

Intercultural Competencies for entering the global workplace – a possible approach to assessment and validation

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in cooperation with a team at CAL and ACER, Australia

Rationale



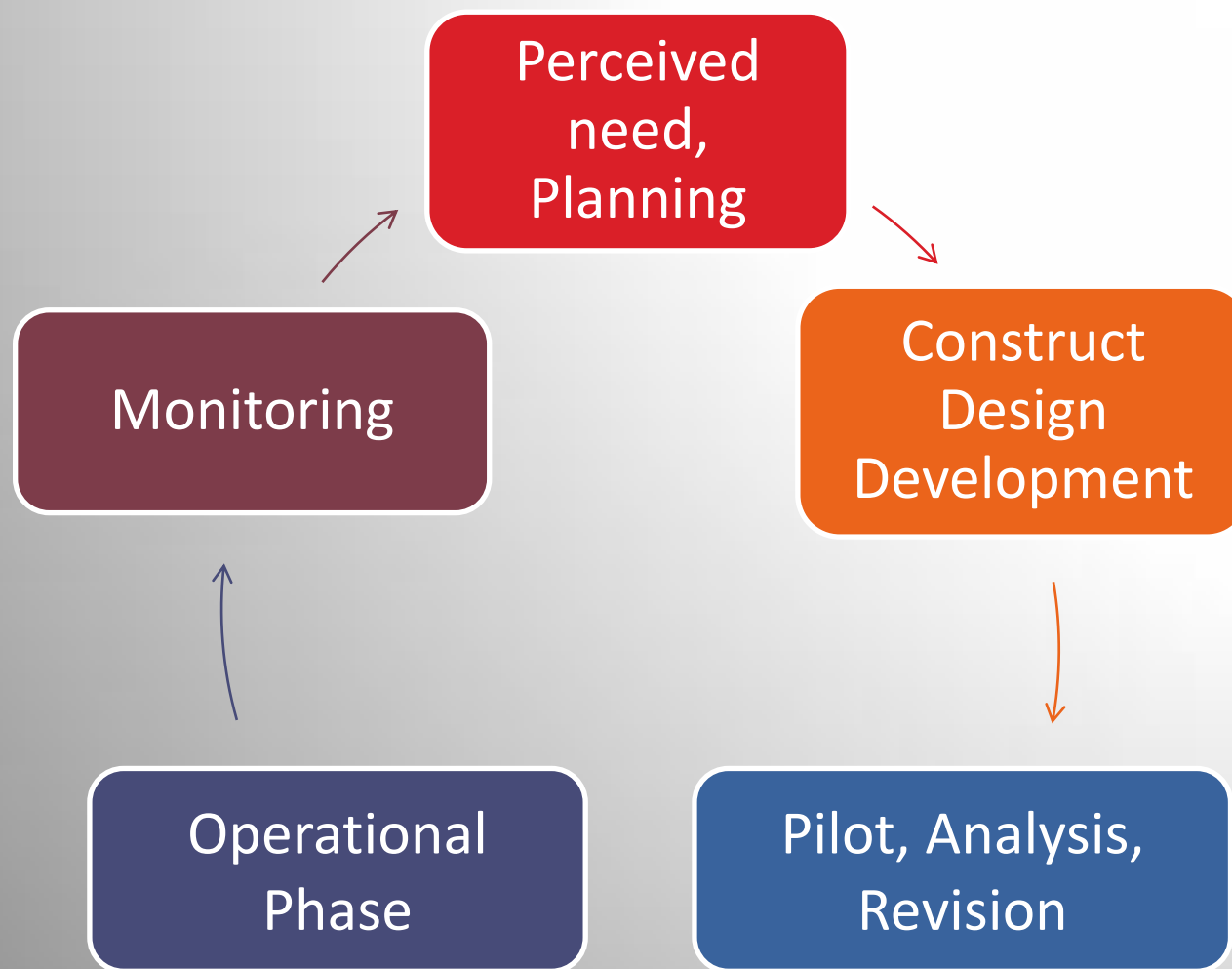
- Intercultural communicative competencies (ICC) increasingly important
- Regarded as employability skills for graduates entering the global workplace (e.g. BC 2013, CIHE 2012)
- Developing graduates' ICC for the global workplace responsibility of universities (e.g. Jon 2013; Parsons 2010)
- Current approaches to assessing ICC often lack reliability, validity, feasibility or empirical underpinning (e.g. Matsumoto & Hwang 2013)

