“Employability and Transformative Learning”

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December 2010

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Introduction

1. Context:
   - knowledge society and Bologna
2. What is employability?
3. Attributes
4. Employability development
   - Framework and pedagogy
5. Work experience
6. Critical transformative graduate

1 Knowledge society

- Shift from humanist to economic utilitarian view of higher education
- Relevance of higher education

1 'Official' encouragement

- It is extremely important that students develop valuable transferable skills as part of their university experience…

Future Fit

- The UK Commission wants to see…every school, college, university and training provider to treat the employability of their learners as part of their core business. We want a unified and coherent policy, assessment and funding framework that empowers teaching and training professionals to develop employability.

Employability Challenge 2009 UK Commission for Employment and Skills

1 NUS website (£100 prize)

- "Are you worried you'll struggle to get a job….Do you know what businesses really look for when they employ graduates?
- According to CBI, businesses value skills, such as problem solving and communication, but CBI would like to know if students have had the opportunity to develop them at university.
- We are asking students to fill in a short survey to tell us what they know and think about employability skills and whether or not they have received support from their institution to develop such skills."

1 Bologna (Bled, Slovenia, 2004)

- Employability is a major objective towards the establishment of EHEA
- Employability takes different emphasis in different programmes.
- Internships: recommended for BA/MA
- Full advantage should be taken of the flexibility for employability provided through the new two-cycle structure.
- Work needed with employers re BA
- Professional/academic distinction unhelpful

1 Bologna (Swansea, Wales, 2006)

- Embedding skills in the curriculum is a key element of the Bologna reforms
- HEIs should assist students to recognise and articulate the employability skills developed within the curriculum and in other activities at all three cycles
  - linked to the Dublin Descriptors/national qualification frameworks
- HEIs should also ensure that students receive information and advice on all sectors of the labour market, together with career management skills.

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1 Bologna

- Initially, Bologna was about mobility and the idea of employability was problematic
- Now seen as important in the three-cycle system: employer understanding of Bachelor degree
- Employability is still linked to mobility

2 Bologna definition

- There are many definitions of employability. For the purpose of the Bologna Follow-up Group, employability is defined as **the ability to gain initial employment, to maintain employment, and to be able to move around within the labour market.**

The official Bologna Process website July 2007–June 2010

2 ESECT definition

Employability: A set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation.

[whether or not that is paid employment]

2 Employability is not…

- Employability ≠ graduate employment
- It is not the same as
  - training,
  - vocationalism.

- It is about attribute development

3 Personal attributes

- intellect
- (subject) knowledge
- willingness to continue learning
- ability to find things out
- flexibility and adaptability
- risk taking
- self skills

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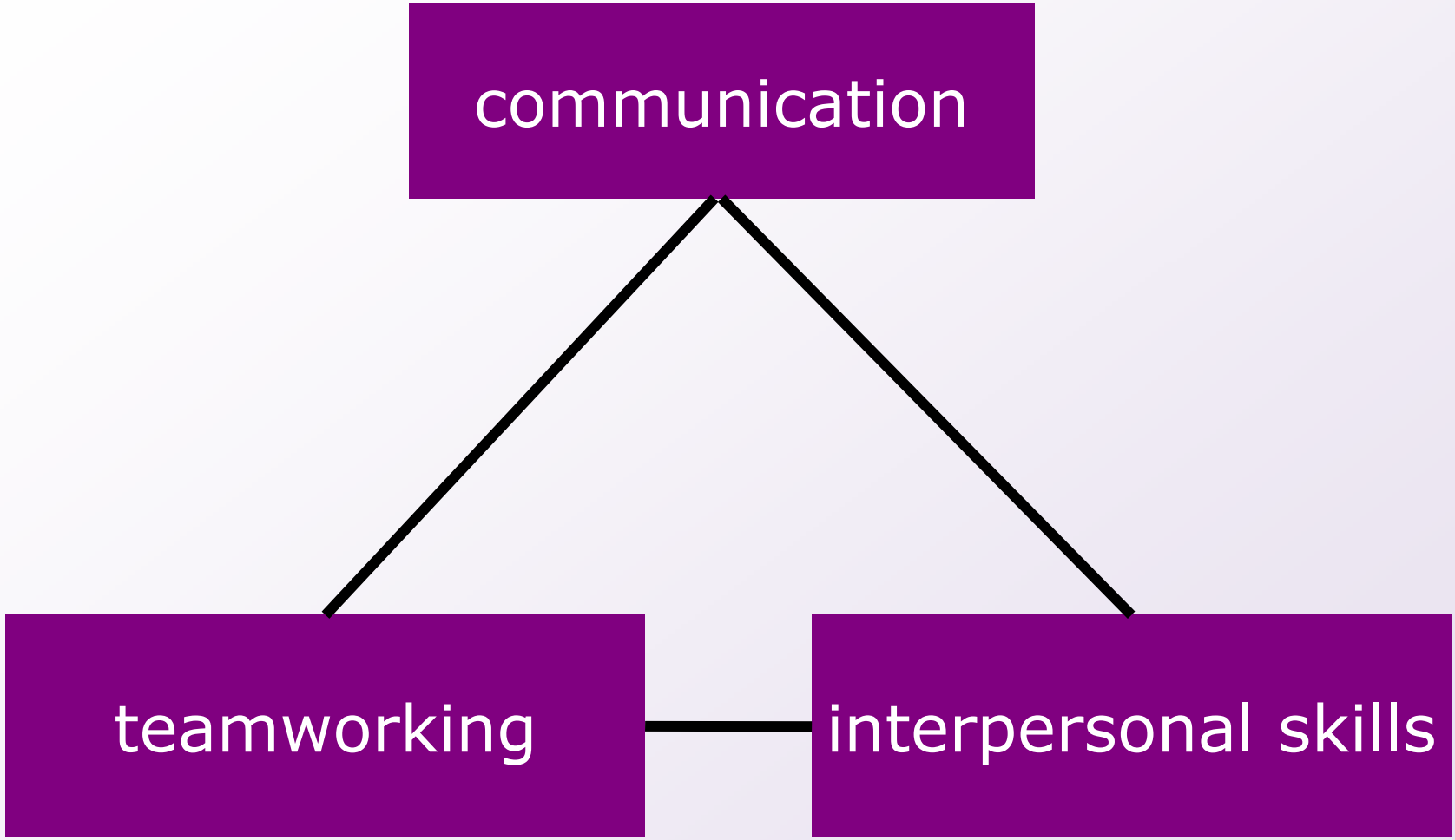
3 Interactive attributes



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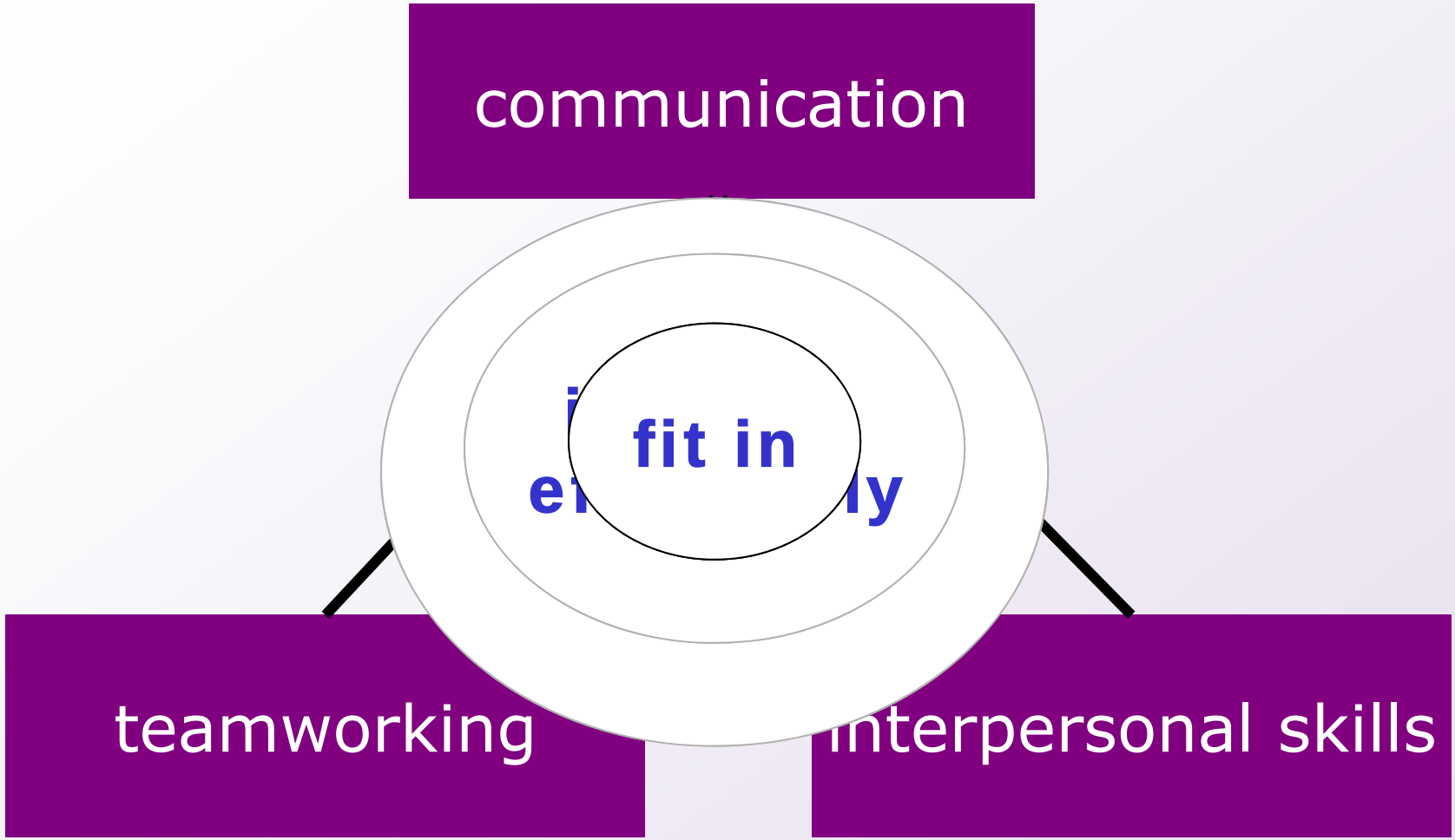
3 Interactive attributes

