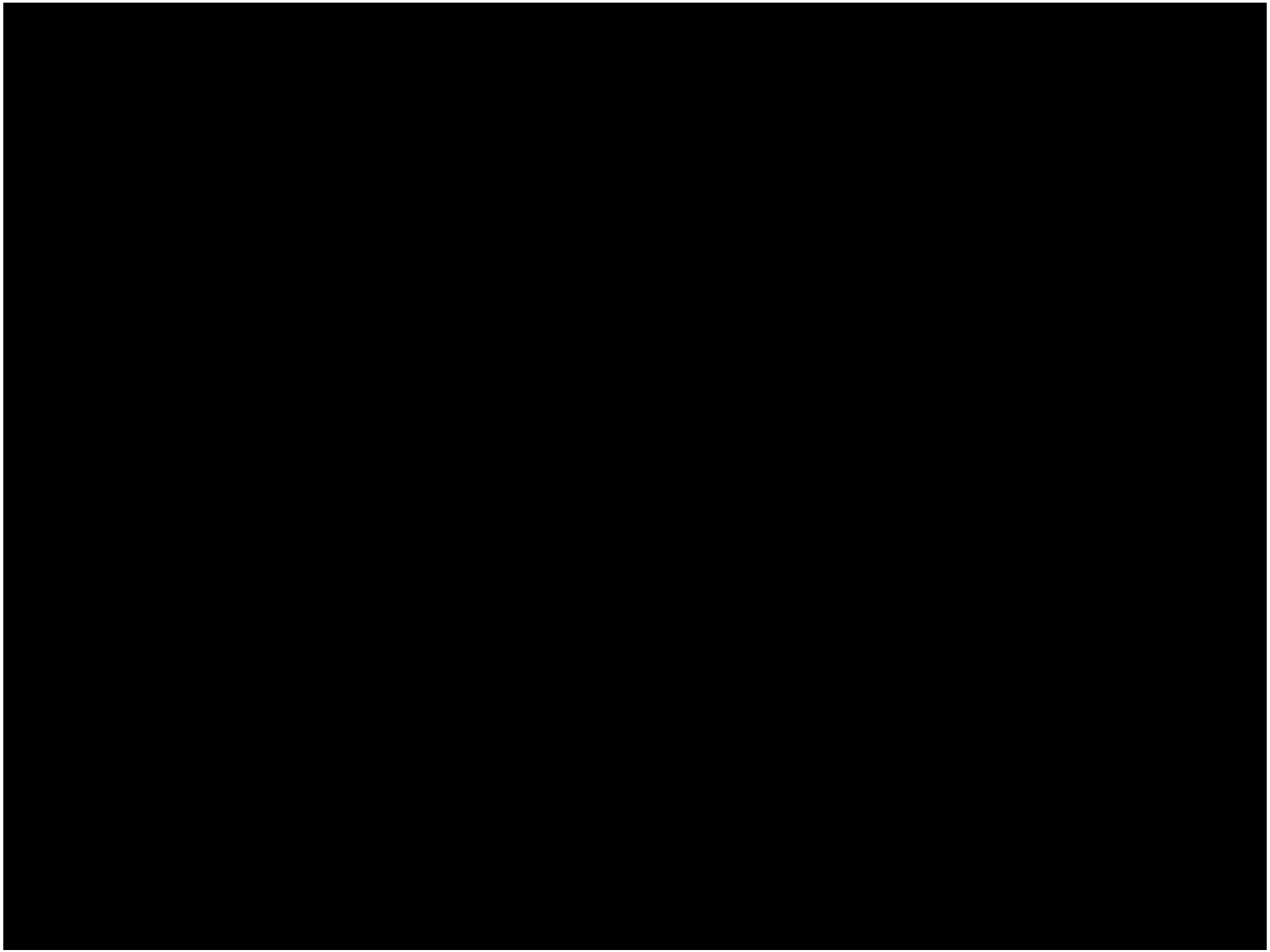

CRQ

# Can institutional evaluations help higher education institutions?

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**ENQA Quality Seminar**
**Tromso**
**December 2002**

# Overview

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- Explore impact issues
- Quality processes and how they relate to conceptions of quality
- Evaluations/critique of external quality processes
- Evidence, methodology and politics of quality
- Conclusion: Are we making progress?

# Quality evaluation

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**‘Evaluation’ is an umbrella term for all forms of quality monitoring, assessment, audit, legitimation, endorsement or accreditation. It also includes standards monitoring.**

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Impact?

