



# **Whānau Ora and Action Research**

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A paper prepared for Te Puni Kōkiri, Wellington. June 2011

# WHĀNAU ORA & ACTION RESEARCH<sup>1</sup>

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## Summary

In April 2010 the Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives presented its report, 'Whānau Ora', to the Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector, the Hon Tariana Turia. Six goals for whānau were outlined in the report, with their achievement resting upon a foundation of Whānau Ora principles; good governance and management; whānau-centred provision of services; and the overall aspirational aim for whānau ora. Later that same year Te Puni Kōkiri, in consultation with the Ministries of Social Development and Health, called for Expressions of Interest (Eol) from NGOs for the provision of Whānau-Centred services. Of the 130 Eols, 25 providers/provider collectives were selected to participate in the Whānau Ora initiative. Among the first tasks for these providers/provider collectives was the development of a Programme of Action (PoA), followed by a Business Case, for the transformation of services and the consequent implementation of a Whānau Ora approach. The Action Research component of the PoA was designed to facilitate the delivery of Whānau Ora services.

Action Research is a participatory research method that begins with an initial question that is asked in order to inform practice. Research is then undertaken to answer the question, with the findings reflected upon for their practice implications. Practice is then changed in response to the research findings and the resultant changes and the outcomes they produce are researched or evaluated, with the reflections on these findings then informing further questions that might be asked. The philosophical underpinnings of Action Research (e.g., freedom, justice, equity, self-determination) align well with the principles of Whānau Ora and with Māori research methodologies. As such, Action Research is well-placed to increase knowledge about the delivery of Whānau Ora services in a way that is responsive to providers/provider collectives and whānau, as well as informative for funding agencies about how they might best support the aspirations of providers/provider collectives and whānau.

Each provider/provider collective is working alongside at least one Action Researcher (selected through an Eol process) to establish an engagement protocol that will set the foundation for the relationship between the provider/provider collective and Action Researcher, and the development and implementation of a Programme of Action for Action Research. The five-phases of Action Research within the Whānau Ora initiative (Relationship and engagement; Planning; Data Collection; Action, reflection and analysis; Analysis) will require Action Researchers to fulfill many roles, including: critical friend, facilitator, catalyst, and resource. This requires flexibility within the context of a trusting and resourced relationship. Currently phases 1 and 2 are underway, with phases 3-5 to be implemented over the coming 18 months. This paper outlines the philosophy behind, and the implementation of, Action Research within the Whānau Ora initiative.

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in this paper are those of Dr Cram and are not intended to represent the views or actions of Te Puni Kōkiri.

## Overview

The present paper is in four main sections. In the first section Action Research is introduced and the principles and values that underpin this research methodology are explored. A brief overview is given of different approaches to Action Research before a fuller description is provided of the Action Research approach that is being used within the Whānau Ora initiative.

In the second section of this paper the aim, principles and goals of the Whānau Ora initiative are outlined. This sets the scene for a discussion of Action Research within Whānau Ora, and how it is aligned with both the principles of Whānau Ora as well as those of Māori research (e.g., Kaupapa Māori research).

The third section provides an overview of the five phases of the implementation of Action Research within the Whānau Ora initiative. The role of an Action Researcher is also examined.

Finally, the fourth section provides a summary of the paper along with some concluding remarks.

## Part 1. Action Research

Action Research is a methodology; that is, a philosophical approach to research that guides the way action researchers practice (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire, 2003). A methodology is distinct from the particular methods or tools that are used within research (although methods may come with their own distinctive methodological background) (Cram, 2009; Lather, 1986). In this first part of the paper Action Research is explored, with a particular focus on the philosophy and values underpinning the practice of Action Research.

Breaking down a quote by Reason and Bradbury (2001, p.1) into bullet points illustrates the values that lie behind Action Research (also see below, 'Action Research Values'). These values include participation and democracy, with the vision of people finding practical solutions and communities being supported to flourish. Action Research is:

- *'...a participatory, democratic process concerned with*
- *developing practical knowing*
- *in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes,*
- *grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to*
- *bring together action and reflection, theory and practice,*
- *in participation with others,*
- *in the pursuit of practical solutions to*
- *issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally*
- *the flourishing of individual persons and their communities'.*

Such values have occasionally thrown Action Research into disrepute among research scientists for being at the 'lighter' or 'softer' end of scientific enquiry (e.g., Patton, 2002). However Action Researchers use methods that are invariably sound, scientific and replicable. Action Researchers are consequently on firm ground in their generation of evidence and their subsequent knowledge claims. Like research generally, Action Research opens itself to critique and dialogue but, unlike much research, this openness (sourced from an ethic of



accountability, relationships, and collaboration) begins at the start of the research process with the identification of the first issue to be addressed.

This section explores the values of Action Research further and presents an overview of some of the different approaches to Action Research. A local project conducted by the Department of Labour is then profiled for how it implemented, and learned from, Action Research. First, however, a brief account of the origins Action Research is given in order to set the scene for why it has developed as a distinctive philosophical approach to research and innovation.

## Origins of Action Research

The story of Action Research often begins with the American psychologist Kurt Lewin at the Research Centre for Group Dynamics, University of Michigan. According to Blum (1955, p.1), Action Research for Lewin meant the *'diagnosis of a social problem with a view of helping improve the situation. All action research has, therefore two stages:*

1. *A diagnostic stage in which the problem is being analysed and hypotheses are being developed.*
2. *A therapeutic stage in which the hypotheses are tested by a consciously directed change experiment, preferably in a social 'life' situation'.*

Lewin intended Action Research to be as much about the application of science to intervention, as about knowledge production and theory development. Hence the use of the dual terms: 'action' and 'research' (Baron, Stephens & Haslett, 2009). Blum (1955) also stressed the importance of the Action Researcher developing a *'mutual relationship'* with stakeholders. Checkland and Howell (1998, p.1) built on this and identified four *'crucial elements in a research approach which works within a specific social situation:*

1. *A collaborative process between researchers and people in the situation*
2. *A process of critical inquiry*
3. *A focus on social practice, and*
4. *A deliberative process of reflective learning'.*

A key point made by Checkland and Howell (1998) is that social science and hence Action Research deals with *open* systems (in contrast to their application to *closed* systems within positivist science). An assumption of open systems is that the elements and relationships in the system are affected by external (or environmental) influences. Beyond this the nature of an open system is the subject of theoretical debate. For example, postmodernists see the social world as socially constructed. Critical theorists argue that systems of domination arise in which the powerful suppress the weaker class of (Ainamo, 2009). Both these approaches have exerted an influence on the theorization of Action Research.

