Community engagement in remote schools: Just who is engaged and what for?

Lecture 10 in the Remote Education series

NARU, 18 November 2015 at 12:15PM

The premise of this presentation is that successful remote schools are defined by the level of parent and community involvement in the school. This premise arises from the findings of the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation's (CRC-REP) Remote Education Systems (RES) project which shows this view of success as the single most important aspect of remote schools— and these views came from both remote Aboriginal respondents and non-remote respondents alike. This indicator is more important than either attendance or academic outcomes. For non-remote respondents the level of school-community engagement was the second most important indicator of a successful school.

While respondents gave plenty of examples of what this might look like in a remote school, they also suggested a number of ways that systems can respond to achieve these important outcomes. The importance of parental involvement is certainly not ignored by systems, even if the dominant discourse of success is about attendance, attainment, retention and transition to further education or work.

RES respondents suggested that the best way to achieve these outcomes is by giving parents and communities power. But is this realistically achievable? This presentation will present findings about success and system response. It will argue that community engagement is important, but that the question of how to achieve powerful community-school partnerships where parents and community role models are actively involved in children's education or at schools in other ways, is not easily answered. It is one thing for school systems to have community engagement strategies, but it is quite another for communities to have school engagement strategies. The presentation will conclude with some suggestions for how the goals of communities and systems can be—and in some cases are being—successfully achieved. There will be opportunity for questions and answers after the seminar.

Bio

John Guenther is the Principal Research Leader for the Remote Education Systems project with the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation and Flinders University. John has worked as a researcher and evaluator in remote Australian contexts—particularly the Northern Territory—for the last 12 years on issues related to education, training, families and children, justice, child protection and domestic violence. His current role is focused on understanding how education systems can better respond to the needs of students and families living in very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Community engagement in remote schools:
Just who is engaged and what for?
Remote Education Systems project

Darwin,
18 November 2015

Introduction

Introduction

- RES lecture series topics 1-9:
    1) What is education for?
    2) Disadvantage and advantage
    3) Complexity and chaos
    4) Workforce development
    5) Successful remote schools
    6) Teacher quality and qualities
    7) Culturally responsive schools,
    8) Red dirt curriculum and Australian curriculum,
    9) Student language learning needs in red dirt communities

- Is community engagement really important for remote schools?
- If so why?
- How do schools do it well?

My aim in this lecture is to present findings from the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation's (CRC-REP) Remote Education Systems (RES) project. This is the tenth in a series of 11 lectures. So far in the series topics we have covered include 'What is education for in remote communities?', 'disadvantage and advantage in remote schools', 'complexity and chaos in remote schools', 'workforce development for remote education', 'successful remote schools: what are they?', and 'teacher quality and qualities'. I am happy to share the text of all the lectures we have given so far.

The RES project was designed to uncover ways that could contribute to improving outcomes for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families. The project team gathered data over three years from school, community, university, and government stakeholders. I acknowledge the work of my colleagues, Sam Osborne and Samantha Disbray, and early on in the project, Melodie Bat. When I talk about 'we' in this lecture, I acknowledge the team's contribution to our work.

In this lecture I want to explore the topic of community engagement and its significance for remote schools and potentially boarding schools. Community engagement is one of those terms—a bit like partnerships, consultation, collaboration and networks—that is bandied around with assumed meanings but could actually mean different things to different people. In particular for schools that *do* community engagement the meaning might be different than those who are on the other end of community engagement processes.

Perhaps more importantly, the question might arise (as it does in the literature) about whether community engagement is actually desirable or even necessary for schools. Should a teacher just get on with the job of teaching? Should a principal just get on with leading a school and its staff? My observations of teachers is that they are expected to do a lot more than teach these days.

But putting that aside, if community engagement is important what does it do? And how should it happen?

In the RES project we didn't ask these questions directly. I admit to being a bit surprised at how vociferous remote Aboriginal stakeholders in our research were on this topic. They talked about this a lot in terms of what success looks like and indeed how systems should respond to the issues of remote education for Aboriginal people. I'll come to our findings shortly, but let me first lay some foundations about definitions and parameters.

How the dominant discourse frames success

In the discussion that follows I will focus on just three aspects of successful education: successful learning, successful teaching and successful systems. I will show how success is defined, how it is achieved, and how it is measured from an Australian system-wide perspective.

By 'system', I mean the supply side of education in its various forms including departments of education, the non-government sectors and the various supporting instruments that govern the delivery of education in Australia (see discussion of this in Bat & Guenther, 2013). These instruments include Acts, agreements, universities which train teachers, curricula, professional standards, funding arrangement, measurement frameworks and policy-makers. It includes schools and all their associated bureaucracies.

