

# Cultural mirrors

A dialectical approach to quality culture

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**EURASHE-seminar on the Implementation of Internal and External Quality Assurance** taking place on 24 and 25 October 2013 in Bucharest



# INTRODUCTION

- Quality as culture
- Organisational culture

# REFLECTION EXERCISE

- Six images of organisation
- Core Quadrant Method

# FUNDAMENTALS

- Dialectics, contingency, imagination

# CONCEPTUAL MODEL

# ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

# RESEARCH

# PERSPECTIVES

- Research
- Practice

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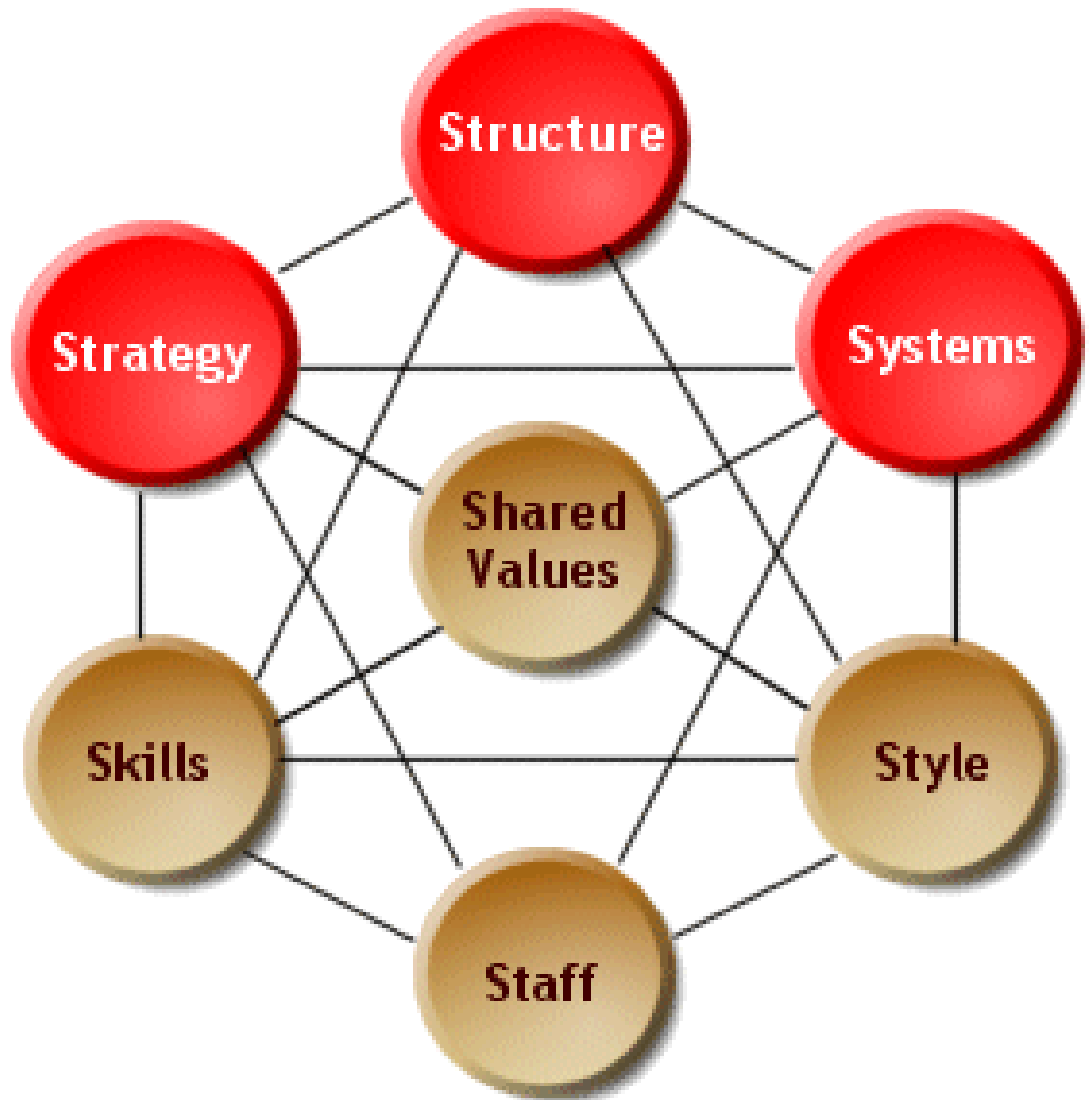
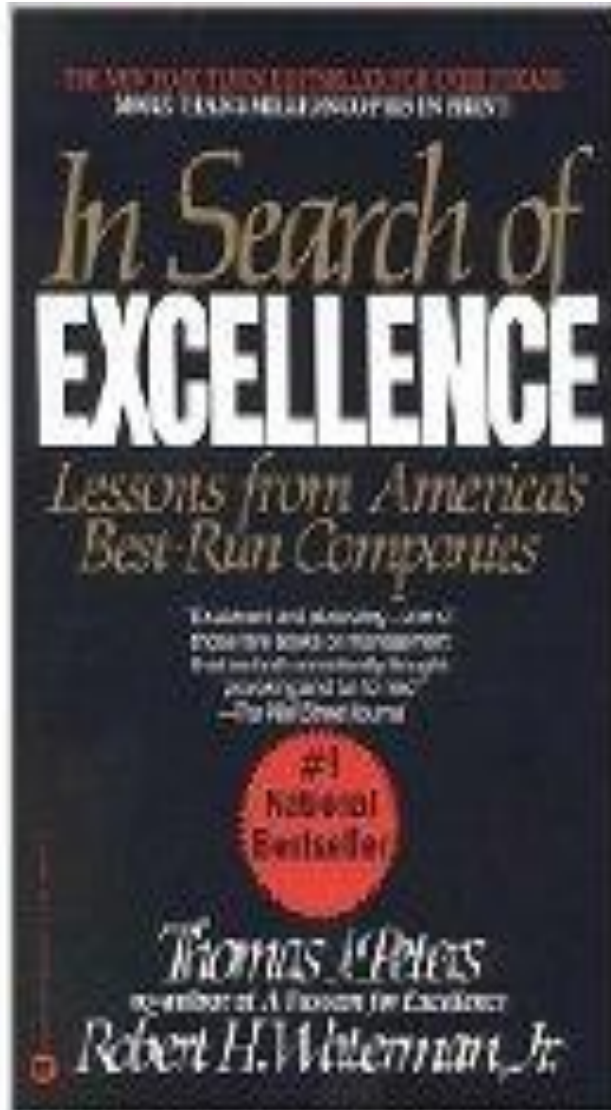
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## RESEARCH

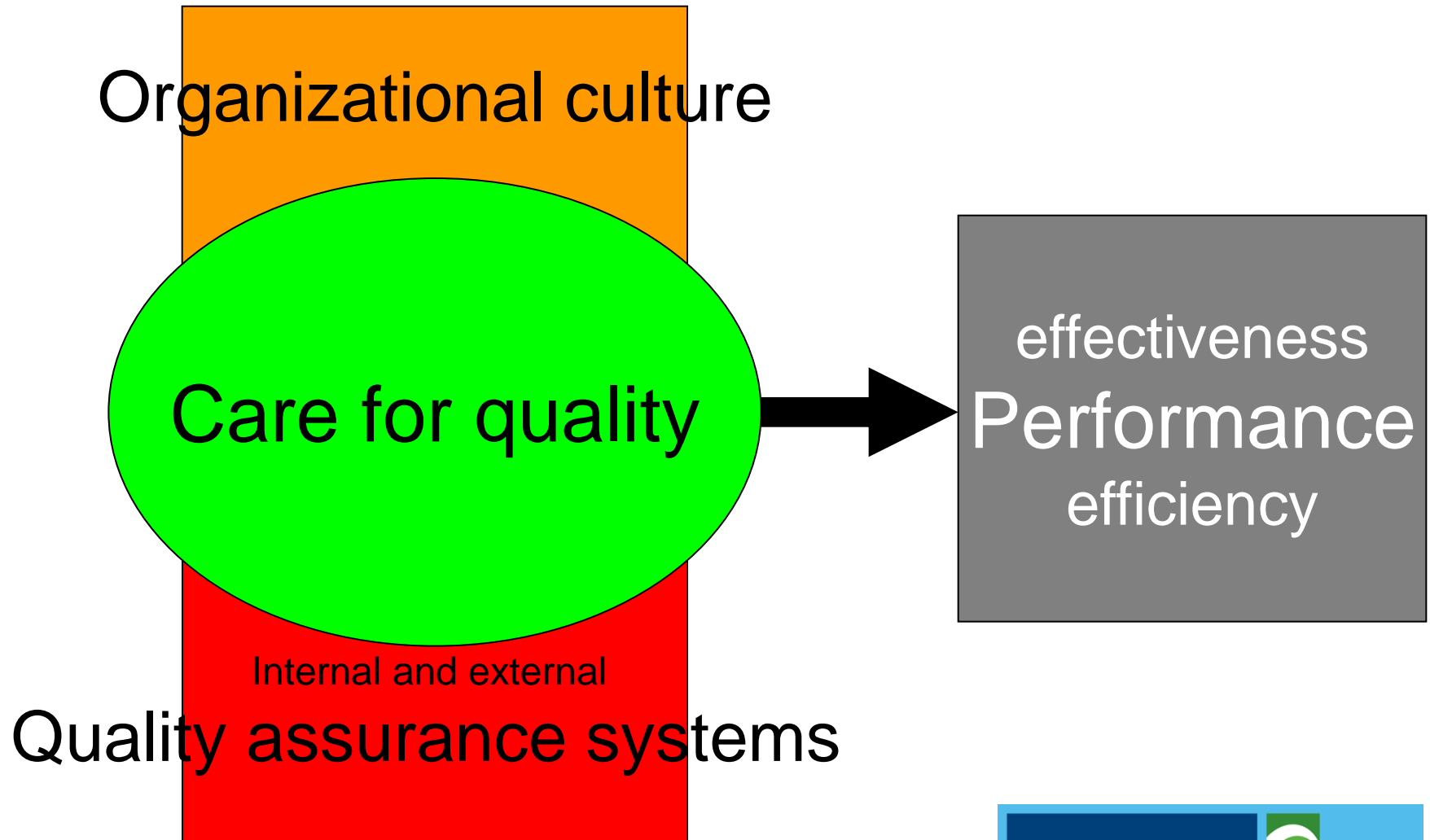
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# Hard and Soft