## Concerns

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**At the INQAAHE Conference in Santiago (1999), opening keynote, I expressed concern about:**

- **the impact that quality processes have on higher education;**
- **the extent and nature of (independent) evaluation of external quality evaluation.**

# Impact

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- More work for all involved in external evaluation (return on effort?).
- More documentation (but better?, for whom?).
- More information (right sort?).
- Clearer vision (for managers?).
- Greater accountability (about what and to whom?
- More compliance.

# Impact (2)

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- Better regulation of th ctor?
- More efficient institu ns?
- More accessible? en access, fees?)
- Better resea
- Better tea g?
- Improv tandards of student attain t?

Jury is still out on most of these questions

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Quality processes and link to quality?

# Evaluation (external)

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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Approach | accreditation | audit | assessment | external ex |
| Object | provider | programme | learner | output |
| Focus | govern-anace & regulation | curriculum design | learning experience | medium of delivery | student support |
| | content of program-mes | financial viability & processes | qualifi-cation | admin support | organis-ational processes |
| Rationale | accountability | control | compliance | improvement |
| Methods | self-assessment | PIs | peer review | inspection |
| | document analysis | stakeholder surveys | direct intervention | proxy delegate |

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| Quality | Process | Standards | Outcomes |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| traditional | | academic | |
| perfection | | competence | |
| fitness for purpose | | service | |
| value for money | | organisational | |
| transformation | | | |

Standards

| academic | competence | service | organisational |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Quality

- traditional
- perfection
- fitness for purpose
- value for money
- transformation

Standards

Quality

- traditional
- perfection
- fitness for purpose
- value for money
- transformation

| academic | competence | service | organisational |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

## Exceptional quality of academic standards

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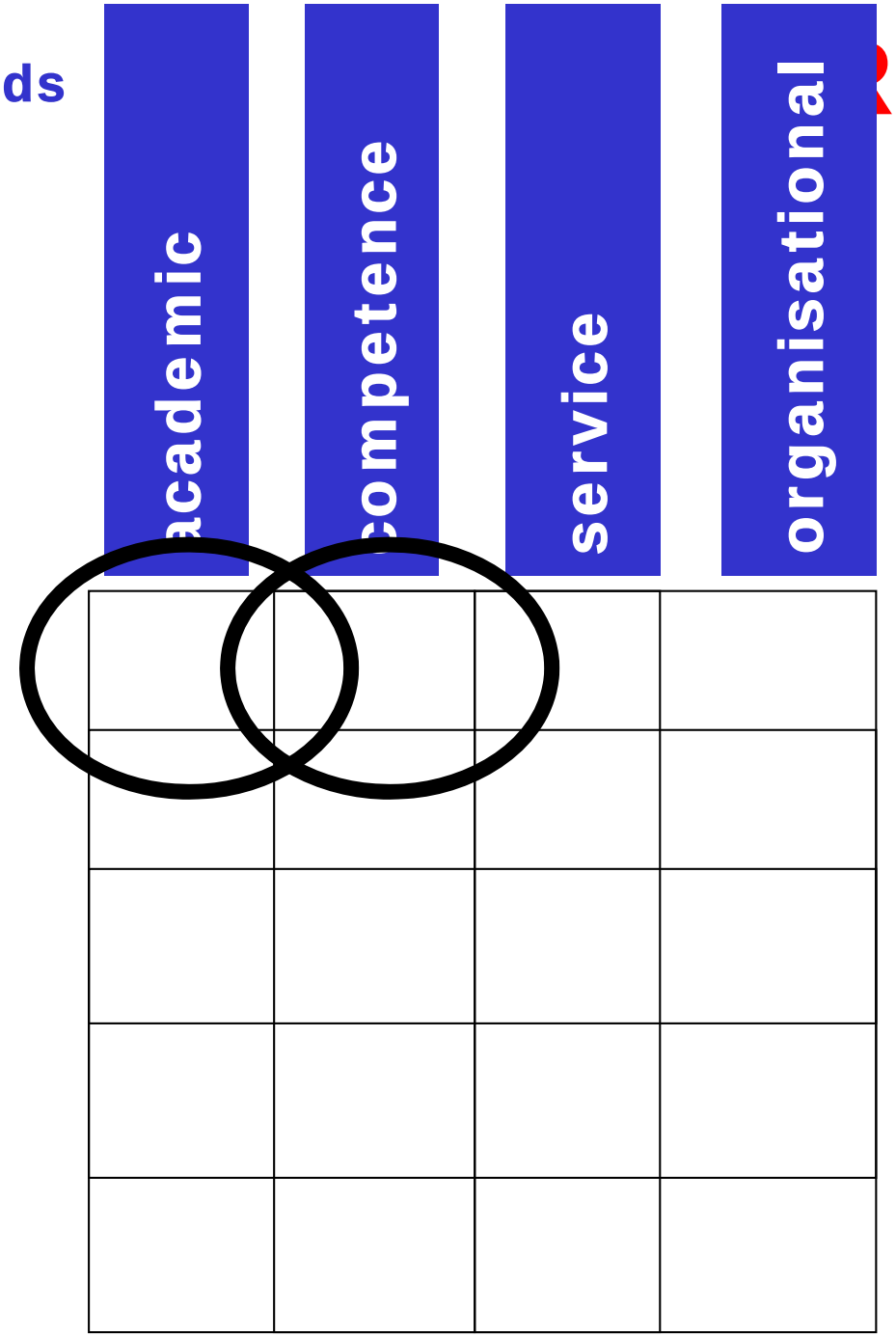
**Emphasis on summative assessment of knowledge and, implicitly, some 'higher-level' skills. Implicit normative gold-standard against which to measure academic performance. Elitist presupposition that there is a need to maintain pockets of high quality and standards.**

