Using evaluative inquiry to generate useful, high quality knowledge

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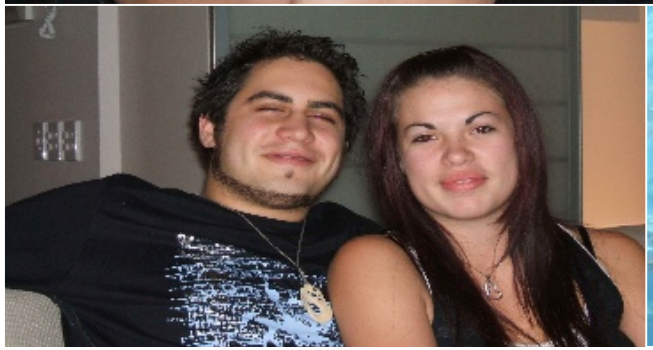
The KNOWLEDGE INSTITUTE

Who am I?

- Irish, Scottish and English Descent (1800s)
- First ships (waka) were the 'Bolton' and 'Empress of the Sea'
- 6th generation 'Kiwi'
- 'Pakeha' ethnicity
- Born in the Manawatu (North Island region)
- Now live in Te Awamutu



SO THEN there will be better outcomes for citizens
AND THEN they will change their behavior and their practice - their practice will be evidence informed
AND THEN people will change their attitudes and beliefs
THEN people will make use of it - it will increase their awareness and knowledge about new information
IF we make research information available and accessible

We can know more than we can tell or explain to others – much of our knowledge cannot easily (or even at all) be communicated in words or symbols such as numbers (Davidson and Voss, 2001:63)

Practical Exercise:

Getting from 'know what' to 'know how'

Turn to your neighbor and write a 'three step' guide to a **passionate kiss**

[2 Minutes]

How many of you believe that after reading your instructions, the result would be a truly passionate kiss?

Practice change is complex

- It takes time, resources, support, feedback, dialogue and reflection etc
- Fundamental to any change is learning
- Understanding and creating the conditions for learning is everything
- Interaction with others is key
- There is no recipe – it requires more than a set of instructions!

So why might evaluative inquiry be useful for building knowledge in community settings?

- Evaluation – has evolved since the early days of the 1960s
- Evaluative inquiry – a critical thinking process, using systematic data collection and evaluation logic, for investigating and understanding issues of policy, programmes, practice, organizations, etc
- Much evaluative practice – is intentional about use, about learning and change

In community settings…

- Role of the evaluator:
  - Facilitator
  - Guide
  - Technical assistant
  - Coach
  - Actively building useful knowledge for action
- Orientation to inquiry
  - Focus on outcomes and results
  - Data driven

The focus of evaluative practice….

Creating the conditions for knowledge creation that is grounded in the needs and realities of communities - is useful for their purpose

Some of these conditions…

- Relationships are at the heart of it all…whanaungatanga
- Interaction is critical – kanohi-ki-te-kanohi
- Finding the hook – *what's in this for me?*
- Being contextually relevant, appropriate and credible – or linking and aligning with people's worldviews *'..in my words..'*
- Responsiveness and adaptability – no such thing as 'best practice'
- Support - not 'one-off', not an event, but a process

The challenge as I see it…

…is to find new ways for academic research practice(s) to interact and better 'fit' with the community contexts and realities into which change is seen as necessary

But this does imply a new framing…

- Whose questions and issues?
- Where are the resources focused?
- Who are the experts?
- On whose terms?

Knowledge transfer….?

Or do we really mean…

Power and resource transfer?