RESEARCH

PRODUCING IMPACTFUL DISCOVERIES THAT ARE WELL INFORMED AND FUTURE ORIENTED
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Background

While there are many definitions of translational research – from the laboratory bench to patients’ clinical trials, to looking for improved health outcomes and behavioural changes across populations – translational research aims to create the biggest difference and best outcomes for people. What that means within the context of Wai Research, the research arm of Wai-Atamai, is that whānau drive the research process. Any research undertaken for whānau needs to meet the needs expressed by them, as opposed to researching what we, as researchers or as an organisation, might view as being important.

The translational research process that we aim for seeks to provide outcomes that directly relate to whānau and community outcomes moving forward. We work collaboratively on this, not just with other teams within Wai-Atamai, but also within the broader organisation of Te Whānau o Waipareira. Ultimately, translational research (or research that ‘translates’ into positive outcomes) addresses different levels: from the government, at the policy and advocacy level, through to services and providers at the frontline who are connecting with whānau, each with the same shared desire to build whānau wellbeing.

This article aims to share our approach to translational research and its place in our community.

Wai Research

Wai Research is a community-based research unit located within Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust – a whānau-centred, indigenous, community-based health and social services provider, founded within the West Auckland community over 30 years ago. Wai Research is based within the Social Innovation Hub – Wai-Atamai. This hub brings together insight, impact and innovation through the Wai Research Team, the Change and Transformation Team and the Strategy and Innovation Team. Alongside these teams are the Brand and Design Team and the Digital and Media Team ‘Edit Lab’, both of which help to bring our mahi to life in creative ways. Each team brings a unique perspective, passion and drive to change outcomes for the community. This is achieved through the incubation of prototypes and models both within the unit and alongside those in our provider networks that have an interest in developing particular initiatives. Through this hub, work is constantly changing and evolving to better meet the needs of our whānau and community.

Best Practice for Hearing Whānau Voices

For Wai Research, hearing the voices of our communities and what is happening with whānau often provides the catalyst for action as researchers and provides an opportunity to scope a particular issue through our own organisation and the wider networks regionally and nationally that we link with.

When carrying out translational research, the voice and needs of whānau are at the centre of everything we do. Hearing the voices of our whānau and the community is of vital importance to our research and provides key stepping stones into the next step of the research process. Ensuring that we gather information on whānau wants and needs is imperative, addressing what they position as their greatest needs, and not what we, as researchers, envisage them needing.
Gathering relevant information for scoping a project is done through a range of avenues. Searching for literature on the proposed topic, scoping what is already out there and where there are gaps that need to be addressed. Collaboration with frontline kaimahi, who experience whānau needs, and kōrero with whānau on a regular basis through their mahi, are important in painting a picture towards gaining knowledge in this area.

Throughout this process, when deemed necessary for the research, an internal steering committee is formed to inform and advise on the project. This is made of people with knowledge in this area, those who can bring lived experience and wisdom to a project.

Following this scoping and initial stakeholder engagement, opportunities may be taken to leverage further networks and supports to raise issues. Through further discussion, opportunities in research can be identified to understand and gather evidence which supports these concerns.

Collating relevant information, literature, and voices of kaimahi, whānau and other community stakeholders builds the knowledge base for research to be carried out, supported by a solid understanding of what is happening in that community.

**Approach**

There are different types of research that we carry out, depending on the nature of the topic and the outcomes to be achieved. Evaluations are one method that we commonly use to extensively look into and provide recommendations for improvements to current and pilot programmes. Evaluating a programme is important, as it helps to measure the effectiveness of a programme and its alignment with the desired outcomes. Much of our evaluation work to date has involved mainstream service provision within the broad health and disability area or social services, with a particular focus on improving outcomes for whānau Māori. We have also evaluated some programmes provided by Te Whānau o Waipareira.

