



## Building Resilient Learning Communities: Using Evidence to Support Student Success

#ETConf20



# Evidence and evaluation for enhancement: Māori and Pasifika perspectives in Aotearoa New Zealand

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## Abstract

In early 2017 New Zealand universities collectively agreed to incorporate an enhancement theme into their sixth cycle of academic audit. The topic selected for the theme was “Access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and for Pasifika students”. Although New Zealand universities are generally considered to be well-performing internationally, persistent gaps existed in levels of access and achievement for Māori students and for Pasifika students. Adopting this topic recognised that these gaps were an academic quality issue, and consequently asked the question of what universities (not students) needed to do to redress these gaps. The other component of Cycle 6 is an academic audit against a framework of 30 guideline statements. This places emphasis on evidence, including an expectation that evidence may take a variety of forms and may be based on indigenous knowledge systems. This paper will discuss how evidence recognising and respecting indigenous knowledge systems is being developed in the enhancement theme for use in academic audit. Based on a Symposium held in November 2019, it will examine the challenges of using evidence to support change that delivers equity for Māori students and for Pasifika students.

## Introduction

Universities in Aotearoa New Zealand have been undertaking an Enhancement Theme as part of the sixth cycle of academic audit for universities (Te Pōkai Tara, 2019-20). The Aotearoa New Zealand enhancement theme has been modelled on and informed by the experience of the Scottish enhancement themes, including advice from QAA Scotland and the Convenor of the Student Transitions Enhancement Theme (Bamber, 2017). However, the enhancement and assurance components of the audit cycle are organised differently from those in Scotland with enhancement and assurance phases running sequentially in Aotearoa New Zealand. As with the Enhancement Led Institutional Review process in Scotland, the assurance phase in Aotearoa New Zealand is also enhancement oriented (Matear, 2020).

The Enhancement Theme for universities in Aotearoa New Zealand has addressed the topic of “Access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and for Pasifika students”. The topic of “Access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and for Pasifika students” was chosen because although New Zealand universities are generally considered to perform well, persistent gaps exist in access to university and success for these groups of students. In addition, for Māori students, the 1840 Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) between Māori and the (UK) Crown establishes principles of partnership, participation and protection with, by and for Māori that are applicable to social policy, including education (Jennings,

2004). Principles for academic quality assurance of New Zealand universities acknowledge Treaty principles (UNZ and AQA, 2013) and they are also reflected in the academic audit framework (Matear, 2020). Although it is extremely important, further discussion of the Treaty is beyond the scope of this paper.

The Enhancement Theme was framed to recognise the bicultural foundation of Aotearoa New Zealand and the place of Aotearoa New Zealand in the Pacific. The Enhancement Theme did not initiate work in these areas as by definition the topic was a “strategic priority for all universities and is an issue of national importance” (AQA, 2017). The Universities New Zealand committee on Māori – Te Kāhui Amokura – was already leading work in this area and a Universities New Zealand Committee on Pasifika – Komiti Pasifika – was formed during the Enhancement Theme.

Members of both Te Kāhui Amokura and Komiti Pasifika, including the convenors of both committees, joined the Steering Group established to oversee the Enhancement Theme. Deputy Vice-Chancellors Academic, or their nominees, and two students comprised the other members of the Steering Group. The Enhancement Theme was conscious not to take or perpetuate a deficit view of students. Rather an academic quality perspective, that asks what does a university need to do to better support and enable access and success for these students, was taken (ETSG 2018).

Each university developed its own objectives and plan for the enhancement theme. Universities have reported on progress at the end of the enhancement theme phase of the audit (ETSG, 2020) and will report further in the assurance phase of the audit cycle. Two guideline statements in the assurance component have been included in the audit framework to assess this further progress.

The Guide to the Cycle 6 Academic Audit (Matear, 2020) also sets out criteria for evidence, including the criterion that “Universities and audit panels should be open to and expect that evidence may take a variety of forms and some evidence may be based on indigenous knowledge systems”. As universities reported on progress on their enhancement theme plans and thought ahead to responding to audit guideline statements, it became apparent that there was a need to consider further how the success of initiatives and plans addressing access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and for Pasifika students should be evaluated.

