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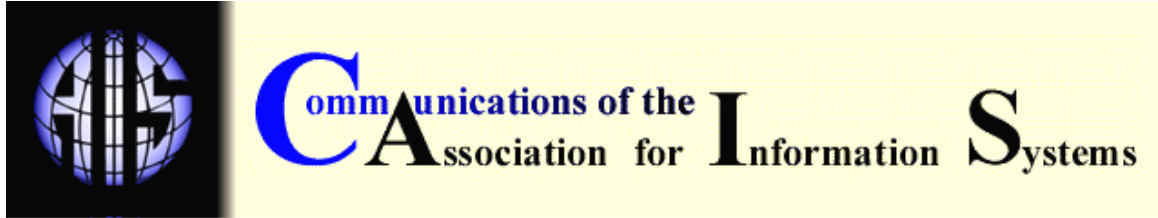
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THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE IN HONG KONG

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks to the history of the development of Information Systems in Hong Kong as a contextual base for examining the Information Systems discipline in Hong Kong. The historical analysis highlights the newness of Information Systems as an academic discipline in Hong Kong, dating back little more than 20 years. The study reports on data from eight of the ten universities in Hong Kong. All Information Systems groups in Hong Kong universities are shown to be located in business schools, with almost all groups having no separate Information Systems identity. Few Information Systems academics in Hong Kong are reported to have senior faculty positions. In keeping with the placement of Information Systems groups, and reflective of Hong Kong's status as a world finance centre, Information Systems curricula are shown to have a level of consistency across the state, with a heavy business component. By contrast, the study reports diversity in Information Systems research topics and research methods. Although the data analysed suggests that the Information Systems discipline is immature in Hong Kong, evidence of a strong turnaround in ICT in Hong Kong and the recent establishment of the Hong Kong Association for Information Systems suggest a basis for boosting the status of Information Systems as a discipline in Hong Kong universities.

Keywords: Information Systems, IS discipline, Hong Kong universities, case study

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the past, the present, and the future state of Information Systems (IS) as an academic discipline in universities in Hong Kong, based on interviews conducted with IS department heads and IS group leaders in universities in Hong Kong. We will first state the objective, the scope, and the research method of the study. With that, we will give a chronology of the development of the IS discipline in Hong Kong. Then, the current status of IS as an academic discipline in terms of administrative placement, teaching and curriculum, research areas/interests, and professional development and activities is presented. The paper concludes with emerging challenges and opportunities for IS in Hong Kong.

II. OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND RESEARCH METHOD OF THIS STUDY

The main objective of this study is to document the development of the IS discipline in Hong Kong. By reviewing the past and the present of the discipline, we aim to identify the potential

challenges and opportunities of IS to further develop as a distinct academic discipline in Hong Kong universities.

We have interviewed eight IS colleagues, as listed in Table 1. Altogether, these colleagues represent about 90 percent of the IS faculty strength, the IS programs and the IS students in Hong Kong. There is no representative from the Hong Kong Baptist University because we failed to work out a feasible timeslot with the IS group leader to do the interview during the study period. Open University of Hong Kong is also missing in the table. This university offers programs mainly by distance learning, although more recently they have introduced a limited number of face-to-face, full-time undergraduate programs. The Open University of Hong Kong has a small IS group (with three colleagues who are teaching-oriented) in the School of Business and Administration.

Table 1. Interviewees Information

School	Name	Position
Chinese University of Hong Kong	Prof. Vincent Lai	Professor
City University of Hong Kong	Prof. K.K. Wei	Department Head and Professor (Chair)
Hong Kong Institute of Education	Dr. Eugenia Ng	Senior Lecturer and former Deputy Head of Department
Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, Shatin	Prof. Simpson Poon	Head of Department of Business Administration
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Dr. Eric Ngai	Associate Professor
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	Prof. K.Y. Tam	Chair Professor and former Head of Department
Lingnan University	Dr. Irene Kwan	Associate Professor
The University of Hong Kong	Dr. Benjamin Yen	Associate Professor

