Reference No. 104

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:

Research Publication:

Name of Researcher(s):
R.G. Schwab and I. Anderson

Time period:
1994–1997

Geographic location:
Australia-wide

Methodology:
This research analyses vocational education and training education (VET) data compiled annually by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and collected from State/ Territory training authorities. The key variables used in this analysis were: field of study, State/Territory, qualification level, gender, enrolment type and provider type. Analyses in terms of commencing students and student completions are presented in the paper.

Aims:
The purpose of this paper was to identify trends in Indigenous health education and training in the VET sector that would assist policy makers in shaping workforce development efforts in the various health fields.

Selected findings and insights:
The paper provides numbers and trends in Indigenous student enrolments in health and community services courses over the period 1994–1997. These data provide useful baseline information upon which to benchmark more recent student enrolment information to identify the extent to which the need for Indigenous health workers is being addressed.

In 1997, there were 4,332 Indigenous student enrolments in health and community services courses in VET. These student enrolments corresponded to 4,536 Indigenous course enrolments in the health and community services field of study, a rapid rise over the preceding 3 years. Of these 4,536 course enrolments:

- the majority (56%) were in the community family and personal health care area and 22% were in health support services;
- 38% of enrolments were in Qld., 25% in NSW and 18% in the NT;
- 52% were at the certificate level, 24% at an enabling or non-award course level and 12% each at the advanced certificate and diploma levels. Almost one per cent of enrolments were at the advanced diploma level; and
- 65% of enrolments were by female students and about 80% of enrolments were part-time.
The paper identified a range of policy and planning implications arising from this study.

- Given the diversity of training in the VET and higher education sectors, there would be significant value in mapping the occupational category ‘health worker’ in the Indigenous context as a mechanism to identify gaps in education and training.

- The continuing lack of enrolments aimed at diploma and advanced diploma qualifications suggested a skill deficit that would reduce the opportunities for Indigenous health workers to participate at higher managerial levels and become directly involved in Indigenous health policy.

- There were specific fields such as dentistry where enrolments were low but where there was a need, which itself indicated a need to examine those factors influencing the types of courses in which Indigenous students are enrolling;

- The predominance of female students had significance for Indigenous health care provision where cultural constraints surrounding interaction between the sexes may affect the willingness of Indigenous men to seek out health care.

Educational implications:

The major educational implications are identified in the paper and described above. Briefly these centre around two major Indigenous health education issues:

- the development of a workforce planning and training strategy for Indigenous health so that Indigenous health workers are targeted to those health issues most in need of attention; and

- the importance of monitoring workforce education and training needs, availability of and access to health courses, and the types and extent of training and education being undertaken by Indigenous people.

The articulation between VET health education and training courses and the higher education sector is critical to developing pathways for Indigenous health workers to further develop their skills and areas of expertise to meet the high demand which is currently being placed upon health workers in Indigenous communities, both in urban and remote localities.

Relevance:

Introductory Topic: The Health of Indigenous Australians

Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education

Participation, retention and achievement in vocational education and training

Related papers:
