II. Literature Review on current Studies into Teams and Groups in Organisations

2.1. Introduction

Teams and groups in companies have been intensively studied over the past two decades. Different disciplines looked at various aspects of teams and groups in the private sector. To list a few, research has investigated group composition, task design, organisational context, environmental factors, internal processes, personality traits, diversity and effectiveness. Furthermore, the definitions of teams and groups used in the different studies vary. Existing literature has investigated work teams, work groups, self managed teams, management teams, and most recently virtual teams. In other words: the body of literature is vast. The following literature review systematically structures existing team and group literature relevant to the conceptual framework of this thesis.

The aim of this review is

- to give an overview of the definitions of the terms team and group
- to give an overview of studies of teams and groups in real organisational settings and
- to identify which factors enhance and influence teamwork

2.2. Definition of the terms team and group

As mentioned above, a variety of definitions for the terms team and group exist and often the terms are used interchangeably. The mere existence of two terms suggests that there must be a difference. The Oxford English Dictionary (1989) records the following uses of the terms:

Group (in general): A number of persons or things regarded as forming a unit on account of any kind of mutual or common relation, or classified together on account of a common degree of similarity (Vol. VI, p 887)

Team: A number of persons associated with some joint action; now esp. a definite number of persons forming a side in a match, in any team sport, hence a group collaborating in their professional work or in some enterprise or assignment (Vol. XVII, p 692)

According to the dictionary the term group is the more general one whereas the term team is more special as joint action is implied. Hare (1992) argues that the term team is reserved for work groups that are highly visible and require more differentiated roles and more integration of members’ activity. He further argues that no clear distinction between the terms is evident in the social-psychological literature. The current literature review also shows that researchers often use the terms interchangeably: for example Bettenhausen (1991) intensively reviewed group research and only refers to teams in the context of team building activi-
ties, whereas Cohen and Bailey (1997) refer to Bettenhausen’s work as a review of teams. Over the years, the term team has largely replaced the term group. Especially in management literature the term team is used more often (e.g. empowered teams, self managed teams, team effectiveness) whereas the academic literature used the word group more frequently (group dynamics, group cohesion, group effectiveness). Still there is no universally accepted definition of the terms in management literature (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996). However, some researchers agreed on one widely established definition of team being “a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their task and who share responsibility for outcomes” (Guzzo & Shea, 1992; Hackman, 1987; Sundstrom, DeMeuse, & Futrell, 1990).

Table 1 below gives an overview of the definitions of the terms team and group found in the articles analysed.

Table 1: Definitions of team/group in chronological order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Francis &amp; Young (1979)</td>
<td>Occasionally we meet an exceptional group that combines high morale, effective task performance, and clear relevance to the organisation and we award the accolade of a 'team'.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hackmann (1983)</td>
<td>Work groups are intact, bounded social systems, with interdependent members and differentiated member roles that pursue shared, measurable goals. They consist of all employees who report to the same supervisor and who are engaged in tasks requiring some degree of coordination.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wall, Kemp, Jackson, &amp; Clegg (1986)</td>
<td>Self-directed work teams are those organizational units in which (a) employees share functionally interrelated tasks and are collectively responsible for end products, (b) individual team members have the variety of skills necessary to perform tasks that are the collective responsibility of the team, and (c) employees receive feedback and evaluations that are given in terms of team performance. Self-directed work teams have a high degree of self-determination that includes control over the pace of work, distribution of tasks, work breaks, and participation in recruiting and training new members.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dyer (1987)</td>
<td>A team is a collection of people who must collaborate, to some degree, to achieve common goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patten (1988)</td>
<td>The group must have a natural reason for working together. The members of the group must be mutually dependent upon each other's experience, abilities, and commitment in order to fulfil mutual objectives. Group members must be committed to</td>
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<td>Authors</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alderfer (1977), Hackman (1987), Sundstrom, DeMeuse, &amp; Futrell (1990)</td>
<td>A team is a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their task, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and who are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems (for example business unit or the corporation), and who manage their relationships across organisational boundaries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orsburn, Moran, Musselwhite, Zenger, &amp; Perrin (1990)</td>
<td>Successful SMWTs (Self-managing work teams) have the proper resources at their control, a wide range of cross-functional skills among the team members, and all the information they need to make sound decisions. Additionally, SMWTs have the authority to plan, set priorities, coordinate with other teams, measure progress, and take corrective actions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salas, Dickinson, Converse &amp; Tannenbaum (1992)</td>
<td>Contrary to groups, teams consist of two or more individuals that can be characterized by high task interdependence, high role differentiation, high task differentiation, and distributed expertise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guzzo &amp; Dickson (1996) based on Alderfer and Hackman</td>
<td>A workgroup 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 customers or co-workers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corderly (2003), Forsyth (1999)</td>
<td>Teams are commonly regarded as structured sets of people that pursue collective performance objectives within larger organizational systems and that require coordinated interactions to successfully accomplish relevant tasks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>McCreery &amp; Bloom (2000)</td>
<td>A self-managing work team (SMWT) is typically given a wide latitude in decision making in organizations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marquardt &amp; Horvath (2001)</td>
<td>Multicultural teams are task-oriented groups consisting of people of different national cultures.</td>
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The definitions above bear several messages:

