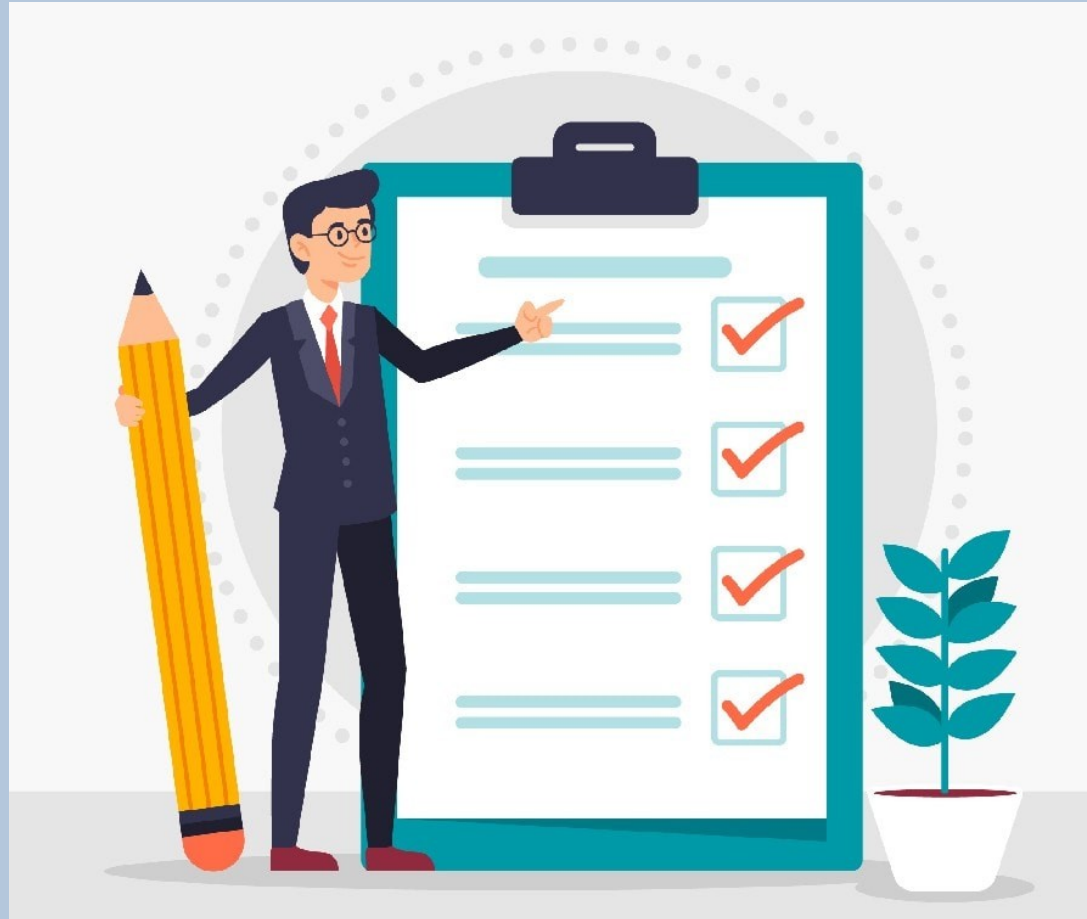


The emergence of a self-evaluation culture and its development into the Italian academy



The history of the quality evaluation system dates back at least in 1980 when a President of the Republic's decree stated that all university teachers should be evaluated (DPR 11/07/1980).

It is amazing that it clearly states (artt. 19, 33) that full professors as well as associate professors and researchers should be checked every third year, but most universities applied this decree only to researchers.

Though this decree could have pushed Italian university toward a new path, it partially failed.

In 1999 several European countries (29, then 49) agreed to set common rules for the higher education process, that since then it is known as Bologna process.

The Bologna Process seeks to bring more coherence to higher education systems across Europe.

It established the European Higher Education Area to facilitate student and staff mobility, to make higher education more inclusive and accessible, and to make higher education in Europe more attractive and competitive worldwide.

