

# **Models and good practices for QA systems in universities**

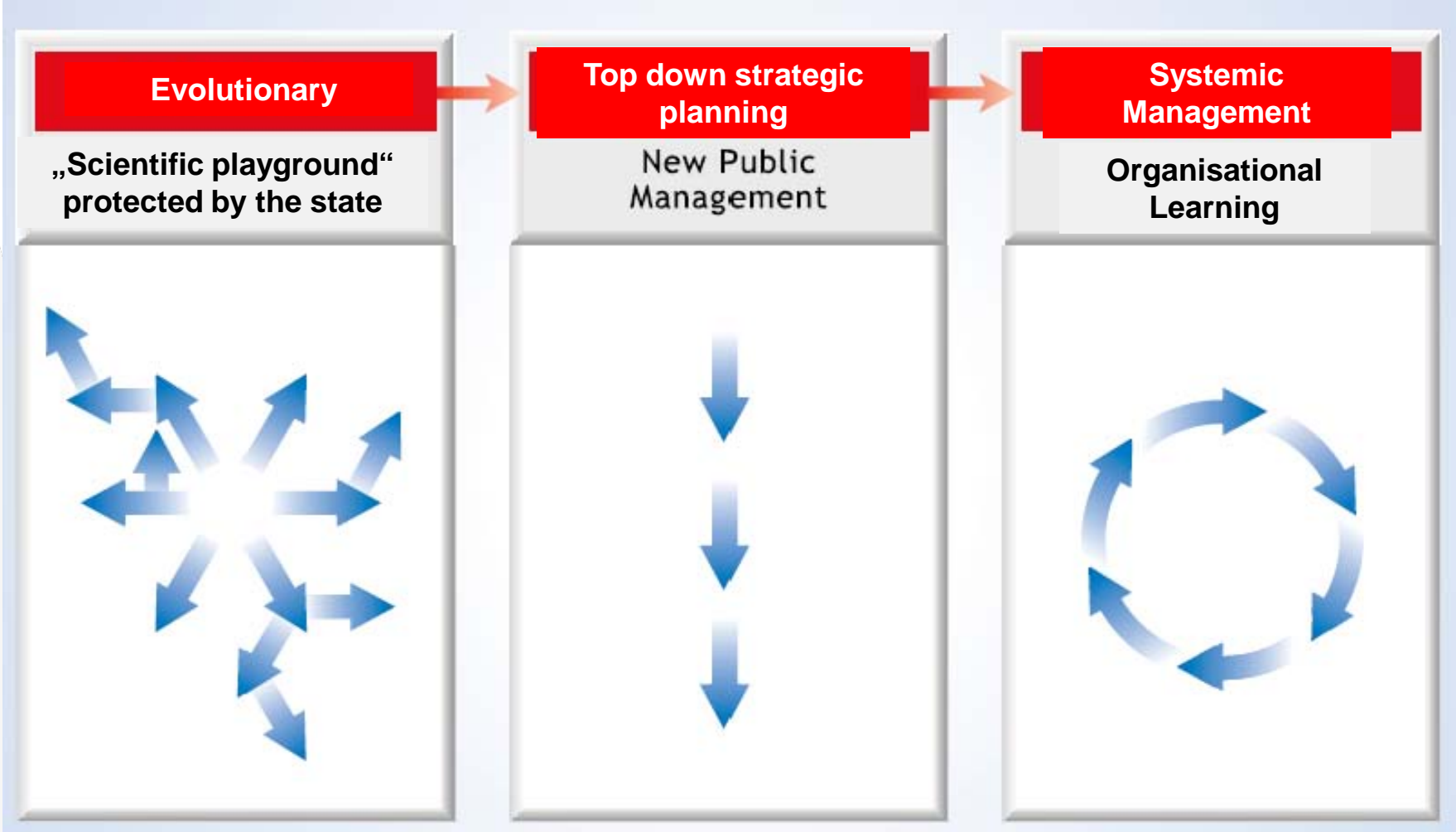
Dr. Sigrun Nickel  
MODERN Peer Learning Workshop  
Amsterdam 6 May 2010

