

Regional Training Organisation (RTO)

Title	Partnering with industry and families – a tripod model
Description	This partnership focuses on creating pathways to training and employment for young people disengaged from education and training (i.e., falling out of mainstream schooling). Its purpose is to broaden young people's vocational skills. This partnership was established in Queensland in 2017 and continues to operate through a group of stakeholders who come together to plan and initiate pathways and programmes for youth at the local level. The ethos for the RTO is based on shared values – of making a difference to young disengaged youth.
Governance	This partnership was initiated and sponsored by an agency (herein referred to as the RTO) external to the communities in which they are located thus by definition (Billett et al., 2007) an 'enacted' partnership. The RTO is governed by a tripod model through an enrolment contract signed by the RTO, the student and their parent/carer. This is to ensure the involvement and commitment of the three parties in the education and training of the young person.
Operation	<p>Its key partners include industry enterprises, local communities (e.g., McLean community gardens, Queensland Bushfood association), local newspapers (e.g., Parkridge news, Jimboomba times), government bodies (e.g., Australian Institute of Horticulture, Logan City Council) and individuals (e.g., board of directors of professionals, academics, individuals from various trades).</p> <p>Opportunities provided through the RTO included traineeships, apprenticeships and work placements, and many of these were incorporated into vocational certification of students. The RTO has expertise with at risk and vulnerable young people – many of those experienced issues with split families. It also provided mentoring programmes to help these young people with their literacy and numeracy before engaging in traineeships or apprenticeships. It was also established to achieve an environmental outcome including garden projects, or lessons on sustainable practice. The RTO's main focus is agriculture (including horticulture) and options for students to pursue other interests such as automotive trades etc.</p>
Engagement with young people/ workplaces/ educational institutions	<p>The RTO has engaged with its partners through communications and interactions on a regular basis. This includes monthly newsletters, parental meetings, and promotions in local newspapers. It has also invited partners to events at the RTO and engaged with TAFE Queensland through talks and taster programs. TAFE also provides courses to supplement those offered by RTO. The RTO has an open-door policy that invites partners for conversations at negotiated times though with urgency if there are student issues.</p> <p>The RTO premises its engagement with young people on the principle of 'pastoral care' mutually shared by all interviewed stakeholders. 'Listening to students' and considering 'students as partners' were reported to be effective practices in this partnership. Hearing the voices of students about their aspirations but at the same time advising them about realistic goals based on their capacities and encouraging</p>

	them to think of broader goals through multiple pathways. The relationships between partners are based on trust and every effort is made to maintain that trust especially with young people. The pedagogies are designed to engage students – follow the prescribed curriculum but also entertain the specific interests of the individual students. Unlike a highly school structured curriculum the hidden curriculum of the RTO is what sustains the interests of the students. Above all, it is the pastoral care that is of most significance to students and their parents.
Continuity outcomes	However, their continuity is in part premised on its financial viability. That is, its governance and leadership commitment and especially student enrolments as it is a self-funded agency. Infrastructure improvements were brought to the forefront in this partnership should it strive for continuity outcomes. Also, word of mouth was held to be important for its continuity.

Tentative findings

<i>Using five premises to evaluate the formation and ongoing development of the social partnership</i>	
Factors supporting	Shared values, purposes and goals, and intended outcomes Shared ownership and decision-making and relations with partners
Areas for improvement	Partnership governance and leadership Trust and trustworthiness Resources and capacity building for partnership work Very small enrolment numbers
<i>Post-school pathways – informing and engaging</i>	
Context	A self-funded agency (RTO)
Aim	Creating pathways to training and employment for young people disengaged from education and training (i.e., falling out of mainstream schooling). Its purpose is to broaden young people's vocational skills. Opportunities provided through the RTO included traineeships, apprenticeships and work placements, and many of these were incorporated into vocational certification.
Informing	School-based training, industry site visits, informed talks and events, parents, open days, graduation events, visits by guests.
Engaging	Hands-on activities/projects on-site, work placements off-site

Context for the social partnership

Much can be learnt about the development of social partnerships on the basis of a consideration of their origins and their auspicing or hosting (Billett et al., 2007). As this partnership is enacted by an agency external to the community and is more inclusive in its membership and wider in its localities thus by definition (Billett et al., 2007) this is an example of 'enacted' partnerships. This partnership was hosted by a self-funded agency (herein referred to as the RTO). Opportunities provided through the RTO included traineeships, apprenticeships and work placements, and many of these were incorporated into vocational certification. The RTO has expertise in dealing with at risk and vulnerable young people (i.e., falling out of the mainstream schooling) – many of those experienced issues with split families. The RTO was established in Queensland in 2017 and continues to operate through a group of stakeholders who come together to plan and initiate pathways and programmes

for youth at the local level. Most of this is through individual networks. However, their continuity is in part premised on its financial viability. That is, its governance and leadership commitment and especially student enrolments as it is a self-funded agency. Infrastructure improvements were brought to the forefront in this partnership for it to strive for continuity outcomes. Also, word of mouth was held to be important for its continuity. It is a young institution with potential to grow as more graduates successfully complete their programs and gain employment.

