



Overview of Remote Education Systems qualitative results

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List of abbreviations

ACARA	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
ESL	English as a Second Language
NGO	non-government organisations
RES	Remote Education Systems
RQ	research questions
VET	vocational education and training

Executive summary

This report provides an overview of key results from qualitative data obtained through the Remote Education Systems (RES) project, conducted by the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation (CRC-REP). It is a preliminary report designed for use by and feedback to our stakeholders.

Qualitative data were collected during the period from mid-2012 through to the end of 2014 to seek responses to the following four research questions:

- What is education for in remote Australia and what can/should it achieve?
- What defines ‘successful’ educational outcomes from the remote Aboriginal standpoint?
- How does teaching need to change in order to achieve ‘success’ as defined by the Aboriginal standpoint?
- What would an effective education system in remote Australia look like?

The data came from interviews and focus groups in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia and two online focus groups with participants coming in from across all Australian states except Tasmania. We interviewed a large range of stakeholders from both the demand and supply sides of the remote education system. To ensure that we better reflected the positions of remote Aboriginal people in the data, responses from Aboriginal people from remote locations were quantified separately from those of non-Aboriginal people living remotely and all people living in non-remote Australia.

The top four responses by Aboriginal stakeholders living in remote Australia are that:

- **the main purposes of education in remote communities are about:**
 1. maintaining connection to language, land and culture
 2. ensuring that learners have a strong identity rooted in their context
 3. providing pathways to employment and economic participation
 4. being strong in both worlds (western and Aboriginal).
- **success in remote education (in order of remote community responses) is about:**
 1. parent involvement and role models in children’s education
 2. academic outcomes – predominantly basic competence in reading, writing and numeracy
 3. community engagement – communities being part of what happens at school
 4. attendance.
- **there are multiple teaching responses to achieve success:**
 1. ensuring the health and wellbeing of students at school
 2. drawing on and building the expertise of local language Aboriginal educators
 3. building strong relationships between teachers, students, assistants, families and other community members
 4. using English as a Second Language (ESL) and multilingual learning approaches.
- **potential responses from the education system to address the above priorities include:**
 1. promoting parent and community power
 2. approaches that work with communities developmentally
 3. partnerships with community stakeholders
 4. the importance of secondary provision.

Non-remote stakeholders (who made up the bulk of responses) were particularly concerned about workforce development, resourcing and the political/policy context as well as parent and community power.

1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of key results from the qualitative data obtained through the Remote Education Systems (RES) project, conducted by the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation (CRC-REP). It is a preliminary report designed for use by and feedback to our stakeholders. The word ‘system’ could, of course, be variously described. In the broadest sense of the word, the system encompasses stakeholders in the demand and supply sides of schooling as represented below in Figure 1. The schooling context is influenced by those who are users (on the demand side of the system) and providers and funders (on the supply side). What happens in school – where educational outputs are generated – is affected by a range of contextual factors represented by the connected elements of, among other things, language, culture, identity and land.

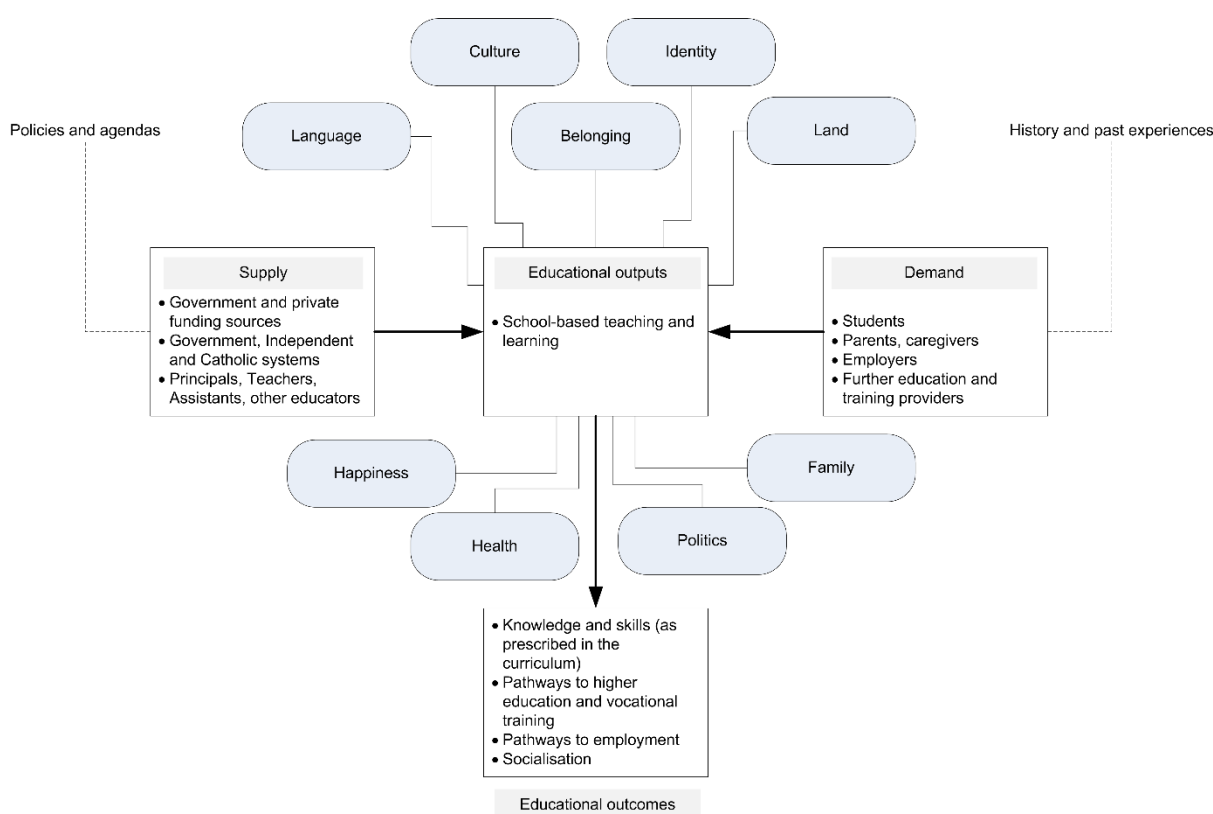


Figure 1: Representation of a remote education ‘system’

Source: Bat & Guenther (2013)

Later, in the results section, we talk about ‘system response’. While accepting that the system is broad, we suggest that the ability of the system to respond is largely determined by funders, providers and policymakers at the political level (the supply side). There are examples where system response has come from the demand side of the above model – for example the Aboriginal Independent Community Schools movement – but by and large we see that the bulk of system responses originate with policy and resources.

The intent of this report is to lay out results of our qualitative analysis. The findings need to be further considered in the light of literature and within the context of existing policy and practice. Our interpretations of the data will be presented back to our research stakeholders for feedback, which may generate some refinement of the results presented here.

2. Methodological approach

The methodology used in this research has been underpinned by a number of foundational (paradigmatic) assumptions. Our philosophical position coming into this research draws on a blend of constructivist/interpretivist and participatory paradigms (Lincoln et al. 2011). We acknowledge our position as non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander researchers in community contexts where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders are the primary users in the education system. This in itself creates a tension for us as researchers, where our goals include the promotion of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices (Guenther et al. 2014). We acknowledge the risks associated with attempting to portray remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander standpoints, as indicated by our research questions below. We also recognise that the process of analysis involves bias, because of our inherent non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander positions. That said, the three researchers who have worked on the project have extensive experience working with Aboriginal people in remote contexts, particularly in the Northern Territory and South Australia, where we have each worked for more than 10 years. Through processes of critical reflection together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and stakeholders, we attempt to ameliorate the risks associated with our positions as outsider researchers.

2.1 Research questions

Four research questions (RQs) underpin the research. Qualitative data collected from all sources have been examined for responses to these questions.

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?

2.2 Qualitative analysis methods and foundations

Qualitative data were collected during the period from mid-2012 through to the end of 2014. Sites for interviews and focus groups included Alice Springs, Adelaide, Yulara, Yuendumu, Lajamanu, Wadeye, Darwin, Perth, Broome and two online focus groups with participants coming in from across all Australian states except Tasmania. Data collected from the physical sites included participants from several communities across remote parts of Australia. We interviewed teachers, assistant teachers, school leaders, community members, policymakers, bureaucrats, university lecturers and researchers, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education students, youth workers, child care workers, education union members and representatives from non-government organisations (NGOs).

Data from all sources were incorporated into a single NVivo™ database. NVivo is qualitative data analysis software that allows ‘references’ (which could be images, text, audio or video) to be ‘coded’ (given a theme). The codes are represented in a hierarchical structure of parent and child ‘nodes’. Audio files created during interviews and focus groups were transcribed before being imported into the database for coding. Images of whiteboards and butchers paper and handwritten notes were scanned into the database. Electronic reports with secondary source data were also imported into the database.

The process of coding involved several steps; it is a highly interpretive task that requires considerable critical reflection. In the first instance the project team came together to conceptualise a coding structure built on the RQs. Some nodes were proposed at this time. Following this, the team worked on coding each document each member was responsible for. Additional nodes were created as required, consistent with a Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz 2006, Denzin 2010). The team then came together for a two-day workshop to test the structure and validate coding. Following this, the team finalised the coding of sources and moderated other team members' codes before coming together again for a further two day workshop to rationalise the structure, check node content and consider implications of the data. The process was completed in February 2015.

