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**Moeke-Pickering, T. and Nikora, L.W. (1995). Te Whiuwhiu o te Hau Maori Counselling Certificate Programme: Agency Placements and Supervision. Summary of and Evaluation. Unpublished report. Hamilton: Maori Studies Department, Waikato Polytechnic.**

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## **Background**

In 1994, the Head of the Maori Studies Department (MSD) at the Waikato Polytechnic and programmes committee commissioned an evaluation of practicum placements that were part of the Te Whiuwhiu o te Hau Maori Counselling Certificate programme (TWH). This paper begins with a brief overview of how practicum activities have evolved in the TWH programme, followed by a summary of the 1994 evaluation process and outcomes.

In 1991, a group of Maori people who work in the area of counselling requested that a Maori counselling programme be initiated and run by MSD. The Head of Department commissioned a needs assessment (Moeke-Pickering & Nikora, 1991) that confirmed claims, that a Maori counselling programme was needed. A community hui was initiated by MSD to report the findings of the needs assessment and to allow for oral submissions. In total, 35 people attended the community hui and validated the development and establishment of the Maori counselling programme.

In 1992, 18 students participated in a six month pilot-course. The pilot was evaluated (Nikora, 1993), revised and extended to a full-time (32 week) programme. The new full-time programme was offered in 1993 and again in 1994. In December of 1993, the programme was approved and accredited by the New Zealand Polytechnic under delegated authority of the NZ Qualifications Authority.

## **Evolution of Practicum Placements**

The certificate for the Te Whiuwhiu o te Hau programme is an "A" Endorsed Certificate as defined and standardised by the New Zealand Council for Education and Training in the Social Services (NZCETSS). A requirement of the certificate is that students are expected to complete a practicum placement under the guidance of a supervisor.

Students undertaking the 1992 pilot programme (from July to December 1992) were required to complete two 6-week placements. The purpose of the placements was to give students supervised experience in applying knowledge gained from the programme to activities in the placement agency. Placements were to be completed:

- a. firstly, in the students 'own work settings', and

- b. secondly, in a work setting that was not their usual place of work.

Students had to meet four requirements. Firstly, to complete a placement plan and contract negotiated between the student and the agency, and approved by the programme Tutor. Secondly, students were required to attend regular group consultation times with the programme Tutor. Completion of a placement report was the third requirement. The last requirement was that the Agency complete an evaluation of the students' performance which also included information in regard to attendance.

In light of recommendations from evaluation activities (Nikora, 1993) and the experience of having offered the programme once, the following changes were made for the 1993 programme:

- a. During the selection process all students were informed of how to prepare to meet placement requirements.
- b. A Practicum Handbook (1993) was developed incorporated programme expectations, assessment requirements and clear guidelines for participating parties.
- c. A policy was made indicating that placement agencies would not be remunerated for time/costs incurred through hosting a student placement.
- d. Students were required to undertake one placement of 220 hours, over seven months in an agency that could provide supervision.

Although no formal evaluation was completed of the 1993 programme, feedback from students and agencies stimulated further refinements to practicum activities. These refinements are described below:

### **Refining the Practicum Handbook**

The practicum handbook for the 1994 year provided a refinement of programme expectations, activities, content and guidelines for the supervision relationship and assessment. The 1993 handbook provided more of an overview of practicums as opposed to specific expectations required by the programme and of participants and agencies.

### **Practicum Module**

A Practicum Module consisting of 6 days (35 teaching hours) was formally structured into the programme. The module was divided into three 2-day workshops offered at the beginning, mid-year and at the end of the practicum period. Practicum module content included practicum preparation, progress and reflection.

### **Practicum Assessment Workbook**

An assessment workbook that clearly defined module content, learning outcomes, performance criteria and assessment requirements was prepared for the Practicum

Module and corresponded with progressions that students were expected to make in their placements.

### **RELATED DEVELOPMENTS:**

When this current evaluation was commissioned, the Te Whiuwhiu o te Hau Supervision module was being designed. It was expected that students could credit the TWH supervision module towards the Certificate in Professional Supervision offered by the Department of Community and Continuing Education at the Waikato Polytechnic. The TWH supervision module was expected to be offered in 1995.

