The Role of Innate Characteristics in Enhancing Team Development

Author

Chapman, Geoffrey R., Fitzgerald, Anneke

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Geoffrey R. Chapman
Central Queensland University

J. Anneke Fitzgerald
Griffith University

ABSTRACT

While existing literature provides much insight into instinct and team development as separate concepts, there are limited studies that combine these areas to investigate the role of innate characteristics in team development. This paper discusses the effects of implementing a profiling tool based on innate characteristics, and the potential benefits this practice may have for organisational teams. Using longitudinal case research, the study presents findings from eight teams across four organisations, comparing the development of teams that implemented the profiling tool versus teams that did not. The findings suggest that a greater awareness of innate characteristics can result in accelerated team development, particularly for new teams. This acceleration is achieved through the reduction and resolution of conflict, and an increased understanding of working styles, which enables more efficient communication. These findings have theoretical implications for the field of human resource management and practical implications for managers in organisational environments.

INTRODUCTION

The question of what makes a team of employees work together successfully has long been an area of interest to a variety of fields of study. To illustrate this, there are many studies examining how instinct influences performance (for example Winter, 1973; McClelland & Burnham 1976; Cosmedes & Tooby 1994; Spohn 2005; Hampton 2006; Miller 2006), the impact of organisational culture on team development (for example Alvesson & Berg 1992; Lok & Crawford 2001; Martin 2002; Alvesson 2003; Schein 2006), and theories of team development itself (for example Tuckman 1965; Beckhard 1969; Fiol & Lyles 1985; Senge 1990; Beckhard 2006; Schilling & Kluge 2009; Anderson 2010). However, there is only a limited number of studies in the field of human resource management that combine these concepts, and specifically

examine how awareness of innate characteristics may influence and potentially enhance team development.

In organisational research, instinct refers to thought processes which are inherited or instinctual, and is generally defined as the innate characteristics that influence cognition and direct behaviour (Kupermintz 2002; Hampton 2006). This study utilises the ID System® (Burgess 2007), which is a profiling tool designed to increase awareness of innate characteristics. This awareness applies not only to individuals' own innate characteristics, but to the innate characteristics of others within the same team or group. The choice to use this tool was based primarily on its focus on innate characteristics, rather than observable behaviour (Fitzgerald et al. 2006; Burgess 2007). However, other reasons contributing to the choice of this particular profiling tool include the use of scale measures of innate characteristics, rather than dichotomous types (Pittenger 2004), and the localised development of the questionnaire, ensuring cultural significance (Burgess 2003). While this paper will not specifically discuss the ID System® itself, existing studies provide ample justification for the use of this system to increase awareness of innate characteristics (Fitzgerald et al. 2006; Chapman & Dadich 2009; Chapman et al. 2011).

Adopting appreciative inquiry (AI) as a methodological approach (Cooperrider et al. 2008), and focusing on the positive elements arising from observation of team behaviour, this study is relevant, not only to the field of human resource management, but also to the emerging field of positive psychology (Luthans & Youssef 2007). As identified by Seligman et al. (2005), the field of positive psychology is constantly evolving, and this evolution is primarily guided by new methods and processes that adopt the tenets of positive psychology. Furthermore, recent studies have highlighted the potential benefits that positive psychology has for the field of human resource management in general (Paul & Garg 2014), and call for further research in this area. This call for further study, along with the lack of research examining the link between innate characteristics and team performance, led to the development of the following research question:

> What differences become evident over time between teams that have obtained greater awareness of their innate characteristics, and teams that have not?

Through examination of this research question, this study addresses a gap in the literature by investigating how increasing awareness of innate characteristics can impact team development. Findings will be further supported and justified by reference to and discussion of relevant literature.

