E-ME – TOWARDS A NEXT GENERATION STUDENT IS ARCHITECTURE

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As a result of the knowledge economy the university as an institution is becoming increasingly important. Students are getting academic education in diverse phases of life including off-campus and part-time. Further, large portions of the contemporary university IT architecture emerged throughout the 1980:s and 1990:s when the computing capabilities in academia were technologically superior to compared to the average consumer setting and hence often heavily utilized by its students (Shields, 1995). However, as a result of the massive societal digitization these capabilities are now available in the homes or mobile phone of most citizens, decreasing incentives for students to utilize these systems. In many cases, as a result of the loosely coupled structure of universities (Weick, 1976), the information important for students reside in numerous isolated islands, often available by a device-independent hypertext interface but where semantics have been stripped. Hence, the coordination of this digitized information required remains a manual task for students. Using this backdrop of university IS, there seems to be plenty of incentives for universities to become more attractive by innovating on existing information systems and making them more available to students. Yet, building end-user services for all users and their devices may seem a Sisyphean task. Drawing upon theories of digital innovation, a modular service-oriented architecture is now being established. The functionality to enable by such architecture has previously been elicited through a number of workshops and surveys after a prototype was built (Albinsson et al. 2006) and evaluated (Lind & Rittgen 2009). The evaluation showed that for the prototype to be more useful, more services needed to be induced in the platform. E.g. a lot of existing university-related information (e.g. changes in class scheduling) is isolated from the everyday tools of the student (e.g. Google Calendar). Hence, we have built a platform that is based on the concept of a toolkit (von Hippel & Katz 2002), enabling users to modify and transfer information previously considered “sticky”. Moreover, since universities are lacking resources to produce all end-user services themselves, this toolkit will be made publically available (Chesbrough 2005) allowing users and third-party vendors to produce new plug-ins as new technologies are diffused by students and new sources of information are being published by universities enabling students (Sanchez & Mahoney 1996).

References