

# Why are scientists afraid of employability?

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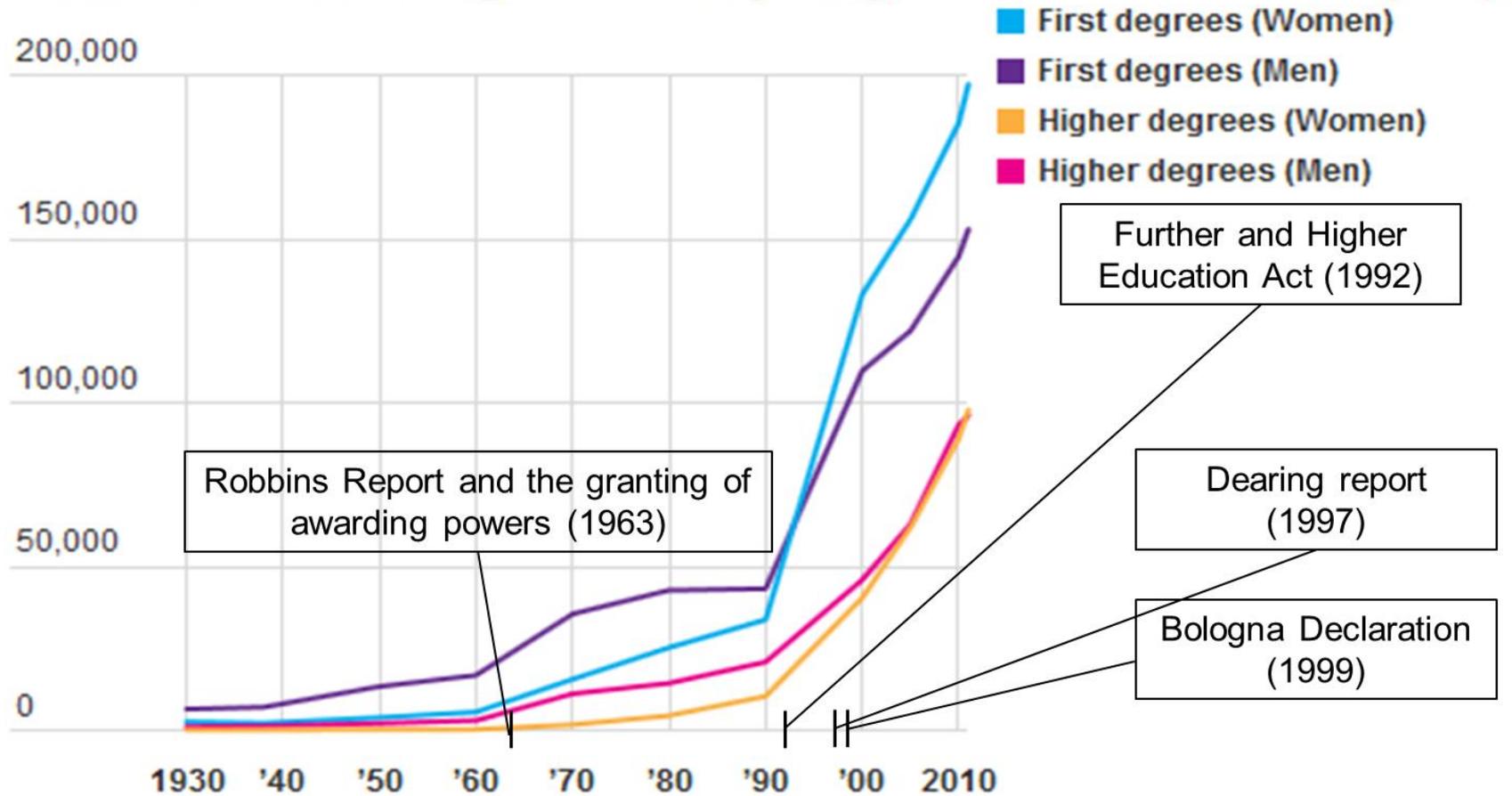
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# Running Order

- Defining the role of employability in the age of mass participation
- A history of employability
- Hope for the future

# Mass participation in HE

Students obtaining university degrees, 1930 - 2011 (UK)



# Employability

*“A set of achievements - skills, understandings and personal attributes - that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.”*

**Knight and Yorke (2003)**

# **Benefits of Employability development in HE**

- Improved employment outcome post-graduation
- Greater percentage of graduates in employment
- Varied and innovative teaching
- Increased confidence for students
- Satisfies government pressure

*'[It is] no longer enough just  
to be a graduate, but  
instead an employable  
graduate'*

"there is a close relationship  
between employability and  
good learning..."

