

WORK TEAMS: A REVIEW OF SOUTH AFRICAN RESEARCH

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Abstract

The use of teams has become one of the standard features of the South African organisational landscape. Internationally this phenomenon has attracted the interest of researchers and scholars alike. The current study reviews local research on teams according to the model of theory building proposed by Carlile and Christensen (2005). It provides a heuristic framework to present the literature review within the categorisation stage of this model and indicates the research according to the various categories of the framework. It has found that local research addresses a wide array of these categories and that the majority of research is done from a descriptive perspective.

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Introduction

Internationally the use of work teams has expanded dramatically in response to global and organisational pressures and the importance of teams for organisational success is increasingly emphasised (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). Work teams can be defined as “interdependent collections of individuals who share responsibility for specific outcomes for their organisations” (Sundstrom, De Meuse & Futrell, 1990: 120). Guzzo and Dickson (1996: 308) adds by saying it “is made up of individuals who see themselves and who are seen by others as a social entity, who are interdependent because of the tasks they perform as members of a group, who are embedded in one or more larger social systems (e.g. community, organisation), and who perform tasks that affect others (such as customer or coworkers (*sic*)).”

In the wake of this trend of increased attention to work teams, the search is on for the holy grail of what constitutes an effective team “resulting in a great deal of literature being generated on the characteristics of effective teams” (Hyatt & Ruddy, 1997: 553). In addition it seems that teambuilding is an intervention used often in organisations internationally (Offerman & Spiros, 2001) and locally (Cilliers, 1999)

and had been one of the “enduring themes in organisational development literature (Hardy & Crace, 1997: 3). By definition, teambuilding is “a team intervention that enhances team performance” (Tennenbaum, Beard, & Salas, 1992: 4) and is employed “for the purpose of establishing more effective ways of operating” (Yukelson, 1997: 73). Thus, the two trends are related, if teambuilding interventions are done to increase team effectiveness it presumably will have an impact on the characteristics of teams that enable the team to be effective.

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Purpose

Offerman and Spiros (2001: 376) refer to these two themes in their examination of organisational science and practice on “team development” and “team building” and state: “Research needs to more clearly identify mechanisms that make teams work, as well as how to make them more effective.” Although international research has taken up these challenges as indicated by reviews like that of Guzzo and Dickson (1996) and De Meuse and Liebowitz (1981), it remains unclear how research in South Africa has progressed in this regard. This is especially important since there is a growing realisation that South African management research should reflect

“the unique reality of the South African business context” (Beaty, Nkomo & Kriek, 2006). The “contextualisation” of the workplace and society in general (Kriek, 2006a) should be reflected in the research. However, no local review of literature covering work teams could be found and the purpose of this research is thus to provide a review of research done on work teams in prominent South African journals.

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Research methodology

The study uses the model proposed by Carlile and Christensen (2005) to review local research on teams. This approach graphically displayed in Figure 1.