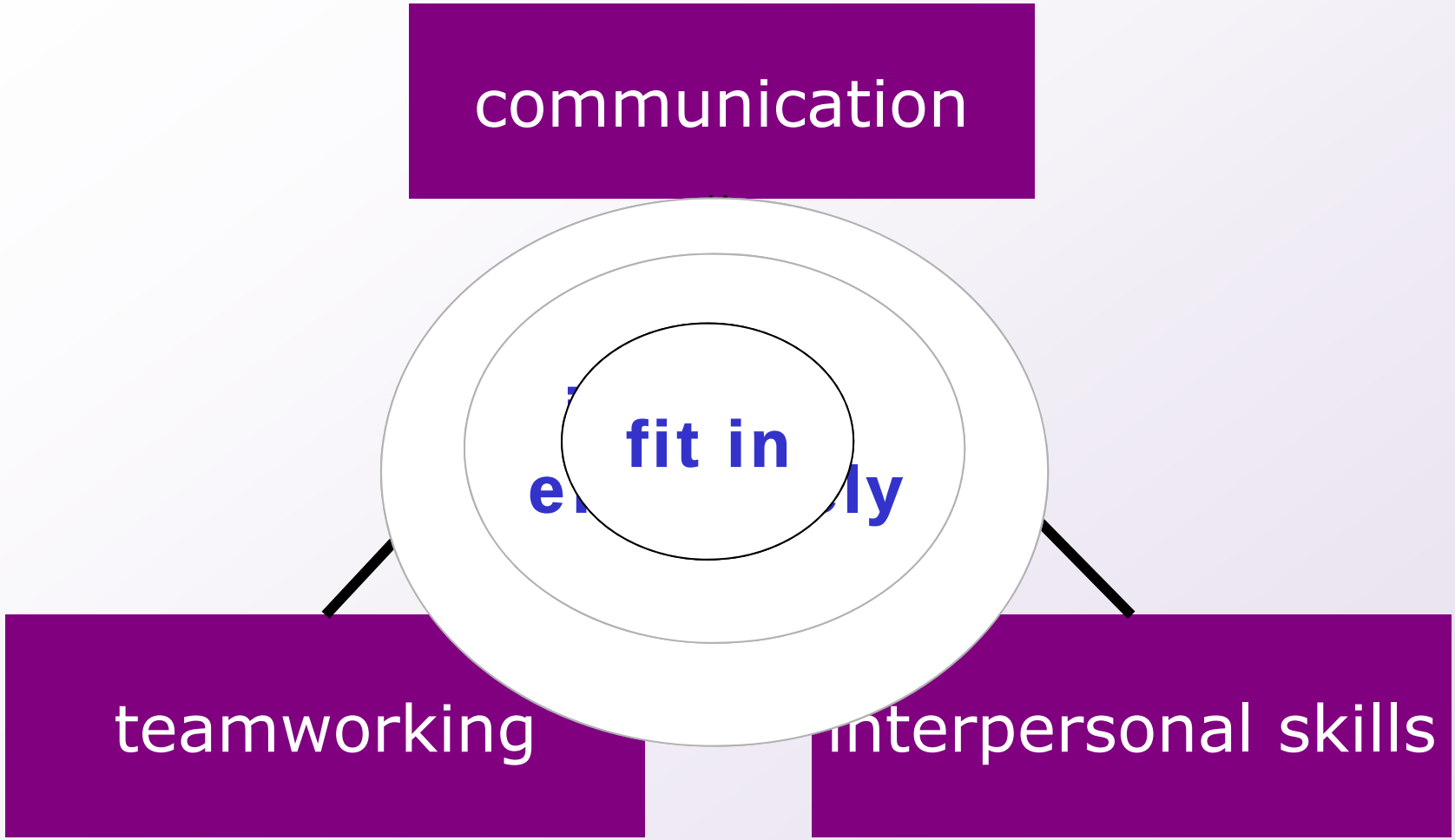


3 Fit in

‘We are looking for what we call, suitability to [our organisation], which is actually specific to our culture... I suppose that ethos would be work hard, play hard, in that order. ... But when that deal is done we will relax, we will celebrate, we will pop those champagne corks. The team will have fun, and let their hair down.’

(graduate training manager, large law firm)

3 Interactive attributes

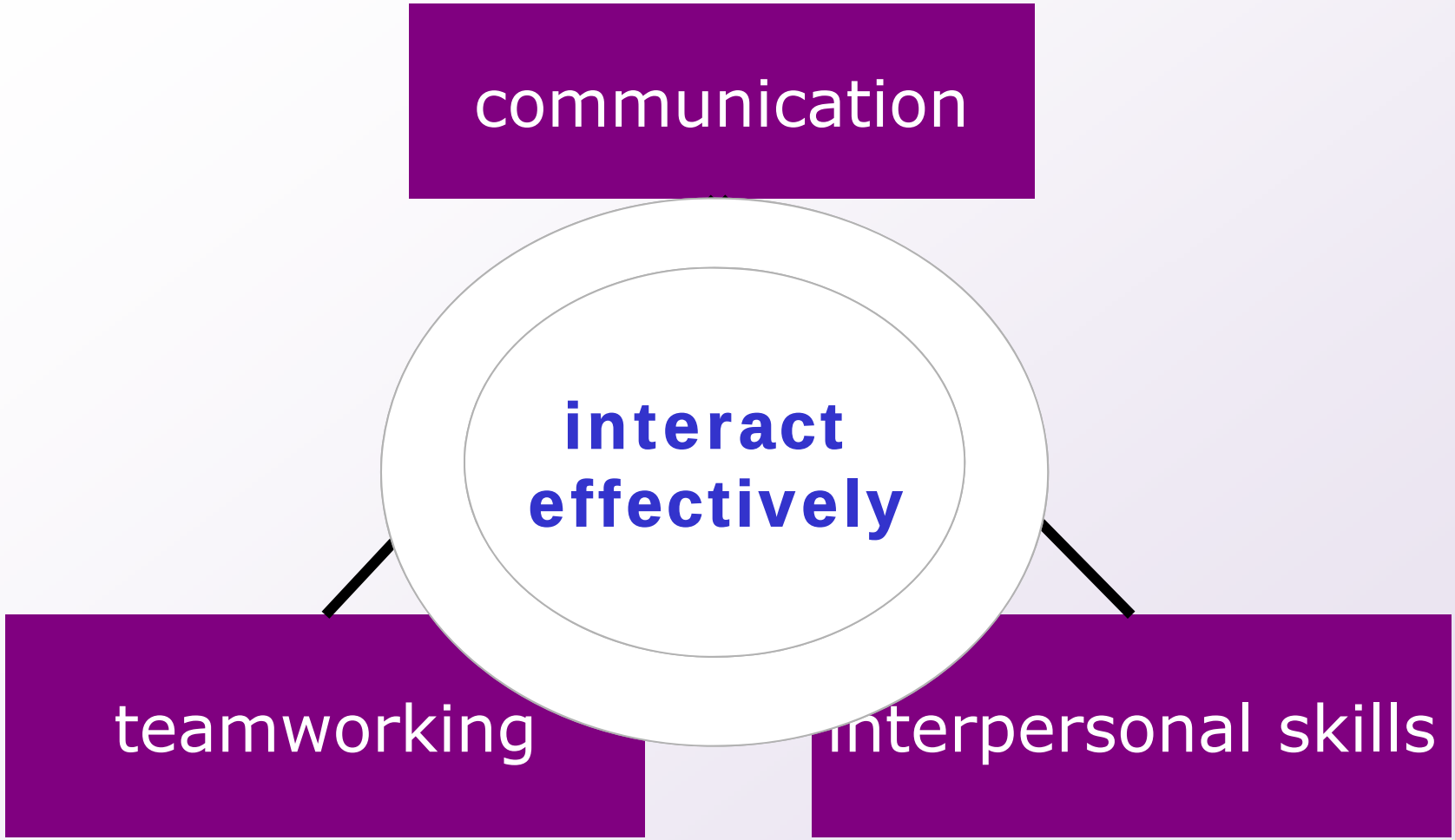


3 Interact effectively

‘Somebody who can work both in a team and on their own, is not afraid to ask questions if they do get stuck. Another aspect is providing fresh ideas. No one person has a handle on all good ideas. So not being afraid to push their own ideas forward, but also, a big thing we look for is, being able to compromise as well.’

(software development manager, small, operator-systems design firm)

3 Interactive attributes

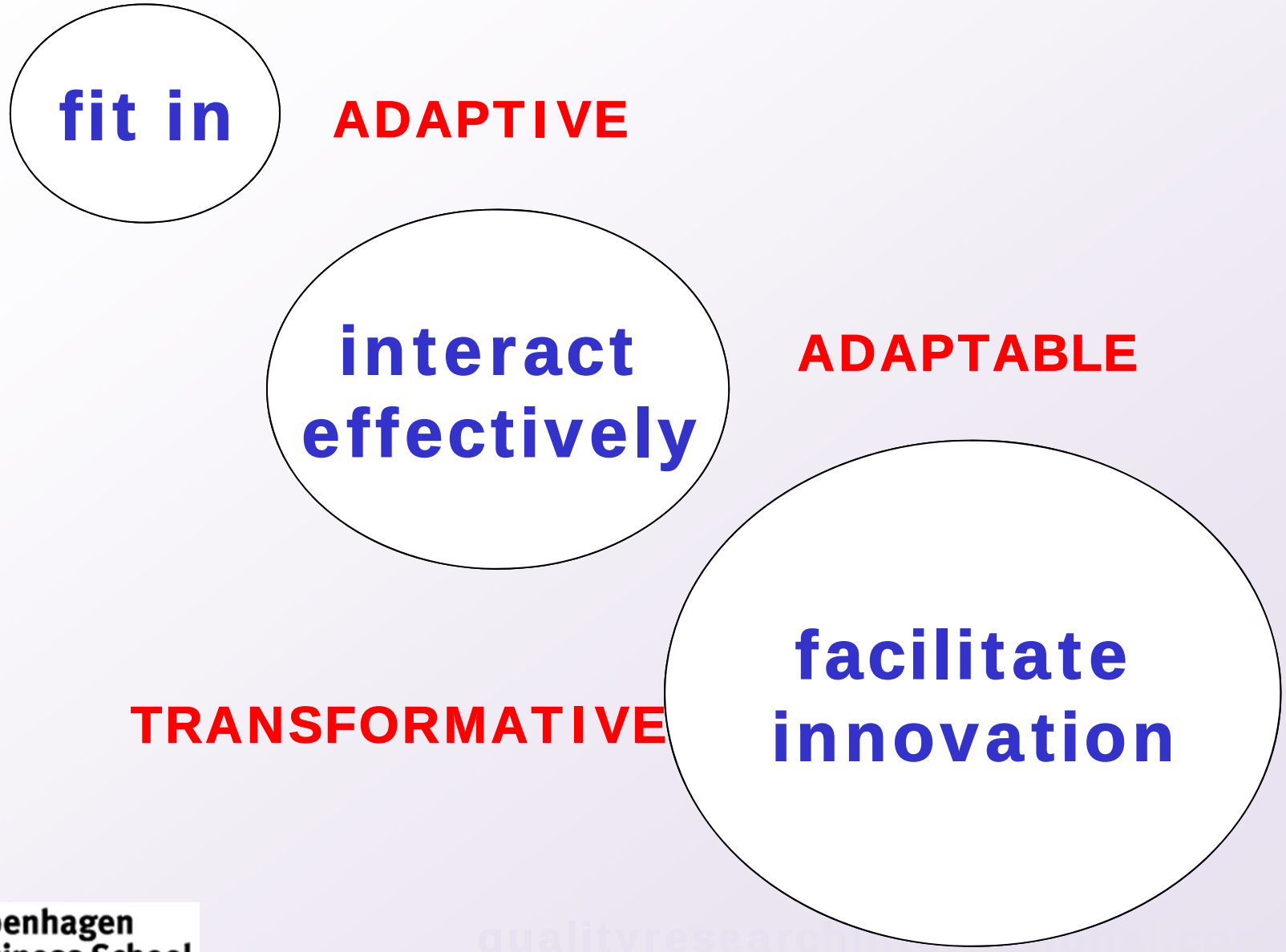


3 Facilitate innovation

‘I want leaders, I want captains of teams rather than managers of teams. I want that captain to be on the pitch and not the manager up in the stand…. I need people who have got that about them, who have the ability to work *with* people, not have people work *for* them.’

(director of operations, vehicle manufacturer)

3 Attributes for what?



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3 Enhancement continuum

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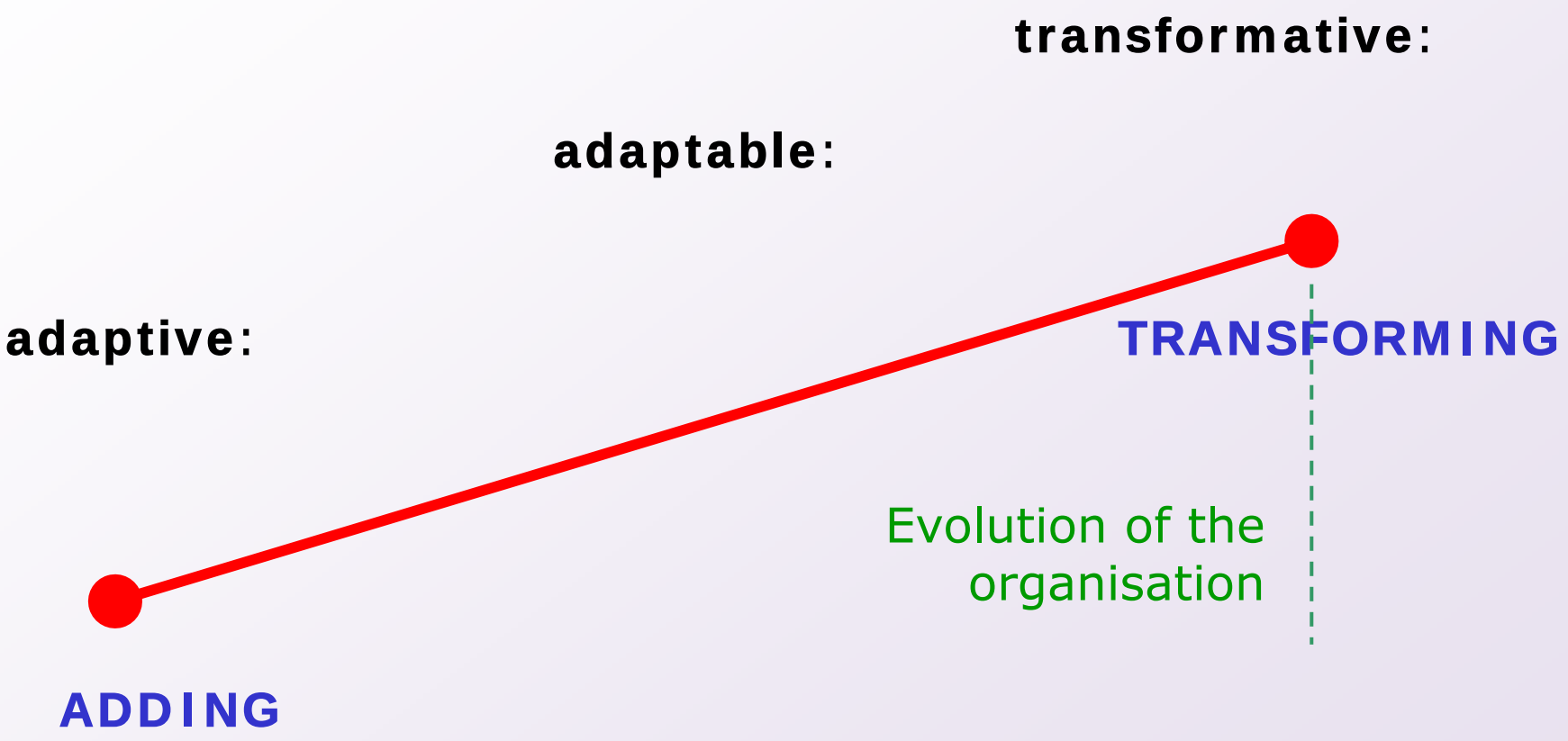
3 Enhancement continuum