Overview Research Project

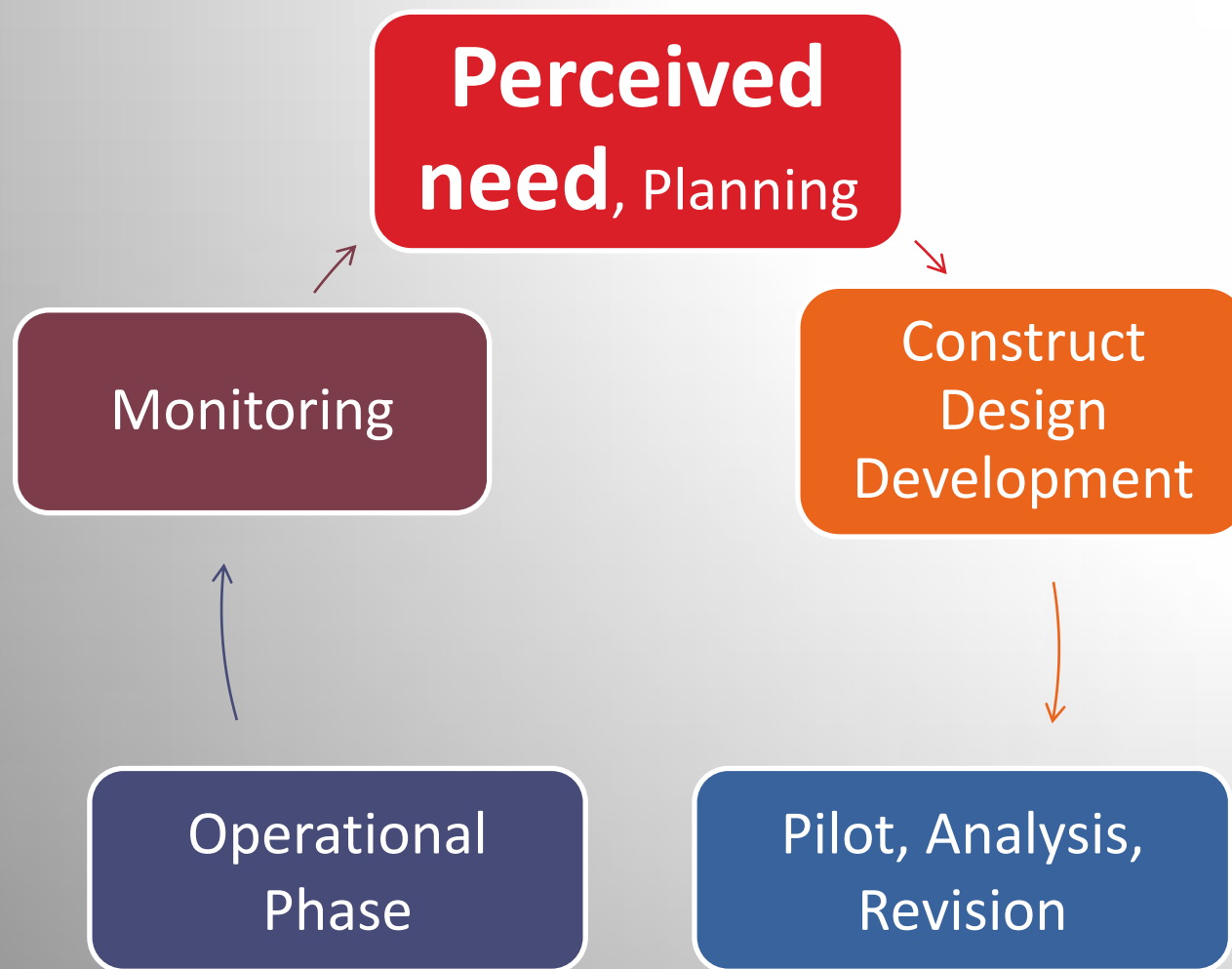


- Aims: conceptualising and assessing graduates' ICC for entering the global workplace
- Data-driven approach to conceptualisation and validation
- Work-in-progress:
 - presentation of main stages of test design
 - with a view to validating each stage
 - referring to data collected and preliminary analyses run so far