METHOD

A qualitative approach is suitable for studies of organisational culture. This study used a longitudinal case research method, as explained below. This is because qualitative methods mine large amounts of in-depth, rich data, which are essential to the understanding of culture and context within organisations (Stake 2000). Conversely, the quantitative methods available do not provide the level of depth required to effectively analyse the culture of organisations. As suggested by Martin (2002), a wide variety of sources can be tapped for data on organisational culture, including the stories people tell, the layout of working space, the display of personal and other items, workplace jokes and relations among workers. While the current study did not set out to observe each of these workplace phenomena specifically, they are good examples of the types of interactions and events that facilitated the understanding of what the study did set out to observe, which were the perceptions expressed by participants.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Cooperrider et al. (2008, p.2) define AI as "an organisation development process that grows out of social constructionist thought", and explain that "through its deliberately positive assumptions about people, organisations, and relationships, AI leaves behind deficit-oriented approaches to management and vitally transforms the ways to approach questions of organisational improvement". Lewis et al. (2008) suggest that an appreciative inquiry methodology recognises that teams, much like individuals, need to be nurtured in order to develop successfully. These authors also go on to suggest that because appreciative inquiry was developed in the United States, it has been used sparingly in international research, and could be tested for universal relevance through its continued use in studies around the world. This approach was applied throughout the research process, and is demonstrated in the focus on perceptions rather than more objective measures, like sales figures. This approach allowed for multiple understandings, or realities (Bushe 1999) of one team or organisation to be examined, and was particularly important in situations where teams had minimal cohesion. Appreciative inquiry permitted an analysis of how different perceptions were formed between individuals, teams and organisations, which led to a better understanding of the effect of increasing awareness of innate characteristics.

CASE RESEARCH PROCESS

In this study, the case research process involved qualitative analysis of observations and interviews, which together provided in-depth insights into

the culture and team dynamics of several companies. These provided a foundation on which it was possible to build an understanding of how awareness of innate characteristics amongst individuals and teams affects team development, and ultimately, perceptions of team performance.

The use of case research in organisational studies is highly appropriate, for a number of reasons. First, the diverse nature of the business world makes generalisability of research difficult; however, this study increases in-depth knowledge about the case which may be transferable to other contexts. Second, case studies focus on bounded, functioning entities, which are often easier to identify within organisations than in the general public (Vaughan & Hogg 1998). Bounded entities could include individual employees, the team in which the employee works, or the entire organisation itself. Third, the underlying culture of the groups and teams within organisations is highly relevant when conducting any type of analysis in the organisational environment, yet most studies are unable to examine culture due to the level of depth required for effective analysis. Case research is one of the few methods that gives the researcher this necessary level of depth, and enables culture to be used as the foundation for a research project. Stake (2000) provides a detailed explanation of how case research can be designed to maximise its ability to produce meaningful data. He suggests that typically in an intrinsic case study, the researcher would be interested in one particular case, and would draw all of their information from that one source. However, in a collective case study, the researcher is less interested in specific cases, and instead draws on a number of cases to investigate a particular phenomenon, population or general condition.

Cases included in a collective case study should include both an aspect of redundancy and an aspect of variety, in order to obtain more meaningful results. Selection of cases can be purposive: "They are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorising, about a still larger collection of cases" (Stake 2000, p.438).

The use of a case research method appropriately addressed the research question posed in the current study. This method enabled the analysis of both groups and individuals, in the context of the culture present within their organisation. Additionally, the longitudinal nature of the case research used in this study allowed the analysis of change over time, both in employees' perceptions of self, and their perceptions of the team. Inferences were then drawn, specifically in terms of how these changes may influence job performance.

Following the suggestions of Stake (2000), the participating organisations in this study were purposively selected to demonstrate aspects of redundancy and variety. These terms refer to the importance of having data with points of similarity (redundancy) and difference (variety). The demographic similarities and differences between the four organisations and the eight teams involved in the study are shown in Table 1.

Whilst important considerations for any qualitative research include the clarity and validity of the information gathered during the study (Edmondson & McManus 2007), these are particularly important for researchers using case studies, as there is a much smaller sample size (Creswell 2003). Accordingly, to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation, researchers using case studies should gather diverse data to make several observations of the same phenomenon or group (Stake 2000). Assuring this diversity is one form of triangulation (Denzin 1978) that provides further validity to the research data.

