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Taking a long view towards Quality Enhancement

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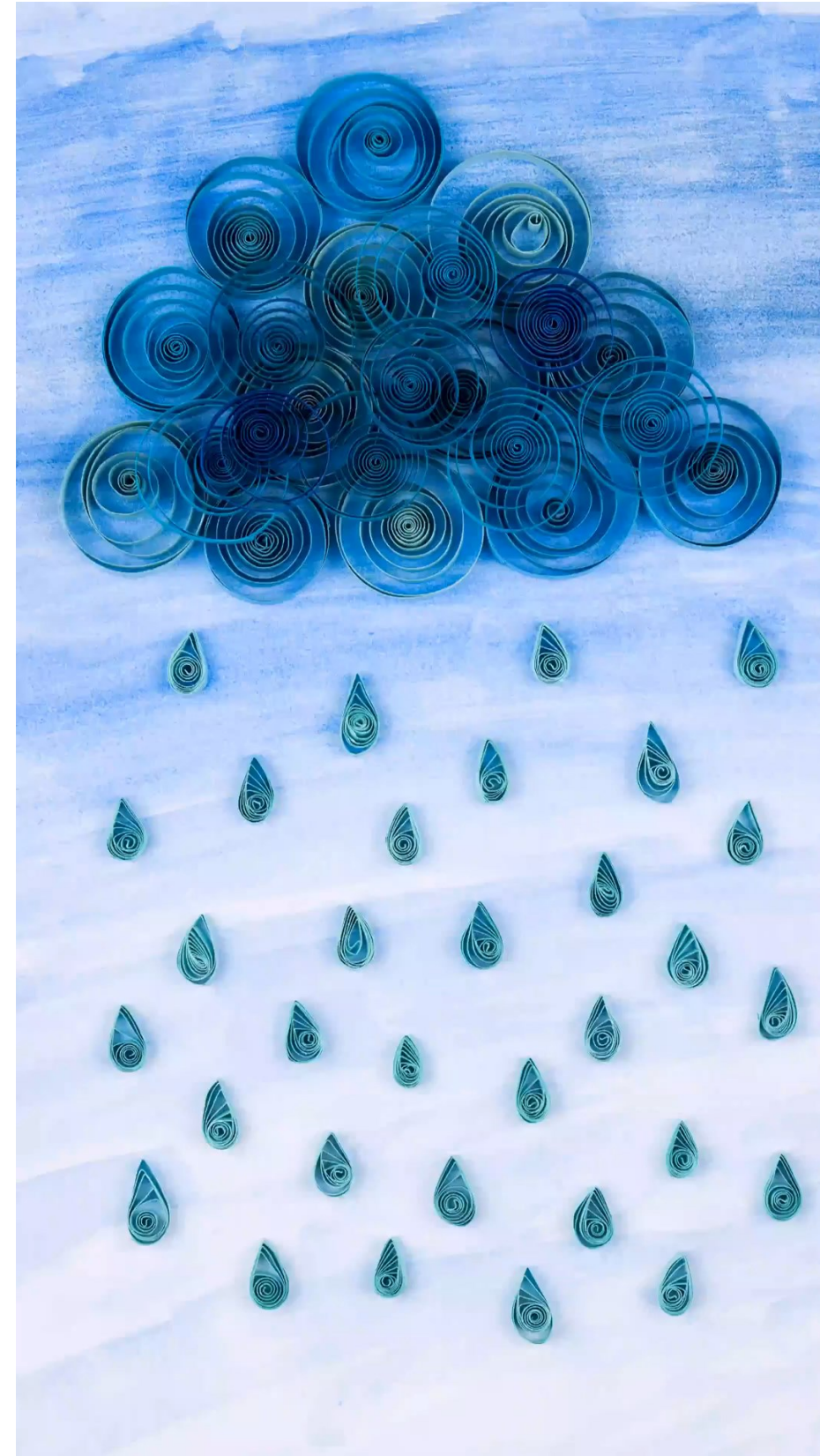
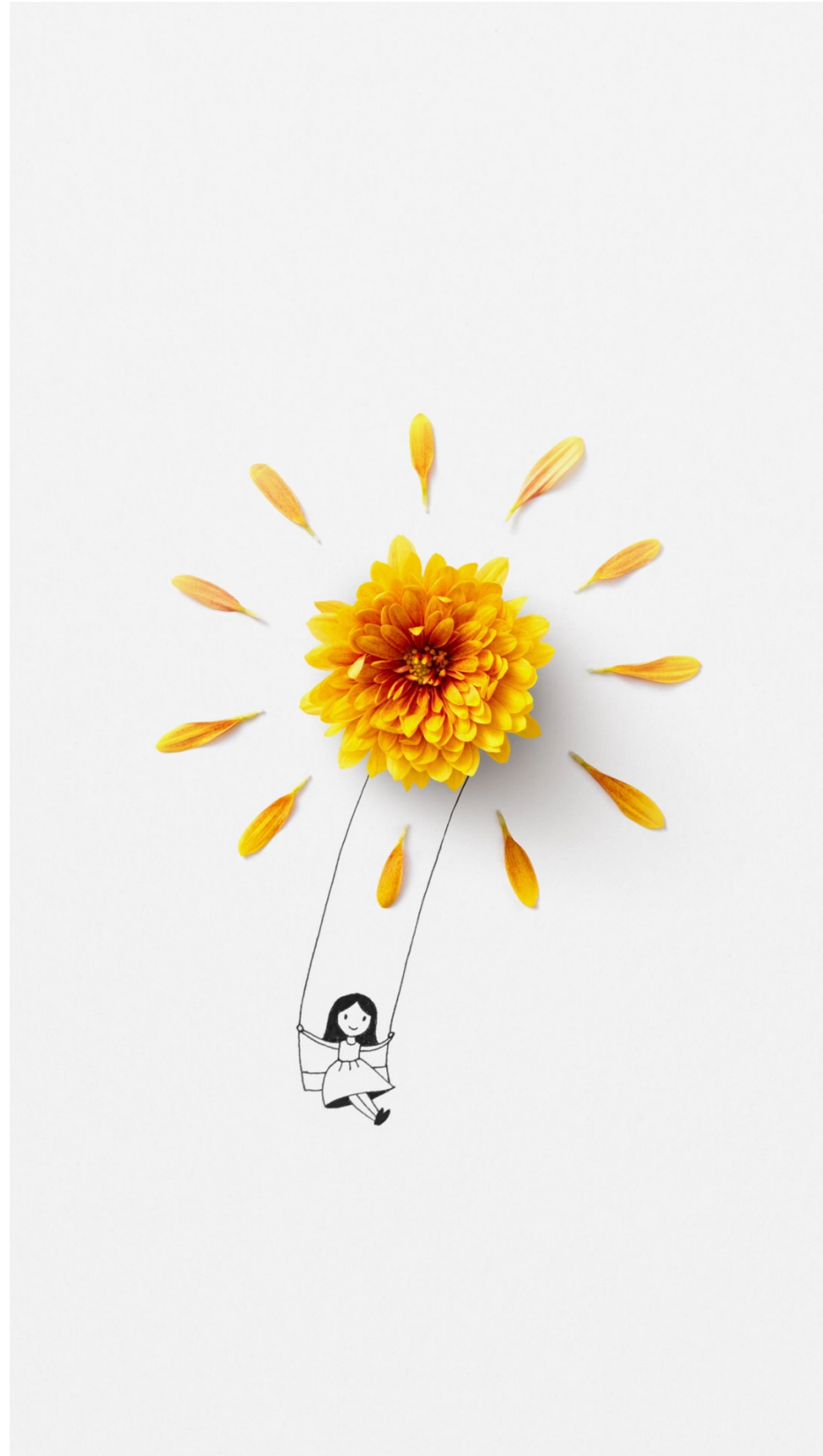
Session Overview

