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Navigating the evaluation space between schools and ERO in a transformative system

A thesis
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For the children of Aotearoa.

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to provide the reader with an example of the knowledge, practice and structures needed to effect change within the New Zealand education system in moving transformatively toward equity and excellence. This research is centred within the government organisation of the Education Review Office (ERO) which has recently changed its approach to evaluation in response to a review of the Tomorrows School's education policy and education provision in New Zealand.

In this study, evaluators who have participated in the Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning (PPBL) speak to their experiences of culturally responsive evaluation in partnership with school leaders. PPBL challenges participants to understand the role of culturally responsive practices in system transformation. Recent government policy and strategies aimed at promoting equity within education are linked and connected within the context of the research. This thesis provides one example of how a government organisation has enacted a power sharing and partnership approach intended to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The voices within the research narrate their experience of change within this government organisation and the wider education system.

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Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua.

I walk backward into the future with my eyes fixed on my past.

This whakataukī grounds me. Many people have influenced my values and experiences. Time is fluid and learning is constant, the knowledge I gain will continue to change and adapt as ideas, perspectives and experiences continue to shape the world around me as I listen to the wisdom of others.

Firstly, thank you to the people who contributed to this research. I acknowledge your openness, honesty, and trust. It has been my privilege to work with all of you and I have strived to honour your voice and contributions. To the organisation of ERO, I thank you for your support in this research and the courage with which you undertook to move away from Western underpinnings thus providing the platform for this thesis.

Mere, my deepest appreciation for your guidance and patience. The way in which you value, question and encourage those around you into new understandings embodies ako and manaaki. That you included me in your life's work is something I will forever be grateful for. Ngā mihi mahana kia koe.

Toby, your unconditional support of whatever life choices I make is much appreciated. Knowing you are always on my team and that you always 'have my back' means the world to me. Arohanui.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not represent the views of the Education Review Office.

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INTRODUCTION

Having worked in education for more than twenty-five years and being engaged in professional learning with Poutama Pounamu for the last several years, it has become clear to me that our education system urgently needs change. This research sets out to understand the churn of change from within a government organisation tasked with a role to play in improving educational outcomes centred on equity for Māori. Equity requires the rebalancing of a system that has disproportionally not performed for Māori learners while at the same time benefitting non-Māori. Therefore this thesis focuses on the move toward a culturally responsive approach to enacting the intent of government policies that strive to rebalance societal outcomes with and for Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand. The research seeks to understand the components needed to successfully enact change toward equity in education through the lens of evaluation.

This thesis is underpinned by a response to the following challenge made by activists in 1970's New Zealand and quoted by Consedine and Consedine (2012) as:

> First, learn your own history, cultural identity and cultural values; second, take responsibility for your own lack of awareness of New Zealand colonial history, particularly the implications of the Treaty of Waitangi; and third, create a process that begins to challenge the majority culture of which you are a member (p. 21).

This statement has become a personal mantra. Participants within this research are aware of and taking steps toward a different way of being within their evaluation roles. This research contributes to understanding the opportunities and challenges of enacting government policy and strategy through culturally responsive evaluation within a transformative education system.

Poutama Pounamu is an organisation hosted by Waikato University and provides professional learning that seeks to enlighten participants about the power structures within a colonised society and empower people to enact a response within their sphere of influence. In this example of research, the influence is positioned within school evaluation. The research seeks to understand what knowledge, practice and

conditions are needed to successfully enact the changes aspired to within New Zealand society.

As a researcher I come from a unique position within the education system. At the time of undertaking the research, I worked for a government organisation which designed an approach to evaluation that disrupted dominant power dynamics; a position where professional learning and practice became complementary. An opportunity for a culturally responsive approach to evaluation within the education system is the motivation behind this thesis.

The research questions posed are:

- What was learned from participating in the Poutama Pounamu blended learning about the relationships of power in a colonised society?
- What impact has this learning had on my own approach to evaluation as well as the approach of a sample of my colleagues with whom I subsequently worked?
- How **might** these learnings about relational power, together with education policy and a partnership approach to evaluation inform the role of an evaluator to support system transformation?

The purpose of this research is to share the voices of a group of colleagues working within ERO who understand the impact of power within the New Zealand education system. This understanding, alongside a more culturally responsive model of evaluation, positions participants within an opportunity of disruption of the status quo of power held and imposed by the crown. It is expected that by listening to participants' experiences within a system focused on equity, evidence of how change is supported or challenged will crystalise. An understanding of building trusting relationships and working responsively alongside individual school contexts will explore the potential for change in relation to intended government outcomes.

This thesis is arranged into five chapters. In the introduction the purpose for the research is presented and the research questions posed. Chapter one explores relevant literature to provide background and justification for the research. Chapter two outlines the theoretical underpinnings of the research methodology and

explains the methods and processes that are used in conducting the research. In chapter three the research findings are shared as a collaborative story. Chapter four discusses the findings and implications of the research. Finally, in chapter five the findings of the research are summarised and recommendations that have arisen from the research are presented.

CHAPTER ONE LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Current government policy in New Zealand is leading change. Increasingly there is a shared social vision of biculturalism and co-governance as intended by the original indigenous signatories of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the founding document of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Returning to the challenge shared by Robert Consedine of Māori activists to the coloniser, the third challenge is now at a pivotal point and government is visibly working to "create a process that begins to challenge the majority culture of which you are a member" (Consedine & Consedine, 2012, p.21).

For the purpose of this literature review, it is important to back map and understand what has led to this current context; the forces that have acted and the research that has led to a more commonly understood perspective of what needs to change, why, and how to go about this. Therefore, the power of a colonised system will be explored together with research that is pushing back to inform transformation toward realising the promises made in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The actions needed to disrupt the status quo of a society built since colonisation, by a dominant culture of Eurocentric values and perspectives will be integral to the literature.

Education as a lever for change will be explored in light of the recent review of the education system and recommendations made for improvement as outlined in the 2018, Ministry of Education publication *Our Schooling Futures: stronger together = whiria ngā kura tūātinitini*. Resulting government priorities and strategies will be explored. As a component of the wider education system, the role of evaluation will be presented as a potential support for schooling improvement and improved educational outcomes within the New Zealand education system. This will be related back to expected changes from The Education and Training Act (2020) and the activation of the Ministry of Education's National Education Learning Priorities (2020).

As this research is being conducted within a specific space in the education system, the purpose will be to come to an understanding of what role evaluation can play in

'navigating the evaluation space between schools and ERO', connecting back to the research questions presented in the introduction.

Historical context

The signing of The Treaty of Waitangi and Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840 led to the indigenous Māori people of New Zealand becoming members of the British commonwealth, and the birth of *Aotearoa* (the indigenous Māori name of New Zealand), as a colonised society. The Treaty recorded the conditions under which non-Māori could remain in the country they had named New Zealand (Mulholland et al., 2010). In the time prior to the deliberate colonisation of New Zealand by the British in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, there are examples of relationships between Māori and European settlers that were positive and mutually beneficial (Jones & Jenkins, 2013). Historical narratives share that prior to the signing of te Tiriti o Waitangi, Māori were very much in power and thriving in industry and trade (King, 2004). To support this contention Ward (2015) suggests that "today, many Māori look back on that time as something of a golden age in European-Māori relations, a time when the chiefs were substantially in control, admitting settlers on their terms" (p.9).

In the 1830s various colonial power struggles began to occur, both with European governments and business opportunists. Immigration was increasing, power and control of New Zealand was contested by the interests of the British, French and American, particularly in relation to the acquisition of land (King, 2004). In 1835, James Busby, in response to a French attempt at setting up an independent state in Northland, liaised with 34 Māori chiefs north of the Hauraki *rohe* (area of land or territory) to declare their authority over their lands and, *He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni:* The Declaration of Independence, was signed in 1835. The declaration acknowledged *mana* (authority) and *rangatiratanga* (chiefly autonomy and ownership), of Māori over their lands (Orange, 2015). The declaration was made to the British Crown which agreed to recognise the country's independence and to extend crown protection (Mutu, 2011).

Despite this declaration, a treaty was still deemed desirable due to the lawlessness that was taking hold in New Zealand amongst the settlers, and the need for stability in the interests of British subjects and Māori (King, 2004). The British could see the need for sovereignty if they were to have access to trade and land for settlers (Orange, 2015). Interestingly, there are records of debate as to whether a treaty was necessary to claim sovereignty, it could be argued that in the minds of the British, sovereignty was a foregone conclusion. In his narration of history, Ward (2015) reflects that "the British were acting as if they had governmental authority in New Zealand before the Treaty was even drafted" (p.13). In the eyes of the British a transferal of power was needed.

This attitude was founded on a platform of the "international law of colonialism, which is known today as the 'Doctrine of Discovery'" and was "used by European nations to justify their desires to acquire riches and empires around the world" (Miller, 2019, p. 35). These declarations were made by churches in Europe in the 15th Century with the intent of allowing European explorers to 'discover' and make claim to lands inhabited by indigenous peoples on behalf of the sovereignty of the time (Berryman & Haydon-Howard, 2023).

By the early 19th century, this attitude had softened slightly in that history shows William Hobson was sent to New Zealand from London in 1839 with:

> …instructions to take the constitutional steps necessary to establish a British colony. He was told to negotiate a voluntary transfer of sovereignty from Māori to British Crown so there might be no doubt under international law about the validity of the annexation that would follow (King, 2004, p.156).

Margaret Mutu articulates that what was communicated in te Tiriti was very different to the British intent above. The message to Māori being "the Queen of England wished there to be peace and good order between her subjects and the Māori people, and to achieve that she needed to control her own Pākehā subjects" (Mutu, 2010, p.35); referring to both those settlers who were currently in New Zealand, and those who would come after.

Following the signing of the Treaty, a colonial settler government was established based on relationships between Māori and the British who had very different

conceptions of political power (Duncan, 2007). What was not communicated throughout the process of writing and signing te Tiriti o Waitangi was that Māori would be losing their power or authority over their territories and people, which as history shows (Orange, 2015), was taken by the British Crown. Arguably this was a foregone conclusion given the English and European history of colonisation and their self-proclaimed laws supporting the 'discovery' of lands.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed in 1840 alongside the Treaty of Waitangi, a version in *te reo* (the language) Māori, and a version in English. Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed by hundreds of Māori while a much lesser number signed the English version. History demonstrates that British sovereignty was imposed with the British and Māori operating from different texts and different world views (Consedine & Consedine, 2012). Much debate has ensued resulting from the anomalies in the two documents (Duncan, 2007). Regardless of debate, history reflects the taking of power by the British colonisers.

Following the signing of the Treaties, the British set about establishing government systems and laws that would suit the purposes of land acquisition and the settlement of British subjects in New Zealand (Spoonley, 1984). The New Zealand Company exerted pressure in taking control of land and played a leading role in dishonouring the promises made within the Treaties. The arrival of George Grey from 1846 onward saw legislation processes become increasingly anti-Māori and anti-Treaty. History reflects the deliberate over-riding of the Treaty agreements (Consedine & Consedine, 2012). Mutu (2019) unpacks the power structures that ensued and describes the coloniser as myth makers who implemented illegitimate laws that "claimed that the British and their institutions were absolutely and unquestionably supreme" (Charters, 2019; Jackson, 2019, as cited in Mutu, 2019, p.8). In the present day, more in society are acknowledging this history, power imbalance and positioning for political change and social justice.

A changing reality

With the United Nations' adoption of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) in 2007, the debate as to whose version of the Treaty or Te Tiriti is foundational, should end. With New Zealand's acceptance of UNDRIP, the

English version of the Treaty is now defunct with acknowledgement that historical documentation in indigenous languages would supersede that of any colonial influence, especially if contradictory messages had resulted between the existing versions. *He Puapua* by the Ministry for Māori Development (2019) released a document outlining the New Zealand response to UNDRIP. In the opening pages it states:

> He puapua means "a break", which usually refers to a break in the waves. Here, it refers to the breaking of the usual political and societal norms and approaches. We hope that the breaking of a wave will represent a breakthrough where Aotearoa's constitution is rooted in Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (p.i).

Current time sees New Zealand's Labour led government planning for systems' transformation toward social justice. A vision of a power sharing partnership between Māori and non-Māori as reflected by the He Puapua statement above. This is reflective of the original intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi which was "seen as a charter for power sharing in the decision-making processes of this country" rather than what history reflects in the "domination by Pakeha and the marginalisation of the Maori people" (Bishop 1996, p. 12). The discussion and intent to create change has been occurring for decades and as Gardiner (1998) stated almost 40 years ago: "public policy is likely to be more successful in improving Maori welfare if it reflects the holistic Maori ethos, rather than the Western view that compartmentalises activities and functions for administrative convenience" (p.65).

The above quote demonstrates an understanding of differing epistemologies within New Zealand. The challenge is to effect change through social policy by recognising the systems as they currently are. In understanding that Western paradigms dominate New Zealand systems and having a clear vision of shifting the power toward indigenisation, a more balanced state of society that enacts the intent of social justice is possible.

Systems of Power

The fabric of New Zealand society as underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi, would promote a vision of genuine partnership and biculturalism. Consedine and Consedine (2012) explain that the Treaty is what allows all cultures other than Māori to settle in New Zealand. However, they add that since the settlers became the majority in New Zealand, the promises of the Treaty have not been upheld. In relation to the concept of partnership within Te Tiriti o Waitangi, MacDonald (2018) cites O'Sullivan, (2007) as describing Māori as 'junior partners' because of the unequal sharing of power in relation to the Treaty intent. In terms of the education system, MacDonald (2018) discusses the current situation being "that Māori interests are side-lined in a settler-colonial education system that places whiteness at the centre" (p.191). The effects of colonisation continue to result in statistics of inequity for Māori across society (Marriott & Alinaghi, 2021). When looking at various government funded systems across society, a move toward social justice in New Zealand must rely upon something different moving forward. The crown recognises the need to honour the promises of the Treaty and this is reflected at a government level by *Te Puni Kōkiri* (Ministry of Māori Development) (2022). Any shift in society toward equity in relation to Te Tiriti o Waitangi must address the current power imbalances that perpetuate a belief of cultural superiority of some and the perception of inferiority in others (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

To understand the present day and governmental intent to transform systems for equity, the history of systems in New Zealand, and the power held within them must first be explored and understood. Spoonley et al. (1984) explain that "for the entire 19th century, power over the realm of the economy, finance, land, commerce, the media, judicial appointments and Parliament, was monopolized by a small clique of pakeha male entrepreneurs" (p.32), setting in place the conditions for systems that continue to control power within New Zealand society. They go on to say that "within this governmental system there was no place for things Maori. It was a pakeha institution whose structures, procedures, values, priorities and personnel were unashamedly monocultural" (p.32).

What is clearly recognisable is that New Zealand society is underpinned by systems created to deliberately privilege the coloniser and marginalise the Māori people of

New Zealand (Bishop & Glynn, 2003). Mutu (2019) asserts that Māori have always known the laws and government systems were constructed to maintain wealth, power and privilege for the coloniser. History reflects the systematic use of Crown imposed government policy to acquire land and promote the culture, language and values of the European settlers over those of the indigenous Māori people of New Zealand. Potter and Jackson (2018) discuss an example of present-day constitutional reform intended to restore the original state of sovereignty, *rangatiratanga* to address "the frustration with what are called Māori perspectives or interests so often being ignored by the Crown and the difficulty in getting any real expression of rangatiratanga recognised" (p.1).

Looking back the cause of inequity in New Zealand is visible through power structures imposed by the Crown, and current statistics for Māori illustrate these effects. The statistics within the New Zealand Health system, Justice system and Education system are resultant of these deliberate acts of colonisation (O'Malley et al., 2011). The inequity plays out with disparate outcomes for the marginalised, indigenous minority culture, the Māori people of New Zealand (Rashbrooke, 2013).

Reports from the 1960s onward (Hunn, 1961) speak to inequity within New Zealand where wealth, land ownership and education are working disproportionately better for the coloniser than for Māori. The current situation in New Zealand reflects Health, Justice and Education systems that are all under immense pressure and not serving the people of New Zealand equally or equitably (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). In particular, the government systems are underserving Māori (Exeter, et al., 2017) and therefore, not honouring the country's founding document, te Tiriti o Waitangi. New Zealand society now finds itself in a time of redress and government policies aim to address societal inequities moving forward. The following section explores some of what must be broken down to create the space for something better.

Decolonising systems of power

Mutu (2019) articulates the concept of settling colonisation through a process of constitutional reform that ensures Māori are positioned to make decisions for Māori; and the Crown is positioned to make decisions for non-Māori. The Treaty

partners would then work together in a relational space as equals on matters of mutual interest. By creating this form of constitutional relationship, power balance would be restored creating a space for Māori and non-Māori to live together more peacefully and in harmony, which was the original intended purpose of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Decolonisation is a more commonly known phrase in New Zealand. Moana Jackson (as cited in Krishnan, 2020) has argued that decolonisation is the reclaiming of the right of Indigenous peoples to once again govern themselves in their own lands. Many Māori activists and scholars are holding the Crown to account in relation to giving effect to article two of Te Tiriti, *tino rangatiratanga* (self-determination) in New Zealand society. Simultaneously, government documents are shifting toward ensuring the voices of *iwi* (tribes) and *whānau* (familial relationships) Māori are heard in recognition of articles within Te Tiriti.

The acknowledgement of the need for deconstruction of certain elements of society are reflected in government documents. An example of this within an education context is the first of the National Education Learning Priority (NELPs) objectives which is to "ensure places of learning are safe, inclusive and free from racism, discrimination and bullying" (MOE, 2020). For this goal to be realised, the first step is to understand and acknowledge the current situation. There are many examples of research into the current state of education (Auditor-General, 2013; Māori Advisory and Reference Group, 2016; Taskforce, 2018). This research underpins the goals of the recently released NELPs.

With current shifts in government policy, the need to understand and address racism, discrimination, and the impacts of colonisation across society are prioritised. To achieve these intentions, we need to understand the issues that need to be addressed and deconstructed before aspirations, visions and plans can be realised. When researching who the current systems were established to benefit and how to go about rebalancing systemic power, race is an obvious thread to explore.

