# The Attitude Gap Challenge:

# Research Evidence and Case Studies

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# Table of contents

# Introduction

A co-design project has been initiated to explore the following: i) youths' expectations of employment, and ii) employers' expectations of work readiness in South Auckland. Insights were collected on the attitudes, views and experiences of young people, employers, and whanau. These insights informed six key focus areas.

The purpose of this report is to provide a short research summary of each of the six key focus areas, summarising research findings from international and New Zealand (NZ) literature. Furthermore, several of the key focus areas also include case studies which provide examples of how companies implemented specific strategies which enabled them to overcome the challenges associated with that area.

Two supplementary research summaries have also been prepared. The first, 'What is attitude?' explores how attitude can be defined and developed within the youth employment context. The second, 'The cost of youth disengagement' examines empirical literature which has quantified the economic costs of youth disengagement.

# Theme One: The invisible purpose of the process

**Summary of theme and key insights**

When comparing the views of young people and employers, there appears to be a misalignment with regard to the purpose of the job application process. For young people, the application process is part of the journey towards getting a job, and more or less requires them to present their skills. Employers, on the other hand, use the application process as a tool to 'screen out' unsuitable candidates.

Based on the insights drawn from engaging with young people and employers, several factors appear to drive young people not fully grasping 'the invisible purpose of the process'. These include: i) lack of, or incorrect, information, ii) job searching skills (e.g., presenting a tailored CV, being conscious of communication norms, effectively applying online), and iii) job readiness (e.g., demonstrating soft-skills).

**Summary of research**

On the international front, there is a wealth of literature on education to employment (E2E) transition. Observations drawn from a selection of the literature are summarised below:

> Successful transitions from school-to-work require young people to have information at hand in order to make informed decisions (e.g., job opportunities, wages, skill requirements). Engaging 'at-risk' young people is problematic and requires aggressive strategies for success. For example, some engagement strategies also push information onto young people's families and social circles (McKinsey & Company, 2012).

> Part of the process, but one often overlooked by young people, is the requirements for job searching skills. In several studies, teaching young people effective job seeking skills was identified as a factor which can smooth the E2E transition (Hughes & Gration, 2009; Versnel, DeLuca, Hutchinson, Hill, & Chin, 2011).

> Skills employers value (i.e., soft-skills such as teamwork, commitment, honesty – see Cunningham and Villasenor (2014)), relative to the skills young people have, are often misaligned. Research has shown that young people believe that they possess soft-skills desired by employers, however, opinions from employers have shown mixed results (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012). Soft-skills are often best developed on the job (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012). For example, students who participated in a skills-to-work programme reported gaining self-confidence, self-esteem, and becoming more mature and ready to participate in work (HMIE-Scottish Government, 2007).

NZ research by Coll et al. (2009) supports observations drawn from the international literature above. Coll et al. (2009) concluded that work integrated learning (i.e., combining learning with work placements) deliver tangible benefits to students. In particular, skills gained through work experience were generally behavioural in nature (i.e., soft skills - communication, showing respect, work ethic). Although having focussed on students in higher education, their findings are consistent with the international literature on young people who are deemed 'at-risk'.

## Examples of successful interventions and best practice

**International - Developing job search and job readiness skills:** In Switzerland, career guidance is embedded in the school curriculum and is mandatory for young people aged 12-15 years. Career guidance includes learning about different occupations, visiting companies and preparing for interviews. Parents are encouraged to participate in order to gain awareness of job opportunities for their children (McKinsey & Company, 2012)[1]. Roughly two-thirds of young people participate in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system, which combines classroom and practical workplace learning (SERI, 2015). This approach to career development exposes young people to the world of work at an early age, develops their self-awareness and self-confidence, and given the close partnership between the schools and employers, ease the transition from E2E. Swiss youth unemployment has consistently been among the lowest in the OECD (8.53% in 2013)[2], and although influenced by a multitude of factors, providing early career guidance is potentially playing an important role in this outcome.