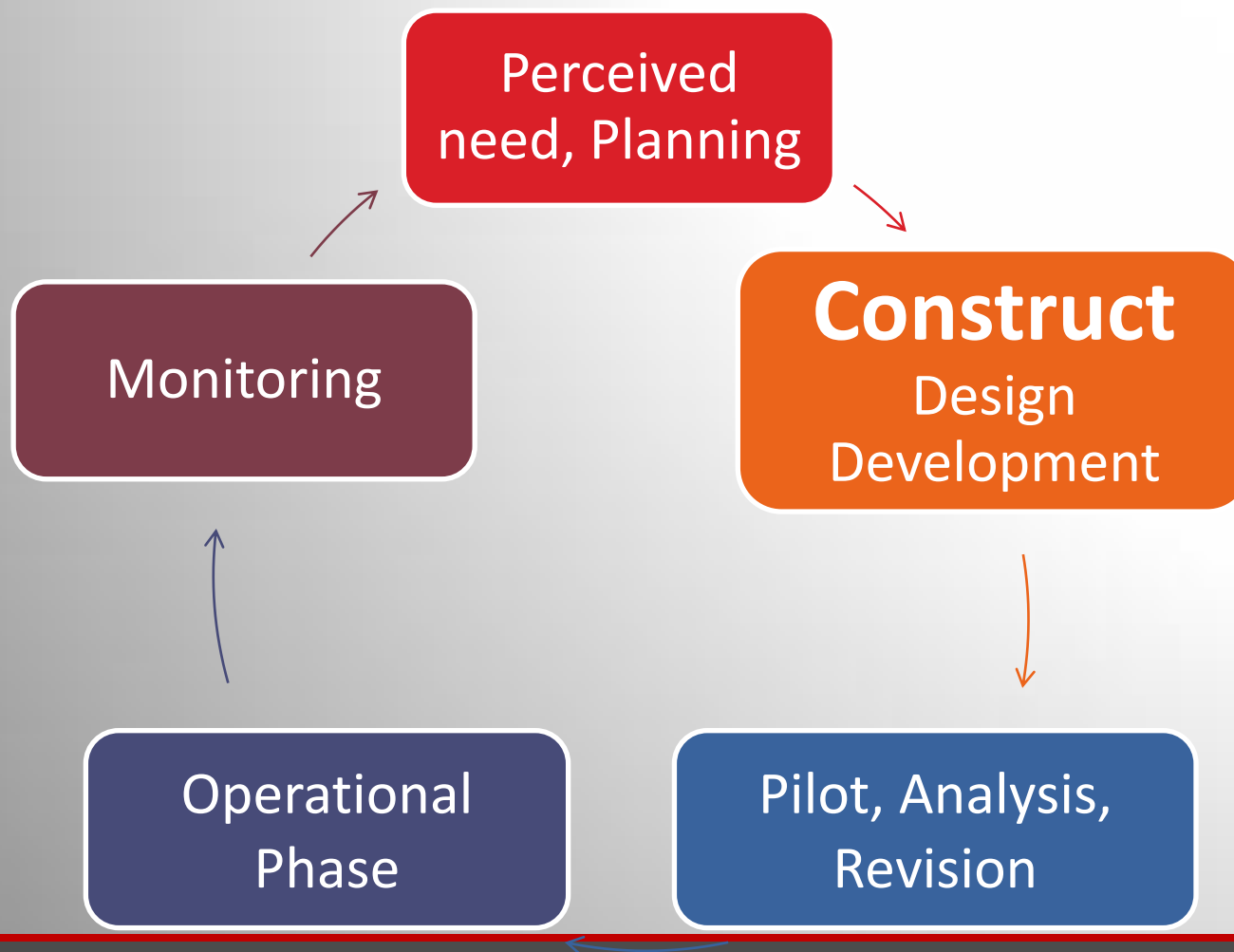
Test development process (Milanovic, 2002)



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Workplace Demands and Conceptualisation - Construct

‘Target ICC use domain’
(‘target language use domain’,
e.g. Bachman and Palmer, 1996; Douglas 2010)



Study 1: Demands / conceptualisation

Aim 1: Which **recurring issues and challenges** can be identified that newcomers face at an intercultural workplace (from the perspective of leaders and newcomers)?

- Describe the 'universe of challenges' relevant for intercultural encounters at the workplace
- Develop a list of characteristics to serve as
 - item writer guidelines
 - assessment / test specifications
 - basis to derive competence levels / qualitative performance descriptions.



Study 1: Demands / conceptualisation

Aim 2: What **competencies, dispositions** can be identified (reported by leaders and newcomers) which help to overcome or tackle recurrent issues and challenges?

- Establish a **competency framework** of ICC with a focus on newcomers at an international workplace

Study 1 Participants



- 5 focus groups, 25 leaders from third sector; 2 managers who gave work placements
- 3 focus groups, 14 MSc students having returned from work placements
- Written assignments, 16 participants
- 10 Erasmus students returning from work placements,
- 285 questionnaire participants, engineering students on IC seminars, Uni of Leuven, Jan van Maele

Study 1: Methods



- Data basis: interviews (n=51), texts (n=16) and questionnaires (n=285) data
- Inductive approach, thematic analysis (e.g. Braun & Clarke, 2006; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011)
- Several coding cycles
- Results: preliminary conceptualisation of issues, challenges and competencies – the so called framework

