

# Approaches to supporting young disadvantaged learners in VET

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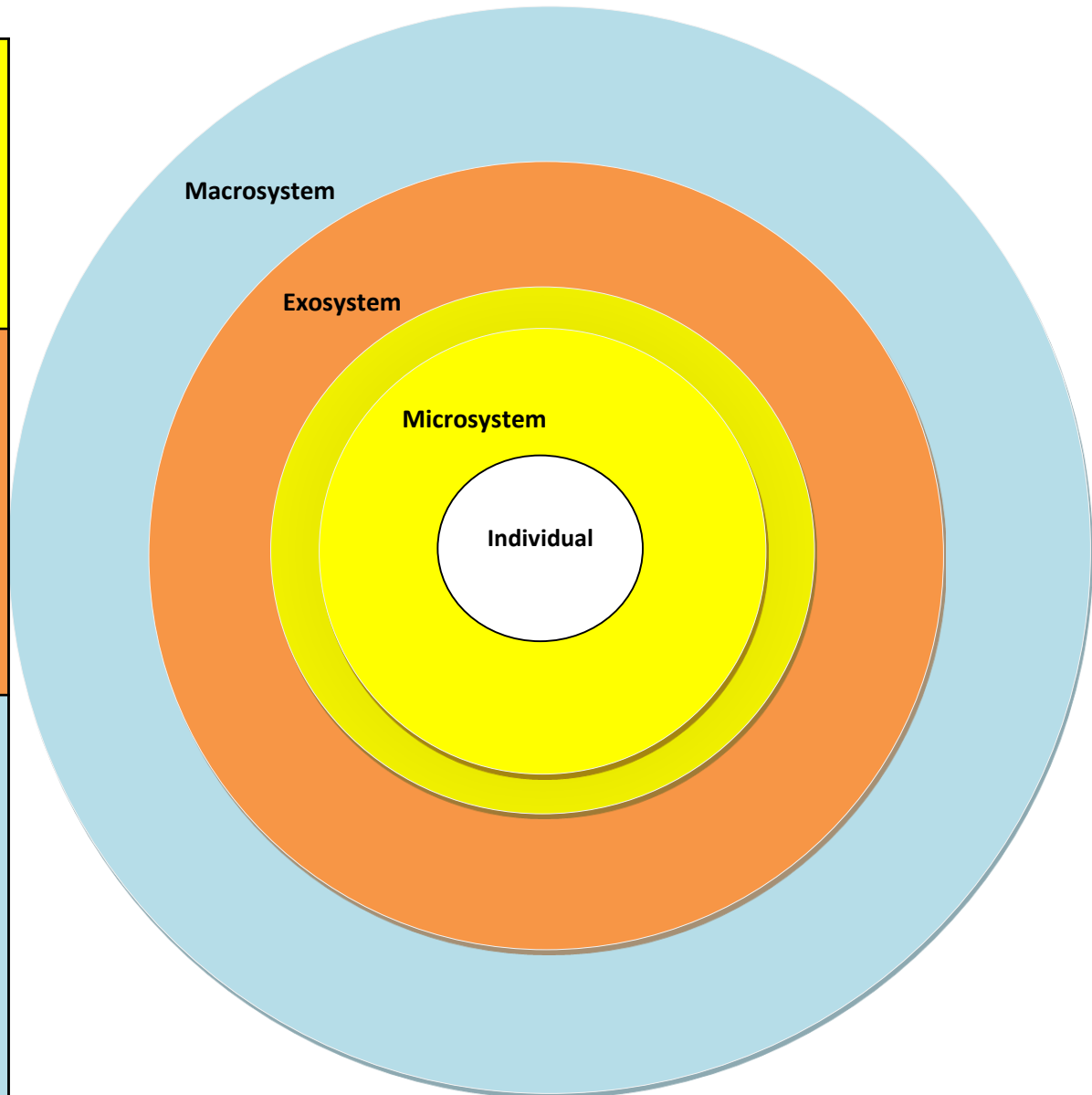
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# Viewing a young person's world

Relationships between the individual's immediate circle and environment (family, peers, school, and neighbourhood).

