Pathways: following the highway, taking the scenic route or journeying through the dreaming

Eva McRae-Williams
CRC - Remote Economic Participation / Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

John Guenther
CRC-Remote Economic Participation / Flinders University, School of Education

The work reported in this paper is supported by funding from the Australian Government Cooperative Research Centres Program through the CRC for Remote Economic Participation. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the CRC for remote Economic Participation or its Participants.

Abstract

Embedded in much Vocational Education and Training discourse and research is the notion of 'pathways' between education/training and employment. The use of this term has become so common place and its relevance so deeply assumed, that the meanings and manifestations of such 'pathways' are rarely unpacked in policy statements and research recommendations. The importance of 'pathways' has become an inarguable and necessary condition of effective Vocational Education and Training (VET) initiatives. Congruent with this, the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation (CRC-REP) partnership developed an agenda which identified a need to develop a systemic understanding of 'pathways' between education, employment and enterprise for Aboriginal people in remote regions of Australia. As a component of the CRC-REP *"Investing in People Program"* a *"Pathways to Employment"* research strand has recently been initiated.

Rather than a focus on research findings, this paper is a preliminary discussion on the possible directions the *"Pathways to Employment"* project could take. It aims to explore assumptions behind the notion of a pathway between education/training and employment/enterprise as well as expectations associated with economic participation. By raising questions about the common place and assumed relevance of 'pathways' and certain forms of economic participation this paper proposes an alternative research agenda. One which recognises the existence of potentially different ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies shaping Aboriginal aspirations for vocation and work in remote community contexts and subsequently influencing how pathways can be meaningfully conceptualised.

Introduction

This paper reflects the thinking behind a recently initiated but yet to be undertaken research project through the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation (CRC-REP). As one part of a much larger CRC-REP research agenda, this yet to be fully developed research project sits with the framework of the CRC-REP's three goals:

1. To develop new ways to build resilience and strengthen regional communities and economies across remote Australia.

2. To build new enterprises and strengthen existing industries that, provide jobs, livelihoods and incomes in remote areas.
3. To improve the education and training pathways in remote areas so that people have better opportunities to participate in the range of economies that exist.

Of particular relevance to the third goal of the CRC-REP, the *"Pathways to Employment"* project was first conceptualised as an exploration into the factors that support or create barriers to sustainable employment/enterprise outcomes in remote Aboriginal Australia. It was envisaged that this would occur through comparing and contrasting the strengths and weaknesses of existing programs and documenting the perspectives of Aboriginal people on successful transitions between education and employment. The following discussion highlights some of the assumptions behind this initial direction through exploring the logic of a linear, often hierarchical, A to B journey between education and employment.

By introducing the concepts of ontology, epistemology and axiology this paper argues that the *"Pathways to Employment"* project may well benefit by recognising and engaging with the potentially different ways of being, knowing and valuing that shape Aboriginal peoples' existence and life-worlds in remote Australian communities. These academic concepts may seem a bit 'pie in the sky' for those who see employment and education as primary indicators of advantage (SCRGSP 2011). However, this paper aims to raise questions about how we conceptualise not only education and employment but also economic participation in order to open a space for creatively thinking about the presuppositions that shape research in these areas and the possibilities for alternative approaches of investigation both within and beyond the*"Pathways to Employment"* project. From the position of not wishing to replicate what is already known about the barriers to employment for Aboriginal people residing in remote communities, the problematising of assumptions behind the mainstream pathways construct enables the development of an innovative framework and approach for this recently initiated project.

Literature review

To understand the importance placed on pathways between education/training and employment we must first consider the cultural assumptions that have built the notion that a pathway actually exists between the two. Work, understood as paid employment, is what distinguishes industrial societies from other forms of society (Beder 2000). For members of such societies, work socialises people and shapes political, educational and social institutions. This centrality of work also endows employment with important psychological functions; it has become a source of pride, fulfilment and social identity formation (Furnham 1984). Employment has *"*come to be seen as natural, desirable, morally right and inevitable" (Beder 2000, pg. 263).