Study 1: Findings: Issues (selected)



Issues at work

- Team work
- Meetings
- Deadlines , time management

Atmosphere

- Leadership style
- Work attitude
- Work-life balance

Newcomer issues

- orientation, induction
- practicalities

Working life

Wider Challenges

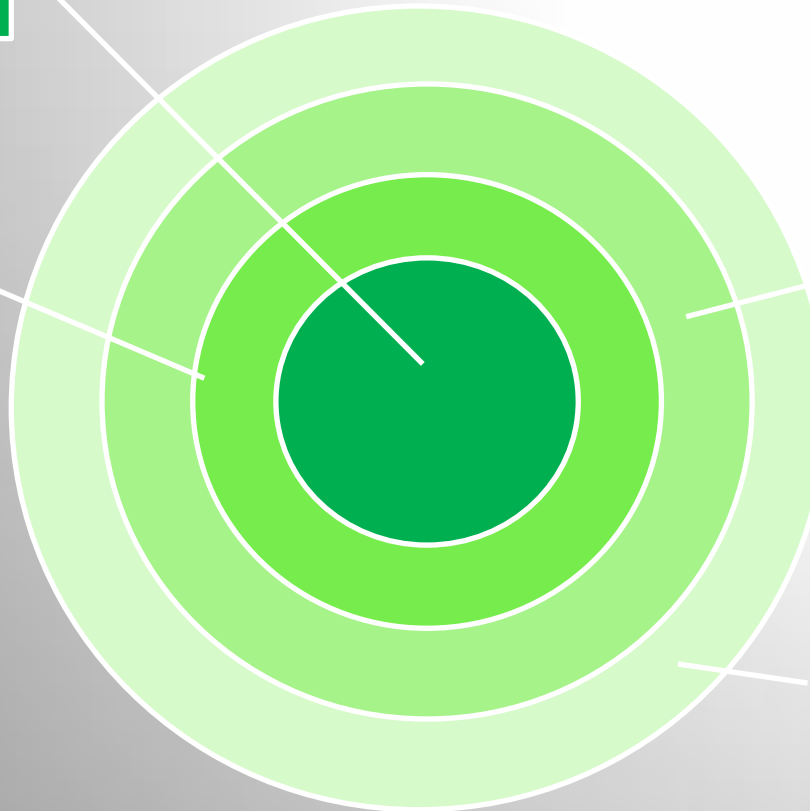
- Language
- Pragmatics
- Communications
- Relationships

