

*A proactive management model for the
constructive alignment of educational quality
and student satisfaction*

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The context

Students

- Changing expectations
- Told to “shop around” for best value for their money
- Focus on employability and the end “product”

Universities

- Emergence of non-traditional players
- Marketization
- Rankings and indicators as means to differentiate

Current policy and quality discourse in higher education

Quality concept

- Flux of definitions and models for quality management
- Failure to take a realistic stance in the debate “student as customer” and “top-down” quality perspective

Quality Management

- Primarily focusing on risk-mitigation
- Overconcentration on student satisfaction
- Reactive rather than proactive

Key challenge ahead

- Increasing focus on educational quality (e.g. TEF)
- Intensification of competition in HE sector (i.e. private providers)
- Student satisfaction metrics to drive prospective students' decision making
- Pressures to improve retention and cost effectiveness

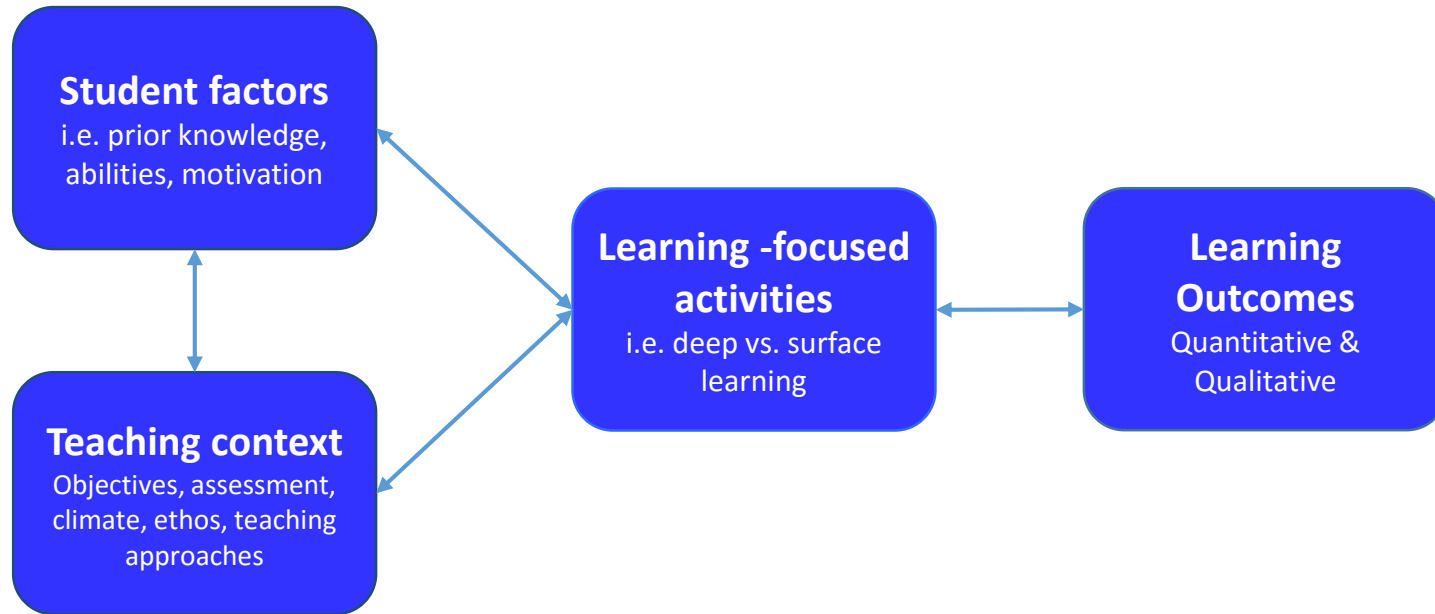
How to balance between Educational quality (retention, attainment) and Service quality (student satisfaction) ?

