

Accreditation models in Higher Education: experiences and perspectives

Summing up and discussion

“At the European level Ministers call upon ENQA, through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, **to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Follow-Up Group to Ministers in 2005.** Due account will be taken of the expertise of other quality assurance associations and networks”.

enqa

From the Berlin Communiqué (3)

“...by 2005 national quality assurance systems should include:

- A definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.
- Evaluation of programmes or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results.
- A system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedure
- International participation, co-operation and networking”

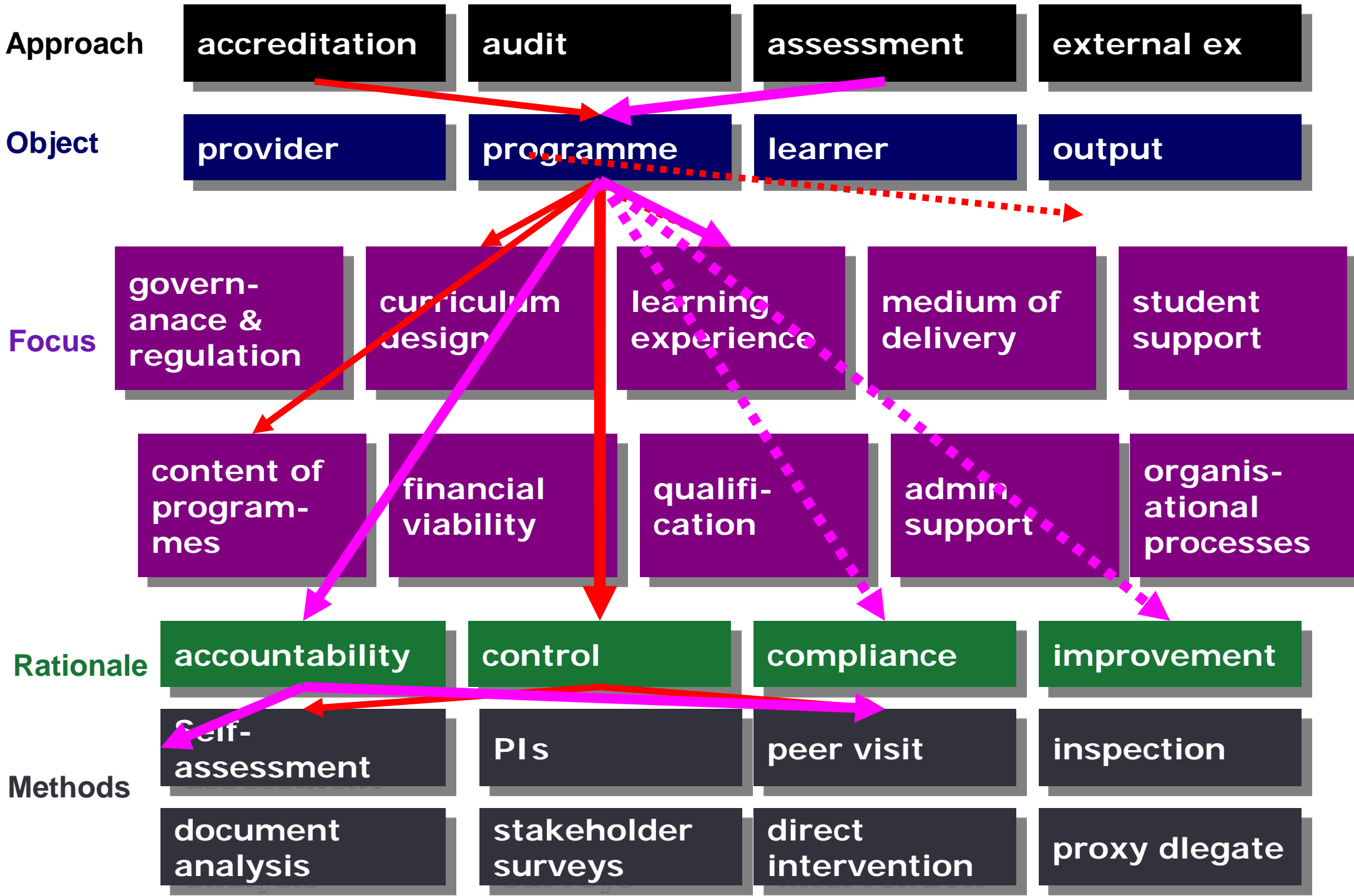
Political

- **Underpinning view: Europe is rushing precipitously into accreditation.**
- **Approach is based on naïve views of accreditation.**
- **Unspecified and unexamined set of taken-for-granted that legitimate accreditation.**
- **Accreditation is highly political and is fundamentally about a shift of power concealed behind a npm ideology, cloaked in consumerist demand and European conformity.**

Accreditation

- **A public statement that a certain threshold of quality has been achieved or surpassed.**
- **Decisions *should* be based on transparent agreed, pre-defined standards or criteria.**
- **Accreditation is a binary state. But there is often a provisional status.**

External evaluation



The Man With the Golden Gun

bespoke or “one size fits all”

- "One size fits all" vs. variety, atomisation and shopping
- Ireland: quality assurance in each discipline

Are examples the first signs of a trend towards

007 breaking away from "one size fits all"?

Will off-the-peg quality assurance (Walther PPK) disappear to make way for the Golden Gun of the tailor-made alternative?

Golden Eye

the carpenter's eye and other pointers for the working method

- an orchestrated game: checklists vs. holistic approach
- established standards and methods: perversion in the quality assurance system

- Education more than sum of all kinds of quality aspects



Variation and surprise :

- experimental or quasi-experimental designs for evaluation
- longitudinal studies
- triangulation including the use of mystery guests and unobtrusive measures

Standards

- ✓ It would not be wise to determine rigid and detailed accreditation standards in such a situation. Rather, it is convenient to use simple quality standards that can be helpful to guide universities and stakeholders in the transition.
- ✓ Fixed standards vs. fitness of purpose and fitness for purpose.
- ✓ Framework standards and discipline standards

Framework standards

- ✓ Set-up by the agencies
- ✓ Qualification framework
 - ✓ BaMa
 - ✓ Role of the professionals (Harvey)

Discipline standards

- ✓ Set-up by the academics
- ✓ Within or outside the panel
- ✓ Ossification
- ✓ Costs

Learning outcomes

- ✓ Skills and competences
- ✓ Ex-post accreditation, not ex-ante

YES or NO

- ✓ No simple YES/NO
- ✓ Often based on evaluation
- ✓ Recommendations (Quality improvement)
- ✓ Conditional accreditation

Peers or experts

- ✓ Open “old-boys” network
- ✓ International but pitfalls (standardization)
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Communication

Quantitative and qualitative

- ✓ Clear frameworks for experts
- ✓ Inter subject activity
- ✓ Data and database

The Spy Who Loved Me

stimulatory supervisions

Supervision of accreditation

- supervision of the agency
- Achievement of defined goals
- Effectiveness of the system





"Taking our own medicine", Sitges recommendations

- Ensure transparency in goals, clearly defined processes, and clarity of outcomes of agency activities
- Agencies' internal quality assurance should include relevant stakeholders such as the evaluated institutions, the students – also future students, and the external experts
- External quality assurance agencies should themselves undergo an independent, external evaluation at, for instance, five-year intervals.