

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EMPLOYABILITY

Richard Paterson

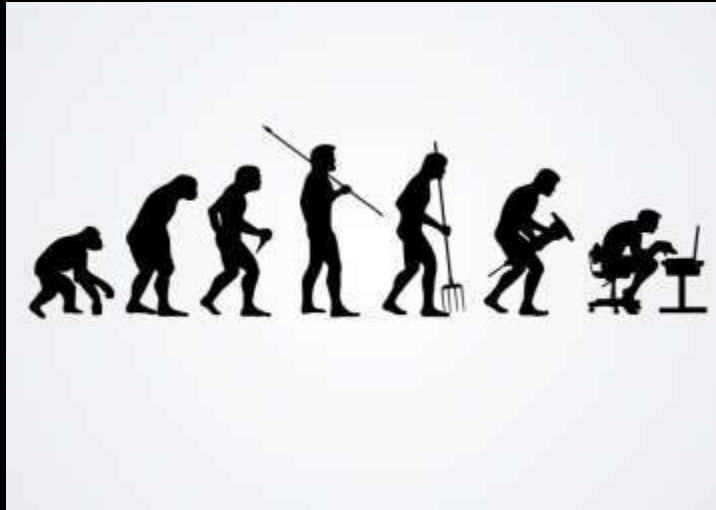
University of Westminster

IN THE BEGINNING ...



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- there were jobs



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- and universities



IN THE BEGINNING ...

- there were jobs
- and universities
- then employability



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- there were jobs
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... but only in Anglo-Saxon contexts

PROBLEMS

The recognition of employability arose out of changes in global employment demands



Government driven changes in higher education policy have reinforced the employability agenda

ARGUMENT

Pedagogy to develop employability can be best exploited if linked to the ideas of pre-professional and graduate identity.



MORE PROBLEMS

Debates surrounding employability have taken place in primarily Anglo-Saxon contexts

A need for research in a more diverse range of HEIs, particularly in transnational education



NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT

Job security and promotional opportunities

Employability, training, human capital development, and networking opportunities

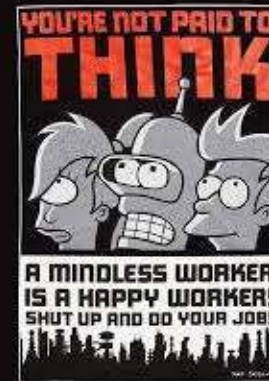
First steps in higher education being colonised by economic policy

DEARING REPORT 1997

- First to formally identify the skills that should be taught on undergraduate degree courses
- Governments try to create conditions where human capital is valued - encouraged to develop
- Government driven changes in higher education policy reinforce the employability agenda

CRITICS OF EMPLOYABILITY AGENDA

- HEIs are becoming tools of government economic policy
- Legitimised a shift of responsibility to the individual.
- HEIs risk becoming factories that produce willing participants in the global workforce



