Developing Employability Attributes of Higher Education Project Management Graduates: A Scoping Review

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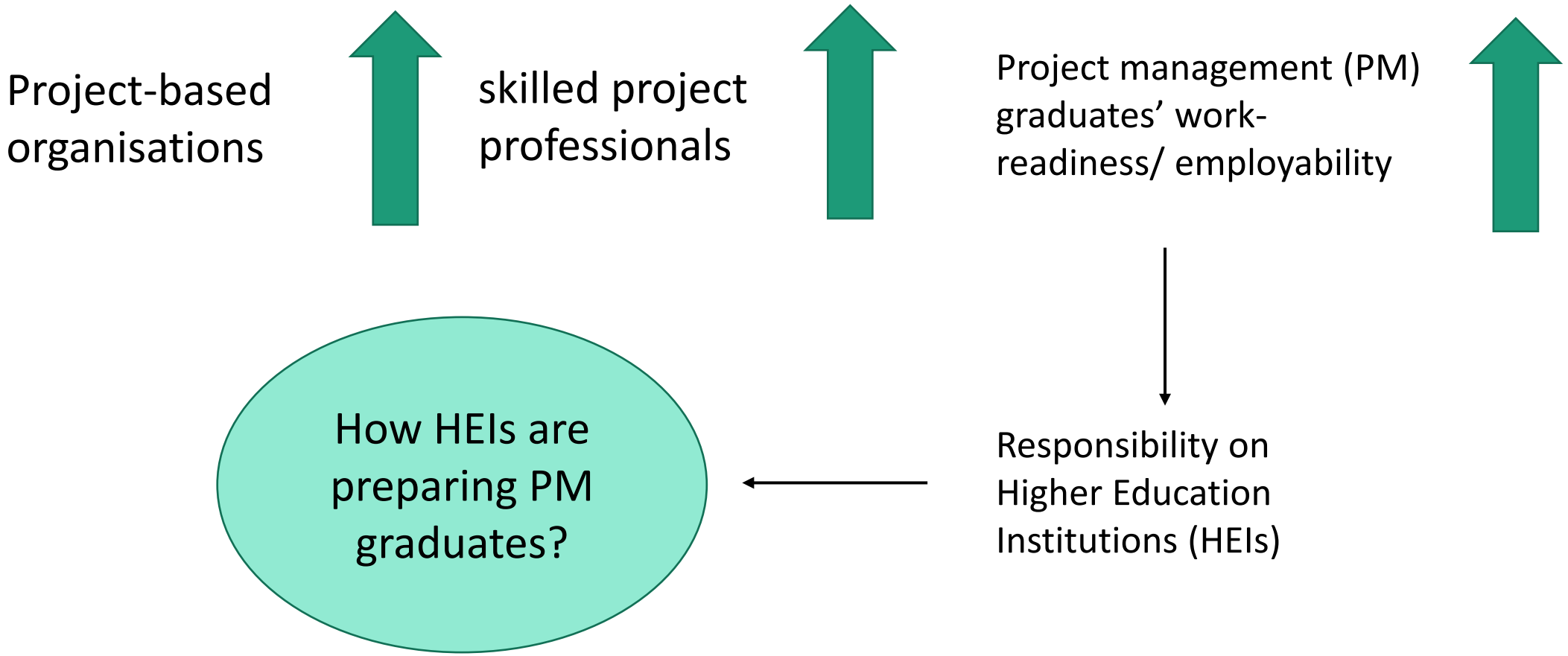
Outline

- Introduction
- Theoretical underpinnings
- Conceptual framework
- Definition of employability
- Graduate attributes of project management graduates
- Work-readiness of project management graduates

Outline

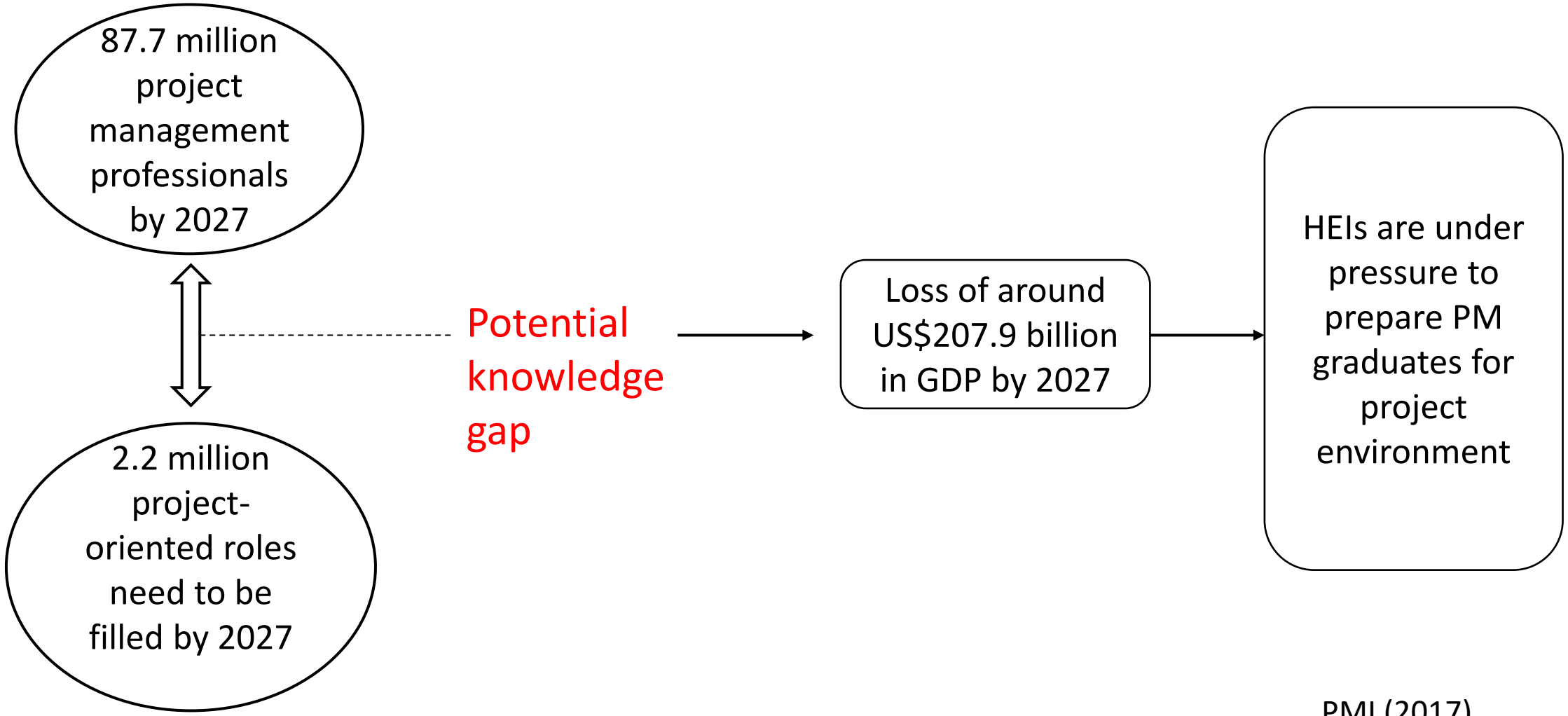
- Project managers' competencies
- Role of universities in graduate work-readiness
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Future directions

Research Synopsis



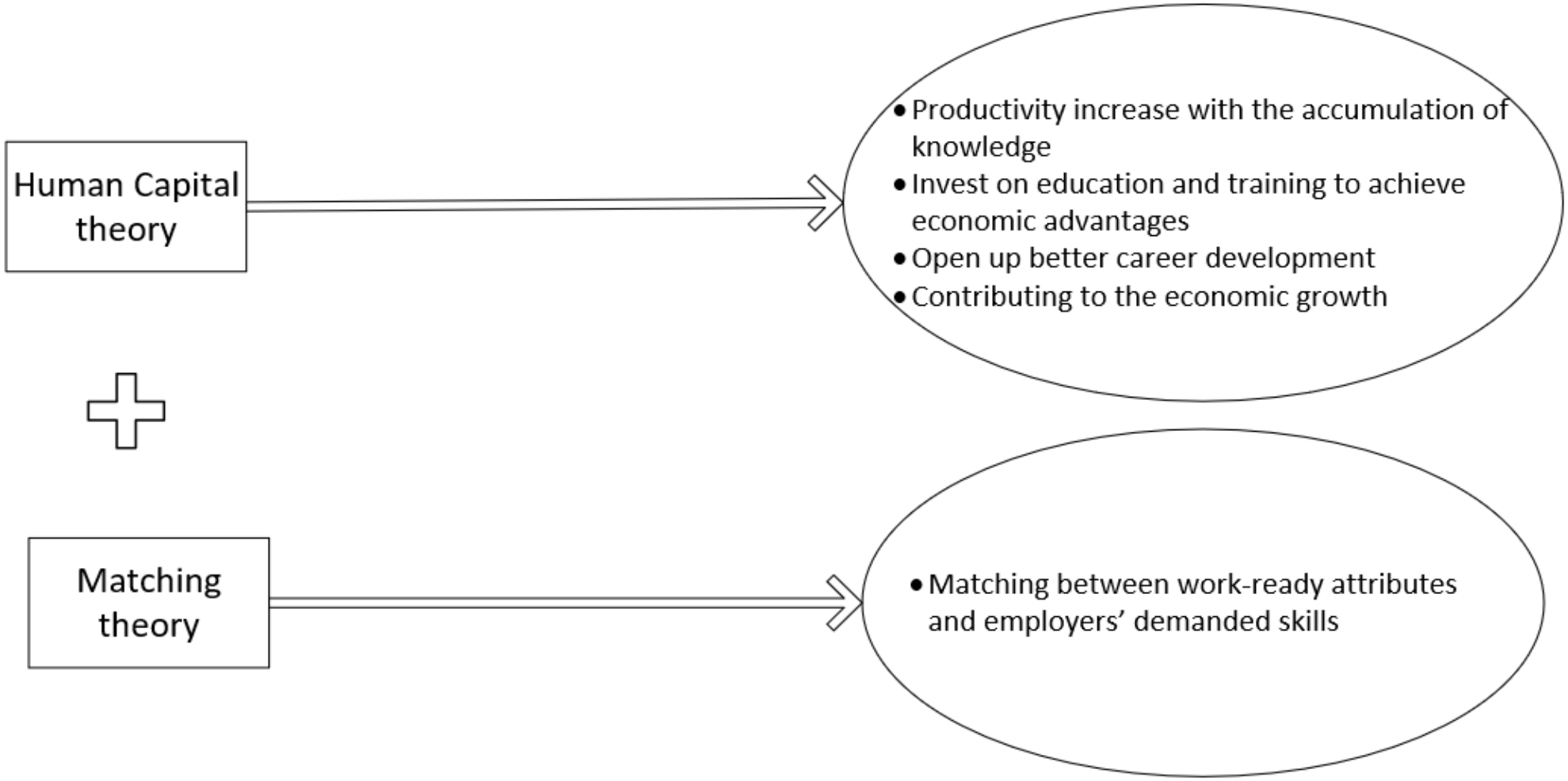
PMI (2017)

