

Can the field of MIS be disciplined?

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Main Findings

The preoccupation and perceptions about MIS being a scientific field, the authors attempted to find that most models in the field of MIS have been based on inappropriate monistic view of science.

Firstly, that this preoccupation of whether MIS was a science field, was legitimate and a necessary epistemological quest. Secondly, this research found that MIS is a fragmented field or pluralistic scientific field.

Quality of the Research

The research question and objective were not stated clearly, until I read through half-way in the paper only did I understand what the research was all about. This paper lacks an introduction section that would bring the reader into the same realm of the authors. As simplistic, the research question might be, it was necessary for the author(s) to explain what type of discipline they going to apply in considering their research, to a common man on the street this means absolutely nothing.

The research attempts to evaluate if MIS qualifies to be treated as a science discipline or otherwise.

The Research Method

The research team used firstly, the Kuhn's Model, to try using this model defined paradigms or concepts, to find if MIS can be qualified as a science discipline. The findings of this experiment included firstly; the model was found to be too restrictive to bring valuable contribution to the MIS field. Secondly; the advent of a paradigm did not necessarily guarantee any progress in the field. Thirdly, the model itself contained seeds for the elaboration of a more appropriate model which could be extracted from recent contribution in the philosophy of science.

In a second attempt, another model was used to ascertain how MIS would fit into the realm of science. The Whitley Model, which has more leaning to the social sciences than natural sciences like biology, to the intellectual enterprise carried out by scientists. The Whitley model introduced notions of cognitive and social institutionalization of science fields into the argument.

The two (2) could not satisfactorily give a positive or negative result to the argument whether MIS has to be classified as a science field. I do argue though that MIS has adequate frameworks within its body of knowledge that can be used to settle this argument. MIS might be fragmented, according to Culman and Swanson (1986)

" Davis suggests that MIS represents the intersection of six fields of knowledge: computer science, behavioural science, decision science, organisation and management, organisational function and accounting"

Conclusion

As much as the two models depicted above had been used for two different perspectives of proving whether MIS is a science field, I do not find this research really necessary. The MIS discipline in its approach to matters of knowledge might have been defined long time ago, and I agree knowledge changes over time, this does not change the definition of what MIS is, it is a science field.

“One of the challenges of developing a framework is to delimit the area of inquiry. Is information management a discipline in its own right, or is information management several disciplines? Little research has examined information management in a disciplinary perspective. It is argued that an exploration of the components of a discipline is important as a foundation for development of a conceptual framework for information management” Madsen (2013).

Lastly, more research is needed to explore the independence of MIS as discipline and a science in its own right.

References

Culnan, M.J., and Swanson, E.B. Research in management information systems, 1980-1984: points of work and reference. MIS (2. IO, 3 (Sept. 1986), 288-302.

Madsen, 2013, Disciplinary Perspectives on Information Management, Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, Volume 73, 27 February 2013, Pages 534-537