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Post-compulsory education and training for Indigenous Australians

R.G. Schwab

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R.G. Schwab

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ABSTRACT

There exists in Australia a significant tension between the nature and definition of government goals of education, which are substantially economic, and the essentially social educational goals of Indigenous people. This paper addresses those tensions as they relate to post-compulsory education. It begins with a depiction of findings from the first national survey of Indigenous people pertaining to levels of qualification, desires for further education, and preferred institutions for education and training. The paper then turns to an analysis of the economic and social tensions that have resulted from increasing economic rationalism in education, and explores three prominent economically-based education goals: the development of human capital, increased educational efficiencies and 'enhanced' outcomes. The conflict between these and a range of Indigenous cultural assumptions and practices are then examined. The paper closes with discussion of the policy challenges inherent in attempting to find a balance between the economic imperatives of government and culturally-based Indigenous educational goals.

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R.G. (Jerry) Schwab is Research Fellow at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Faculty of Arts, The Australian National University.

Among the diverse range of critical issues in contemporary Indigenous affairs, education remains prominent. Over the course of two decades, a long chain of reviews have been undertaken and countless reports written dealing directly (Aboriginal Consultative Group 1975; Hughes 1988; Commonwealth of Australia 1995) or indirectly (Miller 1985; Commonwealth of Australia 1991; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 1994) with Indigenous education. Throughout this period and in each review, report or policy recommendation, Indigenous access, participation and equity have remained primary themes; Indigenous people chaired and played key roles in the various committees that addressed these issues (Schwab 1995). These themes are particularly significant in that they reflect not only government concerns but also, and perhaps more importantly, the interests and demands of Indigenous people themselves.

These interests and demands are underpinned by broad recognition among Indigenous people of significant tensions between the nature and definition of government goals of education which, as will be argued below, are substantially economic, and the essentially social educational goals of Indigenous people. A series of important questions arise from these tensions: To what degree do the assumptions inherent in government education policies and programs conflict with the social and cultural experiences of Indigenous people? How do new educational 'efficiencies' affect the particular needs and interests of Indigenous communities? Do existing educational and training structures and approaches fit the varying needs of Indigenous people? How do government notions of improved educational outcomes match the sorts of outcomes Indigenous people want?

This paper is intended to be an exploration of some of these issues as they relate to post-compulsory education. It begins with a depiction of findings from the first the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS), in 1994, pertaining to levels of qualification, desires for further education, and preferred institutions for education and training. The paper then turns to an analysis of the economic and social tensions in education that have resulted from increasing economic rationalism in education, and explores three prominent economically-based education goals: the development of human capital, increased educational efficiencies and better outcomes. The conflict between these and a range of Indigenous cultural assumptions and practices are then examined. The paper closes with discussion of the policy challenges inherent in attempting to find a balance between government economic imperatives and culturally-based Indigenous educational goals.

A contextual snapshot of Indigenous post-compulsory education

The NATSIS was a unique exercise undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The survey was conducted in response to the Royal

Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and attempted to provide a range of statistics related to the social, demographic, health and economic status of Indigenous Australians. Unlike the census, which attempts to collect information from every Australian on a particular date, the NATSIS was a sample survey in which over 15,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were interviewed. This survey resulted in new insights into a range of issues not covered in the census, including additional and specific details pertaining to Indigenous education and training.

Post-school qualifications

The NATSIS provides a glimpse of the levels of qualification of Indigenous Australians who might participate in post-compulsory education and training (Table 1). Among persons aged 15 and over, 83.1 per cent lack post-school qualifications, a figure that aligns with other findings showing apparent retention rates of about 75 per cent for year 12 Indigenous students in 1994 (ABS 1994: 60). Slightly more males (18.1 per cent) than females (15.6 per cent) have post-school qualifications. The proportion of people with such qualifications appears to decrease with distance from capital cities. For example, in capital cities, close to a quarter (23.6 per cent) of the Indigenous population aged 15 or over who have left school hold a post-school qualification; the proportion in other urban areas is 17.3 per cent while only slightly more than one in ten (10.4 per cent) Indigenous people in rural locations hold post-school qualifications.

Table 1. Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over who have left school: by sex, part-of-State, and labour force status Australia, 1994.

