

DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS HUI

An emergent bricolage method for culturally responsive qualitative research

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Abstract

This paper is about the adoption of a novel way of using documentary analysis in order to be culturally responsive in a research setting. It describes an original method, located in an actual empirical study in a wānanga, that meshed the analysis of documents with a group hui through a bricolage approach. To support a Māori kaupapa, the researcher wished to incorporate values of participation and collaboration, thus overturning the traditional values of simplicity, passivity and individuality that are the purported advantages of documentary analysis. Embracing the method in a new and innovative manner was challenging, but it enabled the creation of a blended method combining the active and collaborative tenets of a focus group, and demonstrated commitment to the collective involvement of participants and relationship building under the umbrella of Māori ways of being and doing. The new method, documentary analysis hui, brought documents to life through culturally responsive conversations with the participants, and this paper highlights the strengths and weaknesses of daring to be different.

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Keywords

documentary analysis, hui, innovation, cultural responsiveness, bricolage, research method

Introduction

In this paper, we have critically reflected on an attempt to apply values of cultural responsiveness through an innovative research method that was practised within an empirically based study. The research context that gave rise to the development and application of the documentary analysis hui was a supervised Master of Educational Leadership and Management thesis entitled *Managing Quality in a Wānanga Setting: Two Sides of the Same Coin*. The researcher located the study within her own institution—a whare wānanga in the city of Auckland. Wānanga are places of higher learning “charged under the Education Act 1989 to run their institutions in accordance with tikanga Māori and āhuetanga Māori practices” (Mead, 2003, p. 312). Tikanga Māori is, according to Knox (2005), a custom lore used as a basis for all important decision making and is described as “the first law of Aotearoa” (Mikaere, 2012, p. 25). Āhuetanga is described as all things having a Māori dimension and appearance (Edwards, 2009).

The decision to bring a Māori Indigenous notion such as hui into the realms of rigorous research in a Western academic world was daunting for both the researcher and her supervisor, but both were committed to taking a deliberate step towards adapting a well-known group interview research method to better serve a qualitative data-gathering purpose in a culturally responsive manner. In hindsight, the practical imperative to find a way of combining a traditional documentary analysis exercise with a participative method can be theorised as employing a form of research bricolage as conceptualised by Kincheloe (2004), who says that by viewing research methods actively as tools that can be redeployed rather

than accepted passively as the conventional way of proceeding, “we actively construct our research methods from the tools at hand rather than passively receiving the ‘correct’ universally applicable methodologies” (p. 2). The researcher and supervisor in this context embraced the complexity and risk-taking that is the hallmark of bricoleurs’ efforts to forge alternative solutions by actively constructing a new, hybrid method to serve a particular purpose. This involved an integration of two established methods, documentary analysis and focus group, which, when merged, provided opportunities for conversations to occur around the documents in a way that involved the participants in a form of active, rather than passive, documentary analysis through a hui. This event demonstrated the researcher’s commitment to the principles of partnership, protection and participation related to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Hayward, 2016), which the researcher believed were applied to support a Māori kaupapa in the following ways: (a) partnership—between the researcher and the participants in determining the selection of documents and in sharing the analysis task, (b) protection—of Māori ways of being and doing by using the hui (and its associated rituals) as the context for carrying out the task and (c) participation—the inclusion of the participants in an active way.

Because the researcher was strongly committed to research that enabled collective involvement of participants and relationship building under the umbrella of Māori ways of being and doing, she was prepared to do something different and possibly daring in her study.

Culturally responsive research: A critique of application to method in a study

This effort to find a new version of old methods that would fit the cultural world of the research setting was essential because of the uniquely challenging nature of the study. It was research being conducted by non-Māori in a Māori setting, a role that Woller (2013) calls insider-outsider in relation to being a member of the organisation or community but not a member of the ethnic group. It was also practitioner research conducted inside the researcher's own organisation. To meet the first challenge of being non-Māori researching in a Māori context, it was imperative to seek the support and advice of Māori colleagues in implementing and reporting the process. Generous support was offered and it is acknowledged as invaluable. Practitioner research places the researcher in an outsider position while he or she also holds a position inside the organisation (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). To be an insider-outsider researcher in one's own workplace is acceptable within qualitative research, but performing this double role requires critical thinking about relationships and processes as well as being both ethical and respectful (Smith, 1999). Hence, considerations needed to be thought through with regard to the chosen research processes, as *hoa haere* within the thinking and actions of the researcher.