At a general level, most definitions include (1) who is on the team/group, (2) why those individuals are on the team/group and (3) what their task and/or goal is. At a more narrow level some definitions describe specific types of teams/groups only, whereas others are less detailed and structured. Nonetheless, the general idea of a team or a group is basically the same which may be one reason for the interchangeable use of the two terms. Contrary, Gibson & Zellmer-Bruhn (2001) argue that in a multinational context the differences in the definition of teams account for different outcomes of similar studies.

Summing up, there is no clear definition of and no clear line between the terms group and team. As a result, researchers use the terms interchangeably and therefore both terms were included in the keyword search for this literature review.

2.3. Journal review: Studies of teams and groups in real organisational settings

The broad field of team/group work and its outcomes has been widely discussed in academia in the past decades. Consequently, there is such a huge body of literature across various disciplines that in fact it has become rather difficult to get an overview of existing research. To give a structure to the findings of research into team and group work, the following steps have been taken:

A journal review of team and group literature in 25 academic journals and management journals between 1998 and March 2007 was conducted. The journals were chosen based on their rating (common consideration as top and leading academic journals) and because of their relevance in the field of group research and public administration.

Prior to the physical journal review a number of criteria for inclusion and exclusion of articles were developed. Only studies published in the journals listed (table 2) were included, only studies conducted in real work environments have been chosen as these findings can more readily be generalised to the world of work, and only studies of teams and/or groups of employees were included.

Consequently, the following exclusion criteria were developed: studies with students or experimental studies were not included because of the practical focus of the topic of this dissertation. Furthermore, management teams were excluded as this thesis focuses on employees. Lastly, action teams (e.g. sport teams), performing teams (e.g. musical groups), teams in hospitals (e.g. health care teams), and virtual teams were excluded. However, conceptual and theoretical articles as well as meta analyses have been looked at and will be presented in the review.

The literature review is partly based on three seminal reviews of team literature which have been conducted recently. Van Knippenberg & Schippers (2007) reviewed literature on work group diversity from 1997-2005, Rasmussen & Jeppe-
sen (2006) assessed current knowledge of teams and associated psychological factors from 2000 to 2005, and Stock (2004) investigated drivers of team performance in articles published between 1990 and 2003. The current review includes all factors in one paper and covers the period between 1998 and March 2007. However, slightly different journals have been looked at and therefore not all articles listed in the reviews mentioned will be covered in this review.

A keyword search using the terms “team”, “group”, “work team”, and “work-group” within the journals listed was conducted. 96 out of approximately 12,000 articles in the 25 journals screened were identified as being relevant.

Table 2 gives an overview of the journals screened and the number of articles found relevant for the topic.

Table 2: Journal screen from 1998 until March 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journals screened</th>
<th>Relevant studies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academy of Management Journal</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academy of Management Review</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Science Quarterly</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Psychology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Management Journal</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Dynamics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Relations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Journal of Cross Cultural Management</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Journal of Public Sector Management</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Public Management Journal</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Studies of Management and Organizations</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Applied Psychology</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Psychology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Applied Social Psychology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Business and Psychology</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of International Management</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Management</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Organisational Behavior</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Subsequently, the 96 included studies were analysed by the author. First, the articles were screened with regards to what kind of teams or groups were looked at to get an overview of the different terms used. Furthermore, the studies were grouped into quantitative and qualitative and I also distinguished between studies conducted in the private and the public sector. In the following, a few general comments on the findings of the article search will be made before the literature analysis will be discussed in more detail.

- The majority of studies (73 studies out of 96) were conducted in the private sector and followed a quantitative research approach (76 studies). This phenomenon highlights the importance of qualitative research in the public sector and as a consequence the relevance of this dissertation. Nonetheless, the findings of existing studies form a vital basis for this research setting, as it is suggested that findings of team/group work in private sector companies can at least partly also be found in team/group settings in the public sector.