The Racial Contract

Mills (2022) explores race and articulates a concept of a 'Racial Contract' whereby the social reality of being white "is a cognitive model that precludes self-

transparency and genuine understanding of social realities" (p.18). The attitudes underpinning the Doctrine of Discovery further permeate today's society in the privileging of whiteness. Doane and Bonilla-Silva (2003) argue that whites are at the top of a racialised social system that is supported by institutions that demonstrate white privilege. The idea of this racial contract also supports the reality of a meritocracy in a society dominated by Western values. The belief that anyone can work hard and therefore succeed promotes and validates those who have gained power positions within the system. Meritocracy promotes the understanding that those in power positions have achieved their status purely by their own merit; that no privilege is at play (McNamee et al. 2013). Employment statistics within the Public Services Commission (2021) support and illustrate this reality and reflect New Zealand Europeans being employed at disproportionately higher rates in leadership positions within government organisations. This current situation and the wider implications of insufficient change have been acknowledged by Te Puni Kōkiri (2022) who state that "despite significant investments and programmes implemented by governments over the last several decades" there remain significant challenges for Māori whānau, and that "it is predicted that in 20 years' time these challenges will continue unless there is a shift in the policies, services and investments implemented by government to support whānau" (para. 6 & 7).

In 2022 workforce data published by the Public Services Commission reflect statistics beginning to show improvement of diversity within the public sector. Deliberate strategies recognise and respond to a system established to privilege the coloniser and an awareness of the presence of institutional racism. Action is being taken to disrupt the status quo of inequity within government systems that are a direct result of the colonial structures in New Zealand.

Institutional Racism

Milne (2017) gives a description of institutional racism through her analogy of 'white spaces'. The understanding that ethnic and cultural identities are expected to correspond with the dominant cultural norms, and that for those of the dominant culture, there is a lack of understanding of this lived reality for minority cultures. Institutional racism is defined by Consedine and Consedine (2012) as:

> …when a society perpetuates the world view and values of the dominant group through institutional policies, practices and procedures that advance their interests and serve to disadvantage other racial/ethnic groups. Members of the dominant culture often deny the existence of institutional racism because they do not experience it (p. 134).

As illustrated in this quote, institutional racism is generally unintended, it is not visible to those who are administering the systems, as the system is one based on their own cultural and societal values, therefore it is unrecognisable to those who have not deliberately sought to understand it or, who are not being actively disadvantaged by it. In becoming conscious of institutional racism, an opportunity is created to deconstruct this norm. Milne (2017) discusses the importance of co-constructing a different way forward, but that this is not possible if professionals in the system haven't sought to understand this first.

Currently many within government systems are seeking to understand; the public service have published expectations around this (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2022). A range of professional learning opportunities underpinned by relevant research are available. Statistics related to the number of Māori employed in government leadership positions demonstrate that changes are slow to have meaningful impact within the public service (Ministry of Māori Development, 2022), across society, and for the purpose of this thesis, within education (Auditor General, 2016).

Alongside the acknowledgement of the existence of racial privilege and institutional racism, and the need to deconstruct these systemic realities, it is also important to explore and acknowledge whether society in general has had open access to much of this information or whether parts have been, or are being, silenced.

Silencing

Silencing is defined by MacDonald (2019) as the muting of race within the education system. Silencing could also be interpreted as a "response to pressures associated with being positioned in a white norm" (p.39). MacDonald's research unpacks the experiences of a group of Māori in pushing back and opening up spaces

to articulate and enact their cultural identity and the challenges of doing so within the education system context. Attention is focused on the ongoing colonial constraints to marginalised cultures within a white norm and the choices that individuals need to make within a systemic context as a form of self-preservation. Silencing when viewed within the context of a hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1968) and in relation to the unnoticed aspects of a hidden curriculum, the three factors of crowds, praise, and power within a system (as cited in Portelli, 1993, p. 345) must be considered. It is possible to see that the unofficial institutional expectations give rise to what is valued and what is not through crowds (majority), praise (what is valued) and power (who makes the decisions). An implicit or invisible curriculum (Portelli, 1993) is visible to those who do not fit within the white spaces (Milne, 2017); the minority are aware of its existence because they have their identity and culture silenced or suppressed within this curriculum. These people have learned that to be successful they must follow the "unspoken, informal agreement that supports colonial rule over indigenous peoples" (MacDonald, 2019, p. 39). Silencing, together with a hidden curriculum promotes a meritocracy that privileges those who navigate what is, and thus are promoted into positions of power (Castilla, 2008).

Education has the potential to be a key driver of change within a society. As Mulholland and Tawhai (2010) conclude, education "has a crucial role to play in Aotearoa, New Zealand's future. This includes in part facilitating the reconstruction of where citizenship, equality and Indigenous rights intersect in the minds of the Aotearoa citizenry" (p.300). It is expressed that the opportunity to leverage this role is now. If equality and indigenous rights are to become part of the collective consciousness with the intent to reimagine and act on an equitable social vision, "deliberately breaking the frame to create space for a new one" is key (Kidman, 2011, p. 27).

Foundations for Systemic Change

Currently the Education System is underpinned by the education policy *Tomorrow's Schools* implemented in 1989. Education inequity for Māori has been

an ongoing discussion since the publication of the Hunn report in 1960. More recently in 2016, the office of the Auditor and Controller General published a summary report of education for Māori. In this report the implementation of the Ka Hikitia policy was again reviewed. Ka Hikitia was launched in 2008 with the intent of addressing equity for Māori. In 2013 the Auditor-General had the following to say:

> The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) introduced Ka Hikitia slowly and unsteadily. Confused communication about who was intended to deliver Ka Hikitia, unclear roles and responsibilities in the Ministry, poor planning, poor programme and project management, and ineffective communication with schools have meant that action to put Ka Hikitia into effect was not given the intended priority. As a result the Ministry's introduction of Ka Hikitia has not been as effective as it could have been (p.7).

In 2016 the *Summary of our Education for Māori reports* again surmised that Ka Hikitia was a "missed opportunity" (p.19) and commented on the "public discussion about the transformation of education in New Zealand" (p.13) and the hope the information within the most recent report would be considered in the transformational space of the education system.

Two years later, a taskforce was appointed in April of 2018 at the request of the education minister at the time, Chris Hipkins. The purpose of the Taskforce was to review the current New Zealand education system and establish whether there was a need for change. Simultaneously the Ministry of Education hosted two education summits to lay the foundation for the future of learning in Aotearoa over the next 30 years. Essential within this was hearing the voices of groups previously unheard; students, whānau, Māori, Pacifica, people with disabilities and employers were explicitly emphasised. The Tomorrow's School Independent Taskforce undertook a comprehensive review of the education system and published *Our Schooling Futures: Stronger Together = Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātinitini* in 2018. Within the document, findings and recommendations are shared in relation to the system in its entirety. The Taskforce (2018) reported:

> We know the system is not working for a large number of Māori and have been reminded about the fundamental importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in

> this country. Under the promises explicit in this document we have the obligation to redress past and current inequalities of provision for Māori children and young people. We understand Te Tiriti o Waitangi is grounded in a foundational bicultural relationship between iwi Māori and the Crown. Pākehā and Tauiwi (new migrants) sit together under the Crown (p.9).

The publication of this document provided the disruption to the status quo of the current inequitable education system and provided the impetus to decolonise the education system. The MOE responded to this report with the *Supporting All Schools to Succeed Reform of the Tomorrow's Schools system,* this was published in November 2019. In relation to the Taskforce report the MOE (2019) stated:

> The report focuses strongly on the need to improve equity and excellence for all learners/ākonga, particularly those whose needs are not currently being met. It also calls for the school system to be founded on the rights of the child and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and points to the need for localised support and decision making to build more trust within the system (p. 9).

Another key review that was occurred prior to the Taskforce report was conducted by the office of the Children's Commissioner and the School Trustees Association (2018). This report identified six key insights to support schools and education agencies to understand what needs to change to make schooling more positive. These organisations conjointly published *Education matters to me: Key insights – A starting point for the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities.* These learning priorities are intended to be "grounded in the needs and lived experiences of all tamariki and rangatahi in Aotearoa" (2018, p.3).

The six insights are outlined and unpacked alongside recommendations in the report. The government responded to this research with the National Education Learning Priorities (2020). The recommendations are made in plain language and clearly state from a child's perspective what needs to change if as a country, we are to provide a world class education system that is equitable, and therefore is intended to give effect to the intent of te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The messages are clear, the research has been done. Both the Tomorrows School's Taskforce Report and *Education matters to me: Key insights* have provided a call

to action and the government has responded with 'Supporting All Schools to Succeed', the NELPs, and a number of legislative and strategic changes are planned to make a difference for learners and give effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi. The 2020 amendments to the Education and Training Act (2020) state in section 127 that one of the primary objectives of school boards of trustees is to give effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi. The MOE (2020) explain this for school boards as the obligation to: "ensure its plans, policies and local curriculum reflect local tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori" and to take "all reasonable steps to make instruction available in tikanga Māori and te reo Māori" (para. 5). The intent of these amendments is to achieve equitable outcomes for Māori.

Aligned with this change in education law are several other strategies and policies. The National Education Learning Priorities (NELPs) are expected to be visible and linked with school strategic plans from 2023. The NELPs give effect to the Education and Training Act section 127. At an implementation level, the Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum (MOE, 2022) provides a platform to enact the teaching of local histories, narratives and mātauranga Māori. The documents to effect changes are in place and they are backed by New Zealand research.

Berryman and Haydon-Howard (2023) ask whether documenting and saying that we must enact Te Tiriti o Waitangi is enough. When looking back at the launch and subsequent relaunching of *Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success 2008-2012* (MOE, 2008), despite the documentation and intent being high quality, the execution of implementation was "originally flawed by a slow and unsteady introduction by the Ministry of Education. As a result, the introduction of Ka Hikitia was not as effective as it could have been" (Controller and Auditor-General, 2016, p.19).

The implementation of government policy and how it is led and prioritised is of utmost importance to whether it will have the desired effect. The systems currently in place have been based on "monocultural assumptions and practices within the institutions of general New Zealand culture" (Ritchie, 1992, p. 8). Te Puni Kokiri (2022) acknowledge that there have been significant investments by government, but that evidence shows over the past decades challenges continue for Māori whānau and wellbeing. Strategic plans are in place to make improvements across the public sectors. Multiple systems need transformation as per the

recommendations made in recent reviews and research. All of these recommendations reiterate the need to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The research shows that the time to act is now, the legislation and documentation need to be enacted to activate change. A key social driver of change sits within education. As O'Regan (2011) says:

> If we as a society take the bold steps now that are required to create the necessary social and political change within our education institutions, then we will have gone a considerable way towards restoring the "voice" to Māori within education that they have long been denied (p. 44).

Pivotal to the current opportunity for transformation is knowledge, understanding and deliberate acts of leadership. "The challenge lies in ensuring that this shift happens in a way that empowers all those engaged to develop their thinking, and then to have that development effectively reflected in their practice" (O'Regan, 2011, p.43). For leaders within the education system, this statement is a call to action in providing the conditions for capability building in support of those tasked with change.

The opportunity for the disruption of the current system has been provided. Deliberate de-colonisation of the status quo of institutional racism, white dominance and silencing promoting meritocracy must be recognised by those in positions of power. Realities must be understood, and strategic action taken if there is to be systemic change.

The Education System – Activating Transformative Change

The process of transformative change is complex and requires transformative leadership. The MOE (2019) acknowledges:

> The changes to further strengthen our education system will be significant. They will require ongoing investment of both time and resource and will need to be managed in a coherent and connected way over the next five to ten years (p. 6).

Supporting All Schools to Succeed Reform of the Tomorrow's Schools system (MOE, 2019) outlines a number of actions to be taken by the MOE to address and support the needs within the education system.

Given all the evidence that shows Te Tiriti o Waitangi has not been honoured, and that equity for Māori in New Zealand society will provide redress, what process do our systems need to move through to achieve this aspiration?

Conscientisation

The people tasked with implementing change first require knowledge and understanding of perpetuating a system that is not working for one of the Tiriti partners.

Consedine and Consedine (2012) shared the voice of Māori who in the 1970s laid down the challenge to Pākehā during a time of escalating activism. They articulated the need for non-Māori to learn their own history, cultural identity and effect change with the intent of addressing and redressing Treaty promises to ensure social justice. Freire (2015) speaks of the positivity and strength of spirit needed to balance the scales of society. First, one must understand the power imbalance. Freire explains that for a process of emancipation to begin, one must go through a process of 'conscientisation', a process of understanding that differing epistemological viewpoints exist. One needs to understand that experiences and cultural norms create values and bias. That decisions made, understandings, knowledge are based on a person's experience of the world. In New Zealand the dominant culture is largely Caucasian and descended from British colonisers. As Consedine and Consedine explain:

> In New Zealand white privilege evolved in colonial times where structures were put in place that were designed to meet the needs of Pakeha settlers. Immigration, assimilation and integration policies directly benefited Pakeha and marginalised Maori, yet these systemic structural benefits remain invisible to most Pakeha (2012, p. 200).

Conscientisation is the process of making the invisible, visible. Changing the lens through which the world is viewed, or at least being aware that there are other lenses

through which the world may be viewed. In the instance of this research, all participants were exposed to material intended to conscientise through their learning and participation in the PPBL process (Maisey, 2023), or through being part of an *ākonga* (learning) group in these same processes.

Knowing – Poutama Pounamu

Freire (2015) asserts that by "looking critically at the world in a dialogical encounter with others" given the right tools and circumstances an "individual can gradually perceive personal and social reality as perception of that reality, and deal critically with it" (p. 24). Richie (1992) when discussing the aspiration of societal change in New Zealand states "we will not easily achieve an authentic bicultural society unless everyone who wants to be involved does go through their own personal process of growth in understanding, and finds their own personal credo" (p. 10). Time and time again Māori have called to non-Māori to learn the history of New Zealand, understand the part we all must play in society and to honour the promises made by the crown at the inception of a bicultural Aotearoa. Many universities and professional learning providers are offering support and opportunities to understand colonisation and its effect.

Poutama Pounamu have worked as an iterative research and development organisation since 1995 (Berryman, 2008). They offer teachers, leaders and a range of agencies within the education system an opportunity to engage in learning that seeks to conscientise, a process by which one comes to know and understand a wider reality. The PPBL programme explores critical theory, research and history as well as opportunities to engage in dialogic settings with other learners to deeply reflect on the social and political forces that shape society (Maisey, 2022). By drawing attention to these power structures Freire (2015) explains that the world becomes one that is changeable by people understanding, critically reflecting on, and constructing theories to adjust to their reality.

Poutama Pounamu also leads learners through theories of change and the components that are needed to transform specific settings following the need for disruption of the status quo. The key levers for transformation are critical

leadership, evidence informed decision making and clear, strategic and prioritised outcomes (Berryman et al., 2014).

Transforming the education system

At a government level, all the necessary current policy and strategic documentation is available (Education Training Act, 2020; NELPs, 2020; Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia, 2020; Aotearoa New Zealand Histories, 2023). The Taskforce report (Taskforce, 2018) gave the information needed to disrupt the status quo of an education system that is serving the Treaty partners of New Zealand inequitably. However, the system is powerful and designed to pull people back toward a status quo with a myriad of procedures, culture and attitudes that are comfortable situated within the dominant cultural norms (Mutu, 2019).

For this research, the lens is narrowed into a focus on ERO, one of the supporting agencies identified within the Tomorrow's Schools Taskforce review. ERO is one of the mechanisms within the wider education system tasked with adapting and addressing its part in system transformation.

The Education Review Office is a Crown agency that provides external evaluation of New Zealand schools and early childhood institutions. ERO also provides research into aspects of the education system (ERO, n.d.). In relation to ERO, the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce (Taskforce, 2018) stated that currently "ERO does not have the right drivers and approaches to improve the system" (p.121). The report explains a range of issues identified as part of the review and goes on to articulate an alternative model of school evaluation as:

> We firmly believe that reviewers should be working as fellow schooling professionals with teachers/kaiako and principals/tumuaki on a collaborative and ongoing basis. This would build a trusting relationship where progress and lack of progress can be both discussed openly, and without fear. The process should be external, but organic. Issues would be raised by reviewers or staff and addressed in a timely fashion as they arise. This relationship and process based approach should be supportive, with help and advice on hand as necessary (p. 123).

The above statement implies a shift from a Western top-down approach to evaluation toward an increasingly culturally responsive and relational approach. The statement provides the disruption necessary to move forward differently. To provide some context, it is important to explore the roots of evaluation and its purpose.

Evaluation

Evaluation in New Zealand is largely underpinned by theorists who emerged from the American academy in the second half of the twentieth century (Alkin, 2004). Schwandt (2015) explains evaluation as being an "organizational phenomenon, embedded in policies and practices of governments, in public institutions like schools" (p. 1). He goes on to define evaluators as people who practice in systematic and disciplined ways intended to provide information to governments based on a set of values and knowledge. This definition illustrates perspectives of the dominant Western cultural perspectives. Alkin and Christie (2023) acknowledge that the previous editions of their evaluation theory work, "featured contributors [who] were predominantly Western, White and male" (p.4). Their more recent work seeks to increase a diversity of approaches to evaluation as a result by using critical reflection to deliberately advance evaluation to "be increasingly imaginative, encouraging of diversity, and ultimately, in service of equity" (Alkin & Christie, 2023, p.5). Evaluation, if not thought of critically, has the potential to perpetuate unintentional harm such as institutional racism.

Cram et al. (2018) provide examples of a consciously indigenised approach to evaluation and state in relation to their intent to do better that, "we continue to practice Kaupapa Māori evaluation, just as we continue to reflect on whether we are part of a solution, or part of the problem. Only our relations, including our peers, can help us respond to this query" (p.73).