Successful learning

To a large extent 'success' defined by education systems, depends on perceptions of what education is for. In 2013 we problematized this within the context of remote education in Australia (Guenther & Bat, 2013). If, as we argued then (see also Guenther, Bat, & Osborne, 2013)—that in Australia at least—a good education leads to economic participation and wealth, capacity to think, individual agency and control, democratic participation and a sense of belonging, then those are the things that we should count as success. The 2008 *Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, 2008) concurs with these aims, suggesting that successful learners: develop their capacity to learn; have essential skills in literacy and numeracy; are able to think deeply and logically; are creative and innovative; can make sense of the world; and are on a pathway to 'continued success in further education, training or employment' (p. 8). The ideas of the Melbourne Declaration have been picked up and enacted through a number of significant policy initiatives and directions since then.

The question I have though, is whether these definitions of successful learning are shared by everyone, particularly those from remote communities. And to what extent does community engagement connect with these outcomes?

Successful teaching

A successful education involves successful teaching as well as learning. In Australia, following on from the *Melbourne Declaration's* 'Commitment to Action' a number of initiatives were put in place to improve teacher quality. The National Education Agreement (Standing Council on Federal Financial Relations, 2012) specifically committed policy directions toward 'improving teacher and school leader quality' (p. 11). In 2010, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) was formed to promote teacher quality through initial teacher education, better school leadership and support for teachers to maximise their impact on student learning. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011, 2012) were subsequently developed. According to this framework, successful teachers are those that:

1) know their students;

2) know the content and how to teach it;

3) plan and implement effective teaching and learning;

4) create safe learning environments;

5) assess and report on student learning;

6) engage in professional learning; and

7) **engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community**.

Note the last statement there—community and parent engagement has effectively been codified as an important element of successful teaching.

Successful systems

The intent of the current Australian reform agenda is clearly articulated by the Council of Australian Governments:

> *Raising productivity is a key focus of COAG's agenda, and education and training are critical to increasing the productivity of individual workers and the economy.*(Council of Australian Governments, 2012)

The Australian Government's education policy focus, *Students First,* largely affirms the 2012 COAG directions. It adds one additional element: Engaging parents in education. The rationale for this is given as follows:

> *Effective parent and family engagement in education is more than just participation in school meetings and helping with fundraising, it is actively engaging with your child's learning, both at home and at school.* (Department of Education and Training, 2015)

As such parent and family engagement is described as one of the 'four pillars' of the Australian Government's education reform agenda. The others are Teacher Quality, School Autonomy, and Strengthening the Curriculum.

What is community engagement?

Just what is community engagement?

- Community: end users of schooling
- Engagement might include the following:
  - Involvement in school governance and leadership (Ranson, 2011)
  - Parent involvement in learning at school or home (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012; Daniel, 2015; Emerson et al., 2012)
  - Parent/teacher relationships and communication (Higgins & Morley, 2014)
  - Staff involvement in community activities
  - Cultural inclusiveness (Gollan & Malin, 2012; Hands, 2013) and responsiveness (Perso, 2012)
  - Community or NGO involvement in school activities (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2010)
  - Consultative bodies
  - Formal partnerships (What Works. The Work Program, 2013)
  - Employer involvement in schools and student involvement in industry such as work experience and school-based apprenticeships

Before looking at 'engagement' let me indicate what I mean by 'community'. When it comes to RES findings, I am referring to the broad range of stakeholders that form part of the education system in a remote community—broadly speaking, the end users of schooling: parents, students, elders, employers, non-government agencies, training providers, and higher or further education

stakeholders. A lot of the literature focuses just on parents and carers. My definition and scopes is therefore broader.
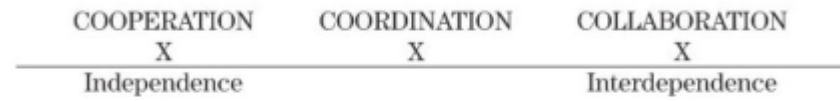
Within the context of successful systems, successful teaching and successful learning, community engagement can cover a range of elements and strategies. It *could* be about any of the following:

- Community involvement in school governance and leadership (Ranson, 2011)
- Parent involvement in learning at school or home and educator support for learning at home, for example through home liaison officers (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012; Daniel, 2015; Emerson, Fear, Fox, & Sanders, 2012)
- Parent/teacher relationships and communication with school for example through newsletters (Higgins & Morley, 2014)
- Staff involvement in community activities
- Cultural inclusiveness (Gollan & Malin, 2012; Hands, 2013) and responsiveness (Perso, 2012)
- Community or NGO involvement in school activities, for example in excursions (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2010)
- Consultative bodies
- Formal partnerships between schools and communities or communities and schools (What Works. The Work Program, 2013)
- Employer involvement in schools and student involvement in industry such as work experience and school-based apprenticeships

Of note in the literature is the weight given to issues related to parental involvement. However, the important thing to note here is that the structures of community engagement *should* not be limited to those that are initiated from the school. Some of the literature describes parents as 'targets', suggesting a kind of battle where parents are forced to engage. There is little in the literature that I have seen, which points to the roles of community in schools (as initiators of engagement).

