

Quality Assurance in Secondary and Higher Education: Worlds Apart or Complementary Views?

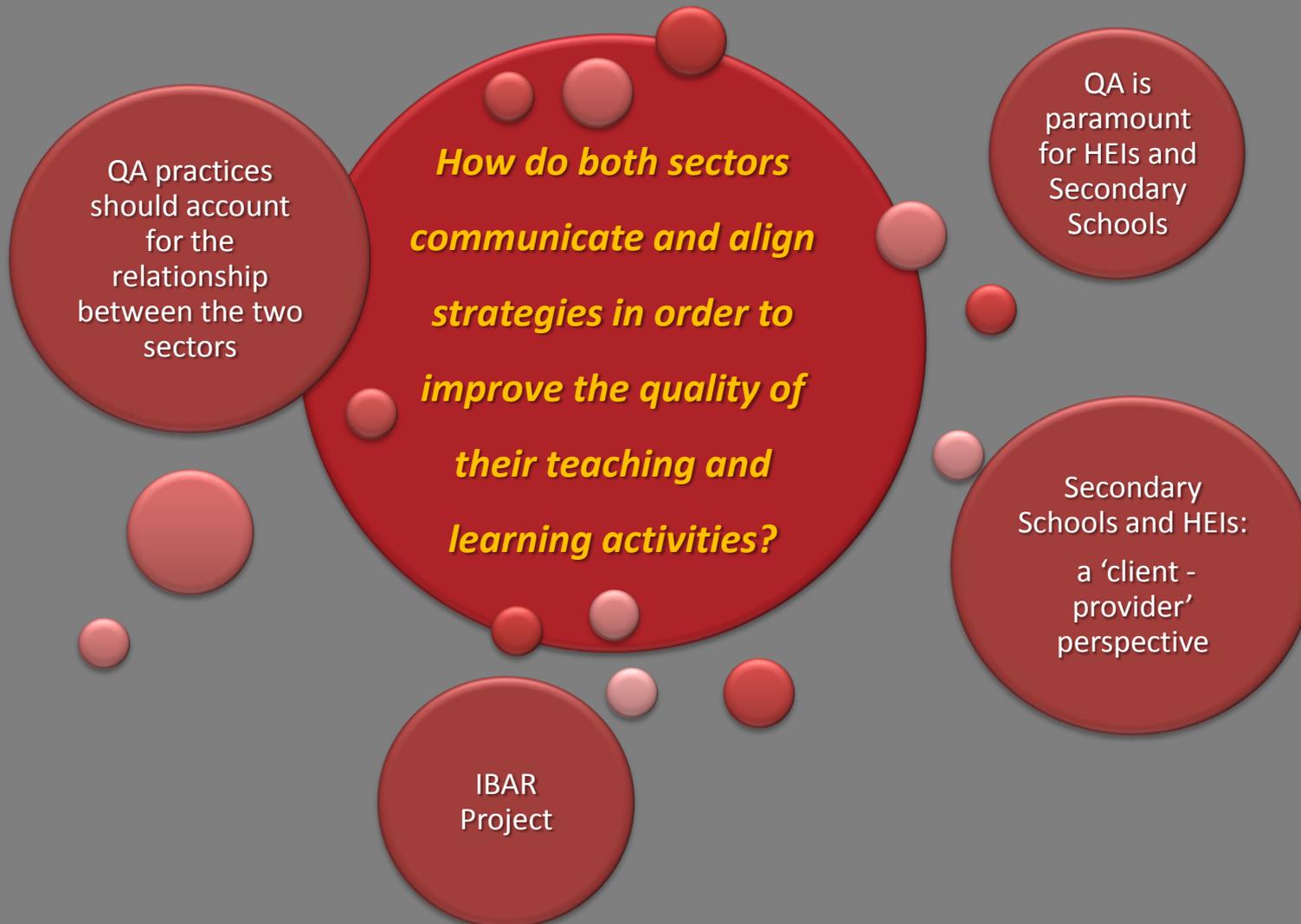
Maria J. Rosa & Cláudia S. Sarrico



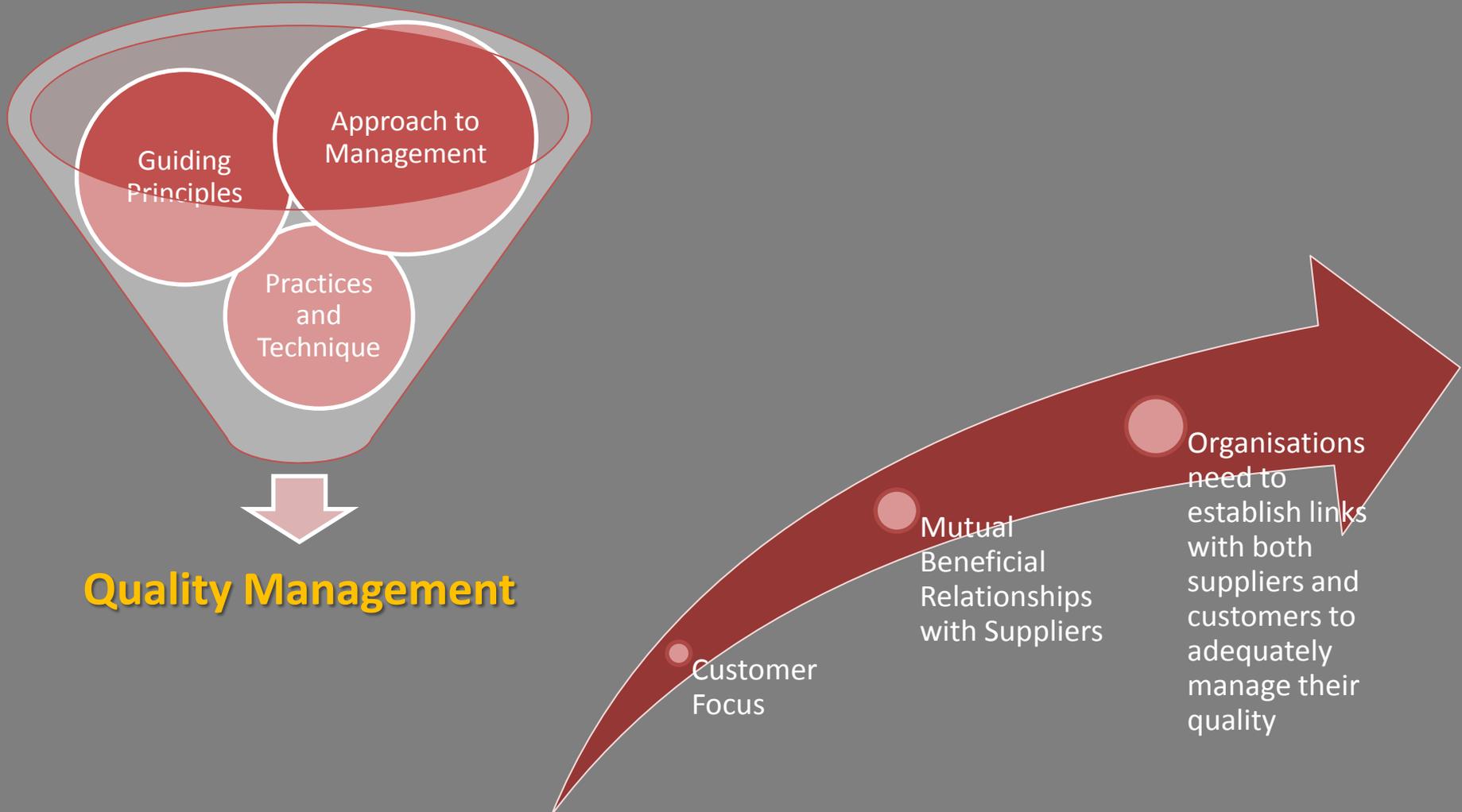
26th CHER Annual Conference

Lausanne, Switzerland
5-8 September 2013

Introduction



Introduction



What About Higher Education Institutions?

They need to **establish a link** with different types of stakeholders (“set out of its traditional ivory tower and outreach towards its environment” (Santiago et al., 2008))

They also have ‘customers’ and ‘suppliers’ – **secondary schools** are an example of a ‘**supplier**’

A better articulation between secondary and higher education should be promoted (Santiago et al., 2008):