**Quality evaluation proceses include standards monitoring, e.g. external examiners, reputational indicators (league tables), employer recruitment preferences, research evaluations (RAE). Accreditation also acts as a background monitor of the exceptional quality of academic standards.**

Standards

Quality

- traditional
- perfection
- fitness for purpose
- value for money
- transformation



# Evaluation (external)

CRQ

| | | | | |
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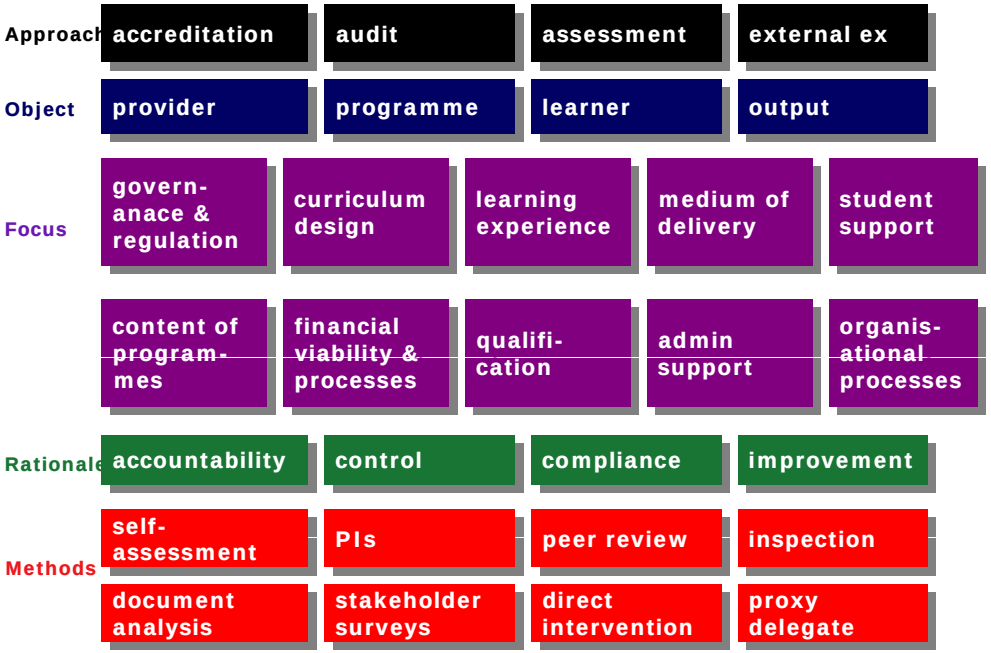
# CRQ


Approach
accreditation
audit
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Object
provider
programme
learner
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Focus
govern-anace & regulation
curriculum design
learning experience
medium of delivery
student support
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admin support
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Rationale
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stakeholder surveys
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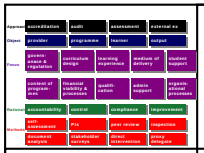
proxy delegate

## Standards

## Quality

- traditional
- perfection
- fitness for purpose
- value for money
- transformation

| academic | competence | service | organisational |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | | | |
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## Standards

