

# Early career success: What can you do to make it happen?

A presentation at the Annual Council for Australasian Tourism &  
Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) Bill Faulkner Workshop for PhD Scholars  
and Early Career Researchers  
Tuesday 7 February 2017

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Project webpage: <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/early-career-academics>



# “Get in behind”



A poem composed entirely from the words of participants in my early career academic project in New Zealand universities













# Research participants

- 82 interviewees from three countries (Canada, NZ & Sweden)
- 538 respondents to a national survey sent to all early career academics in all eight New Zealand universities
- 108 respondents to a national survey sent to a sample of academic managers (Heads of Departments, Deans, Deputy/Pro/Assistant Vice Chancellors, etc)

# Early Career Academic Time in NZ

Percentage time spent on...	All NZ	Men	Women
Research	44	42	45
Teaching	34	36	34
Service & Administration	21	21	20
Total	99%	99%	99%



# What about YOUR Time?

## 1) How are you expected to spend your time?

Teaching

Research

Service & Admin

## 2) How are you actually spending your time?

Teaching

Research

Service & Admin

## 3) What might account for any difference?

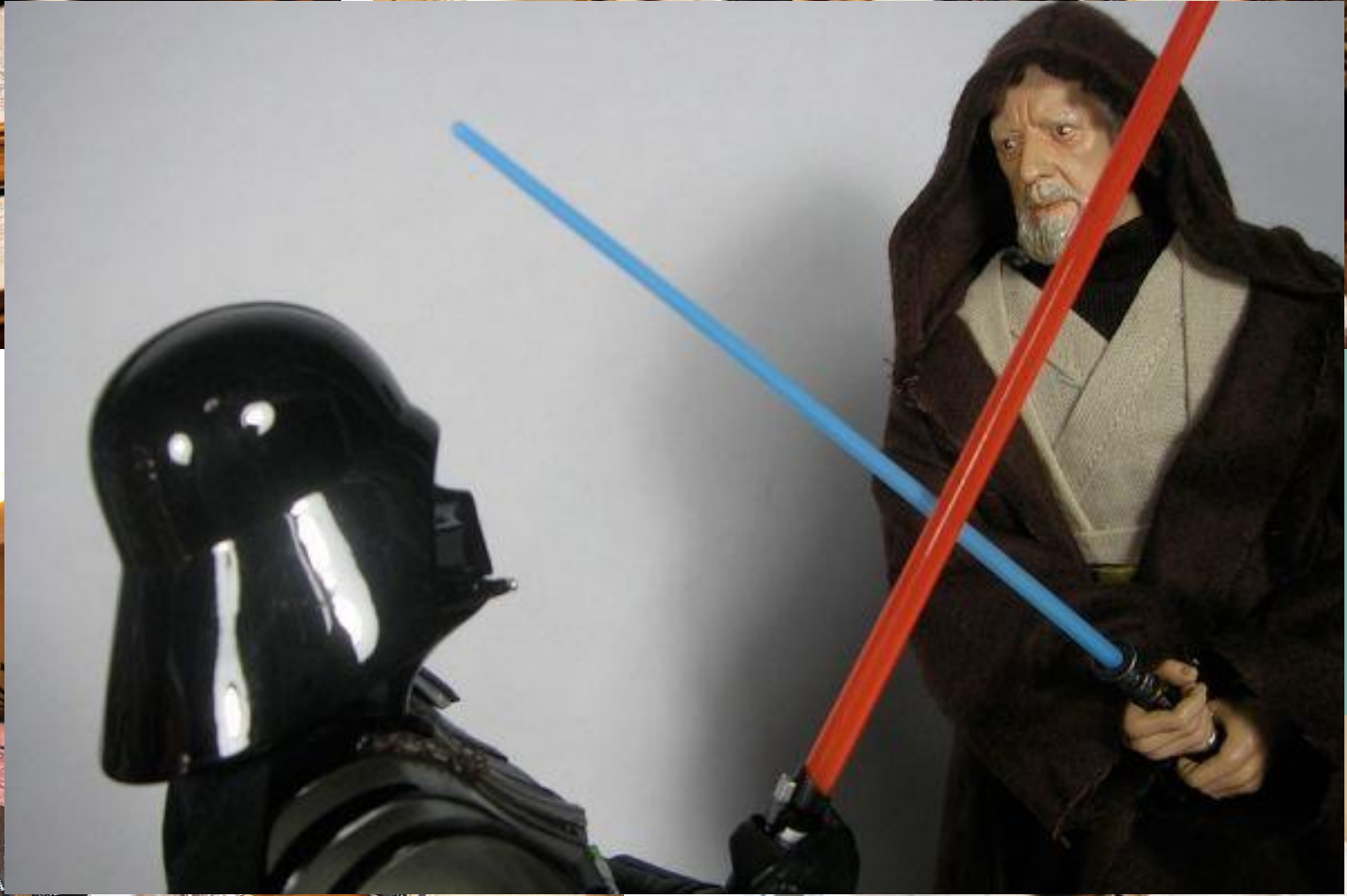
# Early Career Academic Interests

My interests lie...	All NZ %	Men%	Women%
1. Primarily in research	27	26	27
2. In both, leaning towards research	40	48	35
3. Equally in research and teaching	21	22	24
4. In both, leaning to teaching	8	3	11
5. Primarily in teaching	4	1	3
Total	100%	100%	100%
Mean	2.22	2.19	2.24



# Where do YOUR interests lie?

1. Primarily in research
2. In both, leaning towards research
3. Equally in research and teaching
4. In both, leaning towards teaching
5. Primarily in teaching





# Why did/will *you* become an academic?

- Think back to your decision to engage in graduate studies – why did you decide to go beyond your undergraduate degree? Who and/or what influenced that choice?
- During your PhD and/or post-doc, what made you *stay* in academia? Who and/or what influenced that choice?
- Who are ‘your people’? To whom is your effort directed?

