



RESEARCH PROGRAMME ON  
EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT  
LINKAGES

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# **Career Management Skills: Learning about Abilities and Opportunities**

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## Details

This PowerPoint presentation was an invited keynote address to the second research symposium of the Career Practitioners Association of New Zealand, held at Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin, on 13 March 2009.



# Introduction

- In March 2007, FRST announced that it is funding a five-year research programme on education employment linkages for youth in New Zealand.
- This presentation will: (1) introduce the EEL programme (more details at [www.eel.org.nz](http://www.eel.org.nz)); and (2) explain one of the recent themes in the international literature about “career management skills” of young people.



# Background to the Research

“In the next decade, the largest ever group of young New Zealanders will make the transition from secondary schooling into tertiary education and the workforce. ...

This is a strategic opportunity to ensure our workforce can compete with the best in the global economy.”

*(Developing the Second Tertiary Education Strategy, 2007/12, p. 11)*



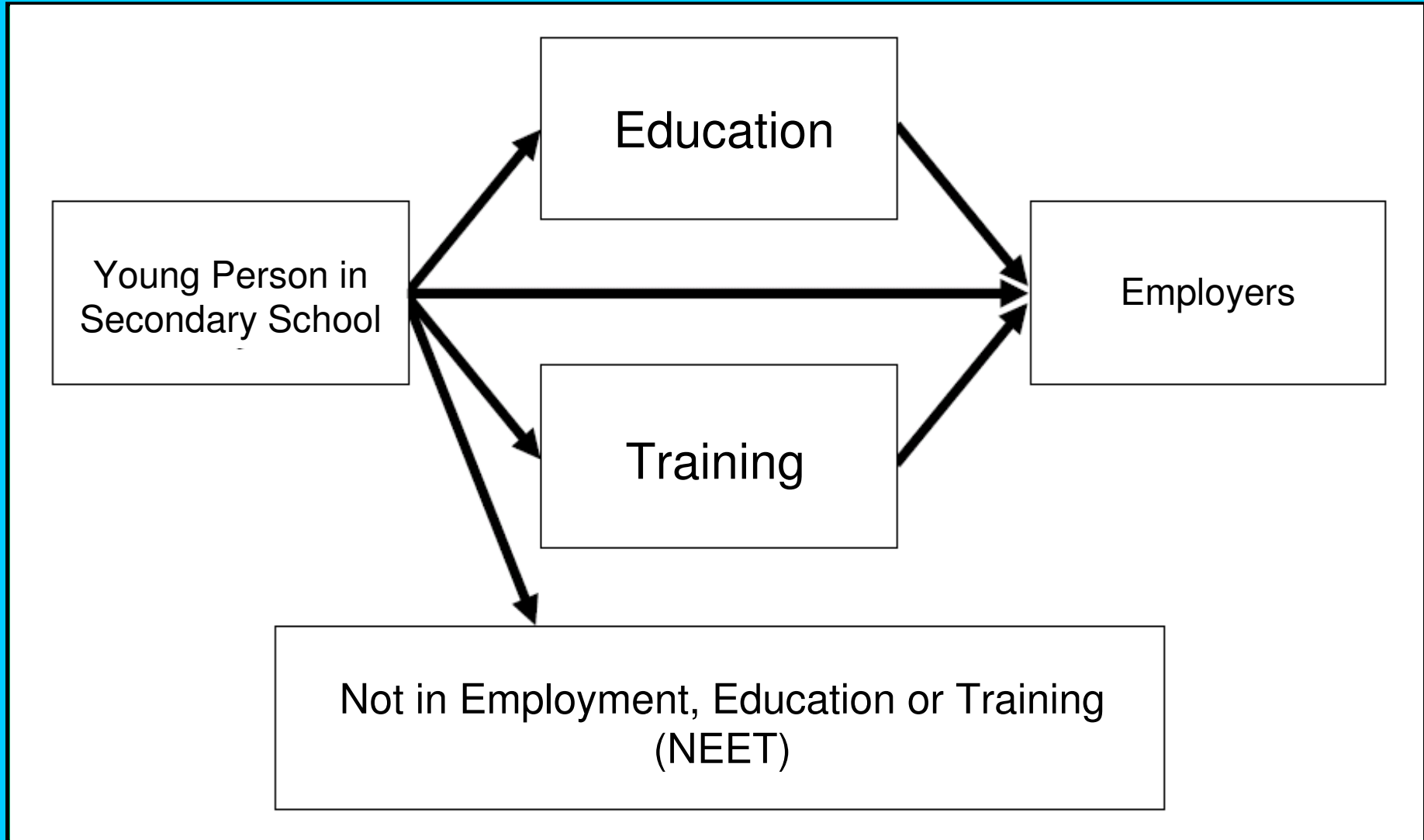
# Is There a Problem?