	With post-school qualifications Per cent	Without post-school qualifications Per cent	Total Per cent	Total ('000)
Sex				
Males	18.1	81.9	100.0	85.2
Females	15.6	84.4	100.0	86.3
Persons	16.9	83.1	100.0	171.5
Part-of-State				
Capital city	23.6	76.4	100.0	47.0
Other urban	17.3	82.7	100.0	71.2
Rural	10.4	89.6	100.0	53.4
Labour Force Status				
Employed				
Non-CDEP	31.6	68.4	100.0	47.3
CDEP	9.8	90.2	100.0	16.7
Unemployed	15.2	84.4	100.0	39.3
Not in labour force	9.3	90.7	100.0	65.0

Source: ABS (1995).

Examination of post-school qualifications according to labour force status is interesting. Among those Indigenous persons classed as unemployed, 84.4 per cent have no qualifications, while over nine out of ten (90.7 per cent) of those classed as not in the labour force hold no qualifications. The NATSIS data show two types of employment: mainstream employment and employment related to participation in the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme. The CDEP scheme is a program of grants administered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission that enables Indigenous community organisations to pay wages to Indigenous members of these communities in return for work on community managed projects or activities. The scheme is often referred to as a work-for-the-dole program since the grants are calibrated to the rough equivalent of combined individual unemployment benefits and are paid in lieu of those benefits. The CDEP scheme was initially available only to rural and remote Indigenous communities where other employment opportunities were non-existent. Since 1987, however, the CDEP scheme has been extended to urban areas as well.[1] The NATSIS findings show that individuals with post-school qualifications are over three times as likely to be employed in mainstream programs than individuals without such qualifications. Those without qualifications who are employed are most likely to be employed in CDEP programs.

Table 2. Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over who have left school: interest in further study or training, Australia, 1994.

	Wants to do further study or training Per cent	Does not want to do further study or training Per cent	Total[a] Per cent	Total[b] ('000)
Sex				
Males	44.8	55.1	99.9	85.2
Females	46.6	53.1	99.7	86.3
Persons	45.7	54.1	99.8	171.5
Part-of-State				
Capital city	56.4	43.6	100.0	47.0
Other urban	47.2	52.7	99.9	71.2
Rural	34.3	65.4	99.7	53.4

a. Does not include not stated.
b. Includes not stated.

Source: ABS 1995.

Interest in further study or training

NATSIS provides some useful insight into the educational aspirations of Indigenous people (Table 2). Among those persons aged 15 years and over

who have left school, nearly half (45.7 per cent) express a desire to undertake further study or training; among these individuals there is little difference between the interest levels of males and females. Differences do emerge, however, when the responses of individuals are examined according to location. Interest in further study or training declines with distance from a capital city. Over half (56.4 per cent) of the Indigenous people in capital cities indicated their desire for further study or training, while less than half (47.2 per cent) of the people in other urban areas expressed this same interest. Indigenous people in rural areas were even less interested with about two-thirds (65.4 per cent) indicating they have no desire for further studies or training. The low level of interest in rural areas probably relates directly to the relatively low levels of educational experience in these areas and the limited range of educational services.

Currently studying for qualification

Table 3 displays the distribution of post-compulsory students among various educational providers. Among those individuals aged 15 years and older who are currently studying for a qualification, most (39.9 per cent) are attending universities. Almost as many (36.0 per cent) are studying for a qualification at an institution of Technical and Further Education (TAFE). The remaining respondents (19.1 per cent) are studying through some other institution or mechanism. Looking at the distribution of these students according to sex reveals some clear differences: males are more likely to be enrolled in TAFE programs and women far more likely to be enrolled in university.[2] Where 29.9 per cent of males are enrolled in university study and 39.0 per cent in TAFE study, nearly half (48.2 per cent) of all females currently studying for a qualification are doing so in universities and only a third (33.4 per cent) are enrolled in TAFE. The other category in this table presumably includes individuals studying in other types of adult education programs. These programs appear slightly more popular with male students (22.7 per cent) than with females (15.9 per cent).

The patterns of participation are strikingly different when enrolment by part-of-State is considered. While over twice as many students in capital cities attend universities (55.5 per cent) as TAFE institutions (24.0 per cent), the reverse is true in other urban areas where only 23.9 per cent of students studying for qualifications attend universities while 48.5 per cent attend TAFEs. In other urban areas, 23.5 per cent of students are enrolled in other institutions.[3] Roughly equal proportions of rural students attend universities (36.0 per cent) and TAFEs (37.4 per cent). The high margin of error around the reported rural other institutions makes the figure difficult to interpret, but this option is more popular among other urban students (23.5 per cent) than among capital city students (14.1 per cent).

Table 3. Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over who have left school and are currently studying for a qualification: type of institution attending by sex and part-of-State, Australia, 1994.

