

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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TEAM FORMATION STRATEGIES BASED ON PERSONALITY TYPES AND COMMUNICATION STYLES TO IMPROVE TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

The creative process starts with assembling a creative team which consists of the right mix of people with a blend of talents and personal attributes that rarely exist in one person. Therefore, creative teams in which different members contribute different complementary skills are very important and ensure an output that is greater than the sum of the individual components. This study evaluates the Goal Accomplishment and Team Effectiveness of teams formed using DeBono's six thinking hats and Myers-Briggs personality types. First year students of the MBA program were used to form teams in the context of a Workshop on Creativity and Lateral Thinking. The students were divided into teams based on their 6 hats or MBTI typologies. A total of 101 students were divided into 9 teams of 4 students each based on 6 hats, 9 teams of 5 students each based on MBTI and 5 teams of 4 students each were formed randomly without following any Team formation Strategy (TFS). ANOVA and t-test were done using SPSS and it was found that Goal Accomplishment was significantly different between the 6 hat teams and MBTI teams. Team Effectiveness was found to be significantly different between the 6 hats team, MBTI teams and the control teams. It is concluded that heterogeneous teams had a positive effect on team effectiveness and goal accomplishment.

KEYWORDS

Team formation strategies , Myers-Briggs personality types, Six hats, team effectiveness, innovation and creativity.

INTRODUCTION

Business, public service, education and the not-for-profit sector are all hearing stakeholders calling for more and more innovation, creativity or enterprise. It does not help that "creativity" has strong associations with the special artistic talents of a small number of exceptional people: creative geniuses like Beethoven, Rodin, Picasso or Shakespeare. People in business often claim to be uncreative for this reason. However, Thinking 'outside the box' is not limited to artistic and writing professions. Innovative thinking, brainstorming, and creativity exercises are encouraged and used by forward thinking businesses and corporations to successfully plan, create, and sell products and services.

Many people mistakenly think that they lack the ability to be creative. To them, creativity is a mysterious phenomenon, inherited, and therefore not available to them. To keep an open mind, switch tracks, see new perspectives, shift paradigms, generate different mind sets, associate remote stimuli in the environment with elements in the mind and combine them into new and unusual ideas, generate many ideas which are really different and develop them, adopt different problem-solving approaches and persist in the face of criticism are some of the abilities associated with creativity and innovation. Few of these creativity skills seem to be inherited, and most seem to be learnable with training. Creativity exhibited by employees and managers provides raw materials and building blocks for organizational innovation because much of today's competitive marketplace demands ever-increasing value to customers, which translates to lowest total cost, highest total quality, fastest total cycle time and highest total overall customer satisfaction (Atkins, Dykes, Hagerty & Hoye, 2002). Smith and Munn, (2000) predict that future success globally will be achieved only by driving down costs as well as improving operating efficiencies. Smith and Munn are content that creativity is what it will take to do so. Shapiro (2002) agrees that today's business world thrives on creativity and innovation in a climate of uncertainty, volatility, and continuous change. As more organizations vie for significance in the global marketplace, creativity and innovation have become the most important factors in establishing and maintaining a competitive advantage (Meisinger, 2007). Dorothy Leonard (2010) in her book "Fostering Creativity: Expert solutions to everyday challenges" says that the creative process starts with assembling a creative team which consists of the right mix of people with a blend of talents and personal attributes that rarely exist in one person. For example, creative work requires a fresh approach to problem solving as well as planning how to convert a creative idea into a profitable innovation. Therefore, creative teams in which different members contribute different complementary skills are very important and ensure an output that is greater than the sum of the individual components.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess if there is difference between the effectiveness of teams with respect to the Team Formation Strategy.
2. To see if there exist any difference between measurement and accomplishment of goals with respect to MBTI and Six hat teams.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

PERSONALITY TYPES AND COMMUNICATION STYLES

This study has used two models to categorise students into teams - the MBTI and DeBono's 6 hats apart from control teams where neither of these were used for the team formation strategy. A brief overview of each of these tools is given below:

OVERVIEW OF MBTI

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator indicates psychological preferences in the perception of the world and in decision making. It groups preferences into four categories giving rise to sixteen personality types as shown in the table 1. Though the MBTI has many uses, its use to understand how people learn is not widespread especially in educational institutions worldwide (Jensen et al, 2003) and India in particular. This can be understood from the limited literature available and none from India.