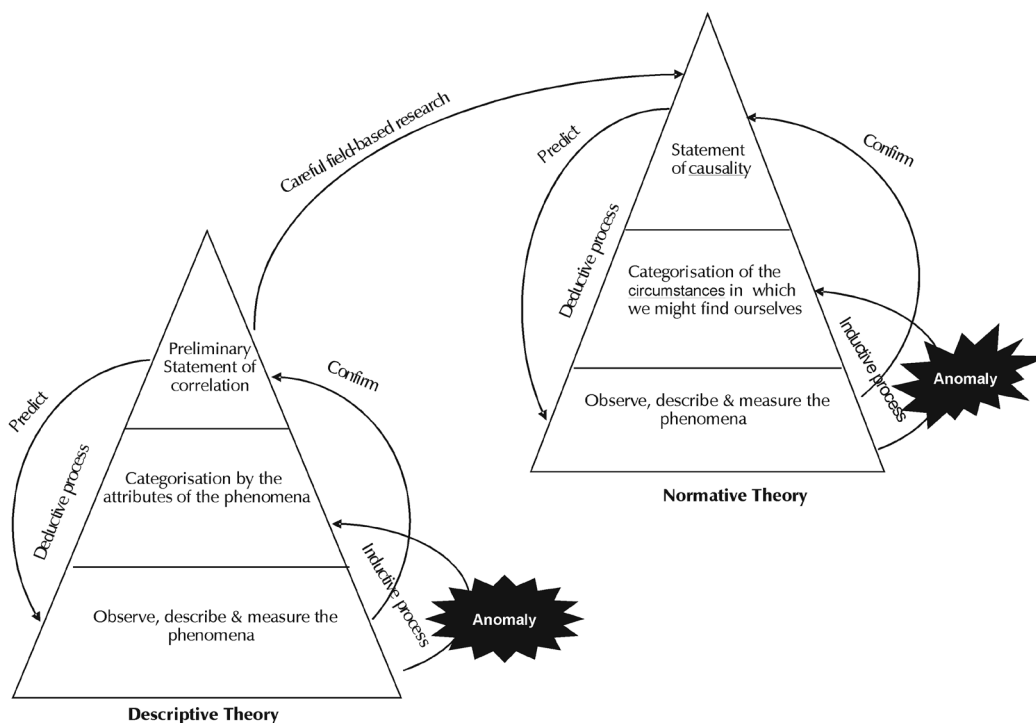


Figure 1

The transition from Descriptive Theory to Normative Theory

The researchers contend that the building of theory occurs during a descriptive and a normative stage. Within each of these major stages three steps (i.e. observation, classification and definition of relationships) are found and the theory building process continuously iterates through these three steps. In the first step researchers observe, describe and measure phenomena and develop constructs from the observations to assist in understanding the essence of the phenomena. During the classification step the constructs are classified into frameworks or typologies to highlight

relationships between the phenomena. The association between the category-defining attributes and the outcomes is the focus of third step and researchers develop their understanding of differences (and/or the magnitude thereof) into models. This approach can be termed inductive and can be augmented with a deductive process where the direction is reversed from “top to bottom” and hypotheses are tested to improve the initial models. This is done by studying a different set of data and establishing whether outcomes are correlated with the proposed model. Once it is found

to correlate, the model is confirmed but if an anomaly is found that does not fit with the theory; opportunity exists to improve the current model. Thus, detecting such an anomaly gives researchers opportunity to “define and measure the phenomena more precisely and less ambiguously, or to cut it into alternative categories –so that the anomaly and the prior associations of attributes and outcomes can all be explained.” Carlile and Christensen (2005) contend the descriptive stage (explained above) is augmented and expanded by normative research. This part of the theory development process attempts to ascertain the causes of the outcomes observed in the previous steps and to establish the actions managers ought to take to get the required results. Researchers provide hypotheses they believe would ensure causality and deductively (by following the same steps that were used in the descriptive stage) test the statement of explanation. Thus, the hypotheses provide actions and if taken they would lead to the required (and predicted according to the model) outcomes. If this does not occur, an anomaly exists that is explained by going back to the lower levels of the pyramid to develop more accurate explanations of the phenomena. Often this entails revisiting the categorisation stage and expanding the contexts wherein managers find themselves. Sufficient iterations within the inductive and deductive cycle provide opportunity for scholars to predict outcomes *given a particular circumstance* – thus expanding the models to include what managers are supposed to do in given situations.

Carlile and Christensen furthermore point out the importance of “categorisation” in the research process. It rings particularly true for the current study as it is acknowledged that no two teams are exactly alike and no framework can ever reproduce the chaotic jumble and hurly-burly of real human interaction. The processes involved are complex and every team develops in its own unique way. The study of teams also falls into the category of research where sceptics proclaim that it is too difficult to study (Carlile & Christensen, 2005) given the complex nature of the phenomenon of teams. Therefore, Woodman (1989) is probably correct to state that the goal of finding a “single, unified

theory is probably misdirected.” However, many efforts in this regard are found in literature and many researchers have tried to distinguish the characteristics unique to effective teams (In the terminology of Carlile and Christensen this would refer to “categories”). Examples include Campion, Medsker and Higgs (1993) and the replication of the study by Campion, Papper and Medsker (1996), Larson and LaFasto (1989) and Guzzo and Shea (1992). Locally Steinmann (2000: 16) proposes “six principles of synergy”, namely territorial harmony, dedication of individual strengths, rituals, trusting relationships, sense of purpose and team maintenance. Although these are by no means exhaustive it does indicate efforts to determine key team components. The current study addresses this need for categorisation as indicated by Carlile and Christensen (2005) by using a heuristic model to assist in the process of reviewing the literature and providing categories.

