

Investigating Local Voice in K-12 School System Decision-making

Friday, July 8, 2022

The logo consists of the letters 'K' and 'P' in a stylized, handwritten font. The 'K' is on the left and the 'P' is on the right, both in a dark purple color.

Presenters

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Land Acknowledgement



Introduction

- Study investigates local voice in school system-level decision-making
- Examine and compare decision-making systems in jurisdictions across Canada
- Ask questions around who is participating, how systems function, what changes have occurred or may be needed in the future
- Funded by the Canadian School Boards' Association

Setting the Stage

Pro school boards:

- ensure local control over local education
- allow for more efficient responsiveness to issues
- mediate influence of partisan provincial / territorial governments

Against school boards:

- perception that they are overly complicated organizations
- performance issues blamed on management of the board
- concerns over level of power school boards possess

Setting the Stage

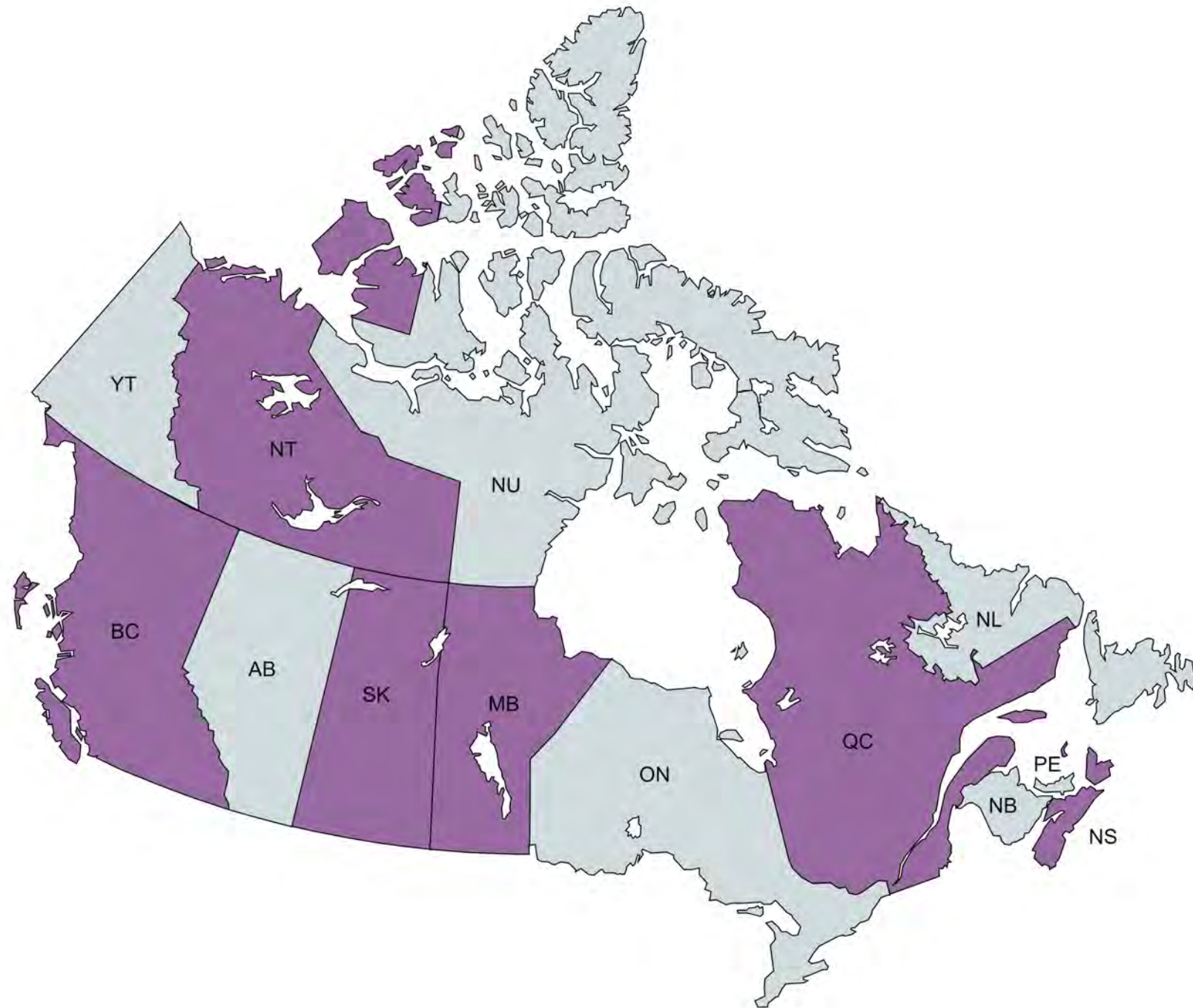
Reforms in education in Canada include:

- reducing the number of school boards
- changing the role school boards play in decision-making
- abolishing school boards altogether