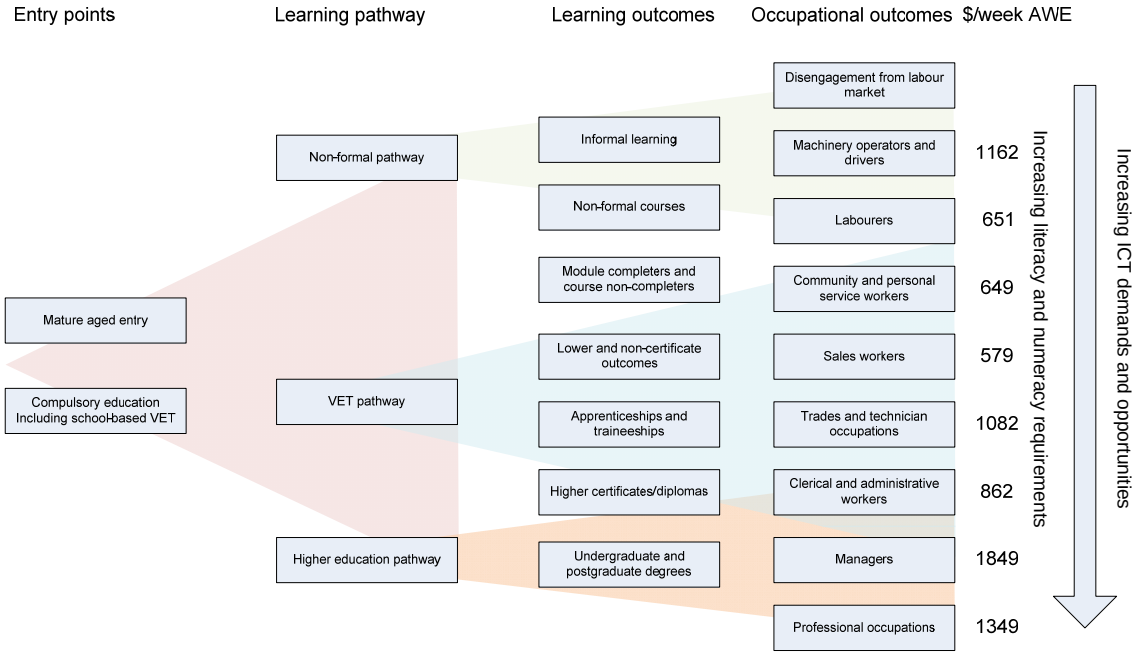
With employment positioned at the core of economic, political and social life it is not surprising that educational institutions, both historically and today, play a significant role in supporting the centrality of 'work' and encouraging particular 'work' behaviours. In modern capitalist societies education has served as an increasingly refined training and selection mechanism for the labour force. Getting individuals ready either for participation through developing competency in work-related skills, or broadening the skills of those already in the work-force, is the underlying aim of most educational and training programs in

contemporary capitalist societies (White 1997). As such, the assumption that there is a pathway between education/training and employment is well-established. While counter narratives around the meaning and purpose of work exist, as a powerful central ontology, a belief in the importance and value of paid employment remains entrenched in the structure of most of our cultural institutions. Journeying on a pathway towards employment or through the employment environment continues to operate as a normalised cultural expectation. Making visible the centrality of this employment focused ontology through raising questions about the assumptions that support it, this paper aims to open up a space where different understanding around the meanings of education, employment, economic participation and the potential pathways that exist between them can be explored.

Conceptual framework

The logic and normalisation of the education to employment pathway is rarely questioned. Coinciding with its linear direction are institutional structures and cultural values that shape and support the hierarchical organisation of steps along the pathway. By and large uncontested in the mainstream education and employment literature, Figure 1, conceptually maps these assumptions.

