

## Chapter 4

### Methodology

#### *Research Approach, Conceptual Framework, and Design*

#### 4.1 Kaupapa Māori research

Kaupapa Māori research is a Māori-centred approach that emerged from the social and political context of the 1990s. Although akin to Western critical theory, it is not merely a critical response to quantitative positivist research, nor is it post-modernist, for these and previous research philosophies are located in Euro-centric epistemology. In contrast, kaupapa Māori research is “a ‘home grown’ theoretical and research approach that interrogates and investigates issues as they are contextualised within Aotearoa” (Pihama & Gardiner, 2005, p.10). In short, it is research into issues of concern to Māori, undertaken by Māori, for Māori, from a Māori perspective, and executed in a 'Māori way'. Graham Smith (1997) argued that kaupapa Māori theory validates and legitimises Māori language, knowledge and culture, while Durie (2002) maintained that kaupapa Māori research privileges the Māori world-view, and Māori aspirations. It is motivated by the desire for Māori to know more about themselves, to control the way Māori view the world and themselves, and how the world views and interacts with them.

Scott and Usher (1999) asserted that research methodology, the types of data and the means of data collection, are of less significance to the definition of research than are the epistemological and ontological assumptions that underpin the research approach. A kaupapa Maori approach to research is not constrained by choice of research methods and/or tools, however, the approach does require that proposed methods are scrutinised in relation to Ao Māori custom and practice, and, a decolonising agenda is a key element of analysis (Pihama & Gardiner, 2005).

Te Kōpae Piripono entered into the Centre of Innovation research project with the aim of contributing, from a Māori perspective, to educational knowledge, to benefit the Māori community. Foremost, was the desire to enhance whānau development at Te Kōpae Piripono, using the opportunity afforded by the Centre of Innovation initiative, to explore the ways the Māori worldview is framed and phrased in contemporary language to be understood by whānau members and then incorporated into the structure, practice, and processes of the whare kōhungahunga.

Smith (1999) identified *whānau* as “the intersection where research meets Māori, or Māori meets research, on equalising terms” (p.185). It is highly appropriate that kaupapa Māori, the Ao Māori paradigm, that has whānau at its core, is the theoretical framework of both the research and the researched. Both find reference, genealogically and/or conceptually, on the all-embracing Tātai Whakapapa. In fact, the pursuit of knowledge and the extension of understanding is very Māori. Tāne and his siblings, those who desired that their parents be separated so the offspring could expand and develop, set the precedent. Later, Tāne climbed into the heavenly realms in search of knowledge and enlightenment for humankind, which he then returned to earth. Later still, descendent Māui-Tikitiki-ā-Taranga, the youngest of his family, was inquisitive, innovative and risk-taking, ignoring the role and responsibilities prescribed for him, he achieved prominence through his quest to know and to change.

The themes of whānau and interdependence recur through the successive stories of the Tātai Whakapapa. Kaupapa Māori research seeks to uphold those themes of Te Ao Māori in the present and into the future, as does Te Kōpae Piripono.

## **4.2 Participatory action research**

While ideologically the Te Kōpae Piripono research is inherently kaupapa Māori, the approach accords with the tenets of *participatory action research*, which is the research methodology of the Ministry of Education’s Centres of Innovation project. The Ao Māori concept of *whanaungatanga* suggests relationship building, inclusivity and cooperation. Durie (2002) proposed that any undertaking of kaupapa Māori research would appropriately involve the development of dynamic relationships, solutions, negotiated directions and innovations. So it was that the Te Kōpae Piripono research effort was a comfortable blend of the kaupapa Māori approach and participatory action research.

Participatory action research is a process of enquiry that aims to create positive social change in communities and in society. The method embraces the principles of participation and reflection, and the empowerment and emancipation of individuals and groups seeking to improve their situation (Hughes & Seymour-Rolls, 2000).

Participatory action research is also known as practitioner research for its application in institutions such as early childhood centres by practitioners/teachers who regard research

for social change as a collaborative process rather than simply an outcome. For this reason participatory action research was deemed a suitable methodology by Te Kōpae Piripono.

