


Awarding Great British Qualifications



Information Systems and Organisations
 Topic 6:
 Cultural, Structural and Political Aspects of IS

Scope and Coverage

This topic will cover:

- How IS affects the structure of organisation
- Centralisation and localisation of control
- Organisational politics and IS
- Structuration, what makes organisations like they are


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Learning Objectives

By the end of this topic students will be able to:

- Understand how IS can affect organisational structure, decision and control processes
- Appreciate political aspects related to IS implementation
- Be able to use the theory of 'structuration' to help analyse the impact of new IS on an organisation


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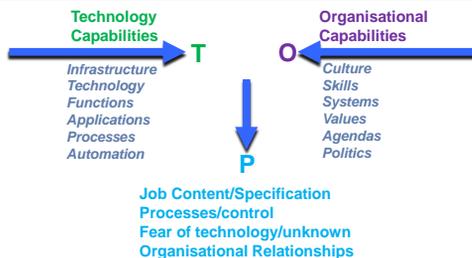

Contents

- IS and structure
- Centralised and localised decision-making
- Political and cultural aspects of IS
- 'Structuration'

- Emphasis – **People** and **Organisations**


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IS Effects on Organisations



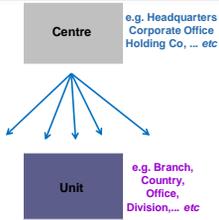

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IS Ability to Affect Structure

- Consider the mechanist/structuralist perspective on organisations
- IS and Technology can clearly affect the way an organisation is structured (organisational hierarchy) and the way things are done (processes)
- Automation of existing tasks → more efficient tasks, speeding up of processing, current/accurate information


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IS Ability to Introduce Centralising



- IS provides the means of generating, storing and communicating information and instructions that are more easily and cheaply realised and in real time.
- This reduces the need for 'unit' managers to be involved and increases the capability of making decisions centrally that can be quickly executed.



IS Effects on Decision-making

Centralised

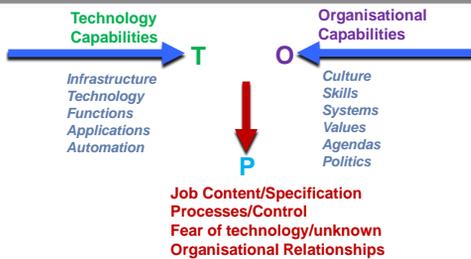
- Optimised
- Takes (some) time
- Planned
- Inflexible
- Meets organisational requirements
- Organisational efficiency

Distributed

- Sub-optimised
- Greater immediacy
- Reactive
- Flexible
- Meets environmental requirements (local market)
- Local effectiveness



IS Effects on People/Politics



Politics in Organisations

- People's behaviour in an organisation has a political nature
- Job roles, processes and organisational relationships have real and important effects upon people's lives
- Power, influence, position, or simply feelings of worth can affect the political environment – sometimes negatively
- ...this leads to political motives and actions



Bases of Power 1

- Coercive
 - Ability to instruct and apply sanctions (by managers and supervisors)
- Reward
 - Ability to direct resources of the organisation in particular directions (by managers/supervisors)
- Technical expertise
 - Having specialist information/skills



Bases of Power 2

- Administrative expertise
 - Control over the operation of particular policies and procedures (by managers/supervisors)
- Referent
 - Consistent with accepted values and culture of the organisation



Organisational Culture

- Many ways to describe organisational culture
 - Symbols, Myths, Stories
 - Structures, Processes, Rules
 - Behaviours, Values, Attitudes (to technology?)
- A whole field of study – complicated and overlaid by 'national' culture
- "The way we do things in this organisation"



Examples

- Old organisation - There are rules/ways of working, but difficult to find these documented anywhere. The usual way of finding the accepted ways of doing a task is to find a particular named person and talk to them
- New organisation - There are rules/ways of working, and these are accessible from the desktop of your PC via the intranet
- You move to work in a new organisation. It is in the same business as the organisation you have left, and the same type of technology – but after working there a while you recognise subtle differences



Descriptions of Culture

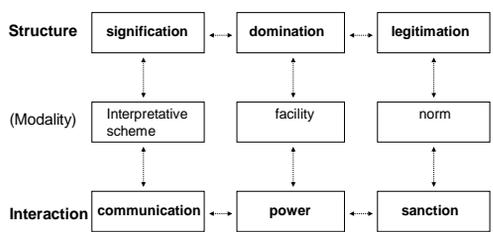


Organisational Theory

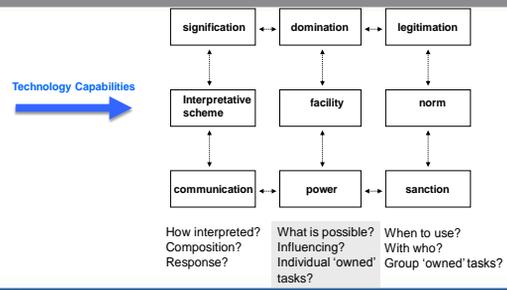
- Giddens Theory suggests:
 - Individuals and social structures are inter-related
 - Structures are produced by the acts of people
 - Social structures are: traditions, moral codes, ways of doing things
 - Social structures can be changed, modified, reproduced differently
- Technology also impacts on social structures
- Organisations are examples of social structures



Structuration



Technology Application



Example of Technology and the 'Interpretative Scheme' Modality

- In an online discussion forum, an issue was raised concerning whether contributions to the forum should be considered 'copyright' of the creator. Some members of the group debated in earnest; others were perplexed by this issue, believing that it was simply an electronically mediated 'virtual' discussion and the contributions were subject to an informal interpretation.....
- **What do you think?**



Example of Technology and the 'Facility' Modality

- IS has the ability to make centralised decision-making easier - clearly affecting facilities available for 'domination' and exercise of power
- Now note that: facilities generally relate to the mechanist view of organisations where we try to achieve efficiency. Structuration shows whatever the facility (IS) we employ, there is a relationship to both meanings and norms of behaviours which we should not ignore



References

- Boddy, D., Boonstra ,A., Kennedy, G. (2008) *Managing Information Systems : strategy and organisation* 3rd ed. FT Pearson. ISBN-13: 978-0273 -71681-5XXX
- Lamsal, M. (2012) '*The Structuration Approach of Anthony Giddens*' *Himalayan Journal of Sociology & Antropology* 5 pp.111-122
- Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society* (Oxford: Polity Press).



Topic 6 – Cultural, Structural and Political Aspects of IS

Any Questions?