This session is designed to be interactive and reflective. To that end, the session will:

- Provide participants with activities to complete to identify challenges and acknowledge successes.
- Invite individual reflection and an opportunity to work collaboratively to create strategies for quality enhancement.
- Provide opportunities for discussion and questions throughout.



Acknowledging the complexity



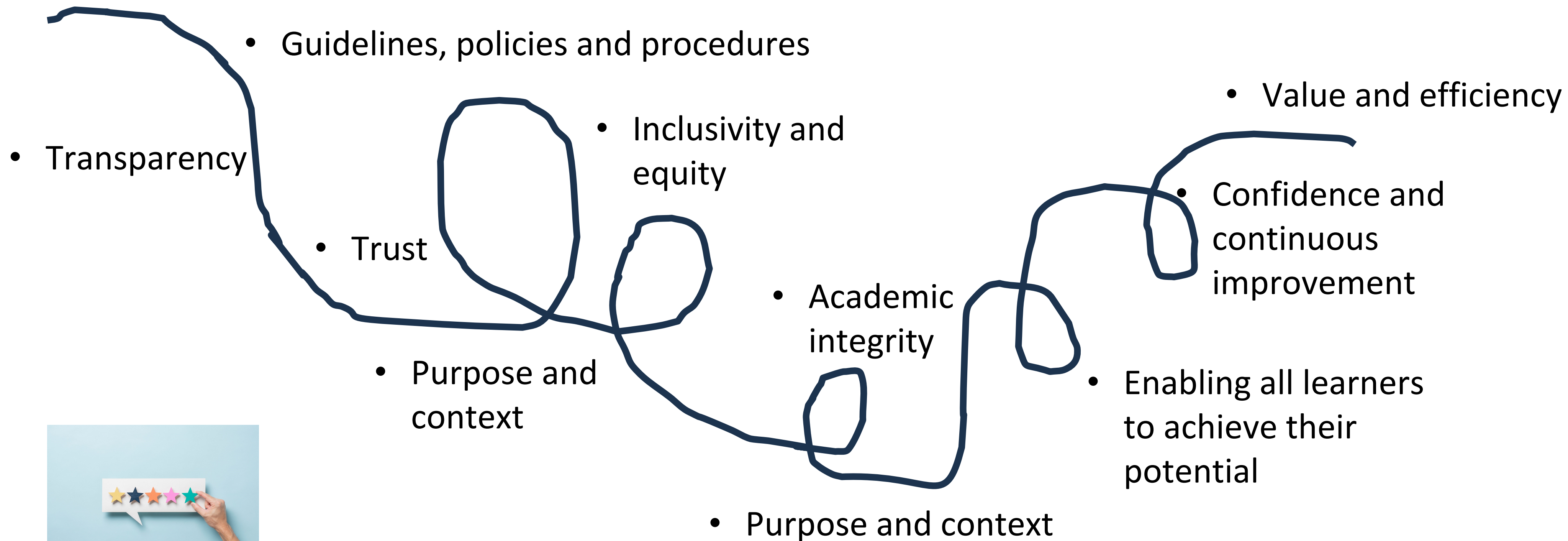
Acknowledging the complexity



- Guidelines, policies and procedures
- Academic integrity
- Confidence and continuous improvement
- Transparency
- Value and efficiency
- Purpose and context
- Inclusivity and equity
- Enabling all learners to achieve their potential
- Trust



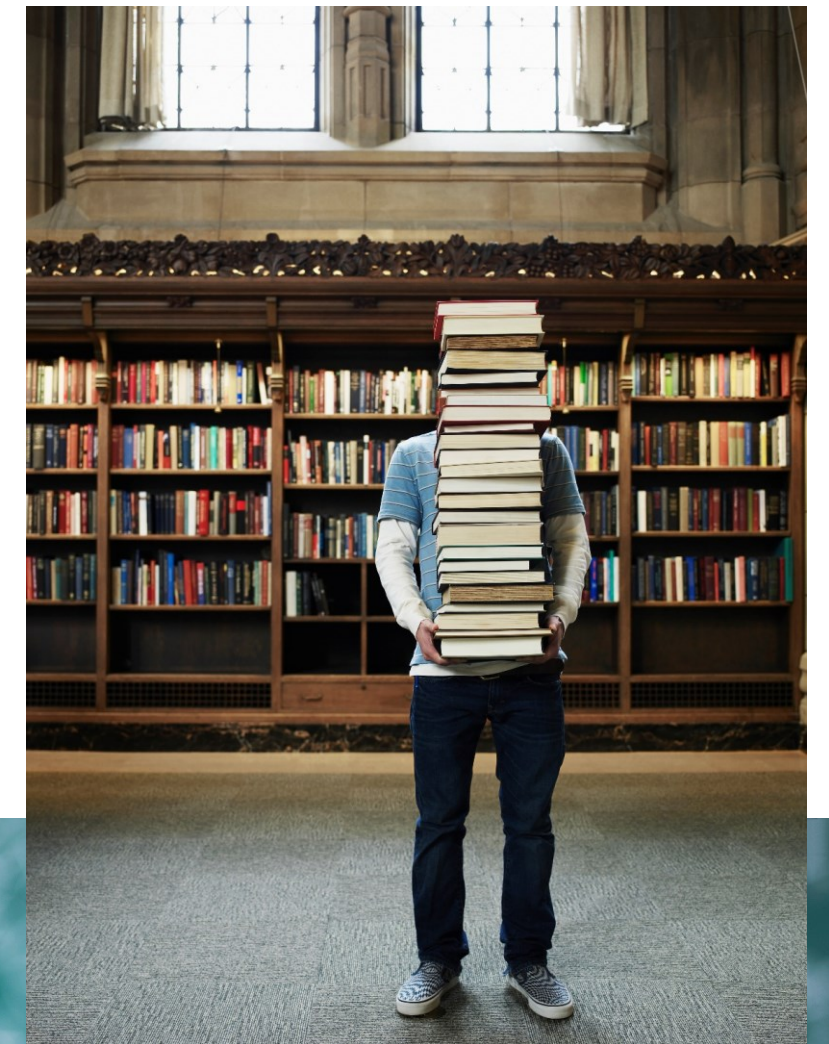
Acknowledging the complexity



What do we already know?



- The importance of quality assurance in higher education is widely assumed (Cardoso *et al.* 2015).
- However, relatively little scholarly work has discussed the development and enhancement of a quality culture that embeds consideration of quality across a university (Legemaate *et al.*, 2022).
- A significant quantity of research involves relatively small-scale and short-term surveys with a focus on performance indicators that can oversimplify complex problems and overlook interlinked elements (Hamshire *et al* 2017 and Harvey, 2022).



Where are we now?