In their examination of Action Research as a scientific method, Barton, Stephens and Haslett (2009) drew upon American philosopher, CS Peirce's expression of three modes of inference: abduction (hypothesis formulation), deduction, and induction. Within this broader scientific taxonomy Action Research is defined as the application of scientific methods to open systems. The goals of the methods used within Action Research (e.g., facilitation) are therefore about:

1. Abduction – the gathering of environmental data and hypothesis formation, and
2. Induction – evaluation.

Positivist science and Action Research are complementary approaches to science (Barton & Stephens, 2009). Table 1 below compares these two approaches. Action research, as stated

above, is conducted within open systems and the process of how this is done is replicable. The dominant mode of inference is abduction (during the research phase) and, unlike positivist science, Action Research involves 'action'.

**Table 1. Action Research and Positivist Science**

Property	Positivist Science	Action Research
Systems frame	Closed	Open
Repeatability	Experimental result	Process
Conditionals on hypotheses	Known and controllable	Unknown and not controllable
Objectivity	Apparent independence of researcher but dependent on the norms of peers	Triple loop learning evaluation; dependent on values of community of inquiry
Dominant mode of inference	Deduction	Abduction
Action based	No	Yes

Source. Barton & Haslett, 2009, Table 1, p.486

The objectivity claims of Action Research rest upon 'triple-loop learning'. In 'single-loop learning' people assess the gap between the actual and desired outcomes of their actions and, as a result, may change their actions in order to shift the outcomes they experience more toward their desired goals. Double-loop learning involves a similar process with the additional questioning of values, assumptions, practices, policies, and system dynamics (Argis & Schon, 1978, 1996). Patton (2010, p.11) writes that *'Making changes to improve immediate outcomes is single-loop learning; making changes to the system either to prevent the problem or to embed the solution in a changed system involves double-loop learning'*. Critical reflection has been added by Flood and Romm (1996) as a third loop in which systems of meaning, power, and ethical considerations are explored.

In summary, there are many definitions of Action Research, including many that have moved away from 'Research' and wholly into 'Action'. This section is a brief reminder that the origins of Action Research are about learning, knowledge production and theory development for the purpose of improving social situations. In addition Table 1 above, Action Research (unlike positivist science) includes a very explicit discussion of the values underpinning its practice. This understanding of values is imperative for double-loop learning (see above) as well as ethical research and practice (triple loop learning). The next section provides a brief overview of some key Action Research values. This will allow the compatibility of Action Research with Whānau Ora and Māori research philosophy to be examined later in this paper.

## Possibility Theory

*'Possibility Theory'* is presented within Action Research as an alternative to predictive theory (that is, understandings of the world based on the assumption of: 'if this, then that'). Action Research focuses on creativity, imagination and transformation that come about through group self-understanding within an open system dynamic. As such Action Research is both a 'means' and an 'end'; in other words, Action Research is *instrumental* in that it is a means to an end (i.e., change, transformation, as well as *constitutive* in that it is an end in itself (i.e.,

that the act of Action Research can bring about change and transformation) (cf. Labonte & Laverack, 2001).

The act of undertaking an Action Research project should bring insight to an organisation that may well lead to changes that run ahead of a formal review/revise process. In this sense Action Research has a natural kinship with Michael Quinn Patton's (2010) latest writings on Developmental Evaluation, which explicitly support an initiative's desire to engage in ongoing reflection and development (as opposed to pausing in a developmental cycle so that a summative or outcome evaluation can be undertaken).

In Action Research 'knowledge' can be considered a verb rather than a noun in that it *'is a living, evolving process of coming-to-know rooted in everyday experience'* (Bradbury & Reason, 2003, p.203). This could be described as turning *'knowing'* into *'knowledge'* as Action Researchers work alongside communities to surface and record their understandings and explanations; a process that Reason and Bradbury (2001, p.2) describe as *'liberating ways of knowing'*. This fits with the primary purpose of Action Research of producing practical knowledge (Reason & Bradbury, 2001), and also with Bob Morgan's (1999) explanation that *'re-search'* is about searching again - with different tools, lenses and questions – pathways that have often been well-trodden. In this way knowledge becomes both a means (verb) and an end (noun), in the recognition that communities are often the experts on what their own issues, strengths and solutions are (Cram, Taupo & Kennedy, 2006).

## Action Research Values

McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (2003, p.7) write that 'Research is about creating new knowledge, finding ways of testing its validity, and sharing the knowledge for specific purposes. In action research terms, those purposes are always to do with learning and personal and social growth'. In this section some of the values that underpin Action Research are explored in response to Checkland and Holwell's (1998) call for Action Researchers to declare their epistemology. The values showcased here are those generally discussed by Action Research theorists.

### Respect & Freedom

A respect for people is a basic tenet of Action Research (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). Cahill (2007) describes this epistemological orientation as an 'ethic of care' while Reason and Bradbury (2001, p.4) point out the *'fundamental importance of liberating perspectives on gender and race as a foundation of action research'*.

### Democracy

The promotion of democratic social change through the generation of knowledge that is both valid and vital for the wellbeing of individuals and communities is a central value of Action Research (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). Democracy includes a commitment to participation and social inclusion. Participation, in turn, fosters justice, equity and collaboration. André and colleagues (2006, p.2) argue that good governance and the potential for empowerment depend upon the participation of local communities. For example, McIntyre-Mills (2009) found that different ways to govern democratically were facilitated through participatory policy that incorporated the views of Aboriginal service providers and service users.

### Equity

Inequalities occur between socio-economic groups, geographical groups (e.g., rural vs. urban), men and women, and ethnic groups. In colonised countries Indigenous peoples invariably have poorer health than other population groups, even when socio-economic status

is taken into account. It is now recognised that these inequalities are ‘generally *beyond the control of the groups most affected*’ (Ministry of Health, 2002, p. iii). Action research has the potential to be ‘*contesting research*’ that is designed to interrupt dominance and inequity (Fine, 2006). Cahill (2007, p.363) writes that ‘... *participatory research potentially represents a challenge to white privilege’s investment in maintaining and producing racial hierarchies in the normative production of knowledge*’.

