



Jiu ye or ke gu yong xing: a common language?

Dr Robert Partridge

Former Director Careers Service, The University of York, UK

Head of Registry, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China

QS-APPLE, November 2009



Oven-ready graduates

- ‘hardly the place of universities to compensate for the inadequacies of employer induction and training...’ (Coopers and Lybrand, 1998)
- ‘creative destruction’ (Hesketh, 2004)
- transferable skills are not that transferable





What is employability?

jiu ye

**ability to
find a job**

**ke gu
yong xing**

**attributes,
knowledge and
skills to obtain
and maintain
work**



What makes a graduate employable?

technical

working
under pressure

communication

meticulousness

problem solving

imagination & creativity

adaptability & flexibility

desire to learn



What makes a graduate employable?

technical

**but remember
employers are
heterogeneous and
inconsistent**

working
under pressure

communication

meticulousness

problem solving

imagination & creativity

adaptability & flexibility

desire to learn



What makes a graduate employable?

technical

**but remember
employers are
heterogeneous and
inconsistent**

working
under pressure

communication

meticulousness

problem solving

imagination & creativity

adaptability & flexibility

desire to learn



Curricula and pedagogy for employability

- **Skills and understandings relevant to discipline**
- **Work-based and work-related learning**
- **Planning and reflection**
- **Graduate labour market**
- **Packaging**





Some universal truths

- ① **Employers are competing to recruit the best graduates**
- ② **Students are competing for graduate level work (and supply is outstripping demand?)**
- ③ **Graduates need to be oven-ready and self-basting (probably!)**
- ④ **But there's more to employability than writing a business plan ...**
- ⑤ **... and there's more to university than getting a job**



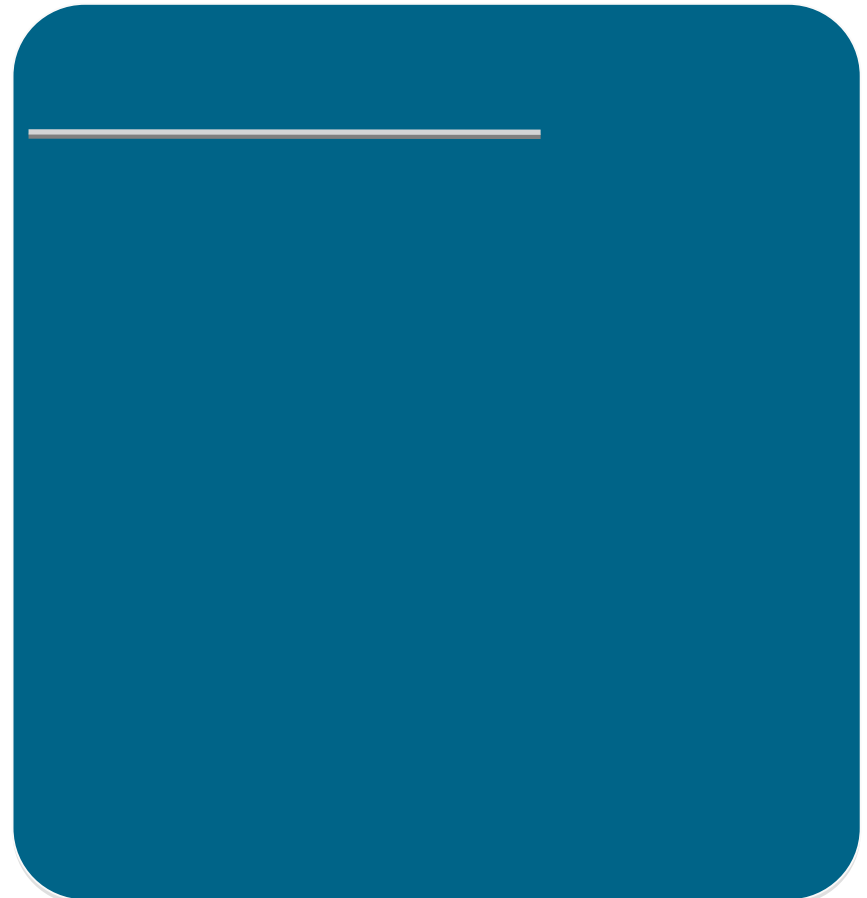
China/UK comparison

	China	UK
<i>No. of students</i>	c. 23% (approx. 9.5M)	c. 43% (approx. 0.3M)
<i>Rate of growth</i>	70% increase in student numbers over last 6 years	Modest after rapid expansion in 90s; 27% adult UK population has a degree
<i>No. of universities</i>	2,600	169
<i>Graduate unemployment</i>	c. 22% (c. 11.4% for postgraduates)	c. 7%
<i>% Progressing to postgraduate study</i>	> 50% (c. 60% at world-class Chinese HEIs)	c. 16% (20-25% at world-class UK HEIs)



China: graduate unemployment UK: graduate underemployment

- a mismatch between supply of and demand for labour
- a reluctance amongst graduates to accept lower level jobs
- lack of training in 'labour market skills'
- *graduates' desire for work in urban areas at the expense of the rural economy (China only?)*