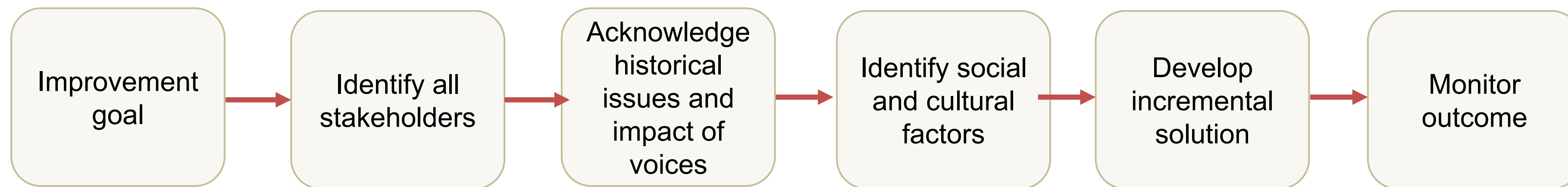


- Quality enhancement projects in universities frequently rely on short-term, fragmented studies implemented in response to snapshot data linked to student feedback (Hamshire et al. 2024).
- Such projects may not address the complex interplay across stakeholder groups and do not always acknowledge the unintended consequences of change (Hamshire et al. 2024).
- A more critical examination of quality in higher education is needed, with consideration of how it relates to shared values and collective ownership (Harvey 2022; Legemaate 2022).





Simple Quality Enhancement solution



Activity 1: Ensuring that investments in quality enhancement are effective



Working in a group at your table consider:

How do we achieve the right balance between accountability and continuous improvement in developing a quality culture?

How do obligations around accountability impact quality improvement?

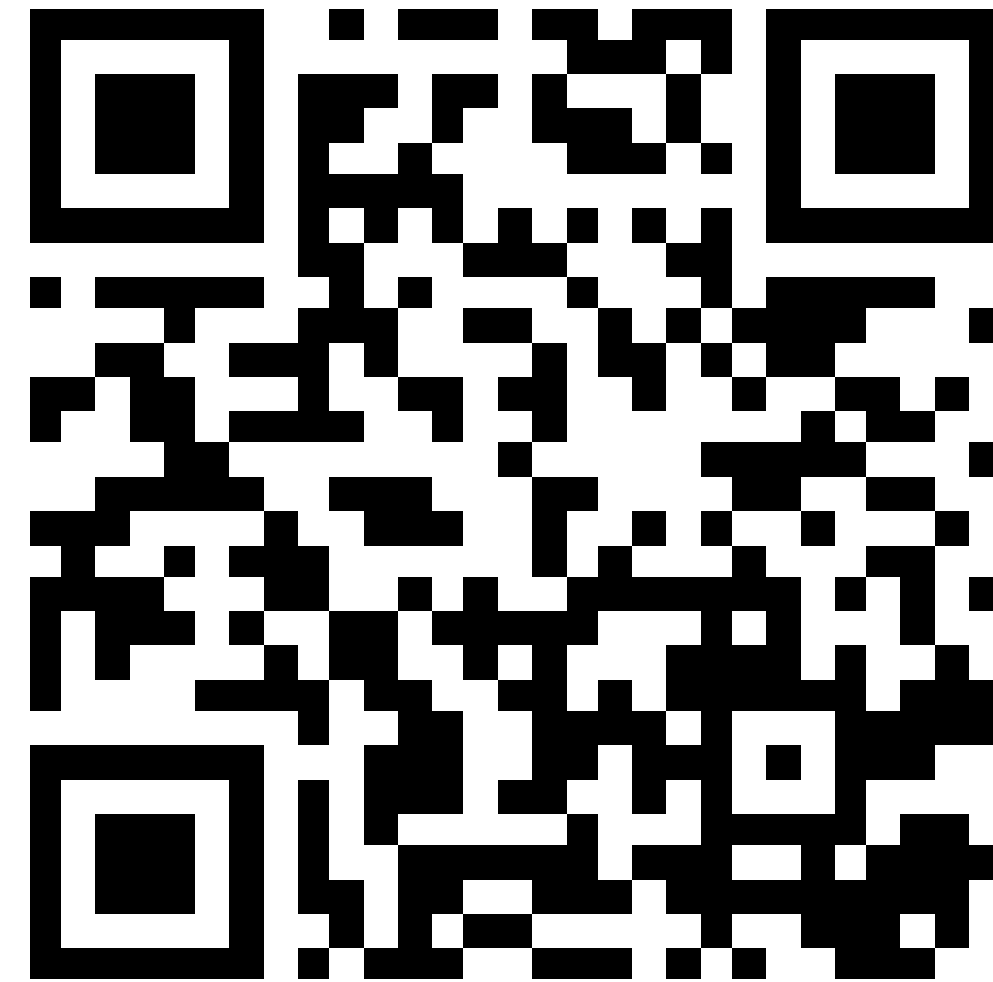


Activity 1: Ensuring that investments in quality enhancement are effective



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- 1). How do we achieve the right balance between accountability and continuous improvement in developing a quality culture?
- 2). How do obligations around accountability impact quality improvement?