1. How QA systems work
2. Types of QA systems in universities
3. Suggestions and recommendations for implementation

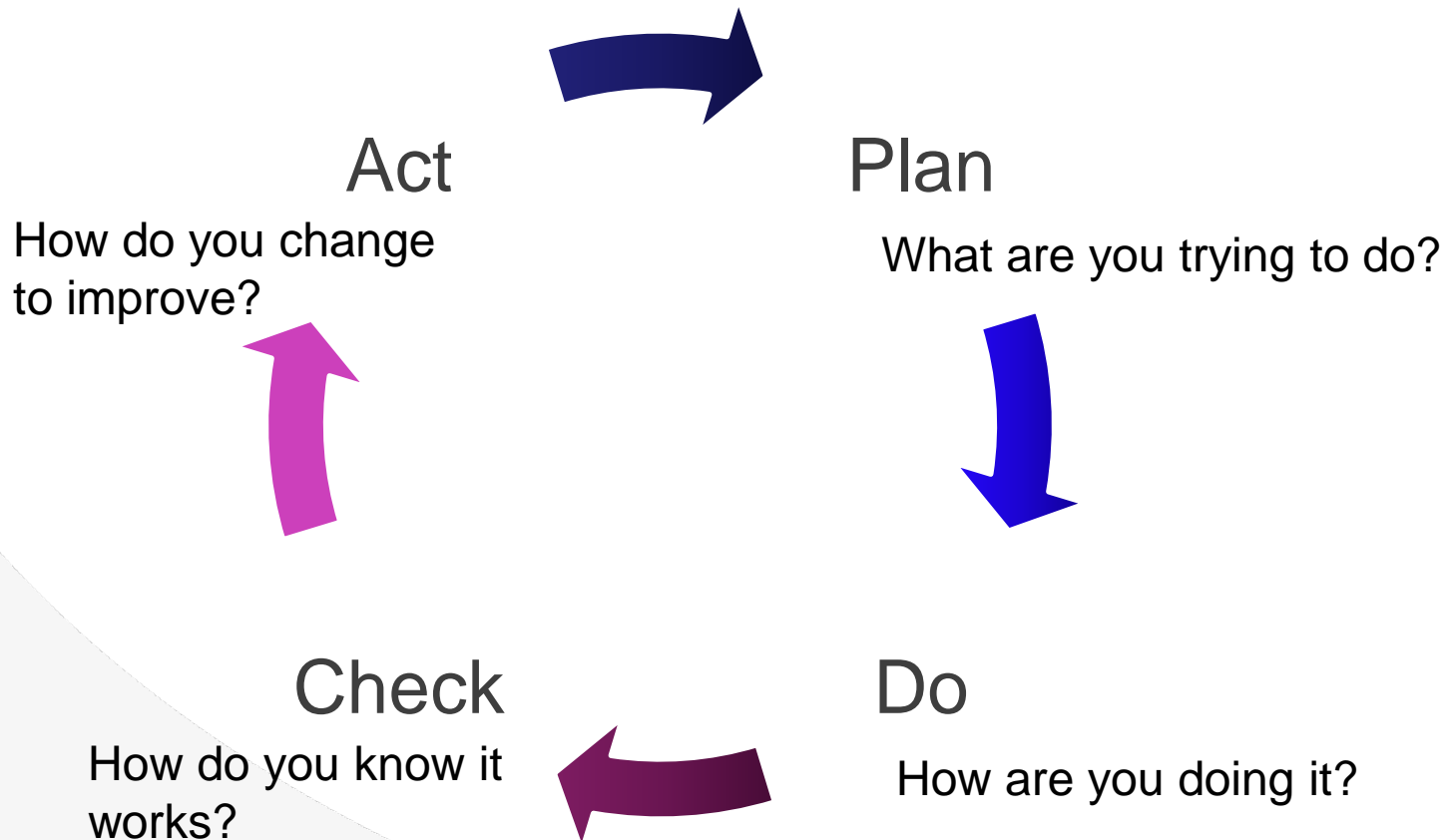
# QA is based on a systemic approach



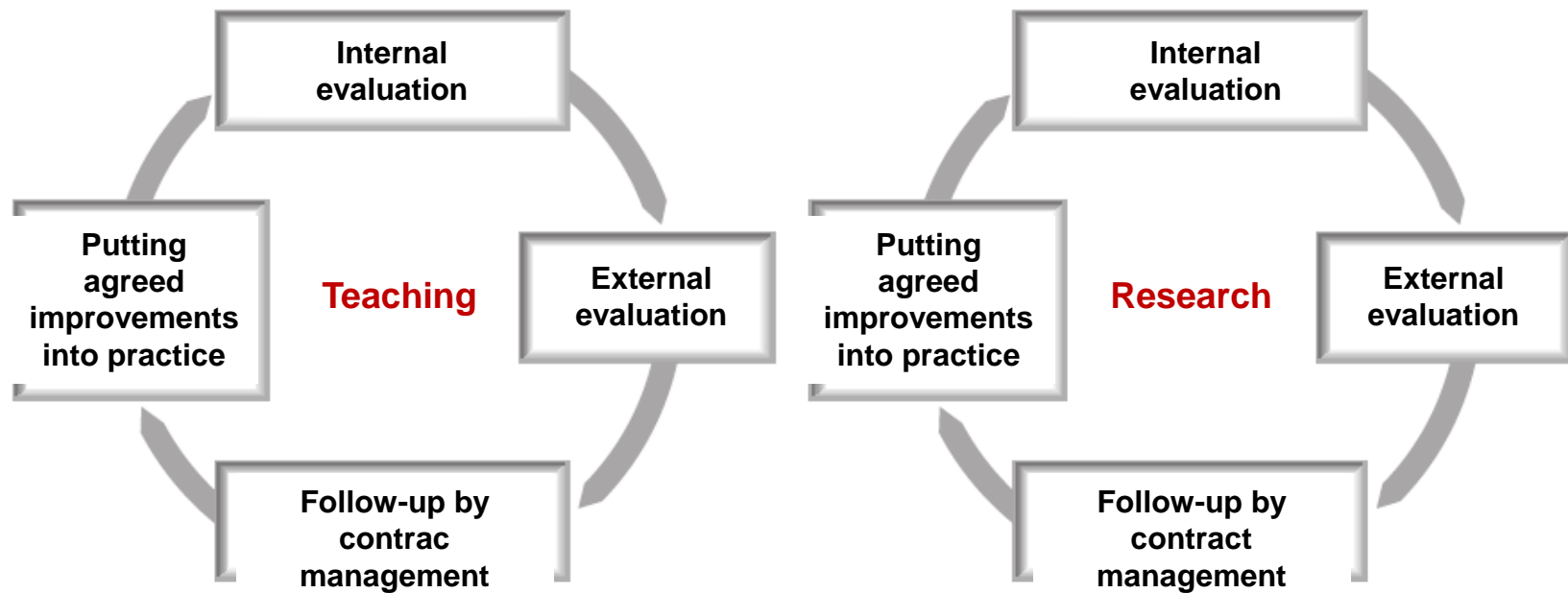
