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1.4 Analyse the context

What?

Through previous steps you've mapped the problem, it's causes and effects. You've also gained some insights on user behaviours and needs, and what stakeholders there are with stake and influence over the problem. Now it's time for a deeper contextual analysis.

Context includes the environment or setting in which the proposed innovation is implemented and characteristics associated with that practice setting. Context can either be a barrier or facilitator of implementation. It's a dynamic and active element that responds to and is impacted by both the new knowledge and the implementation process. It is modifiable, although often difficult to change. Therefore, the innovator has to map contextual facilitators and barriers for implementation, such as innovation readiness, resources, implementation climate, incentives and external policies and then decide how to tackle them.

Why?

When implementation has failed to achieve the desired goals, it can often be traced to the lack of contextual understanding. Too often innovators assume that they know what users and customers want or need, or simply believe their solutions and technologies are so valuable that they can address any needs or gaps.

The more insights you as an innovator gather on the context in which your innovation will be implemented, the better chances to address possible upcoming barriers and to enhance the facilitators. This is especially important in complex environments. Innovation complexity occurs when the desired change practice involves multiple steps, multiple stakeholders, and the need for actions across groups and teams in an organization.

Health care organizations are proposed to be amongst the most complex of environments for knowledge translation. For example, hierarchical reporting structures, multiple local practice cultures, disciplinary cultures and norms, external influences (political, legislative) all contribute to this complexity. These complexities can render implementation outcomes vulnerable to modification, erosion, incomplete uptake, and a return to pre-implementation behaviours.

How?

In this section we suggest contextual analysis through a number of areas as suggested below.

Step by Step!

1. Decide on what contextual areas to focus on, with highest relevance to your proposed innovation.

Examples of areas to analyse:

- **Cultures and Norms** – individual and organisational (ie. existing values, history, past experiences, risk aversion, receptiveness to change)
 - **Organisational structure** (ie. resources, hierarchies, decision making, implementation procedures, procurement, contracting)
 - **Leadership** (ie. transformational leaders, clear roles)
 - **Knowledge** (ie. previous knowledge, educational levels, elements of learning and evaluating)
 - **External influences** (ie. political, legislative, access to internet)
 - **Affected population** (ie. digital literacy, neurological diversity)
2. Trend spotting according to above areas to understand the evolving nature of the world, target users and customers, their organisations, the market and technologies.
 3. Competitor analysis which involves understanding what competing solutions there are to the problem. A competing solution could be a product with similar functionality, but it could also be a completely different way of solving the problem. Sometimes status quo could be your toughest competitor, as your target users might not want or be able to change habits or their ways of working.
 4. Investigate your own organisation's ability, looking at strengths and weaknesses such as financial situation, staff competence etc.
 5. Stakeholder insight gathering, to understand the gaps and needs of users, payers and others with influence over the innovation, and what they value.

Questions you may ask when doing your analysis:

- *Why does this problem or opportunity exist?
(use your problem tree from 1.1 to explore different causes)*
- *Who else is working on it? (what other solutions are out there)*
- *Why hasn't the problem been solved so far?*
- *What obstacles have others met when trying to address the problem?*
- *Do users and customers understand the need or opportunity?*
- *Is there value in solving it?*
- *How many would benefit from the problem being solved?*

Many of these insights can be gathered through desk-top research, but it could also be a good idea to conduct interviews with some chosen stakeholders. A good "short-cut" is to talk to those who are already working on solving the problem (entrepreneurs, healthcare staff, politicians etc) to get a deeper understanding of how they experience the problem. This is also a good way to build a network of potential partners and collaborators when it's time for you to develop your solution.

Your solution could either aim at modifying the context (which is possible but difficult) for example by influencing social norms or educating the leadership, or you design your solution so that it fits into the existing context. Both approaches would enhance the compatibility between the innovation and the context for use.

Resources/Sources:

<https://bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12913-020-4935-y>

<https://www.nccmt.ca/knowledge-repositories/search/85> :

<https://brand24.com/blog/context-analysis/>



1.3 Map stakeholders

2.1 Develop the concept