At Wai Research, we also carry out research - looking for new insights, new information and new ideas relating to a topic of interest. Carrying out a literature review is a common step in the translational research process for Wai Research. Gathering background knowledge and information in the research area helps to provide a solid knowledge base in order to move to the next stage in translating this knowledge into outcomes. Conducting a literature review helps to inform best practice in the research area, giving us a toolkit through examining what other people have found, also helping to compare findings between different research areas. This also means that we know what has already been looked at in-depth, ensuring we do not reinvent the wheel.

**Research**

After pulling together available information and research, we will decide on a method that best fits the outcomes that we are trying to achieve. The way each research project is shaped will depend on a range of factors such as timing, budget, requirements for the research and intended outcomes.

Before the start of any research project and before we gather data from whānau for a particular purpose, it is important to prepare ourselves for the research through the development of a plan to guide the research development; to show the expected outcomes of the research; and to ensure a transparent programme of work for stakeholders and other researchers. The plan should include who the stakeholders are, including whānau; the purpose; aims and objectives; key research questions; and the methods and types of research analysis that will be used to answer the research questions. Sometimes, this will be presented diagrammatically as well, in the form of a logic model demonstrating the expected theory of change for whānau as a result of the service they are receiving or the research being undertaken.

Research tools, such as information sheets for all participants, which include whānau consent forms and questionnaires, must be developed so that all participants understand what the research is about, who will be carrying out the research, how the research will happen, what will happen with the information, how the information will be protected and anonymity maintained if necessary, how they will know what has happened to the research, and their role and rights in the research process.

There are also ethical considerations, so once the plan is agreed and research tools developed, the research or evaluation plan will be submitted for internal and, at times, external ethical consideration. This process asks about all of the elements already discussed regarding preparation, but more importantly, what steps will be taken to engage appropriately with whānau and other participants using known cultural best practice; the use of whānau information and protection mechanisms in place to preserve their information and restrict access; who will be working on the research team and the experience they bring to the team and the research; and how the final research will be disseminated. Within the Waipareira ethics approval process, we are required to discuss how all aspects of ‘Te Kauhau Ora’ will be addressed as part of our research. We are unable to, and should not, proceed with the research without ethical approval and at a minimum, the approval of the Waipareira ethics committee.

**Gathering Data, Analysis and Translation**

Once the research is underway, gathered data is assessed and if there are any emergent issues seen as important, these are discussed in the team and reported back to the funders of the research. This may allow them to adjust actions on a timely basis, for example, during the course of an evaluation where it is shown that some service actions are causing harm or significant concerns to whānau. Sometimes, service staff may have already made adjustments, but the process of informing the funder provides further evidence and maintains a strong working relationship, supporting positive whānau outcomes.

Once the research data is gathered, the information or evidence will be analysed for data which answers the original research or evaluation questions and can show achievement, or otherwise, of the expected research outcomes. This part of the process is important from a translational outcomes perspective, because we will look at strategic or high-level policy implications within an organisation or at a ministerial level, or we can consider operational recommendations which the evidence shows could provide better services or new services to produce better outcomes for whānau Māori. The research can also identify other areas or questions for further research. The evidence and findings from the research can then be reported and recommendations made to address translational outcomes.
Dissemination of Data and Presentation of the Final Report

The production of a final report initiates the next step of the translational research process. It is important to inform all the identified research stakeholders of the outcome of the research. A dissemination list is drawn up to ensure the initial stakeholders are included in dissemination. A summary of the research findings will also be prepared for distribution to those that may not want the detail of a full report. The dissemination list should also consider a wider group of stakeholders that may receive the report once the final report has been signed off.

How the research is presented also needs consideration depending on the nature of the research, the funder and the wider opportunities for dissemination shown by the dissemination list and the strategic importance of the topic for Māori.

When there are particular strategic considerations, the research team will produce a publication or a specially printed report to illustrate aspects of the research findings. The latter has been found useful for capturing whānau stories, which can be a powerful way to communicate whānau outcomes, needs and aspirations visually and graphically.

