Higher Education and Employability

Higher education and the economy

The connection between higher education and the economy is longstanding. In its review of higher education in the UK four decades ago, the Robbins Report listed four aims for higher education, opening:

We begin with instruction in skills suitable to play a part in the general division of labour.

(Robbins 1963: para. 25)

The Report placed this aim first in order to counter the risk that the importance of higher education for the economy might have been ignored or undervalued, and it went on to offer the view that few would enter higher education without an eye to subsequent employment.

In the UK, the nature of first-cycle higher education has in recent times been evolving, although the rate of change has been such that its magnitude has passed almost unnoticed (Yorke 1999a). The initial stimulus for the changes was probably the then Employment Department’s Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE) initiative of the late 1980s which was designed to accentuate in higher education the notion of enterprise. Over time, this evolved into more of a concern with personal qualities and transferable skills, and lessened the emphasis on entrepreneurialism. It is probably fair to conclude that EHE has had a lasting effect on curriculum development.

The more recent Dearing Report on higher education (NCIHE 1997) drew particular attention to the vital role that higher education plays in a modern economy. Global competitiveness, it asserted, required that

Education and training [should] enable people in an advanced society to compete with the best in the world.

(NCIHE, 1997: para. 1.11).

Some commentators have questioned whether human capital is the key to economic well-being (Morley 2001) and whether ‘employability’ is anything but an
empty concept. Even if the concept has value, it is debatable whether higher education can develop employability as governments suppose (Atkins 1999). Although these challenges have force, the notion of employability has far too much face validity for politicians to abandon it.

What do labour markets want of higher education?

When trying to appreciate the potential for higher education to contribute to economic well-being it is helpful to distinguish between the formation of subject-specific understandings and skills and the promotion of other valued skills, qualities and dispositions. Whereas the world of employment has, by and large, been satisfied with the disciplinary understanding and skills developed by graduates, it has been less happy with their development of what have been termed ‘generic skills’, such as communication, teamworking and time-management. In the UK, the grumbles of employers about graduates’ generic skills have been longstanding, although Hesketh (2000) provides evidence to suggest that there may be an element of myth contributing to general perceptions. If there is evidence from the employers’ side, there is much less evidence concerning the satisfaction of graduates regarding their preparedness for the world of work. Initial findings from a survey of new graduates funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) suggest that graduates do experience difficulty with verbal communication, time management and ‘task juggling’ (Leon 2002).

Harvey et al. (1997) showed that employers in the UK tended to value generic skills more highly than disciplinary-based understanding and skills. Whether the disciplinary aspect was being taken for granted by respondents to their survey is unclear. Brown et al. (2002: 19) quote one human resources manager as saying: ‘Academic qualifications are the first tick in the box and then we move on. Today we simply take them for granted.’

For some employers (the computer industry and social work provide two contrasting examples), disciplinary knowledge and understanding are vital. Indeed, in the field of information technology, accreditation by major companies is competing with awards from higher education (Adelman 2001), corporate universities are growing in the USA, and there are hints of their potential growth in the UK as well. For other employers, a general ‘graduateness’, understood to include the possession of general dispositions, qualities and skills (HEQC 1997), seems to be regarded as sufficient, where the view seems to be something like ‘give us a bright and engaged graduate, and we will build specific expertise for this organization on top of that’.

Robert Reich, Secretary of State for Labor in the first Clinton administration in the USA, has argued that advanced economies need two sorts of high-level expertise: one emphasizing discovery, and the other focusing on exploiting the discoveries of others through market-related intelligence and the application of interpersonal skills (Reich, 2002). The latter might be interpreted as entrepreneurship, whose inclusion in curricula at all levels was the focus of an investigation sponsored by the European Commission (EC 2002). In an earlier work, Reich (1991) suggested that
these professionals, whom he termed ‘symbolic analysts’, had a range of achievements to their names. Symbolic analysts, he said, were imaginative and creative, had at their fingertips relevant disciplinary understanding and skills, and also the ‘soft’ or generic skills that enable the disciplinary base to be deployed to optimal effect. One important source of knowledge growth is the learning-by-doing that takes place in innovative workplaces. Another is the higher education system.