**NZ - Developing job readiness skills:** In Auckland, There are a number of interventions underway to support youth successfully transitioning from E2E. The Youth Employer Pledge (YEP)[3] is an example of such an intervention. Through commitment made by leading Auckland businesses, the YEP aims to get more young people into job and career pathways. The Warehouse Group is an example of one such employer who offers different developmental pathways. For example, 'Red Shirts in Schools' enable young people deemed 'at-risk' to build their work readiness through gaining retail experience while completing a National Certificate in Retail (Level 2, 3 & 4). In 2015, over 2,400 young people participated in 'Red Shirts in School'. This programme places young people in a position to develop skills

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[1] Evidence has shown parents to be the most widely used source for career advice (Reid & Cominetti, 2013). Therefore, educating parents is arguably one of the key influencers of success in E2E transition programmes.
[2] The youth unemployment rate was 16.25% (NZ) and 16.20% (OECD). 2013 data is the most recent available (OECD, n.d.).
[3] For more about the YEP,, see http://www.aucklandnz.com/business/youth-employer-pledge

(e.g., communication, teamwork), enhance their confidence and self-esteem, and prepares them for navigating the job application process in the future (The Warehouse Group, n.d.).

# Theme Two (i): Integrating home culture and work culture

**Summary of theme and key insights**

Understanding cultural differences is bi-directional (i.e., employee and employer) and critical in building professional relationships. For employers, learning about diverse cultures and how to accommodate them can be costly. Business processes are therefore generally standardised to minimise costs and risks.

Based on the insights drawn from engaging with young people and employers, there are several factors that appear to drive issues relating to 'integrating home culture and work culture'. These include: i) cultural differences, and ii) culture shock.

**Summary of research**

On the international front, there is a wealth of literature on integration of indigenous and workplace cultures. Observations from a selection of the literature are summarised below:

> Findings have shown negative associations between measures of cultural attachment (e.g., speaking an indigenous language) and the probability of employment (Stephens, 2010). This negative association could potentially be linked with conflict between cultural differences which may arise (i.e., tensions between work and family responsibilities). Such conflict can cause significant personal strain and result in lower productivity (Hughes & Gration, 2009). This is particularly relevant to cultures which are highly relational in nature. For example, research by Generation One (2011) have found that Aboriginal woman are more likely to have to contend with family pressures (e.g., taking care of children or relatives) while working or seeking employment.
>
> Experiencing workplace culture for the first time can often result in 'culture shock'. For example, disadvantaged youth who know little about how workplaces operate, report their early days of work as intimidating, daunting and anxiety provoking (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012). This 'culture shock' may be intensified when combined with indigenous cultures where shyness is common, or different communication norms are adhered to, as is the case for Aboriginal people (Generation One, 2012).

A selection of NZ research on cultural integration is summarised below:

> Exploratory research by Holmes, Marra, and Schnurr (2008) identified situations where differences in cultural norms could give rise to unintended miscommunications

or offence. For example, ways of expressing criticism differ between Māori and Pākehā. Where Māori are often indirect, implicit and group-orientated, Pākehā may be more explicit, confrontational and focussed on the individual. This supports the notion of why cultural awareness is vital in building long-lasting professional relationships.

While NZ maintains a socially cohesive environment in general, tensions do exist between cultures. Although the majority of NZ Europeans agreed that immigrants should maintain their own cultural norms, while adopting NZ culture, only 10% were prepared to change aspects of their culture to integrate with others (Stuart & Ward, 2009). At work, such reluctance may give rise to behaviours like workplace discrimination, which can negatively impact ethnic relations (Ward & Liu, 2012).

**Examples of successful interventions and best practice**

**International – Indigenous employment programme – Woolworths Limited (Generation One, 2012):** Key to the success of this programme is the belief that diversity is valuable and should be celebrated. Key components of the programme are summarised below:

Managers receive training (facilitated by an indigenous trainer) which focusses on gaining understanding, empathy and respect for indigenous employees.

Pre-employment training is provided to job candidates which provide them with an understanding of employment expectations and introduces them to Woolworths as a workplace[4]. This job readiness training reduces the risk of 'culture shock'.

On-the-job mentoring support is provided to indigenous employees. Two mentors are assigned (one workplace manager and one from a partnering organisation[5]). Each is tasked with addressing different issues (e.g., employment issues, community issues).

**NZ – Developing a culture of learning – Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) (Equal Employment Opportunities Trust, 2012):** SKM employees 350 people in NZ. Believing diversity is key to their success, SKM established the following initiatives to drive its diversity strategy:

An intercultural awareness programme which teaches employees how one's own cultural preferences may impact working relationships.

Flexible working policies (e.g., parental leave) and striving for pay equity.

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[4] Pre-employment training is a key focus of the Australian Vocational Training and Employment Centres (VTEC) initiative. This ensures indigenous job seekers have the skills necessary to be successful in employment (Generation One, n.d.).
[5] Mentors assigned from Diversity Dimensions are Aboriginal in ethnicity and support employees in navigating two worlds (indigenous and commercial).