To explain this framework a metaphor of a tetrahedral molecular structure is used. Such a molecule consists of a core atom with four other atoms attached to it at equal degree distance from each other (e.g. Methane (CH₄)) as indicated in Figure 2.

The presentation should be seen as three-dimensional with the different atoms connecting to a core at an equal distance of 120 degrees. Metaphorically, this indicates that all aspects are of equal importance to the effectiveness of a team. Expanding the metaphor of the tetrahedral molecule structure, it would seem that the molecular structure helps to introduce various components of a team and as it cannot exist in isolation it introduces its context as critical element to consider. Physics tells us the real energy of an atom is generated through the interrelation and inner-working of the components within each atom the level of protons, quarks and electrons. Applied to a team, the different elements of the components of the team influence each other and other components by creating a field wherein the team can function (Wheatley, 1999). Thus, a constant interrelation (Sundstrom, De Meuse & Futrell, 1990: 122) and interaction of all the elements at the same time influence the teams’ operations.

To focus on one particular element or component is merely to assist in understanding what is happening in the team and must be done in full realisation of the fact that intervention in one element or component will influence other parts of the team (molecule) as well. This focus on interrelation and context is based on a systemic framework (Capra, 1996) and departs from the traditional “input-process-output” frameworks (e.g. Tubbs, 2001). According to Capra’s view living systems consists of *structure*, pattern of organisation and life process (Capra, 1996: 156).

However, a team is also a social system and given its *context* (i.e. organisations) is expected to deliver specific outcomes. Thus, a psycho-social element (i.e. *culture*) and specific *performance* outcomes have to be included in a framework. Furthermore, a distinguishing component of a team is its vision, its members’ commitment to shared outcomes and as a human system has unconscious element reflected in its *core*. The components are all of equal importance and their influence is ubiquitous in the team’s operation.

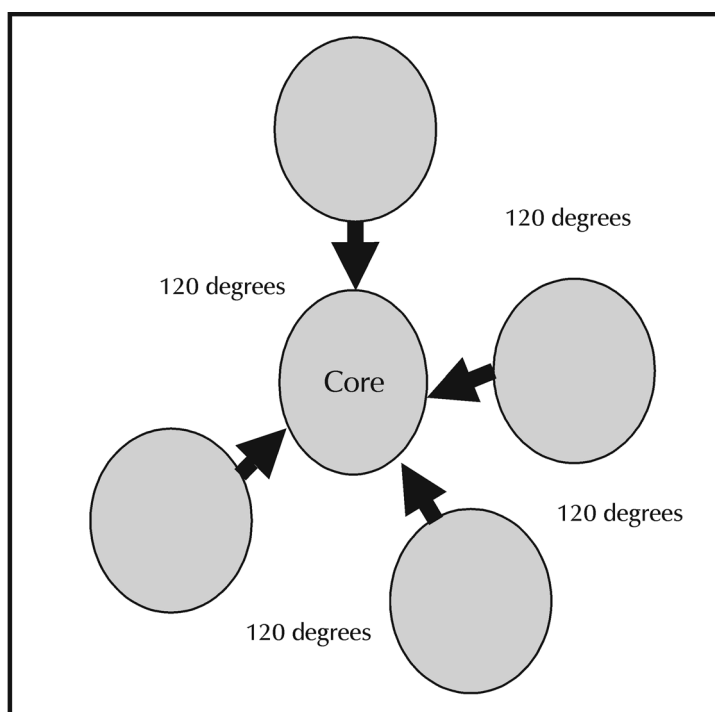


Figure 2

A schematic presentation of a tetrahedral molecular structure.