For the researcher in this study, it was important to receive constant guidance from Māori colleagues about her own knowledge and actions. When working with Māori, a Māori worldview must shape and drive the parameters of practice (Durie, 2001; Woller, 2013). Values and principles under the umbrella of *Te Ao Māori* are placed at the centre of all interactions and are not supplementary, as they are for non-Māori (McCaw, Wakes, & Gardner, 2012; Whaanga, 2012). *Whanaungatanga* is a paramount concept under the umbrella of *Te Ao Māori*. *Whanaungatanga* has been described

as kinship, connectivity or relationships that are meaningful through culturally appropriate ways that promote deeper commitments and connections between people (Bishop, 2005; Durie, 1998).

The overarching notion of *whanaungatanga* brings with it responsibilities and commitments, particularly for non-Māori researchers seeking to respect Māori *kaupapa* within their research approach (Bishop, 2005). These efforts were underpinned by critical theory (Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013) to inform the culturally responsive methodology of this research. Critical theory brings researchers and their research participants "into a shared, critical space, a space where the work of resistance, critique, and empowerment can occur" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 5). The critical stance within *Kaupapa Māori* theory challenges objectivity and neutrality, allowing researchers and participants to engage in relational discourses (Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013) while being culturally safe (Irwin, 1989). *Whanaungatanga* is also held between Māori and non-Māori people who are like-minded and work together in support of a common goal (Smith & Reid, 2000). The researcher believed that her experience of working with Māori colleagues in a *wānanga* setting made it possible for her to align with the principles and practices associated with Māori ways of being and doing. She believed she could apply the *kaupapa* in her study. In her choice of methods, it was important to stay true to this philosophy. While analysis of documents was necessary to access particular evidence in this study, it was portrayed in the conventional literature as a method that did not align well with the researcher's determination to be culturally responsive.

The role and complexity of documentary analysis

It is important for qualitative researchers to employ several methods for collecting empirical data that together or separately provide significant insights (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Multiple methods within a study allow data to be triangulated to provide rigour, using data from several sources that can be drawn together to strengthen the findings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Bowen (2009) affirms this rationale for documentary analysis in relation to methodological and data triangulation. It is commonly used as a second method in qualitative studies. The original thesis study employed interviewing as the main method, and six semi-structured interviews with wānanga leaders were conducted *kanohi ki te kanohi* in line with the notion of respect embedded in a Māori kaupapa.

In this study, documentary analysis was selected as the second method, which would work well in tandem with qualitative interviews and can “enrich a study throughout the research process” (Wellington, 2015, p. 213). In this study, the research questions guided a search for evidence about quality practices in the organisation that were held in the perceptions of the staff and also contained in official and formal documents related to policy, procedures and practices. Documentary analysis is noted as a preferred method in organisational research because organisational documents are normally easily accessible and contain existing information (Forster, 1994). For this study, the documents required for analysis were available in the form of national and organisational policy and procedure documents. However, many of the tenets of traditional documentary analysis principles and processes posed challenges for the researcher, who was dedicated to conducting this research with constant regard for the values that underpin a culturally responsive research methodology. The aspects that were particularly challenging related to the

purported advantages of documentary analysis in the literature, specifically that it was a method that was individualistic, unobtrusive and passive.

Those who theorise documentary analysis as a research method (see, e.g., Wellington, 2015) are consistent in implying that the practice of analysis is individualistic in that the researcher is the only person who engages with the documents, and these theorists highlight the advantages in terms of the non-engagement of people, which allows the circumventing of applications for ethics approval. The appeal of collecting a set of documents and then “getting on with the task” was complicated in this instance by a wish to make the very act of analysis open to the scrutiny of others to avoid the researcher’s ideology dominating in their interpretation. The principles of partnership and participation could not be respected if the approach to analysis was individualistic rather than collaborative.

