

Innovative practices amongst academics working within small educational organisations



This research endeavor seeks to explain the complexity of innovative behaviours adopted by academics working in small educational organisations. The environments within which small educational organisations operate changes rapidly. Institutions need to proactively adapt to cope new demands, expectations, and realities. Within educational settings innovations are important as they tend to improve the quality, effectiveness and outcome of the learning process (Messmann and Mulder, 2011). On the front-line within educational settings academics are key contributors to the application of innovation through the adoption of innovation behaviours.

Research shows that the use of innovative approaches will provide the learners with optimal learning opportunities and job preparation (Nieuwenhuis, Nijhof and Heikkinen, 2005). This qualitative research project aims to address and contribute to the filling of this gap in literature to identify the key factors that affect the adoption of innovation by academics in small educational organisations.

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Programme of Studies

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1 Problem Statement

The problem to be addressed through this study is the use (or lack) use of novel innovative approaches by academics working in small sized educational organizations. This research looks at elucidating key factors that determine the use of innovative work practices by academics working in small educational organizations. It also investigates the processes involved in the adoption of innovative techniques.

2 Research Question

The research question governing the study is:

How do academics within a small educational organizations make use of innovative practices to enhance their students' learning process?

3 Objectives

Three primary objectives are being identified for the research project. These are as follows:

1. To identify, describe and evaluate the various **dimensions that influence academics' innovative behaviour** within an educational organization.
2. To explore any possible **common underlying factors** that relate the various dimensions to one another.
3. To determine emerging constructs and map these out to develop a **preliminary framework/conceptual model** of the relationships between the different dimensions

4 Methodology

During this research endeavour an **interpretative** and **constructivist** approach is being adopted. Data on the critical influences on innovative work behaviours for academics is being collected through **in-depth semi-structured interviews** that will be held with several lecturers teaching different subjects. Lecturers are selected through **convenience** and **purposeful sampling**.

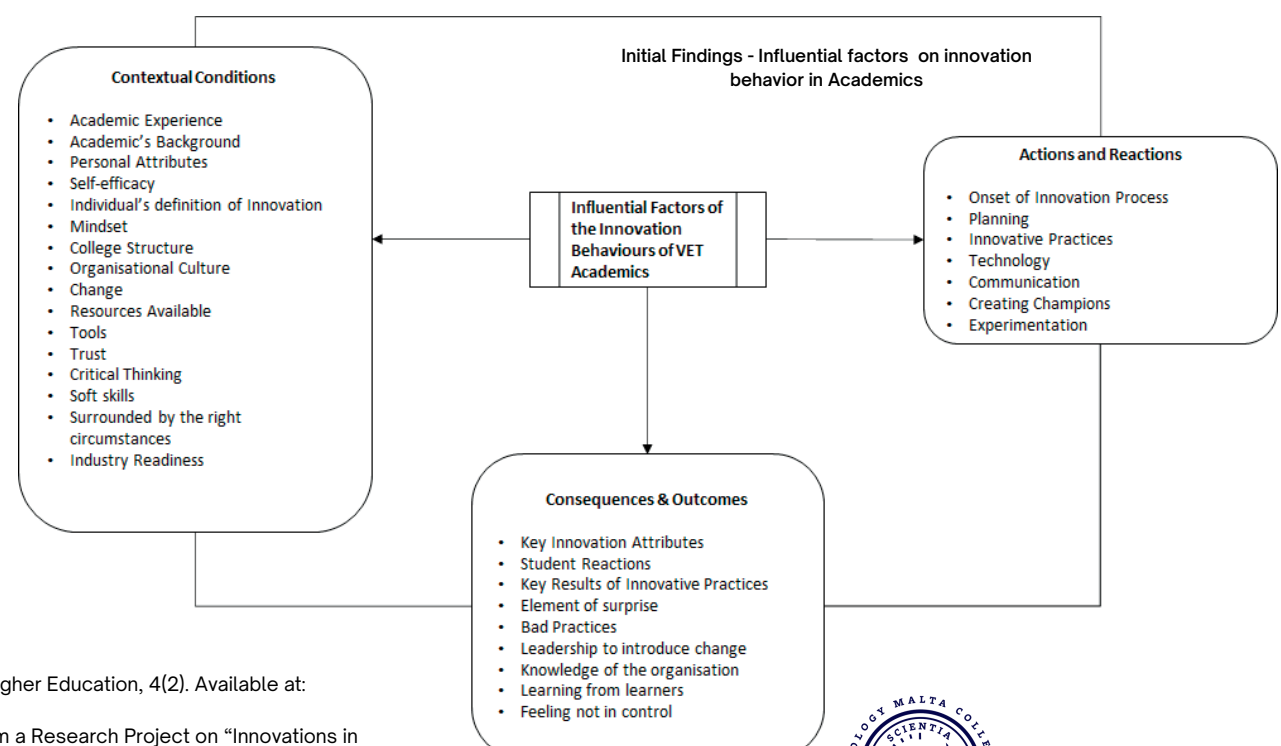
The research methodology applied for this project will be **Grounded Theory** research (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz and Henwood, 2008; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). **Open, axial and selective coding** will eventually make up the analytic and interpretative process as theoretical comparisons are made, and theory building is sought (Strauss & Corbin 1998). An outcome of this research is the generation of a **theoretical model** that is grounded in data acquired from the study emerges about this phenomenon.

5 Research Propositions

The following research propositions were formulated:

- The success of small educational organisation is dependent on the innovation behaviour of its academics.
- There are key character traits that are consistent amongst lecturers adopting innovative practices that outline an academic's innovation behaviour.
- Academics influence their students' learning trajectory through the use of innovative practices.
- There is a significant difference in the learning effectiveness between lectures held by lecturers demonstrating an innovation aptitude and lectures without an innovation drive.

6 Key Figures



Related literature

- Berg, B. and Östergren, B. (1979) 'Innovation Processes in Higher Education', *Studies in Higher Education*, 4(2). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075077912331377027>
- Hannan, A., English, S. and Silver, H. (1999) 'Why Innovate? Some Preliminary Findings from a Research Project on "Innovations in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education"', *Studies in Higher Education*, 24(3). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079912331379895>.
- Messmann, G. and Mulder, R.H. (2011) 'Innovative Work Behaviour in Vocational Colleges: Understanding How and Why Innovations Are Developed', *Vocations and Learning* [Preprint]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12186-010-9049-y>



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