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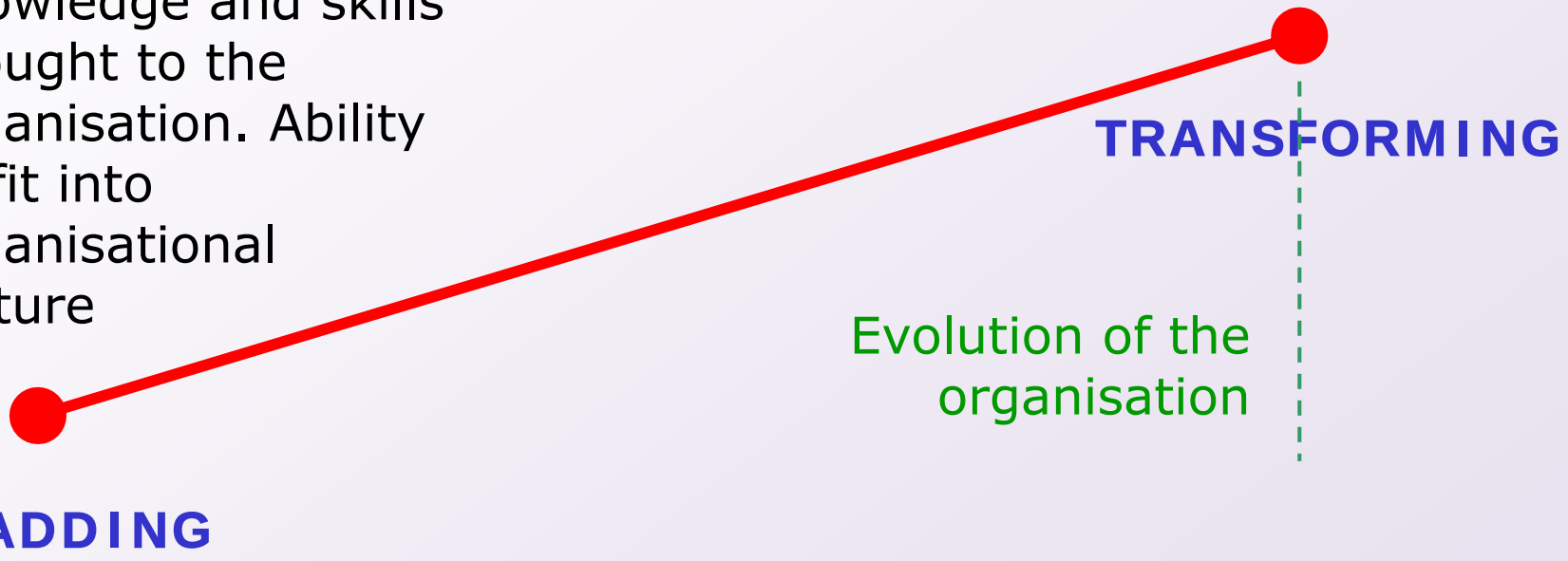
3 Enhancement continuum

transformative:

adaptive: knowledge and skills brought to the organisation. Ability to fit into organisational culture

adaptable:



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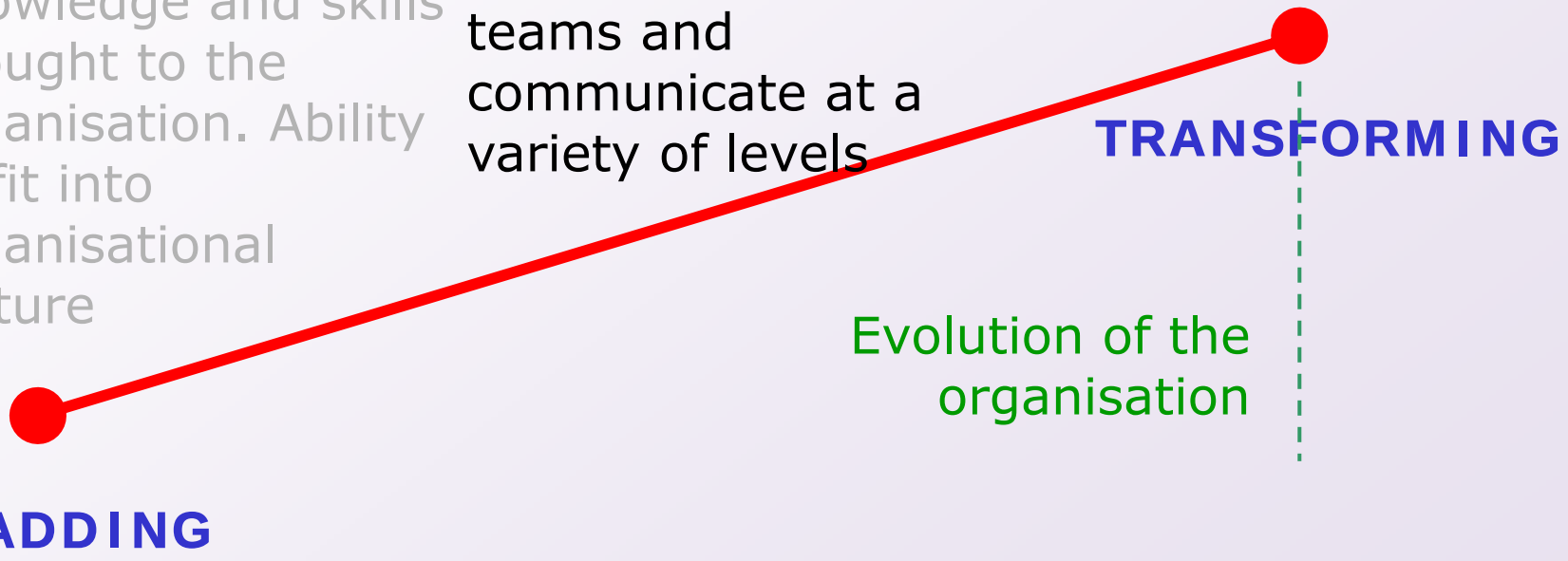
3 Enhancement continuum

adaptable: ability to learn and apply knowledge and skills in the face of change. To interact effectively work in teams and communicate at a variety of levels

transformative:

adaptive: knowledge and skills brought to the organisation. Ability to fit into organisational culture



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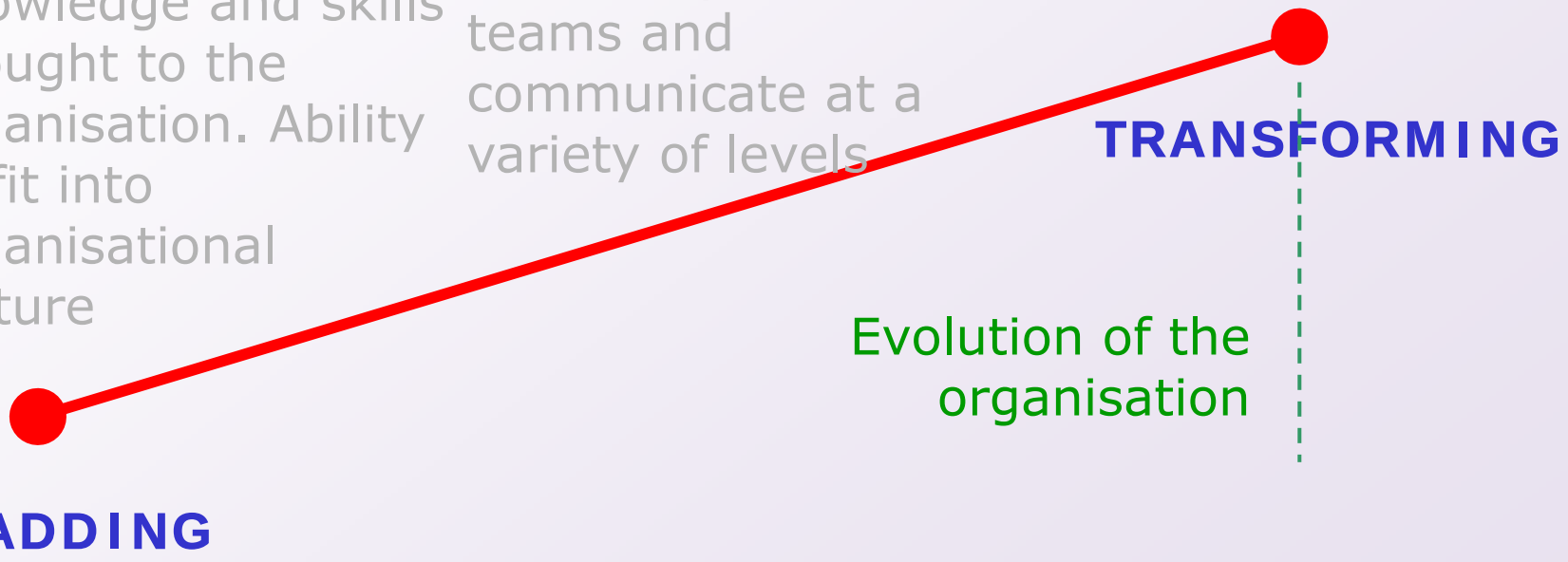
3 Enhancement continuum

adaptive: knowledge and skills brought to the organisation. Ability to fit into organisational culture

adaptable: ability to learn and apply knowledge and skills in the face of change. To interact effectively work in teams and communicate at a variety of levels

