

## TEAMWORK – THE ASSUMPTIONS OF THE THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT ADAPTATION IN ORGANIZATION ACTIVITY (LITHUANIAN CASE)

VLADIMIRAS GRAŽULIS

### Abstract

The article analyses practical adaptation possibilities of well-known scientists (*Mayo, Homans, Schein, Katzenbach, Belbin and others.*) theoretical provisions in organizing teamwork. In scientific literature the team concept is interpreted in different ways, so in the article a particular attention is paid to the understanding of teamwork problems. The author of the article agrees with the opinion of the scientists who defend the position that teamwork environment forming media is groups' of workers way through several stages of team building. The author's research shows that putting employees into teams according to the widely applied practice, where preference is given to formal requirements (education, work experience, knowledge of foreign languages, etc.) does not always help the organization to achieve the pursued objectives.

One of the most important reasons of it – not enough attention is given to the natural characteristics of an individual to perform certain types of tasks. The author of the article used the theoretical base of R. M. Belbin, when investigating the priority conduct profiles of people in various work situations and interviewed nearly 2 thousand respondents in Lithuania, which helped to identify the prevailing team roles. The results of the research confirmed usefulness of R. M. Belbin team roles theory in the practical work of organizations. The theoretical principles of teamwork discussed in the article and the application of the research results into practice help to develop a focused work teams.

**Keywords:** team, stages of team building, team roles, personal characteristics.

**Classification JEL:** M12 – Personnel Management

### 1. Introduction

Research done almost 80 years ago showed that organization employees and their groups should be explored and valued not just from the position of the organization production, but also from social systems' positions, where the most important are: behaviour of employees, relationship between them, general values etc. (*Mayo, 1933, p. 3-5*). While examining working groups 60 years ago, a USA sociologist G. C. Homans has made an important input in his book "Groups of people" (1950), where he emphasized the complexity<sup>3</sup> of the processes of working together. In his opinion, important elements of a group are: activities attribution (physical and mental work), co-operation (communication features, ability to negotiate etc.), sentiments (confidence, feeling of closeness, attitude towards partners and clients, etc.), and also norms (rules of behaviour etc.). As employees groups (teams) are working in a typical organizational environment, the author also proposes to evaluate the technological (buildings, equipment etc.) and cultural factors (objectives, values, traditions). Moreover, in his opinion, geographical location and regional climate has influence on the activities of a collective/team.

So, how we should understand the team? If we try to discuss the concept of a team using literary definitions, it's not difficult to notice that they can be described like employees groups designated by organization director, whose task is to reach the goals of the

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<sup>3</sup> In general sense, describing the group it can be used the descriptions of G. C. Homans (1950), E. H. Schein (1965), M. E. Shaw (1971) and other authors, saying that group is – two or more people which want to achieve common goals, interact with each other, each affecting the other and at the same time are influenced by other people.

organization together. As a rule, teams' life conditions are: to have a common goal, to dispose of the necessary resources and power of attorney, team members have to be able to coordinate their activities and to carry out various assignments. Usually in literature sources teams of experts are mentioned, teams of new projects, improving the quality, working units (e.g., health care, which consists of doctors and nurses), self-government and similar attribution teams. The importance of the team size is often emphasized (e.g. some authors are pointing the size of team from 3 to 10 people, others – to 15 people, and other offers of team size), also the importance of team existence duration (e.g., team existence duration of project team is defined by the order of director or by the contract).

Some authors agree that teams can be totally independent, but also some teams may not be performing autonomous tasks, some may execute creative, strategic tasks, but also have to do the routine tasks (*Boddy & Peiton, 1999, p. 298-299; Meskon et al., 1997, p. 448, 457; Savanevičienė & Šilingienė, 2005, p. 17-24; Stoner et al., 2006, p. 489-495; West, 2011, p. 23-24*).

As we can see, the task of researchers, who are interested in teamwork issues, is to clearly define the boundaries of on-going research. R. M. Belbin (*1981, 1993*), R. A. Guzzo (*1996, p. 3-24*), J. R. Katzenbach & D. K. Smith (*2003*), E. Appelbaum & R. Batt (*1994*), S. G. Cohen & D. E. Bailey (*1997, p. 239-290*), M. A. West (*2003, p. 14-15*) and other scientists' teamwork perception research had shown that teams from other groups of organization employees stand out by:

- ability to carry out the tasks which are based on challenges in a motivating way;
- well-developed sense of the future of the team;
- ability to organize the work while considering each member's acquired skills and a personal role;
- importance of work results' feedback understanding<sup>4</sup>.

Apparently, it is possible to present more advantages characterizing teamwork.

## **2. Groups of employees – teamwork environment forming media (literature review)**

B. W. Tuckman & M. A. Jensen studies have found that during formation of the team, group of employees have to go through 4 stages of development (Figure 1) – from the group's formation to maturity, i.e. working together effectively (*1965; 1977*)<sup>5</sup>. The authors point out the conditions necessary for it – the growth and formation of the appropriate skills and a sense of confidence. The theoretical model proposed by these authors basically is supported by all the researchers who accept the stages of team building.

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<sup>4</sup> Feedback about the team's work results should be valued by indicators such as the competitiveness of selected objectives, availability of financial resources and efficiency of introduced innovations, opinion of customers (users), quality of relationship between team members and partnership between them, efficient cooperation with other departments of the organization and with other organizations and so on.

<sup>5</sup> The authors, analysing the team building phase circuit, in addition suggested to include one more – the completion stage (dissolution), but also recognized that this stage is characterized by reaching the final destination of its projects (task) teams (*1977*). J. Stoner and his colleagues note that completion of the phase behaviour of team members' "range from excitement to depression" (*2006, p. 497*), so I would consider that this case represents a backward step from the expressed teambuilding prerequisites: growth and the necessary skills and confidence in the sense of accomplishment. Cited fact suggests that the completion stage, although known, but is not a consideration of the subject of team formation. It should, because the team disbanding stage, as well as any other working arrangement largely governed by legal procedures or collective social development of theoretical elements.