South African research on work teams published over the past ten years (i.e. 1996 – 2005) was reviewed and classified according to the categorisation stage of the descriptive part of the model proposed by Carlile and Christensen (2005). To facilitate the presentation within the categorisation stage of the model the heuristic model described above was employed. Content analysis was done and the advice of Offerman and Spiros (2001, 368) is heeded as the current review attempts “to integrate the wide array of

existing knowledge through usable frameworks or categorisations” rather than to present a single, unified theory. Therefore, the approach of Cohen and Bailey (1997) is followed in that a heuristic framework is presented to sort the literature by relevant content. This heuristic framework is based on and reflects recent trends in research and is used to facilitate presentation and review of the South African literature. A review of each article in the published literature was done to determine the

thematic focus thereof and to determine what component of team effectiveness it addresses best. It is acknowledged that a team (as a human social system) is complex and dynamic and has multiple influences impacting on it simultaneously. Thus, the framework is meant to facilitate easier presentation of myriads of co-occurring influences and it attempts to map the state of local research. The aim of the framework is therefore to assist in the presentation of the literature review rather than to try and find a correct “fit”.

Although it is accepted that South African scholars also publish their research on teams in international journals (e.g. Grütter, Field & Faull, 2002; Horwitz, Kamoche & Chew, 2002); local journals (e.g. Gmeiner & Van Wyk, 2001); electronically (Stander, 2004) and for degree purposes (Kossuth, 1998; Heunis, 1997) the focus of this study is on the local research scene. This is done to map trends in South African in management research outlets (i. e. journals) (Beaty, Nkomo & Kriek, 2006)) and to review the development of a local body of knowledge. The following local and accredited (by the Department of Education) journals were reviewed, namely:

- *South African Journal of Business Management,*
- *South African Journal of Labour Relations,*
- *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology,*
- *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences, and*
- *Management Dynamics.*

The study was limited to work teams to enable analysis of a particular, coherent body of literature and include for example executive teams, production teams and teams responsible for design, service delivery or projects. Teams like research teams, student groups or sports teams were not included. A computer search was launched by entering “team” plus wild card (i.e. “team*”) and “teambuilding” into the search engine: *SA e-publication*. It yielded fourteen articles in the relevant journals focusing on teams and none with teambuilding as content. One study was eliminated because the case was

situated in the United Kingdom. These were then augmented with popular, non-accredited yet discipline-related and practitioner-focused outlets, namely *Management Today, Productivity SA, Human Resource Management* and *People Dynamics*. It was decided to include both academic oriented and practitioner oriented outlets as part of the study for two reasons. Firstly, the dearth of research on teams required a larger span of focus and secondly, it presents an attempt to bridge the gap between science and practice – especially since this “schism” had been identified as “the single greatest impediment to progress in OD” (Woodman, 1993). This was done to review the scope of content between accredited/scholarly and non-accredited/popular journals.

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Results

The metaphor of a tetrahedral molecule described above is used as framework in this study to facilitate presentation of local literature on teams. Focusing on individual components is somewhat like putting the spotlight on some members on a stage while other members of the cast are still performing but not in the (spot)light. Isolating the different components does, however, allow for a coherent presentation of the different interrelating components. Thus, local literature is presented according to the components of the framework (i.e. core, structure, process, culture, context and performance) and summarised in Table 1.

4.1 Core

This is the “heart and soul” of the team and refers to its leadership, vision and values. The core of the team is the gel that clues the team together. It provides the purpose for the team (Steinmann, 2000: 17-18), contains the elements to which members commit themselves and includes the potency of the team. The purpose includes mission (the reason why the team exists) and vision (the desired outcome propelling the team to the future). Values are the cornerstone of behaviour and present beliefs about what is good or bad and what is important or not

(Poovan *et al.*, 2006). They determine the performance ethic of the team and serve as generating factor to specify behaviour in the team. Leadership (Warner, 1999: 24; Wolmarans, 1996: 31-32;) forms part of the core of a team and refers to the interplay between leaders and followers and acknowledges that a leader can only lead in accordance with the level of autonomy provided (Van der Heyde & Roodt, 2003). Examples from the animal world to illustrate key leadership elements of teams like visioning (eagles); followership (buffalo and bees) and dominance via expertise (rhino) are given by Frost (2001: 28). The core also embodies the commitment of the team to common goals, unconscious elements that bind the team together (e.g. shared mental models) and its energy (Baker, 2000: 34). Often the elements of the team are concretised in a charter or “constitution” (Baker, 2000: 34). The review of local literature revealed that all aspects of the core of a team (i.e. leadership, vision and values) are addressed by local researchers.