Standards monitoring
Accreditation
Assessment (L or R)
Audit/institutional
PIs
Customer surveys/feedback

academic | competence | service | organisational

RQ

## Quality

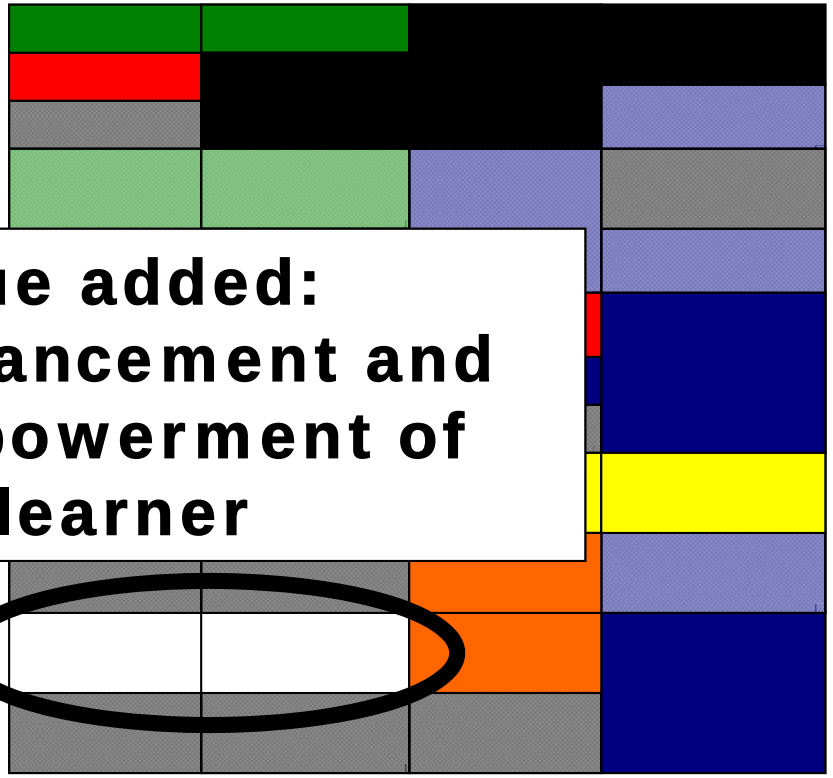
traditional

perfection

fitness for purpose

value for money

transformation



**Value added: enhancement and empowerment of the learner**

# Transformative learning

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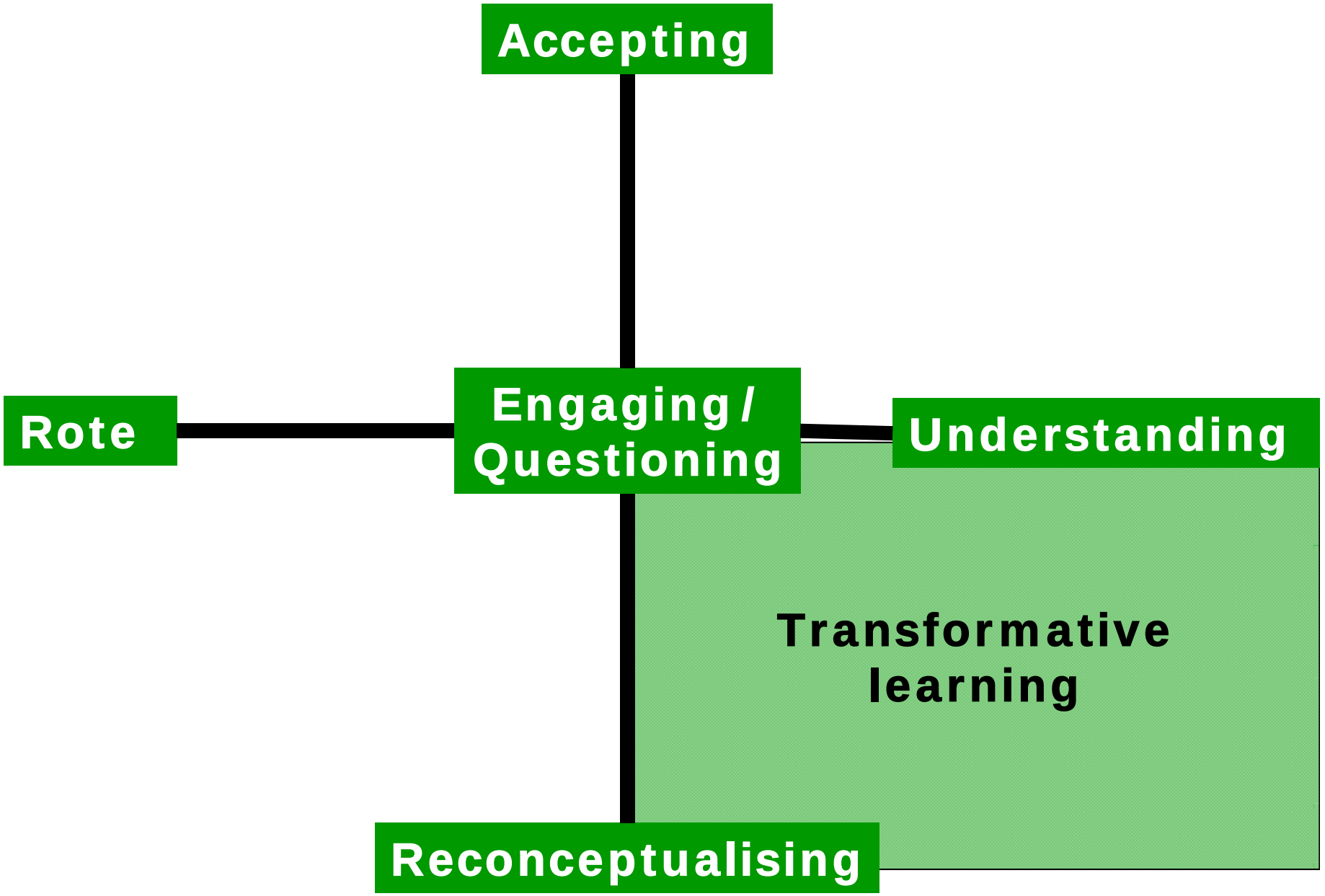

