



Outcome Measurement

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS: OUTCOMES FOR WHĀNAU

Clara K. Pau

Samoan/Pākehā

Clara holds an MA from the University of Otago, where she also worked on translating research into programmes to increase academic achievement for Pacific students. She has spent time at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, as part of a Fulbright Graduate Award, where she also continues to work on projects around representation on Louisiana local boards and elections. Clara is a former Outcomes Measurement researcher for Wai-Research.

Abstract

This article aims to demonstrate the importance of manaakitanga to the Outcomes Measurement process. The article offers key reasons that manaakitanga is important to the process, which are that Māori communities are best placed to predict their own outcomes; evaluators or researchers need to contribute to generating honest answers about community outcomes; and manaakitanga is required for external validity of programmes or projects. At the same time, this article reiterates – and provides some commentary – on the significance of Te Ao Māori in non-Māori methodology. The article argues that Te Ao Māori, especially manaakitanga, both enhances and gives greater applicability to programmes or projects which are designed for Māori communities.

Key words: outcomes measurement, manaakitanga, methodology, Te Ao Māori, research

Background

While it is one of my personal convictions that indigenous knowledge is important to our world, this contention is particularly focused where it argues for the application of the Māori specific world-view in Outcomes Measurement. I am not Māori, although growing up in a small Central Otago town meant that people often thought I was, especially because the closest I could get to a Samoan cultural group in my town was my secondary school's kapahaka *roopu*. There are similar concepts to *manaakitanga* in Fa'asamoa, and also to some elements of Pākehā ways of life and manners, and these are incorporated in the very humanistic and universal elements of *manaakitanga*.

Other cultural concepts of *manaakitanga*, such as reciprocity, *fa'aaloalo* (respect), hospitality, responsibility or *tautua* (service), for instance, are encompassed by *manaakitanga* according to *Te Ao Māori*. There are many mixed-ethnicity peoples and non-Māori who receive services from Te Whānau o Waipareira. In line with *manaakitanga* in the Māori sense, these people are afforded their own opportunity, just as I have been since I started with Te Whānau o Waipareira in 2016, to be welcomed, acknowledged and assisted as their own unique selves.

If we consider who has controlled and designed much of the New Zealand political, economic, social and health infrastructure (non-Māori or Pacific) and who exactly is on the receiving end of the intervention initiatives in those sectors (disproportionally Māori and Pacific peoples – for health, for legal aid, for the unemployment benefit and for the disability allowance, as examples), we see how there might be differences in the way those interventions might be thought of. This idea of *manaakitanga*, as one that is encompassing, is not much favoured by prevailing political structures. However, tailoring the design of programmes with and to the people whom they are actually meant to serve is important, as are the world-views or outlooks of those persons.

And, after all, what is so bad about prioritising Māori knowledge?

To be clear, *Te Ao Māori*, including *manaakitanga*, is valid in its own right to Outcomes Measurement. Not because I have ancestral ties which inform a Māori world-view, nor because I simply feel that way, but because having a programme which has an epistemological foundation which aligns with those who will receive service from that programme makes sense.

Outcomes Measurement: Outcomes and Outputs

Outcomes measurement is “a systematic way to assess the extent to which a program has achieved its intended results” (Reisman & Smart, 2010, p. 9). In Aotearoa, outcomes have been transformed from analytical tools for economists into vernacular for public officials (Norman, 2007, p. 538) and internationally have moved towards capacity building devices for not-for-profit organisations (Reisman & Smart, 2010). The distinction between outputs and outcomes has become important, with the distinction adopted in New Zealand in 1989 as the “central mechanism for forcing accountability and responsiveness on a public service system, which was seen by political leaders to respond too slowly to a fiscal crisis” (Norman, 2007, p. 538).

Outputs can generally be understood as the unit of assistance supplied, often described with a numerical value (Reisman & Smart, 2010, p. 7). Examples could include: number of hours, amount of money generated, scores on a test, number of whānau interviewed or the number of attendees to a programme. Outcomes, on the other hand, can be understood as changes in attitude, changes in behaviour, changes in relationships or changes in policy (Mathias, 2018).

Outcomes Measurement, therefore, addresses questions of change. In particular, someone interested in understanding the value of a programme, or what a programme might need, may ask:

- What has changed?
- Has a programme or initiative made a difference?
- How have the lives of those in the programme changed because of the programme?
- Are there reasons (other than the programme) that changes have occurred?
- How can the programme be altered?
- How can we demonstrate that change has or has not occurred? What tools can we use?

It is important to note here that outputs still play a very central role in understanding change. As aforementioned, the distinction between outputs and outcomes is important, but they are often not mutually exclusive. This is because change is unlikely to occur unless units of assistance are supplied (i.e. outputs), and because outputs may well be the only information generated from a particular programme.

Often changes, as opposed to outputs, can be harder to identify, to measure and are more complex to understand. Changes may not be immediately tangible or even ever relatable to the programme coordinator, the evaluator, or the researcher. Changes may not be obvious to the outsider looking in, but are more likely conveyable by those for whom the change has occurred, or those to whom the change is relevant.