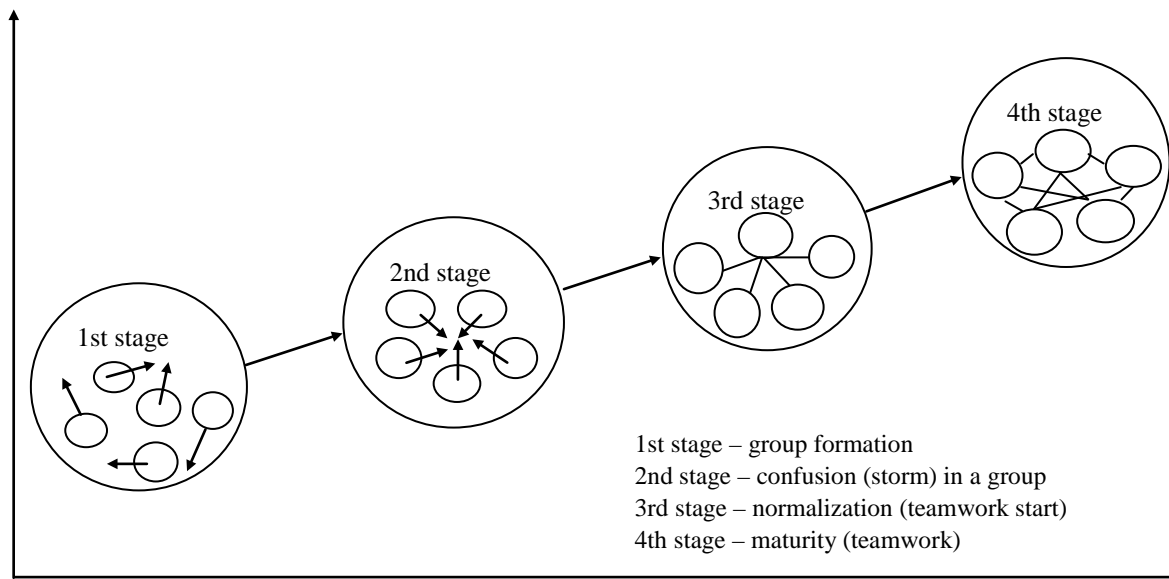


Figure 1. Stages/phases of working group becoming a team

Source: made by Tuckman, B. W. & Jensen, M. A. (1977). Stages of small group development revisited, p. 419-427

Having summarized the work of these and other researchers in the accomplishment of the stages of team building (Tuckman & Jensen, 1997, p. 419-427; Boddy & Peiton, 1999, 305-308; Stoner et al., 2006, p. 497; Savanevičienė & Šilingienė, 2005, p. 44-59; Kasiulis & Barydydienė, 2005, p. 81-83; Masiulis & Sudnickas, 2008, p. 220-223; West, 2011, p. 32-33) and authors on-going research, descriptions of the following team building stages can be provided:

**Group formation** – it is a stage, during which according to the professional and functional abilities the candidates are joined into a work group; new employees get to know each other and they exchange primary, the most formal type of information between themselves, the more active ones provide suggestions concerning the future work of the organisation. At this stage members of the group are characterized by anxiety; they most often carry out independent tasks, but may be performing the common tasks as well. Organizational structure of the group is characterized by the formal division signs and poor communication process. Members of the group are rarely interested in the prevailing organizational culture characteristics and the role of the head of the group (the more formal leader<sup>6</sup>) and his management style is very important. The main concern of the manager in this stage is his efforts to clearly formulate tasks. Mostly it depends on the group manager of how long the formulation period will last. Usually a manager being more task oriented than people oriented due to his strict attitude is having a harder time creating a collective work organization basis and seeking team's members' spiritual disposition, therefore postponing the group' formation stage. In general this stage is assessed as group member's primary guidance period.

**Confusion (storm) in the group** – this is the stage where the employees' personal skills, interests, priorities, goals and motives working in a group are expressed in different, often irreconcilable approaches to the work process. The result of this is different assessment of

<sup>6</sup> It must be accepted with an absolute majority of specialists that the formal or designated leader of the group is not necessarily the actual leader of the employee, because to become one a person needs to show a sense of self-confidence and ability to direct the actions of the group in the right direction (Sears et al., 1985). One having no characteristics of actual leadership in the team remains only a formal leader.

values and situation of the group, volatile relationships, conflicts are not a rare due to personal influence. In the confusion phase the hidden tensions can rise to the surface. On-going work is often understood only as orders from the manager, which must be done in any case, regardless of the available resources, environmental impact and so on. Very often there doubt exists on the task with dignity and opportunities to meet high quality. The group's organizational structure further on is familiar with formal attributes and emerging communication process. Along this stage, the initial perception of the prevailing organizational culture at personal level is trying to adjust to the organization's embracing values, habits, it's mission and vision. At this stage, group members can now evaluate and compare mission and vision promoted by organization, formulated with the personal expectations of the implementation possibilities. The formal group supervisor's duty is to understand the on-going process and to try to discover positive communalities and advantages in the team members expressing diversity, to encourage employees to become committed to group's stated objectives, to build trust. This would take the group in the future to work towards a common work.

**Normalization** – this is the stage when the group members gradually adapt to their colleagues behaviour individual features, developing collective values, common standards, also appears an emotional member match and positive dealing with conflict situations. Due to the increasing share of tasks for their increased performance, higher requirements are being given together for the search on adequate methods for the joint work. The group normalization stage is the beginning of taking the roles of teamed up members and an internal organizational structuring process is going on, which leaves the organizational structure more flexible. This allows adapting quicker to the changes of the environment. It is starting to recognize an individual group member's personal leadership right by his individual abilities. As a result, labour efficiency is increasing; the group shows the first signs of competitiveness. At this stage, only the formation of this group characteristic features of organizational subculture are achieved as the searching for the unity of the whole organization at the prevailing organizational culture continues. A formal group manager starts to coordinate his role with other members of the group. This creates favourable conditions for each member of the group to take greater responsibility for the on-going work also in on-going inner group processes. Finally, the normalization stage of the work group status can be defined as collective, acquiring the characteristics of the first team.

