

KAUPAPA MĀORI EVALUATION: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE TO INNOVATION - A PRACTITIONER'S VIEW

Haze White and Hector Kaiwai

Haze White (Tainui) and Hector Kaiwai (Ngāti Porou) are evaluators within the Wai Research unit. Collectively they have an extensive and diverse research and evaluation portfolio with a particular focus on hauora Māori. Their work for Wai Research comprises a number of evaluations of Kaupapa Māori and Whānau Ora programmes.

This paper provides a practitioner's experience of kaupapa Māori evaluation within a social innovation hub and highlights many of the challenges of using kaupapa Māori in a mainstream setting. It explores the principles that guide our evaluations and what they look like in practice. This paper also gives us, as Māori evaluators, an opportunity to acknowledge those who created the path which we walk upon today and to provide insights as to where that path has taken us. The substantial body of knowledge regarding kaupapa Māori theory and practice that those before us produced provides a framework that defines the way in which we work within a Māori context. More specifically, the principles of kaupapa Māori provides us with the culturally appropriate methodological underpinnings for conducting research or evaluation by and for Māori in a safe and meaningful manner.

Innovation in Kaupapa Māori Evaluation

The experiences we share within this narrative derive from the work we have conducted for Wai-Atamai, a social innovation hub that sits within a Māori health and social service provider called Te Whānau o Waipareira. The role of us as kaupapa Māori evaluators within Wai-Atamai is primarily one of quality assurance. Assessing the impact that health and social services have on whānau Māori, and improving service design and implementation.

The term 'innovation' is difficult to grasp within the fields of research and evaluation. Mostly because we are classically trained to work within a host of different frameworks, paradigms, methodologies and epistemologies. Such structures can often make it difficult to 'think outside the box' or to be novel in this space – which is interesting given that our job is not only to prove theories, thinking and knowledge, but also to create new knowledge and build upon existing thinking. As evaluators working within Wai-Atamai, the notion of 'outside the box' is business as usual. We are given free rein to push boundaries in our thinking and in our practice so that we can maximise the effectiveness of our evaluation mahi. Why this is beneficial for us is that it allows us to tailor our practice to suit the diverse groups that we work with, from urban Iwi groups, to Whānau Ora partners, to mainstream funding agencies, to government departments.

Kaupapa Māori Evaluation Experiences

Kaupapa Māori evaluation is in and of itself innovative. Its genesis followed the emergence of kaupapa Māori theory in the 90s, a theory which seeks to create a space in research in which Māori knowledge is affirmed and which is critical of other paradigms that unjustly encroach on this space.

Kaupapa Māori theory is underpinned by a number of core principles. Principles that can be adopted into practice, such as evaluation, and is from where kaupapa Maori evaluation draws its theoretical underpinning. These principles guide our evaluations, outlining the design of the evaluations, how we engage with other parties and how we collect data. The principles highlighted in this narrative are not the only principles of kaupapa Māori, but have specific relevance to the evaluations we have conducted and to the groups we have worked with.



We have had to tailor our approach to each context we work in and, as such, how we have experienced the kaupapa Māori principles has been slightly different according to each context:

- *The principle of whānau: whānau sits at the core of kaupapa Māori. It acknowledges the relationships that Māori have to one another and to the world around them. Whānau, and the process of whakawhanaungatanga are key elements of Māori society and culture. This principle acknowledges the responsibility and obligations of the evaluator to nurture these relationships and also the intrinsic connection between the evaluator, those evaluated, and the evaluation itself.*

Relationship building has been a core component of every evaluation we have been involved in – ranging in importance from vitally to critically. The strength of the relationship has, for us, been an accurate indicator of how well the evaluation will track. It is not an understatement to say that the relationship has consistently been the most important aspect of our work. While that may seem straightforward, it is astonishing just how often it isn't prioritised – leading to a number of problems throughout the evaluation's life cycle. This is not to say that evaluations built upon a strong relationship won't incur problems, but, all parties are more willing to communicate and can resolve problems more effectively.

