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Integration at the top: A closer look at top management team internal process

ABSTRACT

By interviewing 50 members of top management teams (TMT) in Latin American corporations, we explore how top management teams share information and shape the decision process during task accomplishment. Using the input-process-outcome framework (IPO), we analyse how these teams share information during task accomplishment. We also explore how the existence of trust might impact this information sharing. We then followed Edmondson (2003) to proposed that a team leader can be more or less directive about the decision process. The team leader can be directive about the *content* (what decision is made) and directive about the *process* (how the decision is made). We explore three potential process choices that a TMT leader face when making a decision: how to reach a final decision (outcome control), how to facilitate a discussion (a form of process control), and how to structure a debate (process design).

Keywords: team process, top management teams, trust in teams

INTRODUCTION

Research tradition on small groups and teams has used a computational lens approach, focusing on how inputs are transformed into outputs through a process, also known as the IPO framework for studying team effectiveness (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; McGrath, 1964). Inputs are the antecedent factors such as initial information, individual members profile, task structure or organizational design, that enable or constraint members' interactions or team process, to achieve results valued by one or more constituencies, also known as outcomes (Johnaff Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp, & Gilson, 2008). Broadly speaking, the outcomes include decisions, performance and even affective reactions (e.g., commitment or satisfaction). The IPO framework has long been used by researchers and has been extended in several ways to emphasized different aspects such as contextual issues (Cohen & Bailey, 1997), mediating mechanisms (Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson, & Jundt, 2005), or episodic dynamics (Marks, Mathieu, & Zaccaro, 2001).

The Upper Echelon theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) and later the Strategic Leadership theory (Finkelstein, Hambrick, & Cannella, 2009) has also built over the IPO framework but focusing predominantly on the relationships among inputs and outputs with less attention to the

intervening process variables. These theories advocate that specific knowledge, experience, values, and preferences of the top managers influence the strategic choices they make. Although a relationship exist between demographic variables -i.e., age, education, tenure- and outcomes - i.e., innovation, turnover, risk taking-, the empirical results are conflicted and fundamental questions have been raised about the validity of demographic variables as surrogates for psychosocial constructs (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001; Bromiley & Rau, 2015; Edmondson, Roberto, & Watkins, 2003; Priem, Lyon, & Dess, 1999). Important evidence suggested that team process variables -i.e., coordination, information sharing, conflict management- are better predictors of the outcomes than team demographic variables in the studies that have focused on the TMT process (Camelo-Ordaz, García-Cruz, & Sousa-Ginel, 2015; Carmeli & Halevi, 2009; Smith et al., 1994). The emphasis for composition aspects has been strong due to the relative ease access to demographic data, but unpacking the causal direction of TMT practices requires the study of the team process directly (Lawrence, 1997). Direct observation of the TMT process has a strong potential to illuminate how top teams go about their tasks, how CEOs engage with their immediate subordinates, and how, why, and when the upper echelons engage in teamwork and trustful relationships (Pettigrew, 1992). Our first objective is to acquire empirical evidence that support and explain those suppositions. Instead of using stable team characteristics to explain differences in outcomes, we intend to understand how the TMT's exchange and coordinate information while accomplishing a task, also called action processes (Marks et al., 2001).

Our second objective is to explore how the TMT leader shape the decision process to increase effectiveness during action processes, and what are the factors of the team or the situation that affect the leader's process choices. The role of the TMT leader is essential in the

definition of the team processes because the CEO has a disproportionate, sometimes nearly dominating influence on the group's characteristics, incentives and outputs (Finkelstein, 1992).

The third objective of this research is the exploration of trust as potential moderator of the relationship between team process and effectiveness, also conceptualized as an emergent state of the team member's interaction (Marks et al., 2001). Trust has been proposed as a necessary quality of any work relationship and an essential element for team performance (Costa, Fulmer, & Anderson, 2017; De Jong, Dirks, & Gillespie, 2016). It also has also been demonstrated to increase information sharing (Lee, Gillespie, Mann, & Wearing, 2010), and decreased dysfunctional team behaviors (Malhotra & Lumineau, 2011), reducing team process losses.