	University Per cent	TAFE Per cent	Other Per cent	Not stated Per cent	Total Per cent	Total ('000)
Sex						
Males	29.9	39.0	22.7	*8.5	100.0	4.7
Females	48.2	33.4	15.9	*2.4	100.0	5.3
Persons	39.9	36.0	19.1	5.3	100.0	10.0
Part-of-State						
Capital city	55.5	24.0	14.1	*6.4	100.0	4.3
Other urban	23.9	48.5	23.5	*4.1	100.0	3.9
Rural	36.0	37.4	*21.3	**5.2	100.0	1.8

* relative standard of error is greater than 25 per cent.
** relative standard of error is greater than 50 per cent.

Source: ABS (1995).

Table 4. Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over who have left school and who attended a training course in the last 12 months: provider of course by sex and part-of-State, Australia, 1994.

	University	TAFE	Other	Total	Total[a] ('000)
Sex					
Males	10.9	36.1	53.0	100.0	11.6
Females	23.1	39.2	37.8	100.0	9.5
Persons	16.4	37.5	46.1	100.0	21.1
Part-of-State					
Capital city	22.8	27.0	50.1	100.0	7.5
Other urban	10.8	47.0	42.2	100.0	9.0
Rural	16.9	35.9	47.2	100.0	4.6

a. Excludes the not stated category.

Source: 1994 NATSIS, unit record file.

Participation in training courses

Table 4 portrays Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over who have left school and who attended training courses in the last 12 months. As defined in the NATSIS, training courses are those that aim to develop skills or assist in learning about a subject; they do not lead to an educational qualification. The data include responses from individuals who attended a

wide range of different courses; individuals who attended half-day courses are included along with individuals who attended courses over many weeks. Most immediately striking in these data is the prominence of the category other in the provision of such courses. Nearly half (46.1 per cent) of all people sampled indicated they had undertaken training courses outside the mainstream public education institutions of universities and TAFEs. While some proportion of these are likely to be adult education providers, some of these are likely to be independent Indigenous education providers; still others are probably employers who provided training programs for employees. Just how many are employers is difficult to determine, but as Daly (1996: 99) has pointed out in a closer examination of these patterns, 57.6 per cent of males and 45.3 per cent of females attending training were employed, either in CDEP or non-CDEP jobs. This pattern strongly suggests that a large proportion of this training resulted from the needs and interests of employers.

Slightly more males than females reported attending training courses. This is a reversal of the pattern found among individuals studying for qualifications. In addition, it appears that while a higher proportion of males (53.0 per cent) undertake training through programs offered by employers or other non-public institutions, a greater proportions of female students (37.5 per cent) appear to have relied on TAFE for training programs. Not surprisingly, universities provided relatively less training for Indigenous people; this is probably because universities emphasise the acquisition of qualifications and de-emphasise training.

The distribution of training by the variable part-of-State is more difficult to interpret. The high proportion of study through other providers across all regions seems to reflect the impact of employer provided training; the proportion is probably highest in capital cities because employment opportunities for Indigenous people are greater there. Similarly, the proportion is probably high in rural areas because of CDEP scheme employment; employment levels are lower in other urban regions and so Indigenous people may be undertaking training through the most accessible provider, the local TAFE. Universities provided 22.8 per cent of capital city training opportunities, a pattern which may be explained by the location of the majority of such institutions in these places. These courses probably comprise university bridging, preparatory and other non-credit courses (Schwab 1996).

Even this cursory glance at the NATSIS data reveals some important features of the Indigenous population relevant to the provision of post-compulsory education. A large majority lack post-school qualifications of any sort, but those who hold qualifications are more likely to be employed. Nearly half of the Indigenous population who have left school express a desire for further study. Among those who are currently studying for a qualification, most are enrolled in universities, but only slightly fewer are

enrolled in TAFEs; about half as many study in some other form of institution as study in universities. When training rather than study for qualification is considered, it is striking that the majority of individuals who have participated in some form of training course not leading to a qualification did so at an institution other than a university or TAFE. In light of these patterns, it is worth considering how well Indigenous interests and needs are being served by the mainstream post-compulsory system and to what degree trends and political pressures in educational provision will address or conflict with those interests and needs.