Kemmis & Wilkinson (in Atweh, Kemmis & Weeks, 1998, pp.21-36) listed six central features of participatory action research:

- 1) It is a social process aimed at improving organisations and groups by exploring the relationship between the individual and the group
- 2) It is participatory in that practitioners research themselves, examining how their own understandings, skills and values, frame and restrict their actions
- 3) It is practical and collaborative
- 4) It is emancipatory
- 5) It aims to free researchers from linguistic constraints and relationships of power within the educational setting
- 6) It is recursive, involving reflective evaluation of one's practice

According to Meade (2003) action research puts teachers in the “driving seat” and fosters positive attitudes to lifelong learning. The emphasis on self-reflection and evaluation can facilitate meaningful learning opportunities for adults and children. Over the years, the Te Kōpae Piripono professional development programme has incorporated the action research model.

### **4.3 Case study/Self study**

As the primary aim of the Centres of Innovation project is to allow early childhood centres to research their own uniquely innovative practice, the Te Kōpae Piripono research is a case study, a stand-alone study of its own case, using a variety of investigative strategies. This in-depth study of Te Kōpae Piripono was designed to show how key Māori concepts are used and interpreted by the whānau to enable the centre to deliver quality outcomes. Reflection on practice and self-study have become essential elements of professional development through the better understanding of personal experience (Loughran & Northfield, 1998, in Hamilton, Pinnegar, Russell, Loughran & LaBosky, 1998, p.7), particularly for teachers in education. Te Kōpae Piripono's self-

study, has been a collaborative exercise, involving persons in the research process who are associated with the centre, but distant enough to bring ‘other’ perspectives to the interpretation of and response to any contradictions between beliefs and practice that Loughran and Northfield (1998) argue are likely to be found in self-study.

The collection and analysis of data from multiple sources, both qualitative (semi-structured interviews, wānanga, hui, narrative, observations) and quantitative (standardised questionnaires, attendance (etc) records), over the three year period, has enabled the interactive processes of Te Kōpae Piripono to be examined, providing some understanding of the complexities of a single sub-group of the kaupapa Māori early childhood education population. The qualitative information is most valuable when seeking to understand ‘why’ and ‘how’ things happen, and to know the qualities of happenings. When complemented with quantitative data, indicating frequency and intensity of activity, a more complete picture is drawn.

In keeping with case study methodology, the research team was not concerned about the study being 'representative' (Mitchell, 2000). There was no pretension that statistical inferences can be made from the study. Rather, logical inferences have been made based on the interactions and the relationships within the study, and through the triangulation of multiple sources of information (Scott & Usher, 1999). Te Kōpae Piripono hope that the findings of this case study will be of use to other kaupapa Māori education facilities and to all those who care for Māori students.

#### **4.4 Research design**

The innovative practice of Te Kōpae Piripono is centred on its “kaupapa Māori” (Māori conceptual framework) that is at the very core of the centre. Whānau Development is an imperative of kaupapa Māori at Te Kōpae Piripono. The Centres of Innovation project furnished Te Kōpae Piripono with the opportunity to research its brand of Whānau Development, the strategies employed to promote whānau development, and the dynamic role Whānau Development plays in fostering leadership to enhance children’s learning and development.

The research question for this project was:

*How does whānau development at Te Kōpae Piripono foster leadership, across all levels, to enhance children's learning and development?*

The question emerged naturally from the deliberations of the whānau of Te Kōpae Piripono, and the professional development activity of Kaitiaki, reflecting on how the abstract concepts of te Ao Māori and kaupapa Māori, and other relevant paradigms, are translated into concrete outcomes, such as the behaviours and environment conducive to good practice and optimal development amongst adults, then transferring into enhanced learning and development for the children. The research was planned in response to this question, with the objective of superior whole-whānau development at Te Kōpae Piripono and beyond.

A whānau approach to the research required that all whānau members have a clear understanding of the conceptual framework of te Ao Māori, and their connection to it. An initial realisation that some whānau members did not have this basic understanding, prompted the research team to focus in on the Ao Māori belief system, to clearly articulate, orally and in print, its significance and meaning, and relevance to us in the present. Until the research team did this, and talked it through with whānau, we could not assume that all (particularly new members) shared an awareness of the ideology that is the bedrock of kaupapa Māori education.<sup>1</sup>

#### **4.4.1 Cycle One**

The research proper commenced with a thorough review of Te Kōpae Piripono's operation through an analysis of Te Kōpae Piripono's documentation, a survey of the Te Kōpae Piripono whānau and extended community using a comprehensive questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, whānau hui and wānanga.

