Indigenous Students In The Tertiary Education Sector

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Background

• NCVER research grant to investigate – *Indigenous Students and the Pathways from Post compulsory Education to Work*

• Two sectors of the tertiary education system
  – Higher Education
  – Vocational Education (Cert 1 – Advanced Diploma)

• Pathway from VET to HE
Context of the NT

- 1,364,000 km$^2$ (Aust. 7,682,300 km$^2$)
- Pop. 212,000 people (0.17 person per km$^2$)
- 54% of Pop. Reside in capital city
- 23% <15 yrs of age
- 30% of Pop. Indigenous
- Majority of Indigenous Pop reside in remote or very remote locations
- 1 University (Dual sector – VET and HE)
- 1 Indigenous HE/VET provider (BIITE)
- 1759 Private VET providers
Policy Context

• ...from 2010 the supply of people with undergraduate qualifications will not keep up with [the labour-force] demand. To increase the numbers participating we must also look to members of groups currently under-represented within the system, that is, those disadvantaged by the circumstances of their birth: Indigenous people, people with low socio-economic status, and those from regional and remote areas (Bradley et. al,2008.xi).

• One potentially significant means of improving access for people from under-represented groups in the tertiary education system is to streamline the pathways from VET to HE (Bradley et. al,2008 .21).
Research Focus Questions

– What is the retention, progression and attrition rate among Northern Territory Indigenous students in the VET sector?

– What is the experience of Northern Territory Indigenous students that transition from the VET sector to the HE sector?

– Can collaboration between the VET and HE sectors increase the educational and employment opportunities of Indigenous students in the Northern Territory?
Methodology

• Mixed methods – quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis:
  – Interviews.
  – Focus groups.

• Multiple sites:
  • CDU
  • BIITE – Residential students from remote locations
  • Two private VET providers.
Indigenous students represented on average, 27.3 per cent of the total VET enrolments.
## Enrolment by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Aver. % (2000-2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;20 yrs</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29 yrs</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39 yrs</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49 yrs</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;49 yrs</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Highest proportion < 29 years of age.
- Students < 20 years of age represented approximately 41 per cent of all Indigenous VET students.
Enrolment by Gender

- Indigenous male enrolments - 59.4 per cent of all Indigenous enrolments.
- Female enrolments - 40.6 per cent.
Enrolment by Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Aver. Enrolment (2000-2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate I</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate II</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate III</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate IV</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Diploma</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 92 per cent of enrolments at Certificate I and II.
- 7 per cent enrolment at the Diploma level.
- < 1 per cent at the Advanced diploma level.
Completion Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Average (2000-2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate I</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate II</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate III</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate IV</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Diploma</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Highest completion rate at Cert I level.
- Total completion rate averaged 16.2 per cent.
- Non-Indigenous students experience twice the success rate.
Multiple Course Enrolments

- Multiple course enrolment consistent feature of the enrolment pattern.
- Between 2005 – 2009 approx. 25.5 per cent of Indigenous students enrolled in more than one course in a given year.
- For the same period, 18.6 per cent of Non-Indigenous students were enrolled in multiple VET courses.
2005 – 2009 Field of Study Enrolment, Completion and Success Rates

• Highest number of enrolments in Agricultural Environmental & Related Studies.
• Highest success rate in Natural & Physical Sciences#; and Food Hospitality & Personal Services.
• Highest attrition rate in Mixed Field programs.
• Total of 5892 students enrolled – success rate of 10 per cent.
  • (#1 student enrolled)
## Indigenous Engagement in Higher Education at CDU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aver. Student numbers (2000- 2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous enrolments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous enrolments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous enrolment as a % of total enrolment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Approx. 86.6 per cent in Under-graduate program.
- Approx: 13.4 per cent Post-graduate study.
- 4.8 per cent of total HE student body.
### HE Basis of Admission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOA</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TEP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature age</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Education</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous HE course</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• 25 per cent completion rate.
• Majority of withdrawals occurred during first year of study.
Indigenous Participation and Outcomes in Post-Graduate Programs

• Indigenous intake includes:
  • Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters and Doctoral programs.

• Very modest numbers of Indigenous students undertake Post-Graduate studies.
  • Annual average of 37 enrolments.
  • 46.4 per cent graduated.
  • 44.6 per cent dropped out.
  • 6.7 per cent still enrolled.
Qualitative Data

• 29 interviews.
  – 10 CDU students.
  – 9 BIITE students.
  – 10 students - two providers.