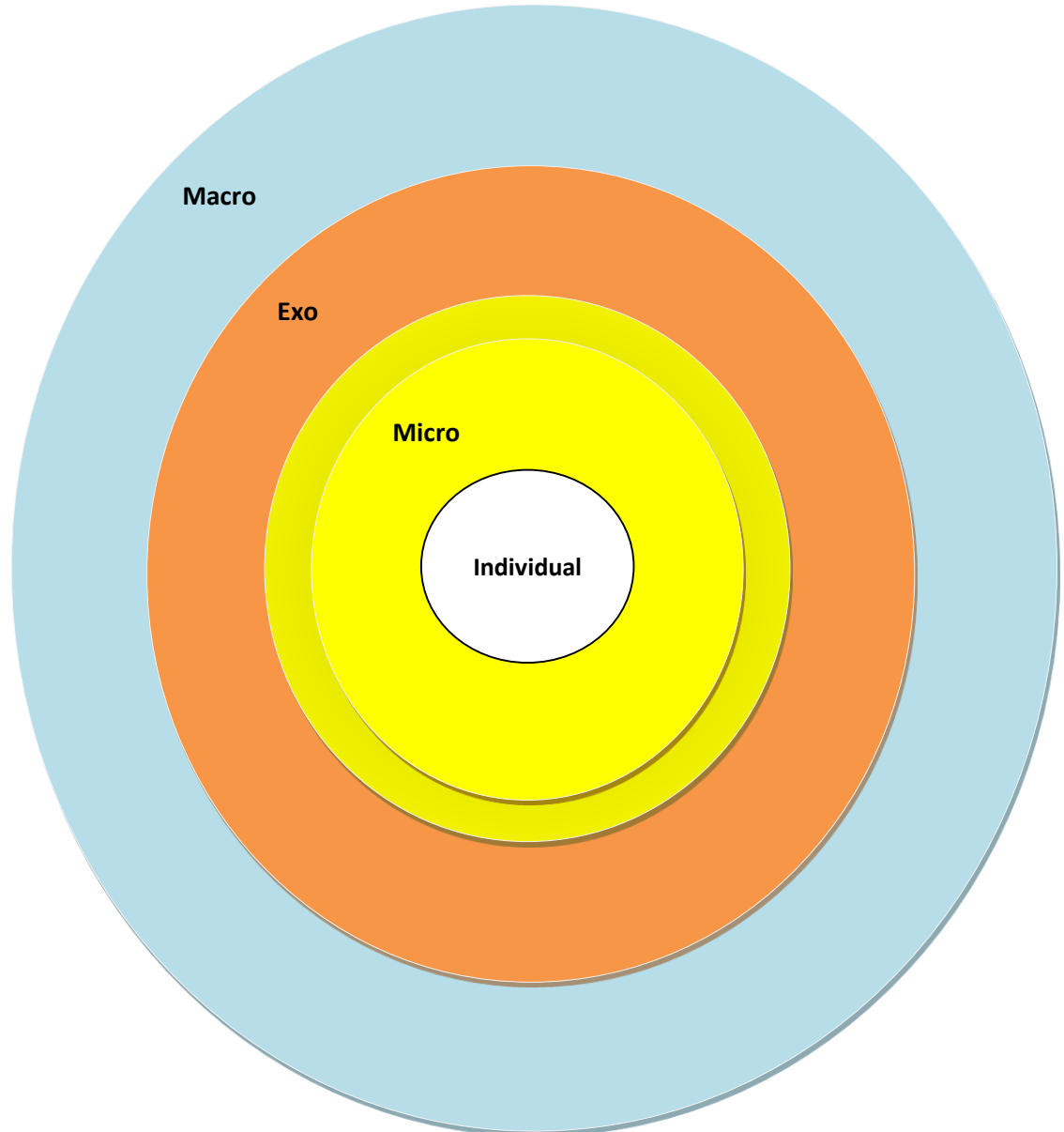
The settings that affect a child but do not directly impinge on them: parents' place of employment, parents' social networks, and government and social policy.

Systemic imperatives: environment, economic, technological, political, environmental and cultural. Prevailing attitudes and ideologies (e.g. a culture's values concerning child-rearing or the purpose of education).



# Disengagement from education

THE WEB OF INHIBITORS
<p>Negative self-image Physical / psychological wellbeing Pathways confusion/indecision</p>
<p>Caring responsibilities Financial responsibilities Social Practices</p>
<p>Parents' poor education, loss of employment, social networks. Isolation and/or lack of access to services Local government and social policy</p>
<p>Exclusion and discrimination Geographical location Unemployment and deprivation Economic downturns Inadequate funding System fragmentation</p>



# ‘NEET’: One of many indicators

Young people  
*‘neither in  
education,  
employment or  
training’*

(AIHW 2015)

Year	Age	Per cent
2010	15-19	8.5
	20-24	12.2
	Total	10.4
2011	15-19	8.4
	20-24	12.1
	Total	10.3
2012	15-19	7.2
	20-24	12.2
	Total	9.8
2013	15-19	7.4
	20-24	14.0
	Total	10.9
2014	15-19	7.0
	20-24	12.9
	Total	10.2
314,800 young people		

# Policy responses.

## Increased participation in VET.

2009-2014 National Partnership for Youth  
Attainments and Transitions

2009 National Agreement for Skills and  
Workforce Development (National Agreement)

2012 National Partnership Agreement on Skills  
Reform

# Young people in the VET system

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	
15 to 19 years	458.1	474.9	484.4	447.9	<b>418.000</b> <b>(306.6 without year 12)</b>	<b>23.4 %</b>
20 to 24 years	304.5	319.4	330.8	323.8	<b>323.700</b>	<b>18.1 %</b>

## Completion rates (% under 25)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Australia</b>	<b>43.8</b>	<b>45.9</b>	<b>44.6</b>	<b>46.8</b>	<b>40.9</b>
New South Wales	49.8	49.8	52.0	51.7	47.3
Victoria	37.0	40.6	39.7	44.0	35.0
Queensland	54.5	53.6	51.0	52.0	52.6
South Australia	44.1	44.7	43.5	44.9	44.8
Western Australia	45.6	47.5	48.2	49.7	49.0
Tasmania	59.4	49.0	64.6	64.7	64.3
Northern Territory	44.1	55.4	52.2	56.7	64.4
ACT	74.6	72.1	91.4	86.1	79.7

(NCVER 2014, 2015)

# The training provider landscape

**All VET providers  
(4,570)**

**Public/community  
owned  
(750)**

(Tafes (54), Schools, Uni,  
Community based)

**Privately owned  
(3760)**

**'For profit'  
(3210)**

(Not for profit privates inc  
private schools, Unis, Industry)