transformative: the use of 'high-level skills' to facilitate innovative teamwork



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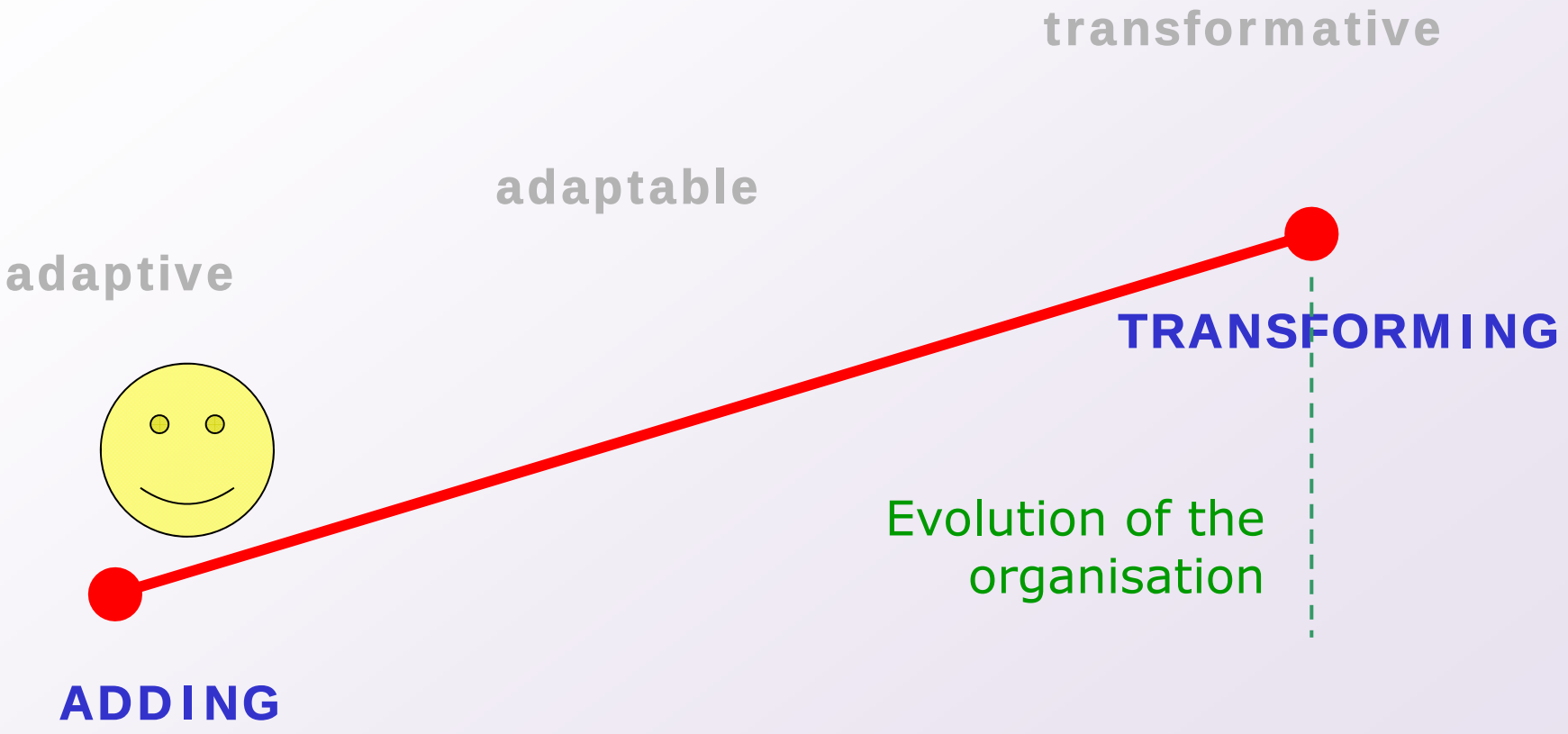

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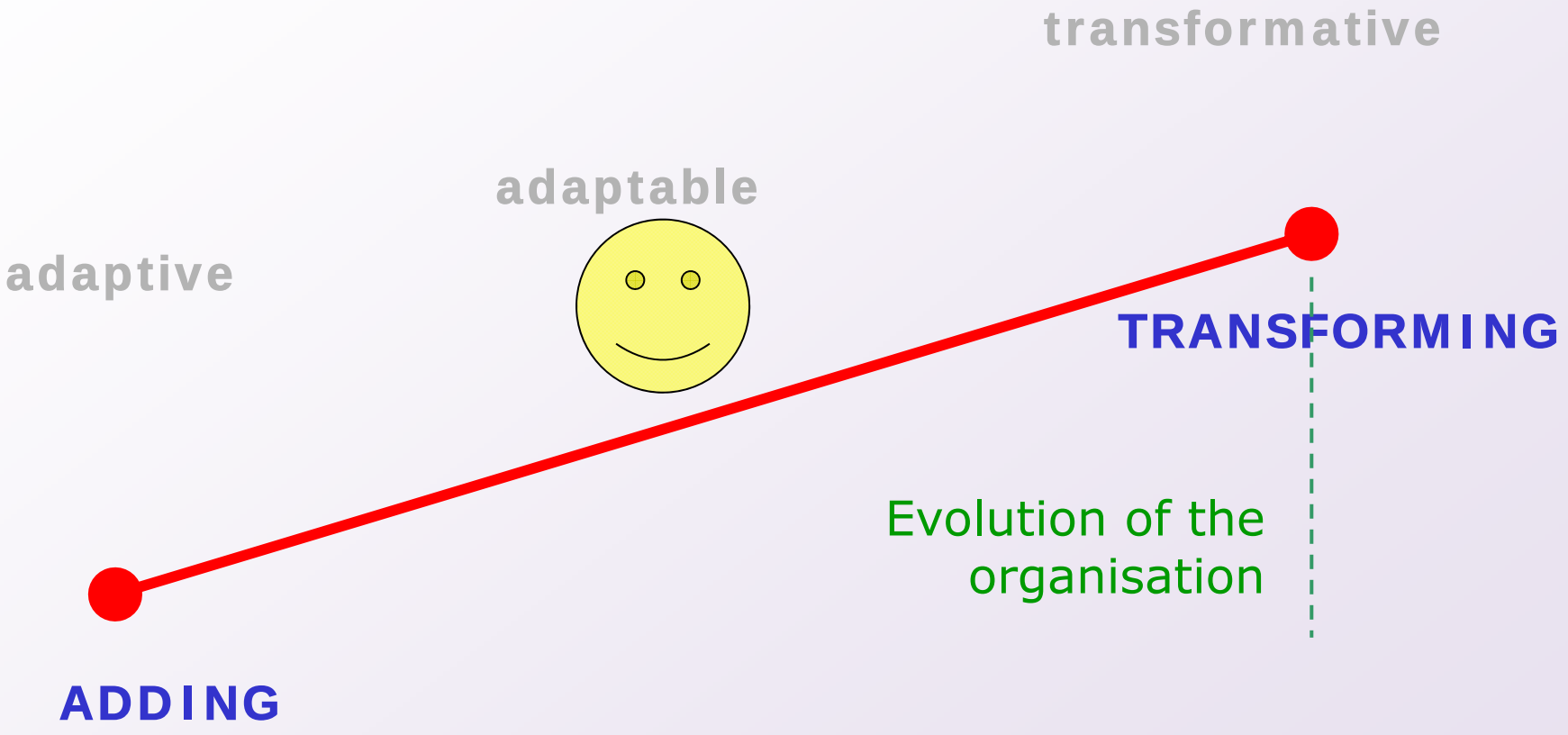

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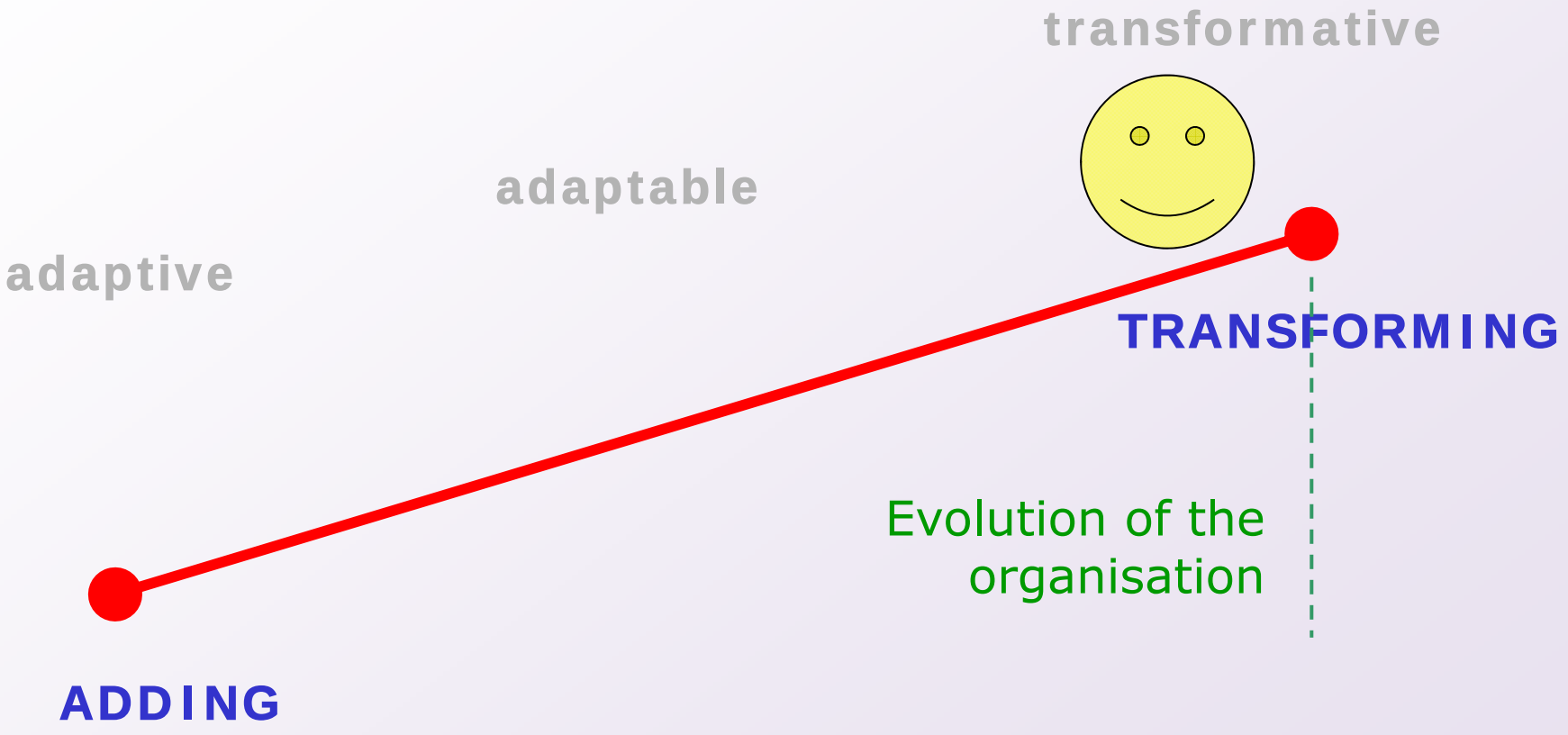

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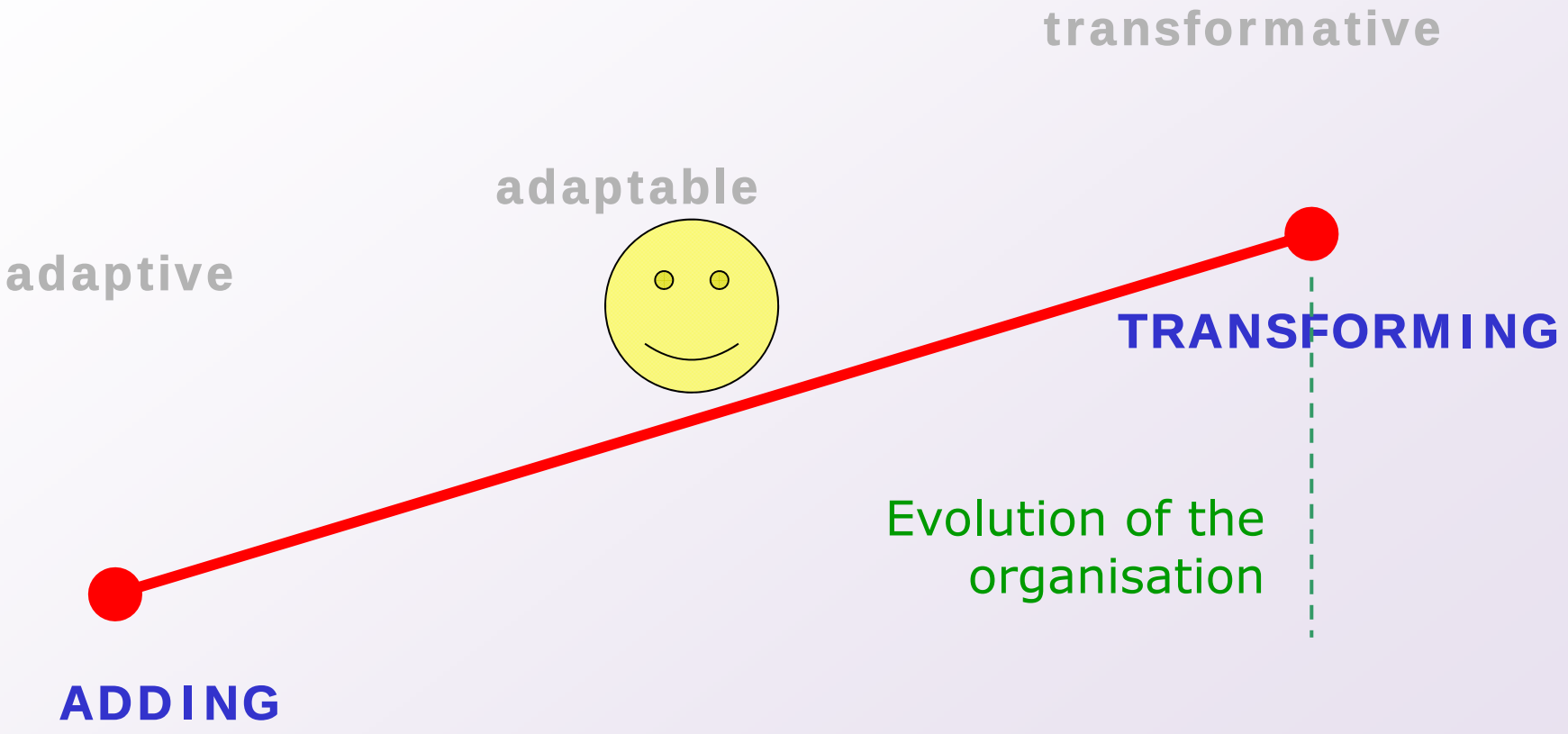