Following on Edmondson et al. (2003), we understand *TMT effectiveness* as: (1) the degree to which the team's decisions enhance organizational performance, (2) members' commitment to implementing team decisions and willingness to work together in the future and, (3) the extent to which the team process meets members' growth and satisfaction needs (Hackman, 1987; Hambrick, 1994). We certainly had access to information about firm growth and TMT turnover through the comments of the participants, but a complete analysis of team effectiveness should address more systematically self-report, peer assessments, observations, and objective outcomes (Salas, Reyes, & Woods, 2017). Because we performed a qualitative research with exploratory purposes, we are not defining a specific single indicator of effectiveness, although we have in mind a definition of effectiveness to frame the interventions of the participants.

In developing our research, we intend to contribute to the understanding of the TMT's process in different ways. First, the dominant use of a demographic approach has been pointed as

a limitation in the advance of strategic leadership theory and more exploratory studies have been required to highlight new concepts and relations that “may be glossed over by the dominant survey based research of today” (Carpenter, Geletkancz, & Sanders, 2004; John Mathieu, Hollenbeck, van Knippenberg, & Ilgen, 2017, p. 461). Second, the team process literature has had many advances since the proposition of the strategic leadership theories, and many of them have not yet been properly incorporated in the TMT domain. In this research, we incorporate an episodic approach to understand how TMT establish trust, share information and shape the decision process so that they minimize process losses within the TMT (Edmondson et al., 2003; Hambrick, 1994; Marks et al., 2001). And third, we extend the cultural context of the TMT’s analysis because we perform our research in Latin American organizations, where the corporate environment varies significantly in comparison to the United States and Europe and data at the top level is difficult to access. To our awareness, no previous research has compared the team process at the top level in such a context.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

There is a general assumption that teamwork is a good thing, but there is no doubt about the complexities of assembling a team, and serious reservations exist about the gains in effectiveness from a team-like group in the top management (Hackman, 1987; Katzenbach, 1997). It is also clear that TMT effectiveness can fluctuate from one situation to another while the TMT composition remains stable (Edmondson et al., 2003; Katzenbach, 1997), and many studies have showed how dysfunctional group dynamics -such as conflict or excessive opportunism- can lead to errors in the decision or flaws in the execution of strategies (Langfred, 2007; Simons & Peterson, 2000). Edmondson et al. (2003) proposed that the same team composition will have a

different effect on TMT effectiveness depending on how the information is shared and how the decision process is defined.

In this section, we will review the team process literature using the dynamic approach introduced by Marks (2001), also called episodic approach. We will then review the concept of trust in teams and its relationship with information sharing. The team process literature framed action processes in terms of monitoring and Edmondson outlined the leader choice's in terms of control, so that a brief review of the concept of control in terms of teams is appropriated. Finally, we will review the role of the TMT leader as an architect of the decision process.

The team process

An analysis of the profile of the team members and the resources available is not enough to explain the outcomes of a team. It is imperative to understand the linking mechanism or interactions between the team members' talents and the available resources that explains the success or failure of a team, also known as the team process (Marks et al., 2001). Marks et al. (2001) defined *team process* as "members' interdependent acts that convert inputs to outcomes through cognitive, verbal, and behavioural activities directed toward organizing taskwork to achieve collective goals," whereas *emergent states* are "properties of the team that are typically dynamic in nature and vary as a function of team context, inputs, processes, and outcomes" (Marks et al., 2001).

For the analysis of the team processes, Marks et al. (2001) proposed a taxonomy that has great support in the literature (LePine, Piccolo, Mathieu, Jackson, & Saul, 2008) and includes three categories: transition, action, and interpersonal. During *transition phases*, team members reflect on previous performances and plan for future work. These processes include mission

analysis, goal specification, and strategy formulation. During *action phases*, members concentrate on accomplishing tasks, monitoring progress and systems, and coordinating with, monitoring, and backing up their teammates. *Interpersonal* includes conflict management, motivation, trust-building and affect management. Interpersonal is salient across episodic phases (Marks et al., 2001).

