



Systematic Team Development Interventions

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Learning goals for today

- Learning about the steps in a systematic intervention
- Learning about a specific problem: A work team does not adapt to new demands and changes: “The team is stagnant and does not develop”
- Learning how to carry out an intervention to solve the problem with the stagnant team

Team work: Is the sum more than the parts?

- A tendency to romanticize teamwork - the evidence for the positive effects show low to medium-sized effect-sizes
- Most of us have experienced bad teamwork
- And still, when teamwork works it can make wonders – it is a common way to work in many workplaces and universities

Team definition

- **a) Two or more persons, b) who interact socially (face to face, or virtual), c) possess one or more common goals, d) are formed to perform organizationally relevant tasks, e) exhibit interdependencies with respect to workflow, goals, and outcomes, f) have a differentiated structure of roles and responsibilities, and g) are embedded in an encompassing organizational system, with boundaries to the broader context and task environment**

In our research we identified 9 common problems with teamwork

- We have teams – but no teamwork
- Team composition is not optimal
- The team cannot coordinate smoothly
- Conflicts
- *The team does not adapt to new demands*
- Poor team-leadership
- Team learning does not result in organizational learning
- Interventions do not work
- *The way the problem is addressed is a problem in itself*

Today:

We address two of the problems:

- *The team does not adapt to new demands*
- *The way the problem is addressed and “solved” in workplaces and by consultants is a problem in itself*

Our conclusion about how to contribute to the field:

- We write an advanced textbook for informed and intellectually curious practitioners, and students on advanced levels (master / ph.d). (Routledge, London, 2020, Studentlitteratur, Lund, 2020, Kohlhammer, Berlin, 2020).
- Each chapter tackles one problem
- The structure in the chapters follows the steps in the problem-solving circle. From defining the core problem to evaluating the intervention

THE PROBLEMS WITH TEAMWORK, AND HOW TO SOLVE THEM

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Team effectiveness

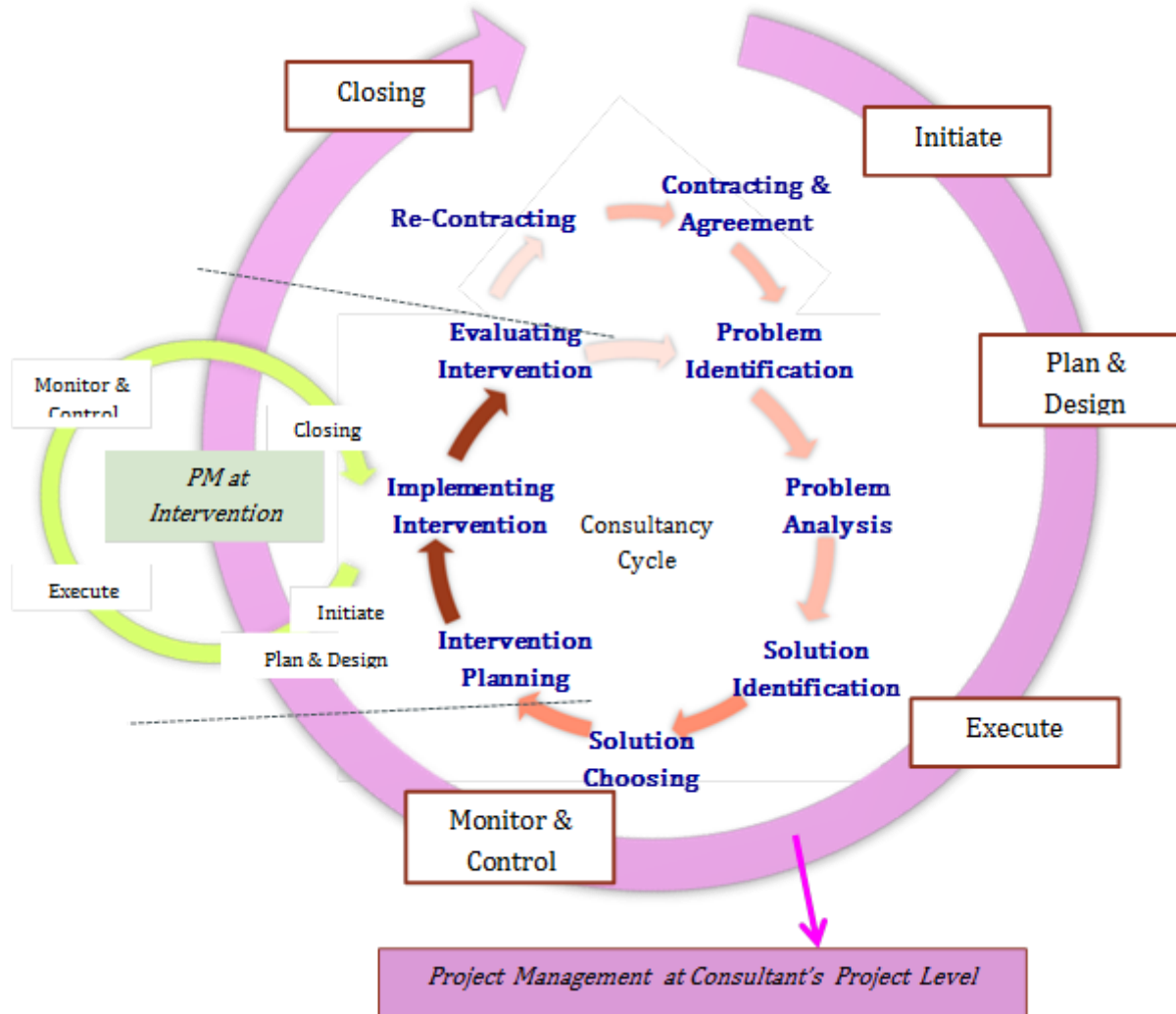
“When team-processes are aligned with environmentally driven task demands, the team is effective: when they are not, the team is not.”

(Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006, p. 78).

shifting task demands are dealt with through a *process of making use of*, and coordinating cognitive, affective, and behavioural processes.

Two criteria to evaluate effective teamwork: smooth coordination and adaptation to new demands

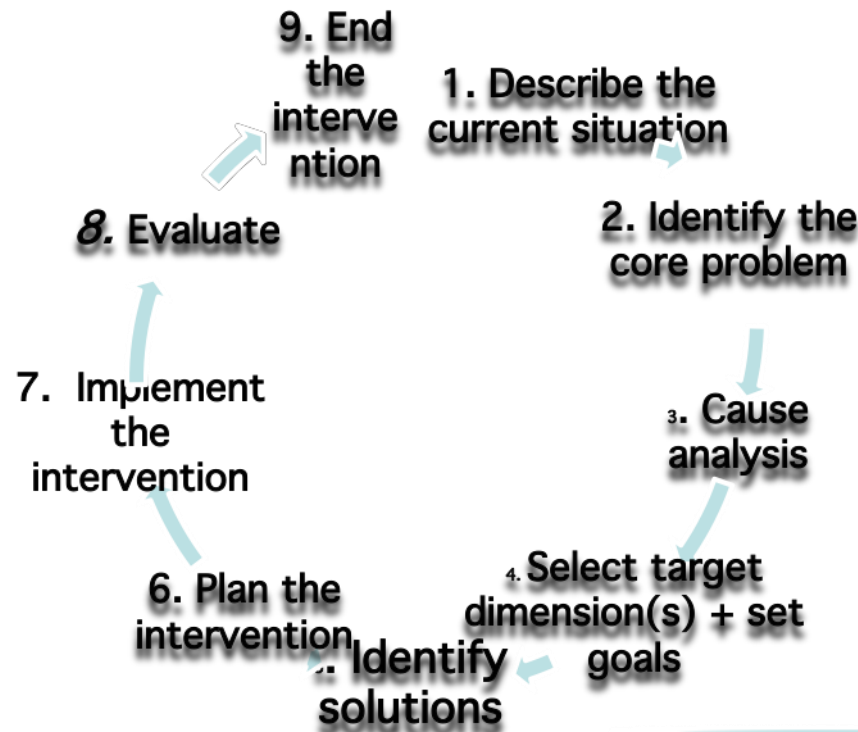
- 1) Coordination = the combination of disparate team member actions and efforts, and b) temporal and action synchronization when combining team member actions and efforts.
- 2) Adaptation = adaptive performance is how well and accurately the team succeeds in aligning their behavior with novel demands (Porter, Webb, & Gogus, 2010).