III. HONG KONG

To better understand the development of the IS discipline in Hong Kong, it is useful to know a little about the region. Hong Kong has a population of almost 7 million and a land area of a mere 1,100 square kilometres. It includes some 262 outlying islands. Chinese and English are the official languages. Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997, after a century and a half of British administration. Under Hong Kong's constitutional document, the Basic Law, the existing economic, legal and social systems will be maintained for 50 years. Hong Kong is the world's 11th-largest trading economy. The education system is very similar to that of the United Kingdom. About 17,000 new, full-time students enter undergraduate degree programs in Hong Kong each year.¹

¹ Figures obtained from the Hong Kong Government Web site at http://www.info.gov.hk/gja/general/200503/09/lc9_1e.pdf

IV. A CHRONOLOGY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IS DISCIPLINE IN HONG KONG

IS is a very young academic discipline in Hong Kong. The first IS department was established in 1990 at the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong (which became City University of Hong Kong in 1994). The department was situated in the faculty of business, with only 16 faculty members, offering a higher diploma and a postgraduate diploma. Over its 16-year history, the department has grown steadily in terms of faculty strength, number of students, and program offerings. As of end of 2005, it had over 30 IS faculty members/teaching staff, and over 700 students studying in eight different programs at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, including more than 30 students in its MPhil and PhD programs. It is the largest IS department in Hong Kong today.

In the summer of 1992, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology founded the second IS department in Hong Kong; the Department of Business Information Systems within its business school, originally with five faculty members recruited from the U.S., the U.K., and Canada. One year later, the department was restructured and renamed - Department of Information and Systems Management, to reflect its merger within a single department with the Management Science/Operations Research, Operations Management, and Statistics groups. As of end of 2005, the department had around a dozen IS faculty members teaching about 220 students in three IS programs (one at each level - undergraduate, masters and MPhil/PhD). It had about 20 IS research students studying towards their MPhil/PhD degrees.

The third IS group in Hong Kong was also established in the early 1990s, at Hong Kong Polytechnic (which became Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 1994) when the department of computing was moved from the engineering school to the business school of the institution. The group was large for the time, with more than a dozen teachers working with another three-dozen computer scientists in the department. Interestingly, the business school was called the Faculty of Business and Information Systems even though there was not a department of IS. The group was disbanded in the mid-1990s when several of the key/senior faculty members in the group left the university. The computing department moved back to the engineering school and the business school was renamed Faculty of Business. A small IS group was reestablished in the business school in early 2000, with three IS colleagues located within the department of management and marketing. As of end 2005, though, there were no IS programs at either undergraduate or masters' levels, there were 30-40 students taking an IT management specialization in the MBA program. Hong Kong Polytechnic University also had a small PhD program in IS, with an intake of around three to four students each year (approximately three PhD students per staff member).

Two of the more established (older) universities in Hong Kong, i.e., the University of Hong Kong (founded in 1911) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (founded in 1964) have never had an IS department and did not have an IS group until quite recently.

The University of Hong Kong, though offering IS courses for more than 20 years (mainly as service courses to both undergraduate and masters' students and delivered by one or two academic staff in the department of management studies, then school of business), did not have an IS group until the early 1990s when the university decided to develop one in the department of computer science. With a couple of fresh PhD graduates from North America, the department began to offer an IS stream in the undergraduate computer science program and two years later changed its name to Department of Computer Science and Information Systems (CSIS). The group and the IS program, however, did not work with the rest of the department as well as planned. In 1999, another IS group began to develop in the business school. In 2000, the business school and the computer science department joined hands and launched a BBA(IS)/BEng(CS) double-degree program taking in approximately 40 students per year. Like Hong Kong Polytechnic University, there is no IS program at the masters level, but quite a few IS courses are offered in the MBA program. In summer 2005, the CSIS department changed its name back to Department of Computer Science and all IS courses in the university were offered by the IS group in the business school. As of end of 2005, the IS group had seven faculty members with about 120 undergraduate students and 10 MPhil/PhD students in IS.

