



Evaluation rubrics:

how to ensure transparent and clear assessment
that respects diverse lines of evidence

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Introduction

Independent external evaluators generally have to work within a range of constraints. Often there is less than ideal availability of time, money, or data. This article presents an example of how a team of external evaluators worked around these constraints on an evaluation in the education sector.

The evaluation process incorporated the use of a logic model to identify boundaries. It also featured the use of rubrics, to make evaluative judgements – their use supported robust data collection and framed analysis and reporting. The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, which included qualitative and quantitative survey data as well as existing project data, which helped build up a rich evidential picture. Furthermore, an indigenous Māori¹ perspective was present throughout the evaluation ensuring Māori views were heard, respected, and actioned within this mainstream project.

Understanding the context

This small-scale evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the First-time Principals² Induction Programme, which aims to induct new principals and strengthen professional leadership in New Zealand schools. This Programme focused on the importance of pedagogical leadership. In particular, this included leaders building links with their school's community, including Māori and Pasifika³ communities, to raise student achievement.

This Programme comprised a number of different components, which were to be evaluated:

- A national residential course, provided by the main programme provider, ran as two residential workshops – one for three days at the end of the first school term and the other for two days later in the school year.
- Individual mentor support focused on supporting first-time principals in the dimensions of “Ako” (self-learning) and “Pono” (self-belief). Five separate universities provided mentor support at a regional level.
- Online support for each first-time principal, provided by the main programme provider, was designed to integrate with the residential courses and mentoring component.
- Research and evaluation capability of school leaders was built during the Programme.
- Regional support was provided through School Support Service advisors, for at-risk first-time principals (or first-time principals from at-risk schools).

Engaging and framing

The Ministry of Education (Ministry) contracted this one-off evaluation to review the First-time Principals Induction Programme, a well-established programme. The review was to inform Ministry decisions on how to best focus and commission the next round of Professional Leadership and Development contracts for the First-time Principals Induction Programme.

The evaluators were to identify the components of the Programme that best achieved their goals. They were also to examine the mix of support provided to first-time principals and recommend changes where necessary, so the Ministry could best structure these components in the future contracting, especially national and local support, and support for first-time principals in challenging situations (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Core values and evaluation questions

The evaluation framing was informed by key aspects of *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why: Best evidence synthesis iteration* (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009), which was being prepared for publication at the time of the evaluation.

The focus of the evaluation was the extent to which the Programme supported pedagogical leadership. Specifically, the following areas were assessed within the evaluation. To what extent:

- is the First-time Principals Induction Programme a high-quality programme that inducts first-time principals across primary, secondary and kura kaupapa⁴ settings to be educational leaders in their schools?
- is there efficacy in having both national and regional elements within the First-time Principals Induction Programme?
- do the components of the programme support first-time principals?
- does this programme reflect existing research (Robinson, 2007; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007) as to the leadership practices that are effective in improving student learning?

A range of professional development providers and stakeholders were included in the evaluation:

- first-time principals from primary, intermediate, and secondary schools as well as from both English-speaking and Māori immersion schools

- providers responsible for delivery of each of the components of the course (as outlined above)
- other key opinion formers in the community, such as the advocacy groups and the professional bodies for principals.

Description of the process

This small, finely tuned evaluation was undertaken in a two-month timeframe by a team of four independent evaluators (two of whom were Pākehā⁵ and two of whom were Māori), between April and June 2009. The evaluation was a Utilization Focussed Evaluation (Patton, 2008). The external evaluators collaborated with the project manager and the wider Professional Leadership team within the Ministry as well as a range of stakeholders outside the Ministry, to ensure the evaluation process was transparent.

Managing tasks

This section outlines the tasks undertaken as part of this evaluation, which includes; the contracting process, scoping phase, (which included development of a logic model, evaluative criteria and rubrics), data collection, analysis and reporting.

The contracting process

The external evaluators submitted a tender for a contract advertised on the New Zealand Government Electronic Tendering system. The contracting process helped clarify the evaluation activities, responsibilities, budgets and timeframes for both the Ministry and the external evaluators. The process helped define the limits of the evaluation – given the timing was tight, and there were budget and data constraints.

During the contracting process, the question of how to make, and who would make, the value judgements in this evaluation were considered. Alkin, Vo and Christie remind us that “there are various ways in which evaluation can be conducted, issues pertaining to the valuing process – who should value, with whom, to what extent, and under what conditions” (2012, p. 31).

Key stakeholders had the opportunity to influence the areas of focus, describe key areas of performance to be assessed. But, given the purpose of the project was to inform future contract tendering, the final judging process was to be undertaken predominantly by the external evaluators, with some input from Professional Leadership team within the Ministry. This process is described in more detail later in this document.

Scoping phase

The scoping phase of the project helped focus the evaluation. Scoping included: an initial review of background material; developing a program logic; making explicit the judgements to be made in the evaluation using rubrics; considering how to undertake the project ethically – in particular ensuring a Māori perspective was present, and identifying cost-effective ways to collect data.

