Complex Facilitation

Why When and How
Cynefin meet up group Australia

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Quotes from Dave Snowden - Blog

Discuss in groups

Facilitation has always been important for me and it's not just a question of how to do it well, it's also a question of power'

'some people get complex facilitation but a lot don't. The content issue is the key one, if you want to get involved in that or even to listen to it then there is a problem'

'I'd always seen the role of a facilitator as that of allowing people's voices to emerge without influencing content'
'

'You never spell out a lesson, let alone tell people in advance what the learning objective is, you enable the group to discover things for themselves and that discovery does not have to be articulated per see.'

'Methods are designed to change interactions, not to change people'

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Classic Questions

What was the same?
What was different?
What really surprised you?

Complex Facilitation - defined

https://www.complexability.com.au/complex-facilitation/

When the issues are complex, the methods and processes used for people to make sense, make meaning, take action, and monitor the impact also need to be different.

Complex facilitation is concerned with **congruence** and **coherence** between
- the principles of complexity that are embedded in the complexity based tools and methods *and*
- the role and behaviour of facilitators, what they do and do not do *and*
- the experience of participants in engaging in the **social construction of their own meaning.**

The outcomes of a complex facilitation process is creating and sustaining *the environment*
- where participants with *multiple perspectives*
- engage in a series of activities that enable the *social construction of sense making and meaning*
- and the development of *a sufficiently shared understanding of* the complex issues
- *to emerge* as the basis for
- *enough agreement* to take action.

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What is different?

Complex facilitation mirrors the principles of complexity and therefore facilitation principles include:

- Light footprint facilitation **versus** controlling direction and problem solving

- Operating at the whole of system level **versus** individual participant level

- Information is shared and socialised **versus** report-backs

- Enough agreement to take action **versus** consensus.

- https://www.complexability.com.au/events/complex-facilitation-theory-and-practice/
- Sept 21 course promotion notes

- *Comparison of facilitation methods (share)*

Discovery
Finding patterns and themes

SenseMaking
Sorting data into visual patterns and themes
& Making Meaning
Contextualising

Insights to Action
Enough agreement for action not consensus

complexabili[...]

Requisite Variety

Social Construction
Descriptive Self-awareness

Monitoring Impact

What to consider…
- Who's in the space
- Hearing all voices
- Starting with current state
- Generating data
- Expand data pool wider than SenseMaker®
- Influencing the social system (who sits with whom, moving people and/or data)

Techniques include:
- Anecdote Circles
- Linear Cynefin®
- Future Backwards
- Silent Listening
- Prompting Questions

What to consider…
- Composition of groups
- Multiple parallel activities
- Avoiding premature convergence
- Material around the room
- How to contextualise to own environment
- How information will be socialized
- How will power issues be managed

Techniques include:
- Silent Listening
- Deconstructed Cynefin ®
- Facilitation questions
- Metaphor
- Archetype Extraction

What to consider…
- Portfolio of initiatives
- Mandate and decision-making
- Risk management *(early detection and excellence in recovery)*
- Monitor *(Impact)* vs Manage *(Outcome)*
- Pattern entrainment of projects and action planning approaches/methods

Techniques include:
- Social Network Stimulation (SNS)
- PROBE Design- Identities, Constraints
- Vector Theory of Change
- Key questions: What could we change? What will we change? What impact can we monitor
- Key questions: What, So What, Now What

Facilitation 'how to's'... *Viv Read*

Maximise **cognitive equity**

Ensure **epistemic justice**

Ensure **requisite variety**

Create shared context

Change the energy

Create **descriptive self-awareness**

Hold the tension

What will you monitor?

- Epistemic justice or "knowledge justice": how can we make sure that different sorts of knowledge all get a fair amount of possibilities to contribute to important decisions

Requisite variety - The notion that a certain amount of diversity in viewpoints and perspectives is required for groups and organizations to address complex problems as they emerge

Descriptive self awareness - People are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they have themselves discovered than by those which have come into the mind of others. Pascal

Decisions come to people who can describe what is happening to them and describe what it means

Lorna Roth - original concept of "**cognitive equity**" – this is a notion of equity that does not revolve around legislation, statistics and access to institutions, but rather is an intelligent strategy for creating and promoting equity by inscribing a wider dynamic-range into common products, visual technologies, and design practices. An example is having access to a range of colour toned thumbs up emoji instead colouring all emojis 'white'

- Be a light catalyst

- Don't work alone

When you need to expand the possibilities...

- Bounded applicability - complex issues and system complexity

- Create a container. How you start matters

- Facilitate - Stay at the system level - **Manage Process, not People.** The general principle of **descriptive self-awareness** focuses on changing the context so that people discover things for themselves

- *Work it baby - No piece of data is done once* - disrupt patterns; a pattern of meaning emerges from multiple interactions over time.

- Inclusion - Epistemic justice or "knowledge justice": how can we make sure that different sorts of knowledge all get a fair amount of possibilities to contribute to important decisions?

Wanderer, your footprints are
the path, and nothing else;
wanderer, there is no path,
the path is made by walking.
Walking makes the path,
and on glancing back
one sees the path
that must never be trod again.
Wanderer, there is no path—
Just your wake in the sea.
- Antonio Machado

https://sonjablignaut.medium.com/ten-tips-for-facilitating-emergent-processes-92da3141d664

https://cynefin.io/wiki/Complex_facilitation

https://www.complexability.com.au

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