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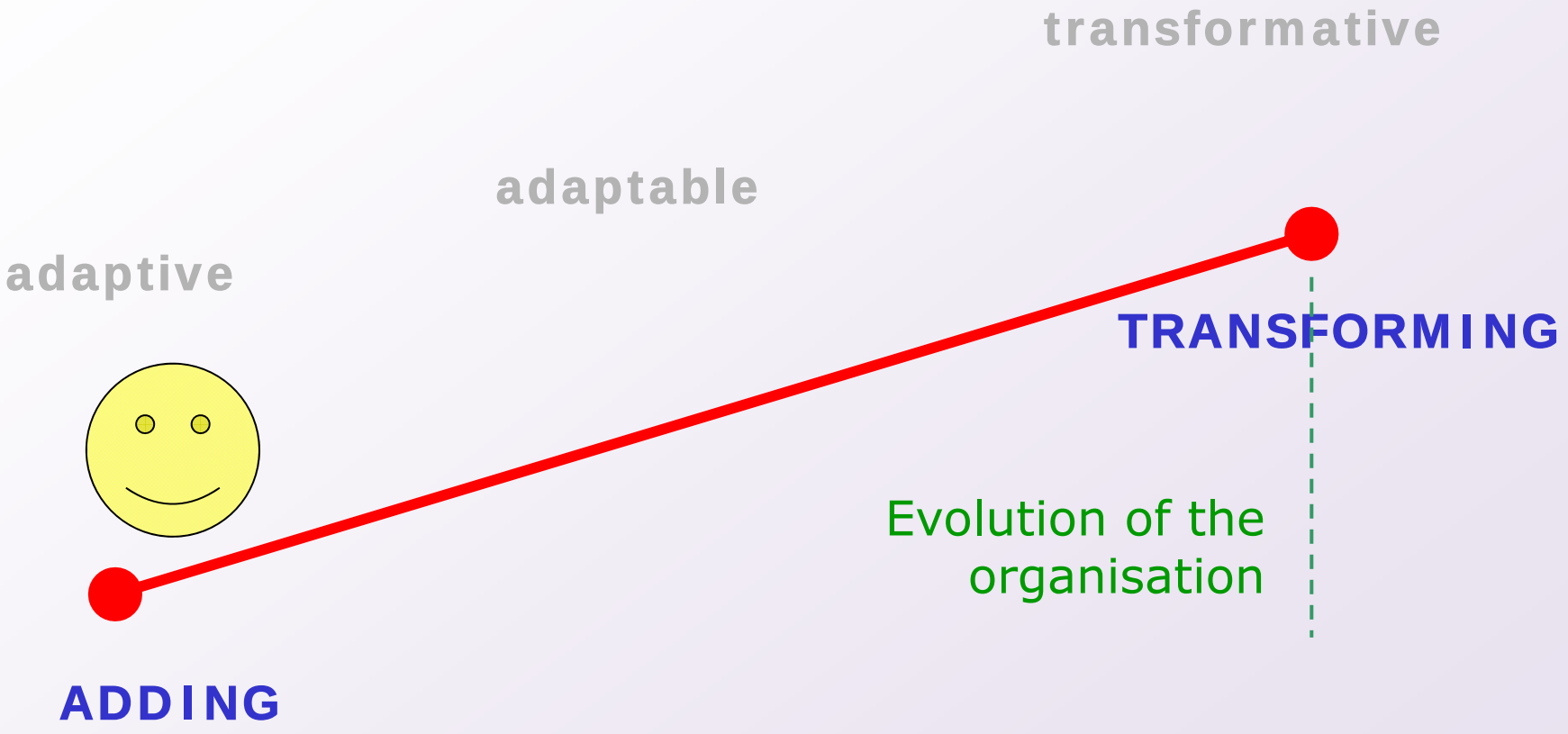

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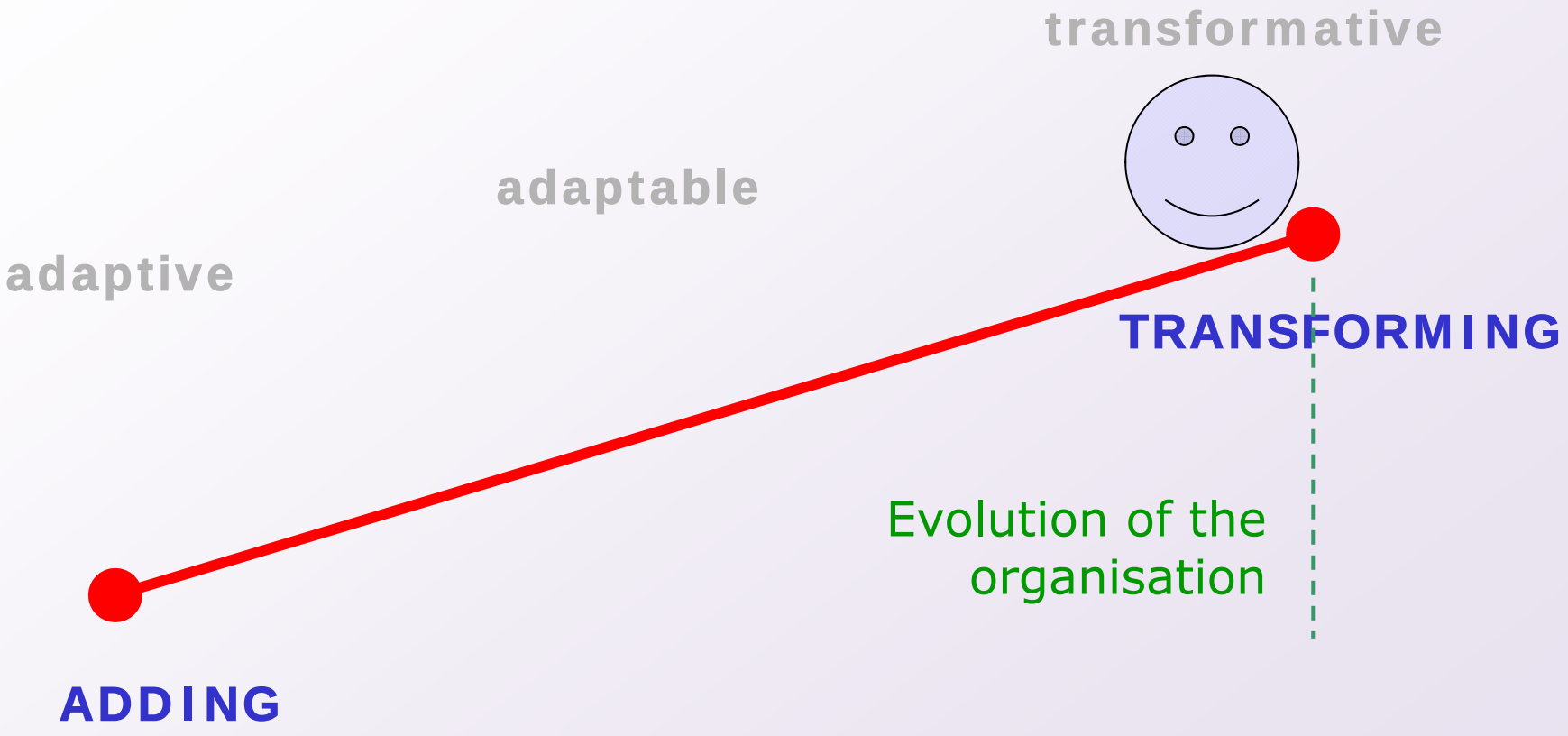

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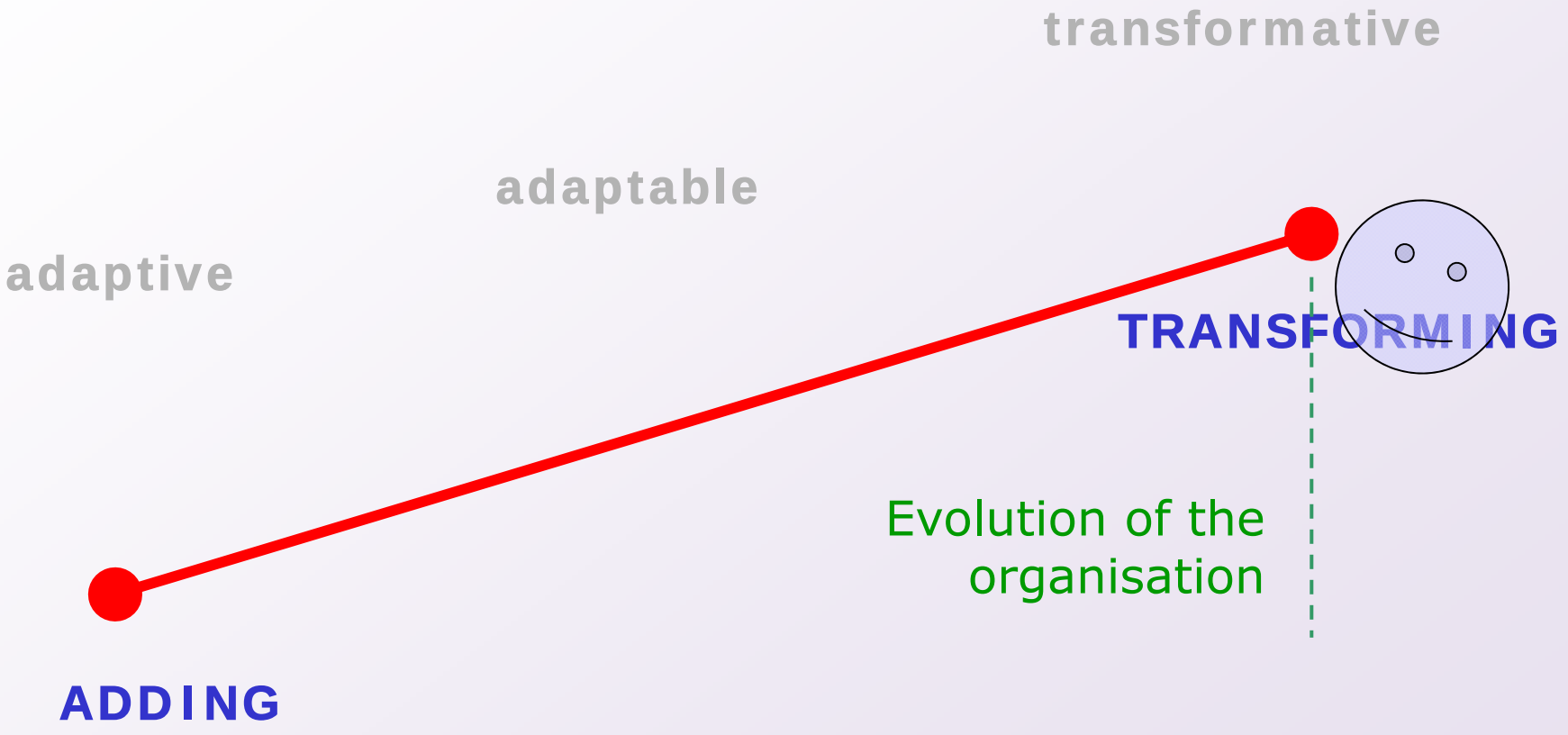