The key contribution of higher education to national prosperity, according to Reich (1991), lay in the development of graduates with the skills of the symbolic analyst at their disposal. The consequence was that undergraduate programmes should be concerned with four areas in particular:

- Abstraction (theorizing and/or relating empirical data to theory, and/or using formulae, equations, models and metaphors).
- System thinking (seeing the part in the context of the wider whole).
- Experimentation (intuitively or analytically).
- Collaboration (involving communication and teamworking skills).

Educational institutions are not always successful in preparing learners for the complexity inherent in the two main sorts of activity that Reich attributes to symbolic analyst’s role: learners are often expected to learn what is put in front of them and to work individually and competitively, and subject matter may be compartmentalized. Plainly, the education of symbolic analysts – who are likely to be those at the leading edge of economic developments of one kind or another – requires that institutions make a particular effort to foster the achievements that Reich highlighted.

Higher education is, however, concerned with far more than the education of symbolic analysts. A massified system (Scott 1995) implies a highly variegated set of expectations regarding achievements: for example, mid-level qualifications have an important part to play in economic well-being (Robertson 2002). The US system, with its two-year and four-year institutions, and European systems (such as the German) with a differentiated higher education sector, seem to be more successful than the unified UK system in providing such qualifications. However, the introduction in the UK of the foundation degree (a two-year full-time equivalent programme involving work-based learning) is expected to fill a manifest national qualification ‘gap’ (DfES 2003).

As well as preparing graduates and diplomates initially for employment-related roles of various kinds, higher education has an acknowledged role in economic development through its contribution to lifelong learning – for example, in educating further the middle manager so that they can manage more effectively; in upskilling the teacher, teaching assistant, nurse or process worker; facilitating the development of active citizenship; and so on.

What is meant by ‘employability’?

There are a number of interpretations of ‘employability’ in the literature, which can be reduced to three overarching constructs:
• Employability as demonstrated by the graduate actually obtaining a job.
• Employability as the student being developed by their experience of higher education (i.e. it is a curricular and perhaps extracurricular process).
• Employability in terms of personal achievements (and, implicitly, potential).

In the UK, a key performance indicator is the proportion of graduates obtaining jobs (HEFCE 2002) – currently, this indicator covers any job, rather than only those that would normatively be accepted as ‘graduate jobs’. Even if this indicator could be refined sufficiently to include only ‘graduate jobs’, it would still be problematic since it would not take into account the fluctuations in the labour market, or the differential ease that graduates from different disciplines experience in getting a job (for example, when there is a shortage of teachers, graduates from teacher education have no difficulty in obtaining employment). However, employability should not be confused with the acquisition of a job, whether a ‘graduate job’ or otherwise. It is also a mistake to assume that provision of experience, whether within higher education or without, is a sufficient condition for enhanced employability. The curricular process may facilitate the development of prerequisites appropriate to employment, but does not guarantee it. Hence it is inappropriate to assume that a student is highly employable merely on the grounds that they have experienced a particular curriculum.

The graduate exhibits employability in respect of a job if they can demonstrate a set of achievements that are relevant to that job. They are ‘capable’ in Stephenson’s (1998) terms, which point beyond employability at the moment of graduation towards employability in the context of lifelong learning:

    Capable people have confidence in their ability to
    1. take effective and appropriate action,
    2. explain what they are seeking to achieve,
    3. live and work effectively with others, and
    4. continue to learn from their experiences, both as individuals and in association with others,

in a diverse and changing society. . . .