Study 1: Findings: Factors involved



**Persons in
interaction**

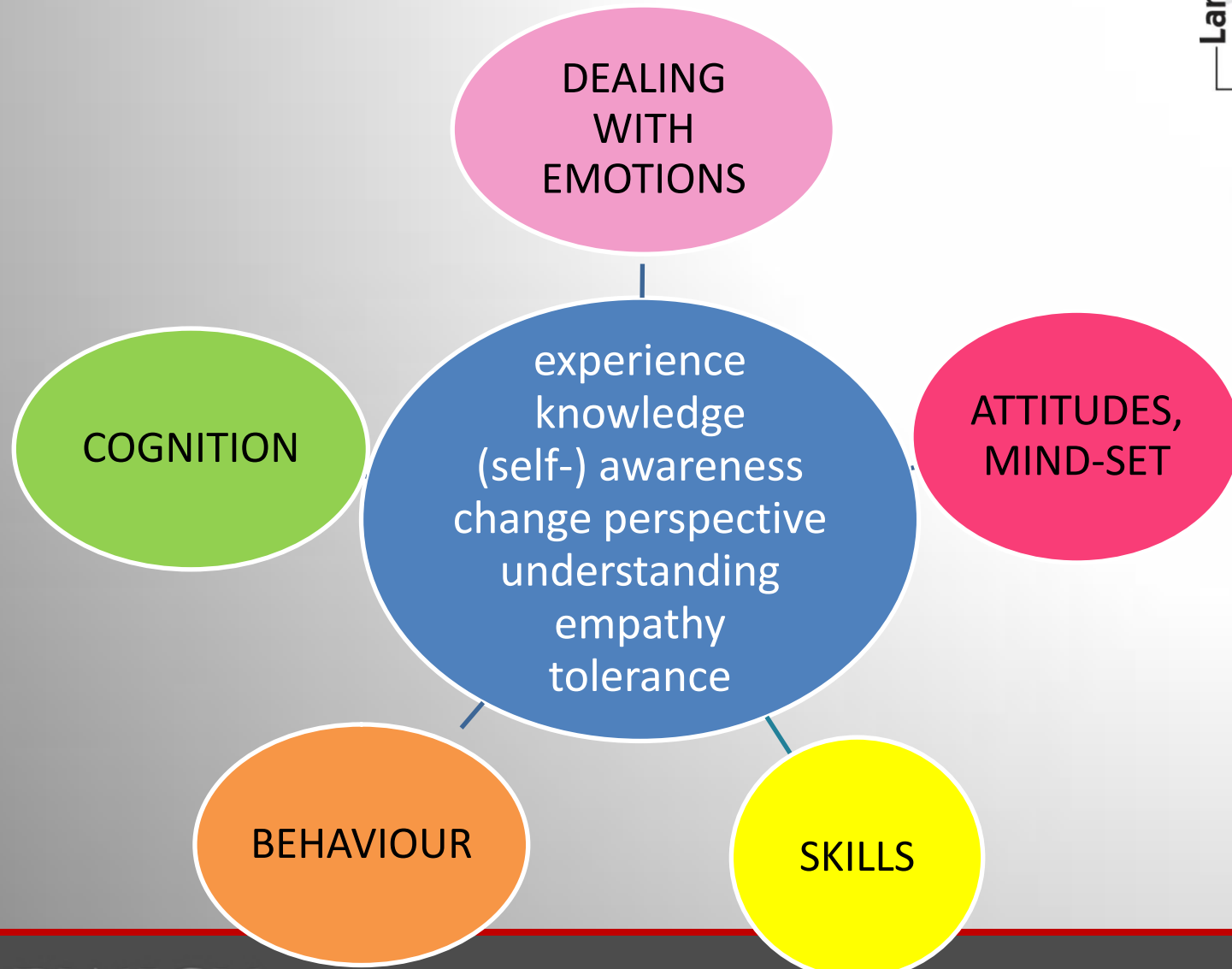
**Immediate
situation**



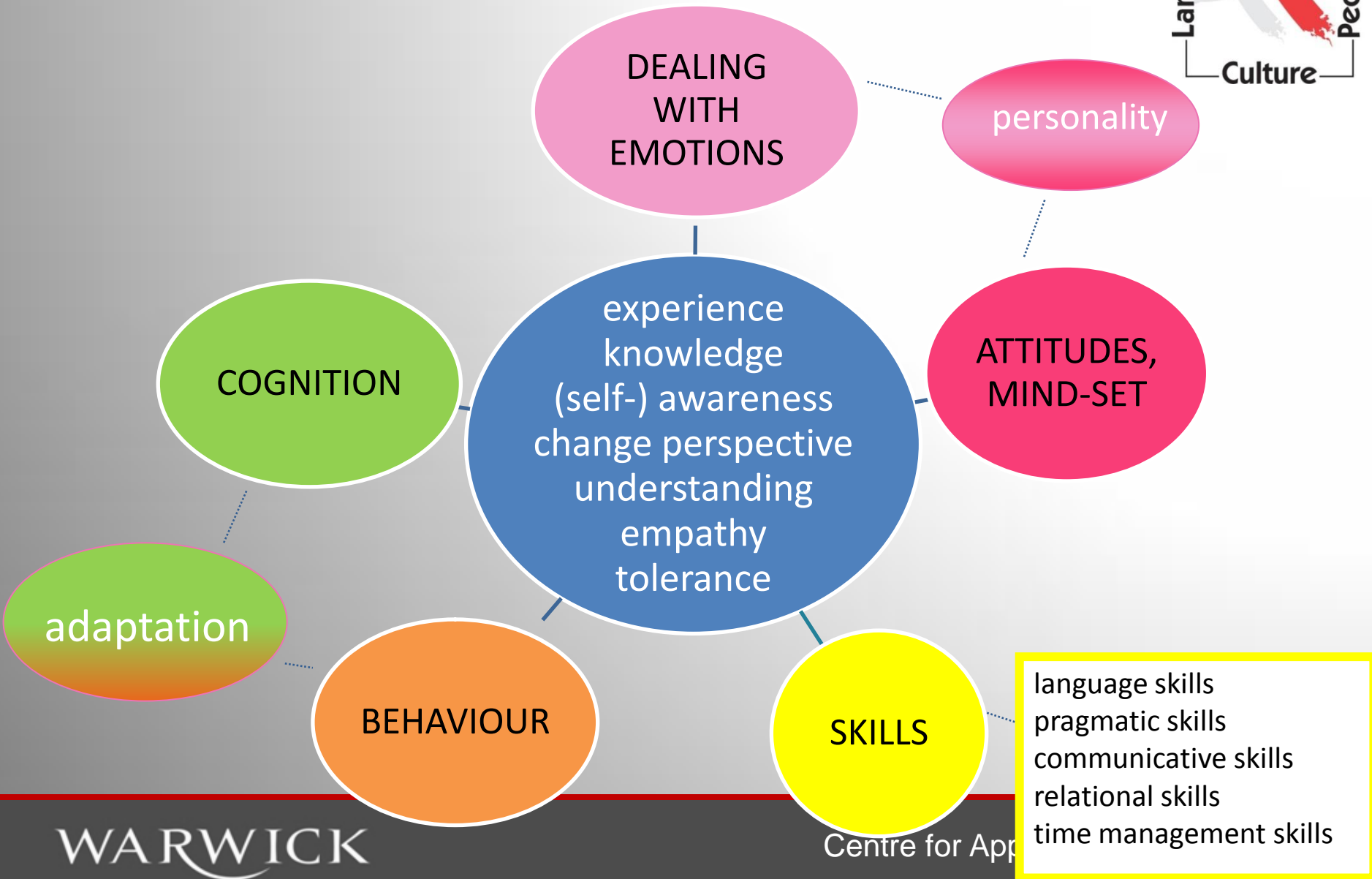
**Wider context,
e.g. which positions
do the persons have in
company, society?**