2.3 Data sources

The analysis draws on a range of data sources as tabulated below in Table 1. The largest amount of qualitative data comes from 45 focus groups and interviews with 250 remote education stakeholders. Some data are also extracted from reports of additional research conducted either by or for the RES project team. This includes an analysis of 31 very remote schools' Collegial Snapshots conducted by Principals Australia Institute and the Australian Council for Educational Research. These 10 documents do not include primary source data, but where reference is made to specific responses relevant to our research, they have been coded accordingly. The coding of data included a 'node' which identified references attributable to remote Aboriginal¹ stakeholders and made these references quantifiable. We defined these stakeholders as Aboriginal people who resided and came from a remote location, as defined by the ABS (2011) remoteness structure, or with a strong family connection to a remote location. In this report Aboriginal people from non-remote locations are included with remote and non-remote non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The reason for this distinction was to ensure that we were better reflecting the positions of remote Aboriginal people in the data.

Table 1: Document sources and coding references

Document source	All sources	All coding references*	Remote Aboriginal references*	Number of unique participants
Interviews and focus groups	45	2501	523	250
Field notes and observations	12	111	0	0
Secondary sources/reports created by or for RES	10	856	603	~800†
Butchers papers and whiteboards	20	197	0	0
Total	87	3665	1126	

* Includes coding references assigned outside of the RQs

† Note that some survey reports used for this analysis did not detail the participant numbers.

¹ To the best of our knowledge the data analysed does not include responses from Torres Strait Islander people.

3. Results

Numbers referred to in the charts that follow are related to the coding references as described earlier. The charts report percentages of codes attributed to non-remote stakeholders and remote Aboriginal stakeholders. Tables of numbers and percentages relating to sources and references are shown at Appendix A.

3.1 Responses to RQs

Figure 2 presents the findings in terms of references coded for each RQ. The largest number of references (1052) were coded to RQ3. Note, however, that proportionally, the responses from remote Aboriginal stakeholders decreased with each RQ, from nearly 50% at RQ1 to about 15% at RQ4.

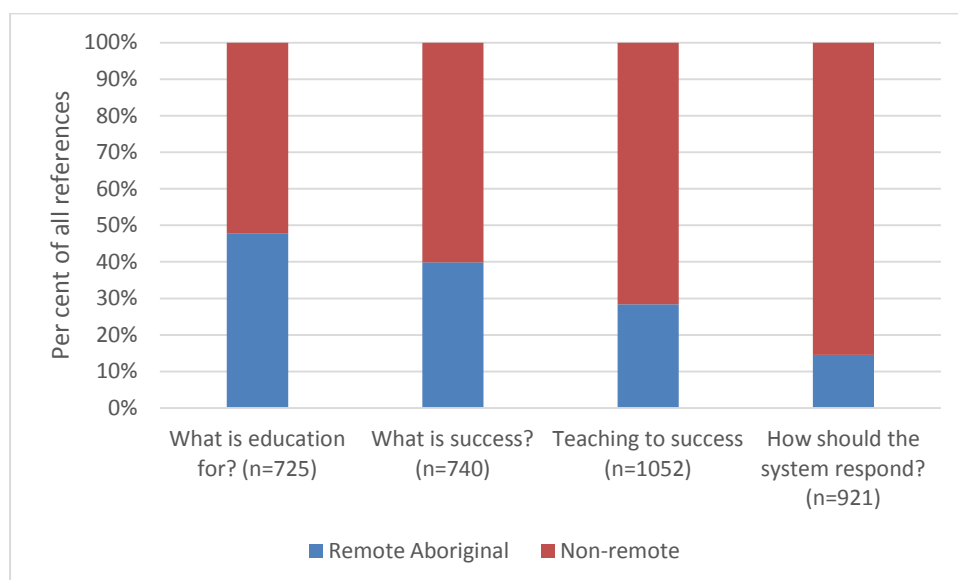


Figure 2: Coding references by participant status for each RQ

In the bar charts that follow, the data are presented in ascending order according to the remote Aboriginal response. More detailed explanation of coding descriptors is given at Appendix B.

3.2 What is education for?

Figure 3 shows references coded at RQ1. The largest number of references were coded at 'language, land and culture'. In abridged terms, this is about maintaining strong links to local language, kinship and stories. This view of education was articulated more strongly by remote Aboriginal people. The second issue of importance to respondents related to identity. There was frequent overlap between 'language, land and culture' and 'identity' themes, but the points of distinction were the importance of belonging, individuals knowing who they are, and being confident and strong in spirit. A third issue raised by many respondents was described as 'being strong in both worlds', that is, respondents felt that young people needed to learn how to engage in their own culture and be confident engaging with western cultures. This was about being able to speak English and Aboriginal languages, knowing the rules of western cultures

and knowing what was appropriate in both cultures. The fourth most common response from remote Aboriginal people to the question ‘What is education for?’ related to employment and economic participation: the importance of education leading to jobs.

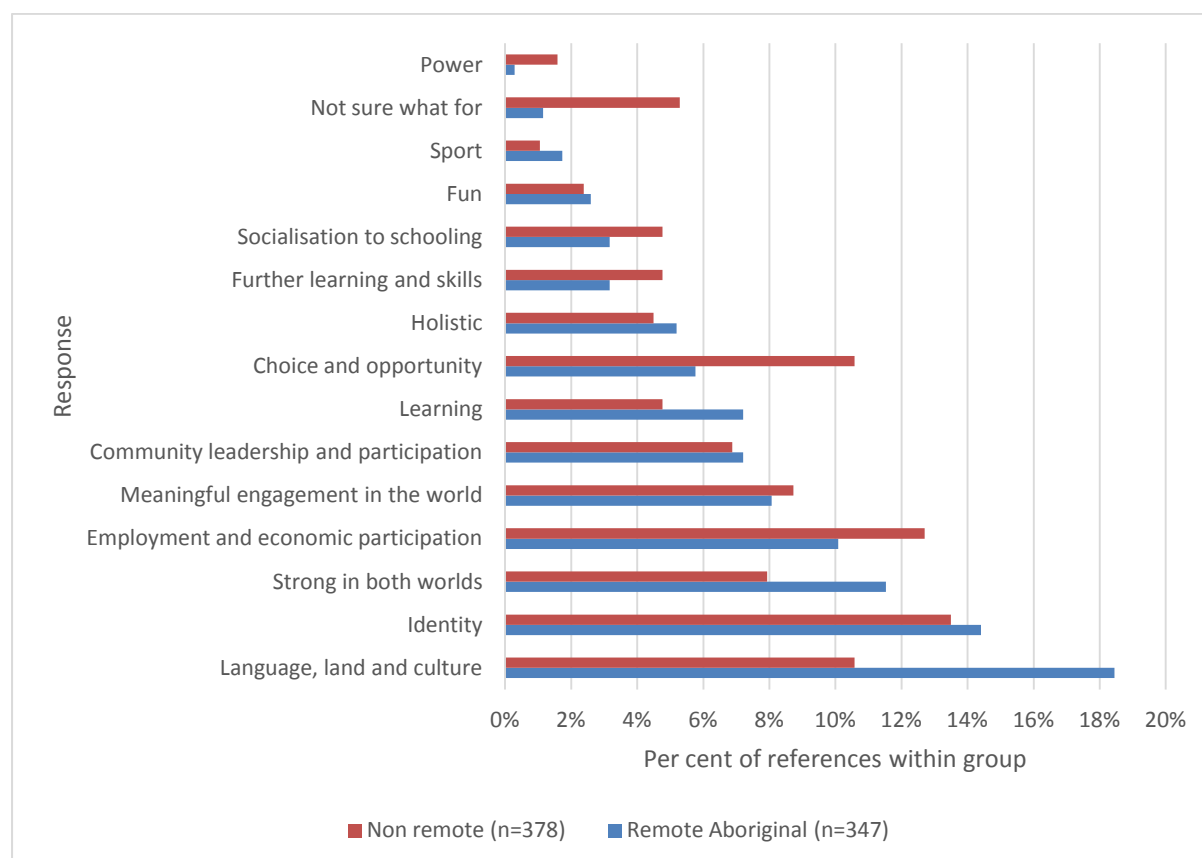


Figure 3: What is education for in remote Australia? (RQ1)

3.3 What does success look like?

Figure 4 summarises respondents' views of what makes a successful education. While this RQ asks about this from a remote Aboriginal standpoint, we did not exclude non-remote or non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander views. For most responses there were no significant differences in the proportional responses for both groups. The exceptions were: ‘academic outcomes’ and ‘first language literacy’, which were commented on more often by remote Aboriginal respondents, and ‘meeting student needs’, which was commented on more frequently by non-remote respondents.

The largest number of responses under RQ2 were coded at ‘parent involvement and role models in child’s education’. Respondents talked about parents encouraging their children, acting as role models, building aspiration for their children, being involved at school, and supporting their children at a number of levels. In some cases the role models described were extended family members or significant others in the community, who led the way for students. While proportionally there were slightly more references from remote Aboriginal people coded to this node, the difference between remote Aboriginal and non-remote participants was not significant.

