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Summarising: Smith (1995), Redfern Works: the policy and community challenges of an urban CDEP scheme
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:
Redfern Works: the policy and community challenges of an urban CDEP scheme

Research Publication:
CAEPR Discussion Paper 99/1995  

Name of Researcher(s):
D. E. Smith

Time Period:
Research conducted in January 1995, though Census data from 1991 is also employed.

Geographic Location:
Redfern, NSW.

Methodology:
This research uses ABS 1991 Census of Population and Housing data to analyse the key characteristics of the urban Indigenous labour force in Redfern. Interviews were also conducted with staff and participants of the Redfern Aboriginal Corporation (RAC) CDEP scheme.

Aims:
Through the combination of statistical and anecdotal portraits of the working environment in Redfern, this research aims to examine what is specifically 'urban', if anything, about urban CDEP schemes. It then seeks to:

- critically assess prevailing policy assumptions that urban Indigenous communities are more 'locationally advantaged' than rural or remote Indigenous communities.

Selected findings and insights:
The primary finding of this research was that urban CDEP schemes were not necessarily more locationally advantaged, and were no more likely to establish integration with mainstream employment, than rural or remote communities. This is demonstrated in the following ways, showing that the RAC scheme:

- was forced to deal with low levels of literacy and numeracy in its work force
- was as actively involved in the social and physical rehabilitation, and skill-development and training of its employees, as it was in providing employment opportunities
- was no less governed by 'cultural' constraints than 'remote' schemes; particularly the preference people share for working within local Indigenous kin and social networks
- was not integrated with mainstream economies and labour markets, despite its geographic proximity to them.

Despite the benefits that urban CDEP schemes such as RAC delivered to Indigenous people, this research suggests that factors such as those outlined above render urban Indigenous communities no more likely to develop economic self-sufficiency than more 'locationally disadvantaged' Indigenous communities in 'remote' or rural Australia.
Educational implications:

For education, this study is important in so far as it confirms that many of the socio-cultural issues faced by remote and very remote schools in the education of Indigenous young people (and by training providers in the case of Indigenous adults) also apply to the provision of education in ‘settled’ Australia, including urban settings. [culture]

This research shows that the success of Indigenous employment in urban settings was highly dependent upon a CDEP scheme that recognises and supports the significance of participants’ continuing links to wider personal and community networks. Such social nets are indeed integral to their effective participation in the (CDEP) scheme.

- It would seem then that a similar acknowledgement of the social embeddedness of individuals must likewise be established and nurtured in urban educational contexts. Such socio-cultural considerations are no less integral to ‘effective participation’ in education than in later working life. [culture]

- That is, Indigenous people living in urban localities are similar to those Indigenous people living in more regional or remote localities in their preference to work or to train in a culturally comfortable environment. This in turn seems a necessary condition if Indigenous education and employment participation rates are to increase. It also suggests the need to ensure support programs are available to assist Indigenous students or workers in their transition to a more western mainstream learning or work situation. [support services]

As this study notes, there appeared substantial difficulties for Indigenous people to enter mainstream employment. In urban areas where CDEP is no longer operating, the challenge for training providers and Job Network will be to establish pathways to stable employment opportunities and to assist both employers and their newly recruited Indigenous employees in this critical period of transition from training to work. [pathways]

The complementary role of providing social and physical rehabilitation assistance will place additional resourcing pressure upon existing government and non-government services. This is a further example of the priority which must be accorded to improved consultation and effective local partnerships between key welfare agencies and Indigenous community organisations to maximise the benefits of education and training in increasing the human capital of the individual and the community. [partnerships]

Relevance:

Domain 2: School and community educational partnerships

Complexity and diversity of communities

Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education

Student aspirations and key transition points

Participation, retention and achievement in post-compulsory schooling, training and higher education

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