The research team determined it appropriate to begin the research by pulling the whānau together to take an historical journey through to the distant past, and to then retrace steps to Te Kōpae Piripono beginnings and to the 'kaupapa' of Te Kōpae Piripono. With an understanding of how the foundation whānau was thinking when they established Te

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 2 of this report articulates how the Tātai Whakapapa helps us make sense of the world.

Kōpae Piripono, it was felt the current whānau could better reflect on where Te Kōpae Piripono was positioned in the present. The whānau examined how individuals and families are currently located in TKP, and in the wider community. The wānanga process brought the whānau together in a whānau development exercise to build collective understanding, and to allow history to inform the present and future. The wānanga series also served as an introduction of the COI project to the entire whānau, and provided a baseline data collection exercise.

The combination of the introductory strategies provided the opportunity for all participants to self-reflect and -evaluate. The initial data (documents, surveys, transcripts) were methodically collated and analysed thematically, serving as the foundation for the research process, and shared with the whānau to allow the collective to both understand and determine the relevant concepts that would then thread through the research. A vision was arrived at, barriers and enablers for that vision were identified, and a plan to realise the vision was devised. For the purposes of the research, areas of focus emerged, and these were crystallized into three research areas:

- ***Whakawhanake whānau*** (*the Whānau Development programme*) – This focus was about optimising whānau development, at the heart of Te Kōpae Piripono, to better support members so they develop the capacity to participate equally and fully in Te Kōpae Piripono, and thereon in other areas of their lives.
- ***Whakauru whānau*** (*The enrolment and induction process*) – This focus emerged out of a shared view that the whānau should take greater care with the introduction of new children and their families into Te Kōpae Piripono. It was felt that full entry should follow a structured enrolment process that provides new persons with the necessary information and support to achieve a high level of understanding of the Te Kōpae Piripono paradigm on entry. This would assist their integration into the whānau, increasing the likelihood that they and Te Kōpae Piripono match.
- ***Tautoko whānau*** (*whānau support*) – This focus arose from concerns expressed about the difficulties individual families experience at Te Kōpae Piripono, and the shared desire to be appropriately responsive to those needs.

Three groups were formed from whānau volunteers to refine and develop the three research areas, informed by the data analysis. The groups worked independently and then reported to hui whānau. In April 2006, the Tautoko Whānau and the Whakauru Whānau strands were merged, as the similarities between the two became apparent.

Issues requiring action were prioritised and practical solutions devised. Plans of action were developed to augment whānau development to advance leadership across all levels of the whānau. The strategies included: revamped wānanga programme, process and opportunity; renewed enrolment and induction procedures; parenting support mechanisms; fresh approaches to and opportunities for social interaction and whānau relationship building; and, new personal and professional development opportunities.

Te Kōpae Piripono, the childcare centre, operated as normal over the three-year period. An extra full time teacher was employed to allow Kaitiaki to have time to participate actively in the research. Kaitiaki documented and reflected on their development and observations, in addition to the following:

- Writing children's learning stories
- Writing their own stories and maintaining reflective journals
- Observing and documenting children's play, conversations and learning
- Photographing children playing, talking and learning
- Taking videotape and/or audiotape of children while they were playing, talking and learning
- Presenting and recording children's work/art
- Engaging with parents/whānau/caregivers, on children's learning

Links were made between activity at adult level and children's learning. Whānau were surveyed to establish the effectiveness of the strategies, which were reviewed and then improved or replaced, as deemed appropriate. The overall efficacy of the research effort was assessed using methods similar to those utilised for the initial data collection.

