

EACEA Project IMPALA

International Conference

IMPACT EVALUATION OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

A Contribution to Sustainable Quality Development of the Knowledge Society



Palau Robert, Barcelona, Spain, 16-17 June 2016





(Preliminary) Résumé of the Conference and General: A Quick SWOT Analysis of Impact Evaluation of QM in HEIs

- **Methodological SWOTs**
- **IMPALA SWOTs**

Methodological SWOTs: General

S	W	O	T
–	No experiment	–	–
–	No control group	–	–
<p>Before-after comparison</p> <p>(observations & change assessments by participants; analysis of documents and data; counterfactual self-estimation; causal social mechanisms; methodological principles: devising the causal network; understanding the context; counterfactual and factual causal analysis; mixed methods approach)</p>			
<p>Ex-post analysis</p> <p>(dto.)</p>			

Methodological SWOTs: General (E&KSoc)

S	W	O	T
			Proper implementation of chosen methodology
			Independent impact evaluation from HE politics, HEI leadership, QA agencies, ... (impartiality)
			HEI performance probably too complex for reliable impact assessments (?)
Enables/ supports evidence-based QM		Dito.	
Enables/ supports evidence-based HE policy		Dito.	

Methodological SWOTs: Before-after Comparison

S	W	O	T
No memorisation problems of involved persons		Causal mechanisms; analytical models	Attribution problem (which effects are caused by QA and not by other causes)
No other time-lag problems			
No relegation to ex-post available data			
	Fluctuating stakeholder groups	Deep longitudinal analyses	Expenses (time, money)

Methodological SWOTs: Ex-post Analysis

S	W	O	T
Always applicable, without special methodological preparation and effort	Memorisation problems of involved persons		Attribution problem (which effects are caused by QA and not by other causes)
	Other time-lag problems		
	Relegation to ex-post available data		
	Fluctuating stakeholder groups		

Methodological SWOTs: Change Assessments by Participants / Analysis of Documents and Data (before-after & ex-post)

S	W	O	T
Standardised (online) surveys with target groups – complete acquisition			Survey instruments must be qualitatively adapted to social, organisational, cognitive context of persons surveyed
Intensive in-depth/ structured Interviews with target groups			Dito.
Participant observation (e.g., in status seminars, final presentations)		Original view into practice	

Methodological SWOTs: Counterfactual Self-Estimation (before-after & ex-post)

S	W	O	T
Counterfactual available	Restriction to own intentional states		Memorisation problems
			Deficits in self-analysis of intentional states

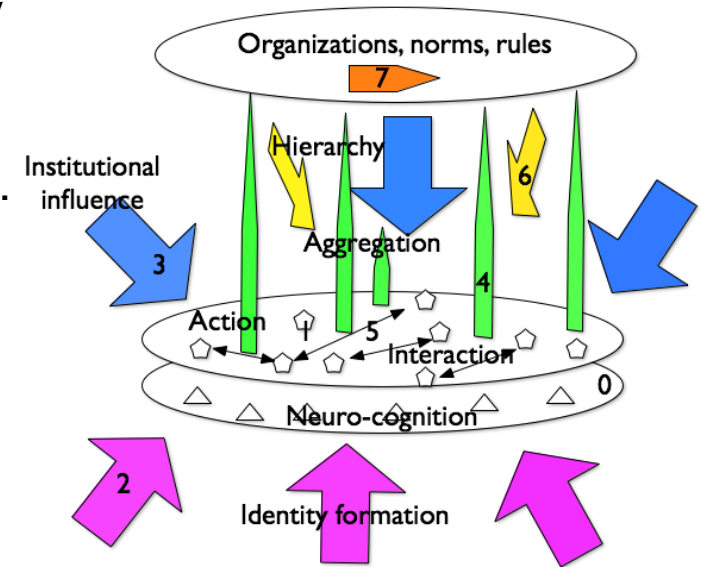
See also Mueller, C. E., Gaus, H. & Rech, J. (2013) The counterfactual self-estimation of program participants: Impact assessment without control groups or pretests. *American Journal of Evaluation*, published online October 03, 2013, pp. 1-18

