficient performance feedback opportunities for development. In order to increase the overall team effectiveness, senior leadership and team leaders are recommended to provide and encourage opportunities for teams to reflect upon self- and group- performance.

Keywords: Effective team, Educational organizations, School, UAE

1. Introduction

Since the 1950s, researchers have been interested in the benefits of teams within organizations (Henderson & Walkinshaw, 2002; Mickan & Rodger, 2005). Throughout various investigations, teams were shown to foster an effective work environment as they divide workload and responsibilities (De Meuse, 2009). In addition, the collaborative environment that is created from close work with other individuals has shown to increase job satisfaction and productivity (West, 2004). "It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare" (Lencioni, 2002: vii). As Azmy (2012: 19) argued, "Since the beginning of the 20th century, globalization, technology, and the intricacy of work have resulted in more organizations becoming aware of the importance of understanding team effectiveness". For example, as Mealiea and Baltazar (2005: 141) confirmed, "in the US, 82 percent of companies employing more than 100 employees have turned to the use of groups to support organizational goals". Kennedy and Nilson (2008: 4) added that "81% of Fortune 500 companies are building at least partially team-based organizations, and at least 77% use temporary project teams to perform core work". In general, "European and North American employees often do not work in isolation from each other but work in team" (Taggar and Brown, 2001: 698). So, it is evident that the significance of teamwork is on the rise as a result of the increasingly global nature of companies in the form of multinationals, more diverse and cross-cultural job definitions, and, overall, growing complexity in the structures of these organizations (Naquin & Tynan, 2003). To handle the complexities of expansions, grade-level teams within workplaces are created (Mealia & Baltazar, 2005) in various forms, eg, "project teams, virtual task forces, quality circles, self-directed work teams, standing committees" and/or work units, eg, "surgical units, airplane crews, R&D teams, production crews" (De Meuse, 2009: 1-2). Many problems are likely to arise from these groupings and, as a consequence, leaders need to take the challenge of measuring, supervising and ensuring the effectiveness of these newly launched teams. These viewpoints can be equally true for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) -- a fast growing gulf country and an emerging hub to many international companies. As the country allows growing organizations to take the responsibility to develop, monitor and maintain a sense of community and productivity, forming work teams have become a practicing norm among companies in the recent years.

In light of the changing economic and international business scenarios, this study has made an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of grade-level teams within a fast-growing private educational organization in the UAE, namely, 'Emirates International Academy – EIA' (pseudonym), in an inductive manner to generalize the findings on similar organizations operating in the UAE, using both primary and secondary information. EIA became operational five years ago with a small number of academic staff who were hired from abroad and had just arrived new to Dubai. At the beginning, the academic employees worked as a small community to attain a common organizational goal. In five years' time, the academic staff size has doubled causing greater complexity in the organization's structure and operations. In order to maintain the sense of community and transfer information effectively, senior leadership created grade-level teams appointing team leaders to serve as mediators between senior leadership and the teaching staff, and ensure continued productivity of the school as teams. As observed in the literature, in recent times, team leaders seem to have started facing problems of

various kinds, eg, experiencing conflicts amongst members, and, thus, risking expected productivity of teams. In this connection, measuring team effectiveness and setting the strategy next have appeared as important and timely for EIA. In this connection, in order to attain the objectives of this research, the following focus questions were formed:

1) What characteristics are required within a team in order to ensure effectiveness?
2) How can team effectiveness be measured?
3) How effective are the grade-level teams within the EIA?

2. Theoretical Development

Using the behavioral scientists' viewpoints, Mealiea and Baltazar (2005: 142) argued that "the success of team-building efforts is a function of the number of desirable team characteristics that can be built into a work environment". Although number of studies have continued to focus on identifying characteristics of teams and how they are linked with team effectiveness since the early 1950s, a single and universally acceptable model of team effectiveness is not yet visible in literature (Henderson & Walkinshaw, 2002). For example: McGrath (1984), Driskell, Salas and Hogan (1987), Tannenbaum, Beard and Salas (1992), Klimoski and Jones (1995), and Blendell, Henderson, Molloy and Pascual (2001) explained team effectiveness using three components: input, process (or throughput) and output (or outcome) whereas Shanahan (2001) suggested 'structure' as an additional component to these three. Rasker, van Vliet, van den Broek and Essens (2001) worked on the operational context for the team and listed most of these components as determining factors of team effectiveness, eg, organisational, situational, team, individual, and task factors. Mickan and Rodger (2000), in their study, listed most variety of the characteristics highlighted by other authors.