TABLE 1: MBTI OVERVIEW

EXTROVERSION – E Get attention and energy from outside and others, spends time in the outer world of people and things, action oriented	INTROVERSION – I Gets energy by spending time in one’s own inner world of ideas, images, memories; takes time to think and reflect
SENSING – S Pay more attention to sensory information, values experiential learning	INTUITION – N Pay attention to patterns, meaning and possibilities of the information received; works with symbols, abstracts and theories; future orientation
THINKING – T Objective, focus on facts, impersonal	FEELING – F Subjective, focus on people, context based
JUDGEMENT – J Structured decided lifestyle, timely planned decisions	PERCEPTION – P Flexible adaptive lifestyle, process oriented decision making

OVERVIEW OF 6 HATS

DeBono’s six hats identify six communication styles/roles. These styles or roles are associated with six distinct ways in which the thinking process happens and is represented by 6 different colours. Table 2 gives information on the six hats and their characteristics. By mentally wearing or switching hats, individuals can focus or redirect thoughts, mentally challenging the thinking process and thinking in other styles other than the individual’s preferred thinking style. Both the MBTI and 6 hats tools were used as part of the Team Formation Strategy (TFS) to group the respondents into teams.

TABLE 2 – 6 HATS OVERVIEW (Source: Jensen et al 2003)

White Hat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I focus on objective facts. · I enter into a discussion without preconceived ideas on a solution · I seek to know that facts of a situation · I seek to know the statistical evidence concerning a decision · I try to think totally objectively about a situation · I seek to differentiate between facts and opinions · I am more interested in facts than opinions 	Red Hat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · My feelings sway my decisions · I have good intuition · I often have hunches about the best decision · My personal opinions play a significant role in my decision making process · I listen to my emotions when making decisions · I am suspicious of other people’s decision making process · I think emotions should play a significant role in decision making
Yellow Hat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I usually see the positive side of things · I can often see the good parts of even a bad idea · I am usually optimistic that a new idea will work · I tend to see the valuable contributions in people’s ideas · I believe that most new ideas have significant value · I usually “look on the bright side” of a problem · My comments are usually positive and constructive 	Black Hat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I can quickly see why an idea will not work · I often can tell an idea will not work by judging from past experience · I like to play the “devil’s advocate” · I can usually see the pitfalls in an idea · I can readily detect poor logic in someone’s argument · I find it easy to be critical of other’s ideas · I am often pessimistic of others ideas
Green Hat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I am creative · I often generate new ways of thinking about a problem · I easily think “outside of the box” · I am good at finding new approaches to solving a problem · I am constantly thinking of alternatives · I am not likely to settle for the “status quo” · I can easily generate new concepts 	Blue Hat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I like to lead the problem solving process · I tend to think as much about the problem solving process as the problem itself · I focus on the big picture, summarize and draw conclusions · I find myself trying to keep the group focused · I tend to try to optimize the group problem solving process · I often help the group clearly define the problem · I often find myself orchestrating the group

USE OF MBTI AND 6 HATS FOR IMPROVING TEAM PERFORMANCE

Jensen et al (2000) designed a new team formation strategy using DeBono’s 6 hats. Teams formed with the 6 hats methodology were compared with teams formed using Myers Briggs based team formation technique. The results indicate that teams based on the 6 hats strategy achieved their goals better than non-6-hats teams and MBTI based teams met their goals better than non-MBTI teams. Teams which met both 6-hats and MBTI criteria reported increased effectiveness. So forming teams using these team formation strategies increased effectiveness of the teams.

Jensen et al (2003) used both the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the DeBono’s 6 hats apart from VARK Catalyst to categorise student’s learning styles as part of the Team formation Strategy(TFS). The authors found that both MBTI and the 6 hats team formation strategies showed a dramatic increase in team effectiveness when team formation criteria from both these techniques were used.

Shen et al (2007) have shown that the Sensing-iNtuitive scale of the MBTI is the most important of type preferences to form engineering design teams. The paper also argues that using either MBTI, Keirse, Belbin or Learning styles is better than random formation of teams.

