



# **Impact of Quality Evaluation**

**Lee Harvey**  
[lee.harvey@shu.ac.uk](mailto:lee.harvey@shu.ac.uk)

**INQAAHE 2005 Conference  
Wellington, New Zealand**

- **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?**

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

Impact?

**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.**

- **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)

CRQ

- **Better regulation of the sector?**
- **More efficient institutions?**
- **More accessible? (in access, fees?)**
- **Better research?**
- **Better teaching?**
- **Improved standards of student attainment?**

**Jury is still out on most of these questions**

Quality processes and link to  
quality?

# Evaluation (external)

CRQ

Approach	accreditation	audit	assessment	external ex	
Object	provider	programme	learner	output	
Focus	govern- ance & 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	

## Quality

Process

**traditional**

**perfection**

**fitness for purpose**

**value for money**

**transformation**

## Standards

Outcomes

**academic**

**competence**

**service**

**organisational**

# Standards

# Quality

academic

competence

service

organisational

Q

traditional

perfection

fitness for purpose

value for money

transformation


# Standards

# Quality

academic

competence

service

organisational

Q

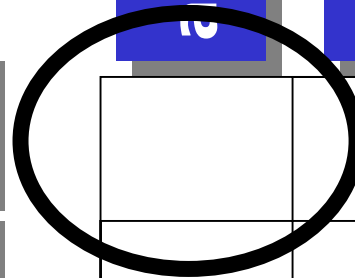
traditional

perfection

fitness for purpose

value for money

transformation




# Exceptional quality of academic standards **CRQ**

**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 processes 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

academic

competence

service

organisational

Q

# Quality

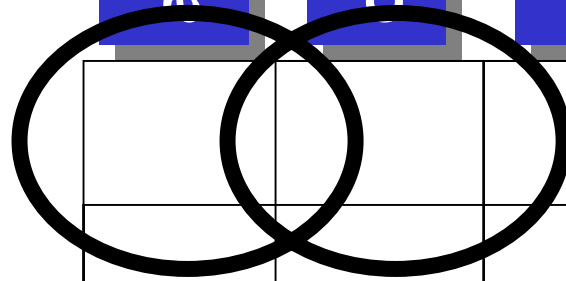
traditional

perfection

fitness for purpose

value for money

transformation




# Evaluation (external)

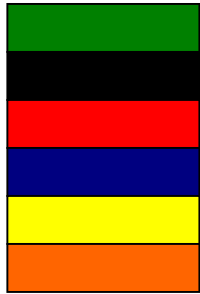
CRQ

Approach	accreditation	audit	assessment	external ex	
Object	provider	programme	learner	output	
Focus	govern- ance & 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	

Approach	accreditation	audit	assessment	external ex	
Object	provider	programme	learner	output	
Focus	govern- ance & 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	



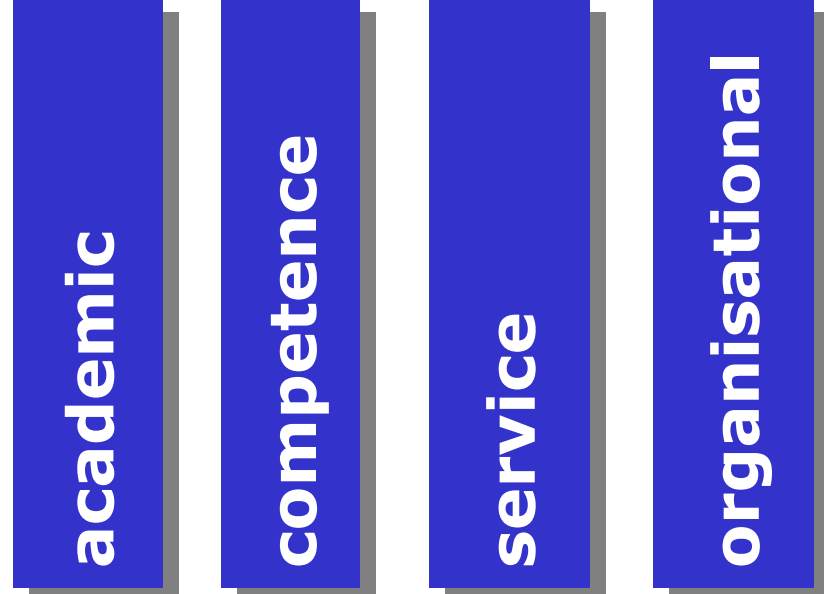
# Standards



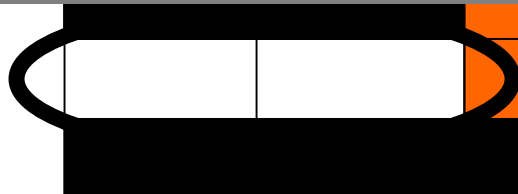
- Standards monitoring
- Accreditation
- Assessment (L or R)
- Audit/institutional
- PIs
- Customer surveys/feedback

