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STRUCTURATIONAL ANALYSIS OF COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EIS BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND JAPAN

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Information systems such as executive information systems (EIS) are high risk as evidenced by the high percentage of organizations that have reported EIS failures (Rainer et al. 1995). Developers and users of advanced information systems hold high hopes for their potential to change organizations and work for the better, but actual changes often do not occur, or occur inconsistently (DeSanctis and Poole 1994).

Two schools of thought have dominated the study of information technology (IT) and organizational change. Early research studies assumed technology to be an objective, external force that would have deterministic impacts on organizational properties; later researchers focused on the human aspect of technology, seeing it as the outcome of strategic choice and social action (Orlikowski 1992).

As either view is incomplete, an interactive view was advocated by a few researchers such as Orlikowski and DeSanctis and Poole. Although there is growing interest in interactive analyses of IT, actual accounts are very sparse.

Giddens' (1979, 1984) structuration theory (ST) represents one of the most influential developments in social theory in recent years and focuses on the dialectical interplay between agency and structures. ST has begun to be used in a few recent research studies of IT and organizations. However, Garnsey and Kelly (1995) revealed that the use of this theory in empirical research can be fraught with difficulty and that misinterpretations of features of ST are not uncommon. The premise of this study is that there is still a need for reevaluating ST in the IT field. The intention is to use the theory to find the potential of ST by conducting a comparative study of EISs between the UK and Japan.

Originally, the authors independently conducted detailed interviews with people in individual companies to investigate the situation of EISs in the United Kingdom (Fitzgerald 1992) and Japan (Kosaka 1993, 1995). It was found that EISs emerged very differently in each country although the purposes of the systems were similar. Relatively speaking, EISs in the United Kingdom emerged mostly as the systems rationalization of the existing information channels, while EISs in Japan emerged as a new channel, which had not existed before, that often provided detailed operational information of a non-monetary basis. Furthermore, cultural differences between the United Kingdom and Japan are also very large, as claimed by Clegg (1990), who characteristically describes United Kingdom organizations as modern and Japanese organizations as post-modern.

The differences of EISs and cultures between the two are so large that they were considered excellent material for the study of structuration of EISs and also to examine the potential of ST in IT and organizations. In order to make a comparative study, a generic success case was created for each country from the data based on direct interviews.

The analysis of the cases with the use of ST were successful to such an extent that the dynamic interplay between the action and structure (knowledge and resources) of people was captured, the interaction between developers and users was described, and the cultural differences were incorporated. This implies that ST can guide research, which, when applied, might increase the likelihood that IT would be employed with more desirable consequences for users and developers.

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