    Capability is a necessary part of specialist expertise, not separate from it. Capable people not only know about their specialisms, they also have the confidence to apply their knowledge and skills within varied and changing situations and to continue to develop their specialist knowledge and skills.
    (Stephenson 1998: 2, minor presentational changes made)

Employability is context-dependent. A repertoire of attributes and achievements may have a general value, but may well prove insufficient for some specific situations. Employability is, then, a (multifaceted) characteristic of the individual. It is, after all, the individual whose appropriateness for a job is appraised by an employer.
Definitions of employability

In this book, employability is taken as

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a set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations.
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There are a number of points to be made regarding this definition.

- It is probabilistic. There is no certainty that the possession of a range of desirable characteristics will convert employability into employment: there are too many extraneous socio-economic variables for that.
- The choice of occupation is, for many graduates, likely to be constrained. They may have to accept that their first choice of post is not realistic in the prevailing circumstances, and aim instead for an option that calls on the skills etc. that they have developed.
- The gaining of a ‘graduate job’ and success in it should not be conflated. Higher education awards describe the graduate’s past performance but some achievements vital for workplace success might not be covered, not least because of the difficulty of placing a grade on characteristics such as drive, cooperative working and leadership. Large organizations may be able to fill in any gaps by recruiting through assessment centres which can call upon a greater range of (expensive) assessment techniques.

It is necessary not to lose sight of the fact that most of the discussion of employability implicitly refers to the full-time student who enters higher education at around the age of 18 and who graduates at the age of 21 or 22, and deals with matters beyond the boundaries of the subject discipline(s) concerned. For older students, employability may take on a different colouring, since those students may well have experienced employment and/or voluntary work prior to engaging in higher education: for them, the emphasis that they give to employability may be on the development of subject-specific understanding to complement what they have already learned about employability in general. There is also a need to acknowledge the employment-relevant learning that ostensibly full-time students derive from part-time employment as they seek to fund their passage through higher education.

**Alternative approaches to defining employability**

Hillage and Pollard (1998) work towards a definition of employability that focuses on what is needed to secure and maintain a ‘graduate job’. For them, employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment.

(Hillage and Pollard 1998: 2)
Unfortunately, the word ‘capability’ is ambiguous, suggesting both ‘potential’ or ‘necessary characteristics’ and the securing of employment (which then attests to possession of those characteristics). Brown et al. (2002) claim that Hillage and Pollard’s view is ideologically loaded, because it does not acknowledge that the condition of local, national and international labour markets is a powerful determinant of graduates’ success. The criticism could stem from the ambiguity inherent in the word ‘capability’.

Brown et al. offer a different definition of employability:

The relative chances of finding and maintaining different kinds of employment. (Brown et al. 2002: 9, emphasis added)

They see employability as a combination of the absolute and the relative: the absolute dimension relates to the individual’s characteristics, the relative dimension relates to the state of the labour market. Following Hirsch (1977), they observe that, where many possess degrees, a degree confers no positional advantage in the labour market: ‘at best, it enables the individual to stay in the race’ (Brown et al. 2002: 9). The ‘relative chances’ proposed by Brown et al. are influenced by a number of factors:

- The programme choices made by individuals.
- The institution attended. (Some employers have a list of institutions from which they prefer to select graduates (Hesketh 2000). Further, criteria such as the match of a curriculum to the employer’s business and the reputation of the institution can affect the graduate’s chances.)
- An employer’s preferences (perhaps implicit) in regard to the composition of the workforce (see Brown and Scase 1994: 130ff). Blasko et al. (2002) show, in the ‘Access to What?’ project, that these relative chances are not the same for all students with equivalent qualifications, since some groups face systemic labour market disadvantage.

‘Skills’ are more complex than is sometimes appreciated

Over the years, a variety of terms has been used to signal the kinds of achievement beyond the subject-specific that assist learners in higher education to demonstrate their potential value to the workplace. The literature includes ‘core’, ‘common’, ‘personal transferable’ (often without the ‘personal’), ‘key’ and ‘generic’ skills, suggesting – as Bennett et al. (2000) do – that there is an underlying theoretical uncertainty regarding their status.

