Flexible Learning Spaces - Implications for Teacher Wellbeing

by

Caroline Burns

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

School of Education

Faculty of Culture and Society

2020

Abstract

The design and construction of Flexible Learning Spaces (FLS) in New Zealand schools has been government policy since 2011. As teacher wellbeing is increasingly recognised as a critical contemporary educational issue, understanding how combining teachers in collaborative teams to work in large, open spaces with large numbers of students affects teacher wellbeing is an unexplored area of significance. This research specifically sought to reveal aspects of FLS that challenge teacher wellbeing, while also examining how the affordances of FLS may actually support teacher wellbeing.

This qualitative case study captured the narratives of eight teachers working in FLS in New Zealand schools. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focussing on an exploration of the participants' self-reported sense of their wellbeing and the opportunities and challenges FLS present to their wellbeing. Four teachers took part in interviews, and a further four teachers involved in the focus group. Data analysis revealed unique opportunities presented by working conditions in FLS. Five emergent themes suggest both resources and approaches that best support teacher wellbeing in FLS. These recommendations suggest strategies and best practice for individual teachers, teaching teams and school leaders. The findings also have implications for teacher education institutions, and future research.

Responsible state and national educational policy should ensure the wellbeing of teachers, who are key to the education process if teaching is to support effective learning. This study of the relationship between teacher wellbeing and the implementation of FLS policy is therefore timely, as this area is under-researched, and this study contributes to filling this gap. By carrying out this research it is hoped that teachers can gain a deeper understanding of the nature of their own wellbeing and through this foster the wellbeing of the teaching profession.

Acknowledgments

Table of Contents

List of figures and tables

List of figures

List of tables

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Caroline Burns

Chapter One: Introduction

Mā te whakātu, ka mohio, mā te mohio ka marama, mā te marama ka matau, mā te matau ka ora.

With discussion comes knowledge, with knowledge comes understanding, with understanding comes wisdom, with wisdom comes wellbeing.

Education Counts (2020)

If the education system was a rugby team that wanted to win this season, how would this be achieved? According to Ian Foster, Head Coach to the All Blacks (personal communication, March 12, 2019) the secret of the All Blacks' winning formula is caring for player wellbeing. As Head Coach, that is his top priority. But in education the key players, teachers, are neglected. Instead, the focus is metaphorically on improving the pitch, the stadium, league tables, uniforms, and public relations; while in the meantime, levels of teacher wellbeing are in decline (New Zealand Educational Institute, 2019; Riley, 2018).

This study will seek to uncover the lived experiences of teachers who have transitioned to teaching in flexible learning spaces, and how this has affected their wellbeing. My decision to focus on teachers in FLS was a deliberate measure to narrow my research to one area of teacher wellbeing where it could have the most affect and benefit to the participants. The context of FLS were chosen because of their current position in the political landscape. FLS are now essentially mandatory under the New Zealand government's pledge to equip all schools with 'modern classrooms' described in their manifesto as 'flexible spaces' by 2030, (Keogh, 2018). Current government policy effectively requires teachers to make the move from practicing in traditional classrooms, to team teaching in large open spaces, commonly with eighty or more students. In

traditional classrooms twenty to thirty students are commonly seated at desks facing the teacher at the front of the class. The teacher designs and leads the learning and assessment activities within individually siloed subjects. In FLS teams of teachers work in large, open plan spaces with a range of modern furniture that can be arranged and rearranged to suit different activities. Students in FLS have greater agency to design their own learning and assessments in cross-curricular projects. Considering the existing crisis in teacher wellbeing, an investigation into how these major changes in working environments and working practices are affecting teacher wellbeing was urgently needed. The crisis in teacher wellbeing is apparent across all sectors of education and across countries and leads to burnout and lower job satisfaction (Gray et al, 2017). The crisis in teacher wellbeing is evident in the pervasiveness of teacher stress stress (Glazzard, J., & Rose, A., 2019) Teachers are consistently reported to experience an increased risk of developing mental ill health (Kidger et al., 2016; Stansfeld et al, 2011).

To return to the analogy of the education system as a rugby team, upon reflection this needs revision. The key players, teachers, are not simply expected to win this season, they are being asked to play a whole new style of game, requiring the adoption of new rules, strategies, behaviours, tactics, tools, equipment, pitch, team and methods. Educational policy must be focused on ensuring the wellbeing of its key players, whose wellbeing is already depleted, if a transition to a new type of education in FLS is to succeed. Within this new realm there is a clear and urgent need for research that explores the interplay between FLS and teacher wellbeing. Without further inquiry educational policy makers run the risk of deepening the teacher wellbeing crisis.

Rationale

The design and construction of Flexible Learning Spaces (FLS) in New Zealand schools has been government policy since 2011. As teacher wellbeing is increasingly recognised as a critical contemporary educational issue (Glazzard, J., & Rose, A., 2019; Kidger et al, 2016; Stansfeld et al, 2011), understanding how

combining teachers in collaborative teams to work in large, open spaces with large numbers of students affects teacher wellbeing is an unexplored area of significance. This research specifically sought to reveal those aspects of FLS challenge teacher wellbeing, and which aspects of FLS increase teacher wellbeing.

Case study

This qualitative inquiry captured the narratives of eight teachers working in FLS in New Zealand schools. Primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, focussing on an exploration of the participants' self-reported sense of their wellbeing. Data collection explored how teachers perceived opportunities and challenges that teaching in FLS presented to their wellbeing. Five emergent themes arose from the findings and were analysed in relation to previous research and existing literature. Results and recommendations were then made in regard to individual teachers, teaching teams and leadership policies.

Researcher positioning

As a teacher with over twenty years' experience I have long been concerned with falling levels of teacher wellbeing. Having never worked in FLS I could more easily refrain from placing my own understanding and interpretations on emerging ideas. Conducting this research at a school that was unknown to me, further ensured that I suspended any presuppositions and allowed an open-minded investigation in this setting.

Research Aim

The aim of the study was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of teachers following their transition to teaching in flexible learning spaces (FLS), and the impact this had on their wellbeing. This investigation will contribute to the research involving FLS and teacher wellbeing by providing evidence on teacher experiences of their own wellbeing in FLS.

Research questions

This research was framed by the following overarching research question and sub questions:

How is teacher wellbeing affected by the transition to Flexible Learning Spaces (FLS), how do these spaces challenge teacher wellbeing, and what are the factors that can support teacher wellbeing in practice in FLS?

I. What constitutes wellbeing for teachers and how do they articulate this concept?

II. What are the challenges presented by FLS, and how might these challenges affect teacher wellbeing?

III. What are the opportunities and factors offered by FLS that might positively influence teacher wellbeing?

Research Design

This qualitative case study explores teachers' notions of wellbeing, gaining an appreciation of how participants understand and define wellbeing. An insight into the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of flexible learning spaces on their wellbeing was collected from observations, interviews and a teacher focus group. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Taking a qualitative research approach to understand the ways in which the transition from traditional classrooms to FLS has had implications for teacher wellbeing, the methodology of this research will focus on conducting semi-structured interviews with teachers working in FLS. The main focus of the interviews was to explore the thoughts and feelings of participants on notions of wellbeing (what this concept means to the teachers), how they feel their wellbeing is being supported (or not) in FLS, and what particular opportunities and challenges FLS present to their wellbeing.