Schwandt (2015) also explains evaluation as being the "act of judging the value, merit, worth, or significance of things" (p.1). He articulates that evaluative thinking requires excellence in thought and that this must be systematically cultivated. Within the hegemony of Pākehā over Māori within New Zealand society, values are prioritised for the cultural norms of the Pākehā mainstream. Giving effect to Te

Tiriti o Waitangi has the potential to restore the balance of power within New Zealand society. The Education Review Office (2018) states "ERO's commitment to giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi is fundamental to a consideration of a culturally and contextually responsive approach to evaluation in Aotearoa New Zealand" (p.10). The intent to work within a culturally responsive approach is clearly stated with consideration that ERO ensures they give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Kaupapa Māori evaluation

In bringing evaluation to a New Zealand context, Cram, Pipi and Paipa (2018) explain an evaluation approach from a *Kaupapa* (agenda) Māori perspective. In Kaupapa Māori evaluation although the methods used are largely based on Western evaluation practice, the methodology and epistemology underpinning the approach are Māori.

As with Kaupapa Māori research, Kaupapa Māori evaluation is underpinned by critical theory and the identified need to ensure evaluation is not 'done to' participants from Māori communities as has been the experience in the past. In order to move evaluation into a culturally safe space, it is explained by Cram et al. (2018), that "as Māori evaluators we work in a liminal space, that is, a space in between a Māori worldview and a colonial system of government" (p. 64).

Kaupapa Māori evaluation draws connections with Kaupapa Māori and critical theories, however, as Cram et al. (2018) articulate, they are brokering between the Western and indigenous world views when working in an evaluation space. By approaching evaluation from a Māori world view while making use of Western research methods, evaluators can act as intermediaries between communities. They can implement evaluative programmes created by Māori for Māori, while considering government expectations for evidence and information, and using outcomes to inform policy decisions.

To frame this work, Cram et al. (2018) name the following eight principles:

- *Tino Rangatiratanga – The self-determination principle*
- *Taonga Tuku Iho – The cultural aspirations principle*

- *Ako – the culturally preferred pedagogy principal*
- *Kia Piki Ake i Ngā Raruraru o te Kāinga – the socio-economic mediation principle*
- *Whānau – the extended family structure principle*
- *Kaupapa – The collective philosophy principle*
- *Te Tiriti o Waitangi – affirming the rights of Māori as tangata whenua and citizens*
- *Āta – encompassing the building and maintaining of respectful relationships* (p.68).

These principles align with Māori service provision and are "striving for positive transformation in the experiences and positioning of Māori. Both are about bringing Māori in from the margins of society by seeking the transformation of our society" (Cram et al., 2018, p. 68). In terms of how evaluation could play a part in restoring power balance and deliberately creating the space for the values of a Māori world view moving forward in New Zealand society, Cram shares a framework that should be considered in relation to developing culturally responsive relationships within a New Zealand evaluation context.

Culturally Responsive Evaluation

Given ERO state an intent to provide a culturally responsive approach to evaluation that honours the intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, it is important to define how this might manifest in practice. When articulating a culturally responsive approach to evaluation, Chouinard and Cram (2019) describe:

> Cultural responsiveness in evaluation requires kinetic and creative thinking, a shift away from the methodological allure (and safety?) of the Western canon. We need to listen to community voices and perspectives and have the courage to choose a pathway that may very well take us beyond what we know and understand and that may require us to cross a border into territory that is more familiar to those with whom we work. The courage we need to do this comes from our knowing that we will not be alone on this journey, since it will be fuelled by growing trust relationships and by the

> mutual sharing of knowledge, skills, and expertise. In this sense, we need to share control of the "steering wheel" and open ourselves to the enlightenment that can be gained from others' ways of being and knowing (p.138).

A culturally responsive approach to evaluation reflects a power sharing paradigm whereby any and all epistemological viewpoints and contexts should have the opportunity to thrive. A particular method informed by indigenous evaluation practice is shared by Brown and Di Lallo (2020). The method is defined as 'Talking Circles' whereby all participants are given equal voice and space within the evaluation process and ensuring a process that "increases voice, decreases invisibility, and does not privilege one worldview or version of reality over another" (p.367). This method would appear complementary to the intent within the NELPs to ensure the breakdown of racism and ensure iwi, hapū and whānau have their voices privileged and are informing the context for localised curriculum that includes histories and narratives from a Māori perspective (MOE, 2022).

In drawing another comparison between culturally responsive evaluation and government policy, Ka Hikitia (MOE, 2020) approaches education from a strength-based approach for Māori. Thomas and Parsons (2017) explain that a culturally responsive evaluator works from a strength-based approach. Opportunities are identified and evaluation is focused on the strengths communities and culture bring to a context rather than focusing on deficits and perceived gaps. This approach to evaluation is promoting social justice by ensuring the interests of the marginalised are heard. A goal of a strength-based evaluation approach is to create knowledge that is more valid and reliable than what has been the historical experience of marginalised groups of people and cultures.

A culturally responsive approach to evaluating in schools, built on a foundation of trusting relationships, has the potential to be a driver that connects the intent of the NELPs, Education and Training Act (2020), Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia and the Aotearoa New Zealand History curriculum through a process of developmental evaluation. Identifying what is being enacted and what is working by adopting "a strength-based approach to evaluation design. Strength-based approaches focus on opportunities rather than on problems, emphasising what can be done rather than

what cannot be done" (Thomas & Parsons, 2017, p.9). An approach focused on strengths reflects the intent of Ka Hikitia across all phases (2008; 2013; 2020).

Social Justice

A primary purpose of evaluation is the pursuit of social justice. Alkin and Christie (2023) describe the "three "roots" of the evaluation theory tree" as being "social accountability, systematic social inquiry, and epistemology" (p.12). They go on to explain that social accountability is about improving programmes and society; that systematic social inquiry provides a structure through which evaluation can uphold the quality of process and epistemology, that is the philosophical thinking around whose knowledge and values are at the core of evaluation practice.

In the context of New Zealand, if social justice is to be realised, the underpinning driver toward equity can come from giving effect to the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Recognising this and saying so are the first steps. Achieving real change is a mountain to climb, the progress being made and the learnings from this process of change is the space for evaluation. Evaluation provides society the opportunity to understand how well the actions taken are moving a society towards social justice (Schwandt, 2015).

A Knot within Society

At the time of Tā Tipene O'Regan being named 'New Zealander of the Year', he reflected on his life and contributions to New Zealand society. In an interview, speaking of the position of New Zealand in relation to Te Tiriti he shared that we have "come an enormous distance in our mutual understanding." He went on to say "that we still have a knot in our country's physiology" (One News, 2022). He speaks of the Treaty being not only for Māori, but that for new people coming to New Zealand it provides an agreement through which people are able to be here. He acknowledges the Treaty as a foundational agreement. He goes on to speak of mutual cultural knowledge and understanding being the underpinning of respect for

each other to move forward into a culturally diverse future for the country (One News, 2022).

Claudia Orange speaks to how we can move ahead using the Treaty as a framework to move forward from. In a video interview, Claudia says that in the public service we need greater open-mindedness and "let's be frank, a change of mindset and that's not going to happen easily" (Bridget Williams Books talks, 2022).

In thinking about Tā Tipene's knot in the physiology of New Zealand Society, and the change in mindset needed to move forward in Claudia's statement, the question emerges, is the system the knot? And are the people within it who hold power the people whose mindsets need to shift? If so, what is needed for this to occur with enough depth to effect decision making and leadership? Dame Claudia Orange goes on to say that this shift usually occurs through personal experience, at a wānanga or something similar.

For participants of the PPBL, this is the "changing hearts and minds" (Maisey, 2022), it is the conscientisation that Friere speaks of, and it is the personal experience referred to by Dame Claudia Orange. In looking at the education system, and in the interests of this research, evaluation within education, what is the knot, and what will it take to unravel it?

The Education Review Office

New Zealand Public Service "supports the Government to implement its policies and deliver services for New Zealanders. United by a spirit of service, public servants work every day to achieve better outcomes for people in Aotearoa New Zealand" (Public Service, 2023). ERO is the public service tasked with evaluating the provision of education. ERO (2021) provides evaluation "that informs and facilitates improvement in early learning services, kōhanga reo, puna kōhungahunga, kura and schools" (para. 1). ERO states its commitment to Māori learners and whānau by saying:

> …our vision is grounded in our ambition for equity and excellence for all Māori learners. We strive to influence and support the education system to create inclusive environments where Māori enjoy and achieve education success as Māori. We aim to support whānau, hapū and iwi in achieving their aspirations for their tamariki (para. 3).

ERO is positioned within the education system to provide an external lens as to the quality of education provision provided by individual schools and early childhood centres in both Māori and English medium settings. ERO also provides systemwide research and information to the public and to government ministers.

In relation to the recent disruption of the education system provided by *Our Schooling Futures: Stronger Together – Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātinitini* (Taskforce, 2018), ERO was described as not having the right "drivers and approaches to improve the system" (p.121). The report describes issues voiced by schools that detracted from the value of the process. Schools also voiced examples of useful practices including the "long-term relationships-based methodologies used by the Māori medium ERO team who are seen to be highly collaborative and developmental in their approach" (p.121). The recommendations made by the Taskforce are based on developing collaborative relationships with school professionals that allow for robust and honest discussions relating to what progress is or is not being made in relation to schools plans for improvement (Taskforce, 2018). These discussions would be based on evidence gathered through evaluative processes.

These recommendations align with a culturally responsive approach to evaluation. As Chouinard and Cram (2019) observe, there are "challenges of practicing culturally responsive approaches to evaluation amidst economic, political, social, and cultural challenges. There is no simple checklist or eight-step recipe for implementing a culturally responsive practice" (p. 135). As with any new way of working or operating, wayfinding is necessary (Spiller et. al. 2015). In 2021, ERO embarked on a new approach to evaluation that began with a pilot, gathered feedback from schools and was iterative in response to information gathered in the development of the approach.

A new approach – Te Ara Huarau

The Tomorrows School's Taskforce review was followed closely by the societal disruption caused by Covid 19. Leadership within ERO responded to both events as a catalyst for change. An internal document was produced following an extensive review process, known as '*The High Level Operating Model'.* Taking a wayfinding leadership approach (Spiller et al., 2015) 15 evaluation partners from across Aotearoa were put forward to 'prototype' a new way of working. The key elements of change were based on the values or concepts of *whanaungatanga* (relationships from a Māori world view), *mahitahi* (working together collaboratively) and *poutokomanawa* (integrity, strength of purpose). ERO's intent was to move into a courageous new space of working responsively in partnership with schools, and evaluation was intended to become a key driver of schooling improvement using a developmental, strengths-based and culturally responsive approach. The prototype iterated into the approach now named *Te Ara Huarau,* an approach described as "a more developmental approach to evaluation, supporting each school's improvement over time" (ERO, 2021, para. 1). This approach was described as "building a professional evaluation relationship over time", connecting with schools' strategic planning and utilising evaluation to inform planning for improvement. Working in these ways the approach "reflects individual schools' context, culture and needs" (ERO, 2021, para.6).

Te Ara Huarau – the metaphor

The evaluation approach *Te Ara Huarau* is positioned within a Māori world view and aligns with the cultivation of *kumara* (sweet potato). Growing kumara was a co-operative practice requiring the input of many people and whānau. The metaphor speaks to the role of *kaumātua* (elders) in advising around conditions for success so that the outcome will be a fruitful harvest. "Te Ara Huarau recognises the need to understand the local context and the conditions required for a successful and fruitful "harvest" – and working together for the good of people" (ERO, 2021, para. 12). In this statement an intent to move toward an increasingly indigenised approach to evaluation is visible.

Professional capability building

ERO published the strategy *He Taura Here Tangata (*the braided threads that bind us) in 2021. This document is guided by Te Tiriti o Waitangi and provides a vision and strategies to build capability of staff within ERO toward the three key areas of "becoming a bilingual organisation", and "to be a bicultural, inclusive organisation, valuing Te Ao Māori" and "to be an organisation that builds purposeful, authentic, trusting, collaborative partnerships with whānau, hapū and iwi" (ERO, 2022, p.2). This would be achieved by building organisational "capability evaluation practice, partnerships with whānau and the sector will support the goal of Māori enjoying education success as Māori" (ERO, 2022, p.2).

A number of professional capability building opportunities have been offered to ERO staff in line with public service goals (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2022) and with ERO's own strategy He Taura Here Tangata. One of the opportunities offered was participation in PPBL (Maisey, 2022) for a number of ERO evaluators in both the 2020 and 2021 years. It is within this space that this research is positioned, to shine a light on what is possible when history is known, a different way is understood, and the conditions are in place to implement theory into practice.

Conclusion

When understanding the history of New Zealand and the society that has been shaped by the forces of colonisation, it is possible to see the evolution of the systems we rely on for quality of life. Research demonstrates an acknowledgment of the power imbalance within these systems and is clearly evident in the inequitable statistics between the colonists and the Māori people of New Zealand (O'Malley et. al. 2011). Māori have always resisted and held fast to the promises made within te Tiriti o Waitangi as the platform for which non-Māori were able to settle in New Zealand; and the agreement that ensured safety and equity for all (Mutu, 2019). In the past fifty years, Māori have been proactive in the research, education and public arenas calling for change focused on the guarantees assured within te Tiriti o Waitangi; and redress to balance and improve societal outcomes in New Zealand. More recently, government has increasingly indigenised its approach to policy and

the research underpinning strategic change is increasingly informed by Māori voice and Māori led research.

New Zealand society now sits upon a precipice whereby the theory, the intent and aspects of practice are positioned to transform society to one that moves ever closer to the intent of te Tiriti o Waitangi. As Wally Penetito reflected over a decade ago "something important is happening in New Zealand today in relations between indigenous (Maori) and European (Pakeha) New Zealanders. Some kind of ambiguous force seems to be operating that is close at hand, yet not quite within reach" (in Banks (ed.), 2009, p.288). Ten years on, this force is increasingly articulated by the crown. It now falls to our leaders within government and governmental systems to recognise the opportunities, acknowledge and deconstruct the history of harmful structures into a transformative space that will realise the aspirations of both Treaty partners in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Models of what is possible sit within Māori organisations, as Mason Durie says "they apply a Māori lens over their work, others don't apply a Māori lens so much as a Māori idea, now and then" (Te Karere, 2022). Penetito challenges society to collaborate and find "truly creative and imaginary solution(s) when we learn to make better use of the 'spaces between'" (O'Malley et.al, 2011. p. 6). This thesis explores one example of what is possible in a transformative space within the education system. With knowledge, understanding and the will to do better in the space between ERO and schools, there is an opportunity for social justice.

CHAPTER TWO METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

Research methodology refers to the process by which research questions are answered and knowledge is gained (Cresswell, 2012). The question relevant to methodology selection is, whose knowledge? Russell Bishop (1999) questions what knowledge has arisen from research in a New Zealand context, and who this knowledge has served. Commonly known Western methodologies have historically valued the knowledge, power and cultural norms of the researcher and his or her agenda over the minority cultures of those being researched (Smith, 2015). This research is being conducted, and is positioned within the space of the New Zealand education system, a system that is currently producing inequitable outcomes for the indigenous Māori people of New Zealand as outlined in the recent extensive schooling review of Tomorrows Schools (Taskforce, 2018). Bishop and Glynn (1999), state that "educational researchers in Aotearoa/New Zealand have developed a tradition of research where research concerns and agendas are determined by the dominant colonising culture" (p. 168). Walker (2003) "challenges researchers to reject a colonial epistemological paradigm and instead meaningfully integrate multiple ways of knowing within research protocols" (as cited in Berryman et al., 2013, p. 3). This research deliberately considers relationships of power and how the application of methodology will be reflective of power sharing between the researcher and participants.

For the purpose of this research, the methodology has been selected to ensure the deliberate modelling of power sharing, respectful and mana enhancing relationships, the removal of power and domination of one set of values (that of the researcher), over another (that of the research participants). In this chapter, research methodology and methods will be outlined that reflect research underpinned by the intent to present information that is as free from restrictions of power and bias as is possible. The methodology for this research will demonstrate the deliberate

modelling of values and concepts that underpin Te Tiriti o Waitangi, particularly that of *ōritetanga* (equality) whereby equal value is recognised for both people(s) in a partnership.

In this chapter, explanation as to the research methodology, methods and process of inquiry into the research questions will be presented. Positionality of participants and the researcher will be shared, as will the research procedure. The data analysis used will be described and presented with the intent of providing clarity of process as to how the findings were arrived upon.

Methodology

For the purpose of this research a culturally responsive approach has been selected by the researcher with the intent of following a process that models power sharing relationships. Berryman, SooHoo and Nevin (2013) define culturally responsive methodology as "the conjoined work of both the researcher and the participant(s) of carving out a liberatory research pathway toward mutual respect and freedom from domination" (p. 3). As a researcher who is within a government organisation, and whose participants are colleagues, it is of the highest importance to know where power lies, to be conscious and reflective of this, and to do all that is possible to mitigate power structures within the research.

Culturally responsive research methodology provides an alternative approach to the more commonly known Western informed research practices that position the researcher and participants in a hegemonic relationship valuing one epistemological perspective over others (Bishop, 2008). Culturally responsive methodology tries to acknowledge and respect all epistemological viewpoints and endeavours to provide the researcher with a frame that constantly acknowledges and reflects upon the researcher's power, intent and bias within the research process (Berryman et al., 2013). Through the promotion of co-construction of the research process and shared ownership of the research, the methodology strongly centres the importance of relationships as the key to co-constructing the research data. Culturally responsive

methodology demands high levels of critical reflection and awareness of the researcher and the context in which the research is being undertaken.