The development of the IS discipline and the IS group at the Chinese University of Hong Kong are quite similar to those at University of Hong Kong. A small group, only two academics, was formed in the Department of Systems Engineering and Engineering Management in the mid-1990s. Both faculty received their PhD degrees in the U.S. and worked at the Department of Computer Science of the University of Hong Kong before moving to Chinese University of Hong Kong. However, the group has never grown. Rather, another IS group developed within the Department of Decision Sciences and Managerial Economics of the business school in the mid-1990s. From this group, an IS concentration within the BBA program was offered in the mid-1990s, and two MSc programs were launched in early 2000. As of the end of 2005, the IS group had about 120 undergraduate students, 100 MSc students and about 10 MPhil/PhD students.

There are several other IS groups in other universities and tertiary institutions in Hong Kong, including Hong Kong Baptist University, Lingnan University, Hong Kong Institute of Education and Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education. They are, in general, smaller, in terms of both number of faculty members (fewer than five) and number of students (fewer than 50). The group at Hong Kong Baptist University is located within the Department of Finance and Decision Sciences, while the group at Lingnan University is part of the Department of Computing and Decision Sciences (which was named Department of Information Systems from 1998 to 2003). Both offer an IS concentration with their BBA programs. Neither Hong Kong Institute of Education nor Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education offers any formal IS program at undergraduate degree level.

V. CURRENT STATUS OF IS AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

We next consider the relative size and administrative placement of IS within universities in Hong Kong, distinctive features of IS curriculum, research foci, and professional development and related activities.

RELATIVE SIZE AND ADMINISTRATIVE PLACEMENT OF IS

As briefly presented above, and as shown in Table 2, there are around 90 IS academics in Hong Kong, with one-third being teaching-oriented. City University of Hong Kong has the largest group, with more than two-dozen research-oriented faculty members and seven teaching-oriented staff. Hong Kong University of Science and Technology is next in size, with 15 IS faculty members in the department. The University of Hong Kong has seven and each of Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Lingnan University has a small group of four. Both Hong Kong Institute of Education and Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education have 10, all teaching-oriented. As expected, larger groups teach more students, with teacher-student ratios ranging from 1:6 (Lingnan University) to 1:30 (Chinese University of Hong Kong).

There are at least three distinctive features of the IS groups in Hong Kong. First, although they might be with different departments, they are all located in business schools. This is quite different from other parts of the Pacific-Asia Region, such as Australia and Singapore. Second, of all the IS groups in Hong Kong, only City University of Hong Kong has a clear and separate identity within the university; all others are located together with colleagues in other disciplines. A point to note is that several groups did have a separate identity in the past, but had more recently been merged with other groups. For instance, at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, IS changed from Department of Business Information Systems, to Department of Information and Systems Management; at Lingnan University, from Department of Information Systems, to Department of Computing and Decision Sciences; and at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, from Department of Information Technology, to Department of Mathematics, Science, Social Sciences and Technology. Third, of all the 90 IS faculty members, only three are at the Chair Professorship level (one of whom received his Chair in summer 2005). This reflects the relatively "weak" strength of the IS groups in Hong Kong universities.

Table 2. Faculty Strength and Administrative Placement of IS

School	Faculty Strength	Number of Students	Administrative Placement
City University of Hong Kong	25 faculty members and 7 teaching staff	UG: 400 Masters: 250 Research: 30	Department of IS, Faculty of Business
Chinese University of Hong Kong	4 faculty members and 2 teaching staff	UG: 120 Masters: 50 Research: 10	Department of Decision Sciences & Managerial Economics, Faculty of Business Administration
Hong Kong Institute of Education	10 teaching staff	Programs are mainly in Education	Department of Mathematics, Science, Social Sciences and Technology, Faculty of Languages, Arts & Sciences
The University of Hong Kong	7 faculty members	UG: 120 Masters: 0 Research: 10	School of Business, Faculty of Business & Economics
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	13 faculty members and 2 teaching staff	UG: 120 Masters: 80 Research: 20	Department of Information & Systems Management, School of Business & Management
Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, Shatin	10 teaching staff	Programs are at sub-degree level	Department of Business Administration
Lingnan University	4 faculty members	UG: 20 Masters: 0 Research: <5	Department of Computing & Decision Sciences, Faculty of Business
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	4 faculty members	UG: 0 Masters: 40 Research: 15	Department of Management & Marketing, Faculty of Business

