



Research on „Non-Issues“ – Difficulties of Empirical Research on the Requirements Engineering & Management Process at the Client's Site

Some Notes from an Explorative Study

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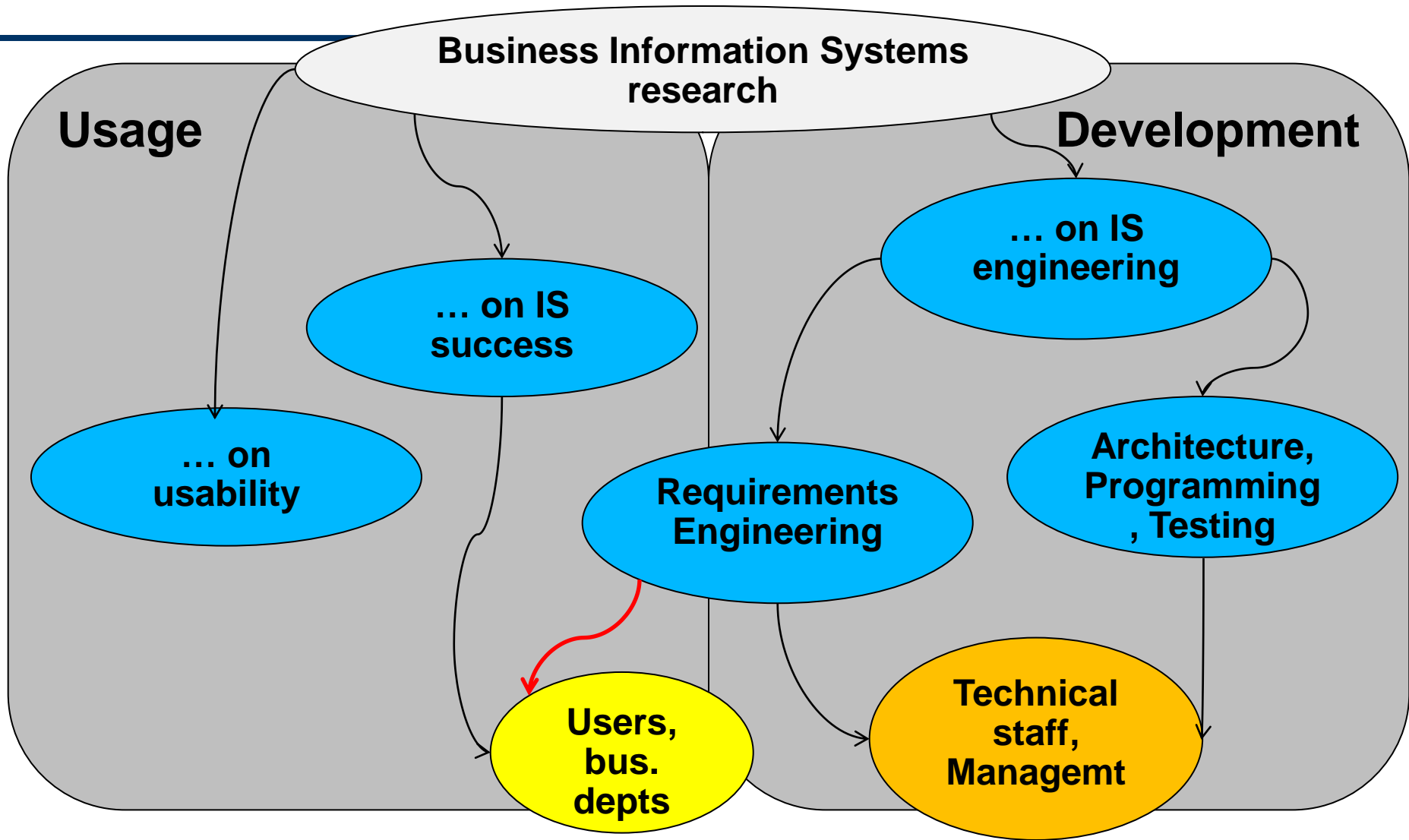
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ToC

- **The FaPrAa Study**
- **Recruitment of Participants**
- **Arguments for Non-Attendance**
- **Triggers for Participation**
- **Discussion**

Empirical Research on Business Information Systems





The FaPrAa Study

FaPrAa: Business Departments in the Requirements Engineering Process

- Requirements Engineering [RE] is a main factor for the success or breakdown of information system [IS] projects
 - Success of business IS is related to the usage by the clients
 - **active participation** of business department staff (not completely equivalent to users and/or customers) in the RE process can be assumed as precondition for the project's success ...
- ... but this topic seems to be overlooked in literature (more passive role)



The FaPrAa Study

- **explorative study:**
 - **qualitative research**
 - **case studies**
 - **grounded theory**

- **25 semi-structured personal interviews, 30-90'**
- **Hamburg area (NW Germany), 2010/2011**
- **different sizes and businesses, no „ICT companies“**
- **7 interviews organized by personal contact**



The FaPrAa Study

Table 1: Structure of participating companies

Classification according to (UN, 2008)	Numbers of employees, categorization bases on (European Community, 2003)					
	250+, affiliated group	250+, private	Medium (>= 50)	Small (>= 10)	Micro (<10)	SUM
C (Manufacturing)	4		3	2		9
G (Wholesale and retail trade)	1	3	1	1	1	7
H (Transport and storage)			2			2
J (Information and Communication)				1		1
K (Financial insurance activities)	1			1		2
M (Professional, scientific and technical activities)				3		3
N (Administrative and support service activities)				1		1
SUM	6	3	6	9	1	25

Weißbach, R.: How Business Departments Manage the Requirements Engineering Process in Information Systems Projects in Small and Medium Enterprises (InSite 2013, Porto/Portugal Juli 2013))



Recruitment of Participants

1st idea:

- **recruiting by a regional entrepreneurs association (direct telephone calls)**

... but:

- **no reaction**

Then:

- **student assistant (experienced in market research)**
- **conducted 900+ phone calls**
- **to get 18 interview appointments**

=> response rate: 2%



Arguments for Non-Attendance

- **general lack of time**
- **privacy policies**
- **general lack of interest in research**
 - **specialized topic without direct influence on the management**
 - **SMEs often have an „anti-academic“ attitude**
- **research topic is a „Non-Issue“**
 - **lack of awareness**
 - **unknown vocabulary**
- **(empirical) research has no direct benefit**
 - **results will come too late, will be too abstract, ...**



Triggers for Participation

- **own academic background**
 - **as individual support for the university**
- **professional awareness**
 - **due to the own professional education**
- **own experiences**
 - **from own projects**
- **desire for reflection**
 - **during the daily work**
- **mouth-to-mouth references**



Discussion: Conclusions

- **„objective“ relevance of a topic is no sufficient trigger for the participation in a research study**
- **low importance of empirical research at the client's site in general (exception: IS success)**
- **„process“ (of developing information systems) for companies outside the ICT market not so much relevant as for companies in the ICT market**



Discussion: Validity

- **untypical research question**
- **heterogenous group of potential interviewees**

- **=> not valid for research *in* the ICT market**
- **=> results are no quantitative base**



Future Work

Assumption:

- **IS are essential for core processes in organizations, so the design and the implementation of IS are essential too.**
- **This relevance will increase parallel to the increasing responsibility of the business departments for their processes.**

Question:

- **How can interviewees be motivated to participate in research on processes?**
- **Do they have time for reflections on processes?**
- **Will they be motivated to reflect on processes?**



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- **Who is interested in research at the client's site?**
 - **market research !**
 - **academic research ?**



Thank you !

Questions ?