The Dearing Report (NCIHE 1997) recommended that higher education focus attention on so-called key skills (communication, numeracy, information technology and ‘learning how to learn’). Key skills are now a curricular commonplace in UK higher education and are often to be found in specific modules where there is both some risk of ‘ghettoization’ and a perception by students that they are of little relevance to the main thrust of their studies. A more rounded view of qualities and
skills relevant to employment and other situations, which is properly underpinned in theoretical terms, could lead to a more valuable – and valued – contribution to the profiles of successful graduates.

Wolf (2002: 117ff) tracks the policy commitment to ‘core skills’ and ‘key skills’ from their articulation in a speech on further education given in 1989 by the then Minister of Education, Kenneth Baker, and through a number of policy interventions, showing that their introduction can be laid at the door of the business community. She echoes Bennett et al. (2000) in remarking that they have nothing more than an ad hoc foundation.

There are two presumptions regarding skills, however linguistically qualified:

• They provide underpinning to a range of actions needed in employment.
• They are transferable from one realm of experience to another, relatively unproblematically.

Whereas the first is probably uncontentious, the second has been the subject of considerable debate.

In an early discussion of transferability, Bridges (1993) differentiated between skills that were in essence context-independent (the use of word-processing, say) and those that were context-dependent. Context-dependent skills can be demonstrated in behaviour that might be appropriate in one context (such as challenging received wisdom in higher education) but that might not be well received in another (challenging an employer’s way of going about things). Far from transfer being a simple translation, its potential applicability required an appreciation of how the change in context might impact. In the same vein, a recent analysis by Hinchliffe (2002) insists on the importance of developing situational understandings that are (at least potentially) able to cater for the unpredictability of happenings in the world.

Consideration of context-dependency led Bridges to a further category of skills which he termed ‘transferring skills’ – higher-order skills that enable the person ‘to select, adapt, adjust and apply their other skills to different situations, across different social contexts and perhaps similarly across different cognitive domains’ (Bridges 1993: 50). He points out that the exercise of ‘transferring skills’ involves very sophisticated personal/intellectual achievements that are much more attuned to professional behaviour than atomistic lists of competences. This is another way of describing metacognition.

Towards theory

In Chapter 10 we present a list of transferable or generic skills. Some would say, though, that it and others like it are little more than ‘wish lists’ constructed by interested parties. Two approaches which try to make connections between employability and theories of learning are:

• the model developed by Bennett et al. (2000) which links disciplinary content, disciplinary skills, workplace experience, workplace awareness, and generic skills; and
• Knight and Yorke’s (2002) USEM model.
Bennett et al. (2000) offered the view that four personal management skills were relevant to a range of contexts:

- management of self;
- management of others;
- management of information;
- management of task.

Linked with this is their model of course provision, in which ‘generic’ skills interlock with disciplinary content, disciplinary skills, workplace awareness and workplace experience. Their approach to skills development, whilst useful, is focused strongly upon the person’s performance: the individual psychological conditions that underpin a person’s performance are given little emphasis.

Employability is seen as being influenced by four broad and interrelated components:

**U** Understanding.

**S** ‘Skills’.

**E** Efficacy beliefs, students’ self-theories and personal qualities – of critical importance being the extent to which students feel that they might ‘be able to make a difference’ (not every time, but in a probabilistic way).

**M** Metacognition, encompassing self-awareness regarding the student’s learning, and the capacity to reflect on, in and for action.

The USEM account of employability is summarized in Figure 1.1, where it can be seen that the ‘E’ component suffuses the other contributions to employability.

