Reference No. 74

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 1:
Labour market participation pathways to Indigenous employment

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

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

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 was also a limitation.

Aims:
This study aims to describe the major patterns of participation in employment, education and training and identify those pathways most likely to result in job seekers successfully making the transition to employment.

Selected findings and insights:
This analysis is based upon 1996 and 1997 data when the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) was still operating. The CES was replaced by the Job Network in May 1998. This study nevertheless provides important insights into the participation of Indigenous Australians in the labour market over time.

Just as Indigenous people generally were highly mobile so too were Indigenous Australian job seekers. Over the 19 month period of the study, 33.5% changed their address, with younger job seekers more likely to move than older respondents. Some 43.1% of Indigenous job seekers aged 15-24 years had changed addresses compared to 25.4% of those 25 years or older.
• The major reasons for moving were personal or family related and only a small proportion related to taking a job or looking for work.

An estimated 13.9% of older job seekers and 22.3% of younger job seekers had been unemployed for at least three-quarters of the time since leaving school. During the 19 month period of the survey these job seekers were typically employed for only about 20% of the time.

• a history of unemployment was strongly correlated with ongoing unemployment.

Unemployment history was negatively correlated with the number of jobs held over the period. That is, those job seekers employed for a greater proportion of time since leaving school were more likely to have been employed in more jobs. For example:

• males employed for more than three-quarters of the time since leaving school had an average of 2.2 jobs, compared to an average of 1.1 jobs for those employed less than a quarter of their time since leaving school.

The study identified considerable 'churning' in terms of employment. That is, over the 19 month period, Indigenous job seekers tended to move between full-time employment, part-time employment, CDEP employment and unemployment. For example, of those males in full-time employment 19 months earlier, 48.8% were still in full-time employment at the end of the 19-month survey period, 6.8% were in part-time employment, 5.3% in CDEP employment, 29% unemployed and a further 10.1% had withdrawn from the labour force. There was little difference in 'churning' for older and younger age groups.

Job retention for at least 12 months was positively related to higher levels of education (both level of secondary education completed and post-secondary qualifications attained). For example, having an education to Year 12 as opposed to Year 10 or less increased the probability of job retention by about 30 points. However

• Job retention was negatively related to health problems and involvement with the justice system.

Overall, having a health problem reduced by 15.6% the probability for males of holding the same job for 12 months and having been arrested reduced the probability by 21.3%.

The study was unable to provide detailed information on school to work transition however it did find that:

• Full-time employment was not an impediment to continuing with study. Almost 70% of those combining study with full-time work 19 months earlier and who were still in full-time employment at the end of the 19-month survey period were also able to maintain their studies over the period. However people who indicated that they were working (either full- or part-time) and studying were slightly less likely to continue with their studies than were non-workers.

• Those studying were doing so to further improve their employment prospects, either through attaining better qualifications or gaining the necessary skills to get a better job.

• Non-participation in the labour market among females was strongly affected by pregnancy, with pregnancy being cited as the main reason for non-participation by 44.7% of young females. For young males, the main reasons for non-participation were study, reported by about 38% of young males, and poor health or a disability, reported by 18% of young males.

• Continuing with education after leaving school was seen as instrumental in gaining a better job.

Educational implications:
Unfortunately, as the study acknowledges, it was unable to track what happens to Indigenous students on leaving school which highlights the importance of longitudinal studies. Nevertheless the study does present a picture of Indigenous youth as not having stable forms of employment, which suggests the need for improved career counselling and the development of intervention strategies to support school leavers in their early years post-school and on entering the workforce. This need is further emphasised by the large number of unemployed youth. [career counselling]

The large numbers of Indigenous employed people who combined work and study is consistent with the priority these employed people place upon the instrumental value of education as improving employment prospects. This raises the question of how to promote valuing education and training among those who have already left school and are not working as a means of increasing their employment prospects. As other CAEPR research has shown, educational participation is largely driven by social, family and cultural factors as much as the labour market conditions existing at the time. To address this requires a much broader policy response than that which could be provided by educational agencies of themselves. [policy]

Relevance:

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

- Student aspirations and key transition points
- Access to post-compulsory schooling, training, employment
- and higher education

Related papers:


