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**Abstract**

Making use of Grisay's typology of educational equality, the paper analyses rhetoric and policy on equality in higher education (HE) in Spain and the UK in the period 1996?2004, using electoral manifestos, policy papers, legislation and academic literature. We find that in both countries, and in spite of similar pressures and levels of access to HE, the prevailing notions of educational equality vary. We also find evidence of a good match between policy rhetoric and policy practice in terms of areas of intervention, but not in the strength of these interventions. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)