Methodological SWOTs: Causal Social Mechanisms

S	W	O	T
Explanation by mechanisms instead of law-like relations or statistical correlations (causal effects of QM measures)		Solve attribution problem by mechanism hypotheses	Identification of cause-effect mechanisms (high complexity)
			Expenses (time, money)

Causal social mechanisms

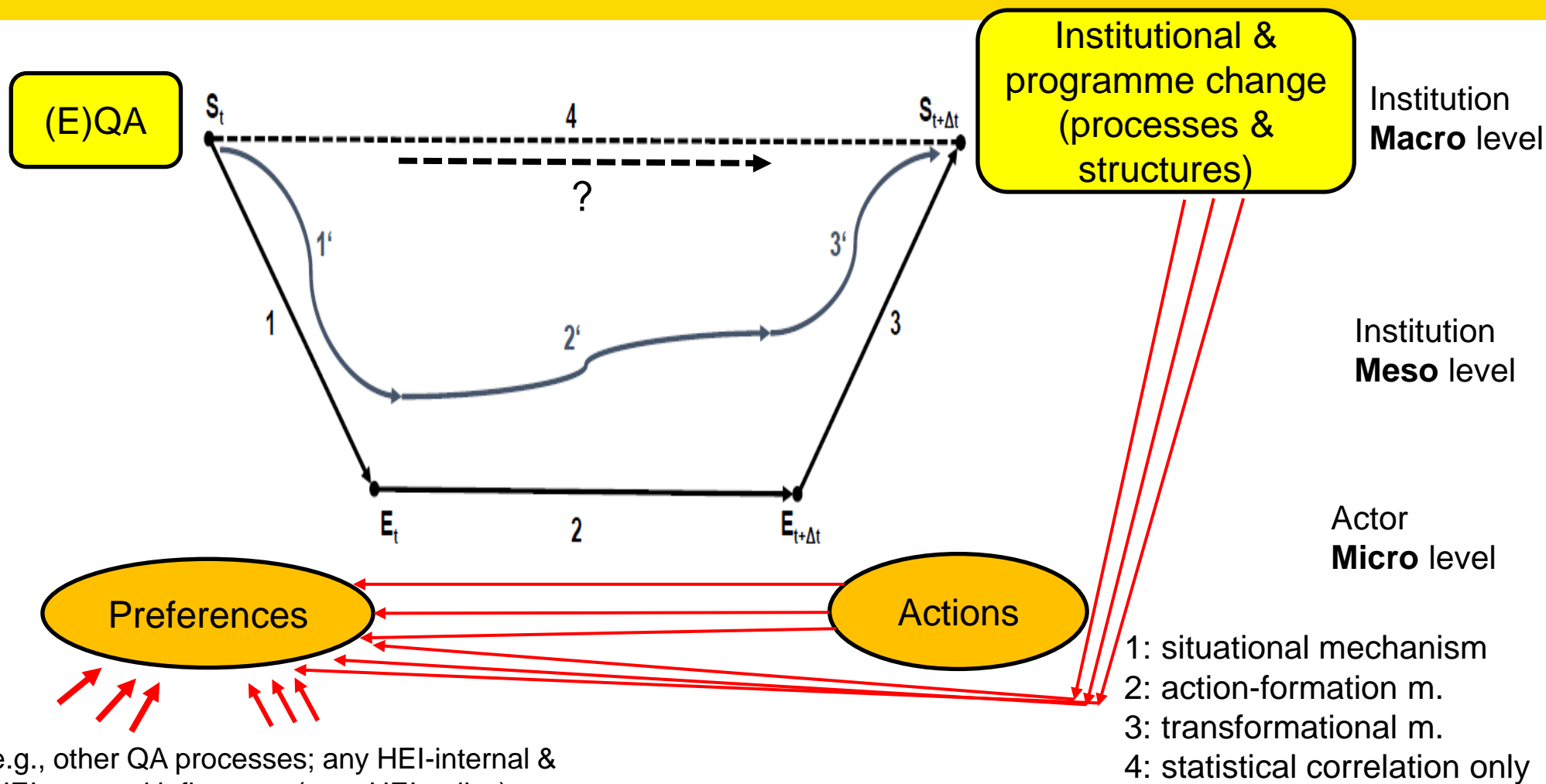
- “That we explain **not** by evoking universal **laws**, or by identifying **statistically relevant factors**, but by **specifying [causal] mechanisms that show how phenomena are brought about**” (Hedström, 2005, p. 24).
- “Social mechanisms are complexes of interacting individuals, [bodies and institutions] usually classified into specific social categories that generate causal relationships between aggregate-level variables. A mechanism will be said to be from the variable X to the variable Y if it is a mechanism through which X influences Y” (Steel, 2004, p. 59).
- In a nutshell, a causal social mechanism is “the [social] pathway or process by which an effect is produced or a purpose is accomplished” (Gerring, 2007, p. 178).