# Quality culture: a working model



# Quality culture: a working definition

**“Quality culture is an *organisational culture* which contributes to the development of effective and efficient care for *quality*”**

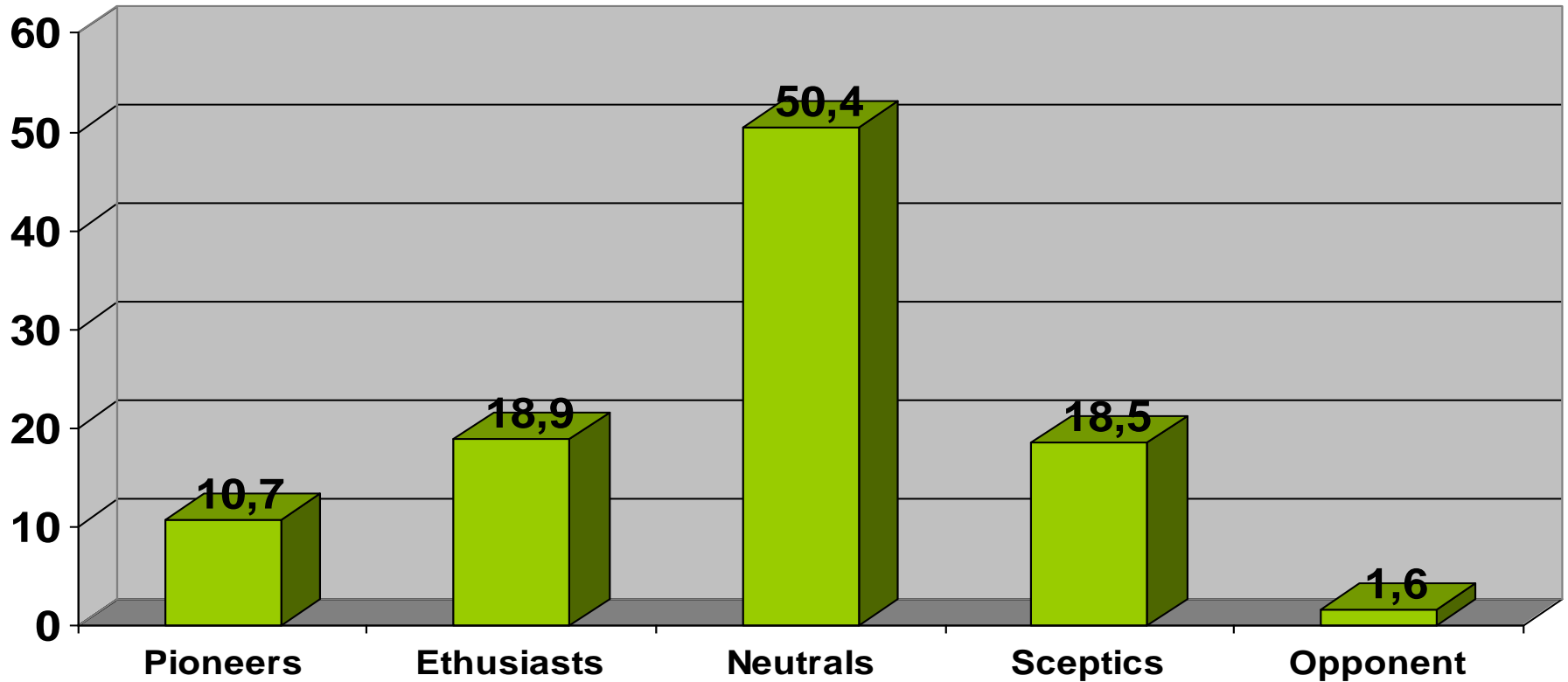
Flemish Bologna Expert Team (EUA case studies; Berings et al., 2011)

# QUOTE 1:

*While systems, procedures and rules are being laid down, [...] there is still a lack of staff and student attachment and active involvement in these processes.*

*Harvey & Stensaker, 2008*

# TQM-attitude

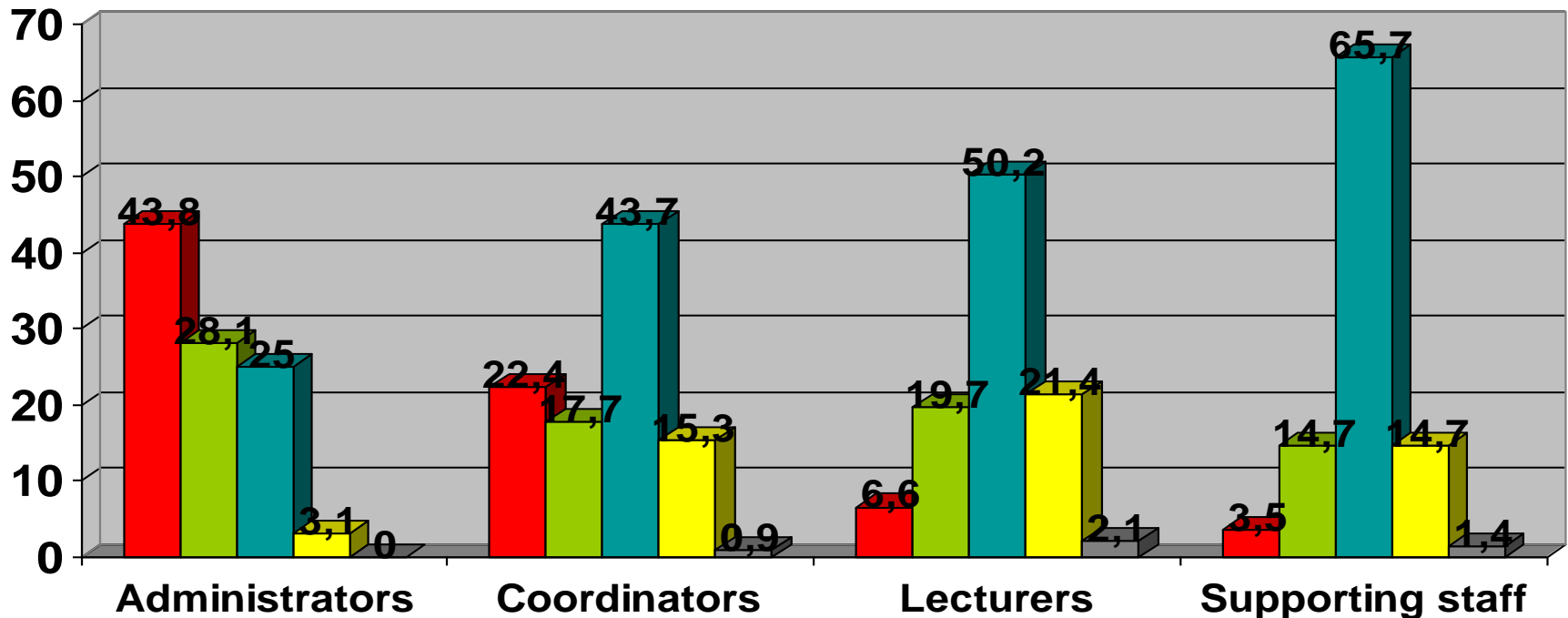


Berings, 2001



# TQM-attitude

■ Pioneers ■ Enthousiasts ■ Neutrals ■ Sceptics ■ Opponents



# Quality culture: a working definition

“Quality culture is an **organisational culture** which contributes to the development of effective and efficient care for *quality*”

Flemish Bologna Expert Team (Berings et al., 2010)

“**Organizational culture** refers to the taken-for-granted *values*, underlying *assumptions*, expectations, collective memories, and definitions present in an organization. It reflects the prevailing ideology that people carry *inside their heads*. It conveys a sense of identity to employees, provides *unwritten rules* and, often, unspoken guidelines for *how to get along* in the organization, and enhances the stability of the social system that they experience.” (Cameron and Quinn, 1999).

