

# Quality culture, quality assurance and impact

## Overview of discussions

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# Quality culture

- What is it? Hard to say!
  - Pre-requisite for QA or result of QA (synthesis)
- Features:
  - Academic ownership
  - Recognition of need for system (but not bureaucracy)
  - Behaviour rather than the system
  - Clarity of purpose
  - Centrality of students
  - Partnership and co-operation
  - Individual and community
  - Leadership: inspires rather than dictates
  - Welcoming of external critical evaluation
  - Self reflection and initiative to improve

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# Quality culture

- Barriers:
  - QA leads to risk aversion
  - Heterogeneity of dept structures and practices
  - Lack of sustainability in face of policy/ practice changes
  - Inappropriate QA systems
  - Need for cohesion — too many soloists in the orchestra
  - Incompatibility between quality strategy and QA process.
  - How to involve all?
  - Lack of action after QA
  - Not part of everyday life

# Quality culture

- Benefits:
  - Increases co-operation
  - Increases competitiveness
  - Enables change
  - Staff develops, takes risks, admits failure and learns (Evidence maybe they don't take risks)
  - Students are heard and are equal partners

Everyone claims to have a quality culture but do they really?

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# Internal quality culture and external quality assurance

- Quality is not a new issue
- Collective formalisation of quality is new
- EQA a necessary precursor of IQA
- Autonomy necessary for good QC
- Some countries have had too much external evaluation
- Strong QC then no need of QA
- Need for mutual trust
- Where are the employers? (Can be very effective).

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## Types of quality assurance

- Quality assurance a process or a product?
- Continuous improvement or reward based on outcomes?
- Accreditation: based on quality of process or concrete results?
- Accreditation has limited impact on quality: encourages concealment of weaknesses
- Accreditation is not quality assurance.
- Audit (process focused) versus accreditation
- International accreditation.

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## European perspective (ESG)

- Institutional not European view
- ESG need to be contextualised at a national level)
- Articulation between quality assessment and the European QF: jury out although possible for some professions

## Impact of QA?

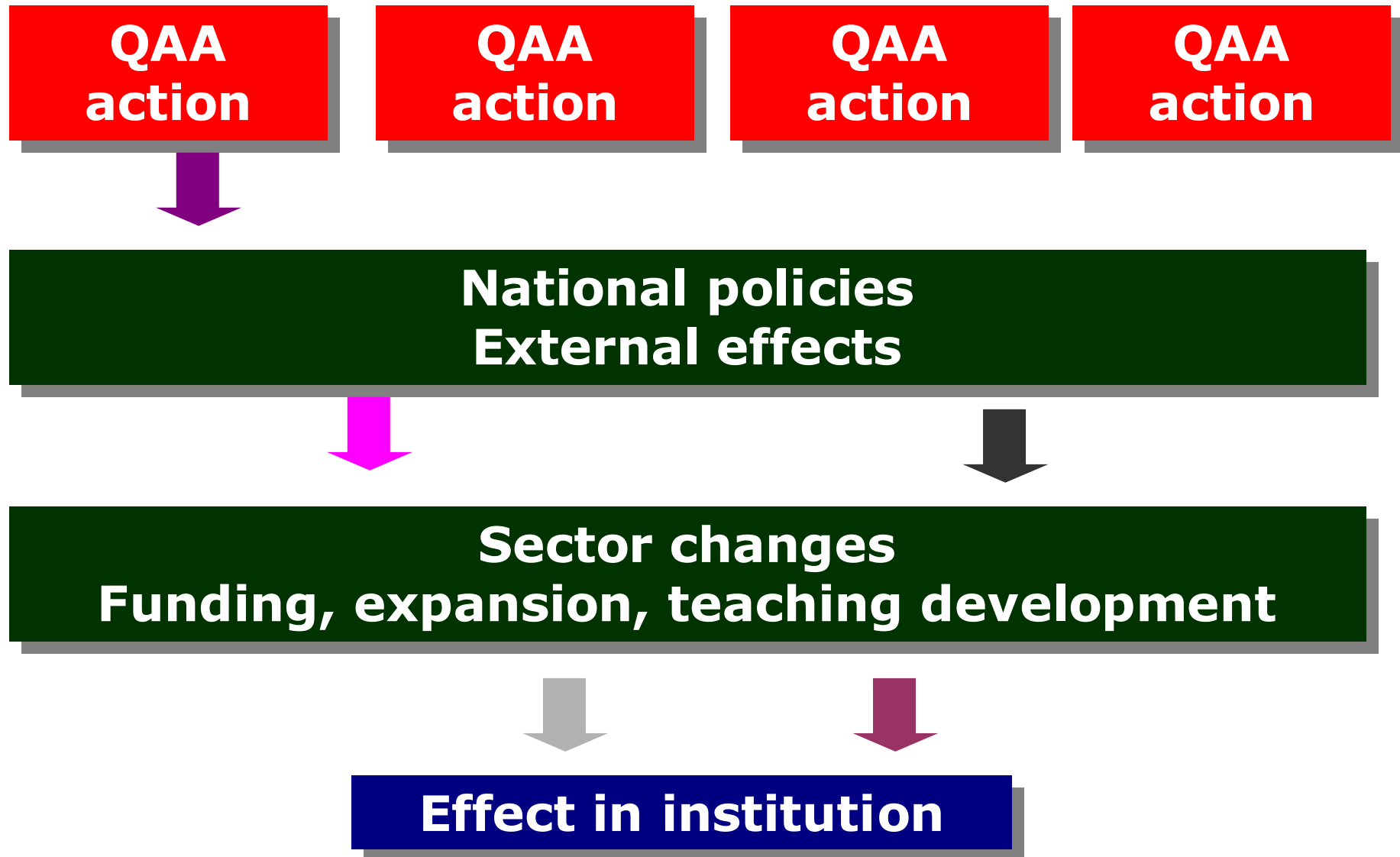
- Bjorn: yes
- INQAAHE agencies: yes
- Discussion groups: mainly yes
- Mostly positive
- Not so easy to measure



# Epistemology



# Epistemology: permeable layers



# Impact of QA: Bjorn

- Power
  - Supports new leaders, institutional image debate, legitimates role for students etc.
- Professionalisation
  - Formalisation/codification, academic/admin co-operation, fear is gone
- PR:
  - Promote importance of T&L, defence against ranking lists
- Permeability
  - Demystifies HE, integrates dimensions of HE

## **Impact: agencies, on student learning**

- Requirement to take responsibility for students enrolled
- Curriculum adjustments
- Concern with attrition
- Course evaluations
- Appeals, complaints
- Different ways of doing things
- Better teaching?
- Improved standards

# Impact on teaching/learning

- History or future:
  - History shows we are good so QM should look to the past!
  - Forget the past, what's the future looking like?
- Reward improvement to get impact or stimulate further development
- Communication factor in impact

## Impact on teaching/learning

- Not much evidence
- Short-term possibly:
  - Self evaluations engender change in practice (?)
  - Student input to evaluations can highlight teaching/learning issues
  - Evaluation recommendations rarely at the level of teaching innovation
  - QA legitimises discussion of teaching
- Innovation in T&L operating independently of quality assurance processes (Quality in Registry not T&L development unit)

## Discussion questions

- Should internal procedures reflect external procedures or the other way round?
- Is quality culture an illusion?
- Is quality culture really about good staff-student interaction?
- Is QC (and QA?) about self-critical reflexivity?
- What really impacts on learning and how important is EQA in this process?
- Research: what drives improvement?

Thank you for your  
attention

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