Beställarkompetens vid upphandling och utveckling av IT: Om kompetensframväxt i skuggan av kunskapsfragmentering

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Abstract:

Ever since IT started to become important and strategic assets in organizational practices, systems acquisitions have been a challenging and complex endeavor. There are seemingly never ending reports of unsuccessful IT acquisitions and lack of systems acquisition competence (beställarkompetens in Swedish). The aim of this thesis is to shed deeper light on what systems acquisition competence is about, and to present a framework for understanding its nature and premises in IT-projects. This thesis is grounded on three concurring problem areas. First, IT projects are notoriously prone to problems. This despite of decades of IS and ISD research on methods, project management, etc. While there is extensive knowledge about the development process, methods, techniques, tools, developers' skills and competence requirements, less is known about systems acquisition competence. Second, and following from the first, there are few established or generally agreed upon definitions, or substantial theories, of this distinct competency. Third, there is still a limited understanding of systems development from a learning or knowledge work point of view. This thesis deals with the concept of "beställarkompetens", and theorizes the underlying empirical phenomena; knowledge work in IT project practices. Drawing on exploratory empirical work in an interpretive multiple case study, this thesis investigates 10 governmental IT projects, their outcomes and stakeholders perceptions of acquisition competency. This investigation was supported by theories of individual and organizational perspectives on learning, as well as knowledge theory, competence theory and systems development theory. This thesis presents a theoretical perspective suggesting that acquisition competence can be understood as an emergent quality of the system development process, that is, as dynamic rather than static knowledge. Further, it suggests that key stakeholders interaction, collaboration, situated learning and competence renewal are prime mechanisms to ensure sufficient systems acquisition competence and project performance. One important practical implication from this research is the identification of fragmentation of knowledge as a main threat to successful outcome of IT projects. The contribution is a theoretical framework useful for understanding "beställarkompetens" in systems development contexts, and a tentative theory of emergent competence.

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