As a research unit, Wai Research sits within the unique setting that is the Innovation Hub. Through this hub, we are able to work together and connect with other teams in the hub, each of which can play an important role in maximising the impact of the research dissemination, going outside the script of traditional research dissemination. We have several different approaches in producing and disseminating our research, not only to the funders, but out into the community and back to whānau.

There are a range of tools available to the research team which include social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, organisational websites, video and photo reporting, along with publications designed and produced through the Innovation Hub’s Brand and Design team. This range of methods helps to connect our research with the community on many different levels, to improve access for whānau to our research information. This method makes the research findings available on a timely basis in innovative ways, helping to break down barriers across generations and different settings.

An approach which presents an organisational report of our research is also useful when there are a potential wide range of stakeholders who might be interested in the research but are also involved in producing strategic policies or developing services which impact Māori health and wellbeing.

Publications provide powerful tools to support dissemination of findings at ministerial levels and conferences, both nationally and internationally, to influence current thinking, challenge our research views and attract further interest from research communities.

Overall, these approaches to dissemination allow for discussions and kōrero to occur in different forums and different levels of society leading to a variety of outcomes. Those outcomes might involve improvements in policy which influence funding decisions, but ultimately for Wai Research, in time, better outcomes for whānau.

Mā te rongo ka mōhio – through perception comes awareness
Mā te mōhio ka mārama – through awareness comes understanding
Mā te mārama ka mātau – through understanding comes knowledge
Mā te mātau ka ora – through knowledge comes wellbeing
PATHWAYS TO IMPACT:
ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE THROUGH POLICY

Dr Tanya Allport and Dr Sneha Lakhotia

Tanya (Te Āti Awa) is the Director of Wai-Atamai’s research, evaluation and policy team: Wai Research. Led by Sneha Lakhotia (Ngāti Īnia (India)), the policy function of the team is to take ‘on-the-ground’ research insights into the governmental policy-making space to ensure that the voices of Māori communities are represented at every level.

The Strength of Advocacy

Te Whānau o Waipareira has a long tradition of advocacy. From the very early days, the development of Waipareira was as much a response to the conditions that Urban Māori were facing as they made new, and often precarious, settlements in the city, as it was a way to shape the future of whānau within and beyond West Auckland. For Urban Māori, the personal has long been also the political. The history of Waipareira highlights that throughout the development of what began as a small movement of Māori individuals fighting for their rights as Māori, to what is now a large, pan-tribal multi-sectorial provider of services, with strategic and functional partnerships that reach far beyond West Auckland, advocacy has always gone hand-in-hand with that development.

In 2013 the Waipareira Trust Board strategically embedded advocacy within their new 25-year vision, ‘Whānau Future Makers – A 25-year Outlook’, highlighting and strategising the importance of lobbying for whānau wellbeing. The establishment of Wai-Atamai, Waipareira’s innovation hub, has taken on the challenge of looking at how advocacy can run across multiple platforms, engaging a myriad of sectors in various ways.

The establishment of Wai Research, Wai-Atamai’s research, evaluation and policy unit, has been a major step towards fulfilling the ambitions of the 25-year strategy. The creation of new evidence – the kind of evidence that is useful to West Auckland whānau – was seen not just to fill the existing knowledge gaps and to reclaim rangatiratanga over our own data, but was also the type of knowledge that would support advocacy going forward on an evidentially-based platform. As such, the research done within Te Whānau o Waipareira has been instrumental in providing the springboard from which to plunge into the potential murky waters of what is known as ‘Policy’.

The ‘Chicken and the Egg’ Dilemma – Who Influences Policy?

Policy, in a New Zealand governmental decision-making context, has been described as having the potential to be “the foundation of effective government decision making. It underpins the performance of the economy and the wellbeing of all New Zealanders.”