DEFINITIONS OF EMPLOYABILITY

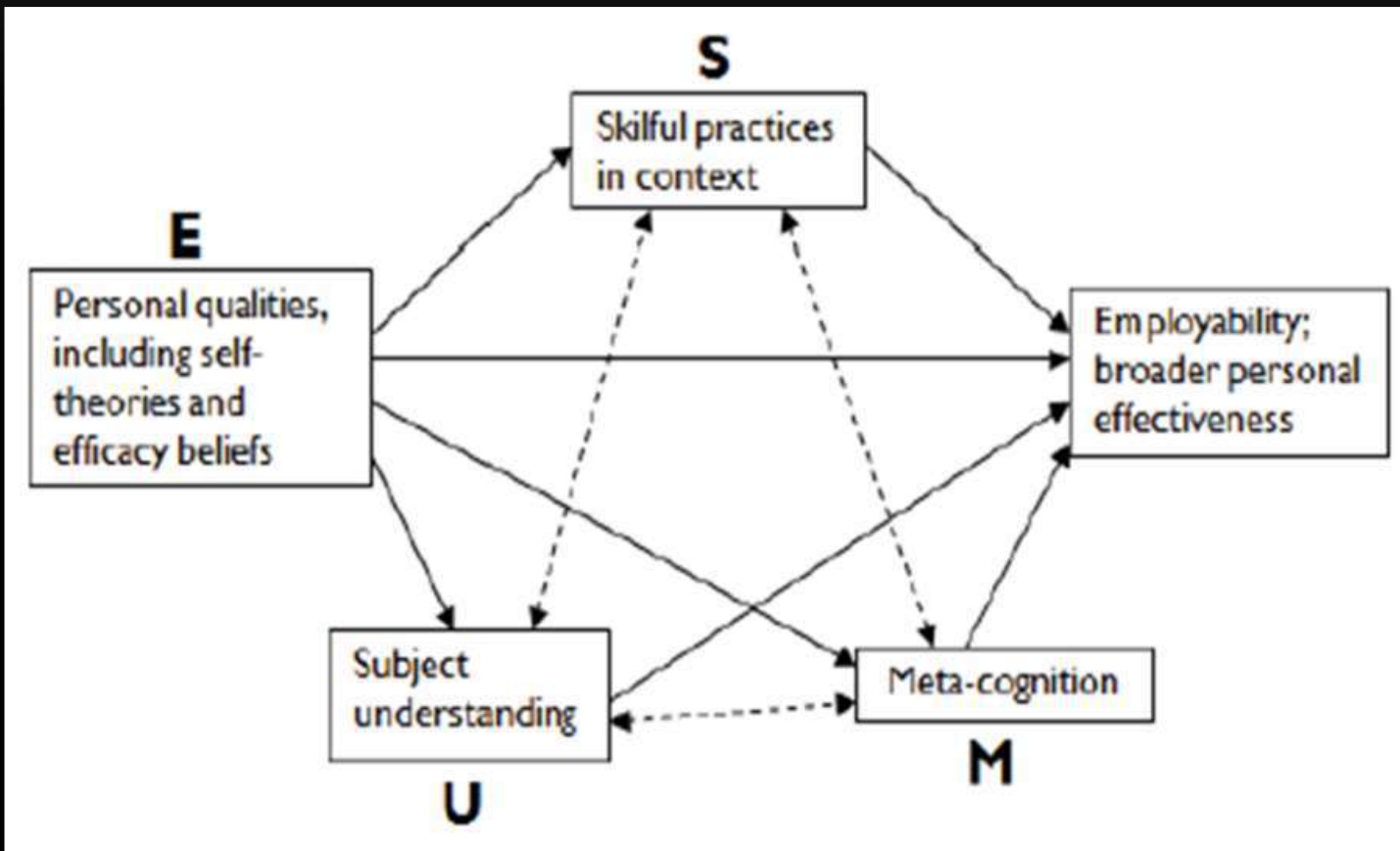
- Inadequacies of narrow definitions of employability related concepts
- Employability = buzzword - frequently used but rarely understood
- Narrow definition – restricted discussions of employability related concepts



