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PANEL 7 MODELS FOR THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS CURRICULUM: WHArS HAPPENING INTERNATIONALLY?

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OVERVIEW

A model curriculum may affect your work as an educator, the advancement possibilities for your graduates, and the content of textbooks available to you. Will curriculum innovations in other parts of the world affect you? Is there a universal curriculum or is every country different?

A model information systems curriculum for IS specialists defines a standard content and a typical set of courses to achieve it. The model is based on assumptions about work the students will do upon graduation, background of those entering a program, and appropriate pedagogy. There are a number of model curriculum initiatives in progress with international implications. The panel will explore several of these efforts and look at issues related to standard curricula. Some of the issues are impact of national/cultural differences and portability of programs, curriculum stakeholders, convergence of models, education for the past or future, and value to individual schools.

FOUR MODEL CURRICULUM INITIATIVES IN PROGRESS

There are a number of curriculum efforts in progress. This panel will explore four important initiatives that illustrate different approaches. All of these initiatives have international implications. Of special interest is the informal cooperation between ACM and DPMA that may result in some convergence of these two well-known models.

- **ACM:** The ACM Information Systems Curriculum was the first widely recognized standard curriculum model. First published in 1972, it was revised in 1982 and a revision is in progress. Development of the curriculum followed an expert model with a small group of faculty and scholarly practitioners participating. The basic ACM curriculum was a graduate degree program; a modified version was published as an undergraduate degree program.

- **DPMA:** The first DPMA curriculum was published in 1981; there was a revision in 1986. The curriculum is currently under a third revision. The Data Processing Management Association curriculum was heavily influenced by practitioner input. There is both a two-year and a four-year undergraduate model. DPMA has strongly supported schools that adopt the curriculum and has encouraged textbooks for the model courses.

- **CEMS:** The Community of European Management Schools is a coalition of leading management schools that are cooperating in standardizing parts of the curriculum. One objective is to encourage students to expand their educational experience by taking courses at member sites. One committee is exploring a standard information systems curriculum.

- **IFIP/BCS:** The International Federation for Information Processing Technical Committee for Education, with strong participation from the British Computer Society, developed a professional degree program with a practice requirement as part of the curriculum. Developed in 1974, the curriculum was revised and published in 1987.

CRITICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING MODEL CURRICULUM DESIGN

Model curricula are not value free. They reflect the opinions, experience, and objectives of those providing the energy and initiative for development. The support for a curriculum may come from a professional organization (such as

DPMA), a group of faculty associated wit a professional organization (such as ACM), a consortium (such as CEMS), or a school with a significant reputation that takes an initiative.

Almost all model curriculum efforts have involved significant organizational support. This is required not only for the assembling of experts and preparation of documents but also for dissemination of results. The ability of the sponsoring group or organization to disseminate the results has a major impact on acceptance.

In most schools, the teaching requirements demand that courses have good pedagogical materials in the form of textbooks, cases, software, etc. An innovative curriculum may elicit interest but will not be widely adopted unless appropriate supporting materials become available.

ISSUES WITH MODEL CURRICULA

There are several issues that affect the value and acceptance of a model curriculum. They also affect the possibility for convergence of curriculum designs.

1. National and cultural differences.

2. The interests of stakeholders who supported the development of the curriculum.

3. Pedagogical requirements and textbook support.

4. Perceptions of the future for graduates of information system degree programs.

5. Models that prepare students for the past versus models that speculate on future developments.

IMPLICATIONS OF MODEL CURRICULUM INITIATIVES
FOR FACULTY AND SCHOOLS

This panel is not intended as abstract debate. What is happening in these curriculum initiatives is likely to significantly affect you. There is reasonable agreement that the educational needs for information systems specialists are changing because the IS function is changing. It is possible that we need a new generation of curricula and supporting materials. The initiatives currently under way are likely to affect the courses you teach and the textbooks you use.