Measurement and Methodologies

In a lecture entitled “Evaluation and the Measurement of Cultural Outcomes” – delivered to the Academy for Māori Research and Scholarship (2005) – Professor Te Kani Kingi commented that the idea of “measurement” is not new. The issues of universality, generalisability, bureaucracy and competition have resulted in advancements in measurement tools and essentially resulted in “greater precision and accuracy, application of ideas and methods elsewhere, and an expanding knowledge base” (2005, p. 7).

Pertinent to Kingi’s point about developments in measurement leading to the application of ideas and methods elsewhere is the application of non-Māori methods to Māori communities. There have been important works written about the concerns which some Māori have when researchers use non-Māori approaches or methodologies to research Māori populations, or to assist specific problems within Māori communities. For instance, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, in her seminal work *Decolonizing Methodologies*, notes that research has outright failed to recognise indigenous knowledge and belief systems altogether (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). This is because, as scholars such as Denzin (2008) and Kovach (2009) explain, researchers have often used findings from indigenous communities to further marginalise indigenous peoples, either by way of misinterpretation or by simply entering communities, taking, and then leaving with their data for the researcher’s own benefit.

Related to methodology specifically, Wolfe (2006) has noted that even though a given methodology may appear to be appropriate for a community, it may attempt to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative approaches, for instance, “data collected by these methods usually dismiss or negate indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing as they are interpreted against settler standards.” Braughn, Brown, Ka’opua, Kim and Mokuau (2014) explain that “native histories and realities are suppressed as they are discounted and replaced by settler epistemologies and methods” (p. 120).

Outcomes Measurement is one such methodology which was not built by Māori methodologists, nor specifically formulated for issues about Māori communities. Therefore, if we choose this as the most appropriate tool to use for examining change in Māori communities, or the impact any given programme might have on Māori peoples, we need to be purposeful in infusing the process with Te Ao Māori. This is not because it is our job or responsibility to make Pākehā methodology ‘fit’ Māori communities by making a framework ‘culturally appropriate’, but to acknowledge that Māori are also producers of knowledge, rather than of culture alone (Cooper, 2012, p. 64). Relatedly, Professor Mason Durie explains that, “while some indicators, such as life expectancy, can be applied with confidence to all

populations, there are also specific outcomes (such as increased value of land) that can only be measured if Māori perspectives (such as land tenure, and the relationship of land to other resources) are afforded adequate recognition through specific indicators.” (2004, p. 8). To ensure an outcome is measured, the outcome must be understood. Dismissing Māori knowledge via methodological omission precludes understanding change for Māori communities.

It is an important point to make here that omitting Te Ao Māori from a process or methodology does not just make it harder for the Outcomes Measurement researcher, evaluator, or programme coordinator to understand outcomes in Māori communities. Rather, the omission may make it more difficult for Māori communities themselves to understand outcomes or change. This is because the way a programme for a Māori community might be defined, may not be the way things are changed.

For instance, a programme might be designed to give people access to free dentistry. A community outreach coordinator could be appointed to help to raise awareness of the programme and contact those who might require the programme. The community outreach coordinator was not educated in elements of Te Ao Māori in their approaches to contact people, so to some, the person may seem unapproachable or disrespectful, thereby alienating those who they were hired to help. Essentially, an epistemological translation would be required by Māori communities for any given intervention. So even if an individual is disrespected culturally, the onus is on them to accept or ignore it, as well as to feel like a programme has made a change in their life. Unfortunately, this is the reality of several of the New Zealand Government’s programmes, including the Accident Compensation Corporation, the New Zealand unemployment benefit and much of the Family Court system.

Perhaps it comes as no surprise that the power differentials between Pākehā and Māori mean infusing Outcomes Measurement with Te Ao Māori is easier said than done. An increasing number of Māori and non-Māori scholars have examined how difficult it can be to ensure Te Ao Māori or *tikanga* can be incorporated into a discipline, with many highlighting that power differential as a barrier. Some scholars note tokenistic praxis of Te Ao Māori and/or *tikanga* in an array of fields, including Early Childhood Education (Ritchie, 2008), Higher Level Education (Ngapo, 2013), and Physical Education (Heta, Matoe & McKerchar, 2009). Research methods are no exception to this.

Manaakitanga and Outcomes Measurement

An example of Te Ao Māori tokenism has been the use of manaakitanga.

Professor Mason Durie notes that while tikanga and *kawa* may differ among *hapū* and *iwi*, a “core of Māori culture and philosophy” in all Māori traditions, includes manaakitanga, *kaitiakitanga* and *karakia* (2003, p. 317). Anecdotally, there has been a temptation by scholars (perhaps even a tendency) in some research to say that manaakitanga is practiced through taking a plate of biscuits to a whānau and putting them on a table prior to an interview with them. While the sharing of kai is an important process to break *tapu*, transition to *noa*, uphold tikanga Māori, and is one way to demonstrate or reflect manaakitanga, it must be made clear that manaakitanga is not simply a tool in research, nor a mechanism to get answers from interviewees.