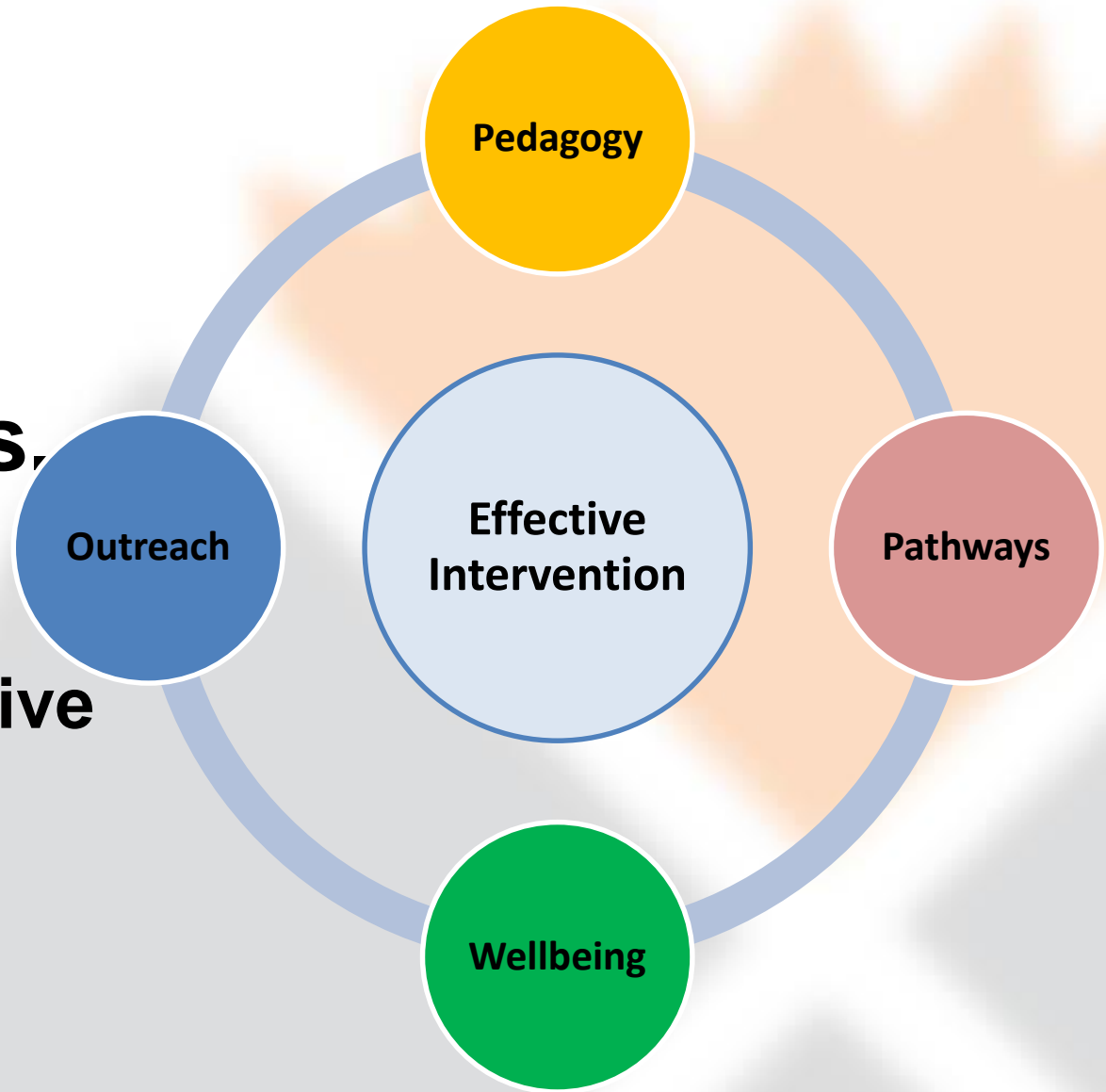
# Macro-Exosystem factors contributing to non-completion

- a confusing, fragmented and – conflicted policy landscape
- contestability: commercial providers' raison d'être is profitability.
- cuts to TAFEs and, hence, embedded support
- often alien and confusing institutional and learning environments and processes.
- trainers unaccustomed to dealing with 'at risk'/high needs youth.
- adult orientated, with a range of ages among the learners.
- competency based, book heavy, learning tightly linked to qualifications, and 'the job'



# Exo- Microsystem level analysis,

## Findings from reviews of effective engagement strategies



(DEECD/Davies et al 2011; Bowman et al 2012; NVEAC 2012 ; Volkoff et al 2009; Qld Govt 2012)

# Case study

## Tailored foundation level courses Cert I in Developing Independence

### The cohort

‘For young people at risk of homelessness, and who lack social, personal and family networks to develop the planning skills, knowledge, networks and aspirations necessary for them set achievable goals for their future education and employment pathways.’

### Course-program-mode-approach

‘An accredited 180 hour course that provides planning, networking and goal setting skills to enhance educational engagement and planning for independent living to young clients’.

# The sites of engagement

- **Online and remote**
- **New or modified institutional settings**
- **Established support services**

## Embedded wellbeing support

# Learning and linking

- **The past: valuing informal skills**
- **The present: awareness, orientation, motivation**
- **The future: exploring possibilities**

# Student feedback

“I liked it when people asked me questions [about ‘Informal Learning’] because ... it reminds me about what I’m capable of doing ... Which is good for me because sometimes I forget and I underestimate myself and then, when I just think about some of the things that I’ve done, I remember that I’m actually capable of doing a lot more than what I thought I was” (Pilot 1 female).

