



Partnering to belong : Beyond inclusivity towards a felt sense of belonging

**SAGEA Careers Service Forum
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UCT Careers Service**





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**“I don’t know how to highlight my skills,
I feel like an imposter.” (UCT student)**





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The dining room picture





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**What was your experience of
unbelonging?**

How did you feel?

Where did it land in your body?





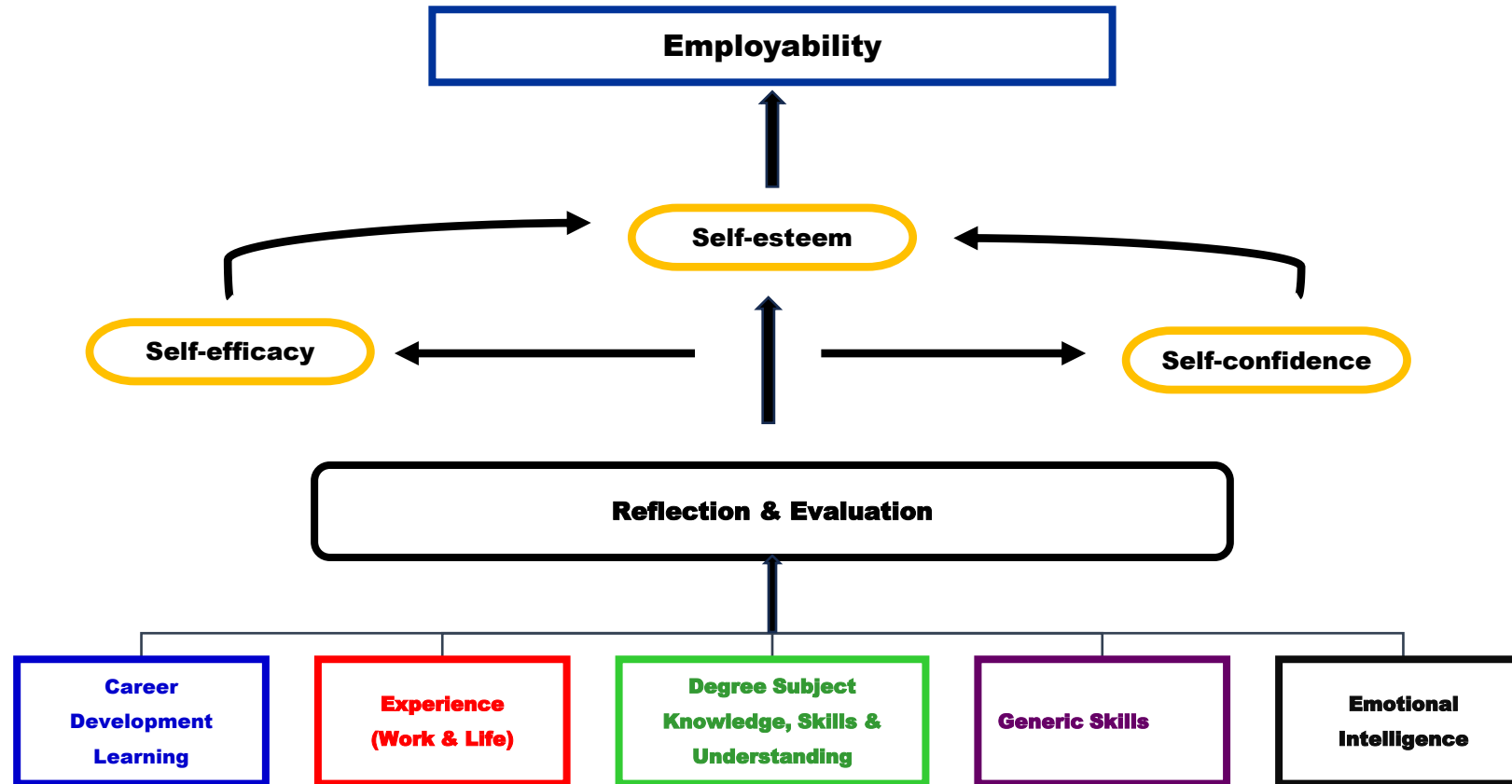
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Our purpose