Tamura & Furukawa (2007) developed a Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) and used the Six Hats methodology to introduce, facilitate and train students on an online training environment. The authors found significant differences in the number and quality of ideas for given problems between Six thinking hats environment and simple online discussion environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The six hats typing Instrument was validated through a survey given to the students at the end of the workshop. This simple survey asked students to categorize themselves on 6 Hats category which best described their role in the team. The six hat typing instrument developed by Jensen et al was used for this study. This instrument was based on a detailed review of DeBono’s original work and it consisted of the key characteristics of the six thinking hats 6 items falling under each hat type.

Students were asked to take up a survey on the six hat typology much before the registrations for the workshop began. The rating scale of 0 - Never True to 5 – Always true was used in the survey comprising of 30 items. From the scores of the instrument the students were categorized on their six hats thinking styles. Another instrument which categorized the students on their typology was given to the students after the workshop. In contrast to the original typing instrument, this one had the complete list of characteristics of each 6 hats style in a single list. Students were asked to prioritize and rank the 6 styles which they used in their team activities. This was used for validating and checking for conformities in the original instrument. The objective of this exercise is to validate whether the dominant style as described by the original typing instrument is identified by the validation instrument as a truly dominant style or role.

The corroboration between the original typing instrument and the validation instrument shows that the style identified by the original typing instrument as dominant for that particular student was later rated, in the validation instrument as one of their preferred style of working in teams. It was found that 76 percentage of the time the original typing instrument did a reasonable job of correctly identifying the student’s style.

Apart from assessing the students on the 6 Hat typology, they were also given a form of the MBTI test. The Kiersey Temperament Sorter was used for this purpose (Kiersey 1999). Based on the 6 Hats and the MBTI Typology of the Student the following Goals were set for the teams. The Goals of the 6 Hats teams were to Provide Creativity, Provide Mixed Positive and Negative Feedback and to provide team leadership. On the other hand the Goals of the MBTI Teams were to Provide Creativity, to Provide Quick and Extended Decision Making and to provide logical and intuitive thinking.

TEAM FORMATION STRATEGY

Both the Six hat teams and the MBTI Teams were formed with a specific strategy. The Algorithm for forming the Six hat teams were as follows:

- 1) Every team shall have a student whose primary 6 Hat type is "Green"
- 2) Every team shall have a student whose primary 6 Hat type is "Yellow"
- 3) Every team shall have a student whose primary 6 Hat type is "Black"
- 4) Every team shall have a student whose primary 6 Hat type is "Blue"

There is a rationale behind this particular algorithm. The Green Style/role represents creativity. This is a crucial Role that any team shall be using for the activity and hence the first criterion in the 6 hats team formation strategy is a predominantly Green hat. The Yellow Style provides positive feedback and encouragement to proceed with an idea. On the other hand a Black Style provides constructive criticism and looks into the practicality of the idea. A Blue Style was included primarily to bring in some moderating and leadership quality into the team. The Red and White Hats could have become a part of the team, but it became increasingly difficult to satisfy the additional criteria.

Just like the Six hat Team formation Algorithm, The MBTI teams were also formed with a specific strategy. There are Sixteen Personality types in the MBTI Instrument. Therefore forming teams with the Sixteen personality types would be difficult and hence a different algorithm was used to build the teams. The teams were formed with 5 important criteria's

- 1) An Extroverted Intuitior (EN) was a part of the team (OR) a Introverted Intuitior (IN) plus an Extrovert (E) was on a team.
- 2) One Judger (J)
- 3) One Perceiver (P)
- 4) One Thinker (T)
- 5) One Feeler (F)

The logic behind having an Extroverted Intuitior or a Introverted Intuitior plus a extrovert was to ensure that there is a scope for creativity or innovation in the team. By having an extrovert as a team member we further ensure that the creative and innovative ideas are expressed to the team. By having a Judger and a Perceiver it is ensured that the team will be mixed between those who are ready to make decisions on limited data ("Judger") and those who want to fully consider ALL the options before making a decision ("Perceiver"). A thinker and a Feeler in the team would help to create a mix between those who make decisions by concentrating on facts and logical relationships ("Thinker") and those who allow insight and intuition to play significant roles ("Feeler").

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

VARIATION IN PERFORMANCE

One of the objectives of this paper is to evaluate if there is any variation in the performance of the teams. In other words, if teams were formed with some scientific methodologies, do their performance with respect to creativity and innovation increase? ANOVA was used to test the same. As it has been already discussed, teams were formed based on the 6 Hats and MBTI; there was yet another group of teams, the formation of which was random.