“**Organizational climate** is the relative enduring characteristic of an organization which *distinguishes* it from organizations; and embodies members *collective perceptions* about their organization with respect to such *dimensions* as autonomy, trust, cohesiveness, support, recognition, innovation and fairness [...] and reflects the prevalent norms and attitudes of the *organization’s culture*; and acts as a source of influence for shaping behavior.”  
(Moran and Volkwein, 1992).

# Cultural mirrors

An integral approach to quality culture

- How do we perceive ourselves?
- What kind of organisation do we want to be?
- Do we differ from other organisations?
- Is our organisation internally divided?

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## Image1: .....

*Organization X is known for its sound and, also, traditional approach. This organization only brings about change when it is absolutely necessary and only if it is almost certain that the new approach is better than the old one.*

## Image 2: .....

*In organization X, there is a real team spirit. The staff has a strong sense that they are all contributing to a common goal and ideal. Time and effort are allocated to develop a common future vision. The staff uses this as a frame of reference for their own work.*



## Image 3: .....

*Organization X employs in particular specialists who are recruited mainly because of their specific professional skills. These professionals focus primarily on their own specialization and pay less attention to the organization as a whole. The support services are at their disposal for practical and organizational issues.*

## Image 4: .....

*Organization X is known as a trend setter in terms of the use of modern methods and techniques. It rapidly responds to new trends in society. Changes in offer and internal organization and regulations take place in rapid succession. If improvement is considered to be possible, action is immediately taken.*

## Image 5: .....

*In organization X the managers highly trust their employees. They believe that most people are intrinsically motivated and capable of figuring out how to work best. Consequently, anyone can perform his duties according to his own insights, principles and style.*

## Image 6: .....

*In organization X, all activities are perfectly aligned with each other. There is a system, logic and order in everything. Objectives, plans, agreements and tasks are put on paper. Careless work and sloppiness are fought. The management insists that everything is in accordance with the agreements.*

## QUOTE 2:

*A person might retain basic elements of the two opposing perspectives and believe that both perspectives might contain some truth, even at the risk of tolerating a contradiction.*

*Ping & Nisbett, 1999*

## QUOTE 3:

*Every disadvantage has his advantage*

*Johan Cruijff*

# Core quadrant method

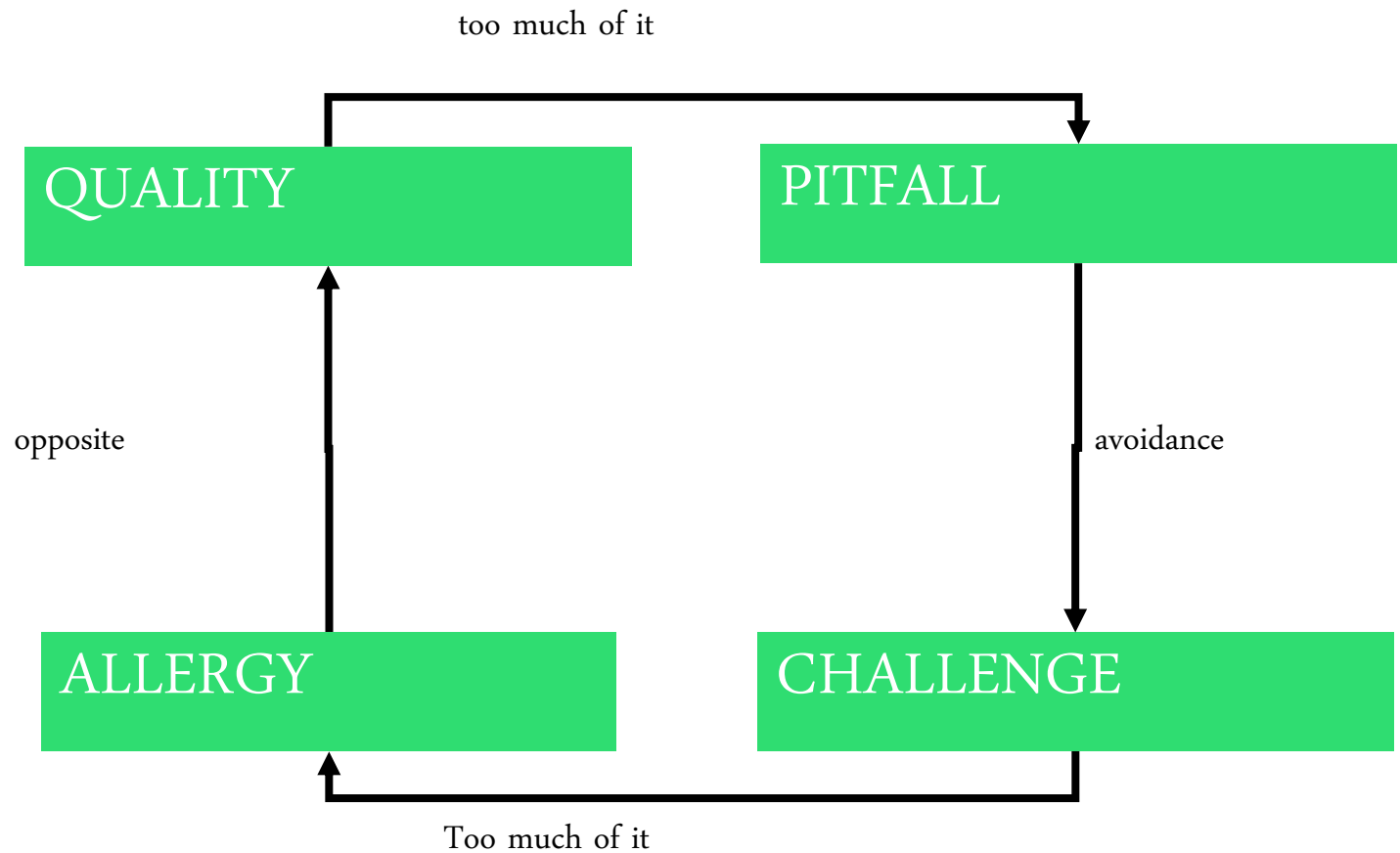
<http://www.scienceprogress.info/effectiveness/core-quadrant-ofman>

- Original purpose: activation of self-reflection in managers about their own *personal qualities*.
- Our application: activation of reflection on *quality culture* by quality assurance professionals, HEI administrators, academics or other HEI-employees.
- Our purpose: stimulate dialectical reasoning around quality culture

Berings & Grieten, 2012 (EQAF, Talinn)

Berings, 2013 (NVAO voorjaarscongres, Rotterdam)

# Core quadrants





# Reflection assignment

- Discuss two images
- Allergy: what advocates of each approach want to avoid?
- Quality: what is the most important advantage of each image?
- Pitfall: what could be weaknesses or risks of each image?
- Challenges: how can we try to preserve the advantages without the pitfalls?

|              | Allergy | Quality | Pitfall | Challenge |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Innovation   |         |         |         |           |
| Tradition    |         |         |         |           |
| People       |         |         |         |           |
| System       |         |         |         |           |
| Collective   |         |         |         |           |
| Professional |         |         |         |           |

|           | Tradition | Collective |
|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Allergy   |           |            |
| Quality   |           |            |
| Pitfall   |           |            |
| Challenge |           |            |

|           | Professional<br>(specialisation) | Innovation |
|-----------|----------------------------------|------------|
| Allergy   |                                  |            |
| Quality   |                                  |            |
| Pitfall   |                                  |            |
| Challenge |                                  |            |

|           | People | System |
|-----------|--------|--------|
| Allergy   |        |        |
| Quality   |        |        |
| Pitfall   |        |        |
| Challenge |        |        |

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# Dialectics

- Thesis – antithesis – synthesis (Hegel)
- Competing values (Robert Quinn)

# QUOTE 4:

*Quality culture is not mechanistic [...] but an iterative, indeed dialectical, process.*

*Quality culture is first and foremost a tool for asking questions about how things work, how institutions function [...] and how they see themselves. The problem with quality culture as it is used today is that the concept is thought of as the answer to challenges, while in reality, it is a concept for identifying potential challenges.*

*Harvey & Stensaker, 2008*



# Contingency

- No one best way to manage or organise
- Effectiveness depends on context factors
- Equifinality: a given end state can be reached by different potential means

# Dialectics

these

need to control

Anti-these

need for autonomy

Synthese

empowerment

# Imagination

Gareth Morgan:



“Ideas about organizations are always based on implicit images or metaphors that persuade us to see, understand, and manage situations in a particular way.”