Policy, as it forms or informs laws and strategies at a governmental level, is thereby a vital mechanism for how New Zealand advances on the very issues that shape whānau wellbeing: from health to education, justice and social systems, to determining the running of government departments and its representatives. For policy to be relevant and intelligent, it has to have a firm relationship to research, in that policy needs to be grounded in evidence.

For us as researchers at Wai-Atamai, what this means is that ‘doing policy’ – which can be either responding to an existing or an emerging policy – is another form of disseminating whānau research. Tilley et al. remind us that when we think about how to make the most impact with our research, we need to reframe the idea of how we put the research out there to make it meaningful:

“Think ‘engagement’ not dissemination. We talk a lot about research ‘dissemination’, but this is one directional and communication is much broader; it’s about engagement and knowledge exchange.”
This is of particular importance as Te Whānau o Waipareira’s commitment to advocacy means making the voice of whānau heard. To bring the voice of whānau to the forefront in advocacy and via research means looking at how policy and research relate to each other. This is very much akin to the ‘chicken and the egg’ question, and has created some substantial debate within research. In terms of research versus policy impact, there are four distinct theories of how these two relate to each other:

• The first theory offers a ‘supply’ model of research-policy relations, focusing on how knowledge and ideas shape policy:
  
  \[ \text{Research} \rightarrow \text{Policy} \]

• The second theory points out that research is not independent of politics and policy, and proposes that political power shapes knowledge:
  
  \[ \text{Research} \leftrightarrow \text{Policy/Politics} \]

• The third theory suggests that research knowledge and policy/politics are linked through a mutually reinforcing relationship:
  
  \[ \text{Research} \rightarrow \text{Policy} \]

• The fourth theory goes a step further, and declares that there is no causality of one or the other – instead the two systems pick up only selective outputs or ideas from one another:
  
  \[ \text{Research} \leftrightarrow \text{Policy} \]

When looking at the competing theories of influence and impact, it is possible to see value in each of those models. The relationship between the spheres of influence is obviously a complex one, and it is beyond the scope of this article to argue for one over the other, but to say that the main point of the influence debate highlights that research and policy are intertwined.

What is of interest here, is that when we look at how to influence decision making ‘from-the-ground-up’ we can see that innovating around the different models is crucial. Without innovation – meaning being able to ‘get the message out’ in new, noticeable ways (which is done throughout Wai-Atamai’s various teams) – we run the risk of not being heard, not having whānau voices as part of the narratives that come across decision-makers’ desks. With the advent of the 2017 elected Labour Government’s focus on re-examining issues and policy across the board, the Wai-Atamai policy team has had various opportunities to be part of re-writing those narratives.

**Bringing Whānau Voices to Policy Makers**

Bringing about sustainable and lasting positive change has called for exploring all avenues to influence change. This implies innovation shepherded to develop expertise and knowledge of local contexts; to facilitate debate and discussions between key stakeholders; and to engage and foster bottom-up approaches, leveraging the voices of whānau and community to influence reforms. Wai Research is unique in its position – operating in an environment where leaders, policy makers and whānau intersect. It works at the interface between knowledge, policy and practice to influence change and impact.

Locally rooted and well-networked, Wai Research is well placed not only to conduct rigorous and critical research to fill the knowledge gaps, but also to advocate and influence change with research-informed policy. The meaning of ‘translational research’ has been covered by other articles in this journal, but for the purpose of engaging in policy reform, the team utilises the following strategies:

1. **Communication and dissemination** – informing government, policy makers and community on key issues to stir public debates.

2. **Engagement in policy process** – being a part of the complex system and processing and shaping change in policy.

3. **Direct advocacy** – advocating for implementation of specific measures and/or proposals to subsequently be adopted by the authority (local councils, government).

4. **Influence with new ideas** – bringing to the table innovative, creative and/or tailored solutions and ideas to reframe approaches and outlook to issues.

5. **Monitor and evaluate** – hold government, local bodies or other institutions accountable by monitoring the effectiveness and efficiency of programmes and policies.