Bowen (2009) and Bryman (2012) refer to the unobtrusive nature of documentary analysis, which can be an advantage because it is non-reactive, meaning that one can work quietly, behind the scenes, without drawing attention to one’s presence or influencing the data in existence. In this study’s context, this notion clashed directly with the principle of *whanaungatanga* within Māori kaupapa. Relationships are a central feature of this kaupapa (tradition) and are built through interaction with people in open forums. A collective approach that respects the knowledge of the participants is consistent with a commitment to culturally responsive research values (Bishop, 1999).

The researcher’s personal cultural intuition and bicultural awareness in this study alerted her to consider the importance of the participants’ and the researcher’s shared ideologies. She realised that it was necessary to examine as well as discuss the documents being scrutinised and that the kaupapa (process) needed to include conversations about the documents and what lay behind them. This dialectical

interaction created a mutual engagement with no spectators, only participants (Freire, 1998), in line with the notion of *whanaungatanga* (Bishop, 2005). It is also associated with the value of co-constructing meaning by pushing the boundaries of old methods, which is linked to the notion of a culturally responsive methodology (Berryman, SooHoo, Nevin, Barrett et al., 2013).

A new bricolage method: Documentary analysis hui

An alternative to the normal practice of documentary analysis was created as a unique method named *documentary analysis hui* (Anderson, 2014). This innovative approach is in line with the notion of the bricolage that qualitative researchers can employ to create new methods or techniques by borrowing from different sources (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2005). Criticising the limitations of traditional methods, Kincheloe (2001, 2004) argued for rigorous multi-method innovation that was responsive and adaptive to specific research contexts and expanded on the original notion of the *bricoleur*, a French word describing a handyman who makes use of available tools to complete a task.

The concept of bricolage in qualitative research was introduced by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) as an eclectic interdisciplinary process of employing methods as needed in the research context, but Kincheloe (2004) pushed the notion to a new level of complexity, stating:

the bricolage highlights the relationship between the researcher's ways of seeing and the social location of his or her personal history. Appreciating research as a power-driven act, the researcher-as-bricoleur abandons the quest for some naïve concept of realism, focusing instead on the clarification of his or her position in the web of reality. (p. 2)

Bricoleurs, according to Kincheloe (2001, 2004), operate in a domain of complexity. He contends that in the creation of research processes, there is need for a much more active role on the part of the researcher, who must embrace complexity in shaping what may be a new reality. As a bricoleur with a commitment to respecting the unique culture of the research context, the researcher of this study needed to find a process that engaged the participants in a sharing of the analysis tasks to generate findings. Thus, existing tools available to qualitative researchers were employed but adapted to actively embrace the *kaupapa* associated with Māori values. It was inevitable that the new active and participative processes would heighten the complexity of the process of documentary analysis, hitherto renowned for its simplicity.

The documentary analysis hui method was a combination of two traditional research methods, predominantly documentary analysis incorporating aspects of the focus group interview conducted in the form of a hui. Consequently, *wānanga* documents were identified and *wānanga* leaders who dealt with quality systems and were familiar with this set of documents were invited to actively take part in selecting and analysing organisational documents through a process developed to conduct documentary analysis hui (Anderson, 2014). This new method was created in keeping with the researcher's commitment to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles of partnership, protection and participation (Bishop, 2005), and values of collectivism and respect for relationships associated with culturally responsive research. The documentary analysis hui method gave rise to the praxis of an interactive research technique that allowed participants to choose appropriate *wānanga* documents to be analysed collaboratively, meshing protocols traditionally used with documentary analysis and focus groups in a new and innovative way (Anderson, 2014). While an extensive search of research methodology literature did not reveal instances

of the combination of these two methods in previous studies, it is possible that documents have been analysed by groups in other studies. Our searches, however, did not reveal such practice, and we can claim that this innovation was driven by a culturally responsive intent, adding to its complexity and use in a unique setting.

