

Tool

Service Interaction Analysis (SIA)

Area of Application	Identification and analysis of service interactions in service provision networks (in all sectors)
Objective	The clarification of service interactions and identification, and analysis of problems in complex service networks

1 Context

The “Service Interaction Analysis” (SIA) is a set of analytical tools designed to help identify as systematically as possible the services that are either being or are to be provided, and the relevant service relationships within a service network. The individual tools can also make it easier to analyse problems associated with the provision of services and with service relationships in a way that takes the distinguishing features of services into account.

The SIA can be applied to suit each individual problem situation. Thus, conducting an SIA is not a matter of following a fixed sequence of operations, but rather of focusing on different key areas in different situations.

Contexts in which the Service Interaction Analysis might be applied are settings where the service interactions between different role players in a multi-organisational context are unclear or problematic, or settings where the service programmes of individual service providers are unclear. This also includes situations where the service provided by individual organisations to others is proving difficult.

The ideal way to apply the Service Interaction Analysis is within a workshop environment featuring the most important stakeholder. The central problem to be addressed by the workshop must be identified beforehand in conjunction with the initiators of the workshop. This discussion generally reveals who the respective participants should be.

Initially, the Service Interaction Analysis was conceived as a step-by-step procedure with a predetermined sequence. However, experience in a wide variety of settings has shown that selection of the individual tools within the Service Interaction Analysis should be closely geared to the major problems identified when preparing and planning the workshop. This clearly requires some experience in applying the different tools.

2 Description of the tool(s)

The main individual tools of the SIA are the following:

- Sketch of the Service Network
- Matrix of Relations (in the Service Network)
- Service Provision (or Reception) Programmes
- Problem Analysis of Individual Services

Tool 1 Sketch of the Service Network

At the beginning of each SIA workshop, the major organisations involved in the service or service area at stake are identified, and an overview of the “service network” is drawn up. This rough sketch helps to identify the main role players, and can be used throughout the workshop as a frame of reference.

Tool 2 Matrix of Relations

Since the distribution of roles between the different actors in a service network is very often one of the main problems (at least in TC Projects), the “matrix of relations” has been designed as a means of visualising the multitude of relations in a project context. This matrix can be used to map all the relations between the different participants identified in the network. It is important here to be aware that exchange relationships between two partners or organisations may involve different levels. Examples of important levels of relations are:

- service relations,
i.e. the exchange of services, in some cases also the exchange of material goods
- institutional relations,
i.e. norms, laws and agreements regulating the exchange of goods and services
- power relations,
referring to the dominance of one of the partners within the exchange relationship
- interpersonal relations,
referring to the relations between people who the project comes into contact with at the organisational interfaces
- information relations,
accompanying all the above relations.

Obviously, time constraints mean that it is not always possible in a short workshop to completely map all relations. Mapping therefore has to be confined to the relations considered most important by the participants.

The discussions involved in drawing up the matrix usually centre on the following questions: what kind of relations exist or ought to exist between the different participants, and which relations are problematic? The results are noted down (separately) and then incorporated into the matrix. This allows difficult or missing services to be identified.

Tool 3 Service Programmes

One of the key tools of the Service Interaction Analysis (SIA) is to draw up a “Service Provision Programme”, illustrating the entire range of services provided by the organisation or organisations under review for various bodies and/or individuals. A list of all the individual services the organisation provides, plus the recipients of these services, is produced. This is then broken down and categorised by type of service and beneficiary. This tends to reveal a number of services which would otherwise often be glossed over or forgotten due to their intangible nature. These may be coordination inputs (liaising, clarifying legal issues) or information services (issuing circulars, organising information events) which, although frequently time-consuming and complex, are often not given the consideration they deserve in planning work, unlike “primary” services (such as construction and repair work in the case of a soil and water association).

An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of an organisation can be included in the Service Interaction Analysis, designed to identify problems and difficult operations within the range of services provided. Participants in the workshop (in an ideal scenario the clients themselves, if they are present) are therefore asked to rate the services listed on a five-point scale from “very weak” to “very strong”.

Tool 4 Problem Analysis

Based on this strengths and weaknesses analysis, specific problem areas or services can be selected for closer examination. The problem analysis conducted within the Service Interaction Analysis looks in more detail at those services which workshop participants have classified as problem areas. The special nature of services, i.e. the fact that as a rule they can only be provided with the collaboration of the client, must be taken into account. Interaction with the client is especially important in the case of interpersonal services, such as consultancy. This means that the problems of providing services must be seen not only from the viewpoint of the provider, but also from the angle of the beneficiary, and examined at the interface between these two parties, which is where interaction actually takes place. Thus the problem analysis looks at the problems identified on three separate levels: 1. Problems relating to the service provider; 2. Problems relating to the client; 3. Problems relating to the interface.

3 Use of the tool

The Service Interaction Analysis can be used by anyone interested in analysing a complex service provision process, and is generally applied in a workshop setting featuring the main stakeholders.

The individual steps of the SIA can be used separately in a variety of fields, such as

- inadequate composition of service programmes
- contrasting service programmes with clients' needs
- identification of duplication of services in service networks
- linking clients and service providers
- improvement of individual services
- clarification of roles and services (in service networks)

(See concepts: an illustrated version of two SIA case studies can be found in Huppert, W. and Urban, K. (1998): Analysing Service Provision instruments for development cooperation

illustrated by examples from irrigation, Schriftenreihe der GTZ No. 265, GTZ, Eschborn, Germany, 103 pp)