Low and Lantz, 2015 adapted from Woods and West, 2014 : The steps in an intervention at a workplace

Problem 2. The problem with problem-solving

- **One's own limited competence or mental set determines the causes of the problem (not only a problem for practitioners)**
- **One reason/factor explains the full effect (lack of knowledge and lazy thinking)**
- **Confirmation bias (the psychologist's dilemma too)**
- **Jumping to a solution, without prior analysis of what causes the problem**



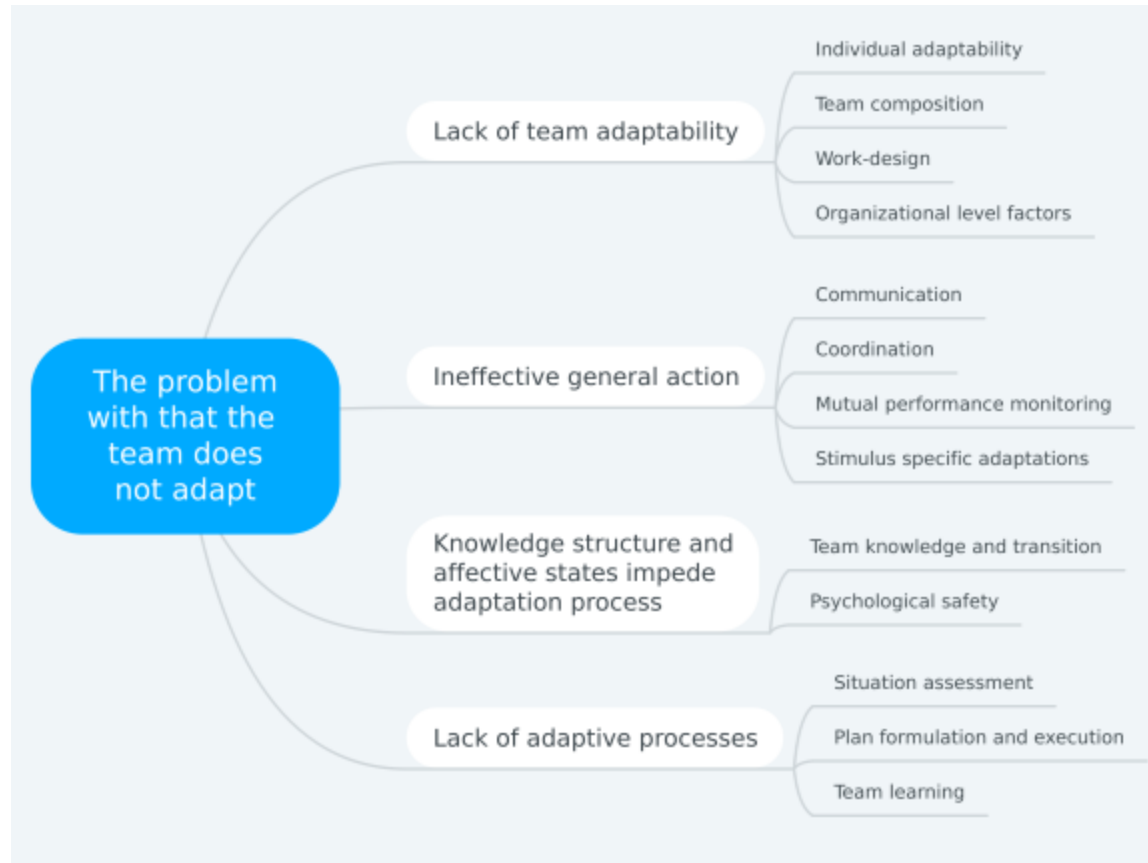
How to perform a systematic TDI

Step 1 and 2

- Stakeholder analyses: a) those who are intellectually curious and know about the work and its organization, b) those who are dependent on the outcome of the team's work and c) those who impact the problem
- Participative approach
- Find divergent perspectives and converge
- What are the needs for change
- Cluster symptoms into core problems - decide

Step 3. Cause analyses

- What does theory tell about the “causes” to the problem?
- Previous research helps us build a model of possible explanations to a problem
- We use a model to diagnose a team in a workplace
- We need a model to explain the problem with lack of team adaptivity!



A model to use for analysis of the causes to a problem with lack of team adaptation

Problem: The team does not adapt

Step 3. Theoretical explanation = "causes"

The processes of carrying out the task in a coordinated manner (action phase) and adaptation to change (transition phase) are interlinked.

The quality of routine action processes will impact how successful the team's performance is in the transfer phase.

When a team is facing change, it is engaged both in general action activities and in adaptive processes specific to addressing the change.

Instruments for “diagnosis”

e.g.