Supporting cultural traditions (e.g., providing flexible working hours and dedicated prayer rooms for employees observing the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan).

# Theme Two (ii): Developing a summary for cultural perspectives

**How employment and work can be integrated within a Māori and Pasifika world view**

A number of strategies have been identified for NZ organisations who want to better understand and engage young Māori in employment. These are summarised below:

> Fitzgerald and McLaren (2006) found that approximately two-thirds of Māori employers relied on word-of-mouth contacts to find suitable employees. Therefore, engaging and building relationships with the local Māori community may be a viable option for attracting and engaging young people into employment.
>
> In reviewing the success of Māori youth transition programmes, Te Puni Kōkiri (2012) identified mentoring as invaluable. It provided youth with role models to look up to. The success of mentoring has also been shown in Aboriginal recruitment programmes (Generation One, 2012) and recommended by NESA (2014) to support E2E transition.
>
> Other success factors identified by Te Puni Kōkiri (2012) included involvement of whanau (e.g., involvement in goal setting) and acknowledgement of Māori cultural norms (e.g., the use of te reo Māori).

A number of strategies have been identified for NZ organisations who want to better understand and engage young Pasifika in employment. These are summarised below:

> Being aware of how cultural differences drive behaviours. For example, traditional family and church culture teach young people unquestioning obedience and respect toward authority figures (Ferguson & Gorinski, 2008). In contrast, employers generally encourage open and clear communication (e.g., questioning, discussing different viewpoints).
>
> Recognising the importance of family. Many young Pasifika people have community and family commitments which are as important to them as work. Therefore, employers must recognise the importance of family, which can be achieved by either getting to know workers' families or involving them in any work issues the young people might be facing (Equal Employment Opportunities Trust, 2011).
>
> Providing Pasifika mentors. These mentors help motivate and engage young Pasifika workers. These mentors often inspire the young people to be more productive and to

make the most of their opportunities and potential (Equal Employment Opportunities Trust, 2011).

## Examples of successful interventions and best practice for a cross-cultural workplace

**International (Generation One, 2012):** Burswood Entertainment Complex (BEC) runs an Aboriginal Employment Program. The programme is structured as follows:

Participants are attracted to the programme through traditional recruitment channels (e.g., company website), partnerships BEC has established with community organisations, and/or word-of-mouth (e.g., family referrals).

The screening process identifies participants' training and development needs and will either place a participant directly into a role, or into a 'Real Jobs' training programme, where job-readiness training is provided. An indirect outcome of 'Real Jobs' training is that participants develop support networks. These networks are important as indigenous people often find it difficult to open up to non-indigenous people.

Mentors are assigned to provide support to programme participants. Mentors are tasked with ensuring that new employees successfully transition into employment.

The importance of family is recognised. Examples include involving families in the selection process and extending support services it makes available for programme participants to their families as well (e.g. counselling services).

**NZ (Equal Employment Opportunities Trust, 2007):** Beca Transportation has developed several initiatives ensuring it recruits and retains the best traffic engineers from around the world. Key to its success has been in helping managers be aware of the fact that people from other cultures might need support in doing things differently. The initiatives are outlined below:

Training and development for new staff. For example, Beca Transportation employed an English tutor to help foreign employees improve their English language skills. One employee received one-on-one training, and participated in an English conversation group, all paid for by the company.

Adjusted social gatherings to account for other cultural norms. Some of the 'Kiwi' ways of doing things were not appealing to workers from other cultures, and consequently, these workers became disengaged from team events. Responses from

Beca Transportation included making non-alcoholic beverages available and moving team lunches from pubs to local restaurants.

At a time where similar organisations have been losing employees, Beca Transportation has seen a 30% growth in staff numbers.

# Theme Three: The cycle of motivation, risk and reward

**Summary of theme and key insights**

Young people are unaware of the need to demonstrate an appetite, or certain level of motivation, for career advancement. Consequently, if employers, who are constantly assessing the risk of investing in training and development for young people, are not getting signals from their young employees who want to progress, these employees are likely to be passed over.

Based on the insights drawn from engaging with young people and employers, there are several factors that appear to drive 'the cycle of motivation, risk and reward'. These include: i) intrinsic motivators, ii) clarity of communication, and iii) the role of employers.

**Summary of research**

On the international front, there is a wealth of literature on skill development and job progression pathways. Observations from a selection of the literature are summarised below:

> Intrinsic motivational factors, such as a young person's self-confidence about their ability to carry out job-related tasks, have been highlighted as a key determinant of sustained employment and progression (Devins et al., 2011). Furthermore, past experiences may have impacted their self-confidence about their abilities (e.g., experiences at school)[6], which may reduce their motivation to participate in learning and development activities.