As part of the European Higher Education Area, all participating countries agreed to:

- introduce a three-cycle higher education system consisting of bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies

- ensure the mutual recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad completed at other universities

- implement a system of quality assurance, to strengthen the quality and relevance of learning and teaching

European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

2000 - established to promote European cooperation in the field of quality assurance in higher education.

2004 – turned to the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

AIMS

to contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of European higher education

to act as a major driving force for the development of quality assurance across all the Bologna Process signatory countries

The background: quality assurance within the European framework – the ENQA

In the Berlin communiqué of 19 September 2003 the Ministers of the Bologna Process signatory states invited ENQA ‘through its members, in cooperation with the EUA, EURASHE, and ESIB’, to develop ‘an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance’ and 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 Bologna Follow-Up Group to Ministers in 2005’.

In 2005 the ministries of education of 45 countries met in Bergen to discuss the ongoing Bologna process not only from the perspective of **academics** and not only concerning **teaching** activities.



Beyond Europe itself and beyond good ideas without a follow up, this meeting was a milestone for the whole process of the self-evaluation

The main Bergen's outcomes

- the interests of students as well as employers and the society more generally in good quality higher education;
- the central importance of institutional autonomy, tempered by a recognition that this brings with it heavy responsibilities;
- the need for external quality assurance to be fit for its purpose and to place only an appropriate and necessary burden on institutions for the achievement of its objectives.

The EHEA after Bergen pushed to a closer relationship among the partners to promote a first release of the European Standard Guidelines for higher education institutions.

1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance: **Institutions** should have a **policy** and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the **development of a culture** which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a **strategy** for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a **formal status** and be publicly available. They should also include a role for **students** and other **stakeholders**.

The EHEA after Bergen pushed to a closer relationship among the partners to promote a first release of the European Standard Guidelines for higher education institutions.

2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards: Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.

3 Assessment of students: Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.

4 Quality assurance of teaching staff: Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

Besides these guidelines, the ENQA developed also recommendations for external evaluation

5 Learning resources and student support: Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

6 Information systems: Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.

7 Public information: Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering.

In 2015 the Yerevan conference was a further turning point to change the pace to the whole Bologna process. The Bologna Follow Up Group set a dense agenda to improve a new culture of evaluation processes among the partners.

The Yerevan conference's outcomes are important for the further development of the evaluation process.

The European Standard Guidelines is intended to give help more than prescriptions

The whole process is, thus, bottom-up rather than top-down driven

Bologna Follow-Up Group

BFUG Board

BFUG
Secretariat

AG1 - EHEA international
cooperation

AG2 - Support for the
Belarus roadmap

AG3 - Dealing with non-
implementation

AG4 - Diploma
Supplement revision

WG1 - Monitoring

WG2 - Implementation
Fostering implementation
of agreed key
commitments

WG3 - New Goals
Policy development for
new EHEA goals

In cooperation with national stakeholders

Legend

Advisory group

Working group

V3 - September 2016 - based on work programme consolidated version of 14.09.2015

The background: quality assurance within the European framework – Bologna FUG

The whole process had a first outcome in Italy in 2010 with the establishment of the National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and the Research (ANVUR), though the law was promulgated in 2006 (L. 2006/286 – Artt. 2, c. 138, 139, 140, 141)

It has the goal to give an external evaluation of the quality of research. Thus, it is only a portion of the whole evaluation process. The path is correct but it took more time to reach a full development of a relationship between