The building of relationships in the context of kaupapa Māori evaluation is no different from building relationships in any other context. They take time, effective communication and transparency. Time, sadly, is a resource we lack. The timelines we are given to conduct these evaluations are narrow, and they almost never allow an appropriate amount of time for whakawhanaungatanga. Asking Māori organisations and whānau to trust us isn't always a straightforward process. Adding to this is a history of mistreatment at the hands of researchers and evaluators which, understandably, makes it even more difficult to gain the trust of Māori organisations and whānau.

- *The principle of whakapapa: whakapapa is often translated as being 'genealogy', but also encapsulates the way in which Māori view the world. It is a way of thinking, of learning, storing and debating knowledge. In terms of kaupapa Māori, whakapapa is integral as it allows for the positioning and contextualising of relationships between people, communities, participants, landscape and the universe.*

The Māori programmes that we have worked alongside operate within a Māori worldview with a specific set of values and ideologies. Mainstream funders similarly have their own set of values and ideologies – at times conflicting with those of the Māori providers. In some instances, the two groups may be seeking the same outcomes but the path in which they take to get there may differ. This has required of us to be the 'bridge' or 'translator' in understanding between the two groups.

In other instances, the two groups may be expecting different outcomes for an evaluation. Our role in this has been to make the evaluation process as transparent as possible. Ensuring at the beginning of the process that all evaluation stakeholders know exactly what the evaluation will entail, why the evaluation is being conducted and the expected outcomes of the evaluation. Furthermore, Māori programmes are often asked to deliver considerable outcomes despite being modestly funded.

- *The principle of rangatiratanga: rangatiratanga is related to the notion of autonomy, sovereignty and mana motuhake. Rangatiratanga is also embedded into the evaluation process in terms of allowing Māori to shape their own processes. (whānau rangatiratanga – co-design/wānanga process)*



Self-determination is a fundamental component of kaupapa Māori evaluation. Managing the contrasting worldviews also means managing power relationships with an understanding that there has historically been a subservient relationship between Māori and mainstream. Such power relationships still exist nowadays: be it between funder and provider, researcher and researched, or commissioner and contract holders. It is not beyond us to acknowledge that as evaluators, we hold a position of power and privilege engaging with communities. It is, however, our responsibility to use that platform to enhance the communities we engage with – to treat them and their kōrero with respect and dignity.

What We Have Learnt from Our Experiences

Fundamentally, social innovation has many parallels with kaupapa Māori theory and evaluation. Social innovations are new practices which meet social needs in a better way, kaupapa Māori theory and evaluation looks to use more appropriate methodologies to meet the needs of Māori in a better way. Both challenge systemic processes and both seek to support progress. As evaluators, working within this space and in this manner is both challenging and rewarding.

Because we work with a wide array of groups we must be understanding of a wide array of contexts and perspectives: one day we are conducting a pōwhiri and the next we are presenting our work to parliament. One of the most useful and empowering things we have learnt in our work in Wai-Atamai and Waipareira is how to engage with the diverse spectrum of whānau from different communities. Having the capacity to identify which methodologies work best given the situation at hand and having the capability to enact those methodologies. While Te Reo Māori and tikanga Māori processes might be important for some whānau, it can be the complete opposite for others, and, in some cases, it can be disempowering. For us, being fluid rather than prescriptive has always been the most appropriate approach.

We have been given the freedom to challenge discourse which is not appropriate and harmful for whānau, and as such, have learnt more about the different ways in which government departments, funders, hospitals and many other organisations knowingly or unknowingly misalign with whānau Māori.

Ensuring that whānau remain at the centre of what we do is the most significant parallel between our work as kaupapa Māori evaluators and as being a part of the Wai-Atamai social innovation hub. It is what is most rewarding about working in this space as we can be sure that the evaluations we conduct are contributing to improved outcomes for whānau.