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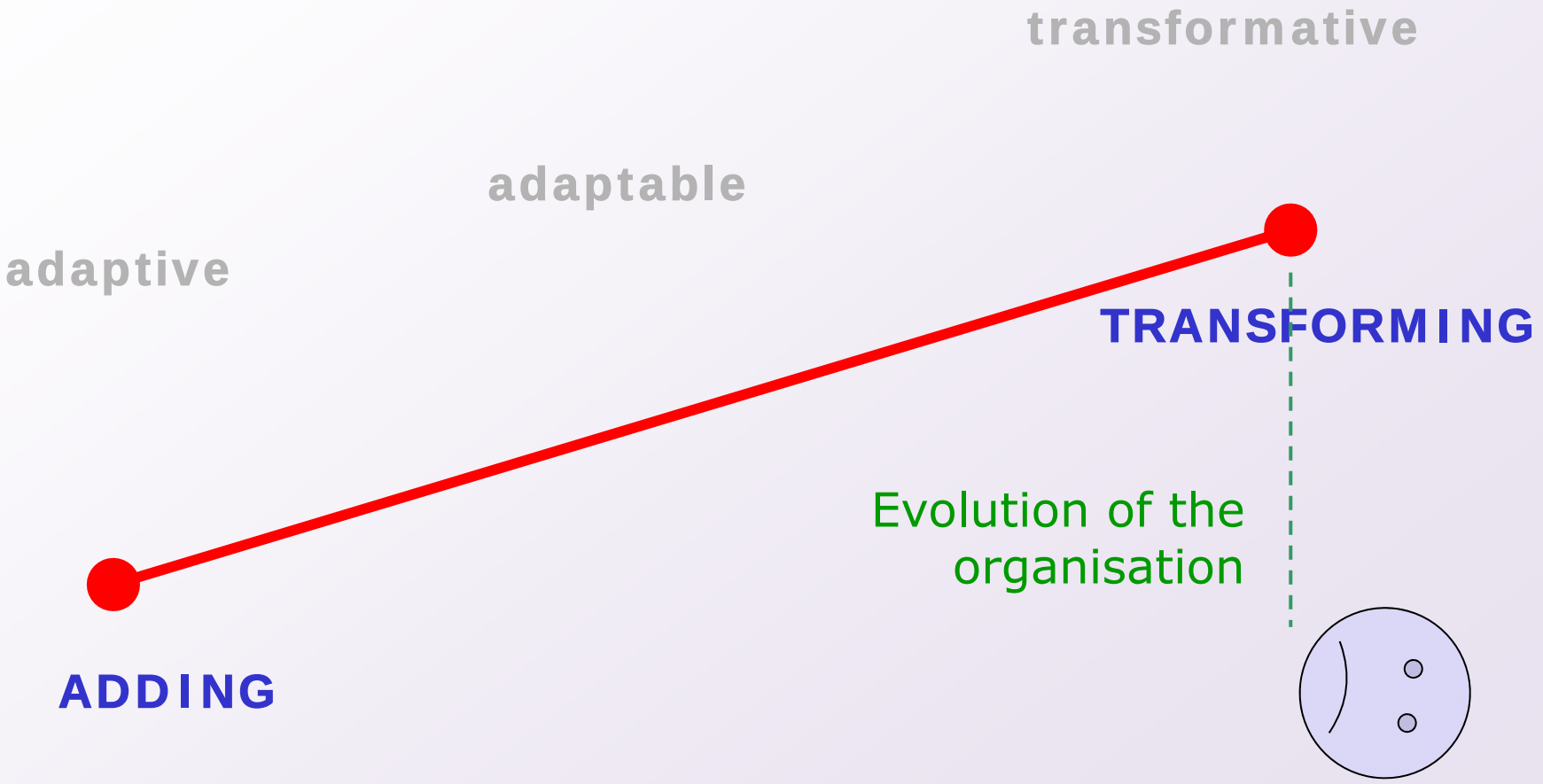

3 Not about 'training'

- About attribute development

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3 Student views…

"There is a 'business' culture at CBS, a culture which makes students from other institutions laugh sometimes, but I think it's a positive culture. It's about preparing yourself for a job when you graduate, networking etc. We think about this as a natural part of our student careers."

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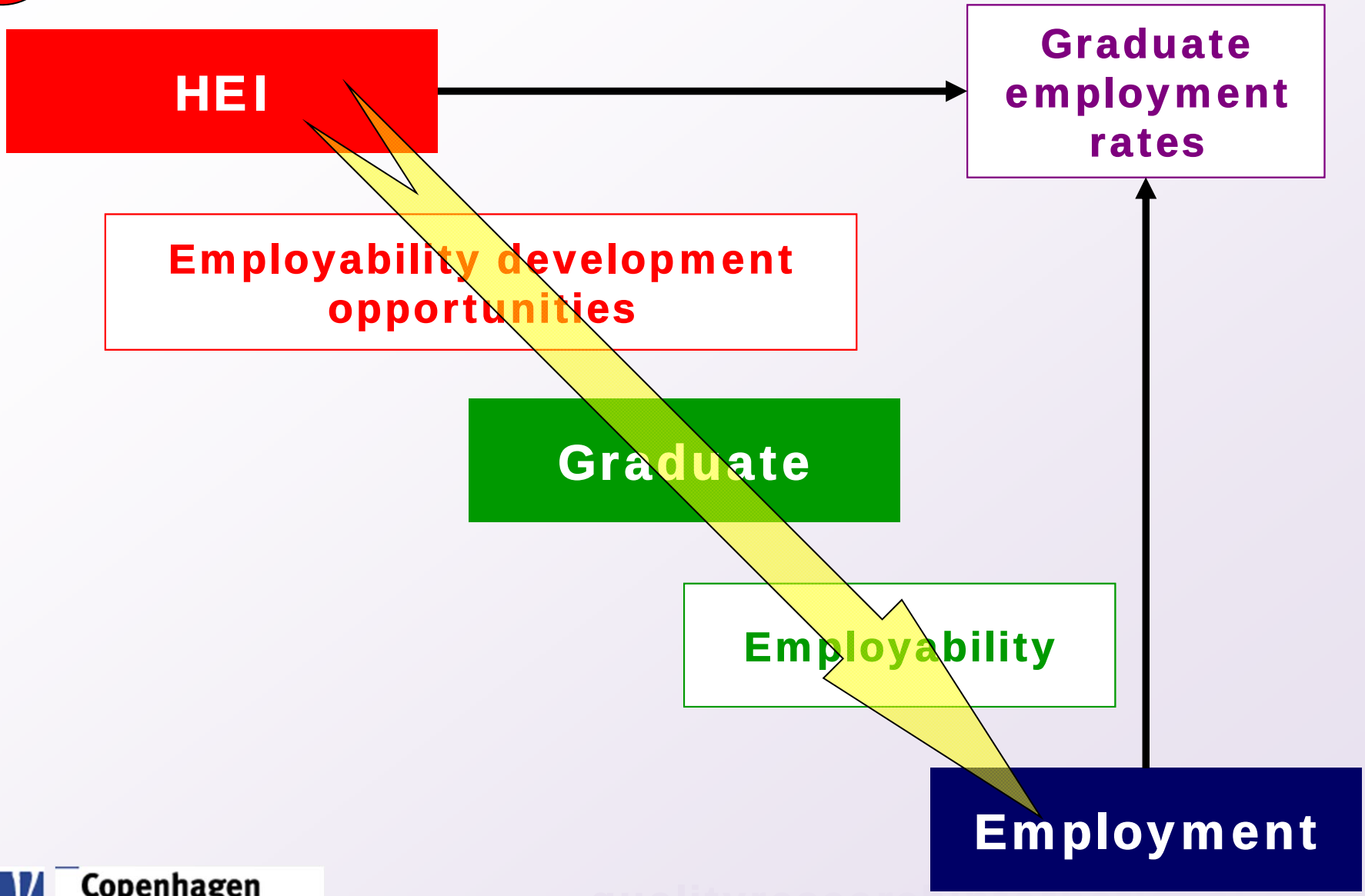
3 Spain

- A recent Spanish study (Rué 2010) identified the aspects of learning most valued by students and prominent were:
  - Learning tasks connected with real life situations
  - Work on real life professional situations

3 European Study (Storen, 2010)

- Relatively large country differences were found concerning the graduates' assessments of the [employment] usefulness of the study programme. The assessment of the Norwegian graduates emerges as far more positive than any other country. Graduates from The Netherlands report the most negative assessment…
- The higher the extent to which the study programme was demanding, vocationally oriented, known by the employers, academically prestigious, based on lectures, internships, written assignments and/or oral presentations, the greater is the probability that the graduate will reply that the programme was a good basis (to a very high extent) for starting work. The higher multiple-choice examinations are emphasised in the study programme, the lower is the probability of a positive response concerning the value of the study programme for commencing employment.

4 Magic bullet



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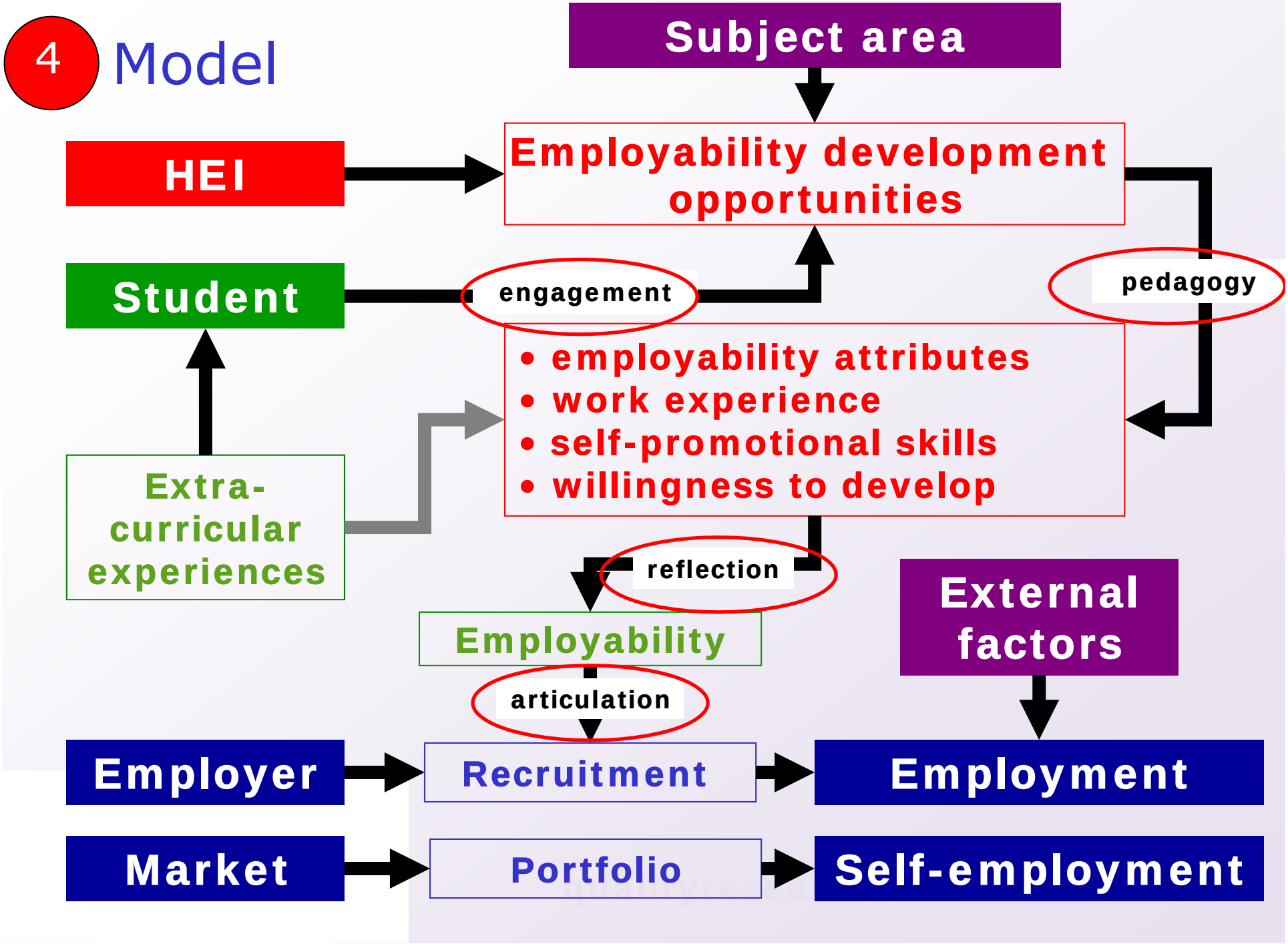
4 Model


Subject area
HEI
Employability development opportunities
Student
engagement
pedagogy
• employability attributes
• work experience
• self-promotional skills
• willingness to develop
Extra-curricular experiences
reflection
Employability
External factors
articulation
Employer
Recruitment
Employment
Market
Portfolio
Self-employment

4 QHE, 1994

Quality in Higher Education project (1994), amongst other things, argued that employability was an element of quality learning and teaching and suggested that it be integral to programmes of study.