BROADER DEFINITIONS

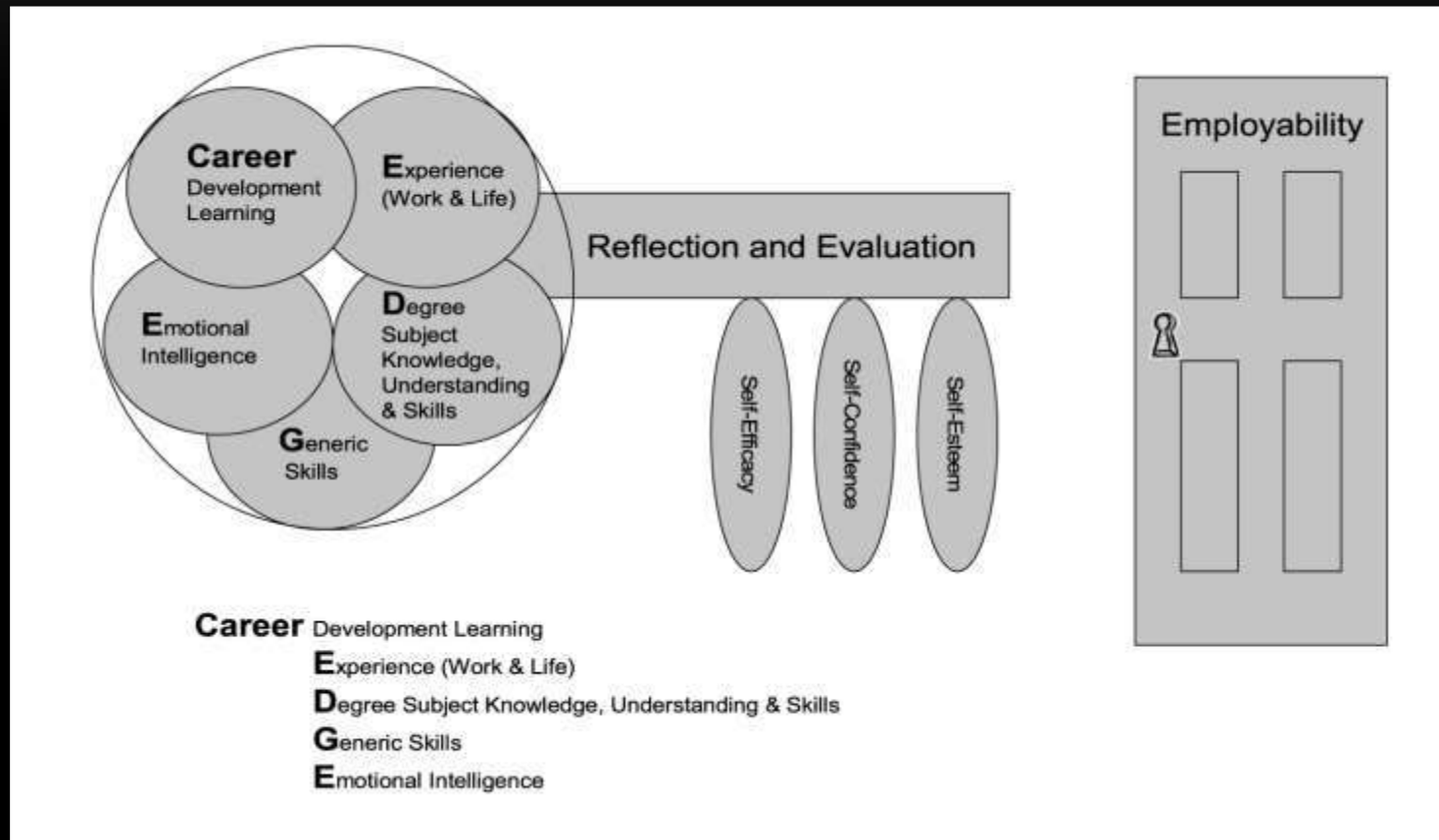
- Getting a job: key skills and understanding work – embedded in education
- Keeping a job: maintaining employment – making transitions
- Getting a better job: independent in labour market - managing transitions
- Develop soft skills - personal attitudes
- Demonstrate – market - sell employability