The list I detailed includes a number of structures associated with engagement. These structures, which range from formal partnership arrangements, to school councils, to consultative bodies and even programs such as VET in schools. However, each structure has different actions associated with engagement. Those actions might be described in terms such as: consulting, networking, partnering, collaborating, coordinating, empowering, or participating.

A typology of engagement

COOPERATION   COORDINATION   COLLABORATION

$$\frac{COOPERATION \quad X}{Independence} \qquad \frac{COORDINATION \quad X}{\quad} \qquad \frac{COLLABORATION \quad X}{Interdependence}$$

Source: Barnett et al. (2010, p. 20)

NINTI ONE: CRC REMOTE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION   Australian Government Department of Industry and Science   **Business** Cooperative Research Centres Programme   5

Source: Barnett et al. (2010, p. 20)

The literature differentiates between various forms or types of engagement. Barnett, Hall, Berg, and Camarena (2010) for example, differentiate between cooperation, coordination and collaboration. Cooperation occurs when actors remain autonomous and continue to work independently of each other. But as partnerships move from coordination to collaboration they tend to work more interdependently. The mutual benefit experienced in collaboration morphs into a symbiotic relationship as collaboration strengthens. While Barnett et al.'s models were applied to education partnerships more generally, they could also apply to the specific cases of school/family/community engagement. At low levels of engagement parents and communities are targets to be engaged. When engagement levels are high, the number of actors collaborating increases but collaborative interdependence is also evident.

Is community engagement important for schools?

The role that parents and communities more generally play in educating children, is seldom questioned. In 2010, I listened to a presentation by Tess Lea on a project, based in the NT, which suggested that for parents, being engaged was not a concern at all, and that community engagement was not something likely to make a difference to educational outcomes. I was a bit surprised by this and so was intrigued to read more in her somewhat provocative *Fuzzy Logic* paper of 2011. She says:

> *Parents do not demonstrate the active distrust and sense of high-stakes competition that intensive 'cultivators' display. Is it this trust, this 'non-engagement' that external commentators really mean to dismantle when they talk of needing to do more to force Indigenous parents to explicitly value education?* *(Lea, Thompson, McRae-Williams, & Wegner, 2011, p. 335)*

While the authors do not actually argue for *less* community engagement they do suggest that the drive for community engagement from schools is underpinned by a deficit discourse where the reasons for 'poor' attendance and 'gaps' in achievement are based on a 'lack' of engagement or valuing of education. According to them, the logic therefore goes that improving parents' involvement in school will improve outcomes. What they found was that parents trusted schools to do their job so why should they bother getting involved in schools when they were the experts. In a more recent paper based on the same data, Lea and her colleagues argued that while schools see parent engagement as an 'inarguable good' it tends to be focused on 'assisting parents to reinforce the values of the school' and not necessarily supporting the values and cultural beliefs of parents and communities(Lea, Wegner, McRae-Williams, Chenhall, & Holmes, 2011, p. 278). In this they could well be correct, but their study was conducted in three urban schools of the Northern Territory and the situation is somewhat different in remote communities.

Why is parent engagement important?

There are some compelling arguments in this fuzzy logic. But there are some equally compelling arguments from Australian and international research that suggest otherwise. My own research, and that of the RES project has shown that community engagement, when done well, benefits parents as much or more, than it does schools. And it has less to do with academic performance than it has to do with social capital. Good community engagement will lead to:

- Parents having an ally in the classroom, and teachers having an ally in the home;
- Parents benefit from the social networks generated through engagement activities;
- Parents feel a greater sense of belonging and ownership of the school;
- Parents have a greater say in the decision making that goes on in the school;
- Parents are able to access a wider range of non-school supports in the community;
- Parents develop greater parenting self-efficacy. (Guenther, 2011, 2014)

These findings concur with other research. There is a distinction in some of the literature between parental engagement in schooling and parent engagement in learning (Emerson et al., 2012; Hattie, 2009). However, according to the Australian Government's Students First approach, the benefits are largely school related:

