

Abstract

Information system (IS) implementation is a complex process that has been extensively studied. Nevertheless, our knowledge about the ways IS become integrated with organizational contexts and work practices is limited, and organizations struggle to effectively adopt new systems. While some research shows that it is implementation failures, not technological shortcomings that are the major cause of organizations' difficulties to achieve the intended impacts of the IS, other research points to the increasing complexities involved in modern information technology (IT) and IT use as the major cause. Because modern technology play an increasingly significant role in organizations and society at large it is important to improve our understanding and managerial practices related to implementing them.

On this background, the overall purpose of this thesis is to contribute to our understanding of how managers can effectively implement contemporary IS. Three specific choices have been made to address this challenge. First, the thesis investigates implementation of a particular form of contemporary IS, i.e. organizational networking systems, that integrates human activities in new ways across boundaries, creating new interdependencies within and between organizational areas. Second, the thesis has investigated the implementation of these systems through case studies in two organizational contexts supporting an in-depth understanding of the complexities involved in such processes. Third, the two cases of IS implementation have been studied through the lens of different theories to help build a more comprehensive understanding of the problems involved and possible actions that can be adopted to facilitate effective implementation outcomes. More specifically, recent studies suggest that adoption of a contextual approach based on a process perspective can help us understand and further guide managers towards successful IS implementation. In process theories, the concept of agency is essential. While actions drive processes, processes cannot be explained solely by individual or collective agency. Actions are embedded in contexts that shape and are shaped by agents. The thesis has therefore adopted theoretical lenses that emphasize how the intertwined relationship between agency and context unfolds over time to address the following research questions:

1. What is the role of human agency and technology in implementation of organizational networking systems?
2. What is the role of context in implementation of organizational networking systems?

These questions are researched based on data from a local government and a hospital in which organizational network systems were implemented. The study leads to three major findings contributing to our *understanding* of implementation of networking systems:

- Critical events are key building blocks in developing a contextual understanding of implementation of organizational networking systems.
- Many different forms of human agency are driving forces in implementation of organizational networking systems.
- Planning and follow-up strategies, trial-and-error strategies, as well as improvisational strategies play important roles in implementation of organizational networking systems.

The thesis discusses how these findings relate to the literature on IS implementation and implications they have for *managing* such processes. Principal implications concern leveraging critical events as well as human agency during IS implementation, and adopting various complementary strategies to support IS implementation.

Keywords: *IS Implementation, Contextual approach, Process perspective, Agency, Organizational change, Managing IS implementation processes*

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