Documents are one of the main ways of communicating at all levels of an organisation; hence, they can “cast light on many aspects of organisational life” (Forster, 1994, p. 148). Documentary analysis is about locating, interpreting, analysing and drawing conclusions about the documented evidence presented (Duffy, 2010; Fitzgerald, 2012). The focus group method is a “research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher” (Morgan, 1996, p. 130). The topic selected by the researcher was “analysis of organisational quality documents”. For this research study, five participants, who were well informed about the topic and who were able to provide the necessary information, were chosen to meet the standards set for inclusion in a focused discussion to collect qualitative data (Bryman, 2012). The new technique therefore utilised a focused discussion framework that centred on a set of documents rather than a list of questions about an issue. The framework, in the form of a matrix, that was used to engage in the analysis comprised a vertical column of questions that assisted with the location of content related to the *purpose* of the document, the explicit and implicit *values, tensions or conflicts*, and *keywords* that identified components in the policy. The horizontal row of the matrix directed the analysis under two headings related to the dimensions of Māori and mainstream.

Preparing for and conducting the event

Conventional documentary analysis begins with the researcher assembling a set of documents chosen because they are considered

pertinent and informative and, therefore, worthy of analysis. In the case of implementing this new method of documentary analysis hui, the researcher deviated from this unilateral approach and in the spirit of partnership invited each of the participants to select a key policy document related to the topic of quality management based on their judgement of the most relevant material available. Suggestions were received for two key documents to be analysed, a strategic plan and a policy document called *Tikanga Ako* (version 1.0, 2014). The participating wānanga leaders were contacted *kanohi ki te kanohi*, as this is viewed as a respectful way to establish an initial relationship with each person prior to meeting them as a group. They verbally accepted the invitation to participate and consequently they were officially invited via email. An information sheet was attached explaining the purpose and process to be applied in this research event. Also attached was the documentary analysis hui protocol containing the framework of questions (as advised by Krueger & Casey, 2015) that would be used for analysing the documents.

After a *karakia tīmatatanga* and attention to ethical protocols to obtain consent for participation, the researcher guided the analysis of two documents (agreed to by the group) through content and discourse analysis of the texts. The focused hui proceeded for approximately 60 minutes and concluded with a *karakia whakamutunga*. This approach was well accepted by the participants as they understood the importance of *tikanga Māori* while engaging in research (Bishop, 2005; Pohatu, 2008).

Active content and discourse analysis

Content analysis of documents in qualitative research goes beyond a rigid focus on word counts to establish frequency of evidence in the text and can be used in a flexible manner to draw inferences from the content by acknowledging the mere presence or absence of certain words or phrases (George, 2009). This

form of content analysis is concerned with the text but also with a more holistic dimension. As Kohlbacher (2006) asserts, “context is also central to the interpretation and analysis of the material” (p. 16). Furthermore, in a qualitative approach to documentary analysis, there is almost always a study of the theory base in the form of pertinent literature. This review of theory and research provides a background to contextualise the text and can be drawn upon by the analyst to probe, not only the text, but also its meaning (Scott, 1990). In this study, a comprehensive review of the literature on quality management policy and practice in tertiary education settings in general and wānanga settings in particular had been completed before secondary data from wānanga quality documents were collected.

The conventional approach is based on the assumption that content analysis is an individual activity acted out by a solo player. The new form of documentary analysis hui overthrows this view because content analysis became a collaborative group activity with several players contributing to scrutiny and identification of text, albeit led by the researcher. The researcher, because she was familiar with the theory base, had prior knowledge of some of the key aspects of the documents to be searched, and the preparation of the focus group schedule of questions ensured that the scrutiny of the participants was directed to specific areas of interest. Yet, the possibility of further areas of interest being identified by the participants was left flexible. In this study, text was identified that fitted with both preconceived search parameters and beyond these boundaries, so there was verification from multiple participants as well as the emergence of surprises in the text. Basically, what Bowen (2009) describes as the scrutiny of the document content to identify categories and themes took place in a hui and was enriched by the participation of practitioners who knew and used the documents they were helping to analyse.

