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Mind the Gap

Short-Cycle Higher Education and Flexible Learning Paths in the Knowledge-Based Economy

Presentation at 1st CHAIN5 Annual Conference
 Amsterdam, 2/13/14, 3:30 p.m.

Leon Cremonini



Aim of the Presentation

- Defining Short Cycle Higher Education (SCHE)
 - Contextualizing its purposes
 - Link with / role of Higher Education Institutions
 - The European Higher Education Area
 - Part of Life-Long-Learning
- SCHE: a world issue?
- How pervasive is it?
 - Stakeholders
 - Some data (mainly on The Netherlands)



What is SCHE?

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 1973:

- (Predominantly) non-university
- Strong vocational element
- Terminal character

Key Objectives for Spreading SCHE (OECD, 1973)

- Increased demand for higher education
- Equality of opportunity
- Labour Market demand
- Innovation that 'traditional' universities are reluctant to implement

Types of SCHE Provision

OECD, 1973: Types of 'Short Cycle Institutions'

- Multiple purpose (e.g. the U.S. Community College)
 - Response to increased student demand
 - Strong link with universities for transfer (often \cong first two years of Bachelor study)
 - Very diverse curricula offered (some academic some vocational / terminal; different modes of delivery)
 - Regional focus
- Specialized model
 - Response to inequality in educational opportunity concerns (for students ineligible for university education)
 - Weak/no link with universities: terminal degree and LM focus
- Binary model

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Bologna: Clarifying what SCHE Is (Meant For)

- London Communiqué: SCHE as an important engine to address the "social dimension" action line of Bologna dedicated to creating "more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education," enhancing "participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity," and fostering "social cohesion" (Bologna Process: London, 2007, p. 5).

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SCHE, LLL, and Flexible Learning Paths

- Together with the Recognition of Prior Learning, part-time education, and online learning
 - Labour Market focus, L5 (Associate Degrees) are ideal for dual or part-time delivery (*Dutch National Platform Associate Degree, 2013*)
- A way to overcome early tracking—a change from before: connection into higher education
- Study programmes to widen participation and attract returning adult learners
 - SCHE should be seen as an opportunity to attract new groups of learners

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A Missing Link?

- SC in HE "easily readable and comparable degrees"?
- Dual role of SCHE (for Labour Market and to progress to a "full" Bachelor)
 - Flexible transitions are strongly dependent on system arrangement and on institutional partnerships
- Two Qualification Frameworks
 - QF-EHEA: SCHE for Labour Market *and* for further studies but graduates not expected to have (strong) problem-solving, critical thinking skills, &c.
 - EQF-LLL: element of management and supervision and independent problem solving

SCHE: Part of a Global Development Agenda

World Bank:

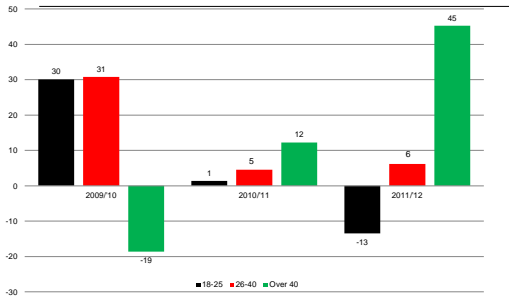
- Tertiary education key for advancement and application of knowledge
- Developing countries risk being marginalized because their rigid tertiary education systems
 - Growth in demand not matched by supply
 - Alignment to the Labour Market
 - Equity issues

Changing landscape of higher education, to include SCHE as an avenue towards development

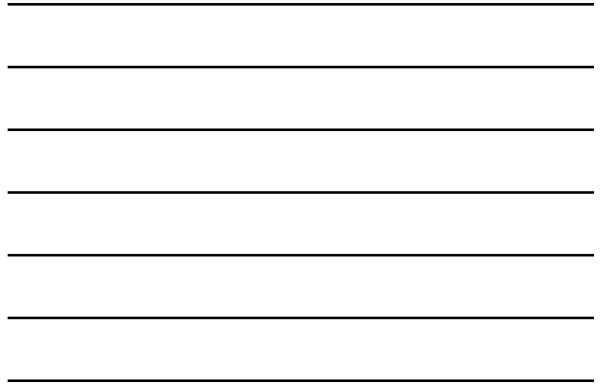
A Changing (Higher Education) Landscape

- SCHE can contribute to flexible learning paths but what relation with other provision/paths, e.g.:
 - Recognition of Prior Learning
 - E-learning
 - MOOCs etc. (Massive Open Online Courses)
- Diversification in the system: a matter of prestige?
- Programmes' sustainability
 - Does SCHE programmes fulfil their goal ("fill the gap")?
 - Practice vs. intentions

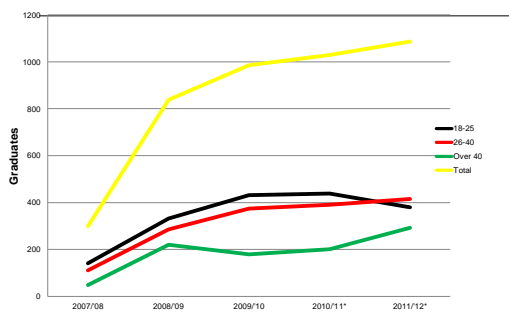
Changes in SCHE Graduation Rates 2010-2012 (%)



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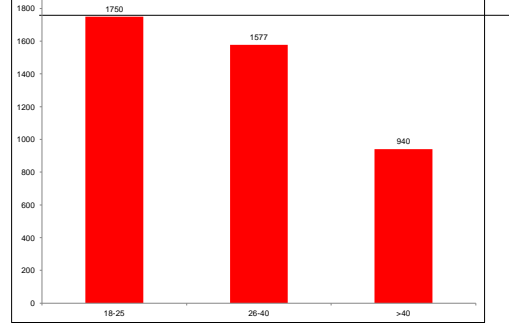
SCHE Graduates Over the last 5 Years, by Age



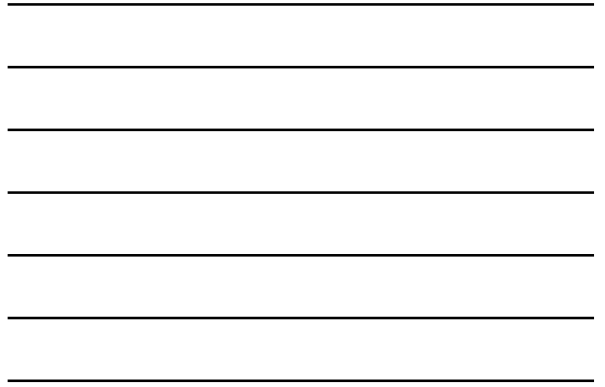
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SCHE Graduates in The Netherlands by age group, 2007-2012



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION !

University of Twente
Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS)
PO Box 217
7500 AE ENSCHEDE
The Netherlands
email: l.cremonini@utwente.nl
Telephone: +31.53.489.3263
Web: <http://www.utwente.nl/cheps>