The second largest group of responses was about academic outcomes, which were reported more frequently by remote Aboriginal respondents. A large proportion of references here were about basic

literacy and numeracy: the importance of being able to read and write English and count, as well as having basic comprehension and competence in speaking English.

The third indicator of success was described in terms of community engagement. This was articulated as consultation, community involvement, school–community partnerships, good communication between schools and communities and bringing expertise from the community into the school.

A fourth indicator of success was described (mainly by non-remote respondents) as ‘meeting student needs’. Respondents discussed this as knowing students, monitoring progress, identifying student strengths and preparing them for transitions. Many of these comments came from teachers or teacher educators.

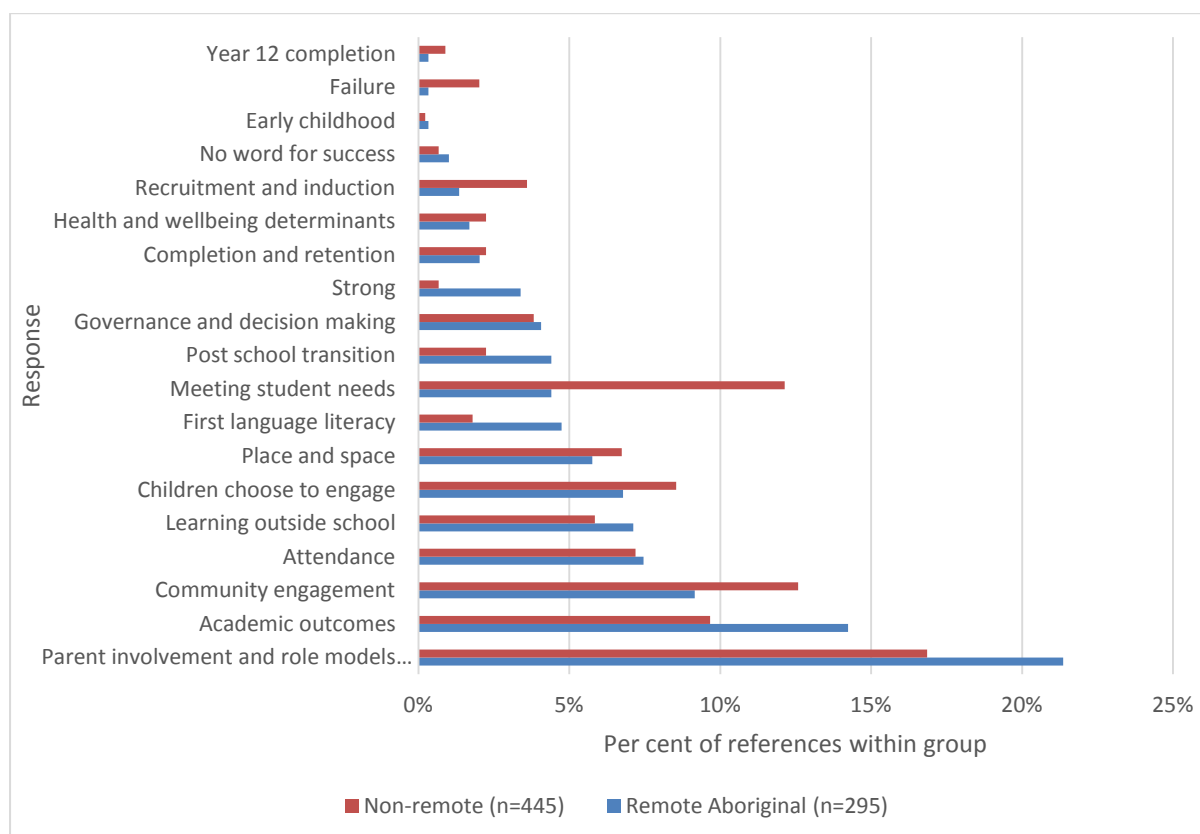


Figure 4: What defines ‘successful’ educational outcomes from the remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander standpoint? (RQ2)

3.4 How should teachers teach to achieve success?

Figure 5 represents data about RQ3: how teaching should achieve the above measures of success. On this question there were a number of points of divergence between remote Aboriginal respondents and others. Comments about ‘health and wellbeing at school’, ‘local language Aboriginal teachers’ and ‘contextualised curriculum’ were more likely to come from remote Aboriginal respondents. Comments about being ‘contextually responsive’, ‘professional learning’, ‘assessment and progress’, ‘experience’, ‘informal learning opportunities’, ‘time’ and ‘whole-of-school practices’ were more likely to come from non-remote stakeholders. Note that the ratio of non-remote to remote Aboriginal references is about 2.5:1 for this question.

Comments about ‘health and wellbeing’ at school were discussed in terms of children’s wellbeing at school as a priority, teasing, safety, school as a safe place, hearing, mental health, resilience, personal hygiene, healthy food and showing respect. The intent of these comments is not to prescribe these as

having to be ‘taught’, but rather taken into account by schools and teachers. Respondents talked about the need for schools to ensure that student wellbeing was a foundationally important consideration for effective teaching and learning to take place.

The discussion about the importance of ‘local language Aboriginal teachers’ focused on their role as brokers and mediators of local knowledge, being an integral part of ‘two way’ learning, being actively engaged in what happens in classrooms, teaching in local languages and working with staff to ensure student wellbeing and safety. The importance of relationships was discussed at a number of levels. Constructive relationships between teachers and assistants, teachers and students, school and community, and teachers and parents were seen as critical to successful teaching by many respondents. The importance of teachers being part of the community was also emphasised as a prerequisite for effective teaching.

Overall, English as a second language (ESL) and multilingual learning was raised as the most important consideration for successful teaching. This was articulated as bilingual programs, teacher language skills, teacher awareness of language and teaching in first language (among other related themes).

For non-remote respondents, the two equally most important considerations for successful teaching were ‘ESL and multilingual learning’ and to be ‘contextually responsive’. They discussed this latter as being informed, adaptive, flexible in their teaching, using differentiated approaches to teaching, understanding other agencies and supports that are available, understanding complexity in the teaching context, using creative ways to engage and making learning valued by students. The bulk of comments coded this way came from teachers, leaders or school staff.

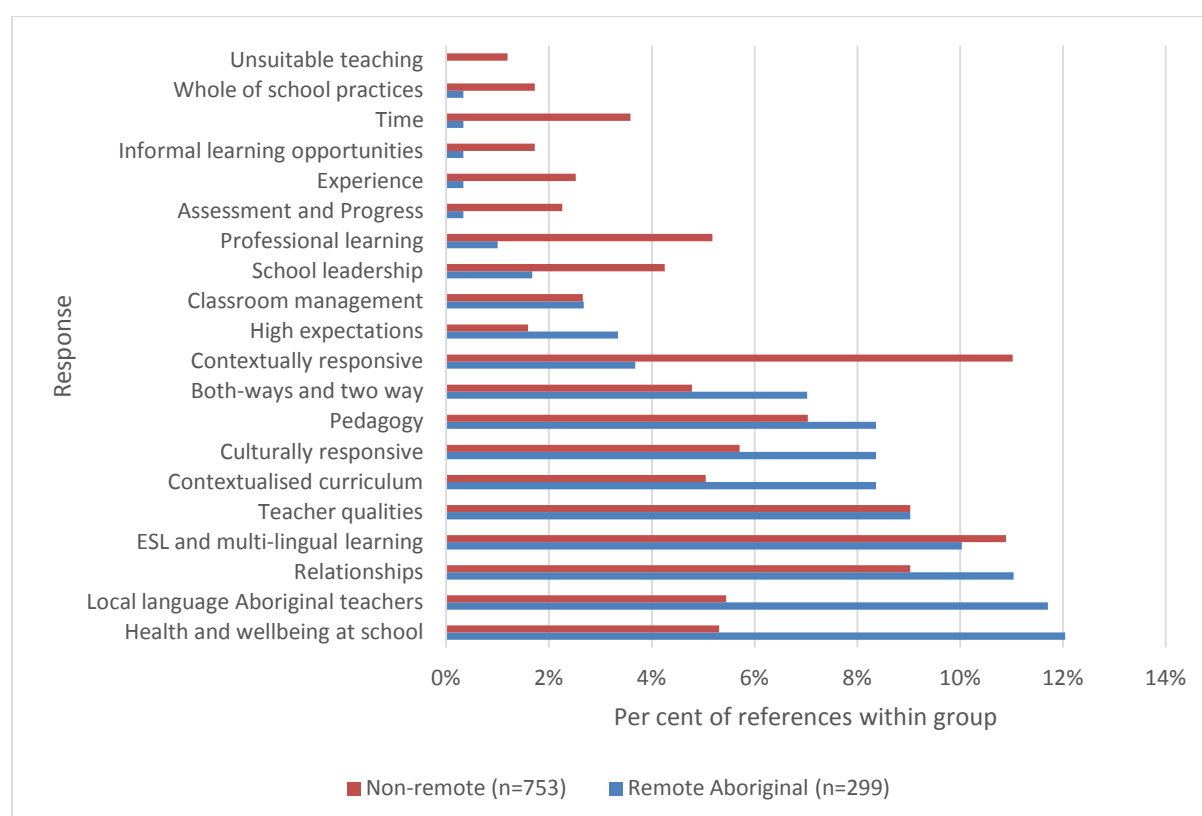


Figure 5: How does teaching need to change in order to achieve ‘success’ as defined by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander standpoint? (RQ3)

3.5 What would an effective remote education system look like?

Figure 6 summarises responses to RQ4, about how an effective remote education system would respond to the issues raised above. Note that while the figure shows percentages, the ratio of non-remote to remote Aboriginal responses is nearly 6:1. Therefore, what the data point to is a non-remote response to the remote context. The comments made described concerns about the system as well as how it should best respond. That said, comments coded as ‘community developmental and community responses to success’, ‘partnerships’, ‘secondary education’, ‘workforce development’, ‘inspiration and aspiration’, ‘boarding’ and ‘national frameworks and international benchmarks’ were proportionally and statistically more likely to come from remote Aboriginal respondents than from non-remote stakeholders.