from: Daniel Little, **Classifying mechanisms by location**, August 02, 2014, http://www.google.de/imgres?imgurl=http%3A%2F%2F2.bp.blogspot.com%2F-HALuvk5b-5U%2FUMFIPAU_uR1%2FAAAAAAAG_Q%2FWcWfXnK2iNc%2Fs1600%2FScreen%252BShot%252B2012-12-06%252Bat%252B8.34.41%252BPM.png&imgrefurl=http%3A%2F%2Ffundsoc.org%2Ftag%2Fmechanism%2F&h=325&w=477&tbid=VaTtYnxYjldJGM%3A&docid=ygBUSB19425hWM&ei=fwzWVa6RDYqtU9zdfAP&tbm=isch&iact=rc&uact=3&dur=170&page=1&start=0&ndsp=43&ved=0CCEQRQMwAGoVChMI7szA1eHpxwVitYUCh3cbgj-

Causal social mechanisms model

with reference to Coleman's boat (cf. Coleman 1994, p. 8)

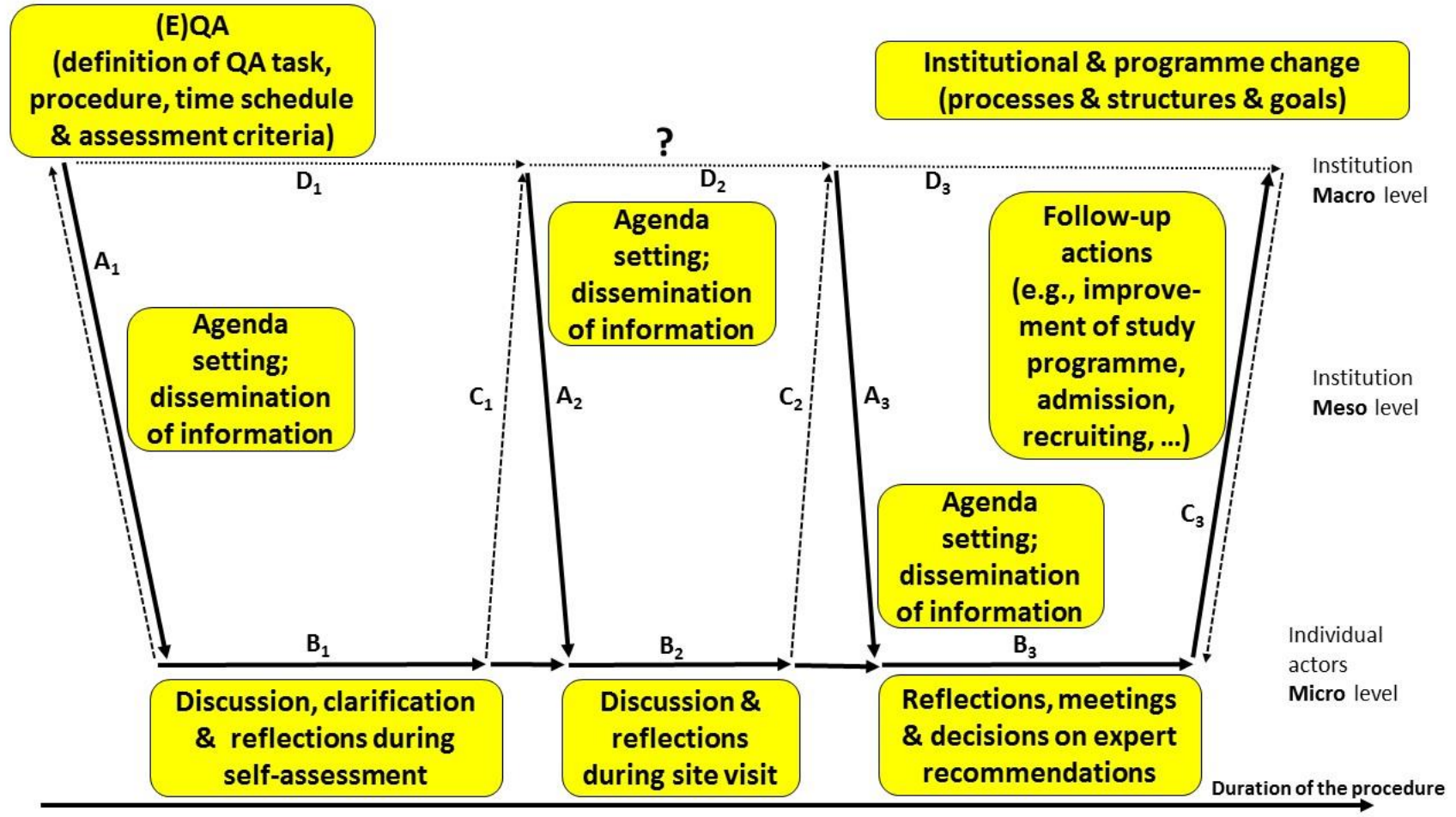


e.g., other QA processes; any HEI-internal & HEI-external influences (e.g., HEI policy)

- 1: situational mechanism
- 2: action-formation m.
- 3: transformational m.
- 4: statistical correlation only

Basic model of mechanisms underlying “QA meets HEIs”

inspired by (Astbury & Leeuw 2010) (A_i: situational mechanism; B_i: action-formation m.; C_i: transformational m.; D_i: statistical correlation only; i = 1, 2, 3)



IMPALA SWOTs

S	W	O	T
Applicable to any HEI performance area			
Applicable to any stakeholder group			
Diverse case studies	Diversity of case studies		
Impact perception and assessment of different HEI members			
Students, teachers, QA staff considered			
Some nice, informative & promising case studies			