> The formation and communication of clear progression pathways have been identified as key factors in sustained progression at work (Devins et al., 2011). At a firm level, this includes formalised procedures to discuss training and development needs between employee and employer, whereas on an individual level, this can include having an agreed and written training plan (Park, 1994).

> The role of the employer is key in shaping an employee's attitude towards training and development (Johnson et al., 2009). Promoting a 'culture of learning' within a workplace was identified as positively influencing employees' decisions about participation in training and development. For example, Taylor and Spencer (1994) noted how learners valued the support received from employers (e.g., time off, financial support). This observation is crucial when considering family responsibilities, getting

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[6] Research with disadvantaged young people found that problems experienced at school resulted in negative attitudes (which undermine motivation) towards workplace learning (Ball, Macrae, & Maguire, 1999).

time off, and costs having been identified as barriers to not taking up training opportunities (Park, 1994).

Research by Pio (2007) provided a comprehensive overview of the training and development landscape in NZ. For example, at public training institutes, access to employer-sponsored training was unevenly distributed among the workforce, with younger and less experienced employees receiving less frequent training. Such findings are not too surprising, and could partially be explained by observations from the international literature – for example, juggling work and family responsibilities with training or costs associated with undertaking training.

**Examples of successful interventions and best practice**

**International - Developing a culture of learning – The Cheesecake Factory (CF) (Ruiz, 2006):** Staff training and development is at the forefront of Human Resource strategy at CF. On average, CF spends US$2,000 on training per hourly employee each year. Training programmes are individualised to each employee (given their job responsibilities). All levels of staff receive training, from Dishwashers (mastering English as a second language), Servers (2 weeks of on-the-job training), and managerial candidates (a 12 week development course). Progression pathways are clearly communicated from the start of employment, with new hires given a career roadmap for professional advancement. Return on investment is measured by staff turnover, with CF having a turnover rate 15% below the industry average.

**NZ – Developing a culture of learning – Goodtime Food** (Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment, n.d.)**:** Towards the end of the 1990s, Goodtime Food saw staff turnover at 180%. The company decided to invest in its people, and implemented the following initiatives:

> A training and induction programme: Key to the success of this initiative was existing workers, who acted as training buddies, giving daily performance feedback to new hires. Such feedback clearly communicated the worker's strengths and areas for improvement.
>
> A staff committee was established to open up communication channels between staff and management. Staff were encouraged to raise any issues or voice ideas they had.
>
> A structured training programme was implemented, with achievement linked to remuneration. The progression path of this training was clear and well communicated, with participation potentially leading to a nationally recognised qualification in bakery or supervisory skills.

By creating a 'culture of learning', where structured training programmes were available, and communication channels between staff and management open, Goodtime Food saw staff turnover drop to 14% in 2003 (down from 180% towards the end of the 1990s).

# Theme Four: The changing work environment

**Summary of theme**

The work environment is changing for young people, with impacts from globalisation and technological advancement adding complexity. Youth no longer benefit from the work stability their parents experienced (International Labour Office, 2012), and what was once thought of as career path has now become a lifelong journey of varying learning and employment roles (Hughes & Gration, 2009). What was once a simple E2E transition process, has now become problematic and lengthy (Keep, 2012), thus, insight must be gained on how young people can be supported in successfully navigating this process.

**Summary of research**

A substantial body of research has investigated changes occurring in the work environment. Strategies to support young people successfully transitioning into employment have also been developed. These changes and strategies are outlined below:

> **Change - A decrease in the quality of jobs for youth:** The casualisation of jobs for young people has become common (i.e., casual contracts, part-time work) (NESA, 2014; Auckland Chamber of Commerce, 2015), forcing young people to engage in sub-optimal employment. This can result in a cycle of temporary jobs with little progression (International Labour Office, 2012). These jobs provide no training, are low paid, unpleasant, and thus offer little incentive for youth to fully engage (Keep, 2012).
>
> **Strategies:** Create more entry-level jobs with clearly defined work-based training pathways/progression opportunities. This may encourage youth to take a work-based route to qualification (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2011). Entrepreneurship can be encouraged as an alternative to low-skilled/entry-level jobs, with government support provided (Foundation for Young Australians, 2015a).
>
> **Change – The E2E transition has become more complex:** The transition to employment now takes longer and is filled with obstacles (Keep, 2012). The key to navigating this changing landscape lies in the availability of comprehensive labour market information to youth and parents (McKinsey & Company, 2012).
>
> **Strategies:** Relationship-based hiring sees schools match students to jobs. Employers can also pre-hire youth, where employers sponsor/influence training to ensure a better

fit for when the young person starts work. Career counselling and labour market information are essential (McKinsey & Company, 2012).