• Two focus groups
  – 10 students from BIITE.
  – 6 students from CDU.
Demographic Information

• Location:
  – 48 per cent of interviewees resided in an urban location.
  – 21 per cent lived in the rural area.
  – 31 per cent were from a remote or very remote location.

• All remote students relocated to Batchelor to undertake their study.
English Language Competence

• English language competence:
  – 76 per cent - English was the main language spoken at home.
  – 24 per cent – ATSI was their first language.
  – 80 per cent were fluent in English.
  – 3 per cent spoke “reasonable” English.
  – 17 per cent had “trouble with English”.
  – 66 per cent of BIITE students spoke “reasonable” English or had “trouble” with English.
Motivation to Study VET

• In order of frequency and importance:
  – I wanted extra skills for my job/to help me in my job.
  – It was a requirement of my job.
  – To get a job.
  – Knowledge acquisition, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy
I had a lame job with minimum wage - moved from job to job - did not earn enough. I wanted to get a good paying job. Can’t get ahead in life without a degree. VET is the first step in education. It’s pointless in life earning the minimum wage.
Quality of the Course

• High level of satisfaction with:
  – Quality of lecturers and tutors.
  – Cultural appropriateness of the course.
  – Opportunity to interact with other Indigenous students.
  – Flexibility of course.

• Dissatisfaction with:
  – Lack of Indigenous teachers.
  – Level of financial support received.
  – Lack of child care places.
  – Social and linguistic isolation (BIITE).
Outcomes - Improved career prospects and employment aspirations

- Employer impressed by the study done. Given more opportunity to attack a variety of job options.
- Gained an increase in wage by having a certificate.
- The study was helpful in getting me looking for a job.
- (VET study) did help me find work.
- ...helped with reading and writing. (I) was able to fill in log books, accident reports etc. (obtained) computer skills.
- Indigenous courses for crane and rigging is (now) the foundation of my full time employment.
Outcomes – Family and Community

- Now closer to my teenage son (I) can help with homework. Communicating better with my mother by talking about issues that could not be discussed previously.
- Cert IV enabled me to seek medical assistance for my family.
- (I have) gained respect of wife, family and community.
- Helped me with community meetings [as an interpreter] when Power and Water come. Gives me confidence.
- (Assisted with) with filling out forms, speaking to get things done like family matters.
Outcomes - Personal

- When (I) retire will be able to use computer and stay in touch with the world.
- (I have)... better English more confident. Communicate better with other people.
- Make me more confident - easier to read newspapers and books.
- I try my best. Makes me feel good. Family feels happy for me. Like(s) me coming to Batchelor as I can help them back in community.
- ... expanded thinking and broadened knowledge ...promoted self-confidence
- Helped with self-confidence. Inspiring me to study more and look at the bigger picture.
VET to HE Pathway

• 17 per cent of interviewees utilised the VET to HE pathway.
• Participating in 1st year of Under-graduate program.
• Some students felt VET had prepared them for HE.
• Others struggled with the workload, work-life balance, financially and emphasis on online learning
Comments

• Money – need more scholarships – particularly in first year. These scholarships are needed in first year not in third [year of a Degree]. I struggle financially. Not having any money I dropped out for 6 month – got a job but came back to study. I need to live, pay rent and buy food. I got a credit card to make ends meet but got into debt with the card. (My ...Parents had to pay off the debt. (We)... need accommodation scholarship in first year.
Summary

• VET Indigenous enrolment pattern similar to national trends.
• Proportionally low enrolment numbers characterised by:
  – High male cohort.
  – Concentration in Cert I and II courses.
  – Relatively young student body.
  – Low completion rate.
  – Low graduation rate.
  – High attrition rate.
Summary (contd)

• Limited access to VET for students in very remote locations.

• Isolation issues associated with relocating
  – Physical
  – Social
  – Linguistic

• Support required in the form of tutors and resources in remote communities.
Summary (contd)

• Challenges of studying VET and HE at CDU:
  – Financial constraints.
  – Perceived lack of information on financial assistance available.
  – Perceived lack of scholarships in 1st year of HE.
  – Cost of child care.
  – Lack of child care places on campus.
Summary (Contd)

• Pathway from VET to HE is a viable option but limited pool of potential graduands at the Cert IV level.
• High level of attrition in 1st year of undergraduate study.
• VET study relevant to HE but:
  – Some students felt unprepared for academic HE environment.
  – Additional computer support required.
Conclusion

• Low student numbers in HE – student visibility is low.
• Limited research.
• Dual sector institutions well positioned to close the gap.
• Closer collaboration between VET and HE has the potential to:
  – enable Indigenous students to realise their personal and professional aspirations.
  – extend the pathways from post compulsory education to work.
• Concerted effort by all stake holders is required