With the recent changing of the political landscape, advocacy has meant focusing on ‘filling the gaps’ of traditional policy processes, where – more often than not – Māori voices have been silenced.

Here are some examples of how Wai-Atamai, through its research evidence and innovative focus on advocacy, has proactively participated in bringing whānau voices to governmental agendas:

**Child Poverty Reduction Bill**

Wai-Atamai’s policy team drew on research done by Wai Research around whānau poverty and debt to inform the Child Poverty Reduction Bill and Child Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Working with the Child Wellbeing Unit, whānau experiences were taken into account to reaffirm Crown obligations to the Treaty of Waitangi to ensure the inclusion and consideration of wellbeing of Māori children and their whānau, who are often subject to more complex and adverse factors over period/s of time as compared to others.
Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historic Abuse in State Care

The Wai-Atamai policy team were instrumental in informing the Royal Commission of Inquiry into historic abuse in state care, headed by Sir Anand Satyanand. Through written submission and through kanohi-ki-te-kanohi (face-to-face) meetings, research around whānau needs and experiences formed the basis on which to assert consideration of Māori-specific issues within the inquiry process.

National Mental Health Inquiry

Wai Research’s robust evidence outlining the experiences and systems in place for whānau facing mental health problems was shared and put on the table at the National Mental Health Inquiry. The research showcased the on-the-ground reality of the national issue and has been key to designing and informing new models of practice and programmes along with objective research towards Māori mental health. This policy work also trickled down to inform regional and community practices and models.

Government Living Standards Framework

A Māori wellbeing framework has been advocated to be recognised and synchronised with the Government Living Standards Framework, supporting the New Zealand Treasury vision to promote higher living standards for all New Zealanders. The current government framework fails to reflect the status of Māori as the indigenous population of New Zealand and as partners of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Reform of the State Sector Act

Recommendations were made to the Reform the State Sector Act, reflecting the interests and experiences of the community. An equitable and outcomes-focused lens, with considerations to Māori participation and service delivery, were among the significant recommendations put forward to the reform of the Act.

Whānau at the Centre

The raison d’être for a Social Innovation Hub is to serve as an important catalyst for ideas and action for the community. By using our own evidence from our research team, and through the strategic efforts of the policy team, we have been able to actively engage in the type of political, policy-based mechanisms from which communities – and Māori communities in particular – are so often excluded.

By being able to identify and capture underlying issues, stimulating public debate, bringing whānau voices to the table, broker ideas and offer creative yet practical and local solutions to tackle problems, we have been able to make a connection between research and policy. Reliant as they are on each other, and when evidence comes from the ground-up, the relationship is not mutually exclusive, but self-reinforcing. Without good evidence we will not have good policy – and without engaging from the private to public, from community to government, we will not have positive change for Māori.

The research, policy and advocacy strategies undertaken by Wai-Atamai present an inclusive and innovative platform and a guide – from a Māori world view – for collecting, analysing and using data for whānau wellbeing – whānau are at the centre. This sets an example of the array of efforts at multiple levels to influence change via research and policy for all Māori.

References

2 https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project
3 Research Excellence Framework (REF) impact toolkit Helen Tilley, Louise Ball, Caroline Cassidy March 2018
4 Rethinking policy ‘impact’: four models of research policy relations Christina Boswell & Katherine Smith
What is Social Innovation?

Innovation has been defined in various ways within the literature. However, common properties can be found within these various definitions including “being new, bringing about change, and having multiple stages” (Baregheh, Rowley, & Sambrook, 2009). The social context and interactions that happen within the process itself are important. The literature that looks at the development of innovation from a business viewpoint considers the main purpose of this process as competing and differentiating their business successfully in their marketplace (Baregheh, Rowley, & Sambrook, 2009, p. 1334). On the other hand, for philanthropic and non-for-profit organisations the aim of innovation is for a greater social goal, rather than for the business itself.