Gareth Morgan

# IMAGES OF ORGANIZATION



Updated Edition of the International Bestseller



**KU LEUVEN**



## QUOTE 5:

*Imagination is more important than knowledge.*

*To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advance in science.*

*Albert Einstein*

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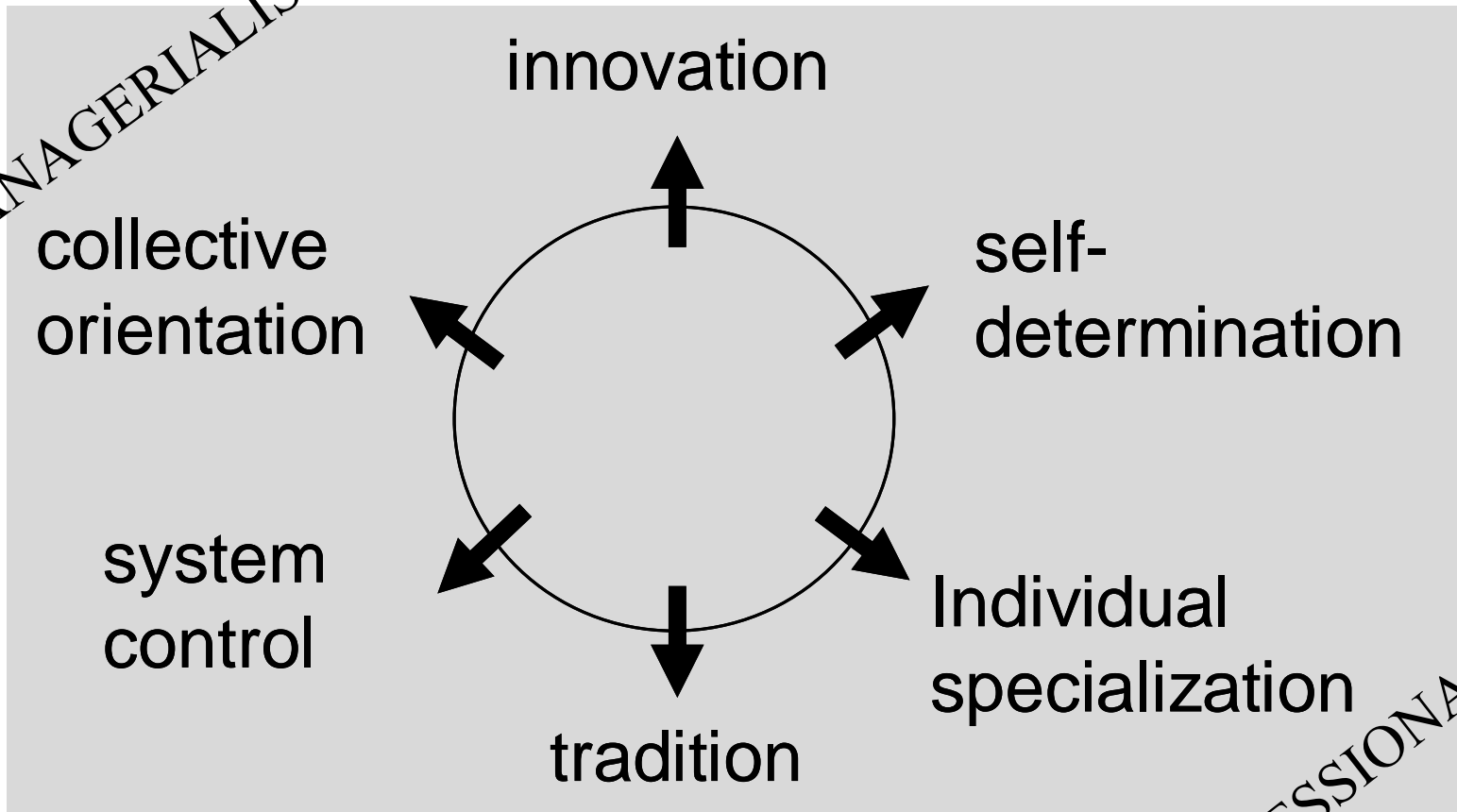
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# Our framework: competing values

*MANAGERIALISM*



*PROFESSIONALISM*

## QUOTE 6:

*It is often the case that when speaking of quality, it is easy to revert back to such managerial concepts as quality control, quality mechanisms, quality management, etc. These concepts, however, are not neutral. They convey a technocratic and top-down approach that will backfire in academic settings. The self-perception of academics as successful professionals who are committed to excellence means that they dislike being managed.”*

*EUA (2006). Quality Culture in European universities: a Bottom-up approach. Brussels: European University Association)*



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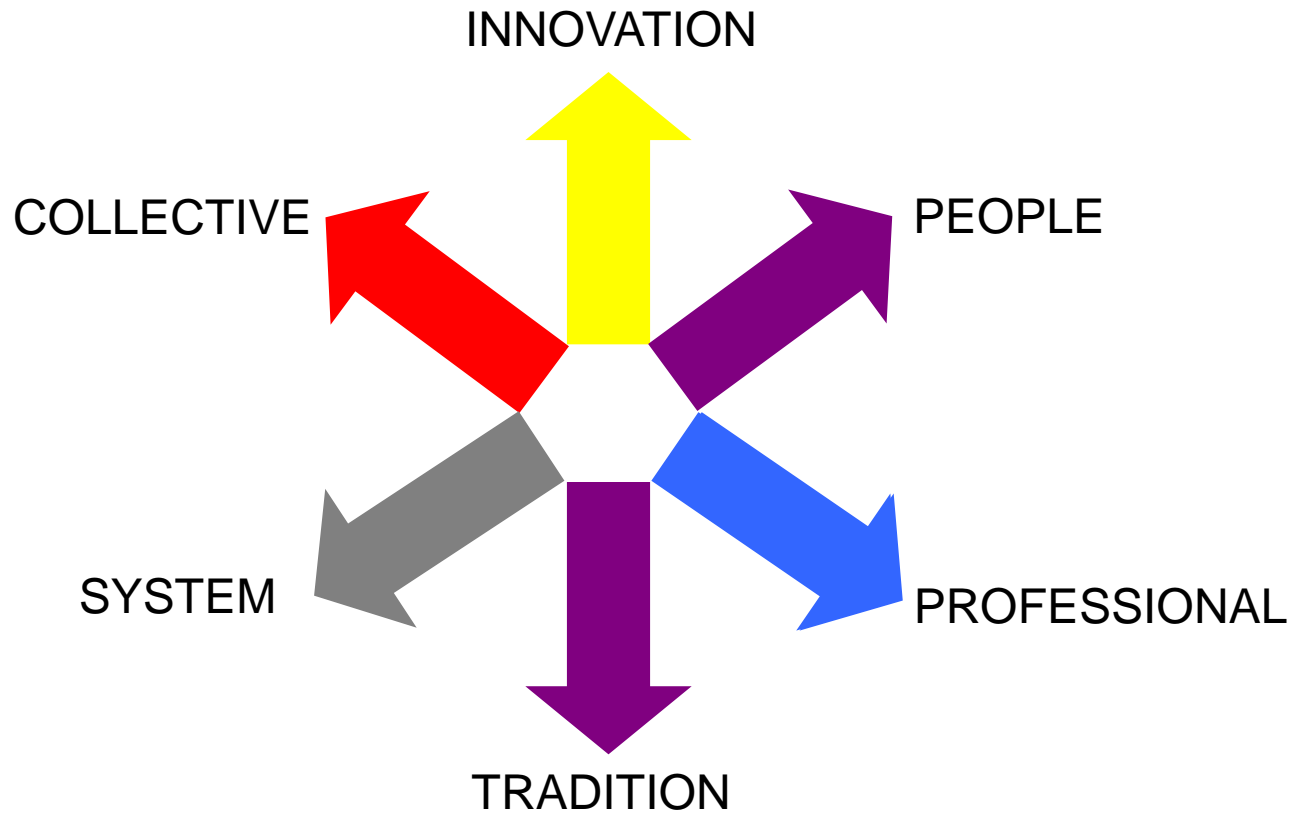
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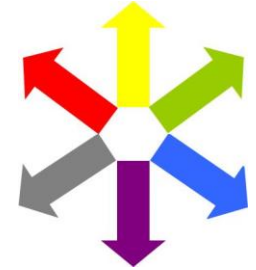
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# Assessment Instrument



