

Considerations for Implementing an Optimal Model for MIS Education

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Abstract

This study is a work in progress that evaluates and analyzes management information systems (MIS) employment from the perspective of industry expectations and pedagogy to determine the ideal structure and level of integration between business and computer science education. This information is used to build an optimal theoretical model for MIS education. The model is then used to compare a range of existing MIS programs to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges that exist in implementing MIS education programs.

As technology becomes widely integrated in today's economy, there is a demand for individuals who have skills in both business and computer applications. Pharr states "Employees who understand the interrelatedness of the various business functions should be more adept at making decisions that benefit the firm as a whole rather than a single department" (2000). This integration of functions requires individuals with a broad range of skills in both business management and information technology.

This need to integrate business and technology has not been overlooked by academic institutions. Most institutions that offer undergraduate business and computer science education are offering MIS specialty options and/or joint majors in Business Administration and Computer Science. The composition and level of integration between the two disciplines varies significantly between institutions. The challenge for curriculum designers is to determine which combination of programs and pedagogy are the most effective for their institution and how to implement the desired approach.

The research design for this project consists of two phases. Initially, research will be conducted using existing literature and interviews with industry representatives to determine the desired and applied knowledge and skills required by MIS specialists. The results will be used to identify the core competencies that are required for an effective MIS education program. The core competencies will then be placed on a scale that ranges from a strong computer science focus to a strong business focus. Those competencies that are located in the middle of the scale and have common characteristics between computer science and business will identify the potential areas for program integration. Concurrently, the existing literature will be examined to establish a set of criteria to measure the level of integration between education programs. The study will then use these criteria and the identified core competencies to determine if there is an optimal model for MIS education.

The second phase of the study will analyze and compare the programs offered by selected academic institutions in reference to achieving the optimal model for MIS education. The findings from this phase of the research will be used to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges that are likely to be encountered when implementing an optimal model for MIS education programs. The results of this research will provide a guide for curriculum designers in determining which combination of programs and pedagogy are the most effective and identify issues likely to be encountered when implementing integrated computer science and business education programs.

References

Pharr, S. W. (2000) "Foundational considerations for establishing an integrated business common core curriculum" *Journal of Education for Business*. Issue 1 Vol. 76 pp 20-24.

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