**Enhance career readiness and
employability through careers
education and employability
development**

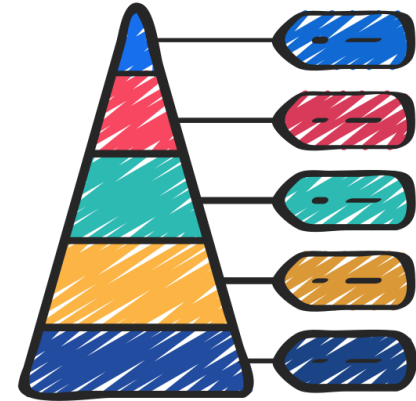




Pool and Sewell's Career EDGE model of graduate employability (2007)

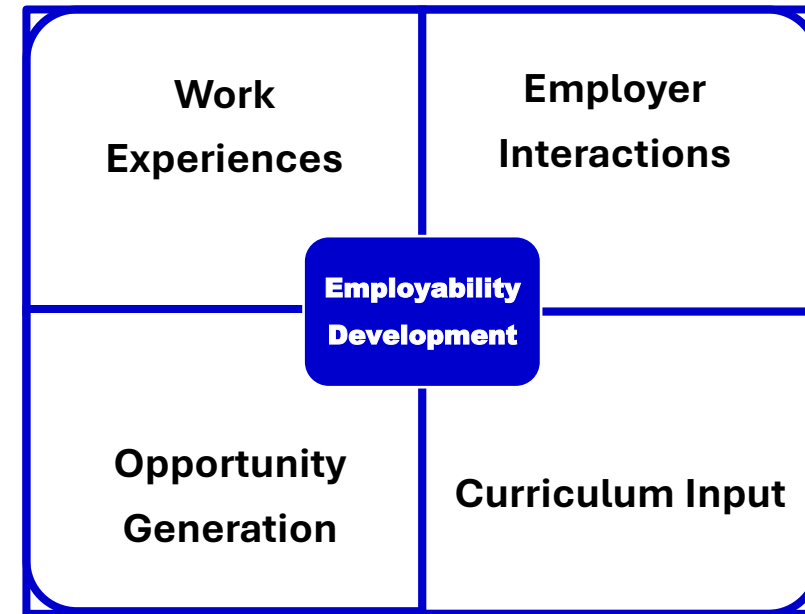
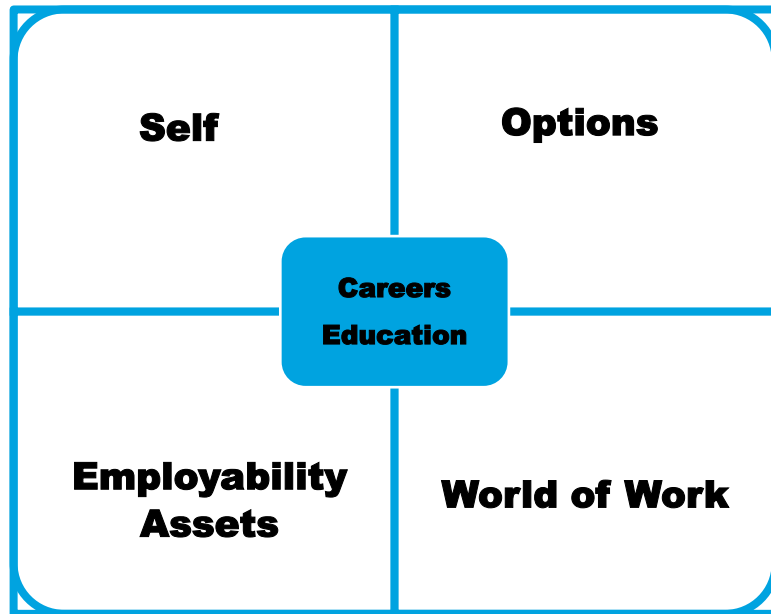


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Careers education & employability development to enhance employability (Daubney, 2022)





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The case for a felt sense of belonging





Research indicates that:

- ***Student belonging and engagement are central to improving student retention and success (Thomas, 2012)***
- ***Sithaldeen and colleagues (from UCT) indicated that a sense of belonging could help students overcome academic challenges and minimise non-completion rates; students with a low sense of belonging are reticent to ask for help (2022)***
- ***Students need to develop a sense of belonging and adjust emotionally and academically to persist in their studies (Mtshweni, 2024)***
- ***Students who need help the most are least likely to seek it out (Dodgson & Bolam, 2002)***