Thesis Organisation

Chapter One introduces the context and rationale for the research. A short outline of the case study and researcher positioning is presented. The research question and design are then indicated, followed by an overview of the methodology used.

Chapter Two analyses existing literature that is pertinent to the research questions. The main themes explored in this chapter are: definitions of wellbeing; the specific notion of teacher wellbeing and wellbeing in the New Zealand Curriculum; teaching in flexible learning spaces; collaboration; reflective practice and personalised learning.

Chapter Three explains and provides justification for both the research methodology and research methods used in the study. Data collection and analysis are considered and evaluated. Lastly, ethical issues arising from the research are discussed.

Chapter Four summarises and explains the findings from teacher observations, interviews and the focus group. Findings are organised into five emergent themes.

Chapter Five presents a critical discussion of the major findings from the study. This discussion considers the findings in relation to the research question and the literature reviewed.

Chapter Six brings together the findings from Chapter Four and the discussion from Chapter Five to form five major conclusions in relation to the main research question and sub questions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to provide a critical evaluation of current literature pertaining to the research question. Firstly, an investigation into the notion of wellbeing will evaluate attempts to both define it and measure it. The current issue of teacher wellbeing in today's educational climate will then be examined, and how it interplays with teaching in flexible learning spaces. Finally, this chapter seeks to define the concept of FLS in New Zealand policy, identify FLS, its features and their consequences for teacher wellbeing.

The construction of Flexible Learning Spaces (FLS) is now essentially mandatory under the New Zealand government's pledge to equip all schools with 'modern classrooms' described in its manifesto as 'flexible spaces', by 2030 (Keogh, 2018). In the transition to FLS teachers are required to "deprivatise their practice in spaces that are transparent and porous" (Benade & Jackson, 2017, p. 744). FLS change the role of the teacher and encourage the adoption of an appropriate new pedagogy with new teaching practices. FLS support what has been described as a 'paradigm shift' in education from a didactic to a constructivist approach to teaching and learning (Kariippanon et al, 2018, p. 302). How this change affects teacher wellbeing is an unexplored area of vital importance. Teacher wellbeing is an increasingly critical contemporary issue in education, with rising levels of teacher mental health problems, burnout and attrition recognised as global problems; the potential causal factors of which are numerous (Allen & Sims 2018; Bahr et al., 2018; Eyre 2017; Kidger, et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2018; McCallum & Price 2010; Owen 2016.). Ian Vickers has been addressing the issue of teacher wellbeing since 2013 after recognising the effects of stress as he saw "too many great educators leaving the profession, and more worryingly, too many soldiering on – to the detriment of their health" (in Boyle, 2017, p.1). Teacher wellbeing needs to be defined and understood to recruit and retain quality teachers.

General Notion of Wellbeing

Two main philosophical perspectives of wellbeing—eudaimonic and hedonistic views—provide historical understandings that trace back to ancient Greece.The distinction between these two conceptual understandings being broadly the hedonistic notion of well-being derived from pleasure-seeking, in contrast to the eudaimonic view of well-being as a way of living that has meaning, purpose and virtue (Spratt, 2017; Teschers & Harris, 2015). Hedonic happiness focuses internally on emotional responses, while eudaimonic happiness takes an external focus on "how a life is lived in relation to the wider world" (Spratt, 2017, p. 50). Deci and Ryan (2008) found that these two understandings of wellbeing are founded on different beliefs of what it means to be human. In a eudaimonic sense wellbeing can be understood to be an active and ongoing process, engaging in fulfilling and worthwhile activities and relationships. Once again values are at play in this conceptual understanding, as defining some activities as 'worthwhile' implies other activities are not, involving the assessment and judgement of the value of different activities. It is also noted that activities that contribute to a person's own good "often have others at their heart" (Spratt, 2017, p. 51).

Nussbaum's Capability Approach (1988) expands on this sense of eudaimonic wellbeing, which values the freedom of each individual, not to pursue self-interest, but to strengthen and enrich communities. She proposes ten capabilities essential to a "life worthy of human dignity" (Spratt, 2017, p. 52), namely: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; concern for other species; play; and control over one's environment. Significantly the concept of Capability omits wealth or income as directly related to achieving wellbeing. Other studies that have researched the role of wellbeing in education have used a hedonistic definition of the term. For example, Lawes and Boyd (2018) carried out a quantitative research study funded by New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER), which collected data from 58,337 students and 3,416 teachers at 400 schools to determine levels of student wellbeing. In this study wellbeing was defined in relation to the hedonistic tradition and measured by an absence of negative feelings and aggressive behaviour, or the presence of positive behaviour and emotions.

Subjective Wellbeing

Defining and measuring wellbeing is problematic and attempts to do so have attracted criticism (Matthews, 2012). Wellbeing is most commonly understood and measured using a person's self-reported measure and evaluation of own wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing (SWB) is defined in the field of psychology as having three key components: life satisfaction, positive affect and low negative affect. SWB research typically asks participants to "self-rate their satisfaction with life as a whole, their happiness yesterday and their usual state of wellbeing", (Powdthavee, 2015, p. 314). Joshanloo (2019) concluded that a person's own notion of the nature of wellbeing has a strong impact on how they assess their own wellbeing. A surprising finding of this research was that valuing happiness, (e.g. "highly endorsing the goal of feeling happy", p. 222), actually predicted lower SWB. The study found that people viewing happiness as fragile may "contribute to a pessimistic life outlook and less hope of achieving actual happiness" (p. 223). These fragility beliefs undermine resilience and the positive emotions that play a fundamental role in the ability to face life challenges and recover from negative emotions and negative events. The study concluded a pessimistic belief about wellbeing, for example the fragility of happiness, has a negative impact on SWB, and suggests that targeting these "maladaptive beliefs" (p. 226) could be an important part of an intervention programme for individuals with low SWB or those facing negative life events. Garcia and Rosenberg (2016) also see wellbeing as defined not by external events, but rather the individual's ability to respond to life events. This research uses a ternary model of personality with three factors, namely, temperament, character, and identity, to increase our understanding of a person's well-being. It is the influence of identity, and particularly self-narrative and how events are interpreted, that reinforces Joshanloo's notion of fragility beliefs impacting on SWB.