Introduction



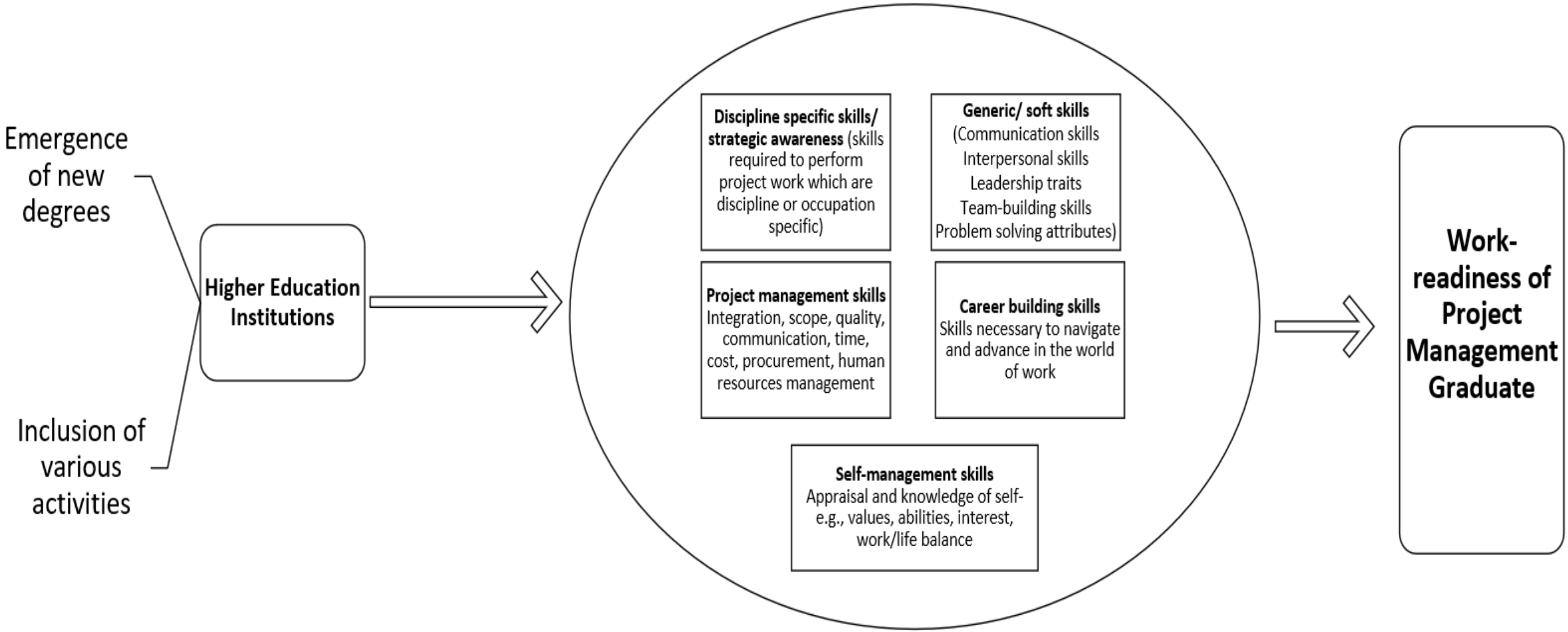
PMI (2017)

Theoretical Underpinnings

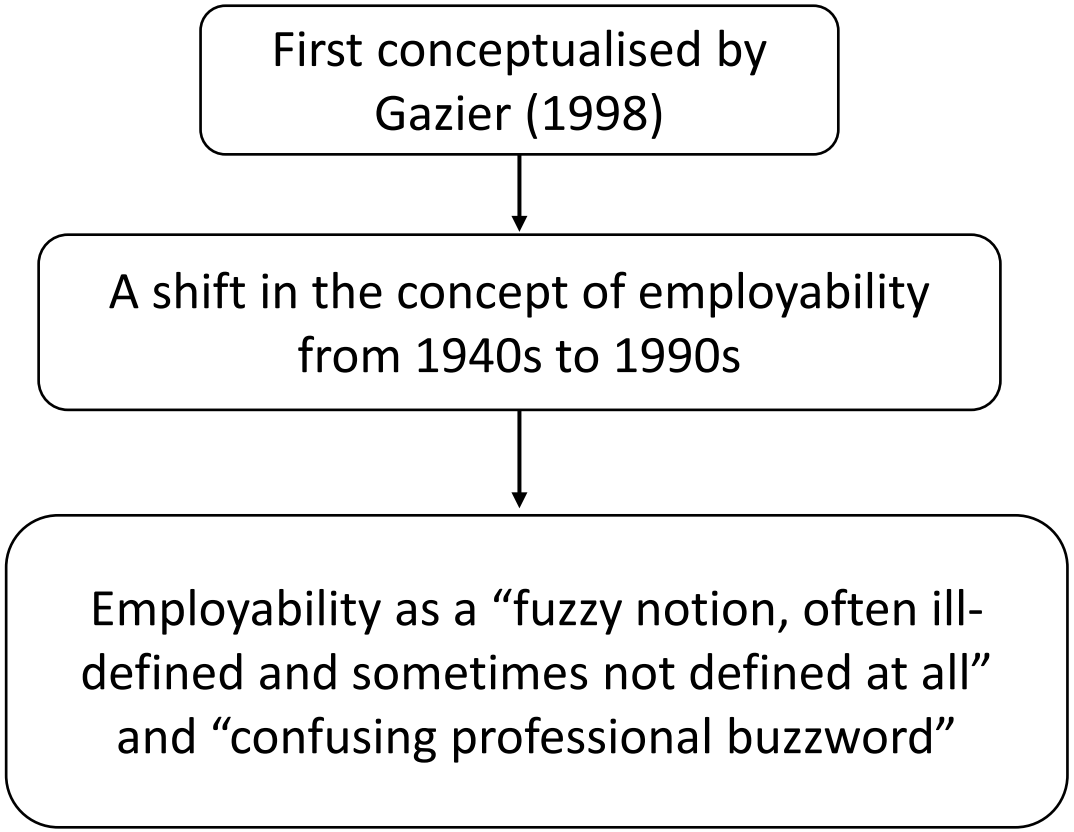


Abdulkadiroglu and Sönmez (2013); Becker (1964)

Conceptual Framework



What is Employability?



Thijssen et al. (2008)

What is Employability?

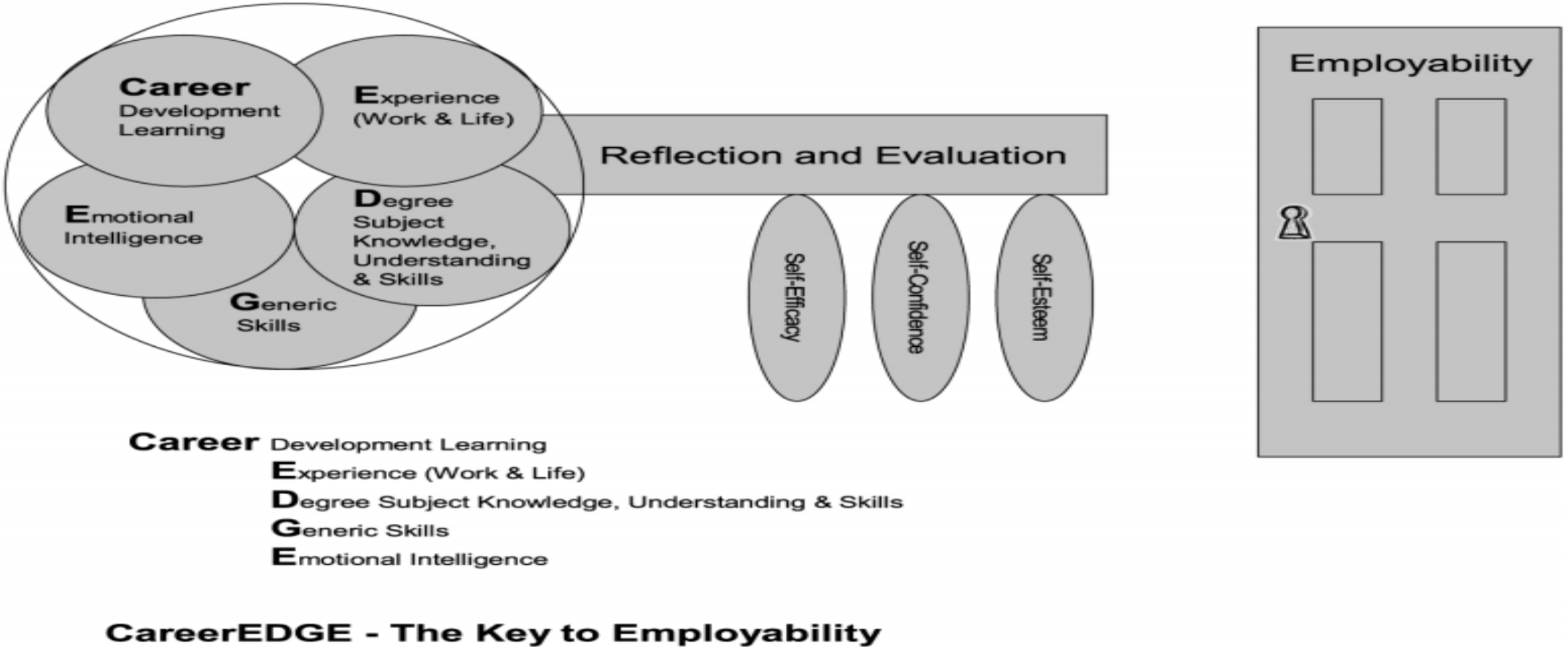
"the ability to keep the job one has or to get the job one desires"