Student experience

Colleague experience

Quality Enhancement

System impact

Economic impact

Concatenated research



- A form of longitudinal qualitative exploration,
- A series of studies are linked , as if in a chain, leading to cumulative grounded theory,
- Each exploratory study unfolds with an accumulation of research and application of theory,
- provides opportunities to explore both the intended and unintended consequences of institutional change.

(Stebbins, 1992 & 2001)



Ensuring that investments in institutional changes are effective



- Acknowledging complexity as well as valuing historical voices, in partnership with all stakeholders, enables us to focus on developing incremental solutions (Hamshire et al. 2019).
- Recognition of the multifaceted intersections of student & staff experience and acknowledgment of the unintended consequences of change, (Hamshire et al. 2024).
- Working within complex systems, staff can perceive that the solution to challenges is for students to adapt and change to fit in with a institutional culture rather than substantial changes in institutional approach (Forsyth et al. 2021).

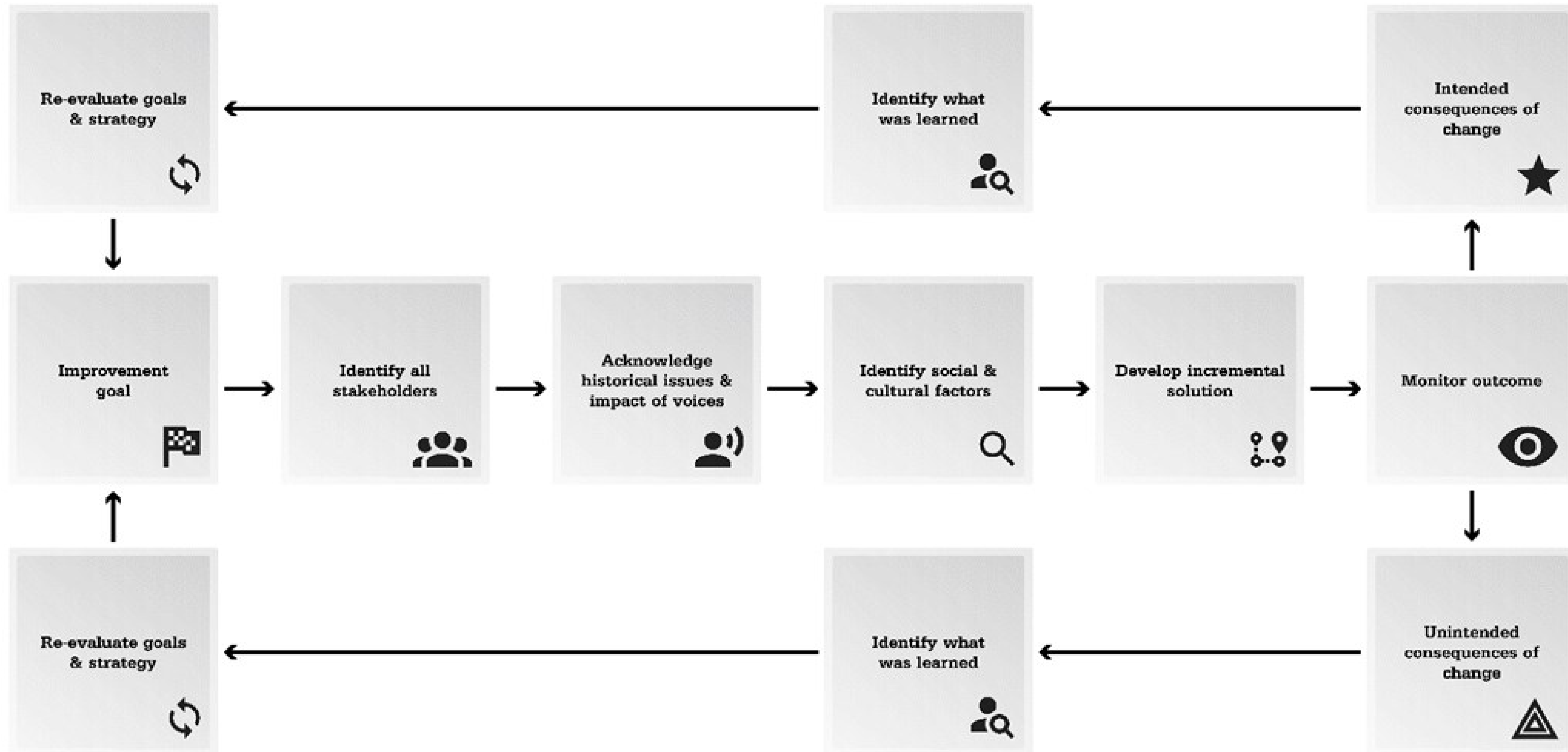
Complex educational changes are wicked problems

