

# Mass Higher Education and the Changing Labour Market for Graduates



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From Employability to Employment

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## 7. From employability to employment: university education and employers' requirements in Chile

**Oscar Espinoza and Noel McGinn**

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### INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an evaluation of the impact in Chile of introducing “employability” as a key element in the profile of university graduates. Beginning in 1973, Chile has experienced rapid economic growth and dramatic political change. It has achieved universal enrolment in primary and secondary education, passed from the elite through the massification stage in higher education and is poised at the entrance to the universal stage (Quaresma et al., 2022). Reforms in curriculum and pedagogies emphasizing development of graduate’s “competencies” may have played an important role in Chile’s economic growth. To date, however, there has been no systematic analysis of the contribution of universities’ emphasis on employability of graduates.<sup>1</sup> Contextual analysis of this experience can broaden understanding of employability and the new role assigned to higher education.

After this introduction, the chapter continues with a brief review of the concept of employability. A following section describes three efforts to introduce employability into the curriculum, and some effects on the economy and the career paths of university graduates. The fourth section analyses the impediments to improving employability of university graduates. The chapter concludes with an explanation of why progress has been slow and offers suggestions as to what might accelerate the process.

### **A Brief History of Higher Education and Economic Policy in Chile**

Chile is located at the edge of the populated world, isolated by the Pacific Ocean and a high mountain range. Rich in minerals and limited arable land, its assigned role in the Spanish empire was to supply raw mineral and agricultural products to other colonies and the mother country. Its settler population grew