Under ‘parent and community power’, themes discussed included building relationships with community, community (including school) empowerment, supporting community engagement, parental responsibility, local autonomy, giving parents real choices and parents participating in planning. The node labelled ‘community developmental and community responses to success’ was conceptually connected to the ‘parent and community power’ node. There were important distinctions though. Community developmental approaches included those which listened to community expectations, were empowering, built a shared language, used developmental approaches, took time, and which recognised the incongruence in values between community and the ‘system’.

Among non-remote respondents the most frequently discussed topic was ‘workforce development’. This covered an array of workforce issues, including undergraduate teacher programs, recruitment, orientation, professional learning, support of teachers and staff, induction processes, mentoring, Aboriginal teachers and providing supportive environments. In summary, this theme is about finding and keeping the right people to best suit the remote teaching context.

Resourcing was another issue of particular concern to non-remote respondents. It related to issues of funding arrangements and budget priorities, the use and adequacy of financial resources and financial sustainability. The key concerns raised were about ensuring that resources for staffing, infrastructure and the general running of schools in remote settings were adequate for what was required.

Another theme raised more frequently by non-remote respondents was coded as ‘policy and political context’. Among the many points raised under this heading were the impacts of politics and policies, actions driven by strategies of the day, many of which come and go (e.g. National Partnerships, Closing the Gap), the need to recognise complexity versus simple messages (e.g. about attendance), concerns about bureaucratic involvement, and legislation. In general, the views of respondents suggested that the system’s ability to respond to the needs of remote communities was constrained, rather than supported, by the policy and political context.

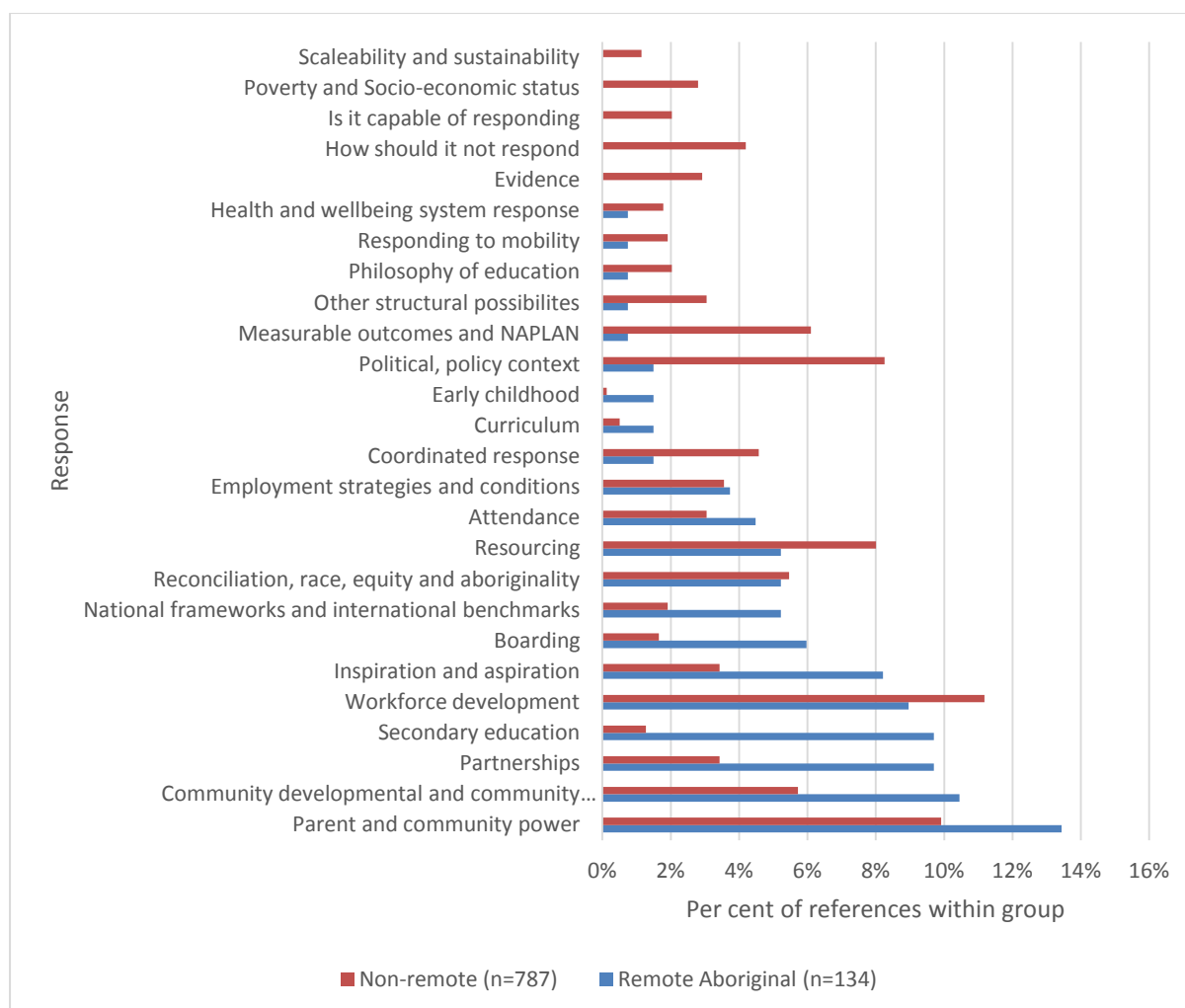


Figure 6: What would an effective education system in remote Australia look like? (RQ4)

3.6 Cross-cutting analysis

It is important to recognise that the RQs discussed above are all interconnected. That is, how respondents view the purpose of education influences how they see success, how teachers should teach successfully and how the system should respond. It is also important to recognise that in approaching remote education, many stakeholders do not start with a view about what education is for. Rather, their thinking (depending on their position within the system) may be shaped by their pre-conceived ideas about what success looks like or how the system is currently responding. For teachers and school leaders, their focus is clearly on teaching and learning.

In the following four diagrams, we look through the lens of each of the four RQs, focusing on the major themes with the most responses. In Figure 7, for example, we look through the lens of 'education: what is it for?' to see what else appears in terms of success, system response and what successful teaching looks like. NVivo facilitates this process of cross-cutting analysis through 'queries' that look for intersecting nodes. For example, a query can be created that finds intersecting references in a given coding reference. For the purpose of this analysis, the query definition includes the intersection where the references are 'near' each other. That is, the intersection occurs within the surrounding paragraphs of text. The resulting

matrix generates numbers of co-occurrences. To assist the interpretation of these matrices, the diagrams (or ‘models’ as they are referred to in NVivo) filter out co-occurrences with fewer than seven references. Shapes with bold typeface print present the predominant or ‘key’ themes with over 10 co-occurrences. Non-bold typefaces are divided into two groups: those with between seven and nine co-occurrences are shown in the smallest typeface and slightly larger typefaces represent co-occurrences with 10 or more references.

3.6.1 Education: what is it for?

For the ‘education: what is it for?’ lens we apply five filters: employment and economic participation; identity; language, land and culture; strong in both worlds; and meaningful engagement in the world. These five filters represent the most frequently identified purposes of remote education. Applying the employment filter we see parent involvement as the key indicator of success, and supporting inspiration and aspiration as the system response. Co-occurrences under successful teaching were quite limited, with just one co-occurrence related to contextually response teaching appearing in the model.

When the identity filter is applied, we see success defined as community engagement, with a number of minor themes around this; a limited view of the system response built on partnerships and community power; and a cluster of teaching responses built around contextually responsive approaches.

Applying the land, language and culture filter, we see success built around three key themes of community engagement, learning outside school and parental involvement. The system response is then seen with a key theme of parent and community power, supported by a cluster of teaching responses built around culturally responsive approaches.

The strong in both worlds filter yields no key system or teaching responses and only a minor indicator of success as parental involvement. The meaningful engagement in the world filter reveals a small cluster of success indicators with learning outside school as the most frequent, but no system response and two minor teaching responses related to contextualised curriculum and ESL/multilingual learning.