**Maturity (team work)**<sup>7</sup> – it is a stage when the working group are working together, following certain standards, and the distinguishing feature of the activity is an effective communication system, solidarity decision making and continuous innovative activities. Work organization is based on the acquired competences of the team members and continuous training; the performance has good quality and competitiveness. Occurring conflict situations are professional; they serve as team a development prerequisite. An organizational structure appropriate for the whole team is set, with its inherent flexibility and helping to timely respond to the changes. The appointed leader exercises the functions of the coordinator of different work stages' leaders (most often by their team roles). A performance feedback system is installed, which helps the team to properly and timely react to environmental changes and remain efficient. Team organizational culture is characterized by strong culture traits; also it manifests itself as an independent subculture throughout the

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<sup>7</sup> Some authors say think that the ideal team is formed in the maturity stage, where strong ties between the team members prevail (*Kasiulis & Barvydienė, 2005, p. 83*). The strength of ties between team members can be important at the team maturity stage, but it is not a basis to form a strong team.

organization. At this stage an important task of the team is to stay focused and prevent its members' conformist sentiment<sup>8</sup> because it can become a reason for team decay.

As can be seen, while speaking about team work we witness high coherence in a collective<sup>9</sup>, the organizational structure is characterized by concentration and solidarity, efficient communication channels<sup>10</sup> have been developed, each responsible for the other and all for one, team members are seeking to commit themselves personally and show loyalty, they identify themselves with the team and the organization. The more focused the team is, the higher its chances in the competitive environment. Various studies confirm these findings (*Stoner et al., 2006, pg. 499-500*).

While discussing advantages of teamwork, the scientific literature often mentions that teams are innovative and efficient. Continuous search and application of more efficient work methods illustrate the innovativeness of a team. M. A. West & N. R. Anderson (*1996, p. 680-693*) presented a theoretical four factor team innovation module, where the main valuation criteria should be new ideas and their quality/efficiency (Figure 2). Accordingly, the team activity innovation evaluation is closely related with the team efficiency definition. In 1964 professor P. F. Drucker (*1993*) got interested in the question while analysing the features of efficient management. He mentioned that we can speak about efficient organization or group/team only on the basis of well-chosen goals<sup>11</sup>. Other researchers, for example G. P. Shea & R. A. Guzzo (*1987, p. 25-31*) also support this attitude while emphasising the idea of common goals in a team's activity. Naturally, for efficient team performance the team members' decision making rights become very important, i.e. what factors are going to be most important in exercising a task?

B. W. Tuckman (*1965, p. 348-399*), and other experts note that the theoretical team formation provisions help to explain why one or the other way difficulties are being encountered, how risk factors influence the work performance. One answer lies in the fact that the group, trying to ignore the storm or normalization stages, may experience only short-term success (*Stoner et al., 2006, p. 497*). Another possible cause of the difficulties is formed group thinking negative manifestations. Overall, the group thinking media appears in a team when strong organizational culture is formed and the team cares more about the unity and coherence, but not so much about the search of effective solutions. On the one hand, holding strict to team norms of behaviour and customs is beneficial to each member of the team, because it helps everyone to focus on the task, but on the other hand, there is a risk that the occurrence of the conformist sentiments make team members to lose their individuality, influenced by external information and displayed deafness to other views. Then personal

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<sup>8</sup> Conformity, as a phenomenon to be considered a group thinking (Groupthink), formed in a strong group of consequence. One of the first in group thinking problem systematically intrigued J. Janis (*1972*) that saw a number of positive features, characterizing employees focus. Simultaneously, the author noted that the group thinking can be difficult to repair, and have negative consequences, such as., effective self-censorship, lack of expert judgments, opinions, avoiding critical statements, manifesting the illusion of unity and the pressure to distance itself from any other position, and who see a different type of information (*Janis, 1972*). Some Lithuanian authors, however, sees only the positive side of conformism (*Kasiulis & Barvydienė, 2005, p. 66*), but, in our opinion, conformity will eventually become an unbearable burden for proactive and creative staff.

<sup>9</sup> J. Kasiulis & V. Barvydienė (*2005, p. 68*), brings group cohesion concept as the lowest operative costs "to obtain the maximum result".

<sup>10</sup> About the importance of effective communication in groups significant scientific study of the first articles is published by social psychologist R. Bales (*1950, p. 257-263*).

<sup>11</sup> P. Drucker (*1993*) noted that effective leadership is often based on "better and fairer to the task" idea, as opposed efficiency and effectiveness (performance) concepts. Practice shows that not every task that is performed effectively really has the needed signs. According to P. Drucker, this work is regarded as a temptation, which generally should be avoided. Meanwhile, effective leadership is based on the selection of appropriate goals idea.

initiative and innovation search are stopped, even destroyed personal initiative, innovation search, finally, the consequences of conformism is becoming to cause a slowdown of the team's progress.

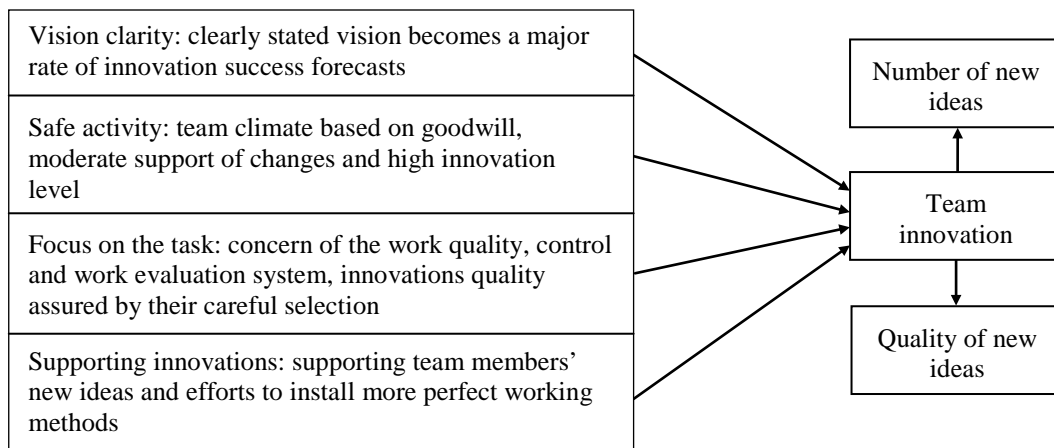


Figure 2. Theoretical model of team's four innovation factors

Source: West, M. A. (2011). Effective teamwork. Printing and Information Sciences, p. 123