Action phases, the venue of our research, consist of four types of activities that occur as the team works toward the accomplishment of its goals and objectives (Marks et al., 2001). Following LePine *et al.* (2008), the processes are summarised as follows: The first type of activities is *monitoring progress toward goals* (Rapp, Bachrach, & Rapp, 2013), which involves members paying attention to, interpreting, and communicating information necessary for the team to assess its progress toward its goals. The second type is *systems monitoring*, which involves activities such as tracking team resources (e.g., money) and factors in the team environment to ensure that the team has what it needs to accomplish its goals (Crawford & Lepine, 2013). The third type is *team monitoring and backup behaviour*, involving members going out of their way to assist other members in the performance of their tasks. In the literature, team monitoring and backup behaviours are “synonymous [to] concepts such as cooperation (e.g., Jehn & Shah, 1997), workload sharing (e.g., Campion, Medsker, & Higgs, 1993), and group-level organizational citizenship behaviour (e.g., Hyatt & Ruddy, 1997)” (LePine et al., 2008, p. 276). The last type is *coordination*, which designates the synchronization or alignment of the activities of the team members with respect to their sequence and timing (Marks et al., 2001). Monitoring activities prevail during action phases. In the following section, we will analyse the definition of trust in teams and relate it with the notion of monitoring.

Trust in teams

The general assumption of the literature is that trust is beneficial for team performance (Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2013; De Jong et al., 2016; K. Dirks, 1999). In the team process perspective, trust is an *emergent state* that evolves based on interpersonal interactions and group dynamics (Marks et al., 2001). We are not meaning trust at the team level -or *team trust*- as an aggregated perception, which is meaningful when there is sufficient agreement among members (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). We are referring to *interpersonal trust among team members*, which resides at the individual level and denotes the interpersonal dyadic relationships between pairs of members in the team (Costa et al., 2017).

Interpersonal trust is defined as an individual's willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995a; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). In the context of a team, trust is the psychological state of accepting vulnerability, influenced by the complex interrelations among the expectations, intentions, and dispositions of the team (Costa et al., 2017). The willingness to accept vulnerability refers to the suspension of uncertainty by assuming that the actions of others will be beneficial or at least not detrimental (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995b; Mollering, 2016).

As an *expectation* or belief of the trustor, trust is a compilation of judgements by the trustor about different characteristics of the trustee (Dietz & Hartog, 2006, p. 560). This expectation is usually termed *trustworthiness*. Ability, benevolence, and integrity—the “ABI model”—are the main characteristics or antecedents the trustor assesses in the trustee to determine whether to trust him or her (Mayer et al. 1995). In the literature, trustworthiness refers to the qualities of the trustee, while the construct “trust” is something that the trustor does based on those qualities.

Trustworthiness is the strongest predictor of trust, but there are other factors intervening external to the trustee, such as propensity to trust or situational risk assessment (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007; Costa, 2003). As a *willingness*, trust is the intention to be vulnerable or to assume the potential detrimental actions on the part of the trustee. This willingness is also influenced by the “predisposition” or “propensity” of the trustor, based on stable personality traits, previous experiences, and cultural background, which affect his or her willingness to make him or herself vulnerable (Mayer et al., 1995a; Yu, Saleem, & Gonzalez, 2014).

The literature also differentiates trust as a behaviour, also called *behavioural trust* (Mayer et al., 1995a). It is possible to trust without assuming the risk, and it is also possible to assume risk without trust, but the presence of cooperative behaviours and lack of monitoring, together with the propensity to trust and perceived trustworthiness, will signal the existence of trust (Costa, 2003). The form of risk-taking “depends on the situation” in a particular relationship (Mayer et al., 1995a, p. 724). In fact, Mayer et al. (1995) advocated a different construct—with little resonance in the literature—named “risk-taking in relationship” (RTR), suggesting that trust moderates the vulnerability that the trustor is *willing* to assume, while the *behaviour* is affected by contextual elements and “trust is not involved in all risk-taking behaviour” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 725). The risk-taking behaviour implies the assessment of the situation, such as the positive and negative outcomes, and the interpretation of the risk involved. This interpretation depends on the information available, familiarity with the situation, control systems, social influences, and other elements outside the relationship with the particular trustee.

