Article Review of "Agile Methodology Adoption Decisions"

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In the Introduction section of their article, McAvoy and Sammon (2005) state, "the purpose of this paper is to develop a model for student learning that improves a student's knowledge of the adoption of agile methods" (p. 409). A resulting product of this model and the students' increased knowledge was to "illustrate the usefulness of a decision support process (adoption assessment matrix) to determine the viability of an agile method for a specific software project" (p. 409). From the outset, McAvoy and Sammon (2005) clearly indicate that agile methods are not always the most appropriate approach to every software development project, and "the factors in the decision to adopt, or not adopt, an agile method are not addressed" (p. 409).

Prior to this class, I was not familiar with agile methodologies. Our textbook focuses on agile in terms of a Scrum framework (Saddington, 2013). This week's article helped me realize that agile is "a collection of methodologies with common core values" (p. 409) and then listed several other "agile approaches" and included Scrum as one of them. Based on the way these authors presented this information, I have a clearer understanding that the common core values are the principles described in the Agile Manifesto. Throughout this article, McAvoy and Sammon (2005) are realistic in their descriptions of software development approaches. Regarding traditional versus agile approaches, they state, "neither approach is correct in all circumstances, and the 'best fit' needs to be determined for a given circumstance. As is the case in many aspects of the industrial reality, there are no silver bullets in software development" (p. 410).

As they presented the basis for their approach in teaching the students about the agile methodologies, McAvoy and Sammon (2005) did an outstanding job organizing the eleven

critical adoption factors "to assess the suitability of a software project to the adoption of an agile methodology, as illustrated in Table 1" (p. 410). Table 1 clearly lists the factors, the description for each factor, and the references associated with each factor (p. 411). In Table 2, these factors were classified into one of four groups: "Project; Team; Customer; and Organization" (p. 411). Since McAvoy and Sammon presented this fundamental information in a logical, organized manner, it was easy to understand, as well as easy to find, when I needed to refer back to it while I was reading. In the Process description in Table 1, the acronyms "CMM" and "TL900" were the only items not fully explained.

Under the Project grouping description, the following statement stood out to me, "Mechanized systems are appropriate for stable environments, while organic systems are pertinent to conditions of change and flux… projects using agile methodologies show a close correlation with the definition of organic systems" (McAvoy and Sammon, 2005, p. 411). What came to mind with regards to "organic" was that in my experience as a software designer-developer, some software projects certainly did seem to have a life of their own. Had agile been a recognized methodology in the mid-1980's, some of those projects would have been managed differently.

The information we have read from Saddington (2013) and the information in this article regarding agile methodologies agreed overall. One thing that was somewhat different was related to team size. Rising and Janoff (2000) present, (as cited in McAvoy and Sammon, 2005) "quantifying ten as the optimum number of developers … in an agile team" (p. 411). Saddington (2013) states, "The best teams are small in size, five to nine cross-functional members work together like a charm!" (p. 10).

In all aspects, this article was well-written and relevant. I appreciate McAvoy and Sammon's research methods and how they applied their findings. In their Conclusion section, they noted "positive benefits and insights to both students and the lecturer", "a number of improvements can be introduced for future work in this research study", and "this workshop has some deficiencies which could be addressed in future planned workshops" (p. 417). Based on Saddington's (2013) description of the retrospective (p. 85), McAvoy and Sammon essentially performed an agile retrospective on their own research. How fitting!

References

McAvoy, J., & Sammon, D. (2005). Agile methodology adoption decisions: An innovative approach to teaching and learning. *Journal of Information Systems Education, 16*(4), 409-420. Retrieved from https://trevecca.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.trevecca.idm.oclc.org/docview/200156315?accountid=29083

Saddington, P. (2013). *The agile pocket guide: A quick start to making your business agile using Scrum and beyond*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.