“...the course gave us a perspective of where we want to go ...when we first started we didn’t know what the hell we wanted to do, but now ... after doing some research I know what I want to do [business admin]”. (Pilot 1 female).

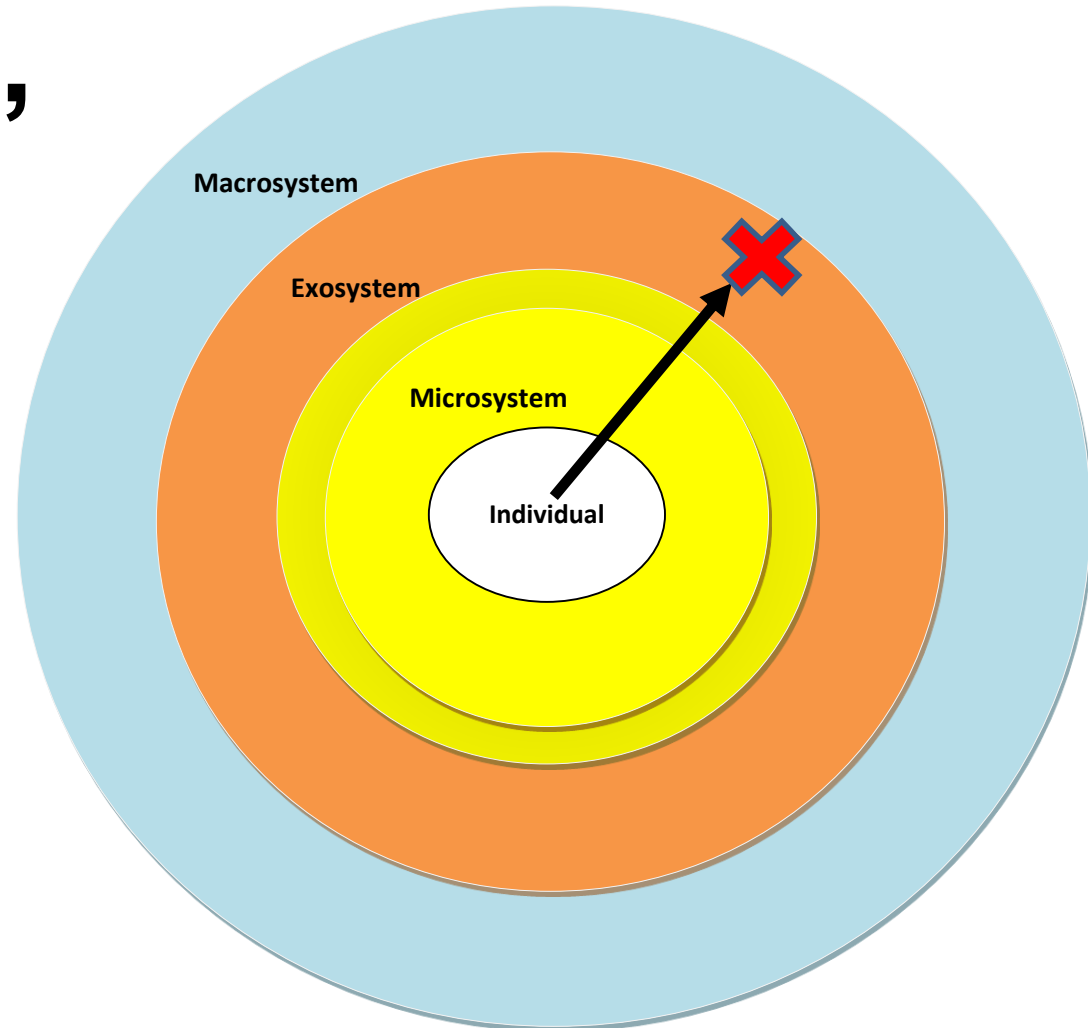
# Student feedback

... once somebody speaks out about what they're going to do in the future, it gets you thinking ... about what you're going to get in the future, what you've got to do to get it. So all these thoughts get into your head in this class [and] like, it always does. (Pilot 2 male student)

I think it's important to have a goal or many goals for that matter. It's good to have ambition. It's good to really try and visualise what you want out of your life because, you know ... who is [it] that said we only live one life? You might as well make the most of it. (Pilot 2 female student)