Initial review of background material

Initial scoping ensured the review design was tailored to meet the Ministry’s needs whilst taking into account the evolving context. The evaluation team read supplied material about the delivery and content of the First-time Principals Induction Programme and reviewed the existing research (Robinson, 2007; Timperley et al., 2007). The evaluators also reviewed existing milestone reporting from the universities providing services to the programme, and reviewed data from the 2008 first-time principals’ cohort – to help develop a profile of the cohort and develop a sampling approach.

The external evaluators discussed with Ministry staff, the philosophy, aims, objectives, and implementation context of the First-time Principal’s Induction Programme. The external evaluators also spent half a day with the main programme providers who ran the residential courses and online aspects of the First-time Principal’s Induction Programme. This allowed them to understand the history of the project and the logic that underpinned its focus, and to learn of current developments.

Developing a program logic

Despite the First-time Principals Induction Programme having run since 2002, there was not a programme logic. Funnell & Rogers (2011) suggest that developing programme logic assists stakeholders and evaluators to understand both the theory of change for the programme and how action is intended to occur. Thus, the external evaluators recommended developing a programme logic to assist this evaluation and were able to develop this logic within days. The external evaluators found the *Kellogg’s Logic Model Development Guide* approach to logic development (WK Kellogg Foundation, 2006) an efficient and effective way to outline the programme logic. Once developed, the external evaluators shared the logic with the Ministry and the main programme providers and confirmed that the logic model was an accurate representation of the project before undertaking any further work.

The benefit of developing a programme logic was it helped clarify the assumptions underpinning the project, for both the evaluators and the Ministry. The following page contains the logic model developed.

A logic model for the First-Time Principals Induction Programme

Project need: To support first-time principals to work effectively in schools and to have high quality principals as they are key to student achievement of outcomes.

Context: Programme started in 2002. Was projected that there could be a national shortage of principals in the future as principals were an ageing workforce. 'Tomorrow's Schools' initiative has not resulted in change at a systematic level to address both quality issues in schools generally and more particularly equality issues for Māori. First-time principals needed to be inducted in a sustainable manner to meet the workforce demands across the education sector.

Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals need to be leaders of learning (BES) to ensure best outcomes for students. • While it is hard to change behaviours of existing principals, there is an opportunity to shape the beliefs and opinions of new principals. • An induction programme can create change at a systematic level over time to effect change at a national level to: raise the quality of principals in NZ schools, address equity issues in schools, and address quality issues in schools. • There is the need for support and guidance of first-time principals to facilitate the development of a wide range of competencies to ensure: best outcomes for students; high quality management of schools; and, good relationships with communities. • Some first-time principals are in particularly challenging situations and require additional support to ensure they survive and thrive. • It is beneficial to have principals from schools from across all sectors on induction courses together. • All training needs to be informed by ongoing research.
Inputs/resources - In order to accomplish out set of activities we will need the following:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-time principals able to attend courses. • Residential course venue available. • Sufficient staff to run the programme. • Sufficient high quality presenters to deliver the residential workshops. • Sufficient lead mentors and mentors for the programme. • Mentors sufficiently trained to support first-time principals. • First-time principals have access to Skype and online aspects of the programme via broadband. • First-time principals have support from L & Ms. • First-time principals have support from regional Ministry of Education offices.
Activities - In order to address our problem or asset we will accomplish the following:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session with mentor on enrolment to focus first-time principals development and goals. • Residential courses of 3 and 2 days for first-time principals. • Online courses for first-time principals. • Access to mentors 2 face to face visits and phone of Skype contact. • Participation in 2-3 facilitated PPLGs. • Access to L & M personnel. • Access to regional support from the Ministry. • First-time principals support is well coordinated, there are support groups working with first-time principals.
Short term outcomes - We expect that once accomplished these activities will produce the following evidence or service delivery:	<p>First-time principals participate in professional learning dimensions relevant to the leadership of teaching and learning in their school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-time principals have a professional development plan; develop relationships with mentors and peers; engage in reflective learning; • First-time principals understand the importance of being leaders of learning including for Māori and Pasifika and have strategies to affect this. <p>First-time principals know about effective management systems and model consistent use of them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-time principals know how to collect, analyse and act on data to support student learning. • First-time principals start to address their school's management needs. • First-time principals start to address work with BOT to achieve good governance of their school. • First-time principals understand the importance of building links with their community, including Māori and Pasifika communities. • There is consistent and continuous improvement based on reflective practice.
Medium term outcomes - We expect these activities will lead to the following changes in 1-3 then 4-6 years:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of first-time principals being leaders of learning. • Evidence of first-time principals and schools collecting and analysing data to inform planning and development programmes of learning for all students. • Evidence of first-time principals focus on equity for Māori. • Sound evidence of first-time principals management governance of schools. • Evidence that first-time principals build links with their communities.
Long term outcomes - We expect that if accomplished these activities will lead to the following changes in 7-10 years:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-time principals focus on: best outcomes for students; demonstrate high quality management of schools; good relationships with their communities. • Programmes address equity for Māori students and include whānau. • First-time principals have a wide network of peers. • First-time principals take on leadership roles in education. • There is less 'at risk' schools nationally. • First-time principals are retrained in the sector. • There is a growing body of research evidence of what works in terms of professional learning.