Student satisfaction



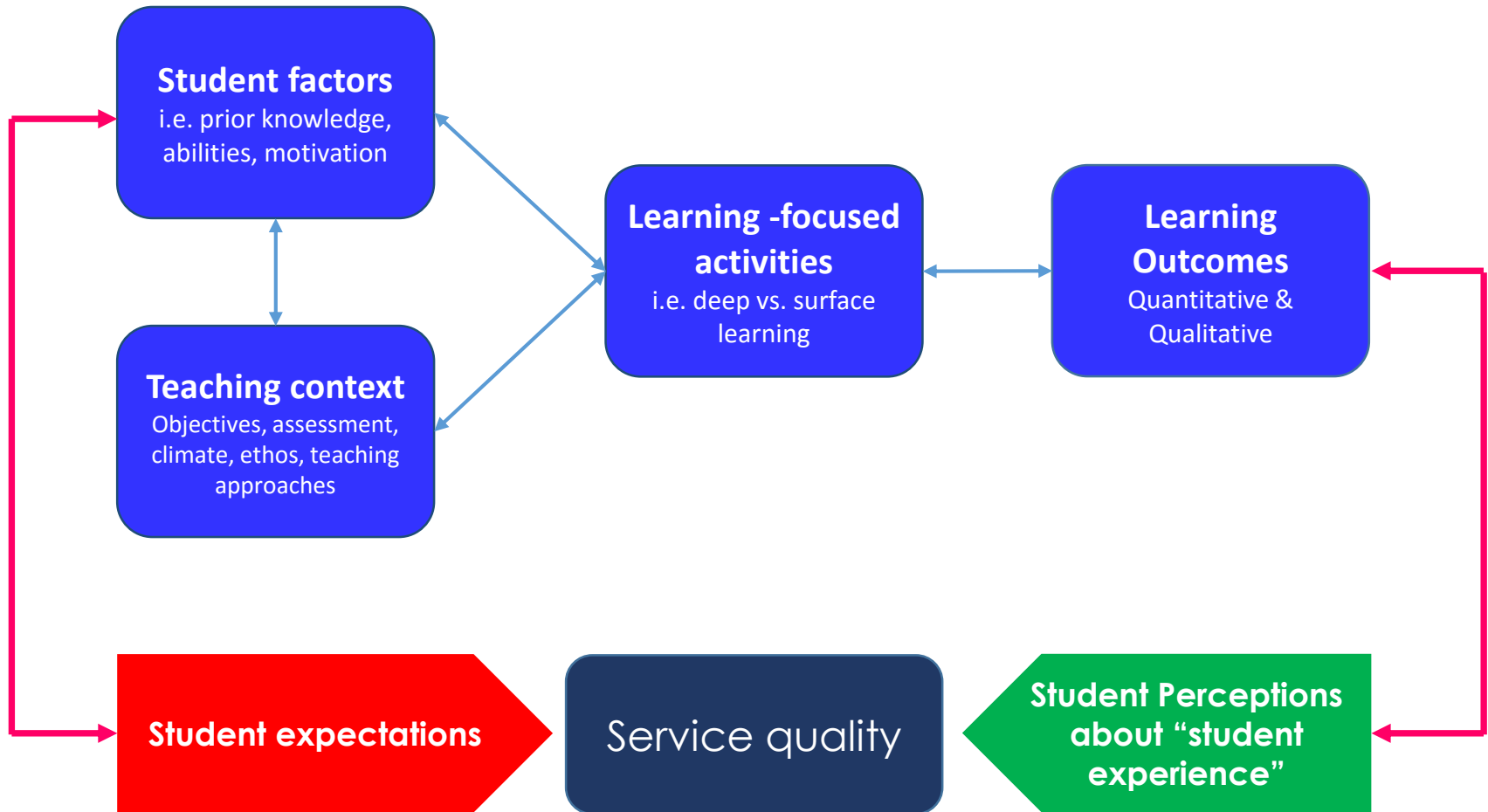
(Gronroos, 1990)

Educational quality



(Biggs, 1989)

Educational and service quality are closely linked



(Tsiligiris, 2015)

Research findings: student expectations and perceptions

- Students perceive differently quality in higher education. However, the majority of students consider educational quality as the prime element of quality in higher education.
- Student expectations and perceptions about quality are influenced by contextual dynamics (i.e. family, previous education experience, word of mouth, social capital).
- Students tend to associate direct contribution in the payment of fees with expectation for passive role in the learning process.
- The way students perceive the role and purpose of higher education influences their expectations and perceptions about educational quality.