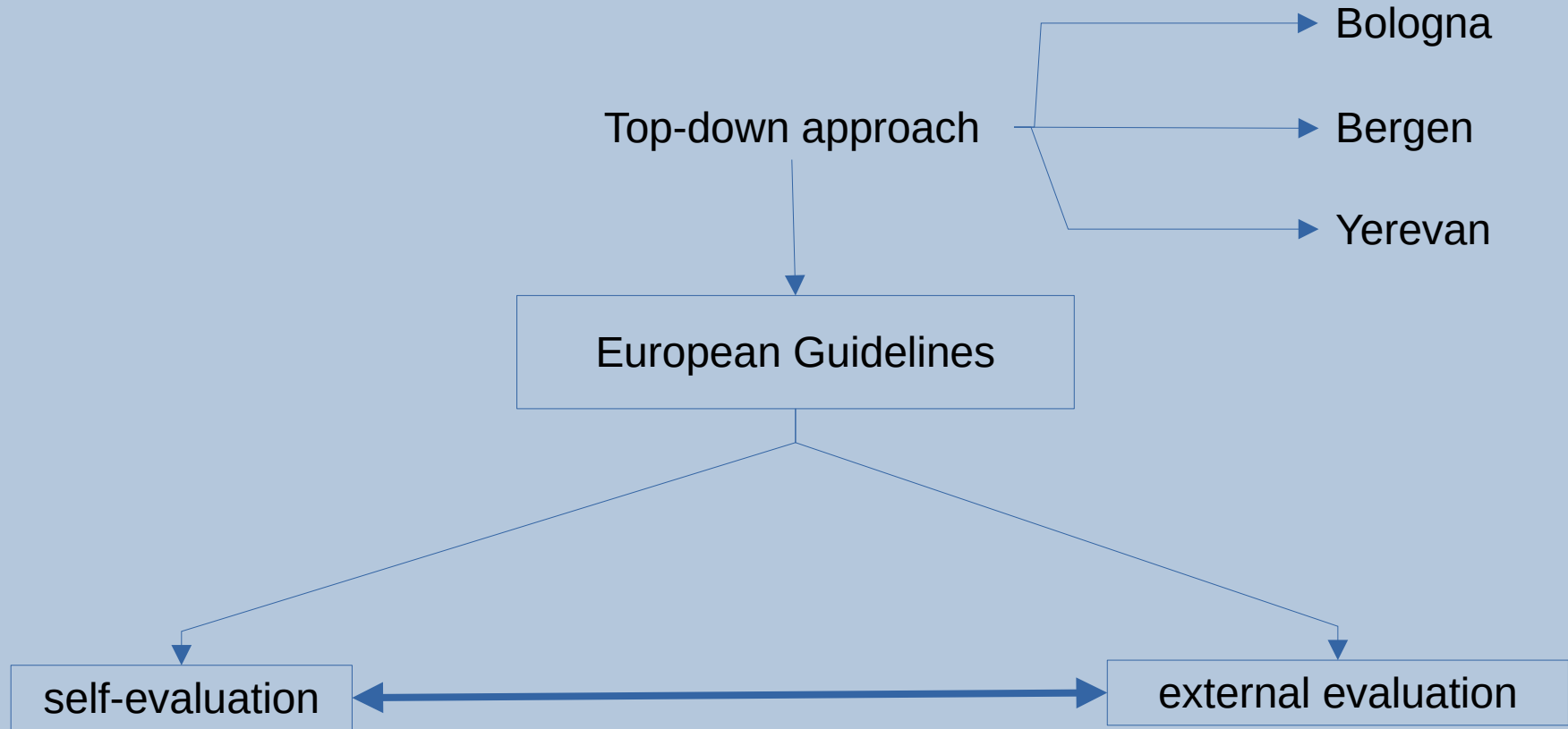
self-evaluation

external evaluation

The follow up of the whole process came with the DM n.1154 dated 14-10-2021. It clearly states at art.1 that all the universities have to be granted the right to keep on with teaching activities **after a periodical evaluation process which includes a self-evaluation.**

For the first time the whole set of principles coming from the Bologna process (and Bergen and Yerevan) were officially acknowledged as crucial features of the Italian higher education system.

Summarising the long lasting path



The emergence of a new culture: the awareness of self-evaluation

Self-evaluation is the skill to evaluate how much did we fit with the goals we set.