Culturally responsive methodology signals the intent to model an inclusive and participatory way forward in the research space. Critical theories will often underpin emancipatory actions taken by marginalised peoples. In a New Zealand context this relates to the indigenous Māori people of New Zealand and the promotion of more equitable outcomes (MOE, n.d.). Culturally responsive methodology deliberately questions and challenges power structures on multiple levels of dominance and marginalisation. Within this research context the lens is applied to that of the researcher and participants; that of employee and employer; and at a national level, that of the signatories of both language versions of Te Tiriti o Waitangi - the crown and the indigenous tribes of New Zealand. Culturally responsive methodology holds at its core the acknowledgement of, and value for, all people's epistemological viewpoints and ways of knowing (Pasque & Alexander, 2022). It is with these concepts at the centre that this research will be undertaken in culturally responsive and responsible ways.

Berryman et al. (2013) explain the importance of responsive dialogic interactions in the research space. A 'space between' is described where new knowledge can be conjointly developed and emerge. The research methodology and methods selected for this research are intended to honour this relational space between, where through conversation, realisations and new understandings can be recognised. At another layer, all participants in this research are working in a space between. The space between societal status quo of disparate social outcomes, in this case specifically relating to education; and the vision of a bicultural nation founded on the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. What is happening 'in between' to contribute to education system transformation? It is the intent of the researcher through culturally responsive methodology to lift out stories that speak in and to this space.

The valuing of voices and cultural perspectives in culturally responsive research design are articulated by Berryman, SooHoo and Nevin as "considered essential in the research design but also the lives of the researchers, as both sides bring their collective resources and well-being together to construct a process of relevant and significant meaning making" (2013, p.5). Culturally responsive methodology is

inclusive of the knowledge and perspectives of both the participants and the researcher, the ability to acknowledge and examine all perspectives as knowledge is co-constructed is integral to the research process.

In consideration of how to move forward ensuring a disruption to the status quo of traditional Western research methods, modelling relationships reflective of the power sharing partnerships intended within the Te Tiriti o Waitangi through research, is one way for the researcher to take personal responsibility for a different way forward within the education system and is a deliberate choice. Consedine and Consedine (2012) explain this personal responsibility as:

> We can reflect on our own behaviour and attitudes and freely choose whether we need to make changes in our personal and professional lives or in our thoughts and actions regarding the issues confronting New Zealand today. We can take responsibility by being open to change in our places of work, by exercising a willingness to find and accept new ways of functioning that recognises and honour cultural diversity (pp.182-183).

If dominant cultural discourses in New Zealand society are to be broken down, those who know a way to model and enact another way, should. The quote above relates to a working context, however this can be recognised and demonstrated in multiple layers. In this instance it relates to both the relationships between the researcher and participants as work colleagues within the education system, and also of the relationship between the researcher and the participant in a research context using culturally responsive methodology.

Insider

In relation to who should conduct research within communities, Bishop (1999) discusses the concept of positioning within the research, the importance of motivation and who will benefit from the process. This gives rise to consideration of positionality of the researcher and whether or not s/he is an 'insider', someone of the community, or an 'outsider', someone who is outside the context of the research. Insiders are generally known and trusted by the people the research will affect and are respectful of the impact of the research. In Western research the

objectivity of outsider positioning is said to maintain greater researcher impartiality and less interference. In contrast to this Smith (2021) unpacks indigenous research that authentically voices lived experiences from within communities and specifically counteracts the 'objectivity' of an outsider perspective. By researching from within "knowledges and cultures [that] have been silenced or misrepresented, ridiculed or condemned in academic and popular discourses" (Smith, 2021, p.22) are given power and voice through research from the inside.

The context of this research is very focused on specific experiential and employment criteria, it is centred within a governmental evaluative body, and within the education system. Both the researcher and participants are employed within this context, in this instance the researcher is very much an insider in the research. Personal accountability sits with the researcher in ensuring respect for the integrity and mana of the organisation, all research participants who collectively work for the organisation, and the group and individual reputations of all involved.

Inherent in the context of this research are relationships of power surrounding the Education Review Office, which is administered by the state sector, and a governmental department very much entrenched in the current societal power structures that have led to inequity in New Zealand society. The very power that needs to be shared to give effect to the intent of Te Tiriti is found within the system on which this research sits. It is my intent as the researcher that the need to acknowledge and share power throughout the research, by co-constructing findings while respecting the integrity of the research process, by ensuring robust examination and acknowledgement of the evidence gathered and analysed, can be fore fronted using culturally responsive methodology.

Frames and Framing

It is acknowledged that the researcher brings experiences, values and perspectives to the research. It is important in the analysis of data gathered that these frames are acknowledged, explored and planned for. Grbich (2013) explains that "recognition, acknowledgement and exposure of the frames that are dominating both your view of reality and your interpretation of texts are clearly necessary" (p.18) and goes on to say that frames will also distort and effect the interpretation of data. Bringing this

back to culturally responsive methodology, this is acknowledged and seen as valuable to the research. The researcher and participants bring who they are to the research, their lived experience is what is of interest and will inform the findings. In a culturally responsive approach, researcher experience and knowledge is recognised as of value and integral to the research process. Berryman, SooHoo and Nevin (2013) explain that unlike more Western approaches to research methodology, a culturally responsive approach acknowledges insider knowledge with depth rather than being "glossed over by most qualitative researchers, given their position of requiring the qualitative researcher to expose his/her biases" (p.18).

The Position and Power of the Researcher

The nature of research is such that knowledge is being sought by centring on a set of research questions and their potential responses. The questions themselves highlight the interest, curiosity and potential bias of the researcher. The research must go in a certain direction to be able to gather sufficient data to speak to or answer the research questions. In using culturally responsive methodology, respect and value is upheld for participant voice. By valuing what participants have to say and co-constructing meaning and understanding through conversations with participants, researcher power and bias is balanced by the nature of the relationships within the research. Value is put on 'the space between' where knowledge is discovered by both the researcher and the participants through the process of co-construction.

Berryman, SooHoo and Nevin (2013) describe this as "the responsive dialogic space" (p.22) as demonstrated in the model below.

Figure 1.1: The responsive dialogic space.

The gathering of data for this research has centred on working within this responsive space.

Methods for data collection

A range of methods that complement culturally responsive research methodology have been selected to best suit the context of the research, the participants, relationships, and ethical considerations.

Qualitative research methods

Qualitative research is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) in their authoritative handbook as "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world" (p.3). It is commonly used in the humanities and social sciences, in the case of this research, evaluation and education. Holliday (2007) explains that rather than seeking to quantify and reduce uncontrollable social variables as quantitative research methods would, qualitative research investigates them directly to understand what has been their influence on the experience of participants.

Qualitative methods of data collection seek understanding of the experiences rather than quantifying sets of evidence. Grbich (2013) discusses the phenomenon of epistemology in qualitative research and the need for a researcher to understand and frame research following epistemological traditions identified in the work. For the purpose of this research, culturally responsive methodology is supported by qualitative research methods whereby the researcher seeks to understand the perspectives of the research participants and collaboratively make meaning of the data that they have shared.

Intensive Interviewing and interviews as conversations

In this research, the perspectives of participants are gathered through a process of interviews as conversations. Kovach (2010) shares that conversational research methods are dialogic interactions based on relationships, and that this method is particularly complementary to indigenous methodologies as conversation further supports the sharing of one's experience and epistemology without defining knowledge assumptions. Intensive interviewing, or interviews as conversation allow flexibility and responsivity between the researcher and participants. The method is based on discourse that makes it possible for participants to use the interview to achieve clarity through the piecing together of the conversation by both the researcher and the participant to make sense of their situation, experience, and knowledge.

In the language of Grounded Theory, Charmaz (2013) describes intensive interviewing as being a process by which a researcher "conducts an open-ended, in-depth exploration of an area in which the interviewee has substantial experience" (p.85). When relating this back to the concepts that underpin culturally responsive methodology, the method has been described to participants as an 'interview as a conversation' in the participant information letter. The choice to use this phrase, rather than 'intensive interviewing' was made by the researcher to be more reflective of power sharing. However, the known term centred in the method of Grounded Theory is intensive interviewing.

During these conversations, participants were encouraged to speak to their knowledge in relation to the research questions, their experience as evaluators and

their observations of shifting practice and expectations within the education system. The researcher facilitated focus on the key ideas within the research questions and used open ended questioning techniques to gain further depth about some of the ideas that were shared in the conversation. This took the form of the researcher repeating back a summarised version of what has been heard and then invited the participants to further extrapolate. Charmaz (2013) describes this process as the researcher identifying which scenes to gaze into. Conversations were approximately one hour in length.

Open ended questions

Participants were provided with the research questions and possible conversation starters to help them think about and reflect on their experience prior to the interview as a conversation. The conversation starters were structured as open ended questions or statements to ensure a fluid approach to the data gathering method. Kvale (1996, as cited in Warren, 2001) describes conversation as being an open-ended process through which the researcher is attuned to who is being travelled with rather than setting out a precise route to follow as intended by a survey or more structured interview technique. Charmaz (2013) shares a range of open-ended questioning techniques intended to facilitate conversations to effectively gather the perspectives and lived experiences of research participants. Elements of these examples were selected by the researcher to incorporate in the research methods for gathering data.

Co-construction

Transcripts of the individual conversations were written and shared with participants for editing and further comment. Participants were offered the opportunity to come back to the researcher to further discuss elements of their transcript. The research remained open-ended up until the point of writing to potentially return to the conversation throughout the analysis process to further discuss particular themes that had arisen from the data. As themes arose, these were shared with participants for ongoing comment. This process was intended to ensure theory was pursued as a collaborative process and co-construction fore fronted.

Charmaz (2013) shares her thoughts around pursuing theory through research and heeding the cues of what the research participants want to say. She explains that there are two objectives in the interviewing process, "attending to your research participants and constructing theoretical analyses. Accomplishing both objectives might require either more than one interview or building additional carefully constructed and focused questions into later interviews" (p.87).

With culturally responsive methodology and relationships of power sharing in the research space fore-fronted, together with the reflexiveness and adaptability of constructing grounded theory, the research process was designed to offer the space to respond to arising themes to progress theoretical analysis.

Journaling

Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014) describe journaling as "the practice of recording events, ideas and thoughts over a period of time, often with a particular purpose or project in mind" (p.472). Throughout participation by the researcher in PPBL, a process of journaling was undertaken. This was expected as part of the requirements of the programme and provided an opportunity to progressively review and analyse learning undertaken throughout the course work. The journal included both reflections of ākonga following professional discussions centred on content provided, and the reflections of the researcher as the facilitator of this group. Archer (2012) identifies internal dialogue, reflecting on what has happened and determining what action to take, as reflexivity. Internal dialogue is determined by what we see as important and worthwhile as well as our context including what constrains us and enables us to act.

Reflections and content from the journal are sources of internal dialogue shaping actions taken. Journaling is used in conjunction with participant voice to further inform themes of the research in the findings chapter.

Analysis methods

A range of methods for analysis of qualitative research data were selected to make sense of the research data and inform the findings chapter. Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2013) underpins the methods of data analysis. The process followed allowed for analytic questions to be asked of the data gathered. It is recognised that during the research process, the researcher brings themself, their values and biases to the process (Grbich, 2013). Constructivist grounded theory and the methods used are described below.

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is an approach to qualitative data analysis. Discovered by the researchers Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the 1960s, it is explained as the development of an explicit analytic process of data analysis that allows the construction of theories using qualitative data (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). The big shift in this qualitative method was the move away from beginning with a testable hypothesis from existing theories into a space where the process gave rise to the themes from which to begin the hypothesis. Kathy Charmaz (2013) delves into the processes of 'Constructing Grounded Theory' and provides many contexts in which this method of extrapolating data to inform research is useful. Grounded theory is seen as enabling the "documentation of change within social groups" and in doing so provides "understanding of the core processes central to that change" (Morse et al., 2009, p. 13). In the context of this research, where change is the central theme and people are the instrument of that change, using grounded theory to extrapolate the stories of participants and make meaning reflexively from the data gathered, would seem most appropriate.

As a method, grounded theory demands flexibility. It can't be seen as a firm process, more a way of thinking about data. "Every time grounded theory is used, it requires adaptation in particular ways as demanded by the research question, situation and participants for whom the research is being conducted" (Morse et al., 2009, p. 14). Methods from grounded theory are complementary to culturally responsive research methodology, both of which demand adaptability and

flexibility of a researcher. In terms of a way of thinking, Charmaz (2013) references Glaser's key question in the gathering of grounded theory data as being "what is happening here?" (p. 34). A range of methods are explained as ways in which this question may be answered.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

"Constructivist grounded theory highlights the flexibility of the method and resists mechanical applications of it" (Charmaz, 2013, p. 13). When delving further into the way a researcher must think in relation to constructing grounded theory, a constructivist approach allows for iteration in the process of sensemaking of the data gathered. The constructivist method further complements culturally responsive research methodology by allowing a researcher to step away from Western research perspectives that demand, as Charmaz (2013) describes, "objective external reality, a passive, neutral observer" and also "that researchers must examine rather than erase how their privileges and preconceptions may shape the analysis" (p.13).

Also inherent within constructivist methods is the need to reflect wider on the situation and bias beyond the data gathered. According to Morse et al. (2009):

> We also try to locate participants' meanings and actions in larger social structures and discourses of which they may be unaware. Participants' meanings may reflect ideologies; their actions may reproduce current social conventions or power relationships. We look for the assumptions on which participants construct their meanings and actions (p. 131).

The researcher must be aware that data will be interpreted and theory constructed from within a certain context, be aware of bias and values, and take a reflexive, adaptive and critical viewpoint as to the positioning of both the participants and the researcher. The subsequent knowledge arising from analysis will be situated within an articulated frame by the researcher. Rather than having preconceived notions or hypotheses as to what may arise from the research, through critical analysis that acknowledges the situation, research findings will be explored.

Coding

Coding in grounded theory analysis "is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data" (Charmaz, 2013, p. 113). Coding offers a procedure by which data is segmented, sorted and summarised. The coding process brings forward initial analytic data to pursue in later analysis. A process of line-by-line coding is used whereby words and phrases relevant to the research questions are identified. Charmaz (2013) acknowledges that a researcher constructs codes. Observed realities contribute to language and perspectives of the initial codes. When speaking of researcher bias, Berryman, SooHoo and Nevin, 2013) share that unlike most qualitative research, culturally responsive methodology consider "researcher bias as a gift in which researchers bring their own "unique subjectivities" to any project" (p. 18). What is important is that these biases are acknowledged as part of the research process.

In the process of recognising themes from the data, coding consists of initial labelling, the process ensures that the researcher pays close attention to data and scrutinises the emerging leads. As Charmaz (2013) states, "grounded theory coding need not be complex. By engaging in thorough coding early in the research process and comparing data and codes, the researcher can identify which codes to explore as tentative categories" (p. 115).

Initial codes are kept open ended to allow for iteration in the analysis of data. At the stage of initial coding the researcher doesn't necessarily know the significance of early concepts. "The researcher just kind of knows intuitively that something is important and should be noticed" (Morse et al., 2009, p.44). It is from this point onward that an iterative analysis process occurs. The process outlined above is the process by which participant transcripts were analysed and themes lifted for the purpose of answering the research questions in the findings chapter.

Memo writing

Moving between the coding process and developing tentative theories, memo writing is a useful tool. Writing memos supports the researcher by providing a process by which emerging thinking, noticing and theorising may be captured for further testing and reflection. This process is described by Charmaz (2013) as:

> Memos catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections you make, and crystallize question and directions for you to pursue. Memo-writing creates an interactive space for conversing with yourself about your data, codes, ideas and hunches. Questions arise. New ideas occur to you during the act of writing. Your stand points and assumptions can become visible (p. 162).

When relating this process back to culturally responsive research methodology "the methods and lines of inquiry are expected to change as the researcher and the participants' become better acquainted and the research begins to be more responsive to the participants' directions throughout the course of the inquiry" (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 19). This statement may be considered at various points in the process: the conversation itself, the analysis of the initial data, and also the iterative nature of the process and the potential to re-engage with participants during the analysis process for further conversation and co-construction of meaning and theories. Memo writing was used for the purpose of developing themes throughout the analysis process.

Research Procedure

An initial sequence for gathering data was planned for and approved by the University of Waikato Ethics Committee. This process was explained to potential participants via email in an information letter together with an invitation to participate in the research. The information shared included the research questions, the time commitment involved, a brief outline of the process of data collection and also contact details of the researcher, supervisor and a contact within ERO. The letter invited questions and expressed no expectations or coercion to participate.

Participants who agreed to be part of the research were provided with consent forms to sign prior to interviews taking place. After receiving consent, an appropriate location to conduct the data gathering was discussed and decided upon. Interviews took place in a location of choice of the participants. All interviews were conducted face to face and all participants were interviewed individually.

Whakawhanaungatanga (connection and relationship building) was conducted prior to commencing recording. As all participants were well known to the researcher, initial interactions consisted of 'catching up' on family and work lives. Participants were asked for permission to record the conversation prior to commencement. Each interview was recorded using a 'voice memo' application. Participants were informed that they would receive draft transcripts of the conversations within a week, and that they had the opportunity to edit what they had shared, and that there was an opportunity for further discussion should they find this useful to further communicate their thinking.

Transcripts were prepared as a word document, emailed to participants for editing and approval. Verified transcripts were then printed for analysis.

The data was analysed using grounded theory and appropriate methods as outlined in this chapter. The initial themes were then sent back to participants for comment via email. Also included in this email was a request for confirmation that each participant continued to be comfortable to have their contribution included, offering the right to withdraw their transcripts prior to the commencement of writing of findings as per the outlined conditions of participation and consent.

Findings were presented as a collaborative story centred under the themes that arose through the process of grounded theory analysis of the data gathered.

Within this sequence, consideration was given to the allowance of reflexivity, adaptability and responsiveness to and for the research participants, the researcher, and the theories that emerged from the data gathering process. Culturally responsive methodology allows for iteration in the research process.

Participants

The participant group invited to contribute to the research project were school based evaluators employed by ERO and working within the education system at the time of data gathering. All participants were colleagues of each other and the researcher. All worked within the organisation of ERO and had backgrounds in either primary or secondary school leadership. The key criteria was that invited participants had engaged with learning through PPBL together with the researcher as part of ākonga

groups in 2020. Four participants agreed to take part in the research, two male and two female. Due to confidentiality, descriptions of the participants are withheld as ERO is a relatively small organisation and participants would be easily recognisable to people within the organisation and thus breach confidentiality.