All students are different

“

All students are different, and they are becoming more different.

For part-time postgraduates attending classes on wet winter evenings, the quality of teaching (and learning from their peers) is everything.

For full-time young undergraduates, what matters is the quality of "student life", in which formal academic work may rank alarmingly low.”

Sir Peter Scott (2014)

Different students have different expectations and perceptions !

Key attributes of the current approach

1) **Service quality is seen as important but not linked to educational quality**

Two extreme poles in this:

- Student satisfaction is critical in a “value for money” HE world
- Students should inevitably suffer in their journey to knowledge; so student satisfaction is irrelevant.

Any attempts to manage student satisfaction are concerned, primarily, with the services peripheral to teaching & learning

Key attributes of the current approach

2) Retrospective approach in managing final learning outcomes

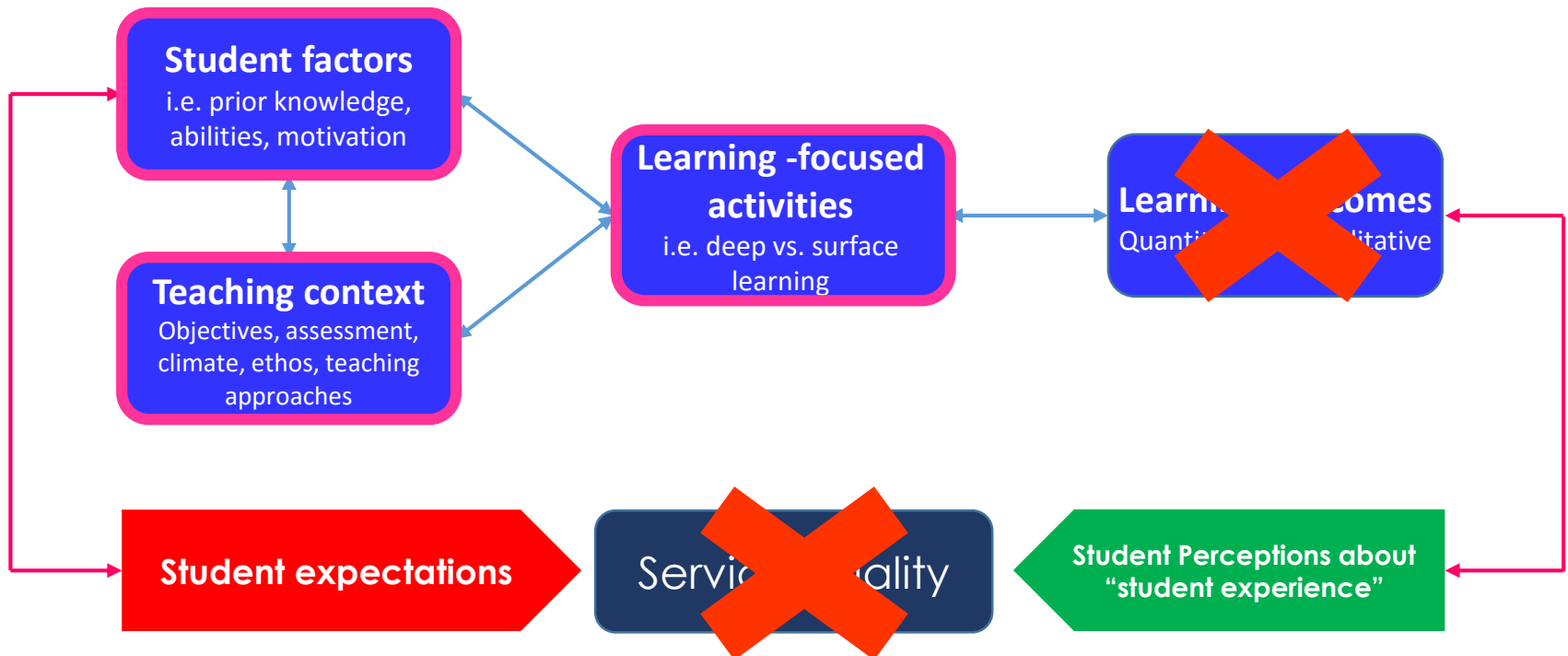
- Over-reliance on student satisfaction surveys
- End-of-cycle focused quality management system
- The relationships between dimensions assumed as static
- Individual student characteristics ignored