A sense of belonging

Is fundamental to what makes us human; (describes as...) subjective feelings and thoughts about experiences; (...)need, desire to connect, be accepted, and seek social interactions

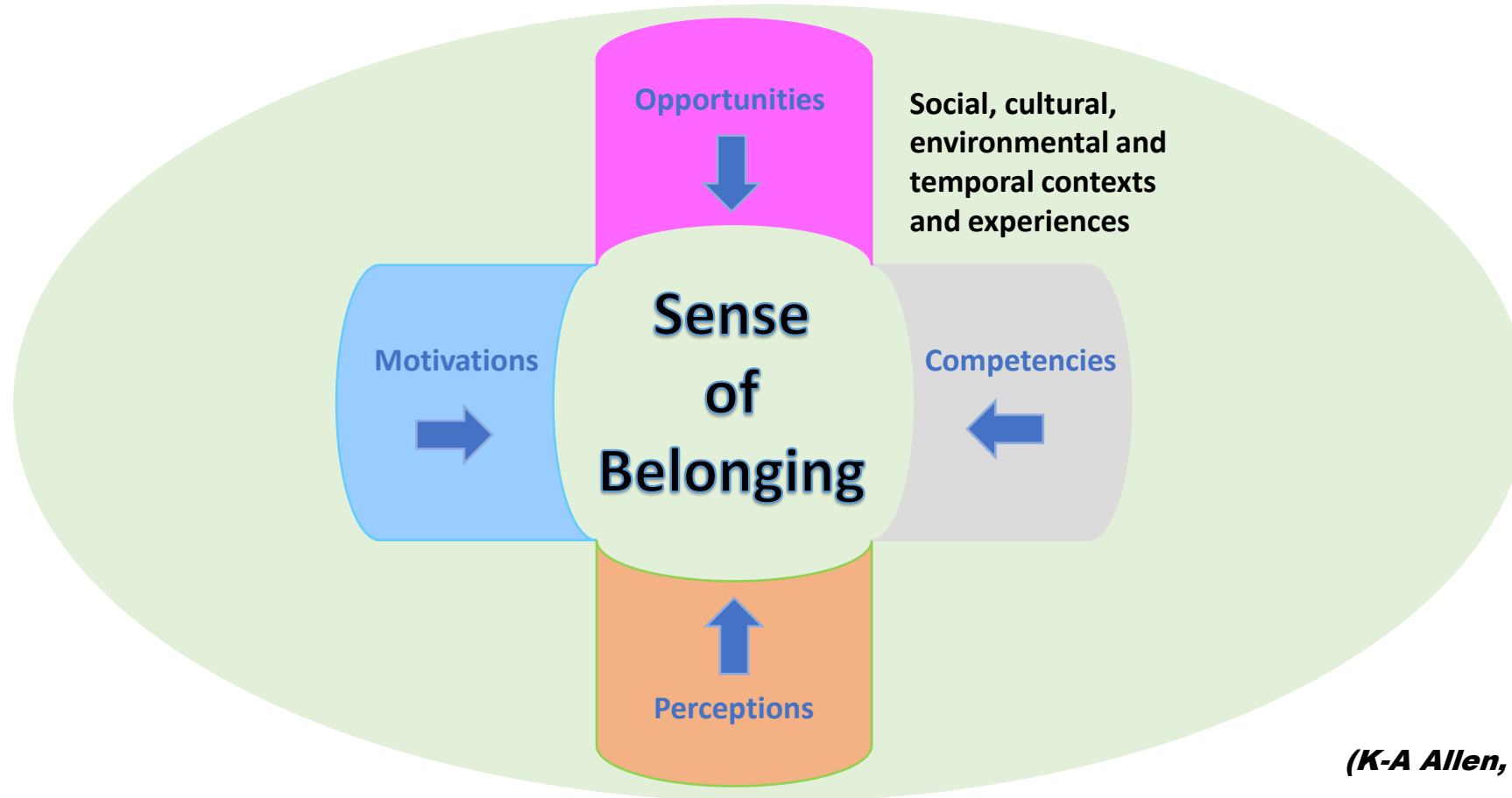
(Baumeister & Leary, 1995)

It is a multifaceted construct.