As the course content for the Programme was continually improved, the most recent cohort to complete the course – the 2008 First-time Principals cohort, were selected to be surveyed as part of the evaluation. Therefore, the short-term outcomes in the logic model became the focus of the evaluation. These short-term outcomes included:

- first-time principals participate in professional learning dimensions relevant to the leadership of teaching and learning in their school
- first-time principals know about effective management systems and model consistent use of them.

It was also agreed that the evaluation would also look out for any possible side-effects or unintended consequences.

Making explicit the judgements made in an evaluation using rubrics

From the programme logic, the evaluators developed the rubrics for the project. **Rubrics** offer a process for making explicit the judgements in an evaluation and are used to judge the quality, the value, or the importance of the service provided. Rubrics are made up of:

- evaluative criteria: the **aspects** of performance the evaluation focusses on
- merit determination: the **definitions of what performance looks** like at each level. (E J Davidson, Personal communication 3 September, 2012)

Rubrics have been used for some time in the education field and in that context are generally thought of as a “scoring guide used to evaluate the quality of a student’s work” (Popham, 2012, p. 5). Popham also believes rubrics help to focus on the aspects that it is “important to pay attention to” (2012, p. 11) and are useful to ensure “clarity of curricular intent” (2012, p. 10).

Davidson (2005) proposes that rubrics are useful in evaluation because they help make transparent the

judgements being applied. In *Evaluation methodology basics: The nuts and bolts of sound evaluation* (2005, pp. 126-127) Davidson suggests that the evaluative criteria come from a needs assessment and other sources, and that the relative importance of criteria can be derived from a number of strategies as outlined in Table 1.

So having described a little of the theory of rubrics – this next section sets out to show how they were developed for this evaluation.

The rubrics for this evaluation were developed to cover the short-term outcomes, which are as highlighted in the logic model on page 4. The first key area of focus in the programme logic (highlighted), *First-time principals participate in professional learning dimensions relevant to the leadership of teaching and learning in their school* was rewritten as one of the two key headings for the rubrics: *Participate in professional learning and are recognised as leading learners in their school*.

The initial sources for developing the evaluative criteria included: the literature, knowledge from selected stakeholders – in particular feedback and documentation from contractors providing the key aspects of the First-time Principal’s Induction Programme, and the Professional Leadership team at the Ministry. The Ministry appreciated the external evaluators’ approach:

The speed at which you grasped the key issues and your focussed approach has all been appreciated. (Ministry feedback in letter to Lead evaluator, 10 August 2009)

The following the types of performance were the areas the evaluation focussed on. These are known as the evaluative criteria. It was considered important that:

- there are clear and appropriate professional development goals set for first-time principals
- good working relationships which provide professional support and advice to first-time principals are established between first-time principals and mentors

Table 1: Summary of strategies that can be used for deriving the importance of evaluative criteria

Strategy	Advantages and disadvantages
Stakeholders can vote	Inclusive and democratic but assumes stakeholders are all well informed.
Can draw on knowledge from selected stakeholders	Combines stakeholder and evaluator expertise but requires careful justification.
Use evidence from the literature	Avoids reinventing the wheel and is a good supplement to stakeholder input, but requires good knowledge of the literature.
Use specialist judgement (expert panels)	Quicker than a literature search but may reflect the prevailing expert view.
Use evidence from needs and values assessments	Provides independently verifiable evidence of importance but works only for criteria with that evidence.
Use programme theory and evidence of causal linkages	Provides independently verifiable evidence of importance but may be difficult to explain to stakeholders and or use in a participatory mode.

Source: Adapted from Davidson, F. I. (2005). *Evaluation methodology basics: The nuts and bolts of sound evaluation*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. (p126-127)

- networks of peer support are established between first-time principals and peers
- first-time principals engage in reflective learning about being leading learners in their schools
- first-time principals understand the importance of being leaders of learning and have clear strategies to effect this
- first-time principals report they know how to collect, analyse and act on data to support student learning
- there is evidence of the first-time principals focus on equity for Māori
- support for first-time principals is well co-ordinated (especially where there are several support groups working with the first-time principals).

All aspects of performance were considered equally important, so the different types of performance for this evaluative criterion were not prioritised.

The external evaluators, in discussion with the Ministry, also considered the question:

“if this Programme was working really well, what would we be able to see, hear, or feel, if first-time principals were participating in professional learning and were recognised leading learners in their school?”

