

## **Sabbatical Report**

Title: Undertaking a research study to develop a local response to strengthening Māori students' wellbeing

Author: Louise Anaru Tangira

School: Flaxmere College

Duration: Term 3 2017

### **1. Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to the Ministry of Education as part of the Teach NZ Study Awards programme for the opportunity to undertake this 10 week Secondary Principals sabbatical.

I would like to acknowledge Flaxmere College Board of Trustees and Board Chair Taime Pareanga-Samuel who endorsed my application for this Sabbatical and who have been very supportive of me engaging in this professional learning opportunity.

I really appreciate DP Jim Hay-Mackenzie for expertly leading the school in the role of Acting Principal in my absence. Alongside, the Flaxmere College Leadership Team DP Shelley Arnold, Lisa Larwood, Mary Stubbings and Cherie Heeney and EO Kathryn Simmons who were extremely effective in leading and managing the school in my absence.

### **2. Purpose**

The purpose of my sabbatical was to complete two Master of Educational leadership papers. One paper was on Educational Leadership and Organisational Development and the other was on Educational Research Methodologies. For this Sabbatical Report I will focus on key findings from my third assignment for the Educational Research Methodologies paper in which I planned a piece of empirical research which I will use to guide a future directed study in 2018.

### **3. Rational and background information**

#### *Research aim*

In general the research aim of this study is to work with a local secondary school community (students, staff, whānau, hāpu, Iwi) to better understand Māori student notions of hauora/wellbeing after experiencing loss by suicide. It is hoped that the research findings may assist the community if it is their wish to develop a local response to strengthening local Māori student's wellbeing and thus contributing to suicide prevention. The source of my research ideas come from my own experiences as a Principal in a secondary school context being affected personally and professionally by losing students and a staff member to suicide. I have reviewed research undertaken in this area and would like to add to my current knowledge on this topic by finding out new knowledge through this proposed study.

### **4. Executive summary**

#### *Research question*

In line with the research aim above I have constructed the following specific research question: In what ways are hauora- holistic wellbeing made sense of by Māori students in a New Zealand secondary school who have faced death via suicide of a fellow student, friend or family member? For the purpose of this study hauora will be defined as Durie's (2006) definition of hauora symbolised by the whare tapa wha which outlines four dimensions of holistic wellbeing; te taha tinana – physical wellbeing; te taha hinengāro – mental and emotional wellbeing; te taha whānau – relational and extended family wellbeing and taha wairua – spiritual wellbeing.

### **5. Methodology**

#### *Research design*

In order to answer the research question I need to make a number of research design considerations and decisions. For instance; how will I work within a Maori context and what will be a suitable paradigm to generate knowledge? How will I care for the people in my study and how will I ensure quality and validity? How will I collect and analyse data and report my findings? How will I know that my study is quality research and that new

knowledge has been created? For the purpose of this study I will be using a participatory action research methodology.

Action research was developed by Lewin in 1944. It traditionally aimed to generate new knowledge and change designed for specific settings alongside producing general knowledge that can be applied to other settings. The action research process is cyclical and iterative and involves widespread participation and collaboration of those involved in the research. Importance is placed on data gathering and analysis prior to action planning and implementation and subsequent evaluation. More recent models of action research focus on advocating social change and innovation, with further adaptations of appreciative inquiry approaches and where both the researchers and participants are co-learners. (Cardno, 2003; Piggot-Irvine, 2009; Waddell, Cummings & Worley, 2000).

There are many definitions of action research and a range of different models. Other key aspects of action research is that it involves implementing change in the process as opposed to solely investigation. Furthermore, research is also important as the action research process is based on an evidence informed decision making process. Common action research models include; critical, classroom, action learning, action science, soft systems approaches and educational management. Action research is commonly used in educational settings and is often termed practitioner research. Cardno designed developmental action research for specific use by educational practitioners to carry out in their own settings. Piggot-Irvine built on a developmental model to create a problem resolving action research model, again for use in education. (Cardno, 2003; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003; Menter et al., 2011; Piggot-Irvine, 2009; Robinson & Lai, 2006). For the purpose of this study I will use a participatory action research method.

### *Research paradigm*

The research paradigm in which I will be researching is Kaupapa Māori Research. Kaupapa Māori can be seen as a discourse of proactive theory and emerged from Māori dissatisfaction with the effects of the urbanization of Māori in the post-World War II period 1950-1960s and resulted in an intensifying political consciousness and a shift in the mind set of many Māori over the 1970-1980s from a dominant colonial discourse. As a result the revitalisation of Māori cultural aspirations, philosophies and practices (Berryman et al., 2013; Berryman & Glynn, 2003; Bishop, 1997, 2005; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Smith, 1999, 2005) were produced resulting in a range of changes into the future such as Kaupapa Māori Research.