Figure 1. Pathways to employment schema



AWE=Average Weekly Cash Earnings, Source (ABS 2011a)

Firstly, the pathway from left to right can be seen as linear, direct and causal. The assumption is that if an individual starts on one of the three learning pathways then the consequences for employment outcomes (and by inference income) are fairly well prescribed. Secondly the pathway model assumes that entry points are equally accessible by all. Thirdly, society generally places more value on the pathways that lead to higher paying occupations such as managers and professionals, compared to labourers, sales workers and personal and community service workers. Knowledge acquisition in this schema is of value to skill development. Fourthly, it is assumed that completion of a particular pathway

provides a passport into another (generally higher value) pathway, for example from an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level 1 or 2 and on to 3, 4, 5 and so on.

While this model generally works there are recognised exceptions even in mainstream society. For example, the pathway taken to become an elite athlete or renowned artist, have different trajectories that are not primarily dependent on knowledge acquisition but rather on inherent skills. Coinciding with changes in the organisation of the formal labour market, there is also a growing body of research which challenges this linear, hierarchical journey for mainstream participants (Ciulla 2000; Baruch 2004; Arthur *et al.* 2005). Rea, *et al.* (2008, pg. 10), have stated, "Everybody has their own pathway and many are circuitous and unpredictable, involving individuals, chance and opportunity". Yet, the strength of the view that sees education, particularly Vocational Education and Training (VET), as an individualised linear process where skills are imparted to meet employer requirements and therefore fill industry skills gaps remains firmly entrenched.

Building from, and reproducing, this deep-seated assumption is the large body of research that aims to identify real and potential barriers or stumbling blocks that inhibit this linear and hierarchical progression. Barriers associated with access to, engagement with, and effectiveness of education/training and employment initiatives have been well documented for different population groups, including the young (Mission Australia 2006) the aged (Wooden *et al.* 2001), migrants (McDonald *et al.* 2008), people with disabilities (NESA 2011) and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people (Abbott-Chapman 2007; Guenther *et al.* 2008).

Discussion

The *"Pathways to Employment"* project is concerned with 'remote communities'. This term is used to signify discrete settlements where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders live, in that part of Australia defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as 'very remote' (see ABS 2011b). Copious amounts of research and statistical documentation, about these communities has, and continues to, highlight a multitude of interrelated disadvantages experienced by residents. High levels of unemployment and low levels of education are understood as common characteristics of this disadvantage (Dockery and Milsom 2007), as are lack of infrastructure, access to services (Dillon and Westbury 2007; Larson 2011), issues of overcrowding (Baile *et al.* 2005) and morbidity and mortality rates (Jamieson *et al.* 2008). Yet, under this shared blanket of disadvantage, remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities differ substantially in their cultural underpinnings, worldviews, historical experiences, population size, environmental conditions, infrastructure, available services and economic opportunities. These unique settlements can also not be assumed to be homogeneous or harmonious as the term community may imply. Aside from the obvious uniqueness of all individuals, these often artificially established places have drawn together different cultural and social groups. Within any one community there is a complex mix of relationships and power dynamics between different tracts of land, tribes, clans and families, between different age groups such as elders and youth, between men and women, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents and local and larger political and cultural institutions. In this initial phase of the *"Pathways to Employment"* project, case study sites

are yet to be identified, however an acknowledgment of and an engagement with the uniqueness of people and places will be a fundamental component of the project

Aligned with the research approach of the CRC-REP, this research project will also not simply gather data for the sake of academic reporting. Rather it will attempt to work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers to co-produce knowledge that is on the one hand supportive of remote community aspirations and on the other, supportive of a need to bring about systemic, practice and policy change. Co-development with relevant Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait people on methodology and research direction will take place as the project moves beyond its establishment phase. As such, the authors, at this point, wish to make clear that as non-Indigenous researchers we cannot assume to represent an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander position and that the following discussion, rather than focusing on a confirmed research question or direction, is simply aimed at identifying possible assumptions and proffering preliminary ideas to be considered in the projects development stage.

