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Panel: Coordinating the Management of IS in Higher Education

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Panel: Co-ordinating the management of IS in Higher Education.

Chair: D.K.Allen
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I. DESCRIPTION

The co-ordinated development of ICTs within the HEI context is particularly problematic. The HEI provides a setting where there are numerous interest groups and strong organisational cultures. An often-used metaphor is that universities are like collections of fiefdoms where barons (and baronesses) are in charge of their own, independent realms, and vigorously defend their territories. It would seem that universities are fundamentally different from business organisations. The co-ordinated development of IS within this context provides a number of distinct challenges. The panel will explore these challenges outlining the implications of recent research in this area for researchers and practitioners.

Allen and Kern will present the first paper reporting on the embryonic attempts by three British Universities to outsource their ICT. The paper will highlight the cultural, power and political issues that arose when public sector institutions follow the example of private sector organisations core competency drive – by outsourcing to a third party service supplier. Outsourcing is put forward the solution to all Higher Education's co-ordination, management, technology (updates and innovation), and internal power and political struggles. Allen and Kern will debate the paradox that while ICT is seen as a rationalising act, cleansing the organisation of a political problem and passing it to a third party. The reality is that it is most effectively managed through careful attention to and involvement in organisational politics. Politics, rather than being "the darker side of the organisation" or as Warren Bennis described it 'the organisation's last dirty secret' is of critical importance. Organisations which view politics (as mainstream literature suggests) as 'insiders not always being obedient' or of power being illegitimate, informal, dysfunctional, primarily coercive, negative, and operating outside the realm of authority is seen as misguided.

Newman will discuss the issue of developing a common system across HE Establishments. A variety of experiences in software development processes between a HE organisation (the University of Helsinki) and several software vendors over a decade-long period will be described and interpreted. Three information systems histories will be presented as case examples. A social process model will be used to describe the relationships between key actors within the client organisation while a transaction cost framework is used to explain the joint forms of the relationships between the client and the vendors. The resulting model depicts in a concise way how the relationships have evolved and stabilised over time.

Bob O'Keefe will act as discussant and David Allen as Panel Chair.

II. PANEL MEMBERS

DAVID ALLEN is a lecturer in information systems and information management in the Information Systems Institute at the University of Salford. His research focuses on information and information systems strategy and organisational change processes. An important element of his research focuses on these processes within a HEI context.

THOMAS KERN is assistant professor for information management at the Rotterdam School of Management. He graduated in 1999 with a DPhil in MIS from Christ Church, University of Oxford and has been since 1995 a research affiliate with the Oxford Institute of Information Management at Templeton College. Thomas is well known for his work on IS outsourcing. E-mail: t.kern@fac.fbk.eur.nl

MICHAEL NEWMAN is a Reader in the School of Accounting and Finance at the University of Manchester and Professor of Information Systems at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. Dr. Newman's research focuses on the process of information systems development, and he has conducted many empirical studies in a variety of organisational settings. E-mail: msrysmn@fs1.acc.man.ac.uk

BOB O'KEEFE is Professor of Information Management in the Department of Information Systems & Computing at Brunel University, and an associate faculty member at Henley Management College. His present interest is the use of Internetworking to support customer and consumer decision making. He is the co-author of the Wiley book entitled *Re-wiring Business*. He is co-editor of the European Journal of Information Systems E-mail: Bob.OKeefe@brunel.ac.uk