## Types of university management

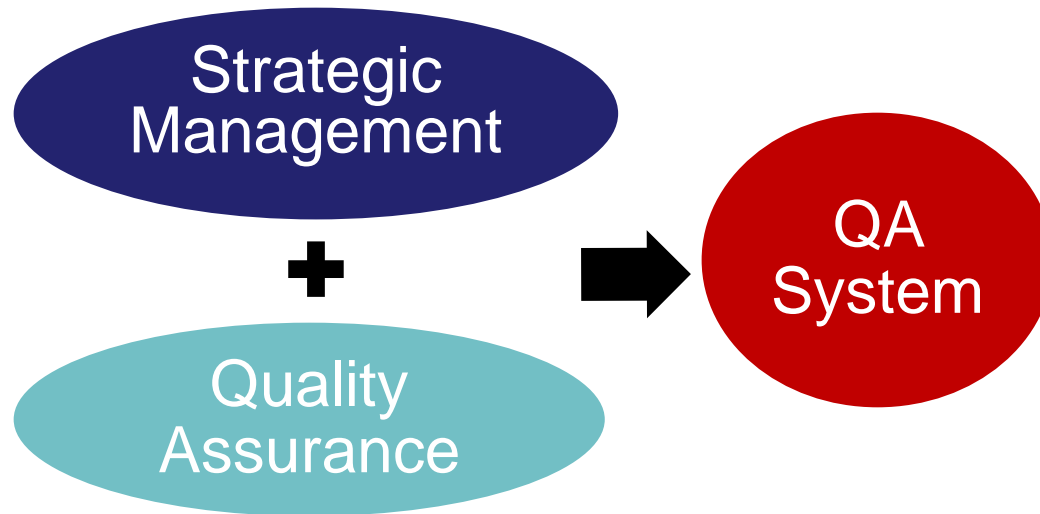


## Quality cycle by Walter Deming



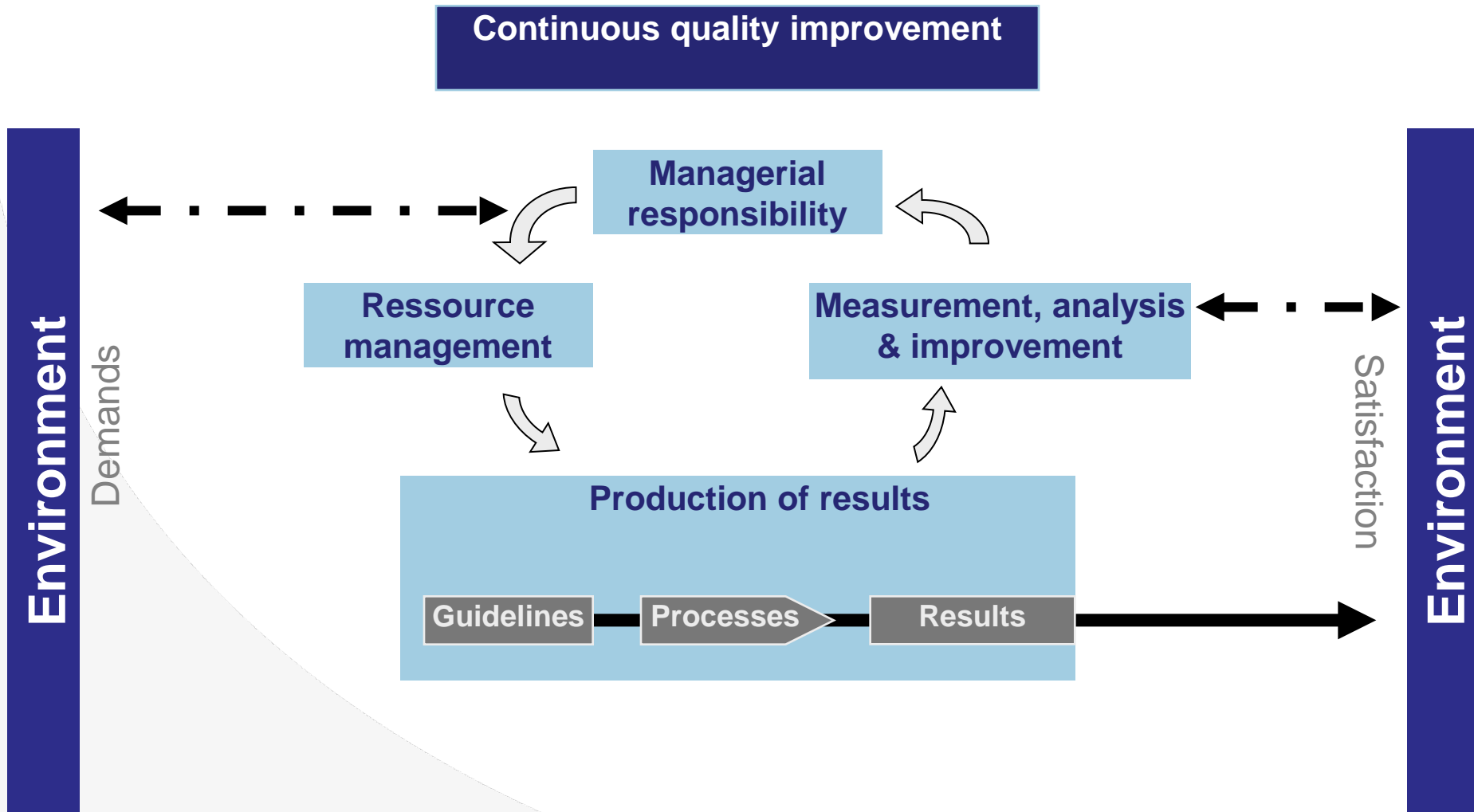
## Quality cycle typical for peer evaluation