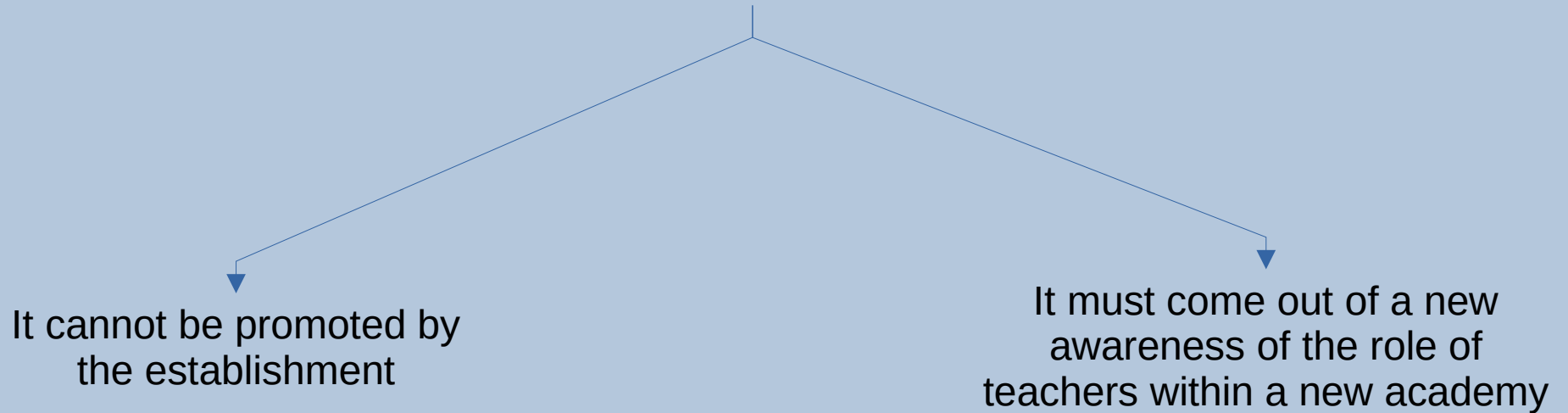
Everything's fine



Nothing seems to work

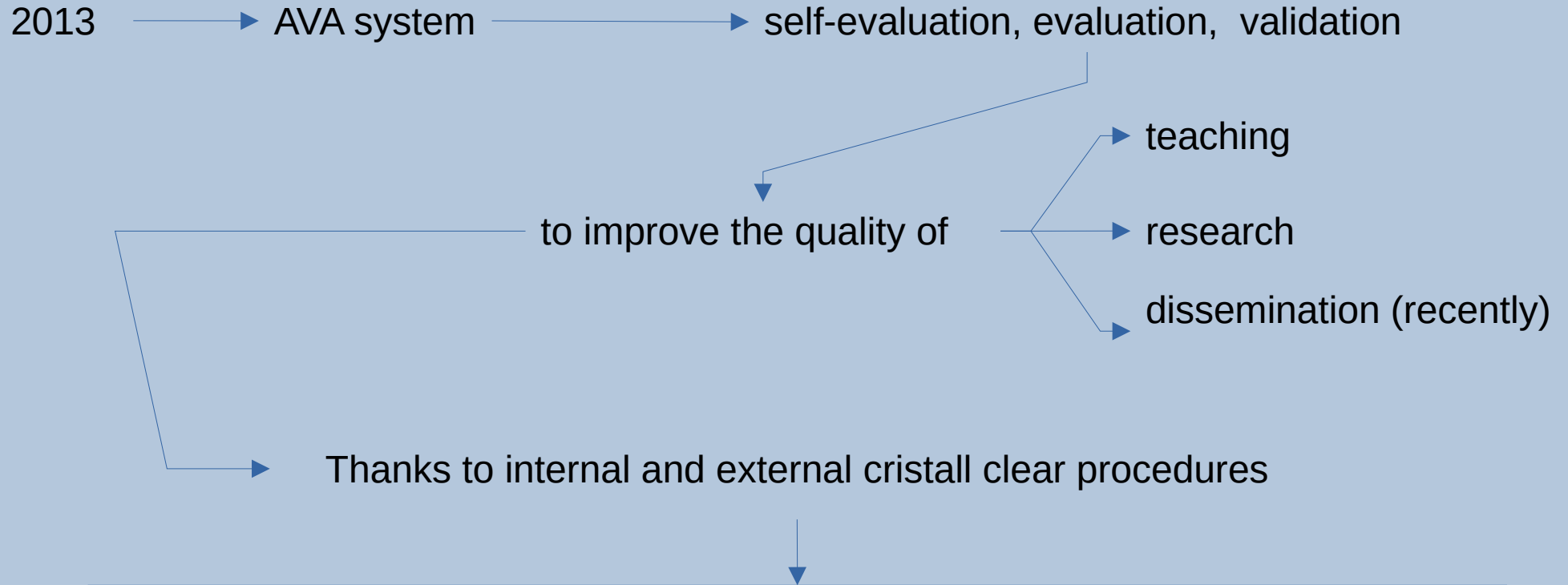
What do I mean for self-evaluation?

