Evaluation in Partnership – Some Thoughts on Methodological Aspects of Evaluation at Iwi Level

Author - Grant Pittams

Organisation – National Library of New Zealand - Te Puna Mätauranga o Aotearoa

Abstract

The paper examines some methodological implications of conducting an ex post evaluation to satisfy a range of different needs, ranging from high-level policy issues, to detailed process issues. The methodology had to take into account that respondents located in the Wairarapa district of New Zealand, came from two different iwi, Rangitane o Wairarapa and Ngati Kahungungu ki Wairarapa, and that the iwi have a history of not enjoying close relationships, even though in many individual cases their whakapapa is inter-twined. Interviews and reporting had to incorporate a mixture of Mäori and English and at times dealt with concepts that were difficult or inappropriate to translate. The paper discusses how the evaluation was designed and carried out in partnership with the two iwi, and provides some thoughts on best practice for cross-cultural evaluation.

E ngä mana, e ngä reo, e ngä maunga, e ngä awaawa, e ngä pätaka o ngä taonga tuku iho, tënä koutou

Background

The Alexander Turnbull Library has a commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document. This commitment impacts on all operational policies and has implications for access to, and preservation of, intellectual and cultural property. The Alexander Turnbull Library which is located within The Alexander Turnbull Library of New Zealand, is a guardian of New Zealand's documentary heritage, of taonga or treasures, which have been collected through purchase, donation or deposit. The Library acknowledges that taonga have mauri, a living spirit, that connects a physical object to the kinship group involved in its creation. The mauri is instilled in an item on its creation. It remains an active part of it and links tïpuna or ancestors to descent groups.

This concept of guardianship is held parallel, and in addition to, conventional legislation and intellectual property systems. Guardians take on the responsibility to protect and preserve the physical objects as well as their integrity and significance for future, present and past generations.

The Alexander Turnbull Library, as part of it's normal operational work, will seek more assiduously than in the past, collaborative relationships with families and descent groups connected to taonga in its collections. These relationships are drawn on to make decisions about all aspects of the management of these items, including conservation, exhibition and attribution regardless of whether the Library is legally the owner or guardian of the item in the collection.

During the 1997/98 year, the Co-ordinator of Mäori Language Collections of the Alexander Turnbull Library,, collaborated with two iwi (tribe, nation, people) from the Wairarapa [Rangitane o Wairarapa and Ngati Kahungungu ki Wairarapa] to describe, catalogue, and thereby create, improved access to the Alexander Turnbull Library's collections of unique unpublished materials relating to the Wairarapa. The aim of the project was to provide improved access for the Wairarapa iwi to their material held within the Alexander Turnbull Library. Informally the project was described as "a way to bring all the

korero (speak, talk) about the Wairarapa together in one place, so that we know what's there". The first phase of the project involved a range of meetings with hapu (section of a large tribe, clan, secondary tribe) and iwi and the making of verbal agreements with them. These agreements were:

- The Alexander Turnbull Library would give weight to the information needs of Wairarapa Mäori
- The Alexander Turnbull Library agreed to provide copies of the database guides to Wairarapa Mäori [through iwi and Public Libraries].

The project led to the production of guides and access tools, both online and printed, for the unique unpublished Wairarapa material held in the Alexander Turnbull Library. The material used in the project ranged across a number of collections, although in the Mäori paradigm, the project was in fact working with a single collection that had been broken up over time.

At the same time, a set of recommended principles for a framework for the Alexander Turnbull Library on the care and preservation of Mäori materials, with particular reference to cultural and intellectual property rights, was in preparation. (Te Mauri o te Mataurangi: Purihia, Tiakina! – The Spirit of Knowledge: protect it and take care of it!). To assist this process it was decided that the project undertaken in the Wairarapa could provide useful insights, and would enable lessons learned to be drawn on to develop the principles, as well as to contribute to operational planning. It was also judged a useful contribution to the partnership goal in the Alexander Turnbull Library's strategic plan. This goal focused on consultation requirements.

The original aims for the Wairarapa project included the direction that "this work should be undertaken with the view to establishing a set of guidelines for the development of such guides that is portable and transparent."

An evaluation was undertaken with Mäori and Alexander Turnbull Library staff to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Wairarapa model and the methodology.

The evaluation for this project therefore had to satisfy a range of different needs, ranging from high-level policy needs, to detailed process issues.

Research objectives

The research objectives for the evaluation were:

- To determine whether the Wairarapa project was consistent with the recommended principles relating to cultural and intellectual property, i.e., the basis on which the Alexander Turnbull Library cares for and preserves material relating to Mäori.

- To determine whether aspects of the Wairarapa project can be used to further develop a policy framework for the Alexander Turnbull Library's position statement on intellectual and cultural property and operational policies for managing Mäori materials.

- To assess whether the project achieved the outcomes sought by hapu and iwi.

- To assess whether the project achieved the outputs and implicit outcomes sought by the Alexander Turnbull Library.

