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Defining System Requirements: a critical assessment of the Niam conceptual design procedure

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Abstract

Requirements definition is a fundamental activity within information systems development. Social and organisational issues are at the centre of many of the problems experienced during the development and implementation of information systems, and these need to be explored during requirements definition. The NIAM Conceptual Schema Design Procedure (CSDP) is a method for identifying and describing information requirements using fact types. This paper discusses some limitations of the information requirements definition step of the CSDP which result from its lack of focus on the socio-organisational dimension of information systems development. Four different approaches to exploring the socio-organisational contexts of systems are discussed. It is proposed that one of these, viewpoint development, be incorporated into the NIAM CSDP to provide a means of exploring and understanding a system's socio organisational context and to ensure that contextual information is a major input to the requirements definition process. This results in an enhanced design procedure. Future and current research areas are identified.

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