The changed face of Australian education and training

Observers of the Australian education scene have recognised for some time important shifts in government perceptions of the nature of education. Marginson (1993: 56) describes the appearance of economic rationalism in the educational arena in the context of a drift from democratic political goals to market economic goals in education. He suggests that education policy issues in Australia are no longer a mix of social, cultural and economic issues, but rather they are perceived by government as primarily economic policy issues. This shift was manifested symbolically and practically in the formation of the super-department of Employment, Education and Training in 1987. The recent expansion of this department to include Youth Affairs can also be interpreted as further confirmation of the underlying governmental belief in the economic model of education.

The economic goals of education in Australia conflict with many contemporary social goals, but nowhere is that conflict more obvious then in the arena of Indigenous education. This section of the paper explores three prominent and interlaced government economic goals related to public education and examines tensions between these and a range of Indigenous cultural assumptions and practices.

Development of human capital

Human capital theory underpins current education policy in Australia (Chapman and Pope 1992; Marginson 1993). It is essentially an economic model of investment based on the assumption that if governments and individuals invest resources (time, money, energy) in education, tangible returns should result. Such returns should manifest in increased productivity, increased income and a range of less tangible but equally important social returns. The notion of investment in human capital suffuses Australian education and training at every level. It is evident, for example, in the push for primary school literacy testing (to ensure a skilled workforce), in the conflict over national competency standards in TAFE programs (to identify measurable, transferable worker skills), and in the promotion of partnerships between universities and industry (to make research more practical). At every level, the educational system is being

held more and more accountable for the nation's educational investments and the dividends of those investments are being assessed at ever turn. In every sector, education is being promoted as integral to the nation's future economic health. Whether or not this is actually true is a separate question, but the assumption itself is deeply problematic where Indigenous Australians are concerned.

One of the assumptions of human capital theory is that individuals make rational decisions in order to maximise their private rates of return. Not only do governments invest, but individuals invest and, presumably, both benefit. The problem is that many Indigenous Australians employ a cost benefit analysis for education that is quite different from the analysis of other Australians.[4] There are significant social costs to educational investment for Indigenous people that influence their decisions to participate in education. Some of these costs result from social disadvantage, others are derived from cultural differences. For example, many if not most Indigenous people have lacked the opportunity for post-compulsory education until relatively recently and it is still common for individuals to be the first generation to undertake such study in their communities. As the first to venture into self-motivated study at the post-compulsory level, they sometimes contend with high levels of suspicion from within their own families and communities where, in the experience of many Indigenous people, education is a tool of oppression.

In addition, Indigenous family expectations and individual responsibilities may not allow the time necessary for study; the relatively larger family units create additional demands that often distract individuals from study. Something as simple and unremarkable for non-Indigenous students as a desk to write at and a place to safely store books may be impossible for some Indigenous students. Yet, the option of leaving home to study in another location may be almost impossible as a result of social demands. Those who undertake study must contend with the common expectation on the part of their families and community that their education will be put to use in the home community. Many of these individuals suddenly face a range of new responsibilities and are often called upon to assist people back home and to sit on various committees. The time demands for an educated Indigenous person increase exponentially to the point that the demands are often so onerous the students withdraw from study.[5] In this sense, participation in post-compulsory education brings with it a range of significant cultural costs and expectations, and Indigenous students (and potential students) must weigh up those costs against the various benefits in determining whether or not to continue, or to enrol in the first place. This is a particularly difficult problem for the students who must travel great distances or relocate in order to undertake study. While this can indeed be seen as a calculation of the private rates of return to education, those calculations are based on a very different notion of investment in human capital.

While human capital theory begins with the assumption that individuals make rational choices about participation in education in order to maximise their rates of return, this assumption is clearly problematic when applied to Indigenous people. It appears that many Indigenous Australians employ a different cultural cost-benefit analysis than do other Australians which results in different educational trajectories.

Increased educational efficiencies

One of the most powerful trends in economic rationalism is the drive for increased efficiency. In education, this often translates into increased class sizes, extended use of facilities, reduction in duplication of courses, standardisation of curricula, and a range of other actions to maximise the value of educational investment. Against the backdrop of economic rationalism, with the drive to develop human capital, and the decline of available resources, much attention is being paid to making education more efficient. While it is sometimes difficult to separate the political from the economic - for example, in the recent government criticism of teachers and the call to move back to basics - there is clearly a ground-swell of intolerance for waste in the educational system. One of the crucial problems is that waste can be defined very differently by different groups and cutting costs to reduce waste may in fact result in decreasing choices, options and opportunities, particularly for those on the social periphery.