Trust is multifaceted in nature and can designate the expectation and willingness to be vulnerable and a risk-taking behaviour. In the literature, these components constitute “interpenetrating and mutually supporting aspects of the one unitary experience that we call

trust” (Costa, 2003, p. 608; Lewis & Weigert, 1985). The majority of the literature on intrateam trust conceptualises it as a unitary construct (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013; De Jong, Bijlsma-Frankema, & Cardinal, 2014). **Error! Reference source not found.**summarises the three dimensions.

Insert Figure 1 about here

As an emergent state, trust refers to a continuous social process of sense-making, interpreting, signalling, and reciprocating, by which team trust is formed from interpersonal trust (Möllering, 2013). According to Costa et al. (2017), the analysis of this emergence can be grouped into three approaches: *Incremental approaches* focus on the gradual development of trust over time and stress the role of the social context and the reinforcing cycles between trust and behaviours in subsequent trust development; *non - incremental approaches* focus on the presence of moderate and high levels of initial trust and emphasize individual dispositions and different social categorization processes; *transformational approaches* address how the basis and form of trust transform over time within work relationships (Costa et al., 2017). The emergency of trust occurs simultaneously at individual and team levels along with relationships that traverse levels (Costa et al., 2017).

Monitoring and trust. Monitoring and control have been used indistinctively in the literature (Chenhall, Hall, & Smith, 2010; Ouchi, 1979; Sitkin, Cardinal, & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2010; Weibel et al., 2016), although monitoring have emphasized how team members keep track of “fellow teammates’ work to ensure that everything is running as expected and that they are following procedures correctly” (McIntyre & Salas, 1995, p. 23), also describe in many articles as *peer control* (Christ, Sedatole, & Towry, 2006; De Jong & Dirks, 2012; De Jong & Elfring, 2010; Langfred, 2004; Salas, Sims, & Burke, 2005). According to the literature, the control

exercised have been classified as behavioural, output, or clan control (Kirsch, 1996; Ouchi, 1979; Snell, 1992). *Behavioural control* accounts for specific rules and articulated procedures to be followed to achieve the desired outcome and it is also named process control (Snell, 1992). *Output control* involves setting formal targets and employing information systems that enable monitoring of whether targets are met and whether rewards and sanctions are tied to goal accomplishment (Snell, 1992). The previous ones are formal types of control established at the organizational level. *Clan control* is a type of informal control, which operates “when behaviour is motivated by shared values and norms and a common vision, and individuals attempt to be “regular” members of a group by behaving in a manner that is consistent with agreed-upon behaviors” (Kirsch, Haney, Ko, & Haney, 2010, p. 470). Clan control is also known as normative control as it is established by a social or “people” process. In this sense, clan control and trustworthiness might be overlapping processes.

Action phases are dominated by monitoring activities (Marks et al., 2001; McIntyre & Salas, 1995), but monitoring and trust constitute different ways of managing interdependencies and uncertainties in personal relationships (Bijlsma-Frankema & Costa, 2005; Long & Weibel, 2017). The relationship between trust and control has been studied in the literature for a long time, and two main perspectives have arisen: the substitution perspective and the complementary perspective (Costa & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007; Handy, 1993). The substitution point of view argues that trust and monitoring are inversely related, and low trust involves formal control, but high trust admits limited formal control (Vlaar, Van den Bosch, & Volberda, 2007). Ouchi observed that “people must either be able to trust each other or to closely monitor each other if they are to engage in cooperative enterprises” (Ouchi, 1979, p. 846). Because the presence of trust is associated with information exchange and cooperative behaviour, a higher level of trust

should allow for lower levels of monitoring, but the empirical evidence about this inverse relationship is sometimes contradictory (Ferrin, Bligh, & Kohles, 2007; Zaheer & Venkatraman, 1995).