We react on issues that concern a previous cohort and reinforce solutions/actions on a different cohort, which may have different characteristics/needs

Shortcomings of the current approach

Individual student presage factors are ignored or assumed to be the same across different cohorts

Student expectations and perceptions about quality in higher education, both as term and as set of desired outcomes, are ignored or assumed to be fixed/irrelevant



Existing efforts and challenges to address

Meeting student expectations

BUT !

- What about the expectations we have from students ?
- Are students aware of what is “excellent teaching” ?
- Are students able to conduct an unbiased evaluation once they are actively involved in the process, and foremost, and outcomes of assessment ?

Personalised student experience

BUT !

- Sidelined or segregated attempts which concentrate on peripheral to teaching activities
- Long programme review cycles hindering contextualization
- Lack of a conceptual framework and of a “holistic” approach

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Emerging conceptual framework: educational quality

Contextual Factors

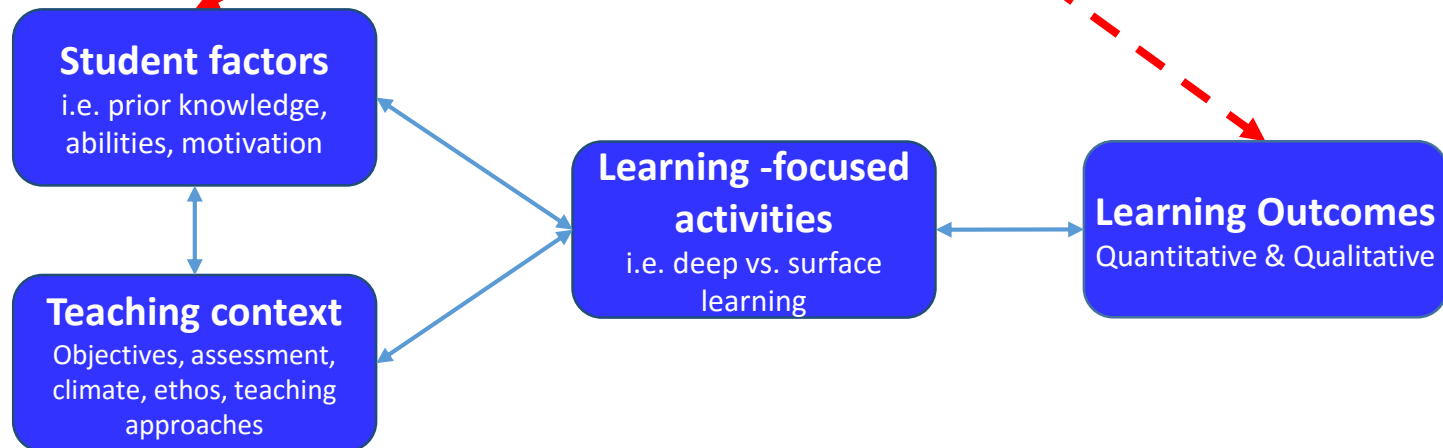
- Role of family
- Employment considerations
- Social capital / word of mouth
- Impact of media/ datasets

Student Presage Factors

- Abilities
- Previous education experience
- Prior Knowledge

Each student comes with a unique set of **abilities** and **expectations** about teaching and learning