Kaupapa Māori Research can be seen to relate to critical theory where is research undertaken in Māori contexts bestowing Māori values, ethics and protocols. Kaupapa Māori

Research is carried out by Māori with and for Maori. Central to this research method is its grounding in tikanga Māori. Māori research involves Māori as significant participants and the research team is usually Māori. Analysis is undertaken typically by Māori thus producing Māori knowledge, protocols such as expectations and quality standards are set by Māori. In short, this form of research aims to make a positive difference for the participants and is designed with the participants. It is a counter-hegemonic approach that is in contrast to western approaches such as positivism. (Berryman et al., 2013; Berryman & Glynn, 2003; Bishop, 1997, 2005; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Kidman, 2014; Mutch, 2013; Rameka, 2012, 2016; Te Putaiora Writing Group, 2010; Smith, 1999, 2005; Wearmouth, Berryman & Glynn, 2009). Henceforth solutions for Māori therefore lie with Māori. As Freire (1970) stated:

*Then it is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in its power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both. (p.21)*

## 6. Findings

### *Research and its purpose*

Menter et al., (2011) provides a simple definition of research: “research is systematic enquiry, the outcomes of which are made available to others” (p3). The key aspects to this definition is that of enquiry, systematic and sharing outcomes. There are multiple views on what is research and its purpose. General definitions of research can be seen as a systematic, scientific investigation to discover new knowledge. Moreover research can involve establishing facts thus confirming existing knowledge, or seen to be finding answers to a problem. Further common themes in research descriptions include that it is purposeful and gathers data. The research question is related to the researchers’ beliefs and context and influences the direction of the study. A specific set of research skills are required to undertake research alongside understanding the process including its limitations. Appropriate methods and ethical practice should be used and finally, the research findings should be recorded and reported publically. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Menter et al., 2011; Mutch, 2013).

Educational research or research within educational settings is a form of social science research and is concerned with people and processes related to teaching and learning. The purpose of educational research is in short to improve teaching and learning for everyone. (Mutch, 2013). According to Menter practitioner research is: “...systematic enquiry in an

*education setting carried out by someone working in that setting, the outcomes of which are shared with other practitioners”* (p.3). Key components being that the research is undertaken by someone who is both undertaking research and practicing in the same education setting. Moreover, in addition to the practitioner using the research findings to improve their own practice it is also intended to share the findings with the view that others can use the information for improvement purposes also. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Menter et al., 2011; Mutch, 2013; Robinson & Lai, 2006).

#### *Why I consider my study is research*

Upon reflection of the discussions above, and in particular to practitioner research I consider my study to be research within an educational setting. The research question of the study is in relation to an educational context. The aim of the research is intended to improve wellbeing for the students within the context alongside improving the practice teachers and leaders within the institution. The research also plans to share the findings with the participants through to the wider community. Furthermore it is anticipated student voice will generate new knowledge as it is from a specific group of students within a specific context and culture.

#### *Research design and paradigm*

A research design is an overarching research method which links to a research paradigm and theory. It can be distinguished from a research paradigm which is essentially a particular world view on research which links to theory and research design. According to Markula and Silk, (2011) a paradigm is: “... *an overarching set of beliefs that provides the parameters – how researchers understand reality and the nature of truth, how they understand what is knowledge, how they act and the role they undertake, how they understand participants and how they disseminate knowledge of a given research project*” (p. 25). The research design and paradigm can be seen to align with a non-positivist or naturalistic/constructivist and critical approach. Alongside this I will be using a qualitative methodology. These approaches are appropriate for educational research as they are subjective and knowledge is co-created between the researcher and the participants. (Borko, Liston & Whitcomb, 2007; Donmoyer, 2006; Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Onwuegbuzie, 2005).

As discussed earlier participatory action research methodology is being used to answer the research question. Specific features of participatory action research is that it is concerned with social change and involves shared ownership and participation. Analysis is collaborative with community involvement and action. Supporters of this research design such as Freire view research as subjective and argue research which claims neutrality are in fact serving interests of the powerful majority. Therefore this approach can be seen as a social process that is emancipatory. It is participatory, practical and collaborative.

Furthermore, a participatory action research model can be seen as critical, recursive, reflexive, dialectic with the broad aim to transform theory and practice. (Cardno, 2003; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003; Piggot-Irvine, 2009).

