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Professional desire, competence and engagement in IS context

Peter M Bednar¹ and Christine Welch²

Abstract. This paper attempts to address the failings of a predominant paradigm in IS research and practice that emphasises technological determinism. This paradigm makes use of a false belief in the power of rationality in organizational decision-making, and a mythology in which organizational actors can be viewed as passive ‘users’ of technology. We wish to create a discussion of the nature and role of professionalism as an expression of more than technical competence. Both system analysts and organizational stakeholders (e.g. ‘users’) are to be viewed as professionals. We discuss desire, exercise of will and their role in professional judgment in relation to transcendent values espoused within communities of practice. We go on to relate this to the environments of Information Systems research and practice. It is pointed out that many researchers, over a number of years, have dealt with these issues in relation to effective management of technological development and organizational change. The paper attempts to encourage renewed attention to interpretivist perspectives on IS development and organizational change, including recognition of the importance of contextual dependencies.

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