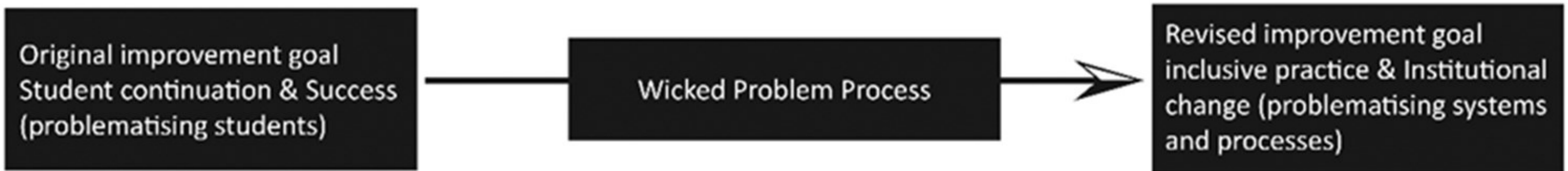
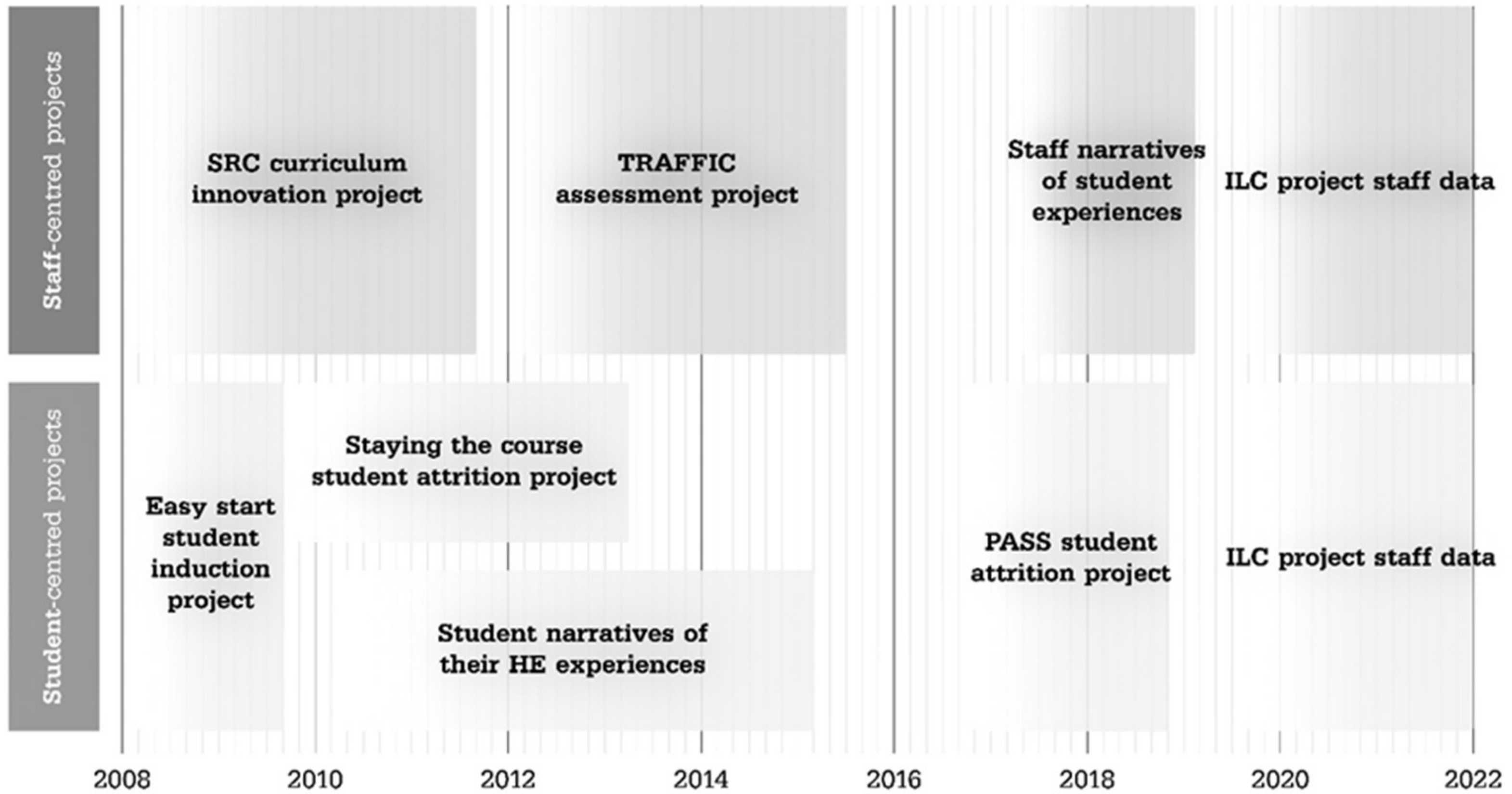