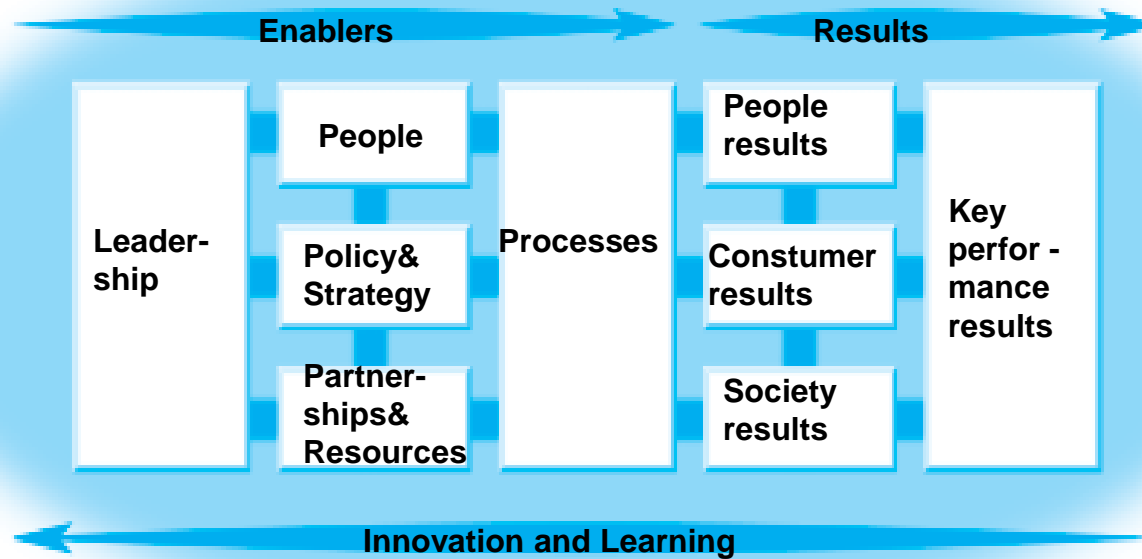


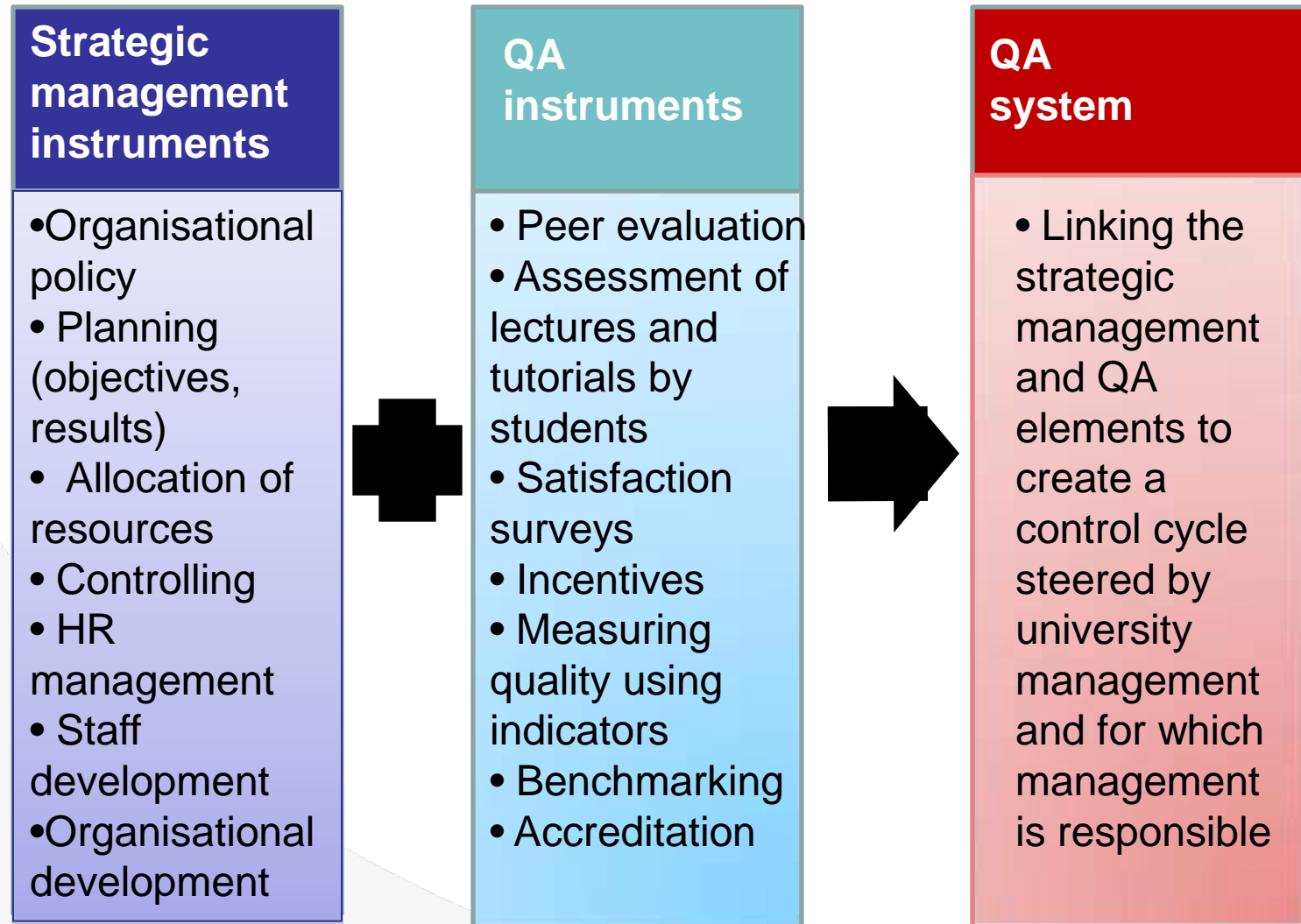
Comprehensive and continuous organisational development by integrating strategic management and quality assurance in one management system = quality becomes the overarching aim for all management activities.