Gordon Matthews (2012) argues that statistical measures of wellbeing of SWB are an inaccurate and unreliable measure of happiness. Although he maintains their validity and usefulness in some contexts, Matthews claims that SWB is an insufficient measure alone, and its validity becomes lesser within comparisons between societies and in global studies. Because SWB is a subjective measure it relies on memory and is determined by the mood of the respondent at the time. Even when emotions and feelings are measured over an extended period of time, consistency between
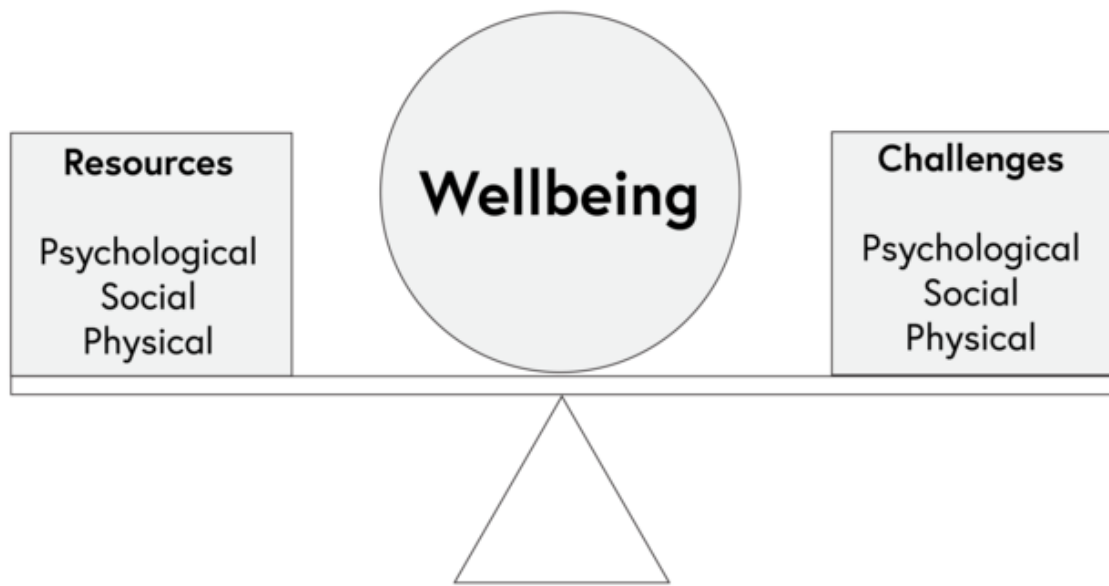
Figure 1. "Definition of wellbeing" (Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230)

participants is problematic due to individual interpretations of descriptors, as what might be a 4 on a scale of particular emotion for one person, may be the equivalent of a 6 to another person (Matthews, 2012). Cultural differences also make comparisons difficult as some cultures may value modesty, viewing talking highly of your own wellbeing and success and boastful (p. 300) Other cultures such as Americans may be 'culturally required to pursue and proclaim happiness' (p. 301). Not only is it therefore challenging to make comparisons between cultures, it is difficult for an individual to see their own cultural conditioning. At the deepest level are the cultural layers that are so fundamentally part of who we are they are invisible to us. Matthews sees these deepest levels of "cultural patterns and shapings of language, gender, social class, and familial background that largely determine the basic conditions for happiness" (p. 307). This leads Matthews to question the extent to which people really comprehend their own wellbeing and happiness, and therefore their ability to make a self-assessment.

A new definition of wellbeing

The challenge of defining and measuring wellbeing was explored by Dodge et al (2012) who found wellbeing to be a multifaceted construct that continues to evade the attempts of researchers to define and measure. The study revealed that the terms 'quality of life' and 'happiness' have been used interchangeably with wellbeing which has made the task of defining it "conceptually muddy" (p. 224). On this basis the authors propose a new definition of wellbeing that reflects the equilibrium or set point as a fluctuating state between challenges and resources (Figure 1). Set point theory proposes that for most people, most of the time subjective wellbeing (SWB) is relatively stable. Essentially, stable wellbeing is when "individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge. When individuals have more challenges than resources, the see-saw dips, along with their wellbeing, and vice-versa" (Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230).

True levels of wellbeing can therefore be understood to be how effective a person's resources are in meeting life's challenges. This balancing act was also explored by Day and Gu (2013) who agreed that resilience is an "unstable construct" (p. 28), and to understand the nature of this fluctuating state provides an important insight into our understanding of wellbeing through teachers' self-reported perceptions. Hong (2012) sees the correlation between teacher wellbeing and resilience, identifying both as a process involving strength and vulnerability. Day and Gu agree that to achieve equilibrium or a state of wellbeing requires positive emotions and strengths that fuel psychological resilience. They identify a range of personal resources, including physical, intellectual, social and psychological build up reserves that can be drawn on later to improve the odds of coping successfully and surviving challenges.

Dodge, Daly, Huyton and Sanders (2012) saw the strengths of their definition of wellbeing as fourfold. Firstly, this model's strength is in its simplicity, capturing the essence of complex ideas in simple language that can be easily accessed. Secondly, it can be universally applied in all situations regardless of culture, age or gender. Thirdly, the authors regard this model as promoting the optimism of positive psychology, empowering individuals to take charge of their own wellbeing by increasing resources or challenges to restore their own equilibrium. Lastly, they view this model as providing a basis for measurement, to enable individuals to assess and measure their own resources,

challenges and state of wellbeing. By removing the need to measure wellbeing on a linear scale of high to low, this definition seems to reflect the delicate balancing act that is the art of wellbeing. Similarly, this model enables wellbeing to be understood as more than simply an ability to bounce back, or recover from challenging or traumatic experiences and events, but rather, "the capacity to maintain equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency in the everyday worlds in which teachers teach" (Day & Gu, 2013, p. 39).

The psychological and social resources required by a person in order to develop the ability to restore and maintain equilibrium were explored by McGraw and McDonough (2019). This study identified individual dispositions that are developed internally through self-awareness and reflection using personal theories and self-identity. The five key dispositions are: people centredness, critically attentiveness, reflectiveness, creativity and strategising. These dispositions have cognitive, emotional, social and moral dimensions that the researchers believe will enable teachers to be better equipped to handle the realities of teaching experiences. A five-stage process for identifying and developing these dispositions is recommended by the authors. The first step is to understand each disposition, followed by demonstrating it, documenting this, receiving feedback and then enhancing those dispositions.

Additionally, Lazari-Radek (2018) goes on to question not only the validity of self-assessed wellbeing, but more fundamentally whether the concept of wellbeing can be defined by what is good for an individual. The work of Lazari-Radek challenges the notion of wellbeing as an individual state that can be measured fully without the wider consideration of the wellbeing of others. Her research explores how the concept of wellbeing can be understood as being either our own good (partial), or for the collective good of all (impartial). This immediately implies that what is good for an individual may be against the preferences of a community; conversely, what is good for a community may be considered detrimental or against the wishes of an individual. Lazari-Radek also raised the question that what others believe is in the best interests of a person may not be what that person believes is best for themselves. Cloninger (2013) agreed that impartial good is essential for partial good, explaining that "individual well-being is always a transient illusion when it is not coupled with collective well-being" (p. 24). His research identified three character traits that "typifies people who are healthy, happy and fulfilled" (p.25), specifically, self-directedness, cooperativeness, and self-transcendence. Cloninger

claimed that healthy, organised people are high in both self-directedness and cooperativeness, and low in self-transcendence. Transcendence was defined by Maslow as the very highest, most inclusive or holistic level of human consciousness (1971, p. 269). Low transcendence leads to self-centered behaviour and an inability to adapt to changes. These people are considered successful in Western societies because they are focused, helpful and tolerant with their own interests or the interests of their close associates, friends and family. However, Cloninger (2013) found that creative people are highly self-directed and cooperative, but also high in self-transcendence which enables them to be innovative and visionary. In his view individual wellbeing is undermined if collective wellbeing is not fostered in the context of today's global challenges. In this sense the issue of sustainability is seen to be crucial for wellbeing and can only be addressed through high self-transcendence that fosters service and humility. Spratt also identifies sustainability as an emerging theme in the discourse of wellbeing. Any attempt to pursue happiness is linked to the pursuit of sustainable development; just as any attempt to address social inequalities that effect wellbeing must also consider sustainability. "Human wellbeing is deeply entangled with the way in which we care for the environment" (Spratt 2017, p. 55).