The participants who consented to involvement were provided with PPBL ākonga group themes sourced from reflections within the researcher's journal and generated by group discussion and reflections at the time of participation in 2020. The purpose of providing this information was to refresh memory as to what was fore fronted and discussed as part of PPBL ākonga group. This information acknowledges that the research being conducted is two to three years following the professional learning.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of participation was planned for within the research design by carefully selecting an appropriate setting for the conversation to take place in consultation with participants. Transcripts were edited and approved by participants and are anonymised. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of participants in the writing of the findings. Ethical considerations are implemented to protect participants involved in the research conducted for the purpose of a Master's Thesis, content contributing to course EDU593, as per agreement with The University of Waikato ethics committee, approval number FEDU062/22.

Presenting Findings

Collaborative storying

Collaborative storying is a research method that has gained traction with indigenous cultures as it recognises perspectives, experiences and narratives of research participants without imposing dominant Western oriented discourse (Bishop, 1999). Collaborative storying compliments culturally responsive research methodology through concepts of power-sharing, co-construction and iteration in the research process. Content from research transcripts are used to weave together

the voice of participants to illustrate the themes discovered through the analysis process in the research.

The Position of the Reader

It is the intention of the researcher that findings will be presented in such a way that the reader will bring his/her knowledge and experience to the research. Themes and theories will be presented in such a way that the reader will make meaning of the findings by bringing themselves to the research also. In this way there is no intent to persuade within the data. In the spirit of Freire (2015) and knowing that readers are most likely to be centred in the education system, research information will not be presented as *banking* (education) but rather as *problem posing* (education) with the intention of further breaking down power constructs within the research.

CHAPTER 3 FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, the findings from the research are shared. The analysis of participant transcripts led to the four overarching themes of power, professional learning, culturally responsive evaluation, and whanaungatanga. These themes will be explored in the findings chapter and presented as collaborative storying whereby participant voices are woven together. Included in this collaborative story will be content from the researcher's journal of reflections collected at the time of ākonga participation in PPBL.

The research questions will not be discussed specifically in the findings chapter, they will be unpacked in the discussion chapter. The research questions and an outline of their context is provided below as a preface for reading the findings and the themes that have arisen through participant conversations.

Question one: What was learned from participating in the Poutama Pounamu blended learning about the relationships of power in a colonised society?

Question one is looking for the knowledge that participants have, how they have come to their understanding of history, colonisation, the way in which power is recognisable and reflected in the contexts of schools, ERO as an organisation and the wider education system.

Question two: What impact has this learning had on my own approach to evaluation as well as the approach of a sample of my colleagues with whom I subsequently worked?

Question two is applying this knowledge to practice. How are participants reflecting what they understand in the way they approach their relationships with schools and the way in which they are growing their practice to best meet the needs of schools in an ongoing professional relationship.

Question three: How might these learnings about relational power, together with education policy and a partnership approach to evaluation inform the role of an evaluator to support system transformation?

Question three asks what knowledge and skill an evaluator needs to effectively support system transformation, and how, when people have the skills and knowledge, can this be applied in their practice? When these evaluators are focused by appropriate documentation and conditions, **might** system transformation be possible?

Background

The platform on which this research is based was the participation of colleagues in an ākonga group for PPBL. Participation in this group pre-dated the research and informed the criteria for research participation as explained below.

All research participants expressed interest in being part of an ākonga group being established by the researcher in 2020 as part of the course expectations of PPBL. Ākonga were invited to explore a range of resources centred on understanding colonisation, the power it established in New Zealand society and its impact over time. The recognition of education debt for Māori in the form of inequitable outcomes was explored as were improved pedagogical practices that could effect change. Ākonga were also invited to engage in professional learning and discussion together through the platform of curated electronic resources provided by Poutama Pounamu. The resources flowed through a process of conscientisation as to the history of New Zealand and the impacts of colonisation and policy on power structures in society. The content then guided participants into applying discussion and thinking to the context of education, and in this instance, with a particular focus on evaluation practice. Ākonga were also scaffolded to reflect on the professional learning opportunities in the programme and how resources and discussion were impacting on their thinking. These reflections were shared with the group facilitator and facilitators from Poutama Pounamu. As part of ongoing journaling and reflections, both personal and group impact were gathered throughout the blended e-learning process.

The data collection for the purpose of this research took place in 2022 and 2023, sometime after participation in the PPBL. The participants were all working as EPs

at the time of data collection and applying their knowledge of culturally responsive evaluation within the model of Te Ara Huarau. As all participants were and are interested in social justice and equity in their roles as EPs, conversations during the research process reflected a range of knowledge that evidenced understanding of relationships of power in New Zealand society this is reflected throughout the themes explored in the findings.

It is important to acknowledge that all participants brought prior knowledge to the context of the Poutama Pounamu ākonga group, some of which was through school experience with Kia Eke Panuku, through social justice interests and learning, and several participants had completed post graduate studies in areas complimentary to the content of Poutama Pounamu.

At the time of participation in the ākonga group, Covid 19 had put New Zealand into lockdown. The ākonga group was a way in which interested and motivated colleagues could engage in online learning through regular zoom meetings to discuss the content of the resources shared in PPBL. As the facilitator for the group, it was possible to prepare focus questions that would lead to discussion that brought the content from the modules to the context of evaluation. Content was able to be explored and discussed on multiple levels; knowledge that would inform evaluation foci, how as evaluators it was possible to model partnership and power-sharing concepts in relationships with schools, and also in making connections between the resources and government policy and strategy and what this meant for evaluation in practice.

Almost simultaneously, ERO was going through a change process. The report published by the MOE in response to the Tomorrow's Schools Taskforce report (2018) had prompted ERO to rethink evaluation to be more focused on schooling improvement and forward facing rather than a review as it had been previously. A process of constructing a different approach to school evaluation had been produced by ERO internally with the support of external consultancy. This high-level conceptual plan complimented the content and learning that ākonga were engaged in through Poutama Pounamu. The opportunity to genuinely explore culturally responsive evaluation had surfaced.

The following themes arose from the interviews as conversations with the researcher in relation to the research questions identified. The themes arose through the process analysis based on grounded theory and are connected with the content explored and experiences shared through participation in the PPBL ākonga groups.

Theme 1: Power

As colleagues working within a government agency, power plays out on multiple levels. This power is not necessarily visible unless one is aware of its existence. An overarching theme that arose from participant voice in the research conversations was centred around power. All participants in the research are aware of inequity within the education system as ERO focuses its evaluations around improving outcomes for Māori and all learners in relation to equity and excellence. Poutama Pounamu was one opportunity to recognise power, to explore the history of the power of colonisation in New Zealand, and the resulting inequities that have arisen in New Zealand society since the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840. Power is explored through a range of sub-headings intended to illustrate the ways in which participants have expressed their knowledge of power and the impact this is having within their practice.

Conscientisation

All participants in this research have taken up the challenge to know and understand the history of New Zealand and how it has led to the ongoing inequity for Māori in the New Zealand schooling system. All have social justice and equity at the heart of their identity. This was demonstrated in making the choice to participate in the Poutama Pounamu ākonga group. By doing so, participants were demonstrating their curiosity and desire to learn and understand. As Tia shared:

> At the time [of the PPBL ākonga group] my awareness was quite raised around educators as social justice leaders or warriors.

Participants shared a range of reasons for engaging, Tama shared:

> I had quite a bit of prior knowledge having engaged with Kia Eke Panuku over a five-year period. With time in ERO, things change and you forget. I was really interested [to engage] and see what had and hadn't changed.

Tane expressed that he was interested to engage in discussions, and that:

> Poutama Pounamu wasn't a watershed moment for me but hearing somebody else's point of view or different way of looking at something really deepens your own understanding.

Tane went on to share that the most significant learning and impact for him as part of the ākonga group was listening to the personal experiences of racism as Māori, shared by another group participant. Tane was moved by the stories recalled, and these brought context to the group discussion and allowed those non-Māori participants who had not experienced racism directly, to understand and gain an empathetic perspective of someone close to them.

The examples shared during the research conversations demonstrated that some participants joined the learning with high levels of consciousness of power relationships and the underpinnings of inequity in New Zealand society. Other participants in the original ākonga group were experiencing conscientisation as they met resources and learning content for the first time, an example of understanding crystallising was recorded in the researcher's personal PPBL Journal reflection, module 1:

> Racism is well entrenched within our society, to the point where people don't know they are racist, their unconscious prejudice is a result of their values, a combination of history, media and the spaces around them.

For Tui the impact of conscientisation provided increased clarity:

> The readings and discussions gave me greater insight into racism and unconscious bias with the colonial predominant culture coming through. Power has been and is used to control and cause major devastation. I think that doing this work through Poutama Pounamu, and working for the crown has given me a bigger insight and I think I notice power relationships more than I did before. I feel more equipped to identify them.

Knowledge about the power relationships in the education system is fundamental to the narrative within these findings and reflective of themes explored in chapter one. As conversations took place the identity and moral purpose of the participants and their belief in their ability to make a difference through evaluation practice, together with various government policies and strategies, is a common thread. Evaluator knowledge, identity and moral purpose is shared in the voices.

Inequity

All participants have extensive experience within the education system, both as school leaders and in their roles as evaluators within ERO. These experiences together with professional learning have led to an understanding and knowledge of inequity within New Zealand schools and the impact this is having on disparate outcomes for Māori learners. All expressed their moral purpose in impacting change within this space. In Tui's words:

> In New Zealand there is a major lack of equity, and before equity can be restored there are generations of power thinking, whether conscious or not conscious, that needs to change.

However, through her interaction with materials from the PPBL, she expressed that:

> Learning more, I am more focused on ensuring I look deeper and have those deeper conversations, if I can make a difference that way, I will.

Tui went on to talk about how, now that she knows and understands what she is seeing, her motivation to act is heightened.

As realisations and learnings arose in both the ākonga group setting, and then in making connections with ERO's refreshed relationship-based approach to evaluation, Te Ara Huarau, participants increasingly voiced and recognised how they were able to make a difference in the education system and space. Conversations reflect this knowledge in action, and how participants were negotiating the space between schools, schooling improvement, and ERO's expectations and systems.

The System

As research participants had engaged with PPBL bringing their prior knowledge to the context, conversations moved quickly into the workplace and how colonisation and power relationships were playing out within the government organisation and education system context. The concepts explored in the conversations reflected the level of understanding participants had in relation to the intent of the PPBL "to contribute towards a better future so that our next generation have more equitable opportunities to develop their potential and take their rightful place in society" (n.d.). As Tane articulated:

> All of those words: marginalisation, marginalised people, colonised people, the way that marginalisation or being disempowered or not having as much power as other people, the way that looks in education is that Māori people are not succeeding.

Voices reflected that all participants were highly attuned to the fact that the system is currently failing Māori learners and that all have a role to play in improving equitable outcomes. Personal responsibility and a desire to make a difference in shifting inequitable power constructs is highlighted. Tama expressed his thoughts:

> We all bring a culture to our work and our lives, but understanding that power imbalance, and being conscious about that is something I'm really aware of now and try to bring into all aspects of my work.

He went on to relate this understanding to the system and seeing the space as it pertains to ERO; that there are recognisable efforts to acknowledge the need to move forward differently and that any movement is currently visible in documentation, but not yet necessarily in practice. Tama believed that ERO was yet to move into authentic power sharing at a system level:

> The systems and structures are still very Western orientated. I think we try to tick a few boxes by putting words into documents and doing aspects of tikanga.

Many participants articulated that they were bringing their knowledge of culturally responsive evaluation to the context of Te Ara Huarau, in many cases this was despite some of the guidelines produced by ERO recognised as being part of a

system intended to support consistent practices. As participants are EPs who understand the Māori world contexts underpinning Te Ara Huarau, all were trying to authentically work in partnership with schools. As such, the 'might' in research question three (how ***might*** these learnings about relational power, together with education policy and a partnership approach to evaluation inform the role of an evaluator to support system transformation?) became pivotal as participants made sense of their knowledge, the culturally responsive way in which they were endeavouring to work, and their push back on the colonised systems inherent in government departments. Tama identifies this struggle:

> There is a tension and conflict between the expectations of the organisation and the way that they want us to work, and the way that we actually work.

Tama has identified the struggle of power within the system. He expressed his commitment to working in a culturally responsive way, and that "the way they want us to work" is what is detracting from this. He goes on to share his recognition of attempts at indigenisation through the Māori concepts gifted to the model of Te Ara Huarau as:

> Beautifully written in documents. There are a few of us in the organisation who actually took them to heart, those concepts are the basis of how I operate. However, there is a real tension between that and in the same breath we also receive a four-page document to outline how we should run our evaluations rather than being responsive to the situations and contexts we are dealing with.

At times all participants shared their noticing around the decisions being made during the change process in ERO and how these decisions were representative of the colonised system in which all are employed. For some it appeared that due to the provision of guidelines intended to support evaluators to fit the requirements of the system, opportunities to ensure Te Ara Huarau was enacted as per the bicultural intent underpinning the model, were being put at risk.

The space for indigenisation within colonisation

With the political recognition of a power imbalance in the favour of colonised systems, and the creation of space for more indigenised perspectives, government documents are increasingly reflecting bi-cultural concepts. Aspects of tikanga and indigenisation were recognised throughout the conversations with participants, as were acknowledgement of ERO allowing spaces for increased indigenous practices to emerge. The conversations reflected the knowledge of relationships of power in a colonised society in relation to research question one. Aspects of the impact this learning has on the approach to evaluation in relation to research question two, also came through in the dialogue. The conversations also reflected what is possible when evaluators have the knowledge and understanding to engage with and make use of appropriate professional learning. That by supporting conversations in schools focused on strategic actions underpinned by government policy and strategy, transformation of the education system becomes possible.

To provide an example of knowledge, practice and impact coming together, within *Te Tai Putahinui* (Central Region of ERO) around the time period of this research, a group had established itself to champion indigenous practices within the organisation. This *rōpu* (group) is known at *Rōpu Kōkiri* and is referred to by participants throughout conversations. At a regional Professional Learning and Development (PLD) *hui* (meeting) in Taupō, Rōpu Kōkiri negotiated the space to organise and facilitate learning time with and for their colleagues. The group engaged with the local iwi Tūwharetoa and invited representatives to attend the PLD and share aspects of *Tūwharetoatanga* (practices of Tūwharetoa iwi) with the intention of growing EP understanding as to how schools in the area could be engaging with iwi. Tane shared in his conversation acknowledgment that the planning underpinning this PLD came from aspects of *Te Hurihanganui* (a national education initiative prototyping partnership between iwi, communities and educational institutions).

For Tui, the impact of this professional learning meant that she had the knowledge to have conversations with schools in the area about what they were doing to ensure Tūwharetoatanga was being implemented within the school. In particular, how this was having an impact for Māori boys – whose data was showing underachievement:

> I asked the question of how they implement Tūwharetoatanga in their school. They said they hadn't done much but they had done some art. We then looked at their achievement data, they had high numbers of Māori boys underachieving in literacy, so I asked them again, how they thought that learning within Tūwharetoatanga would impact content, authentic contexts, meaning, particularly for Māori boys. We actually went through it quite fully because we'd also had that PLD with ERO, plus I'd met with the Tuwharetoa facilitator in another school.

Tama shared his thoughts around some of the PLD that had been facilitated by Rōpu Kōkiri as valuable in:

> Understanding the iwi that we work with, one example was in 2021, where we talked with Tūwharetoa as a region. That was a really good opportunity and I know that at least one or two people [EPs] have used those connections in Tūwharetoa in an ongoing way as part of their evaluation work which is pretty amazing.

The participants demonstrated that they have the knowledge to understand the value of the relationship formed with Tūwharetoa, and to connect with the professional learning opportunities that were given. This was the intent of Rōpu Kokiri in designing PLD that would provide a platform for ERO evaluators to understand the possible connections with iwi, either directly, or in knowing what is possible and currently available for the schools' that EPs are partnering with. When reflecting on the tension between what had been shared with EPs in terms of expectations of what evaluator knowledge is expected around iwi relationships, Tama shared:

> There was a mandate or expectation that whatever school or organisation we go into, we understand the history of what that school has been through in terms of iwi, or know who all of the iwi are in that area, what's going on for them and how that might relate to the school we're in.

Tama went on to share that to his knowledge, this expectation hasn't been followed up on in terms of ERO's quality assurance processes. Rōpu Kokiri provided a model of professional learning demonstrating what is possible as an organisation in terms of engagement with iwi. Participants spoke to the potential within ERO for

this to become common practice and for opportunities to be fostered and connections grown.

Other deliberate actions and decisions were made by ERO during the change process to shift the practices within the system to a more power sharing approach. The intent to consider Māori perspectives in documentation and change process was established late in 2021. Tane shared his observations of this as:

> The change management at the end of last year around the shift to Te Ara Huarau, with the establishment of *te ohu pātui* [a forum established to apply a Māori perspective to change planning in partnership with leaders], where everything came through us, with a Māori lens put across it before it progressed further. It was far more participatory, with those sprint groups, a far more participatory change management process. That wouldn't have happened when I first joined ERO, it was sort of a top-down approach, and a Pākehā-centric approach. You know, there's a long way to go.

With these examples of the potential for indigenisation within the organisation, participants are reflecting on seeds that have the potential to grow. The impact of creating the space for indigenous practices within the organisation provides hope for decolonisation of the current Eurocentric education system. Tia also shared the opportunity and the risk in the following statement:

> I think there's a challenge in the tension between the old and the new, the old always wants to pull the new back. I think we've seen the old pull the new back in the refinement [of Te Ara Huarau].

Through the deliberate recognition and evaluation of what has been tried and is better, and noticing what is detracting from improvement, it is possible to grow the seeds of practice ensuring that evaluators have the capacity to enact the intent of the documents underpinning government expectations.