Self-evaluation is crucial to develop a culture of good practices when planning teaching courses as well as research projects and public engagement activities (these are the 3 milestones for Italian academics)

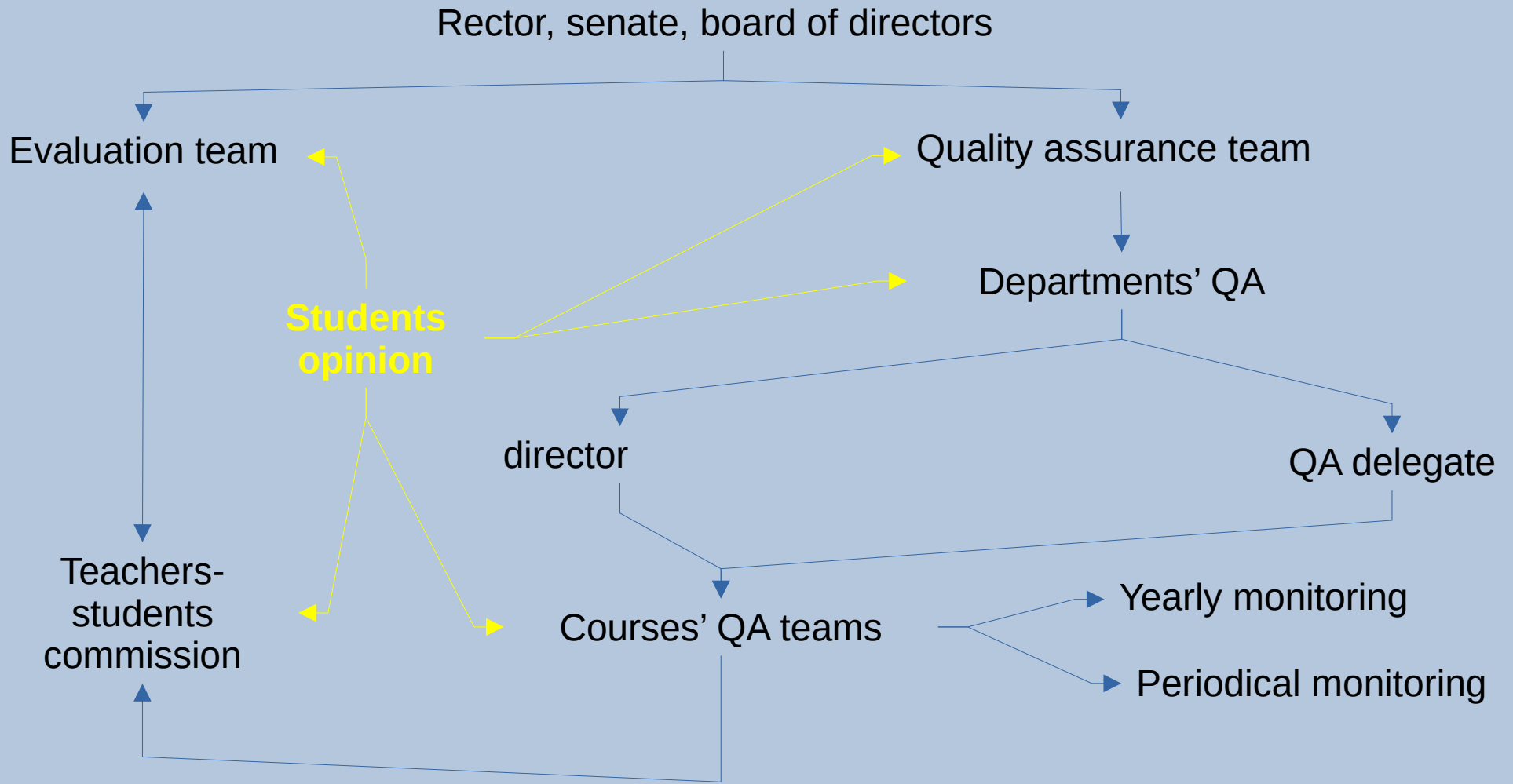


It helps to plan sustainable paths and reasonable outcomes

Do I really need a self-evaluation?