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# Nature of evaluation

# Evaluation of evaluators

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**Evaluation of evaluators is mostly unsystematic. Two broad types:**

1. **Opinion, predictive or theoretical analyses using existing (anecdotal) data [OLD].**
2. **Analyses that are based on systematic data collection [NEW].**

## Evaluators

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1. Self-evaluation.
2. External evaluations initiated internally — sometimes using consultants as ‘friendly’ advisors.
3. Independent evaluations initiated and undertaken by an individual, research centre or organisation, as one-off studies or as part of a research programme into HE policy.

## Purposes

A. Feasibility studies, evaluations of pilots or modifications to an existing process.

B. Evaluations of effectiveness of quality process (ability to deliver the ‘underlying rationale’).

C. Fundamental review of impact on the sector.

| Purpose \ Agency | Self-evaluation | | Agency initiated | | Independent | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Old | New | Old | New | Old | New |
| Feasibility or modification | | Saito | | | | |
| Effectiveness | Jeppesen | | Macukow | Bean<br>AlHaribi | Blackmur | Yeats |
| Impact | | | | Patil | Carr | |

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# Evidence, methodology and politics of quality

# Evidence

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- **Statistics**
  - Dubious provenance
  - Convenience measures
  - Poorly operationalised
  - Conceptually invalid
- **Verbal / written testimony**
  - Action
  - Intention
  - Opinion

**Beware 'facts'**

## Facts

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- Naïve objectivism
- Theory-related nature of observation
- Evidence linked to theory
- Clear epistemology -- or at least a clear link to a specified concept of quality
  - (fitness for purpose as an escape clause)

# Epistemology

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- **Positivism**
  - **explanations: cause and effect**
- **Phenomenology**
  - **interpretation: meanings**
- **Critical (dialectical)**
  - **understanding, situated**

# Methodology

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- Causes
  - inferred
  - data as objective, unambiguous
  - statistical relationships
- Meanings
  - ‘customers’, ‘choice’
  - data as indicative; surface scrutiny (linked to expectation)

# Methodology (continued)

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- **Dialectical understandings**
  - **context dependent: historical, structural**
  - **totalistic**
  - **abstraction**
  - **data deconstruction / reconstruction**
    - **semiotic; critical hermeneutic; structuralist; dialectical processes.**

# Politics of quality

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“ The ‘politics of quality’ refers to the macro and micro agendas that accompany the introduction of quality monitoring procedures. … Alvesson & Willmott, (1996, p. 11), suggest that the achievement of quality in higher education ‘is essentially political in origin’. The politics, though, are concealed behind a facade …. Thus, any evaluation of evaluation systems needs to unravel the politics of quality. Equally, there is also a need, as in any social science, to explore the values and political agendas of researchers as well as those who commissioned the research. ”

## Conclusion

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Do we

- seriously evaluate the evidence we use and the nature of the epistemological enterprise in which we are engaged?
- use naïve models of impact?
- confuse effectiveness of process with impact on the sector?
- Continue to ignore the politics?
- really address the affect on student learning?