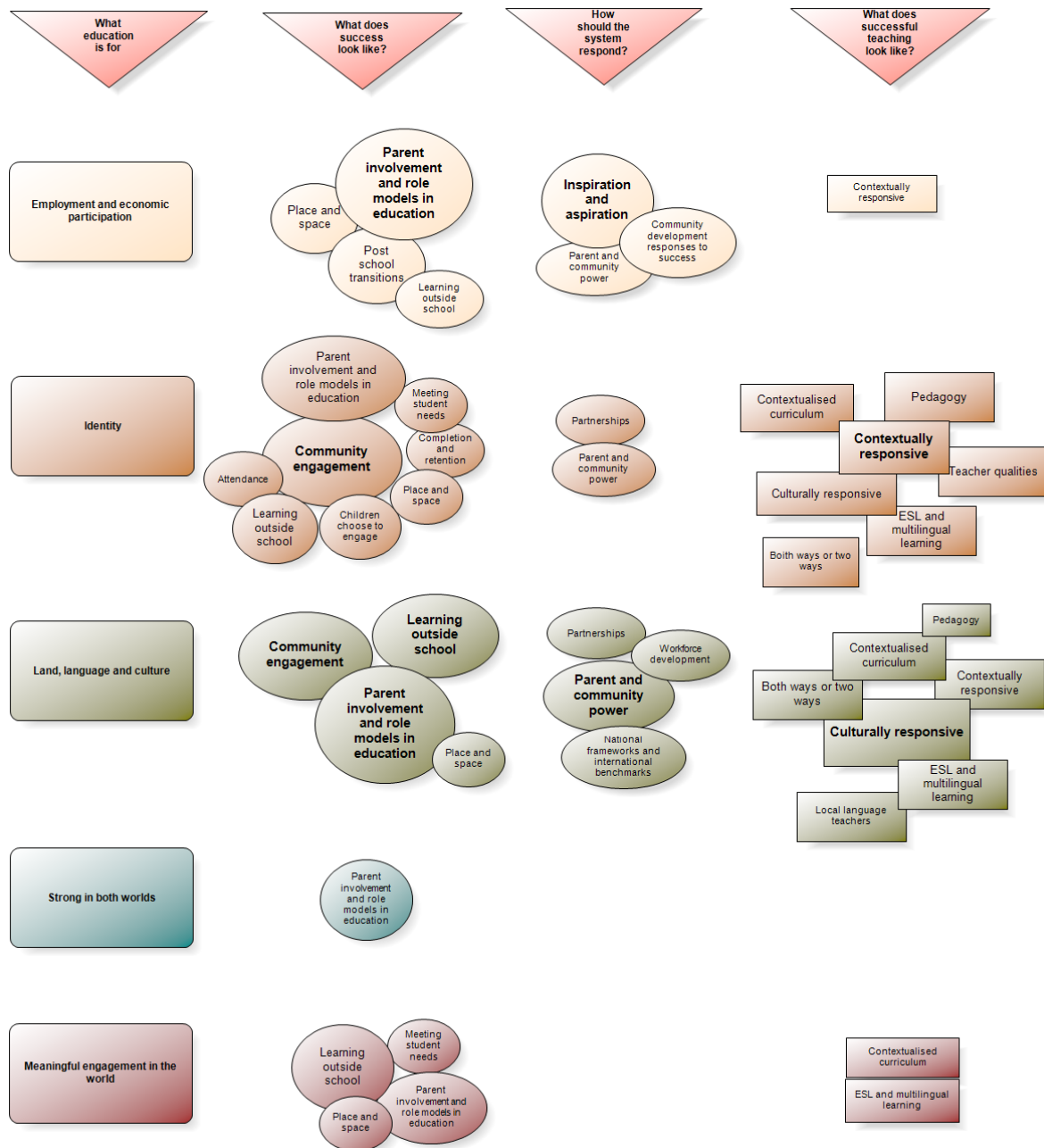


Figure 7: Looking through the 'education: what is it for?' lens

3.6.2 What does success look like?

Two filters in the success lens yield strong co-occurrences across the RQs. Where the parent involvement and role models in education' filter is applied, the purposes of education are clustered around two key themes of employment and economic participation; and language, land and culture. Multiple system responses are clustered around a key theme of parent and community power. An array of teaching responses is clustered around a key theme of contextually responsive teaching.

In contrast, when success is viewed as community engagement, the purpose of remote education is more narrowly defined around language, land and culture. The system response, as above, is focused on parent and community power. The teaching response, though, is clustered around relationships.

The other filters represented in the model yield far less in terms of purpose, response and teaching approaches.

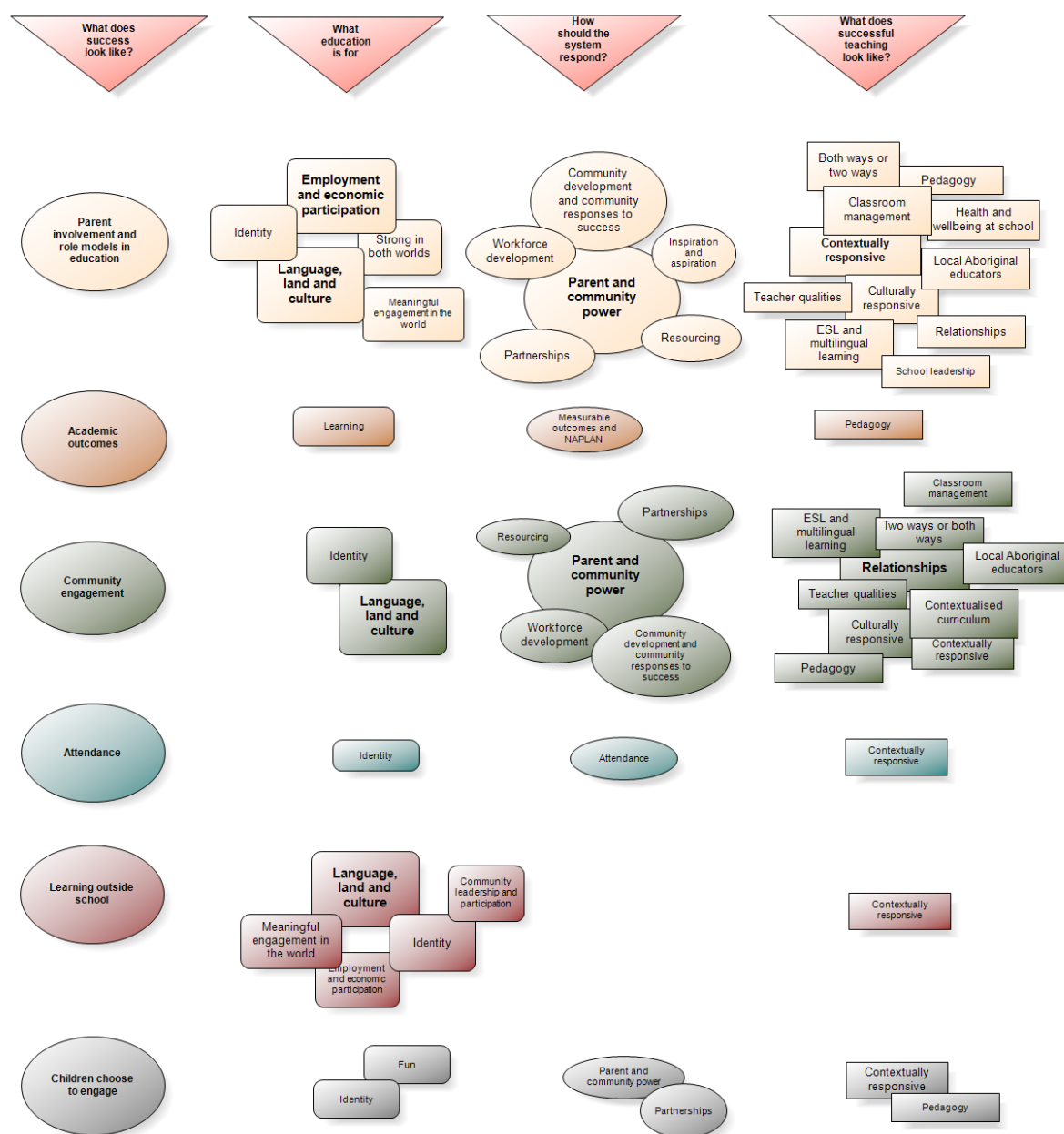


Figure 8: Looking through the lens of 'success'

3.6.3 Teaching to achieve success

Four out of the six filters shown in Figure 9 reveal parent involvement and role models in education as the key indicator of success. The relationships filter revealed community engagement as the key indicator, while the contextually responsive filter showed meeting student needs as the priority indicator. System responses for five of the six filters related to parent and community power while workforce development was also a key theme for the local language Aboriginal teachers and the teacher qualities filters. Only three filters had corresponding key themes related to the purpose of education. The ESL and multilingual learning filter revealed language, land and culture as the key purpose, while teacher qualities and contextually responsive filters revealed identity as a key purpose for remote education.