4.2 Structure

This component refers to the actual physical embodiment of the team as it is made up through the diversity of its members or put differently “the nature and attributes of group members” (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996: 310). It provides the most basic point of entry for analysing or describing the team. Some of the structural elements cannot be changed (e.g. race, age and gender of members) while others can be influenced by organisational influence (e.g. skills make-up of a particular team). Elements assisting in describing the structure of a team include its composition and design.

Composition consists of elements like:

- heterogeneity as it increases the range of competencies of the team (e.g. race, gender, age, geographic distribution, nationality, language and culture) (vid Rijamampianina & Maxwell, 2002);
- personality: External to the journals reviewed Gmeiner and Van Wyk (2001) use psychometric instruments to assess personality as part of a team development

programme but the review found no focus thereof in the scope of journals reviewed for this article, and

- functional diversity as reflected in different skills and expertise levels. Frost (2001: 26) provides metaphors from the animal world (notably lions and wild dogs) to illustrate the value of selection and skills levels in assigning roles while Steinmann (2000: 17) points to the importance of mobilising individual strengths through dedication of skills, knowledge and experience.

Design elements include:

- size: minimum number of people required to provide optimal outcome as Gostelli (1996: 22) argues for the ideal management team size to be between “five and eight” and uses purpose of the organisation, flow of the purpose and the number of people required as determinants of the ideal team size;
- type: e.g. project team, top management teams, work teams or parallel teams (Cohen & Bailey, 1997: 241). Additionally advice and involvement; production and service; projects and development, and action and negotiation teams (Sundstrom, De Meuse & Futrell, 1990: 120). Types of teams identified in local research include:
 - Self-directed- or self-managed work teams (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2004; Kemp, 2002; Veldsman, 1995)
 - “Teamnets¹” (Erwee, 1997: 28) that are “networks of teams that cross conventional boundaries.”
 - Virtual teams. These teams “are goal orientated, collaborative and knowledge intensive groups of people where work undertaken by individuals is separated by time, space and location” (Gorelick & April, 2004a; Gorelick & April, 2004b; Furst, Reeves, Rosen & Blackburn, 2004; Maritz, 2000: 12);
 - Top management team (Warner, 2000: 38), and
 - Project teams (Leonard, 2004).
- Task design: The logical subdivision of work into reasonably sized subunits to facilitate

partially independent units of work that can be allocated to different members in the team. Aspects influencing task design include the familiar significance, skill and variety model proposed by Hackman and Oldman (1980), as well as participation, self-management and identity (Campion, Papper & Medsker, 1996: 430);

- Assigned roles: include formal (e.g. roles assigned to manage the operation of the team like chairperson, secretary, treasurer, director or shop steward), functional (e.g. roles due to professional or technical knowledge like engineer or accountant) and process (e.g. roles assigned to keep the process of the team continuous like timekeeper or focus-keeper).

The review of literature reveals that no attention had been given to the elements of task design and assigned roles in the period studied.

4.3 Processes

The network of a team refers to the relationships between the components thereof. Thus, the manner in which the different components communicate with each other and get fixed in patterns or processes. This component deals with:

- Tasks of the team: (i.e. what the team does – its “deliverables”). It includes verbal (e.g. topics discussed) and non-verbal (e.g. the physical nature of the task at hand) content of the team. Grutter and Faull (1998: 34) show the importance of “task execution” that facilitated successful team effort;
- Processes: the manner in which the linkages between members of the team are configured through:
 - effective communication (e.g. documentation of structured and implemented production processes (Hyatt & Ruddy, 1997: 561), dialogue (Katz, 1996: 36); interaction (Warner, 1999: 23). Management examples include the effectiveness of meetings (Katz, 1998: 102);
 - decision-making, problem-solving and conflict management processes,

- production processes (vid. systems mapping and bottleneck-mapping in teams as described by Sandrock (1996: 26-29)

The focus of this component of teamwork is on the relationships between the elements of a team and refers to the manner in which the different components relate to each other.