1. No clear definition of the problem
2. Never ending solutions and amendments: no stopping point
3. No right or wrong evaluation or solution
4. No immediate test of solution
5. No trial and error phase
6. No criteria to know if all solutions have been identified
7. Each wicked problem is unique
8. Wicked problems can be the result of another problem
9. Framing of the problem affects and limits potential solutions
10. Pressure on policy makers

(Rittel and Webber 1973)

Wicked problem framework (Hamshire et al. 2019)



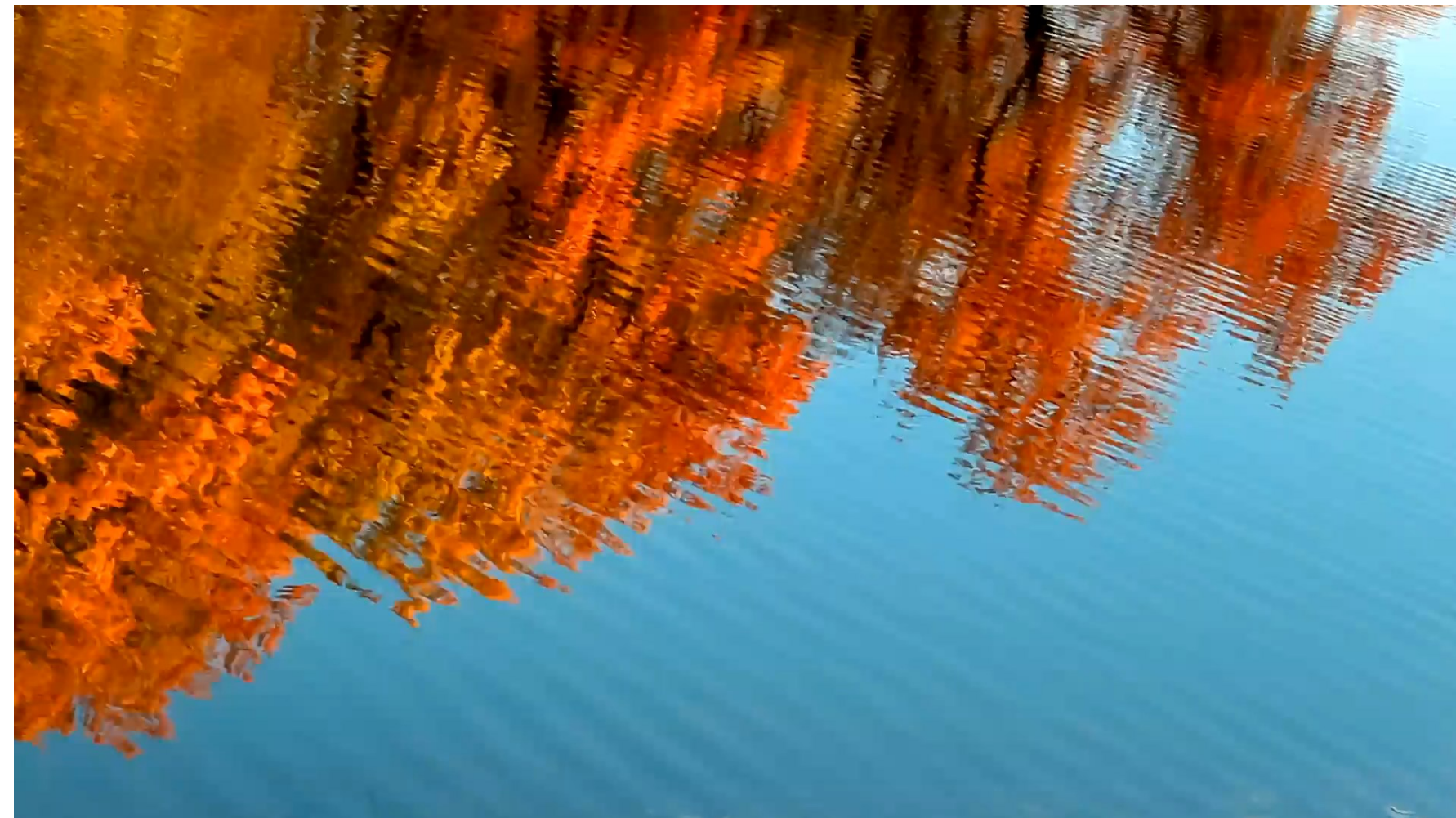


Activity 2: Analysis and resolution of wicked problems



Working in a group at your table consider:

What role can/should quality assurance play in contributing to the analysis and resolution of Wicked problems?