- Because of the variety of definitions and the interchangeable use of the terms, the articles identified were also analysed according to the definition of team/group and the terminology used in the different studies. The majority of articles (78 out of 96) did not provide a clear definition of the unit of analysis at all. Some authors used the terms team and group interchangeably and only 18 studies actually provided a definition of the unit of interest.

Appendix 1 gives an overview of all articles screened. The articles are sorted by author in alphabetical order and labelled into categories such as private/public sector, qualitative/quantitative studies and show definitions of the terms used.

2.4. Aspects of team/group work in literature

In the following pages, the studies of teams and groups in organisational settings which have been found in the course of the journal and literature review will be presented in more detail.

The articles are grouped around three main aspects of interest in research into teams and groups:
1. Organisational aspects such as organisational context, structure and culture,
2. Managerial aspects such as leadership, relationships between management and individuals, and
3. Individual aspects such as diversity in its various forms and personality.

Accordingly, the articles will be summarised and presented.

2.4.1. Organisational aspects
Organisational aspects such as the context in which groups and teams are embedded are depicted by the structure and culture of an organisation as well as society and politics. Context is inescapable because it is there whenever research is conducted. However, this does not mean that context is also considered in the setting and analysis of research. How much attention is paid to it lies solely in the hands of the researcher. Rousseau and Fried (2001, p.1) argue that the clue to more integrative studies is based in contextualisation which “entails linking observations to a set of relevant facts, events, or points of view that make possible research and theory that form part of a larger whole”. In general, a rich description of the context of a research setting helps to explain the meaning, variation, and relationship among variables under study.

The current review showed that organisational aspects only play a peripheral role in group and team literature. Most studies seem to have neglected the importance of context and its effects on teams and groups. Those contextual influences which received the most attention in research into teams and groups in multinational companies are, according to Jackson et al. (2003): task characteristics (e.g. Gilson, Mathieu, Shalley, & Ruddy, 2005; Gilson & Shalley, 2004; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999), organisational culture (e.g. Ely & Thomas, 2001; Polzer, Milton, & Swann, 2002), and strategic context (e.g. Jehn & Bezrukova, 2004).

Few studies noted the importance of boundary spanning activities as a key variable that shapes group and team processes and outcomes. External activities or boundary spanning activities are directed toward the team’s/ group’s environment (other units within the same organisation, other organisations, or the general public).

Choi (2002) revealed that traditional rules and organisational structures are incomparable with team and group settings. On the one hand, tasks are too interdependent or too complex to be hierarchically managed. On the other hand, teams and groups need to communicate directly with other teams or units of the organisation or other organisations. For this reason, boundary activities on an organisational as well as on an individual level are being practised.
Cross et al. (2000) demonstrated that adopting boundary-less organisational structures by implementing team and group structures lead to an increased need for boundary activities. In hierarchical structures boundary activities are executed by functional heads while they shift to team and group members in less formalised structures. Keller (2001) associated boundary activities with team and group performance and maintained that external activities lead to a decrease in cohesiveness of a team/group.

As mentioned in 2.3. only a few studies (4 out of 96) were conducted in the context of public organisations. Despite the fact that the studies were undertaken in public sector organisations, the authors did not provide a description of the context nor did they refer to a possible contextual impact on the results. This lack of contextualisation may impede the reader’s understanding and interpretation of results.

In a longitudinal study Armstrong, Stassen, Wagar & Cattaneo (2004) investigated job satisfaction in association with downsizing in a public sector environment. Members of work groups that remained intact during and after the downsizing reacted with lower levels of job satisfaction, lower job involvement and lower perceived justice than those who underwent a change of team membership during the downsizing. To assess the impact of the structure and culture of the organisation studied would have been an interesting avenue for research.

The same is true for the study conducted by Carless & De Paola (2000) which focused on different forms of cohesion (task cohesion, social cohesion and individual attraction to the group) in a team setting.

Other studies conducted in the public sector investigated the role of perceived diversity in teams (Hohmann, Bordia, & Gallois, 2003), and cognition and its indirect effects on team effectiveness (Rentsch & Klimoski, 2001).