In addition, the Te Whiuwhiu o te Hau Diploma programme was also being designed and expected to be offered 1996. The Diploma would be open to students who had completed the TWH certificate programme and would include extensive counselling and supervised practise.

To summarise, as a result of working to change and improve placements, the 1994 practicums required that students complete a total of 220 practicum hours, with the primary focus of placement activities being counselling. Practicums begin in April and end in October, giving students a total of 22 weeks to complete placement activities. In addition, students are required to attend all the placement workshops, complete assessment, and maintain their own records of hours worked, time absent, supervision and training workshops attended. The programme expects of an agency to provide regular supervision and complete an evaluation form at the end of the practicum period.

The TWH programmes committee recognised that the participation of placement agencies and supervisors in preparing students in their roles as Maori counsellors was vital. Previous evaluations and feedback from students had highlighted the need for clearly defined expectations and guidelines, sufficient time to allow for the development of skills amongst other issues. However, to ensure that efficient and effective pathways for placements were being established further evaluations were important.

### **EVALUATION PROCESS**

#### **Aims**

The major aim of the evaluation was to identify those characteristics of a practicum placement that will assist the Programmes Committee to select a potentially successful placement agency prior to the placement of course participants in an agency. Through the evaluation process, questions relating to two primary areas were considered. They were:

- a. the suitability of the practicum placement settings. For example, what is the staff and resource base? Is there a person available who can supervise counselling training in the agency?

- b. the learning and other processes that make practicums more or less successful (i.e. the expectations of students in the programme and how these processes match the expectations of the students).

### **Process:**

Six TWH students who had completed or were currently undertaking a placement; and six people who were members of agencies based in the Hamilton and Waikato region who had participated in supervising placements, were interviewed.

Of the students, three had completed placements in the 1993 programme and three were currently in the 1994 programme. Among participants from agencies, three had supervised students from the 1993 programme and three were currently supervising students in the current programme. Four of the six agencies that participated in this research, are based in Hamilton. The other two are based in Te Awamutu and Huntly. Those agencies interviewed include; Te Whakaruruhau - Maori Women's Refuge; Maatua Whangai - Huntly and Hamilton; Health Waikato; Hei Maunga Hei Kakahu - Te Awamutu; and the Hamilton Abuse Intervention Programme.

In collaboration with the Programmes Committee an interview schedule was developed. The schedule consisted of nine open-ended questions and examined the following themes.

1. Agency benefits of having a placement
2. Agency disadvantages for having a placement
3. Skills, tasks or experiences required for students to develop prior to placements
4. Policy or ethical standards students need to know before engaging in placements
5. Improvements to ensure assessment of student progress is accurate
6. How is agency supervision provided
7. Agency supervision improvements
8. Suggested training areas for the proposed Supervision Module

A summary of the primary findings that resulted from data analysis is included in the following section.

## **FINDINGS**

From the information collected, three major characteristics in determining a potentially successful practicum were identified.

### **Agencies - providing opportunities for student development**

It is important to determine early on whether an agency can expose the student to the necessary counselling experience for students to meet the requirements of the TWH programme. Participants who were interviewed described a number of issues that could be addressed prior to placements commencing. Some of the primary issues included:

- Ensuring that the proposed supervisor has sufficient time available to provide the necessary supervision, guidance and monitoring to students, over and above their normal activities.
- Ensuring that the agency and supervisor are sufficiently informed of student skills and knowledge areas to allow confidence in the students' capacity to engage in and efficiently complete tasks.
- Inquiring of agencies as to restrictions that may inhibit learning opportunities for students. The issue of client consenting to the presence of a student can cause frustration and an absence of client contact for the student.