Justification for the need take a proactive approach



Emerging conceptual framework: service quality

Contextual Factors

- Role of family
- Employment considerations
- Social capital / word of mouth
- Impact of media/datasets



Student Presage Factors

- Abilities
- Previous education experience
- Prior Knowledge



Each student comes with a unique set **expectations** and **perceptions** about the role of higher education and the meaning of quality

Justification for the need take a proactive approach

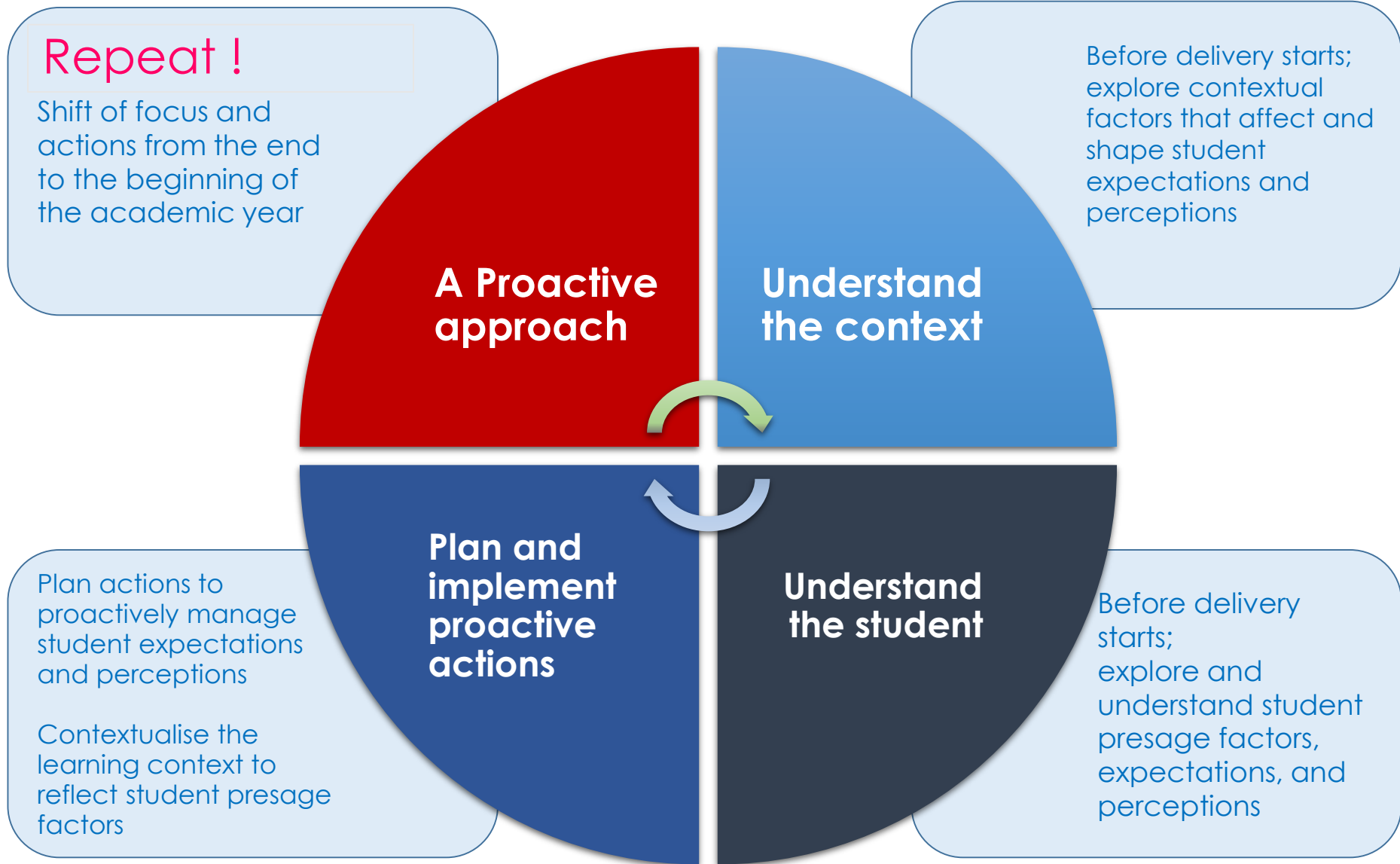
Student expectations

Service quality

Student Perceptions
about "student
experience"