Specific Notion of Teacher Wellbeing

The complexity of teacher wellbeing as a concept is due to the innumerable factors that contribute to the making and shaping of it. In linguistic terms it is an example of a floating or empty signifier, as what the word refers to is not definite, and meaning is derived from what it is being associated with (Spratt, 2017). Its use as a noun has also taken preference over the verb 'being well' enabling wellbeing to become something that can be 'done to' people, something that can be measured or increased, 'rendering it ripe for policy intervention', (Spratt, 2017, p. 37). Teacher wellbeing has been defined as concisely as professional contentment (Acton & Glasgow 2012); and broadly as a holistic concept that encompasses social, emotional, physical, cognitive and spiritual dimensions (McCallum & Price, 2010; Ragoonaden, 2015). Positive emotions and high emotional intelligence are also identified as integral to wellbeing and have been shown to result in to increase teaching ability (Bower & Carroll, 2017; McCallum & Price, 2010). This combination of positive psychology, positive relationships and engagements are key elements for

wellbeing (Owen, 2016). Day and Gu (2013) agree that emotions are key to resilience and that effective teachers are not only charged with positive emotions but are "emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy" (p. 31). Roffey (2012) and Hong (2012) both point out that teacher wellbeing is usually discussed in deficit terms in research literature regarding stress and low retention levels in the profession, and research about factors that support teacher wellbeing is scarce.
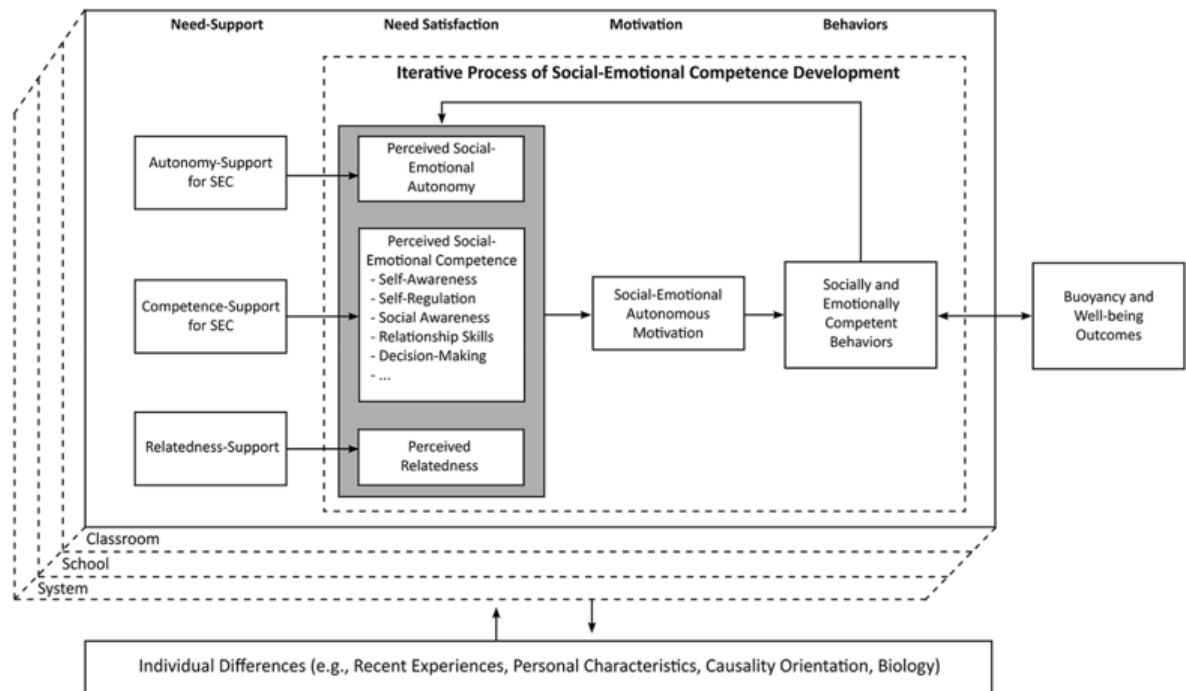
Figure 2. The Framework for Cultivating Teacher Thriving.

Conditions for wellbeing to thrive

To understand the implications of FLS for teacher wellbeing, the factors that enable teacher wellbeing to thrive must be identified. The interrelations between teacher wellbeing, social and emotional competence were outlined conceptually by Collie and Perry (2019). Drawing on self-determination theory the authors developed this model (Figure 2) to illustrate the complex factors that determine a teacher's ability to bounce back from challenges and maintain the equilibrium of wellbeing.

This interplay between individual, collective and environmental wellbeing was also explored in a conceptual framework for understanding teacher wellbeing developed by Liu et al. (2018). This framework illustrates the global complexity of teacher wellbeing as a balance of both individual and collective contributing factors including intrinsic

motivation and professional autonomy, that must be balanced with collective factors like making a valued contribution to society and support networks. Owen (2016) also found that a healthy professional learning community supports teacher wellbeing through collaboration, shared goals and values. Liu et al. (2018) emphasise balance however, because a lack of collective aspects (such as collaboration and teamwork), can lead to feelings of isolation, but conversely an over-dependence on collective aspects can hinder intrinsic motivation, and a lack of autonomy lead to dissatisfaction. The study concludes that equilibrium is found within freedom from both 'individual isolation' and 'collective conformity' (p. 143). Acton and Glasgow (2012) also find that a balance between collegial support and respect for professional autonomy is key to fostering teacher wellbeing. Ecological systems theory has also been used as a framework for understanding the complex factors that impact on teacher wellbeing (McCallum & Price 2015). This approach reveals the interactions between microsystems (family, friends etc.), mesosystems (interrelationships between these), exosystems (organisational), and macrosystems (society and policy).

However, many researchers highlight the importance of teacher-student relationships as the most significant factor in fostering or inhibiting wellbeing (Gibbs & Miller 2014; Harmsen et al., 2018; Milatz et al., 2015; Spilt et al., 2011). Attachment theory suggests teachers gain emotional security from their students through relationships that meet their own psychological needs (Milatz et al.,2015; Spilt et al., 2011). Self-determination theory (SDT) identifies three universal psychological needs: autonomy, competence and belongingness; that have been used to understand teacher wellness (Kariippanon et al., 2018; Spilt et al., 2011). Fulfilment and sense of belonging are seen to be gained from close interpersonal relationships with 'their' students as a significant source of teacher wellness. A study looking at teacher's stress causes and stress responses also confirmed that relationships with pupils are central to teacher wellbeing (Harmsen et al., 2018). This research concluded that future efforts to improve teacher wellbeing and reduce stress and attrition should be focused on improving student-teacher relationships. Gibbs and Miller (2014) agree with earlier studies that student behaviour is 'major source of stress' for teachers but conclude that efficacy and resilience are the solution to support teacher wellbeing. Other researchers identify the importance of the relationship between external forces on teachers. For example, Moè

(2016) found that teacher wellbeing is dependent on teachers developing a harmonious passion for teaching through autonomy and the ability to choose activities they value. Roffey (2012) explores the relationship between power and teacher wellbeing asserting that social capital has a significant impact. This functionalist perspective suggests that teacher wellbeing depends on the harmonious functioning of the education system to create high levels of trust and inclusive belonging. In this sense teacher wellbeing is seen as dependent on the quality of relationships within the school community. The qualitative research findings from this study paint a linear picture of the causes of teacher wellbeing, suggesting a top down model where respect and caring relationships start with leadership and trickle down through teachers to students.