To summarise, a weakness of the studies analysed is that organisational aspects have often been ignored. If important contextual factors are ignored, results don’t provide incremental knowledge. Yet, the understanding of the importance of contextual factors triggers one big problem: the number of potentially important aspects of context may quickly become overwhelming (see also Jackson et al., 2003). It is totally impossible to capture all contextual factors in one study. Moreover, quantitative studies might be limited by a higher complexity whereas qualitative studies offer more space for inclusion of a wider range of contextual factors and as a result more comprehensible and integrative explanations.

2.4.2. Managerial aspects

The move towards team based structures in organisations challenges managers to lead and motivate not only individuals but teams/groups as a whole. There-
fore, the behaviour of managers/leaders as a main driver of team/group performance definitely needs to be considered in theoretical foundations and practical studies. However, the literature review revealed that studies on team performance in general have overemphasized a direct link between demographic or functional characteristics and outcomes without adequately describing intervening psychological and social constructs. Literature focuses primarily on team processes but only rudimentary on the role of leadership styles and their impact on team performance (e.g. Zohar, 2002). As a result, the driving influence of managers on team processes and the role of leadership are still in an early stage of research.

Joshi & Lazarova (2005) researched extensively into competences which leaders of teams/groups should possess in order to effectively lead such teams/groups. Chang & Tharenou (2004) tried to assess a set of competences needed to manage a multicultural work team/group. In a qualitative study managers as well as team/group members identified several competences which they considered as important: communication skills, the ability to continuously learn on the job and keep an interest in the work team/group, cultural empathy, honesty, and stability.

In a similar vein, Keller (2006) stressed in a longitudinal study that transformational leadership and initiating structure matter the most to R&D team performance. A multilevel study of leadership, empowerment, and performance in teams was conducted by Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen & Rosen (2007a). The study indicated that leaders need to use different approaches to motivate individual team members on the one hand and teams as a whole on the other hand. In the first case, a high level of mutual trust has to be built to empower individuals whereas in the latter case a delegation of autonomy and decision making is associated with high empowerment and performance. The study by Chen, Lam & Zhong (2007b) showed that managers can motivate employees to improve performance by opening a clear and approachable channel through which they can seek positive and especially negative feedback.

Also most recently, Ambrosini, Bowman & Burton-Taylor (2007) have investigated inter-team coordination activities as a driver of performance and a critical component of delivering customer satisfaction. Once again, the importance of encouraging communication in a team/group setting has been highlighted. Team empowerment as a trigger for higher performance and customer satisfaction was also reported by Kirkman & Rosen (1999).

In a cross-cultural study, Chevrier (2003) observed that when managers encounter cross-cultural differences, they often ignore them and rely on individual team members to surmount these differences. Moreover, in multinational teams, team members reported that they tended to forget the nationality of their colleague and to focus on technical issues. A study by Reagans, Zuckermann & McEvily (2004) showed that the demographic composition of an organisation limits man-
agers to shape the demographic composition of a team. They argue that as a result the manager’s interventions are less likely to be successful.

The relevant literature has arrived at the conclusion that managing people very much depends on contextual aspects. However, the weakness of most studies is that these contextual aspects have – if at all - only rudimentary been considered and described. A greater attention to the link between leadership and organisational context would broaden our understanding of the effects of different management styles.

Management practices and styles tend to be subject to trends and vary across cultures. Longitudinal studies would help to gain a deeper understanding of the complex interactions between individuals and to assess causality.

One example for cross-cultural, longitudinal research is the Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) research programme. The programme’s focus lies on culture and leadership in 61 nations. House et al. (2004) found that regardless of culture, there are some universal aspects of leadership.

Research lacks studies of management in international organisations. While challenges in the private sector may be found in some form in the public sector, it appears that the public sector faces more political influences and has to deal with more rules and regulations (Feldman, 2005). This gap in literature is an interesting avenue for future research.

2.4.3. Individual aspects

Teams and groups are a collection of individuals who may be different with regards to a plethora of aspects such as nationality, gender, or personality. Hence, team and group literature is dominated by research into diversity in its various forms.

Diversity research

Typically diversity is conceptualised as a reference to the differences of personal attributes among interdependent members of a social unit (Jackson, 1992; Jackson et al., 2003; Triandis, Kurowski, & Gelfand, 1994; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998).

In practice diversity research focuses on differences

- in demographic compositions like age, ethnicity, gender
- in job related issues such as education, function, task, and
- between individuals with regards to personality, attitudes, and values.
Williams & O'Reilly (1998) covered 40 years of diversity research in their seminal research into work group diversity. They identified two main strands in research into work group diversity and performance:

- the social categorisation perspective and
- the information/decision-making perspective.