The Labour Market Dynamics Research Programme, led by Professor Paul Spoonley at Massey University, reported from a survey that **43 per cent** of people aged 15-34 feel their current job is not very closely related, or is not related at all, to their educational qualifications.

This suggests there is a significant amount of education-employment mismatch.



# School to Work Transitions





# The EEL Research Team

- The EEL Research Programme brings together three research institutions and four senior researchers:
  - The AERU research unit at Lincoln University (Paul Dalziel & Jane Higgins)
  - The New Zealand Centre for Educational Research (Karen Vaughan)
  - He Pārekereke at Victoria University (Hazel Phillips).



# The EEL Research Question

- *How can **formal support systems** best help young New Zealanders make good education-employment linkages to benefit themselves, their communities, and the national economy:*
  - In school communities?
  - In regional communities?
  - In Māori and Pasifika communities?
  - In employer-led channels?



# The EEL Research Programme

		<b>Objective 1 (K. Vaughan)</b>	<b>Objective 2 (J. Higgins)</b>	<b>Objective 3 (H. Phillips)</b>	<b>Objective 4 (P. Dalziel)</b>
<i>1. International Context</i>		Integrated international literature review drawing on: Education      Sociology      Indigenous Studies      Economics			
<i>Primary Research</i>	<i>2. What is happening?</i>	Mapping of current education employment systems in: School Communities      Regional Communities      Māori & Pacific Communities      Employer-Led Channels			
	<i>3. Why is it happening?</i>	Interviews, surveys and focus groups of key informants in: School Communities      Regional Communities      Māori & Pacific Communities      Employer-Led Channels			
	<i>4. How can we make it different?</i>	Case studies of how positive outcomes occur in: School Communities      Regional Communities      Māori & Pacific Communities      Employer-Led Channels			
<i>5. Integration and Assessment</i>		Two pilots of best practice systems, assessing in each pilot site the integrated results of the four research streams.			



# Choices

At the centre of the research programme is the young person making choices.

Hence the overall framework for our research comes from the ways in which “choice” is understood by

- sociology,
- education,
- indigenous studies, and
- economics.



# Choice: Sociology

- Structural constraints associated with family background, neighbourhood, class, gender and ethnicity affect young people's choices.
- Nevertheless, young people have *agency*; they can, and must, make choices.
- Decision-making is not a one-off event, but is a social process, taking place in interaction with other people.
- There are distinct 'turning points' in the social process when choices must be made.



# Choice: Education

- Educators have a critical role to play in helping young people at their turning points.
- Educators can help young people navigate the 'landscape' of choices.
- Educators can help young people imagine different options ('horizons') they might not be able to see from their point in the landscape.
- Educators can help young people not limit themselves to making decisions based on very short-term considerations.