# Basic QA model: DIN ISO 9000

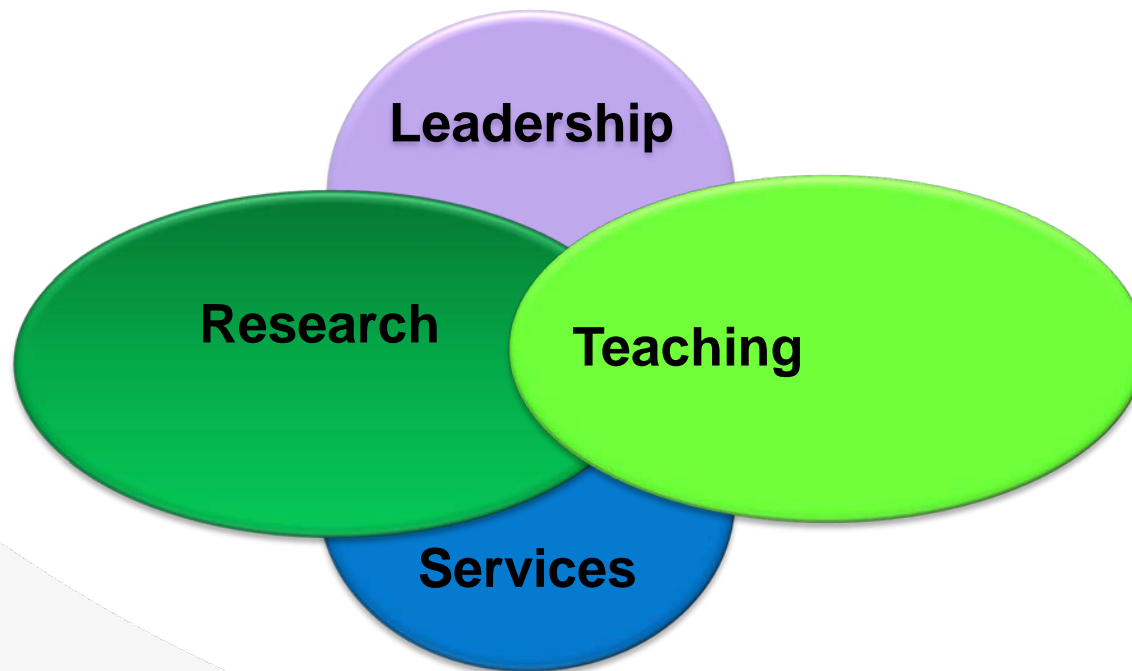


# Basic QA model: EFQM/TQM

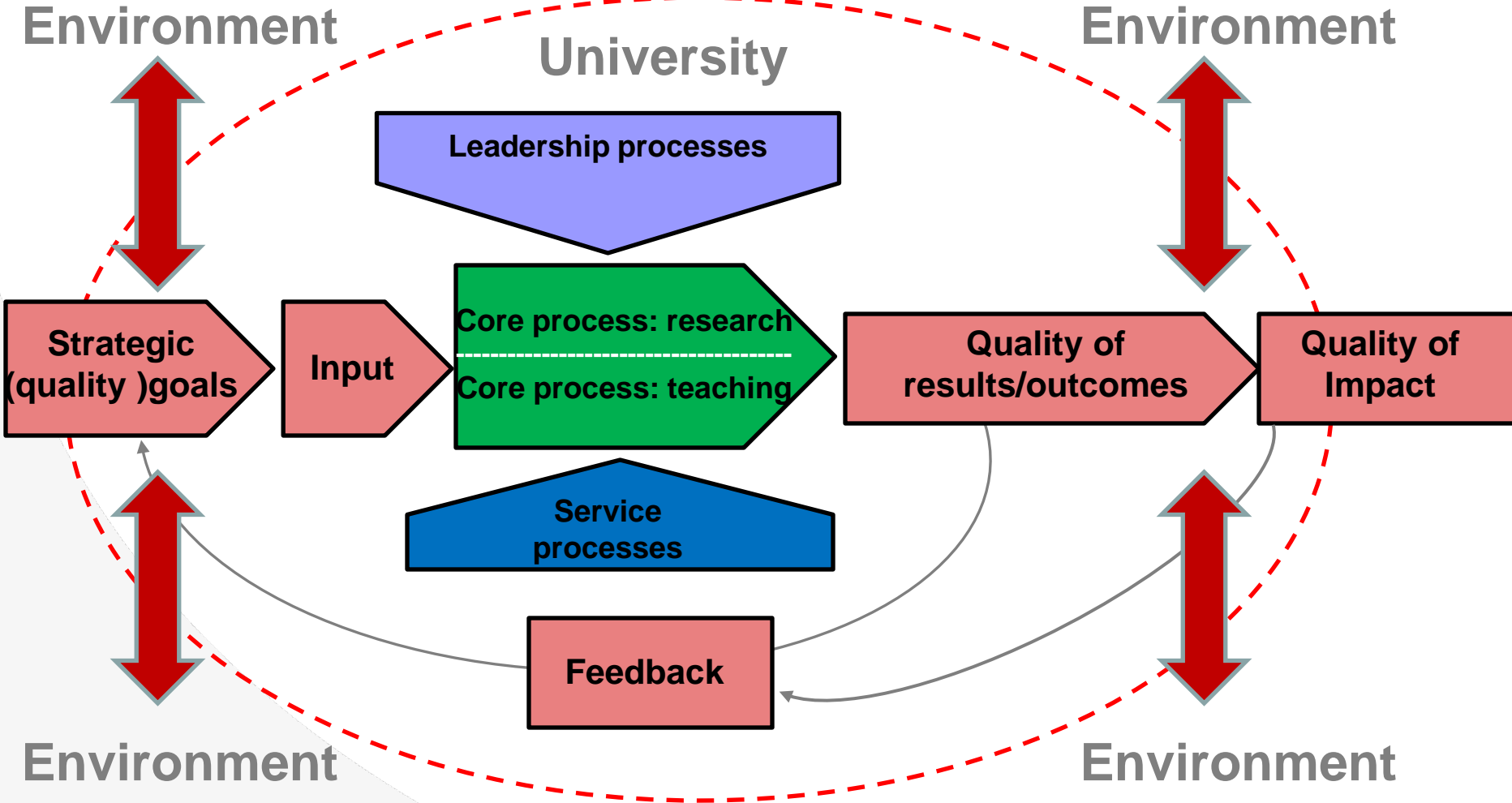




Quality in research and teaching/learning as a result of interlinked activities of different institutional actors



# Basic model of a “strategic QM system”



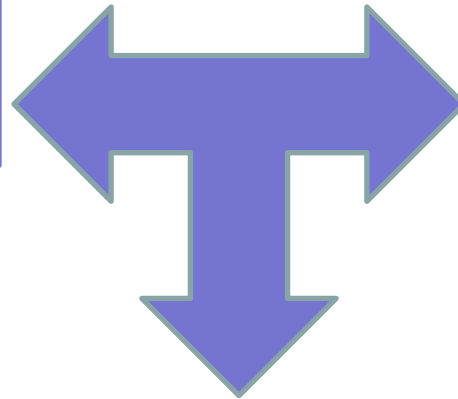
Source: Nickel 2007

- **Target orientation:** QA systems organise the thicket of managerial and quality assurance instruments in such a way that the desired quality of results can be reached in a more targeted way. This is the bases for a well working monitoring/controlling.
- **Effectiveness:** QA systems create management links that pool the considerable financial and human resources that are currently being needed for quality assurance purposes more effectively.
- **Efficiency:** QA systems keep the workload for university members to an adequate level.