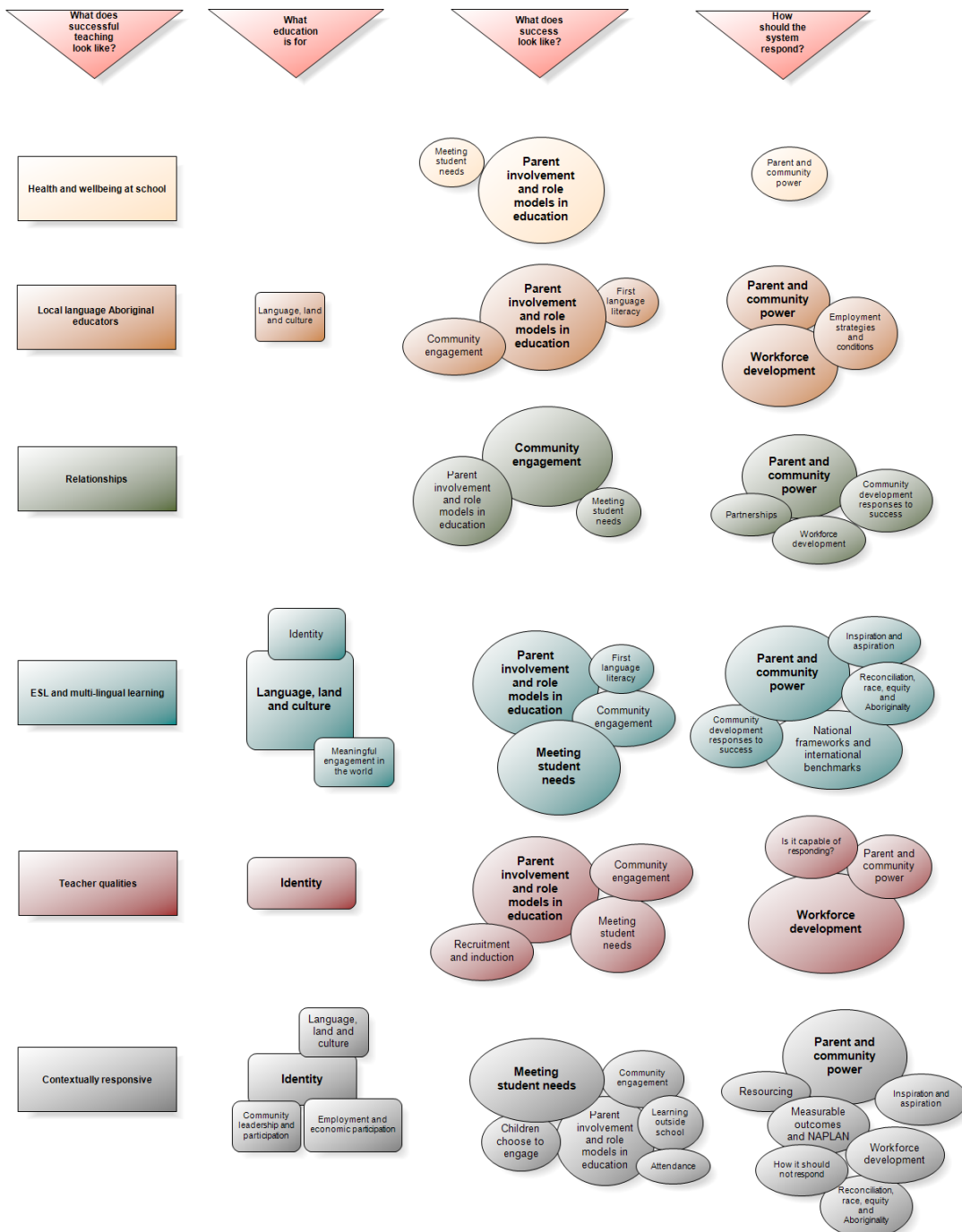


Figure 9: Looking through the lens of successful teaching

3.6.4 System response

When the five main system response filters are applied in Figure 10, success includes the key theme of parent involvement and role models in education for all themes. The partnerships filter also revealed community engagement as a key success theme. The only system response filter to reveal a key theme under education: what is it for? was parent and community power, which showed language, land and culture as the main purpose for education. While the indicators for success looked similar, the responses about teaching to achieve that success were quite different. The parent and community power filter revealed a cluster of approaches around the key theme of contextually responsive teaching. The community development filter showed a small cluster of teaching responses built around the both ways or two ways key theme. The workplace development filter showed a large cluster of teaching strategies built around teacher qualities. Finally, the resourcing filter revealed aspects of pedagogy as a key teaching response.

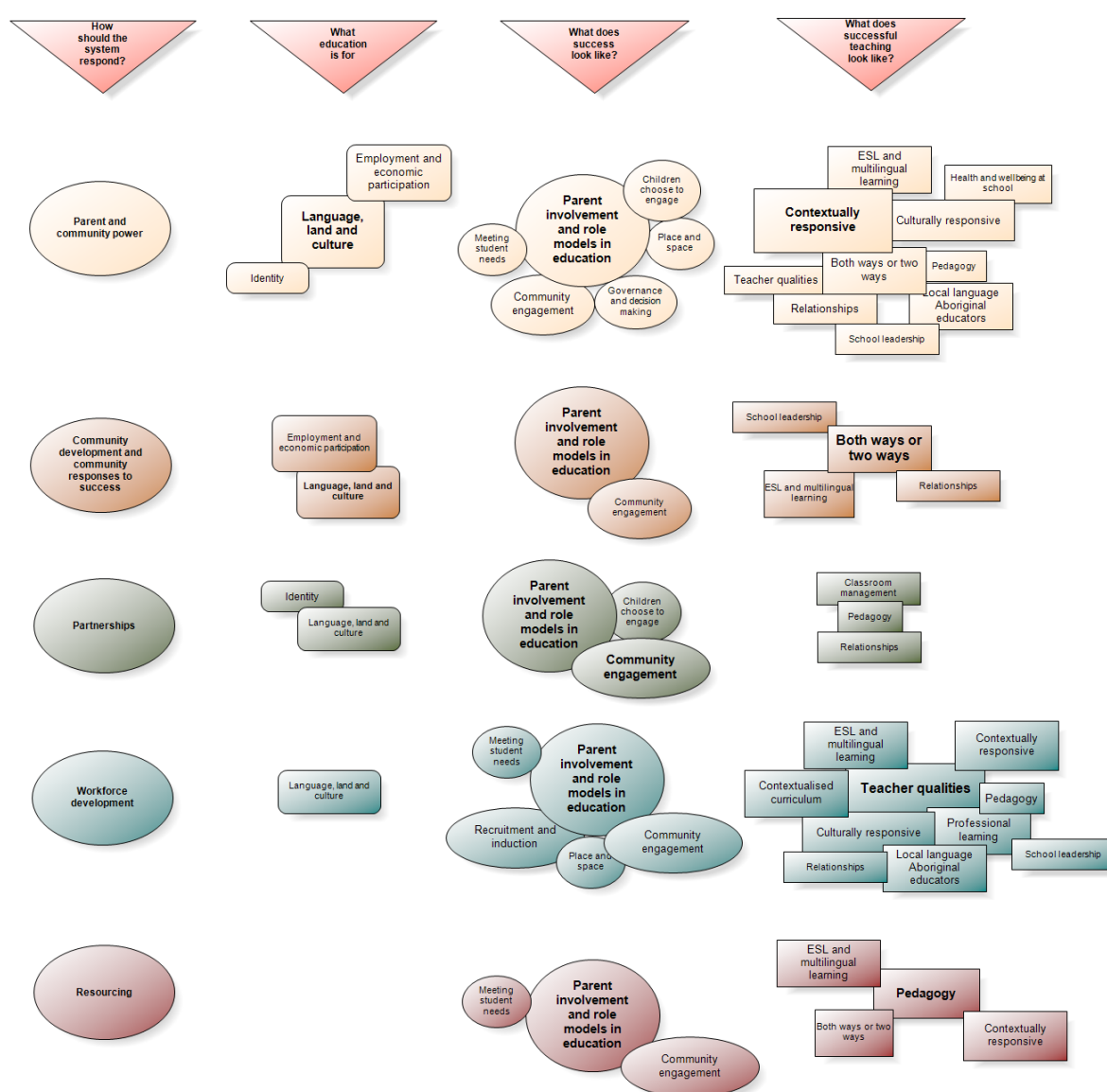


Figure 10: Looking through the lens of system response

3.7 Other themes and implications and applications

The source data includes references to a number of issues which we saw cutting across the four RQs and which therefore need to be analysed separately and which will be reported on separately. These themes include context and complexity, boarding schools, technology, creativity, history, innovation, gender and social justice.

The implications and application of the above findings will be considered separately.

4. Conclusions and summary

This analysis presents the findings from an analysis of 87 sources which represent data from 45 interviews and focus groups and 10 secondary source reports that were completed either for or by the RES project team. The analysis represents the views of more than 1000 remote education stakeholders. Just under one-third of the coding references are attributed directly to remote Aboriginal stakeholders. These stakeholders contributed almost half of the responses to a research question (RQ1) about what education is for in remote communities, about 40% of the responses to a research question (RQ2) about what defines educational success in remote communities, slightly more than one-quarter of responses about how to teach to those definitions of success (RQ3), but less than one-sixth of all responses about how the system should respond (RQ4).