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*Figure 1.1  The USEM model*
Understanding (as a term, preferred to ‘knowledge’ because of its implication of depth) is a key outcome of higher education and needs no further justification here. We follow convention by identifying ‘skills’ as a key element of employability, although we are critical of the term, believing that it lends itself to the view that skills are determinate achievements that can be readily measured and unproblematically transferred from setting to setting. These reservations are significant for assessment practices but it would intrude to elaborate them here and, for the sake of simplicity in this book we shall generally treat skills as a component of employability. However, we make a sharp contrast with narrowly conceived notions of skills such as those appearing at the lower end of the NVQ framework, or in some usages of so-called key skills.

Understanding and skills are not enough, though, if students tend to believe that their successes come from luck or from being innately smart and their failures come from malign forces or from a lack of ability. In the latter case students may succumb to the paralysis of ‘learned helplessness’ (Peterson et al. 1993) and, whatever their objective achievements, feel that effort will be wasted. As for students who believe that a high level of fixed intelligence accounts for their achievements, trouble comes when they encounter problems which defy quick solution. They are likely to lack persistence and to give up, which does not commend them to employers who want people able to chip away at problems that may be novel. It is better, argues the American social psychologist Carol Dweck (1999), to have malleable self-theories, to believe that strategic or reflective thinking, effort and persistence usually allow one to make some difference in most settings. Malleable self-theories go with a disposition to see tasks as opportunities for learning rather than as performance-oriented opportunities to demonstrate competence (or avoid showing incompetence). There are correlations between deep learning and a personal commitment to the pursuit of learning goals, and between surface learning and an orientation towards performance. Hence the self-theories that students – and their teachers – hold are likely to influence learning, with those tending to malleable self-theories being likely to have more belief in their ability to be effective when faced with novel challenges. Entity theorists – those who rely on fixed traits in their explanations of actions, successes and failures – have less persistence and less commitment to learning. Dweck says that,

holding a fixed theory of intelligence appears to turn students towards concern about performing and looking smart. Holding a malleable theory appears to turn students toward concerns about learning new things and getting smarter. We have also seen that entity theorists’ concerns about looking smart can prevent them from seeking learning opportunities, even ones that could be critical to performing well in the future.

(Dweck 1999: 23)

She argues – and we are inclined to agree – that graduates who incline to malleable self-theories can make better use of their achievements than those with fixed theories. She makes the further point that, ‘it is students who are challenge-seeking and persistent and can tolerate periods of confusion who have the advantage’ (p. 124).
‘Metacognition’ is a term not well known outside psychology, but we use it because it has an established literature which we find helpful when we think about how programmes can be designed to enhance student claims to employability. We mean three things by ‘metacognition’: knowing what you know, knowing how it can be used, and knowing how you get new knowings. Underlying these three senses is the idea that the more we are aware of what we know and how we know, the more we are able to use our resources to good effect and go about acquiring new ones. Metacognition complements malleable self-theories (it provides the reflective or strategic thinking) and it contributes to the continued learning that professionals need to do if they are to grow and to keep pace with changes in the demands of their work. Those without this reflective capacity are likely to be professionally frozen and act on the basis of what has worked in the past rather than think analytically and reflectively about what it would be best to do. The virtues of metacognition are asserted by Mentkowski and Associates:

Through a cycle of metacognitively monitoring performance, self-assessment of performance, reflective learning, and re-envisioning performance in some specific role, students and alumni gained a sense of self-confidence grounded in their capacities.

(Mentkowski and Associates 2000: 196)

The employability-aware curriculum

Curricula in higher education are becoming more complex. Not so long ago the Modern History syllabus at the University of Oxford was a laconic statement which merely advertised that there would be, for example, an examination paper in British History 1066–1485. The tutors interpreted the statement as they chose, the students inferred from their engagements with their tutors what was expected, sat the examination, and succeeded to varying extents. It was tacitly assumed that success in the whole degree programme also signified employability.

