Back-Stage User Participation in Large-Scale IS Projects

Hamid Mehmood
PhD Candidate – IDI, NTNU

Background

- Prevelance of large-scale information system (IS) implementations and platformization practices

- Complexities associated with large-scale IS projects

- User participation in IS development and implementation vs scale

"the fundamental transcendence of the user's role from being merely informants to being legitimate and acknowledged participants in the design process" (Simonsen & Robertson, 2012)

Background

- Front-stage activities are the pretty images of success: group meetings, workshops, co-design sessions, prototypes

- Back-stage activities are referred to as the hidden chaos of conflict and turmoil: preparations, negotiations and analysis. (Bødker et al., 2017)

- Existing research focuses on user participation in the front-stage, whereas user participation in the back-stage is less documented

Research Questions

- How the back-stage activities are defined in large-scale projects, and how are they related to the front-stage activities?

- How do participation take place in the back-stage of large-scale IS implementations?

Our Case – Health Platform

- Implementation of medical record system in central Norway

- There are four implementation projects, one joint and three local

- Our research looks into one of the local implementation projects and the subproject organizational development within it because of its relevance with our RQs

- Organizational development has three activities ; Readiness, Training and Benefit Realization

Research Methodology

- Case study as the research strategy

- Data collection
  - 5 in depth semi-strcutured interviews
  - Field observations and
  - Document analysis

Findings

Readiness: activities concerned with identifying the needs of prospective users and making them ready to use the new system.

Training: activities focusing on training and teaching the future users of the health platform on how to use the new system.

Profit Realization: activities around ensuring desired targets of benefit and strategic goals

Readiness:

- Maturity analysis as the key activity in readiness

- Maturity analysis is about getting greater insight into the maturity of one's organization and an understanding of future needs for change and training

- Two maturity analysis areas: the ability to change and understanding of change and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) competence.

Training:

- Facilitating the training through super users and establishing the learning culture

- Given that the super users are engaged in multiple activities, a lot of planning is required to schedule the activities in a way they could easily participate

- Unit and leader meetings happening to decide upon activities in order to create a learning culture

Benefit Relization:

- Benefitt realization does not have clearly defined activities as readiness and training but its all about achieving the strategic targets and goals.

- Extensive user participation in deciding the strategic goals

"To define these targets, we probably had half a year of workshops involving managers, subject matter experts, and user communities. We got 500 winnings and created a profit model that categorized, analysed, and picked the most important ones."

Ways of Working:

- Workmeetings are conducted apart from already planned activities and they are relevant to many activities like readiness, training and profit relaization

- Afterskiing – a lot of discussion (participation) relevant to the project happens informally after the regular meetings are over or it also takes place at the lunch breaks, over coffee machines and in open office space

Discussion:

- Prevalence of back-stage activities in the implementation of the health platform facilitating the conduction of front stage activities

- Need to create a space for informal activities in large-scale projects

- Participation in the back-stage activities is restricted, as the users only participate in front stage activities, which have been defined by back stage activities.

- Back-stage user participation through managed communities

Questions??