# Types of QA systems in the university sector

**Linking evaluation and higher education steering = an institutional evaluation system**

**Quality as the top goal of the entire higher education management system = Total Quality Management (EFQM/TQM)**



**Primarily fulfilling the audit requirements of the national QA agency and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**

# Type 1: Institutional evaluation system

**Example:  
University Duisburg-  
Essen, Germany**



Source: Lothar Zechlin 2008 Download: [http://www.hochschulkurs.de/2008QM2\\_zechlin\\_qmdue.pdf](http://www.hochschulkurs.de/2008QM2_zechlin_qmdue.pdf)

**Focus:** Linking evaluation and steering

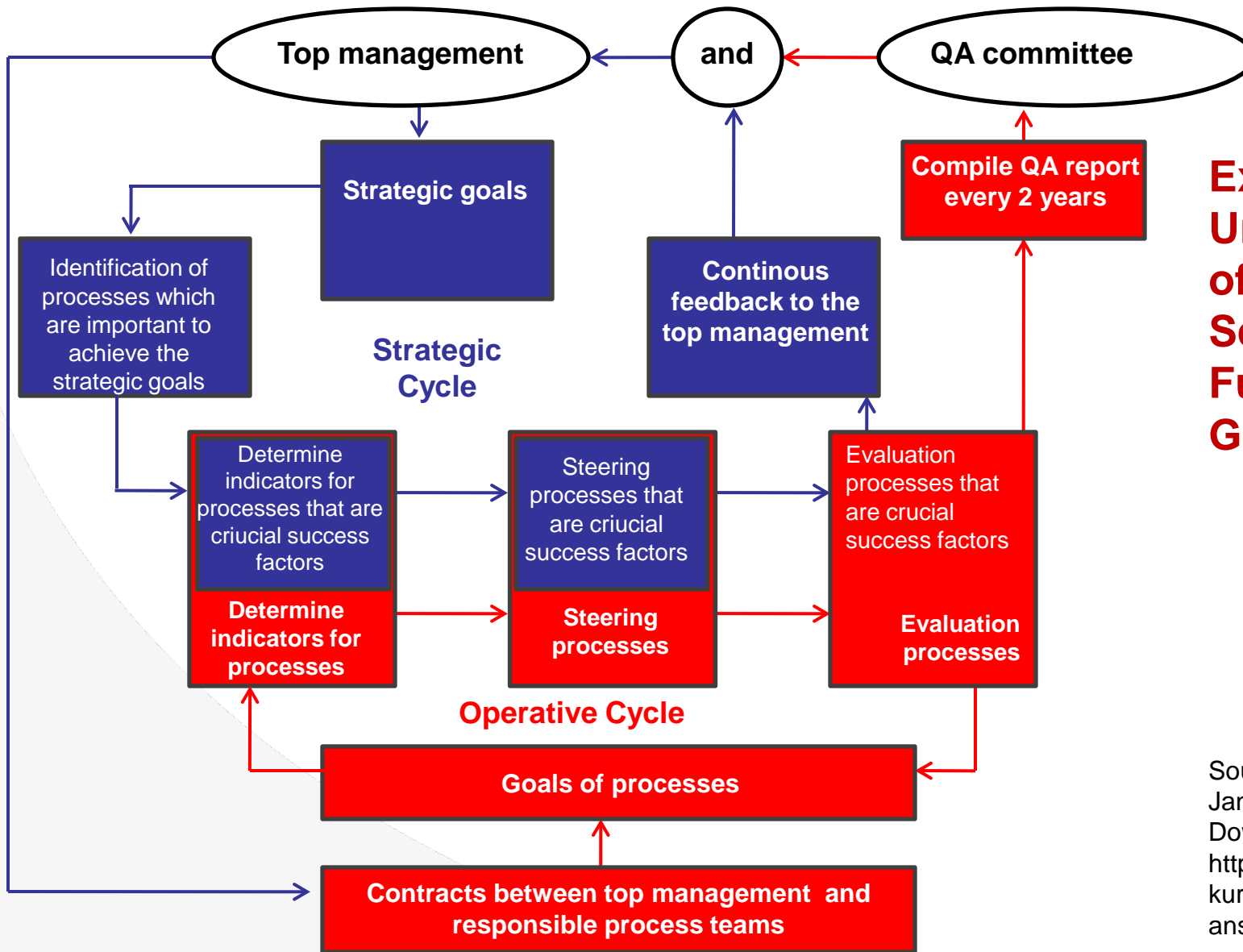
**Goal:** Continuous quality improvement

**Instruments:** Peer evaluation / internal audit by in-house evaluation agency; periodic evaluation of all units of the university

**Course of action:**

- ◆ spot-check appraisals of the teaching, research, management and service quality of faculties, institutes, rectorates and administrative units
- ◆ *follow-up* by contracts