4.4 Culture

This refers to the intangible or invisible aspects or the psychosocial elements the team employs (Buitendach & Stander, 2004; Koortzen & Wrogemann, 2003). A major difference between a biological system and a human social system is the fact that the latter also has a symbolic social domain (Capra, 1996). A symbolic domain is a non-concrete way of communicating – taking the existence of the system into an abstract realm. This is created by the components of the system and *for* the system itself. It comes into being through the interaction and interrelation that exist between the members of the system and is created and employed with the specific purpose of benefiting those members. Not a lot of research effort was devoted to this component and only rituals (including conflict; bonding and communication rituals) (Steinmann, 2000: 17) were studied. Other aspects of culture that did not receive local researchers’ attention include:

- boundary (i.e. the team’s efforts to delineate itself from the context and to integrate into a larger system). “By boundaries we mean features that (a) differentiate a work unit...(b) pose real or symbolic barriers to access or transfer of information, goods, or people... or (c) serve as points of external exchange with other teams, customers peers, competitors, or other entities (Sundstrom, De Meuse & Futrell, 1990: 121);
- Affective factors: Another critical psychosocial element of the team’s operation is on an emotive level. Whether they are openly stated or displayed in a disguised form, emotions form part of the operation of the team and the intensity levels thereof could influence the manner in which the team functions. Often they reflect in the

security levels (i.e. safety and trust between members) that refer to the belief members have that others in the team will support them when needed, respect their opinions and feelings and fulfil their obligations to the team's required outcomes. Support is the extent to which members receive encouragement, assistance, information, and support from other team members, leaders and the organisation (Hyatt & Ruddy, 1997: 563). Local research that focuses on this aspect includes Dambrowski and Van Wyk's (1997) discussion on resistance to change;

- Informal roles (i.e. expected behaviour patterns that are attributed to different members of the team in terms of their task related and emotional needs). Although outside the scope of the research of this paper informal roles were used in studies by Gmeiner and Van Wyk (Belbin Team roles) and Stander (Team Management Profiles);
- Norms can be defined as expectations that team members have on what constitutes appropriate behaviours, beliefs, attitudes and communication. They are the standards shared by members that can be used to regulate and influence behaviour;
- Cohesion is the collective sense of belonging that exists within the team (Cohen & Bailey, 1997), and
- Development processes: Well-known examples include Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning or Gersick's (1989) punctuated equilibrium model.

4.5 Internal and external contexts

Every team, irrespective of the dynamics, is embedded (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996: 327) within larger systems and operates in a given historical context. The team's connection with these systems includes the personal systems of the members (e.g. value and cultural systems), links with the organisational context (e.g. culture) and on a larger scale what is happening in the economy, social trends and political decisions. What is happening in these systems and what

is required by the historical context could influence the dynamics of the team.

To assist in the review of research and as part of the heuristic framework, the context of a team can be divided into two distinguishable types: namely:

- ecological context. This refers to the larger systems that the group forms part of and it represents all the interactions that the team has with its environment including:
 - remote (e.g. political, economic, social and technological trends; customer requirements and/or industry standards);
 - organisational (e.g. reward systems; training resources (e.g. skills development (Maister, 1996: 44) or cultural diversity training (McNamara, 1995); organisational culture; recognition, and hierarchical level);
 - operational contexts (e.g. proximity of work-stations and gathering places (Sundstrom *et al.*, 1990)), and
- actualised context. This is the context unique to the specific team and it evolves as the team develops. The team is constantly busy creating or developing its own context and should achieve to "gain a competitive advantage from the territory in which they operate" (Steinmann, 2000: 16). This occurs because the team develops in time, employs its own content and generates its own points of reference to which team members can refer.

The literature review reveals that both internal and external contexts were studied during the period studied.