Table 1: Details of participating teams

Company type/Base country	Team code	Team size (incl manager)	Time working as a team (mths)	Time manager had been with team (mths)	Type of team
Finance/ Australia	Finance Team 1 (FN1)	12	8	8	Management/ Sales
	Finance Team 2 (FN2)	10	12	12	Sales
Healthcare Australia	Healthcare Team 1 (HC1)	7	12	6	Marketing
	Healthcare Team 2 (HC2)	6	8	8	Marketing / Sales
Not-for-profit/ Australia	Not-for-profit Team 1 (NP1)	5	12	8	Functional / Regional
	Not-for-profit Team 2 (NP2)	5	12	3	Functional / Regional
Information Technology/ United States	Information Technology Team 1 (IT1)	12	12	12	Management/ Project
	Information Technology Team 2 (IT2)	7	2	2	Project

As shown in Table 1, each of the eight teams involved in this study were assigned a code relating to the organisation and according to whether or not the team had been actively using the ID System®.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Contact with the developer of the ID System® was made to confirm details of organisations to be included within the study. At this stage, employees and managers within teams that were using the ID System® had already measured their innate characteristics. They had also been provided with a personalised report detailing how their innate characteristics influence their working style. Teams using the ID System® also had received at least one training session on how to get the most benefit from their ID System® profiles. These sessions were conducted by a trained consultant, who provides examples of how team members might be able to incorporate strategies in the workplace that make use of the innate characteristics.

Contact was then made with either the team leader or appropriate administrative person in order to arrange an appropriate time and day to collect the data. Each team consisted of between five and 12 members, but a maximum of five members from any one team were used for the interviews. Each participant was given an information sheet with details of the study prior to participating in the research, and signed a consent form as per the ethics approval. The current study made use of semi-structured interviews to enable specific topics to be covered, but also allowed participants to raise any topics that they felt were relevant. The semi-structured interviews conducted with team members in the first phase of the study focused on perceptions of current team culture, including styles of interaction, amount and frequency of communication and assisted in the identification of any existing language norms within the team. After collecting data from each team, all interviews were transcribed verbatim and brush coded. The brush coding procedure involved the researcher highlighting key sections of text which appeared at face value to be relevant to the research question guiding the study, assisting with the more comprehensive analysis conducted after all data was collected.

Six to nine months after initial contact, employees and managers were again interviewed to gather data regarding the long-term effects of implementing a system based on innate characteristics. The time gap was chosen on the bases of feasibility, practicality and impact. Less than six months was not considered long enough to allow the consultation process to have its desired effect, and more than eight months was not viable in the timeframe of the study. Due to this time gap, some of the participants who were interviewed in the first phase

were not available to be interviewed in phase two, which resulted in fewer interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Initial observations

When increasing their awareness of innate characteristics in workplace teams, it appears that individuals are primarily interested in the results of their colleagues, rather than in their own profiles. When an individual decides to undertake a personality profiling test on their own, it is likely that they are mainly interested in finding out what that particular tool has to say about their own personality and characteristics as they will have no source of comparison for their results. However, when a profiling tool is utilised within a workplace team with the goal of improving workplace productivity and communication, it was noticeable that participants had a different attitude to it. This contrasting approach was demonstrated by most of the participants in the study, and expressed in the statement below:

> …there wasn't really any sort of surprises that … 'cause you know your own persona pretty well, it's really… ID is for everyone else to have a look at. (Team Member 3 – HC1)

It was also interesting to note how team members would often divide the team (regardless of size) in different ways according to the profiles of the team. This practice was observed to be useful for members in terms of deciding how they would communicate with others in the team. If the team could easily be divided into two groups of people with similar innate characteristics, team members could easily remember the best ways to communicate with their own group and the other group.

> I found it was really good, because it helped us communicate a lot more. It helped me … just the team in general … 'cause it was pretty much just the four of us, and two people were the same, and the other two people were the same. (Team Member 1 – NP1)

This type of grouping could also lead to members feeling unfairly categorised, or in some cases, individuals being ostracised due to having a profile unlike anyone else in the team. However, despite the few cases which highlighted these potential problems, positive effects on team development were much more common than were negative effects when team members were grouped according to their profiles (with only two participants expressing concerns). A related finding suggests that increasing awareness of a colleague's innate characteristics allows for efficient and effective dialogue to occur with that

colleague. In teams where the ID System® was not used, interviewees reported that they were often unsure of how to ask a colleague to perform a task, which often resulted in decreased communication within the team, and an increase in conflict. This was evident (to different degrees) in all of the teams that had not implemented the profiling tool. When employees in these teams asked colleagues to perform tasks, the way they were asking did not take the colleague's innate characteristics into consideration. This often resulted in conflict, and respondents generally attributed these problems to personality clashes. An example of this can be drawn from the Finance team that did not use the profiling tool.