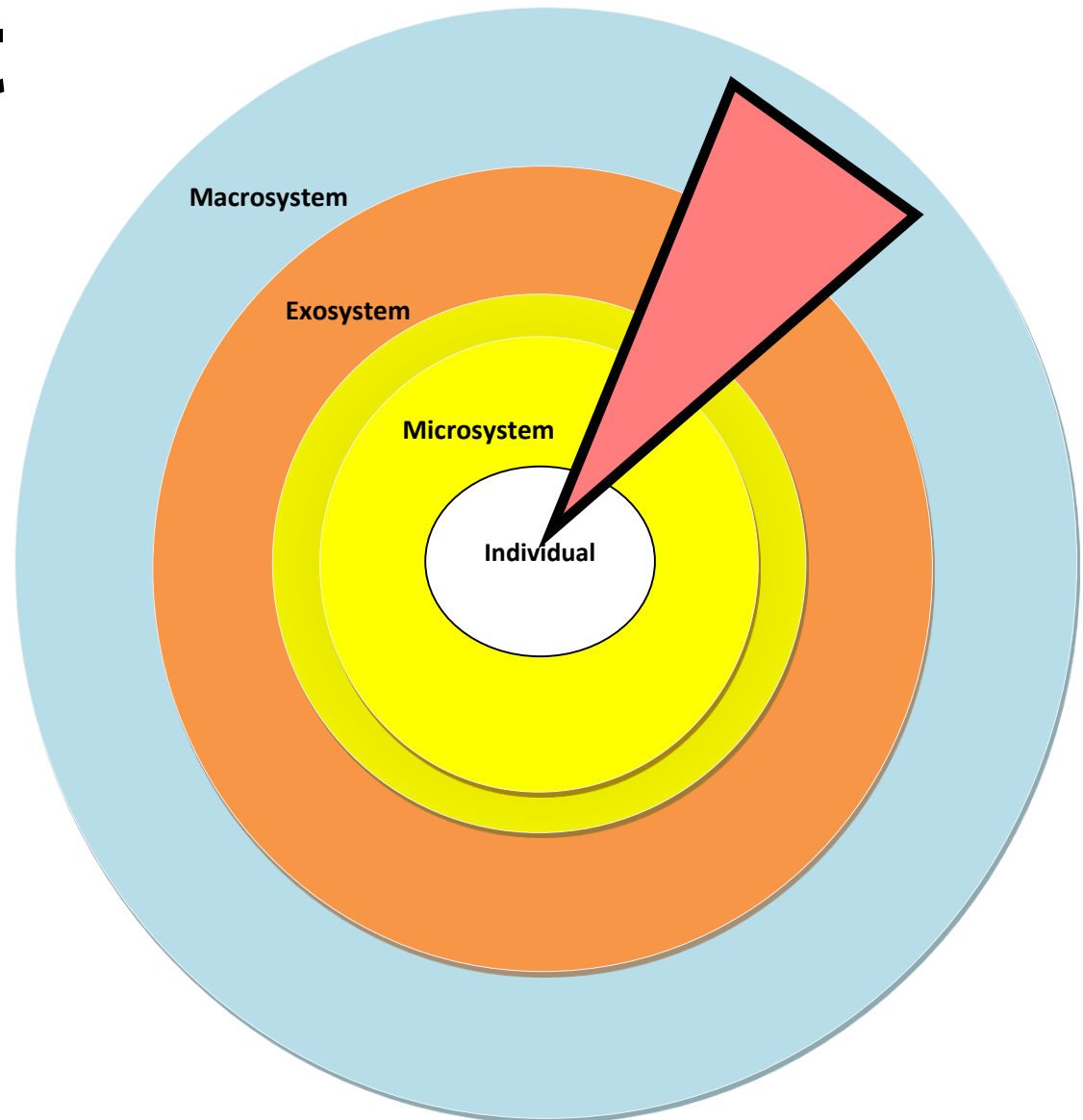
# Macro-Exosystem reform

The 'what is'  
(fallacy)...



(Wheeler et al 2015)

# The 'what ought'...



(Wheeler et al 2015)



