

Lead Author

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Dr Wili Suluma is an early career researcher. One of the highlights of his career was being a principal and a teacher in some of the most remote schools in isolated Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. This was where his interest in Indigenous education started. His PhD explored the purpose of education for remote Aboriginal students in remote communities in the Northern Territory of Australia using the Internal Colonisation Theory and Human Capital Theory. Wili is a lecturer in Indigenous education at James Cook University and is involved in preservice teacher education.

Details

Title	Exploring the purpose of education for Aboriginal students in remote communities in the Northern Territory
Primary theme	Education systems and practices
Secondary theme	Politics, self-determination and decolonisation
Language	English

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Body

The recommendation of the Wilson Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory (2014) saw the progressive cessation of secondary schooling in remote communities to encourage families to send their children to boarding school. It was argued that remote secondary schools failed in areas such as attendance, consistent engagement, literacy and numeracy outcomes, and quality programs that led to employment pathways. Given the lack of a formal policy in this area, stakeholders' views on the purpose of education for remote Aboriginal students were examined through the Internal Colonialism Theory (ICT) and Human Capital Theory (HCT) lenses. Semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis and field observation were used to collect data. The findings of the study suggest that stakeholders' have mixed views on the purpose of education for remote Aboriginal students. Their views were influenced by economic opportunities, academic and socio-political agendas. Findings indicated that the socio-political agendas of boarding were driven by assimilatory objectives. The Western education system appeared to be a significant underpinning factor that contributed to the multiple challenges Aboriginal students experienced at boarding school. Analysis through the HCT lens indicated that the purpose of boarding was driven by employment agendas. The challenges facing Aboriginal students in education are complex and entrenched. Such views are valuable in, not only, making education meaningful and worthwhile for students and their parents but more importantly pave the way for meaningful improvements in educational equity and achievement for Aboriginal students in remote Australia.

Bibliography / Acknowledgements

Wilson, B. (2014). A share in the future: Review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory. Education Business.