### **Self-determination**

An important companion value to the commitment to participation and collaboration is a belief in the self-determination of the groups or communities that are participating in an Action Research process. According to O’Brien (1998, p.9) the main role of an Action Researcher is to build the capacity of local people so that they can assume responsibility for the Action Research process within their community or organisation.

### **Reflexivity**

Action Research takes researchers and communities into ‘double-loop learning’ and ‘triple-loop learning’ (see above). Reason and Bradbury (2003, p.211) refer to self-reflective practice as *first person* research practice. Reflexivity moves the researcher from a role of distant, objective scientist to a responsive research collaborator. Reflexivity includes: reflecting on how our values and assumptions impinge on our research practice; being open to the inadequacies of our theories and to counter-interpretations; and being fully involved with research participants, constantly exploring and learning in a continual change and growth process (Cram, 1997).

### **Ethical use of evidence**

The North American HIA Practice Standards Working Group (2009, p.8) describes the ethical use of evidence as ‘emphasizing that transparent and rigorous processes are used to synthesize and interpret the evidence, that the best available evidence from different disciplines and methodologies is utilized, that all evidence is valued, and that recommendations are developed impartially’. This reinforces Linda Smith’s (1999) statement that Kaupapa Māori researchers may have let go the pretense of objectivity but still remain rigorous in their application of research for Māori purposes.

### **Sustainable development**

Sustainable development is open considered to rest upon foundations of social development, economic development and environmental protection (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2002). It is also concerned with intergenerational equity (Torjman, 1998). To this Dodson and Smith (2003) add cultural values and Indigenous development concepts, as well as the governance mechanisms that make it possible for these to be exerted as part of sustainable development. This fuller understanding of sustainable development is embodied in some New Zealand legislation, for example, the Local Government Act 2002.

### **An Action Research Cycle**

There are various versions of the Action Research cycle. What they have in common is that they describe a process that includes periods of action interchanged with periods of critical reflection and, as cycles are repeated, the methods used, the data collected and the interpretations made, and the critical reflections are continuously refined based on the learning from previous cycles (Dick, 2009). Wadsworth (1998, original emphasis) writes that

*‘Action research is...action that is intentionally researched and modified, leading to the next stage of action which is again intentionally examined for further change and so on as part of the research itself’.* In this way, good Action Research emerges over time as individuals and communities develop Action Research skills alongside a culture of inquiry and evidence-informed practice (Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

**Diagram 1. Action Research Cycle**



Within the Action Research cycle represented here (see Diagram 1 above) a more explicit research stage is included that informs the actions to be taken, which are then assessed to see if the changes they brought about were as intended (or not) and what lessons can be learned from observing the outcomes. Actions are therefore informed by both research, and local and international programme theory (Ministry of Health, 2006). Making the assumptions or theory about how and why things ‘work’ is an important step within the Action Research cycle.

An Action Research cycle begins with people reflecting on the action they are taking and identifying an *engaging* question, the answer to which will inform the action being taken. This reflection and question identification has potential in its own right to make understandings about action (e.g., a programme or service) explicit and shared among stakeholders.

Once a question has been identified the Action Researcher guides the community to plan how the question might be answered. Qualitative methods of inquiry are closely associated with Action Research, probably due to the desire to use methods that communities can relate to (Smith, 1999). There is, however, a growing understanding and use of quantitative methods alongside the use of mixed-method approaches to research (Greene, 2007). Before any method is used it should be interrogated for the compatibility of its philosophical roots and value commitments with Action Research.



Research is then conducted and the implications of the findings for the actions being taken are assessed, with consequent changes to actions that are then implemented and evaluated. The findings of the evaluation are assessed and new questions might then be asked and researched. And so the cycle begins over, with reflections leading to new research and/or refined actions.

## Approaches to Action Research

### Community-Based Participatory Research

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) has been promoted over the past 10-15 years by, for example, Nina Wallerstein and her colleagues. As a methodology CBPR focuses on the formation of research relationships between academics and communities for the improvement of health and reduction of health disparities. CBPR practitioners tend to prefer the term *cultural humility* to describe their commitment to redressing power imbalances and to maintaining respectful relationships, largely based on the notion that academic partners will be white, and working in communities of colour. At the same time, however, practitioners are committed to building community research capacity so that communities can be in the 'driver's seat' (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006).

### Participatory Action Research

Practitioners wanting to make the involvement of participants more explicit added the term 'participatory' to Action Research. Participatory Action Research (PAR) *'represents a commitment to centering marginalized voices, to 'the understanding that people – especially those who have experienced historic oppression - hold deep knowledge about their lives and experiences, and should help shape the questions, [and] frame the interpretations' of research'* (Torre & Fine, 2006, p.458, in Cahill, 2007, p.363).

The definition of Action Research in this paper is one of participative research. The questions asked about participants by Participatory Action Research practitioners are therefore useful reflective devices to ensure that a true participatory context is facilitated. These questions include: Who is a participant? How much do they participate? In what ways do they participate? Participants include those who are commissioning the research, along with the researchers; the critical reference group; other stakeholders; and, most importantly perhaps, those being researched (who may include one or more of the aforementioned stakeholder groups) (Wadsworth, 1998).

### Other Approaches

Other action research-oriented approaches include Appreciative Inquiry (Cram, 2010), Transformative Research & Evaluation (Mertens, 2009), Empowerment Evaluation (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005), and Asset-Based Community Development (Kretzman & Knight, 1993). It could be argued that many action- and utilisation-focused research and evaluation methodologies have some of their roots in the philosophies promoted by action research practitioners.

### Department of Labour CEDAR Project

Over three years, beginning in June 2000, the Department of Labour (DoL) used Action Research to explore community economic development with the goal of creating closer connections between communities and government policy. This included gaining 'real world' knowledge; enhancing policy to reflect this knowledge; being responsive to calls from the community and voluntary sector, including Māori, for more participation in policy processes;

and raising community knowledge about policy and policy processes (CEDAR Project Team, 2004). While DoL drove this project, it can be argued that it was responsive to community desires to better understand and engage with policy processes.

The Action Research process was multilayered, with the first layer representing the processes operating between researchers and community groups. Plan-Act-Reflect cycles were followed with the three communities involved, with the researchers taking on the role of critical friend within the process. The Action Research process began with 'fuzzy' research questions that allowed for the collaborative (researchers and communities) emergence of more precise questions over time. Once an issue was more clearly identified a broad range of stakeholders were talked to find out about the issue. The researchers then reflected upon meaning of these findings with the community.