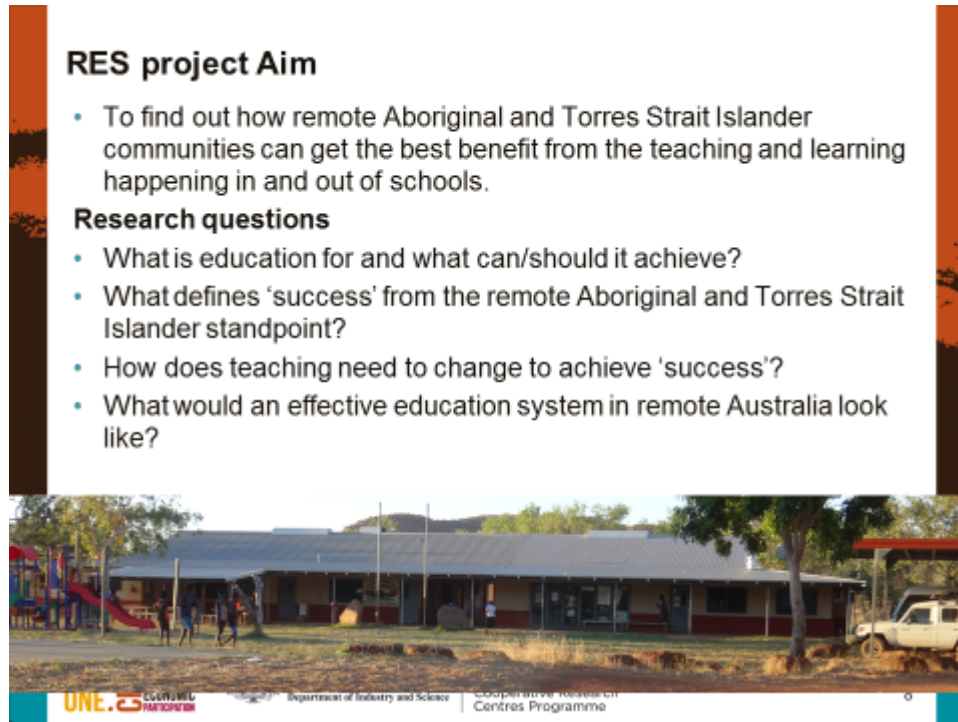> *Parent engagement is associated with improvements across a range of indicators, including:*
>
> - *better education outcomes*
> - *enhanced engagement with school work*
> - *more regular school attendance*
> - *better behaviour*
> - *and increased social skills.*
>
> *(Department of Education and Training, 2015).*

Regardless, contrary to Lea and her colleagues' findings, there is strong evidence for involving parents in children's education. The point they make though, about engagement processes that simply promote the hegemonic values of school culture, are worth noting. I will come back to that a bit later, after I have briefly outlined our methodology and findings.

RES project methodology

Research questions

And this is just where I'd like to introduce the findings of the Remote Education Systems project. I should also point out that while overall, our research is concerned about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander standpoints (from remote communities), the data I will present today comes from a mix of remote and non-remote stakeholders, though in the slides that follow, you will see that we have separated out the two groups. Our research questions which drove our project, were as follows.

| RQ1	What is education for in remote Australia and what can/should it achieve?
RQ2	What defines 'successful' educational outcomes from the remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander standpoint?
RQ3	How does teaching need to change in order to achieve 'success' as defined by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander standpoint?
RQ4	What would an effective education system in remote Australia look like?

Data sources

Our research draws on both qualitative and quantitative sources. These include:

- Publicly available datasets (my school and Census);

- Community surveys in 10 remote communities;

- Observations from site visits in 3 jurisdictions (WA, SA, NT);

- Engagement of over 200 remote education stakeholders in formal qualitative research processes (20 Thinking Outside The Tank sessions);

- Dare to Lead Snapshots in 31 Very Remote schools ; and

- Reading of the relevant research literature

- 7 post-grad research projects covering topics related to boarding schools, technology, SACE completions, culturally inclusive curriculum, school readiness and health and wellbeing, and the impact of adult literacy programs.

What the RES data says

What is success?

Descriptions of success: engagement *is* success
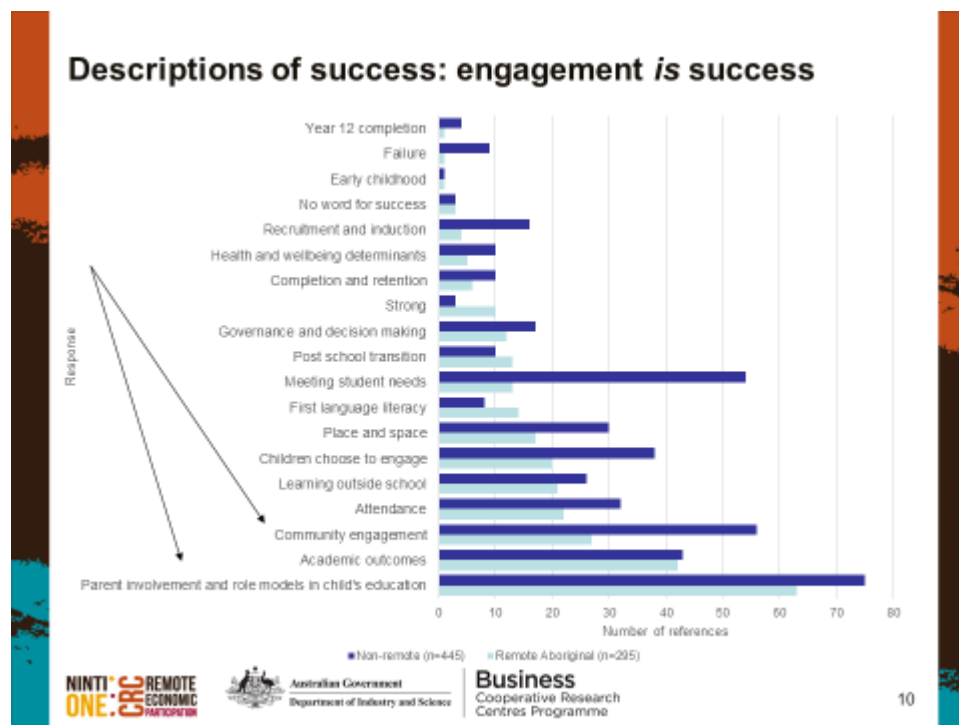
When responding to issues related to success in remote education our research participants described a number of indicators, which are summarised in this slide. The most frequently mentioned indicator of success was parent involvement and role models in children's education. They suggested that a successful school was one in which parents and role models were involved at school. The flip side of this is what we categorised as 'community engagement' which is schools being involved in the community. The two of course are related, but of note is that local people spoke about parent involvement more than non-locals, and non-locals tended to speak more about engagement than locals.

