

ABSTRACT

Information systems development is considered socio-technical system design (Bostrom and Heinen, 1977). Technical system developments with conventional software development methodologies (lifecycle/waterfall approach, CASE tools, RAD, OOP) sometimes ignore important social and cultural factors, which may lead to failure of the information systems (Bostrom and Heinen, 1977; Bennetts et al., 2000). Soft Systems Methodology (Checkland, 1990) is identified as a potential approach for tackling such factors in messy ill-structured information system development problem situations. Many attempts have been made to integrate SSM with more conventional methodologies (Avison & Wood-Harper 1990; Savage & Mingers, 1996; Bustard et al., 2000; Lewis, 2008) and some recent developments are made by Mathiassen & Nielsen (2000) and Rose (2002). Conceptualizing work systems using SSM has been carried out in many studies (Kasimin and Yusoff, 1996; Sørensen & et al. 2010). However, almost all studies have taken a single organizations' work situation as their starting point.

This interpretive action research uses SSM to compare two work situations: the Examination Departments of Mehran University (MUET) and Aalborg University (AAU). MUET is a primarily manual system, whereas Aalborg is extensively computerized. The objective is to design an improved system for MUET. Standard SSM analysis tools are integrated with interaction and transformation models (Rose, 2002), flowchart tools (JAI, 1995), physical workspace models and user interface prototypes from contextual design (Beyer & Holtzblatt, 1998), and the process of organizational meaning model (POM) (Checkland, 1998). A systematically desirable and culturally feasible examinations information system model is proposed for MUET. Much inspiration can be taken from study of the computerized work process at Aalborg, but care must be taken to accommodate the underlying cultural differences.