A second layer, at the CEDAR project level, involved the researchers, CEG and policy members of the teams reflecting on the project processes. This reflection led to the wider team taking on the role of 'critical friend' to ensure the rigour of the analysis and interpretations. The third level involved the researchers, policy analysts and the management team discussing emerging findings and their potential impact on their actions. These two layers were enacted without community involvement.

One issue that arose in the participating communities was that the implementation of Action Research was often seen as replicating the Community Employment Group (CEG) fieldworkers' work (CEDAR Project Team, 2004). However other fieldworkers saw Action Research as a more refined method that they could use in their work. This issue highlights how Action Research can look like 'business as usual' to stakeholders who are already implementing collaborative processes within their communities.

From their experiences the CEDAR Project Team (2004) note that Action Research projects need time, space, and people and organisations that are able to cope with the unpredictability of open systems. This includes people who are able to critically reflect on an issue or task that is amenable to action and critical reflection, within an environment that supports this reflection.

## Action Research Summary

The first part of this paper has examined the philosophical and values base that guides the practice of Action Research. Compared to the 'closed systems' of positivist science, Action Research applies scientific methods within open social systems. As such it is explicitly political and socially engaging, and deliberately thought-provoking and democratic, combined with a fundamental belief that understanding and change will only come about through processes that involve the people concerned (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). '*Action researchers worry about relevance, social change, and validity tested in action by the most at-risk stakeholders*' (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003, p.25). In other words, there is an explicit acknowledgement with Action Research that people and communities are the experts and action researchers are skilled supporters, researchers, evaluators and facilitators, there to respond to community needs and aspirations.

The Department of Labour's experience showcased an example of Action Research in support of participatory policy. Their experience demonstrated the investment that needs to be made in Action Research so that participation is viable for stakeholders. Engagement of, and collaboration with communities takes time and resources. As both a process and an outcome, successful Action Research engagement and collaboration will be thought provoking and inspiring for all stakeholders as the values inherent in Action Research are brought to life.

## Part 2. Whānau Ora

*The history of whānau, hapū and iwi and the Māori race generally is full of examples of our people's predisposition to development..... Our ancestors' adoption of technology as a tool for future development is one example. Our people's pre-occupation with building upon our own structures, institutions and processes to keep pace with the pressures and consequences of development, is another (Turia, 2000, p.1).*

Over the past 30 years Māori have seized opportunities to provide culturally appropriate services and to build their communities health and wellness, resulting in growing numbers of Māori and Iwi provider organisations. These providers play an important role in Māori development in at least two ways. First, they provide accessible and responsive services that contribute to the wellbeing of whānau, hapū, Iwi and communities. Second, by developing their own capacity and the capabilities of their staff, they contribute to the capacity of whānau, hapū, Iwi and communities (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2000). Services delivered by Māori and Iwi providers tend to be 'by Māori, for the whole of the community'; non-Māori are not excluded (Pipi et al., 2003). Māori and Iwi providers can therefore be considered key intermediaries in Māori development as well as the wider context of community development.

The right of Māori to control and deliver their own services and programmes was affirmed by the Treaty of Waitangi guarantee of rangatiratanga. Equally the Treaty guaranteed citizenship for Māori, which can be assessed by Māori access to, and outcomes from, general (i.e., mainstream) service provision. On 20 April 2010 New Zealand endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (United Nations, 2007). This Declaration affirms the rights of Indigenous peoples to their identity and to self-determination. Article 23 of the Declaration is particularly pertinent to the provision of services by Māori and Iwi providers.

**Article 23** *Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.*

Māori and Iwi providers bring a holistic worldview and an understanding of individuals within the context of whānau, hapū and Iwi to the determination of their own services and institutions. Over the past 10-15 years there has been increasing recognition of this by funding agencies, culminating in current day innovative and Kaupapa Māori services and programmes alongside the delivery of more 'mainstream' programmes. In 2010 the Whānau Ora initiative was launched, affirming again the Treaty of Waitangi and the status of Māori as tangata whenua. The initiative aims to strengthen the support pathways for whānau; helping them to address their needs and achieve their aspirations. This section examines the principles and goals of Whānau Ora. This sets the scene for an examination of Māori research and the possibilities of Action Research within the Whānau Ora initiative.

### Whānau Ora

Nearly ten years ago Māori and Iwi providers told us that their dreams and goals revolved around tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake (self-determination). They were also motivated by their desire to improve conditions for Māori, with their effectiveness reflected in the positive changes they had seen in the attitudes and behaviour of individuals and their whānau (Pipi et al., 2003). This aligns with the Whānau Ora Minister's, the Hon. Tariana

Turia, description of the Whānau Ora initiative as *'...a great opportunity for providers to work collaboratively and openly discuss how they could jointly work together to implement Whānau ora in their communities'* (Turia, 2010, p. 3). The Whānau Ora initiative has variously been described as

*'...practical, community-based support to whānau so they can be self-managing and determine their own economic, cultural and social development' (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010c, p.1).*

*'...about whānau taking responsibility for whānau. It places whānau at the centre and empowers them to lead the development of solutions for their own transformation. The majority of whānau are already doing this and Whānau Ora will provide opportunities for sharing and learning from whānau stories' (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010b, p.4).*

*'...building on whānau strengths and capability, growing whānau connections, supporting the development of whānau leadership and enhancing best outcomes for whānau' (TPK, 2010a, p.3).*

The Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives (the Taskforce) (2010, p.13) defined whānau as *'a multi-generational collective made up of many households that are supported and strengthened by a wider network of relatives'*.<sup>2</sup>

The Whānau Ora initiative presents providers with an opportunity to have the ways in which they worked acknowledged and valued by government funding agencies, and to strengthen their capacity and networks to undertake their work. Following a call for Expressions of Interest for whānau-centred services, 25 providers/provider collectives, representing a total of 158 provider organisations, were selected to be involved in the first roll-out of Whānau Ora.

### Whānau Ora Principles

Seven principles underpin the Whānau Ora framework and, according to the Taskforce, these principles should inform the allocation of funding, outcome measures, and indicator selection (see Diagram 2 below, from Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives (2010, p.21)). Each of these seven principles is described briefly below (Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives, 2010).

**Ngā kaupapa tuku iho** recognises that whānau draw strength from their cultural heritage, including whakapapa, customs and resources. In addition, cultural values and beliefs guide whānau in their day-to-day lives as Māori. These resources should be available to all whānau.

