Information systems as rational discourse: An application of Habermas's theory of communicative action.

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Information systems as rational discourse: an application of Habermas's theory of communicative action â˜†

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Abstract

Information systems have traditionally been conceived as technical artefacts which may (or may not) have social and behavioural implications. They act as mechanisms that reinforce organizational control. In this article we argue that such a conception is too limited: information systems possess the potential to support authentic communicative interaction between organizational actors in such a way as to inspire criticism, to facilitate learning, and to raise the overall level of organizational competence. To support this claim, Habermas's communicative theory is applied to information systems. In particular, the use of information systems (referred to as IS-use) is conceived as a type of social action which can be supported through the notion of rational discourse. We consider some of the forms that such support might assume, and refer to some empirical examples presented in the literature. We suggest that by applying Habermas's

theory to information systems, new insights regarding the legitimation and implementation of information systems can be obtained.

Keywords

Information system; critical theory; social action; organizational impact

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