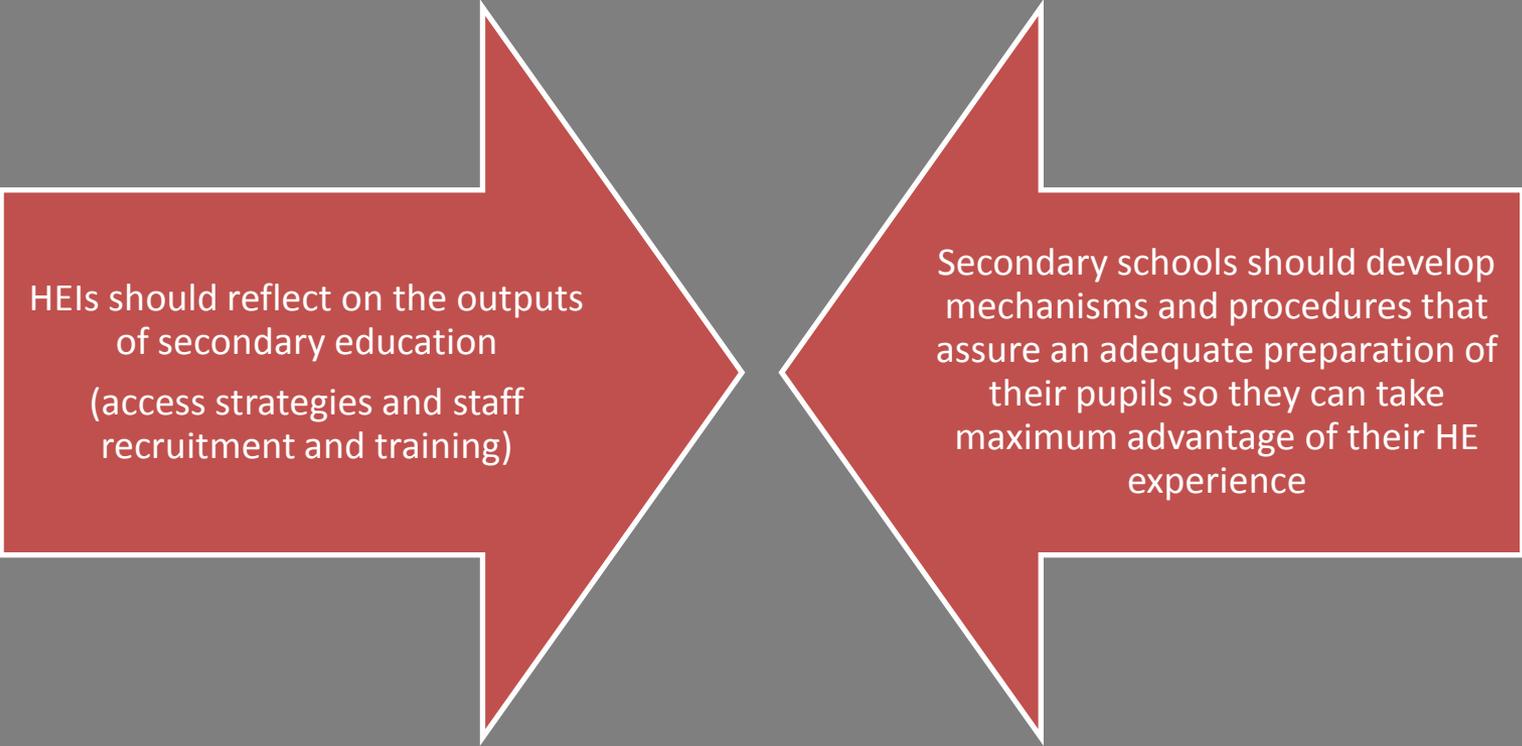
- Student information and career guidance at secondary level
- Alignment between secondary and higher education curricula
- Special programmes at HEIs
- Tracks from vocational secondary education to HE

The ESG (ENQA, 2005) explicitly include references to HEIs' external stakeholders and the need to take their views into consideration:

ESG1.1 – The policy and procedures for quality assurance “should also include a role for students and other stakeholders”

ESG1.2 – “quality assurance of programmes are expected to include: (...) regular feedback from employers, labour market representatives and other relevant organisations”

But there is no explicit reference to the secondary education level... rather odd since secondary schools are by far the main provider of students to HE!!



HEIs should reflect on the outputs
of secondary education
(access strategies and staff
recruitment and training)

Secondary schools should develop
mechanisms and procedures that
assure an adequate preparation of
their pupils so they can take
maximum advantage of their HE
experience

**But to which extent is secondary education
factoring in HEIs' policies on QA?**

The Portuguese Context – Links Between Secondary and HE

The majority of students access public HE by means of a national competition that takes into account their grades in secondary education and in national exams

Both sectors are subject to national quality assessment systems that share some common characteristics

Under the national quality assessment systems schools and HEIs have to develop their own internal quality mechanisms

Secondary Education
precedes HE, serving as its
main students' provider



Both sectors need to
develop internal
mechanisms to assure
the quality of learning
and teaching



Are the two
sectors **working
together** or are
they simply two
worlds apart?