The social categorisation process is elicited by the assumption that demographic similarity/dissimilarity is the basis for categorising self and others into groups. As a result, people categorise demographically similar people as members of the in-group and dissimilar ones as members of the out-group (Brewer, 1979). Consequently, people of the in-group are more similar to one self than members of the out-group. Furthermore, people tend to trust members of the in-group more than members of the out-group (Brewer, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Overall the self categorisation perspective arrives at the conclusion that the more homogenous the team/group the higher the commitment of the members and thus the higher the performance.

The information/decision-making perspective holds the idea that heterogeneous teams/groups positively affect performance and creativity because of a broader range of perspectives, knowledge and abilities. This gives diverse teams/groups a larger pool of resources that may be especially helpful in dealing with non-routine tasks and problems. In addition, diverse perspectives may lead to potentially more innovative ideas and to solutions which would not have been reached in a homogenous team/group (De Dreu & West, 2001). However, some studies found a higher rate of conflict in heterogeneous teams/groups and a greater need for reconciliation between the members of the team/group (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Lovelace, Shapiro, & Weingart, 2001; Pelled et al., 1999).

As a result of these two conflicting perspectives, a general disagreement exists on whether diversity in a team/group has overall positive or negative effects on performance. In his review, Bettenhausen (1991) even concluded in an overall negative effect of diversity on team performance. At the same time other researchers highlight the positive effects of diversity in bringing the group a variety of values, perspectives and behaviours and therefore enhancing the overall creativity and performance. In support of this proposition, Gibson & Vermeulen (2003) found that diversity was positively related to team learning behaviour whereas Van der Vegt & Bunderson (2005) suggested that team learning behaviour mediated the relationship between expertise diversity and performance. Simultaneously, some researchers predict positive as well as negative effects of diversity: Polzer, Milton, & Swann (2002) for example revealed that high interpersonal congruence between diverse team/group members improved creative task performance while diversity undermined performance in teams/groups with low interpersonal congruence.
Ely & Thomas (2001) reported that according to each member’s attitude toward diversity the effects on performance may be either positive or negative. Research into the positive and negative effects of diversity on performance has moved into separate directions and an integrative theoretical framework which helps to understand both directions seems to be missing e.g. (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998). Moreover, the highly inconsistent evidence for positive as well as negative effects of diversity is striking (Bowers, Pharmer, & Salas, 2000; Webber & Donahue, 2001; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998). The context in which studies have been conducted has been widely neglected in explaining team/group dynamics which may be one reason for conflicting results across studies (Jackson et al., 2003). Another possible explanation could lie in the types of diversity studied and the role of intervening variables affecting teamwork and performance. Additionally, Jackson et al. (2003) revealed in an extensive review on recent research into team and organisational diversity that the majority of the studies focused on a select diversity attribute only. Studies on demographic and functional/educational dissimilarity were found to be predominant in literature (Jackson et al., 2003; Van Knippenberg, 2007). Rightly the latter argue that those studies fail to capture the full spectrum of diversity found in organisations. Van Knippenberg, deDreu, & Homan (2004) went as far as to propose refraining from explaining the effects of diversity through typologies and dimensions of diversity. They promote giving up the strict distinction between a self categorisation perspective and an information/decision-making perspective for a more integrative view of diversity.

**Faultlines: Gender, Stereotypes, Language**

In a similar vain, Lau & Murnighan (1998) suggested to go beyond the analysis of single characteristics and to investigate the interrelationship and effects of multiple characteristics to understand and to explain the dynamics and the effectiveness of teams and groups. They introduced the term ‘faultlines’ which refers to a division of group member’s on the basis of one or more attributes. The novelty of the concept of faultlines is that groups with moderate diversity tend to experience more difficulties in establishing trust and managing conflict than groups with maximum diversity. In a highly culturally heterogeneous group/team, few common bases for categorisation, sub-group formation, self-categorisation and social identity exist. Hence, members will try to establish a new shared understanding of processes, communication, role expectation, and the like (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000).

Moreover, Lau & Murnighan (1998) argue that demographic faultlines may have their strongest effect at the beginning of a team’s or group’s life. Yet, if team and group members do not divide along demographic faultlines at the beginning, other attributes such as gender, personality, religion or hobbies may determine the group’s/team’s faultline structure. For example, the emergence of
gender faultlines may result in a division into male and female subgroups. The implementation of teams and groups in organisations has been accompanied by greater participation of females in work roles that traditionally were occupied by males (Hirschfeld, Jordan, Feild, Giles, & Armenakis, 2006). Yet, the potential influence of gender on team and group outcomes has only been superficially researched into and stereotypes seem to prevail. For instance, females tend to be regarded to have a lower capability to succeed than males (Chattopadhyay, Tluchowska, & George, 2004). Other stereotypes propose that sex is a more salient social category among women than men and that men are more competitive with one another than women (In: Chatman & O'Reilly, 2004).

