Summary

As today’s organizations face the challenge of fast-paced change and innovation (Drucker, 2001; Harrison & Kessels, 2004; Kessels, 2004; Senge et al., 1999; Wierdema, 2007) the emphasis on teamwork has been growing rapidly, since the nature of work has become increasingly complex, often too complex for a single individual. Teams can outperform individuals when it comes to solving complex tasks (Cummings & Worley, 2009; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002), because they have greater information processing capacities (Curšeu, Jansen, & Chapin, 2013), can achieve greater creativity by working together and can therefore achieve more effective solutions (Chrislip, 2002; Snow, 1999). Despite their potential, many teams struggle to outperform their best member (Curšeu et al., 2013; McGrath, 1984; Rietzschel, Nijstad, & Stroebe, 2006). Researchers, organizations and teams are therefore urgently seeking theories and models which can explain teamwork and help teams to achieve better results (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & Spangler, 2004; Marks, Mathieu, & Zaccaro, 2001). Our aim in this study is to contribute to this objective.

The main research question of this dissertation is: How can teams create developmental space in order to achieve the best possible result?

The research question implies that we are interested in the effectiveness of teams. A great deal of research on this topic has been carried out for quite some time. However, Antoni and Hertel (2009) have highlighted the complexity of such research, given the vast number of variables which influence team effectiveness. Of these many variables, research suggests that team interactions have the most profound influence on effectiveness (Leenders, Contractor, & DeChurch, 2015; LePine, Piccolo, Jackson, Mathieu, & Saul, 2008; LePine, Hanson, Borman, & Motowidlo, 2000; Tjosvold, West, & Smith, 2003), which is why these interactions are the focus of the present study. Marc Coenders conducted doctoral research on team interactions in 2008. His model of developmental space (Coenders, 2008) forms the starting point for this dissertation. The appeal of this model lies partly in its apparently simple structure, based on four dimensions. It also speaks to the logical notion that teams need to create a social space, a setting in which to flourish and achieve the best results. Nevertheless, the underlying theory and the terms used within the model are highly complex and not directly applicable by teams in their daily practice. We have taken up the challenge of further developing this concept and making it practical for teams, managers, and anyone who works with teams.

Any research into teams calls for a clear definition of what is meant by the term
'team'. For the purposes of this study, team is defined as a group of 2-10 people working together on a complex task. The team members fulfil different roles or functions within the team, have a shared goal and need each other to achieve that goal. A team may therefore take many forms, including a project team, a core team, a working group, an occasional team and a think tank. The focus is on the shared complex task since the task is a key factor in the process and performance of teams (Antoni & Hertel, 2009). By complex task we mean any task that requires knowledge creation or new combinations of existing knowledge and that necessitates a learning process in order to achieve completion (Boonstra, 2008; Clegg, Kornberger, & Pitsis, 2005; Corso, Martini, Paolucci, & Pellegrini, 2001; Kessels, 2004).

Model for developmental space

In Chapter 2, we redesign the model of developmental space proposed by Coenders (2008). We are in search of a model which will help teams, managers and everyone who works with teams to analyse and influence the developmental space. This gives rise to the following description:
Developmental space is a social and conceptual space that arises from the mutual interaction between team members and the interaction between the team and the environment. It is a dynamic space. Teams create this space by engaging in four activities: creating future, reflecting, organizing and dialoguing (see Figure 15).

In an optimal developmental space, team members feel free to express themselves. They trust each other and feel confident enough to introduce novel ideas and opinions. They are able to openly discuss ideas which are disparate and sometimes conflicting. At the same time they are focused on the result they want to achieve within the time and budget at their disposal.

In Chapter 3, we continue this research by testing the model quantitatively. The questionnaire which we have developed for this purpose would appear to be an instrument teams can use to analyse their developmental space. Both studies show that the more developmental space teams create, the greater their satisfaction with their results.
Developmental space and leadership

In the literature, leadership is seen as a crucial factor in team success (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007; Edmondson, 1999; Hoch & Morgeson, 2014; Kozlowski, Gully, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1996; Sarin & McDermott, 2003; Yukl, 2013; Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001). Chapter 4 examines the types of leadership that emerge in teams and which type of leadership encourages the creation of developmental space. We conduct a qualitative study, consisting of a multiple case study (N=10 teams) and a field experiment (N=6 teams), since we are not sure whether shared leadership occurs naturally in teams.