Kelchtermans (2013) identifies the *"double edged sword"* (emphasis original, p. 968) of professional core relationships as either the most supportive or the most destructive working conditions in a teachers' professional lives. These include relationships with students, their parents, colleagues and senior leadership which can contribute to positive job experiences or the opposite – "disappointment, self-doubt, low or negative self-esteem, increased stress or even burnout" (p. 968). Teachers self-efficacy has been found to be greatly largely determined by relationships with colleagues and students (Schleicher, 2018). Relationships as the key to wellbeing was the focus of another study that positive self-identity and self-esteem were created through positive relationships at school (Le Cornu, 2013). The quality of these relationships was also found to be at the root of teacher wellbeing in Day and Gu's research (2013). This study found that when the nature of everyday relationships

> reflect ongoing abuse, rancor, and insecurity this profoundly threatens resilience as well as the personal attributes that might otherwise have fostered it. Conversely, the presence of support, love, and security fosters resilience in part, by reinforcing people's innate strengths (such as self-efficacy, positive emotions and emotion regulation). (p. 40)

Hong (2012) also agrees that a teacher's attitudes and beliefs play a crucial role in determining their resilience in the face of challenges. Hong (2012) believes that rather than identifying factors or personality traits that promote wellbeing and resilience, it is more valuable to focus on the process of how an individual teacher perceives and interprets their external environment. Hong promotes the study of how an individual's

psychological state interacts with external events and challenges. He identifies four major psychological constructs that interact with the external environment to effect teacher wellbeing and resilience. These constructs are: self-efficacy (beliefs about one's own capabilities which determine whether difficulties are perceived as threats or challenges), content specific beliefs (how difficulties are perceived as either external/internal, stable/unstable, controllable/uncontrollable); values (regarding the worth of teaching career); and lastly emotions (Hong considers teaching to be an emotionally charged career).

Wellbeing in the New Zealand Curriculum

A 2015 study by Teschers and Harris found the concept of wellbeing to be poorly defined and understood in the context of New Zealand's national curriculum documents and identified contradictions between them. This study sought to evaluate how wellbeing is constructed and used in the two New Zealand national curriculum documents: Te Whāriki - He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa/ Early Childhood Curriculum (Ministry of Education [MoE] 1996); and The New Zealand Curriculum for English Medium Teaching and Learning in Years 1 - 13 (MoE, 2007) (NZC). It also explored the problem of how well-being has been defined and understood both historically and philosophically. A confronting finding of the Teschers and Harris study was the notability of well-being as a holistic concept in the eudaimonic sense throughout *Te Whāriki;* and by comparison its glaring absence from the NZC where it seems to be only promoted in economic terms as part of a capitalist agenda. Teschers and Harris' critique challenged the NZC's use of neo-liberal terminology that reflects a government and corporate agenda, indicating the NZC's emphasis on the well-being of the country (specifically the economy and workforce), as superior to the well-being of the individual student or teacher. Spratt (2017) also recognised that the popularity of the term wellbeing is problematic not only because it has come to represent different concepts under one umbrella term, but because these different concepts are linked to different agendas.

Acton and Glasgow (2015) are also critical of current neoliberal policies that harm teacher wellbeing by fostering competition in education rather than collegiality. The New Zealand Curriculum neo-liberal use of the term wellbeing reflects the argument of Greaves et al. (in Newby 2010, pg. 43) that 'education serves the capitalist economy' and

'reproduces the organic inequalities of capitalism'. Many features of neoliberal environments including performance goals, league tables, scores, individualism and managerialism undermine the type of collegial teacher relationships that have been shown to support teacher wellbeing, (Acton and Glasgow, 2015). The authors highlight this intensification of teachers' workloads as responsible for disengagement and incompatible with factors that foster wellbeing. McCallum and Price (2010) agree that the status of teachers declining due to this increased focus on standards. An increased feeling of being under scrutiny, a growing lack of trust and an increased (unpaid) workload are some of the reported 'terrors of performativity' that are impacting negatively on the lives of teachers (Kelchtermans, 2013, p. 971). This type of competition and performativity are at odds with the goals of collaboration and innovation that support teacher wellbeing, and that FLS are aiming to foster.

Teacher wellbeing in crisis

Wellbeing of teachers is a critical issue in education today and falling levels of teacher wellbeing have resulted in teacher attrition becoming a global problem (Hong, 2012; Kelchtermans, 2017; McCallum & Price, 2010). The teaching profession is regarded as a highly stressful profession (Harmsen et al., 2018), and an alarming 2015 survey from the United Kingdom claimed that 50% of teachers were planning to leave the profession within the next two years (Eyre, 2017). Although that figure did not actualise, it certainly suggests a high level of dissatisfaction, and another survey of teachers in the Netherlands found 1 in 5 experiencing burnout symptoms (Harmsen et al., 2018). Teacher burnout, teacher shortages, fewer applicants, an aging profession, increasing dropout rate of beginning teachers are all symptoms of the teacher wellbeing crisis (Owen, 2016). International studies have found that teachers are at a higher risk of common mental health problems and work-related stress (Kidger et al., 2016). A 2019 survey of New Zealand teachers revealed that nearly half of all new teachers leave the profession within five years and concluded that the country is 'losing passionate, quality teachers because they were overworked and underpaid' (NZEI, 2019, p. 1). Kelchtermans (2017) defines teacher attrition as "qualified teachers leaving the profession, for reasons other than having reached the age of retirement" (p. 962). He also clarifies that the concern is not with those who find they do not like teaching, or

"who turn out to be very bad at it" (p. 962). Rather, the crisis in teacher wellbeing can be seen in the number of good teachers that are leaving the job for the wrong reasons in 'alarming numbers' (Hong, 2012).