Research has shown that social interaction is frequently accompanied by stereotypes which directly influence perceptions. Other individuals are being categorised on the basis of easily identifiable characteristics such as race, language or age. Stereotyping also means that all individuals of the categorised group are attributed with the same roles, characteristics and skills (Husemann, 1993). This way, stereotyping is a means to reduce complexity. In fact, if stereotypes are ‘right’ individuals can react faster in a given situation. Moreover, they are said to be more beneficial when making comparisons between cultures than within cultures. However, they become counter productive if they do not get modified by individuals based on experience and observation in the course of team and group work (Adler, 2002).

The concepts of faultlines and stereotypes are closely related to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). On the one hand, individuals categorise themselves and hold multiple social identities which vary depending on context and situation (Garcia-Prieto, Bellard, & Schneider, 2003). On the other hand, individuals categorise their team and group members into in-group and out-group members. Moreover, individuals use negative stereotypes to view out-group members as less attractive than in-group members and to maintain high levels of self esteem (Flynn, Chatman, & Spataro, 2001).

In multicultural teams, nationality and culture often trigger faultlines and individuals use cultural stereotypes to categorise each other. Randel (2003) proposed that culture was salient to those members of a multinational team who had the same country of origin as either few or many fellow members. Further studies on cultural diversity looked at social interactive processes in multinational groups. Vallaster (2005) revealed that effective collaboration between individuals of different nationalities occurs only when everybody understands and accepts the guiding principles or cultural values (Kirkman & Shapiro, 2001) for their actions. Barinaga (2007) looked at two sides of the meaning of cultural difference in a multinational team. On the one hand, national culture stressed the sense of difference among group members whereas on the other hand it served to emphasize a sense of interdependency among group
members. The ‘national/cultural’ discourse served both as a marker of distinction among group members and signified a sense of mutual dependency. Another aspect of diversity and identity, namely language, seems to be forgotten in research into teams and groups. 20 years ago, Holden (Holden, 1987) remarked in a review on research into language and linguistic issues in management literature that these topics are treated with brevity by a very small number of authors only. 20 years later, Holden’s remark still holds true. In fact, language studies have been treated as separate areas of research and not seen in the context of organisational studies or group and team research (Peltokorpi, 2007). This is unfortunate as numerous challenges result from language diversity: a negative impact on interpersonal relations, trust and the socialisation process have been illuminated (Lagerstroem & Andersson, 2003). Language and communication competences become a major challenge in the socialisation process and when it comes to small talk. The interpretation of small talk in cross-language communications triggers more problems than the discussion of technical issues (Henderson, 2005). Hence, if language is managed effectively it enhances team building and group cohesion (Goodall & Roberts, 2003; Holden, 2002). For instance, trust can be established by speaking the language of other team members from time to time even if it is not the main working language (Goodall & Roberts, 2003). Nonetheless, even if all members share one common language, it is common that native speakers of one language will form closer relationships with each other, hence subgroups emerge (Chen, Geluykens, & Choi, 2006).

Overall research into teams and groups and the effects of language still is in its infancy. We agree with Chen et al. (2006) that effective communication practices need to be identified to manage language difficulties in teams and groups. Another weakness lies in the lack of knowledge of which aspects of language impact on team and group performance and to what extent. Moreover, the impact of organisational, societal and cultural aspects on language and subsequently on performance is not yet investigated.

**Personality**

The role of personality is another decisive issue related to diversity. According to existing literature there is evidence that specific personality traits are supportive for team and group work (Driskell, Goodwin, Salas, & O’Shea, 2006). Other research suggests a moderating effect of personality on e.g. acculturation of expatriates (Caligiuri, 2000). One of the earliest investigations on the relationship between personality and team effectiveness were undertaken by Mann (1959) who found some 500 personality traits which have been measured in diverse studies conducted until that time. A reduction to the “Big Five” personality traits happened almost 40 years later when Costa & McCrae (1992) discovered that there are about five basic but
general dimensions that describe personality. These big five personality traits are emotional stability, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness which will be briefly explained.