Scope and Methodology of the study

The Wairarapa is a rural district located about an hours drive from Wellington. The Wairarapa iwi are widely diffused across the district, but in general Rangitane o Wairarapa is located in the central to northern Wairarapa, and Ngati Kahungungu ki Wairarapa in the southern, eastern and northern parts of the district.

Data was obtained from respondents in face to face interviews, and a short usage survey. Seventeen interviews were held with iwi representatives in the Wairarapa. These representatives included iwi policy analysts, kaumatua (respected senior iwi member), researchers, both iwi authorities, members of Mäori Standing Committees and non-representative individuals. Staff of the Masterton Library and Archive, were also interviewed. In addition, five interviews were conducted with staff of the Alexander Turnbull Library. These included the Co-ordinator: Mäori Language Collection, the Chief Librarian, Alexander Turnbull Library, the Manager: Services to Mäori, and others involved with the project.

Short survey forms were located with the database printouts in the Wairarapa, for a month from May 21 to June 21 1999. This survey asked users to record when they used the database, why they were using the database, and whether they intended using it again. During the survey period there were 48 responses.

The critical element of the methodology was the partnership between researchers within the Alexander Turnbull Library and the Wairarapa iwi. It was felt that identification of key people to interview, and the gaining of access to these people, was central to the success of the evaluation. Another vital element was the identification of someone who was widely known in the Wairarapa, who could work as part of the research team. This person needed the local knowledge to identify the key people, and have the mana (influence, prestige, power) to access these people. Ideally the person also needed to have been aware of the original project, have a library background, and an understanding of te reo Mäori (the Mäori language).   On the surface this seemed a tall order, however a person with all the required attributes was identified through local contacts and local knowledge, and they agreed to take on the role of local facilitator and interviewer.

The proposed methodology was discussed between the Alexander Turnbull Library researchers and the Wairarapa iwi, and it was decided that face to face interviews on a one to one basis, should form the basis of the research. It was felt that interviews would be conducted in either Mäori or English, whichever language the interviewees felt comfortable with. In fact, the interviews were mainly conducted in English, with particular concepts being expressed in Mäori. While the interviews were taped, a note taker who was also fluent in Mäori, accompanied the interviewer.

The specific research questions were developed between the Alexander Turnbull Library researchers and the iwi. These research questions were:

Questions for iwi representatives

- Did the iwi representatives feel that they had sufficient and appropriate input into the project?
- You (iwi representatives) said at the start of the project that you were interested in whakapapa (genealogy) information. Does the finished product provide easier access to the whakapapa information that you were interested in?
- Did you like the way that the information was laid out? What else would you like to see?
- If the project could be run again what would the iwi representatives do differently?
- What specific aspects of the project did the iwi representatives like? What things did they dislike?
- Has the process raised matters needing further thought and discussion regarding understandings of the concepts of ownership and guardianship?
- Was the project clearly explained to the iwi representatives?
- Did the iwi representatives understand the project?
- How effective was the identification by the Alexander Turnbull Library of the appropriate representatives to consult?
- Could a project based on the Wairarapa model be used with other iwi?
- Were the iwi representatives happy about the process adopted for the project?
- Can you find information about your hapu in the database? Is this the kind of information you were looking for?
- Can you find information about your tipuna (ancestor, grandparent) using this database?
- Is there any information in the database about your lands? How hard was it to find? Did it answer your questions about where to find the information?
- Did any benefits emerge from the project that they didn't expect?
- Do the iwi representatives feel that they now have better access to material held by the Alexander Turnbull Library as a result of the project?
- Are the iwi representatives aware of whether Mäori have used Alexander Turnbull Library material as a result of the project?
- Were the iwi representatives comfortable with how the Alexander Turnbull Library approached them and consulted with them?

Questions asked of Alexander Turnbull Library staff

- Could a project based on the Wairarapa model be used with other iwi?
- If the project could be run again what would the Alexander Turnbull Library do differently?
- Have the iwi made use of material from the Alexander Turnbull Library?
- What were the good things to emerge from the project?
- What lessons in terms of consultation and partnership has the Alexander Turnbull Library learned in working with the Wairarapa iwi?
- Has the Wairarapa project challenged the accepted norms in dealing with iwi material?
- What changes may the Alexander Turnbull Library consider in handling and caring of Mäori material as a result of the Wairarapa project?

The questions were used as a basis for the interviews. The interviews were loosely structured and the interviewer was not required to rigidly follow the exact wording. This was because the interviews were seen to be more of a conversation than a

formal process. It was felt that this approach would generate more empathy between the interviewer and the respondents. In the interviews where I was present as well as the interviewer, interviews often started in a very informal way. This was a way for interviewers and respondents to 'get to know each other'. During this phase of the interview both sides explored each other's background. In one instance, for example, the interview started by sharing childhood experiences, and this lead, to a discussion about some of the 'naughty' things that each of us had done as children. In this way, family background and history was revealed and links to the land explored. This process led to a rapport between participants based on understanding of background, and an assessment of each other as people.

As interviews progressed, supplementary probing and prompting questions were asked at the discretion of the interviewer. These probing and prompting questions varied from interview to interview depending on what was discussed. At times experiences from our past were used to clarify and illustrate concepts such as guardianship and ownership.