EMPLOYABILITY MODEL 1 - USEM



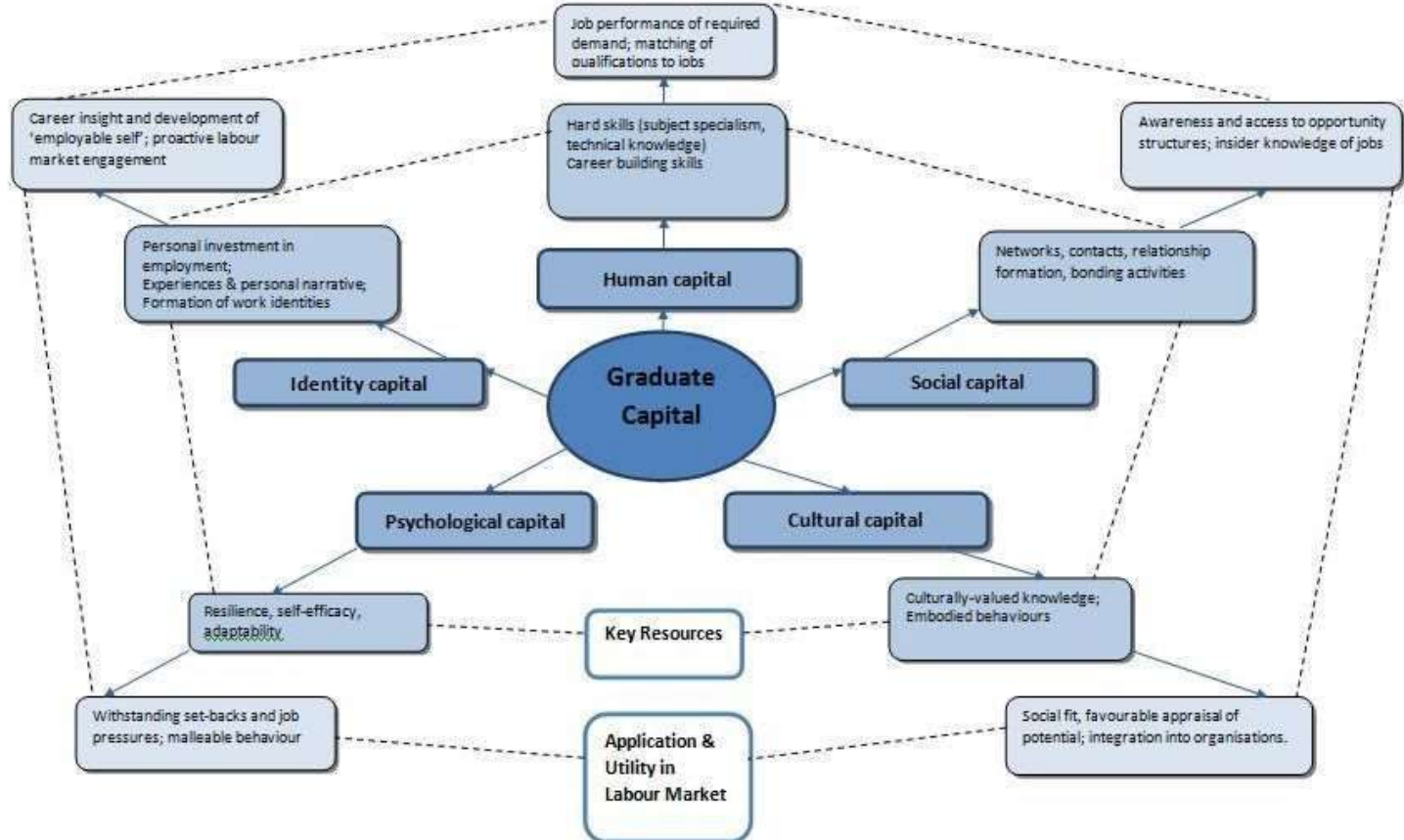
USEM model of Employability (Knight & Yorke 2002, p.265)

EMPLOYABILITY MODEL 2 – CAREER-EDGE



CareerEDGE Model of employability. (Dacre Pool and Sewell 2007, p. 281)

EMPLOYABILITY MODEL 3 – GRADUATE CAPITAL



Graduate Capital Model (Tomlinson., 2017, p. 340)

EMPLOYABILITY PEDAGOGY

- Employability focused agenda - the most significant cultural shift in recent higher education development
 - Greater impact among low achievers and disadvantaged groups
 - Lack of evidenced based information
 - Lack of evidence linking attainment of employability skills with career progression
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EMPLOYABILITY AND BOLOGNA

Bologna process 1999 - aimed at assuring quality and standards of higher education