The relative educational and employment disadvantage of Aboriginal people compared to non-Indigenous people in Australia has been widely acknowledged (Commonwealth Government of Australia 2008). While there are relatively high rates of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people participating in VET, their pass rates and qualifications remain well below those of non-Indigenous Australians (Young *et al.* 2007; NCVER 2011). While not exhaustive, the following impediments to education/training and employment pathways in remote communities have received some attention:

- Lack of education/training and employment opportunities in local area (Hunter 2009)
- Poor or inappropriate education/training program development, implementation and delivery
- Cultural barriers
- Low levels of English literacy and numeracy skills – educational and language disadvantage
- A lack of basic skills such as drivers licence and job search skills
- Personal and social health issues (ALA 2004)

Identifying factors that create barriers to sustainable employment/enterprise was an initial focus of the *"Pathways to Employment"* project. However, it may not provide information for a pertinent or new analysis. Rather, as a principle focus, it is highly likely to simply replicate previous findings on barriers or impediments to education/training and employment/enterprise development in remote locations. Identifying barriers also has the propensity to reflect a common deficit model of enquiry. For example, looking at impediments involves identifying deficits in individuals and/or in institutions and leads to conclusions focused on how to fill or overcome these absences or deficiencies. Exploring enablers or supports along the A to B pathway between education and employment, does a similar thing. It identifies positive factors with the hypothesis supporting this being the need to replicate these factors in those identified as deficient. In any case, a lot of work has already been done in this area (for example, Miller 2005).

Such a focus fails to acknowledge the cultural assumptions behind education/training and employment pathways. Starting in an already predefined cultural space, where going to school, completing further education/training and engaging in employment is the right, moral and expected pathway, it perpetuates the logic without questioning the larger worldview that shapes it. The approach assumes a certain direction and purpose to vocational/work pathways and necessarily becomes a component within assimilative agendas. Whether assimilation is a right or wrong process is not being discussed here, rather the aim is simply to highlight something that often goes unsaid. To follow this linear and hierarchical pathway a person must possess or develop a certain way of being, thinking and valuing that supports this journey. Guenther *et al.* (2011, pg. 92) have explained that:

> Creating opportunities for employment requires more than successful completion of a Certificate III. It requires a shift in identity so that the trainee's values become more closely aligned to those of the workplace. We may at first cringe at the thought of training as a vehicle for identity change, but that is what we are indeed doing in training.

Defining 'successful transitions' from within this mainstream framework, involves acknowledging the need for the adoption of the behaviours and values of a mainstream employment centred culture. This assimilative agenda is not new and has shaped relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people since colonisation. Getting Aboriginal people to "work" in a specific and prescribed way was seen to be an instructive stage in Aborigines' evolutionary road towards inclusion in civilised society, encouraging discipline and particular social practices in exchange for entry into mainstream society (Povinelli 1993). An assumption that a "work ethic" could and needed to be taught was both implicit and explicit in the aims and writings of missionaries and governments in the colonial era (Powell 1982). The contemporary focus on improving pathways between education/training and employment and/or enterprise is a present day extension of this.

Even with this concerted and continuing effort assimilating remote Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people's ways of being, doing and knowing to reflect those of a work-central society has not been fully accomplished. There is a large body of research spanning decades, which has identified tensions between remote Aboriginal cultural beliefs, values and behaviour, and those inherent in employment cultures. Structures of, and ways of understanding authority and autonomy, kinship organisation, decision making systems and the emphasis placed on reciprocity, have been demonstrated to be in tension with the hierarchical structures, linear time and activity management, and individual accumulation components of an employment orientated world view (see Taylor 1984; Trigger 1992; Rowse 1998; Austin-Broos 2006; Gibson 2010; McRae-Williams and Gerritsen 2010).

McRae-Williams's (2008) research around understandings of work in Ngukurr, a remote community in South East Arnhem land, found that while local Aboriginal people valued formal education and employment, the meanings attributed to these activities and the connections between them significantly differed to those dominant in mainstream arenas. While, life for non-Indigenous peoples in Ngukurr was shaped by the centrality of employment, whether they liked it or not, Aboriginal residents' lives revolved around

a complex notion of 'relatedness' and it was this that shaped their learning and work experiences. Kral and Falk (2004, pg. 8), similarly found in a Central Desert community that,

> …most training does not fit into the meaning and purpose of community life. The connection between education, vocational education and training and employment pathways is not linked to any future planning process that takes account of community aims and aspirations.