The complementary perspective argues that a high level of trust may not automatically imply a lowering of monitoring behaviours. Trust and monitoring could reinforce each other and mutually contribute to the level of cooperation needed in a relationship (Sitkin & Weingart, 1995). Costa (2003) and Schoorman et al. (2007) claimed that the presence of monitoring may become a basis for trust in specific situations. For example, when the risk of trusting is high, “a control system can bridge the difference by lowering the perceived risk to a level that can be managed by trust” (Schoorman et al., 2007, p. 346).

The literature suggest that the complementarity or substitutive relationship is related to the perceived type of monitoring and the contextual factors (Costa et al., 2017; Ferrin et al., 2007). If monitoring is perceived as being inherent to the task and expected, the team members will not interpret monitoring as a lack of trust but rather as a way to support their tasks, keep on track, and achieve common goals (Marks & Panzer, 2004; McAllister, 1995). Following the self-determination theory (SDT) perspective, Weibel (2007) argued that formal control enhances trust when it is perceived to have a positive effect on improving autonomy, competence, and relatedness. If an individual perceives monitoring as a demonstration of care and as a precondition to provide feedback on performance, appreciate good work, and provide support and guidance, it will increase his trust (Bijlsma & Bunt, 2003). Research also advocates that if perceived control protects the sense of self-determination and values, individuals will trust the person exercising the monitoring (Chenhall et al., 2010; Christ, Sedatole, & Towry, 2012; Inkpen & Currall, 2004; Malhotra & Murnighan, 2002). On the contrary, if the system is perceived to

eliminates autonomy using strong formal control, it will inhibit the development of trust (Schoorman et al., 2007). When monitoring is not expected or it is perceived as a violation of autonomy, it undermines intrinsic motivation (Ferrin et al., 2007; Kramer, 1999), and team members are more likely to interpret it as signifying a lack of trust (Langfred, 2004). Although the findings about the trust–monitoring relationship in teams are mixed, the valence of the relationship seems to be contingent on how monitoring is experienced in context (Ferrin et al., 2007).

The relevance of the team leader

Many practitioners and scholars have claimed that teamwork at the top promotes innovation and the generation of multiple alternatives (MacCurtain, Flood, Ramamoorthy, West, & Dawson, 2010), enables the use of diverse experience to solve difficult problems (Edmondson et al., 2003; Simons & Peterson, 2000), and increases participation and collaboration of senior executives in execution (Ancona & Nadler, 1989). On the other side, the literature is conscious about the competitive profile of the top management team members (Katzenbach, 1997) and how the exercise of effective power and competition for the CEO's attention and succession, intensify the *political and competitive behaviour* within the TMT more than in other teams (Ancona & Nadler, 1989; Shen & Cannella, 2002). The members of the TMT are normally the *power authorities* in their areas and goals for each department -i.e., finance and marketing- are specific or even conflicting goals, so they are less likely to be benevolent or cooperate as team members in another team (Nielsen, 2009). In addition, there is an objective restriction of resources in which the TMT members do not necessarily have the time or knowledge to get involved in collective dynamics. Researchers have been sceptical about the possibility of a team relationship

between the top management (Edmondson et al., 2003; Katzenbach, 1997), and the extent to which TMTs are cooperative and behaviourally integrated remains a debated topic among scholars (Barrick, Bradley, Kristof-Brown, & Colbert, 2007; Hambrick, 1994; Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011; Simsek, Veiga, Lubatkin, & Dino, 2005).

The lack of consensus about definitions has been a clear weakness of the team literature and a source of extreme variability (Hollenbeck, Beersma, & Schouten, 2012). Hollenbeck and Beersma (2012) identified 42 diverse definitions of team types in organizational sciences. This lack of precision spreads over the definition of the top management team (TMT), also named the upper echelon (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), top hats (Ancona & Nadler, 1989), or merely the management team (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). Based on time and task, Cohen and Bailey identified at least four general types of teams: work teams, parallel teams, project teams, and management teams (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). *Work teams* are stable, usually full-time and well-defined teams with a clear composition and hierarchy. *Parallel teams* pull people together from different units to perform a task in parallel to the formal structure, but they normally have limited authority over specific topics. *Project teams* are time-limited teams created to produce a one-time output with the collaboration of multi-disciplinary members. *Management teams* are responsible for the overall performance of a business unit and establishing the strategic direction (Cohen & Bailey, 1997).