→ Collection of skills, attributes, and characteristics that an employee needs to demonstrate to a prospective employer

→ "gaining, sustaining and progressing in employment"

Green et al. (2013), Lowden et al. (2011), Rothwell and Arnold (2007)

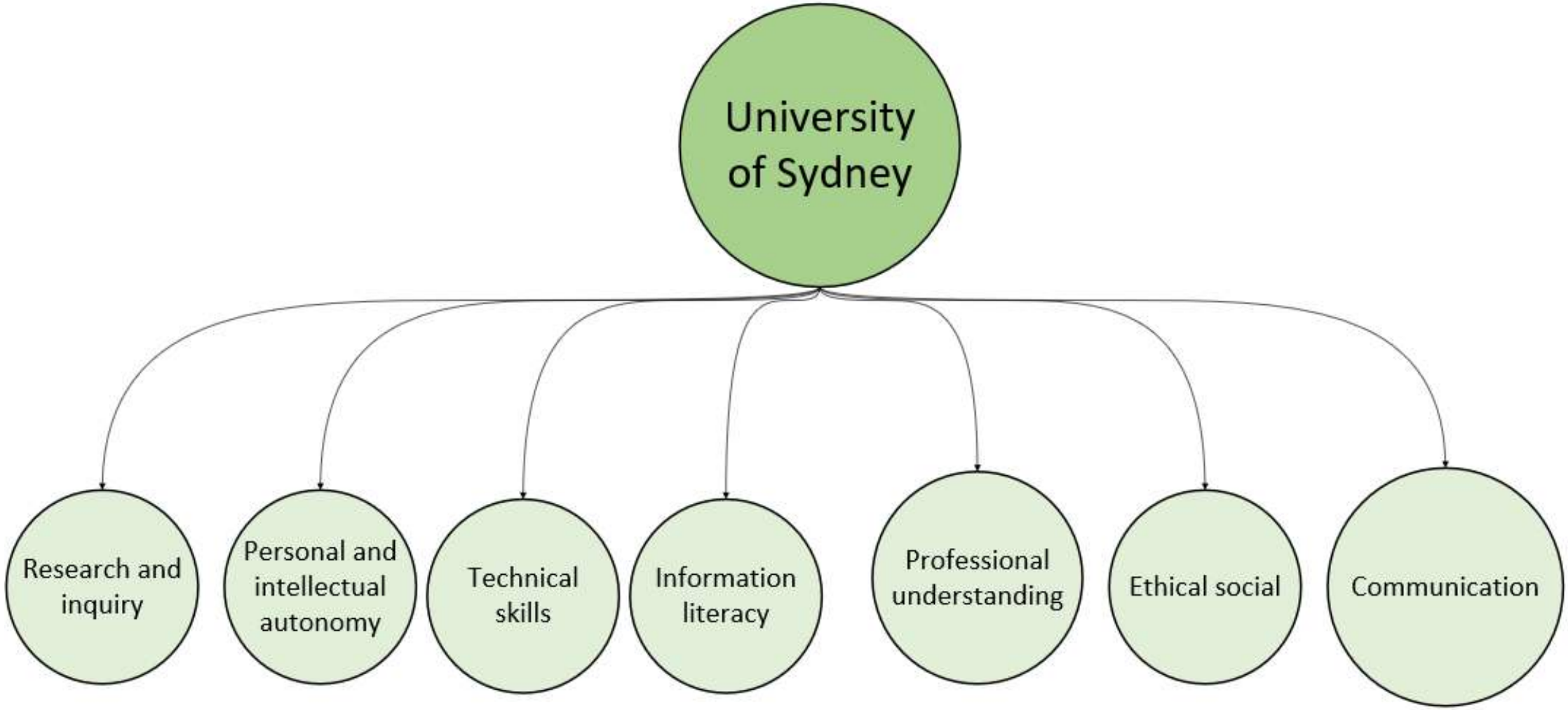
Employability Framework (CareerEDGE Model)



Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007)

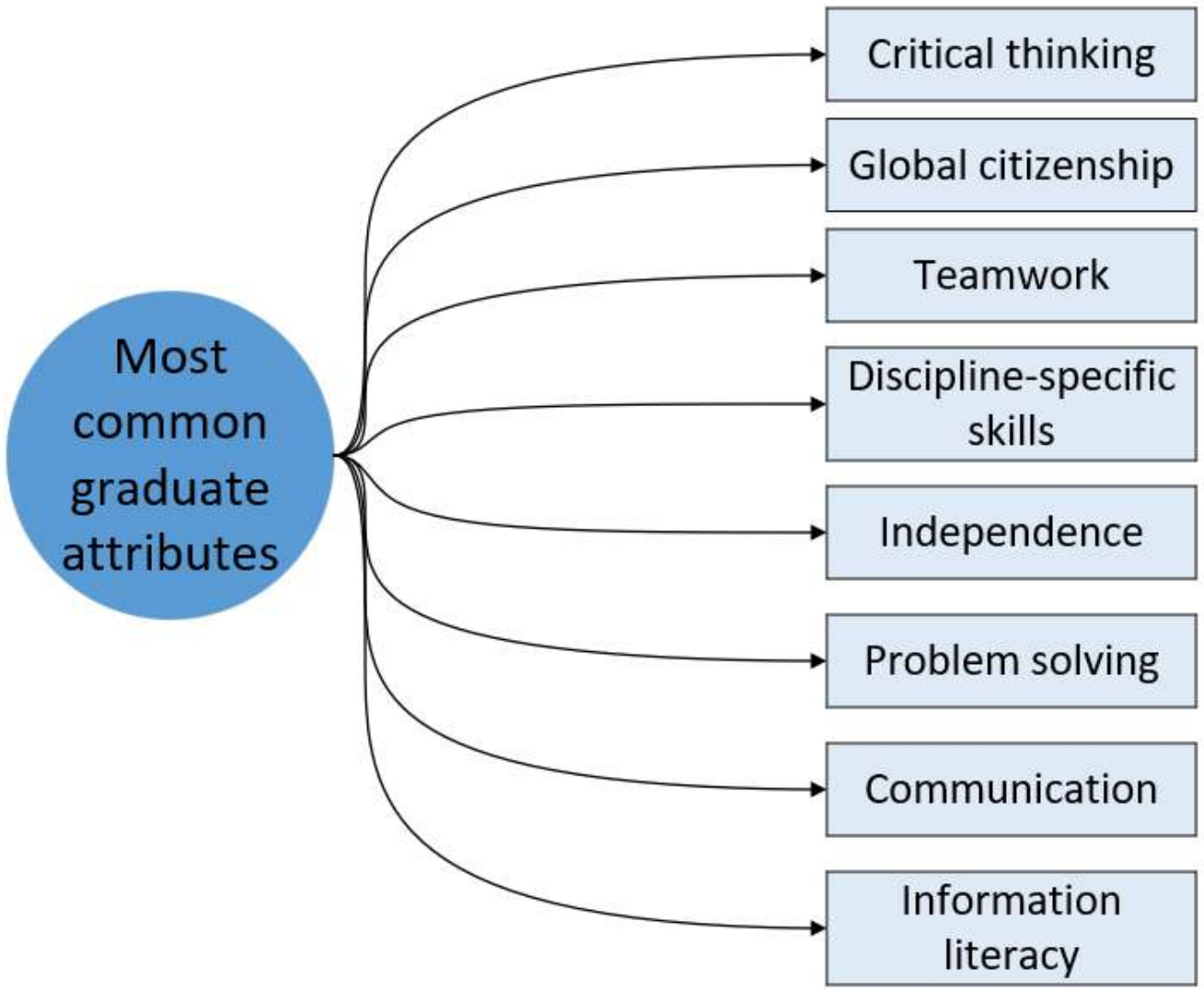
Taken Together

Graduate Attributes



Cairns and Malloch (2017)