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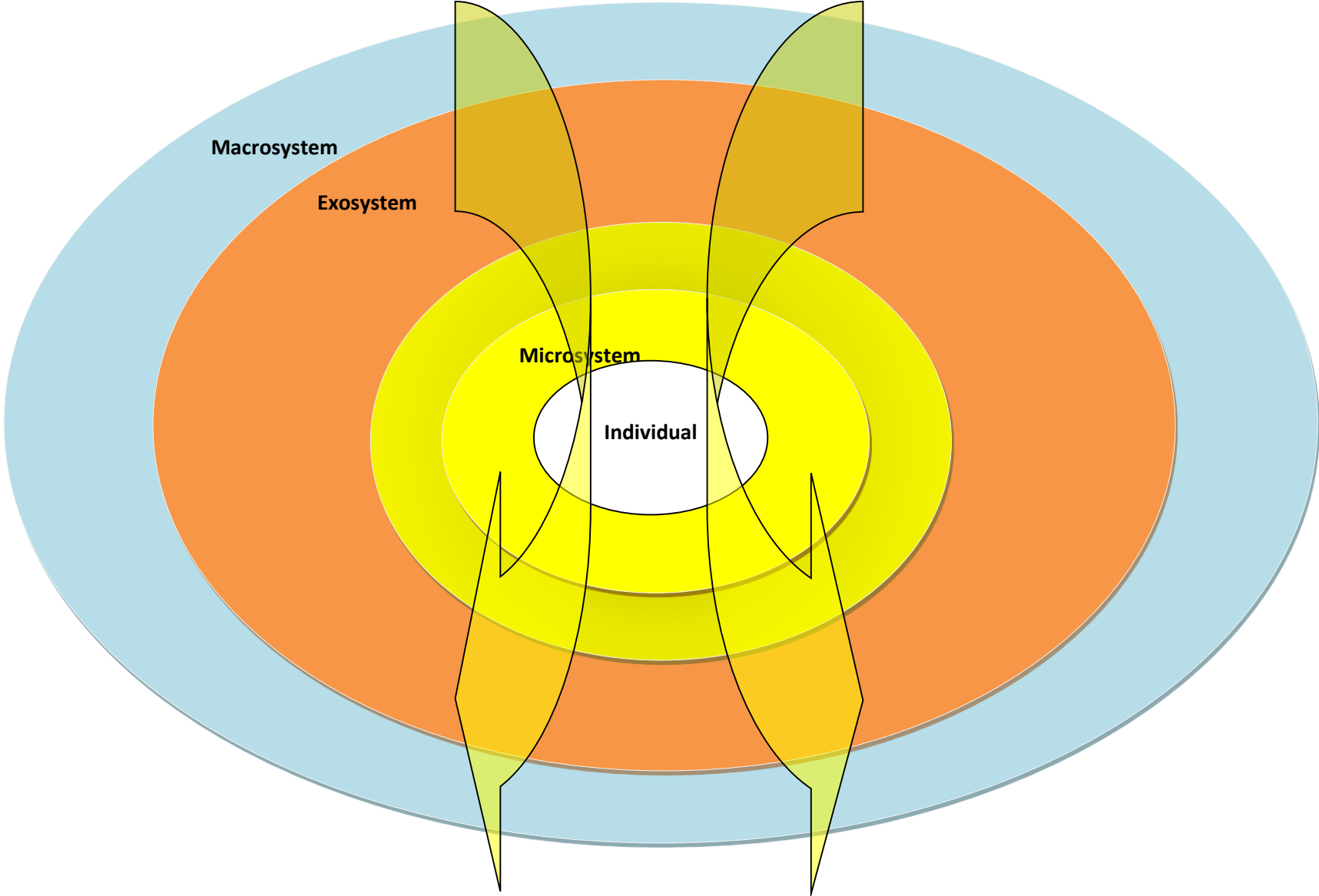
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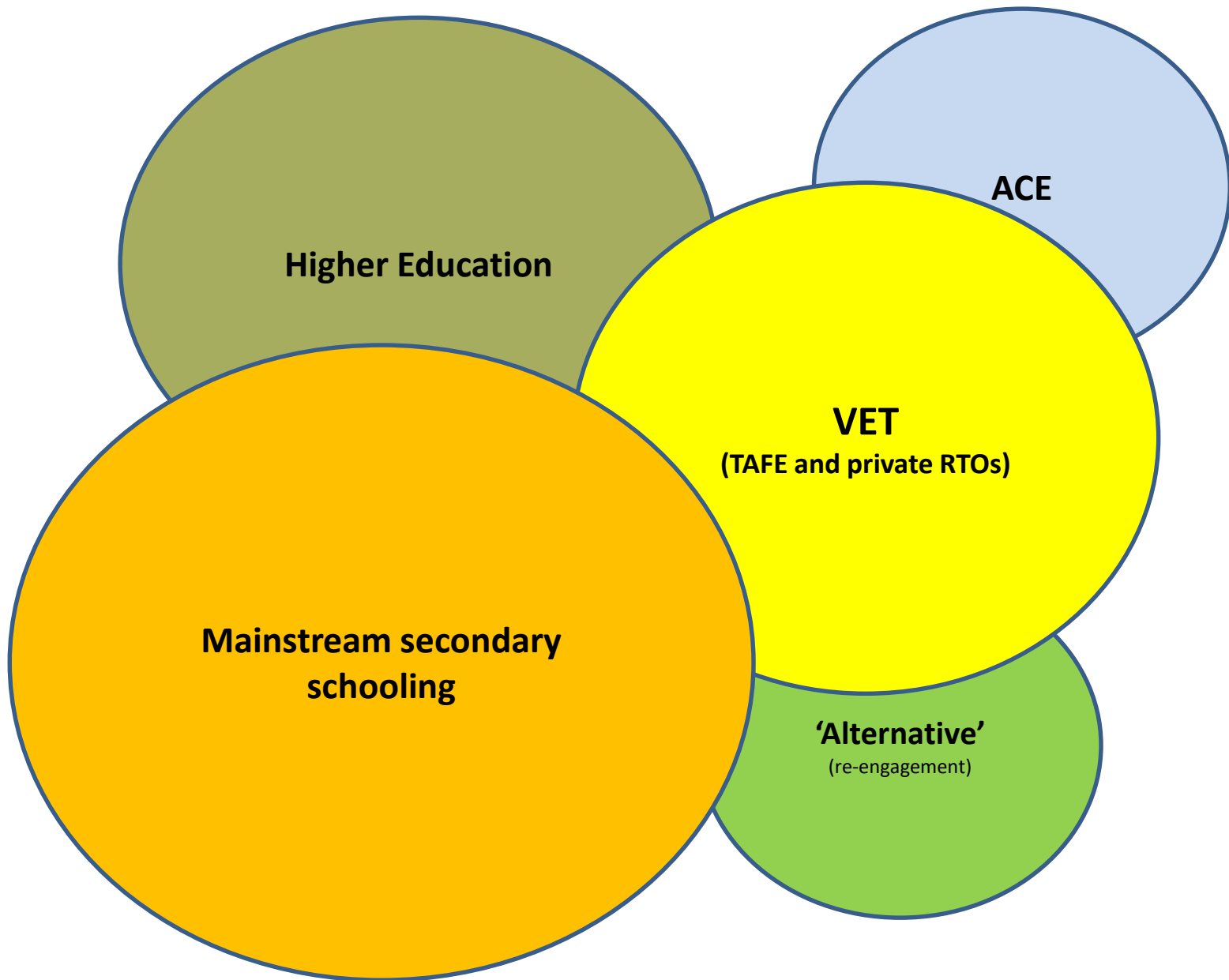
