



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. 32

Summarising: Campbell & Schwab (2001), *Training by doing: Pathways through CDEP*

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](http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/education.php)>.

**Title of Research:**

Training by doing: Pathways through CDEP

**Research Publication:**

The Indigenous Welfare Economy and the CDEP Scheme . F. Morphy and W. Sanders CAEPR Research Monograph No. 20 2001

[http://epress.anu.edu.au/caepr\\_series/no\\_20/pdf\\_instructions.html](http://epress.anu.edu.au/caepr_series/no_20/pdf_instructions.html)

**Name of Researcher(s):**

S. Campbell and J.G. Schwab

**Time period:**

2000

**Geographic location:**

Australia wide, covering rural, remote and urban localities

**Methodology:**

Qualitative study using in-depth telephone interviews to explore training issues associated with the CDEP scheme with 11 CDEP managers across the country.

**Aims:**

The purpose of this research was to better understand how training was being managed within the constraints affecting CDEP, the obstacles and opportunities CDEP programs encountered and strategies adopted to improve the training content of CDEP programs to meet the needs of CDEP participants.

**Selected findings and insights:**

The study identified four key issues affecting training delivery in CDEP:

- **Access to adequate training** - while access was not an issue in the capital cities, CDEP programs in rural areas had fewer options and, in the more remote areas, it often verged on the impossible in being able to access suitable training.
- There was a '**critical mass**' necessary to secure appropriate and recurrent training. Smaller programs with fewer participants did not have the staff required to develop applications for training or to become a Registered Training Organisation;
- The individual **skills and knowledge** of individual CDEP managers was significant, especially among new managers who lacked the business and policy skills necessary to navigate through government agency procedures;
- **Community aspirations**, having clear and realistic goals, and an understanding of how the CDEP program may fit within the overall community development planning strategy.

The study identified a set of quite specific problems associated with **skill levels** of participants:

- The difficulty of **transferring existing 'cultural' skills** into mainstream training and employment. For example, whilst being well equipped for 'caring for country' and maintaining cultural continuity, this does not lead to recognisable skills outside an Indigenous context;
- Low levels of **literacy and numeracy** result in increased course length (which may affect likely completion) and the skills required of the trainer – not only 'specialist' skills on the training topic but also literacy training skills;
- Existing **low levels of educational attainment** limited the extent to which CDEP participants could access further education and training, as well as take up mainstream employment opportunities. This resulted in the establishment of CDEP based 'enterprises' to develop mainstream job readiness.

**Relevance of training programs** continued to be an issue, balancing training programs that were oriented towards mainstream further training and employment and enabling participants to better maintain a lifestyle that acknowledges and incorporates their cultural responsibilities. That is, training could serve two purposes – the individual through employment and the community through community activity.

- The study found that Indigenous people appear less concerned about 'accreditation' and the actual gaining of a qualification but see training in terms of its direct relevance to what they are actually doing, not some future employment aspiration.

This leads to a dilemma for those responsible for delivering relevant training – relevant to what?

- Orienting training to future goals such as entry into further education or employment which may or may not be result in actual gaining of a job; or
- Giving communities the task of identifying training needs which are more likely to be directed towards immediate community concerns, leading to greater participation, but not towards a pathway for improving employment prospects.

This focus upon the 'here and now', with its practical relevance, suggests a need for skills acquisition by hands-on training and real-life situations such as the above 'enterprise developments' that characterised some CDEP projects or more direct applications to community needs.

#### **Educational implications:**

There are several important educational implications for the future delivery of training that flow from the CDEP scheme. Firstly, access to relevant training remains an issue for Indigenous Australians residing in remote and very remote locations and even in rural locations the nature of training that is available may not take account of Indigenous needs. **[access]**

Secondly, existing skills levels of Indigenous Australians place a severe limitation on the delivery of training. By firstly requiring training in literacy skills, the chances of completing vocational training courses are reduced. There are another set of skills and understandings that Indigenous Australians are also less likely to have acquired – these are the more subtle skills of interacting with a formal training institution. This in turn calls for culturally appropriate support strategies to improve their chances of course completion. **[training]**

Thirdly, the different set of aspirations Indigenous Australians may hold in respect of education will affect their participation in training. Training courses, especially those that are attempting to act as a bridging course leading towards further training, will need to be mindful of the more immediate applicability of

course outcomes rather than be reliant upon the bridging courses being seen as the first step towards a future qualification. [training]

**Relevance:**

*Domain 2: School and Community Educational Partnerships*

Cross-cultural understanding of purposes and value of education

*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

Influence of CDEP on young people

**Related papers:**

D. E. Smith, 'CDEP as urban enterprise: The case of Yarnteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation, Newcastle', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 114*, 1996.

<[http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/1996\\_DP114.pdf](http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/1996_DP114.pdf)>.

D.E. Smith, "'Working for CDEP': A case study of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme in Port Lincoln, South Australia", *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 75*, 1994.

<[http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/1994\\_DP75.pdf](http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/1994_DP75.pdf)>.

D. E. Smith, 'Redfern Works: The policy and community challenges of an urban CDEP scheme', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 99*, 1995.

<[http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/1995\\_DP99.pdf](http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/1995_DP99.pdf)>.