The evaluators then developed a rubric, which illustrated the definitions of what performance looked like at each level from Excellent to Poor. Here is the example for the rubric: *Participate in professional learning and are recognised as leading learners in their school*. This showed the different levels of performance that might be observed for each of the evaluative criteria. The Ministry approved the rubric before questionnaire development began. This rubric can be viewed below.

Rubric for: Participate in professional learning and are recognised as ‘leading learners’ in their school

Rating	Evaluative criteria
Excellent	<p>Clear example of exemplary performance or best practice in this domain: no weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are always clear and appropriate professional development goals set for first-time principals • Good working relationships which provide professional support and advice to first-time principals are always established between first-time principals and mentors • Networks of peer support are always established between first-time principals and peers • First-time principals always engage in reflective learning about being leading learners in their schools • First-time principals always understand the importance of being leaders of learning and have clear strategies to effect this • First-time principals always report they know how to collect, analyse and act on data to support student learning • There is always evidence of the first-time principals focus on equity for Māori • Support for first-time principals is well co-ordinated (especially where there are several support groups working with the first-time principal).
Very good	<p>Very good or excellent performance on virtually all aspects; strong overall but not exemplary; no weaknesses of any real consequence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is almost always clear and appropriate professional development goals set for first-time principals • Good working relationships which provide professional support and advice to first-time principals are almost always established between first-time principals and mentors • Networks of peer support are almost always established between first-time principals and peers • First-time principals almost always engage in reflective learning about being leading learners in their schools • First-time principals almost always understand the importance of being leaders of learning and almost always have strategies to effect this • First-time principals almost always report they know how to collect, analyse and act on data to support student learning • There is almost always evidence of the first-time principals focus on equity for Māori • Support for first-time principals is almost always well-co-ordinated (especially where there are several support groups working with the First-time Principal).
Good	<p>Reasonably good performance overall; might have a few slight weaknesses but nothing serious</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is mostly (with some exceptions) clear and appropriate professional development goals set for first-time principals • Good working relationships which provide professional support and advice to first-time principals are mostly (with some exceptions) established between first-time principals and mentors • Networks of peer support are mostly (with some exceptions) established between first-time principals and peers • First-time principals mostly (with some exceptions) engage in reflective learning about being leading learners in their schools • First-time principals mostly (with some exceptions) understand the importance of being leaders of learning and mostly have strategies to effect this • First-time principals mostly (with some exceptions) report they know how to collect, analyse and act on data to support student learning • There is mostly (with some exceptions) evidence of the first-time principals focus on equity for Māori • Support for is mostly (with some exceptions) well-co-ordinated (especially where there are several support groups working with the First-time principal).

Rubric for: Participate in professional learning and are recognised as ‘leading learners’ in their school. *continued*

Rating	Evaluative criteria
Adequate/ok	<p>Clear example of exemplary performance or best practice in this domain: no weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is sometimes (with quite a few exceptions) clear and appropriate professional development goals set for first-time principals • Good working relationships which provide professional support and advice to first-time principals are sometimes (with quite a few exceptions) established between and mentors • Networks of peer support are mostly (with quite a few exceptions) established between first-time principals and peers • First-time principals sometimes (with quite a few exceptions) engage in reflective learning about being leading learners in their schools • First-time principals sometimes (with quite a few exceptions) understand the importance of being leaders of learning and have some strategies to effect this • First-time principals sometimes (with quite a few exceptions) report they know how to collect, analyse and act on data to support student learning • There is sometimes (with quite a few exceptions) evidence of the first-time principals focus on equity for Māori • Support for first-time principals is sometimes (with quite a few exceptions) co-ordinated (especially where there are several support groups working with the first-time principal).
Poor	<p>Clear evidence of unsatisfactory functioning; serious weaknesses across the board on crucial aspects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is little or no evidence of clear and appropriate professional development goals set for first-time principals • Good working relationships which provide professional support and advice to first-time principals are not established between first-time principals and mentors • Networks of peer support are not established between first-time principals and peers • First-time principals do not report engaging in reflective learning about being leading learners in their schools • There is no evidence that first-time principals understand the importance of being leaders of learning, nor do they have strategies to effect this • First-time principals report they do not know how to start to collect, analyse and act on data to support student learning • There is very little or no evidence of the first-time principals focus on equity for Māori • Support for first-time principals is not at all co-ordinated (especially where there are several support groups working with the first-time principal).

Considering how to undertake the project ethically

The external evaluators ensured a quality and ethical evaluation by carefully considering the *context of key stakeholders* who were included in the evaluation. Surveying the most recent cohort of first-time principals created limitations as they had just completed the programme and were not be able to demonstrate longer-term changes in behaviour. Hence, the evaluation could only focus on short-term outcomes.

