Education, Training and Indigenous Futures

Research Summaries
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Reference No. 50
Summarising: Gray & Hunter (2005), Indigenous Job Search Success
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:
Indigenous Job Search Success

Research Publication:

Name of Researcher(s):
M.C. Gray and B.H. Hunter

Time period:
1996–1997

Geographic location:
Analyses are presented at the national level only.

Methodology:
This study interviewed a sample of jobseekers selected from the Indigenous Job Seeker Survey of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. The survey tracked the labour market experiences of Indigenous Australians over an 18 month period in 1996 and 1997. Job search behaviour during the four weeks prior to the survey was collected. The researchers point out the limitation of the sample used in this study: its focus upon Commonwealth Employment Service (since replaced by the Job Network) registrants who were more often the long-term unemployed job seeker and the relatively short time span for measuring program effectiveness.

Aims:
This study aims to provide an account of the relative success of various job search strategies in assisting Indigenous job seekers find and then retain employment.

Selected findings and insights:
As this analysis is based upon 1996 data, the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) was still operating and hence the CES provided a formal avenue for job seekers to receive employment information. The following findings need to take this into account.

For Indigenous job seekers the most successful job search strategy was through the CES, with about 30% of respondents having got a job through the CES or CES job boards. The next most successful strategy involved assistance through friends or relatives, with almost 25% of successful job seekers getting a job in this way. Some 13% of successful job seekers directly contacted employers.

Different job search strategies were more likely to lead to different job outcomes:

- **Permanent and non-seasonal jobs** were more likely to be found through external advertising such as the CES job boards and newspaper advertisements whereas more **casual, seasonal jobs** tended to be more commonly found through less formal networks such as friends or relatives. Furthermore these less formal networks more often led to jobs which were regarded as not being career oriented. Note: About 43% of the Indigenous workers registered by the CES were actually in casual employment (compared to 22% of the non-Indigenous workforce at the time).
• Overall more proactive job search strategies such as answering newspaper advertisements and contacting employers were more likely to lead to a job and also lead to a job which the job seeker retained. However after taking account of personal attributes such as educational attainment, health status, region of residence and involvement with the justice system, the only job search strategy that appeared to significantly influence likelihood of getting and retaining a job was actually answering job advertisements.

While increased job search activity increased the likelihood of getting a job it did not seem to significantly influence the likelihood of the Indigenous job seeker retaining the job:
• job retention was more affected by educational attainment, health status, region of residence and involvement with the justice system.

Educational implications:
This paper, together with a related CAEPR paper (see below), raises the issue of schools and TAFE becoming more involved in assisting Indigenous young people in seeking jobs and developing soundly based career plans. For older job seekers no longer participating in education or training, other avenues will be more appropriate within the current government policy framework of Job Network. However this may not always be the case, with significant numbers of older Indigenous students gaining post-school qualifications. [career counselling]

The paper also highlights the interaction of the labour market and the type of job search activity that needs to be encouraged within career counselling and job readiness courses. That is, courses are required to improve those skills associated writing job applications and directing job seekers to the most relevant sources of job vacancy information, these being external advertisements. Similarly, the development of interpersonal skills involved in directly contacting prospective employers are another important component of job search and work readiness courses. Both are more likely to lead to permanent employment. [pathways]

As this study is based upon a survey of the most disadvantaged job seekers, further research is required to identify those best practice job search skills among young Indigenous students leaving school or TAFE and about to enter the workforce. However this does not reduce the importance of the above study in so far as such a large proportion of Indigenous youth are not in the labour force or are unemployed. Where further research is required is in evaluating more closely successful job search strategies and work readiness, especially those most likely to overcome, or at least reduce, the greater impact of factors such as qualification levels, health status and prior involvement with the justice system. [policy]

Relevance:

Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education

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