As a further explanation of kaupapa Māori research, I will also utilise Bishop's (1999, 2005) model to develop and evaluate the research study. This model is aligned to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and seeks to address self-determination of Maori in research through addressing research issues of initiation, benefits, representation, legitimation, and accountability. Bishop's model asks critical questions for researchers under each of the five areas above that address issues of power and control. Smith (1991) also provides critical questions for Kaupapa Māori Research which I will also use to frame the research. (Berryman et al., 2013; Berryman & Glynn, 2003; Bishop, 1997, 2005; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Smith, 1999, 2005).

#### *Why the research design and paradigm is appropriate for my study*

I would argue facilitating an action-research method as appropriate for this study and the context as it is collaborative in nature and acknowledges participants as active agents and co-creators of knowledge, it is seen as suitable for use in educational settings and is congruent with working with Tangata Whenua and within a Kaupapa Māori paradigm. In particular, participatory action research was selected as a method as it often sets out to study something to change and improve it. Most participatory action research is initiated out of wanting to change a situation where the people affected want to bring about change for the better. This approach is similar to the aims of my study where the rationale to engage in such a research method is based on the collective desire to better understand notions of wellbeing with the view to contribute to youth suicide prevention.

Furthermore, the chosen paradigm has clear alignment with the context of the study as the participants and co-creators of the research are Māori youth (in conjunction with and only if their whanau and hāpu and Iwi grant permission). The study will include acknowledging Māori world views, ways of being and perspectives in the research. Emphasis will be given to building whānaungatanga relationships with participants based on respect and reciprocity. Further to the quote provided earlier from Freire within this paradigm, it is acknowledged the Māori participants in this study such as Māori youth and whānau have the personal power and agency to transform their own lives as opposed to taking a deficit theorising position of externalising blame and waiting for 'those in power' to bring about a solution in terms of Māori youth suicide prevention.

#### *What counts as evidence?*

Different types of research produce different types of evidence such as documentary and perception data. Qualitative research produces a range of evidence such as people's perceptions, stories, descriptions, opinions, visual symbols and graphic representations. Quantitative research also generates various forms of evidence including; scores, tallies, frequencies, trends and measures. (Menter et al., 2011; Mutch, 2013).

#### *Data generated to answer my research question*

As mentioned above different approaches yield different types of data. The data generated in this study to answer my research question at this point in time is planned to derive from qualitative research through semi-structured collaborative interviews/stories evidence. In my view this in conjunction with undertaking a literature review will provide sufficient and specific evidence to answer the research question. As the research question focussed on the perceptions of Māori youth within a specific setting, it is therefore their voice and perception data that are central to the evidence gathered. However, it is also important to acknowledge working within a kaupapa Māori paradigm depending on where the participants and partners lead the research alongside the ongoing reflexivity and reflection of using a participatory action research method, may require future modification of the investigation and accordingly impact on the range of evidence and data gathered. (Bishop & Glynn, 1995).

#### *What is quality research?*

According to Anderson (1998): *"Successful research is based on the knowledge, thinking and research that proceeds it... A review of literature is a summary, analysis and interpretation of the theoretical, conceptual and research literature..."* (as cited in Mutch, 2013:90).

Therefore a literature review will be undertaken related to the research question outlined which will ensure the study was justified in the first place and that context chosen and aim is relevant.

Key requirements for qualitative research to be quality research is to ensure the research is trustworthy and credible. Trustworthiness can be developed through concise documentation of the research design, data gathering and analysis, decision making and ensuring an ethical approach. Credibility can be addressed through triangulation such as peer review and member checking by the participants in the study. Using cycles of feedback with the participants can also be a useful way to validate the data. Quality can be addressed through ensuring data analysis is systematic, robust and transparent. Furthermore, quality can be strengthened through inviting public scrutiny through making the findings public. The research should also be implemented in a principled way that aligns to the participants' values and beliefs. A particular validity consideration for participatory action research is to ensure there are strong communication lines in place throughout the research to allow the participants continual input, engagement and ownership of the study. (Cardno, 2003;

Cohen, Manion & Morrison; Denzin, Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003; Lincoln & Giardina, 2006; Menter et al., 2011; Mutch, 2013, Piggott-Irvine, 2009; Shenton, 2004).

Ethical considerations also need to be taken into account to ensure quality research. As the study is being undertaken within my current school context I will also need to consider insider research implications. Smith (1999) argues insider research: "... has to be ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical... it also needs to be humble... because the researcher belongs to the community with a different set of roles and relationships, status and position" (p.139). Other ethical considerations to be addressed in this study include; informed consent, anonymity, working with youth, working with Māori and within Māori Settings, voluntary participation, right to withdraw, confidentiality, privacy and participant safety. (Piggott-Irvine, 2009; Menter et al., 2011; Mutch, 2013; Wilkinson, 2001).