Table 1. Comparing Mickan and Rodger (2000) with other models.

Characteristics (as of Mickan & Rodger, 2000)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)	(I)	(J)	Total
Clear purpose	☑	☑	☑	-	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	9
Appropriate culture	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	-	☑	☑	☑	☑	9
Distinct roles	☑	-	☑	-	-	☑	☑	☑	-	☑	6
Suitable leadership	☑	☑	-	☑	-	☑	☑	☑	☑	-	7
Relevant members	☑	☑	☑	-	☑	☑	-	☑	-	-	6
Adequate resources	☑	☑	-	-	-	☑	-	☑	☑	-	5
Trust	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	-	-	☑	-	-	7
Commitment	☑	-	☑	☑	☑	☑	-	☑	-	-	6
Flexibility	-	-	☑	☑	-	☑	-	-	-	-	3
Coordination	☑	☑	☑	-	☑	☑	-	☑	☑	☑	8
Communication	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	-	☑	☑	9
Cohesion	☑	☑	☑	-	☑	☑	-	-	-	-	5
Decision making	☑	☑	☑	-	☑	☑	☑	-	☑	☑	8
Conflict management	☑	-	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	9
Social relationships	☑	☑	☑	-	☑	☑	-	☑	-	☑	7
Performance feedback	-	-	☑	-	-	☑	☑	-	☑	-	4

Article keys: (A) LaFasto & Larson (2001); (B) Hackman (2002); (C) West (2004); (D) Halfhill, Sundstrom, Lahner, Calderone, & Nielsen (2005); (E) Lencioni (2005); (F) Mickan & Rodger (2005); (G) Mealiea & Baltazar (2005); (H) De Meuse (2009); (I) Gilley, Morris, Waite, Coastes, & Veliquette (2010); (J) Carlock (2012).

For a clear conceptual development, the list of team characteristics developed by Mickan and Rodger (2000) are compared with other prominent researches of the period 2001-2012 in Table 1. Adopting the style of De Meuse (2009), a count of the number of appearances of these characteristics in literature is also made in the extreme right column of the Table. Although Mickan and Rodger (2000) considered 'specified task' and 'self-knowledge' as important, these characteristics are finally not included in Table 1 due to lack of coverage in other literature.

3. Research Design & Methodology

Most team effectiveness measures are based on characteristics of effective teams identified within literature (Bateman et al., 2002; West, 2004; Mickan & Rodger, 2005). Bateman et al. (2002) formed a group to create a *Team Effectiveness Audit Tool* and combined both internal team dynamics and external team output focusing on six themes: team synergy, performance objectives, skills, use of resources, innovation and quality. The questionnaire employed statements on these themes using a 5-point Likert scale and was piloted with a group of managers and a group of staff personal before the actual survey. This audit tool was later conducted with 400 participants, and outcomes were grouped and calculated to reveal the overall team score. West (2004) developed

the *Team Reflexivity Questionnaire,* made up of statements focusing on task and social reflexivity and measured the statements using a 7-point scale. Individual questionnaires were then combined to calculate the team scores on task reflexivity and social reflexivity separately by adding the values of each section and dividing it by the number of team members. The values were then categorized as high (score of 42-56), average (score of 34-41), or low (score of 0-33) allowing each team to determine their areas of strengths and weaknesses, followed by reflections towards further improvement. Mickan and Rodger (2005) made their empirical investigation by selecting 39 managers to participate in a structured repertory grid presented in the form of structured interviews. The participants "were asked to identify seven personal teamwork experiences" (p. 261) and rate them as effective/ineffective using a 5-point scale. Final results revealed 30 conceptual categories of effective teamwork. However, due to the fact that any specific instrument to empirically assess the team effectiveness characteristics was not outlined in Mickan and Rodger (2005), a "Team Effectiveness Questionnaire" integrating statements from the Team Reflexivity Questionnaire (West, 2004) and the Team Effectiveness Audit Tool (Bateman et al., 2002) was developed to assess the effectiveness of each grade-level team at EIA.