Extroversion: the extent to which a person is outgoing versus shy. High extroverts enjoy social situations while introverts avoid them.

Emotional stability: the degree to which a person has appropriate emotional control. People with high emotional stability are self-confident and have high self-esteem, while those with low emotional stability tend toward self-doubt.

Agreeableness: the degree to which a person is friendly and approachable.

Conscientiousness: the extent to which a person is responsible, dependable, motivated and achievement orientated.

Openness to experience: the degree to which a person thinks flexibly and is receptive to new ideas. More open people tend toward creativity and action, less open people favour the status quo.

These dimensions are relatively independent and proved to hold up cross-culturally. Research has also found that the ‘Big Five’ are related to several work behaviours e.g. to work motivation (Judge & Ilies, 2002) and work satisfaction (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002).

Many studies also refer to four respectively five dimensions established by Hofstede (2001) which are individualism/collectivism, masculinity/feminity, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and long/short term orientation. As discussed in an interview between Hofstede & Fink (2007) studies by Schwartz (1994) or the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004) include many more dimensions. The interview revealed that the popularity of McCrae’s Big Five lies in the limited number of dimensions which are easier to relate to and also easier to remember. This is also said to be true for the four dimensions established by Myers-Briggs, namely Extraversion/Introversion, Sensing/Intuition, Thinking/Feeling, and Judging/Perceiving.

The importance of a consideration of personality traits when hiring individuals who will be placed in a team has been investigated by Morgenson, Reider & Campion (2005). They support the notion that the big five personality traits together with social skills and team work knowledge positively influence contextual performance. Similarly, Neumann & Wright (1999) stressed the importance of a consideration of personality traits when investigating team effectiveness. Their study proved that agreeableness and conscientiousness are predictive of effectiveness.

However, research sometimes risks neglecting the fact that the statistical significance of personality traits may be sensitive to other variables. For instance, personality traits and culture interact with each other and the question to ask is how this interaction shapes the relationship between individuals and subsequently the relationship within teams and groups. Moreover, Yukl (2002, p.203) writes: “hundreds of trait studies were conducted, but individual traits failed to correlate..."
in a strong and consistent manner with leadership effectiveness”. To answer how and why personality and leadership styles do (not) correlate would also be an interesting avenue for future research.

2.5. Discussion of literature
In the following I aim to provide general conclusions drawn from the literature review on teams and groups and specific conclusions related to the further progress of this dissertation.

Clear definition of key terms
The rather loose use of the terms “team” and “group” is the starting point of my argumentation. Researchers hardly make a reference to a definition of what makes a team or group as appendix 1 clearly shows. I conclude that it is a result of the lack of a common theoretical agreement on a definition of the terms “team” and “group”. As argued earlier, the simple existence of two terms would justify a distinction. Nonetheless, it became common practice to use the terms interchangeably. Researchers may still give a different connotation to terms when they sample and even more when they interpret their findings. I argue that it does make a difference whether research is set in a self managed work team versus a team with an appointed leader or in a group of people who sometimes work together without having a common goal. The dynamics might clearly be very different. On a cultural level a clear connotation of the terms becomes even more important as different cultures have a different understanding of the concept of team/group work and associate different underlying meanings with it (Gibson & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2001)

Integration of dimensions
A plethora of studies on demographic diversity and its effects on performance exists. At the same time, numerous studies on the influence of other factors on group processes exist. The second pillar of my argumentation corroborates that most studies look at one isolated dimension of team/group work only and that existing research into team/group performance lacks integrative research settings. As discovered earlier, most studies on the outcomes of diversity focus solely on demographical variables. Most of them don’t take into consideration interactive effects with other dimensions of diversity such as functional or individual characteristics, see also Jackson et al. (2003). Out of 30 studies grouped in our category named diversity, 16 focus on demographic compositions only, five look at job related variables only, four studies involve demographic as well as job related issues, and a mere single study looks at individual aspects. That means that out of 30 studies 26 deal with pure diversity issues only. The point I wish to make is threefold: there is evidence for a tendency to conduct studies on specific variables, secondly these variables are looked at exclusively, and thirdly
across all studies an integrative, conceptual model seems to be missing. It seems that research got stuck in dimensions and categories by conducting most studies in the same field with just slightly differing variables. Only few studies take into consideration a multi-dimension approach (Ely, 2004; Jehn et al., 1999; Kirkman & Shapiro, 2001; Mathieu, 2006; Mendez, 2003; Randel & Jaussi, 2003) and little pioneered on a multi-category approach (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998; Jehn & Bezrukova, 2004).

