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**Abstract**

Since the late 1980s, the production of PhDs has become a much-discussed political issue, and the reforms and tensions surrounding this category of graduates have gathered momentum. Vocational fields and the contents of PhD education have evolved everywhere, partly because, as academic competition has intensified, the American 'graduate school model' has become widely diffused at international level. Based on both quantitative surveys and qualitative investigations, this article attempts to understand the ways in which PhDs are produced and integrated into the labour market in France and Japan, the way in which PhD training is linked to Japanese and French higher education and research policies and the way they have evolved together in recent years. In doing so, we seek to determine the societal foundation underpinning the labour market for PhD holders and the innovation trajectory each of the countries is now following. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)