There is reason for concern about the implications of this movement for the various education sectors, since the attempts to make education more efficient challenge many of the educational desires of Indigenous people. For years, Indigenous people have sought educational services and approaches that may appear inefficient from the vantage point of economic rationalism. For example, Indigenous people have called for revised curricula with mandatory inclusion of Aboriginal studies, increases in the numbers of Indigenous teachers and classroom aides, support for special enclave programs, separate facilities within mainstream institutions and in some cases wholly autonomous institutions, including a national Indigenous university. The recent Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Commonwealth of Australia 1995) and the subsequent National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 1996) recommended implementation of initiatives in each of these areas, yet none of these can be accomplished without long-term commitments of additional resources, a major constraint in the current economic environment. In addition, there is a strong push by many prominent Indigenous educators and administrators for increased community control of education. All of these are features of the educational terrain Indigenous people say they need if they are to succeed in education. Yet, the initiatives expressed in these recommendations involve decentralisation, customisation and diversity in service; all will push costs up and, presumably, efficiency down. Consequently, the

implementation of such initiatives, while conceived of as essential by many Indigenous people, is highly problematic for a government system looking for efficiencies.

Enhanced educational outcomes

Efficiencies in education are aimed at specific outcomes such as higher literacy and numeracy levels, increased participation and completion rates, and better employment figures. According to the tenets of human capital theory, enhanced outcomes in these areas should translate into a healthier and more productive economic system, and it is certainly clear that the present government wants to see education paying off in terms of employment, economic growth and national prosperity. Yet, not everyone is convinced that a healthier and more productive economy should be the goal of education. This is particularly evident when Indigenous perspectives on educational outcomes are considered.

Many Indigenous people see education in very different terms than do other Australians. Participation in TAFE provides a useful example. According to data collected by the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (formerly known as the Department of Employment, Education and Training) as part of the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, TAFE appears to be the preferred avenue for Indigenous post-compulsory education. Indigenous enrolments in TAFE exceeded 28,000 students in 1993. This number represents an increase from 24,000 in 1992 and 18,350 in 1991. In comparison to other Australians, Indigenous people choose this educational avenue far more frequently; their rate of participation in TAFE is nearly twice that of others (Commonwealth of Australia 1995: 73).

According to that report, about 40 per cent of Indigenous students are enrolled in basic education or preparatory (bridging) courses. This is often referred to as second chance education and involves attempts by Indigenous students to catch-up on missed educational opportunities in the past. While some of these students who succeed in such courses certainly continue and undertake additional study, there is not yet adequate information available to monitor such progression on the national level. Another 17 per cent are enrolled in business, administration and economics, and 10.5 per cent in the arts, humanities and social sciences; only about 13 per cent of Indigenous students are enrolled in trade or higher level courses (Commonwealth of Australia 1995: 74-75). These patterns are mirrored in higher education where research reveals that Indigenous students are markedly overrepresented at the lowest end of the course continuum in non-credit courses and underrepresented at the upper levels (Schwab 1996). These findings suggest that the nature of Indigenous participation in post-compulsory education results in different patterns of outcomes than experienced by non-Indigenous students. Specifically, most Indigenous people are still catching up and employment as a result of this

training may not be high on the agendas of those Indigenous students. The NATSIS findings show that only 24.6 per cent of Indigenous people who attended a training course did so to get a job. In contrast, more (30.7 per cent) attended such courses for personal development; another 7.5 per cent attended as a hobby.

Indigenous participation in post-compulsory education is growing but the outcomes (in terms of employment) are disappointing. While there is evidence that no other factor influences employment chances as much as education (ABS and the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (ABS/CAEPR) 1996), Indigenous employment levels still lag far behind that of other Australians. In addition, high proportions of Indigenous students in all sectors undertake study of value to their people, study that does not necessarily guarantee long-term employment or serve identified economic needs. This was evident in research conducted to document five successful Indigenous adult education programs that focused on literacy and numeracy. Perceptions of program value and success uniformly emphasised not outcomes in terms of jobs, but the social benefits of an Indigenous-focused approach. Indigenous involvement, group learning, flexibility, Indigenous staff, appropriate environment and venues, and a local focus on Aboriginal studies were among the key factors of success identified by Indigenous participants (New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group 1994). While student satisfaction is certainly an important outcome, it is not one that necessarily leads to a competitive workforce. It seems clear that many Indigenous students value outcomes that differ significantly from those of an economically rational nature.