# Type 2: Process focussed system



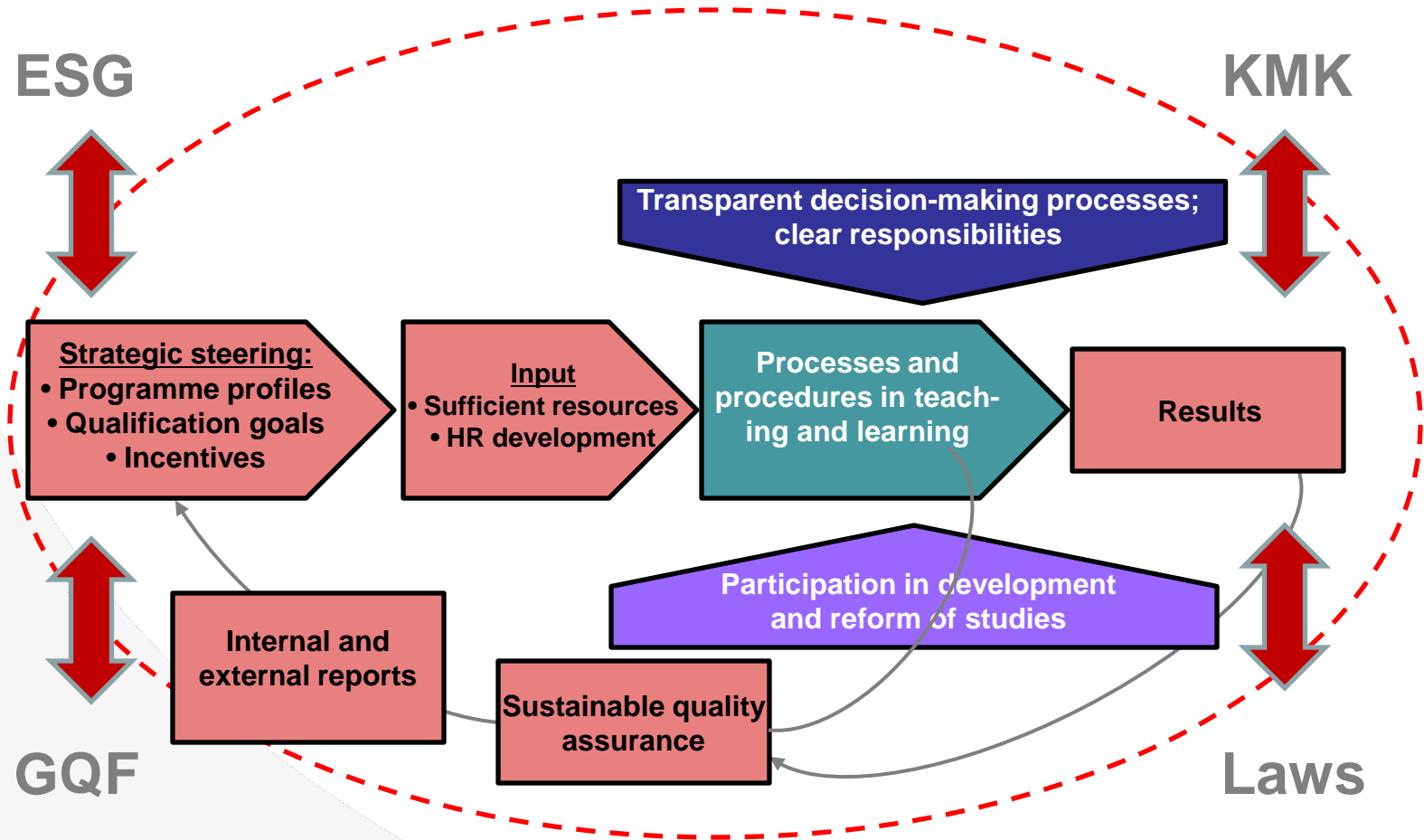
**Example:  
University of Applied Sciences Fulda, Germany**

Source: Johann Jansen 2008;  
Download:  
[http://www.hochschul kurs.de/QM1\\_2008\\_j anssen\\_fulda.pdf](http://www.hochschul kurs.de/QM1_2008_j anssen_fulda.pdf)

- Focus:** Merging all management activities that are relevant to quality into one system
- Goal:** HEI managers motivate HEI members to achieve high performance quality related to a explicit organisational policy and organisational goals
- Instruments:** Strategic planning and steering, process management, organisational and HR development
- Actions:**
- ◆ Continuous monitoring of the teaching, research, management and service quality of the entire university
  - ◆ Review of the quality of the results using monitoring and evaluation procedures

- When people try to transfer QA systems from industry or the service sector, these systems quickly and often lead to hybrid forms of each other and also combined with evaluation procedures that are typical in universities.
- QA systems from industry or the service sector lead to a stronger service orientation, particularly towards students.

# Type 3: QM system according to audit criteria



Example: German accreditation of QA systems for teaching and learning („Systemakkreditierung“)

Source: Nickel 2009

- Focus:** Sustainable steering of the quality of teaching and studies
- Goals:** Achieving qualification goals; ensuring high quality of study programmes; demonstrable compliance with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and with the standards of national QA agencies
- Instruments:** Strategic planning, various quality assurance instruments, HR development
- Actions:**
- ◆ Continuous internal examination of the quality of processes and results as well as compliance with the framework guidelines
  - ◆ Regularly external checks by QA agencies

# Which is the right QA system?

- QA systems are very similar to a large extent.
- Research-driven universities prefer the “institutional evaluation” model.
- Universities of applied sciences use the EFQM and ISO models more often than universities.
- The audit focussed model can be integrated into or combined with other models.