> I'd say it's probably more … it's more … a conflict of personalities, because we have a lot of strong personalities. So everybody is quite firm in what they believe. So if there's ever a discussion, be it about a work issue or anything else, quite often people won't back down. (Team Member 4 – FN2)

This type of personality conflict was reported by more than half of the participants in teams that did not use the ID System®. It should be noted that the identification of conflict in this study is generally based on observations of misunderstandings and miscommunications, and these forms of conflict may have arisen due to a lack of awareness regarding the innate characteristics of other individuals.

Contrastingly, teams that did use the ID System® demonstrated fewer personality conflicts. Further investigation revealed why this may have been the case. When individuals had access to the common language of innate characteristics, they were able to change the way they spoke to their colleagues. This change resulted not only in fewer personality conflicts, but also led to perceived increases in job performance, as evidenced by both the perceptions of the participants and the observations of the researcher. This difference in approach was identified by many team members who had completed the profiling tool, and is highlighted in the quote below from a team member in IT1. This team member described the relationship she has with a colleague, and how the language of the profiling tool has helped overcome tensions that were initially attributed to differences in personality.

> So we were having a lot of issues with accuracy, and just … she's got the 7 in improvise, so she could turn this stuff out and respond to fire drills, and get it turned around, but then some of the numbers wouldn't necessarily be accurate and then we'd have to repeat. So she and I now have a common language where I said, you know this, we need an 8 in verify, so turn on your verify … So that's enabled us to

> kind of have that dialogue, to say instead of … you know, 'Why aren't you being accurate', it's 'We need to verify'. (Team Member 3 – IT1)

As suggested by Team Member 3 – IT1, the positive effect on communication could occur between team members who had previously found it very difficult to communicate with each other. This suggests that gaining a greater awareness of the innate characteristics present within the team not only improves communication and performance, but also improves relationships that have traditionally not been productive. This finding supports those in published literature on cognitive-based profiling tools, (see Myers et al. 1999; McCrae & Costa 1989), although to the best of the researchers' knowledge, there are no published studies that report this finding in relation to conative-based profiling tools (profiling tools focused on innate characteristics). Another example of how increased awareness of innate characteristics helps to resolve conflicts was observed in the Healthcare team, HC1, between two members with vastly different profiles.

> The only one I had trouble communicating with is *name omitted*… but that's more because he goes overboard. You know …I f … if I relate it back to the IDs … I can handle *name omitted* now, because I know exactly what I have to do to talk to him. (Team Member 2 – HC1)

The findings reported above describe that even where people felt that they were unable to communicate effectively with other members of their team, gaining a greater awareness of their innate characteristics has two valuable benefits. This awareness can result not only in more effective communication and better performance, but can also restore relationships that have deteriorated due to personality conflicts and misunderstandings. Therefore, it appears that awareness of the innate characteristics of colleagues can improve team job performance by improving communication. This is achieved through employees being able to speak the same language and reduce time wasting, and inefficient conversations in both meetings and personal discussions. This finding supports the organisational learning and development ideas presented by Barrett (2009), who suggests that positively changing the nature of communication within the workplace may lead to more productive organisational environments.

CHANGES OVER TIME

As suggested by McDade (1994), there is a need to evaluate the effectiveness over time of any development program in organisations. The use of a profiling tool to increase awareness of innate characteristics within a team is no different. Before any conclusions can be made about whether or not the

practice of increasing awareness of innate characteristics is effective, the long term effects need to be explored in more detail. The study compared two teams from four organisations (eight teams in total), one team that had used the ID System®, and one team that had not. There were a number of differences observed over the two phases of data collection between the teams in each organisation. Relevant findings are described and analysed below.

