

Personal Statements – Mega M Subramaniam

Personal Information

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Content

This document presents my research, teaching and service statements.

Research Statement – Page 2-3
Teaching Statement – Page 4-5
Service Statement – Page 6

Brief Introduction

I earned a Bachelor of Science (Hons) degree in Computers in Education from the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor, Malaysia and have a Masters of Science in Instructional Systems Technology from Indiana University, Bloomington. In December 2007, I received my Ph.D. in Information Studies at the College of Information, Florida State University.

I am currently a Visiting Instructor at the College of Information at Florida State University.

I was previously a faculty member at the Department of Educational Multimedia at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, and have recently taught courses at the undergraduate and graduate level at Florida State University and University of Wisconsin-Madison. I have worked as an instructional designer and have been appointed as the lead instructional designer for several national and international projects.

Research Statement – Mega M Subramaniam

My primary area of research is computing education, with an emphasis on the emergence of new areas of inquiry related to computing, information technology education, the information technology workforce, professional computing organizations, and gender and diversity in information technology education.

In December 2007, I received my Ph.D. in Information Studies from the College of Information, Florida State University. My doctoral dissertation reported the first stage in the development of a middle range theory on the emergence of computing degree programs. I attempted to document the events and social interaction factors that led professional computing organizations to develop guidelines and standards for emerging computing degree programs in the United States. Using the data from documents and interviews, I identified the interaction process and factors that triggered the need for change and initiated the development of newer computing degree programs, such as information technology. I utilized grounded theory as my primary methodology. One outcome of this research was a checklist of social interaction factors to be considered in future initiatives to develop computing degree programs.

Further stages of this research will be completed in the future. This research will eventually contribute to the description of the process of emergence of new areas of inquiry, particularly those areas of inquiry related to computing and information science education. A theory that explains how new fields of inquiry related to the field of information develop and become codified will help higher education administrators to understand when new degree programs are needed, and will increase the ability to predict the viability of new educational trends. Prior studies on the development of fields of inquiry have been conducted historically using citation analysis and social network analysis to measure the strength and stage of development, but data to conduct such analyses are not available to researchers examining such phenomena at the early-to-mid-stages of development. This research therefore will make an important contribution to both theory development and practical understanding of the state of the field of computing and information science education.

I am also interested in studying organizational communication. While I was conducting my dissertation research, I used documents from two professional computing organizations as the primary data to determine the interaction process and factors that triggered the need for change and initiated the development of newer computing degree programs, such as information technology. The organizational initiatives provided a much more coherent and consistent research milieu than that associated with the many educational institutions that developed individual degree programs, because documentation was systematically maintained.

Continued on next page

Research Statement – Mega M Subramaniam

In the next phase I will examine initiatives by educational institutions that began offering computing degree program to further the study of documenting the emergence of computing degree programs. Comparisons between these two types of “organizations” in terms of social interaction factors, communication medium, power dynamics, and political and economical influences will be made.

I have also heavily invested interest in the evolution of the library and information science schools and the social meaning of information associated with this evolution. Based on my knowledge of the evolution of other areas of inquiry related to science and social sciences, I would like to articulate the complex process of the split of the Information schools' disciplinary approaches from library science. I would like to engage in the development of theoretical frameworks to explore the reasons and the relationships between various factors involved in this process. My short term goal is to analyze this situation using the theoretical lens used by other sociologists such as Andrew Abbott. My long term goal is to begin developing a theoretical framework which factors in the unique change of social meaning of information, particularly as manifested in information access and exchange. The unique characteristics of this lens may find hidden structures in how we think of information in both as a thing and a process, further illustrating the need for this work.

During my doctoral studies I gained experience conducting quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research. I have a strong interest in qualitative methodologies (specifically grounded theory methodology, ethnography and case studies), and have used qualitative methods in my research. I am a competent user of qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo, and I am familiar with quantitative methods. As a champion of mixed methods, I believe both research paradigms complement each other and enable substantive contribution to convergent research.

Teaching Statement – Mega M Subramaniam

I have more than ten years of teaching experience. At Florida State University, I have taught *Research Methods, Information Science, Information Needs and Preferences* and *Internet Research*, both in online and face to face formats. Prior to Florida State University, I taught courses in *Program Evaluation, Instructional Design, Computing Education, Document Design*, and *Multimedia Instruction*. I am comfortable with face to face instruction as well as participating in chat sessions and online instruction.

My teaching paradigm closely resembles what Reeves (1996) terms as an *eclectic-mixed-method-pragmatic paradigm*. That is, teaching requires flexibility of instructional approaches to convey information that supports students as they expand their understanding. A successful classroom learning environment is a dynamic environment, and online and face to face teaching pose different challenges in this respect.

Students enter a higher education classroom with preconceived notions of what constitutes a learning environment. These may include unrealistic models masked under the guise of learning models. Research shows that regarding Information as 'thing' with the instructor's delivery equating to learning is a static, obsolete method of classroom instruction. A dynamic environment embraces educational psychology research and creates opportunities for students to make a connection between the course content and a need to construct understanding. This requires a flexible learning model with appropriate learning objectives that tie closely to assessment outcomes. This will mirror real world applications to support knowledge transfer.

I strive to provide a dynamic learning environment. For example, LIS 5271 – *Research Methods for Library and Information Science*, is a graduate online course designed with student engagement as a focal point. This course stresses practice by doing, discussion, sharing examples and non examples, teaching others through small team interactions, presentations, screen sharing and "read & react" postings to current issues related to research in library and information studies. Students can choose their preferred mode of participation either through asynchronous discussion on the online discussion boards or real time chat participation. The course delivery is dynamic, accommodating differences in individual learning styles and offering a variety of instructional strategies to ensure students are drawn to participate in class activities.

Continued on next page

Teaching Statement – Mega M Subramaniam

I also enjoy sharing strategies for learning, thereby giving students the tools to educate themselves beyond the classroom. My experiences as a student, an instructional designer and, more recently, an instructor of online classes, have given me a deep appreciation for the challenge of finding ways to help a diverse array of students with different learning styles. My approach is to maximize student engagement with the subject matter. I make every attempt to develop an interactive and conducive learning environment for all students in the class. This includes working together with students to achieve the objectives and goals of the course, providing a balance between teamwork and individual work, providing guidance to help clarify difficult concepts or readings, and presenting an environment of learning by using concrete examples. In summary, in order for students to be engaged, I feel I must provide intellectual leadership, encourage constructive and critical commentary, and guide research projects to be both relevant and doable. Students are able to grasp the concepts taught and are encouraged to be life long learners. This is reflected in the positive teaching evaluations results and student feedback I receive.

Service Statement – Mega M Subramaniam

I would like to strike a balance between the needs of my institution and the needs of the individuals that I am providing service to, while also focusing on my research responsibilities. In this way, the best match can be made between the often conflicting interests of the institution and the individuals, with both having their respective needs met while advancing their separate interests.

Currently, I am active in the field of Information Technology Education at a national level through membership in the Association for Computing Machinery's (ACM) Special Interest Group in IT Education (SIGITE). I was the Technical Program Chair Assistant for SIGITE at the 2005 and 2006 Conference. I have also been a reviewer for *The American Society for Information Science and Technology Conference* and *Journal of Education and Library Science*.

In the future, I would like to work in curriculum development, perhaps helping to create an undergraduate or graduate program in information science to complement an existing program in either library or information science.