Although indirectly but to the possible causes of difficulties in the team the so called C. Argyris "defence patterns" should be attributed. One can agree that "defence patterns" help the team to guard against possible confusion, however, they are manifested mainly because of the threats rejection system to the formed stability in the team. Noted that "defence patterns" comes into play, even regardless of the fact that the team members intentionally induce it or defence begins unconsciously (Argyris, 1990). As an example, one can be mentioned in practical usage widely spread defence case, when due to work problems, team's external environment is being accused first – leaders of organization, other divisions of the organization, partners and so on. In this case it is expected that the "defence patterns" will relieve the "headache" of the team, but it is clear that they often hinder than help the team smooth work. To beat out in a team appearing "defensive patterns" M. A. West (2011) advises to follow some basic rules:

- defence arguments must be compelling, relevant and publicly verifiable;
- promises must be actually implemented;
- team members are encouraged not to blame, but be able to constructively discuss mistakes.

Conformist mood, difficulties in adapting to the new environment increases the risk factor in achieving effective team activity, promotes the loss of the acquired team qualities. The consequence is that the team returns to the previous group activity stage.

In order to avoid possible difficulties in teamwork, manager besides to the recommendation from different wide spread literature sources about the topic, for example, creation of common goals and increased inter-competition (for example, dividing team into sub-groups), also must continuously take care of the organizational culture and the creation of positive relations and to be able to value other free and independent way of thinking, finally, to promote attitudes helping to a timely recognition of environmental challenges and to adapt to the new situation properly. Positive managerial approach to these operational elements turns into incentives to which, as a rule, each member of the group reacts positively.

### 3. Importance of R. M. Belbin team roles theoretical provisions in organizing teamwork

Lithuanian experience shows that in order to become an employee of any organization, first of all you must match certain formal requirements for candidates: to be able to achieve its goals, to have suitable education and work experience, to be communicative, to know the languages and so on. It is noted that none of the requirements listed above can totally guarantee effective work of person in a team. For example, the diploma does not always reveal real level of knowledge, experience insufficiently reflects of employee's inherent skills to react to environmental changes, finally, personal goals may outweigh the objectives of the organization and even to be opposite to them<sup>12</sup>.

Scientists from Canada K. D. Benne & P. Sheats were ones of the first to reveal the importance of employees functional roles working in a group (1948, p. 41-49). In the model carried out by these authors, all staff roles are divided into 3 groups (task-oriented, support-oriented and themselves-oriented) which reflect the initialization, information, coordination, evaluation, promotion, support and others functional roles in the group.

#### 3. 1. R. M. Belbin team roles theoretical provision

Last decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century in Western scientific management literature was recognized that for the correct perception of human teamwork environment is considered individual roles of each team member. In 1981 the importance of the individual roles was adverted by prof. R. M. Belbin (p. 77), noting that the maximum benefit to teamwork bring people whose strengths and qualities are individual and adequate for the team needs. Broadly speaking, the human team role can be defined as the best ability for person to reveal in one or another stage of the teamwork process with its inherent behaviour (e.g. better at organizing work or providing an idea or evaluating the quality of the work and so on). At the same time, learned or acquired behaviour can make influence for the individual role of person. However, people, despite the similar functional competence (skills, experience and knowledge) can act quite differently, because of their inherent behaviour of the group. As we can see, one of the team formatting objectives should be necessary conditions for the employee's innate features, skills, knowledge and interests of the realization, because it's the only way to achieve effective performance of the employee's role and at the same time to ensure the organization's tasks realization.

K. D. Benne & P. Sheats (1948), R. M. Belbin (1981, 1993), J. R. Hackman (1990), C. J. Margerison & D. McCann (1990), C. Handy (2001), Adizes (2007) and others authors' research shows that in any together working team are performing a lot of different roles. Theoretical provisions of those authors are applicable for person working in different sizes teams, so it means small (micro-team) and large (macro-team).

One of the most famous of theoretical framework about team roles is a theory by prof. R. M. Belbin. Author noted that there are many types of human behaviours, but there are fewer types of a high-efficient team types. This fact let him to make an illation that one of the most important assumptions about the team success is the composition of the team member's by priority behaviour, it means, by the best carried out person's team role. In 1981 M. Belbins' published work he has marked out eight roles of team: company worker (task

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<sup>12</sup> Analysis of various sources of literature (scientific, popular, media) leads to the conclusion that such a practice is not specific feature to Lithuania. This is what M. A. West describes in his book: „Usually people are recruited and selected to work as a part of group, because they have the technical skills and experience required for the specific job aspects... Of course it is absolutely logical... But it would be also logical to find out if each candidate's personal qualities will help him to be an effective part of the team,“ (2011, p. 31).

executor or implementer), the chairman (co-ordinator), the shaper (organizer), generator of ideas, resource investigator, monitor-evaluator, team worker and completer-finisher<sup>13</sup>. The author's theoretical concept about the team roles states that working in a team (micro or macro) there isn't any most significant and most positive role, because they all carry out only for themselves specific functions. Moreover, each role has its own strengths and weaknesses. These researches obviously demonstrated that while making the group (team) the biggest risk is manifested when in one team gets together more "the self-similar" people, for example, chairman, creators of ideas or finishers of the work and so on<sup>14</sup>.

Although R. M. Belbin's researches suggest that the teams, in which had met many "company workers" with practical features (executors of the tasks) are very effective, because they place their personal interests to second plan, they are able to do the best for the team, but, when it gets too many of them, the main attention usually goes to purposes of work and formal relationships between employees, in this case, the members of a team, who seek to cooperate, experience some discomfort. Not at all, if there will be too many „team workers“, then it could lead to confusion between „tasks executors“, because they may feel misunderstood as to why they are in general gathered into team. Analysing people's personal character weaknesses, R. M. Belbin also noted that, when in the group gather 2-3 formers, the relationships often get complicated, unhealthy competition increases between each other and with time it leads to intractable conflicts.