## **7. Implications and conclusions**

It is hoped that my research will be considered to be new knowledge through analysis of the findings and through conducting a literature review regarding what has already been researched in this area. The research question was developed after reading widely in the area of study. I found very little research in relation to the broader research aim conducted in New Zealand and could not find any similar examples to my research question. In my view it is likely that new knowledge may be produced by this research. However, I will ensure the research is peer reviewed to ensure quality and to confirm that new knowledge has been created as evidenced in the research findings. I will also ensure the research is published and available for access to the public. I suggest the 'real worth of the research' can be judged over time to see if the study has made some improvement in peoples' lives. (Piggott-Irvine, 2009; Menter et al., 2011; Mutch, 2013).

## **8. References**

Berryman, M., & Glynn, T. (2003). *Transition from Māori to English: A Community Approach*. Wellington: New Zealand for Educational Research.

Berryman, M., Nevin, A., SooHoo, S., Barrett, T., Glynn, T., & Ford Bingley. (2013). *Culturally Responsive Methodologies*. UK: Emerald.



Bishop, R. (2005). Freeing ourselves from neo-colonial domination in research. In Denzin, N.K & Lincoln, Y.S., *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*, (pp. 109-138). Sage Publishers, London, United Kingdom.

Bishop, R. (1997). Interviewing as collaborative storytelling. *Education research and perspectives*, 24(1), 28-47.

Bishop, R., O'Sullivan, D., & Berryman, M. (2010). *Scaling up education reform: Addressing the politics of disparity*. Wellington, NZ: NZCER Press.

Bishop, R., & Berryman, M. (2006). *Culture speaks: Cultural relationships and classroom learning*. Wellington: Huia Publishers.

Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (1999). *Culture counts: Changing power relationships in education*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.

Borko, H., Liston, D., & Whitcomb, J.A. (2007). Genres of empirical research in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58(3), 3-11.

Cardno, C. (2003). *Action Research: A Developmental Approach*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2000). *The handbook of qualitative research*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Donmoyer, R. (2006). Take my paradigm...please! The legacy of Kuhn's construct in educational research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(1), 11-34.

Durie, M., (2006). Measuring Māori Wellbeing. *New Zealand Treasury Guest lecture Series 1 August 2006*, Massey University, Wellington. Retrieved from

<http://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/media-speeches/guestlectures/pdfs/tgls-durie.pdf>.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London: Penguin Books.

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2003). Participatory action research. In Denzin, N., Lincoln, K., & Yovonna, S (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 336-396). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Kidman, Joanna. (2014). Representing Maori youth voices in community education research. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 49(2), 205-218.

Lincoln, Y.S., Lynham, S.A., & Guba, E.G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 97-128). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Markula, P., & Silk, M. (2011). *Qualitative research for physical culture*. Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan. (Chapter 2. Paradigmatic approaches to physical culture. pp. 24-56.)

Menter, I., Elliot, D., Hulme, M., Lewin, J., & Lowden, K. (2011). *A guide to practitioner research in education*. London, England: Sage.

Mutch, C. (2013). *Doing educational research: A practitioner's guide to getting started*. (2nd ed.). Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press.

Onwuegbuzie, A. (2002). Why can't we all get along? Towards a framework for unifying research paradigms. *Education*, 122(3), 518-530.

Piggot-Irvine, E. (2009). *Action Research in Practice*. Wellington: NZCER press.

Rameka, L. (2012). Culturally located assessment in early childhood education. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 17(2), 7-21.

Rameka, L. (2016). Ngā Tuakiri o te Tangata: Being Māori in Early Childhood Education. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2016.13>

Robinson, V., & Lai, M.K. (2006). *Practitioner research: A guide to improving classrooms and schools*. California, United States of America: Corwin Press.

Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonising methodologies: Research and indigenous people*. London/Dunedin: Zed Books/Otago University Press.

Smith, L.T. (2005). On tricky ground. In Denzin, N.K & Lincoln, Y.S., *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*, (pp. 85-107). Sage Publishers, London, United Kingdom.

The Putaiora Writing Group. (2010). Te Ara Tika Guidelines for Maori research ethics: A framework for researchers and ethics committee members. Retrieved from <http://www.hrc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/Te%20Ara%20Tika%20Guidelines%20for%20Maori%20Research%20Ethics.pdf>

Waddell, D., Cummings, T. & Worley, C. (2000). *Organisation development and change*. Melbourne: Nelson Thomson Learning.

Wearmouth, J., Berryman, M. & Glynn, T. (2009). *Inclusion through participation in communities of practice in schools*. Wellington: Dunmore Publishing Ltd.

Wilkinson, T.M. (2001). The core ideas of ethics research. In M. Tolich (Ed.), *Research Ethics in Aotearoa New Zealand Concepts, Practice, Critique*. (pp. 13-24). Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson Education.