Further the evaluators were clear from the outset about the *limitations of the evaluation* and did not over-promise what it would deliver within the time or budget constraints. So, for instance, boards of trustees were not approached to assess the extent to which the self-reported changes in principals had been observed by the wider school community, as this was beyond the budgetary scope of the project.

The external evaluators carefully considered how to *use existing data where possible*. Training providers’ milestone reports, and a wide range of internal data sources were incorporated as evidence, including both qualitative and quantitative data in order to build layers of credible evidence.

The external evaluators adhered to processes that have proved effective in other work. For instance, a self-completion questionnaire was designed to survey all first-time principals in the 2008 cohort. This questionnaire was piloted with four first-time principals from an earlier cohort. Piloting turned out to be an important part of the study, as principals observed it was essential to capture the circumstances in the school at the time they became principal in order to put their subsequent comments into context. So, a series of questions were developed to probe into this. These were on the first page of the self-completion questionnaire, making it clear to first-time principals that context was considered in the evaluation.

Ensuring a Māori perspective was present throughout this project

Māori make up approximately 14.6% of the New Zealand population. In New Zealand a treaty exists which was “signed between Māori and the English Crown in 1840. The Treaty of Waitangi guaranteed Māori the duality of continued sovereignty as well as the same rights extended by the Crown to other New Zealand citizens” (Cram & Oakden, 2012). However, historically the treaty was not honoured, and this has

had a big impact on the Māori population. Today, there continue to be disparities in Māori student achievement and the Ministry developed *Ka Hikitia*⁶ as a way to address these disparities.

We believe Māori participation in evaluation is critical, helps to give meaningful effect to equity, and is our usual practice as the Kinnect Group. The Pākehā lead external evaluator has a personal commitment to ensuring Māori perspectives are authentically present in evaluation. Therefore, there was genuine power sharing with a Māori external evaluator in all stages of the project, including the proposal writing, programme logic development, development of rubrics, questionnaire design, testing, data collection, data analysis, sense making and reporting. The views of Māori were also woven right through the reporting. Thus, the external evaluators had a particular focus on ensuring a Māori perspective was present throughout this project in a way that Māori would consider honoured their aspirations and perspectives.

Furthermore the external evaluators carefully considered how best to approach the Māori principals from kura, where te reo Māori is the main language spoken. The process for contacting and obtaining responses from the six first-time principals from kura was modified and involved providing these principals the opportunity to speak with a Māori researcher fluent in te reo Māori. This ensured Māori principals from kura genuinely had a chance to provide feedback in ways that were appropriate and meaningful to them. While the number of kura was small, and required a small but unequal amount of resource to be allocated, we believe it paid dividends in the final reporting.

Identifying cost effective ways to collect data

Once the rubric was developed, the external evaluators identified existing data that could be used in the evaluation, as well as the gaps where additional data needed to be collected to address the evaluation questions. There was a focus on cost-effective and time-sensitive ways to recruit participants and collect new data from key stakeholder groups. The aim was to maximise the data collection possibilities with a time-poor stakeholder group, in a way that was also ethically and culturally appropriate.

The small, initial scoping stage revealed that the First-time Principal's Induction Programme had continually evolved, adapting and responding to on-going demands and changes over time. As a result, it was agreed that the most recent (2008) first-time principal's cohort should be surveyed as part of the

data collection. Given the complexity of the implementation context, the external evaluators also opted for a mixed-methods design and planned for the use of new as well as existing data. On reflection, the time spent in scoping at the outset of the evaluation set a positive tone and helped focus the evaluation to understand data limitations and manage their expectations accordingly.

Data collection

The rubrics developed for the Induction Programme provided rich descriptions about agreed performance dimensions and made explicit the different levels of performance. The next step was to consider the various forms of evidence that might be used to draw a conclusion based on the definitions of performance. A range of data collection methods were then used to collect data that showed the extent to which the programme had met the agreed performance levels:

- As there were 187 participants in the 2008 cohort, it was possible to send the self-completion survey to all first-time principals from that cohort. The process was similar to that recommended by Dillman, (2000) comprising prenotification, mailouts, and reminders. In addition, principals from the smallest sub-group, secondary schools, were contacted by phone to ensure as high a response rate as possible. By the end of the fieldwork period, a 69% response rate was achieved. The external evaluators attribute this in part to the culture of reflection in the First-time Principals Induction Programme, where principals were regularly invited to provide feedback via self-completion questionnaires. In addition, a relatively short questionnaire was used, which respondents in the pilot survey said was relevant and to the point. It was also judged that busy principals were more likely to fill in a pen-and-paper survey when they had a spare five minutes, rather than opting for an online survey, which could only be done at their desk. Subsequent feedback confirmed these judgements were correct.
- A separate approach was used to contact principals from kura. A senior Māori researcher fluent in te reo Māori and who was well known and highly regarded amongst respondents undertook this work. She sent the prenotification email in te reo Māori to welcome principals to the survey. The email acknowledged that the external

evaluators would have liked to offer the survey in te reo Māori, but this was not possible within the time and budget constraints. Principals were offered the option of filling in the self-completion questionnaire and/or speaking with the researcher to respond in te reo Māori to the open-ended questions. The researcher telephoned each kura principal to ensure they had a chance to respond.

- Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with key sector leaders, lead mentors, mentors, Leadership and Mentoring (L&M) advisors, online support staff, and first-time principals from earlier cohorts. These key informants were identified by the Ministry.
- The external evaluators also reviewed milestone reports from the main programme provider who provided the residential courses and online aspects of the First-time Principal's Induction Programme; and milestone reports from other training providers for 2008.
- A workshop with the Ministry team responsible for the First-time Principals Induction Programme reviewed key findings in the data and offered insight into some of the findings emerging from the review.

The following survey data shown in Table 2 was collected for this evaluation:

In addition, the other sources of data that were included in the review are listed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Other data sources included in the review

Other data sources	Comments
Milestone Reports from main programme provider	Examined all four reports for 2008
Main programme provider data from latest Residential course 1, 2009	Data on satisfaction with other aspects of First-time Principals Induction Programme was available, with regional analysis
Milestone Reports from other universities for the leadership and management advisors	One report per University was available – 5 in total
Observations from interviewers	Provided more detail on stakeholders – ad hoc comments and other anecdotal information.
Research as to what leadership practices are effective in improving student learning (Robinson, 2007; Timperley et al., 2007) and the delivery and content of the First-time Principals Induction Programme.	This research underpins the theory of the First-time Principals Induction Programme.

Table 2: Summary of data collected for FTP review

Stakeholder group	No. of interviews	Data collection method
Self-completion survey of first-time principals attending the 2008 course of the First-time Principals Induction Programme	125	Self-completion postal survey. All 187 participants in the first-time principals Induction Programme received the survey, 180 were eligible achieved 125 responses (69% response rate)
Stakeholder group		
National trainers	4	Face-to-face meeting with evaluators
Mentor leader & L&M advisor	1	Face-to-face interview with evaluators
Sector leaders	3	Phone interviews with evaluators
Other stakeholders		
Mentor leaders	1	Semi-structured telephone interview
Mentors	3	Semi-structured telephone interviews
School Support Service advisors	2	Semi-structured telephone interviews
Personnel overseeing online component of course	1	Semi-structured telephone interview with key course personnel
Principals from 2007 cohort	4	As part of the piloting process
Total	19	

Understanding causes

The use of rubrics enabled the external evaluators to understand better, the extent to which aspects of the First-time Principals Induction Programme had or had not worked well for first-time principals and the reasons for this.

To understand how this worked, it is necessary to understand how to use rubrics in analysis. Popham (2012) discusses two possible ways to use rubrics – either *holistically* or *analytically*. Where rubrics are used holistically, a single judgement is made taking into account all evaluative criteria in one judgement that is quick to administer. Where rubrics are used analytically, separate judgements are made of each evaluative criteria in a step-by-step process. These judgements are sometimes then synthesised into one overall judgement. While this approach is more time-consuming, Popham maintains this approach “can supply diagnostic data of considerable utility” (2012, p. 19).

For this evaluation, the aim was to use the rubrics analytically. Both Popham and Davidson outline a multi-stage process for assessing data against the rubrics. The external evaluation team firstly converted all the data, including quantitative responses from the first-time principals’ survey and qualitative data from interviews with the key stakeholders and sector leaders – to ratings from Excellent to Poor against each of the rubrics, as outlined in Table 4. Providers’ milestone reports were another qualitative data source, and these were incorporated where additional information was required.

Using an analytic approach, the external evaluators mapped the data against the evaluative criteria in a large Excel spread sheet. This helped the external evaluators to identify where there was a consistent picture of performance and where there were variable perspectives. This helped to diagnose areas of good to very good performance, as well as areas for improvement with the programme and possible causes.

Synthesizing and valuing

External evaluators provided data to the Ministry as it became available, in a manner that assured respondent confidentiality. The Ministry was particularly interested in the early results from the first-time principals’ self-completion survey, as this was new data. The Ministry later told the external evaluators that it was useful to obtain

Table 4: Synthesis process used for the review

Rating	Quantitative and qualitative data
Excellent: (Always)	Clear example of exemplary performance or best practice in this domain; no weaknesses. Likely that 90% or more agree with statement to a considerable or high degree
Very good: (Almost Always)	Very good to excellent performance on virtually all aspects; storing overall but not exemplary; no weaknesses of any real consequence. Possibly 80%-90% agree with statement to a considerable or high degree
Good: (Mostly, with some exceptions)	Reasonably good performance overall; might have a few slight weaknesses but nothing serious. In the range of 60%-80% agree with statement to a considerable or high degree and no more than 15% agree to a limited or very limited degree
Adequate: (Sometimes, with quite a few exceptions)	Fair performance, some serious, but non-fatal weaknesses on a few aspects. Around 40%–60% agree with statement to a considerable or high degree and no more than 15% agree to a limited or very limited degree
Poor: Never (or occasionally with clear weaknesses evident)	Clear evidence of unsatisfactory functioning; serious weaknesses across the board on crucial aspects. Probably fewer than 40% or more agree with statement to a considerable or high degree

Adapted from Davidson (2005)

data as it became available, as it helped the staff within the Ministry to build an incremental picture of the findings.