As well as employing content analysis, the researcher in this study was interested in

scrutinising the text of documents to discern the nature of the discourse at a level of “written interactions” within the documents being analysed (Dick, 2004). When applied to the analysis of documents, the objective of discourse analysis, according to Fairclough (1992), is to uncover the socially constructed context of the written word. Its whole emphasis is on the underlying meanings and power relationships that can be attributed to the text-in-use, which takes the analysis exercise to a much deeper and more critical level than that expected of context analysis, which begins and often ends with the manifest text. Thus, discourse analysis lends itself to the deep interrogation of the latent messages within texts that could mirror the language of ideological or dominant power positions. One such example of its use in education is a study of school-level quality inspection documents in the United Kingdom (Perryman, 2012). In the case of this study, documents were analysed by a solo researcher, in passive mode. When the documentary analysis hui method was used in the wānanga study, documents were analysed actively and collaboratively to locate data that referred to the tensions that existed when a Māori institution such as a wānanga with deeply held and practised values had to comply with national expectations that might not be consistent with Māori kaupapa. The attempt to facilitate active discourse analysis was curtailed by time limits and the researcher’s position as a non-Māori, and led to a somewhat superficial discussion of what the participants saw behind the words of the policy documents.

Pushing the boundaries: Daring to be different

The idea for this bricolage technique called documentary analysis hui grew out of a practical and value-based need to draw on and adapt existing tools so that they were fused into a new technique to serve a specific purpose.

That purpose was to incorporate the values of respect and participation from Māori kaupapa into Western research methods to achieve an approach that was culturally responsive. The initial use of this method in a study set within a wānanga created challenges for the researcher, and in hindsight, there were several limitations. While the new method served its purpose by allowing the inclusion of others, it also created challenges because, as Kincheloe (2004) reminds us, the bricolage approach increases the complexity of research. In this case, the simple method of documentary analysis, valued for its unobtrusive, passive and non-invasive characteristics, was turned on its head to become active and participative, including others in the acts of finding, selecting and analysing documents. Invariably, this made the method more time consuming, but it also allowed the values of respecting the views and involvement of others to be recognised and acted upon.

The researcher being non-Māori was itself a limitation to the extent to which deep and rich use of a Māori kaupapa could be made. For example, in this first attempt to use the hui method for documentary analysis, there was no intent on the part of the researcher to facilitate discourse analysis in her study as she had neither the time nor the resources to do this. However, engaging in discourse analysis is possible for those with resources to carry out deep discourse analysis. There were also practical limitations related to the number of documents that could be analysed in a single session. The time taken to apply the documentary analysis hui method was a considerable limitation in its first use by this researcher. In hindsight, there could have been several hui arranged to ensure a wider coverage of documents. It was indeed a demanding event for both the participants and the researcher. However, the hui participants

gave very positive feedback to the researcher about their involvement, which they found daunting because it was new, but also enabling because it gave them insights they had lacked.

The researcher and her associates (supervisor and Māori advisor) in this study humbly offer their reflections on the use of the tool and its possibilities to other researchers, especially those who are keen to be culturally responsive in their own research contexts.

Glossary

āhuatanga	likeness, characteristics relative to the circumstances
hoa haere	constant companions
hui	meeting or gathering in a Māori manner
kanohi ki te kanohi	face to face
karakia tīmatatanga	initial prayer
karakia	final prayer
whakamutunga	
kaupapa	philosophy, agenda, tradition
Te Ao Māori	Māori worldview
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi
tikanga Māori	Māori customs and practices, culturally appropriate ways of being and doing
wānanga	Māori house of higher learning, tertiary institute
whanaungatanga	relationship, kinship, sense of family connection
whare wānanga	university, place of higher learning

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