Graduate Attributes

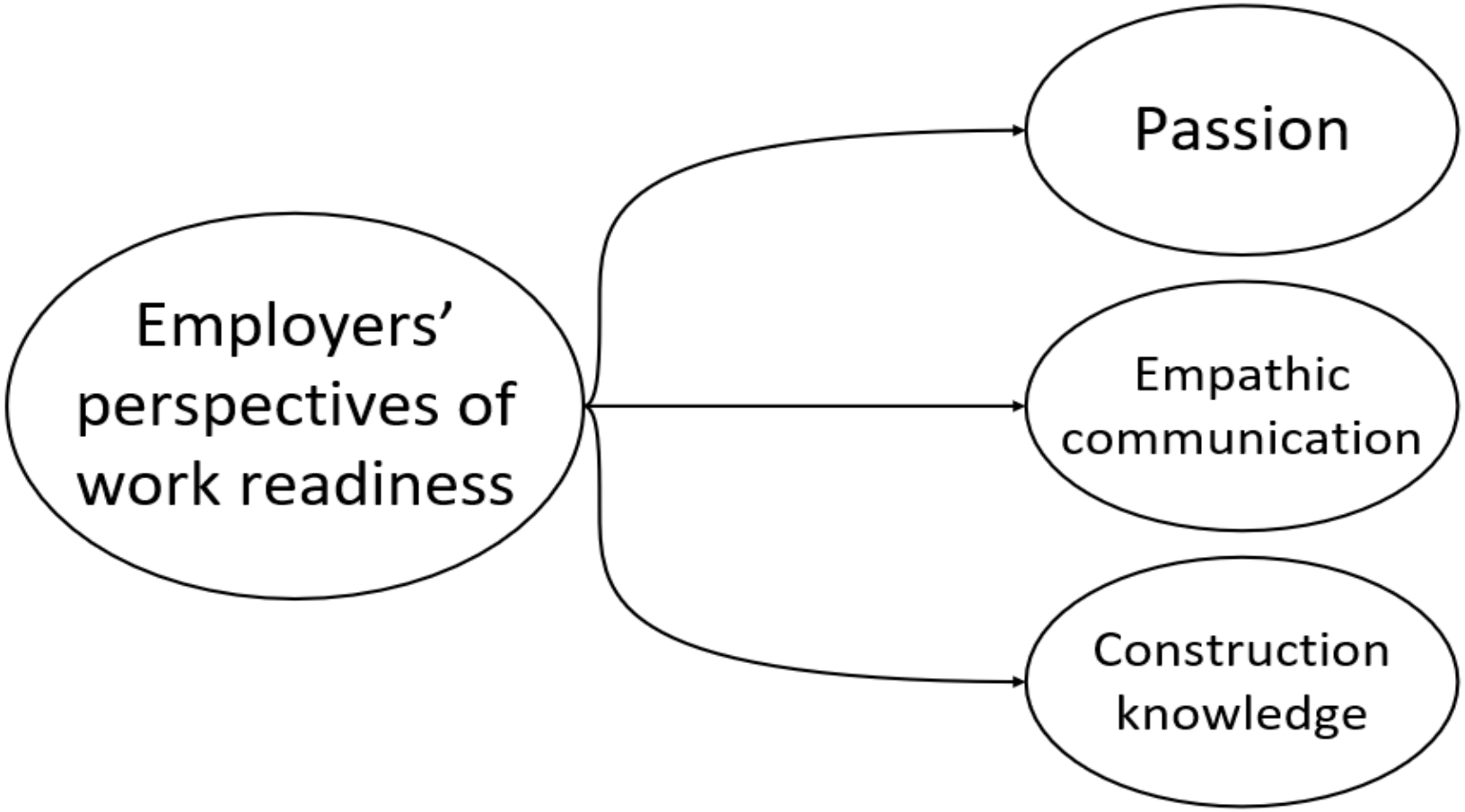


Osmani et al. (2015)

Work-readiness of PM Graduates

- Work-readiness can be viewed as graduate readiness to join the workforce.
- Critical to employers while recruiting graduates.
- Some graduates fall below the expectation of employers in entry-level jobs (Borg & Scott-Young, 2020a).
- Recently work readiness of project management graduates has been on spotlight.

Work-readiness of PM Graduates



Borg and Scott-Young (2020b)

Accidental Profession in PM

- Propelled into the profession and manage the projects by luck, persistence and dedication (Richardson et al., 2015)

- Evolves over time and through the accumulation of experience.

- **"Accidental project managers are not the right solution for managing important investment…. as only 23% of Australian projects and programs [are] delivering to full success -** Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM) and KPMG (2018, p. 16)

- While project management remains an accidental profession for many, this is not necessarily true for **younger members of the project workforce** (Borg & Scott-Young, 2020a)

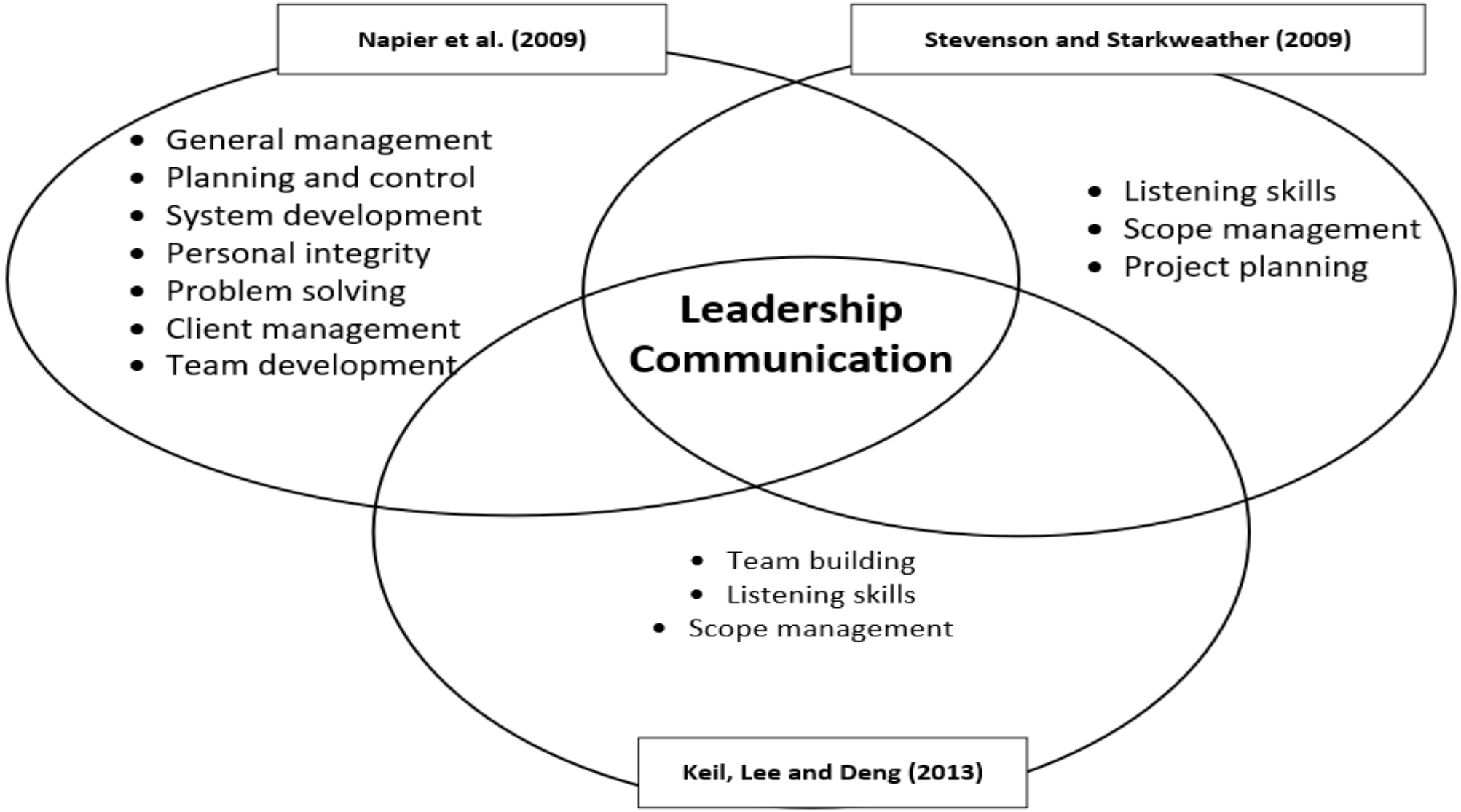
Competencies of PM

- For the successful execution of projects, one of the critical factors is the competencies of project managers.

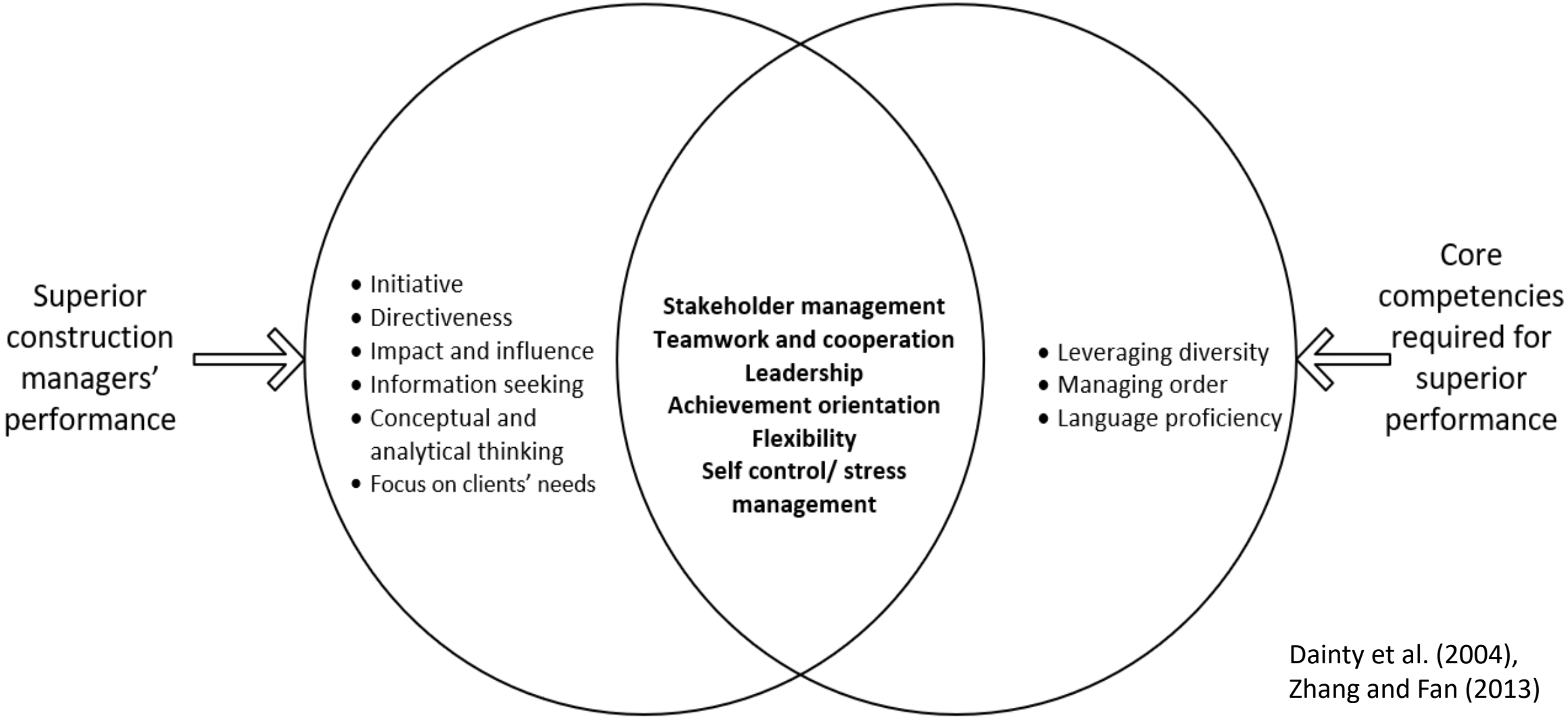
- Focus on project managers' competencies in Information Technology (IT) and Construction.