Manaakitanga, rather than a means to an end in research, can be thought about as a “very powerful way of expressing how Māori communities may care for one another. Manaakitanga is a feeling; it implies a responsibility upon the host; an invitation to a visitor... it contributes to one’s interest or reason for the gathering and may also demonstrate, certainly in Māori settings, that there are active tribal, whānau, and community supports for the individual.” (Blundell, Gibbons & Lillis, 2010, p. 99). Manaakitanga, defined by the Māori Dictionary, is “hospitality, kindness, generosity, support – the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others” (Māori Dictionary, 2018). In essence, says Blundell, Gibbons and Lillis (2010), manaakitanga seeks common ground upon which an affinity and sense of sharing can begin (p. 99). Ritchie (1992) says manaakitanga is the basis of respect for another human being, acknowledging their unique “personal status” (p. 55) and *mana tangata*, or individuality and identity (p. 57).

Manaakitanga is therefore central to Outcomes Measurement. This is because to be able to both listen openly, and to have someone honestly tell you how a programme or project has changed or impacted their life (or not), requires manaakitanga, and not in a tokenistic sense. In a similar way to the feminist method employed by Acker (1991), a close and mutual relationship between researcher and subject, leading to trust, is important in Outcomes Measurement research. Acker (1991) notes that if this relationship of respect and trust does not exist, “we can have no confidence that our research... accurately represents what is significant to [subjects] in their everyday lives, and thus has no validity in that sense” (p. 297). Essentially, ensuring manaakitanga in the Outcomes Measurement process gives Māori communities the space to accurately demonstrate the change (or not) a programme has made in their lives.

Manaakitanga is also essential for building outcomes in the first instance. The outcomes process is such that a detailed understanding of a given programme and the expected programme outcomes and impact is considered, and generally conveyed through a logic model. Building these outcomes, and indeed an entire programme, should be less about guessing how a programme will affect a community, but rather have the community at the centre of prediction. Another way to think of it, is that the community which a programme or project intends to serve are probably better placed than the evaluator or researcher to see how an intervention might affect their community, as well as the programme's feasibility in the community.

Furthermore, it is clear that those who a programme or project intends to serve should have a voice in what changes might occur in their communities. This is not because if a community 'buys in' to a project or programme, it might actually work. But rather, if a community sees the change they want to make, and own that change, utilise service providers to engender that change, and see and live that change, we begin to strip away the schemas of control and power that dictate someone else 'knowing what's best', thus legitimising the knowledge and experiences of communities, including those which differ from our own. As Bishop (1999) explains, "Māori people have always had criteria for evaluating whether a process or a product is valued for them" (p. 4), so manaakitanga must be present to allow space for that knowledge.

Manaakitanga in Outcomes Measurement development also benefits the Outcomes Measurement process itself. One of the factors that leads to increased external validity in Outcomes Measurement, and research more generally, is community involvement. External validity refers to the concept of generalisability, that "the results can be reasonably applied to a definable group of [people]" (Ahmad, Boutron, Deschatres, 2010). External validity is important because if the generalisability of a project or programme is poor – i.e. a project or programme which purports to work for a certain group or individual yet actually does not work, or is detrimental to that group – the safety of that group or individual is compromised. From an organisational perspective, misreporting, skewing results, or having a programme that causes undue harm is fiscally, reputationally and ethically irresponsible.

Going Forward

Manaakitanga is central to Outcomes Measurement in that communities are best placed to predict which outcomes may or may not occur because of a programme or intervention, so ensuring whānau are supported to do just that is important. For the researcher or evaluator to actually hear or see the outcomes which may have resulted from a programme or intervention requires manaakitanga between a community and that researcher or evaluator. Encouraging manaakitanga in Outcomes Measurement also reinforces the wealth of knowledge and expertise that exists in Māori communities, and gives space to draw that out, thereby encouraging Māori to define their own outcomes. Finally, manaakitanga in Outcomes Measurement by way of authentic community involvement leads to external validity of projects or programmes.

While we can offer insight into Outcomes Measurement best practice, there is a tendency to look towards the proof of change. And with reason – we want to see the impact our programme is having. The reality is that our funder or commissioner really wants to see it too. But even though we acknowledge that change and outcomes are hard to see, potentially even impossible for the outsider, we turn our attention inward and ask questions like: “So, did it work?”. We may even become myopic and search for our impact without extending our hands, voices, or ears in the spirit of manaakitanga and ask those who our programme was designed to assist. Often, at times, we might even default back into the output language to consider how many whānau we spoke to, how many interviews we had, or how many surveys we disseminated and measure our success accordingly.

However, if we speak the language of outcomes, and of change, then we can shift our attention away from the pass or fail dichotomy (i.e. it worked or it did not). When measuring outcomes, perhaps we need to consider honestly both our shortcomings and our strengths in a project or programme. For instance, did we do all that we could to create a sense of manaakitanga between us and the community we serve? Did we give them support to flourish and to be honest without fear of backlash? And then we move forward. We use our strengths to improve and secure services for and with future recipients – *tamariki* and *mokopuna* – who might need our help in years to come.

This is important, but even when we get really effective at self-reflection, we will still be moving too slowly if we adhere to a model that ignores or tokenises Te Ao Māori and its core elements, including manaakitanga.

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