By acknowledging that in remote communities, different meanings and values may be attributed to vocation and work and that these views may influence engagement with mainstream education and employment practices and processes suggests that a further hypothesis could be made. From within such a context, it is highly likely that exploring the notion of "successful transitions" from Aboriginal perspectives will reveal that the journey, transitions and understandings of success do not necessarily reflect mainstream expectations. If framed by the standard A to B pathways model of analysis such perspectives would ultimately be constructed as delusionary, i.e. you may think you are successfully transitioning in your vocational/work journey but 'we' continue to accumulate evidence that says this is not really the case! Therefore, for the purpose of the *"Pathways to Employment"* project maybe a more innovative approach would be to begin by acknowledging difference and shift the focus from barriers, supports and notions of success along mainstream pathways to an analysis of the forms and purposes of learning, vocational or work journeys and aspirations for remote Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

As a starting point in the research design this may involve engagement with philosophical concepts such as ontology and epistemology. For those deemed to operate 'successfully' in the mainstream work-orientated environment, at the core of their being, or ontologies, is the importance of certain or legitimate forms of 'occupation'. The value placed on occupation/employment means that in such a setting it functions as a defining feature of what it is to be a 'normal' moral citizen and adult. In terms of the ways of knowing, or epistemologies, that support this existence, knowledge is acquired through an institutional learning system via expert, professional teachers and is recognised through a formal qualification structure (described as the Australian Qualifications Framework). In terms of axiologies, the root, or values that shape this being and knowing, are frameworks represented to a large extent by dollars and social status. Yet these 'mainstream' ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies are rarely discussed or acknowledge openly. Guenther *et al.* (2011 p. 90), have highlighted that:

> … the values of mainstream culture, which are represented in terms of 'work ethic', institutionalised education and training, the importance of material wealth, democratic authority structures and individualism are taken as 'normal'. Conversely, Indigenous values are frequently described in terms of abnormality. Hence, programs developed for Indigenous contexts often tend to make assumptions about what 'whitefellas' think is important for 'blackfellas' - for example in terms of education, health, employment and justice—rather than the other way round.

It is this invisibility of culture as normal that has and continues to give this particular way of being its power (Lipsitz 1998; Moreton-Robinson 2005). For example, while the concepts of ontology, epistemology and axiology are frequently used to inform discussions on academic research paradigms and methodology (see for example Lincoln *et al.* 2011), they are seldom engaged with in educational or employment literature—except as we shall see, in the literature that relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander well-being and learning.

There is a disjuncture between mainstream pathways and frameworks and those built around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ontologies, epistemologies, axiologies and cosmologies. The latter is largely ignored (if not denied) in the mainstream framework of existence, but is arguably central to conceptions of learning and livelihoods (see for example Arbon 2008; Christie *et al.* 2010; Ford 2010). Both Arbon and Ford speak of the importance of identities, ways of being, ways of doing and ways of constructing knowledge for 'education' and its outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Arbon (2008), tracking the history of Indigenous tertiary education in Australia, argues that many in mainstream academia have been unable to imagine alternative paradigms of Indigenous tertiary education. She asserts that: *"This is powerful assimilative intent"* (Arbon 2008, pg. 62).

By beginning from a position which engages with different ways of being, doing and knowing, the *"Pathways to Employment"* project has the potential to explore alternative pathways for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people that do not deny or aim to a large extent to overcome difference. On the flip side, exploring difference in this way may also enable a greater understanding of the meaning and challenges inherent in assimilative approaches and processes. Such exploration will involve working with remote Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people on the ground to explore aspirations and vocational journeys in there broadest sense. It will involve shifting the focus from an A to B pathway from education/training to employment to one that creates spaces to creatively explore and discuss meaning and purpose in life, and from this position the potential for livelihoods. A livelihoods approach recognises not only the many identified barriers to education and employment but also acknowledges that 'work' may be conceptualised more broadly than a nine to five job (Guenther *et al.* 2011).