- **Construction project managers require the largest number** of competencies (Moradi et al., 2019)

Competencies of IT PM

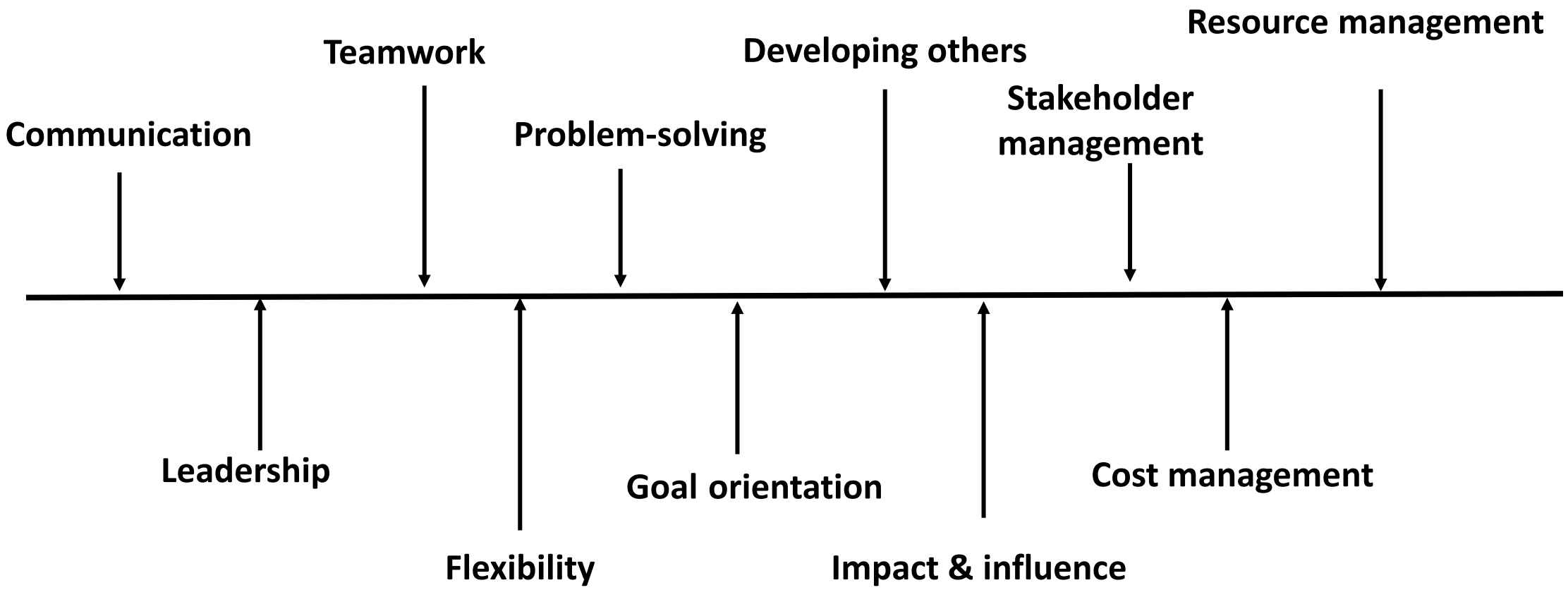


Construction PM competencies



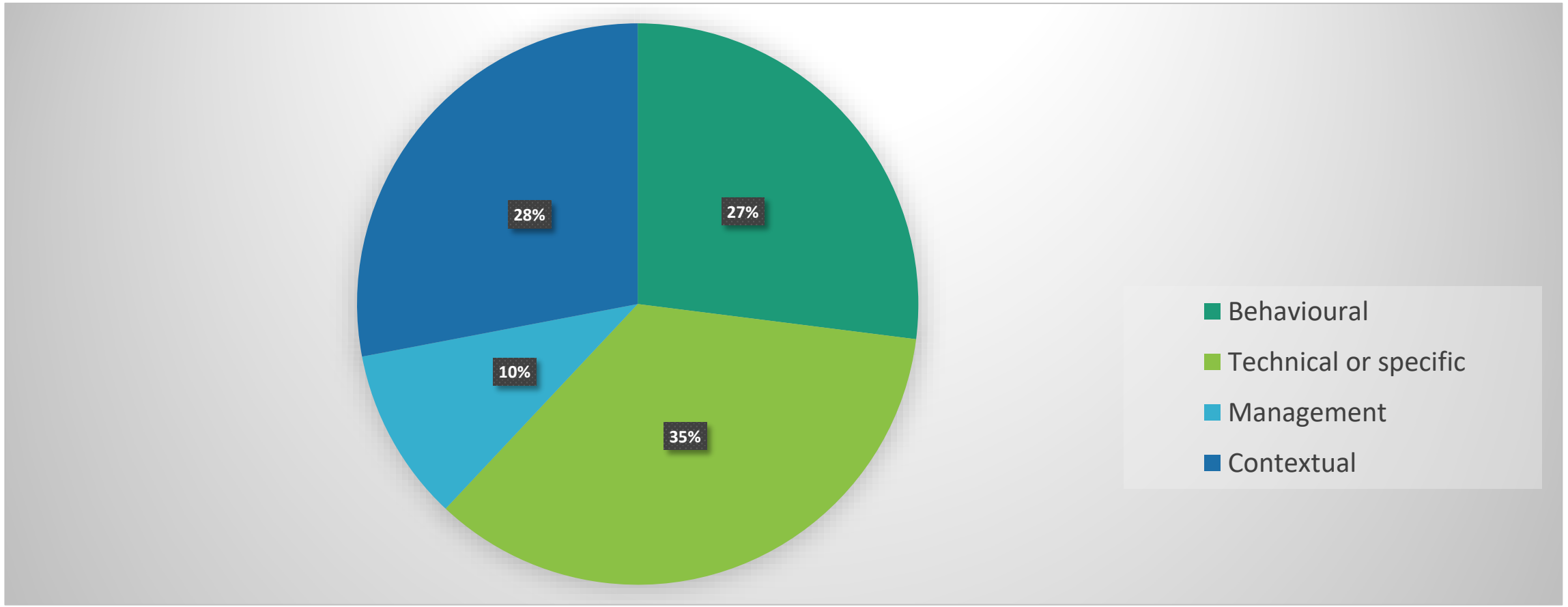
Dainty et al. (2004), Zhang and Fan (2013)

Review on PM Competencies (1959 – 2018)



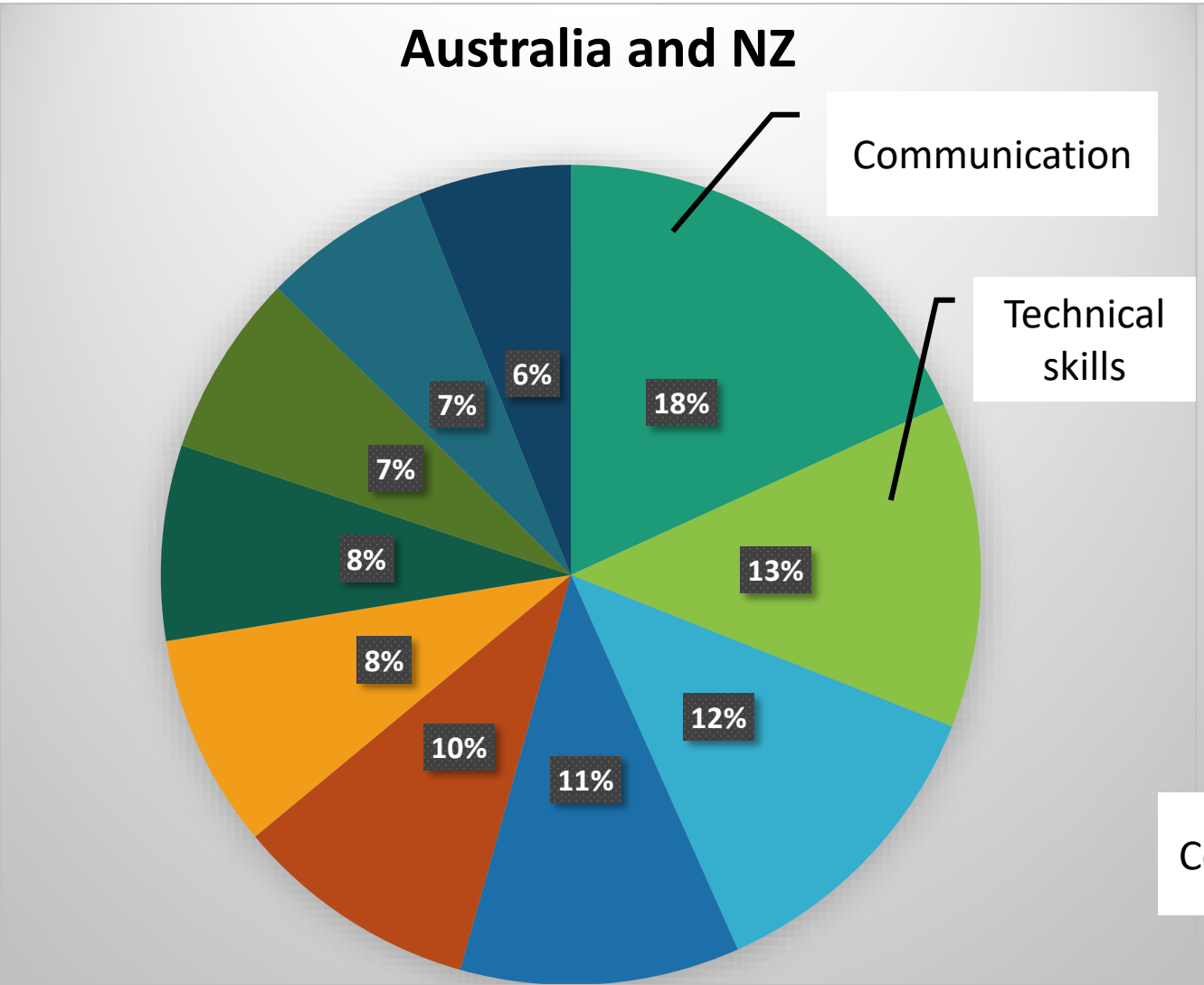
Moradi et al. (2019)