In addition to knowing the extent to which agencies are able and prepared for providing learning opportunities, students can enhance their placement experience by gathering information to orientate them to the agency prior to their placement commencing. In having this information, students would be better prepared and able to integrate themselves into the day to day functioning of the agency. Orientation information includes:

- General information on the history and development of the agency
- The philosophy, aims and objectives of the agency
- Expectations about professional conduct
- Ethical requirements (eg., Client, staff and telephone safety procedures)

### **Clear expectations and guidelines**

It is important to provide both students and agencies with information that will enable the efficient achievement of placement goals. Although it is important to spell out programme expectations and to provide written guidelines, it is just as important to provide regular tutor contact with students and agencies, for the same purpose, in turn enhancing the likelihood of a successful placement. It is the role of the TWH tutor to clarify for both student and agency, the expectations of the programme. Some of the following processes could be engaged in by the TWH tutor to enhance the nature and clarity of information provided to students and agencies.

- Hold a hui of likely participating agencies and supervisors prior to placements commencing to inform and discuss with them TWH expectations, placement goals, assessment requirements etc. In this way, areas of difficulty might be collaboratively discussed and strategies developed to overcome them.
- Encourage students to actively participate in formulating their placement contract and the structure of their supervision in their placement.
- Over the duration of the placement, that the tutor maintain a relationship with agency supervisors to monitor the learning of the student and the progress of assessment activities. By the tutor arranging to meet with agency supervisors areas of difficulty, confusion or debate might be openly discussed and clarified.

The design and development of the TWH supervision module appears timely with those participants in this evaluation identifying a number of possible training areas that would

assist in enhancing the nature of supervision for students. These areas could also contribute to the establishment and clarification of placement expectations and guidelines. Areas for training included:

- Maintaining supervision through ensuring supervisor 'wellness'.
- Enhancing the skills and techniques of supervisors (e.g., trust building; time management; providing guidance and direction; setting and achieving goals).
- Enhancing Maori perspectives and processes in supervision.
- Clarifying the expectations, responsibilities and skills of a supervisor.

### **Improvements to Assessment**

Suggestions made by student participants for improving assessment called for the incorporation of 'reflective' and 'skills based' assessment.

Reflective assessment would require students to critically reflect on the activities, tasks and processes that they had engaged in to identify areas of confidence and areas where they could further improve their performance. Given that students conduct a wide variety of duties, responsibilities and activities within agencies that are not assessed in any specific manner by the programme the utilisation of reflective assessment processes could serve to both acknowledge and enhance these areas of activity.

With respect to skills based assessment, it was suggested that the programme develop a list of skills that students were expected to develop. The utility of this approach might be further refined through students developing their own personal skills enhancement plan that identified skills already developed, and focussed both the student and placement supervisor on activities that would enhance the development of additional skills within the placement setting. In addition, development of compatible assessment procedures in tandem with tools such as a skills enhancement plan would also establish clear goals and standards against which to assess the progress of the student.

### **Summary**

In summary, from the information collected, three major characteristics in determining a potentially successful practicum were identified. Firstly, the importance of determining early on whether an agency can expose the student to the necessary counselling experience that enables students to meet the requirements of the course. Secondly, the importance of exposing students to information that enable them to efficiently achieve practicum placement goals. Thirdly, the need to utilise both reflective and skills based assessment to assess the development of counselling skills, as well as the completion of tasks and duties that are required of students. Further information was gleaned about the research participants' perspectives on supervision procedures, practicum contracts, benefits of having a practicum placement and suggested training areas for the proposed TWH supervision module.

## References

Moeke-Pickering, T. & Nikora, L. W. (1991). Need for a Maori Counselling Programme to be offered by the Maori Studies Department of the Waikato Polytechnic.  
Unpublished report. Hamilton: Maori Studies Department, Waikato Polytechnic.

Nikora, L. W. (1993). Evaluation of the Te Whiuwhiu o te Hau Pilot programme.  
Unpublished report. Hamilton: Maori Studies Department, Waikato Polytechnic.

## Footnotes

1 The full evaluation report is available on request to the Maori Studies Department, Waikato Polytechnic, PB. Hamilton, Aotearoa/New Zealand. Inquiries about this article should be made to the Taima Moeke-Pickering, University of Waikato, Psychology Dept, PB 3105, Hamilton.