**Whānau opportunity** reinforces the importance of whānau connectedness and the ability to fulfill aspirations.

**Best whānau outcomes** speaks to how the success of the Whānau Ora initiative will be measured; namely, by the increase in whānau capacity to function as a whānau and to achieve health and wellness.

**Whānau integrity** is about the accountability whānau members have to one another that preserves their dignity and creates a platform for innovation.

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<sup>2</sup> In consultation undertaken by Cram and Kennedy (2010), Kaumatua Moetatua Turoa discussed our use of the term 'whānau' as a verb, stating that what we were talking about was 'whanaungatanga'. This may well narrow the description of whānau from all those who are tied together by kinship to a subset of those that have reciprocal ties of mutual support. This is reflected in the Taskforce's interpretation of the support that whānau provide to one another and the aspiration for whānau of *'reciprocal commitments between and across generations'* (Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives, 2010, p.7).



**Coherent service delivery** recognises that whānau need service agencies (e.g., health, housing) to coordinate their service delivery to whānau.

**Effective resourcing** is about ensuring the right level of service resourcing as well as tying this resourcing to the achievement of outcomes for whānau.

**Competent and innovative provision** is about the capabilities of the practitioners providing services to whānau; namely, that they need to be able to undertake crisis intervention as well as facilitate the skills and strategies whānau need to achieve their aspirations.

Five foundations of effective Whānau-Centred service delivery were affirmed by the Taskforce: whānau, hapū and iwi leadership; whānau action and engagement (strengths-based); whānau-centred design and delivery of services; active and responsive government; and funding (i.e., relational approach to contracting with funding consistent with the Whānau Ora).

Diagram 2. Whānau Ora Principles



Source. Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives (2010, p.21)

## Whānau Ora Goals

As well as establishing the underlying principles for Whānau Ora the Taskforce also identified what whānau would be like if the goals of the Whānau Ora initiative were met. These six goals set broad parameters for Whānau Ora outcomes that are able to accommodate the differing needs, strengths and aspirations of whānau. The goals were therefore compatible with the Taskforce's statement that Whānau Ora is *not* a one-size-fits-all initiative. This is also emphasised in the service delivery foundation of 'whānau action and engagement', with whānau being seen as active participants who take ownership of their own pathways within Whānau Ora. The outcome goals of Whānau Ora are (Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives, 2010, p.7):

**Self-managing** whānau will be nurtured by effective whānau-centred services. The strengths as well as the challenges of whānau will be acknowledged, including whānau leadership.

**Living healthy lifestyles** as whānau, and supporting whānau to support one another, is recognised as important for whānau who are also influenced by peers, media, societal pressures, policy, etc.

**Participating fully in society** means increasing whānau access to, and outcomes from, universal services such as education and health. This is about social inclusion, with the Taskforce identifying poverty as a major barrier to inclusion.

**Confidently participating in te ao Māori (the Māori world)** spans cultural, tribal and community contexts that provide opportunities for support as well as the transmission of cultural values and knowledge. Poverty is also recognised as a barrier to participation in te ao Māori (Hohepa, 1997).

**Economically secure and successfully involved in wealth creation**, through innovation and aspirational interventions (that move beyond budgeting advice). Economic security will enhance whānau inclusion, while inclusion also facilitates economic security.

**Cohesive, resilient and nurturing** has been enabled by web-based communication tools for those whānau who are scattered throughout the country and the world. For those living in close proximity to whānau there is the challenge of creating safe, nurturing and productive whānau collectives.

The Taskforce (2010, p.43) described these goals as whānau-centred, quantifiable, having implications for Whānau Ora providers and funders, and the basis for evaluating whānau-centred initiatives. An important aspect of Whānau Ora is the accompanying programme of Action Research that was initiated at the same time as Whānau Ora. As well as contributing to the evidence base for Whānau Ora, Action Research (alongside evaluation) was also linked by the Taskforce (2010) to organisational learning and development. The context for Māori research generally is described next, followed by an examination of the compatibility of Whānau Ora, Māori research, and Action Research.

## Māori Research

At the end of a Māori health research hui held at Hongoeka Marae, Plimmerton in 1996, participants formulated what became known as the Hongoeka Declaration. At this hui Moana Jackson (1996) stated that the Treaty of Waitangi '*reaffirmed our right to develop the processes of research which are appropriate for our people, and to do that, the only people we have to seek permission from are our own*'. This statement reflected a growing research awareness among Māori that was being fed by Waitangi Tribunal processes (e.g., assembling tribal knowledge), the Kohanga Reo movement, the changing attitudes of social scientists to

their work with Māori communities, and the growing research capacity of Māori (Cram, 2001). As stated by a Canadian Aboriginal elder, *'If we have been researched to death, maybe it's time we started researching ourselves back to life'* (Castellano, 2004, p.98).

Māori research is proscribed for researchers in cultural terms (Te Awēkotuku, 1992) and makes *'cultural and moral sense'* (Durie, 1996). The research Māori researchers undertake has different epistemological and methodological foundations than western-oriented research (Smith, 1999), largely because the Māori world is relational – the world is not known *through* relationships, rather relationships are the Māori world. Wilson (2008) discusses this more generally for Indigenous peoples, saying that knowledge and ways of knowing are embedded within relationships and relationship accountability is at the heart of research ethics (or axiology).

Once the kaupapa of the research is *tika* (right) then the priority for researchers is to find the right methods and the right people (Mead, 1997). In this sense, the kaupapa of the research is the methodology. Cora Weber-Pillwax (2001, in Hart, 2007, p.78) states that *'Indigenous methodologies are those ones which permit and enable Indigenous researchers to be who they are while they are actively engaged as participants in the research processes. This way of being not only creates new knowledge but transforms who researchers are and where they are located'*.

Local research guidance is provided within, for example, Kaupapa Māori research (Smith, 1999) and Māori-centred research (Durie, 1996). Kaupapa Māori research incorporates a transformation agenda that is about community aspirations and the sovereignty of the people. It also privileges Māori knowledge and ways of being, and prioritises theory and empirical research (Smith, 2006). Linda Smith has developed a set of community research practices that guide ethical research within Māori communities. These include: a respect for people (*aroha ki te tangata*), being a face that is known (*he kanohi kitea*), looking and listening before speaking (*titiro, whakarongo... kōrero*), and being humble (*kia mahaki*) (also see Cram, 2001, Smith, 2006). Many communities are using such practices as a starting point for discussions of how they want research to be conducted when they are involved. Māori knowledge and expertise about research is now a firm platform for the discussion of Action Research and the role it can play in supporting Whānau Ora.

