

Quality Assurance - a Catalyst for Innovation and Performance in Micro and Small HEIs



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Problem Statement

How do quality assurance systems impact innovation and performance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in small island states?

General Research Approach

Data - Main Source

Qualitative data:

- Primary data for this study is collected through in-depth interviews that are flexible and open-ended as to allow the participants to 'assume more power over the direction of the conversation' (Birks and Mills, 2015)

Secondary Data

Qualitative Data:

- MFHEA Audit Reports
- HEI Quality Documents

Quantitative Data:

- HEI Audited Accounts
- MFHEA Qualifications dataset

As stated by Glaser (1978) "all is data", this secondary data will be used for methods triangulation Patton (2002).

- Persons responsible for QA in ten small HEIs in Malta were interviewed

Research Project Overview

This research project investigates the adoption of Quality assurance within small and micro Higher Education Institutions in Malta and how such systems can affect the institution's capability to innovate and perform.

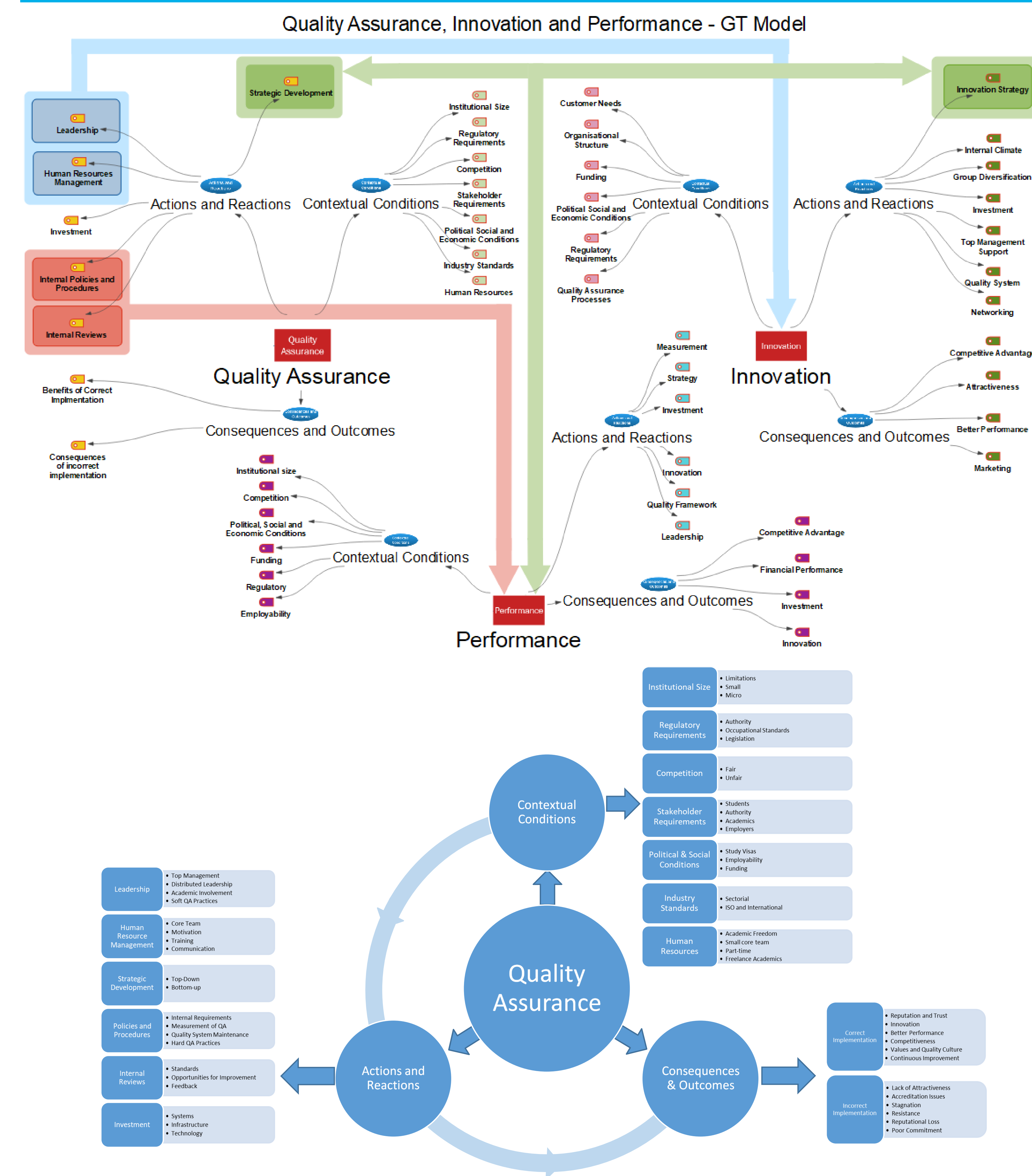
Research Objective/s

- To explore:
 - the effect of quality assurance on innovation
 - the effect of quality assurance on the institutional performance of micro/small HEIs
 - the effects innovation and institutional performance can have on each other
- To develop a model that enables higher educational institutions to understand the application of quality assurance principles, systems and processes in order to foster innovation and improve institutional performance.

Research Methodology

- A Grounded Theory approach has been selected due to the rigorous iterative nature of the process and the grounding of the theory in the data itself.
- The constant comparative analysis process and adherence to the alternating nature of data generation and analysis is applied.
- Analysis follows a variant of the Conditional/Consequential Matrix developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998).
- A triple matrix is employed as shown here

Key Figures & Visuals



Research Propositions or Key Findings

Key Propositions/Findings

- Micro HEIs find it more difficult to reach economies of scale
- It is more difficult for micro institutions to meet regulatory requirements
- Small and micro private HEIs face unfair competition from state institutions
- Study visa issues impact planning and marketing
- Funding schemes need to be administered differently by the state.
- Small HEIs with larger core setups that plan strategically are more likely to be successful.

Key References

Birks, M., Mills, J., 2015. Grounded Theory - A Practical Guide, Second. ed. Sage Publications, London.

Charmaz, K., 2006. Constructing Grounded Theory, First Edition. ed. Sage Publications, London.

Glaser, B.G. (1978) *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*. First Edition. Mill Valley, Calif: The Sociology Press.

Strauss, A., Corbin, J., 1998. Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory, Second edition. ed. SAGE Publications, Inc, Thousand Oaks.