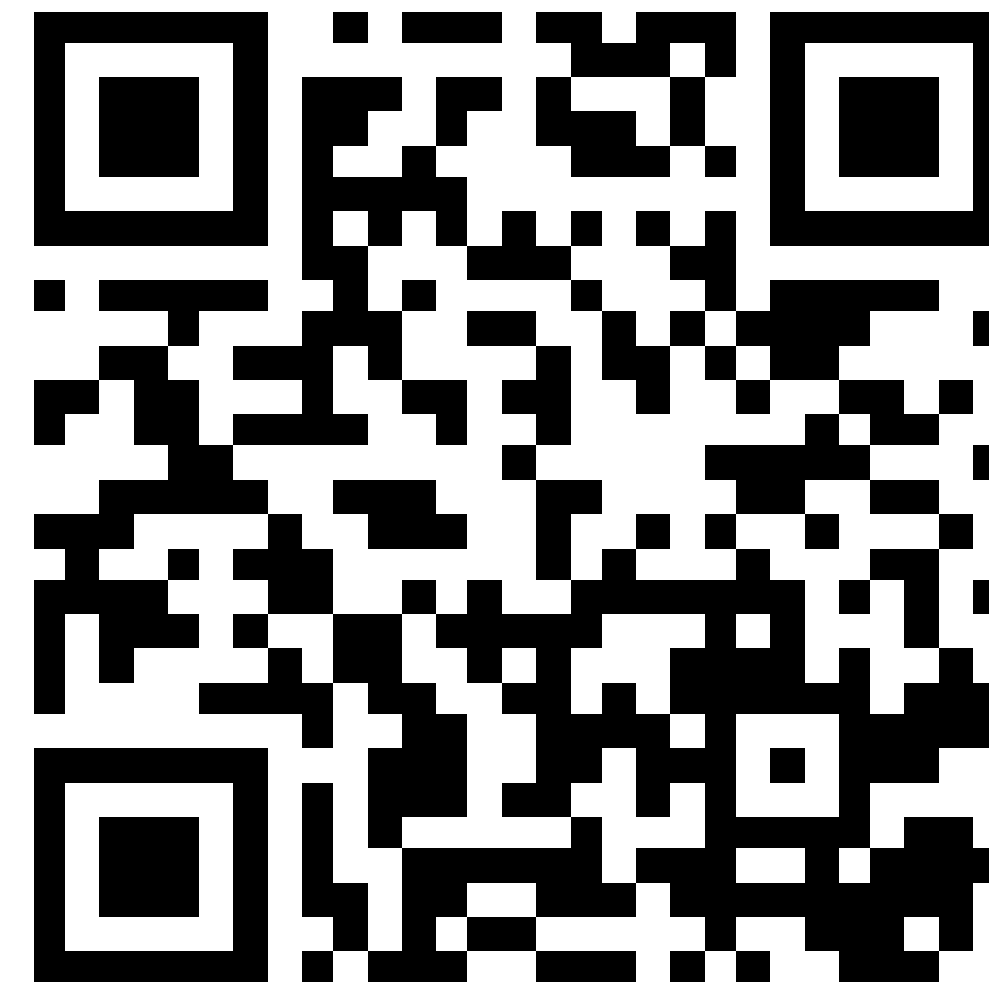


Activity 2: Analysis and resolution of wicked problems



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What role can/should quality assurance play in contributing to the analysis and resolution of Wicked problems?



What equity questions do we need to consider ?



Identifying all stakeholders

- Who will be directly affected by any changes?
- Who might do something differently had they simply known about the co-dependencies across a change process?
- How do you build trustful relationships with stakeholders who have previously been marginalised?

Acknowledging voices, acknowledging the past

- Recognising who has previously been seen and heard within an institution and identifying these different individual experiences is vital, who feels invisible?
- How do you empower students and external partners to ensure that they feel that their voices matter and are valued?

What systems questions do we need to consider?



Identifying Social and cultural factors

- How do we change what has previously worked for some stakeholders but not others?
- How do we ensure that we listen to students as valued stakeholders?

Develop incremental solutions

- How do we conceptualise individual projects and processes as a systems problem?
- How do we consider multiple interacting systems, instead of focusing on simply fixing the original problem?

Evaluate and learn

- How can we use shared values to take collective ownership of successes and failures?
 - Without criticising individual people or previous actions, how can we focus on solving the problem?
-



Final considerations

Improving quality in Higher Education is a wicked problem. There are no obvious solutions for all contexts.

This approach allows us to continuously learn and adapt, becoming more knowledgeable with each well-intentioned success or failure

There are many implications of this approach, both practical (e.g. processes, data) to cultural (e.g. transparency, accountability)

Key recommendations



- Consider all stakeholders at all stages to surface complexities & interdependencies which can lead to difficulties in the implementation of change.
- Partnership with both students and external third parties.
- Listening events to deconstruct current perceptions, recognise complexity.
- Predict the potential impact of system changes, offering an alternative way of thinking about dynamic quality issues.



Acknowledgments



- Dr Rachel Forsyth, Lund University
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