To address both these matters, a second Enhancement Theme Symposium was focused on ‘Evidence and Evaluation’. This paper draws on that Symposium which developed a framework to guide evaluation of programmes and initiatives that support Māori students’ and Pasifika students’ success. It should be noted that the Symposium report contained a number of words and phrases in the Māori language. While these are reasonably commonly understood in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly among the audiences for the Enhancement Theme work, they have been either translated or removed in this paper. Readers from Aotearoa New Zealand may wish to refer to the original report (UNZ, 2019). The exception to this is that references to Te Tiriti o Waitangi are retained in the Māori language as it was the Māori language version of the Treaty that was signed by Māori and that guides our work.

Before discussing the Symposium and the framework further, this paper first provides a summary of the current situations for Māori students and Pasifika students in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## **Māori students in universities in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Māori are the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand. Colonisation, with the associated loss of land, language and culture, has had profound negative consequences for

health, well-being and the very existence of Māori populations in Aotearoa. In 2018 Māori represented 16.5% of the population in Aotearoa New Zealand, but only 11.3% of domestic student enrolments in universities. While clearly identifiable areas of success do exist, other indicators of access and success as well as considerable qualitative comment, suggests that universities are not enabling and facilitating success for Māori students as well as they are for non-Māori students and that the sector has not seen across the board improvement for some time. The Māori population is a young population, estimated to reach 18% of the population by 2030 and placing greater emphasis on universities being able to support access and success at rates comparable to those of the non-Māori population.

The universities in New Zealand all have obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and this provides the basis and driver for work programmes to be specifically targeted for Māori.

## **Pasifika students in universities in Aotearoa New Zealand**

'Pacific peoples' is a collective term used to describe the diverse cultures of people from Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesian countries. There is a rich ethnic and national diversity covered by the terms Pacific peoples and Pasifika. The term does not imply Pacific unity and homogeneity. The Pasifika population in Aotearoa New Zealand is also a young population that is projected to be 10% of the population by 2030 (currently 8%). Currently, Pasifika students are not under-represented in university participation on a gross population basis to the same extent as Māori currents (in 2017 8% of domestic student enrolments in universities were Pasifika). However, the rate of population growth, gaps in access indicators and qualification attainment rates also suggest that Pasifika students are not as well served by universities either.

## **Methodology – iterative workshops**

The second universities' Enhancement Theme Symposium was held on 1 November 2019 at Massey University's Pukeahu campus in Wellington. It was attended by approximately 70 students and staff from all eight New Zealand universities.

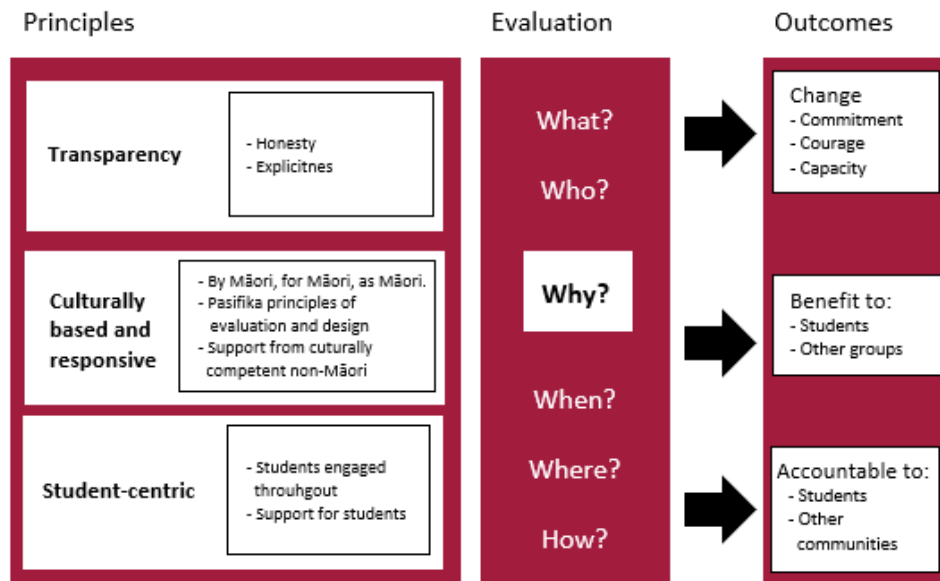
As part of the Symposium, workshop sessions addressed three questions:

1. What principles should guide evaluation of programmes or initiatives to support Māori learner success and Pasifika learner success?
2. How should evaluations of Māori learner success and Pasifika learner success be used to effect change?
3. What are the key elements of a plan for appropriate and effective evaluation of programmes or initiatives to support Māori learner success and Pasifika learner success?

Each of the questions was addressed from Māori perspectives and from Pasifika perspectives, effectively giving six questions. Each question was addressed iteratively in three sessions with the second workshop building on the discussions in the first, and the third and final workshop session building on the discussions in the two preceding sessions. This led to eighteen workshop sessions in total. A facilitator and rapporteur stayed with each question to provide continuity between iterations. Facilitators reported back to the full group. These sessions were recorded and transcribed (using rev.com) and the rapporteurs provided additional notes from the workshops. Transcripts, reports and recordings were used to develop a report from the Symposium. The report was reviewed by the Enhancement Theme Steering Group before being released. This paper draws heavily on the report from the Symposium.

## **An Evaluation Framework**

The summaries presented by the workshop facilitators were used to develop a framework to guide evaluation of programmes and initiatives that support Māori learner and Pasifika learner success. The framework suggests that evaluation should be underpinned by principles, evaluation has a number of dimensions – centered on ‘why’ the evaluation is being undertaken and evaluation has outcomes that can be expressed in terms of change, benefit and accountability. The framework is summarised in the figure below and each of the elements is explained further following the figure.



### Underpinning principles

The influence of the underpinning principles should be evident throughout the model, through the design and undertaking of the evaluation and into the uses of or outcomes of that evaluation. They are transparency, honesty and explicitness, student-centricity and being culturally based and responsive.

These principles shape and can be seen in the different aspects of the evaluation. For example: if some changes are not possible this should be made clear at the outset; students should be part of the design, conduct and consequences of the evaluation and their mana should be respected and upheld throughout (recognising that support for students may be needed); and the evaluation should be led by, for, and as Māori or Pasifika and based on Māori research principles or Pasifika principles of evaluation and research design. These should be evident in all aspects of the evaluation and its outcomes.

Culturally capable non-Māori or non-Pasifika can support, but not lead, this work. They can play valuable roles as supporters, and with their Māori and Pasifika colleagues as cultural navigation partners for Māori staff and Pasifika staff. Māori and Pasifika students and staff in universities walk in two worlds and between worlds. Non-Māori and non-Pasifika staff can appreciate this and support by being culturally competent.

### Evaluation

Each of the underpinning principles needs to be reflected in the different components of the evaluation. These components are not mutually exclusive from one another.

**Why** The ‘Why’ component is presented first as this is the central component of evaluation. The underpinning principle of transparency (explicitness and honesty) needs to be reflected in why an evaluation is being undertaken and what the

intended uses of the evaluation are.

**What** What is being evaluated needs to be clear. Success for Māori students and Pasifika students is not only defined in terms of access, progression, qualification completion and graduate outcomes. Success also means contribution to family and community and what success means for Māori students and Pasifika students needs to be reflected in evaluation.

**Who** Who is involved in the evaluation needs consideration and their mana and contribution needs to be respected and enhanced throughout. Just as the what of success needs to reflect Māori or Pasifika ideas of success, so too does who contributes to and experiences success. Again, success is not only about an individual student and not only about their time at university. Students, and others, may need support to engage with university processes. A further aspect of 'who' is that evaluation should not only reflect the views of Māori students and Pasifika students who have succeeded or are still at university. Evaluation should also consider those who did not attend or left prior to completion.