**Contextualisation and moderators**
As extensively discussed in 2.4.1., context is inescapable but at the same time tremendously neglected in contemporary research. Also, much is still unclear about the effects of diversity, and psychological factors etc. which are strengthened or weakened by moderators. Only recently research has started to examine the direct impact of variables of dimensions on team outcomes by also considering moderators. The set of moderator variables ranges from conflict norms (e.g.: Lovelace, Shapiro, & Weingart, 2001), power centralisation (Bunderson, 2003), team work quality (Hoegl & Parboteeah, 2003), to task routineness and team longevity (e.g. Pelled, Eisenhardt & Xin, 1999). Other moderators within this scope are team cohesiveness, team interdependence, and change orientation. Thus, moderators worth considering might be the feeling for time, the role of humour, and the role of language.

**Qualitative research**
It appears as if research into teams/groups has come to a stage of science characterised by theory testing rather than theory building. As discussed earlier, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and self categorisation theory (Brewer, 1979) prevail in this area of research. Thus, quantitative methods dominate since they are particularly used to test theory (Creswell, 1994). Appendix 1 also clearly indicates this trend. Out of 96 studies the majority of around 70 studies followed a quantitative approach. Considering the wide range of questions still unanswered a theory building, qualitative research approach appears vital. This is for several reasons true in this specific research setting. To start off with, teamwork in the context of intergovernmental organisations is rather unexplored. Only two studies on teams and groups in the context of international organisations could be found (Elron, Halevy, Ari, & Shamir, 2003; Neyer, 2004). However, the key word research in the journals in the field of public administration delivered no results. The six studies identified as being conducted in the public sector predominately focused on attitudinal behaviour. Armstrong-Stassen, Wagar & Cattaneo (2004) looked for example at the effects of downsizing on work-group membership while Klein, Lim, Saltz & Mayer (2004) investigated into networks in teams. Carless & De Paola (2000) illuminated the measurement of cohesion in work teams. Hobmann, Bordia & Gallois (2003)
focused on value dissimilarity, others on team member schema agreement (Rentsch & Klimoski, 2001) or compliance and contextual performance (Van Emmerik, Lambooy, & Sanders, 2002). Those studies clearly provide valuable insights but are far away from being integrative as argued further above.

Since the key word search on teams/groups in intergovernmental organisations did not provide a lot of results I undertook a general review on research into the field of public administration. A number of studies have compared structural characteristics of public and private organisations. Some of the most eminent researchers propose that public and private organisations are more similar than different from each other (according to Rainey & Bozeman, 2000). Other researchers who examined for example decision making practices in public and private organisations reported notable differences (Nutt, 2005). Again, divergent opinions and research findings make it hard to bridge to the possible dynamics in teams and groups.

Consequently, the findings of the literature review bring me to the following conclusions:

- Teams and/or groups in organisations are a widely investigated field across disciplines. However, research into teams and/or groups in intergovernmental organisations hardly exists. As argued throughout this literature review, the context of a study appears to be the crucial part of it. Therefore the aim of this dissertation is to investigate whether phenomena associated with team/group work in the context of private organisations also apply to the context of an intergovernmental organisation.

- The interchangeable use of the terms “team” and “group” which might be the result of a lack of a common definition needs to be addressed again. I argue if academia is not able to find a consensus on whether or not the two terms theoretically may be seen as two different concepts of work units and as a result be labelled with a clear definition, or whether the terms may be used interchangeably, a not very well defined starting point of research will continue to lead to not completely accurately interpretable results. Even more so considering that different cultures connote different meanings to the concept of team and/or group work. I therefore let my interviewees speak and aim to provide clarification on whether or not individuals perceive to be part of a team or group. Based on the experiences and perceptions of the sample of individuals working in an intergovernmental organisation I attempt to provide a clear definition for the specific context.
The findings of the literature research suggest predominantly a non-integrative research approach. As argued many times before, only specific aspects of team and group work and its outcome on performance have been looked at. The aim of this study is to approach this topic in a different way by looking at three main aspects of team and group work: organizational aspects, managerial aspects and individual aspects. I argue that only an integrative view of aspects allows conclusions on the dynamics in the work units. Furthermore, the identification of moderators and the openness for asymmetric relationships will play a vital role in generating an integrative model.

As a logical consequence, an exploratory, qualitative study with clear definitions of the key terms of investigation, a rich contextual explanation and an integrative view of as many dimensions as possible seems to be appropriate and moreover necessary.