- Formalised HE qualifications in terms of learning outcomes
- HEIs always previously adhered to *social and economic responsibilities*
- Neoliberal policies in era of globalisation re-labelled responsibilities as *employability*
- Developing human capital through higher education learning outcomes

EFFECTS OF EMPLOYABILITY AGENDA ON PEDAGOGY

Universities



New knowledge



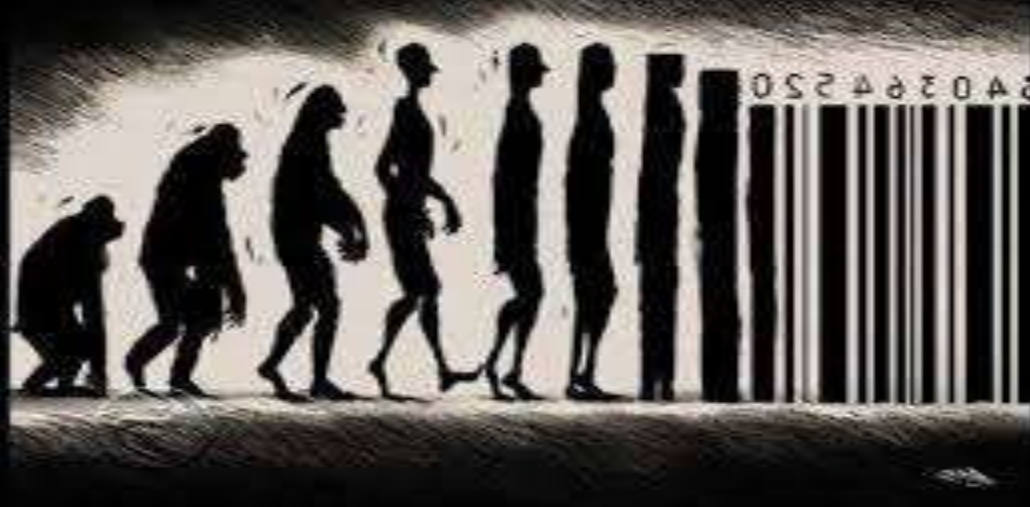
Economic growth



Compliant workers



Consumers



CONTRASTING VIEWS ON EMPLOYABILITY PEDAGOGY

1. Employability skills teaching in universities - limited effect on employment outcomes
 2. Need for real-world work experience and increased employer involvement in course design
 3. Isolating employability from the curriculum is counterproductive
 4. Embedding employability in the curriculum negatively affects disciplinary learning
-

SOME CONSENSUS

Higher education has a role to play in addressing graduate employment - underemployment



HOW CAN UNIVERSITIES CONTRIBUTE?

- Create environments where employability and its purpose are communicated explicitly to students
- Make a distinction between *employment* as a graduate outcome in higher education and *pedagogy for employability*

Employment - measurable in published data on graduate destinations

Pedagogy - teaching and learning wide range of knowledge, skills
- support + continued learning + career development

IT'S MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT

- Gains derived from higher education not evenly distributed

Can depend on:

- Reputation of university
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Socio-economic background



HOW DO STUDENTS DEVELOP EMPLOYABILITY?

Reflection and integration
Experiential action learning



Work experience



INDIVIDUAL LEARNING TRAJECTORIES

- Categorising employability in terms of a skills-based agenda is far too narrow
- Not clear how models relate to each individual's unique experience of higher education
- Tomlinson - *identity capital* - graduates form work identities and employability narratives that they could sell to potential employers

Previous research indicated that students at WIUT were lacking in their ability to describe their own employability narratives