Yet teachers around the world are responsible for cultivating global citizens and so more than ever in this era of globalisation "teachers matter, and their wellbeing matters, tremendously" (Liu et al., 2018, p. 129). Challenging student behaviour and discipline problems have been consistently identified as the most significant cause of teacher burnout, and conversely student growth and development are a significant trigger for positive emotions connected to teacher wellbeing (Bower & Carroll, 2017; Spilt et al., 2011). It is not only teachers who are at risk in this crisis as a strong correlation between increased teacher wellbeing and increased student achievement has been the finding of a number of studies (Lui et al., 2018; Roffey, 2012). The notion that well teachers promote well students was also explored by McCallum and Price (2010) who argued that teachers must be well themselves if they are to have a positive influence on the wellbeing of students. Poor mental health and a lack of wellbeing has been shown to undermine both teacher performance and teacher-student relationships (Kidger et al., 2016). NZEI President Lynda Stuart stated:

> students' education is already suffering from growing class sizes and classes being split around the school when relievers cannot be found. We have to address this crisis now and give current teachers a reason to stay or return, and potential teachers a reason to join us." (NZEI, 2019, p. 1)

Compounding the issue are negative media reports that can influence public perceptions of the teaching profession and further decrease teacher morale and wellbeing (McCallum and Price, 2010).

The declining value and status of teachers in society is seen to be a significant indicator of the global crisis in teacher wellbeing (Dolton et al., 2018). The crisis in teacher wellbeing is apparent across all sectors of education and across countries, and results in burnout and lower job satisfaction (Gray et al, 2017). Teachers are consistently reported to experience an increased risk of developing mental ill health (Kidger et al., 2016; Stansfeld et al., 2011). McCallum and Price (2010) agree that the status of teachers is declining and found education policy and the increased focus on standards

to be the cause. Others agree that the teacher wellbeing is in decline due to the strong correlation between power, social capital and teacher wellbeing (Liu et al., 2018; McCallum & Price, 2015; Roffey, 2012). The New Zealand Ministry of Education also acknowledges this problem and pledges to: "raise the status of the education profession, restore their trust and confidence and ensure they have the time to focus on teaching and learning" (2017, p. 1). In order to achieve this and strategically support teachers, the factors that both challenge and support teacher wellbeing within FLS need to be identified and understood.

Flexible Learning Spaces

The terms 'modern', 'innovative' and 'flexible' have all been used interchangeably to describe new learning spaces - large, open plan environments that are driven by a pedagogy that values student agency, and cross-curricular learning in real world contexts. The term flexible is favoured by Benade (2015) as it focuses on the practices within the spaces rather than the physical structures. FLS support what Kariippanon et al. (2018, p. 302) describe as a 'paradigm shift' in education in recent years from a didactic to a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. Traditional classroom environments were impeding attempts to create more student-centred learning experiences, and stunting the innovative practices that teachers believed would achieve greater student agency and equity for all (Matthewman and Morgan, 2014).

Knowledge and education are inescapably shaped and defined by politics, and 'knowledge building' schools have been presented as a means to challenge the status quo and threaten existing systems of power in society (Matthewman and Morgan, 2014). The industrial schooling system was designed to maintain the status quo and results in the perpetuation of the existing power bias and inequalities as many knowledges are ignored and excluded (Gilbert, 2005). However, this capitalist ideological motivation stands in contradiction to the financial impetus behind the prevalence of FLS in current policy. Producing an effective workforce is at the top of the policy makers' agenda, just as it was for the industrialists (Robinson, 2013). Nair describes the slow rate of educational reform as 'profoundly disturbing', not out of a sense of social justice but conversely because it could "permanently sink our chances of rebuilding our economy and restoring our shrinking middle class to its glory days" (2011,

p 1). However, if other futurists like Sadar are to be believed then Nair could be sorely disappointed. Sadar sees FLS as challenging the status quo in every way, including those who hold power in society, by producing new models that could operate outside of existing structures and potentially eradicating the 'horror show' of capitalism (Sadar, 2015).

Teachers' transitions to teaching in Flexible Learning Spaces

Reforms in education can be 'like moving graveyards' but teaching practice in FLS must change to meet learner needs in the 21st century (Schliecher, 2019). Skills that are simple to teach have become easy to automate, digitise and outsource; whereas more complex, subtle skills including emotional and social skills are irreplaceable and must become the primary focus of the teacher (Schliecher, 2019). Kang (2019) argues that 21st century skills that are valued in FLS are not new, but essentially human; that schools evolved to remove them from education, and teachers need to bring them back again. Acton and Glasgow (2015) critiqued current neoliberal policies that foster competition in education rather than collaboration. Collaboration in teaching is actually very low (Schliecher, 2019) and is one area of concern about the competency of teachers to work in new ways in FLS. Many features of neoliberal environments including performance goals, league tables, scores, individualism and managerialism undermine the type of collegial teacher relationships that have been shown to cultivate 21st century skills. Acton and Glasgow found this intensification of teachers' workloads was also responsible for disengagement and incompatible with the factors that nurture teacher wellbeing. FLS may actually support teacher wellbeing, but only because, in contrast to competition and performativity, FLS seek to foster the same skills in teachers that teachers want to see in their students including collaboration and innovation.

It would seem that teachers who are successful in FLS already possess the necessary skills and attributes for the job, but not all teachers are ready to work in fundamentally different ways (Benade, 2017a). Kariippanon et al. (2018) recommended that teachers be supported to develop 21st century skills of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, as they lack the environmental competence to maximise the potential of FLS. If teachers are to empower students to develop these same 21st century skills, they must first become continuous learners themselves, by

adopting and modelling these skills in their own work and teaching (Benade, 2017a; Bolstad et al., 2015). For teacher transition to FLS to be successful, educational policy must be focused on ensuring the development and wellbeing of the key players in this move, the teachers, whose wellbeing is already depleted. Within this new realm there is a clear and urgent need for research that explores the interplay between FLS and teacher wellbeing. Without further inquiry, educational policy makers run the risk of deepening the existing teacher wellbeing crisis.

The idea that changing the arrangements of the physical learning environment can have profound effects on student learning has been propounded by many; however, the question of whether a change in environment changes teachers and their teaching practices was explored by Beery et al. (2013). This study was built on social constructivist theory that social and cultural influences shape learning. The researchers observed teaching practices in both traditional classrooms and FLS and concluded that although FLS can accommodate the collaborative practice and active learning strategies that traditional classrooms cannot, teachers will default to their usual didactic teaching style which is unsuited to FLS. Benade's later research (2017a) goes further in revealing the juxtaposition of transmission teaching models in FLS which is at odds with the freedom and student agency the space demands. Winston Churchill claimed that "we shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us" (in Jamieson et al., 2000, p 221), but traditional teaching styles are so ingrained that teachers report slipping back into didactic methods when under pressure (Benade, 2017a).

As Benade (2017b) illuminates, spaces are not neutral, but conceal social relations that place demands on teachers. One of the fundamental differences between traditional classrooms and FLS is the removal of students facing the teacher's domain at the front of the class, creating instead a demand to collaborate, share and relate to each other in new ways. Students also lose their claim to their own chair and desk as there can be many focal points and the students can choose where and how they work within the space. In another study Kariippanon et al. (2018) took an interpretive phenomenological approach to their research to uncover the lived experiences of Principals, teachers and students who had transitioned from traditional classrooms to FLS. Unlike Beery et al. (2013) Kariippanon et al.'s study concluded that teachers in all eight schools that took part had experienced a pedagogical transformation from

teacher centred to student led learning. Within the main themes of their findings lay the central notion that, (in agreement with Benade, 2017a), these spaces necessitate the use of student-centred pedagogies, and teacher-led approaches do not work. The ambience, interactions and inclusiveness of FLS were found to enhance the social and emotional wellbeing of both teachers and students; but came at a cost of increased distractions, noise and behavioural management issues as students can be less visible to teachers.

