

# CHERI

Centre for Higher Education  
Research and Information



The Open University

## A ~~b~~achelor? the flexible professional?

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# UK . and continental Europe: what's different?

- “ In higher education systems and their traditions?
- “ In the relationships between higher education and the labour market?
- “ In the ways in which higher education prepares student for employment?

# Cultural traditions of higher education



## **Continental European models**

- “ occupation-led
- “ content-specific qualifications
- “ marked boundaries between VET and HE

## **Anglo-Saxon models**

- “ loose boundaries
- “ low developed system of VET
- “ burden of job-specific training outside HE (usually the employer)

(Maurice, Sellier, Silvestre)

# Higher education landscape in England 2008



- “ Institutional autonomy
- “ unitary system of HE since 1992
- “ tuition fees since 1997,
- “ Most graduate with bachelor, about third have postgraduate degrees (often after work experience)
- “ steep hierarchy of institutions
- “ increasing state interventions
- “ employability, high on the policy agenda:
  - . foundation degrees, work-place learning, widening participation
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# REFLEX . The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society



- “ GRADUATE Views on HE and experiences of work SURVEYS in 12 EU countries (now 15+Japan)
- “ 35 000 graduates, 5 years after first degree (2000 2005)
- “ STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS in five EU countries (2004)
- “ Funded mainly by the EU, co-ordinated by University of Maastricht (Research Centre for Education and Labour Market Research)



# REFLEX data

“ By design, UK sample primarily of those who left higher education after first cycle (bachelor (93%) compared to 39% in the rest of Europe

“ UK students are both younger and older on graduation:

Age	20-24	UK 72%	All 40%
	30+	UK 21%	All 16%
	25-29	UK 7%	All 44%



# Graduates views on study programme

To what extent were knowledge and skills utilised at work?

“ First job	UK (%)	All (%)
hardly used knowledge	33	19
“ Current job	UK (%)	All (%)
hardly used knowledge	14	9



# Graduates views . study programme was a good basis for õ ..

	UK (%)	All (%)
" starting work	48	58
" further learning on job	49	59
" doing current work	39	50
" develop entrepreneurial skills	17	18
" personal development	72	69



# Winners or losers?

- “ UK graduates have had less higher education (39 months against 60)
- “ to a lower academic level (bachelors)
- “ are less likely to have taken vocational courses (27% against 38%)
- “ are less likely to have been on work placements (29% against 57%)
- “ are ~~underqualified~~ as well as ~~overqualified~~
- “ 9



# Winners or losers?

After five years of graduation UK graduates

- “ experienced similar periods of unemployment
- “ earn more or less the same as their continental counterparts
- “ seem reasonably satisfied with their current work situation (65% -63%)
- “ would choose the same study programme at the same institution (65% - 63%)



# Employers' Views (CE)

- “ Bologna good in principle, previously a qualification jungle
- “ Not sure what a bachelor means, particularly SMEs
- “ unfinished degree
- “ Not sure what to pay a bachelor
- “ Worried about additional burden of training
- “ Unclear about a bachelor-masters relationship
- “ Resistance strongest in countries with binary system

# Higher education views (CE)



- “ Different stages of implementation
- “ Concern about the professional credential attached to a degree
- “ Lifelong learning considered important . again mixed views, internal structural difficulties
- “ sceptical about employability agenda. It was difficult to teach employment
- “ How does one teach competences? In or outside the curriculum?
- “ %Employers do not always know what they want+
- “ We should not throw out baby with the bathwater
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# Divergence or convergence?

- “ Shorter degrees generally welcomed
- “ Deep rooted cultural traditions about the value of HE remain (status, professional credentials)
- “ Job specific training outside HE?
- “ Jobs in all countries ~~upgraded~~ or ~~downgraded~~
- “ Transforming capacities of jobs/ profession
- “ Generic competences needed in all areas of work
- “ The bachelor strong enough to ~~carry~~ its own banner?