**A greater emphasis is placed on soft-skills:** There is a greater demand from employers for soft-skills. In fact, employers prioritise developing soft-skills (e.g., teamwork, communication) in employees (Cunningham & Villasenor, 2014). The difficulty young people face is that soft-skills are best developed through work experience (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012), and without gaining work experience, youth are at risk of being unable to develop and demonstrate these skills.

**Strategies:** Embedding enterprise skills (e.g., problem-solving) in curricula creates confidence and creativity in youth (Foundation for Young Australians, 2015a). Employers and education providers need to align educational outcomes and employer skill requirements (NYC Career Pathways, 2014). This can include bringing the 'classroom to the workplace' (i.e., apprenticeships) or vice versa (i.e., employer-led training) (McKinsey & Company, 2012).

**Change – There is a need for gaining relevant work experience:** Employers use work experience to filter out job applicants (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015), and with university graduates expressing frustration at not securing entry-level jobs because they lack work experience (International Labour Office, 2012), the situation seems dire for less-skilled youth. Employers play a critical role in youth transitioning into employment (Keep, 2012), Therefore, if they require youth to be job ready, they also have to make opportunities available where youth can gain work experience (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2011).

**Strategies:** Work experience opportunities must be made available (e.g., internships, apprenticeships or traineeships) (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012). There is also a role for government to provide incentives to employers (e.g. government funding for apprenticeship programmes) (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2011).

**Change – Fundamental shifts taking place in the labour market:** Globalisation of the workforce has seen new types of workers emerge (e.g., virtual/global workers), who can disrupt the youth labour market (Foundation for Young Australians, 2015a). Furthermore, young people are not being trained or educated for jobs of the future, resulting in few employers taking on youth straight out of education (Keep, 2012). Technological advancement will also automate jobs where youth traditionally gain work experience (e.g., retail, administrative) (Foundation for Young Australians, 2015a).

**Strategies:** Students need to be trained for the digital age. Therefore, embedding a mandatory computing or digital technologies curriculum, starting from primary school, set youth up for success (Foundation for Young Australians, 2015a).

# Theme Five: What does successful youth transition look like?

**Summary of theme**

The transition for youth from E2E is complicated and one which involve many groups (e.g., families, education providers, employers). The journey is also one of many routes, and with limited information available on how to successfully navigate each one, young people face considerable difficulties when trying to access the labour market for the first time. Consequently, we are seeing many young people getting lost on their journey.

**Summary of research**

To address this issue, a substantial body of research has been devoted to understanding youth transitions into the labour market. There is also research which outlines key success factors required for developing effective workforce systems (New York City Workforce Strategy Group, 2013, 2014). Based on a selection of the literature (both international and NZ), barriers impeding young people successfully transitioning from E2E are summarised below. Under each barrier, potential solutions are also presented.

> **Youth lack knowledge about the labour market:** Being inexperienced at navigating the labour market means youth do not know how to find suitable jobs, choose the appropriate employer or even understand the job-related requirements (Hughes & Gration, 2009; International Labour Office, 2012; Sustainable Business Council, 2014).
>
> **Solutions:** Career counselling at schools/universities, and providing comprehensive information about the labour market are potential solutions to this barrier (Auckland Chamber of Commerce, 2015; International Labour Office, 2012; McKinsey & Company, 2012). Alternative solutions include employers offering opportunities for youth to engage in job shadowing or holding open days to provide young people with insight into a specific profession or industry (Sustainable Business Council, 2014).
>
> **There is a skills mismatch between what youth offer and what the labour market demands:** Youth, employers and educational institutes all seem to have different perspectives on whether youth are adequately prepared for entry-level positions. For example, fewer than half of youth and employers believe youth are job ready, compared to 74% of educational providers in Europe (McKinsey & Company, 2014). Such varying perspectives suggest there is a need to strengthen the link between the

education system and the labour market so that youth are better equipped to enter employment.

**Solutions:** Improved access to training (vocational, on-the-job, apprenticeships) was identified as potential solutions (International Labour Office, 2012; NYC Career Pathways, 2014)[7]. Furthermore, employers can take a proactive demand driven approach and partner with local schools to help identify the skills they need in their industry (McKinsey & Company, 2014). Providing mentoring and volunteering programmes also provide young people with access to skill development opportunities (Sustainable Business Council, 2014).

