Reference No. 79

Summarising: Kral (2007), *Writing Words – Right Way!* *Literacy and social practice in the Ngaanyatjarra world; Change, learning and engagement: Youth arts*
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:
Writing Words – Right Way! Literacy and social practice in the Ngaanyatjarra world; Change, learning and engagement: Youth arts

Research Publication:

Name of Researcher(s):
I. Kral

Time period:
2004-2006

Geographic location:
Warburton in the Western Desert region (WA)

Methodology:
This study is part of a larger ethnographic study of the literacy practices of the Ngaanyatjarra community, which comprises about 600 people. The methodology consisted of life history interviews, key informant interviews, primary and secondary research, participant observation, the collection of literacy artifacts and access to administrative data. Most data were collected during 2004, with follow-up interviews in 2005 and 2006, seeking additional information or checking information already gained.

Aims:
This summary focuses upon a theme identified in the above PhD thesis about the role of art in a remote community in engaging youth as artists, learners and workers and how textual elements are integrated into arts practice.

Selected findings and insights:
Arts-based activities had a history of community involvement, with parents and grandparents having participated in arts-based activities through:
- the local community Arts Project and Women's Centre
- accredited training, including tourism, hairdressing, office skills and broadcasting;
- school-to-work transition projects; and
- as part of a sexual health strategy.

The study documents youth mastery of multimedia skills and their application to the mastery of literacy. The study argues that the youth arts approach had oriented the young people to post-school learning, by
- focusing on the creative aspects of multi-media, with adult facilitators who were able to promote high aspirations among the youth;
• blurring the distinction between ‘learning’ and ‘work’, and developing work-related skills and competencies, both technical and ‘world of work’ oriented. The study notes that this pedagogy was quite dissimilar to that underpinning normal schooling or further education. At the same time the study found that many of the cohort also participated in the Youth Transitions Program in the areas of hospitality and general employment skills and/or in accredited media training;

• employing adults who could work with young people as facilitators or mentors. The importance of using Aboriginal, as well as non-Aboriginal, mentors is highlighted, especially to mediate social interactions and conflicts;

• fostering collaborative peer learning and associated oracy and literacy skills as well as leadership and management skills; and

• operating within the existing social and cultural frameworks of the community and enhancing social solidarity. Warburton Youth Arts was not restricted to youth but also involved older generations in various capacities.

Educational implications:

This study provides fresh insights into how Indigenous youth who have left formal schooling can be re-engaged in education and training by building on their areas of interest and developing a pedagogy which is flexible and designed to meet short-term goals but which can lead to post-school accredited qualifications. This approach to further education is one which is embedded in cultural context, reliant on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators as facilitators, and is directed towards quite specific competencies. The continuing success of such approaches is founded on the extent to which there is coordination with training providers and how it may and is seen to be contributing to the local labour market, whether that be the private, public or customary sectors. [pathways]

Relevance:

Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education

Pathways and strategies for remote locations