Today, things are very different. Higher education institutions around the world are expected not only to continue to promote deep understandings of complex subject matter, but also:

• to work with cohorts of students from a diversity of backgrounds;
• to pay more attention to teaching, learning and assessment; and
• to support the development in students of a broad range of skills relevant to employment.

The words ‘are expected’ signal the concern of governments in many countries that their higher education systems should be accountable for the quality of the educational experiences that they offer and for the achievements of those who enter. The signal is given force in the various national systems of quality assurance that have been implemented. Further, governments have made clear their expectation that higher education should ‘add value’ to students so that they will become highly employable.
In a time when – as the cliché has it – the half-life of knowledge is steadily decreasing, and the virtues of lifelong learning are asserted, it makes little sense to think of the first degree as being more than the first step on the pathways that graduates subsequently take. ‘Learning how to learn’ is increasingly recognized as an important metacognitive achievement that is central to continuing personal and professional development. This is not to disparage understanding of a subject discipline; rather, it suggests that the first degree programme needs to consist of a new blend of content and process that will provide a launching-pad for lifelong personal and professional development. The curricular emphasis shifts towards quality of learning and away from quantity of learning, since quantity can accrete over time more easily than can quality.

Models for the employability-aware curriculum

There is no single model for the employability-aware curriculum, since contexts, student recruitment patterns, envisaged labour markets and institutional (and departmental) traditions are amongst variables that have to be taken into account when designing curricula. Further, major change designed to create an ‘ideal’ employability-oriented curriculum may engender prohibitive collateral costs.

The ways in which employability can be developed through curricula include the following, which are indicative of general structural options and are not clear-cut distinctions.13

- **Employability through the whole curriculum.** The best example here is of Alverno College in the USA, which requires its students to develop eight broad ‘abilities’ throughout the curriculum. UK examples of whole-curriculum innovation include the introduction of ‘capability’ at the former University of North London (Page 1998) and of transferable skills at the University of Luton (Atlay and Harris 2000).

- **Employability in the core curriculum.** The Skills plus project14 argued the case for the USEM model informing ‘core’ modules in curricula, on the grounds that it would be more difficult to be systematic when modules, as optional components, were contributing in diverse ways to students’ programmes of study.

- **Work-based or work-related learning incorporated as one or more components within the curriculum.** The most extensive incorporation of learning through work experience is in ‘sandwich’ or cooperative education programmes, in which a substantial placement15 is built into the curriculum structure. A more modest approach is to award credit in respect of a module’s worth of experience, such as reflectively documenting experience as a representative of the student body. Separate awards can be made available for work-related experience, and some examples are noted in Chapter 7.

- **Employability-related module(s) within the curriculum.** Work experience often does not fit conveniently into curricular compartments, even though successful experience can be accredited (see previous point). However, an important contribution to employability can be made by fostering skills of learning independently that
may not previously have been developed. Institutions, therefore, often include ‘study skills’ modules at the start of programmes, seeing these as an investment which will pay off in terms of students’ autonomy as learners. Examples of skills-oriented modules at the beginning of study programmes can be found in Abramson and Jones (2001) and Booth (2001).

- **Work-based or work-related learning in parallel with the curriculum.** Many students undertake part-time work in order to support themselves financially through a full-time programme. Whilst this work may not be formally accredited, it nevertheless can be a valuable source of employability-related learning – provided that the student takes the opportunity to see it as such, and can take advantage of it when making an application for a job, or for some other purpose.

**Employability and modular programmes**

Many study programmes are modular in character. Modularity has both advantages and disadvantages in respect of the enhancement of employability.

The prime advantage of modular programmes is that they allow the student some (although not usually total) flexibility in choosing the modules to be studied. Where external constraints (such as the expectations of professional bodies) apply, the flexibility may be quite limited. Flexibility may also be limited where resources are constrained. A second advantage – for some students more theoretical than practical – is the opportunity that modularity offers a student to build up to a qualification by studying at more than one institution, or in one institution over an extended period of time. In the UK, credit transfer between institutions appears to have been little used, perhaps because of the lack of appropriate interinstitutional agreements and/or the fact that many students are restricted by residence to a limited range of institutions.