Study Objectives

- Document the structure (and processes) for participation in school system-level decision-making
- Describe stakeholders' experiences
- Explore the challenges experienced by key stakeholders
- Report strategies stakeholders used to overcome challenges identified

Case Study Locations



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Methodology: Case Study Approach



Policy, Document,
& Context Scan



Interviews



Focus Groups



Public Consultation



Policy,
Document, &
Context Scan

- Each jurisdiction has a unique context
- Board governance should reflect the context in which the board resides
- Comprehensive policy, document, and context scan
- Allows research team to pick up on subtle nuances during data collection & analysis



Interviews

- Virtual through Zoom
- Approximately 1 - 1.5 hours
- Interviews started in April and are ongoing
- More than 60 interviews completed so far

Potential Interview Participants

- Trustees
- Directors/CEOs/superintendents
- School board advisory committee members
- School system management employees
- Professional association members
- Government civil servants
- Elected government officials

Interview Questions

Focus on:

- Participation in decision-making process(es)
- Changes to this process(es)
- Challenges experienced
- Strategies utilized to be involved



Focus Groups

- Virtual through Zoom (except by special request)
- Approximately 2 hours
- Focus groups will occur from August to October

Potential Focus Group Participants

- Educators
- Parents, caregivers, & representatives from parent groups
- Representatives from various community stakeholder groups
- Students and/or student representatives

Focus Group Topics

Focus on:

- Current involvement in public education
- How trustee role is understood (where applicable)
- How decision-making at the school-system level is understood
- Will to be involved in decision-making process



Public Consultation

- Virtual through Zoom
- Invitation to public through EventBrite
- Approximately 2 hours
- Public consultations will occur in early Fall

Potential Public Consultation Participants

- General public
- Must live in the province/territory they are participating in the consultation for
- Must be over 18 years old

Public Consultation Topics

Focus on:

- Current involvement in public education
- How decision-making at the school-system level is understood
- Who the public would *like* to see participating in decision-making

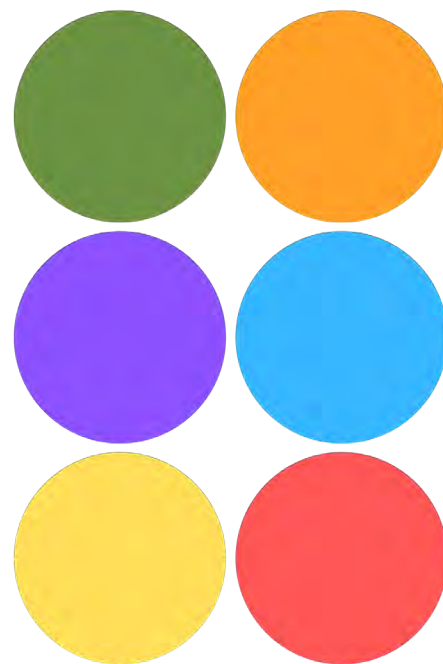
Engaging with Indigenous Communities

- Representation of Indigenous voices and knowledge in public education
- Benefit of Indigenous knowledge and voice to public education decision-making
- Much Indigenous education operates on-reserve under local Indigenous and Federal jurisdiction, outside study scope

Engaging with Indigenous Communities

- Specifically aim to include voices from Indigenous communities:
 - Indigenous trustees
 - Indigenous organization representatives
 - Indigenous community members
 - Jurisdictions with larger Indigenous populations
- Honor local protocols regarding knowledge sovereignty and respectful collaboration
- Ask all participants about how Indigenous communities are involved in decision-making in their organization

Data Analysis



Individual Case
Analysis



Cross-Case
Comparative Analysis



Jamboard Activity

- What challenges have you experienced when participating in K-12 system-level decision-making?
- What strategies can be used to participate in K-12 system-level decision-making?
- How does your organization include Indigenous communities in decision-making?



Jamboard
Activity

<https://bit.ly/3A47bzX>



Findings

- Reasons for and against school boards
- Challenges
- Strategies
- Centralized systems

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Findings: For and Against School Boards

- Efficiency
- Local voice
- Student success

Findings: Challenges

- Individuals (participating in system-level decision-making)
 - Financial resources
 - Understanding role of trustee
 - Political capital
 - Name recognition

Findings: Challenges

- Organization (delivering the system)
 - Limited capacity to change
 - Systemic barriers
 - Struggle to connect with underrepresented communities

Findings: Strategies

- Individual (participating in system-level decision-making)
 - Campaign strategy
 - Knowledge of local issues
 - Use of social media
 - Ask other trustees and committees to reach out to constituents
 - Connect with local constituents to learn about local issues

Findings: Strategies

- Organization (delivering the system)
 - Have multiple processes for bringing local issues to board meetings
 - Setting up ad hoc committees
 - Utilize existing data, research, and expertise

Findings: Centralized Systems

- Appears to be little-to-no system for local voice in centralized systems

Questions?



Contact Information

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