As for IS enrolment, all programs have faced declining demand and negative growth in recent years in terms of the number of applications and/or actual final intakes, largely because of the downturn of the economy, and thus IS/IT employment. The worst case was at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, in which the IS major within the BBA program was closed in 2005 owing to low enrolment. On a more positive note, a healthy recovery is evidenced in 2006, as reflected in increased applications to IS programs. For example, the University of Hong Kong program in 2006 received more than double the applications received in the previous year. A main reason is perhaps the strong economic recovery of Hong Kong since 2005. Many businesses have rebounded and therefore have invested more in IS/IT and hired more IS/IT graduates. Hong Kong Polytechnic University is considering (re-)introducing an IS minor in their BBA program; City University of Hong Kong is planning a new stream called Global Business Systems Management,

under the BBA in IS program; and Lingnan University is planning to add more courses in IT-based logistics and supply chain management.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF IS CURRICULA

In terms of IS programs offered by Hong Kong universities, these are quite “standard” and comparable with those in North America. As shown in Table 3, programs offered by various universities are similar and, as expected, larger groups (such as City University of Hong Kong) offer more programs. Two distinctive features are worth mentioning. First, at the undergraduate

Table 3. IS Programs Offered in Hong Kong Universities

School	Program Offered
City University of Hong Kong	UG: BBA in IS; BBA in Electronic Commerce Masters: MSc in Electronic Commerce; MA in Electronic Business; MA in IS Management; MA in IS Development Research: MPhil/PhD
Chinese University of Hong Kong	UG: BBA with concentration in IS Masters: MSc in E-Business Management; MSc in IT Management Research: MPhil/PhD
Hong Kong Institute of Education	Programs are mainly in Education
The University of Hong Kong	UG: BBA in IS Masters: MSc in Electronic Commerce offered by Faculty of Engineering Research: MPhil/PhD
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	UG: BBA in IS Masters: MSc in IS Management Research: MPhil/PhD
Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, Shatin	Programs are at sub-degree level
Lingnan University	UG: BBA with IS stream Masters: Nil. Research: MPhil/PhD
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	UG: Nil. Masters: MBA with specialization in IT Management Research: MPhil/PhD

level, all programs are within the BBA curriculum, which requires students to study both the business/management side and the technical side of the subject. This, to a certain extent, reflects the characteristics of designing an IS curriculum with a strong emphasis on business/management skills in Hong Kong, which is a major international business and financial centre in the world. Students have to be equipped with knowledge and skills in both business and technical areas. Second, at the masters' level, the foci shift to either management of IS/IT or electronic business/commerce. The former focus, again, reflects the Hong Kong characteristics of being an international business centre with a consequent strong demand in the area of IS/IT management. The latter focus indicates that despite the Internet bubble burst, electronic business/commerce is still a major focus in Hong Kong. This is perhaps owing to its proximity to the Mainland China, the looming economic powerhouse of the 21st century, and its geographical and economic central position in the Pacific-Asia Region.

IS RESEARCH

Unlike the relatively homogenous IS coursework programs offered by institutions in Hong Kong, IS research is more diverse. Table 4 summarises major foci of IS research in Hong Kong universities, and main research methods/approaches employed.

As shown in Table 4, the foci of IS research and the research methods/approaches employed by Hong Kong researchers are not substantively different from those in North America. Unlike other business disciplines such as management, marketing and finance, where a lot of Asia/China focused research studies are being conducted by Hong Kong researchers, there is no particular

Table 4: IS Research Areas in Hong Kong Universities

School	Research Foci	Research Methods
City University of Hong Kong	Knowledge Management; Innovation Management; E-commerce; Virtual Communities; Technology Adoption	Survey; Experiment; Case Study; Modelling; Systems Development
Chinese University of Hong Kong	Logistics; Supply Chain Management	Empirical Research
Hong Kong Institute of Education	IS in Education	Qualitative Research
The University of Hong Kong	Electronic Commerce; ERP; Groupware and Workflow Management; Web Design; IS Evaluation; IS/IT Adoption; IT-based Supply Chain Management; Internet Navigation & Information Retrieval; Data-mining	Survey; Experiment; Case Study; Modelling; Systems Development
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	Economics of IT; Innovation; HCI/Personalization; Telecommunications Policy	Empirical Research; Analytical Research
Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, Shatin	The group is teaching-oriented	N/A
Lingnan University	Very diverse and dependent on individual researchers	Quantitative Research
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	E-commerce; Supply Chain Management; E-education	Systems Development; Prototyping; Survey