# Quality

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

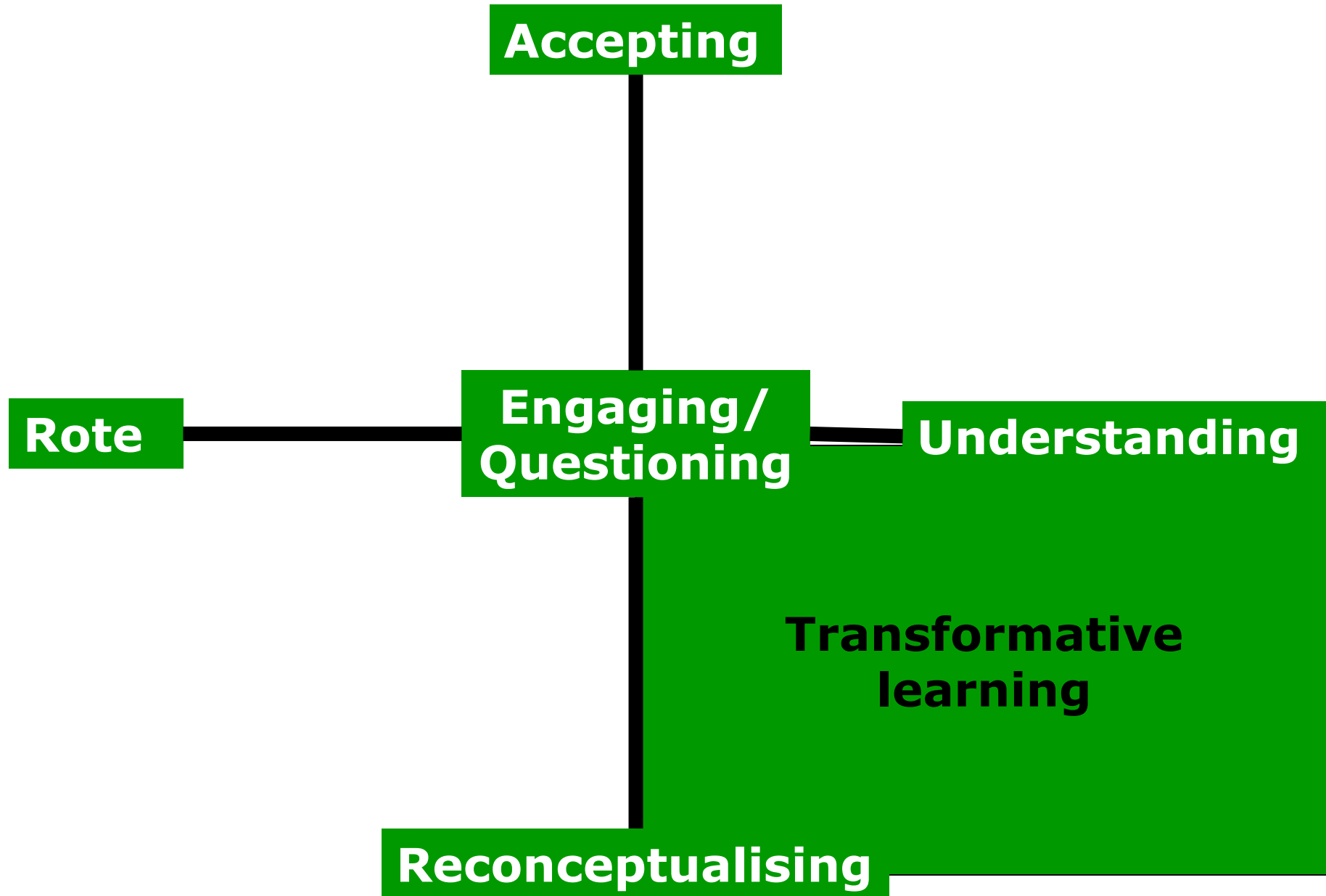


**Value added:  
empowerment of  
the learner**



# Transformative learning

CRQ



# Nature of evaluation

**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].**

- 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.**

**Agency**

**Self-  
evaluation**

**Agency  
initiated**

**Indepen-  
dent**

**Purpose**

**Old**

**New**

**Old**

**New**

**Old**

**New**

**Feasibility or  
modification**

Saito

**Effectiveness**

Jeppesen

Macukow

Bean

Blackmur

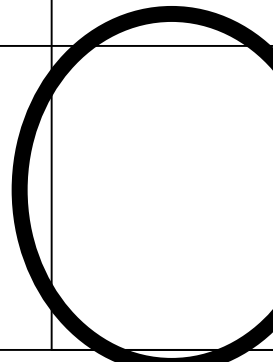
Yeats

AlHaribi

**Impact**

Patil

Carr



# Evidence, methodology and politics of quality

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

**Beware  
'facts'**

- **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)**

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

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

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

# Politics of quality

CRQ



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.