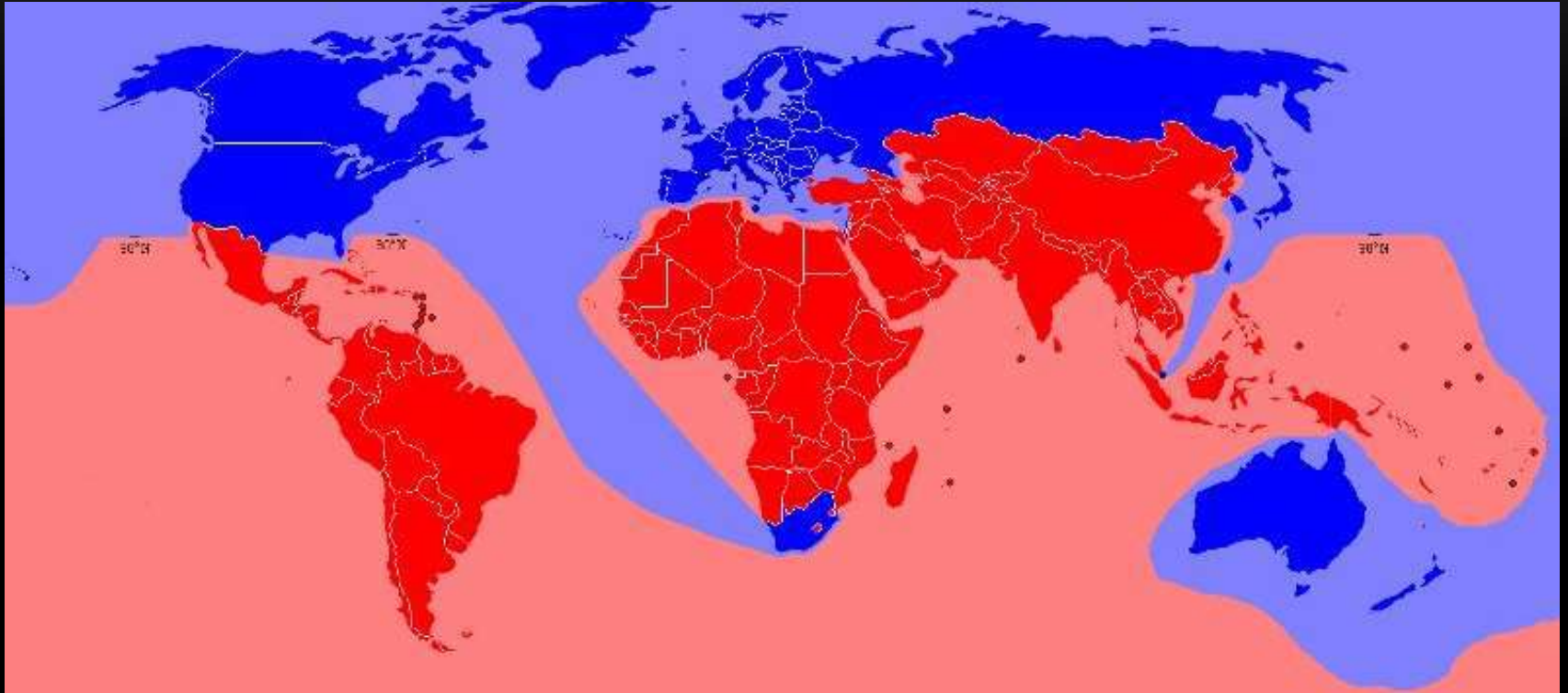
PRE-PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

- Redefining graduate employability in line with professional identity development
- *Pre-professional identity* - understanding + connection with skills, qualities, conduct, culture, ideology of intended profession
- Emphasising higher order intellectual capabilities involved in adaptable expertise

Return to the traditional Humboldtian model of HE.



RESEARCH IN LIMITED CONTEXT



GLOBAL SOUTH ON EMPLOYABILITY

- Enhanced employability largely determined by state of the local labour market
- Different countries and institutions at vastly different stages of devolvement of employability pedagogy
- Importance of local and cultural contexts
- Employability is a culturally based concept
- Universities with a multinational student body may need to develop multiple employability curricula

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“

**Intelligence is the ability to
adapt to change.”**

@HuffPostUK

Professor Stephen Hawking, A Briefer History of Time