Contribution to competence development in impact analysis and meta-evaluation in QA agencies and HEIs			

IMPALA SWOTs

S	W	O	T
	Small time window		Extend time window
	Restriction of questionnaires to certain items		Extend questionnaires
			Clarification of relation (E)QA criteria & and intended/desired effects
			Adequate timing of (E)QA interventions
			Expenses (time, money)

IMPALA SWOTs

S	W	O	T
	Low numbers (but due to specific QM activities)	Apply approach to larger samples (e.g., large study programs with many engaged/informed people)	
	Possible biases because of multiple social roles of participants (QA agencies; HEI QA managers; students)		
	No metric data (only nominal and ordinal scales)		Generate metric data (intervall scales)
	Missing target group interviews		Target group interviews
	Missing target group workshops		Target group workshops

Résumé of SWOTs

- Impact evaluation seems **indispensible** (education societies, knowledge economies, evidence-based governance and QM, ...)
- **No pure methodology** possible (such as control group, before-after, ex-post): mixed methods
- Mix of (closed questions; online) **questionnaires and structured interviews required/desirable**: mixed methods
- **No easy solutions** to Weaknesses and Strengths
- **Hard to achieve metric data** (interval scaled)
- Hard (may be even impossible) to do more than **case studies** (complexity/ dynamics of HE system & HEIs; different HEIs hardly comparable)