



Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
The Australian National University

Education, Training and Indigenous Futures
CAEPR Policy Research: 1990-2007

Research Summaries

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Reference No. 12

Summarising: Arthur & David-Petero (2000),
*Job-searching and careers: Young Torres Strait
Islanders, 1999*

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.

The MCEETYA report and associated research summaries are available at <www.anu.edu.au/caepr/education.php>.

Title of Research:

Job-searching and careers: Young Torres Strait Islanders, 1999

Research Publication:

CAEPR Discussion Paper 205/2000

<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/2000_DP205.pdf>

Name of Researcher(s):

W.S. Arthur and J. David-Petero

Time period:

1999

Geographic location:

Torres Strait islands

Methodology:

In 1999, 105 Indigenous people aged between 15 and 24 years and with equal numbers of males and females were surveyed about their career aspirations and generally using open-ended survey questions. The sample was also split equally between Thursday Island (representing the Inner Islands) and Badu Island (representing the Outer Islands). The sample represented 17 per cent of the age cohort living on Thursday Island, 70 per cent of the age cohort living on Badu and overall the sample represented about 10 per cent of the Torres Strait islander population of 15-24 year olds. Due to the nature of the sampling, the study suggests some caution in the interpretation of results. However the survey is sufficiently robust to identify trends and insights into the career aspirations of Torres Strait islanders.

Aims:

The purpose of this research was to examine the strategies young people adopt to further their careers. Specifically the paper analyses:

- Formal job-search strategies such as approaching Centrelink and Job Network;
- Informal job search strategies such as approaching family, friends and prospective employers; and
- Strategies used to help achieve career goals and factors limiting achievement of career goals.

Selected findings and insights:

Young Torres Strait islanders were more inclined to use informal rather than formal strategies for **job search activity**:

- About 50% of respondents had used **Centrelink**, mainly for payment purposes such as Family related payments, Abstudy, Newstart and Youth Allowance. However Centrelink did not appear to play a significant role in job-search, possibly because of reduced pressure on 'mutual obligations' requirements associated with a very limited labour market at that time. Involvement in CDEP as a source of income also limited the reliance of people upon Centrelink;

- About half of the respondents from Thursday Island had used **Job Network**, principally for job search assistance, with about half of them indicating that their visit had been at least partly successful, in that they were offered job interviews or training options. Note: At the time of the survey Job Network was only being established on Badu Island.
- Use of **informal job search strategies** was a common means of achieving a job. Some 60% (Thursday Island) and 80% (Badu Island) got their job or training position by directly approaching employers, registering with CDEP or by contacting family and friends. A small proportion got their job through Job Network.
- The researchers report that the school itself had a significant school to work program, being involved in local industries including the fishing industry.
- The importance of **training and further study** as a means of achieving future career goals was highlighted by 30% of respondents, with another 23% of respondents indicating that they would approach trainers and employers to make this happen, giving an overall 50% of respondents noting the importance of training and further study in achieving career goals. TAFE was seen as being particularly valuable.
- **Moving locations** was generally not seen as a means of achieving career aspirations. Most intended to stay on the Torres Strait Islands because of ties with family and friends. However up to one-third would prefer to live on the Queensland mainland because of training, further education and employment opportunities.
- **Family commitments** played a major role in Torres Strait Islander life and about 40% of respondents, mainly females, felt that these commitments would play a significant limiting role in them achieving their goals for the coming year. Motivation, self-confidence and other personal attributes were also seen as potential obstacles to achieving future goals.

The study provides insights into the perceived role of CDEP for Torres Strait Islanders. They felt that full-time CDEP employment presented a solid basis for future careers, especially its capacity to provide a recognised training component. In the survey this CDEP work involved traineeships, apprenticeships and work at the community (primary) school, child care centre and health centre. In contrast, CDEP which was part-time was often seen as boring, leading nowhere and not offering the opportunity for recognised training.

Educational implications:

The reliance upon informal strategies for **jobsearch** in a tight labour market needs careful monitoring as it may limit the range of potential job opportunities. Government agencies and the Job Network clearly have a greater role to play than is evidenced from this paper, although this may well have changed now that the Job Network is more established. Furthermore jobsearch strategies would benefit from being integrated with overall regional development strategies as well as with training provision. Where there is reliance upon informal jobsearch this highlights the need for secondary schools to be actively involved in career counselling and teaching jobsearch strategies to their students. The small proportion of early school leavers identified in a related study who enter employment suggest that such jobsearch and career counselling assistance is not sufficiently available. [**career counselling**]

The importance people place on **TAFE** suggests that the role of TAFE could be strengthened and, with secondary schools, become pivotal in assisting people seek jobs and develop career plans. The school-TAFE interface is a further area which provides an opportunity for a seamless transition from education into

training. CDEP provides another important opportunity for career planning and associated training provided that it is both meaningful and involves or leads to full-time employment. [pathways]

Relevance:

Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education

Student aspirations and key transition points

Access to post-compulsory schooling, training, employment and higher education

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

Culturally inclusive support strategies, culturally appropriate work readiness strategies, career counsellors and mentors

Influence of CDEP on young people

Related papers:

W.S. Arthur, 'Careers, aspirations and the meaning of work in remote Torres Strait', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 190*, 1999.

<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/1999_DP190.pdf>

W.S. Arthur, 'Career aspirations and orientation to work: Young Torres Strait Islanders, 1999', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 206*, 2000.

<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/2000_DP206.pdf>

W.S. Arthur and J. David-Petero, 'Education, training and careers: Young Torres Strait Islanders, 1999', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 207*, 2000.

<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/2000_DP207.pdf>

W.S. Arthur and J. David-Petero, 'Careers and Aspirations: Young Torres Strait Islanders, 1999-2003', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 259*, 2004.

<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/2004_DP259.pdf>