

Editor's Introduction

Considering the Role of Culture in Information Systems Research

Since the inauguration of the journal, we have received many encouraging feedbacks. A major issue frequently been raised is how can the journal reflect the features of information systems (IS) research and practice in the Asia Pacific Region. Although I do not think that I am in the right position to specify the unique features of IS research in the region, the journal can do certain things to facilitate the formation of our regional features. The first thing that we can do is to increase the publication of research findings conducted in Asia Pacific. This does not mean that we will give up our publication quality. Instead, grounding on regional data and issues allows our research findings to be more relevant to the local community.

In addition to the relevance of research issues, PAJAIS also would like to address more cultural issues. The IS area is different from computer science in that IS deals with human as well as information technology. Whenever we have human involved in a research project, culture becomes a factor that cannot be ignored. As a simple example, the red color signals lucky in Chinese culture, but is a color of alert in some other countries. The management styles can be very different in China than those in the US. The Asia Pacific region is very unique in that the region includes countries with very diverse cultural orientations. This provides a rich study ground for sensitive researchers.

Recently, we have seen more culture-related papers. For example, Kappos and Rivard (2008) in their *MIS Quarterly* paper proposed a three-perspective model to show the relationships between culture, the development and use processes, and an information system. Culture may play two different roles. On the one hand, culture can influence and moderate IS implementation and use processes. On the other hand, culture can also be affected by the implementation and use of information systems. As information systems are typically considered to be rational, its adoption and use would be different in a rule-based society from that in a relation-based society. However, most current research seems to ignore this factor.

Another issue that needs to be observed is how to choose proper culture-related construct in IS research. Culture is a latent factor. It affects the daily thinking and behavior

of the people, but can hardly be described explicitly. Hofstede's national culture framework can help differentiate cultural difference at the macro level but may not be completely suitable for IS research because most business information systems deal with organizations and individuals. In addition, organizations can provide incentives and other mechanisms to change employee behavior for achieving organizational goals. These management mechanisms may mitigate the effect of cultural difference. Therefore, how can culture be properly defined and included in IS research is an interesting unsolved issue.

It may affect the generalizability of some research findings, and even the validity of certain theories if culture is not included in a research. For example, current literature tells us that user participation is important for successful implementation. In a large centralized bank with thousands of branches, how can user participation be implemented and who should be involved? Would the participative approach work better than a centralized control approach in such a context?

Of course, culture is not the only under-investigated issue in current IS research. There are plenty of creative issues related to the Asia Pacific region that our scholars can explore and publish. PAJAIS will be much more sensitive to this kind of issues and interests.

In this issue, four articles are published. The first one by Lee and Myers uses the theory of organizational defensive routines to explain the failure in implementing enterprise systems. The second paper by Liu and Wang stresses the control mechanism in knowledge management and includes organizational culture as a major component. The third article by Hung et al. reports the publication productivity of Asia Pacific authors in two popular journals: *Decision Support Systems* and *Information & Management*. Many young scholars in this region have built their careers on these two journals. The fourth article by Sato et al. provides insight into information systems research in Japan. PAJAIS certainly welcomes more contributions from Japanese authors in the future.

Ting-Peng Liang

Editor-in-Chief

Visiting Professor, City University of Hong Kong and

National Chair Professor, National Sun Yat-Sen University