Reference No. 73

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:
An analysis of data from the longitudinal survey of ATSI job seekers, Topic 3:
Labour market programs and Indigenous Australians.

Research Publication:
Report to Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, 2000

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

Time period:
1996–1997

Geographic location:
Analyses are presented at the national level.

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. 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 tended to be more frequently long-term unemployed job seekers than might otherwise occur in a representative sample of all job seekers. The relatively short time span for measuring program effectiveness is another limitation.

Aims:
This study aims to examine the appropriateness, quality and effectiveness (where possible) of different mixes of assistance, including case management and labour market programs (LMPs), in helping Indigenous job seekers achieve employment outcomes.

Selected findings and insights:
This analysis is based upon 1996 and 1997 data when the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) was still operating. This study nevertheless provides important insights into the delivery of labour market assistance to Indigenous Australians. Taking these administrative changes into account and focussing more upon those findings most related to further education and training:
Completion rates, measured over the period 1994-1997, differed markedly across Labour Market Programs (LMPs) for Indigenous job seekers:

- Employment support programs (such as Post Placement Support, Relocation Assistance, Work Experience for People with Disabilities) had 90% completion rates whereas formal training programs and apprenticeship/traineeship programs had between 40 and 45% completion rates. The completion rate for Job Search training was about 70%. Completion rates for Indigenous specific programs were also high at 63% for males and 70% for females.

Length of training involved in an LMP influenced program completion:

- For formal training programs, the average training approved for 'completers' was about seven weeks and for 'non-completers' was about 12 weeks, yet both groups completed about the same amount of training, that is, seven weeks - similarly with training associated with wage subsidy programs. Overall, for most programs the longer the amount of training approved the less likely was its completion.

As a pathway to employment, both apprenticeships/traineeships and wage subsidy programs had most effect:

- Employment rates were higher for those who completed training, job creation or wage subsidy programs than those who started but did not complete the programs.

- The study also identified the importance of wage subsidy programs, including apprenticeships and traineeships, in improving employment outcomes for Indigenous job seekers, with 51.1% in unsubsidised employment within three months of participating in the program, dropping to 31.5% after 12 months. In contrast, obtaining unsubsidised employment within three months for those participating in training was 20.8% but rising to 28.2% after 12 months. For each of these LMPs, some 20% of those completing the program were also participating in education as a positive program outcome.

Over the 19 month period between interviews those who had completed wage subsidy programs, including apprenticeships and traineeships, had spent more time in employment, less time being unemployed and had had more spells in employment than those who did not complete their program. The effect of completing formal training programs was less.

When asked about their attitudes to work, about 90% of Indigenous job seekers stressed the importance of job security and the importance of work which helps Indigenous people; fewer were concerned with promotional aspects of the world of work. The study also found that Indigenous case managers tended to be perceived as more helpful than non-Indigenous case managers, although the differences were small.

Educational implications:

Length of training course is an important factor in course completions for Indigenous students, especially in regard to training courses not associated with apprenticeship training which are primarily based within the workplace and are directly linked to future employment. Therefore those responsible for the design of training courses need to give careful consideration to course flexibility built around short accredited modules to enable family and social commitments to be met. And this is currently the case. It also suggests the need for support strategies to ensure take up of subsequent modules as part of an overall training package linked to a well developed career plan. This would ensure that short courses do not become ends in themselves without improving employment prospects.
The study also validates the importance of apprenticeship training and other wage subsidy programs for Indigenous young people. However further research is required to understand the reasons for the significant drop-off in employment after apprenticeship completion, including examining the extent to which work readiness and related interpersonal skill development plays a significant role. Similarly, whether workplaces are not seen as ‘comfortable’, whether family commitments interfere or whether there is an element of discrimination being practiced in the workplace need to be investigated. In both cases there are adequate opportunities for education to play a role - however this study does not give sufficient guidance to identify the reasons underlying the reduced longer-term employment of Indigenous apprentices who have completed their apprenticeship. [support services]

Finally, the success of Indigenous case managers in job placement indicates the importance in developing culturally sensitive support strategies to assist in job search and job placement activity. This parallels another of the study's findings of the high completion rates of Indigenous-specific courses and their interest in work that will assist Indigenous people. Both reflect an alignment of cultural values between the jobseeker, training and jobsearch assistance, and presumably with the type of employment opportunity. Clearly educational policies and programs need to foster such forms of cultural alignment but at the same time facilitating opportunities for non-Indigenous mainstream employment. [mentoring] [culture]

Relevance:

Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education

Career aspirations and key transition points

Participation, retention and achievement in post-compulsory schooling, training and higher education

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