## six images

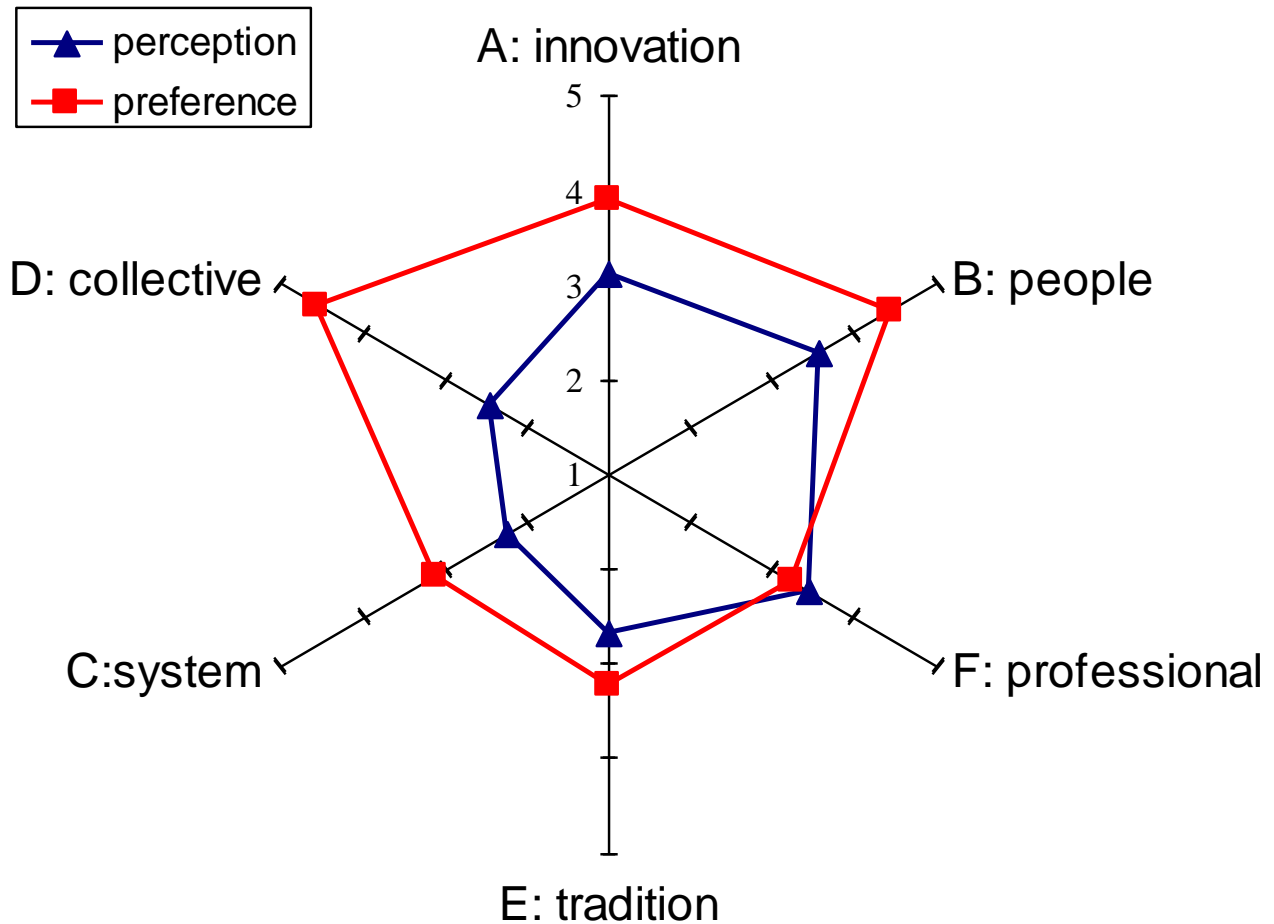
Would you like to work in organization X?

2. Absolutely not
3. Rather not
4. Partly
5. With pleasure
6. With much pleasure

To what extent does your organization or section resemble organization X?

1. Not at all
2. To a small extent
3. As much as it doesn't
4. To a large extent
5. Entirely

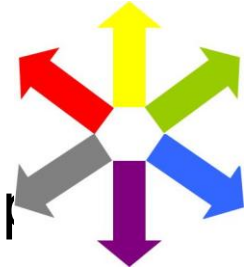
# Profile analysis (Case 1)



# Assessment Instrument

## thirty cultural features

(e.g. “Vision and policy are translated into operational p



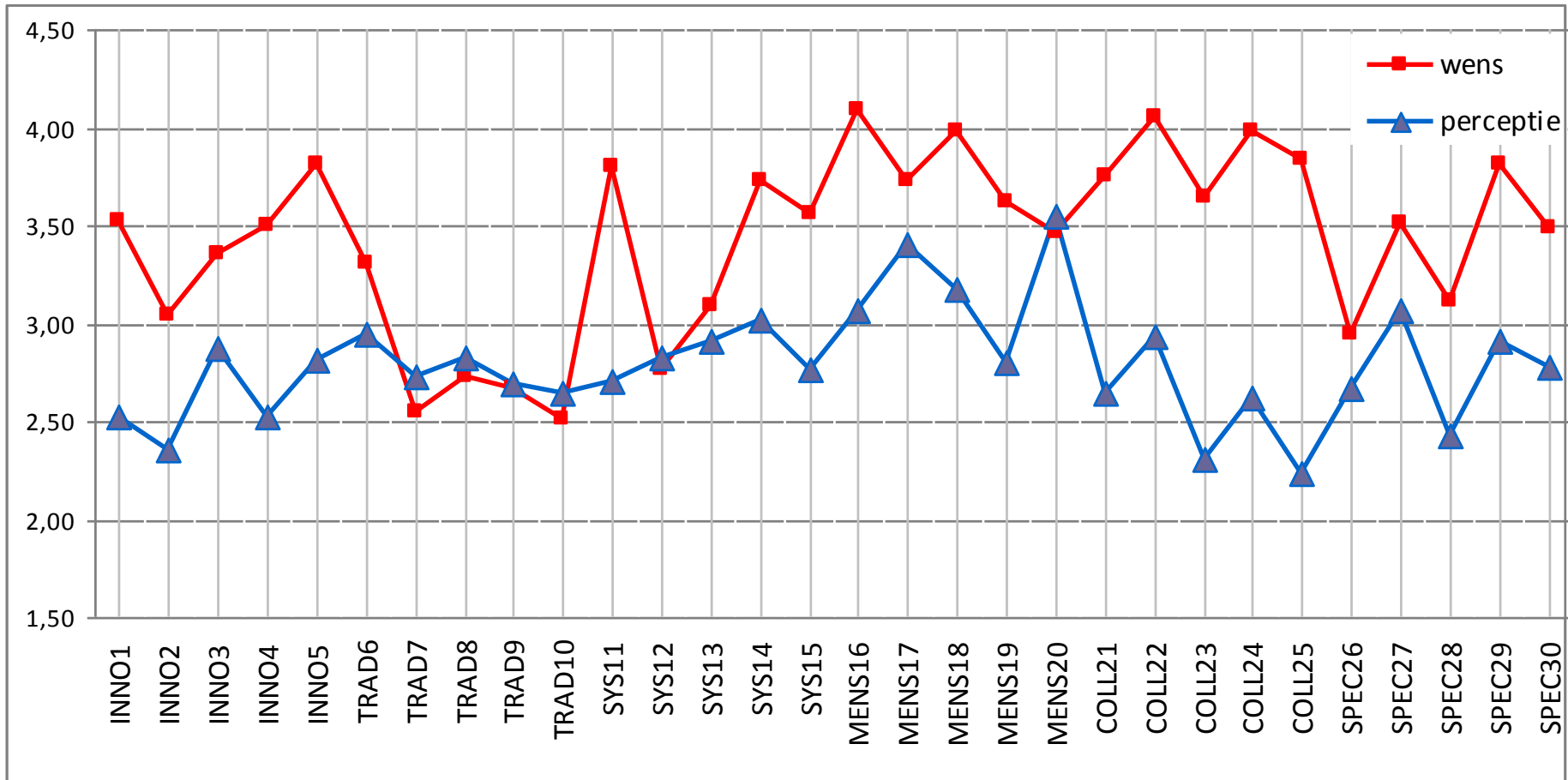
How important is this feature to you?

1. not at all important
2. a little bit important
3. rather important
4. very important
5. utmost important

To what extent does this feature apply to the organisation?