# Factors impacting on the student experience of learning

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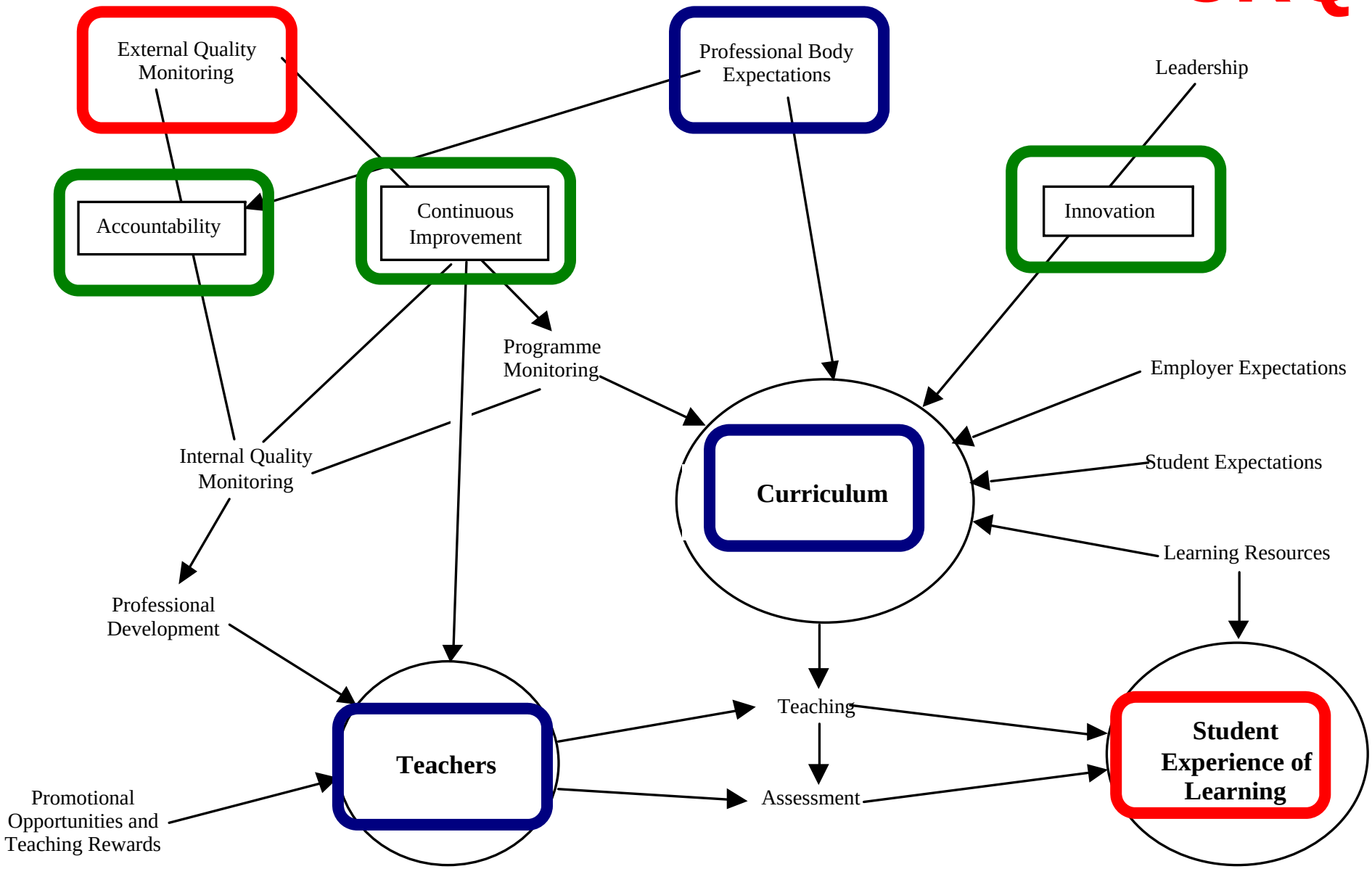


*Source: Adapted from Horsburgh, 1999, p. 22*

# Thank you

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