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4 Apparent agreement in the UK sector

- employability needed to be part of the learning experience
- embedded not add on
- career planning and reflection being developed and potentially linked to reporting of student achievement
- placements or other forms of work experience were a desirable addition that helped not just employability but broader academic skills
- primarily driven by an enthusiastic minority

4 Scotland

"Promoting student employability is also one of the elements for enhancing student learning experience. Increasing number of institutions in Scotland integrate elements of employability and professionalism in designing and delivering of their curricula."

Gvaramadze, 2010, 'Student Engagement in the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework' *QHE*

4 Resistance: not my job

"[Academics] don't really respond. … A lot of the time they are more interested in the teaching of the subject rather than getting [their students] into jobs. Which is a bit unfortunate, really because I think if they were more career minded it would work to the students' advantage a lot more."

(Senior careers advisor, North East England)

5 Work Experience

The Dearing Committee reinforced the importance of work experience (*Graduates' Work*, 1997).

The day of the release of the Dearing report, *The Times* headlined the recommendation of the committee that programmes contain placements.

5 Work Experience and Employability Plans

Welsh Funding Council after a report by the WDA on skills in Wales.
For three years at start of the millennium marginal funding was linked to the presentation, by HEIs, of WEEPs to HEFCW.
Plans became increasingly sophisticated, based on audits of activities within institutions.
HEFCW satisfied that work experience and employability was being integrated and that institutions were able to take it forward.

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5 What is work experience? Definitions

Work experience

Any experience from a work setting linked to the programme: plus 'extra-curricular' experiences

Recently, any learning that takes place in a work setting

Work-based learning

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5 Types of work experience

organised work experience as part of a programme of study

organised work experience external to a programme

ad hoc work experience external to a programme

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5

organised work experience as part of a programme of study

- Placements sandwich (thick)
- Work visits and job shadowing
- Placements professional (thin)
- Modules accrediting part-time paid or voluntary work
- Employer-linked project work
- College-based simulations

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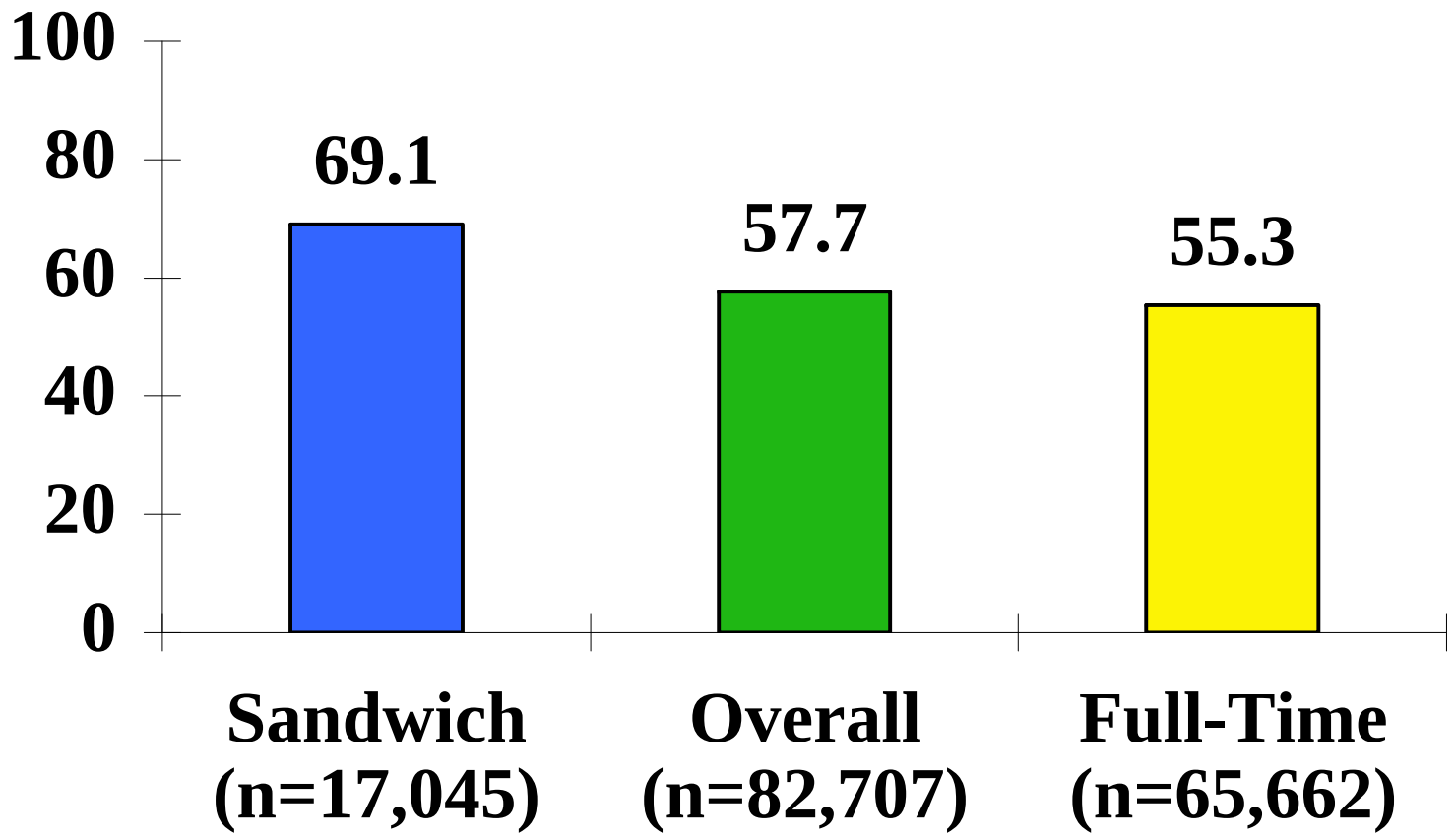
5 Employment: placements

- Study showed that for most disciplines students on degrees with a sandwich placement had a higher rate of graduate employment within 6 months than students on programmes in same subject area without placements.

- (Excluded nursing, teacher training, etc. where placement compulsory)

5

% of Graduates in Full-Time Paid Employment



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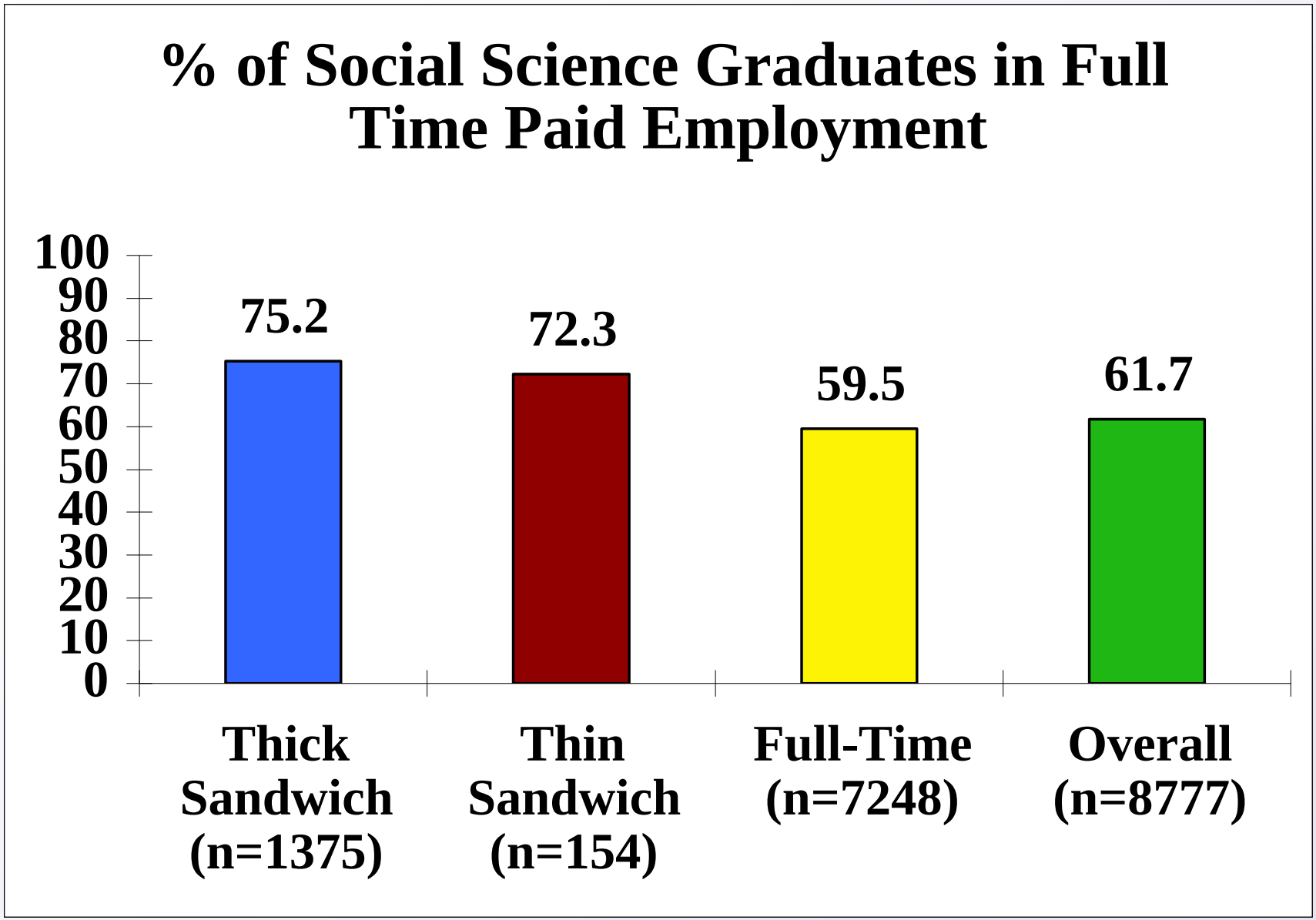
5

% of Social Science Graduates in Full Time Paid Employment



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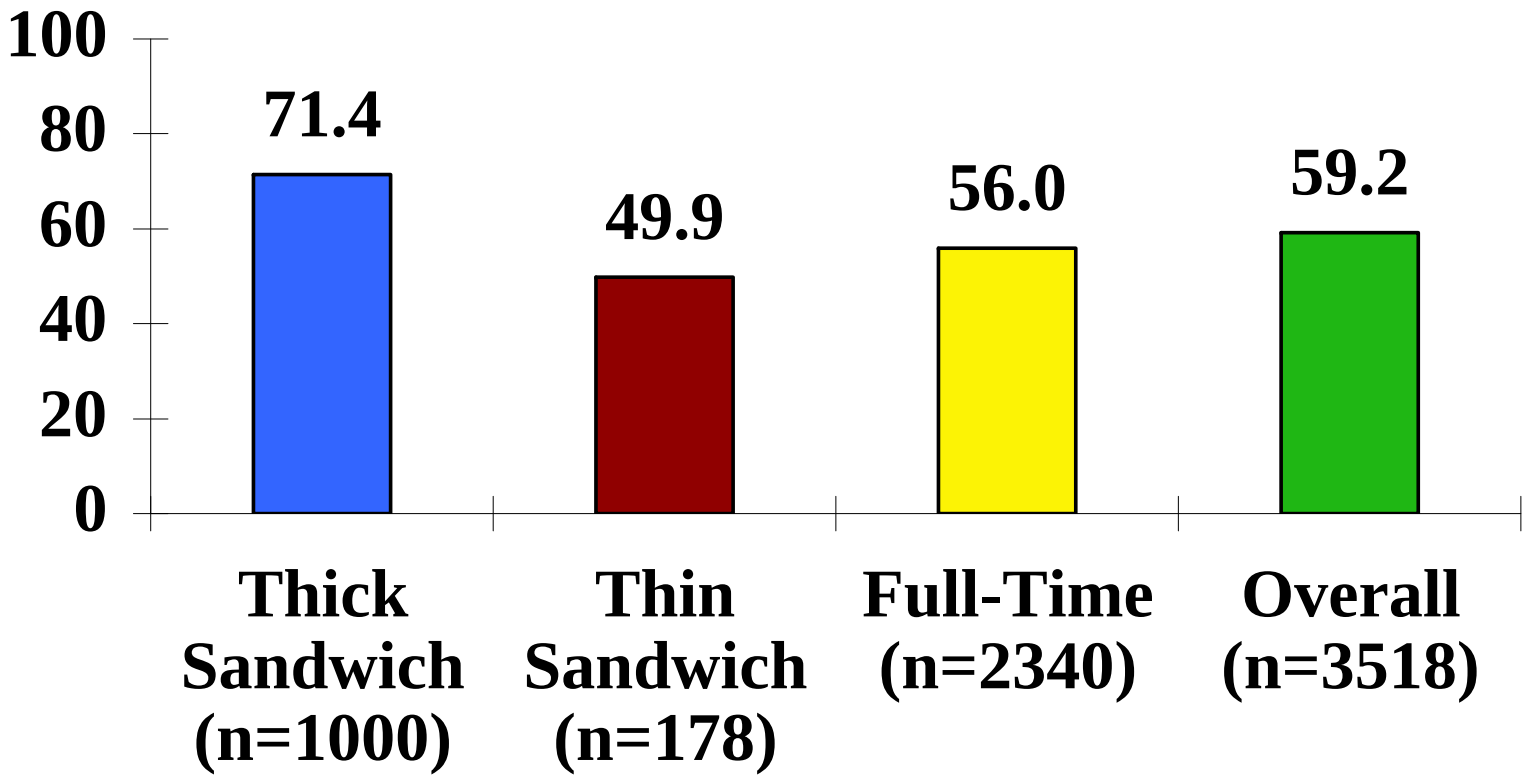
% of Built Environment Graduates in Full-Time Paid Employment



