Reference No. 28

Summarising: Biddle, Hunter & Schwab (2004), *Mapping Indigenous Educational Participation*
Responsibility for the preparation of this research summary rests with the authors of the MCEETYA report *Education, Training and Indigenous Futures: CAEPR Policy Research 1990–2007* and not the original author(s) of the summarised material.

Title of Research:
Mapping Indigenous Educational Participation.

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Name of Researcher(s):
N. Biddle, B.H. Hunter and R.G. Schwab

Time period:
2001

Geographic location:
National, with information provided at regional level.

Methodology:
Using 2001 Census data, this study mapped regional averages for educational participation of Indigenous youth (aged 15–19 years). Regional analyses were presented in terms of the level of Consolidated Indigenous Area (CIA) of which there are 62 CIAs across Australia as well as in terms of remoteness. The study also examined factors likely to impact upon educational participation using multivariate regression analysis.

Aims:
The study aims to identify regional differences in the level of education participation of Indigenous adolescents and compare these differences with those of non-Indigenous adolescents.

The study also seeks to quantify the impact of a range of Indigenous and non-Indigenous factors upon educational participation of Indigenous adolescents in a region. Thirdly, the study examines the mobility of Indigenous adolescents and the extent to which they are likely to move to take up TAFE or higher education courses.

Selected findings and insights:
Regional differences in educational participation rates were identified by the study:

- Of the 62 CIAs, some 40 CIAs had educational participation rates of less than 50% for Indigenous 15–19 year olds. For non-Indigenous adolescents the comparative number of CIAs with educational participation rates for 15–19 year olds was 14.
- Highest educational participation rates for Indigenous adolescents were in the metropolitan and urban regions, especially on the eastern coast of Australia. Indigenous adolescents were least likely to attend educational institutions in northern Australia (especially the Kimberley (WA), Cape York Peninsula (Qld) and most of the Northern Territory). South-west Western Australia, despite being relatively urban, did not achieve a 50% educational participation rate for Indigenous adolescents.
The most important factors explaining educational participation rates were:

- Access to schools and other educational institutions and access to electronic resources that support educational participation, both being positive influences;
- Crowding and disruption within Indigenous households and the presence of the CDEP scheme, both being negative influences; and
- Being a Torres Strait Islander, which was also a positive factor although the study points out it may be acting as a proxy for some other set of (socio-economic) variables since there are so few Torres Strait Islanders in most CIAs.

Usage of the internet by Indigenous people was far less than by non-Indigenous people – less than one in five Indigenous persons compared to three in five non-Indigenous persons accessed the internet in the home in 2001. It was rarely accessed in the Far North (excluding Darwin - NT), the Central and Western Deserts (WA, NT), or the Kimberley, (WA), Gascoyne (WA), East Pilbara (WA) or the Gulf regions (Qld).
Patterns of residence for Indigenous students were different between those enrolled in universities (or other tertiary institutions) and TAFE. In 2001:

- 52.2% of all Indigenous university students were living in major cities compared to 34.4% of all Indigenous TAFE students. By comparison, 8.2% of Indigenous University students were living in remote or very remote areas compared to 11.9% of Indigenous TAFE students.

Indigenous adolescents were more mobile in respect to enrolling in university education compared to enrolling in TAFE, possibly due to less accessibility of university education in those areas. For example:

- Of those enrolled in university education in 2001 and who had been living in very remote areas five years earlier, 40.7% had moved to access university education, including 14.1% moving to major cities; whereas

- Of those Indigenous students enrolled in TAFE in 2001 and who had been living in very remote areas five years earlier, 34.4% had moved to access TAFE, including 5.5% to major cities.

- For those living in remote areas five years earlier and who were currently enrolled in further education, the respective proportions were 51.1% for moving to enroll in university education, including 23.4% to major cities, and 35.1% moving to enroll in TAFE, including 10.7% to major cities.

Educational implications:

Access of Indigenous young adults to secondary schooling and higher education infrastructure is critical to developing the capacity of Indigenous youth and their communities. This in turn will lead not only to increased skill levels and therefore labour market competitiveness and capacity to take advantage of potential employment or business opportunities. It may also lead to an increased feeling of self-worth and increased social cohesion within communities - this will depend very much on the nature of course offerings and delivery strategies.

Easier access and the more practical and flexible nature of courses seems to be leading to increased TAFE participation. This points to the need for the delivery of higher education to be more flexible, possibly more grounded in local experience, and using delivery strategies that enable less frequent need for students to leave their family and communities. One approach could be based upon distance education delivered through community learning hubs with the necessary IT infrastructure and support, or being accessed from training institutions.

Whilst the state of existing labour markets may not directly affect educational participation, due to other social and family factors, there appears a clear need for greater emphasis upon the development of effective partnerships between Indigenous communities, training and higher education providers and potential employers and those groups responsible for regional development.

Furthermore, and associated with the development of effective partnerships, is the need for effective partnerships between all agencies responsible for the delivery of government welfare services. For until the negative effects of poor living conditions, crowding and household stress as well as involvement with the justice system are addressed either educational participation will remain less than desirable or the quality of outcomes will not reflect student ability.

The study does have direct implications that arise from the CDEP scheme and suggests the need for greater VET in Schools pathways (or possibly ranger programs in remote and rural regions) for young people, based upon the practical nature of CDEP as well as its greater flexibility to meet the on-going family and customary commitments of its participants.
Relevance:

Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education

Access to post-compulsory schooling, training, employment and higher education
Participation, retention and achievement in post-compulsory schooling, training and higher education
Pathways and strategies for remote locations
Influence of CDEP on young people

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