#### **4.4.2 Cycle Two**

The first cycle of research highlighted concerns about the emotional difficulties experienced by members on entry to Te Kōpae Piripono and, beyond that, for some

became insurmountable barriers to their participation and growth, which then hindered whānau development. At the end of 2006, a second cycle of investigation, analysis, planning, action, and evaluation began on a deeper level, to explore the discomfort that underlies much of the behaviours of concern. A focus group, comprising a combination of ‘comfortable’ and ‘uncomfortable’ volunteers from the whānau, was formed to collaboratively explore the issues and to ascertain solutions. The group utilised semi-structured interviews and hui. The findings from Cycle Two were finally fed back to the focus group and to Kaitiaki on 26 October 2007.

#### **4.5 Participants**

The participants of this research project were the whānau (community) of Te Kōpae Piripono, past and present. All members of the current whānau were invited to participate in the project. In the main, current whānau (this includes extended whānau) have children attending Te Kōpae Piripono. When children leave Te Kōpae Piripono and move on to kura, they and their whānau continue to be part of the wider whānau network of Te Kōpae Piripono. Their involvement is as valued as that of current whānau members. ‘Former’ whānau were invited to participate in the research project, by email, post, or in person, as and when possible.

A representative group of current whānau members were identified to form the focus group/s (rōpū arotahi) who were consulted at the various stages of the research cycles to provide initial, formative and summative feedback/evidence in order to attest to strategy efficacy. By year three, the rōpū arotahi comprised Te Kōpae Piripono Kaitiaki and several whānau members.

The research team comprised the research leaders - the Tumu (directors of Te Kōpae Piripono) - the research associate, and the research assistant. Contributions were sought from other whānau members, and an independent research advisor, as necessary.

#### **4.6 Ethical considerations**

Te Kōpae Piripono practitioners and other whānau members, both new and old, collaborated in this kaupapa Māori participatory action research. The whānau of

researchers have a vested interest in Te Kōpae Piripono, and therefore in the research. In accord with Bishop and Glynn (1999), the researchers made no pretence of this kaupapa Māori research being impartial. These researchers were not passive observers, nor did they feel it imperative that their research be flawlessly scientific. Rather, the sense of accountability was to their children, and their children's children, by extending the pathway first trodden by their ancestors.

The well being of all parties in the research was paramount. This research had a “credit-based” focus (rather than a deficit-based orientation), meaning the emphasis has been on positive strategies and solutions for whānau development and leadership, framed by the kaupapa Māori conceptual framework. As some whānau members felt challenged by aspects of the research (deemed a valid response to change) they were supported to problem-solve those difficulties. The whānau met regularly to provide/receive support, clarification and guidance. Professional development was provided to assist Kaitiaki in their role, and individual whānau were supported through ongoing dialogue.

Given the up-close qualitative attention given to a sub-unit of the Māori population, by that same group (self study/case study), and given the involvement of children and other whānau members at various stages of personal and professional development, there is an even fiercer requirement here to safeguard participants and to protect their identity throughout the research and the dissemination of the findings. All efforts were made to prevent research activity infringing on participants' rights (indeed those of any stakeholder). Written informed consent was obtained prior to any action.

Confidentiality was, and will continue to be, maintained unless specific informed consent is obtained. The research followed the University of Waikato: Human Research Ethics Regulations 2000, as determined by the University of Waikato School of Education Ethics Committee, which provided ethical approval for the project (sponsored by Professor Ted Glynn).

The Te Kōpae Piripono research contract with the Ministry of Education specifies that Te Kōpae Piripono retains the Copyright for its own intellectual property - understandings arrived at independently of the Centres of Innovation project. Te Ao Māori material belongs to Te Ao Māori.

#### **4.7 Te Reo Māori**

For the ease of the non-Māori reader, the Māori language used by whānau members and quoted in this report has been translated into English.

#### **4.8 Tauwiwi involvement**

At Te Kōpae Piripono, the kaupapa allows *tauwiwi* (non-Māori) to be involved as *manuhiri* (guests) in the whānau, guests of the tangata whenua, the local people. The reo Māori version of the Treaty of Waitangi serves as the model for that relationship. Tauwiwi enter Te Kōpae Piripono on the kaupapa, supporting the vision and the ethos of kaupapa Māori, as well as desiring te reo Māori for their children and families. It is the kaupapa that unites people as whānau. Tauwiwi are welcomed and included at Te Kōpae Piripono, they may participate in and contribute to the whānau, however, authority and control of the kaupapa remains with tangata whenua.