Tama has recognised the power of the system and the deliberate actions needed to move forward toward an improved space in schools and relates this to his experience within ERO. He speaks of his learning with the PPBL and the previous iteration Kia Eke Panuku in a school context compared with what he is noticing within ERO:

> It took a long time [to learn and implement change]. And I don't think ERO has the time, doesn't see the time to invest in that change. If this is what we need to do as a government organisation, do it. I think almost all [people, colleagues] have the desire to work in a more culturally responsive way, and most people have the capability, but it's certainly not a priority.

He went on to explain the tension between the vision giving effect to te Tiriti through the implementation of policy and strategy, juxtaposed with the reality of working in a colonised system underpinned by numerical measures as:

> We have lots of documents, lots of words, lots of espoused stuff. We have He Taura Here Tangata and our leadership strategy. Everything is heavily Māori in terms of what is written down and what is espoused and proposed, but the enactment is very systematic. So no matter what PLD we're involved in there is something sitting there already, reports that my manager wants done. You know, other priorities.

Tui spoke of system constraints as:

> We're constantly told there's a budget, you've only got this amount of time. And so straight away that's totally ruined the – not only the cultural aspect of the model, but also the real focus on improvement for who needs improvement. So straight away you've got constraints around time, constraints around money. It's very output based. As soon as I hear the word output I feel like it's a production line. This is the part I really struggle with, because our sole purpose should be improving outcomes for kids, whatever it needs and whatever it takes. The resourcing should be going into supporting us to be the best that we can be when we go in to support schools. But it's not, decisions are invariably made around how much that will cost, or what will 'look' good.
>
> So, if you're looking for the colonisation effect, there it is.

Theme 2: Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Adaptive Expertise

The second overarching theme that was lifted from participant voice centred on evaluator understanding of culturally responsive evaluation and the different ways in which this was being enacted in practice. Participants also identified challenges or constraints to applying their knowledge and understanding in the context of implementing Te Ara Huarau.

Throughout the conversations there were threads that illustrated each participant's identity in relation to what they bring to their role as an evaluator and what values underpin their relationships with schools. These threads speak to all three research questions, they reflect evaluator knowledge, their practice, and the potential impact their knowledge and practice could have on improving outcomes within schools.

Evaluation Partner Knowledge and Identity

All participants have a range of evaluation knowledge, this is situated within their past experiences and learning as school leaders together with their current learning within the evaluation context. Subsequently, different participants expressed their knowledge and the application of this in different ways which are underpinned by their individual identity and values. The following quotes illustrate who the evaluators are in terms of the perspectives and culturally responsive practice they bring to their interactions with schools.

Tui reflected:

> I know we're all different, all the EPs in ERO are slightly different. In my approach I listen, I do a lot of listening to understand. I ask questions constantly, ask questions and make connections and talk with the schools about those connections. I learn a lot. I do classroom observations and that's really important I feel. I go in there and I notice the environment, is it culturally connected? Can I see the cultural identity of kids in that area, in their environment? What can I see and hear in the learning, how is their localised curriculum going? That really allows me to have those deeper

> conversations with the senior leaders around what is happening for kids and link it back to the policy and strategy that we have [NELPs, Education and Training Act and Ka Hikitia].

Tui shared a number of examples of how she brings her knowledge of culturally responsive pedagogies into conversations with schools where underachievement for Māori learners had been identified. An in-depth knowledge of what practices are known to work with and for Māori is of the utmost importance in having the capability to have conversations with schools about "Māori are enjoying and achieving education success as Māori" (MOE, 2020, para. 1) in relation to evidence.

When sharing her thoughts on Te Ara Huarau as a schooling improvement evaluation approach, Tia reflected on how the approach promotes relationships, power sharing and capability building in the evaluation space:

> Fundamentally it honours everybody that's in the conversation and at the table and invites everybody to be around the table, it reflects more closely where we are heading to as a society with positive framing and growth mindset, and 'let's do this together' capacity building.

Tia went on to speak of her observations of schools' reactions to Te Ara Huarau evaluation approach and the ability to build relational trust as:

> The feedback I've got from my schools is that they feel that they can be who they are, real, they can be real, they can be fallible, they can be whatever because you are building the fundamental trust so people can feel vulnerable.

Tane shared his thinking and the underpinning of his knowledge of research, theory and understanding of power relationships working within evaluation and responsively with schools as:

> Using a constructivist or critical approach [to evaluation] means that it's actually all about listening and listening to as many perspectives as you can and working with stakeholders to construct the meaning. I'm still quite committed to listening to as many stakeholder groups as possible, particularly the Māori community, and also, particularly students.

Tane went on to share that the shift in practice with Te Ara Huarau EPs working as individuals in partnership with schools, illustrated an approach that is more conducive to a power sharing dynamic:

> We can't present a – this is the ERO approach, or this is the ERO perspective. The only people you can synthesise with and make meaning with is them. So you have to do it with them.

In terms of the knowledge he is bringing to evaluation and to the conversations he's having with schools around changes to practice and the prioritisation of what is important to improve outcomes for Māori learners, Tane suggested:

> Mere's [Berryman] research, and Russell Bishop's research, you know, they show that the relationship between culturally responsive and relational practice and increased outcomes for Māori is a straight-line function. If they can show there is greater whanaungatanga in this class then there is greater achievement at NCEA 2. You know, it's as simple as that.

Culturally Responsive Evaluation versus The System

There is an underlying theme in relation to the challenge of implementation of culturally responsive evaluation practice due to system constraints as further system guidelines are operationalised. Through the expression of these challenges, participants are recognising a push against the ability to be culturally responsive evaluators in the implementation of their practice. Tama expressed concerns that:

> We are now moving back to a very standardised way of reporting progress. We said that individual reporting for each school would be different now, it wouldn't be the cookie cutter that it was in the past, the language would be more reflective of the school. We're still ham strung and hampered by a quality assurance process that uses a lot of ERO's words and structures and language, you feel like you have to fight for or advocate for a school's language to come through. I think the evaluation reports, will become quite standardised, not bespoke as was promoted when we first started and very similar to what we did in the past unfortunately. I think the next 12 to 18

> months the sector will see that we haven't changed that much, it's just over a longer period of time [the process] and actually a lot more work for us.

In terms of how evaluator knowledge of power in society and how being aware of this provides the motivation for a more culturally responsive approach with schools, participants expressed their concerns for the loss of the initial potential of Te Ara Huarau to improve outcomes for schools. Participants' voices reflected that they are holding on to the concepts their knowledge allows them to value, and that this is continuing to be reflected in their practice whenever possible.

Tia, when speaking in relation to time and system constraints, shared that she was committed to being adaptive and responsive to school contexts. She did acknowledge that as caseloads increase, she can see people struggling:

> EPs have, for whatever reason, not been able to progress things in reasonable timeframes, even when context is taken into account. I am responsive to what they [schools] need, I don't even think about resourcing limitations.

Tia acknowledged that resourcing constraints are "going to be a limitation that's out of our control".

Tui took this a step further in explaining that the number of schools an EP must work with will be a barrier to potential responsiveness to school's contexts and needs. In her view:

> I think this model can work really well, but it can't be a really stringent evaluation model, it needs to be a model that recognises that improvement and growth happens through good internal evaluation and collective efficacy, collaboration and real coaching for improvement.

Tui explained the reality of the constraints in terms of the system and workload. She is motivated and has valuable knowledge and understanding that could have impact on enacting the intent of government policy and strategy in partnership with schools through her role as an EP. The potential impact of her practice is schooling improvement through the growth of evaluation capacity in partnership with schools, to build understandings as to the actions taken that are having the most impact for

the students who need it the most. Her caseload at the time of data gathering, was forty schools.

Tama when speaking of system constraints shared his concerns about the support for authentic implementation of Te Ara Huarau and what it would take to meet the aspirations of the model. When speaking of his ability to be responsive within a school context, he recognised:

> That the way I work doesn't really fit with our organisation's timeline and expectations and that of our leaders who go onto the minister and treasury. The danger is we espouse stuff, people see that as not followed through, or prioritised and then that creates the tension within how culturally responsive we are as an organisation. *Whakawhanangatanga* [building relationships] is essential for developing partnership, and also being able to share the power of the direction of our evaluative work. There are a few within the organisation who are sticking to that and are genuine about that.
>
> I think that is represented in the quality of the work, not the volume.

Theme 3: Professional Learning

Another strong theme that emerged in relation to culturally responsive evaluation and to practice generally, was in relation to professional learning and collective capacity building. All participants spoke to this in relation to their experiences of being part of the PPBL ākonga group; that they had enjoyed the opportunity to share thinking and relate the learning to practice alongside colleagues. In the concepts underpinning cultural relations for responsive pedagogy as demonstrated by the PPBL, *wānanga* (collective sense-making) and *āko* (reciprocity in a learning space) are fundamental in the facilitation of the programme.

The following excerpt from the researcher's journal is a reflection post module 1 of the PPBL ākonga session and illustrates how ako and wānanga were fundamental to the professional learning process:

> The way the resources are organised and sequenced allow for a development of ideas as we move through the module. The resources are varied and engaging, some reading, but the mix of video and images gives a variety of opportunity for reflection, thought and discussion. The resources are very relatable, easy to relate back to our context and the observations we have. The ākonga meetings had some meaty content to discuss and the ideas that were being shared had depth and ākonga were highly engaged.

When speaking in relation to her experience as ākonga in the PPBL programme, Tia felt that "it should be a prerequisite for any ERO employee".

She further described why she found this programme to be valuable in terms of connecting learning and the current government documentation being published by sharing that:

> This programme in particular offered clarity because there was a beginning point, an end point and guided discussion so it added to what's already been accessible, added to the shifts, the growth and understanding which is also being influenced by central government, education policies, the shift to the NELPs and Education and Training Act. It helps to build that foundational knowledge and I think the more you hear, see and are exposed to that, the more it becomes who you are.

Tane engaged with the programme explicitly for the opportunity to hear the thinking of his colleagues and expressed his value for wānanga and ako in that making sense of the resources and learning together deepened his understanding and knowledge.

Tama, when reflecting on the ākonga experience of the PPBL questioned whether the learning was enough to authentically change practice and went on to question whether the appropriate prioritisation and resourcing is available within ERO to see meaningful change and collective capacity within the organisation to work responsively. He succinctly summed up the tension between professional capability building, resourcing and system constraints in this statement:

> I think, if this is what we need to do, we need to be more culturally responsive, be more culturally responsive. When people were part of

> Poutama Pounamu, and we had that time during Covid, there was space to read the research and the articles, to watch the videos without the pressure of profile reports that my manager wants done in two weeks' time. So, no matter what PLD we are involved in, there is something sitting there. There are other priorities.

The impact and impetus to change practice during the period of participation in the PPBL ākonga group is illustrated by a personal reflection contributed by the researcher in the learning journal reflection following module one ākonga conversations:

> As a group we have a member who has had a lens over cultural responsiveness in his approach for some time. He has shared some of the resources and techniques he has developed. We are planning to wānanga these tools as a group to try and further align these to the thinking that is emerging for us as a group. This will give us some practical actions we can take in terms of making a difference during the review process. We may undertake a collaborative inquiry as an ākonga group to learn from the changes we make and develop a methodology we could share with other reviewers.

A further reflection from the Poutama Pounamu learning journal illustrated how given the right conditions and resources, the learning could have had impact:

> This is my second time around with this learning. I had a fair idea when I started, but my learning has deepened, and particularly with an evaluation lens. We are theorising as a group, we are thinking about the application of this learning to our context, and we are further developing what this might look like beyond our Poutama rōpu. We are motivated, but at the moment the space we are working in has changed [post Covid] and so it is difficult to apply to our context currently. Once we get back into schools, it will be good to continue to reflect and think about how we are deliberately changing our approach, and also what difference we think it is making. Explore what is possible, take action and reflect.

The potential for wānanga and collaborative practice diminished post covid. The introduction of Te Ara Huarau saw a period of change within ERO. Over time Te Ara Huarau became increasingly systemised with the intention of making the process increasingly scaffolded for consistency. Many EPs within ERO recognised the potential to grow and share culturally responsive evaluation practices, this was reflected in participant voices. The reality was that despite this knowledge, EPs are working within a system that is strongly influenced by Western values and within a colonial model of government. What is prioritised within the system is the challenge. As Tane shared:

> Rōpu Kōkiri, one of our little soap boxes is that ERO's methodology needs to be better informed by a constructivist approach, a critical theory approach. It needs to be far more informed by Māori evaluators and Māori evaluation theorists.

The platform for growth of culturally responsive evaluation had been identified through participation in the PPBL ākonga groups and through actions taken by Rōpu Kōkiri.

The level to which EPs can implement intended change depends on their knowledge, experience and the space to do so. All participants acknowledged the shift toward metaphors from a Māori world view being reflected in ERO documentation. These concepts have been appropriately gifted to the organisation. Tama identified the disconnect between what is written in documentation and the need for professional learning and support to ensure the enactment of that documentation. His following statement speaks to 'the space between', in a system that is intended to transform by improving equity and outcomes for Māori:

> Everything is heavily Māori in terms of what is written down and what is espoused and proposed. But the enactment is very systematic.

In speaking to the word systematic, Tama is summing up the impact of colonisation within the system in which evaluation for education is situated. Participants in the research have knowledge of power and how the system resists changing the power balance. All demonstrated understanding of the concepts that underpin the need to move toward a more responsive and relational way of working with schools and

that capacity that needs to be built in this space. To support EPs to bring the Māori concepts articulated in documents to life, it was identified that people need time, professional learning and discussion to make meaning other than an English translation reflecting values and experiences of the status quo of a colonised system of operation.

Tia summed up the need for culturally responsive support and capability building in terms of building capability within ERO in such a way that models and values responsiveness and adaptability in evaluation practice:

> I think they [EPs] probably need some support, more support. More sharing of others [colleagues] practices. Not 'this is how you will do it' because I don't advocate for that at all. But some, here, this is an example of how this could be done, or this, or this, what suits your style? I think we need some much more personalised responses to the needs of our EPs.

Growing collective capacity across agencies

A connection can be made between participant voice and opportunities voiced that speak to the recommendations in the Tomorrow's Schools Taskforce review (Taskforce, 2018) to network better across the wider education sector. Participants recognised opportunities to share professional learning across different governmental agencies, and that there are opportunities within the relational space to connect better for the benefit of ERO employees, school personnel, the MOE and Professional Learning providers and facilitators.

Tui observed that while there were several agencies working within schools who needed support, it was difficult to co-ordinate this support, and she recognised the opportunity for the different agencies to grow people within the space by learning from one another.

When speaking of schools who have particularly high needs, Tui had found it difficult to find support from other agencies, or difficult to co-ordinate this support for these schools, and at times finding people who had the capability to support schools to improve their situation. As she said:

> Imagine if we could work across sectors, with those in the ministry and support each other with what's happening.

Tui went on to speak of a variety of ways in which ERO, PLD providers and other government agencies could work together to upskill each other and share resources. In her experiences to date, she was frustrated by the attitude of different agencies not wanting to take responsibility for supporting schools, that rather than working collaboratively on a plan together with the school there was a pervading attitude of 'xxx doesn't do that, that's xxx job'. Within ERO the expectation is that evaluation is the core role, it is expected that ERO EPs do not move into facilitation or advising. Tui's frustration was that if ERO isn't facilitating or advising, it was important that those who are, could easily be accessed for schools so that support is in place in an ongoing and timely manner.

Government Policy, Strategies and Professional Learning

The shifting landscape in governmental policy toward enacting a more power-sharing and partnership approach to enacting the intentions of Te Tiriti o Waitangi has brought about several documents intended to promote equity within New Zealand society. All the research participants articulated their awareness of relevant policies and strategies in the education space and spoke of their observations in relation to schools and their understandings and readiness to implement strategies. All EPs are tasked with facilitating conversations with school leaders to ascertain the extent to which schools are implementing or planning to implement changes in relation to government documentation. The conversations reflect a range of understandings and practices, as Tama shared when speaking to both the capacity within schools and the capacity within ERO to successfully understand, plan for and implement the intention of government documents:

> Most of our people within ERO have come from a system where there are the NEGs [National Education Goals] and the NAGs [National Administration Guidelines]. I think the alignment of where the NEGs and the NAGs sit within the NELPs has not been fully understood. Now [with the introduction of the NELPs] there is a lot of work around leadership and culturally responsive work, but where does school management sit as well?

> How does that influence resourcing and budget? Whatever you are doing within a school will need resourcing, so how does that align with the NELPs and culturally responsive practice, your PLD, making greater connections with iwi, barrier free access to education? School leaders don't understand that, I don't think our people do either.

The conversation continued into whether or not there was a role for ERO to play in helping schools to unpack some of the documents to support schools to understand. Tama identified the risk with this, that EPs would then be crossing into more of a professional learning or advisory space.

Tui saw collective discussion more as on opportunity in terms of having all support people around the same table and being able to work collaboratively to collectively build the capacity of schools and government agencies to best meet the needs of schools. This thinking was further supported by Tia's thoughts:

> The word documents is fundamental, it feels like they are just documents. I'd say a larger number of schools are not really up with the NELPs and the Education and Training Act, but that there is massive potential in that area. I think ERO need to do some more professional learning. We can't just visit a document every 12 months and expect that people are going to live and breathe it on the ground and implement it, stimulate and facilitate beyond 'have you included NELPs in your strategic plan?' I think we need to do way much more work around that. If they don't become part of your practice, unless there's time and repeat time, and revisiting and it's thread through your practice, it just feels like a tack on. I think also the ETA [Education and Training Act] and NELPs are high level intentions/expectations and schools find it challenging to fully understand what that means on the ground in the everyday life of the school even though there are quite specific guidelines out there, there is just so much documentation.
>
> It can be challenging to see the wood for the trees.