Post-compulsory education and training: the policy challenge

There seems no doubt that Australian education and training has taken on an economic focus. Knowledge for knowledge's sake is a thing of the past and investment of public dollars in education is scrutinised more carefully than ever before. Economic rationalism pervades the human capital model of the 1990s, and calls for greater efficiency and enhanced outcomes in education are common in the newspapers, over the airwaves and in the State and Federal Parliaments. It is most likely only a matter of time before 'special' education and training programs for Indigenous Australians are subject to vigorous challenge and critique.

In the context of the new political economy of education, and in the drive to maximise the investment in human capital, the advantages of diversity are likely to be down-played and uniformity promoted in the name of fiscal responsibility, fairness and equity. Yet the push for efficiency and enhanced outcomes will inevitably hobble the slow progress of many Indigenous people if that push is accompanied by a dismantling of special

programs. Such dismantling would ignore the fact that Indigenous Australians are different from other Australians, that their history is unique and their experience of discrimination and lack of access to educational and employment opportunities has locked many into poverty. Clearly, Indigenous Australians are different and they make educational decisions that are underpinned by historical, social and cultural difference and to deny this is to ignore an opportunity for positive change.

A recent study of factors affecting the success of Indigenous university students has confirmed what many have known for a long time about Indigenous participation in all sectors of post-compulsory education (Bourke, Burden and Moore 1996). According to the study, focused on the University of South Australia, many Indigenous students succeed as a result of strong support services and with the benefit of positive and helpful staff. Over half the students who dropped out of the university did so because they felt unwelcome, while others identified a lack of relevance in the courses and inadequate career counselling. This research aligns with other research to indicate that mainstream education and training structures still do not serve the needs of the majority of Indigenous students.

Policy makers need to focus on ensuring choice for Indigenous people in the various sectors of post-compulsory education. Options need to be provided that span a range of educational approaches. Entry into the mainstream is important to some Indigenous students, but insufficient numbers succeed there. More important is the need to protect what has proven to work - Indigenous support units within institutions, enclave programs, Indigenous staff, and the like - and to support calls by Indigenous people for community control of some post-compulsory education programs. Independent community-controlled Indigenous adult education institutions such as Tranby in Sydney, Tauondi in Adelaide and the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs have been tremendously successful in drawing Indigenous adults into education and training. These community-controlled institutions attract many students who would never initially enrol in mainstream TAFE or university courses, though some do in fact eventually attain the confidence to move on to mainstream institutions. While the outcomes from these programs may not always align with visions of a limited range of uniform, mainstream programs, and while those outcomes may not translate directly or immediately into employment, they serve a vital need in the Indigenous communities in which they are found and they should be supported. Such institutions are currently receiving transitional funding and their enrolments would generate lower levels of funding if the standard formula was applied. In addition, they will be funded at the 1996 level of funding for the next three years, effectively reducing funding over that period.

Independent institutions are critically important in that they make cultural sense to a large number of Indigenous people: they are Indigenous

institutions, controlled by Indigenous people, with an Indigenous community focus and an Indigenous approach to teaching and learning. In expanding the range of people who enrol to study, Independent community controlled institutions also play a vital role in achieving one of the principle goals of education: participation. Participation in education promotes a sense of the social value of and appreciation among Indigenous people for, learning. Participation also inherently promotes a culture of learning in the wider Indigenous community. That culture of learning is carried home by adult learners and can directly affect the educational success of children in that it validates and endorses learning and literacy and illustrates the vitality and value of education for Indigenous people. These are profoundly important dividends from the investment of educational dollars.

Notes

1. The CDEP scheme has been the subject of a great deal of research and discussion. Samples of some of the more prominent overviews and specific policy analyses include: Sanders (1988, 1993), Altman and Daly (1992), Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu (1993), Verrucci (1995) and Altman and Hunter (1996). Case studies of successful CDEP programs appear in Smith (1994, 1995, 1996).

2. The relatively higher proportion of Indigenous female students in universities is borne out in data collected by individual universities. An analysis of these and other patterns for Indigenous students is contained in Schwab (1996).

3. The category other urban includes all centres with populations of 1,000 or more, excluding capital cities.

4. Similarly, post-compulsory education is more readily available for non-Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australians are still far less urban than other Australians. According to the most recent census data (1991), while 64.4 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians resided in major urban areas, only 27.6 per cent of Indigenous people did so. In comparison, 32.8 per cent of Indigenous people lived in rural areas while only 14.5 per cent of non-Indigenous people did so (Taylor 1993). Decisions about whether or not to pursue post-compulsory study are severely constrained by locational considerations such as proximity to services, a problem faced by far fewer of the largely urban non-Indigenous students.

5. This issue was explored in reference to higher education in Schwab (1996).

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