Classical definitions of the TMT are based mainly on the hierarchical and task dimensions, making reference to the position and scope of the team members in the organisation (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Hambrick & Mason, 1984). The term “top management team” refers to a relatively small group of the most influential executives at the apex of an organisation (*hierarchical dimension*) who interpret events and trends in an evolving environment, formulate adaptive

responses, and implement, monitor, and readapt those responses (*task dimension*) (Hambrick, 1994). There is no consensus about the specific levels included in the definition (Carpenter et al., 2004), but they usually comprise the CEO and those executives who report to him or her directly (Carmeli, Schaubroeck, & Tishler, 2011). In a strict sense, no appropriate boundary exists, and there may be a different set of executives depending on the context under consideration (Cannella & Holcomb, 2005; Finkelstein et al., 2009).

In a broad sense, the TMT is a conceptual team, in contrast to *work teams* (Stewart, 2000), because TMTs tend to have open means and ends with no clear boundaries and tasks, and planning and decision-making account for most of their time. The strategic responsibility for the whole organisation suggests that the TMT has *unstructured task streams*—“a continual flow of varying and overlapping situations” that “demand substantial investments in problem definition or creation of new knowledge” (Edmondson et al., 2003, p. 302). By nature, their task is complex and demand strong coordination (Ancona & Nadler, 1989). Because the TMT monitor and interpret external events, they operate at the boundary of the organization to formulate, communicate and execute the responses to the environment. They have to analyse elevated and ambiguous amounts of information and integrate it in multiple perspectives for decision-making (John Mathieu et al., 2017). These conditions are precisely the reason why the study of the top team process is so relevant. The comprehension of the team process that mediated between the profile of the group members and the outcomes gain relevance with such a type of task because the specific form and functioning of the top group will greatly shape the performance of the team and, in consequence, of the whole organization (Hambrick, 1994).

According to Hambrick (1994), the conceptual elements of a TMT can be portrayed as composition, structure, processes, incentives and group leader. *Composition* refers to the

collective characteristics of its members such as tenure, age, background. *Structure* of a top group refers to the roles of members and the relationships among those roles, such as task interdependence. *Incentives* are not only the economic incentives, but recognition, shared incentives, long versus short-term and the less evident succession tournament. *Processes* are the interactions within the group members. The *group leader* is at the centre and he/she has a dominating influence over the group's various characteristics and outputs (Finkelstein, 1992).

To analyse the internal process of the TMT, Hambrick crafted the concept of *behavioural integration* as the “degree to which the top management group engages in mutual and collective interaction” (Hambrick, 1994). Behavioural integration is a construct that intends to describe the TMT’s internal processes using three dimensions: information exchange, collaborative behaviour and joint-decision making. The forces that pull top groups apart are named centrifugal or, conversely, centripetal forces (Hambrick, 1994). Some of those forces are organization size, domain breadth, environmental dynamism, and organizational slack. The concept of behavioural integration has had a diluted resonance in the literature over the years but there are still some important studies about it (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006; Carmeli et al., 2011; Lin, Hsu, Cheng, & Wu, 2012; Raes, Bruch, & De Jong, 2012; Simsek et al., 2005). We think that the notion of internal process is key to understand how the TMT produces its outcomes, but at the same time we recognize that construct named behavioural integration has been abandoned due to the many complexities involved in its formulation. Somehow, our qualitative exploration is a revisit to the origins of the behavioural integration concept with a narrower perspective on the internal aspects of the team process and built over the many advances of the literature along the years.