emphasis on Asia/China in IS studies. One research area attracting increasing attention and popularity is logistics and supply chain management. This is possibly because the Hong Kong government has recently chosen this as a strategic direction for development, and has committed HK\$ 300 millions to set up a major research and development centre co-hosted by three universities - Chinese University of Hong Kong, the University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. At least five Logistics and/or supply chain management research centres have been set up recently in universities in Hong Kong.

In terms of research support, most universities are quite generous in funding academic staff to attend international/regional academic conferences, with at least one per year. However, funding for research projects is not as adequate in terms of both the sources and the amount of funding. The main research funding source is the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong, which invites applications for competitive research grants on an annual basis. On average, about one-third of the IS research projects are funded, with an amount of around HK\$ 400K per project (over two-to-three years). Getting funding from industry is still something very new and rare for the Hong Kong academic community.

Another issue related to research is the size of the research programs (i.e., MPhil/PhD programs). Since all universities in Hong Kong are publicly-funded, the size of the research programs is "controlled" by the government. Thus, all universities but City University of Hong Kong, which has 30+ research students, admit only two-to-three IS research students per year, each university having around a dozen students in progress.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVITIES

IS academics in Hong Kong have been very active in organizing various activities for professional development, for not just the Hong Kong academic community, but also for researchers in the Pacific-Asia Region. For instance, in the past decade, Hong Kong has hosted many international and regional academic conferences such as the Hong Kong Mobility Roundtable (2005), IEEE International Conference on e-Technology, e-Commerce and e-Service (2005), International Workshop on E-Commerce Education (2004), International Conference on Electronic Commerce (2002), International Conference on E-Business (2001), Asia-Pacific Regional Conference of International Telecommunications Society (2001), Pacific-Asia Conference in Information Systems (2000), Asia-Pacific Decision Sciences Conference (1996), International Society for Decision Support Conference (1995). All these conferences have attracted hundreds of participants, coming from not just the Pacific-Asia Region but also other parts of the world, including both Europe and America, promoting Hong Kong as a major hub of IS research in the region.

Even though Hong Kong is geographically small and compact, IS academics do not meet often except when attending seminars/workshops presented by visitors/scholars coming from outside Hong Kong. This, perhaps, is partly due to the "competition" among universities and partly due to the small size of the IS academic community, with less than 100 people in total, a size that is insufficient to organize any regular/annual academic/professional functions/ events such as an annual academic conference. In the Pacific-Asia region, the IS communities in Australia, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are much bigger than that in Hong Kong.

An interesting observation on this infrequent interaction phenomenon is that several IS groups, such as those at Chinese University of Hong Kong and Lingnan University, are quite operations management/decision sciences-oriented, as reflected by the departments with which they are affiliated. While the groups at City University of Hong Kong, the University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology often attend IS-oriented conferences such as PACIS and ICIS, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Lingnan University groups lean more toward decision sciences conferences such as those sponsored by the Decision Sciences Institute (DSI) and the Asia Pacific Decision Sciences Institute (APDSI). Therefore, these latter IS academics seldom meet and interact with their colleagues who attend conferences sponsored by the AIS.

The recent establishment of the Hong Kong Association for Information Systems (HKAIS), a chapter of AIS founded in January 2006, hopefully will change the situation. With colleagues from five institutions to be on the executive committee of HKAIS, activities have been planned to "improve" this "lack-of-interaction" situation by drawing colleagues from different groups to organize and participate in events. For instance, an IS research seminar series was launched in February 2006 targeting all IS faculty and research students in Hong Kong, with speakers from Hong Kong Baptist University, City University of Hong Kong, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Responses and feedback were very encouraging.