A finding common to all teams using the profiling tool was that the perceived level of communication within the team increased between the two phases of data collection. The act of implementing a profiling tool served as an impetus for teams to openly discuss innate characteristics, which in turn led to a reduction in perceived conflict. As shown in the two sections below, both interprofessional conflict and interpersonal conflict was reduced. For the purposes of this study, interprofessional conflict is deemed to be any conflict primarily based on workplace issues (such as disagreements about working styles or misunderstanding relating to task instructions), and interpersonal conflict is deemed to be any conflict primarily based on personality issues (such as lifestyle choices or individual characteristics) (Kessler et al. 2013).

Interprofessional conflict

The changes observed over time between the two not-for-profit teams clearly illustrated how increasing awareness of innate characteristics can reduce interprofessional conflict. Lait and Wallace (2002) discuss how such conflict may arise from unmet expectations, and this in turn leads to increased job stress. The case of NP2 demonstrates how, over time, expectations of the team members were not met, whereas the case of NP1 shows how similar problems were resolved through increasing awareness of innate characteristics. The quote below illustrates that during the first phase of data collection, this respondent was aware of both physical and professional divides within the team.

> I think there is a bit of a difference sometimes between upstairs and downstairs… only because ... three people sit upstairs. And the rest of us sit down. And there was a bit of a division between roles as well. So there probably was that distinction or that difference which meant that we would generally get along better with the people down here than the people up there. (Team member 1 – NP2)

Another member in the team indicated that the lack of structure in the team was an issue.

> I don't think there's enough structure to it. I think when it comes around to each individual ... admittedly we've tried to change it recently, 'cause *name omitted* is quite a new manager, she's only been here a few months. So she's tried to change things around a little bit. (Team member 2 – NP2)

Whilst these issues were raised during the first phase of data collection, the team members did not think they were causing major problems. Attitudes had changed dramatically six months later, as can be shown from one team member's response to the question of how well their team was functioning.

> I'd say fairly poorly. Much worse than it was last time you were here. As a whole team, it's quite dysfunctional really. There's problems with the manager really ... just the way [the manager] manages really is causing some conflict between different people. (Team member 1 – NP2)

This interprofessional conflict was perceived in a similar manner by other team members.

> I just think communication is not very good in this office. I think there's a breakdown between us and [the manager] ... About two months ago I asked for some feedback for my annual financial review. I had to explain about four times what I wanted, and [the manager] still got it wrong ... it's just frustrating. That type of thing happens quite a lot; misunderstandings of basic things. (Team member 2 – NP2)

The key finding on interprofessional conflict in this team situation, as further evidenced by the above, is that it stemmed from ineffective and inefficient communication. This finding is again reflected in the words of another team member.

> The way that we all communicate is very different as well. I think the way we communicate is probably very different to how [the manager] communicates, and the way [the manager] wants us to communicate is very different. So there's just been a bit of conflict about use of language. Every time we have a chat, you think you're having a conversation and the conversation [the manager] thinks you've had is completely different from the conversation you think you've had. (Team member 1 – NP2)

The other not-for-profit team, NP1, did not show the same levels of interprofessional conflict during the second round of data collection. In

contrast, the NP1 team demonstrated significant improvement between the two phases of the study, with members of this team indicating that their levels of communication had improved.

> 'cause we're sort of finally working out who does what. It's been so muddled up for the last few years. We're sort of coming into our own, and we're now not having to communicate some stuff, if that makes sense, 'cause we automatically know what we have to do, and what someone else will do. (Team member 1 – NP1)

This improvement occurred despite forms of interprofessional conflict similar to NP2 being present during the first phase of data collection. During this first phase, one of the team members in NP1 indicated that there were communication issues with another member in the team, as shown in the quote below.

> And so I think it's when, I guess *name omitted* speaks abruptly, and sort of I guess puts you down a little bit, and it's like well 'you don't need to speak to me like that' and I think then I go 'whatever, I won't even talk to you I'll just do my work.' (Team member 2 – NP1)

However, after the teams had been made aware of their innate characteristics, this issue in communication appeared to be resolved.