Besides, R. M. Belbin's researches have shown that the creator of ideas and resources investigator roles reveal special talents to make innovation elements for the team, but according to the author it depends on various factors how much advantages the team will be able to take out of it, quality of management as a factor including (2009). For example, R. M. Belbin found that in teamwork too many ideas can cause confusion because it might be difficult to select the best ideas and go in the direction of the selected continuity trend, this is why the author recommends the team to consider the potential negative consequences for work results and offers to especially control the actions of the idea's creator (2009)<sup>15</sup>. On the other hand, when in team the ideas creator's role is not enough expressed in the team, there is a risk of lack of new ideas.

At the same time R. M. Belbin's researches have defined what the essential differences between the roles of these two teams are there. It turned out that the harder the resources generator carries out his functions due to its unique ability to understand the importance of external environment innovations, the better he corresponds the requirements for the chief or coordinator. However, the better the ideas generator is carrying out his functions, the less they are typical of him, for the functions are of the chief or coordinator (2009). Whatever the case, the roles of both innovators in a team complement each other, due to this the opportunities of the team to compete successfully in the market is increasing. Our current research also suggest that the ideas generator and environment researcher (resources generator) stand out as

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<sup>13</sup> Belbin, R.M. in 1993 published "*Team Roles at Work*." has been added the ninth role to the list of team roles: „expert“, for whom is typical to reveal in team by his knowledge and professional skills from the technical side (but „expert“ role, because of its relatively narrow specialization, in studies is rarely used).

<sup>14</sup> M. Belbin for the research watched 200 teams from various organizations, including 25 teams, in which was brought together individuals who had higher than average intelligence, but as it turned out, during the experiment, the results of this team tasks were one of the worst among all analyzed teams.

<sup>15</sup> As teamwork is associated with extreme confidence in its members, making the need to pay more attention to the operational control of colleagues demonstrates the problems resulting from the team focus. J. Stoner and his colleagues in book „Management“ describes the situation when in the „ARINC Research“ corporation, for one of the teams sake of focus needed not only to understand, that some talented employees can not thrive in a team-oriented work environment, „but also“ recognize the mismatch and to solve the problem before there is no risks for team objectives (2006, p. 499).



exceptional positions between all team roles suggested by R. M. Belbin, because these roles should be more attributed to the constituent components of the work process (without these roles the working process hardly could be in progress), than the team for orientation into task execution or team support<sup>16</sup>.

The team, according to the author, must be a group, in which the strength of the role profiles gets balanced and each member in the team while exercising their role, flow smoothly into the common work process where everybody is trying to perform their roles equally well. In R. M. Belbin's proposed team roles model, each role can be assigned to either task-oriented or group –unity oriented. While task-oriented team members focus on initiative, information search, diagnosing and evaluating, the group–unity oriented team members are characterized as providing inspiration for others, being able to compromise, preserve peace, sum up, etc. R. M. Belbin's research allows us to draw a conclusion that there are cases when a person because of certain individual talents does not correspond any of the team roles, e.g., an intelligent person, but not creative enough. It was found that many of them quite spontaneously react to a new situation, as a rule, these people first speak, then think. There is a danger of such people making a negative influence on the whole team, hindering others from representing their role which leads to inevitable deterioration of the team's competitiveness. Another example presented by the author is when a person's intelligence is low but his self-evaluation level is high. Such people often try to dominate the team, often ignoring the opinion of other people. As long as problems are avoided, these people are full of hope, but when unexpected challenges occur, they are immediately looking for justifications of their actions and try to find responsible for the challenges. More of such examples can be found in the life of organizations, so the author suggests viewing such workers as a separate "problematic" group in a team (2009). Unfortunately, the world practice has it that people who could be attributed to the problematic group lead organizations and for different reasons they travel from some positions to others and the official list "is pretty impressive, so this factor helps them to climb the career ladder (2009).

In one of his recent research professor R. M. Belbin wanted to find out what roles can define an effective manager. The study allowed the author to state that an effective leader has the roles of a coordinator, a generator and a team / group worker in balance. In addition to other things, an effective manager's role profile differs substantially from a poor manager's. In the role profile of the latter the strongest is the team shaper's profile and the weakest – team / group worker's qualities (2010, p. 11-25).

R. M. Belbin team roles study clearly showed that if the group does not keep to the right team formation principles it is destined to constantly chase the others, raising for themselves an only goal: how to reach the finish even if they come the last (2009).

### **3.2. Research and interpretation of results**

In 2002 – 2011 Bachelor and Master program students of a few Lithuanian higher education institutions (Vilnius University, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius College/University of Applied Sciences and International Business Higher School) were *surveyed about the most typical team roles' profiles* on the basis of theoretical team roles' provisions of the professor R. M. Belbin. The number of respondents who took part in the research has grown to nearly 2000, 913 – university students and 1066 – college students. 14 per cent of all respondents were men. Almost 90 per cent of all students which took part in the research studied social sciences.

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<sup>16</sup> This our observation does not oppose to professor. M. Belbin team roles characterization, because of a lot of ideas one tends to be impractical, and the other is more interested what's happening somewhere else.

In the course of the survey the respondents had to decide on the following questions by the way of self-examination:

- *how they could contribute to teamwork*, e.g. ability to notice and take new opportunities, generate ideas, etc.
- *reasons for possible limitations on their personal work*, e.g. inclination to speak too much about the past when the group is already discussing new ideas and etc.
- *possible priority behaviour while working together with others*, e.g. ability to influence other members of the group,
- *what their personal “key to work” is while working in a team*, e.g. ability to use connections outside the team,
- *under what conditions they get job satisfaction*, e.g. a possibility to analyse situations,
- *what effect a new complicated task that needs quick accomplishment makes*, e.g. will start discussions in search of new ideas and disregarding of new circumstances will pursue main goals , etc.,
- *special qualities of a person*, e.g. people face difficulties to start a new job (task), etc.

The research tried to find the following:

- main and additional (secondary and other) teamwork roles,
- possible influence of a person’s sex on the priority roles of the respondents.

In Figures from No. 3 to No. 6 the results of the student survey from Lithuanian higher educational institutions are presented. The presented results allow us to draw a very important conclusion: all the team roles can be characteristic to everyone, the main difference between people lies in the priority role and combination of other strong roles.