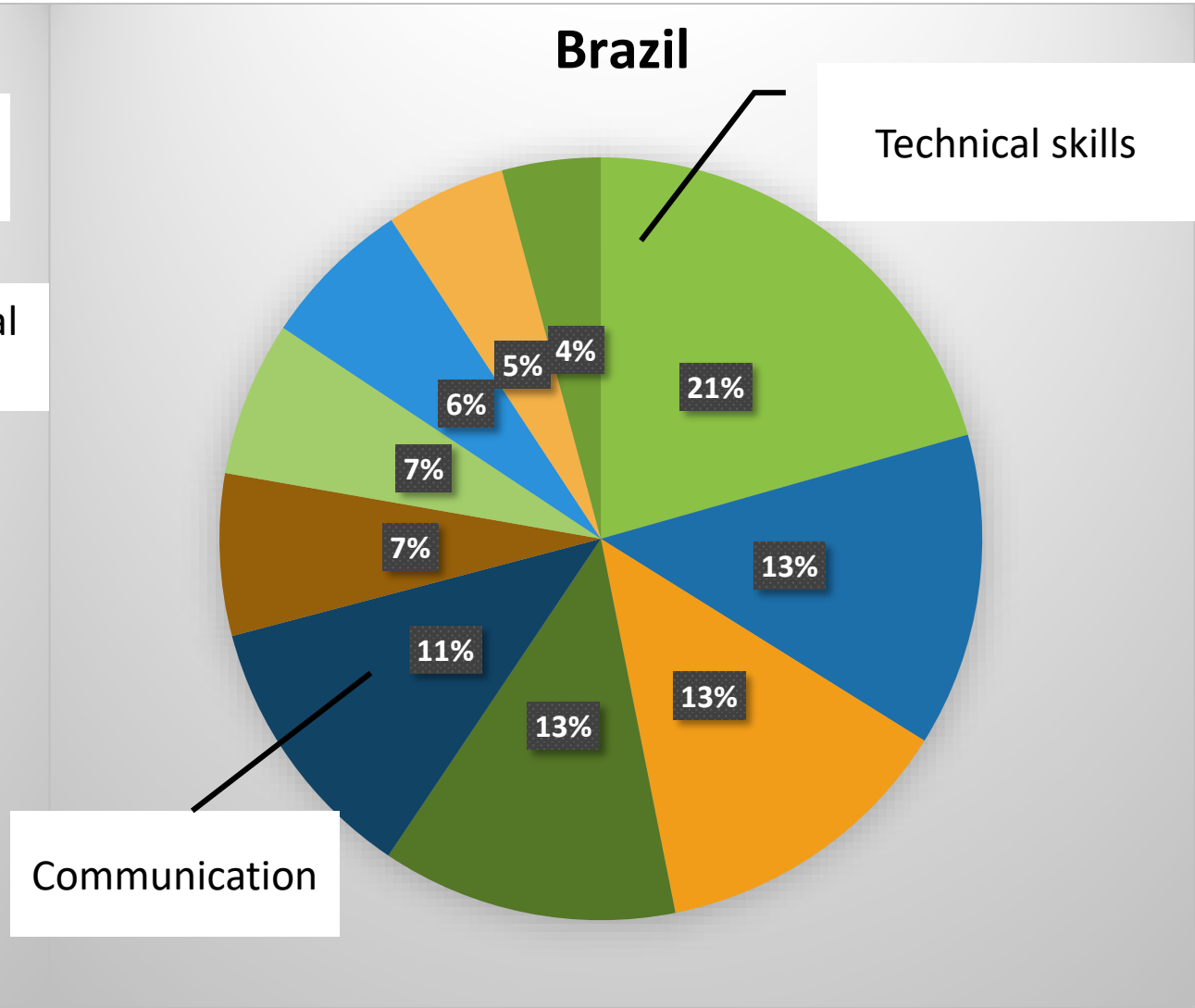
Systematic Literature Review on PM Competencies (1997 – 2014) Based on Job Advertisements



do Vale et al. (2018)

Top 10 PM competences identified in job advertisements





University's Responsibility of Graduates' Work-readiness

- Not suited to prepare project managers for managing projects (Thomas & Mengel, 2008)

- 'Projects are simply a synthesis of human sensations and expectations about how multiple resources are to be used' (Whitty, 2005)

- Universities designing curriculum that PM graduates are work-ready.

University's Responsibility of Graduates' Work-readiness

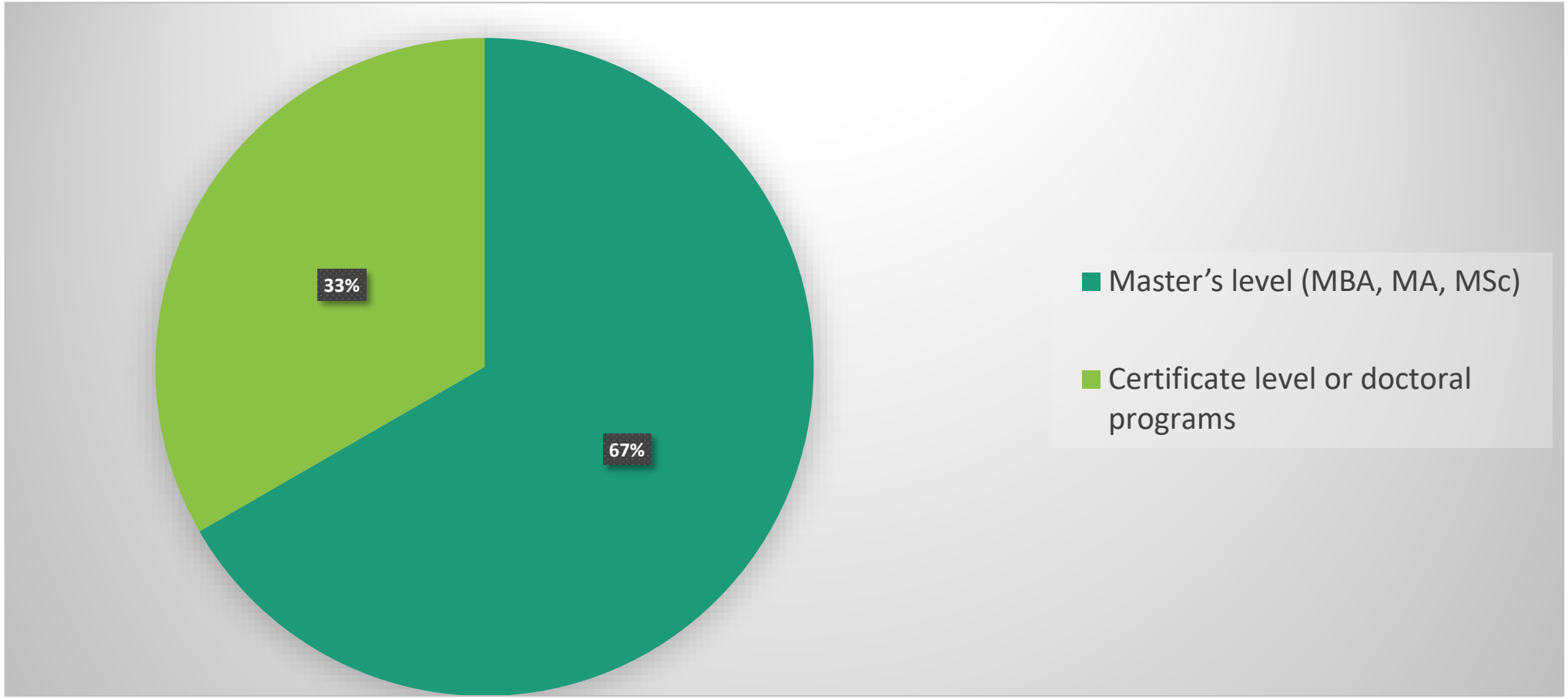
- Should integrate practice and theory at different degree levels (Thomas & Mengel, 2008)
- Should be innovative and forward-thinking.
- PM education seems to be on the technical aspects of project management (Thomas & Mengel, 2008)

University's Responsibility of Graduates' Work-readiness

Technical →	Expertise comprises managing projects within constraints regarding professional standards and guides
Professional behaviour →	Stakeholder engagement, leadership, communication and teamwork
Strategic awareness →	Incorporates contextual awareness and knowledge of strategic and operational drivers