Where appropriate these supplementary questions were included in the transcripts reported in the evaluation report.

The interviews were all recorded on audiotape, and were transcribed in their original languages. The transcripts were then analysed for content and collated together under the interview questions.

The report presented the interview transcripts as much as possible, as it was felt that the voices of the respondents should be heard telling their own stories in their own way.

It has not been possible to quantitatively establish the extent of collection, or access tool usage, among the Wairarapa iwi. This was due to the difficulty of extracting usage records within the Alexander Turnbull Library which could identify specific collection use by Wairarapa iwi members. Also, due to lack of resources it was not possible to comprehensively survey the Wairarapa iwi to determine usage patterns before and after the project. However, as outlined above, a short usage survey was carried out over May and June 1999. This short survey resulted in 48 reported instances of printouts of database use, and showed that there was a wide range of usage of the database, and resulting access to the resources held within the Alexander Turnbull Library.

Discussion

The design and implementation of this evaluation did not involve rocket science. Rather, the evaluation was based on a realistic appreciation of resources, and a clear understanding of the need to carry out an evaluation in a way that the three main stakeholders, the Alexander Turnbull Library and the two Wairarapa iwi, were comfortable with, and would provide a win/win for all. Some of the lessons learned are:

- In my view, cross-cultural evaluation should be based on a concept of partnership. This concept implies that both partners are equal and the result of the evaluation should see the needs of both partners met.

- Benefits from the research should be two sided. Both partners need to understand what benefits each partner will gain from their involvement. The Alexander Turnbull Library saw the benefit in terms of providing access to material that was unique, and only available from the Library. In the case of the of the Wairarapa iwi they saw continuing improved access

to their heritage material as a benefit from the evaluation. They knew that this access was going to feed into research they were involved in for Waitangi Tribunal land claims, and also into their rediscovering of their identity. The Wairarapa iwi also saw another benefit. This was the opportunity to help other iwi in other parts of the country. The Wairarapa iwi understood that they were the first to work with the Alexander Turnbull Library in this way and they were keen to ensure that future projects with other iwi were as well designed as possible.

- There is no textbook which will tell you how to design and conduct a cross cultural evaluation. These things will flow from the mix of cultures involved. Design of a cross-cultural evaluation therefore needs to be approached with a clean slate. It is important that the partners understand each other and that both partners understand that neither side has the one and only 'correct' way of doing things. What is important early on, is that the respondents know what the research is for, feel that their input is important, and believe that there is no secret agenda.

- Having a known and respected 'local' fronting the research in the field is an enormous advantage. In this research having a kaumatua involved, meant that the 'correct' people could be accessed.

- I believe that it is important that the interviewers establish a strong rapport with those being interviewed, and to do this it is important to reveal ones self in terms of experiences and attitudes. In the Mäori world, conversation and openness is valued. If the interviews had been conducted in a detached, 'clinical' way that rigidly followed a script, then I believe that the respondents would not have provided the quality of data that they did.

- The methodology, and resulting details, should not be imposed upon the respondents. There needs to be meaningful consultation with the respondents at an early stage and advice sought and acted on.

- Local issues need to be understood. For example, in the Wairarapa, there is a history of Rangitane o Wairarapa and Ngati Kahungungu ki Wairarapa as iwi not enjoying close relationships, even though in many individual cases their whakapapa is inter-twined. Because of this, methodology tools such as joint group interviews were not considered appropriate. Seek and listen to the local advice, it can mean all the difference to the quality of the evaluation.

- Don't try to conduct, and report, a cross cultural evaluation in one language. If only English had been used in this study then there is a risk that the päkehä (of European descent) partner could be seen to be imposing control over the Maori. In New Zealand, Mäori and English are both official languages. Because of this, and in the spirit of partnership, both languages were used during the research, and in the final research report.

- During the interview stage, allow the respondents to tell the story in their own way. Among Mäori there is a strong tradition of story telling. This tradition emerges in conversations and interviews. Respondents will use a story to explain a concept. At the time it might seem that respondents are going off the track. Usually they are not. I found that the stories told by respondents in the Wairarapa study gave life to the research and were the most powerful data collected.

Conclusion

In my view the key to successful cross-cultural evaluation is collaboration, using partnership as a basis. Both partners need to have input into the methodology, the process, the selection of participants, and the presentation of the results. It is not acceptable for one partner to develop a methodology and attempt to impose it on the other partner. Collaboration is more than just informing the other partner as to how the evaluation should proceed. Collaboration is asking for, and acting on advice. Collaboration is jointly deciding on methodology, the selection of participants, who will interview participants, and how material will be analysed and reported, and what recommendations will be made. I believe that if collaboration is based on partnership then there will be strong commitment to the research and its findings, the quality of the research material will be enhanced, and the process will be more effective. This can only lead to better and more useful cross-cultural evaluations.

Käti ake nei.

Heoi anö.

Ka nui tënei

Käore e kume roatia te körero