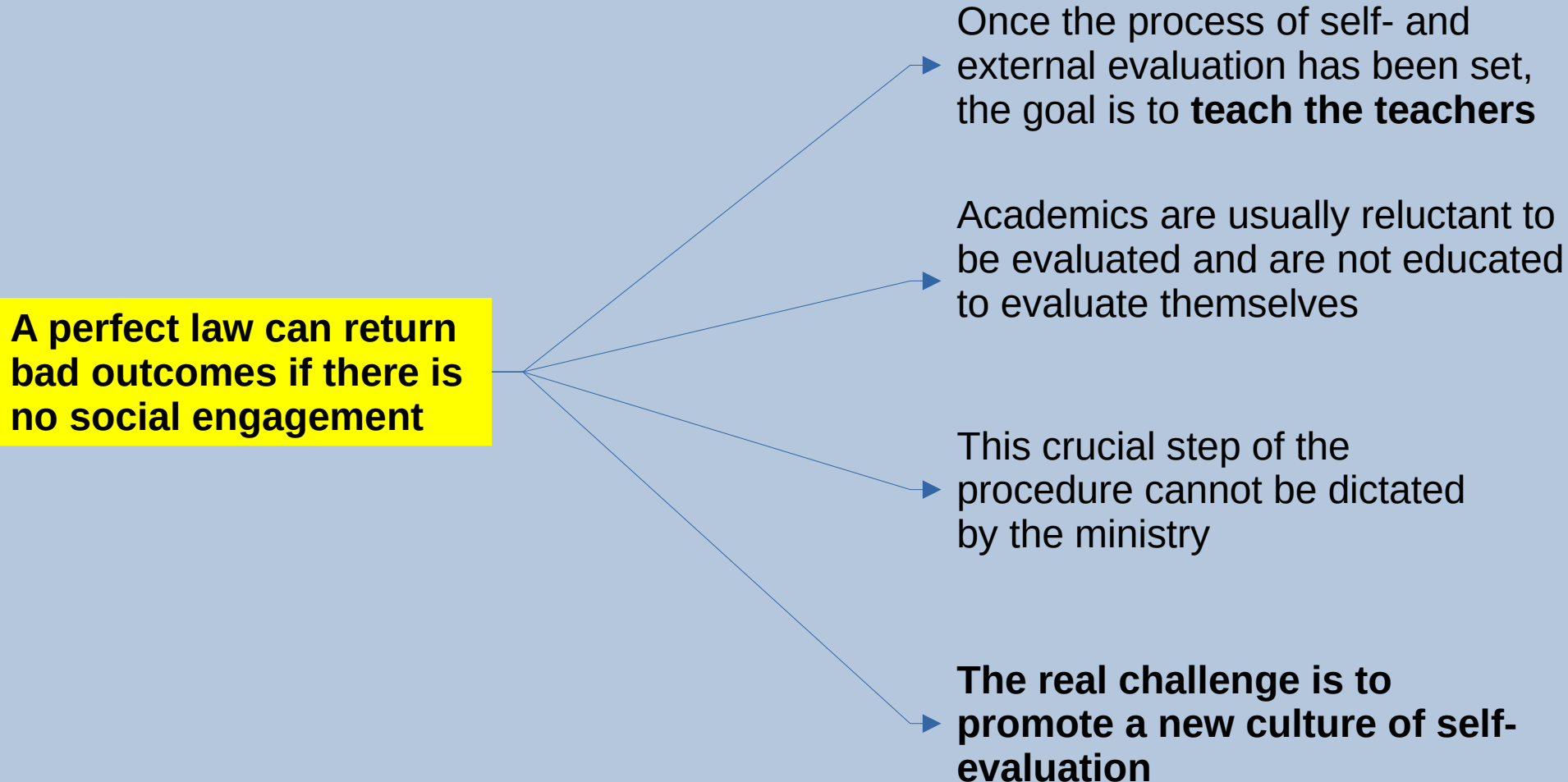


Validation of each single course: there are or persist the quality requirements



The structure of Italian self-evaluation

A perfect law can return bad outcomes if there is no social engagement



Once the process of self- and external evaluation has been set, the goal is to **teach the teachers**

Academics are usually reluctant to be evaluated and are not educated to evaluate themselves

This crucial step of the procedure cannot be dictated by the ministry

The real challenge is to promote a new culture of self-evaluation