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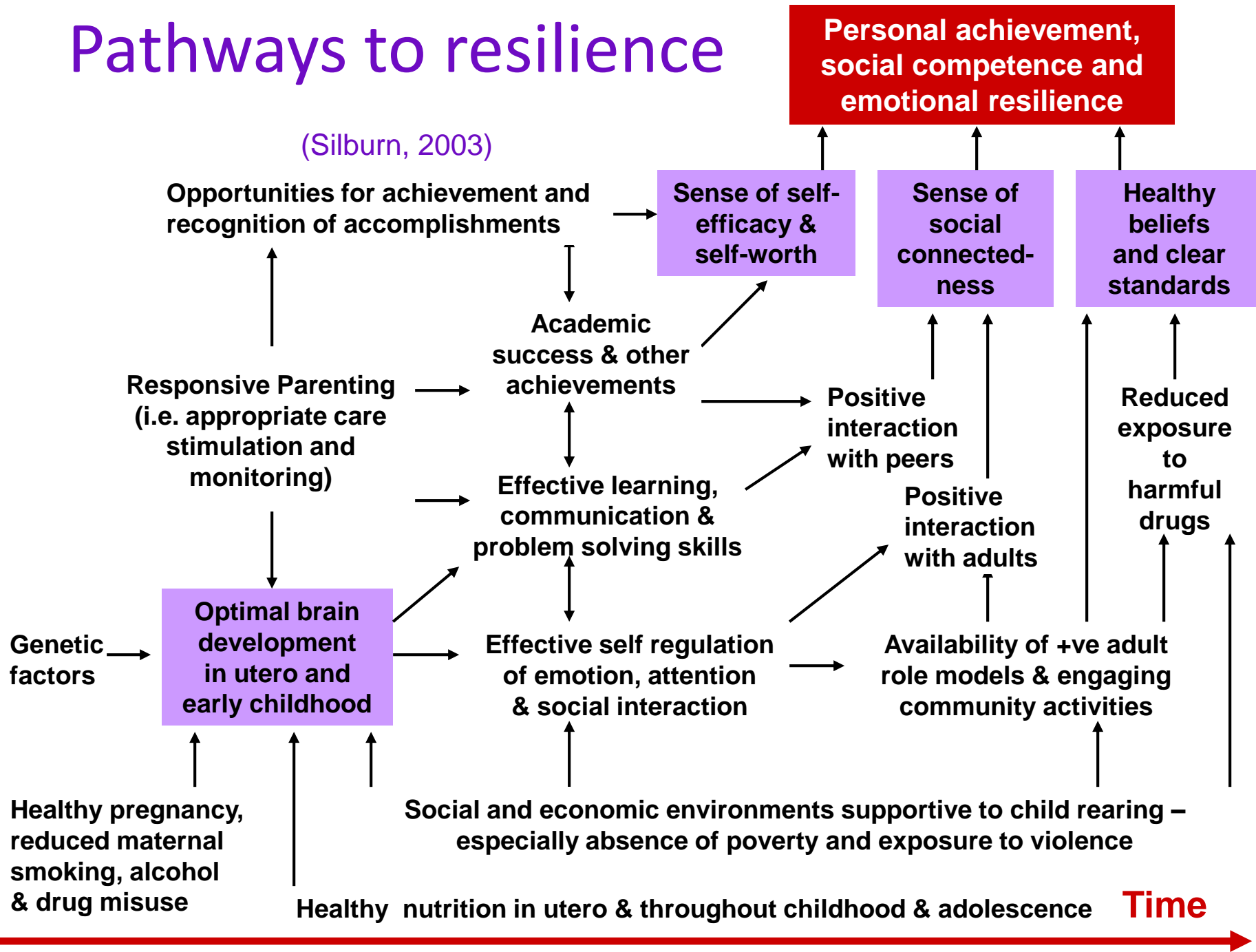
THE ULTIMATE AIM...INCREASED AGENCY AND CAPACITY TO SHAPE THEIR FUTURE, AND THE SOCIETY THEY INHABIT





