

SAP METHODOLOGY TO CUSTOMIZE THE ERP USING ABILITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL INTEGRATION

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Abstract:

Enterprise Systems (ES) are often the largest and most important Information Systems (IS) an organisation employs. Most ES are rented or bought as COTS (Commercial Off The Shelf) software. The use of COTS leads to a distinction between the development of the ES software—done by ES software providers, like SAP and Microsoft—and the implementation of ES software in a specific organisation. Implementation of ES are often associated with problems like higher implementation cost and longer implementation process than anticipated. To improve ES implementation, ES providers increasingly support their ES software by, in part computer-based, implementation methodologies. The paper present an ES implementation evaluation framework called ES Implementation Methodology-in-Action. The framework integrates two complementary views: 1) a technology view, focusing on the formalised aspects as expressed in the ES implementation methodology (the content of the methodology), and 2) a structural view, focusing situational aspects as expressed by the implementers (the users of the implementation methodology) including implementers, implementation context, ES software and other individuals participating in the implementation project.

Keywords: Enterprise Systems Implementation Methodology, Evaluation Framework, Implementation Methodology in Action, Methodology Evaluation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Using document studies and interviews with implementers we show how the framework can be used to evaluate ES implementation methodologies. We evaluate one well-known ES implementation methodology: SAP's ASAP. Enterprise systems (ES) are application software packages developed by ES software providers. ES are alternatives to custom-built software. An ES is implemented in an organisational context using a more or less formalised and adjusted implementation methodology. Most ES vendors have developed vendor specific implementation methodologies. The existing literature on ES implementation methodologies describes mainly the implementation methodology developed and recommended by one of the major ES vendors: SAP's Accelerated SAP (ASAP) methodology. The existing lack of evaluations of ES implementation methodologies reduces practitioners' and researchers' possibilities to comprehend the characteristics, the significance, and the usefulness of ES methodologies. This paper addresses this shortcoming by: 1) developing an ES Implementation Methodology-in-Action framework to be used for evaluating ES implementation methodologies, and 2) by using one case, SAP's ASAP methodology, shows how the framework can be used to evaluate specific ES implementation methodologies. Using current ES and Information Systems Development literature we through an iterative process developed an ES Implementation Methodology-in-Action framework.

2. RELATED WORK

The framework can be used to evaluate a specific ES implementation methodology or it can be used to compare different ES implementation methodologies. To illustrate the usefulness of the framework, we used the framework to evaluate a specific ES implementation methodology, namely SAP's ASAP implementation methodology. The primary data collection method for the evaluation study was semi-structured interviews with ten experienced ES implementers.

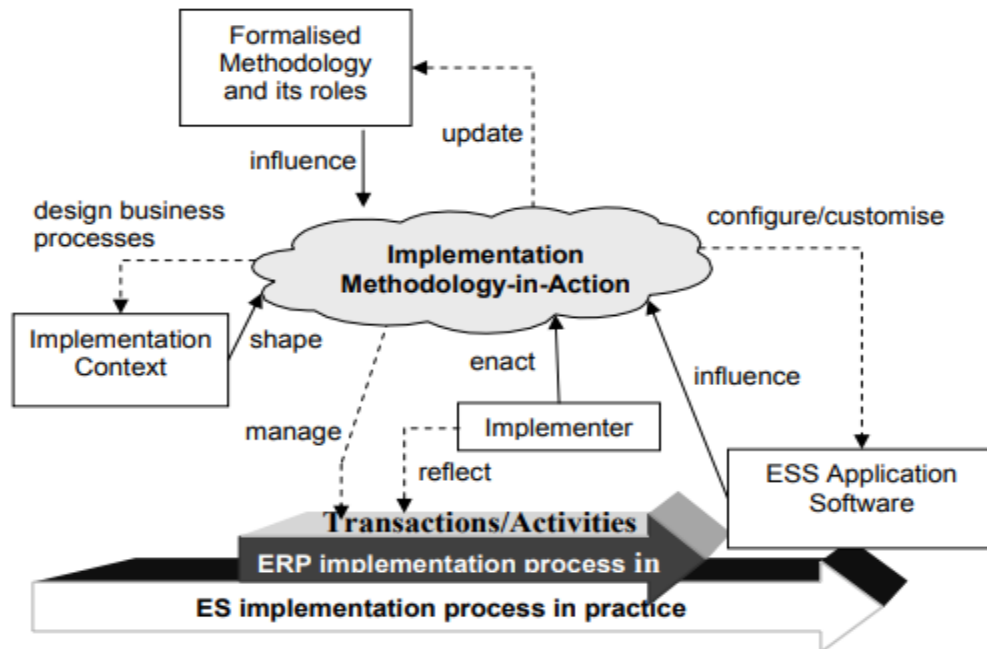


Fig.1. Implementation Methodology

The interviews elicited the respondents' views on and experiences of ASAP. The interviews were done in the fall of 2004 and each interview lasted between 30 minutes and two hours. Documentation was the second data source. Documents provided by some interviewees, SAP's web pages, the situational aspect. Each view highlights significant but different aspects of methodologies. The technology view focuses on the methodology per se and its formalised aspect, i.e. content and roles as prescribed by methodology designers. The structure view focuses situational aspects and considers how methodologies are used in practice (contextual use). The integration of these two views provides a high-level lens for conceptualising methodologies and for developing our ES Implementation Methodology-in-Action framework.

3. ANALYSIS

ASAP implementation methodology is recommended to implementation partners and customers in order to facilitate and support a structured, efficient, and accelerated implementation of SAP solutions. ASAP specifies necessary project management activities and development tasks sequences, as well as methods, techniques, tools and services. The majority of implementation partners customise, i.e. add, adapt or supplement parts of the original methodology and develop their own methodology, so-called Powered ASAP. activities and templates, which might be dynamically adapted by using integrated implementation

tools. These implementation tools are integrated with the application software and should lead to a rapid implementation and optimisation of the ES by providing guidelines and accelerators in order to manage the implementation process, configure/customise mySAP application software. In this paper, a framework which draws on current views on methodology-in-action has been developed and used to evaluate one implementation methodology (ASAP). We argue that an implementation methodology is characterised by both formalised and situational aspects. These two aspects emphasise different features. The incorporation of implementation methodology into tools integrated with the application software has the effect of structuring and standardising the implementation process by enforcing a particular set of phases, activities and necessary documentation upon implementers (Truex and Avison, 2003). In this way, the implementer is guided through the configuration process of the enterprise systems software. This may explain interviewees' perception that the configuration is less arduous than the design of solution, i.e. the process identification and modelling.

CONCLUSION

In this study we used the framework to evaluate ASAP. Further studies can use the framework to study other ES implementation methodologies in action. It can also be used in comparative studies, where different ES implementation methodologies are studied and compared.

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