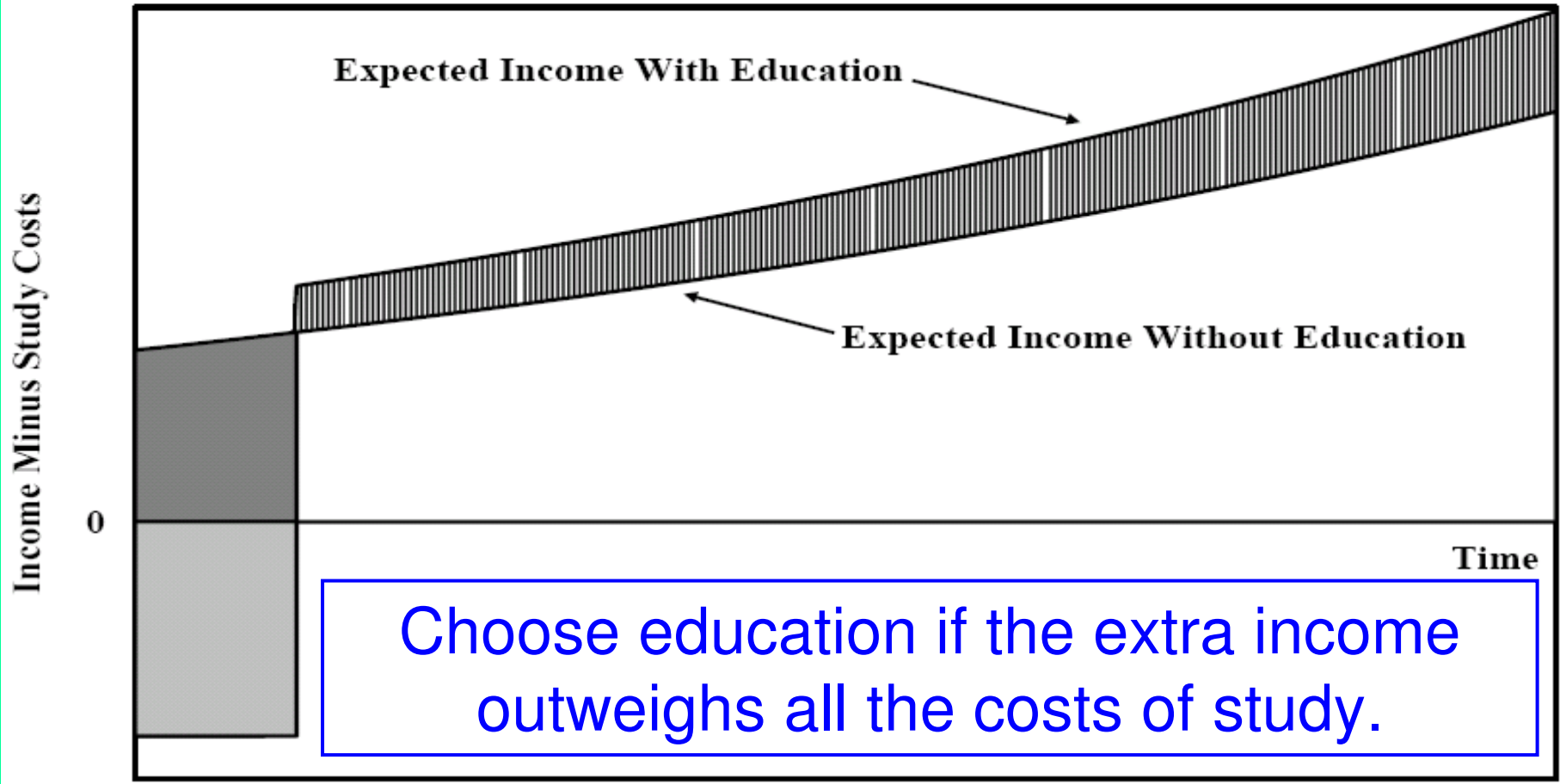


# Choice: Indigenous Studies

- Indigenous communities emphasise strongly collectivist approaches to decision-making.
- Indigenous students may be more strongly motivated by contributing to the community than by earning high future incomes.
- Educators may consciously or unconsciously reinforce ethnic stereotypes in the advice they give their students.
- Dropping out from education that is not culturally safe may be a positive decision.

# Choice: Economics

Figure 1  
Costs and Benefits of Education





# A 'Single Choice' Model

- The standard economics approach modelled a *single* choice made at a *single* key moment during transition from school to work.
- This suggested policy should provide career information and advice to secondary school students, as they make this key choice.
- This is now as out-of-date as the idea of a single job for life!



# 'Sequential Choice' Models

- A key idea going back at least to Rousseau (1762) is that education allows a person to *discover* and *develop* his or her abilities.
- This means students have to revisit their choices as they learn about their abilities.
- More recent economic models have begun to recognise this by treating 'human capital' decisions as sequential choices.



# Discovering Abilities

- Altonji (1993) and Weiler (1994) have models with two decisions (Periods 1 and 3):
  - Period 1: Go on to higher education (or not).
  - Period 2: Learn about abilities and interests.
  - Period 3: Revise the original education choice.
- The model of Keane and Wolpin (1997) has students choosing one of five options every year after turning 16.



# Discovering Abilities

- Arcidiacono (2004) presents a model of tertiary education choices in two stages:
  - Choose to go to college.
  - Choose quality of college.
  - Choose major area of study (from 4 options).
  - Receive feedback on abilities through grades.
  - Revise the earlier choices.
  - Enter the labour market.