1. not at all
2. to a small extent
3. partly
4. to a large extent
5. entirely

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# Study 1 (Berings, 2001)

## 44 HEI departements

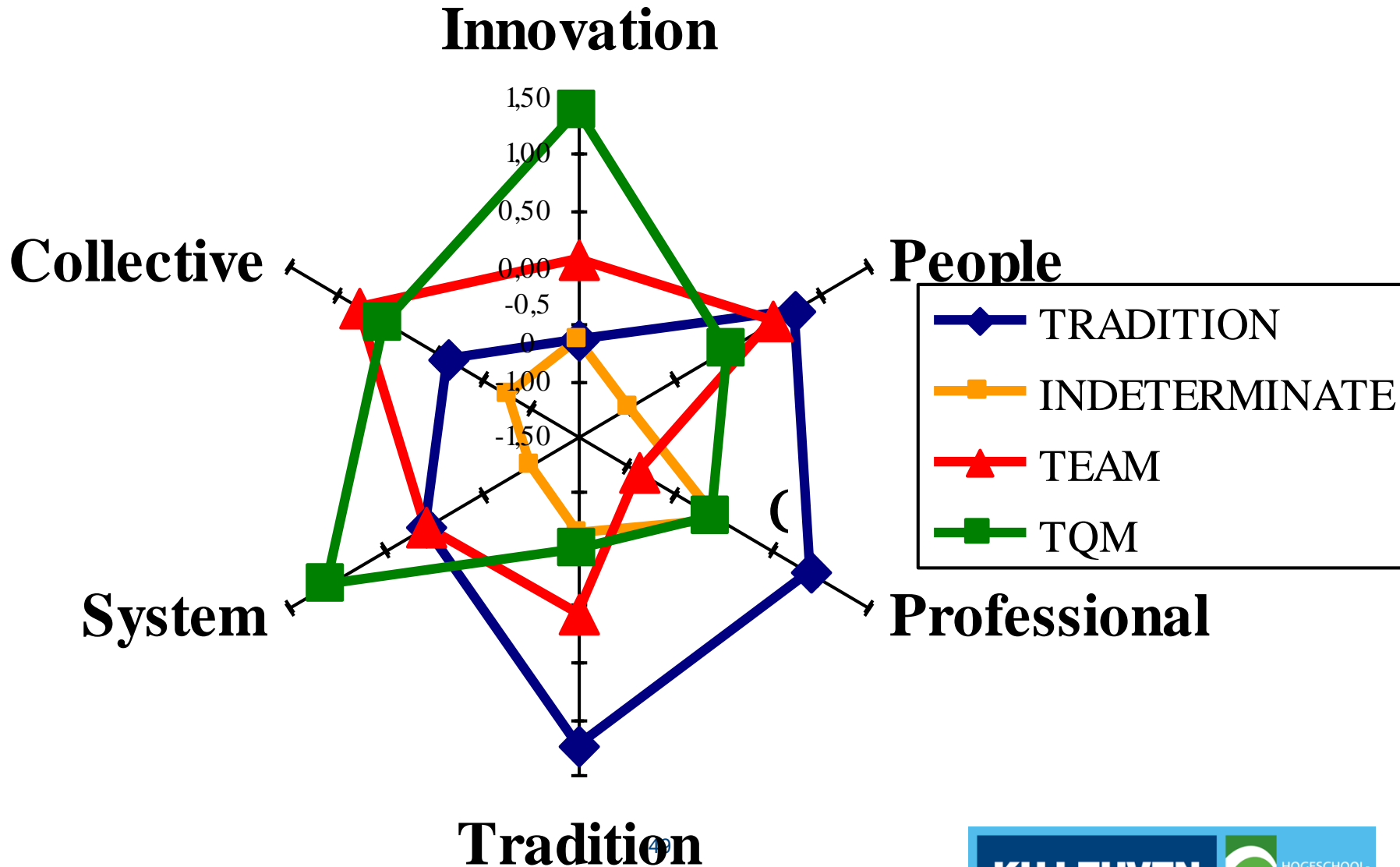
Table 2. Culture images and TQM-criteria: Pearson-correlations.

|                | TQM implementation |   | Student satisfaction |     | Employee satisfaction |     |
|----------------|--------------------|---|----------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|
| Collective     | .39                | * | .60                  | *** | .73                   | *** |
| People         | .23                |   | .46                  | **  | .69                   | **  |
| Innovation     | .22                |   | .46                  | **  | .51                   | **  |
| System         | .13                |   | .49                  | **  | .51                   | **  |
| Tradition      | -.15               |   | .11                  |     | .17                   |     |
| Professional   | -.25               |   | -.20                 |     | -.11                  |     |
| R <sup>2</sup> | .22                |   | .44                  |     | .73                   |     |

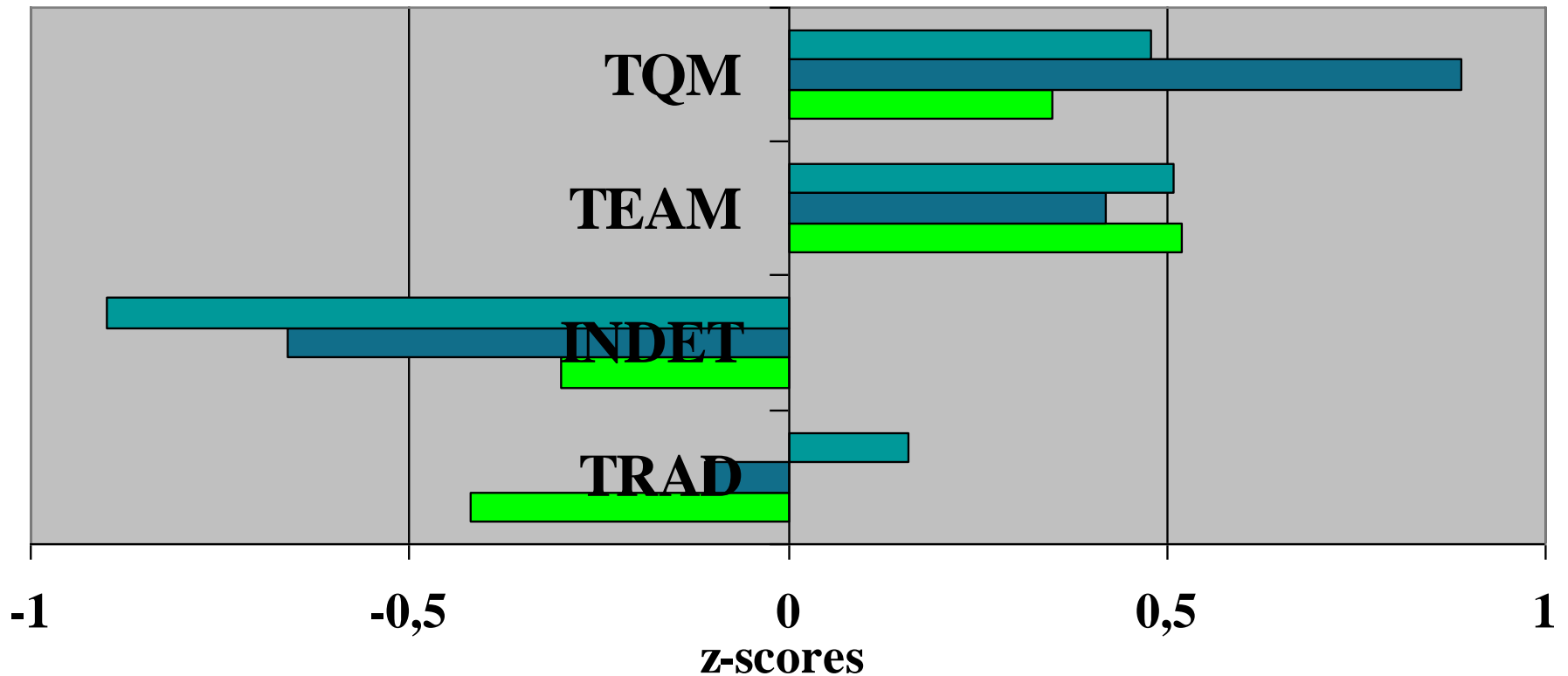
Note: \* p <.05; \*\* p <.01; \*\*\* p<.001



# four clusters



# Four clusters / three criteria



■ TQM implement.