4.6 Performance

Any team exists because it has a vision. To attain this vision the team needs to break down its work into clear objectives, goals and aims. "The effect of goals on group performance has been more uniformly found to be positive..." (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996: 334). This output of the team and the control to ensure it happens are key elements of the performance of a team. It refers to the output required by the team and is a function of:

- the autonomy of the team (i.e. semi-autonomous; self-regulating/directing or self-designing (Hackman, 2003);
- interrelatedness and interdependence: this refers to the “sense of shared responsibility for, and reward value of, group accomplishment” (Campion, Papper & Medsker, 1996: 430) that must be coordinated to ensure collective action (Salas, Burke, & Cannon-Bowers, 2000);
- regulatory systems including:
 - accurate, timely feedback on performance;
 - performance management and measurement systems (i.e. “determining required performance including quality standards, supporting and developing performance, reviewing actual performance and recognising and rewarding actual performance” (Bennett & Minty, 2001: 34), and
- maintenance including collective reflection on work priorities, reform of work and structure around strategy (Steinmann, 2000: 18).

The performance levels of the team provide a gauge of the successfulness of the team as perceived by its management and members alike. They are therefore an indication of how the team manages to coordinate the other components to facilitate its output and production. Except for autonomy all other elements of performance received attention of writers in the reviewed journals during the period studied.

4.7 Teambuilding

From the literature a particular type of approach to team effectiveness (or alternatively a separate category) became apparent, namely “teambuilding interventions.” Although any attempt to improve the performance of a team can be termed teambuilding, Brawley and Paskevich (1997: 14) are correct in stating “the process might be more accurately characterised as team enhancement or team improvement for task and social purposes.” Teambuilding can be defined as “interventions designed to

improve their effectiveness in working together by confronting and resolving problems” (Boss, 1983: 66). This improvement could be the “productive output...” “social processes”, “well-being of individual team members” (Hackman & Wageman, 2005: 272) and “organisational alignment” (Thompson, 2004: 36). However, it would seem that teambuilding has become specialised with different types of teambuilding interventions identified by researchers (e.g. Levi, 2001; Hayes, 1997; Beer, 1980). Research that addresses teambuilding interventions from this more specialised point of view were categorised separately according to the approach or type used. Research has identified a variety of “types” or “approaches” specifically designed as interventions to effect change in teams including interpersonal process, goal-setting, role definition and problem-solving approaches (Beer, 1980) or as Hayes distinguishes (1997), namely interpersonal approach, focus on roles and norms, a values approach or emphasis on the team’s tasks. Levi (2001) identifies goal setting, role definition, interpersonal process skills, cohesion building and problem solving. Locally Cilliers (2000: 18) makes a distinction between functionalistic-, humanistic- and psychodynamic approaches.

Local research seems to be scarce regarding teambuilding interventions and in their choice of specific types. The literature reviews are classified as follows:

Psychodynamic: Cilliers (2000: 18) presents results on the “impact of a team building event presented from the psychodynamic approach or Tavistock stance.” He describes the basic assumption of the approach and its impact on team behaviour as well as the teambuilding event. He concludes that the event “impacts on the individual as well as on the team” in that individuals gain knowledge about and understanding of team behaviour and then about self. Although not strictly presented as teambuilding Cilliers and Rabichund (2001) indicate benefit to individuals participating in group relations training using the same stance.

Adventure-based: Kriek (2006b) provides a description of an adventure-based teambuilding intervention while Heunis (1997) studied a team development process using experiential

education principles in an adventure-based programme.

Psychometric assessment: Gmeiner and Van Wyk (2001) include personality assessment through the use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator while Stander (2003) assesses team roles by applying Margerison and McCann's Team Management Profile. Van Heerden and Du Toit (2000) use assessment of Belbin's team roles in their description of the application of team-building in a non-profit enterprise.

5 Discussion

The dearth of qualitative research in the field of teams and teambuilding are consistent with recent findings of Beaty, Nkomo, and Kriek (2006) in which they confirmed that quantitative research models are preferred in management literature. Although this could be because of inherent difficulties of doing this type of research (e.g. difficulties of interviewing via focus groups (Lee, 1995), the physically and emotionally draining methods that are used (Harari & Beaty, 1990) and logistical hurdles (Triandis & Gelfand 1998), it is generally acknowledged that quantitative models are more suited for testing of theoretical models and qualitative models better at building theory (Symon & Cassell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus, the need to build management theory that reflects the unique reality of the South African business context is critical and more research is needed in South Africa aimed at building theory to respond to the needs of the local context. Indeed, in terms of the South African context, observations by Schurink (2003) suggest that the field of management in South Africa is also dominated by quantitative research because numbers give one "a sense of exactness, which is appealing".

