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Job Skills Inventory for Information Systems Personnel in New Zealand: An Exploratory Study of Change

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Abstract

Based on a survey of 443 members of the New Zealand Computer Society in 1993, this study examines whether the skills requirements for information systems (IS) professionals have changed in the turbulent economic environment New Zealand has experienced since the mid-1980s. Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to rate the importance of thirty-five skill items during the period they have been working under their present job designation.

The research instrument is based on an extensive review of previous research constructs and upon themes visited by academic writers during three eras of computing. The research expectations are that there has been a definite shift in the skills requirement. The focus is on the categorisation of the skills as business-related or technology-related, this being the distinction traditionally accepted by most researchers to date. The model proposed, however, accounts for more sophistication and blurring of such a dichotomy. It is based on the premises that the core skill competencies for IS professionals have essentially remained constant and that there has been an increase in the requirement for more emphasis on the business-related skills.

As assessment of the skills requirement for practising IS personnel resides in an organisational context, the design incorporates strategies to capture the management point of view. The design of the instrument also caters for textual responses about a respondent's current job in order to validate the rating scores provided in sets of Likert scales.

In the main, the findings confirm a pronounced increase in the importance of business-related skills. Additionally, in the view of the managers this requirement needs to be focused on communications skills. There is no implication here of fewer technology-related skills, but rather more business-related skills in view of the greater demands in rapidly changing environments. According to this sample, business-related skills have always been important for them as IS personnel.

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