Reference No. 44

Summarising: Fogarty (2005), ‘You got any Truck?’
Vehicles and decentralised mobile service-provision in remote Indigenous Australia
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:
‘You got any Truck?’ Vehicles and decentralised mobile service-provision in remote Indigenous Australia.

Research Publication:
CAEPR Working Paper 30/2005

Name of Researcher(s):
W. Fogarty

Time Period:
2000–2003

Geographic Location:
Maningrida and surrounding outstations, Arnhem Land (NT).

Methodology:
This research is based on the experience of the researcher, who worked as a teacher providing mobile educational options to communities in Arnhem Land. Statistical data pertaining to school attendance is also utilised to support case studies.

Aims:
This paper examines the value of a model of decentralised teaching programs, promoting mobile educational options that are responsive to the needs of Indigenous people.

The paper also explores elements of conflict and points of alignment in the cultural interchange between service providers and those Indigenous people dependent on resources ‘owned’ by the service provider (in this case a truck).

Selected findings and insights:
In the region under study, it was estimated that only 25% of all school-aged children actually attended school. The study therefore sought to outline a model, based on a mobile ‘Toyota classroom’, which took education to meet the students and their needs, both geographically and culturally.

- Through the example of the school truck providing mobile learning contexts, this research argues that educational contexts needed to be integrated with broader Indigenous activities and the values that underpinned them: mobility, autonomy and the maintenance of connections to Country and family.
- The flexibility of the ‘Toyota classroom’ enabled lessons to be continually adapted to relevant social situations and learning contexts. Literacy and numeracy programs were developed that were portable, adaptive and entirely mobile.
- This mobility and flexibility meant that children didn’t have to choose between pursuing customary, kin-based or cultural pursuits and education - these values were accommodated, and these pursuits integrated within the daily round of lessons.
• A feature of the educational program was that it involved parents and other adults in the learning experience, creating a sense of mobile learning community.

This research points out that even if only half of school-age children and youth attended school every day:
• the demand for classrooms, curriculum resources and other facilities could not be met from existing infrastructure.

The study provides an interesting insight into the intercultural conflicts and alignments which can and do occur between a significant resource such as a Landcruiser Truck and the different views held by the school and the community.
• Indigenous communities tended to regard such a resource as a 'public good' for use by all the community as much as by the school.

That is, there was little differentiation between what was a 'public good' and what was a 'private good', an issue which is the subject of CAEPR Discussion Paper at <http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/dP/2006_DP280.pdf>

As a result of such different perceptions, principals and school staff found themselves in a dilemma - whether to follow official regulations of usage or follow the traditional ways of sharing resources within a community.

Educational implications:

In many of the CAEPR papers, notions of the ‘Aboriginalisation of work’, or training, are recurrent and important themes in projects that exhibit success in creating pathways to employment and training.

This research argues for a model that expresses, implicitly, the Aboriginalisation of education. Whilst the 'Toyota classroom' model will not be applicable in many urban contexts, the principle of taking education to students who are not themselves accessing education is widely relevant. Basic numeracy and literacy cannot be delivered to students who are not in attendance, or not personally engaged in relevant learning when they are present. Indigenising the contexts of learning, by decentralising the classroom and making education mobile and responsive to community dynamics, ensures that education remains an accessible and integrated element in community life. [curriculum] [pedagogy] [access]

The issue of resources available for educating school-aged children and youth is an important one and one which has been identified elsewhere by CAEPR research. If, as has been suggested, current government policies result in a migration of Indigenous people from outstations and homelands then the availability of infrastructure will become even more pressing. [facilities] [planning]
Relevance:

*Domain 3: School Leadership*

Responsiveness to social and cultural context of students

*Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education*

Access to post-compulsory schooling, training, employment and higher education

Pathways and strategies for remote locations

Related Papers:

J.C. Altman 'In search of an Indigenous Outstations Policy for Indigenous Australians'. *CAEPR Working Paper No. 34, 2006*