

bicultural issues

... from the NSCBI

A regular column prepared by the National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues, which aims to inform readers about bicultural issues and explain their implications for the activities of psychologists, and for the practices and policies of the Society.

Evaluation of the bicultural development of the NZPsS Annual Conference 1994: A summary of findings with recommendations.

In 1991 a National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues (NSCBI) was established to act as an advisory body for the development of biculturalism within the society. In 1993 a new rule (Rule 3) was adopted regarding implementation of the Objects for which the Society was established, in response to a growing awareness within the Society of the need to develop bicultural policies and practices.

Rule 3 outlines a commitment to a Treaty of Waitangi framework which embraces the principles of Kawanatanga and active protection, partnership, and Tino Rangitiratanga.

The NSCBI developed an implementation plan for Rule 3, which was tabled at the Society's 1994 AGM. As part of the implementation process the NSCBI suggested that an evaluation of bicultural development within the Society be carried out. The focus of this evaluation was the 1994 NZPsS Annual Conference held at the University of Waikato. The evaluation

RULE 3

In giving effect to the objects for which the Society is established the Society shall encourage policies and practices that reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity and shall, in particular, have due regard to the provisions of, and to the spirit and intent of, the Treaty of Waitangi (NZPsS, 1993).

was carried out by Heather Hamerton, Rose Black and Linda Nikora. It concentrated on three major areas:

Analysis of Abstracts

Abstracts from past conferences (1987 - 1994) were analysed for their cultural context and content. From the analysis of abstracts it became apparent that research is often culturally blind. The analysis showed no trend for increasing cultural awareness or acknowledgment of the context of the research. This may in part

be a reflection of the strength of the positivist, reductionist approach to science to which many fields of psychology adhere.

Conference Planning

Researchers attended meetings of the Conference planning committee. Initially, the planning committee decided that the conference should have a bicultural theme. However, this idea was not developed, partly because the work of the committee became focused on the logistics of conference and partly because the committee, which included no Maori members, lacked the knowledge necessary to achieve a genuinely bicultural conference. Feedback from the conference committee and observations by the researchers suggested that using the University as a venue for conference and having no forum to discuss bicultural issues were barriers to making the conference truly bicultural.

Conference Process

Researchers carried out participant observation of the conference itself. A variety of symposia were attended, a graffiti board was established by the conference registration desk and conference participants were encouraged to complete questionnaires which focussed on the implementation of Rule 3 within the conference. Findings revealed that conference participants also felt the physical setting and structure of conference did not encourage interaction and participation. Questionnaire respondents generally supported Rule 3 but wanted to be told what to do in terms of its implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After considerable consultation with key stakeholders the researchers have made fifteen recommendations based on information collected during the evaluation. The recommendations include research being given a cultural context and bicultural considerations for the planning, organisation and delivery of future conferences.

Research: We recommend:

1. That researchers develop organisational links with Iwi and/or Maori national and community groups with the view to establishing an on-going partnership that involves consultation at a programme level. For example, each university psychology department, RHA or CHE, or government department would consult with Iwi and/or Maori national and community groups with regard to the overall courses being offered, staffing and research priorities and funding allocations. Such participation may help research to be conducted in an organisational framework which is Treaty-based.
2. That research organisations (eg. a University) negotiate with Iwi and/or Maori National and Community groups the level of involvement they want to have in any research (eg. ethical review, consultation re process and findings) so that both the process and outcome of any research is safe for and inclusive of Maori. Partnerships that are set up need to be explicit about the requirements of each of the partners.



3. That priority be given to the recruitment and retention of Maori students into training programmes and supporting them during training.
4. That priority be given to research that is of benefit to the Maori community.
5. That all psychologists make explicit, where appropriate, the ethnic and cultural context of the research, researchers and participants, particularly in the reporting of findings (eg. papers at conferences). That measures such as psychometric tests are standardised to New Zealand populations.
6. That the NZPsS, in consultation with the NSCBI, develop appropriate criteria, in line with Rule 3, for the publishing of research/reports and abstracts for conferences.
7. That the conference committee strive to include Maori either on their committee or in a participatory role.
8. That the conference committee strive to advertise the NZPsS conference through Maori networks.
9. That the values of comfort and inclusiveness be taken in to account in choosing the conference venue.
10. That rooms with moveable furniture and flexible layout be chosen for symposia and Society meetings to encourage more positive interaction by participants.
11. That a workshop on 'issues of concern' to psychologists be incorporated in to the conference programme, at a time when all conference participants are able to attend.
12. That the conference have a main theme, as a way of establishing continuity.
13. That more papers addressing issues of relevance to Maori be included in the conference programme and clashes between such papers be avoided or minimised.
14. That where possible, information for conference participants, including abstracts, flyers, registration forms and signposts at conference, be written in both Maori and English. This would signal the importance of a bicultural framework at conference.
15. That future conferences include a workshop, debate or forum on Rule 3 and its implementation. This could possibly be coordinated by the NSCBI.

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These recommendations are provided as a starting point only.

Principles of action and current obligations will change with time emphasising the need for monitoring, evaluation and review. The Society must develop processes to review whatever Treaty principles, policies and recommendations that it implements in order to remain consistent with the needs and aspirations for whom such policies and practices were designed (NSCBI, October 1994, p.15).

REFERENCES

- National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues. (1994). The NZ Psychological Society and the Treaty of Waitangi: proposed implementation plan. Bulletin of the New Zealand Psychological Society, 82, 13-17.
- New Zealand Psychological Society. (1993). Rules. Wellington. ■