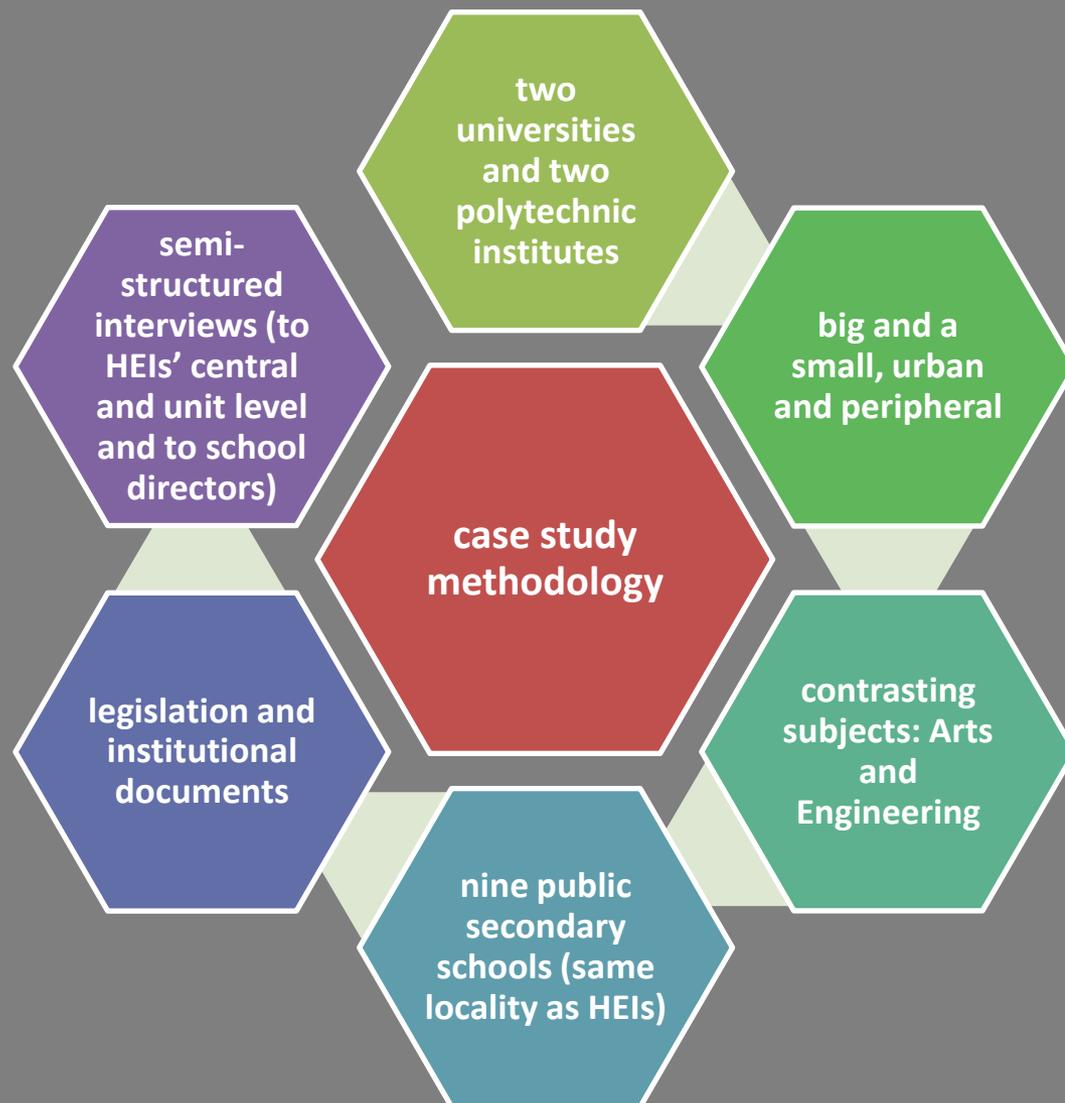
Data and Methods – The IBAR Project

IBAR Project - *Identifying Barriers in Promoting the European Standards and Guidelines of Quality Assurance at Institutional Level and Making Recommendations as to How These Might be Addressed*

Work Package **Secondary Education and Quality** main goals:

- To understand which ‘**good practices**’ and ‘**barriers**’ can be identified at different levels when it comes to the relationship that can be established between secondary and HE
- To discuss how far these ‘good practices’ and ‘barriers’ can contribute to strengthen both institutions processes of internal quality assurance, fostering improvement

Data and Methods



The script

In what way do **national policies** promote an alignment between secondary and higher education?

