Summarising: Schwab (1996), *Having it both ways: the continuing complexities of community-controlled Indigenous education*
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:
Having it both ways: the continuing complexities of community-controlled Indigenous education

Research Publication:

Name of Researcher(s):
R.G Schwab

Time Period:
1996

Geographic Location:
Australia wide

Methodology:
This research is based upon an exploration of the historical and policy context for the emergence of community control in Indigenous education, and the philosophy behind ‘two way’ programs. The research explores these themes in light of a statistical overview of data pertaining to location, enrolment, staffing and curricula in 20 independent Aboriginal schools across New South Wales (1), Northern Territory (2), Queensland (4), Victoria (1) and Western Australia (12).

Aims:
This paper aims to provide an overview of independent Aboriginal community-controlled schools; exploring the value of and demand for further ‘two-way’ schooling options.

Selected findings and insights:
The extent to which ‘self-determination’ has been implemented in education policy is questionable, and has been supplanted somewhat by notions of ‘self-management’.

The provision of culturally sensitive and appropriate educational options that meet the needs of diverse Indigenous groups remains a central challenge in Commonwealth education policy.

Independent community-controlled schools are perhaps the clearest expression of self-determination in Australian education, providing options for ‘two-way education’; encouraging important and relevant competencies in Western educational values, whilst privileging Indigenous knowledge and systems of learning.

Students in these schools are statistically more likely to learn about Indigenous culture and language, and to receive this education from an Indigenous teacher, than children in other schools.

However, only 1.6% of Indigenous students attended such a school in 1994 (706 primary students and 664 secondary students).

The number of Indigenous teachers was lower than might be expected with only 46 Indigenous teachers being employed about half of whom were full-time and the other half part-time employees. Overall only one in five Indigenous staff members were teachers, with the other Indigenous staff being employed in liaison, secretarial, administration and community roles.
Furthermore, there did not seem to be significant demand from Indigenous communities to transform their State or Church run schools into community controlled ventures.

At a general level, Indigenous people in the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey indicated that they were happy with their children’s schooling:

- Up to 91% in rural locations, 85% in other urban areas and 81% in capital cities.

Note: Unfortunately, the 2002 NATSISS did not seek information about Indigenous parents’ attitudes to schooling which would have enabled a check on whether attitudes had changed over the period.

Educational implications:

While the need to develop educational contexts that support and nurture Indigenous values remains paramount, further research is clearly required before we have a better understanding of the costs and benefits of community-controlled or ‘two-way’ schooling. [policy]

Relevance:

*Domain 2: School and community educational partnerships*

Cross-cultural understanding of purposes and value of education

Related Papers:
