

qualified people to help with the rebuild. Why aren't there swarms of young school leavers moving on to study to be electricians, builders, plumbers, plasterers, architects, painters or to learn any one of the many skills needed to rebuild a city – or even just a house?

You cannot blame the Government if you are an unqualified jobseeker. The onus is on the individual to study and attain marketable skills.

M BROOKS
(TAURANGA)

Parents react with dismay when their children experience a period of unemployment or casual, low-paid sporadic employment following the completion of education and training. The article well illustrated the problem we face, showing how unemployment is experienced by a high proportion of both the unskilled and the very skilled.

Since the mid-1980s we have slid down the OECD GDP per capita rankings, and are now settled near the bottom.

According to Professor Paul Dalziel, it is the balance between individual abilities, education investment, capital investment and market opportunities that provides a platform for the application of skills to derive profits, thus enhancing employment and job quality. Attending to this balance is a major function of any government, as successive cohorts graduate from secondary schools, technical institutes and universities and start looking for jobs. The goal of full employment must underpin all decisions.

To see an alternative, consider Singapore, where a failing economy was jump-started with import replacement, creating jobs, especially for the young.

KEVIN BROUGHAN
(HILLCREST, HAMILTON)

As the government agency responsible for the career development of New Zealanders – particularly youth – we encourage and support people to make well-informed decisions about work and learning. In doing so we encounter many of the problems discussed in the article and highlighted via the New Zealand Institute paper "More Ladders, Fewer Snakes".

That paper found improved career

planning is essential to helping youth overcome disadvantage. Careers New Zealand was seen as the key leadership organisation to provide the cohesion, alignment and co-ordination urgently required to link the vast number of agencies, entities and stakeholders.

An excellent early example of the "next steps" necessary to ensure youth get the support and information they need is the recent launch of the Career Education Benchmarks into secondary schools – a New Zealand first.

From 2012, all secondary schools will have a clear understanding of what constitutes "good" careers support for their students. The benchmarks, supported by resources available on our website (www.careers.govt.nz/benchmarks), will provide careers advisers with much improved capability to support students.

The benchmarks will revolutionise the way we prepare students for training, employment and life beyond school by enabling a consistent, high-quality national approach to career development. At the heart of the benchmarks is a clear description of the skills young people need so they can successfully navigate their career journey and life.

GRAEME BENNY
Chief executive, Careers New Zealand

KIWI JOBS

To those young people bleating that they cannot find jobs ("The young & the jobless", November 12), there is one factor they seem to overlook: qualifications. You cannot expect to leave school and walk into a good job. There are plenty of jobs out there, but you need qualifications or the necessary skills to fill them. A case in point is in Christchurch. That city is having to advertise in British newspapers for