An important aspect of the evaluation process was making value judgements based on the data. A sense-making session brought together the external evaluators and the Ministry to consider key findings from the new data collected, particularly the self-completion questionnaire with the 2008 cohort of the first-time principals.

During the sense-making session, the external evaluators and the Ministry considered the data in a number of different ways (Williams, n.d.). Firstly, they looked for generalisations they could make about the data, but also any contradictions that were evident. Then they identified aspects in the data that were a surprise – either unexpected aspects that were present or expected aspects that were not present. Then they reflected on the aspects of the data that were still a puzzle, to try to explain why they might have occurred. This process enabled incorporation of Ministry knowledge into the findings, without loss of objectivity.

Then, the evidence was assessed overall, with input from the Ministry, to determine what it said about the extent to which the First-time Principals Induction Programme assisted first-time principals. An overall judgment was made and the findings, which supported the judgement for each of the evaluative criteria, were discussed. This approach enabled the external evaluators to explore possible reasons for findings, as well as identifying inconsistencies – which needed further exploration when they wrote the report. The external evaluators used a synthesis methodology, similar to that outlined by Jane Davidson, to arrive at a single rating of performance overall. This is considered beneficial as it “allows us to draw overall evaluative conclusions from multiple findings about a single evaluand” (Davidson, 2005, p. 151).

Reporting and use

This section discusses how the project was documented and how reporting was produced, shared, debated, and used.

Throughout the project, a series of weekly emails kept the Project manager up-to-date with the project progress. In addition, more detailed milestone reports corresponded with invoicing.

The Ministry staff told the external evaluators that the sense-making session was useful, as by the time they received the final report the Ministry team felt they already knew and understood the data quite well. This meant they could use the findings from the report quickly and effectively in their work. In particular, they commented that the session provided “greater clarification of the ‘below the surface’ findings in the review”. Ministry staff reflected later that when they get all the data at once, there is so much to go through and it is much harder work to take in all the material.

The Ministry staff also told the external evaluators that the use of rubrics as a reporting mechanism made it possible to quickly convey the key findings to their key audiences and commented:

[The] final report...is well written and presented in a logical format. I would like to reiterate that it has been a pleasure to work with you [external evaluators]. The regular communication,...and your focussed approach has all been appreciated. (Ministry feedback in letter to lead evaluator, 10 August 2009).

At the final meeting for the project, instead of making final amendments to the report (prepared in Word), the evaluation team checked the accuracy of a Ministerial paper arising from the findings of the project. The Ministry intended it would start to drive change around the way professional learning and development was delivered, with a particular focus on raising Māori student achievement.

Because the report was a key input into the contracting the next round of professional learning and development, it was not shared widely. However, the Ministry Project manager summarised the key points from the evaluation and shared these findings with the main programme provider, a well-respected university. The main programme provider accepted suggested improvements proposed in the summary. The Ministry Project manager thought this was because the reporting was clear and there was sufficient evidence to substantiate the points made.

This evaluation had high credibility as it was tightly focused on the right aspects and the first-time principals’ survey had a high response rate – which gave it academic credibility. The Project manager reflected afterward that “the external evaluators got the practicalities right, and there were no mistakes”.

The request for a proposal for the next round of professional development contracts, which went out soon after the report was delivered, had a strong focus on schools working more effectively with Pasifika and Māori. For instance, all providers had to have a *Ka Hikitia* goal and there was greater focus on implementing this programme. The incumbent main programme provider had its contract renewed for two years with the right of a further renewal.

Example of reporting

Here is an example of the way the findings were presented and shows how the evaluative judgements were made explicit in the reporting.

Key findings from the study

Overall, the review found that the First-time Principals Induction Programme (FTPIP) offered a good quality induction programme for first-time principals (FTP). There were some aspects of the programme which required fine-tuning to maximise their effectiveness, but no major changes were recommended by the review. The review found the FTPIP provided a good platform for inducting first-time principals across primary, secondary and (to a lesser extent) kura kaupapa settings to be educational leaders in their schools.

The FTP programme was a fantastic initiative as far as I am concerned and money well invested. I felt supported and had connections to contact when I needed to do so. Our mentors and the PLG [Professional Learning Group] members could share experiences and give timely advice. Sessions at each of the residential courses were scarily apt and timely. Thank you for such a great programme. It was a combination of contextual, real life learning that could be shared with/by experienced people/principals. (FTP participant)

The following Table 1 provides an executive snapshot, identifying the evaluative criteria on which performance was strongest and weakest as judged by FTPs, stakeholders and sector leaders.

