

A Framework for Facilitation Service Quality Assessment

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ABSTRACT

Since the very early research on the concept of groups and communication most social scientists believe that to be a member of a group, individuals should be able to share their ideas, collaborate and structure their relationship in a specific way. With the development of technology, especially within the field of Information Systems (IS) and Information Communication Technology (ICT), groups have started to form a new way of interaction. During the recent years the classical face-to-face collaborations tend to change into the form of dispersed and virtual collaborations. [1].

The decision making groups are larger and globally distributed nowadays. The call to support teams with a **facilitation service** is addressed frequently in the literature [2][3][4]. Researchers have studied different approaches to make assessment frameworks in order to measure the quality of collaborations [5] [6]. Also there is criteria (i.e. knowledge, experience and demonstration of skills) [7] used to certify and standardize the facilitator's competences but there is much less attention paid to the quality assessment of the **facilitated collaborations**. There is no evidence in the literature describing an evaluation framework that can specify different aspects of uncertainties that exist within a delivered facilitation service.

In this paper we describe an evaluation framework we have developed to assess the quality of facilitation services. We deliver a *two dimensional* framework which allows us to define metrics and measures in the context of facilitator's goals and evaluation objectives. Further, the framework can be used for the purpose of comparison between facilitated collaborations and understanding of the service shortcomings and improvement strategies. The framework is shown in the figure below:

Facilitator's Competences	Indicators	Pol	Soc	Per	Meth	Act	Tech	Env
Create Collaborative Client Relationship	Working Partnership Development							
	Meeting Client Needs							
	Effective Multisession Management							
Planning Appropriate Group Processes	Selecting Clear Methods							
	Preparing Time and Space to Support Group Processes							
Create and Sustain Participatory Environment	Effective Participation and Interpersonal Communication Skills							
	Diversity Recognition and Ensuring Inclusiveness							
	Group Conflict Management							
	Evoking Group Creativity							
Guide Group to Appropriate and Sustain Outcome	Having Clear Methods to Guide the Group							
	Facilitate Group Self-awareness about the Task							
	Guide the Group to Consensus and Desired Outcome							
Build and Maintain Professional Outcome	Effective Knowledge base Maintenance							
	Knowing a Range of Facilitation Method							
	Maintain Professional Standing							
Model Positive Professional Attitude	Self assessment and Self Awareness							
	Act with Integrity							
	Trust Group Potentials and Model Neutrality							

Abbreviation	Facilitation Model Layers
Pol	Political
Soc	Social
Per	Personal
Meth	Method
Act	Activities
Tech	Technology
Env	Environment

Fig (1): Facilitation Assessment Framework

The combined use of facilitator's competences indicators (dimension "b" in fig (1)) and facilitator's roles described in the Seven Layer Model of Facilitation (dimension "a" in fig (1)) [8] generates a matrix structure. The matrix suggests the team facilitator a structured approach to assess the quality of the delivered facilitation service at a level of detail provided by team participants or an existing professional facilitator who observes the team collaboration. Each cell inside the matrix refers to a facilitator's goal.

Obviously the assessment is aimed to figure out how well a facilitator has taken advantage of his/her own competences to play a better role. The goal of the facilitator can easily be accessed and defined using the assessment framework.

The evaluation of the goal is made using the *GQM (Goal Question Metric)* [9] approach. At the *conceptual* level, the goal of a facilitator is built through the combination of the role (dimension "a" in fig (1)) he/she takes with any of the competences (dimension "b" in fig (1)) described in the IAF handbook. At the *operational* level the goal is explicated in a number of questions. At the *quantitative* level, the questions are answered by session participants or an observing expert facilitator using a quantitative method.

Facilitated collaborations are widespread in organizations even though it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of these services. The paper delivers an evaluation method to address the assessment of facilitation services and the use of the method in the field. The method is structured in a way to map the facilitation service goals into evaluation objectives, metrics and measurements. The method combines two different viewpoints on facilitation which are the seven-layer model of facilitation and the facilitator competences which are classified in the literature of team facilitation. The framework can also be used for the purpose of comparison among facilitation services and highlighting the weakness and the strength of delivered facilitation services. The framework is evaluated using three case studies.

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