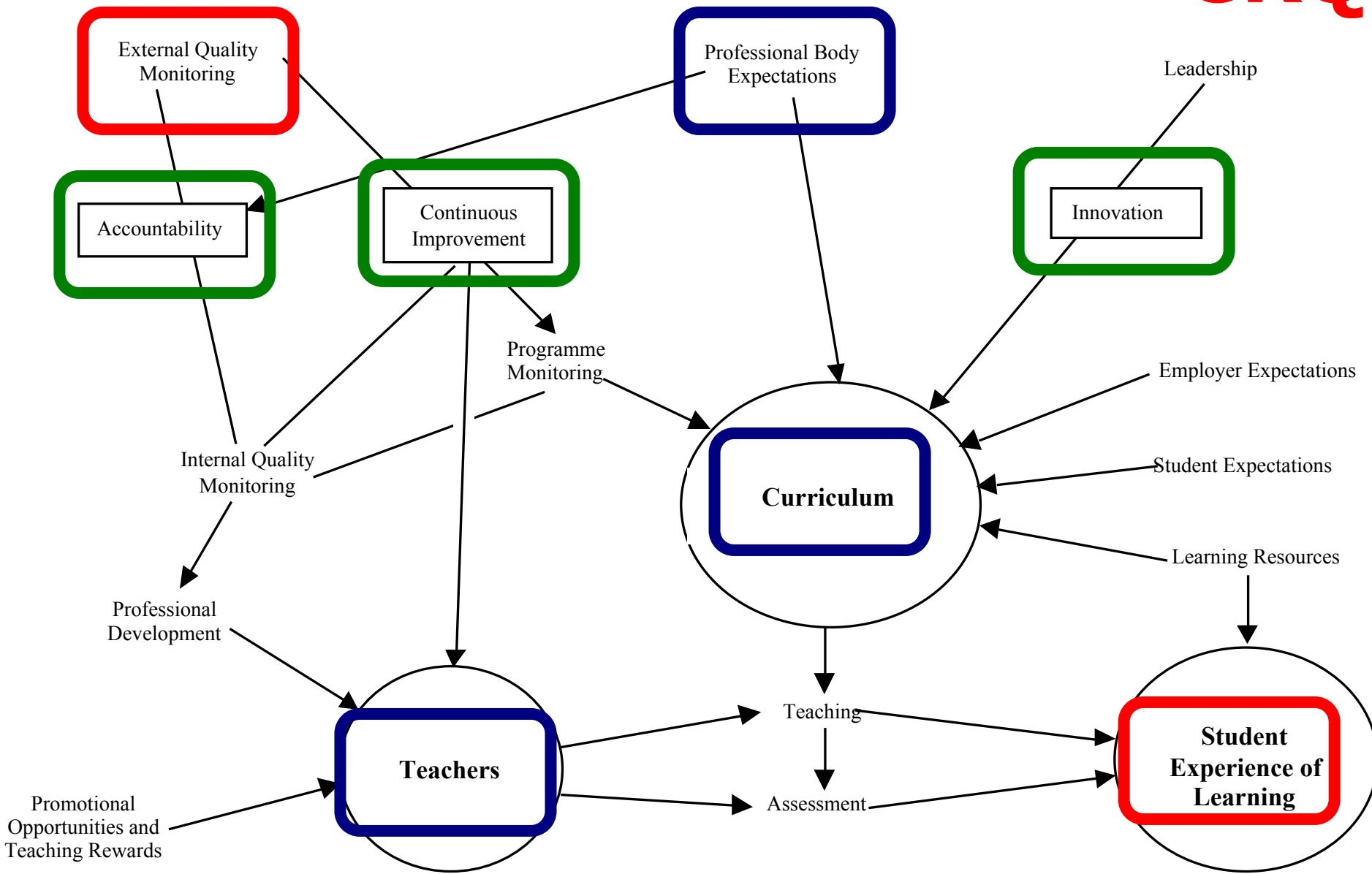


## Do we

- **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

**CRQ**



Source: Adapted from Horsburgh, 1999, p. 22

**Thank you**

**lee.harvey@shu.ac.uk**