

Benefits in context: some questions worth answering

**Presentation to the Welfare Working Group Forum:
Session 9 Q Future proofing the benefit system**

**Rick Boven
10 June 2010**

www.nzinstitute.org

SOCIETIES INTERVENE TO ADDRESS SOCIAL ISSUES

- Outcomes may harm people or impose costs on the society
- The society may help, influence or coerce the individual to make different choices
 - Provide income, housing, health or other supplements to sustain life or reduce risk factors
 - Provide education to influence values and beliefs so different choices are made
 - Provide social supports and legal constraints to influence behaviour
 - Limit personal freedom to prevent unacceptable behaviour

HIGH LEVEL GOALS?

- Reduce harm
- Reduce cost
- Improve productivity



Which
Investments?

WHAT SEEMS TO BE WRONG?

SYMPTOMS?

- Low aspirations?
- Large costs, mostly for consequences or benefits?
- Cost and operational performance focus?
- NGOs and clients become dependent?
- Outcomes not improving for some issues
- Comparative performance not strong for some issues?

ROOT CAUSES?

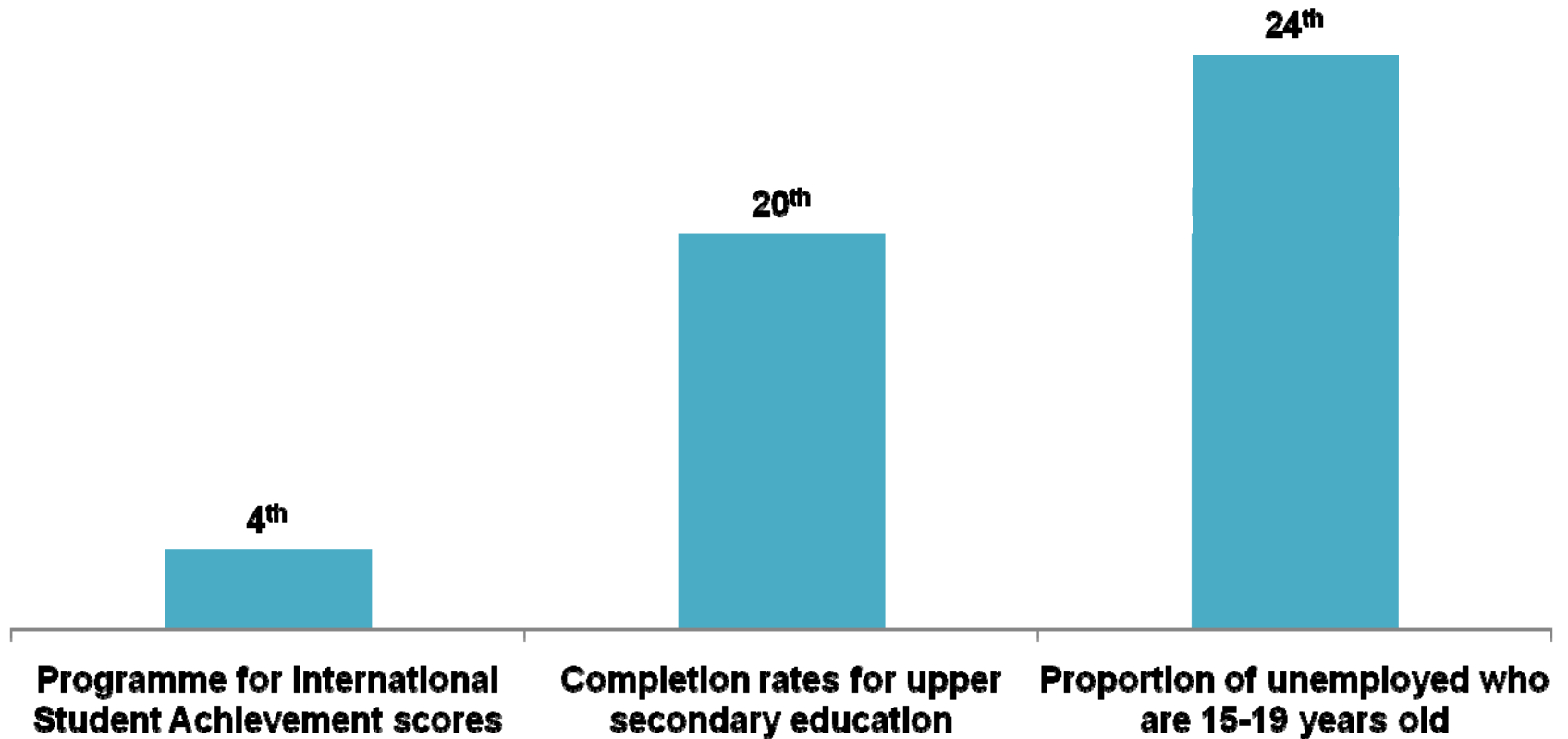
- No unifying framework or theory apparent?
- Emphasis on response, not prevention?
- Weak outcome-driven performance management?
- Institutional inertia?
- Specialists operating within limited paradigms?
- Provider centric not client centric?

DO WE HAVE THE RIGHT PARADIGMS?

- Provider paradigms – what do we offer?
 - Health, schools, prisons, social worker etc.
 - Often individual focused
- Life-stage paradigms – how do we help individuals?
 - Children
 - Teenage issues
 - School-to-work transition
 - Retirement
- An alternative with potential?
 - Who are the people (families, households, communities) who have multiple interactions with social agencies?
 - Why do they make the choices they make?
 - What economic and human outcomes would result from different strategies?

TROUBLE WITH SILOS?

Rank out of 25 OECD Countries



A FOUR LEVEL FRAMEWORK WITH POTENTIAL?

- What **choices** do individuals make, and how?
- What do **individuals** do and what happens to them as a result?
- What are the **economic** consequences of individual behaviour and societal responses?
- What are the **institutional** responses to social issues and what outcomes are observed?

HIGHER ASPIRATIONS?

FROM

- Lack of concern about consequences for others: “it’s all about me”
- Shut out from opportunities
- Isolated from community or embedded in an unhelpful community
- Gaps in support or help when skills, guidance and constraints are required

TO

- Everyone cares about outcomes for others
- Worthwhile opportunities are available
- Everyone connected to a positive community context
- Appropriate support and help is available when appropriate