The other point to take away from this chart is the low ranking of issues like attendance, post-school transitions and Year 12 completion. Even 'academic outcomes' which ranked second for locals, was not about NAPLAN achievement or test scores, it was more about being able to read, write and count in English. Nearly one-third of all responses in our data from remote Aboriginal stakeholders was about the dual needs of community engagement and parent involvement. So contrary to Lea et al.'s findings mentioned earlier, our respondents *do* believe that engagement is fundamentally integral to the success of remote education.

What would an effective remote education system look like?
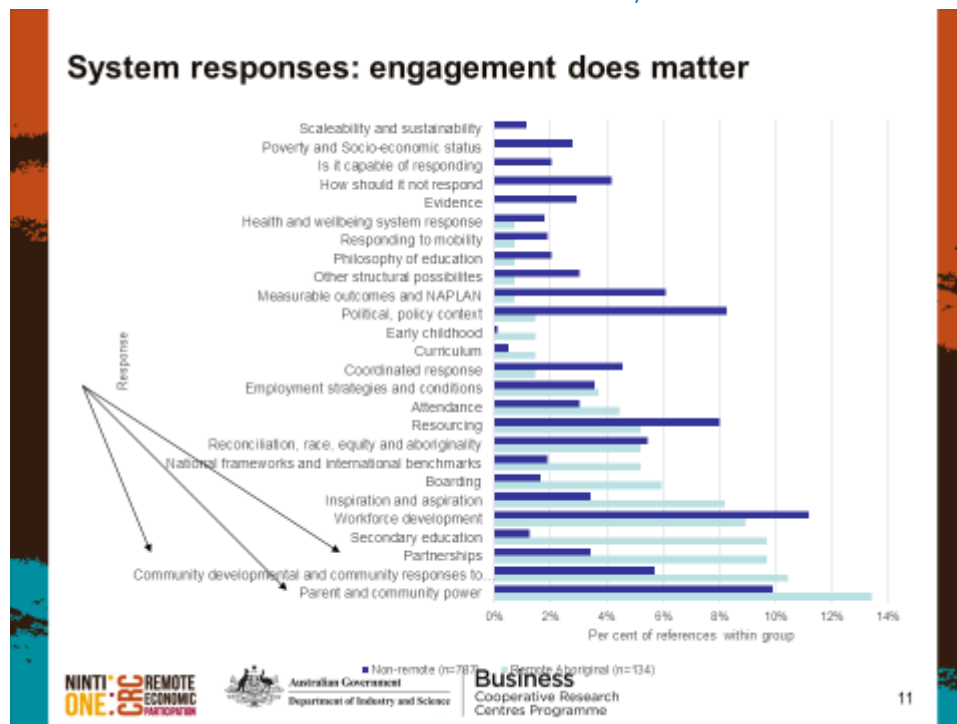
Source: (Guenther, 2015)

The second part of our data that supports the views expressed in the slide about success, are the views expressed about how systems should respond, shown in this chart. While there was some divergence here in the views of non-remote and remote Aboriginal stakeholders, if we focus on the latter group, we can see that the top three responses focus on parent and community power, community development and community responses to success, and partnerships. These three categories accounted for about one-third of all remote Aboriginal responses. The message I take home from this graph is that communities are saying that they want systems to work with them to achieve educational success for remote learners.

Who is engaged and what for?

I now want to turn to the question posed in the title of this presentation: Who is engaged and what for? We found a number of different ways that community engagement was expressed in remote schools and communities. I'll sum this up by offering three models of community engagement that arise from our findings.