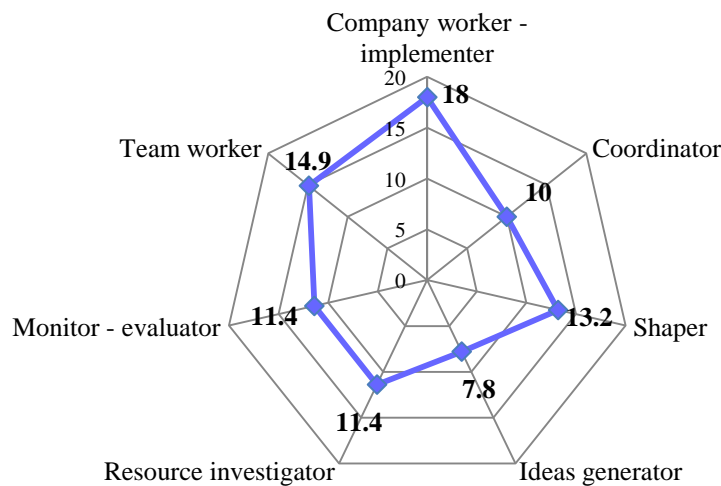


Figure 3. Respondents the profile of team roles (out of 100 points)

Source: own study

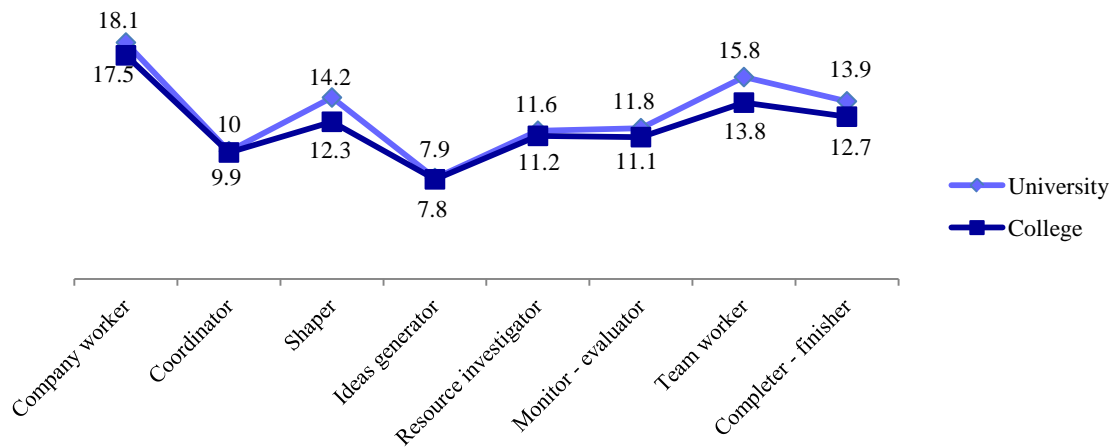


Figure 4. Comparison of the profile of team roles among Lithuanian higher schools students (out of 100 points)

Source: own study

In addition, survey results showed that respondents by team – profile roles joined distribution are weakly associated with chosen study institution (Figure 4) but the main differences are expressed by the respondents typical first role (Figure 5) and gender (Figure 6).

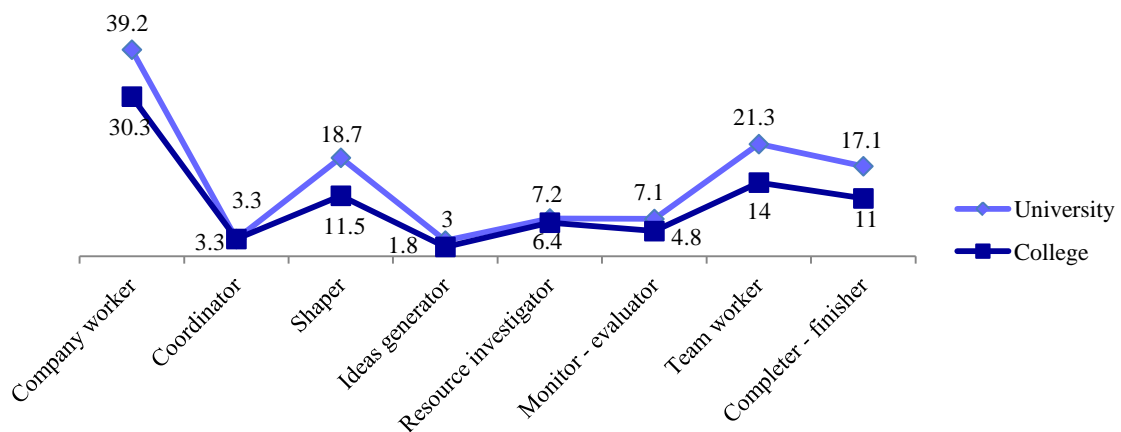


Figure 5. The profile of team roles comparison according to the first role (approx. case number out of 100 respondents)

Source: own study

Research results show that the priority role for the Lithuanian higher school students is a **company worker – implementer** (company employee) – an average of 18 points out of 100, where 18.5 among university students and 17.5 among college students. Sometimes this role reaches even the score of 25 – 30 (highest captured by 39 points). Company worker is a dominant role for 39.2 per cent of university students and almost to every third of college students (30.3 per cent). So this role is 1.3 times stronger expressed among university students. The analysis of the role depending on the sex is more important to women (36 per cent), while this role as a priority role is the most important for each fourth man (26.8 per cent).