> At present I think we are communicating better than what we probably were. I know *name omitted* I think lately has been trying to make a bit of an effort to change the way [they] speak to some of us. I've noticed that [they have] been speaking to me in a way that I am more comfortable with. And whether [they have] been doing that consciously or subconsciously I'm not sure. (Team member 2 – NP1)

The team member who indicated the initial problem and the subsequent improvement did not attribute this directly to the ID System®. However, the noticeable change in the behaviour of the person causing the interprofessional conflict after the profiling had been implemented provides a strong case for the benefits associated with increased awareness of innate characteristics. Furthermore, the same team member did indicate later in the interview that the profiling tool had a direct impact on the types of conversations that were possible between the employees of the team.

> I think the ID System definitely helps in that regard. I know I would never say that I really don't like it, or it's not constructive for me if you

> speak negatively to me. I would never say that, but I think the ID System allows that conversation to happen. (Team member 2 – NP1)

Additionally, there was evidence to support the practice of using profiling tools to decrease interprofessional conflict observed in NP2. Even though this team had not gained an increased awareness of their innate characteristics, one of the team members in this team specifically mentioned that this practice would be a welcome intervention.

> I think it could actually help really. I think it could be a good way to find out once and for all, on a bit of paper, how people work, what works for them, what's the best ways of communicating with different people. I think it could help actually. It definitely can't do any damage, or any harm. (Team member 1 – NP2)

The examples of NP1 and NP2 provide a compelling case supporting the argument that increasing awareness of innate characteristics facilitates more efficient and effective communication. This improvement in communication can lead to interprofessional conflict being minimised or resolved, and subsequently, lead to team cohesion and improved team performance.

Bennett and Savani (2004, p.185) suggest that the reason for interprofessional conflict in not-for-profit organisations potentially could be increased 'psychological distance', which refers to differences in the perception or understanding of language or culture. The psychological distance between the manager and the team members of NP2 was clear, as shown by the comments and attitudes of the team, and this distance was causing significant levels of interprofessional conflict. In contrast, the NP1 team actively reduced their psychological distance through an increased awareness of innate characteristics (both their own and their colleagues'), which in turn helped to reduce the level of interprofessional conflict.

Additionally, the finding in relation to interprofessional conflict supports the research presented by Appelbaum et al. (1999), who examined conflict within self-directed teams. They found that if cognitive conflict escalated into interprofessional conflict, then teams would suffer from decreased productivity. However, research also suggests that if this interprofessional conflict is resolved (such as the manner shown by NP1), then team productivity and efficiency were increased (Appelbaum et al. 1999; Gersick et al. 2000).

Interpersonal conflict

As opposed to the interprofessional conflict discussed above, interpersonal conflict relates to the personal relationship between employees. Barki and

Hartwick (2004, p.232) discussed the definition of interpersonal conflict, and came to the conclusion that "disagreement, negative emotion, and interference constitute three fundamental properties of interpersonal conflict".

Amongst all of the teams in this study, there was only one reported case of interpersonal conflict. This occurred in the FN2 team, who had not gained an increased awareness of their innate characteristics. The conflict consisted of a disagreement between two of the team members regarding a personal matter, and this disagreement led to more apparent manifestations, as noted by the team manager.

> So it got escalated, and they stopped speaking to each other, and I noticed it immediately. I asked what was going on, and the girl who was the friend of *name omitted* just said look, this girl has different values to me, because I would never do that to her. (Team Manager – FN2)

The manager indicated that the lack of communication between these team members had a significant impact on the productivity of the team. This finding aligns with the research presented by Friedman et al. (2000), who suggest that employees who experience interpersonal conflict will be more likely to experience higher levels of stress, and subsequently reduce their standard of performance.

The interpersonal conflict within FN2 was not only observed by the manager, but was noted in various degrees by other members of the team.