**The work experience trap:** Youth often find themselves in a catch-22 scenario where they are not hired because they lack work experience, and they lack job experience because they are not hired. Furthermore, limited work experience can also result in youth not understanding the dynamics of the work environment (i.e., workplace ethics and culture) (International Labour Office, 2012).

**Solutions:** Work experience opportunities can help youth gain employability skills and self-confidence (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012). This can be achieved through internships, apprenticeships or traineeships (Sustainable Business Council, 2014).

**Transport accessibility and driver licences:** One of the biggest barriers for youth getting into employment is driver licences (Auckland Chamber of Commerce, 2015; Sustainable Business Council, 2014). The cost and accessibility of transport as act as barriers (Green & White, 2008; Lee, Sissons, Balaram, Jones, & Cominetti, 2012).

**Solutions:** Greater subsidies can be negotiated with transport providers (Lee et al., 2012). Alternatively, youth transition programmes can support participants through the drivers licence process and help offset costs (Auckland Chamber of Commerce, 2015).

## Examples of successful interventions and best practice – CadetMax[8]:

CadetMax is a partnership between the Auckland Chamber of Commerce and Ministry of Social Development and supports youth from South Auckland transitioning to employment as follows:

Provide opportunities for work experience through engaging its business networks.

Provide support throughout the job application process by providing job search skills.

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[7] In NZ, COMET Auckland has played a key role addressing youth employability in Auckland through involvement in programmes such as the Youth Employability passport (COMET Auckland, n.d.).
[8] Source: Auckland Chamber of Commerce (2015).

Provide support throughout the drivers licence process (i.e., costs, training).

Mentors are assigned for 12 months once participants are employed. This is to ensure that the transition into employment is smooth for the participant and the business.

# Theme Six: The social cost of youth disengagement

**Summary of theme**

The costs associated with youth disengagement are more than those of an economic nature[9]. The costs of being NEET[10] also relate to the community in terms of increased social welfare expenditure and social dysfunction (Hughes & Gration, 2009). Furthermore, youth who experience long-term unemployment or NEET status faces the risk of alienation. These youths must surrender the possibility of participating in a range of activities or purchasing goods or services, due to limited or no income (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2012). Alienation can also result from being excluded from social networks which are primarily through employment or education (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2012). Although such social costs can be harder to measure when compared to economic costs, they do have tangible impacts on youths and their surrounding communities, and must therefore not be ignored.

**Summary of research**

On the international front, there is a substantial body of literature on the social costs of youth disengagement (including unemployment and/or NEET status). Observations drawn from a selection of the literature are summarised below:

> In Europe, NEETs were found to have substantially lower levels of political and social engagement, as well as lower levels of trust, when compared to non-NEETs. This implies that NEETs are at high risk of being politically and socially alienated from their societies (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2012).

> Increases in unemployment overall have been shown to make people unhappy (Ahn, Garcia, & Jimeno, 2004), due to the increased propensity for themselves to experience unemployment in the future (Knabe & Rätzel, 2011).

> There are also health impacts associated with unemployment, such as malnutrition, illness, mental stress, lower self-esteem and depression (Banks & Jackson, 1982; Goldsmith, Veum, & Darity Jr, 1997).

> Raised crime rates (especially property crime) have also been linked to increases in the unemployment rate (Lin, 2008). Similarly, Fougére, Kramarz, and Pouget (2009)

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[9] See the section 'Supplementary: The cost of youth disengagement' for an overview of economic costs, and summary of international and NZ research findings.
[10] Not in Employment, Education, or Training.

found that increases in youth unemployment were associated with increases in burglaries, thefts and drug offences. The costs arising from youth offending has also been found to be consistent, with 75% of these youths re-offending within two years (Lee et al., 2012).

In contrast to the body of international literature, the body of NZ literature on the social costs of youth disengagement is relatively sparse. A paper by the Sustainable Business Council (2014) outlined a range of social costs associated with youth unemployment. Continual short-term experiences of unemployment was said to result in long-term scarring, which is where young people believe their futures are compromised, and subsequently disengage from education and employment. The scarring effects of inactivity have been empirically supported by Maloney (2004), who found that early spells of inactivity (i.e., NEET) were positively and significantly related to later periods of inactivity. The Sustainable Business Council (2014) also highlighted other outcomes associated with prolonged periods of disengagement. These outcomes, with supporting NZ empirical evidence, are outlined below:

**Criminal offending:** Longer durations of unemployment were found to be positively associated with a range of measures for youth offending, including violent offending, property offending, arrests and convictions (Fergusson, Lynskey, & Horwood, 1997).