Drawing from normative decision theory (Nadler, 1996; Vroom & Jago, 2007) and negotiation theory (Elangovan, 1995), Edmondson et al. (2003) proposed that the team leader

can be more or less directive about the decision process. The decision is analysed as an outcome of the team. Nadler (1996) argued that the team leader can be directive about the *content* (what decision is made) and directive about the *process* (how the decision is made). Similarly, Elangovan distinguished between *outcome control* and *process control* of the decision in a dispute resolution. Based on these possibilities, Edmondson et al. (2003) suggested three potential process choices that a TMT leader face: how to reach a final decision (outcome control), how to facilitate a discussion (a non-obtrusive form of process control), and how to structure a debate (process design).

The normative decision theory proposes that the leader adjust the style based upon the circumstances encounter in the different situations. This theory “deals only with the issue of whether to utilize a team to make a decision” based on certain characteristics of the situation (Edmondson et al., 2003), but it doesn’t analyse how to manage the team process to maximize the outcomes and how the leader should avoid process losses by examining how situation-specific attributes of the team affect process choices (Edmondson et al., 2003). This is one of the gaps that we want to address during our reaserch.

DISCUSSION

The label “team” denotes an interdependency and a cohesion that may seldom exist in a collection of strong personalities with unclear shared purposes in independent realms. By exploring the internal processes that mediate between the profiles of the top group members, we explored how the interactions among the executives at the top affect an organization’s success and adaptability.

Conditions like ownership, size, growth, competition, maturity, and CEO's personality, are some of the many contextual elements impacting the internal functioning of the TMT. The TMTs have substantial influence over organizational outcomes, but they are shaped also by forces beyond their boundaries. TMTs are "both causes and effects of their contexts", and any complete model of the top team should incorporate this perspective (Hambrick, 1994, p. 181).

Our research compares how the members of six different top teams arrange its internal action processes and how trust seems to emerge out of that interaction. In some occasions, decide as a team is unpractical or generate a modest value. "Teamness" at the TMT level or *behavioural integration* -using Hambrick construct-, is not a requirement for effectiveness, but might be a desirable proposition to create and sustain value in a growing organisation facing complex and competitive environments. It is not a natural or an easy accomplishment, but an intentional objective. if an organisation intends to create more integration between its TMT, the CEO should manage structure, processes and incentives in the that direction. It seems that the reward system should incorporate interdependency and group indicators might gain more relevance rather than only individual contributions. Compensation and incentives should align with the integration.

The group structure should consider instances -meetings, committees, forums- where teamwork at the top make sense and improve the quality of decisions and the speed of implementation. The centralisation of decisions and analysis could be an expedite route, but the integration of the different perspective and knowledge might increase the compromise of the different players.

The art of managing people is learned mainly by copying others. A manager develops his managerial capacities by experience and example. A further process of reflexion and interiorization might breed a personal style, but the learning about what is effective or how to

treat the others is something we start to learn by example. It is not uncommon that we replicate with our subordinates the same style that we see in our managers creating thus an organizational culture.

Future Research

We believe that our study raise some interesting lines for future inquiries. First, the challenge in the development of in-house talent in a dynamic of high growth. We perceived that as one of the main concerns of the group leaders. The TMT is so busy attending the day to day priorities that they don't really have the time spend few time improving their own managerial abilities or the abilities of their teams and when growth impose additional responsibilities, not everybody is ready to assume them. If the CEO decide to bring external talent, a cultural issue arise and the rate of casualties is very high. People management is not an exact science or technique but a combination of vision, empathy, emotional intelligence and communication skills. In a growing scenario, one of the main responsibilities of a CEO and its TMT is the development of new talent. Task orientation is not enough.

Another line of research is the impact of compensation in the integration of the TMT. The definition of compensation and incentives on a shared basis might have an important influence in the increasing of "teamness". If don't share the consequences, it is improbable that the team will be force to work together. There might also a psychological impact in the instrumentality of the reward, weakening the connection between personal effort and reward.

A third interesting line of research is the strong presence of a shared mission in the motivation or engagement of the TMT. As we saw in the foundation, the connection with the mission of the Company create a sense of "teaming" that overcome the presence of economic

incentives and generate a sense of identity and community that might create the bonds of a real team.

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