Appreciating and advancing bicultural organisational practice

Kia ora ano,

A recent read of Love and Tilley’s (2014) article has been enlightening and helped me further my questions about bicultural organisational practice.

It specifically addresses public relations referred to as organisation-public engagement and can be applied more broadly across organisational contexts.

Here are some key points I found helpful;

- Mainstream management theory is inclined to favour individualistic, colonialist, mechanistic and neoliberal foundations which contribute to marginalisation and give little attention to operations of power and their effects.
- The authors make the call to draw on culture-centred approaches as a way of creating solidarity with marginalised publics to challenge marginalisation and top-down relations of power that continue to reproduce neoliberal, hegemonic practice.
- Critical attention needs to be applied to language and practice that claims to be culturally sensitive, such as ‘engagement’ so that theoretical foundations are identified and care is taken to avoid reproducing individualistic, neoliberal values and practices.
- The creation of practices that take people and power into account is urgently needed.
- Indigenous knowledge can provide an ideal foundation because of its emphasis on placing issues of power and belonging at the forefront of organisational practice and making authentic engagement a valued goal.
- Organisational change needs to be created that fosters “more humane and less oppressive or marginalising forms of organisation, organising and management” (p.36) by embracing the contributions of multiple perspectives.
- Mātauranga Māori can provide a foundation for creating courageous, innovative organisational initiatives.

The authors summarise some core normative values that can be applied including:

taking as a basic premise that all parties involved in engagement be considered sovereign entities with rights of design and control over interactions; involving all parties in co-negotiating the terms of, objectives for, and measures of proposed engagement, such as by setting up autonomous organisation-public working groups; using pragmatic turn-taking and spatial mechanisms ensure equal share of voice and freedom of expression, such as by funding independent spaces for engagement rather than containing discussion within the
organisational domain (in both the online and offline sense of the word); and fourth, and conceptualising engagement as a set of reciprocal relationships similar to kinship, where an organisation has obligations to encompass its publics’ needs via the engagement process, not only its own needs. (p.45)

These all sit well with the relational leadership and people centred, values-based organisational culture and leadership approaches that Adventurous Conversations Ltd seeks to foster in its own operations and with organisations who access our services. Two of the challenges are to maintain an ongoing critical reflexive approach to these ideas and practices and to understand and apply them more fully.

References