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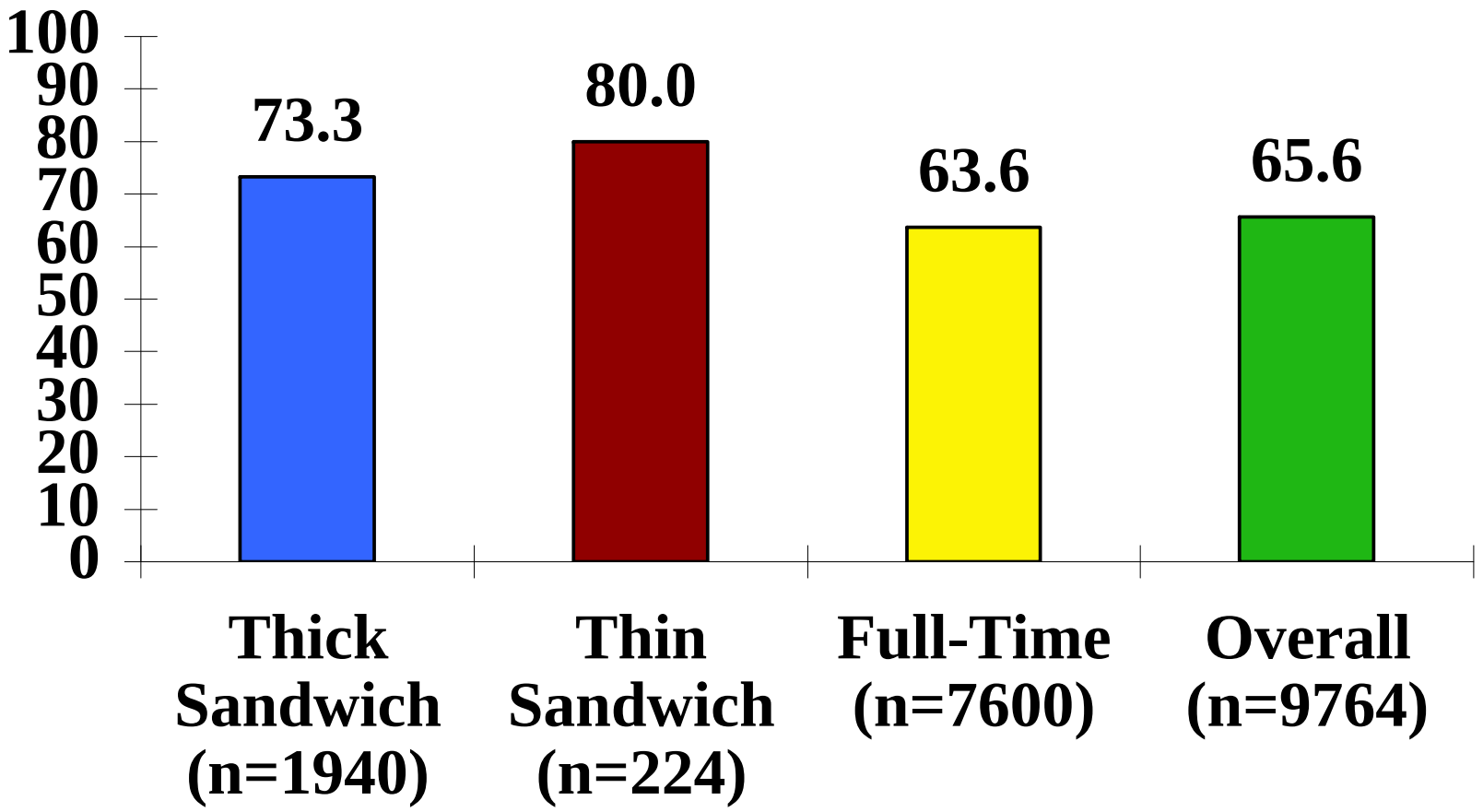
5

% of Engineering Graduates in Full-Time Paid Employment



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5 Endorsement of work experience

- employers: graduates are more effective;
- recruitment route;
- added success in the job market;
- employers would like more
  - small resurgence in United Kingdom
  - prefer year-long placements
  - admit don't provide enough opportunities
- students are positive about impact.

5 Time management

Personal skills development centred on increased confidence and personal organisation. Time-management skills was frequently mentioned.

"… a get up and go attitude—as opposed to get up and mope around and then think about doing work. Because for that year I was getting up at half seven getting in for nine… That was how I worked for a whole year, it was pointless changing my whole routine after a year of doing it this way."

(Business and Technology, academic year, marketing assistant, mortgage company)

5 Approaches to learning

"Other thing I noticed in my final year that I am really taking completely different approach to learning now. I am challenging everything here because I now have the experience…. While I was on placement, I was always thinking about what it means, what it means for my degree."

(Business Administration, Bath, two six-month placements)

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5 Higher-level academic skills

"I know what I'm looking for a bit better now. I think I'm…quicker at finding stuff and I'm a bit more on the ball when it comes to…picking out the most relevant stuff, because I was expected to learn quite quickly when I was down there. So it was…essential that I was able to find information quickly, find the relevant bit and then use that as a basis for my testing."

(Information Systems, product tester, software company)

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5 Employer preference

‘Business awareness and maturity... are significantly improved by work placements…. Those people who have worked in organisations previously have a host of examples of experiences that they are able to share with us. That makes them stronger candidates than those who have just gone from school to higher education and then come straight to us. So it is an advantage to the individual concerned to have done a placement.’

(Senior manager, large financial institution)

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6 Learning

How does all this fit to learning?

Developing a range of students attributes that help them to be successful in the work context is *not* the same as developing vocational courses.

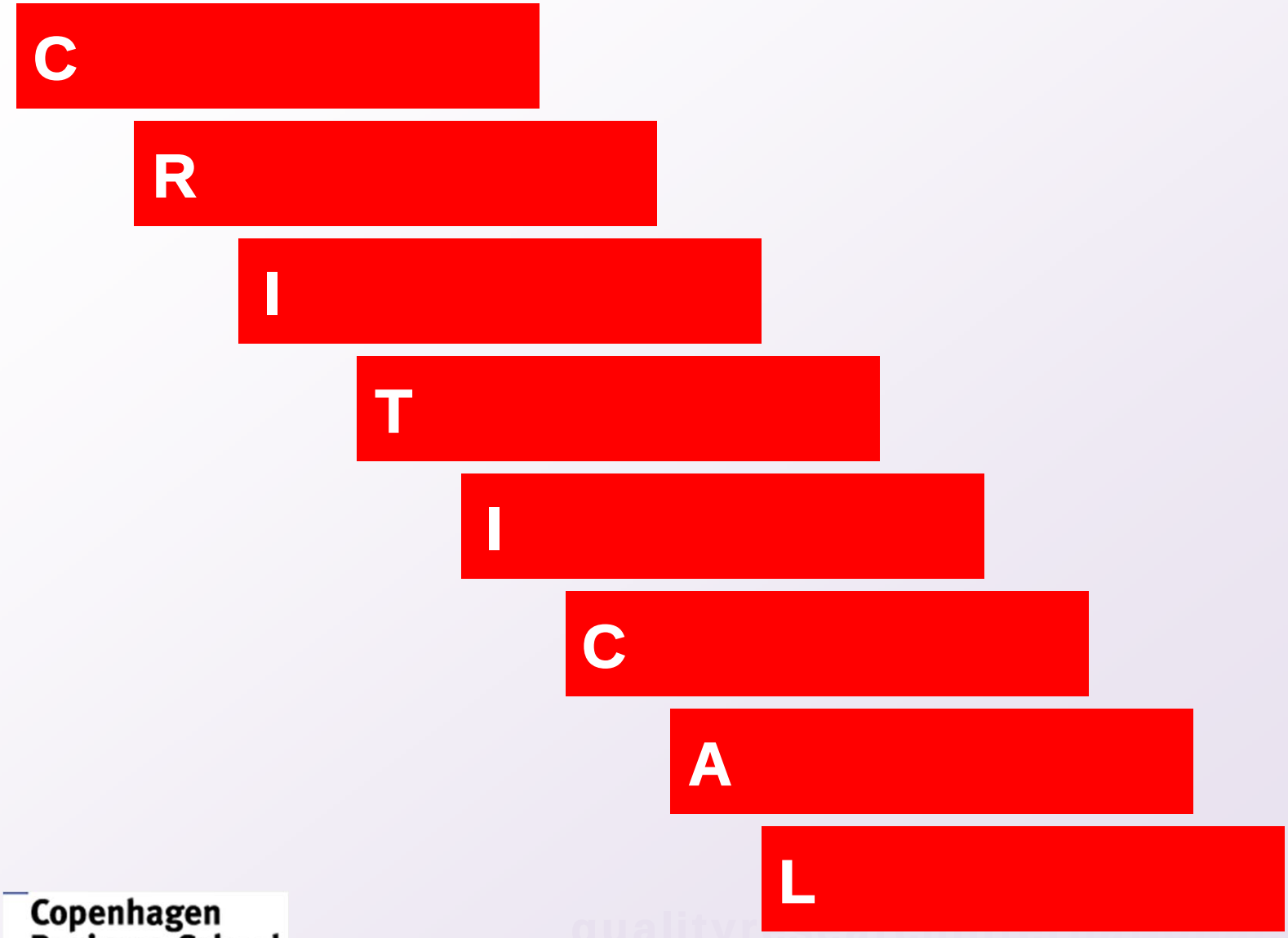
6 Developing transformative learning

- The enhancement and empowerment of the learner.
- Developing graduates' employability is not about getting graduates into jobs.
- It is not about delivering 'employability skills' in some generic sense.
- Rather it is about developing critical reflective lifelong learners.
- This requires an approach to teaching and learning that goes beyond requiring students to learn a body of knowledge.

6 Developing transformative learning (2)

- Empowering and enhancing students requires facilitation of learning rather than teaching.
- Empowering learners means treating students as intellectual performers rather than as compliant audience.
- Learners need to be able to help organisations, to transform in the face of rapid and continuous change.
- Employability is about developing CRITICAL graduates

6 CRITICAL graduate



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6 CRITICAL graduate

Critical

Reflective

Intelligent

Transformative

Interactive

Communicative

Analytic

Lifelong learner

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6 Employability Framework

- Coherent, holistic approach, not piecemeal
- But locally-determined practices: adjust
- Development of intellectual, subject *and* employability attributes: integrated not contrived or enforced
- Everyone's responsibility (not my job) (academic culture)
- From teaching to learning! Student oriented learning philosophy
- Progressive development of learner autonomy
- Include 'real world' activities & examples

6 Employability Framework (2)

- Reflection on use of skills and knowledge
- Reflection on performance; action planning
- Career management skills (self awareness; opportunity awareness; decision making)
- Emphasis on learning not job getting
- Opportunity to articulate learning from work
- Students need help to transfer attributes; research shows transfer is *not* automatic
- E=TL, E≠T

Thank you