**Substance abuse:** Those who were exposed to unemployment had significantly higher rates of substance abuse/dependence (e.g., nicotine, alcohol, other substances) (Fergusson, Horwood, & Lynskey, 1997).

**Suicide:** Being unemployed was associated with a two to threefold increase in the relative risk of death by suicide, when compared to being employed. For young males aged 18-24 years, a strong association between unemployment and suicide was also found (Blakely, Collings, & Atkinson, 2003).

**Mental or physical ill health:** Increased exposure to unemployment was found to be associated with increasing risks of psychiatric disorders in adolescence. In fact, those exposed to unemployment (for periods of six months or more) had rates of disorders 1.5 to 5.4 times higher when compared to those who had not been exposed to unemployment (Fergusson, Horwood, et al., 1997).

In addition to the above outcomes, youth who experience prolonged periods of disengagement are also at risk of lower earnings, greater reliance on social assistance, a higher propensity of unemployment, teenage fertility or homelessness (Sustainable Business Council, 2014).

# Supplementary: What is attitude?

Research on the importance of attitude in employment has been explored from a variety of perspectives. From a qualitative perspective, employers have often been surveyed on the attitude of young people in the workplace, with both positive and negative impressions reported (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012; UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2009). From an empirical approach, Mohanty (2010) found that having a positive attitude and optimistic outlook, increased a person's probability of employment.

One of the gaps that exist in the current body of literature, however, is the scarcity of research from a young person's perspective. For example, little is known about young peoples' attitudes towards employers or work in general (Morris, Nelson, Rickinson, Stoney, & Benefield, 1999), their early career experiences (Taylor, 2003), or motives behind work (Besen-Cassino, 2008). Nonetheless, existing research does provide initial insights into how young peoples' attitudes are formed, and thus where policy interventions should be targeted.

## How is attitude defined?

Defining 'attitude' can be difficult given its psychological nature. Although a precise definition is not possible, Mohanty (2010) describes attitude encompassing how a person sees a given situation. Do they concentrate on the good or bad elements? Are they optimistic or pessimistic about potential outcomes? Therefore, a person with a positive attitude, for example, sees the brighter side of every situation, concentrates on the good elements, and is optimistic that whatever happens will work out for the better.

## How can a positive attitude be developed?

Given the association between a positive attitude and probability of employment (Mohanty, 2010), understanding who influences a young person's attitude, or what the determinants of 'attitude' are, is fundamental for informing effective policy interventions. Based on observations drawn from international literature, parents, schools, and employers all appear to play a role in influencing young peoples' attitudes. These observations are summarised below:

> **The influence of parents:** Young people often draw on the advice and experience of their parents when contemplating decisions on education or labour market participation (Bynner, Elias, McKnight, Pan, & Pierre, 2002). Young people from families with low socio-economic status have been identified as 'at-risk' of developing negative attitudes, as they are often exposed to their parents' negative

workforce experiences (Versnel et al., 2011). The attitudes of parents have also been shown to impact their child's labour market expectations, which in turn can impact their human capital acquisition (Brown, Ortiz-Nuñez, & Taylor, 2011). Therefore, parents must be engaged and educated on the potentially long-lasting impact they have on their children's attitude, and subsequent education and economic outcomes.

**The influence of schools:** The quality and extent of the information provided to young people, as well as the advice and guidance that they received before the age of 16, have been shown to influence their attitudes to higher education (Morris, 2004). The importance of effective career education is further emphasised when considering that employers report students generally not being job ready (e.g., don't have self-management skills, positive attitudes and character) (Hughes & Gration, 2009). Therefore, supplementing traditional education with training in behavioural skills may improve a young person's attitude and future economic performance (Mohanty, 2013).

**The influence of employers:** Employers have a pivotal role in shaping young people's attitudes. For example, Loughlin and Barling (2001) found that early workplace experiences influence workers' subsequent work-related attitudes, values and behaviours. Therefore, care must be taken to ensure that these initial experiences are positive and well supported. This can be achieved by employers engaging with schools to provide students with the opportunity to gain work experience. These opportunities enable students to become familiar with the work environment without experiencing high levels of anxiety and uncertainty that traditional employment may expose them to (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012).