# What do early career academics care about?

Rank	Item	Mean
1	My family or relationships outside work	1.39
2=	Autonomy in my job	1.50
2=	A job which makes a positive contribution to society	1.50
4	Seeing students succeed	1.57
5	Job security	1.58
6	The chance to do innovative work	1.59
7	Having an income adequate to my needs	1.60
8	Other interests outside work	1.95

Scale: 1=Very important to me through to 5= Not at all important to me



# What doesn't matter to ECAs?

Rank	Item	Mean
18	Earning a high salary	3.12
19	The status of having an academic job	3.27
20	Achieving recognition by the general public	3.30
21	Having managerial responsibilities	3.41
22	Becoming professor quickly	3.44

Scale: 1=Very important to me through to 5= Not at all important to me

# Effectiveness of career/professional development

Item	ECAs	Managers
The right infrastructure exists in my university for me to make a career here	3.12*	2.20
My university offers adequate professional development opportunities	3.12	2.37
The academic appraisal/review process at my university has been an effective aid to my career development	3.49	2.31
The student evaluation process at my university has been an effective aid to my career development	3.54	2.93

\* Scale of 1-5 where 1 = Strongly Agree and 5 = Strongly Disagree

# Managers' knowledge of resources/opportunities for early career academics

Item	Not offered	I don't know
Formal mentoring programme for new academics	16	10
Professional assistance for early career academics in developing their teaching	4	2
Professional assistance for early career academics in obtaining external grants	2	7
Paid or unpaid research leave for early career academics	10	16
Teaching relief in the early years of academic appointment	9	18
Opportunity for early career academics to gain a tertiary teaching qualification	0	9



# Factors influencing early career academic success

- Structural and organisational influences
- Prior experiences and qualifications
- Individual characteristics

# Factors influencing success

- Structural and organisational influences
  - Teaching load
  - Effective departmental support
  - Effective institutional engagement
  - Flexibility, rewards and benefits
  - Teaching development and mentoring

# Factors influencing success

- Structural and organisational influences
- Prior experiences and qualifications
  - Published during doctorate
  - Gained TA/tutoring, lecturing and course coordination experience during doctorate
  - Served on committees during doctorate
  - Has a teaching qualification



# Factors influencing success

- Structural and organisational influences
- Prior experiences and qualifications
- Individual characteristics
  - Loyal
  - Involved in one's disciplinary community
  - Resourceful, resilient, respectful, restful, and relational

# Agency

“a capacity to identify the goals at which one is directing one’s action and to evaluate whether one had been successful”  
(Taylor, cited in Edwards, 2005, p. 169)

## Relational agency (Edwards 2005)

A capacity to:

- offer support and to ask for support from others
- both seek and give help when engaging with the world
- align one’s thoughts and actions with those of others in order to interpret problems of practice and to respond to those interpretations

# Recommendations

- Know your own strengths and needs
- Develop the following:
  - Resourcefulness
  - Relational agency
  - Resilience
  - Respectfulness
  - Rest and recreation



# Resourcefulness

- Are you a willing and active member of your department?  
In what ways?
- Have you sought out service activities?
- How are you using [social media](#)?
- How many people do you know *beyond* your department?

# Useful podcasts and websites

- [Research in Action](#) Podcast (Oregon State University)
- [You've Got This](#) Podcast (Dr Katie Linder)
- [www.thesiswhisperer.com](http://www.thesiswhisperer.com)
- [www.theprofessorisin.com](http://www.theprofessorisin.com)
- [www.phdcomics.com](http://www.phdcomics.com)
- Success in Academia:  
<http://akoaootearoa.ac.nz/early-career-academics>

# Relational agency

- Who are your academic ‘kindred spirits’? How much contact do you have with them? How could you find more such people?
- Who are the top 10 scholars in your field? Do they know you?
- How many people do you know who could be examiners for your graduate students? Or guest lecturers in your courses?
- Who are your mentors (teaching, research, social, industry, etc)? How do you nurture those relationships?



# Resilience

- What different forms of feedback do you seek on your academic work, from whom, and how often?
- How do you react when you receive a 'reject' or 'revise and resubmit' email from a journal editor?
- How will you react when you do not get the external grant/s you apply for? Who will you turn to for advice/help re: next steps?
- Who, besides your students, has seen you teach lately?

# Respectfulness

- How do you demonstrate care for your students? For your colleagues?
- What service activities and/or community-based work do you engage in beyond your institution?
- How do you filter information? How do you decide which correspondence is important to read and whose advice is important to take?
- How do you react when you are asked to do something you do not want to do at work?
- Have you familiarised yourself with your department's and institution's core strategy and policy documents lately?

# Rest and recreation

- How do you say “no” when you are asked to take on too much AND “yes” when an important opportunity arises?
- How do you protect your family/personal time from encroaching work responsibilities?
- What exercise/hobbies help keep you healthy & sane?
- Against whose criteria do you measure your success?
- What habits (procrastination and perfectionism, for example) prevent you from being productive at work and restful at home?
- What organisational tools, routines and practices do you use to help you balance/manage your time effectively?

# On the success treadmill

A poetic finale

# Project funded by:



Sutherland, K., Wilson, M. & Williams, P. (2013). *Success in academia? The experiences of early career academics in New Zealand universities*. Wellington: Ako Aotearoa. <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/early-career-academics>