Theme 4: Whanaungatanga

Whanaungatanga was a theme that emerged in the conversations with participants, some of which has been articulated through voice in the previous themes. Whanaungatanga is one of the core concepts underpinning the Te Ara Huarau approach to evaluation and one of the key differences in the way ERO is now approaching evaluation in schools is to promote the development of trusting and ongoing partnerships between EPs and the schools they are working alongside.

In an excerpt of the PPBL researcher's journal, an observation by a Poutama Pounamu facilitator was shared in response to a reflection made post module 2, this statement is relevant to the relationships existing between the education sector and ERO prior to the prototyping of Te Ara Huarau. The statement also highlighted the communication to the sector around the changed approach from ERO, and the intention to base relationships on whanaungatanga and partnership.

> I was speaking with a group of principals yesterday who had just been to a hui to hear about the changes within ERO. They were all supportive of the change but their questions were around how that would play out in reality. Interestingly, our kōrero was focused on unconscious bias and they kept coming back to what they had heard from the ERO hui and asking the sort of questions I have seen / heard you ask. I think you and I have talked about this before, this kaupapa always comes back to the work with self in order to bring about change within the collective. The challenge for me in the conversation yesterday was to keep that mirror up for them and reflect back when pointed fingers started to show. It highlighted how much distrust and cynicism currently sits in that relational space.

As EPs making sense of what different looks like in practice and moving into a deliberately relational space with schools underpinned by the concept of whanaungatanga, Tane shared some of his thinking around what a relational partnership could be underpinned by a *kupu* (vocabulary) Māori perspective:

> I think all of us are trying to work out what having more of a partnership or having more of a collaborative approach looks like. This is a story I tell a

> bit in the introductory meetings I have. I had to find a Māori word for partnership, there's one I've always known which is rangapū, this comes from a Puni Kokiri document that was written many years ago, but has a sort of military type sense to it. A company of people or soldiers. But I happened to be at a meeting, it was a workshop about the new teachers council's approach to appraisal. It was a Māori one, it was for Kura Kaupapa Māori and it was being run by Ani Rolleston who used to work for ERO. The word she was using for partnership was pātui, which I didn't know. So I looked it up, and in the dictionary it means to walk hand in hand, like lovers would walk arm in arm, and I quite liked that metaphor for partnership.

As always, when using a word or concept from another language, the risk is a translation that while well intended, doesn't capture the conceptual underpinning. Tama identified the dichotomy of the concept of a Māori world view of the meaning of *whakawhanaungatanga* (process of connecting and building relationships) as opposed to the perception of a Western lens or translation of the meaning.

> The notion of whakawhanaungatanga, I think it has been a bit Westernised until it's meaning relationship management rather than genuine whakawhanaungatanga. That got emphasised again when I was part of Te Hurihanganui, where they emphasised their way of working with iwi is around genuine whakawhanaungatanga. Where it's not relationship management, it's that trusted bond between two parties, so that when things are good they're really good, but also able to challenge and go through those rough times and accelerate stuff when you need to because everyone understand that, but also to take the time when you need to. That doesn't really fit with our organisation's timeline and expectations.

Tui shared several examples of the impact of having ongoing and trusting relationships with schools. In approaching a school context as a learner and taking the time to understand the context she has fostered the conditions that build relationships and is able to talk honestly with schools. The following statement demonstrates the honesty in her practice with outcomes for children firmly centred. She links this to the use of government policy and strategy to illustrate and clarify

what is needed in terms of improving outcomes for learners in her conversations with schools:

> I'll pull some of those out [Ka Hikitia, the NELPs and other support documents] and say, what do you think, is this happening for these kids? This is what I might've noticed, or this is what I didn't see. I went into a classroom where I didn't see… one school I went into made me feel quite empty inside and I came out and I said I don't even know who that classroom belongs to, there's not any kids learning in there let alone any of their cultural identity. If I went in there as an adult completely unmotivated, disengaged, what's that doing to kids? So, I'm able to have those conversations and link them into – what are the barriers for learning in there? How can children make a cultural connection in that classroom? How do the kids feel that the school, this teacher really gets me and who I am? So by picking and choosing resources, they can be the theoretical back up. It's not just words coming out of my mouth, I can link it back to legislation or high-level research information that's coming through in Ka Hikitia.

Tia, through an array of experiences reflected on the way in which she endeavours to promote trust and power-sharing in the evaluation space. Her identity and self-awareness as Pākehā and also in terms of representing the power of ERO is illustrated in the following statements. Also encapsulated is the essence of culturally responsive practice and the open space of trusting relationships where power is shared and learning able to be co-constructed:

> The work I've done in the space [referring to professional learning] makes me feel calm and centred, unthreatened in the space and open.
>
> I'm the last person to say that I know a lot about te ao Māori or Māori perspectives, but I feel with the learning I've done I have a calmness in the space.
>
> Modifying your responses, you shift. You're true to yourself but you're responding to the needs of the situation too.
>
> I'm quite happy to give away the power, anytime, anywhere, it gives other people the license to relax and be themselves.

> I don’t need to bring power to the table, ERO has enough power in the name, we don’t need it anymore.
>
> You just need to bring your authentic self to the table.

Tane acknowledged that Te Ara Huarau gives the opportunity to revisit schools, to build relationships over time. He shared a story of one school who had expressed that ERO was not able to offer anything of use to the school, but that a year later a relationship had formed whereby the principal was thanking Tane for his input and how useful he had found the support in prioritising for the school’s strategic planning. In Tane’s words:

> That’s where the whanaungatanga starts to build. It’s over time.

Collective voices expressed the value of time to build trusting relationships. All participants are making their own sense of what this looks like and bringing their identity, values and understanding to the evaluation context. The intent of the model to build lasting, trusting relationships whereby honest conversations can be had in the evaluation space is seen as a key to the success of Te Ara Huarau. In Tane’s words:

> So, we’ve come a long way, but there’s still a long way to go.

CHAPTER 4 DISCUSSION

Introduction

This research set out to understand what knowledge supports the understanding of societal power relationships in education. Also, to understand what culturally responsive practices are important for the role of an evaluator within a transforming education system aimed at equity and excellence. The purpose of the education system is as stated: "we shape an education system that delivers equitable and excellent outcomes" (MOE, 2018. Para. 2). The data collected in the research aimed to hear examples of how knowledge focused on achieving equity and excellence could be applied by evaluators in partnership with school leaders to support the enactment of aspects of education policy.

This chapter is framed by the research questions. A summary of what has emerged from the data, gathered through the process of semi-structured conversations, analysed using grounded theory and presented in chapter three as a collaborative storying, is discussed. Connections are made between the impact of participants' participation in a PPBL ākonga group, and their increased understandings of power relationships in the education and evaluation context. Understanding of power relationships voiced by the participants who were ākonga members and who worked as colleagues within ERO, are discussed together with the researcher's interpretations of these experiences. These research findings are related back to the information in the literature review.

Research Question one

What was learned from participating in the Poutama Pounamu blended learning about the relationships of power in a colonised society?

Knowing and Understanding

As themes emerged through the process of grounded theory and from the collective voice of participants, it was evident that a shared knowledge and understanding of the New Zealand education context existed. This knowledge spanned across leadership, evaluation and social justice. In terms of power relationships in a colonised society, for some their knowledge and conscientisation had grown as a direct result of participation in the PPBL ākonga group. For others knowledge was pre-existing and the impact of participation in the ākonga group deepened, refreshed or built on what had been learned about relationships of power in a colonised society. The following paragraphs illustrate the knowledge learned or experienced through participation in the PPBL.

The collaborative story in chapter three reflects participants' understanding of the impact of colonisation, and how this is demonstrated by the inequities of the education system for Māori up to the present day. An understanding of racism and its entrenchment within New Zealand society also emerged. All recognised the power imbalances within the education system and the damage this has done to the identity of, and outcomes for *tamariki* (children) Māori. Underpinning this narrative were deepening understandings of intergenerational power imbalance between Māori and non-Māori in schools, communities, organisations and across society.

As the themes within the findings emerged, participants demonstrated an increased consciousness of the system they work within. This was both in terms of their ability to recognise solutions, including aspects of moves toward indigenisation within the organisation of ERO, and in their depth of understanding of te ao Māori within the organisation's documents and metaphors. However, they also recognised the tensions between the opportunities presented and the realities of system expectations in the work they were doing.

Largely this played out by their pulling back into what is traditionally known and what has been the status quo of Western orientated system practices. Participants recognised this as a reality within a government organisation that is accountable to the existing structures and power relations of the Crown. These recognitions illustrate the current power dynamics within the institution of ERO and situates the attempts being made toward transformation as needing to move away from the

status quo of colonised structures and culture. Gillborn (2005) articulates education policy and the system as it is situated within as, "race inequity and racism [that] are central features of the education system. These are not aberrant nor accidental phenomena that will be ironed out in time, they are fundamental characteristics of the system" (pp. 497-498). Participants of the ākonga group and of this research voiced an increased understanding of this phenomena in their observations of the current system pulling against the opportunity created through their own documentation, for a more culturally responsive and equitable approach to evaluation.

Knowledge to recognise and value opportunities was evident in the narrative and can't be overstated as a key to activating intended transformative change towards equity and social justice. Recognition of efforts to indigenise spaces within ERO and the practices of EPs such as enacting genuine whakawhanaungatanga and holding fast to concepts from te ao Māori were shared. Opportunities were valued and ability to engage and see the potential in various situations were articulated. However, as Robinson (2018) states "good ideas sometimes fail to generate reliable improvement because neither the advocates nor the implementing agents know how to execute them in ways that deliver the intended improvement" (p. 5). What the research themes reflect is that participants did show the willingness and had developed knowledge relating to how to deliver intended improvements.

Aspects of culturally responsive evaluation as described in chapter one of this thesis were shared in the narrative. Participants had made sense of their practice in relation to the implementation of Te Ara Huarua and the importance of a relational, cultural base to work from. Conversations within the context of the PPBL ākonga group facilitated spaces for discussions that brought theory and practice together. Research participants spoke of the moral purpose to understand the needs of schools and be responsive to their individual contexts as per relational pedagogy if the potential of all their learners was to be achieved. These practices had been previously unpacked and more deeply understood in the ākonga group setting.

Implications

To summarise, the key learnings about power in a colonised society emerged or deepened as understandings of the ongoing impacts of colonisation within the education context were discussed. The visibility of racism was also developed through the voicing of power imbalances within the education system, schools, and communities. A knowledge of the importance of acting on the aspirations to do better and rebalance power through a culturally responsive approach to evaluation was evident in the collective voice of research participants.

Looking at the learning and experience of participation in the PPBL from a different perspective, a theme of professional capability building was also present within the research findings. Underpinning the context of this learning was the modelling of a culturally responsive approach to capability building that models power sharing. Understanding the importance of relational and dialogic interactions in a sensemaking space together with colleagues was found to be extremely valuable. Maisey (2022) describes the PPBL ākonga group as a "cascading model of professional learning and development designed to initiate and facilitate consciousness raising in ākonga group members" (p.32). Thin-Rabb (2017) recognised the previous iteration of PLD in Kia Eke Panuku, and her experience of it when working within a school, not as an approach, "but [as] a way of being that has the potential to disrupt the status quo at many different levels" (p.1). The collaborative story clearly demonstrated that participants valued this model of PLD. This related back to the impact of participation as ākonga in PPBL alongside an array of experiences and knowledge gained within the education settings and evaluation contexts in which EPs were working.

Research Question two

What impact has this learning had on my own approach to evaluation as well as the approach of a sample of my colleagues with whom I subsequently worked?

EP identity as key players in system reform

Tia shared that she had a heightened awareness of social justice at the time of her participation as ākonga in the PPBL. This thought was shared by all participants in different ways and provided an insight as to the identity of participants as people committed to making a difference in relation to social justice and equity. All understood the importance of challenging this situation by tackling difficult conversations within their roles as evaluators to make a difference and that these conversations were more effective when they began from strong relational cultural base. Alongside this was the desire from each participant to make a difference and how integral this was to their moral purpose as evaluators within their enactment of Te Tiriti. This aspect of moral purpose is especially important if change is to move beyond transformation alone to become equitable and transformative (Berryman et al., 2014).

Culturally responsive evaluation

Participants shared many examples of their practice which reflected the praxis between their knowledge and understanding in practice, and how they were deliberately enacting a culturally responsive approach to evaluation. The knowledge of culturally responsive teaching pedagogies, understanding of the importance of te ao Māori being reflected within school identity was shared in these conversations. The way in which EPs talked about whakawhanaungatanga and the active relationship building they were fostering in various contexts emerged. All recognised the importance of the ongoing relationships that had been built, the impact of which was demonstrated in examples of relational trust building between EPs and school leaders. Robinson (2018) describes relational trust as an essential platform for difficult conversations. Several participants voiced that the conversations they were having with school leaders were honest, that school leaders were increasingly trusting of the partnership between their evaluation partner and the school evaluation team. This voice is reflective of the evaluation model shared as a support within the education system in the Tomorrow's Schools Taskforce Report (2018). The report recommended the building of "a trusting relationship where progress and lack of progress can both be discussed openly, and without fear" (p. 123). The findings within this research demonstrated EPs value of the opportunity to build honest and trusting relationships with school leaders through

their evaluation role. A relationship that was reciprocated by school leaders who could see it opening up potential pathways for improvement rather than just compliance.

A desire to be true to concepts of te ao Māori in the metaphors of Te Ara Huarau and in the concepts underpinning ERO's approach to working with schools was voiced. Reflected in the collaborative story was their understanding of the importance of enacting the words, moving beyond rhetoric and espoused theory to action a process for changes that brought new and innovative solutions. The implementation of PLD opportunities such as the relationship developed with Tūwharetoa was shared as an authentic example of modelling cultural relationships within more responsive evaluation contexts.

Te Ara Huarau was recognised by EPs as a model that allowed the space for culturally responsive evaluation practices to be nurtured and to emerge. Notably, their ability to use a constructivist approach to the evaluation context by listening, ensuring marginalised voices had a pathway to be heard and co-constructing new evaluation plans that worked better for all learners and their families. Many examples of adaptive expertise were shared and related to the liminal spaces allowed for within Te Ara Huarau.

Power sharing was recognised as not only possible, but essential to the model of Te Ara Huarau. EPs working as individuals alongside schools to remove the power dynamic of an 'ERO team' and an 'us and them' perception between the school and evaluator/s and challenged EPs to work alongside school leaders in a space of mahitahi, mutual respect and authentic partnership.

Identified barriers to culturally responsive evaluation

A feeling of disappointment and resignation was heard in the voices of some participants at what was recognised as the reality of constraints with resourcing and the effect this would have on the intent of Te Ara Huarau to be a truly relational, responsive and adaptive model of evaluation. Voices expressed a recognition of the will of evaluators to make a difference together with schools in the equity space,

juxtaposed with the reality that resourcing would eventually impact relationships and their ability to be responsive to school contexts as time moved on.

A mismatch between what was written in documents and what was expected in practice was identified. Robinson (2018) points out that "espoused theories are important because they express the standards and aspirations against which we want our individual and organizational actions to be judged" (p. 19). Bishop et al. (2010) unpack the elements of structural reform in relation to the Te Kotahitanga project and sustainability beyond the initial enthusiasm of implementation. The need for both structural and cultural change is unpacked and the GPILSEO model is unpacked as a means for sustainable change. The components of this model are: goals (what is to be achieved), pedagogy (effective capability building), institutions (policy and infrastructure), leadership, spread (iterative process of feedback and adaptation), evidence to inform decision-making and ownership (collective resourcing and efficacy). Elements of GPILSEO such as articulating goals and opportunities for capability building are evident in the findings of this research, as are the areas that risk the sustainability of intended change.

Implications

New knowledge together with a model such as Te Ara Huarau provides a unique opportunity for people within the system to begin to shift espoused ideals in relation to the promises of Te Tiriti o Waitangi into reality. The risks to potential were largely identified as resourcing, building of capacity and prioritisation. A recognition of limitations detracting from potential was reflected in participant voice, as was a reluctant acceptance to the inevitable pull back toward the status quo of colonised systems prioritising accountabilities around resourcing and outputs such as reports.

ERO have made a significant step toward a shift in the status quo by publishing and sharing new plans and updated theories of action. The complementing of te ao Māori concepts together with more Westernised structures of evaluation in documentation provides a blueprint or aspiration to move forward for its people in their evaluation work with schools and services. EPs who have engaged in learning about power relationships in New Zealand society have the knowledge to

implement documented aspirations. What the research findings reflect is that to successfully embed and sustain change, additional resourcing to secure both the cultural and structural supports is necessary if this is going to be done properly. Bishop, O'Sullivan and Berryman (2010) refer to the example of education reform in Ontario and state:

> …this example shows the level of commitment that is needed at the funding level to support large-scale educational reform. It is not sufficient to promulgate policies that are responsive to identified needs, such as the plight of Māori students, and then not provide sufficient funding to make that reform a reality (p.177).

Although the research for this thesis is situated within a specific area of the education system, ERO is part of the larger system. Rather than appropriate or play at the edges, if reform is to occur across the system appropriate resources need to be available, and the resources that are currently in place need to be deployed with greater efficiency. Deployment should be focussed on the goals of government strategy (Ka Hikitia, 2020) and priorities (NELPs, 2020), and on those examples of reform that have demonstrated success (Bishop et al., 2010). The voices within these research findings recognise the constraints of resourcing and the likelihood that the potential of Te Ara Huarau will be limited by this reality.

In this example of change, in the beginning stages of implementation of Te Ara Huarau, there was greater freedom from system constraints where possibilities became visible to those who had knowledge of system transformation for equity. All participants understood the importance of the opportunity of being provided an evaluation model that gave the space and resource to work in a culturally responsive and relational approach together with schools. To recognise and sustain these opportunities takes leadership focused on realising the transformative, moral aspirations of educational policy and strategy for equity and social justice. As Fullan (2011) states "realizing moral purpose depends on engaged and deeply committed leaders at all levels of the system" (p. xi). The findings of this research show shifts in the right direction. The challenge for system leadership sits beyond the initial enthusiasm of policy writing to learning iteratively through the liminal spaces of implementation with leaders, staff and whānau in schools.