> Just something that I've observed, like other tensions I think it's probably across the board, just, girls working in a team. You know, you get that situation where girls can be quite competitive ... I think it's because, even though they don't want to, I think girls judge other girls quite harshly. (Team member 3 – FN2)

Reluctance to speak openly about interpersonal conflict may explain why there were no other reported cases of interpersonal conflicts within the other teams. It may be that other teams were experiencing, or had experienced interpersonal conflict, but did not reveal the details to the researcher. However, there is also the possibility that the teams that had gained an increased awareness of their innate characteristics did not report any interpersonal conflict due to the beneficial effects of this practice. By providing the team with awareness of both their own and their colleagues' innate characteristics, the incidence of misunderstandings that lead to interpersonal

conflicts may have been reduced. However, as there were no cases of interpersonal conflict reported by these teams, no evidence can be established to suggest increasing awareness of innate characteristics has an effect on the occurrence of interpersonal conflict. Further research focused on the effect that increasing awareness of innate characteristics has on interpersonal conflict within a team would shed further light on this concept.

Group development

In accordance with Tuckman's (1965) stages of group development, the results of the current study suggest that the increased awareness of innate characteristics allows faster transition through the storming and norming stages, allowing teams to quickly reach the performing stage. This was evident in the comparison between teams which had been working together for similar periods of time, yet differed in their awareness of innate characteristics. Teams that did not implement a conative-based profiling tool still demonstrated behaviours associated with the storming stage of development (such as the conflict discussed above), whereas teams that did implement the ID System® demonstrated more behaviours associated with the performing stage (such as efficient and effective communication and lack of conflict).

The findings suggest that the teams whose members gained an increased awareness of innate characteristics demonstrated an accelerated level of group development, and an increased ability to resolve and minimise conflicts, particularly professional conflicts that related to the way people were doing their jobs. In contrast, the teams which had not gained an increased awareness of innate characteristics demonstrated higher levels of both interprofessional and interpersonal conflict, as well as slower group development. Additionally, these teams were less able to resolve the conflicts that did arise, as they appeared to have higher levels of miscommunication than the teams which had implemented the ID System®.

CONCLUSIONS

The research suggests that individuals who are aware of the innate characteristics of their colleagues are more likely to attribute misunderstandings to different working styles, rather than incompetency or lack of effort. Furthermore, the individuals within the participating teams were able to more effectively and efficiently converse with each other using the language associated with the profiling tool after increasing their awareness of innate characteristics, which further accelerated the team's development. These findings address the research question by demonstrating that there appears to be a clear difference over time between teams that increase their

awareness of innate characteristics, and teams that do not. Furthermore, the study found that an increased awareness of innate characteristics has a significant influence on the communication within workplace teams, thereby significantly contributing to the field of human resource management. To date, research that has investigated ways of improving communication within teams (for example, Olkkonen et al. 2000; Emmerling & Goleman 2005), has not investigated the effect of increasing awareness of innate characteristics. This study, by exploring this aspect, contributes to the field of employment relations, and in doing so, provides a foundation for future research in this area.

The findings of this study provide a useful indication of the impact that increasing awareness of innate characteristics has on workplace teams. These findings can provide the foundation for further research, which can explore the effect of increasing awareness of innate characteristics within teams in a variety of different contexts; for example, in the management and human resources areas, the impact of turnover within teams, and how awareness of innate characteristics can be used to minimise the negative impacts of such turnover. Also, how increasing awareness of innate characteristics may play a role in managing downsizing and strategic reorganisation within companies. Further research in the field of positive psychology and organisational behaviour could examine whether increasing awareness of innate characteristics may lead to negative outcomes such as groupthink and social exclusion of members with different characteristics.

This research shows the value in emphasising innate characteristics in an organisational environment. As demonstrated in the existing literature (Spohn 2005; Hampton 2006; Miller 2006), there has been a recent resurgence of interest in the role of instinct and conation in a variety of contexts. The current study contributes to this resurgence by examining the influence that innate characteristics, and increasing awareness of such characteristics, has in an organisational environment. Specifically, this study found that increasing awareness of innate characteristics can lead to improved communication within the workplace, and more effective conversation between colleagues. This in turn leads to a reduction in interprofessional and interpersonal conflict within teams that have increased their awareness of innate characteristics, both individually and collectively within the team. These findings present opportunities for both HR managers, who can incorporate new strategies for employment relations, as well as researchers in this field of study, who can build on the suggestions made by this study to establish the wider impact that profiling innate characteristics may have in the workplace.

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