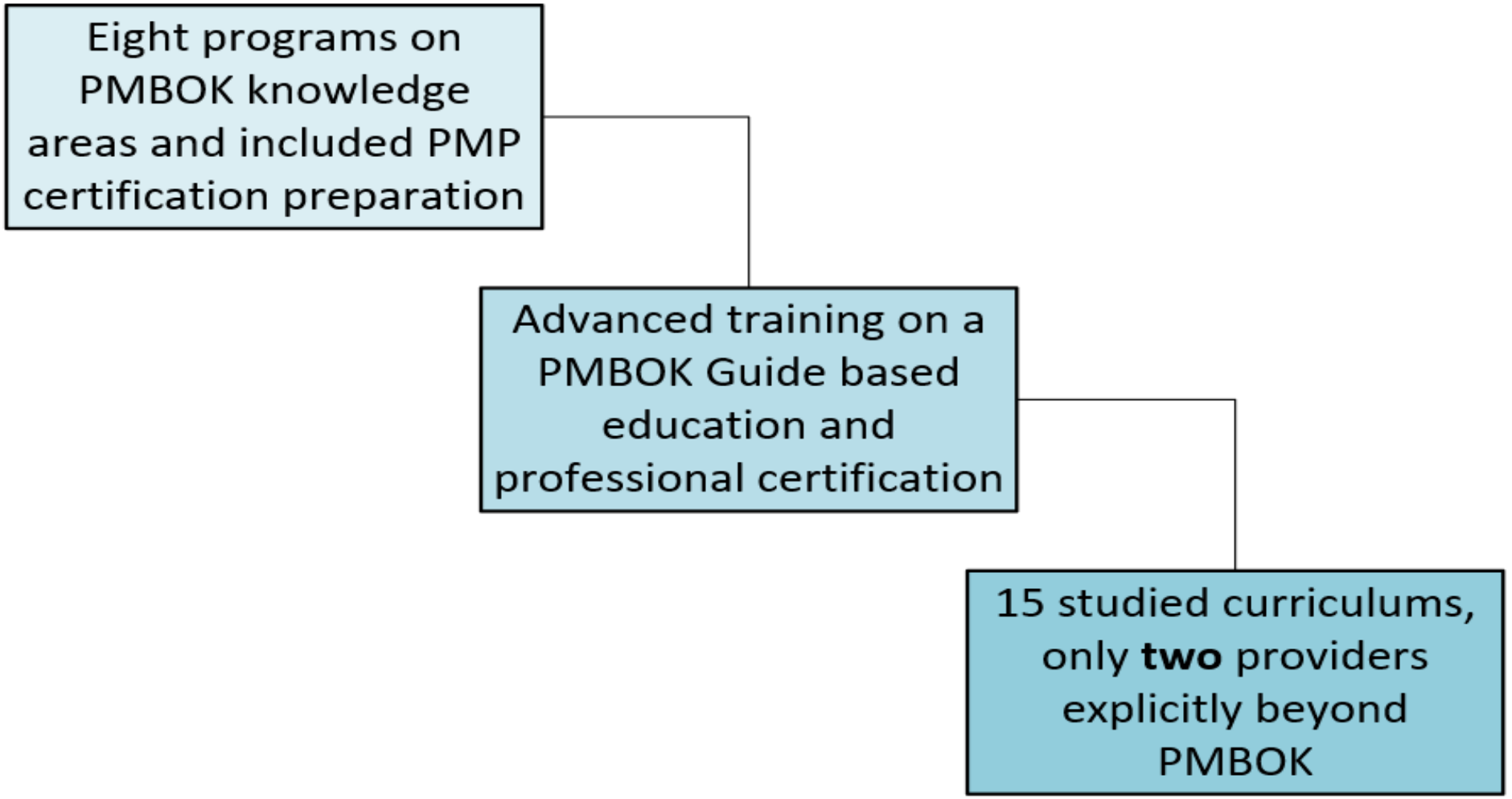
Handbook of Accreditation for Academic Degrees and Awards (2016)

University's Responsibility of Graduates' Work-readiness

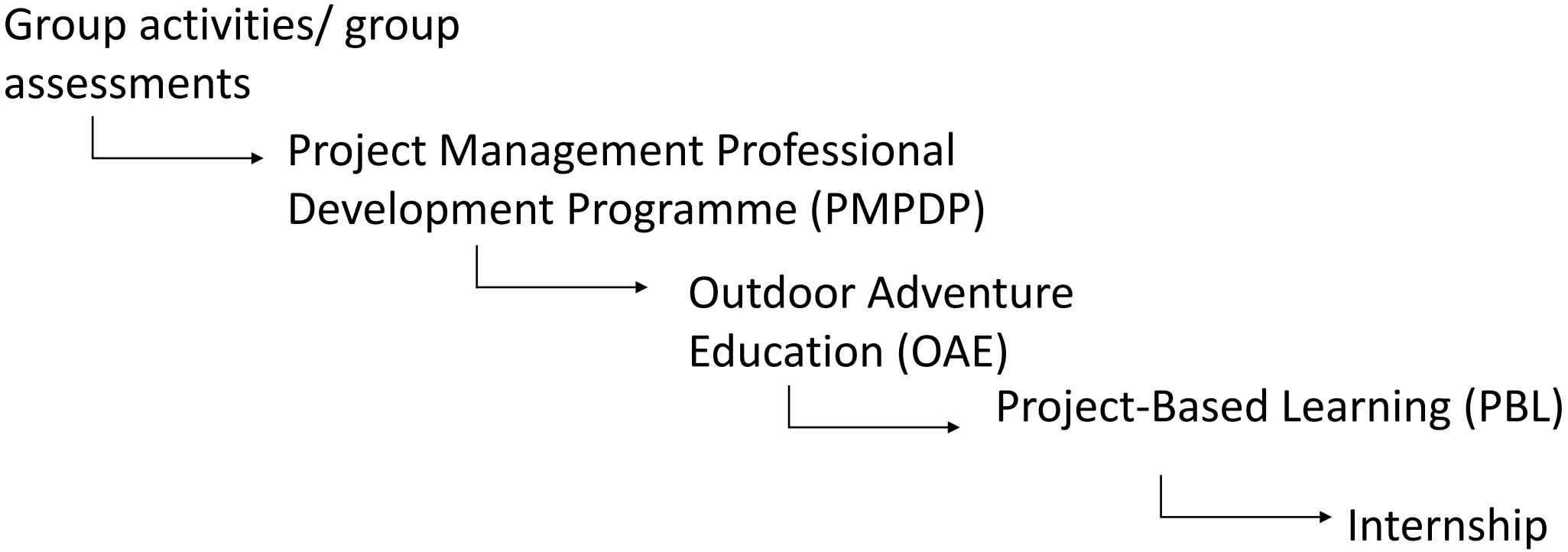


Thomas and Mengel (2008)

University's Responsibility of Graduates' Work-readiness



Approaches to contributing to work-readiness



Alam et al. (2010); Ballantine and McCourt Larres (2007)

New Development……

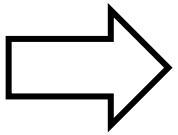
- **Bachelor of Project Management degree** is a new development in undergraduate tertiary education.

- **291 education providers offer bachelor's degree in project management.**

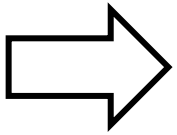
- Borg and Scott-Young researched extensively on the work-readiness on project management graduates.

New Development……

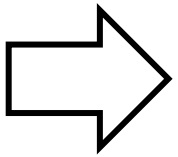
- The most frequently mentioned learning outcomes:



Values: knowledge acquisition, respect, and work ethic



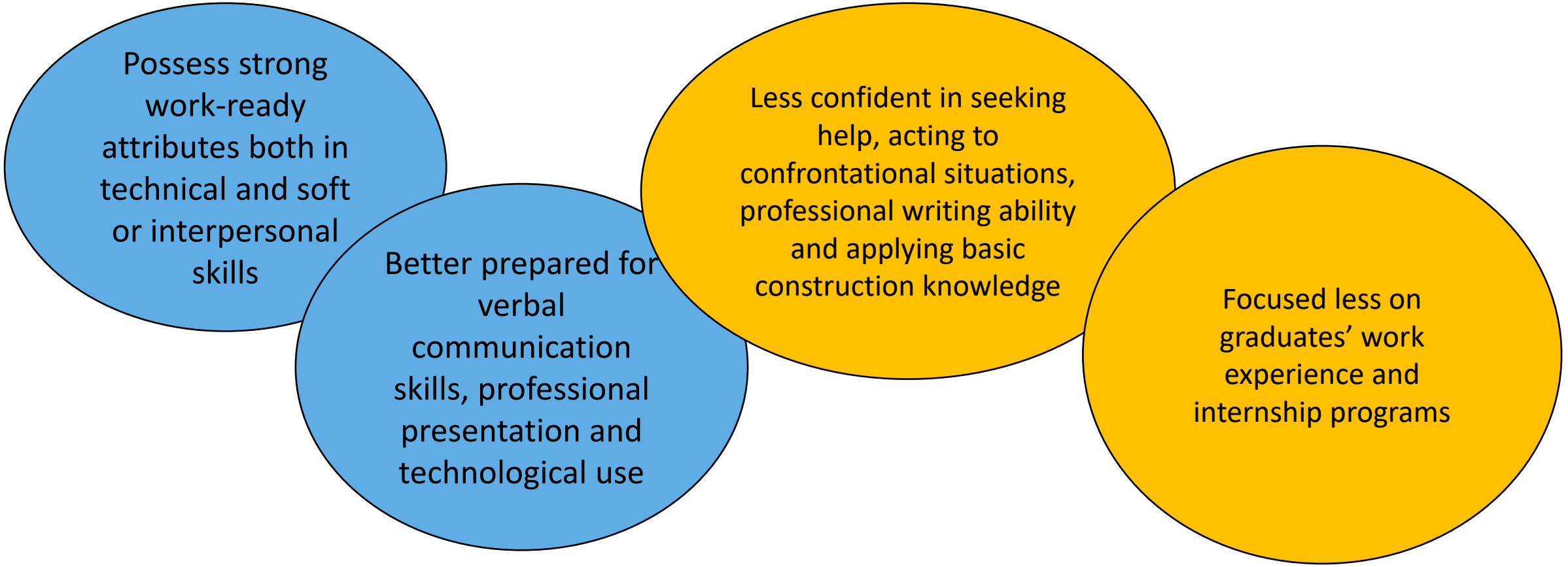
Behaviours: being globally aware, collaborative, and self-aware