The questionnaire of this study addressed the team effectiveness characteristics (Table 1) incorporating 20 carefully selected and filtered statements (Table 2) for final survey. In order to determine the suitability of the content of the questionnaire within the context of EIA, a pilot survey was administered to a small sample of teachers and administrators (7) who were experienced, ranged between grades and administrative positions, had a history of being reliable and reflective, and had been members of the organization for at least 4 years, thus, had familiarity with the organizational context and culture. The survey was designed using a web-based tool (Google forms) and emailed to the participants. The participants were asked to fill out the survey and note if any statements were unclear. Participants were also asked if they had difficulty completing the questionnaire. Results revealed that 29% of participants had difficulty giving an overall rating for various reasons. Based on respondents' suggestions, the questionnaire was edited. For example, similar statements were combined (eg, cohesion and trust) and/or removed (eg, 'specified task' which is conceptually covered under 'distinct roles'), the statements that were marked as unclear were removed, characteristics appearing conceptually close (eg, 'trust' and 'cohesion') were merged together, and so on.

Table 2. Statements under team effectiveness characteristics

Characteristics	Statements used in the Questionnaire Survey
Clear Purpose	(1) The team is aware of the organizational objectives and is committed to achieving them. (2) There are clear objectives established for team activities. (3) The team often reflects on how well they achieve the objectives.
Appropriate culture	(4) Team members are supportive of each other. (5) Team members are always friendly.
Distinct roles	(6) The team is involved in creating task objectives. (7) Members are clear about their roles in the team.
Suitable leadership	(8) There is effective and appropriate leadership within the team.
Relevant members	(9) Members of the team feel that they are fully utilized.
Adequate resources	(10) The team has the resources it needs to do the job and meet the targets it has been set.
Commitment	(11) When things at work are stressful, we pull together as a team. (12) All individuals are committed to perform to the best of their ability within the team.
Flexibility	(13) In this team, we modify our objectives in the light of changing circumstances.
Coordination	(14) The methods used by the team to get the job done are often discussed.
Communication	(15) There is effective communication within the team.
Cohesion and trust	(16) Individuals feel valued as members of the team. (17) Morale within the team is high.
Decision making	(18) The way decisions are made in this team is often reviewed.
Conflict management	(19) Conflict does not linger because people in this team are quick to resolve arguments.
Social relationship	(20) Individuals feel proud to be a member of the team.
Performance feedback	(21) Performance is monitored and feedback is given on a regular basis.

For the questionnaire survey, an email detailing the purpose and instructions of the questionnaire as well as the confidentiality issues that would be upheld was prepared. The email was sent to 32 grade 1-5 teachers with a link to the questionnaire, prior to their meeting for collaborative planning. For each of the statement used in the questionnaire, participants were asked to choose on a 6-point Likert-type scale: 1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=somewhat agree, 5= agree, and 6= strongly agree. Participants were informed that they

could either complete the questionnaire on their desired time, or during the allocated time in their upcoming planning meeting. In order to ensure high response rates, the questionnaire was emailed out to the team leaders and the principal, requesting them to encourage team members to complete it. One week later, a follow-up email with gentle reminder was sent to those who did not yet complete the questionnaire.

Table 3. Grade-level breakdown of teachers & response rates (in percentage)

Grade Levels	Home room teachers	EAL or SEN teachers	Total no. of teachers	Participant teachers	Percentage response
Grade 1	5	0	5	4	80.0%
Grade 2	6	0	6	5	83.3%
Grade 3	6	2	8	7	87.5%
Grade 4	6	0	6	4	66.7%
Grade 5	6	1	7	6	85.7%
Grades 1-5	29	3	32	26	81.3%

The survey resulted in a 81% response rate (Table 3). Although literature has shown various opinions towards acceptable response rates, a rate above 80% is needed to confidently represent a population (Baruch & Holtom, 2008; Sharif, 2011; Cresswell, 2012) and 70% is expected from a professional population (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2011). In light of these observations, the response rate of 81% can be treated as highly acceptable.

4. Results & Discussion

4.1 Team effectiveness characteristics in EIA

To determine the strengths and weaknesses of Emirates International School (EIA) as a whole, a percentage of all types of responses on each characteristic was calculated. This was done by computing the average of all scores for each characteristic, dividing them by the maximum possible score (6) and then multiplying by 100 (refer to Table 4). Also, in order to check the internal consistency of the characteristics included in the questionnaire, a Cronbach's alpha test for reliability is performed. "In general, the closer the value Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0, the more reliable is the instrument" (Azmy, 2012:104). As suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), Field (2005), Sharif (2011), and Sharif and McMinn (2013), a Cronbach's alpha equal to 0.70 or higher indicates satisfactory consistency, between 0.60 and 0.70 acceptable, below 0.60 unacceptably poor and below 0.30 not considerable at all (thus, be dropped). As Table 4 suggests, the Cronbach's alphas of all the characteristics used in this study are lying in the acceptable – highly acceptable range of internal consistencies.

