The Effect of Accounting Control Choices and Practices in the Emergence and Enactment of Supply Alliances

Wednesday, 27 April 2011
1.00pm – 2.00pm
MSB.4.02

Associate Professor Habib Mahama
Australian National University

Abstract:
This paper has three interrelated aims. First, we examine how supply alliance, as a global idea, becomes instantiated in local organisational settings and the translations that occur. Second, we examine the effect of accounting control choices and practices in the emergence and enactment of supply alliances. And third, in the contexts of supply alliance, we explore the notion that accounting is an interdependent actor (i.e., how accounting performance measures are networks made up of, and connected to, diverse entities and relationships). We pursue these aims through a field study of the outsourcing of warehousing and distribution function of a major Australian telecommunication company. Drawing on theoretical ideas from actor-network theory, our field work draws attention to the importance of local situations and practices in the emergence of supply alliances and the implications of these for the demand for and use of accounting controls. We found that the supply alliance emerged from diverse and multiple origins rather than based on particular economic principles that suggest a standardised demand function that is predictive of governance structures. Local situations in addition to local interpretation of global objects/technology were important in shaping the structure of the alliance and the accounting choices made. We also found it useful to conceptualise accounting performance measures and techniques as networks that are constituted in an array of practical activity; that capture traceable associations among heterogeneous entities; and which are conceived to format the associations they represent. Conceptualising accounting performance measure and techniques as networks has implications on the agential capacity of accounting controls. Our field work indicates that the capacity of accounting to act depends on the relationships it simultaneously represents and seeks to perform.

Presenter: Associate Professor Habib Mahama
Email: habib.mahama@anu.edu.au