Moving to FLS demands changes that affect teachers in a number of key ways, primarily: the role of the teacher; collaboration, reflective practice and personalised learning; and finally the nature of assessments and knowledge.

Role of the teacher

Arrangements of the physical learning environment have been altered with the aim of effecting changes in the role of the teacher, teaching practices and student experiences, however this intention is not always realised (Beery et al., 2013). Benade's research (2015) reveals the juxtaposition of transmission teaching models and FLS which is at odds with the freedom and student agency the space affords. As Benade illuminates, learning spaces are not neutral, but conceal social relations that place demands on teachers. One of the fundamental differences in FLS is the removal of students facing the teacher's domain at the front of the class, creating instead the conditions for teachers to collaborate, share and relate to each other in new ways. By radically shifting power relations in the classroom, teachers renounce their sovereignty and liberate students to become equal partners in learning. This, coupled with the deprivatised nature of FLS practice, not only changes the nature of teaching, but at a fundamental level it challenges the identity and the role of the teacher.

The relations between teacher and learner in FLS changes radically with a shift in power relations as they renounce their sovereignty in the classroom and liberate students to become equal partners in learning. This not only changes the nature of their teaching, but at a fundamental level it challenges the identity and the role of the teacher. The traditional view of teacher as the keeper of knowledge is outdated in a world where knowledge is essentially free and limitless. As one secondary school teacher working in a FLS described, the way knowledge is understood and used has changed: "we sort of just

chat more than me being the drill sergeant in the front of the room … you must listen and I will impart my knowledge" (Kariippanon et al., 2018, p. 309). The teacher therefore becomes a facilitator who can move around the space freely, working with groups or individuals, as opposed to traditional whole class teaching. FLS challenge teachers not only to teach in new ways but to shift their pedagogical ideas to think about learning in new ways. This new role of thinking coach and knowledge creator encourages students to ask why and how questions (Kwok Wing-Lai, 2014).

Collaboration, reflective practice and personalised learning

Team teaching is another radically new feature of FLS as one teacher no longer has complete responsibility for and control over 'their' class. Leadbeater (2018) sees collaboration as key to the realisation of personalised learning, but it is a completely foreign concept for most teachers, and it brings with it challenges as well as opportunities. Benade (2017a) found that in FLS teachers will rotate roles with their teaching team, with one acting as 'Director' and taking the lead for each 90-120-minute session. One teacher actively observes the whole space, while the other two teachers run seminars and activities with small groups of students. Teachers see their teams as fluid and highly responsive to the changing needs of their students. In a similar way personalised learning has been defined as building the system around the learner, rather than trying to make the learner fit the system (Bolstad, 2012). Personalised learning philosophy does not seek to educate students by 'batch date' in single age cohorts, but in multi-age cohorts (Robinson, 2013). School leaders see the successful operating of teaching teams as critical to the achievement of FLS. The team leaders have the greatest challenge in this regard as they attempt to juggle the seemingly incompatible roles of collaborating and management (Benade, 2017a). A different study found, however, that beginning teachers identified team teaching as a "significant source of support and efficacy"' (Cooper et al., 2017, p. 73). Many factors that have been identified as critical to teacher wellbeing are also key features of FLS, for example, collaboration, autonomy and close interpersonal relationships with students. The spaces themselves do not create innovative teachers, but they do support, enable and enhance innovative practice. What this implies is both significant potential and opportunity to support the teaching profession, but also considerable pressure placed on teachers who are ultimately responsible for the success

or otherwise of these enormous investments. These pressures only herald further warnings for teacher wellbeing.

FLS require teachers to "deprivatise their practice in spaces that are transparent and porous" (Benade & Jackson 2017, p. 744). Evans (2011) argues, however, that rather than collaborate, teachers default to congeniality, the most common form of relationships in schools. This fosters a culture of pleasantness and privacy, rather than a culture of growth. Breaking this deeply entrenched culture means confronting both structural and personal obstacles to change. As Benade (2017a) suggests, there needs to be a significant 'mental shift' in educators at all levels to establish the trust that will enable teachers to engage in honest and critical reflective practice. He criticises the current policy of linking reflective practice to performance goals and appraisal, which is counterproductive to fostering trust, honesty and transparency. Teachers need to be able to "put their own beliefs and ideas under a critical microscope" (Benade, 2017a, p. 166). Teachers are less likely to default to traditional teaching methods when the culture of the learning environment empowers them to become learners themselves. Reflecting in action is another powerful practice in FLS, where teachers think out loud about their own planning, wondering, actions and reflections, modelling their practice to students.

Assessments and knowledge

The nature of assessments also changes the role of the teacher with the shift towards personalised learning and increased student agency. Rather than measuring students' ability to recall information, or regurgitate existing knowledge, teachers in FLS look for students' ability to use and apply knowledge in new ways (Benade, 2017a). This means exposing students to the highest knowledge and empowering them to use this knowledge creatively and innovatively. Teachers no longer need to provide students with knowledge to store up for the future (Weinberger, 2015). Traditional styles of assessment and standardisation are counterintuitive to innovation and knowledge building. Wagner suggests the type of 'schooling' that fosters innovation is collaborative, play based learning, where 'results' are not valued, but the experience is. In FLS students use blogs to share their learning reflections, and e-portfolios demonstrate their application of knowledge in new ways (Benade, 2017a).

Conclusion

Many critical factors for teacher wellbeing are also key features of FLS, for example, collaboration, autonomy and close interpersonal relationships with students. Teachers in FLS have reported feeling greater levels of support in team teaching and reduced anxiety when dealing with challenging students. However, as Benade notes the 'deprivatisation' of teachers work can be "deeply unsettling" for some (2017a, p. 122); and teachers who need to feel in complete control of their classroom will find the power balance in FLS challenging. There is also evidence that teaching in a FLS with personalised learning is "physically and mentally demanding" (Benade, 2017a, p. 172). For teachers to change their pedagogical practice requires a complete rethinking of the nature of the role of the teacher and the values teachers hold. No real change will happen without teachers understanding and accepting the change, and accepting it as their own idea (Beeby, 1986). According to Berieter (2002) all efforts to improve education have been thwarted because they depend on teachers attempting to upgrade teachers. This concern is echoed by Bolstad et al. (2012) who assert that teachers must be able to access the kinds of learning that supports them to be the best leaders for a future-oriented learning system. Kariippanon et al. (2018) also recommended teachers are supported to upskill to develop critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity as they lack the 'environmental competence' to maximise the potential of FLS. If teachers are to enable students to develop 21st century skills of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity they must first become continuous learners themselves, by adopting and modelling these skills in their own work and teaching (Benade, 2017a; Bolstad et al., 2015).