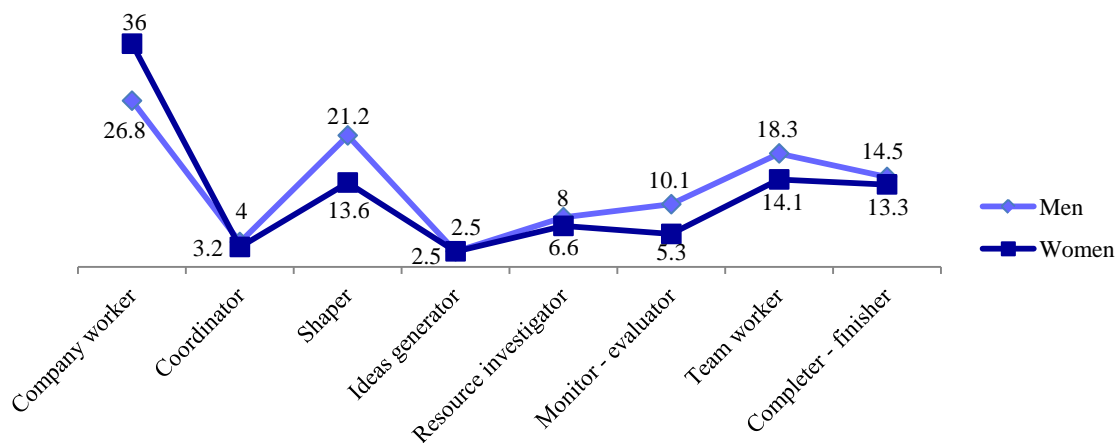


Figure 6. Profile of respondents preferred team roles according to sex (out of 100 per cent)

Source: own study

In addition, it was found that this role as the second, i.e. the reserve role, was typical of every fourth respondent in universities. So in general a company worker (implementer) is the predominant role for the Lithuanian university students of social sciences.

The respondents whose main role is a company worker while evaluating their own characteristics noted that usually they can find out what the team may need. For these reasons, it is very important for these people to know clear work objectives before the beginning of work. While discussing the results of the survey with the respondents, it was noticed that many of them were struggling to comply with their obligations, they were characterized by practicality, respect for traditions, they liked stability and, as has already been mentioned, their life motto was “doing the job”, so they were reliable. These people have a pretty sharp focus on the task and, therefore, they like to deal with the problems arising during the work. Company workers have the ability to adapt easily to the organization’s administrative units’ functions and the dominant environment<sup>17</sup>. Unfortunately, company workers are often poorly motivated to be interested in other people’s affairs, do not always timely notice the importance of new ideas that is why it is very often the case that people respond slowly to necessary changes.

The second group of respondents according to the strength of the role is a *team worker* – 14.9 points, where 13.8 points from university students and 15.8 – from college students. This role is a dominant for every 5<sup>th</sup> college and every 7<sup>th</sup> university student. So it is 1.52 times more often among college students. The investigation shows that this role was regarded as reserve for almost every fifth student at universities. Discussing the survey results according to the sex, we saw that the role of a team worker was more common among women (18.4 per cent or every sixth respondent), as a priority role it was inherent for every seventh man (14.1 per cent).

It was agreed while discussing the characteristic features of this role with respondents, that a Team worker is able to work well with different people and to support an appropriate proposal for the general interest. The role is highly-oriented to the spirit of unity and good relations with co-workers, it helps to perceive the colleagues’ ideas and reduce disagreement,

<sup>17</sup> R. M. Belbin research showed that teams having enough company workers with practical characteristics are especially effective, because this role people put their personal issues into second place and are devoted for the team work.

they are helpful and flexible as well as have the feeling of a healthy sense of humour which is ascribed to the team's assets. Unfortunately, team workers are not determined enough when confronted with genuine opposition, and therefore find it difficult to be group leaders and feel uncomfortable in conflict situations which may have a negative effect on team work<sup>18</sup>.

Respondents were also distinguished by a *completer – finisher* and *shaper* properties (collected 13.3 and 13.2 points). University students had 12.7 and college students – 13.9 points for the completer – finisher role. This role is typical for 17.1 per cent college students as the most important and is 1.55 times more often as for university students. The role of a completer – finisher as a reserve role is characteristic of almost for every fifth respondent. Sex, as shown by the results of the investigation, is not an essential factor for having this role – from 13.4 per cent for men and up to 14.6 per cent for women.

During self-evaluation, respondents noted that they have considerable value in their ability to complete the particular task well. In order to avoid possible errors or possible omissions at work, they are very important to take into account the on-going work in a timely manner, the 'details' to comply with the work schedule and continuously seeking for work objectives. The desire to go into the work carried out too detailed often artificially creates confusion among the collaborators, but the completer – finisher helps to ensure the integrity of the work performed by the team. Delegation of powers to the features of the said character is not a "good" work, therefore, as a rule: these people are poorly oriented to share their powers. Clearly illustrated the completer – finisher's characteristic referred to task performer's role. Personal characteristics of the Completer – finisher work with the same priority in the various structured units of organizations.

The role of the *shaper* took a similar position among respondents (13.2 points), as well as the completer – finisher. Survey showed that university students had 14.2 points and college students 12.3 points for this role. This role as a dominant is typical for 18.7 per cent of university students and is expressed 1.6 times often then among college students (11.5 per cent). Gender, as shown by the results of the investigation, is an essential factor in the role of the show – what maker, the fifth man (21.2 per cent) is assigned for this type of team role, while only every eighth woman (13.6 per cent) can successfully take on the burden this role.

According to the respondents, representing the role, they give the priorities for the actions, which give the work appropriate form and refer to the direction of activity. The role is highly oriented to the task, these people have the ability to formulate clear objectives, are engaged to do work quickly and promote other team members for that. Shapers are motivated to be leaders and may take over the running of the team with no doubt, and, as a rule, they work 'from all forces', know how to oppose other viewpoints, they agree where appropriate to be disliked by team members and to remain a minority, because for them it is very important that the results of the work would be achieved on time. Unfortunately, the shaper's personal relationships with co-workers are often seen as provoking, besides, these people are usually indifferent towards innovation. Person having shaper's personal characteristics with same success can work in the various structural units of an organisation.

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<sup>18</sup> Although specific research to illustrate how students choose study institution is not done, however, these results suggest that many people choose higher education institutions not only from the existing school certificate results and current work experience. Our research practice shows that people's choices are often associated with a person's intrinsic features, which are not always consciously expressed. University studies are more oriented to the organization's administrative processes in general, while non-university studies is - training of specialists for work in a specialized group, it is only rational to explain why the social sciences university enrolling more "company workers – implementers" than the representatives of the non-university higher education schools.