# **Resistance to employability**

- The introduction of employability into curricula still experiences some resistance
- Academic staff often still consider employability to be something external to their course teaching
- Employability development can be seen as bureaucratic and management speak

*“employability is a different  
and separate issue from  
subject curriculum, teaching  
and learning”*

(Quote from academic)

*'Several academics worried about the potential dilution of their discipline if curriculum development to embed or integrate employability was imposed. The majority of staff and students felt that employability initiatives [...] should be “bolt-on” and additional to the mainstream curriculum, thus leaving disciplinary boundaries intact and allowing participating students to differentiate themselves from others.'*

The *Trends IV* reports revealed a tendency amongst academics to interpret employability strictly as preparing students for specific labour market needs, and as such a potential threat to the academic quality of courses. To many, this implied

*‘...a surrender of higher education systems to the short-term requests of an unpredictable labour market’*

**What's your gripe?**

Lamenting the loss of academia for  
pleasure/increase in the *business*  
of HE

*"Employability is not just about students making  
deposits in a bank of skills"*

# Management Speak

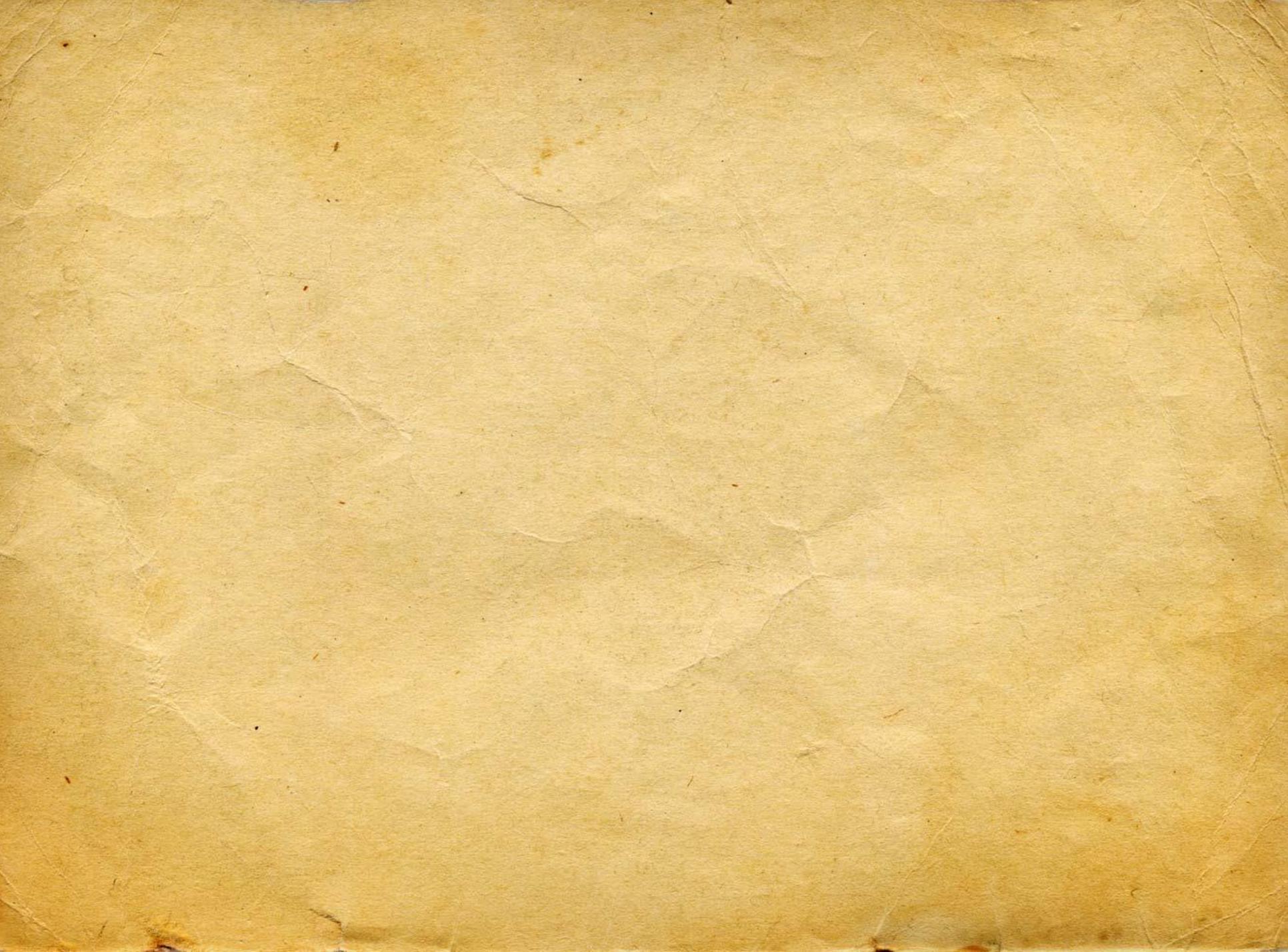
*“in the 21st Century, our natural resource is our people – and their potential is both untapped and vast. Skills will unlock that potential.”*

# Inefficacy of interventions

TQA/TQSA/QAA

High vs low consensus

*'But what's the right answer?!'*



# Employability

"there is a close relationship between employability and good learning..."

**How about a re-brand?**

**Graduate Attributes?**

# **How to fix this**

- Time
- Training
- Bottom up interventions

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