During the change process, some EPs voiced their experience of significant challenges. Voices reflected a level of prediction of what 'would be' at the time of data collection. Te Ara Huarau was yet to be fully implemented at the time of this research and as with all change processes, iterations and tweaks were continuing. All voiced aspects of the model they were passionate about maintaining due to the relational and responsive potential of Te Ara Huarau. At the same time they recognised the constraints of their implementation of the model due to the administrative tasks associated with their roles.

As those within ERO grappled with government expectations, consistency amongst evaluators and ensuring access to resources; the guidelines within the system showed movement back toward something known and familiar. Returning to the quote from Chouinard and Cram (2019) "cultural responsiveness in evaluation requires kinetic and creative thinking, a shift away from the methodological allure (and safety?) of the Western canon" (p. 138). Leadership plays a pivotal role in recognising the potential, possibilities and taking a position such as Cram et al., (2018) articulated whereby the implementation of a consciously indigenised evaluation approach takes constant reflection, questions, and the seeking of feedback to understand how well the approach is taking effect and what is needed to ensure its continued growth. As Bishop et al., (2010) reflect in relation to system reform "current approaches to scaling up educational reform have not worked for minoritized students. Most attempts are short term, poorly funded at the outset and often abandoned before any real changes can be seen" (p. 10). In contrast to this, the authors go on to state the alternative as being "educational reforms have built into them, from the very outset, those elements that will see them sustained in the original sites and spread to others". Evaluation plays a key role in ensuring the success of any new endeavour, ERO should be well positioned to understand and implement the evaluation of successful change within the organisation.

As with so many initiatives in the New Zealand education system that are well written, informed by substantive research, yet have not resulted in the changes desired, will this also be a "loss of the opportunity for transformational change" (Berryman & Haydon-Howard, 2023, p. 12), as with the flawed implementation of the Ka Hikitia policy? Or will the intentions be well supported with professional learning, resourcing and deliberate leadership that enacts a model that is full of

potential for something different moving forward? A model that will truly enable the system itself to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in line with the changes expected of the changes to the 2020 Education and Training Act.

Research Question three

How **might** these learnings about relational power, together with education policy and a partnership approach to evaluation inform the role of an evaluator to support system transformation?

A legacy of transformation?

In another thirty years' time will our country's leaders again be lamenting a lack of change toward equity in New Zealand society? Aspects of 'might' are alluded to within the findings and highlight the potential of Te Ara Huarau. Emerging constraints are also voiced. In answering research question one, we see the depth of knowledge and understanding required to enact culturally responsive evaluation in partnership with schools. In answering question two there are examples of what is important and what this could look like in practice. Question three draws the first two questions together and speaks to some of the literature in the first chapter as to what needs to be navigated to successfully achieve the transformative realisation of equity in the education system within the role of evaluation.

The role of the evaluator

If firstly we focus on the description of Te Ara Huarau as an "approach [that] uses developmental evaluation that reflects individual schools' context, culture and needs. It aims to strengthen the capability of all schools through embedding a continuous improvement approach and, strengthening schools' own engagement with and accountability to whānau" (ERO, 2021, para. 6); this continuous

improvement is possible and indeed is making close connections to the findings of this research.

Participants spoke of their experiences within their roles whereby they developed relationships based on whanaungatanga that were honest, trusting and provided a platform for robust and honest conversations. The observations shared of school leaders' responses to Te Ara Huarau demonstrated an appreciation of the model to recognise individual schools' context, culture and needs. The role of the evaluator demands relational skills, and from a culturally responsive perspective, this requires their ability to listen, adapt and respond constructively to individual contexts and needs. Having cultural competence as to the importance of whakawhanaungatanga and taking the time to build connections, initially provides a solid platform on which power may be shared and evaluation evidence has a platform on which it can be discussed openly.

The evaluator needs the skills to work alongside a school's own improvement approach to identify aspects of improvement together with the school evaluation team to support "each school to build and sustain high-quality evaluation as part of their planning for improvement" (ERO, 2021, para. 2). The evaluator will need knowledge of evaluation, and if it is to be modelling a partnership approach underpinned by the articles of te Tiriti o Waitangi, the approach to evaluation will need to be a culturally relational and responsive one, examples of which are articulated in the findings chapter.

In terms of strengthening a school's own engagement with and their accountability to whānau, the role of the evaluator will need to have a strong understanding of equity, power and the status quo of institutions underpinned by a colonial agenda. Recognising contexts where there continues to be a power imbalance and partnering with schools to ensure evaluation brings forward and creates spaces for the voices of the marginalised and underserved will be essential.

Evaluation partners voiced their drive to ensure they were having the difficult conversations, openly and honestly and that they were framing these within a range of resources relevant to school contexts. They were able to bring forward the NELPs, Ka Hikitia and discuss the Education and Training Act mandate for boards to engage with whānau and iwi to ensure voices who have been previously

marginalised had the space for their voices to be heard. Evaluators need to have strong interpersonal and facilitation skills as well as content knowledge of government documents and the kaupapa and theories that underpin them.

Some participants raised the opportunity of shared professional capability building across education agencies as a way of sharing and building capacity and shared understandings within the system. Again, this observation aligns with recommendations made in the Tomorrow's Schools Taskforce Report (2018). The report recommended the deliberate provision of networks and collaboration amongst agencies within the wider system to ensure schools have responsive and appropriate support available to them. The voices within the findings would urge us to support and value such networks and collaboration.

Impact

The impact of the role of an evaluator within the liminal spaces created by system transformation remains to be seen. Reflected in the voices within the research findings there are glimpses of what is possible. In the role of EP, **if** all the conditions come together as per GPILSEO, there is opportunity. It would be fair to predict that these elements together with the opportunity and conditions to enact strategic actions inherent within policy, evaluation could use a strength-based approach to understand what is working and make shifts within and across the education system. Furthermore, opportunities to model relationships underpinned by power sharing and a te ao Māori ethos could set the conditions in place to more effectively bring marginalised voices to the tables of educational power. Ultimately, if accountability was then underpinned by iwi aspirations, evaluation would play an essential role in how well schools are moving toward the goals articulated and shared by their bicultural communities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and for many, their increasingly diverse and multicultural communities in reality.

Implications

This research provides a snapshot in time of a sample of EPs within ERO as to their experience of a transformative opportunity centred in evaluation, within the wider

education system. For those readers who recognise the potential and messages within the text there lies an opportunity to do something truly audacious in addressing the intergenerational harmful effects of colonisation on Māori (Ngaamo, 2019). Through the transformation of the New Zealand education system in giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, equity for Māori is achievable. In the words of Patricia Grace as cited in Consedine and Consedine (2012):

> We must understand as we stand at the beginning of this stony, rocky, mountainous, tangled path that will not lessen until the yawning chasm in understanding of the Treaty is breached, until racism in all its forms is [ended] and the effects of colonisation are realised (p. 257).

In striving toward giving effect to the articles within Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and in recognising, mitigating and deconstructing institutional, and all forms of racism, silencing, and racial privilege there are huge opportunities for Aotearoa as a nation. In resourcing, prioritising and authentically implementing government policy and strategy, there is possibility to lead and sustain transformative change for equity and social justice within an education system and wider society. This is urgently in need of our commitment and action. Relational and culturally responsive evaluation has a key role to play within these transformative spaces.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Introduction

This research came about as a result of engaging in PPBL, both as a school leader, and then later as an evaluator within ERO. The motivation was driven by the recognition of current theory and research effecting a change of mindset and world view from society, and the application of this to a work context. In response to the Tomorrow's Schools Taskforce review (2018) of ERO's (at the time) processes for evaluation, ERO developed a way to work that would respond to inequity within the education system. The opportunity to inquire into this process through the lens of research was exciting and had the potential to contribute something of interest to the academic community and those within ERO and other government organisations.

This chapter will summarise the key findings from the research, discuss limitations, include recommendations for ERO and other institutions and suggest further research.

Summary of Key Findings

If government policy, aspirations and strategies are to be realised, a range of components need to be present. Firstly, professional capability building, centred on understanding why our current situation exists, what power is at play in society and what needs to be different, are all crucial. This requires a changing of hearts and minds that brings about a different view of reality (Maisey, 2022), or a process of conscientisation that enlightens a learner as to epistemological realities (Friere, 2015). The people making decisions and retaining focus on the goal must ensure there is a shared understanding and depth of knowledge as to why the change is necessary and stay relentlessly focused on navigating change toward the desired outcome (Fullan, 2011).

At the time of this research, Te Ara Huarau provided a structure to enact a mana enhancing, culturally responsive approach to evaluation. This was underpinned by the Māori epistemological concepts of whanaungatanga, mahitahi and

poutokomanawa. Whanaungatanga in particular arose as a theme from the findings within the research. Participants recognised the importance of building trusting relationships that are then focused on a shared kaupapa of improving outcomes for learners. Te Ara Huarau offered a structure. However, within the findings there is evidence that as the status quo of a colonised system and insufficient resourcing began to impact on its implementation, there were risks to the intent of the approach. Cultural changes and prioritisation of resourcing within the organisation of ERO were not yet sufficient to enable the potential of authentic relationships built on the authentic cultural concept of whanaungatanga.

Evidence showed opportunities to connect with and enact the intent of te ao Māori concepts and these were highly valued by participants within the research. While there were some spaces created for these concepts to become authentic within the organisational culture of ERO, this was an area that was identified as needing continued leadership, focus and prioritisation.

Located in the findings are several examples of power within the system beginning to pull the participants back into a way of working that increasingly reflected the status quo of structures dominated by Western ways of knowing and Eurocentric cultural values. This relates back to the concepts of a hidden curriculum based on a racial contract of white dominance. Thin-Rabb (2017) concluded in her research centred on educational change that "until traditional theories and practices that privilege the cultural values and norms of the dominant class and perpetuate power and knowledge are disrupted and dismantled, the status quo will be sustained" (p. 110). Again, the importance of cultural change within an organisation underpinned by capability building focused on conscientisation is pivotal to maintaining the focus on a power sharing change agenda.

Collaborative professional capability building, modelled on a relational and culturally responsive and adaptive approach to growing practice was identified as a priority. By providing the conditions and resourcing for a wānanga and āko type approach to learning and practice, both within ERO and across schools and agencies, a culture of change is more likely to thrive.

Arguably the most important aspect to highlight when concluding this research is the voices of the research participants. As people within the organisation of ERO,

what they have shared from an insider perspective provides voices from their experiences of evaluation throughout the implementation of Te Ara Huarau. Their stories reflect the potential of the model and the aspects that provide opportunities for ERO to leave a legacy of system transformation, should the culture and beliefs of the organisation align with the structured intent of the model.

Limitations of this Research

The limitations of this research relate to time and geography. The time period between ākonga PPBL group participation and data gathering, and also the time since data gathering. Further changes will have happened in the Te Ara Huarau space by the time this research is publicly available. This research provides a snapshot of EP experience of a small number of colleagues within a change space. In terms of geography, ERO is a national organisation, this research focused on colleagues from within the central North Island region. The experiences of other EPs across the country will undoubtedly have differed. In part this will be because the particular group of EPs in this study have all participated in PPBL, unlike EPs across the country.

Recommendations

As yet there are very few examples of system transformation to guide the process of significant evaluation change. Wayfinding is just that, navigating the unknown. To give Te Ara Huarau the best chance of success, ERO should look within and use the tool of evaluation to shine a light on the practices that are working, the voices within this research are a *koha* (gift). Information and evidence will provide the way forward from a strength-based approach. In taking an iterative, evidence-based approach ERO has the potential to be a leader in the transformative space of education within New Zealand. The implementation of Te Ara Huarau could provide a blueprint for other government agencies to follow suit. If the GPILSEO model is applied as discussed, and sufficient resourcing is prioritised, something truly outstanding is possible. To follow the process of the implementation and iterations of Te Ara Huarau with further research would capture further evidence of

how, in transformative action supported by evaluation, equity may become a reality.

In the concluding whakataukī strength and direction may be found.

Whāia te iti kahurangi ki te tūohu koe me he maunga teitei.

Seek the treasure you value most dearly: if you bow your head, let it be to a lofty mountain.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Research information sheet

Research Information Sheet

Tēnā koe,

I am currently conducting research on *Navigating the transforming evaluation space between schools and ERO.* The aim of this research is to provide an evidenced narrative of how the process of understanding the impacts of colonisation through learning with Poutama Pounamu, together with ERO's intent to contribute to the transformation of the education system through a partnership approach (Te Ara Huarau) to evaluation, have the potential to support schooling improvement. The research will be presented as a thesis and will contribute to the completion of a Masters of Education.

As an employee of ERO, I am guided by the ethics of the organisation, and also the comprehensive ethics procedures for the University of Waikato. My methodology will be undertaken in ways that are responsive to the context and give the utmost consideration to respecting the mana of all participants and the organisation of ERO.

As you were a member of a Poutama Pounamu ākonga group I facilitated in 2020, I would like to invite you to participate as one of approximately five colleagues interested in further sharing their experience of how being a participant of the Poutama Pounamu ākonga group has impacted your thinking and practice as a culturally responsive evaluator in the implementation of Te Ara Huarau. This participation would involve approximately 3-3.5 hours of your time, inclusive of a semi structured conversation with you individually, intended to gather information to answer the research questions, the review and amendment of a transcript of our conversation, with the potential for a follow up conversation should this be useful for you to further develop and clarify your thinking. Your participation would be greatly appreciated; however you are under no obligation to participate.

The overarching research questions for the thesis are as follows:

1. *What was learned from participating in the Poutama Pounamu blended learning about the relationships of power in a colonised society?*

2. *What impact has this learning had on my own approach to evaluation as well as the approach of a sample of my colleagues with whom I subsequently worked?*

3. *How might these learnings about relational power, together with education policy and a partnership approach to evaluation inform the role of an evaluator to support system transformation?*

Our conversation will centre discussion around your practice in relation to these questions/ideas, and will inform further themes to be explored for the research.

Should you decide to participate, confidentiality of your participation will be upheld, respected and maintained. The identity of participants will remain strictly confidential in the writing up and presentation of the research. Should you wish to know more about the research prior to expressing interest, please email or phone me on the contact information provided.
All information gathered will be kept confidential, password protected or in the case of hard copies, locked in my office for a period of 5 years after which time they will be destroyed as per university requirements.

I will record and transcribe our conversations. You will then be provided with a copy of your own transcription within 2 weeks of our conversation. You will then have a further 2 weeks to consider and edit what has been recorded until you are happy with what you said. You will then have a further opportunity to conversate with myself regarding your amendments, should this be helpful for you.

Whether or not you decide to participate in the research, I would like to thank you for both your previous participation in the Poutama Pounamu ākonga group, and also for taking the time to read and consider this message.

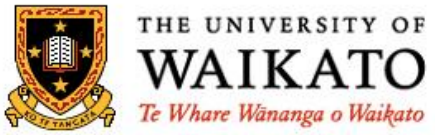
If you are interested in participating, please fill in the attached consent form and return it to me via email.

Again, thank you for your consideration.

Ngā mihi nui,

Tracey Adams

Appendix 2 – Consent form for participants



Consent Form for Participants

I have read the Participant Information Sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time by contacting the researcher using the details provided, and will have the opportunity to remove my information up until 2 weeks prior to the point of the commencement of writing the findings of the thesis. I understand notice will be given prior to this time. I understand I am free to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the Participant Information Sheet.

I understand that should I have any concerns, or should any disputes arise in the course of the research, I am able to contact the research supervisor or an ERO contact using the contact details provided.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Participant Information Sheet.

I agree to my responses being recorded for the purpose of generating transcripts which I will have the opportunity to view and edit prior to use for this research.

I understand that I will be given a further opportunity to speak to/clarify my transcript with the researcher should this be useful. Should this occur, the previously set process regarding transcripts and amendments will again be followed.

It is acknowledged that participants may perceive conflicts of interest between work and participating in this research. Please inform me of any initial concerns below so that I may be aware of this prior to our conversations.

I understand that copies of my own transcripts will be returned to me via email.

It is possible that this information could be useful for other related scholarly endeavours such as journal writing or conference presentations.

I consent / do not consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study to be used for any other research purposes. (circle your response)

Participant's Signature: _____

Participant's Name: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name and contact information:

Tracey Adams

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021 535 906

Supervisor's Name and contact information:

Professor Mere Berryman

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027 464 9256

Appendix 3 – Conversations starters, questions and prompts

THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Conversations starters, questions and prompts:

Question 1.

1. *What was learned from participating in the Poutama Pounamu blended learning about the relationships of power in a colonised society?*

Potential lead-in and questions:

- *Talk to me about how participation in Poutama Pounamu influenced your thinking around power, social justice and equity in New Zealand.*
- *As an employee of the crown, has your awareness of power relationships changed? If so, how?*
- *Talk to me about whether the learning influenced you, your values and understanding of bias. How?*

2. *What impact has this learning had on my own approach to evaluation as well as the approach of a sample of my colleagues with whom I subsequently worked?*

- *Talk to me about the implementation of Te Ara Huarau and the connections you have made between your learning through Poutama Pounamu and your practice…*
- *What opportunities have you recognised through the implementation of Te Ara Huarau? How have you taken advantage of these opportunities?*
- *How is your knowledge of power relationships impacting your practice? What values underpin your approach to evaluation?*

3. *How might these learnings about relational power, together with education policy and a partnership approach to evaluation inform the role of an evaluator to support system transformation?*

- *When thinking about policy and strategy - the NELPs, Ka Hikitia, Education and Training Act - how do you see Te Ara Huarau supporting their intent?*
- *How has your participation in Poutama Pounamu influenced your understanding of a partnership model? How has it influenced your motivation?*
- *What further opportunities do you see?*
- *What challenges/barriers have you faced?*

Note: the following footnote was included in all documentation sent to participants. This research has been approved by the University of Waikato Faculty of Education Ethics Committee on October 17th 2022. Approval number: FEDU062/22.