Table 4. Overall team effectiveness characteristics in EIA: Percentages, Means & SDs

	Percentage	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Clear Purpose	83	4.96	0.87	0.869
Appropriate culture	82	4.74	1.34	0.711
Distinct roles	79	4.52	0.97	0.814
Suitable leadership	78	4.97	1.42	0.612
Relevant members	79	4.36	1.17	0.632
Adequate resources	77	4.97	0.73	0.823
Commitment	79	4.79	1.18	0.698
Cohesion and trust	80	4.75	1.28	0.633
Flexibility	82	4.91	1.04	0.787
Coordination	81	4.70	1.05	0.768
Communication	80	4.61	1.25	0.667
Decision making	79	4.13	1.36	0.623
Conflict management	78	4.42	1.46	0.603
Social relationship	79	4.91	1.16	0.688
Performance feedback	76	4.10	1.21	0.625

EIA revealed overall scores between 76%-82%, and implies, according to Mealiea and Baltazar (2005), the Academy is effective. Among all, 'clear purpose' has scored the highest percentage (with high mean and low SD) and, thus, suggests that all teams work towards achieving organizational goals (Mickan & Rodger, 2000). As a low scoring characteristic in many grade-level teams (Table 5), it was expected that performance feedback would be the least present characteristic overall (with low mean and high SD values). Senior leadership could rectify this problem as an Academy and, subsequently, assist many teams with increasing their effectiveness levels by implementing designated times throughout the year for teams to assess their group and individual performance (Mickan & Rodger, 2000; Mealiea & Baltazar, 2005). By mandating team reflection, as Bateman et al. (2002) argued, senior leadership ensures that teams are regularly assessing their performance, and identifying areas for improvement.

4.2 Grade-level characteristics in EIA

As suggested by Bateman et al. (2002), to have a breakdown of each grade-level team and identify the areas of strengths and weaknesses, a percentage of each characteristic was calculated for each team. This was done by:

1) computing the averages,
2) dividing the averages by the maximum possible score (6)
3) and multiplying by 100.

Results in Table 5 reveal that the team effectiveness characteristic that was most present within the grade 1 team was clear purpose (85%) with the highest mean and a low SD score. In contrast, relevant members, decision making and conflict management, all revealed a score of 56% as well as low means and high SD values, thus appeared to be the least present characteristics among all. This finding may infer, according to Mickan and Rodger (2000), Bateman et al. (2002) and West (2004), that the team perceives members as:

(a) not containing diverse skills to carry out various tasks,
(b) not included within the decision making process, and
(c) that there is a lack of conflict management.

However, as suggested by Mealiea and Baltazar (2005), these characteristics, in addition to the remaining factors, can be made more prominent through empowering the group as a whole to collaboratively make decisions and problem solve, thus increase ownership and commitment to succeed.

Grade 2 scores in Table 5 are mostly above the 70% mark except for decision-making and performance feedback, which, as suggested by Mealiea and Baltazar (2005), indicates that the team, overall, is effective. As decision making and performance feedback are the least present characteristics, the team should involve all members in the decision making process, thus creating ownership and unity. In addition, there should be regular opportunities for constructive feedback to take place which, in return, will further maintain and enhance the remaining characteristics (Mickan & Rodger, 2000; Bateman et al., 2002).

As the most effective grade-level in the Emirates International Academy (EIA), grade 3 revealed high scores (above 80%) in all characteristics (Table 5). It means, as suggested by Mealiea and Baltazar (2005), that other associated factors such as the current stress and workload, the task not matching the skills of the group, etc. have no negative influence on the team members. Suitable leadership scored the highest with the highest mean and the lowest SD values. These results, according to Mickan and Rodger (2000), entail that the team leader effectively maintains the focus of the group towards the organization's vision as well as sets and maintains conducive structures for decision making and conflict management. To support other grades, the grade 3 leader could offer strategies to the other team leaders from ineffective teams. Relevant members, although a high score (81%), was the lowest scoring characteristic within the grade-level. Therefore, in order to become further effective, the grade 3 team should create opportunities where member's diverse skills can be utilized (Mickan & Rodger, 2000).