Who benefits from and who are those involved in the evaluation accountable to also need to be explicit and transparent.

**When** Both the timing of the evaluation and the timeframe it reflects need to be considered. Success for Māori students and Pasifika students does not begin and end with their time at university.

**Where** Where evaluation takes place need to be considered. Different insights will be gained in Māori or Pasifika cultural meeting spaces and places than in a lecture theatre or online, for example.

**How** How the evaluation is undertaken needs to be able to capture cultural nuances which contribute to success and needs to reflect a Māori or a Pasifika research design. There is also an element of 'who' in how the evaluation is undertaken as who conducts the evaluation and who will consider and act on findings is also important.

### **Uses of evaluation**

The above framework indicates that a purpose of an evaluation is to effect change and this change should benefit students. It also recognises that accountability for change (and for student success) extends beyond the university and students, staff and the university are also accountable to wider communities (tribe, Church, family). Change is acknowledged as having the potential to be challenging and requiring commitment and courage to undertake changes. It may be particularly difficult if changes to or disestablishment of roles are involved. The potential for this, and other changes, needs to be acknowledged at the outset of the evaluation. Capacity to undertake change also needs to be considered. Do those undertaking or engaged in the evaluation have the capacity (and support) to undertake change?

### **Conclusions and Implications**

The first conclusion from this paper is that there is a shared understanding that programmes and initiatives intended to improve access, outcomes and success for Māori students and for Pasifika students do need to be evaluated. Undertaking evaluation of programmes and initiatives to support Māori student and Pasifika student success will assist in the scaling of successful initiatives and contribute to an evidence base for future decision-making. It will also contribute to evidence for academic audit. However, these evaluations do also come with challenges and some risks.

This report and the enhancement theme more broadly are concerned with success for Māori students and Pasifika students. The components of the evaluation model reflect the insight provided by Māori students and Pasifika students, as well as Māori and Pasifika staff. There is value however for all students in considering how they view success, being transparent about how initiatives and programmes support their success, why evaluation of these initiatives occurs, who is involved, when, where and how evaluation happens and supporting students to contribute at all stages.

A third conclusion is that although this paper has focused on developing a framework for evaluating plans and initiatives intended to increase success for Māori students and Pasifika students, the context of the paper and the framework address much more fundamental issues for universities. These issues include acknowledging the ongoing impacts of colonisation, willingness to 'shift' the politics of knowledge and of knowing and what it means to be a university in Aotearoa in 2020 and the future.

There are implications for Māori, for Pasifika, for quality assurance and for universities in adopting this framework for evaluation.

For Māori, use of this framework for evaluation of enhancement theme and other initiatives reflects acknowledgement of Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles of partnership, participation and protection. The framework is grounded in and reflects Māori world views.

For Pasifika, the evaluation framework also recognises Pacific knowledge systems and pedagogies and through this that universities can contribute to the place of Aotearoa in the Pacific.

For external quality assurance and for universities, capability and capacity are key implications. In order to be able to undertake and use the outcomes of this evaluation framework, external quality assurance and universities firstly need auditors and staff who are Māori and who are Pacific People; and secondly non-Māori and non-Pasifika staff who are also members of audit panels and universities need to be able to appreciate the value of the evidence developed from these evaluations. It is well known that numbers of Māori staff and Pasifika staff in universities are low (McAllister *et al.*, 2019; Naepi, 2019) and this remains a significant issue. Being able to undertake appropriate evaluations will require further attention being paid to increasing the numbers of Māori staff and Pasifika staff. A further lack of capacity which receives less attention is that the numbers of culturally capable non-Māori or Pasifika staff are also low. The priority however is increasing numbers of Māori staff and Pasifika staff to be able to undertake evaluation.

The quality assurance phase (academic audit) of the audit cycle will commence in 2022. Audit panels should expect to see progress on university plans and initiatives to improve access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and for Pasifika students. They should also expect to see and be able to appreciate evidence developed through evaluative frameworks based on indigenous knowledge systems such as the one presented in the paper.

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