In order to further a discussion on 'pathways to livelihoods' as opposed to 'pathways to employment' another firmly entrenched cultural assumption must be acknowledged. High levels of unemployment or underemployment and the associated reliance on social welfare payments has and is constructed as problematic in remote settings. Finding solutions to this presumed economic exclusion and increasing economic participation of peoples is highlighted as essential in the CRC-REP objectives. Yet it is important to note that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in remote communities are not separate from the mainstream or formal economy. Whether employed or unemployed they participate in the market economy and it could be argued contribute positively to the larger economic environment of Australia. Lea (2008) has pointed out that the Northern Territory economy has a substantial reliance on the continuing service dependency of Aboriginal people. She argues that *"This sort of instance of an unacknowledged dependency on those we would prefer to call dependent is not a deliberate conspiracy, but part of what I call the magic of*

intervention" (Lea 2008: 15). The idea that Aboriginal people *"need our help"* is a fundamental assumption and one that generates substantial employment and enterprise opportunities for non-Indigenous people.

Stoeckl (2011) has also shown that Aboriginal and non-Indigenous economic systems in Australia's North are profoundly and asymmetrically divided. While an increase in Aboriginal incomes will also increase the incomes of non-Indigenous householders, very little money that is injected into the non-Indigenous economic system ever finds its way into the Indigenous one. So while Aboriginal people support the pathways to economic participation of other non-Indigenous populations, their own pathways to economic participation are not simply about *"increasing the quantity of goods and services that are produced in Australia's north (without changing the way in which these goods are produced),* [as this will], *most likely, merely serve to benefit non-Indigenous households"* (Stoeckl 2011, pg. 106). Aboriginal people in remote Australia are therefore participants in the economy, they contribute to labour market and other economic opportunities for others, and through the provision of social welfare payments are active participants in the market economy. Similarly, their contribution to the economy through non-market goods and services such as cultural heritage and natural resource maintenance and management also needs acknowledgement here.

Discussing pathways to economic participation is therefore not simply about creating pathways where there are none but first recognising the existence of the pathways which people are already travelling upon. It is about acknowledging that assumptions are made about what constitutes positive economic participation as opposed to negative participation. It is about unpacking in more depth what it *really is* about welfare dependence, that is viewed as so negatively impacting on peoples livelihoods. If hypothetically, it is simply a lack of financial resources, then rather than simply pathways to employment, a livelihood approach may also focus on exploring pathways to wellbeing that could increase available income beyond simply waged labour frameworks. The potential of such pathways, which may or may not require engagement with employment, could be explored through reference to American Indian contexts where alternative approaches to economic participation have been successfully developed (see NCAI 2003).

Conclusion

The above discussion might sound simply academic as opposed to practical, indeed many may view this discussion as counterproductive in the pursuit of a 'closing the gap' agenda, which sees certain forms of employment and education and associated outcomes as primary indicators of advantage (SCRGSP 2011). However a failure to problematise the assumptions associated with the pathways construct will more than likely perpetuate a continuation of the power dynamics and disjunctures that already exist between the central ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies of an employment central society and the ways of being, knowing and valuing associated with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' experiences and aspirations.

This paper by highlighting assumptions behind the *"Pathways to Employment"* project's initial direction, has brought to the fore the limitations of many studies which focus on

barriers and enablers and successful transitions without a serious questioning of the pathway model framing investigations. Developing alternative pathway modelling or mapping approaches that better capture the lived reality of vocational journeys, not only for Aboriginal people residing in remote settlements but also for marginal populations generally, in other words, those in an ontologically peripheral rather than central position, involves asking a different set of questions. This paper concludes not with answers regarding how to improve pathways to employment for remote Aboriginal and or Torres Strait but rather with a number of points to think about that may facilitate a reshaping of what meaningful vocational pathways might look like. There is a need to question:

- the assumption of a lack of economy in remote locations and the associated notion of a lack of participation in the economy.
- why a different form of economy is assumed necessary and what it actually is about the one that is there that is viewed and experienced as so problematic
- why having an economy principally based on participation in employment, is assumed essential.
- why the strong assimilative forces behind economic participation agendas focused on employment and enterprise development are rarely openly acknowledged or meaningfully discussed
- whether the mainstream system has the ability to acknowledge and accommodate different ways of being and notions of vocation and employment beyond simply rhetoric

At present at the heart of the "Pathways to Employment" project is a recognised need to think big, to go beyond the much traversed sphere of barriers, deficits and disadvantage towards a focus on imagined futures, aspirations and possibilities. By providing a space to think creatively this project may be able to provide new ground from which learning, vocation/work and economic participation as well as the pathways between them can be honestly and meaningfully discussed, engaged with, improved or developed.

References

Abbott-Chapman, J. (2007). Improving the Participation of Disadvantaged Students in Post-Compulsory Education and Training: A Continuing Challenge. In Learning and Teaching for the Twenty-First Century. (ed) R. Maclea. Springer, Netherlands**,** 275-291.

ABS (2011a). Employee Earnings and Hours. Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

ABS (2011b). "Remoteness Structure." Retrieved October 2011, from http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/remoteness+structure

ALA (2004). Submission to Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee, an inquiry into Indigenous training and employment outcomes. Adult Learning Australia (ALA), Canberra.

Arbon, V. (2008). Arlathirnda Ngurkarnda Ityirnda: Being-Knowing-Doing, De-colonising Indigenous Tertiary Education. Post Press, Teneriffe, QLD.

Arthur, M. B., Khapova, S.N. & Wilderom, C.P.M. (2005). Career success in a boundaryless career world. Journal of Organizational Behavior 26, 177-202.

Austin-Broos, D. (2006). 'Working for' and 'working' among western Arrernte in central Australia. Oceania 76:1, 1-15.

Baile, R., M. Stevens, E. McDonald, S. Halpin, D. Brewster, G. Robinson, & S. Guthridge, S. (2005). Skin infection, housing and social circumstances in children living in remote Indigenous communities: testing conceptual and methodological approaches. BMC Public Health 5:128

Baruch, Y. (2004). Transfoming careers: from linear to multidirectional career paths: Organizational and individual perspectives. Career Development International 9:1, 58-73.

Beder, S. (2000). Selling the Work Ethic: From Puritan Pulpit to Corporate PR. Scribe Publications, Melbourne.

Ciulla, J. B. (2000). The Working Life: The Promise and Betrayal of Modern Work. New York, Times Books/Random House.

Christie, M., K. Gotha, D. Gurruwiwi, & Y. Guyula (2010). The ethics of teaching from country. Australian Aboriginal Studies 2010:2, 69-80.

Cohen, D. K. and M. Lazerson. (1973). Education and the corporate order. In Education in American history: Readings on the social issues. (ed) M. B. Katz. Praeger, New York.

Commonwealth Government of Australia. (2008). Closing the gap on Indigenous Disadvantage: The Challenge for Australia. Commonwealth Government of Australia, Canberra

Dillon, M.C and N.D. Westbury. (2007). Beyond Humbug: Transforming Government Engagement with Indigenous Australia. Seaview Press, West Lakes (SA).

Dockery, A. M. and N. Milsom. (2007). A review of Indigenous employment programs. National Centre of Vocational Education Research, Australian Government, Adelaide.

Ford, P. L. (2010). Aboriginal Knowledge Narratives and Country: Marri kunkimba putj putj marrideyan. Post Pressed, Brisbane.

Furnham, A. (1984). The Protestant work ethic: a review of the psychological literature. European Journal of Social Psychology 14, 87-104.

Gibson, L. (2010). Making a Life: Getting Ahead, and Getting a Living in Aboriginal New South Wales. Oceania 80, 143-160.

Guenther, J., K. Castle, N. Raymond, & K. Berschl. (2011). Lessons from an evaluation of 'TraingPlus': an attempt to bridge a cultural divide through a training and employment initiative. AVETRA 14th Annual Conference: Research in VET: Janus - Reflecting back. projecting forward. Rendezvous Hotel, Melbourne.