Table 5. Team effectiveness in grades 1-5: Percentages (Mean and SD)

Characteristics	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Clear Purpose	85 (5.11, 0.60)	81 (4.83, 0.79)	89 (5.33, 0.71)	81 (4.83, 0.41)	81 (4.86, 0.91)
Appropriate culture	61 (3.67, 1.36)	86 (5.17, 1.02)	86 (5.19, 1.11)	63 (3.75, 2.06)	85 (5.07, 1.00)
Distinct roles	67 (4.00, 1.00)	72 (4.33, 0.82)	88 (5.25, 0.71)	75 (4.50, 0.71)	74 (4.43, 0.79)
Suitable leadership	67 (4.00, 1.73)	86 (5.17, 0.98)	96 (5.75, 0.46)	67 (4.00, 2.83)	90 (5.43, 0.98)
Relevant members	56 (3.33, 1.15)	75 (4.50, 1.05)	81 (4.88, 0.83)	67 (4.00, 2.83)	74 (4.43, 1.13)
Adequate resources	78 (4.67, 0.58)	86 (5.17, 0.98)	88 (5.25, 0.71)	83 (5.00, 1.41)	76 (4.57, 0.53)
Commitment	75 (4.50, 0.84)	83 (5.00, 0.60)	88 (5.25, 1.06)	83 (5.00, 0.00)	81 (4.86, 1.10)
Flexibility	78 (4.67, 0.58)	83 (5.00, 0.89)	88 (5.25, 1.04)	92 (5.50, 0.71)	83 (5.00, 1.00)
Coordination	78 (4.67, 0.58)	81 (4.83, 0.98)	83 (5.00, 1.07)	92 (5.50, 0.71)	79 (4.71, 0.49)
Communication	72 (4.33, 2.10)	78 (4.67, 1.21)	85 (5.13, 0.64)	75 (4.50, 0.71)	79 (4.71, 0.95)
Cohesion and trust	64 (3.83, 0.75)	83 (5.00, 1.21)	90 (5.40, 0.73)	71 (4.25, 1.71)	87 (5.21, 0.80)
Decision making	56 (3.33, 1.53)	69 (4.17, 0.98)	86 (5.14, 0.69)	58 (3.50, 2.12)	67 (4.00, 1.63)
Conflict management	56 (3.33, 2.08)	83 (5.00, 1.09)	85 (5.13, 0.99)	50 (3.00, 1.41)	83 (5.00, 1.30)
Social relationship	61 (3.67, 1.53)	86 (5.17, 1.17)	92 (5.50, 0.53)	75 (4.50, 2.12)	83 (5.00, 1.00)
Performance feedback	61 (3.67, 1.53)	67 (4.00, 0.63)	83 (5.00, 0.93)	58 (3.50, 3.54)	67 (4.00, 1.00)

As per Table 5, the grade 4 team showed high levels in coordination and flexibility (with the highest means and percentage scores of 92% as well as low SDs), indicating that they efficiently work together, and are open to change (Mickan & Rodger, 2005). In contrast, conflict management (50%) and performance feedback (58%) were their areas of weaknesses, with low mean and high SDs. Conflict management could be improved by first determining whether the group is having cognitive conflict, which refers to the group agreeing on the goals, but disagreeing on how to accomplish them, or mixed-motive conflict which refers to the group not agreeing on the

goals and, as a result, is difficult to manage (Wagner & Hollenbeck, 2010). By further dissecting the issue, the team could pinpoint the area of weakness in order to focus on enhancing its management. In addition, the team could implement regular appraisals of the team's performance, which, as Mickan and Rodger (2005) suggested, allows for continued reflection.

The grade 5 team revealed scores above 50%, which, according to Mealiea and Baltazar (2005), implies that the team is effective. Results revealed that like grade 3, 'suitable leadership' scored the highest percentage (ie, 90%). Therefore, the grades 3 and 5 leaders could, as recommended by Mealiea and Baltazar (2005), become peer coaches in order to support other team leaders. As a result, other team leaders could implement their suggestions and strategies and increase overall team effectiveness across grade levels. Like grade 2, decision-making and performance feedback were areas of weakness at 66% with low mean and high SDs. Grade 5 and grade 2 team members could be paired and provided with the same professional development in order to improve their decision making process to include all members, which, as Mickan and Rodger (2000) suggested, creates ownership and, subsequently, increases productivity. In addition, there should be regular opportunities for feedback, which, as Bateman et al. (2002) suggested, would increase individual and overall team performance.