■ Student SF

■ Employee SF

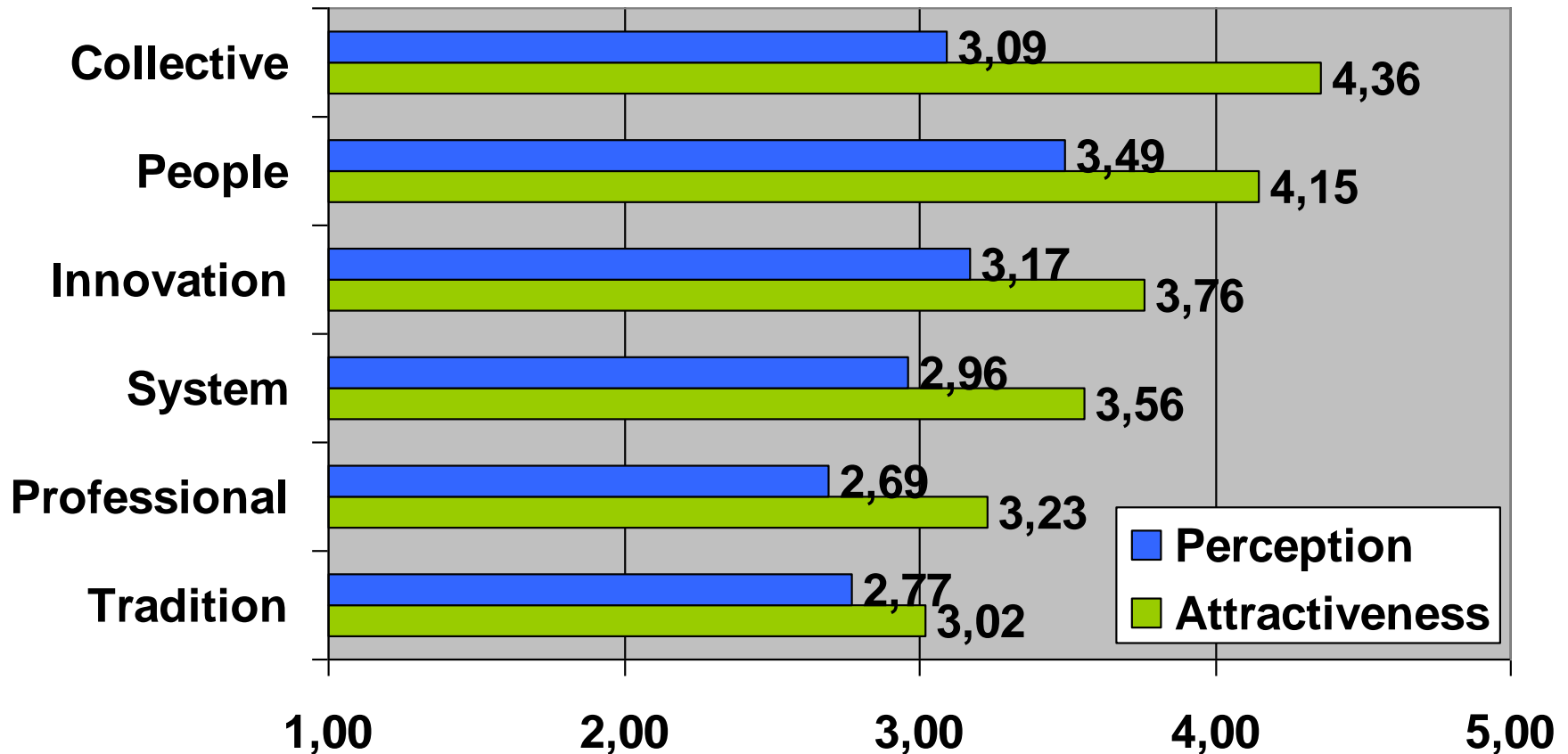
## Study 2 (2009)

28 units of universities and colleges  
(‘hogescholen’)

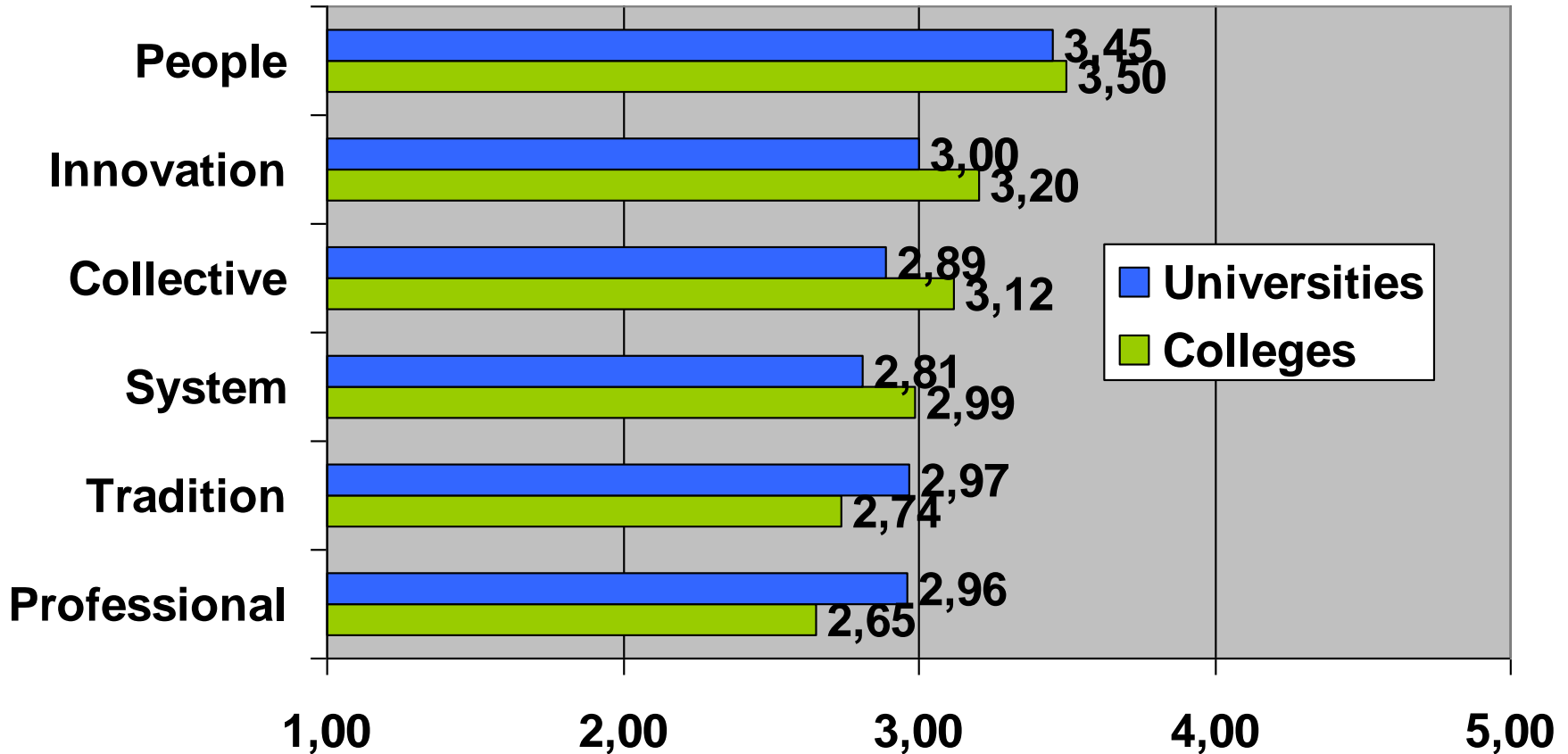
## Study 3 (2010)

64 units of universities and colleges  
(‘hogescholen’)

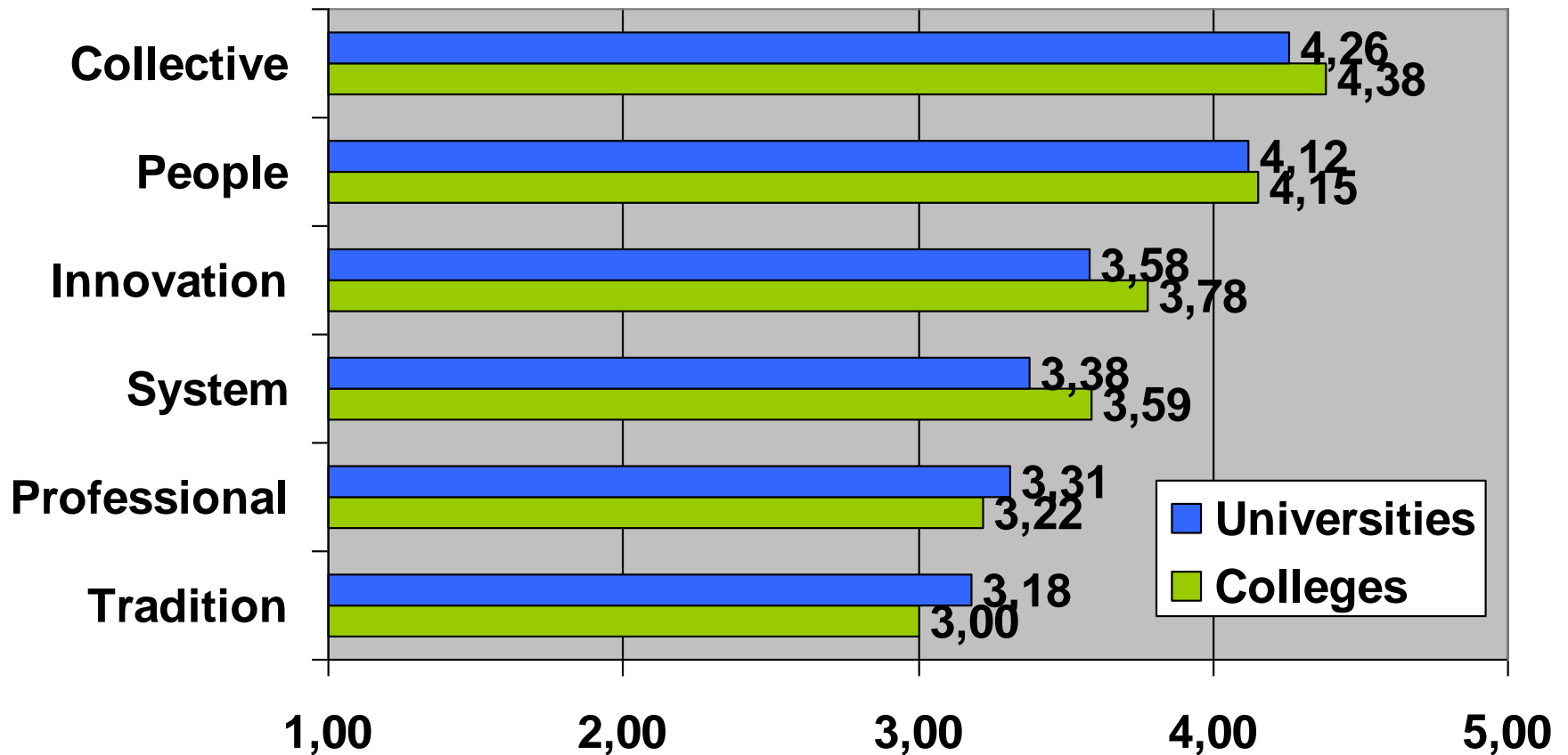
# PERCEPTION versus ATTRACTIVENESS (2010)