Who is engaged and what for: Targets

Model 1. Targeted engagement of parents and community
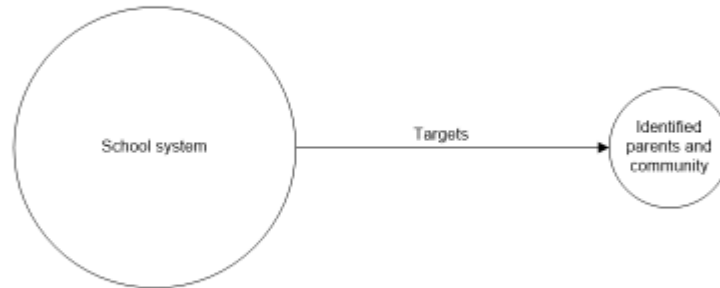
Examples: SEAM, RSAS

Model 1 is the simplest form of engagement of which we saw lots of examples. The language used to describe this kind of engagement is that of consultation, compliance and liaison. Examples would include the kind of engagement that occurs in programs such as the School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM), or the Remote School Attendance Strategy (at least in some of its various forms) using 'attendance officers'. The focus is on short term compliance perhaps with an educational outcome in mind, such as higher attendance rates or improved academic performance. In this model, education is a service that needs to be delivered, parents and students being the target of delivery. I would suggest that this form of engagement is unsustainable. Why? Because there is little local ownership of the process, and there is no or little perceived benefit on the part of the targets of engagement. As Lea and her colleagues argued, this kind of engagement simply attempts to assert the values of a hegemonic system over those of community.

Who is engaged and what for: Mutual benefit

Model 2. Engagement for mutual benefit
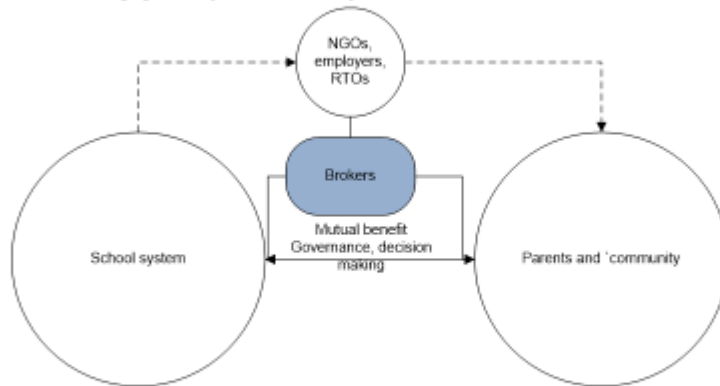
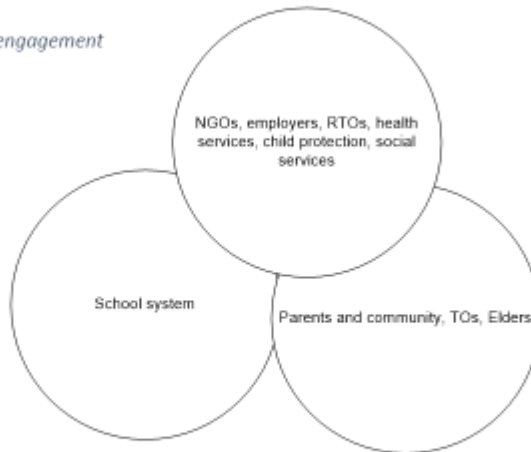Examples: Aboriginal Independent Community Schools, FAST, RIPA, TSU

The second model goes beyond short term goals and moves toward higher levels of participation and collaborative effort between school systems and the community for mutual benefit. It includes opportunities for schools to partner with parents and communities in governance and decision making processes. Schools in this model may also attempt to engage with system stakeholders such as non-government organisations, employers or training providers. The goals here are longer term and they incorporate the philosophical standpoints of all players. We could describe this as a two way or both ways model of engagement. We saw a few examples of this model, particularly among independent schools where there was a strong impetus for involvement from the community itself.

We've seen a few different examples of ways that brokers can be used to facilitate engagement. Some schools use a programmatic approach (for example family-school partnership programs like Families and Schools Together) to achieve similar outcomes. There are special considerations here for boarding schools where their 'community' can be spread out across a number of locations. While some boarding schools manage this process themselves (see for example Scots College: Samengo, 2013), others rely on brokers to work between communities and the school.

There are some recent innovations in this kind of role, for example the NT Department of Education's 'Transition Support Unit' and the Remote Indigenous Parents Association (RIPA), an initiative of Boarding Australia.

Who is engaged and what for: Symbiotic relationship

Model 3. Symbiotic engagement

NGOs, employers, RTOs, health services, child protection, social services

School system

Parents and community, TOs, Elders

Examples: Children's Ground

14

Model 3, which I have described here as 'symbiotic engagement' is far more integrated. It sees education more holistically belonging within a larger system where the array of stakeholders work constructively together in deep, long term collaborative effort. It is no longer a partnership though it may seek support from outside to further its shared goals. It is highly participative. There are very few examples of this model that we have observed. One that stands out is the approach of Children's Ground (Children's Ground, 2013), based in Jabiru, which takes this approach. The end goal is not just about education, but includes employment, cultural, health and wellbeing outcomes as well (Children's Ground, 2015).