- The instrument “Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scales” (BARS). Georganta (2018)
- <https://primarycaremeasures.ahrq.gov/team-based-care/>
- ITP-metrics
- Team climate inventory

Step 4. Choose target dimensions and set goals

- Based on a diagnosis of the team's performance in both action phase and transition phase
- Diagnosis is based on a theoretical model
- Diagnosis through an empirical investigation with valid methods and instruments
- What are the core dimensions that need to be changed?
- Goals should be set in line with goal-setting theory (Latham & Locke)

Step 5. Choose domain for solutions

- Although target dimensions might be on e.g. team-level such a solution might take changes on individual or organizational level
- E.g. team learning might depend on individual's competence and engagement, or task complexity, or leadership style etc.
- This means: most often bundled solutions are needed to work on target dimension(s)

Step 5. Choose valid solution for the intervention

- What is known about validity? Actually more than one thinks, but:
- there is less knowledge about how to develop team adaptation processes than how to develop routine task work,

Team development interventions (TDI) and validity

- *Systematic team-development intervention = all the steps in the problem-solving circle*
- TDIs have a specific content, are made up of tools for diagnosing, assessing, and remediating team performance and (often, but not always) instructional methods for delivery that create the opportunity for learning

What TDIs are not

- many popular activities that are not actually effective and *often not theoretically based*
- the assumptions are often simplistic, sometimes false,
- do not consider the complexity of the context or that the team's situation may require a team-specific TDI strategy and a bundled solution

Requirements

- Is the current situation thoroughly described from different stakeholders' perspectives so that the needs analysis (diagnosis) is valid?
- Is there consensus regarding the main problems/challenges and what needs to be developed and changed?
- Is the analysis of causes of the problems/needs for development solid and theory-based?

Continued:

- Can the chosen target dimensions be changed?
- Is the assessment and diagnosis of the team's functioning and performance carried out thoroughly and *with valid tools*?
- What were the results of the needs analysis?

There are different TDIs with different evidence of validity

- Within each broad category of TDIs (e.g. team building, team training) there are different interventions for how to implement change depending on the combination of content, tools and (for most) instructional methods
- Difficult to assess validity due to poor research and the big variety within one category

When choosing solution

- ***First criterion:* Describe the empirical evidence for the link between target dimension and tools for remediating team performance in target dimension**
- ***The second criterion* for choosing a TDI should be evidence that it works**

Assessing the level of empirical evidence, i.e. quality of a study.

- One example is the 'Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development, and Evaluation scale (GRADE)'. The GRADE system gives a general rating of the level of evidence. The GRADE rating scale has four levels of quality of evidence: (A) high, (B) moderate, (C) low, and (D) very low (GRADE Working Group, 2007)

Meta-analyses about intervention studies has shown:

Most studies have low quality of evidence (C).

Most often have a design with a pre- and post-measurement of target dimensions, no control group,

Data were collected with one method only, often subjective ratings such as questionnaires,

Relatively little statistical evidence directly related to the effectiveness of the interventions was found

But there is hope!

- Evidence for different TDIs are inspired by Kirkpatrick (1996) evaluation criteria (reaction, learning, transfer and results)
- Work design (but little research)
- Team training!
- Team debriefs
- Some specific team-building (roles and goals)
- Team charters –but be cautious

Step 6. Plan the intervention

Reactive or proactive interventions

- A TDI is initiated to improve performance, to restore capacity, or to help new teams to achieve a high performance as fast as possible.
- As within all intervention research primary (proactive) are shown to have most impact – it might be very difficult to change established routines and mind-sets
- I.e. *When* the intervention is carried out plays a role in itself

Before doing anything at all

- 1) ensure the need for teamwork behaviours and TDIs;
- 2) create a positive, safe and non-critical climate for the intervention;
- 3) design the TDI for maximum accessibility, usability and learnability;
- 4) evaluate whether the TDI meets the practice needs and
- 5) create a system for sustaining teamwork behaviour in the organization.

Step 7. Advice based on research on how to carry out an intervention

- Use multiple tools
- Use multiple instructional methods
- Find the mechanisms that impact the intervention in a specific context
- Process evaluation and monitoring
- Feedback during the learning experience makes the TDI more effective, *if given right.*

Step 8. Evaluation

- Process evaluation
- Results: outcomes of the intervention in relation to change in chosen target dimensions

**Thank you for your attention and
inviting me!**

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