Evaluating the RTO's partnership work

The tentative findings of this case study include identifying the premises that support the development and continuity of the RTO, areas for improvements and its limitations. The premises to evaluate the partnership work comprise building and maintaining: i) shared purposes and goals, and intended outcomes, ii) shared ownership and decision-making and relations with partners, iii) resources and capacity building for partnership work, iv) governance and leadership, and v) trust and trustworthiness.

Factors supporting

Factors supporting this partnership work were found to be premised on i) shared values, purposes and goals, and intended outcomes, and ii) shared ownership and decision-making and relations with partners. In forming this social partnership, a need was identified in the community/region for young people who were disengaged from the mainstream schooling to seek for alternative pathways into employment. Also, there was the need for a personalised approach to these young people who experienced issues with split families and needed guidance for diverse post-school pathways. There was a lack of opportunities for this cohort of young people in the community/region. So, there were two levels of engagement: first, a common set of concerns and second, a willingness to work with disengaged young people to provide training opportunities to improve social skills and achieve employment outcomes for these individuals.

While social partnerships might focus on a common problem, partners likely bring distinct perspectives about the problem and how it can be solved and there may be different and competing interests being enacted. For example, it was shared:

It's in our interest at the college. We're interested in the student, right? The person we sent them to is interested in the productive side of that student. So you've got two different points of view. You've actually got three because you've got the student who he doesn't wanna go to work. He'd rather just hang around and watch TV or do videos or play games.

Hence, developing a strategic plan which is realistic in achieving its goals can also be a useful device to build trust and encourage partnerships within the community and overcome institutional tension (e.g., ACER, 2008; Billett et al., 2007; Clerke, 2013). For example, in this case study, the RTO enacts a 'tripod model', i.e., having a negotiated enrolment contract signed by three parties – the RTO, the student and their parent/carer. In this way, the RTO engaged and included the views of those who normally would not have a voice such as young people and perhaps their parents/carers as their contributions might be central to achieving the partnership's core goals. It was held by an informant that "parents are a key because if you haven't got the parents on board, you won't get the kids on board". Thus, building and maintaining relations with partners (i.e., parents and students) was the key focus in this partnership.

Developing shared ownership and decision-making process was held essential in this partnership. It includes considering students as partners. One informant stated:

Give them a sense of ownership and that way it gives them a sense of responsibility. Probably something they haven't had before because they've been demanded to do things. Whereas in this case, we give them the opportunity to have their own ideas and put their own ideas into place.

Flexibility characterised the decision-making process in this case study. It was suggested:

In the first year, which is impossible, but if they do some engineering courses, some mechanical courses and something like trade based and then later on getting to automotive and other things, so you have to make it flexible.

Such flexibility afforded young people the opportunity to try and test their interest. One parent shared:

He has a passion that he's realised like he thought that it was going to be electrician and [the RTO] supported him with that. But all along the way the agriculture has been there, so they've really supported [name] with giving him some projects to work on.

In this case, mutual respect needs to be exercised between partners to build and maintain relationships. This process, beyond the presentation of information (e.g., monthly newsletters, regular parental meetings), was extended to consultations, keeping partners (e.g., parents) informed, working through disagreements and resolving all reconciling differences and concerns as they arise (e.g., "On the first day, we made the triple. This is the pathway. You find somebody where the child is safe and where you are happy, and we will facilitate") was also important in making the partnership work.

A consistent supporting factor expressed by the informants was the 'pastoral care' provided to the young people brought about positive changes to their engagement and subjectivity. This was acknowledged by the growth and positive changes in the interest of an individual:

Because if you know how what makes going through with the split family, the teachers understand and work with [child name] in that sense, and it all started when he first started there at [school name], he explained that he was being taught at and he'd look at me and it's like the teachers are talking at me and just pointing fingers at me and nothing sinks in. Whereas when he went to go [the RTO], it was just a completely different environment. [...] And it's like, ohh, that's right. Ohhh, yeah. OK, I understand that a bit more. It's kind of filling in a few blanks. So by having that large class or not large classroom cause it's only small. But by having that environment, I think they're relearning it. And you know what it's like, going over and over and over and eventually sinks in.

From these examples, enacting on the premises of shared purposes and goals, and intended outcomes, and shared ownership and decision-making and relations with partners have supported the RTO in the formation and ongoing development of the partnership work.

Areas for improvement

Being at an early stage of the partnership work (i.e., 5 years), building and maintaining partnership governance and leadership is in progress. During those years of operation, it was significantly interrupted by the pandemic. So, there is an important role for leadership and governance for the growth and continuity of the partnership work. However, their continuity is in part premised on its financial viability, especially student enrolments as it is a self-funded agency. Thus, infrastructure improvements were brought to the forefront in this partnership should it strive for continuity outcomes. The extended infrastructure is planned to also broaden community engagement by using the facilities for other community events. In this way the RTO would become a hub for the local community. Also, word of mouth was held to be important for its continuity as expressed by the informants. This locally available evidence will likely convince and engage more participants.