I acknowledge that these models are imperfect and do not explain the many quite different approaches that schools and communities take to engage families and communities. I'm not suggesting here that there is one right or wrong approach to take. However, I am suggesting that if we are to take seriously the views of remote community members, then we will look for ways of taking community engagement beyond Model 1 towards Model 2 at least.

I am also suggesting that if we want the kinds of outcomes envisaged by the Melbourne Declaration and even by the Australian Government's Students First initiative, then the system (if it is to initiate engagement) must begin to treat community stakeholders as equals where there is mutual benefit from engagement and where collaborative effort gives or cedes power to communities and parents.

How do we do this kind of engagement?

Based on our observations, there are several ways this can happen. Again there is no magic formula here but we have observed that the following actions will yield mutually beneficial outcomes.

Listen to community members

This sounds pretty obvious, but it doesn't always happen. But it needn't be that hard. This can be achieved directly by the school working with the community, or through a broker, who brings together the relevant stakeholders in the community. The example in the slide here, is one where we as researchers acted as brokers for a school in the south of the Northern Territory.

Local involvement in governance and decision making

School councils or boards need to be in place so that at a minimum there is representation from parents and the broader community in the management and leadership of the school. This presents a significant challenge for boarding schools, but having remote community voices on boards or councils should be a priority if community involvement is considered important.

Employ local people at the school

An important way of empowering the community is to employ them in the local school. This doesn't have to be as teachers or as assistants. It could be the receptionist, bus driver or gardener. Our data suggests that having higher ratios of non-locals to locals can lift attendance by as much as 10 per cent and can improves academic outcomes as well. Again, for boarding schools this may present challenges, but I would argue that having at least some staff (for example boarding house, or classroom assistants) drawn from remote communities would be wise if community involvement is considered important.

Engage with all the system stakeholders

To get the maximum benefit from schooling in a complex environment, schools need to work at their relationships, not just with parents, but with employers, service providers and training providers, cultural leaders and elders. There is a lot of hard work in building relationships. But trust (which is an important component of collaboration) is essential and cannot be built outside of relationships.

Measure community participation as an outcome

If, as our data suggests, family and community involvement is success, then schools should be measuring this as an outcome. It becomes part of an accountability framework just like any other performance indicator. As an aside, this slide provides some ways that community and parent involvement can be measured.

Conclusions

In summing up, I will reiterate some of the important messages coming from the RES project data. *Firstly*, success as it is defined by the community is not just about academic performance or

retention. It specifically includes elements of parent and community involvement in schools. *Secondly*, if we are to take community views seriously, then community engagement/empowerment/involvement in education must be a priority. *Thirdly*, the kind of engagement matters. Engagement that is focused on compliance is not collaborative or participatory and yields unsustainable results. Engagement that is focused on mutual benefit for the longer term will yield results that are of benefit to all stakeholders.

Finally, I'd suggest that there are some very simple steps that school systems can use to ensure that the benefits of collaborative engagement are sustained. It requires listening. Schools can set up local governance structures that are inclusive of local remote people in leadership, management and decision making. If need be they can employ brokers to do the initial connecting. They can employ more local staff, which not only builds capacity but builds ownership. And they can be accountable for community participation as a performance indicator.

I wouldn't want to suggest that any of these 'simple' steps are necessarily easy. They may cost money, and they will certainly require an investment of time and human resources to ensure they happen. But if schools are to play a role in transforming the lives of individuals and shaping communities for the better—particularly where 'better' means incorporating what communities want—then these are worthwhile investments.

References

Anderson-Butcher, D., Lawson, H. A., Iachini, A., Flaspohler, P., Bean, J., & Wade-Mdivanian, R. (2010). Emergent Evidence in Support of a Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement. *Children & Schools, 32*(3), 160-171. doi: 10.1093/cs/32.3.160

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2011, February 2011). National Professional Standards for Teachers.retrieved, July 2012 from http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/static/docs/AITSL_National_Professional_Standards_for_Teachers_Final_110511.pdf

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2012, February 2011). Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.retrieved, May 2015 from http://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/apst-resources/australian_professional_standard_for_teachers_final.pdf

Barnett, B. G., Hall, G. E., Berg, J. H., & Camarena, M. M. (2010). A typology of partnerships for promoting innovation. *Journal of School Leadership, 20*, 10+.