As for the relationship and interaction with local business, IT practitioner communities and IT professional societies, again there is an impasse, excepting that individual IS faculty conduct consultancies and/or executive training for companies. Many research centres have been established by IS academics across the universities, such as the Asia Centre for Electronic Business at City University of Hong Kong, Centre for Electronic Commerce at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and Asian Case Research Centre at University of Hong Kong. However, they are either mainly academic research centres with not much collaboration with the professional communities, or units to facilitate the teaching of various masters level programs. An exception may be the Centre of Cyber Logistics at Chinese University of Hong Kong, which has strong support from major players in the logistics industry including the Li & Fung Company. In fact, the centre has recently been "expanded" to the Li & Fung Institute of Supply Chain Management & Logistics, in recognition of the strong support from the company.

VI. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The IS groups in Hong Kong are relatively young in history and small in terms of the number of senior faculty members and the size of the research programs (MPhil/PhD). With regard to program size, Hong Kong universities are expanding their programs at all levels to China. At the undergraduate level, Hong Kong universities have started participating in the National Joint College Entrance Examination Scheme (NJCEES) in order to attract quality students from Mainland China. At the postgraduate level, an increasing number of joint programs are being offered by Hong Kong and China universities. For example, City University of Hong Kong and the University of Science and Technology of China started offering joint doctorate programs in 2004.

The recent establishment of the Hong Kong Association for Information Systems (HKAIS) does play a positive role in encouraging more collaboration among the IS academics, and more interaction between them and the industry professionals. Further interaction and collaboration can also be sought between the HKAIS and other AIS chapters in the Pacific-Asia region (the second-largest AIS region after the Americas), such as the China Association of Information Systems (CNAIS, which serves AIS members in Mainland China) and the Chinese Association of Information Systems (ChAIS, which serves all the Chinese-speaking members of AIS).

In May 2005, the Hong Kong Computer Society (HKCS), the major professional society for IS professionals in Hong Kong, reached an agreement with the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE) on the reciprocal recognition of professional qualifications. IS professionals who are members of HKCS can apply for membership of HKIE and become chartered engineers, provided that they fulfil the reciprocal recognition requirements. This reciprocal recognition definitely favours the future growth of the IS profession in Hong Kong.

VII. SUMMARY

The IS discipline in Hong Kong is relatively young, with less than two decades of history. Having gone through a number of reorganizations, all the IS groups are now located in business schools, with most IS groups located with academics from other disciplines. These IS groups offer a number of programs at the bachelor's, masters' and doctoral levels, with a strong emphasis on business and management aspects of IS/IT. Beside the wide variety of programs offered, the IS

groups also have diverse research foci, yet all similar to those in North America. A major challenge faced by the groups is that they are generally small in terms of the number of staff, and “weak” in strength in terms of the proportion of senior faculty members, especially at the chair professorship level. Also, while the groups have been very active in organizing activities for professional development, the interactions both among the academic community and with industry professionals have been limited. Hopefully, the recent establishment of HKAIS will foster more interaction and collaboration with these groups.

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APPENDIX I. THE OVERARCHING STUDY:

THE STATE OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE IN PACIFIC ASIA

Figure A-1 depicts the main components of the study “The State of the Information Systems Academic Discipline in Pacific Asia.” The Pacific Asia study is motivated from a recognition that Information Systems as an academic discipline has evolved differentially around the world. The genesis of the study was a panel of the Sixth Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems (PACIS’02), Tokyo, Japan, ultimately resulting in formal project commencement in 2004 with AIS endorsement and seed funding.