**Background
(culture of company,
community, society)**

Study 1: Findings: Competencies



Study 1: Findings: Competencies





Validating the Framework of Issues and Competencies

In Cooperation with a team from
CAL and ACER



Study 2: Validating the framework

- Online questionnaire: [link](#)
- Participants: experts and novices in a global workplace (managers and newcomers)
- Demographics and Background
- 16 statements on ‘issues/challenges’
- 15 statements on ‘competencies needed’
- Likert scales to rate significance/importance and frequency of occurrence [1 - 4]
- Open question to collect critical incidents



Study 2: Data collection, planned analyses

- 51 participants so far, collection ongoing; heterogeneous sample
- Scales: reliability analyses
- Factor analysis: Analysing issues and competencies
- Regression analysis: effects of demographics, background, e.g. experience (length of stay in number of cultures), L1, etc.
- Aim: Establish the most relevant issues (content) and competencies (construct)

Study 2 participants



Sample heterogeneity:

- age 21-67 (average 40);
- 19 nationalities;
- 14 first languages;
- On average worked in 4 different countries (1-40);
- On average 15 years experience (0-57)

Study 2: Preliminary descriptive results



Challenges arising from...	Importance (rank)	Frequency (rank)
Communication	1	1
Induction, orientation	2	4
Linguistic requirements	3	2
Team work	4	6
Politeness and 'face'	5	5
Time management	6	3