**Because self-evaluation
is a bottom-up process
it promotes**

A brand new approach to
teaching and planning courses

A better awareness of the
sustainability and reliability of the
learning projects

It promotes a closer relationship
between teachers and students
to develop better paths

**It pushes to monitor each step
of the learning process and to
find out what did not work**

Self-evaluation is potentially a dangerous process because

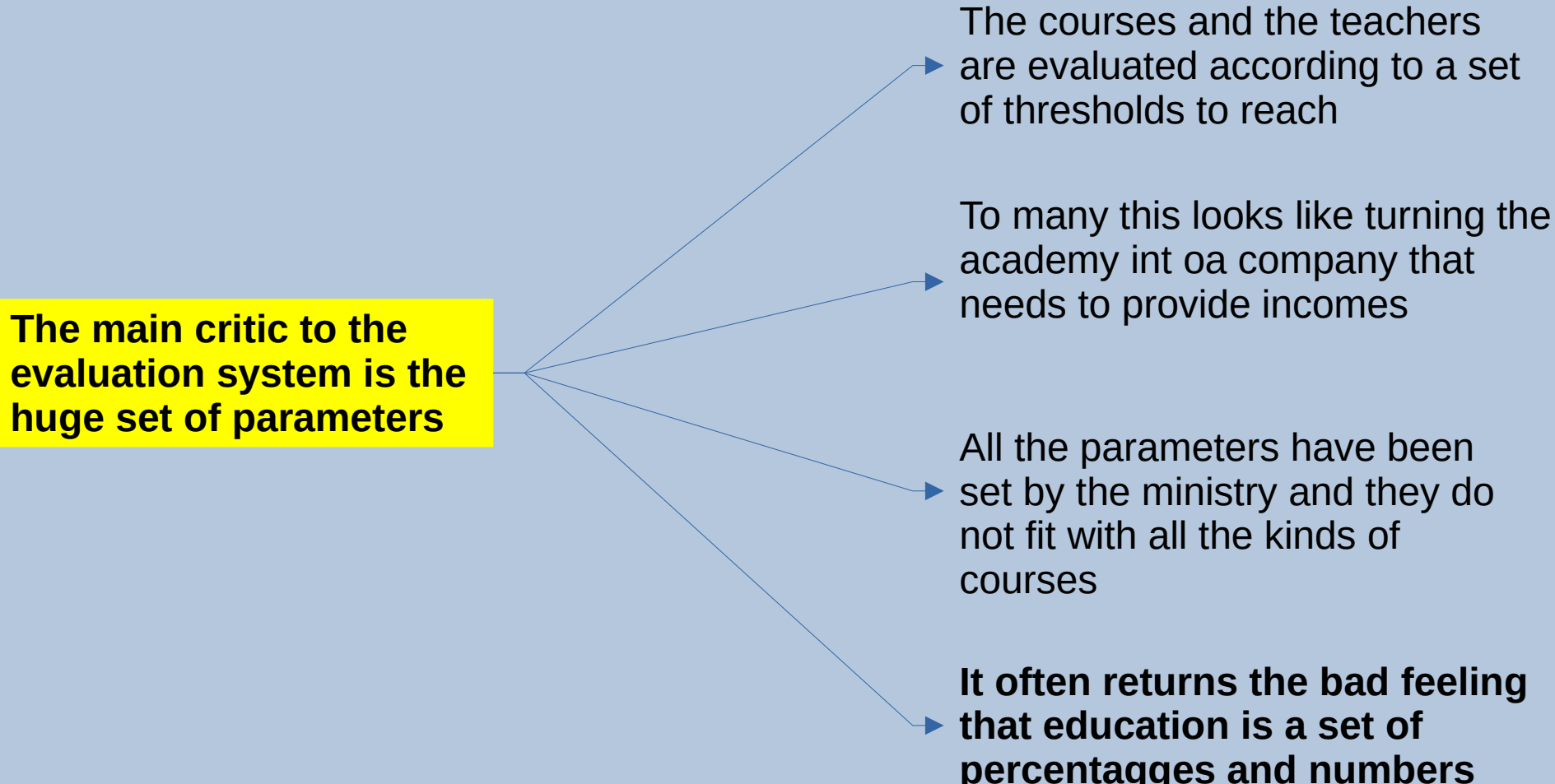
Teachers usually feel it as one among many formal duties

