ABSTRACT

As the debate on the suitability and effectiveness of Quality Assurance (QA) within the context of construction wear on, one particular standard, the ISO9000 QA Standards, stands out as the most widely discussed and argued. While it is undeniably the most prolific of all formal QA standards, the experiences that the construction industry has had with it are at best mixed. Past research done to investigate its impacts, in terms of benefits and costs, suggest that most construction firms have yet to achieve optimal results from its implementation and use. One possible explanation lies in the generic nature of the standards itself. While allowing flexibility in application, it inevitably necessitates the full understanding of the requirements and proper translation into strategies for implementation within the organisation before tangible benefits can be realised.

This dissertation investigates the impacts of ISO9000 on building defects. By focusing onto this very fundamental aspect of construction quality, it shows, both theoretically and empirically, how ISO9000 certification for contractors affects the amount of defects occurring in their building projects. Augmented with findings from a case study, a clearer understanding into the mechanisms of defects and its causes is derived. With that, a conceptual framework for effective defects reduction, based on the ISO9001 model of QA, is developed.

Keywords: Quality, ISO9000, building defects, causes, reduction, project system.