Key findings to emerge from this analysis of qualitative data for the RES project are summarised as follows (showing the top four remote Aboriginal responses for each question). According to stakeholders:

- **the main purposes of education in remote communities are about:**
 1. maintaining connection to language, land and culture
 2. ensuring that learners have a strong identity rooted in their context
 3. providing pathways to employment and economic participation
 4. being strong in both worlds (western and Aboriginal).
- **success in remote education (in order of remote community responses) is about:**
 1. parent involvement and role models in children's education
 2. academic outcomes – predominantly basic competence in reading, writing and numeracy
 3. community engagement – communities being part of what happens at school
 4. attendance.
- **there are multiple teaching responses to achieve success:**
 1. ensuring the health and wellbeing of students at school
 2. drawing on and building the expertise of local language Aboriginal educators
 3. building strong relationships between teachers, students, assistants, families and other community members
 4. using ESL and multilingual learning approaches.
- **potential responses from the education system to address the above priorities include:**
 1. promoting parent and community power
 2. approaches that worked with communities developmentally
 3. partnerships with community stakeholders
 4. the importance of secondary provision.

With regard to the last research question, non-remote stakeholders (who made up the bulk of responses) had different priorities. Apart from parent and community power, they were particularly concerned about workforce development, resourcing and the political/policy context.

The cross-cutting analysis suggests that how stakeholders look at the issues of remote education determines how they see solutions and responses. For example, where responses were focused on employment as a desirable purpose of education, they could see what success and a system response might look like, but they did not see a strong connection to teaching. Looking through the lens of success, respondents saw different purposes and different teaching responses depending on their views of success. Similar dynamics were present when lenses of teaching and system response were applied to the data.

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Appendix A: Tables

Table A1: Coding references for RQ1

		Number of references coded			Per cent of references		
What is education for?	Sources coded	Remote Aboriginal (n=347)	Non-remote (n=378)	All sources (n=725)	Remote	Non-remote	Chi-squared*
Language, land and culture	30	64	40	104	18.4%	10.6%	P<.05
Identity	34	50	51	101	14.4%	13.5%	
Strong in both worlds	34	40	30	70	11.5%	7.9%	
Employment and economic participation	26	35	48	83	10.1%	12.7%	P<.1
Meaningful engagement in the world	29	28	33	61	8.1%	8.7%	
Community leadership and participation	19	25	26	51	7.2%	6.9%	
Learning	24	25	18	43	7.2%	4.8%	
Choice and opportunity	21	20	40	60	5.8%	10.6%	P<.05
Holistic	19	18	17	35	5.2%	4.5%	
Further learning and skills	17	11	18	29	3.2%	4.8%	
Socialisation to schooling	16	11	18	29	3.2%	4.8%	
Fun	11	9	9	18	2.6%	2.4%	
Sport	4	6	4	10	1.7%	1.1%	
Not sure what for	14	4	20	24	1.2%	5.3%	
Power	5	1	6	7	0.3%	1.6%	
Total references		347	378	725	100.0%	100.0%	

* Chi-squared test is used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the number of responses for remote Aboriginal and non-remote stakeholders. Where the column indicates a value of P<.05 it indicates that the probability of the remote Aboriginal and non-remote responses being the same is less than 5%.

Table A2: Coding references for RQ2

		Number of references coded			Per cent of references		
What defines success?	Sources coded	Remote Aboriginal (n=295)	Non-remote (n=445)	All sources (n=740)	Remote	Non-remote	Chi-squared*
Parent involvement and role models in child's education	34	63	75	138	21.4%	16.9%	
Academic outcomes	29	42	43	85	14.2%	9.7%	P<.1
Community engagement	35	27	56	83	9.2%	12.6%	
Attendance	22	22	32	54	7.5%	7.2%	
Learning outside school	28	21	26	47	7.1%	5.8%	
Children choose to engage	24	20	38	58	6.8%	8.5%	
Place and space	25	17	30	47	5.8%	6.7%	
First language literacy	12	14	8	22	4.7%	1.8%	P<.05
Meeting student needs	26	13	54	67	4.4%	12.1%	P<.05
Post-school transition	13	13	10	23	4.4%	2.2%	
Governance and decision-making	18	12	17	29	4.1%	3.8%	
Strong	7	10	3	13	3.4%	0.7%	
Completion and retention	9	6	10	16	2.0%	2.3%	
Health and wellbeing determinants	9	5	10	15	1.7%	2.3%	
Recruitment and induction	9	4	16	20	1.4%	3.6%	
No word for success	4	3	3	6	1.0%	0.7%	
Early childhood	2	1	1	2	0.3%	0.2%	
Failure	6	1	9	10	0.3%	2.0%	
Year 12 completion	3	1	4	5	0.3%	0.9%	
Total references		295	445	740	100.0%	100.0%	

* Chi-squared test is used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the number of responses for remote Aboriginal and non-remote stakeholders. . Where the column indicates a value of P<.05 it indicates that the probability of the remote Aboriginal and non-remote responses being the same is less than 5%. Where P<.1, the probability is less than 10%.

Table A3: Coding references for RQ3

		Number of references coded			Per cent of references		
What does teaching to success look like?	Sources coded	Remote Aboriginal (n=299)	Non-remote (n=753)	All sources (n=1052)	Remote	Non-remote	Chi-squared*
Health and wellbeing at school	22	36	40	76	12.0%	5.3%	P<.05
Local language Aboriginal teachers	25	35	41	76	11.7%	5.4%	P<.05
Relationships	36	33	68	101	11.0%	9.0%	
ESL and multilingual learning	37	30	82	112	10.0%	10.9%	
Teacher qualities	39	27	68	95	9.0%	9.0%	
Contextualised curriculum	26	25	38	63	8.4%	5.0%	P<.05
Culturally responsive	29	25	43	68	8.4%	5.7%	
Pedagogy	33	25	53	78	8.4%	7.0%	
Both ways and two way	26	21	36	57	7.0%	4.8%	
Contextually responsive	37	11	83	94	3.7%	11.0%	P<.05
High expectations	7	10	12	22	3.3%	1.6%	
Classroom management	13	8	20	28	2.7%	2.7%	
School leadership	20	5	32	37	1.7%	4.2%	
Professional learning	17	3	39	42	1.0%	5.2%	P<.05
Assessment and progress	8	1	17	18	0.3%	2.3%	P<.05
Experience	9	1	19	20	0.3%	2.5%	P<.05
Informal learning opportunities	7	1	13	14	0.3%	1.7%	P<.05
Time	20	1	27	28	0.3%	3.6%	P<.05
Whole-of-school practices	5	1	13	14	0.3%	1.7%	P<.1
Unsuitable teaching	8	0	9	9	0.0%	1.2%	
Total references		299	753	1052	99.8%	99.8%	

* Chi-squared test is used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the number of responses for remote Aboriginal and non-remote stakeholders. Where the column indicates a value of P<.05 it indicates that the probability of the remote Aboriginal and non-remote responses being the same is less than 5%. Where P<.1, the probability is less than 10%.

Table A4: Coding references for RQ4

		Number of references coded			Per cent of references		
What would an effective remote education system look like?	Sources coded	Remote Aboriginal (n=134)	Non-remote (n=787)	All sources (n=921)	Remote	Non-remote	Chi-squared*
Parent and community power	39	18	78	96	13.4%	9.9%	
Community developmental and community responses to success	28	14	45	59	10.4%	5.7%	P<.05
Partnerships	25	13	27	40	9.7%	3.4%	P<.05
Secondary education	12	13	10	23	9.7%	1.3%	P<.05
Workforce development	37	12	88	100	9.0%	11.2%	
Inspiration and aspiration	17	11	27	38	8.2%	3.4%	P<.05
Boarding	14	8	13	21	6.0%	1.7%	P<.05
National frameworks and international benchmarks	16	7	15	22	5.2%	1.9%	P<.05
Reconciliation, race, equity and Aboriginality	18	7	43	50	5.2%	5.5%	
Resourcing	27	7	63	70	5.2%	8.0%	
Attendance	19	6	24	30	4.5%	3.0%	
Employment strategies and conditions	9	5	28	33	3.7%	3.6%	
Coordinated response	16	2	36	38	1.5%	4.6%	P<.1
Curriculum	4	2	4	6	1.5%	0.5%	
Early childhood	3	2	1	3	1.5%	0.1%	
Political, policy context	26	2	65	67	1.5%	8.3%	P<.05
Measurable outcomes and NAPLAN	23	1	48	49	0.7%	6.1%	P<.05
Other structural possibilities	15	1	24	25	0.7%	3.0%	
Philosophy of education	12	1	16	17	0.7%	2.0%	
Responding to mobility	10	1	15	16	0.7%	1.9%	
Health and wellbeing system response	7	1	14	15	0.7%	1.8%	
Evidence	15	0	23	23	0.0%	2.9%	
How should it not respond	19	0	33	33	0.0%	4.2%	
Is it capable of responding	12	0	16	16	0.0%	2.0%	
Poverty and Socio-economic status (SES)	9	0	22	22	0.0%	2.8%	
Scalability and sustainability	6	0	9	9	0.0%	1.1%	
Total references		134	787	921	99.7%%	99.9%%	

* Chi-squared test is used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the number of responses for remote Aboriginal and non-remote stakeholders. Where the column indicates a value of P<.05 it indicates that the probability of the remote Aboriginal and non-remote responses being the same is less than 5%. Where P<.1, the probability is less than 10%.