“It is a dynamic feeling and experience that emerges from the interrelatedness of competencies, opportunities, perceptions and motivations and to the degree to which they are supported by the contextual systems within which individuals reside.”

(K-A Allen, et al, 2021)





(K-A Allen, et al, 2021 p 91)



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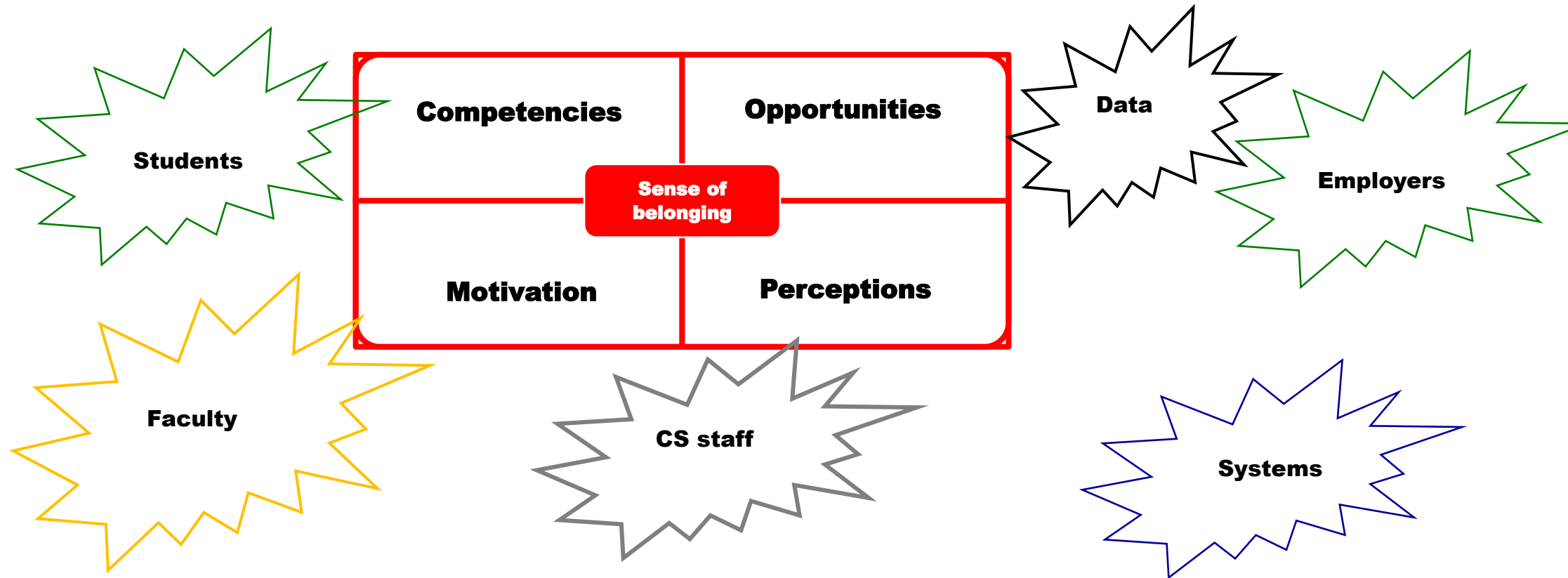


And so, what if we also ...?