Overall FTPs believed they were mostly (with some exceptions) better prepared to be a leader of learning and able to apply this learning in their schools, compared to before they started the FTPIP.

Table 1: Summary of evidence that FTPIP is of good quality–FTPs as ‘leaders of learning’

Evaluative Criteria		Ratings				
		Poor	Adequate	Good	Very good	Excellent
Principals participate in professional learning and are recognised as ‘leading learners’ in their school	Overall rating					
	There are clear and appropriate professional development goals set for FTPs					
	Good working relationships which provide professional support and advice to FTPs are established between FTPs and mentors					
	Networks of peer support are established between FTPs and peers					
	FTPs engage in reflective learning about being leading learners in their schools					
	FTPs understand the importance of being leaders of learning and have clear strategies to effect this					
	FTPs report they know how to collect, analyse and act on data to support student learning					
	There is evidence of the FTPs focus on equity for Māori					
	Support for FTPs is well co-ordinated (especially where there are several support groups working with the FTP)					

Changes as a result of the evaluation

While the evaluation identified that the current mix of support available from the Programme provided the basic building blocks, it also clearly identified some opportunities to enhance the first-time principals learning in line with Government policy. For example, the evaluation made it clear that training providers needed to impress on first-time principals the urgent need to have a much stronger focus on working with Māori to raise Māori student achievement, and recommended making those aspects of the Programme compulsory. The Ministry communicated to others the need to achieve greater equity for Māori as follows:

Addressing equity for Māori and Pasifika students:

- There is a need for good mentors for Māori FTPs, especially for kura principals who are able to contribute to the programme projecting a Māori world-view.
- Many principals are more committed to equity for Māori students as a consequence of the programme but do not appear to have the strategies for implementation. There is a need to ensure that aspects within the programme explicitly focused on implementation strategies.
- While Māori principals rated the residential highly in the course evaluations, the review found evidence from several sources (including Māori principals, L&M advisors and mentors) that some speakers and some of the other participants at the residential courses took a deficit view of Māori. The review suggested that this needs to be monitored.
- Consider provision of opportunities for Māori Tumuaki to meet as a group at residential courses. (Fitchett, 2009, p. 2)

So what changed due to this evaluation? Firstly, there was more effective provision of mentors for kura principals. Secondly, there was a far greater focus on supporting principals to raise Māori student achievement, in an appreciative and non-deficit manner. To support this a whole day of the First-time Principals Residential Course devoted to raising

Māori student achievement, is now compulsory for all attendees. Thirdly, all the mentors are required on an on-going basis to place a particular emphasis in their work with first-time principals on raising Māori achievement.

In addition, there was a change to the timing of the first residential course from April to July, so first-time principals had a chance to achieve greater mastery of some of the management aspects of leadership before they focussed on the pedagogical aspects.

There was also considerably more focus on getting first-time principals to engage with the IT components of the course, particularly the online learning. One of the key aspects of school funding training was taught online, to ensure principals became familiar and comfortable with the online medium.

The Project manager also wrote two articles outlining the changes to the First-time Principals Induction Programme, for a nation-wide magazine read by principals.

Conclusion

This small, finely tuned evaluation helped contribute to change and supported the training providers' improve their approaches to working with first-time principals. It was particularly gratifying that the use of rubrics, and genuinely engaging with Māori, proved their value in this project. This was an early evaluation using rubrics and our approach to them has evolved since.

Notwithstanding, the evaluation provides a practical example of how rubrics can be used to ensure a transparent process for articulating the aspects of performance that are important. Rubrics also help evaluators to identify the data required to make judgements about the performance of the programme so that suitable data can be collected, and identify early any likely information gaps. The synthesis process allows for a wide range of different data sources to build up layers of evidence, and results in a clear assessment that respects diverse lines of evidence.

When using rubrics, reporting can be succinct, but with sufficient detail that users of the evaluation consider the value judgements robust. This process results in evaluation that supports use by users of the evaluation.

Looking to the future, there are a number of different ways to use rubrics. This paper shows one such approach. There is a need for further discussion on the ways different types of rubrics can be used in a range of evaluations.

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Endnotes

¹ Māori are the indigenous people of New Zealand.

² Principals in New Zealand are the equivalent of headmasters or headmistresses in some other countries.

³ Pasifika refers to Polynesian, Melanesian and Micronesian peoples living in New Zealand.

⁴ Kura kaupapa settings are Māori immersion settings such as schools that operate with a Māori worldview and teach predominantly Māori students using Māori language as the primary language of instruction.

⁵ Pākehā is a Māori term used by many New Zealanders to describe New Zealand Europeans.

⁶ *Ka Hikitia* is a programme to raise Māori student potential.