In a study of a health-IT innovation development process in the Auckland region, innovation was associated with the properties of “newness; change; providing values; having vision and innovators; ambiguity; and cost” (Safari Mehr, 2016). The purpose of undertaking an innovative development process to implement either a business or social vision is the same – to solve a problem. The vision can provide value to the end-users while incurring costs for the provider. The innovators are those who contribute to the development of a basic idea into something tangible. Hence, organisations and teams can evaluate their projects against these properties to check if they can be considered as innovations.

“Carrying either a business or social vision, innovation is to solve a problem.”

Social innovation is also a term that sometimes refers broadly to a special type of innovation that addresses unmet social needs (Mulgan, Ali, & Sanders, 2007). Some authors refer to it as a new ‘buzz word’ and others have highlighted the value behind it (Pol & Ville, 2009). Social innovation is to address those innovations that are not designed from a business point of view but to improve human living conditions (Pol & Ville, 2009). Business innovations are basically intended to make or increase profit, and can be either technological or organisational. However, social innovations are designed to improve quality and/or quantity of life for their targeted population.

This raises the question of how can we be truly innovative in the social sphere – or – do we have enough ingredients to make potent innovation?
Innovation through Outcomes Measurement within the Wai Research Team

The Outcome Measurement Team focuses on measurements of success from a whānau point of view. In order to see if our work qualifies as being an innovation, we tell the story of working within this small team, which is part of the wider Wai Research team within Wai-Atamai, and compare it with the properties of innovation described in the previous section.

Outcomes measurement is usually defined from an organisational perspective: How are we doing financially? What is the adoption rate of our services or products? Are we improving patients' hospitalisation rates? However, Te Whānau o Waipareira has taken a ground-up approach in defining what needs to be measured as outcomes of organisational services, which covers a range of health, education, justice and social services (Te Whānau o Waipareira, 2017).

This new approach is undertaken along with a new funding model called ‘commissioning for outcomes’, which emphasises clarifying the desired outcomes as the basis of funding services and measuring success to re-allocate funding accordingly (Te Pou Matakana, 2015). In order to draw a baseline for the desired outcomes of whānau, we have been asked to indicate their concerns and goals in their life, from across the country (Durie, Cooper, Grennell, Snively, & Tuaine, 2009). The result of this call for public opinion was collected through 22 hui and was analysed along with other sources of data from literature and health and social service providers to generate an evidence-based report. This report informed the creation of an outcomes framework developed by Sir Mason Durie (Te Pou Matakana, 2014). As a Whānau Ora service provider the Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework was adopted by our organisation and has been used across our outcomes measurement projects. Therefore, the process of defining success and measuring outcomes based on what whānau, our clients, think is a new approach among health and social service providers. This is the first check point that defines our work as an innovation process (Damanpour, 1991).

Properties of our Innovation

The overall aim for outcomes measurement projects in our team is derived from Te Pou Matakana’s (TPM) overall aim, to make sure: “whānau in the North Island will enjoy good health, experience economic wellbeing, be knowledgeable and well informed, be culturally secure, resilient, self-managing and able to participate fully in Te Ao Maori and in wider society” (Te Pou Matakana, 2014, p. 2). It indicates the focus of our work and how we measure success, which is to solve health, economic, social and cultural problems of whānau, rather than measuring organisational profit or competitive advantages in the market. This is an example of a social value creation process that is solving a problem through innovation, i.e. can be called social innovation.

The first ingredient (i.e. property) for our innovation is ready then, which is aiming to solve a problem.

An outcomes measurement approach requires the development of tools to measure outcomes, based on the frameworks previously mentioned. It is required to collect data and analyse it to measure changes in a whānau situation (whānau outcomes). Our team has supported the development of outcomes measurement tools for different TPM programmes including Collective Impact, Kaārahi and Whānau Direct. This is an iterative development process as the analysis of data can lead to refinement of the tools; moreover, changes in organisational policies and strategies would require revisiting these measurement tools and strategies.