In what way does the **institutional policy on quality** take into account issues of progression from secondary to higher education?

To what extent are **secondary school students prepared** to take maximum advantage of the HE opportunity offered to them?

Are **QA requirements** for secondary education **at odds** with those for HE?

Are there **formal processes** in which the secondary and higher education sectors **communicate** with each other?

In what ways might **more efficient alignment** be achieved?

Difficult to discern a national policy promoting an alignment between secondary and higher education

- ✓ The only reference to a link between both sectors is related to **access**: students' secondary school grades have to be used in HE access
- ✓ Some HEIs' interviewees criticise the access system on the grounds that **it does not allow HEIs to choose their students**
- ✓ The law for HE evaluation refers to the need for **HEIs to cooperate with other institutions**: one can presume secondary schools are included
- ✓ Articulation with HE is mandated in the principles for orienting **curricular organisation** and management, as well as **learning assessment** at secondary education
- ✓ **CETs** can only be offered by secondary schools if a protocol is established with a HEI

Main Results - Institutional Policy on Quality

- The **HEIs' statutes do not include** any explicit reference to a link with secondary education
- The **HEIs' policies on quality do not have any clear and formal** concern with the progression from secondary to HE
- Interviewees from HEIs refer the **existence of special arrangements to assist students** in their first year (the idea behind being to improve their academic quality):
 - **special programmes** in maths, physics, chemistry or Portuguese language for freshmen (both before the academic year or during it)
 - **adaptation** of 1st and 2nd year curricular units to students' knowledge and competences
 - **“bridging courses”** for secondary school leavers
 - **CETs** as a way to smooth the transition between secondary and HE

Main Results - Preparation of Secondary School Students

- HEIs' actors **did not know** about arrangements in secondary schools to adequately prepare students for HE
- Both negative and positive views regarding first-year students' academic quality and (im)maturity
- Secondary education curriculum not demanding enough or simply not adequately aligned with HE?

Main Results - Preparation of Secondary School Students

- **HEIs** promote several **initiatives** especially addressed at secondary school students with significant impact in their preparation
- **School directors** refer:
 - Scientific and academic preparation (extra support classes during the academic year; intensive classes to prepare for the national final exams; special teachers' teams; teaching staff stability; practical laboratory classes)
 - Existence of vocational orientation services (with a psychologist)
 - Extra-curricular activities (some of them offered outside the schools)
 - Students' preparation to work autonomously and to invest in their own education

Main Results – Alignment of QA Requirements

- HEIs and Secondary Schools are **worlds apart** regarding their **knowledge of each other's** QA systems
 - The only exception are HEIs' academic staff that participates in the schools external evaluation programme
- Some interviewees refer that both systems are quite **independent**, while others say **they cannot be that different...**
- Schools and HEIs are **different realities** which determines **different QA**
 - Schools do not have pedagogic autonomy to determine their curricula or courses' content
 - Schools are much more concerned with students' final marks (rankings)
 - In HEIs students have a voice (pedagogic surveys)

Main Results – Formal Processes for Communication

- **Absence of formal processes**, both at national and institutional level – uncooperative situation
- **Reforms** at national level are made **independently** from each sector and without taking into account repercussions in the other (Bologna Process)
- Two national forums could be spaces for communication to happen: CNE and the Council of Schools. At regional level the Municipal Councils of Education. But they do **not have a mandate** to work on a **better articulation** between secondary and HE
- At institutional level there is the possibility of having **HEIs' representatives** in secondary schools' **general councils**