## Complementary Agendas

Action researchers are implored to draw appropriately and creatively upon the methodological traditions of the different research methods they chose to use (Bradbury & Reason, 2003). Similar calls have been made of Māori researchers (Cram, 2009, Smith, 2005). Is Action Research then compatible with Māori research, and do both complement the whānau transformation agenda of Whānau Ora?

It should not be surprising that the principles of Kaupapa Māori and Whānau Ora align as both are committed to the sustainable wellbeing and prosperity of Māori, sourced within te ao Māori and supported and facilitated within te ao hurihuri (the global world). Linda Smith (2006, p.7) writes that *'...participatory action research, Kaupapa Māori research... are just some examples of methodologies that have been created as research tools that work with marginalised communities, and facilitate the expression of marginalised voices and that attempt to re-present the experience of marginalisation in genuine and authentic ways'*. Smith (2005) therefore aligns the agendas of PAR and Kaupapa Māori research at a methodological level. Whānau Ora is also concerned with decreasing the marginalisation of Māori through whānau-centred service delivery, while at the same time holding government and mainstream service providers accountable for their contribution to this objective.

Kaupapa Māori (and Māori research generally), Whānau Ora and Action Research are only possible when relationships are prioritised (see, for example, Cram, 2009; Eruera, 2010; Mauriora Ki Te Ao, 2010). Relationships provide the platform for Whānau Ora and Action Research to acknowledge and transform participants' (whānau, organisations) expertise into solutions (Eruera, 2010). This is the transformation of 'knowing' to 'knowledge', described above, that is now taken a step further to emancipatory actions. In order for this to occur, however, there is a need to wrap Action Research up within tikanga Māori to ensure that the processes and methods employed are culturally responsive.

From her experience of using PAR with taitamariki (young Māori) Eruera (2010, p.102) concluded that Participatory Action Research '*...is able to respond to the diversity of whānau Māori and has the ability to progress whānau development and whānau ora in Māori communities*'. Within the current Whānau Ora initiative Action Research has the potential to inform organisational development while also assisting stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding about: the day-to-day realities and aspirations of whānau; effective service delivery for whānau; successful provider collaborations; and how government can support providers and whānau.

## Whānau Ora Summary

In 2010 the Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives reported on an evidence-based framework for strengthening whānau capabilities and wellbeing. Their report called upon increased responsiveness from government agencies, both in their provision of services to whānau and their relationships with community provider organisations. Māori and Iwi providers/provider collectives were subsequently selected to deliver whānau-centred services that worked with whānau in an holistic, inclusive and strengths-based way. Action Research was then inserted into this mix as an important component of strengthening the whānau-centred practice of Whānau Ora provider/provider collectives and reflecting on the roles of other agencies in the facilitation of Whānau Ora.

An interrogation of the philosophical and values base of Action Research (Part 1, above) and Whānau Ora revealed that the agendas of both are similar in terms of, for example, self-determination, equity, and respect and freedom. The use of an Action Research methodology, implemented within the context of Māori cultural practices, therefore has the potential to build upon the strengths of Māori and Iwi providers for the advancement of knowledge and actions for the achievement of Whānau Ora. Action Research is therefore compatible with, and an intimate part of, the successful implementation of whānau-centred practice and the achievement of Whānau Ora.

The research methods employed in Action Research will be chosen for their suitability according to the philosophy, principles and values of Action Research and Whānau Ora. Ethical principles and practices developed by mainstream organisations (e.g., government agencies, academic disciplines, funding bodies) and Māori themselves will help guide this selection process. Also important will be the collaboration between the Action Researchers and their host providers/provider collectives. It is at these flaxroots that the legitimacy of research protocols and practices will be subjected to their most meticulous assessment.

Part 3 of this paper now turns to a description of the roll-out of Action Research within Whānau Ora.



## Part 3. Action Research Within Whānau Ora

The Expression of Interest (EOI) for Action Researchers (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010a, p.4) described key components of Action Research, including: the self-initiation of actions and change by participants; flexibility and responsiveness to people and situations; and the gathering of evidence of whānau-centred practice models and of whānau development. The 'facilitator' role of the Action Researchers is described as working with providers/provider collectives to:

- *Identify key aspects of Whānau Ora and particularly whānau-centred service delivery;*
- *Examine action taken to implement change; and*
- *Work with whānau to understand their needs and aspirations of whānau-centred delivery, and whānau development.*

A key research question to guide Action Research activity was tentatively proposed in the EOI (and may be considered a 'fuzzy' question to start collaborative conversations with):

*How do whānau succeed through participating in whānau development and engaging in whānau-centred service delivery?*

It was stressed in the EOI that the Action Researchers' ability to build trust relationships with providers/provider collectives was critical to Action Research. Two phases of an Action Research approach were proposed in the EOI: phase 1 with providers and phase 2 with whānau. The 2004 CEDAR report from the Department of Labour, however, suggested that such close work with whānau in phase 2 would replicate, and potentially compromise, the work of the Whānau Ora providers/provider collectives. The roll-out of Action Research therefore became a five-phase approach with Action Researchers working alongside providers/provider collectives and potentially involving whānau as research participants.

As a result of the EOI process a number of Action Researchers/Action Research collectives were selected to implement Action Research within Whānau Ora. Many of the Action Researchers attended the first Action Research orientation and training sessions in December 2010 and February 2011. In June 2011 the lead Action Researchers from the Action Research collectives were brought together to share Action Research experiences in the first two phases of the Action Research roll-out. The Action Researchers have helped shape and guide the implementation of Action Research to date and this will undoubtedly continue. Part 3 of this paper therefore presents an overview of role of an Action Researcher, followed by a description of the five phases of Action Research, with phases 3-5 open to the ongoing feedback of providers/provider collectives and Action Researchers.

### Roles of an Action Researcher

An Action Researcher might take on a number of different roles throughout an Action Research cycle, and even multiple roles at any one particular point of the cycle. Bradbury and Reason (2001, p.201-2) see Action Researchers as having three key roles:

1. *To bring an action dimension back to... knowledge generation,*
2. *To loosen the grip over knowledge creation held by universities and other institutions of 'higher learning', and*
3. *To contribute to the ongoing revision of the Western disposition...toward an emerging participatory perspective.*

The CEDAR Project Team (2004, p.5) found that they had at least four roles: critical friend, facilitator, catalyst and resource. As a resource, for example, an Action Researcher might contribute their research and/or evaluation skills to an Action Research project.