**Determinants of attitude:** To help inform policies designed to improve individuals' attitudes[11] and economic performance, Mohanty (2013), identified four determinants of attitude, including income, employment, experience and schooling. The results suggested that in any of the determinants (e.g., increase in family income or years of schooling) were the primary causes of improvements in attitude among the young adults in the study. At a high level, Mohanty (2013, p. 50) stated that "variables which augment ones self-esteem and make him/her feel as a person of importance are likely to improve his/her attitude".

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[11] Although the effects of 'attitude' have been shown to be long lasting, it cannot be ruled out that poor attitudes adopted earlier on in life are reversible through appropriate corrective actions (Waddell, 2006).

# Supplementary: The cost of youth disengagement

Youth disengagement from the labour market is associated with substantial economic costs. A large body of empirical evidence suggests that young people out of employment or education are likely to have a lifetime of poorer outcomes in terms of future unemployment. For example, Gregg (2001) found that British youth who experience unemployment (when compared to those who do not) disproportionately go on to experience further periods of being out of work in their prime age (28-33 years). Maloney (2004) found similar scarring effects for youth in NZ.

Although there has been a large body of research examining the outcomes associated with youth disengagement, there has been a relatively smaller subset of research which has quantified the costs. On the international front, research by and attempted to estimate the lifetime costs of youth who are NEET in the UK, and in NZ, Pacheco and Dye (2014) undertook a similar analysis, focussing on the short-run financial costs. A summary of the observations drawn from these studies is summarised below.

**International costs of youth disengagement:**

Godfrey et al. (2002) estimated a range of costs associated with NEETs aged 16-18 years, including educational underachievement, unemployment, inactivity, crime and health. One of their findings indicated that crime and health costs are relatively lower when compared to the costs of educational underachievement and unemployment.

Research by Coles, Godfrey, Keung, Parrott, and Bradshaw (2010) updated the earlier work of Godfrey et al. (2002). The research estimated the life-time costs of NEETs aged 16-18 years, based on the size of the NEET population at the end of 2008. Public finance costs[12] were substantially larger than what was estimated in Godfrey et al. (2002), primarily due to the growing size if the NEET population. Similarly, resource costs[13] nearly doubled against what was estimated by Godfrey et al. (2002) in 2002, which was reflective of the changes in wage differentials.

Re-integrating only 10% of European NEETs into the labour market were shown to generate an annual saving of more than 10 billion euro (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2012). Although this study quantified gains at an aggregate European Union level, the findings suggest there are

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[12] These costs quantify the impact to public finances arising from tax and benefits, as well as health, welfare and criminal justice expenditure (Coles et al., 2010).
[13] These costs involve estimating the loss to the economy, and the individual/family welfare loss (Coles et al., 2010).

potential economic benefits available to any country who successfully transition youth into the labour market.

**NZ costs of youth disengagement (Pacheco & Dye, 2014):**

Excluded in the estimated cost of youth disengagement were costs associated with the impacts on health or criminal activity. These were excluded due to the unavailability of data, and in many instances, the inherent difficulty in estimating indirect costs. The categories of costs which were included are as follows:

> **The cost of unemployment:** This was based on the average duration of unemployment for youth. It was assumed that NEETs would remain unemployed for 50% longer than the average.

> **The cost of inactivity:** It was assumed that NEETs engaged in caregiving will be out of the workforce and education sector for 1.5 years (regardless of age group), and that other inactive youth will be out of the labour market for 1 year.

> **The cost of educational underachievement:** This was based on the wage differential that NEETs were likely to encounter when re-entering the workforce. This included a 32% wage differential for NEETs that have no school qualifications (regardless of age group), and an 8% and 24% wage differential for NEETs (aged 15-19 and 20-24 respectively) that have at least a school qualification.

A summary of the high-level findings are presented below[14]:

> The estimated per capita cost (for the next one to three years) for Auckland NEETs was higher than the comparable per capita cost for NZ NEETs (due to higher forgone wages in Auckland).

> The estimated per capita costs also suggested differences by ethnicity, with per capita costs for Māori and Pasifika NEETs being higher than the comparable per capita cost for NZ European youth NEETs. This was attributed to a higher propensity for Māori and Pasifika youth to disengage from education earlier, have caregiving responsibilities at an earlier age, and experience longer periods of unemployment.

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[14] Cost figures from the study are not included here due to the time that has passed since these figures were originally estimated. If per-capita costs are required, it is recommended that they be re-estimate using the most recent data available and the methodology of Pacheco and Dye (2014).

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