Main Results – Formal Processes for Communication

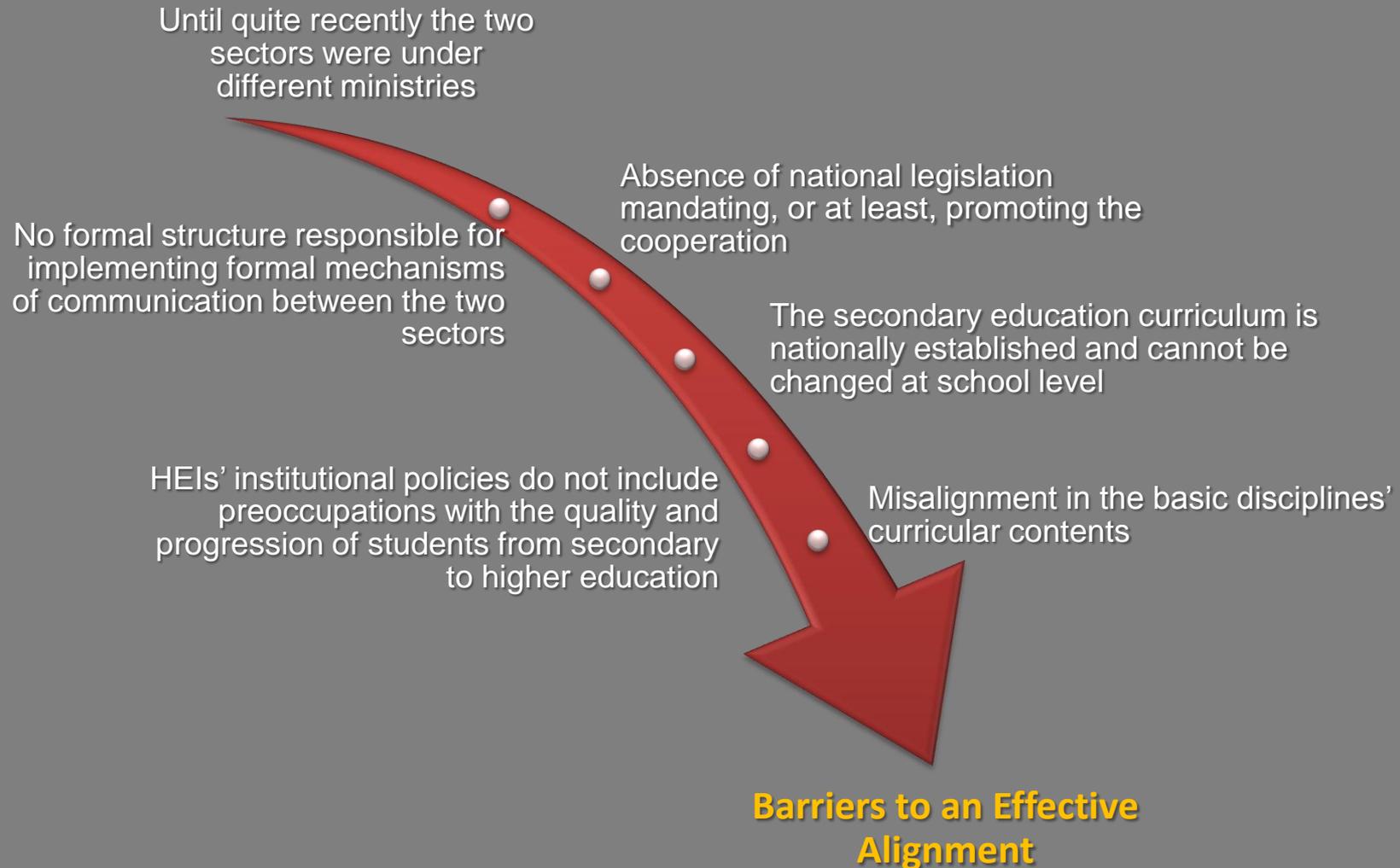
Some **informal processes** at institutional level, very dependent on staff's goodwill:

- Visits of secondary schools' pupils to HEIs
- Visits HEIs or study programmes make to secondary schools
- Internships trainee teachers do in secondary schools
- CET's design and the possibility of having HE and secondary school teachers involved in their delivery
- HEIs open their facilities, including laboratories, to secondary schools' students
- Seminars and short training programmes promoted by HEIs in secondary schools (upon request)

