Reference No. 97

Summarising: Rowse (2002), *Indigenous Futures: Choice and development for Aboriginal and Islander 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:
Indigenous Futures: Choice and development for Aboriginal and Islander Australia

Research Publication:
Published by UNSW Press 2002

Name of Researcher(s):
T. Rowse

Time period:
1991 - 2002

Geographic location:
Australia-wide

Methodology:
A review of CAEPR research undertaken during 1991-2000, which involved close scrutiny of CAEPR publications, work-in-progress seminars and critical engagement with CAEPR researchers.

Aims:
This book aims to critically review research undertaken by CAEPR since its establishment in 1989 within a political science and history framework, taking account of government Indigenous policies and programs existing at the time.

Selected findings and insights:
The scope of this book is extensive, covering Aboriginal employment policy; land, sea and economic development; issues of family, households and gender; Indigenous agencies; and the emergence of an Indigenous sector.

Two issues raised in the book are highlighted in this overview to give an indication of the types of issues raised.

The problem of motivation in education, training and employment

This book points out that much of CAEPR's approach to understanding Indigenous motivation towards education, training and employment is within a 'human capital' accumulation model where accumulation of skills through education and training will be seen to lead to increased employment prospects and income.

- However as a result of the overall relative decline of Indigenous human capital compared to non-Indigenous Australia, the benefits did not eventuate.

Rather than solely focusing upon human capital theory as the motivator, CAEPR research also considered a wider rationale to explain Indigenous motivation which was context specific. In the case of motivation towards education, CAEPR and this book explored three themes. Education was seen as:

- a means for gaining employment, especially in the mainstream job market;
- providing an opportunity to develop the necessary skills to deal with the non-Indigenous agencies, services and culture; and
• a mechanism for ensuring the continuity of their own culture in more contemporary times.

The delivery of education was also considered within the context of Indigenous students:

• adapting to the mainstream, although for some this could be seen as advocating a strong degree of assimilation;
• possessing particular cultural characteristics and learning styles to which schools need themselves to adapt;
• seeking educational outcomes that are defined by the local community to address what it sees as desirable.

Of motivation towards type of employment and apparent industry and occupational segregation, the book found two competing explanations for job choice:

• Indigenous people tended to place a much higher emphasis upon social rewards and less on monetary rewards, often seeking employment in community services;
• Indigenous people felt more vulnerable in many of the mainstream employment options, either due to less developed skills or issues of racism, social isolation and competitive interactions with unfamiliar people. These people tended towards working within the Indigenous Sector where they felt most comfortable.

The Indigenous Sector

The growth of Indigenous organisations as a potential source of Indigenous employment is discussed in terms of there now being an Indigenous Sector of industry. The Indigenous Sector possesses its own training needs as well as more generalisable skills such as literacy and numeracy.

The scope of training for the Indigenous Sector could be extended from simply focussing upon job skills to include maintenance of Indigenous culture and improving individual and community well-being. For example,

• the delivery of Indigenous health services may require the development of Indigenous-specific training modules that take account of community attitudes to health and aim at overall capacity building.

Educational implications:

The assumptions that guide the development of school curricula and pedagogy are challenged by this extended paper. The paper suggests the need for much greater consultation with local communities about the nature of expected and, from the community's perspective, desirable outcomes for education. [curriculum]

Similarly with the large Indigenous Sector, training providers would benefit from working with Indigenous employers in identifying training needs, which may be of considerable scope compared to what is usually considered part of training. That in turn may require adaptations to be made by the training providers both in regard to course content and delivery styles. [training]
Relevance:

*Domain 2: School and Community Partnerships*
  - Cross-cultural understandings of the purposes and value of education

*Domain 3: School Leadership*
  - Responsiveness to social and cultural context of students

*Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education*
  - The challenge for pathways to training, employment and higher education
  - Student aspirations and key transition points
  - Participation in post-compulsory education, training, employment and higher education