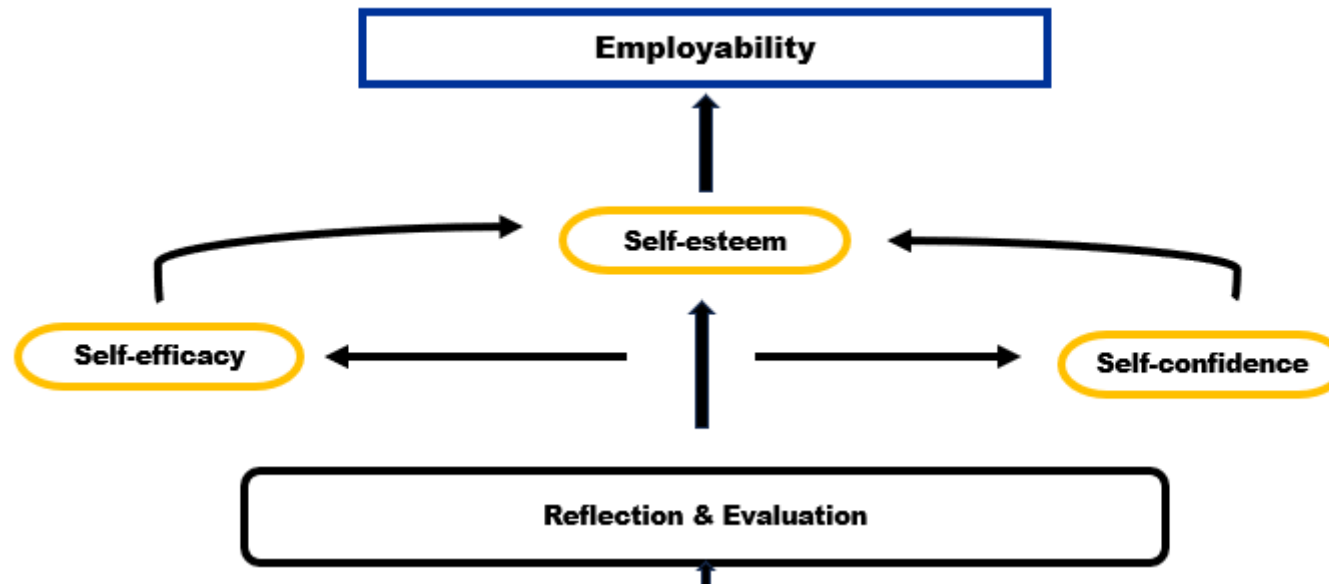


Integrate and amplify the benefits of a felt sense of belonging and it's relationship to success in higher education in our offerings and processes?





Growing recognition of role of sense of belonging in career readiness and employability





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If...

Diversity is being invited to the party.

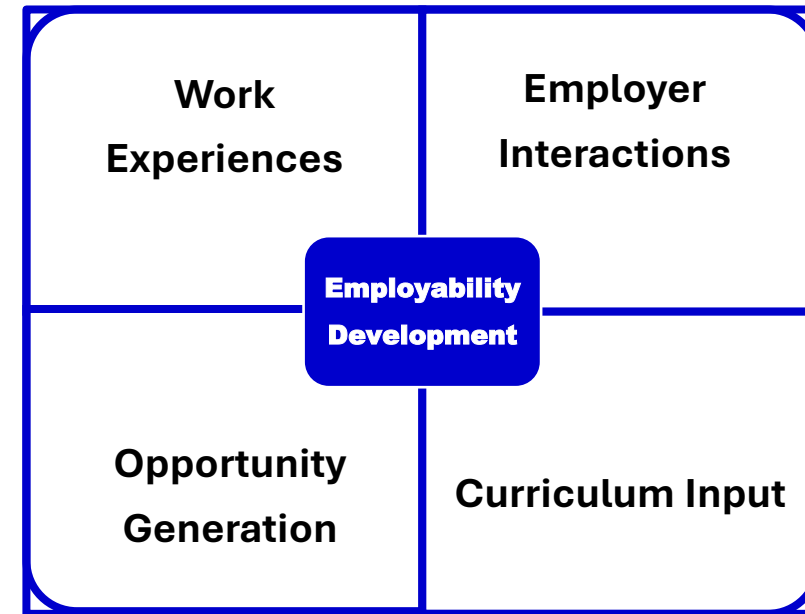
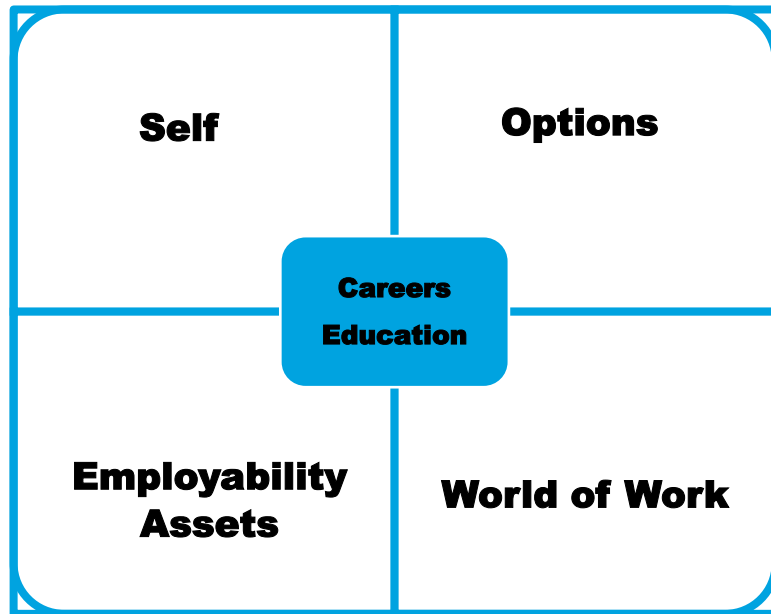
Inclusion is being asked to dance
(Verna Myers)