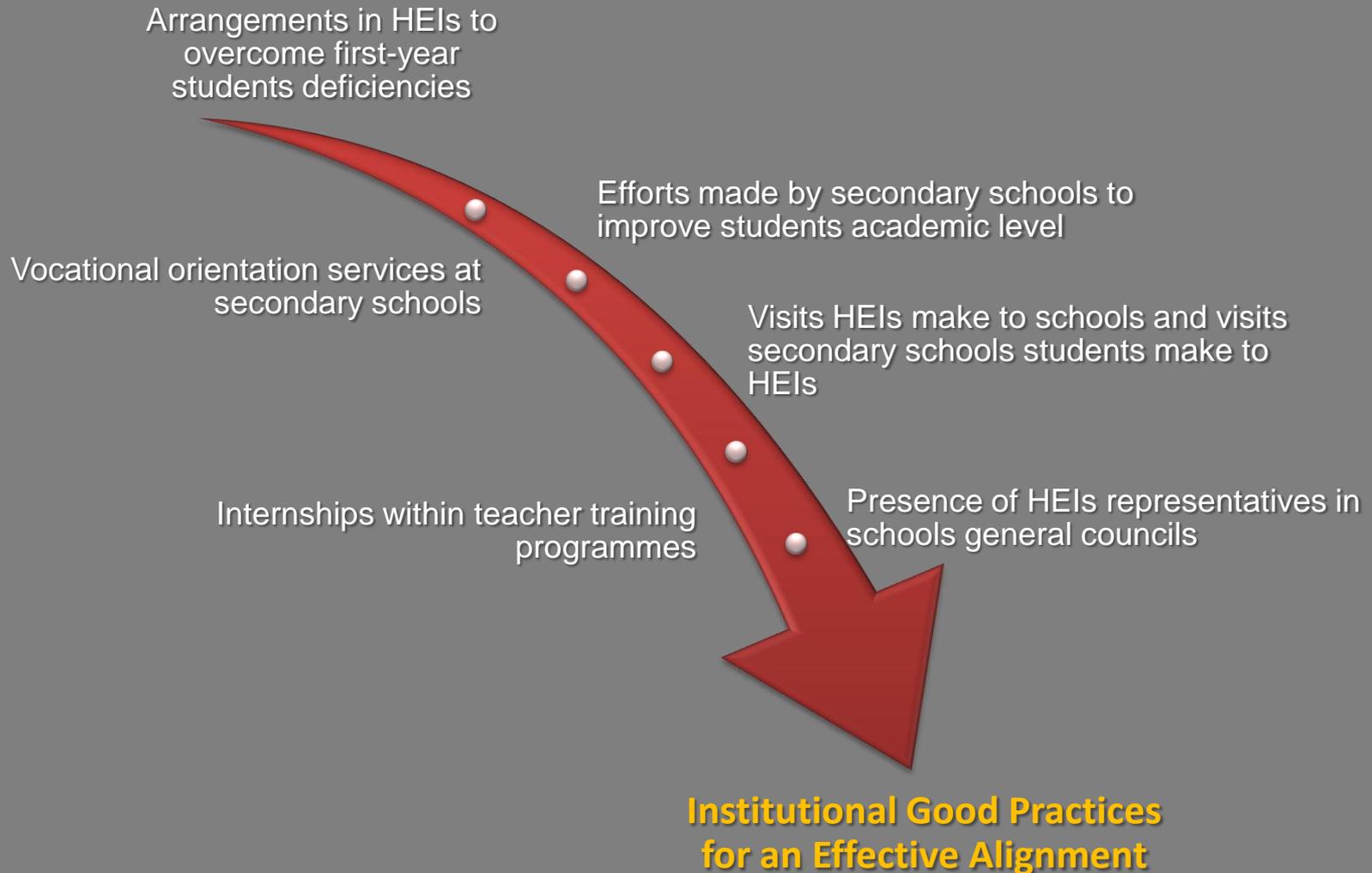
Main Results – Achieving a More Effective Alignment

- A **better alignment should be promoted**, as a way to **improve** the **preparation** of students as future graduates
- Nowadays there is a **gap** between both sectors, where there should be a **continuum**
- HEIs should be the ones more interested in promoting the continuum, because they are the ones taking the students on board
- The **Ministry of Education and Science** should be the entity to formally promote the alignment (especially in terms of curricular content)
- Debates about the topic should be promoted in the **CNE** and the **Council of Schools**
- Maybe the **financial crisis** will contribute to this articulation...