Within an Action Research context a catalyst is a person who hastens an event, often through the provision of an alternative route for that event to occur. A 'critical friend' is someone who walks alongside an organisation or community, listening and observing, and offering feedback and insights. Their role is therefore to interpret, draw out common themes, and highlight inconsistencies; rather than being 'critical'. The origins of the term can be traced to a Harvard University education programme in the 1990s in which a teacher's colleague would become their 'critical friend' for the purpose of evaluating their teaching practice (Pipi et al., 2003).

O'Brien (1998) lists the role of an Action Researcher as: planner leader, catalyser, teacher, listener, synthesiser, facilitator, designer, observer and reporter. As stated above (see 'Self-Determination', p.7), the main role of an Action Researcher is to build local capacity for Action Research so that, over time, more of the responsibility for the process can be handed over to local leaders.

### **Matching Action Researchers and Whānau Ora Providers/Provider Collectives**

The Action Researchers/Action Research collectives were selected on the basis of their research and evaluation skills and their proven networks and relationships with Māori and Iwi providers (or Pacific providers) and communities (including the Action Researchers' openness to ambiguity and having their own thinking challenged). The majority of the Action Researchers are Māori and/or Pasifika.

Once the selection process was completed a matching process began whereby the Whānau Ora providers/provider collectives were asked for their Action Researcher preferences (from those selected in the EOI process). Two provider/provider collectives had their own, internal Action Researchers who met the Action Researcher selection criteria.

In one region, three Action Researcher collectives chose to collaborate and offer their services to all the Whānau Ora providers/provider collectives in that region. This initial matching preceded Phase One, and kept in mind the possibility that preferences could change during the course of the Action Research. Each provider/provider collective was matched with one lead Action Researcher who is often backed up by at least one other Action Researcher.

### **Phase One. Engage - Whakawhanaungatanga**

The first, engagement, phase in the implementation of Action Research allows for the establishment of a working relationship between the Action Researcher and the Whānau Ora provider/provider collective. Kathie Irwin (1994) has written about the importance of researchers engaging in the appropriate Māori '*rituals of first encounter*'. Russell Bishop (1996) describes this process of whakawhanaungatanga as '*...establishing whānau relationships... [by] identifying, through culturally appropriate means, your bodily linkage, your engagement, your ...unspoken but implicit connectedness to others people*'. For Action Researchers and Whānau Ora providers/provider collectives this engagement is also to establish common understandings (e.g., of the Programme of Action, of whānau-centred service), as well as a way of working together on the Action Research.

There are two milestones for this phase. The first is a signed engagement protocol that includes the principles of how the Whānau Ora provider/provider collective wishes to be

involved in Action Research (i.e., purpose and objectives of the relationship, roles and responsibilities, relationship management, operating principles, confidentiality). The protocol will also contain a summary of the engagement process. The second milestone is an overview report on what the Action Researcher finds out about the provider/provider collective during phase 1. This might include, for example, organisational characteristics, service models, and reach of services (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2011).

At the June 2011 Action Research hui the lead Action Researchers reported that this phase was proving pivotal to setting the foundation for their Action Research relationship with Whānau Ora providers/provider collectives. One outcome from Phase One was the general socialisation of providers to Action Research. The practicalities of this phase included the identification of who would be the point of contact for the Action Researcher, how communication would happen, and the development of information sheets, consent forms, and presentations about who the Action Researcher collectives are. All the lead Action Researchers agreed that whakawhanaungatanga was the foundation, or 'golden egg', of this Action Research exercise. Action Researchers were also being called upon by providers/provider collectives to share their other skills and the Action Researchers saw this as part of developing a trust relationship.

## **Phase Two. Plan - Whakamaheretia**

The focus of the second, planning, phase is on the Action Researcher facilitating the PoA for Action Research with the provider/provider collective. Suggested activities for this phase include: identifying research objectives, developing a research methodology and appropriate methods, and deciding how the data would be gathered, analysed and reported on (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2011).

The planning needs to also take into account the common data that Te Puni Kōkiri need to be collected from all providers/provider collectives. It is anticipated that the information sought by Te Puni Kōkiri will most probably also come up in the information generally sought by providers/provider collectives. The role of the common data set is to ensure some consistency and coverage in the information gained from providers/provider collectives that might not happen otherwise. The common data set includes information about whānau engagement; provider/provider collectives (e.g., organisational characteristics); service design and delivery; and government responsiveness (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2011, p.4). Although the information sought is common across providers/provider collectives there are no parameters put in place by Te Puni Kōkiri about the methodology or methods that might be used to fulfill these data requirements.

The milestone for Phase 2 is an Action Research plan that has been approved by the Whānau Ora provider/provider collective. The plan will include: a statement of the purpose for the research; the research approach (methodology), research methods, staff resource allocation, key tasks and timeframes, quality management, research ethics, and project management (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2011). Approval for the funding of this plan will be sought through the provider/provider collective's Action Research PoA and business case, and the Action Researcher's contractual arrangements with Te Puni Kōkiri.

It is also expected that the Action Researchers will update their Phase 1 report about the provider/provider collective that identifies, but is not limited to the progress being made by providers *'operating as collectives and making the shift from individualised to whānau-centred services; and planned improvements to their service delivery model'* (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2011, p.3).

### Phase Three. Research - Rangahautia

In the third, research, phase the plan developed in Phase Two (including data to inform the requirements of the common data set) will be implemented and data collected. The suggested activities in this phase include the implementation of the research plan with providers and whānau; identifying emerging patterns through the analysis of the collected data; noting possible areas for improvement and identifying solutions and actions that can be taken. The final part of this phase is therefore helping providers/provider collectives to consider the implications of the research findings for their delivery of whānau-centred services.

This first collection of information will also contribute to the baseline data (i.e., data collected before whānau-centred services begin), which Te Puni Kōkiri will use to assess the changes that occur as a result of the rollout of whānau-centred services.