4.3 Grade-level effectiveness in EIA

In order to determine the effectiveness of each grade-level in the form of percentages, the method used by West (2004) was adopted in this study. Three steps were followed:

1) the scores of each team member's response within that grade were combined.
2) the combined scores were divided by the number of team members that participated in the study.
3) the outcomes in step 2 was divided by the maximum possible score (126, ie, equal to 21 statements X 6 Likert point-scale) and multiplied by 100.

Table 6. Grade-level effectiveness: Percentages, Means and SDs

Grade Levels	Percentage	Mean	SD
Grade 1	70	4.18	1.15
Grade 2	80	4.83	0.97
Grade 3	87	5.26	0.82
Grade 4	74	4.45	1.41
Grade 5	80	4.84	1.01

As Mealiea and Baltazar (2005) suggested, grade-level teams that have more of the team effectiveness characteristic present will have a higher score on the team effectiveness questionnaire and, therefore, a higher overall percentage. Accordingly, results in Table 6 confirm grade 3 as the most effective team scoring the highest percentage as well as the highest mean and the lowest standard deviation (SD), and grade 1 as the least effective (the lowest percentage) with the lowest mean and a high SD value.

5. Concluding Comments

This study commenced with a set of three questions. The first question was about developing a list of characteristics that a team should exhibit towards being effective. In order to address this question, the characteristics suggested by Mickan and Rodger (2000) were taken into consideration and compared with other prominent literature during 2001-12. In this process, sixteen (16) characteristics were screened and twenty two (22) statements were initially selected to examine these characteristics through an extensive literature review (Table 1). The research question that focused on identifying a suitable method of assessing the overall and grade-level team effectiveness at Emirates International Academy– EIA (the case organization), a "Team Effectiveness Questionnaire" was developed as an integrated and adapted version of the Team Reflexivity Questionnaire from West (2004) and the Team Effectiveness Audit Tool from Bateman et al. (2002). A pilot survey was then conducted involving seven (7) senior management and personnel of the EIA and twenty (20) statements were finally selected and revised before inclusion. Cronbach's alphas were calculated and the values ranging from 0.603 to 0.869 demonstrated high reliability of the team effectiveness statements used in the final questionnaire.

The assessments of the grade-specific team effectiveness within the EIA suggest grade 1 to be the least effective team and grade 3 the most effective. However, the results, overall, show that most of the teams are effective, follow the goals set by the Academy and attempt to accomplish them, although require further opportunities for performance feedback. In order to increase overall team effectiveness, thus lift the overall productivity to a higher level, this study proposes the following recommendations for consideration:

1) Senior leadership as well as team leaders should provide and encourage opportunities for teams to reflect upon self- and group- performance.
2) As professional development activities to increase team effectiveness and overall productivity are not always affordable by the faculty members, the management can adopt some less expensive but useful

methods. A few examples of this kind can be of the following types:

    a) Shared feedback: This can be done, as suggested by Carlock (2012), by asking participants to individually take the questionnaire and then share the responses with each other going through each question at a time, discussing the differences and why they have occurred. Team members could provide a written summary of their discussions and steps into how they could improve (Carlock, 2012). This is one method that can be led by the team leaders during an initial meeting.

    b) Coaching sessions: Here, as Mealiea and Baltazar (2005) suggested, the more effective group can mentor the least effective counterparts. To further develop the program, teachers can be paired based on the results of the questionnaire, matching the strong teachers with the weak ones.

    c) Fun-based team-building exercises: Team building exercises or days may incorporate fun group activities where team members will have the opportunity to get to know each other by participating in these activities (Mealiea & Baltazar, 2005). This can not only be used at the beginning of the year to allow teachers to get to know one another, but also throughout the year to solidify relationships.

3) In order to make the task of creating effective teams highly beneficial for organizations and easy to implement, as De Meuse (2009) recommended, commitment and support of not only the team members but also of senior leadership is required. Team members must take ownership to work towards creating a team that is both task effective and socially effective keeping in mind that it is the responsibility of the leaders to support teams towards this. Therefore, in order to continually ensure that the teams at EIA are productive and functional, team effectiveness should continually be assessed in order to provide team members with the opportunity to reflect and work towards further improvement.

Finally, by making participation mandatory for all teachers, EIA can allow teams to look at the results in order to reflect and create goals for improvement at the beginning of the year. Further on, teams may review this process during mid-year and at the end of year to ensure continuous reflection. The results would then lead teams towards developing goals and receiving professional development specific to their needs. Finally, it can be claimed that the findings of this study can be useful in the contexts of the rising international schools in UAE.

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