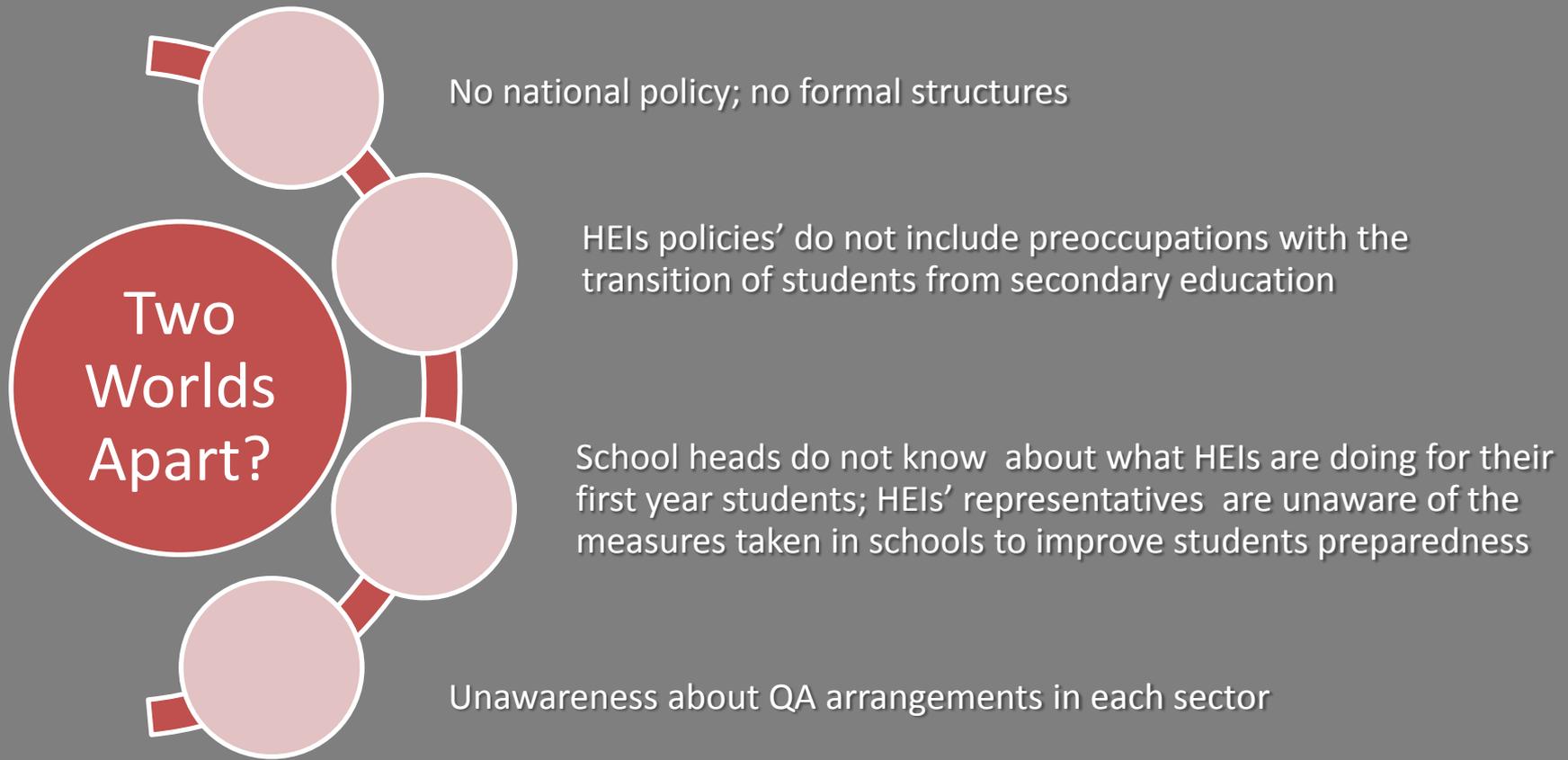
Main Results



Main Results



Concluding Remarks



Concluding Remarks

Institutional Managers

- Create a group inside the HEI to articulate with secondary education (curricular content)
- Give feedback to secondary schools and the Ministry on students' deficiencies when entering HE
- Proactive behaviour regarding access to HE

School Heads

- Create a group inside the school to articulate with HEIs (especially the closer ones)
- Promote the participation in programmes and activities developed by HEIs

Policy Makers

- Create a forum where communication and articulation between each sector is promoted
- Promote the design of curricular contents for secondary education in line with HE's needs

Concluding Remarks

“they [at secondary schools] need to know what their students come to do here and we [at HEIs] need to know what they are doing there, so we can build bridges” (Arts School Dean)