At least three levels of data collection are possible; with it anticipated that the research phase will focus on one or more of these levels (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2011a, p.2-3):

1. Whānau – seeking information about and evidence of:
  - Whānau input into service design and delivery
  - Whānau expectations of services
  - Whānau needs and aspirations
2. Organisation – seeking information about and evidence of:
  - Service delivery model and planned implementation of PoA
  - How organisations are establishing collectives
3. Sector engagement – seeking information about and evidence of:
  - Current involvement of sector agencies (i.e., Health, Ministry of Social Development, Te Puni Kōkiri)
  - Potential involvement of other sectors (e.g., Housing, Education, Justice, Economic Development)

Action Researchers are being encouraged to look for ways to build the capacity and capability of the Whānau Ora providers/provider collectives during the Action Research process. The research phase provides a good opportunity for this as there may be local people interested in acquiring research skills (e.g., interviewing) and being involved in some way.

The milestone for Phase Three is an early report on findings, along with extracts from the Action Researchers Action Research Diary (i.e., field notes that they are expected to keep throughout).

### Phase Four. Act - Arotakengia

In the fourth, act, phase it is anticipated that the Action Researchers will take on the role of evaluator in response to the Whānau Ora providers/provider collectives beginning to deliver a whānau-centred service. It is not anticipated that the Action Researcher will undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of, and outcomes from, whānau-centred services. Rather, it is expected that the Action Researcher will work collaboratively with their provider/provider collective to develop a limited range of key performance indicators that will form the basis of an evaluation (e.g., formative or developmental evaluation) specifically designed to support the provider/provider collective's development of their whānau-centred service delivery.



The stipulation by Te Puni Kōkiri is that the evaluation of actions should include the collection of ‘*whānau stories and data about whānau engagement in, and outcomes from, whānau-centred services (e.g., motivation, satisfaction, changes)*’ (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2011a, p.2). Information can also be sought from the provider/provider collectives about organisational changes, including organisational transformation in response to collectivity. Sector information can also be collected; for example, if and how different sectors (e.g., funding, contracts, service delivery) facilitate and/or impede whānau-centred service delivery and/or whānau ora (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2011a).

The milestone for this phase is an evaluation report that then feeds into Phase 5 deliberations.

### **Phase Five. Reflect - Whakaaroarotia**

In the fifth, reflect, phase the Action Researcher becomes a critical friend to the provider/provider collectives, sitting alongside them to assist with their reflections on the findings from Phase 4 (and possibly also reconsideration of earlier phases). This purpose of this reflection is to decide ‘what next?’ for the provider/provider collective, with the possibilities including:

- Further engagement and relationship building with the same network (e.g., provider collective), and/or a wider network of stakeholders and key organisations;
- The collection of further research data to fill newly identified knowledge gaps; and/or
- The refinement of whānau-centred service theory and/or delivery processes.

The role of the Action Researcher is to take part in these reflections, offering their insights when these are requested by the provider/provider collective. It is anticipated that the Action Researcher may also be asked to take on other roles during this phase, including: facilitator, research and evaluation advisor, programme advisor. It is up to the Action Researcher to decide whether they are the best person to fill these roles, with the possibility that they may request additional support when they are being asked to step outside their expertise.

The Action Researcher is also expected to observe and record information about: the methods for reflection that are used (e.g., hui, Board meetings, advisory groups), and the nature and rationale for any plans and actions that emerge from this reflection.

### **Action Research within Whānau Ora Summary**

Action Research is being rolled out within the Whānau Ora initiative in consultation with the Action Researchers who have been selected because of their track-records for undertaking research and evaluation within Māori organisational and community contexts. The Action Researchers, in turn, have been matched with Whānau Ora providers/provider collectives at the latter’s behest and in Phase One of the roll-out of Action Research have engaged with providers/provider collectives to build a trust relationship. The cultural foundation of Action Research within the Whānau Ora initiative is therefore whakawhanaungatanga, with the government funding agencies recognising the need to resource this through time and funding.

The main role for the Action Researchers is to facilitate an Action Research cycle for the Whānau Ora providers/provider collectives that will inform their delivery of whānau-centred services and thereby promote Whānau Ora. Although the wording of the initial key question might alter during this process, it remains fundamentally the same; namely, *How do whānau succeed through participating in whānau development and engaging in whānau-centred service delivery?* Action Researchers within Whānau Ora providers/provider collectives will fulfill many of the roles outlined in Part 1 of this paper. Their ability to do so from a Māori

research methodology standpoint will be important for their legitimacy and credibility. For the Pacific providers among the Whānau Ora collectives it will likewise be important that Action Research is implemented in ways that are compatible with, and reflective of, their cultural practices, values and beliefs.

The 'freeing up' of a provider-driven research and evaluation cycle by the implementation of Action Research is somewhat balanced by the Crown's requirement that a common data set be collected across all providers/provider collectives. This enables the Crown to remain accountable for the funding going into both Whānau Ora and Action Research, while at the same time moving to more of a relationship context (rather than contractual context) with Māori, Iwi and Pacific providers of whānau-centred services. This aligns with the Whānau Ora framework recommended by the Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives (2010).

Risk management is also afforded to the Crown by an Action Researcher selection process that was rigorous and led to highly skilled and experienced researchers being matched with Whānau Ora providers/provider collectives who themselves had gone through a rigorous selection process. The combination of expertise and the foundation of trust that has been established should ensure that Action Research is successfully implemented and, beyond this, that knowledge is built about the evidence-based delivery of whānau-centred services.

## Part 4. Concluding Comments

If there is one commonality that ties together Whānau Ora, Action Research and Māori research then it is the potential for transformation for whānau, Māori and Iwi organisations, and government agencies so that whānau needs are met and whānau aspirations turned from dreams into realities.

Action Research has the potential to strengthen the links between actions and research in a way that is driven by Whānau Ora providers/provider collectives and Māori communities. Often these links will be about turning the knowing of providers and communities into 'knowledge' that can be shared with others. This is not to say that the practice of Whānau Ora providers/provider collectives is not currently informed by evidence, as the providers are highly skilled in the work they do and have often refined practice models over many years of delivering services within their communities.

The reporting requirements of the Action Research component of Whānau Ora will ensure that knowledge is built about providers, provider collectives, government agency responsiveness, and whānau needs, aspirations and outcomes. In addition, a growing body of knowledge will be produced about the success (or otherwise) of Action Research in assisting Whānau Ora providers to deliver whānau-centred services, including an understanding of the facilitators of and barriers to the successful implementation of an Action Research agenda.

In the end, perhaps the best message we can take with us on this journey comes from Hirini Moko Mead (2003, p.318).

*'Research processes, procedures and consultation need to be correct so that in the end everyone who is connected with the research project is enriched, empowered, enlightened and glad to have been part of it'*

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