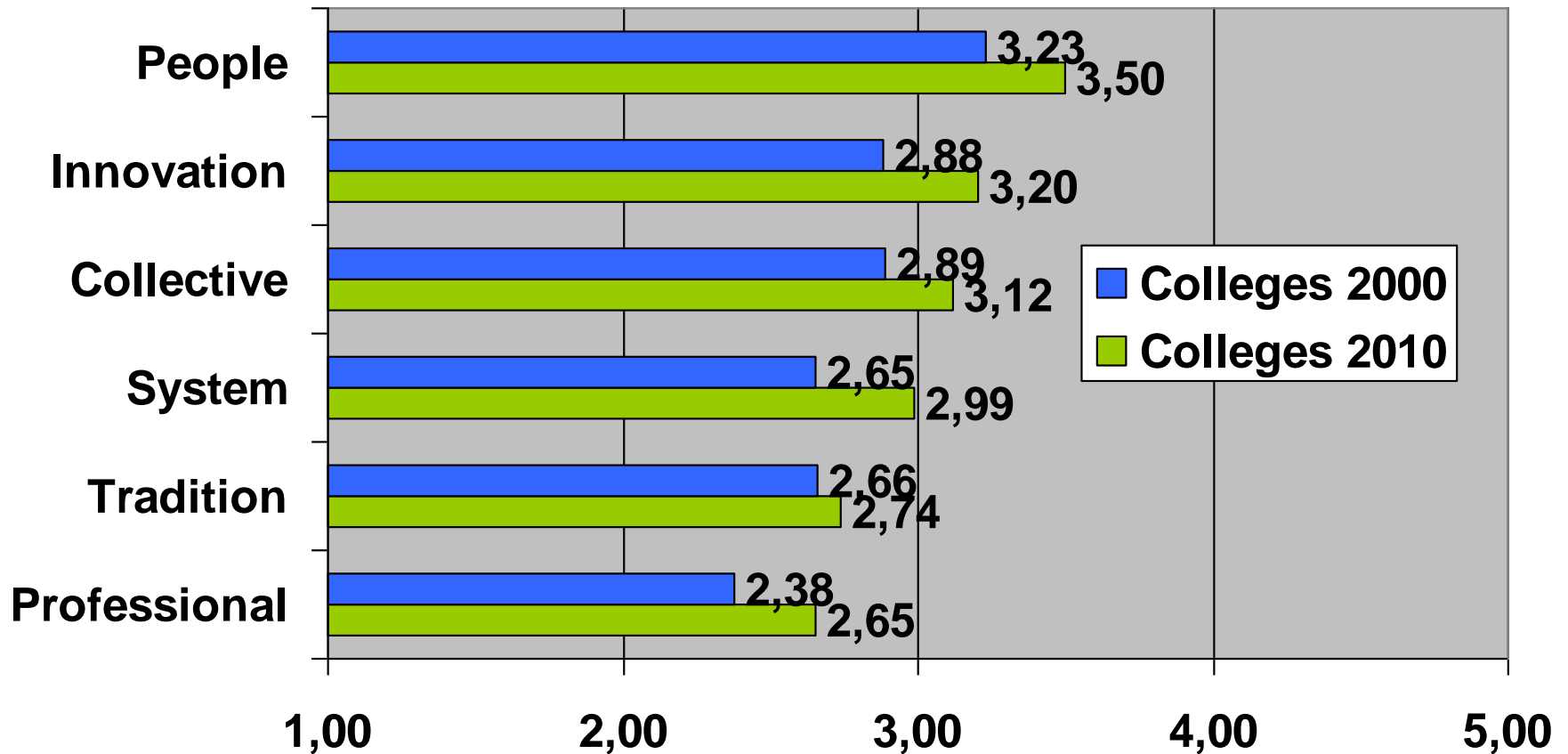
# PERCEPTION (2010)



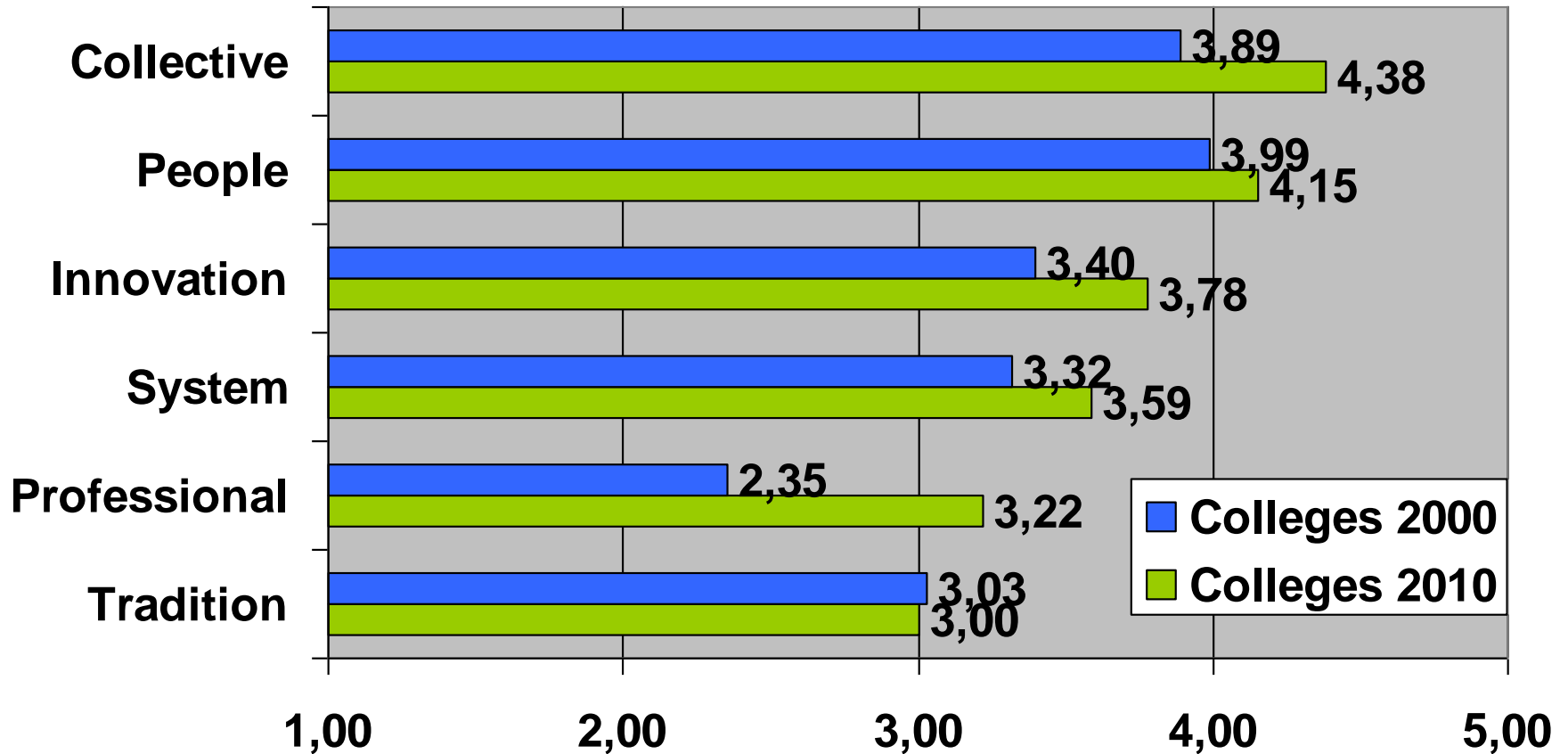
# ATTRACTIVENESS (2010)



# PERCEPTION: trend



# ATTRACTIVENESS: trend





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# Perspectives

## Research:

- Translation and validation (French, English, German)
- Research with more contingency factors and performance indicators
- Research on the relationship between cultural preference and implicit educational theory

## Application:

- Application as a part of Quality Assurance
- Application as a part of Organisational Development
- Further development of follow-up and reflection methods

# Biblio

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