The results of the study suggest that the role of the *resource investigator* gathered 11.4 points on average, where university students had 11.6 and college students 11.2 points. This role is the most important for 7.2 per cent of university students and 6.4 per cent of college students. Sex, as shown by the results of the investigation, is not essential to this role to be expressed – it occurs from 6.6 per cent to (for women) and 8.0 per cent (for men).

Representatives of the role of the resource investigator are often characterized as optimistic, enthusiastic, inquisitive and extrovert. Respondents evaluating their inherent characteristics recognize the ability to detect and, if necessary to take advantage of new opportunities arising in the first place out of the team, they are open to discussions about innovation, but rarely are a source of original ideas personally. All of these features help the resource investigator to become a good negotiator; however, if he fails to persuade colleagues to attract with innovations, he/she starts to be bored. Resource investigator rarely likes to stay at the workplace, but if he/she stays, will be constantly “suspended” on the phone or “sitting” in the online space. The priority characteristics of resource investigator let him/her to work very successfully in marketing departments.

Research has shown that the role of a *monitor – evaluator* scored 11.4 points and equally strong between university (11.8) and college (11.1) students. So this role is the most important for 7.1 per cent of college students and 4.8 per cent of university students. On the other hand, university students had 1.5 – 2 times stronger expressed role of monitor – evaluator. Sex, as the research results have shown, is quite an important factor for this role to exist as it was almost twice as often displayed by men (10.1 per cent) than by women (5.3 per cent).

Representatives of this role noted that they often face difficulties in starting to exercise the set task with other colleagues, for while weighing all “for” and “against” they try to find an alternative for the suggested actions, subsequently their decisions are rather clear. The qualities of a role – monitor – evaluator save the group from meaningless work. On the other hand, the respondents of the survey note that colleagues are often critical of their intensive involvement in work as they become anxious about the loss of the spirit of togetherness in the team. The role of a Monitor – evaluator is task-oriented and as a rule is based on strategic thinking, therefore such people can be the most useful for tasks where new goals are raised and innovative decisions searched for.

The role of a *coordinator (chairperson)* scored 10 points on average not depending on institution it was equally strong. Only 3.3 per cent of respondents, or only one person in 30, are endowed with the qualities of a chairperson as the most important role. Sex, as the research shows is also not an essential factor for the role of a chairperson to perform – 3.2 per cent women and 4.0 per cent men in 100 respondents.

The respondents of the survey whose role as coordinator was the strongest are inclined to share their authority, therefore it is very important for them to find out who of their colleagues are better at one or another task. The chairperson without hesitation shows support for their colleagues and can influence them without putting pressure on them. While solving the task execution questions, the coordinator as a rule approves of the efforts of the colleagues, at the same time demonstrating a strong character when in their opinion, some proposals have to be rejected. The qualities of priority in a coordinator’s role are equally necessary in any organization and contribute seriously while working in various structural units.

The smallest number of the respondents, i.e. only 2.5 out of 100 have a special ability to create original ideas and strategies innovations, in other words for many respondents the “flying in the clouds” feeling is not important. On the whole the respondents gave the importance of the *ideas generator’s (plant)* role only 7.8 points and there was no difference

regarding the sex of the role performers (2.5 people from 100). Yet this role is more often manifested among college students (according as 3 and 1.8 out of 100 cases). On the other hand, same as with the role of monitor – evaluator if university students rated this role as the most important it was expressed almost twice stronger than among the college students.

While analysing how specific the behaviour of ideas generators is, mention was made of their innate ability to generate various ideas, frequent desire to go deeper into their own mind and create something original although it may be the cause of losing connection with their colleagues. Exceptional originality of ideas generators motivates them to devote all their time for new ideas as they believe this may be the main challenge of the team. Because of this attitude many ideas generators lose interest in the group needs and goals and are not always able to hear their “every day” opinions. These are the reasons which make the Ideas generator feel a “nominal” member of the team and rarely show interest in his personal career. If the ideas generator is unexpectedly given a task he does not fully understand, he often makes efforts to withdraw from the execution of it or may even seriously consider change of the organization. The ideas generators’ behaviour is very often related to challenges of their own imagination that is why despite their inner need to do a job well, first of all the behaviour of an independent member of a team is characteristic to them.

#### 4. Conclusion

People of a certain social group by their team roles are more similar than different (the most frequent roles of the respondents are those of a task performer and team worker, the fewest are those of a chairperson and ideas developer).

People of a certain social environment are more alike than different if compared by their team roles (the roles of task performers and team workers dominated among the respondents and those of chairpersons and ideas developers – appeared less often).

People sex has an influence on many roles, e.g. task performers, shapers, critic evaluators and team workers – women dominate in the roles of task performers and team workers and men – in the roles of shapers and critics evaluators.

Two thirds (almost 66 per cent) of all respondents are oriented to task performing so their priority is implementation of teamwork goals, every fourth respondent (24.6 per cent) gives priority to the group’s social aspects and its unity, every tenth/ninth (9.6 per cent) is not very closely related to work and acts as an independent member of the team.

While analysing the results from the aspect of their strength balance, we can say that the weakest appear to be social and creative factors of work.

The most characteristic roles of the respondents (company workers – implementers and team workers) can be characterized as comprising the backbone of team activity though they affect the work of the team from quite different basic positions: one group works to achieve the objectives, another – to maintain an appropriate team spirit. The employers should know that when there are too many company workers in a team, main attention will be paid to work objectives and formal relationships between colleagues so team workers will suffer. However, if there are too many “team workers”, “company workers – implementers” may feel at a loss, for they may not see the point of being in the team. Depending on the priorities of an organisation it can plan specific requirements for the recruited employees and plan their career path accordingly. Knowing this fact could be of great practical importance not only for the employees but for the employers as well.

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**Address of author:**

Prof. Dr. Vladimiras GRAŽULIS  
Department of Strategic Management  
Faculty of Politics and Management  
Mykolas Romeris University  
Ateities str. 20  
LT-08303 Vilnius  
Lithuania  
e-mail: [vladimirasg@takas.lt](mailto:vladimirasg@takas.lt); [vlad.gra@mruni.eu](mailto:vlad.gra@mruni.eu)