LESSONS FROM AN EVALUATION OF ‘TRAININGPLUS’: AN ATTEMPT TO BRIDGE A CULTURAL DIVIDE THROUGH A TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

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Two Organisations

Desert Peoples Centre

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

Centre for Appropriate Technology
The Context

“By any measure - educational, social or economic – education and training in Australia is failing large numbers of Indigenous people, but particularly Aboriginal desert peoples.”

Desert Peoples Centre ‘Our Case’ 2003
The idea

A systematic and coordinated approach to Indigenous education and training is necessary to foster a framework for the future cultural, social and economic development of Indigenous peoples and communities.

It is a catalyst for change; an opportunity to create new, dynamic and productive learning environments for desert peoples, not only on campus but in communities.”
Questions we’d like to address

- What role does training play in producing employment outcomes in Indigenous contexts?
  - Where are the gaps in service provision for Indigenous people wanting to engage in the workforce?
  - What skills and knowledge do trainers need in order to be effective in cross-cultural contexts?
  - Are there models that work to benefit Indigenous job seekers, better than others?
Some cautions

- This paper is based on the evaluation of one program in one context
- We do not pretend to represent the views of Indigenous people
- We do not pretend to have all the answers
- We leave ourselves open to critique and indeed we invite dialogue on this issue
What is *TrainingPlus*?

- An initiative of the Desert Peoples Centre (joint venture of Centre for Appropriate Technology and Batchelor Institute)
- Aims to provide unemployed Indigenous people with support, training, work experience and employment in the building, construction and renewable energy industries
- Commenced March 2009, funded initially for 18 months
- Each participant has a tailored training and employment pathway plan
- Now focused on work with the Central Desert Shire
The context of *TrainingPlus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Persons&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Per cent of total</th>
<th>Selected characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total population</strong>&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>23892</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Indigenous persons</strong>&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4494</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median age</strong>&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; Indigenous</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Median age</strong>&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; non-Indigenous</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persons (aged 15+) with bachelor degree qualifications</strong>&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; Indigenous</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persons (aged 15+) with bachelor degree qualifications</strong>&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; non-Indigenous</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persons (aged 15+) with certificate level qualifications</strong>&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; Indigenous</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persons (aged 15+) with certificate level qualifications</strong>&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; non-Indigenous</td>
<td>3072</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persons attaining year 12 or equivalent</strong>&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; Indigenous</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persons attaining year 12 or equivalent</strong>&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; non-Indigenous</td>
<td>6527</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labour force participation Indigenous</strong></td>
<td>1232</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labour force participation non-Indigenous</strong></td>
<td>11410</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS 2007
Evaluation methods

- Evaluation conducted between August 2010 and April 2011
- Aim: to demonstrate outcomes and to enhance those outcomes
- Mixed methods approach
- Theory of change model (see Funnell and Rogers 2011)
- Data sources: 57 training records, 25 semi-structured interviews, relevant literature, background data
- Qualitative analysis carried out in Nvivo and ‘quantitized’ (see Franzosi 2010)
- Quantitative data analysed using Excel
Summary of findings

- 60% achieved a positive training or employment outcome
- 205 accredited units were marked as competent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment and other outcomes</th>
<th>Status (at Feb 2010)</th>
<th>Per cent of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing employment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed greater than 13 weeks</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed less than 13 weeks</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing with training</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left program (unsure of destination)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
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</table>
What works?

- the case management approach;
- the relationships formed with clients and other stakeholders;
- the ability of staff to advocate for and support clients;
- the learning environment;
- extent to which a client is ready to adopt the values of workplace culture;
- constructive working relationships with other organisations
Some implications

- VET as a tool that leads directly to employment, is not particularly effective in this context.
- VET training is a place for creating meaning and for engaging at the interface between the mainstream and Indigenous culture.
- Awareness of our own cultural biases will help us inordinately as we are confronted with values and norms of behaviour in another culture.
- Trainers who enter this learning environment may need to be qualified, not only in their field of expertise and in adult learning techniques, but also need to be equipped with a range of skills and characteristics that promote engagement.
- We would see a broadening of the scope of funding for VET in Indigenous contexts.
- Training providers in this kind of context must be able to demonstrate that learners are progressing in their identity to the extent that their horizons are widened, their understanding of workplace expectations and values is aligned for the intended purpose and they are more capable of making informed choices about their future.

Why is it then, that an organisation such as the Desert Peoples Centre encourages the use of vocational training?

Do we really understand the unique features of our own culture?

What about the importance of skills for employment?

Isn’t this too much of an ask?
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