The literature review reveals a number of disconcerting omissions that did not receive attention of researchers. Future research (both quantitative and qualitative) is needed to build and test theories in this regard and to reflect the local organisational scene in comparison with international counterparts. In this regard mention can be made of:

- a. different types of teams where top management teams were omitted;
- b. virtual teams that are a feature of modern-day business but were not studied;
- c. diversity and its impact on effectiveness was overlooked, and
- d. variables of effectiveness that did not receive attention.

In a recent study Kriek (2007) points out that the use of teambuilding interventions in South African organisations is a widely used phenomenon. His survey indicates that seventy seven per cent of the respondents indicated that they had participated in teambuilding interventions during the past two years. This seems to be consistent with international trends where *teambuilding* is a common practice as part of growing and developing teams (French & Bell, 1995). It is regarded as one of the most popular intervention techniques in organisation development (Buller & Bell, 1986: 305) and it has indeed been claimed that it is the intervention used most frequently in planned changed efforts (Offerman & Spiros, 2001; Covin & Kilmann, 1991). In the South African context Cilliers (2000: 26) observes "Nowadays almost all large and many smaller organisations invest energy in teambuilding." Given this local and international popularity, the limited research focus by local scholars on such a prevalent management practice is disconcerting and requires attention.

A feature of the South African environment is the emphasis on contextualising the workplace and society in general. This refers to the efforts of the government and business to shed vestiges of colonialism and Apartheid and to rekindle focus on the African context. Kriek (2006a) points to the nature of the workforce, Ubuntu and the African Renaissance as driving forces for change. However, after reviewing literature on teams, it would seem that the focus on Africanisation has only recently started to attract attention of researchers (Kriek, 2006a; Poovan, *et al.* 2006). This is a welcome positive trend in light of international realisation that questions the reliance on Western-based management theory and its applicability to other countries (Javidan, Stahl, Brodbeck & Wilderom, 2005).

More effort is surely needed for the study of teams as they relate to their local context.

6 Conclusion

Some scholars perceive the research of teams and team dynamics to be daunting and challenging (Buller, 1986) but given their increased importance it is enlightening that some local studies are emerging in the field of work teams. It is disheartening to view how little attention is given to the normative cycle. Future research on local teams should focus on this critical cycle of the theory building process.

Endnote

- 1 It consists of independent teams pooling resources across organisations to achieve shared goals and creates networks where disparate people link up to work together on a common purpose. Key aspects of this type of team are the *voluntary* links created between *independent* members around a unifying purpose (Erwee, 1997: 28).

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Table 1
Summary of research according to heuristic framework

FRAMEWORK TOPIC	LOCAL REFERENCES
Core	Steinmann 2000; Poovan 2006; Warner 1999; Wolmarans 1996; Van der Hyde & Roodt 2002; Frost 2001; Baker 2000.
Structure	Gmeiner & Van Wyk 2001; Steinmann 2000; Gostelli 1996; Cohen & Bailey 1997; Coetzee & Rothmann 2004; Kemp 2002; Veldsman 1995; Gorelick & April 2004a; Gorelick & April 2004b; Furst, Reeves, Rosen & Blackburn 2004; Maritz 2000; Warner 2000; Leonard 2004.
Processes	Grutter & Faull 1998; Katz 1996; Warner 1999; Sandrock 1996
Culture	Buitendach & Stander 2004; Koortzen & Wrogemann 2003; Steinmann 2000; Dambrowski & Van Wyk 1997; Gmeiner & Van Wyk 2001.
Context	Steinmann 2000;
Performance	Bennett & Minty 2001; Steinmann 2000
Teambuilding	Cilliers 2000; Cilliers & Rabichund 2001a & 2001b; Kriek 2006; Heunis 1997; Gmeiner & Van Wyk 2001; Stander 2003; Van Heerden & Du Toit 2000.