H₀ : The effectiveness of the teams were homogenous irrespective of whether they belonged to the MBTI , Six hats or the Random Groups

The results of the hypothesis test that were conducted are shown in table 2. It can be seen that the significance of the ANOVA was less than 0.05 and therefore the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted at 5 as well as 1 percent level. Therefore it can be concluded that there were differences in team effectiveness on the basis of team formation strategies. The descriptive statistics for the three groups are given in table 3. It can be found that the Mean for the Six hat teams is higher than the other Groups.

VARIATION IN GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT

Yet another objective of this paper was to evaluate if there were any differences among the teams in their goal accomplishment strategies. As already discussed the goal of a six hat team was to improve creativity, generating alternatives provide for mixed positive and negative feedback and provide for team leadership. On the other hand the goal of MBTI team formation strategy was to provide for creativity, to provide for mixed, quick and extended decision making and provide for mixed logical and intuitive thinking. The extent to which these goals were accomplished was assessed through specific items in the team effectiveness survey. T test was used to test the following hypothesis

H₀ : There is no significant differences in goal accomplishment between MBTI teams and Six hat teams that were formed using a specific TFS

The results of the hypothesis testing are given in the table 4. It can be seen that the significance of the t test was 0.001 and hence the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted at 5 % and 1% level. Therefore it can be concluded that there were significant differences between MBTI and Six hat teams with respect to goal accomplishment.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study corroborated and validated the Six Hats typing instrument developed by Jensen et al (2000). Validation of the students' preferred style of working in teams with the style identified by the original Six Hats and MBTI instruments confirms that these instruments can be used to identify and group people into different teams as confirmed by Jensen et al (2000, 2003). The major difference between the Jensen et al studies and this study was having post graduate management students instead of engineering students to form teams.

Heterogeneity in team effectiveness was seen between the Six Hats, MBTI and control groups and there were significant differences between the groups' team effectiveness. Teams formed using the Six Hats team formation strategy exhibited superior team effectiveness. Thus there is enough empirical evidence that using the Six Hats typology for team formation increases team effectiveness. However, teams formed using the MBTI team formation strategy showed the lowest scores for team effectiveness which is in divergence with the Jensen et al (2000) study.

"Six Hats" teams and "MBTI" teams also showed significant differences in terms of goal accomplishment. Six Hats teams performed better on goal accomplishment than MBTI teams. This may be attributed to the fact that Six Hats teams were formed directly based on preferred communication styles/roles when working in a team. Once these styles/roles were identified, they were used as a team formation strategy to create teams that both balance communication styles/roles as well as ensure certain styles/roles were present in order to improve team effectiveness and therefore goal accomplishment. MBTI teams were formed based on their personality types and their affects on group communication rather on their communicative styles/roles (Jensen et al, 2000). Thus it may be safe to conclude that Six Hats is a better and more direct way to identify communication styles/roles than the MBTI.

Further research can look at the effectiveness of a combination of team formation criteria of both MBTI and 6 hats as in Jensen et al (2003) for management students.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 1: CORROBORATION BETWEEN THE ORIGINAL TYPING AND VALIDATION INSTRUMENT

Ranking According to Original Type Survey	Ranking According to the Validation Survey	Percentage of times the corroboration is true	Cumulative percentage
1	1	76%	76%
2 nd -6 th	2 nd to 6 th	24%	100%

TABLE 2: HYPOTHESIS TESTING FOR ASSESSING VARIATION IN TEAM EFFECTIVENESS AMONG THE GROUPS BASED ON TFS

Particulars	Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance
Between Groups	2.695	2	1.347	6.276	0.003
Within Groups	19.754	92	0.215		
Total	22.449	94			

TABLE 3: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS FOR THE GROUPS BASED ON TEAM FORMATION STRATEGIES

Team Formation Strategy	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Six Hat Teams	34	4.1029	0.44384
MBTI Teams	40	3.7250	0.50149
Control Teams	21	3.8333	0.41500

TABLE 4: T TEST FOR ASSESSING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MBTI TEAMS AND SIX HAT TEAMS WITH RESPECT TO GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT

Teams	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	T Critical Value	Significance
Six hats	34	4.1176	0.41522	3.573	0.001
MBTI	40	3.7625	0.43508		

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