Study 2: Preliminary descriptive results

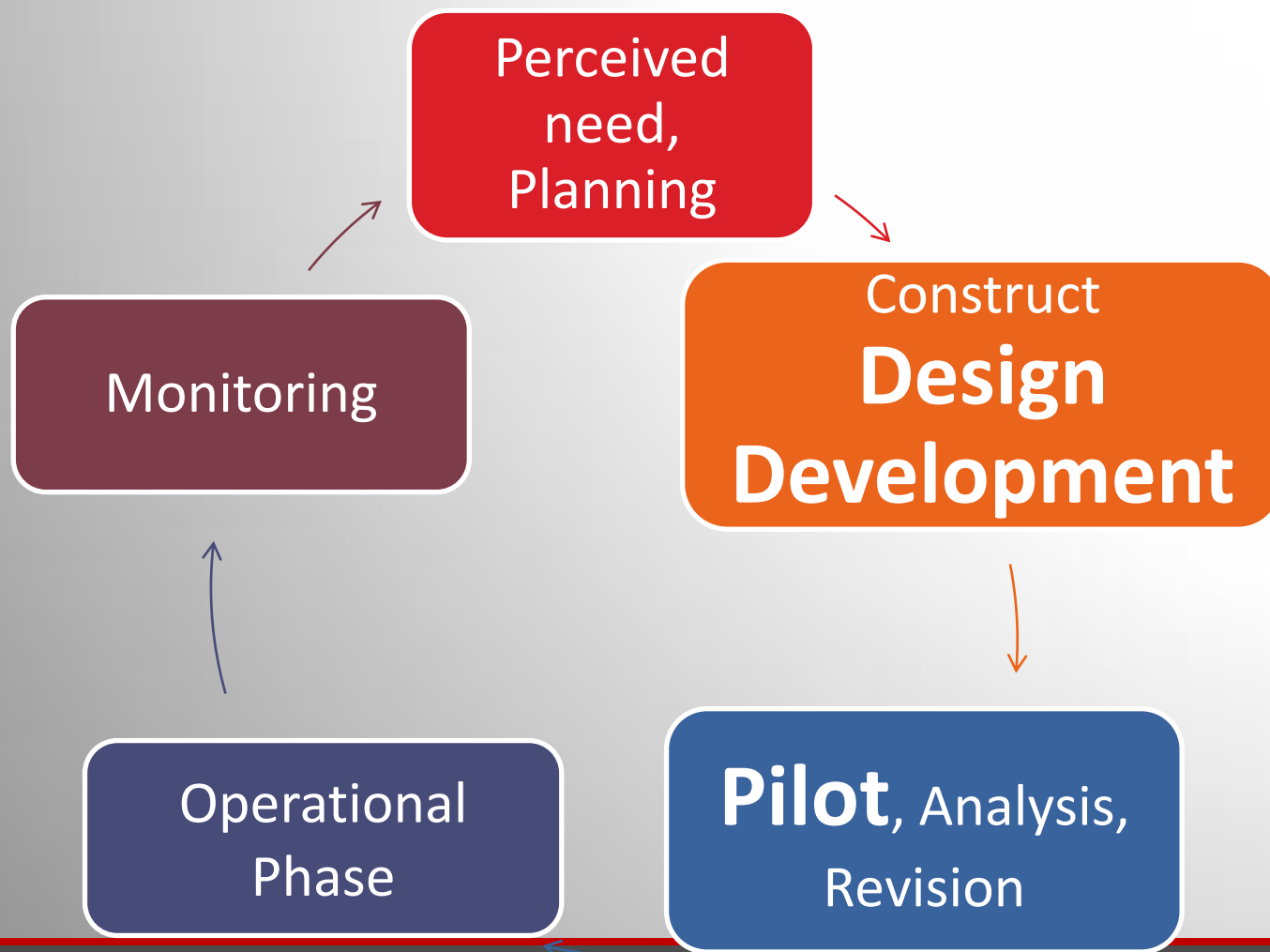


Skills, competencies needed...	Importance (rank)	Frequency (rank)
Adaptability, adaptive behaviour	1	4
Positive attitude and willingness	2	1
Change of perspectives	3	9
Alertness, perception, 'radar'	4	2
Dealing with ambiguity, uncertainty	5	3
(...)		
Taking the initiative, being pro-active	10	5



Design and Task development - using Critical Incidents

Test development process (Milanovic, 2002)



Critical Incidents



- CI: any kind of challenging encounters in intercultural communication
- CIs have been used for assessment purposes (e.g. McAllister, Whiteford, Hill, Thomas, & Fitzgerald, 2006)
- CI interpretation involves cognitive, affective, behavioural situational analysis
- CI can be used in open or MC approaches

CIs and assessment I



1. Collect CIs for a specific context from stakeholders
2. Analyse CIs using relevant frameworks (issues, competencies needed in the critical situation and for interpreting the CI)
3. Develop assessment scenario: narrative and questions for analysing, interpreting, evaluating CI
4. Pilot CIs and questions interactively, dynamically
5. Develop closed items based on IA analysis

CIs and assessment II



Assessment via CI requires the following skills and competencies:

- Cognitive situational analysis: What happened / is going on?
- Affective situational analysis: How do participants feel / would you feel?
- Behavioural situational analysis: What would you do / could should participants have done?
- Transfer: what is to be learned / recommended? What were the reasons for the incident to happen?

Study 3: Pilot Critical Incidents



- 5 narratives developed based on above data
- CIs trialled in dynamic approach (e.g. Poehner 2008)
- Graded questions (implicit – explicit) prepared to stimulate interpretation and understanding in co-construction with mediator
- CIs and questions characterised by above framework of challenges and issues
- 14 Participants in pairs to interpret incidents

Study 3: Analysing cognitive processes as part of validation

(construct / cognitive validity)