Thus, they do not pay much attention to the whole set of procedures and requests

Students are not (and often do not like to be) involved in the making of new paths to a better teaching

Therefore, the forms are often filled without a real discussion and a clear strategy

The main critic to the evaluation system is the huge set of parameters



The courses and the teachers are evaluated according to a set of thresholds to reach

To many this looks like turning the academy into a company that needs to provide incomes

All the parameters have been set by the ministry and they do not fit with all the kinds of courses

It often returns the bad feeling that education is a set of percentages and numbers

Toward a transformation into a company?

Parameters are often not updated or they come from different sources

It is hard to self-evaluate and to project when a parameter refers to a situation we know is already not up to date

An alert on a parameter can mean that there is something to reflect on and discuss about

But there are parameters that do not depend from the will and the work of teachers and students

A wise approach suggests to evaluate each parameter not as a mere number or percentage

We must be aware that the culture of self-evaluation transformed the role of the teacher as well as that of the student

They are now closer to project and manage the course

They collaborate to monitor the parameters and follow the list

Project

Plan

Do

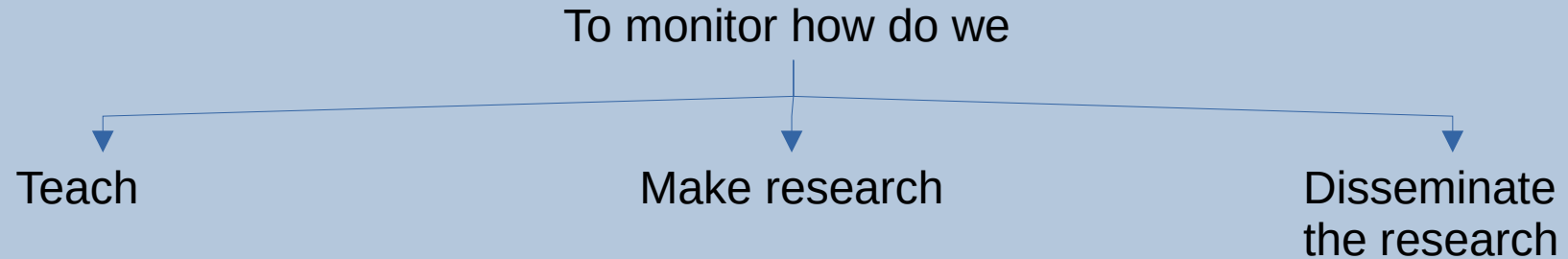
Check

Act

Are we still teachers after the quality evaluation system?

There is a major risk within the process of self-evaluation

To give numbers and percentages a role beyond that of alarm bell



Is nowadays necessary but not enough and it does not substitute the daily relationship between teachers and students in class

Is the self-evaluation system enough?