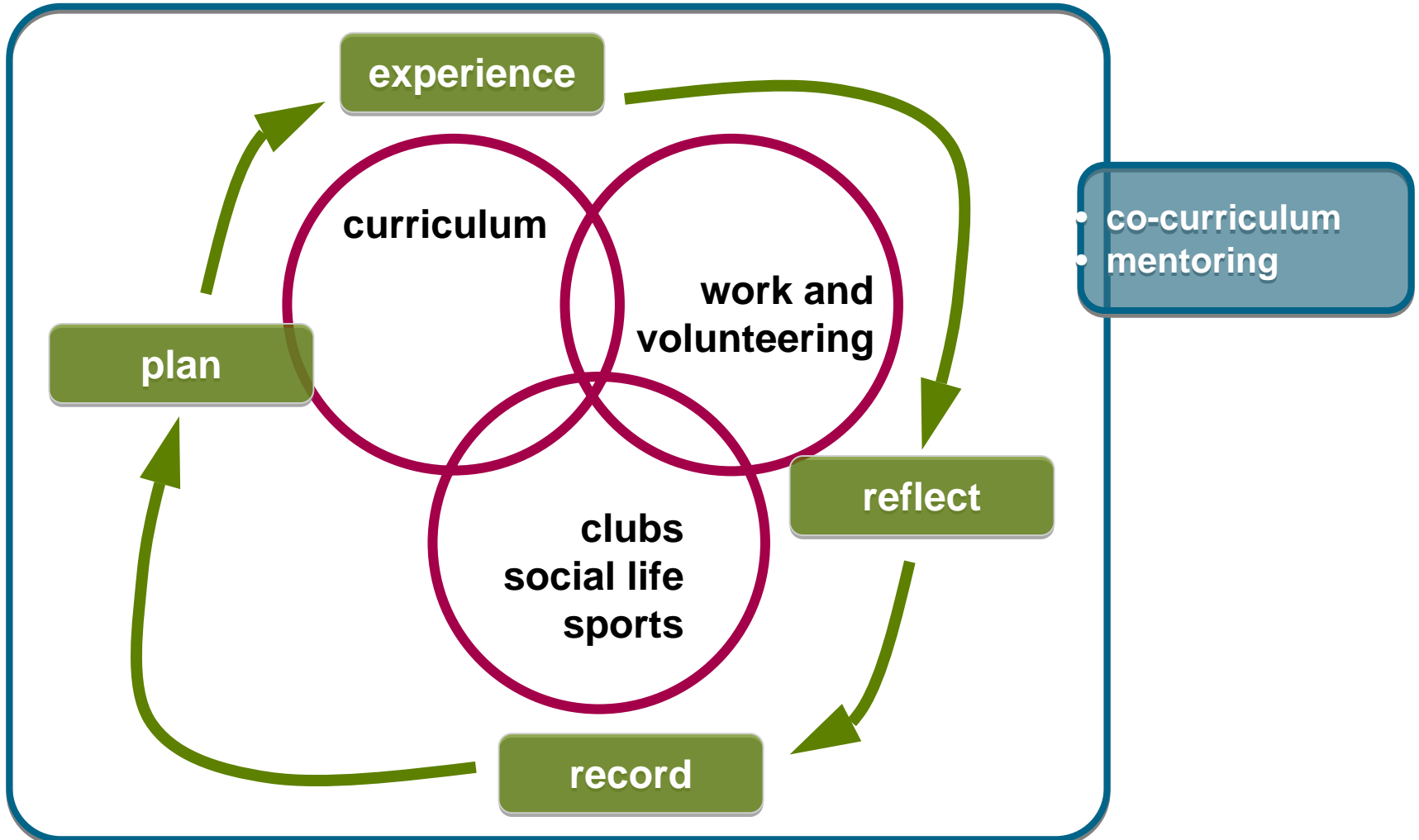
Reducing un(der)employment

Local government:

- **Business start-ups**
- **Enhanced support for job hunters**
- **Graduate careers guidance**

Universities:

- **Alignment with labour market needs**
- **Pedagogical change: skills-based curricula**
- **Careers advice and guidance**





A student perspective

Question:

How would Physics students in your university define their employability?

At Nanjing University:

- ‘Changed ways of thinking’ (eg. problem solving and analytical skills)
- Techniques for stimulating creativity (through involvement in the social activities programme within the department, as well as laboratory research projects)
- Demonstrable commitment to work and tenacity
- Interpersonal skills



Enhancing employability

teaching is
didactic and
authoritarian

students are
reluctant to
speak or argue

problem-based learning
empowering ethos

curricula are non-
vocational

students lack
'relevant' skills

work-related learning
reflection & application



What is employability?

jiu ye

**ability to
find a job**

**ke gu
yong xing**

**attributes,
knowledge and
skills to obtain
and maintain
work**



What has York done so far?

- Three visits to China and one visit to York
- Relationship building
- Information exchange (eg. graduate destinations, pedagogy for employability)
- Joint centre for enterprise and employability with Nanjing University (www.nyjcee.com)
- Joint teaching initiative with Zhejiang University career development centre
- Negotiating a summer student exchange programme
- Examining potential for an 'international York Award'
- Planning a joint international conference on enterprise and employability
- Scoping research study into graduate destinations and employability in the two countries