In developing measures, we follow our social vision. Meaning that instead of focusing on the financial requirements or measuring outputs that might not provide any value for whānau or our service users, we aim to measure outcomes for whānau. Outcomes are about changes in knowledge, awareness, capacity, situation or behaviour of people as a result of using an organisation’s products or services. To measure success for whānau and see the impact of our services on their lives, we need to think about measuring the outcomes rather than the outputs of our activities. This was one of our support activities across TPM’s programmes where the development of logic models for their programme, which included defining all the activities, outputs, and medium-term to long-term outcomes that lead to the expected impact on whānau lives.

The Outcomes Measurement Team provided workshops to develop the capabilities of Whānau Ora providers in the North Island toward analysis and design of logic models for their current initiatives and therefore enabling them to define their path toward reaching long-term goals or whānau aspirations. This work was part of our team’s contribution in disseminating learnings from our experience toward mitigation of ambiguity, which is another property of innovative processes.

“Change is a pivotal part of our work, as we want to see and capture the change in whānau outcomes.”

In our attempt to move away from outputs and trying to connect outcomes to the final aim for whānau, we have benefited from the Social Return on Investment (SROI) tool/framework developed by Roberts Enterprise Development Fund (REDF). This framework defines how to measure social impact/value of social innovations rather than just focusing on financial return on investment. Being aware of the fact that not every aspect of health and wellbeing outcomes can be measured easily, we have followed the SROI approach to let whānau inform us about the value and impact of our services for them. In this measurement approach, the usual economic evaluations are combined with qualitative analysis to capture both socio-economic and environmental outcomes/impacts (Banke-Thomas, Madaj, Charles, & Van den Broek, 2015). The result is a ratio that indicates how much value was created from each dollar spent on the intervention/service that is under evaluation. This framework allows us to measure the changes relevant to whānau.
“Change is a pivotal part of our work, as we want to see and capture the change in whānau outcomes. This is the other property (ingredient) of our innovative work.”

Unpredictability is always part of our work as innovations are often chaotic and change is always ongoing until it is embedded as part of normal work (status quo). For instance, data collection can be seen as a continuous process that goes through refinement cycles based on our requirements analysis. The requirements are also not predefined as whānau perceptions of their priorities might change; moreover, our understanding of the existing resources, priorities and policies also change. The important point is to learn from the experience while we are developing our innovative tools and measures so that the whole movement is toward the overall vision. So, the next ingredient for our innovation is this iterative process.

Challenges

Similar to many other innovative projects, we have experienced challenges. But these challenges should be accepted as part of an innovation development process. From a leadership point of view, it is important to keep an eye on these challenges so that they do not become big conflicts that stifle innovation (Safari Mehr, 2016). These are some of the challenges for the Outcomes Measurement Team:

• Getting everyone on the same page, while ambiguity is an unavoidable property of innovation.
• Being able to feedback what has been learnt through data analysis, even if it is not what was expected. Finding out what does not work and the reason behind it, is a valuable learning experience that happens in most innovation development processes.
• Keeping up with the limitations of resources especially in not-for-profit organisations like ours, and where budgets are not fairly allocated in the health system.
• Doing business as usual and innovation development at the same time is another big challenge, as each requires a different model of work. As a small team in an innovative organisation, we need to manage finding new ways to respond to the changes required for measuring whānau outcomes while collaborating with internal and external stakeholders that requires following the existing rules and/or procedures.

At the end, it is all about whānau and all of us from different teams are passionate about making real changes in whānau lives. Therefore, whatever it takes and no matter what the challenges are, we all feel better when we feel positive outcomes are on the way.

References


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 Māori 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 motuhape. Rangatiratanga is also embedded into the evaluation process in terms of allowing Māori to shape their own processes. (whānau rangatiratanga – co-design/whānau 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.