A proactive model



An example: contextualise the learning context to reflect student presage factors

Before delivery

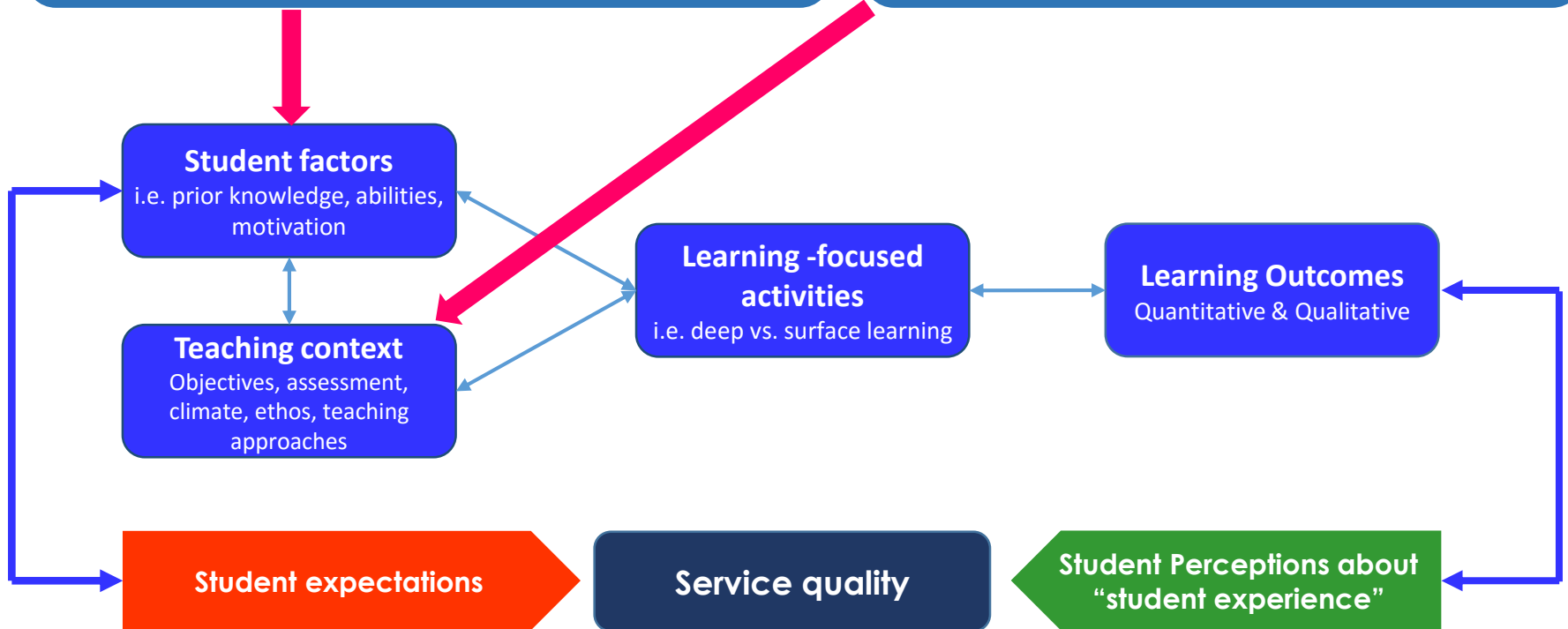
Identify student presage factors

Actions to intervene on presage factors

1. Targeted induction
2. Personalised learning pathways in VLE
3. On-going induction during year 1

Actions to contextualize the teaching context

1. Programme content
2. Tweak assessment
3. Explore language issues



An example: proactively manage student expectations and perceptions

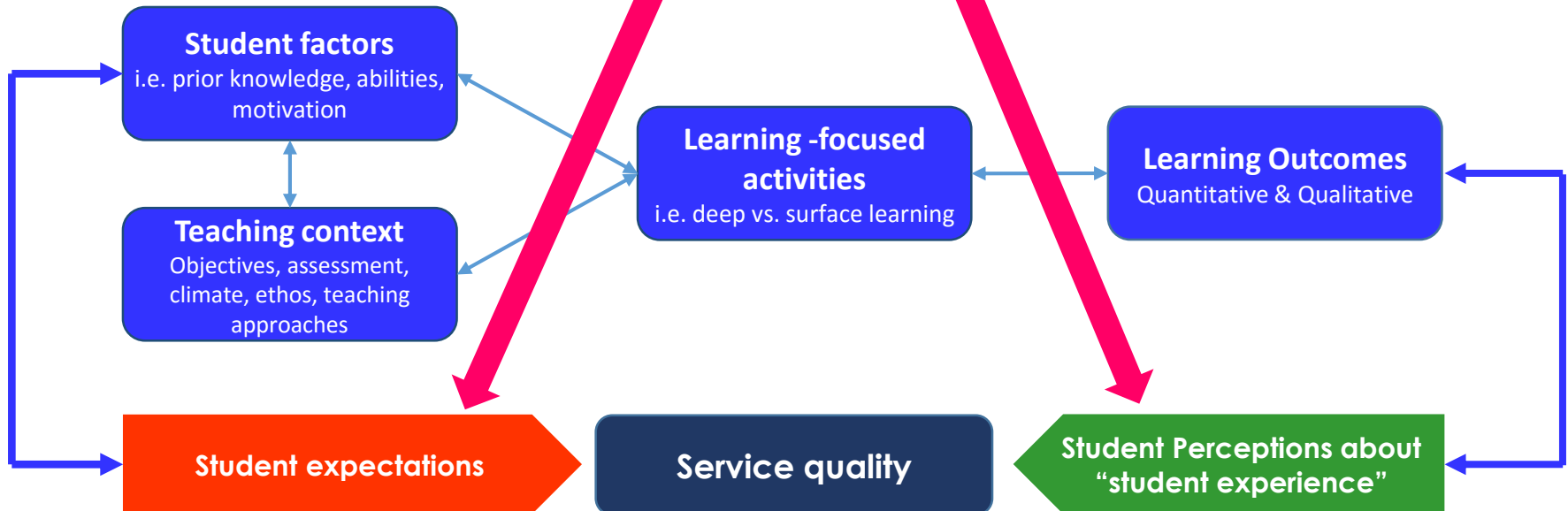
Before delivery

Identify student expectations and perceptions



Actions to manage expectations and perceptions

1. Pre-arrival surveys and self-study units
2. Personalised induction
3. Integrate in applicant selection process (e.g. MOOC)



Practical applications

- **Pre-arrival student survey to identify student presage factors and expectations/perceptions on quality**
 - Entry routes of students
 - Key competencies
 - Preferences of learning styles
 - How they view their role as students
 - How they consider the term “quality” in higher education

- **Targeted and extended induction to adjust (set) student expectations about core aspects of teaching and learning**
 - What is the learning and teaching model
 - What are the requirements (expectations set by the institution) for student engagement/participation
 - What are the core aspects of quality teaching and learning in HE
 - What is meant by critical thinking in higher education context
 - What are the key attributes of an independent learner

Practical applications

- **A MOOC (self-study set of units) to complement selection process of applicants – something maybe for UCAS ?**
 - What are the key characteristics of the UK higher education system/model
 - What is the role of students in the educational process
 - What is (and not !) “value for money”
 - Deep vs. surface learning
 - Purpose and scope of higher education
 - Quality in higher education
- **Personalised pathways in VLE for continuous development of core study skills**
 - Critical argument
 - Independent learning
 - Referencing
- **Enable shorter programme review cycle to accommodate programme contextualization requirements**
 - Maybe setup an expedited review route ?



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Thanks !

Stay in touch

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