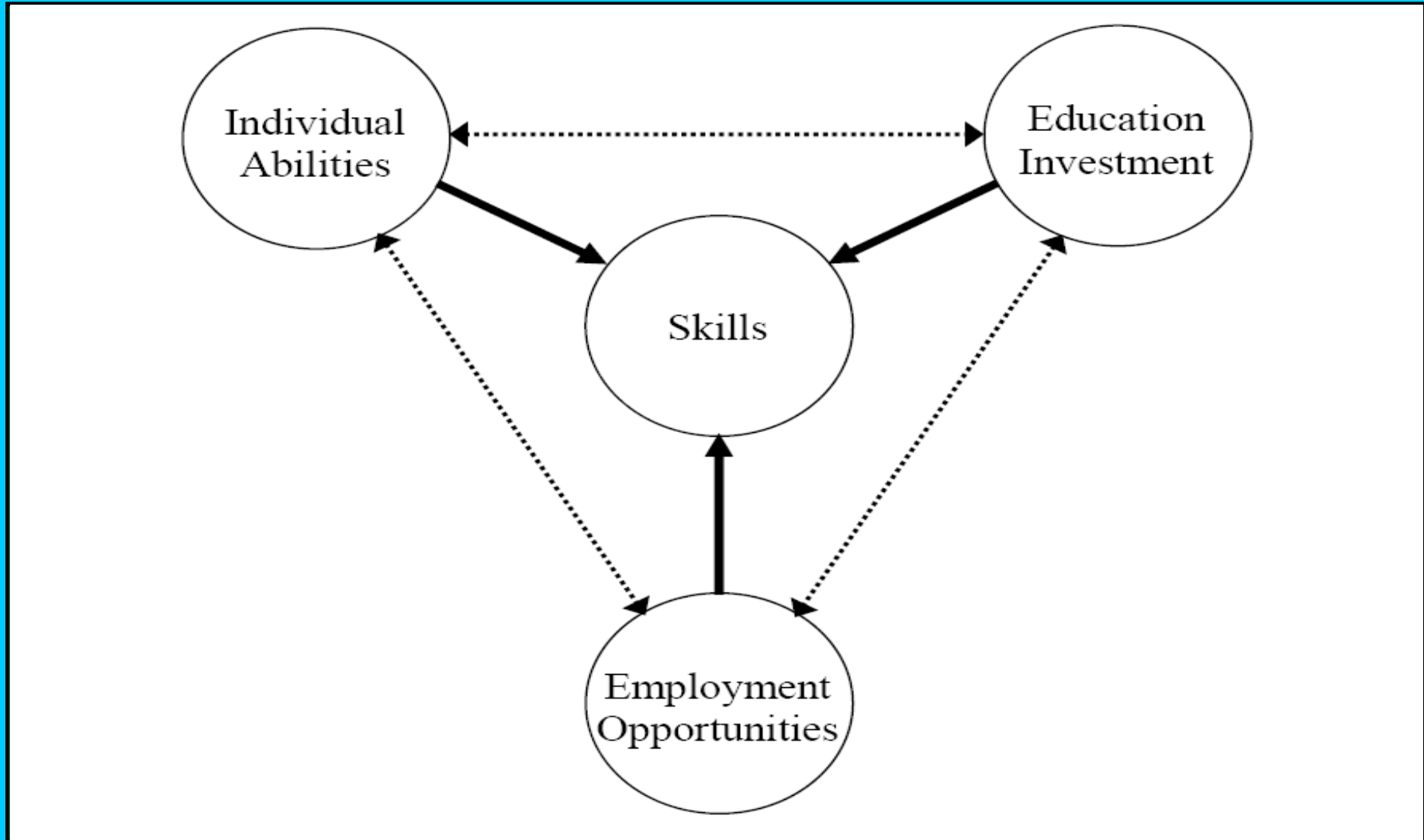


# Implications

1. Failure in education need not be a bad outcome (if learning about abilities).
2. Persistence in failure is not likely to be a good outcome (so change plans!).
3. Obtaining a qualification without genuine ability may not be a good outcome.
4. Matching qualifications to the right job is the best outcome.



# Formation of Skills for Work





# Career Management

- The art of combining personal abilities, education investment and employment opportunities is called **career management**.
- It is a life-long process, not a one-off decision made before the age of 18.
- At secondary school age, students need to learn 'career management skills', not simply receive 'career advice'.



# Career Management Skills

- How can I extend my abilities through my education and employment choices?
- Where can I discover my abilities?
  - Investment in training and education??
  - Employment in a particular industry??
- Where can I develop my abilities?
  - Investment in training and education??
  - Employment in a particular industry??
- How can I match my abilities and genuine employment opportunities?



# Conclusion

Secondary schools are currently required to “provide appropriate career education and guidance for all students in year 7 and above, with a particular emphasis on specific career guidance for those students who have been identified by the school as being at risk of leaving school unprepared for the transition to the workplace or further education/training” (National Administration Guidelines, No. 1, Part vi).



# Conclusion

- Recent work by the OECD has suggested that teaching career management skills to students should **not** be considered a remedial policy for young people at risk.
- Instead it should be considered an essential part of a country's workforce development policies, to prepare young people for a lifetime of learning and career choices.



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