This study shows that teams usually operate with a single leader and that only the leaders who primarily reflect and engage in dialogue are conducive to the creation of developmental space. Such leaders appear to be scarce. Most of the leaders in this study engage primarily in creating future and organizing, and in doing so they impede the creation of developmental space and form an obstacle to achieving the best results. Other studies show that the team member who acts as the leader is often not the member who is best suited to this role (Lynn, Podolny, & Tao, 2009; Paunova, 2015).

The present study also shows shared leadership to be conducive to the creation of developmental space, while shared leadership not occurs naturally in teams. However, the field experiment provides evidence that shared leadership can be prompted by a relatively simple intervention: activity cards which divide the four
developmental space activities among the team members. Each team member is assigned responsibility for one of the four activities, based on their personal qualities.

The developmental space paradox

In addition to leadership, dealing with paradoxes would also appear to influence the creation of developmental space. In Chapter 5, we therefore examine how teams experience the developmental paradox, how they handle it and how it affects them. The creation of developmental space seems to require a simultaneous focus on the performance orientation (creating future and organizing) and on the shared sense-making orientation (reflecting and dialoguing). Although these two orientations appear to be at odds with each other (see Table 18), teams seem to need both in order to function effectively. This is why it appears to be a paradox: two contradictory yet interrelated elements which occur simultaneously and persist over time (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Dealing with a paradox seems to consist of three successive stages: 1) recognizing the paradox; 2) relating to the paradox; and 3) dealing with the paradox. In this study, successful and unsuccessful teams are shown to take differing approaches to the developmental space paradox. Successful teams are more likely to recognize the developmental space paradox. They embrace the two sides of the paradox and attempt to strike a balance, while the unsuccessful teams do not see the paradox or attempt to deny it, and often choose to focus on the performance orientation.

Table 18 The paradox of developmental space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creating future &amp; organizing (performance orientation)</th>
<th>Dialoguing &amp; reflecting (sensemaking orientation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accelerate</td>
<td>Slow down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results-driven</td>
<td>Postpone the direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing</td>
<td>Broadening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving answers</td>
<td>Asking questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixing</td>
<td>Inquiring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking forward</td>
<td>Standing still (or looking back)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action-oriented</td>
<td>Thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions and recommendations based on this study

The main research question of this dissertation is how teams can create developmental space in order to achieve the best possible result as a team. Teams create this space by engaging in four activities: creating future, reflecting, organizing and dialoguing. The more they put these four activities into practice, the more developmental space they create and the greater the satisfaction with their results, both within the team and among third parties. Figure 16 summarizes the main results of this dissertation.

The questionnaire developed in the course of this study can help teams to analyse their developmental space and influence it accordingly. In the Netherlands, this questionnaire has been developed for a free web application for teams. The questionnaire can also be used for follow-up research. The model of developmental space, with its four activities, can help teams to achieve the diversity they need to better understand and utilize their potential as a team.

Shared leadership and leaders who primarily engage in dialogue and reflection seem to be conducive to the creation of developmental space. Most leaders, however, seem to be primarily engaged in creating future and organizing. This appears to stand in the way of creating developmental space and therefore of achieving the best results.

Finally, the way in which teams deal with the developmental space paradox appears to influence their success. This starts with the ability and willingness to recognize the paradox and to embrace both sides of the paradox. The essence of all effective strategies for dealing with a paradox resides in the open examination of the two sides by asking questions of different types and in continuing to address both sides of the paradox throughout the process.
Team results
+ Developmental space
Teams make developmental space in their interaction. The more developmental space they make the better their results.

Leadership
Single leaders undertaking primarily sensemaking activities and shared leadership support the creation of developmental space.

Developmental space paradox
Recognizing and embracing the paradox. Balancing the performance and sensemaking orientation supports the creation of developmental space.

- Single leaders undertaking primarily performance activities hinder the creation of developmental space.

- Not recognizing or ignoring the paradox. Choosing to focus on one side (mostly the performance orientation) hinders the creation of developmental space.

Figure 16. Summary of the results of this dissertation
Referenties