Skills: being critical, literate, and good at problem-solving

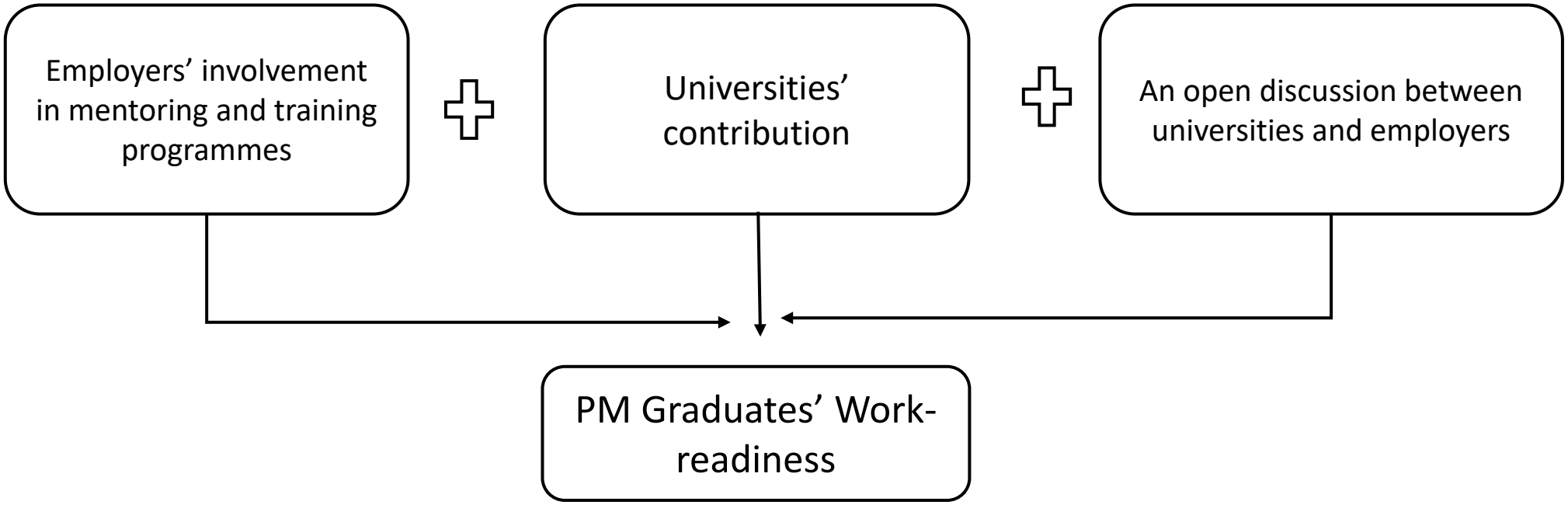
Borg and Scott-Young (2020a)

Employers' Voice

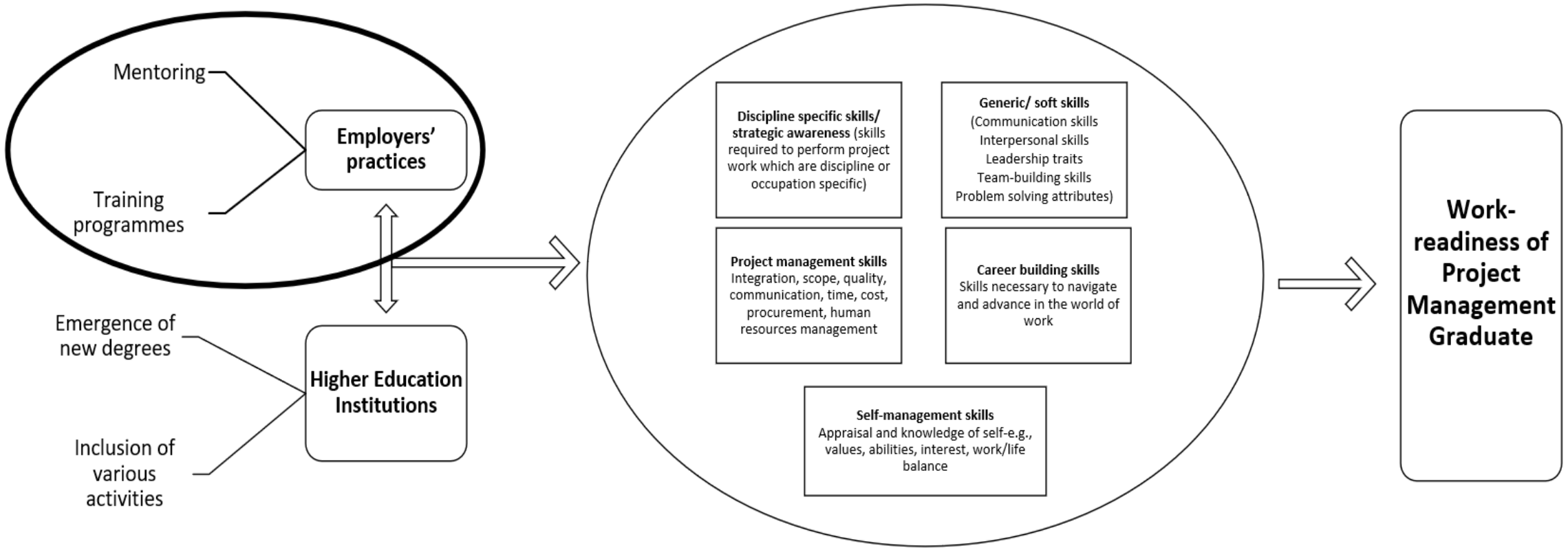


Borg and Scott-Young (2020b)

Discussion


Employers' involvement in mentoring and training programmes
Universities' contribution
An open discussion between universities and employers
PM Graduates' Work-readiness

Modified Conceptual Framework



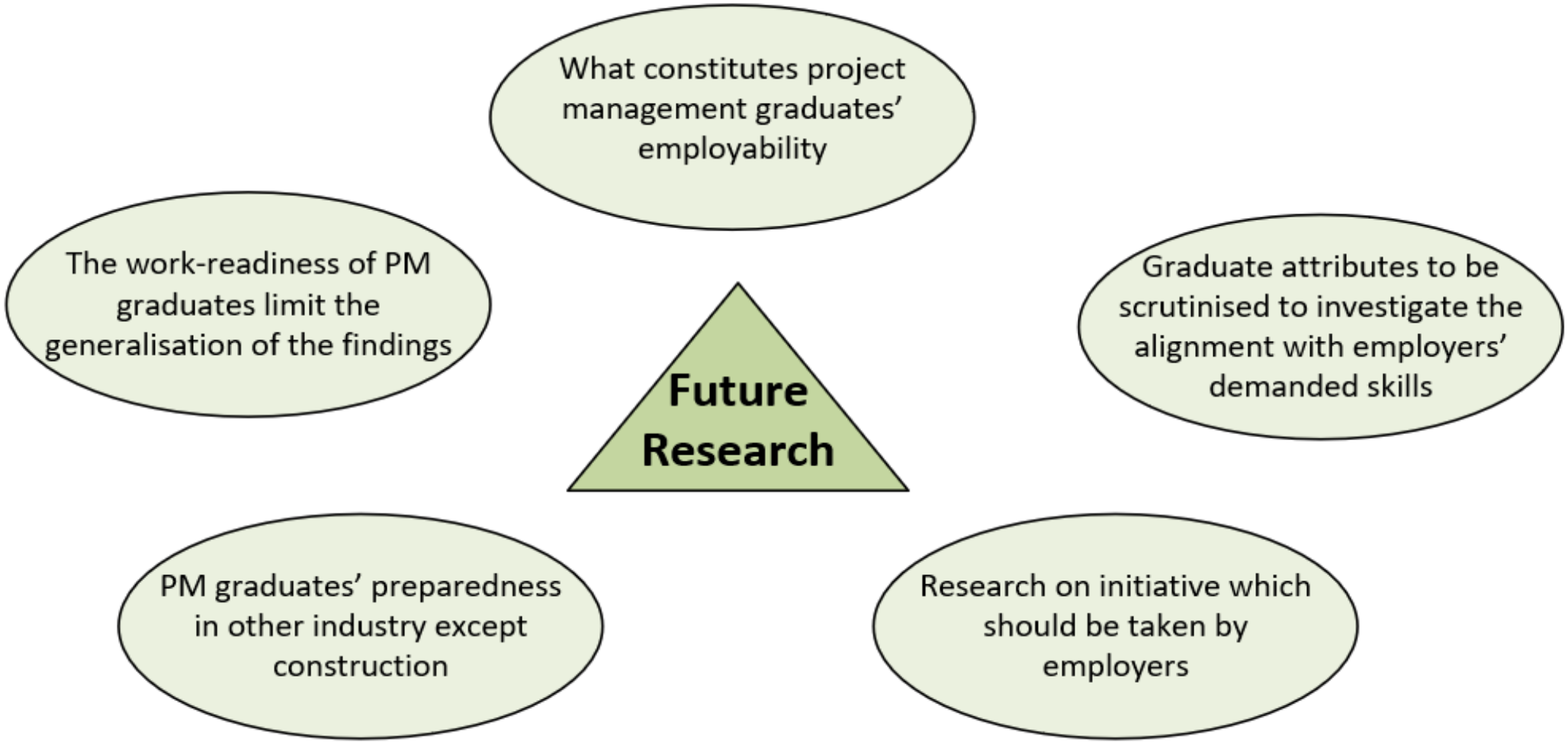
Conclusion

- While no agreed definition around employability, it is not a mere accumulation of technical and generic skills.
- The employability of project management graduates is multi-dimensional.
- HEIs can contribute to one aspect of employability: the work-readiness of project management graduates.
- HEIs are slowly making progress in developing work-ready attributes in project management graduates.

Conclusion

- Alignment with the ‘Human Capital Theory’.
- Looking at this result through the lens of Matching theory, there are still areas for improvement.
- Need to maintain their consistent effort to develop employable PM graduates.
- A partnership and open dialogue is necessary between universities and employers is required.

Future Direction



Thank you

- The full paper will be published in the September edition of the PGCAR Journal.

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