***What else is possible in our space to enable our students
to dance like no-one's watching?***





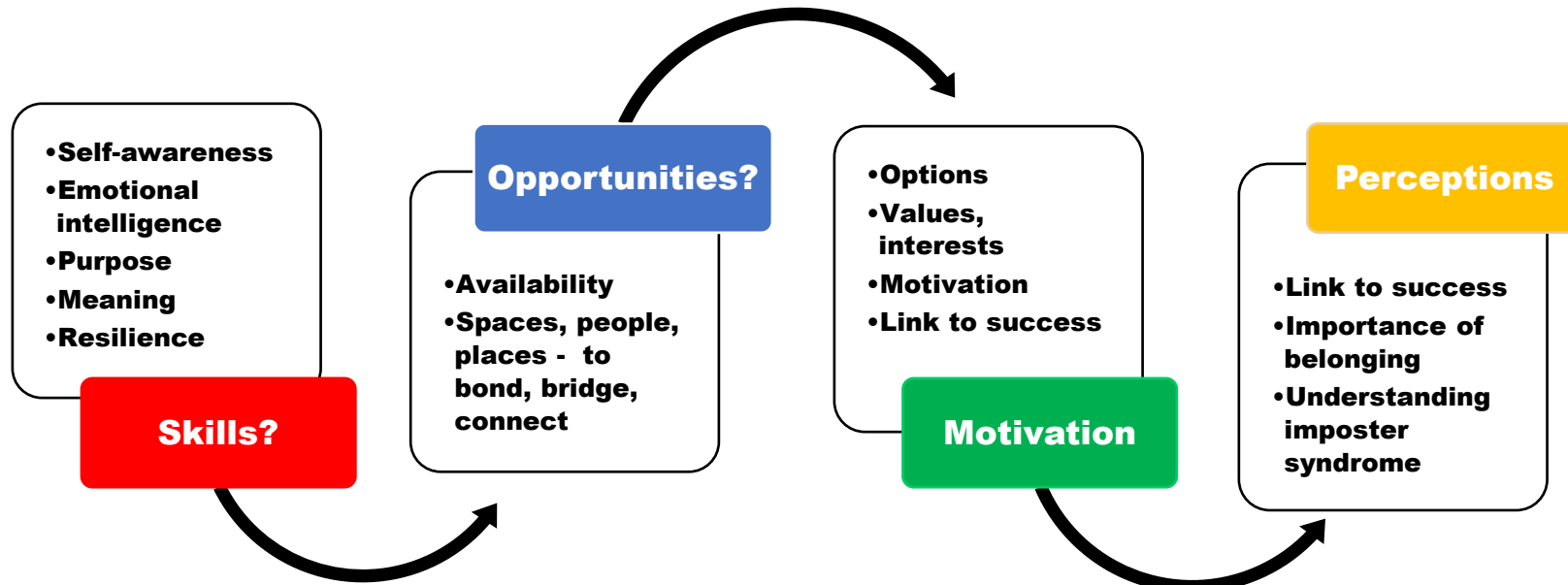
Careers education & employability development to enhance employability (Daubney, 2022)





Possibilities to integrate sense of belonging into CE + ED offerings?

Where optimum fit in offerings and who must we partner with?
What contextual factors must be considered?





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What about graduate programmes in the workplace?

***What becomes possible with purposeful leadership
to foster a culture of belonging
beyond current practices?***





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Any questions?

Thank you!