Guenther, J., I. Falk & A. Arnott. (2008). The role of vocational education and training in welfare to work. National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide.

Hunter, B. H. (2009). Prospects for closing the gap in a recession: Revisiting the role of macroeconomic factors in Indigenous employment. CAEPR Topical Issue No. 01/2009.

Jamieson, L., J. Harrison & J. Berry. (2008). Hospitalisation for head injury due to assault among Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, July 1999 – June 2005. Medical Journal of Australia 188:10, 576-579.

Larson, S. (2011). The socio-economic features of northern Australia. In North Australian Political Economy: Issues and Agendas. (ed) R. Gerritsen. Charles Darwin University Press, Darwin.

Lea, T. (2008). Bureaucrats & Bleeding Hearts: Indigenous Health in Northern Australia. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.

Lincoln, S., S. Lynham & E. Gube. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. In The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research. (ed) N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks. 4th Edition, 97-128.

Lipsitz, G. (1998). The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White people profit from identity politics. Temple University Press, Philadepphia.

McDonald, B., S. Gifford, K. Webster, J. Wiseman, & S. Casy. (2008). Refugee Resettlement in Regional and Rural Victoria: Impacts and Policy Issues., Report commissioned by Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and prepared by Refugee Health Research Centre, LaTrobe University, The McCaughey Centre, VicHealth Centre for the Promotion of Mental Health and Community Wellbeing, University of Melbourne and Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture.

McRae-Williams, E. (2008). Understanding 'Work" in Ngukurr: A remote Australian Aboriginal community. Unpublished PhD thesis. Charles Darwin University, Darwin.

McRae-Williams, E. & R. Gerritsen. (2010). Mutual Incomprehension: The cross cultural domain of work in a remote Aboriginal community. The International Indigenous Policy Journal 1:2

Miller, C. (2005). Aspects of training that meet Indigenous Australians' aspirations: A systematic review of research, National Centre for Vocational Education Research. Adelaide, Retrieved December 2008 from http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/surveys/indig/sysreview/sr4002.pdf.

Mission Australia (2006). Youth Employment Strategy (YES) – 2006. Mission Australia.

Moreton-Robinson, A. (2005). Whiteness, espistemology and Indigenous representation. In Whitening Race: Essays in social and cultural criticism. (ed) A. Moreton-Robinson. Aboriginal Studies Press**,** Canberra. 75-88.

NCAI (2003). Weaving Our Future: A Proposal for Economic Stimulus in Indian Country. National Congress of the American Indian. www.ncai.org

NCVER (2011). Students and courses 2010, National Centre for Vocational Education Research. Adelaide, Retrieved February 2012 from http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2383.html.

NESA (2011). Response to the Inquiry into Mental Health Barriers to Education, Training and Employment Participation. National Employment Services Association (NESA), Melbourne.

Povinelli, E. A. (1993). Labor's Lot: The Power, History and Culture of Aboriginal Action. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Powell, A. (1982). Far Country: A Short History of the Northern Territory. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Rea, N., J. Messner, & C. Gipey (2008). The character of Aboriginal training pathways: A local perspective. Desert Knowledge CRC Report 34.

Rowse, T. (1998). White Flour, White Power: From Rations to Citizenship in Central Australia. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

SCRGSP, Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. (2011a). Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2011. Canberra, Productivity Commission.

Stoeckl, N. (2011). Bridging the asymmetric divide: background to, and strategies for, bridging the divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous economies in Northern Australia. In North Australia Political Economy: Issues and Agendas. (ed) R. Gerritsen. Charles Darwin University Press, Darwin.

Taylor, J. C. (1984). Of Acts and Axes: An Ethnography of socio-cultural change in an Aboriginal community. James Cook University, Cape York Peninsula.
Trigger, D. S. (1992). Whitefella Comin': Aboriginal responses to colonialism in northern Australia. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
White, J. (1997). Education and the end of Work. Cassell, London.
Wooden, M., A. Vandenheuvel, M. Cully, & R. Curtain. (2001). Barriers to Training for Older Workers and Possible Policy Solutions. Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Canberra.