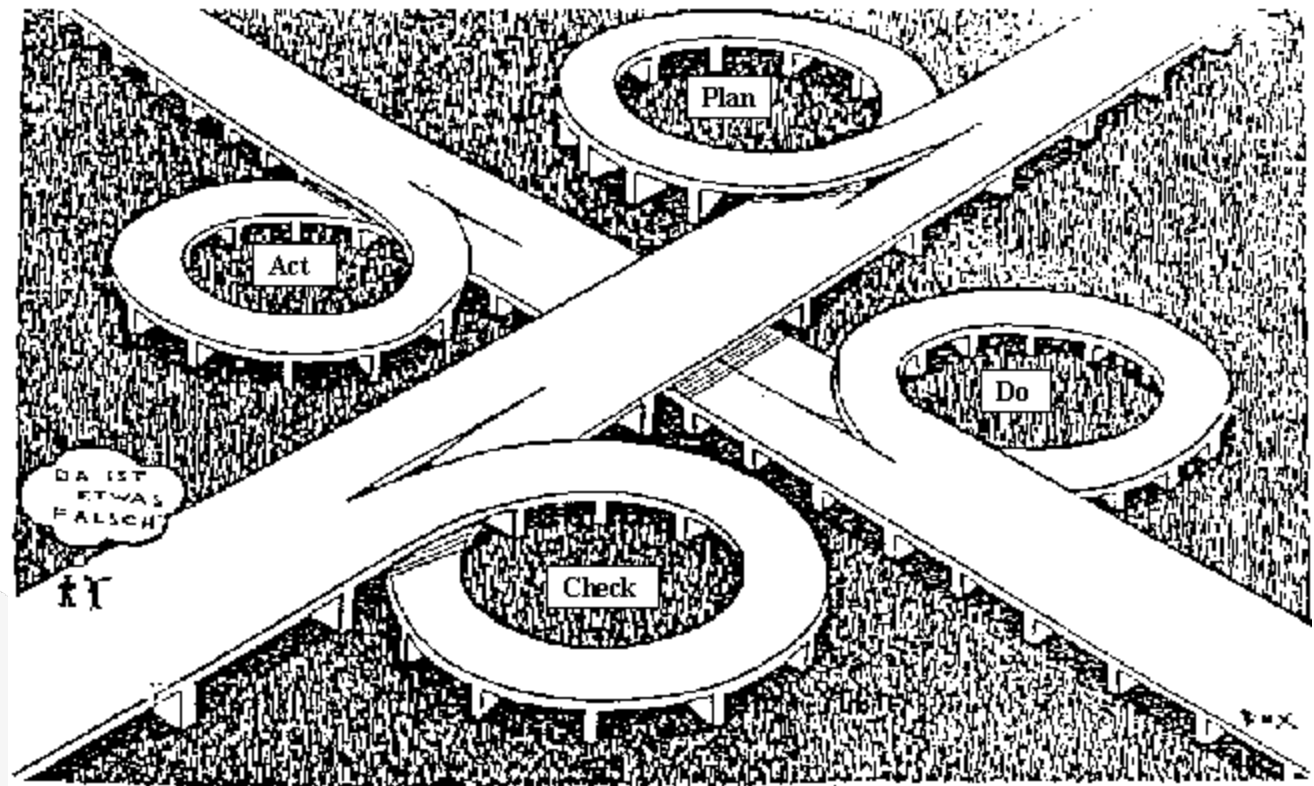
- The main target of QA systems is steering the **entire** organisation or organisational units .
- Their effects are inadequate if the principles of function and elements are implemented only in part.
- This explains the importance of the decision about whether you introduce a QA system or “merely” improve or consolidate the existing quality assurance instruments.



The top management of a university should always clearly decide and take the responsibility for implementation.

## ... less is more!

PDCA-Cycle



## Key questions:

- Are the existing QA instruments (evaluation procedures, indicators, graduate studies, etc.) sufficient to ensure the quality of teaching and research results?
- Do professors and students draw any discernible benefit from the QA instruments applied?
- Do instruments need to be removed and/or new ones added?
- Is the information generated by QA instruments fed into the relevant decision-making processes?
- Does the information have concrete and verifiable effects?

“Beginne hemdsärmelig, aber beginne”  
*(Werner Kirsch)*

**“Start with a shirt-sleeve approach, but  
start”**

- A QA system is usually developed on a step-by-step basis, but the overall concept must be clear before the first step is taken.
- A university can start by restricting the QA system to the core process of “teaching and studies”.
- In this case, the QA system should be drafted in such a way that the core process of “research” can be added later.
- Even if the QA system is initially restricted to “teaching and learning”, management and administration are to be included as support mechanisms for the core process from the start.

- QA systems are management systems
- Rectorates and deans' offices must make QA their issue and govern it.
- Continuity: select people in the management team with the appropriate skills to be responsible for QA and establish the succession procedures.
- No delegation of managers' responsibilities to staff and administrative units.
- Do not use staff and administrative units as the extended arm of the top management but as a service for teaching staff and researchers.

# Example: Free University Berlin

Structure of the Executive Board of the FU Berlin			
<b>President</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall responsibility and strategy (principally strategic planning, strategic controlling (setting budgets and targets with departments, strategic appointments, campus development))</li> <li>• Quality management</li> <li>• Marketing, public relations, fundraising, sponsoring</li> <li>• The Excellence Initiative and the future concept of the "International Network University"</li> </ul>			
<b>First Vice-President</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permanent deputy of president</li> <li>• Academic HR affairs (appointment and tenure negotiations, honorary professorships),</li> <li>• International student exchange</li> <li>• Supervision of various departments and service institutions</li> </ul>	<b>Second Vice-President</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University medicine</li> <li>• Research institutions (Max Planck, Helmholtz, Leibniz, etc.)</li> </ul>	<b>Third Vice-President</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student affairs</li> <li>• New media/ e-learning,</li> <li>• Equality</li> <li>• Supervision of various departments and service institutions</li> </ul>	<b>Fourth Vice-President</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer</li> <li>• Supervision of various departments and service institutions</li> </ul>
<b>Director of Administration and Finance (Chancellor)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative management</li> <li>• University budget</li> <li>• Operative controlling</li> <li>• Environmental management</li> <li>• Data protection</li> <li>• University sport</li> </ul>			

- The “International Network University” concept emerged in 2004.
- Formation of an International Council with 17 advisory academics and scientists from Europe and the USA
- Three centres steer the process:
  - a) Center for Cluster Development (establishment of research networks)
  - b) Center for Graduate Studies (network for young scholars)
  - c) Center for International Exchange (network with branches in other countries to develop “brain gain”, particularly in the area of young scholars)
- The FU Berlin was a winner in the German government’s Excellence Initiative in 2007 on the basis of its future concept

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