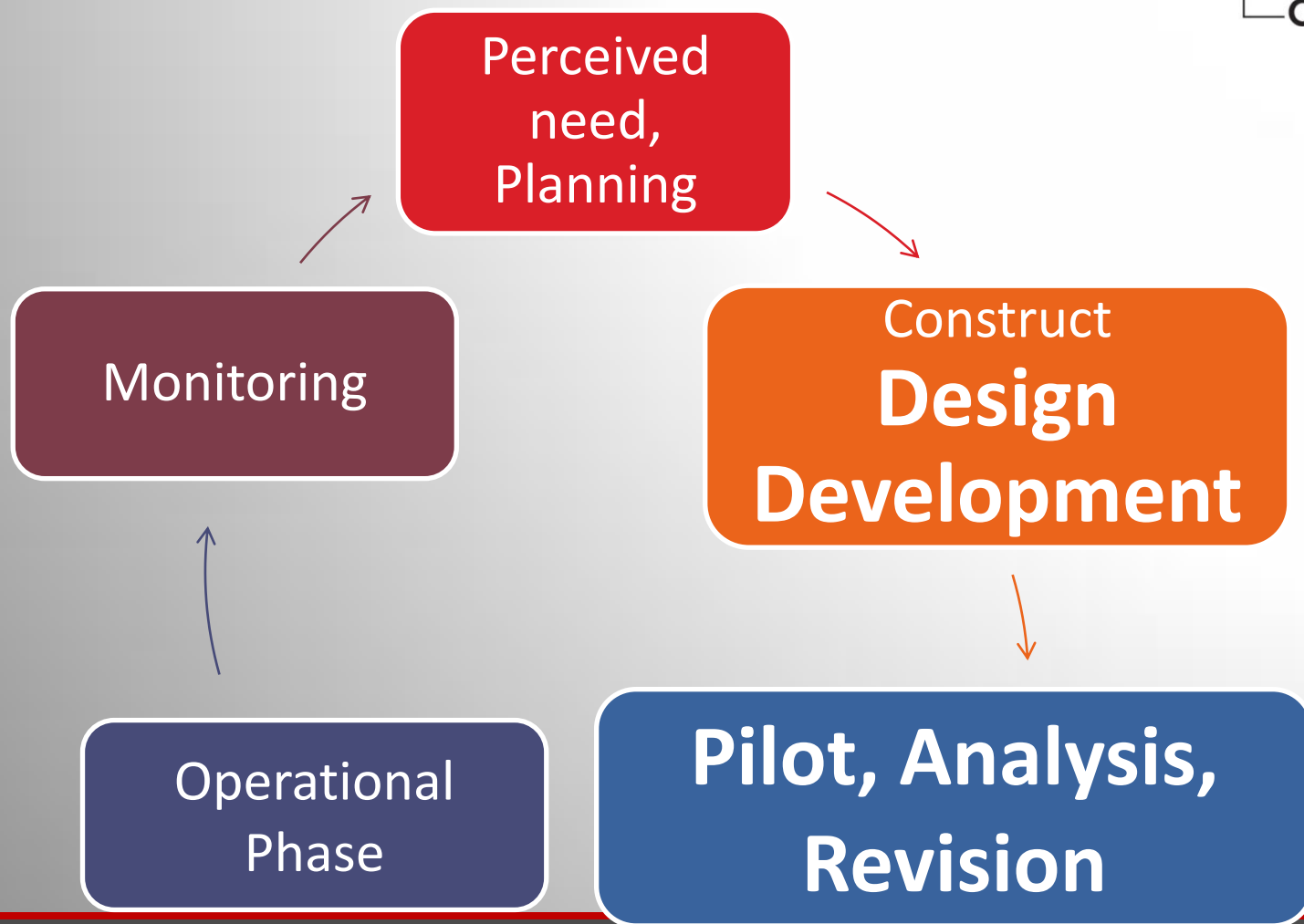


- 12 hours video recordings of interactions
- Currently analysed for
 - cognitive processes ('think aloud', why are incidents and behaviours interpreted in a certain way)
 - different interpretation options, different levels of plausibility (indicator for competence)
- Evaluation of feasibility of dynamic assessment approach in cooperation with Matt Poehner, Penn State Uni, autumn 2014



Outlook: Further Steps for large-scale testing / certification

Test development process (Milanovic, 2002)





Tests for Certification Purposes

- Certification: Use CIs as stimuli, accompanied by multiple choice options, graded in terms of their probability / plausibility
- CIs from stakeholder data – construct narratives
- Pilot in open approach (see above)
- Analyse cognitive processes, possible interpretations
- Develop interpretation options
- Evaluate probabilities of options (expert ratings)
- Specify scenarios and options using above framework of challenges / competencies



Tests for Certification Purposes

- Pilot scenarios and options in suitable sample
- Item and distractor analyses;
Think-aloud: analyse cognitive processes
- IRT scaling, factor analysis to check for multi-dimensionality
- Regression analysis, G-Theory analyses to identify characteristics which can best explain variance and item difficulty
- Use regression analysis to set cut-scores based on combinations of difficulty-explaining characteristics
- Investigate predictive validity

Summary



- Develop data-based conceptualisation of challenges and competencies for target group and context
- Develop CIs based on stakeholder data
- Use CIs for student development (dynamic assessment) and for interaction analysis (construct validation / derive options for standardised testing)
- Develop MC options and rank them by probability (of interpreting/explaining CI)
- Specify CIs and MC options with above framework
- Pilot and use statistical analyses to develop competency scale(s) linked to framework of issues / competencies



**Thank you
for your attention**

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