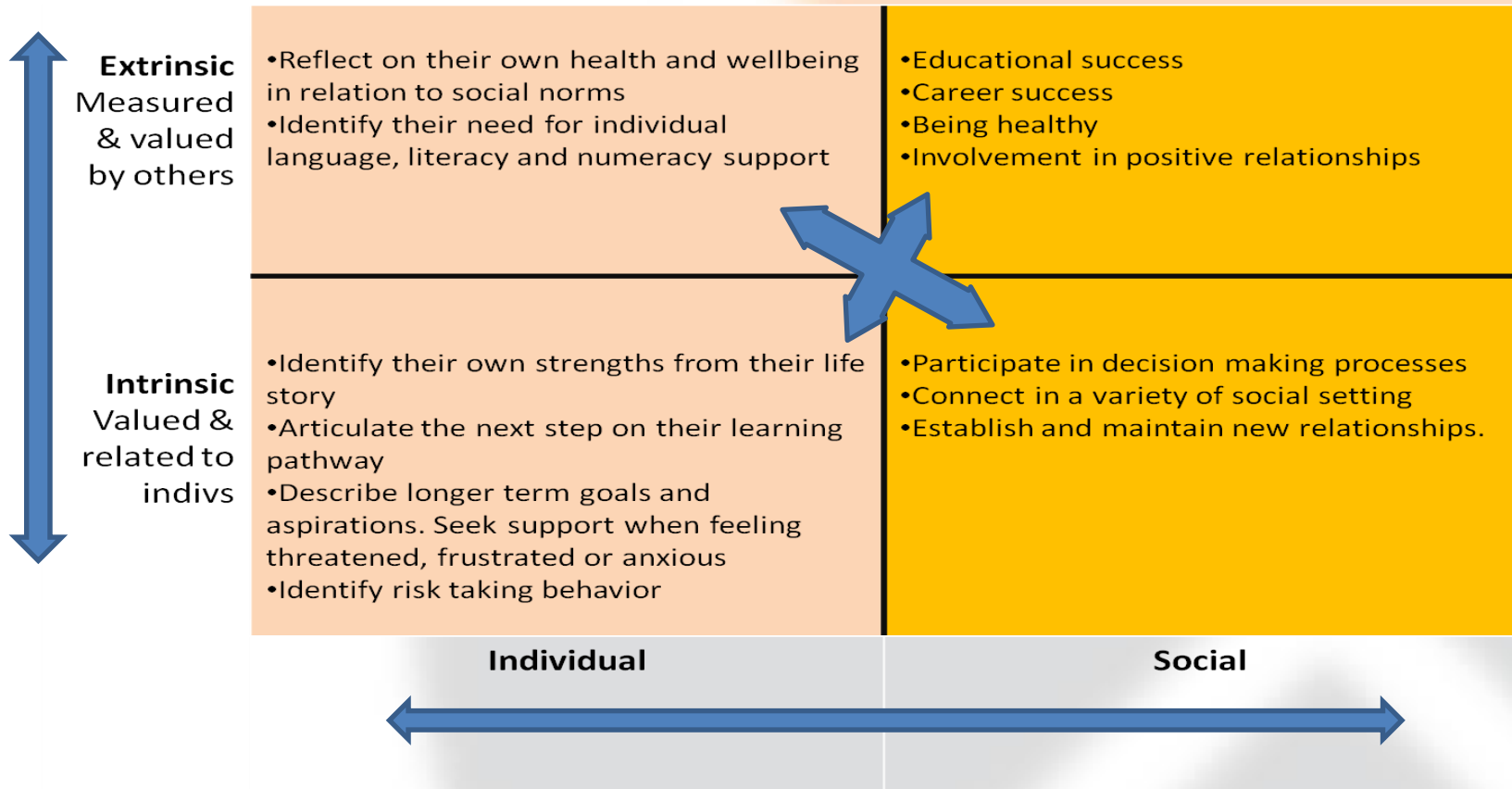
# Pathways to resilience

(Silburn, 2003)





# VIEWS OF OUTCOMES



# What we know about VET drop-out

## The culture clash

“...the kind of knowledge that you learn in VET assumes that you’ve been through school; that you’re an adult; that you have a specific skill set already; and that you’re there to further that skill set or develop something new that’s kind of related to what you want to do...So if you put a young person whose 16; severely disengaged...into a classroom with another cohort of people who are completely different to him or her, with a curriculum that doesn’t fit their place at that time, I think that we’ve got a real [problem] on our hands” (teacher)

# Challenges for the student

## Anxiety

“I haven’t been to that [RTO] yet because I was scared...I was just scared to go...I was that scared, I made myself sick and I just didn’t go.”

(y11 female)

# Literacy and numeracy

“I could do a workbook...[but] I’m not - because it’s worded differently, they’re using bigger words, and it’s like I don’t know what that word is, and I have to keep going back to the dictionary...like it’s taking me extra time to do it because I’m so confused...So I’ll read a sentence and I’ll understand two words in the whole sentence” (y11 female)

# Competency based learning

“[the trainer] doesn’t answer the questions that you ask. Like you’ll ask a question, and the answer will have nothing to do with what you asked with...She just – she doesn’t help you with your work, like – and just – like the questions in the unit, like I know it’s not her fault, because she didn’t make the book...all these units are repetitive, like they ask the same questions in every unit, and – yeah. Just a waste of time” (y11 male)

“Even other students didn’t understand it. One of the other ladies, she was 24 or something. She didn’t understand the work...And then I go up, “Can I have help...I don’t really understand any of the work.” [trainer...]“No, you have to do it yourself ” (y12 female)

Well, we both got jobs, for one ... it made us more motivated, because if we want to get where we want to be in the future, then we have to save up money for a start; move out of home ... we need money to do that.

(Pilot 1 female student)

When pressed about making such a strong causal link between the DI and their positive employment outcome, the interviewees elaborated:

Well, I kinda think that if I didn't do it I wouldn't have had the confidence and the knowledge to get a job on my own. (Pilot 1 male student)

It's given me a broad perspective. I've got a job out of it [fast food outlet]. I know where I want to be in life; I know what I want to do. (Pilot 1 female student, cited above)



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[It's] focused ... around future motives and what's going to help motivate you to achieve those goals rather than dwelling on things that have happened and I think that's sort of looking up instead of looking back ... It stops people from thinking about the trauma or the negative situations that have made them end up in a place like this and it starts making them think about things that they want to achieve and things they want to do that's positive and could end them up in success or things like that. (Pilot 2 male student)





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It's like this place expects us to be completely messed up beyond belief and so that's why my learning plan goes for five minutes because [the support worker] just pretty much opens up my book and goes 'Have you experienced family violence?' And I say 'No'. And the only questions after that are 'How do you get through this? What references do you have to overcome this and this, and this?' It's like the learning plan is expecting the worst of me. (Pilot 2 female student)