Appendix B: Node descriptors

Table B1: Node descriptors for RQ1

Education: what is it for?	1) What is education for in remote Australia?
Language, land and culture	Maintaining language and culture, connection to land, cultural role within community, continuity, transmission of knowledge, strong families, cultural capital, learning on country, family and kinship, respect, connection to business
Identity	Personal agency, belonging, getting to know other people, confidence, growing up strong, pride, strong in spirit, comfortable talking/interacting with whitefellas, issues of shame, sense of achievement, knowing who you are, cultural worth
Employment and economic participation	Paid work, getting a job, work experience
Strong in both worlds	Two languages, literacies, ways to act in both cultures, competence, secret white man's way, broker between cultures
Meaningful engagement in the world	Learning to live in the world, mobility, 'real world', being able to deal with the realities of life in the community, cultural capacity to deal with environments they find themselves in, relevant learning, productive, broadening horizons, creating something that matters, purposive, staying in community, possibly leaving community, life skills, money management
Choice and opportunity	Options, decisions, ability to think for themselves, can include staying in community or going away, future opportunity
Community leadership and participation	Destined for leadership, taking up a destined role, cultural pathways, role models for the next generation, negotiation schools, community responsibilities, community governance, student leadership programs at school, being a role model, community service, civic participation
Learning	Thinking, basic skills, literacy and numeracy
Holistic	More than about learning alone, happy and healthy, being 'good people', becoming good parents, having understanding, doing things properly, humanitarian goals
Socialisation to schooling	Understanding the codes of how to fit in with western norms, rules for school
Further learning and skills	Kids aspire to go on to further education and university, additional skills, financial literacy
Not sure what for	Purpose of education in remote places is not understood
Fun	Enjoyment of learning, kids are happy, fun activities
Sport	Football, carnivals as a motivator, sport as a career
Power	Empowering, power dynamics, codes of power

Table B2: Node descriptors for RQ2

Success	2) What defines 'successful' educational outcomes from the remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander standpoint?
Parent involvement and role models in child's education	Support, commitment and aspiration, role models, older family members leading the way for younger ones, community mentors, surrounded by leaders, parents helping students with homework, parent choices for children's education, having parents who work, parents encouraging children to attend
Academic outcomes	Measured against what is taught, literacy and numeracy, classroom-based achievement, 'performance', progress, reading and writing
Community engagement	ASSPA (Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness), community participation in schooling, authentic engagement, bringing expertise from the community into school, community consultation, improved communication, sharing in planning processes, school–community partnership agreements
Meeting student needs	Knowing students, tracking, individual assessment, responding to individual needs, case management, identifying strengths, preparing for transitions, support, understanding student context
Children choose to engage	... and youth also, parents choose to send their kids, they are engaged in learning (conversely, failure is disengagement from school), students are active participants, kids want to come to school, students are self-motivated, critical curiosity, kids become active, reflective learners
Attendance	Attendance and attendance rates as success
Learning outside school	... and beyond school, use of sporting academies, creating spaces outside school for young people to learn, informal approaches, use of technology to mediate learning, bush camps
Place and space	Importance of location, comfortable space, school as a place for learning, school environment
Governance and decision-making	Local involvement in decision-making, planning and governance, identification of leaders
Post-school transition	To employment, further education or training, work experience
First language literacy	Reading, writing in first language
Recruitment and induction	Pre-service inductions, educating new teachers in cultural protocols, ensuring the right people are chosen for the remote school and community context
Completion and retention	Sense of completion, certificates and qualifications as the end result, achievement
Health and wellbeing determinants	Health and wellbeing factors that contribute to success: substance abuse, diet, violence, developmental disadvantage, smoking and drinking during pregnancy, mental health, gaps in spirit
Strong	Wellbeing, resilience, confidence, safety, proud, strong thinking
Failure	Comments about failure
No word for success	... or other related concepts
Year 12 completion	Retention and completion to year 12
Early childhood	Role of pre-school and early childhood facilities

Table B3: Node descriptors for RQ3

Teaching to achieve success	3) How does teaching need to change in order to achieve 'success' as defined by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander standpoint?
ESL and multilingual learning	Bilingual programs, language skills, need for mentoring, teacher awareness of language, use of first language, literacy in first language, creoles, teaching in first language
Relationships	Students, parents, other staff, Aboriginal Education Workers, communities more generally, listening, trust, communication, becoming part of the community
Teacher qualities	Flexibility, friendly, kind, teacher as a learner, being prepared for the environment, respectful, patient, listens, attitude, passion, commitment, dedicated to doing the best for the kids, high expectations
Contextually responsive	Being informed, differentiated approaches to teaching, understanding other agencies and supports that are available, collaborative approach to interagency, situational, understanding complexity, creative ways to engage, making learning valued by students, using Aboriginal knowledge, adaptive, flexible
Pedagogy	Both ways, ritualisation, two way, effective teaching and learning strategies, 'good' teaching, quality teaching, team teaching
Local language Aboriginal teachers	Includes Assistant Teachers, office staff, positions of importance for local staff, valued, supported, opportunities for development, cultural broker role
Health and wellbeing at school	Child's wellbeing at school is a priority, teasing, safety, school as a safe place, hearing, mental health, resilience, collaboration with health services, physical fitness, positive behaviours, personal hygiene, healthy food, showing respect
Culturally responsive	Understands culture and community context of the student, recognises and celebrates identity, sees possibilities, sitting in the dust, not the square peg in the round hole, awareness of own culture, respect
Contextualised curriculum	Reporting on progress and success, applying curriculum to the context, re-writing curriculum where appropriate, 'red dirt curriculum', ground up, learning on country
Both ways and two way	Generative spaces, knowledge exchanges, accreditation, privileging local knowledge
Professional learning	PL community, professional development, networks
School leadership	Leadership that enables teachers to succeed, engages community, accesses resources, provides support, manages school resources well, responds to community aspirations and priorities, creates supportive environment, effective use of resources
Time	Allowing sufficient time, timing of interventions, retention issues
Classroom management	Behaviour management, rules
High expectations	Encouraging kids to reach potential
Experience	Experience(s) in the community and life skills
Assessment and progress	Assessment and progress mapping practices; forms, processes and uses of assessment; local and systemic
Informal learning opportunities	Residential, outside the classroom, role models, peer-to-peer learning, use of community-based wireless, mentoring
Whole-of-school practices	School system to ensure or encourage programming and planning practices, teaching methodologies, literacy approaches, assessment, progress mapping and record keeping
Unsuitable teaching	Teachers not interested in adapting, learning, changing, career choices not caring

Table B4: Node descriptors for RQ4

System response	4) What would an effective education system in remote Australia look like?
Workforce development	Undergraduate teacher programs, recruitment, orientation, professional learning, ongoing support, induction processes, mentoring, dealing with churn 'renewing knowledge', Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, supportive environment, cultural security
Parent and community power	Relationships with community, community (including school) empowerment, engagement, parental responsibility, local autonomy, give parents real choices, parents participate in planning, recognition of local people who keep schools going
Resourcing	Funding, human resources, cost, allocation of resources
Political, policy context	Impacts of politics and policies important consideration, actions driven by strategies of the day, e.g. national partnerships, closing the gap, recognise complexity, simple messages, bureaucratic involvement, construct of school, legislation
Community developmental and community responses to success	Listening to community expectations, empowering, building a shared language, developmental approaches, takes time, recognise the incongruence in values, need Aboriginal voices
Reconciliation, race, equity and Aboriginality	Treaty, class and Aboriginality, equity, opportunity, language as an asset not a barrier, human rights, recognising the value
Measurable outcomes and NAPLAN	Accountability, testing, NAPLAN, alternative ways of measuring success
Partnerships	Community engagement, respecting and valuing local cultures and languages, bringing together people with the right skills and motives
Coordinated response	Agencies working together, dealing with alcohol issues, integrated services, collaboration
Inspiration and aspiration	Need to inspire young people, building and supporting aspiration, mentoring, being challenged
How should it not respond	Deficit models for resourcing, gatekeepers, unnecessary change, policy impacts, hegemonic power and control, overloading teachers, penalising parents
Employment strategies and conditions	Fly-in/Fly-out, Aboriginal strategies/policies, organisational level senior decision-making and leadership, supporting diversity, conditions of employment
Attendance	Attendance strategies as a response
Other structural possibilities	Remove silos, reverse funding and scholarships for city kids going to remotes, alternative models, Anangu academy, supported distance learning models, adapting School of the Air
Secondary education	Concerns about secondary options and provision, importance of high school learning
Evidence	Evaluations, need evidence-based response, difficulty getting data
Poverty and socio-economic status	Need to address issues of disadvantage, closing gaps
National frameworks and international benchmarks	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), National Curriculum, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), NAPLAN, National Partnerships
Boarding	Boarding schools as a response to remote education
Philosophy of education	Basis of system response, rationale for deficit, aims and purpose of education, responses (or not) to the education: what is it for? question, assimilative
Is it capable of responding	Does it intentionally undermine what works? constrained thinking
Responding to mobility	... and transience
Health and wellbeing system response	System responses designed to address health and wellbeing concerns
Scalability and sustainability	Sustainability, cost of running a small school, long-term funding
Curriculum	Curriculum as a response to remote education
Early childhood	Early childhood education as a response to remote education

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