Bat, M., & Guenther, J. (2013). Red Dirt Thinking on Education: A People-Based System. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, 42*(Special Issue 02), 123-135. doi: doi:10.1017/jie.2013.20

Borgonovi, F., & Montt, G. (2012). Parental Involvement in Selected PISA Countries and Economies. *OECD Education Working Papers.* 73,retrieved, June 2014 from http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k990rk0jsjj-en

Children's Ground. (2013, 29 August 2013). Community charting a new course for the future of Aboriginal children. Retrieved August 2013, from http://www.childrensground.org.au/community-charting-a-new-course-for-the-future-of-aboriginal-children/

Children's Ground. (2015, April 2015). Children's Ground Kakadu West Arnhem Community Report.retrieved, November 2015 from http://www.childrensground.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/CG_Community-report_2015.pdf

Council of Australian Governments. (2012). Schools and Education. Retrieved 7 May 2015, from http://www.coag.gov.au/schools_and_education

Daniel, G. (2015). Patterns of parent involvement: A longitudinal analysis of family-school partnerships in the early years of school in Australia. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 40*(1), 119-128.

Department of Education and Training. (2015, 22 March 2015). Engaging parents in education. Retrieved May 2015, from http://studentsfirst.gov.au/engaging-parents-education

Emerson, L., Fear, J., Fox, S., & Sanders, E. (2012). Parental engagement in learning and schooling: Lessons from research.retrieved, November 2015 from https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/7/filename/Parental_engagement_in_learning_and_schooling_Lessons_from_research_BUREAU_ARACY_August_2012.pdf

Gollan, S., & Malin, M. (2012). Teachers and families working together to build stronger futures for our children in school. In Q. Beresford, G. Partington, & G. Gower (Eds.), *Reform and resistance in Aboriginal education* (Fully revised edition ed., pp. 149-173). Crawley: University of Western Australia Press.

Guenther, J. (2011). Evaluation of FAST Galiwin'ku program.retrieved, May 2013 from http://www.fastnt.org.au/documents/File/Galiwinku_FAST_evaluation_report.pdf

Guenther, J. (2014). Families and Schools Together (FAST) at Gillen Primary School: The sustained impact of a family-strengthening process. *Working Paper Series.* Research Report CR002,retrieved, October 2014 from http://www.crc-rep.com.au/resource/CR002_FASTatGillenPrimarySchool.pdf

Guenther, J. (2015). Overview of Remote Education Systems qualitative results. *CRC-REP Working Paper.* CW025,retrieved, July 2015 from http://www.crc-rep.com.au/resource/CW025_RemoteEducationSystemsQualitativeResults.pdf

Guenther, J., & Bat, M. (2013). Towards a Good Education in Very Remote Australia: Is it Just a Case of Moving the Desks Around? *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, 42*(Special Issue 02), 145-156. doi: doi:10.1017/jie.2013.22

Guenther, J., Bat, M., & Osborne, S. (2013). Red Dirt Thinking on Educational Disadvantage. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, 42*(Special Issue 02), 100-110. doi: doi:10.1017/jie.2013.18

Hands, C. (2013). Including all families in education: school district-level efforts to promote parent engagement in Ontario, Canada. *Teaching Education, 24*(2), 134-149. doi: 10.1080/10476210.2013.786893

Hattie, J. A. (2009). *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Higgins, D., & Morley, S. (2014). Engaging Indigenous parents in their children's education. Resource Sheet 32,retrieved, November 2015 from http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129548210

Lea, T., Thompson, H., McRae-Williams, E., & Wegner, A. (2011). Policy fuzz and fuzzy logic: researching contemporary Indigenous education and parent–school engagement in north Australia. *Journal of Education Policy, 26*(3), 321-339. doi: 10.1080/02680939.2010.509813

Lea, T., Wegner, A., McRae-Williams, E., Chenhall, R., & Holmes, C. (2011). Problematising school space forIndigenous education: teachers' andparents' perspectives. *Ethnography and Education, 6*(3), 265-280.

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs,. (2008). *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians.* Melbourne: Curriculum Corporation Retrieved from http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf.

Perso, T. (2012). Cultural responsiveness and school education with particular focus on Australia's first peoples.retrieved, July 2013 from

http://ccde.menzies.edu.au/sites/default/files/Literature%20review%20Cultural%20Responsiveness%20and%20School%20Education%20March%202012%20FINAL.pdf

Ranson, S. (2011). School Governance and the Mediation of Engagement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 39*(4), 398-413. doi: 10.1177/1741143211404259

Samengo, J. (2013). Whatever the problem, Education is the Key: The Sots College Experience. In R. Craven, A. Dillon, & N. Parbury (Eds.), *In Black&White: Australians All at the Crossroads* (pp. 267-274). Ballan: ConnorCourt Publishing.

Standing Council on Federal Financial Relations. (2012). National Education Agreement.retrieved, May 2013 from http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/education/national-agreement.pdf

What Works. The Work Program. (2013, February 2013). Sustainable school and community partnerships.retrieved, November 2015 from http://www.whatworks.edu.au/upload/1363254474573_file_WWPartnershipsReport.pdf