From the perspective of employability, a major problem faced by modular schemes is of accommodating ‘slow learning’ (Claxton 1998) – the kind of learning that may require more time than is available in a single module. The ability to deal with ticklish interpersonal situations, skill in tackling complex problems, and the development of powers of critical thinking are three examples where ‘slow learning’ is likely to take place. Slow learning is better assessed across a programme rather than at the end of a short modular slot. Hence a key challenge for modular schemes is to anticipate and forestall possible incoherence in the curriculum as it is experienced by the student.

**Employability and assessment**

The aim of enhancing employability brings into the open some longstanding problems with assessment. Awareness has recently grown that, for example:

- Some curriculum designs have inadvertently proved inimical to formative assessment, and consequentially to student learning. There is a need to review
curricula in order to ensure that there is sufficient opportunity in them for effective formative assessment.

- There is a need to accommodate slow learning in the assessment regime, particularly at the level of the programme.
- Some achievements cannot be certified rigorously within the resources and time that are available to higher education. It is necessary to give thought to what can, and what cannot, be certified and, where certification is problematical, to consider alternative approaches.
- Students need to be knowledgeable about their achievements, to document them, and to be able to present them to putative employers in an appropriate manner. Supporting the development of ‘knowing’ students will require more than rhetoric if it is to be successful.

Contemporary higher education is expected to facilitate the development of a wider range of achievements than ever before. The implications for assessment are considerable. The need will be for some radical rethinking where the tweaking of existing approaches cannot do enough. The challenges posed by employability (and good educational practice in general) cannot be wished away. In the succeeding chapters we lay out the nature of those challenges, warn of some sterile or harmful responses, and suggest some potentially useful lines of development for heads of department, programme teams, educational development units and senior managers to pursue.

Notes

1. Later in this chapter we acknowledge difficulties with ‘skills’ (e.g. Holmes 2001; Hinchliffe 2002) and point to an alternative formulation, which we develop elsewhere.
2. The implication is that ‘oral’ is meant, since students claimed strengths in written communication.
3. Rushforth (2003) points out that the current set of employment benchmarks are adjusted to take account of the locality, and that future data will reflect job quality. Further, graduates will be surveyed three years after graduation.
4. This is also the description used on their website and in their print publications by the UK LTSN Generic Centre and the English Enhancing Student Employability Coordinating Team. (www.ltsn.ac.uk/ESECT)
5. The same general point applies to part-time students, many of whom will be studying in parallel with being in employment.
6. A similar distinction may be drawn between ‘near transfer’ and ‘far transfer’.
7. See Bennett et al. (2000: 26ff) for a fuller account.
8. See Cowan (1998) for an extended discussion of reflection that can be directed towards students (in contrast to Cowan’s intended readership of teachers in higher education).
9. Although we have a little more to say about ‘skills’ in Chapter 4, we develop our critique in Knight and Yorke (2003), where we explain our preference for ‘skillful practices’ and our dalliance with ‘social practices’. Our point is that what are often called ‘skills’ are practices. The term directs our thinking to social theories of learning (Trowler, 2002) and away from psychometric ones. What holds for theories of learning holds for thinking about assessment as well.

11. If the person holds a malleable self-theory, then in the USEM model there should logically be feedback loops back to the E from the U, S and M (not shown in Figure 1.1).

12. Pintrich (2002) subdivides metacognition into three: knowledge about strategy, about the cognitive task, and about oneself.

13. A fuller discussion can be found in Yorke and Knight (2003).

14. This project ran in four varied universities in the north-west of England between 2000 and 2002, and sought to bring fresh thinking to the incorporation of ‘skills’ in curricula in higher education.

15. UK placements tend to be of one year’s duration. Elsewhere, shorter periods are more common.