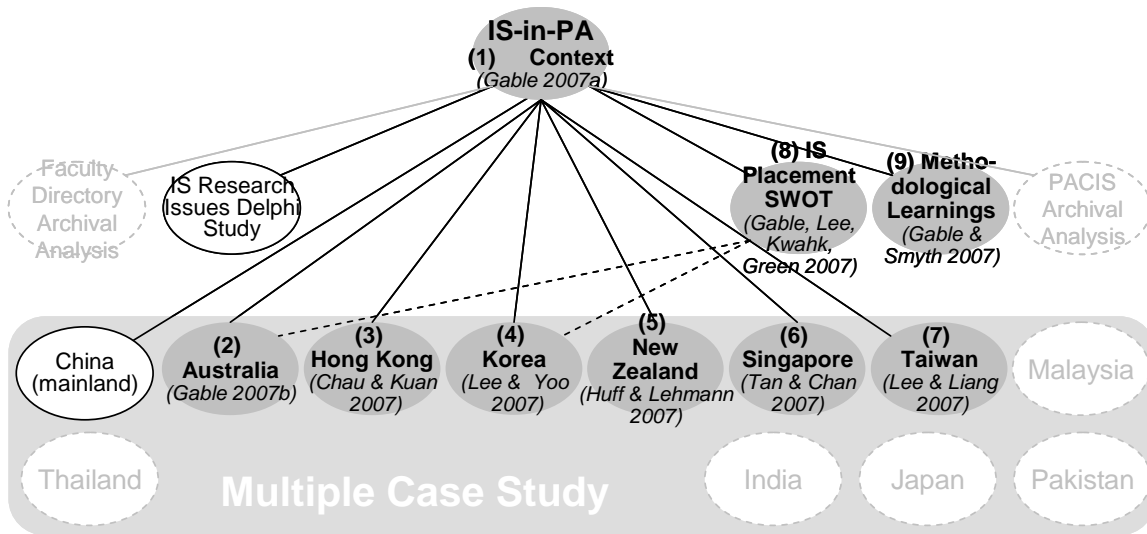


Figure A-1. The IS in Pacific Asia Region Sub-Studies

Principal of the several related sub-studies is a series of case studies across the states² of Pacific Asia. The overall study has from the outset been designed and executed with the expectation that it would be extended and repeated over time. It was decided early on to restrict the first iteration of the study to those areas in the region where IS is relatively more visible internationally – Australia, Hong Kong (China), Korea, New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan.

Shaded ovals in Figure A-1 represent those components completed in the first execution, with results reported in this special issue of CAIS. Unshaded ovals represent components in progress (i.e. Mainland China case study), and dashed ovals represent components soon to commence.

The largely exploratory and descriptive State case studies employed a common research framework [Ridley 2006]. The framework considers the current and past state of IS in Pacific Asia universities from the perspective of the development of a discipline. The framework was guided by Whitley’s Theory of Scientific Change [1984a, 1984b]. It suggests that there is an inverse relationship between the impact of local contingencies and a discipline’s degree of professionalism and maturity.

Given the descriptive and exploratory character of the overall study, the team harbored no illusions regarding the ultimate completeness of issues to be identified, related evidence to be gathered, and analyses to be conducted. It was acknowledged that the study offers a mere starting point for ongoing monitoring of the state of IS in the Pacific Asia region. Regardless,

² The term “state” is used to refer to each of the national entities studied.

efforts were made to achieve some level of representativeness of the evidence and perspectives reported: (1) Selection of the study team – sought region-wide representation. This suggested state-based case reports. Senior and well known IS academics were approached. (2) Interviewees received an early draft of the state report in which their views were recounted. On the basis of feedback, changes were implemented by the state teams. (3) Selected “within state” local experts were sent a copy of the draft state report for review, aims being to: minimize potential adverse reaction from perceived misrepresentation, try to ensure the report is as representative of the state as possible, enrich the report with further insights, and ensure the process of peer-review results in papers of strong academic standard. (4) All authors on all papers of the special issue reviewed the complete draft special issue.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Patrick Y.K. Chau is a professor of Information Systems at the University of Hong Kong. He received his Ph.D. in business administration from the Richard Ivey School of Business, the University of Western Ontario, Canada. His research interests include issues related to IS/IT adoption and implementation, electronic commerce, knowledge management, and outsourcing. He has papers published in major information systems journals including *MIS Quarterly*, *Communications of the ACM*, *Journal of MIS*, *Journal of AIS*, *Decision Sciences*, and others. He is currently co-editor of both *Electronic Commerce Research & Applications* and *DATABASE* and serves on the editorial board of a number of IS journals including *Decision Sciences*, *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, and *Information and Management*. He is also a vice-president of the Association for Information Systems.

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