It would seem that teachers who are successful in FLS already possess the necessary skills and attributes for the job, but not all teachers are ready to work in fundamentally different ways (Benade, 2017a). The spaces themselves do not create innovative teachers, but they do support, enable and enhance innovative practice. What this implies is a huge amount of pressure on teachers who will ultimately make or break what is an enormous investment for all stakeholders, heralding further warning signals for teacher wellbeing. The MoE (2017) aims to: raise the status of the teaching profession; and restore teachers' trust and confidence but at the same time is expecting teachers to radically change their practices. There is a clear need for research that explores the

interplay between FLS and teacher wellbeing. Without further inquiry we run the risk of moving into a new era of education without assessing the implications for teacher wellbeing which is already in crisis.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

This case study set out to investigate teacher wellbeing in an innovative school with solely Flexible Learning Spaces (FLS). The research sought to reveal factors in the school that enhance and enable teacher wellbeing, as well as the barriers and obstacles. In this chapter I initially discuss the research paradigms and approaches shaping this research, followed by my positioning as a researcher. The methodology described in detail, including a justification for the three methods chosen, concludes with a description of the data analysis including the key themes that emerged.

Qualitative Approach

Data was collected in the field where teachers have lived experiences of the transition to FLS, using multiple sources, including formal and informal observations, interviews and focus groups. These methods were chosen to allow the participants to contribute their ideas freely and not be constrained by prescribed fields or measurements, and are recommend methods suitable to qualitative methodology according to Swanborn (2010). In keeping with Dodge et al (2012), this research approach enabled individuals to assess and measure their own resources, challenges and states of wellbeing, without the need to measure wellbeing on a linear scale.Throughout the process I was focused on learning the participants' meanings about their wellbeing in FLS, and mindful not to bring my own meaning or preconceived meanings that have been expressed in existing literature. In this way, the research process created space for emergent design as the questions I used changed in response to my experiences in the field and the ideas and experiences of the teachers participating. By empowering teachers as participants in this research, and through the distribution of the research findings to a wider audience of teachers, a deeper understanding of the nature of their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of the teaching profession could be fostered.

Researcher Positioning

As the researcher it is important to identify my personal values and assumptions. My approach to this research is shaped by my background as a teacher with 19 years'

experience. This was useful rather than detrimental as it enhanced my awareness, knowledge and sensitivity, allowing me to establish a strong rapport with the participants. As a teacher I could relate to my participants somewhat dismantling the power imbalance between myself as researcher and the researched. Never having worked in FLS I was at an advantage as I could more easily refrain from placing my own understanding and interpretations on emerging ideas, and instead allow participants to express their own meanings. Conducting this research at a school that was unknown to me, further ensured that I suspended any presuppositions and allowed an open-minded investigation in this setting.

My reflexivity throughout this research process focused on identifying my own experiences, values and beliefs and how these were affecting the design and process of the research. As a woman taking a transformative worldview this research was designed to identify issues and make recommendations to change the lives of the participants. My primary concern in embarking on this research was the global crisis in the wellbeing of teachers and the increasing alienation of teachers. Signified by a global teacher shortage, the crisis in teacher wellbeing is compounded by an increase of up to 30% of teachers affected by burnout and mental health problems in what is now regarded as one of the most stressful jobs (Milatz et al., 2015). Teachers are also becoming an increasingly marginalised and disenfranchised group in society as the social position of teachers globally is decreasing (Dolton et al., 2018). McCallum and Price (2010) agree that the status of teachers is declining and see the cause as the increased focus on standards. In turn teacher wellbeing is in decline due to the strong correlation between power, social capital and teacher wellbeing (Liu et al., 2018; McCallum & Price, 2015; Roffey, 2012). The New Zealand Ministry of Education aims to raise the status of the teaching profession and 'restore their trust and confidence' (2017, p. 1), whilst simultaneously expecting teachers to radically change their teaching practices in FLS. Nadia Lopez (2019) argues that teachers want to be valued, respected and heard, and are not currently part of the conversation.

My decision to focus on teachers in FLS was a deliberate measure to narrow my research to one area of teacher wellbeing where it could have the most effect and benefit to the participants. FLS were chosen because of their current position in the political landscape. FLS are now essentially mandatory under the New Zealand government's

pledge to equip all schools with 'modern classrooms' described in their manifesto as 'flexible spaces' by 2030 (Keogh, 2018). Current government policy is effectively requiring teachers to make the move from practicing in traditional classrooms, to team teaching in large open spaces, commonly with 80 or more students. Considering the existing crisis in teacher wellbeing, an investigation into how these major changes in working environments and working practices are affecting teacher wellbeing was urgently needed.

Design and Methodology

Although this research did not use policy analysis as a distinct method, a review of current policy at national and institutional level was an important part of the literature review. The policy analysis within the literature review explored the power relations that underpin New Zealand FLS policy, and its implications for teacher wellbeing. By revealing these underpinning ideas, beliefs and assumptions behind the documents, the literature review was both analytical and descriptive in nature, examining the creation of the policies and their content. As part of this process, policy content was also analysed by exploring its language and ways it constitutes knowledges. This revealed forms of subjectivity and power relations that are inherent in those knowledges.

This research took a qualitative approach using field work to understand how this policy has been implemented and explore the implications it has had for teacher wellbeing. This phase consisted of conducting observations, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group interview with teachers working in FLS. This research aimed not to impose findings on the participants, or to take knowledge away from the participants, but rather to empower teachers through an exploratory, reflexive process by which they gain a greater knowledge and understanding of themselves. This approach sees that it is not only the researcher's understanding that will be enhanced through the research process, but the experience should also be enlightening for the participants, facilitating greater self-reflection and self-awareness. As Mutch (2005) describes, this type of qualitative research aims to "illuminate the experience and understanding for others" (p. 46). The axiological assumption here is that this research should ultimately change society for the better. An important outcome of this research is the creation of opportunities for action, and also for further research to explore actions and strategies the participants develop.

This was able to happen because the research formed part of the participating school's cyclical review process. This allowed both participants and other teachers to develop a greater understanding of teacher wellbeing and how it is particularly affected by teaching FLS. By empowering teachers both as participants and, through the distribution of these research findings to a wider audience of teachers, a deeper understanding of the nature of their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of the teachers generally can be fostered. The research findings were presented back to the participants through a formal written report to the school. The report was then used by the school to engage teachers in a review process from which an action plan was made to further develop and enhance teacher wellbeing at this school. Because teacher wellbeing and student wellbeing are inextricably linked, this process also has the potential to benefit the wider community who are stakeholders in the education system as students, parents and whānau (Lui et al., 2018; McCallum & Price, 2010; Roffey 2012).

Case Study

This research sought to explore the conceptual ideas of FLS and teacher well-being allowing a detailed snapshot of teacher wellbeing experiences in one school at one time. Rather than studying teacher's experiences across an extensive range of schools (through surveys for example), I used an intensive research design that allowed me to explore the issue of teacher wellbeing within one organisation. By using a case study, the research question was only explored in one context and therefore the findings are limited, for example in that they neglect the experiences of teachers in other schools that may have differing perspectives.

The case study is located at a co-educational state junior school that enrols learners from years 7 to 10. There are currently 277 students on roll. It is located in the North Island, situated in one of New Zealand's newest communities, and what is the fastest growing suburban area in New Zealand. As of early 2016, the area's population was 84,000 people, and this is expected to exceed 125,000 people by 2031. The case study school was purpose built just over two years ago as an innovative learning environment. The opportunity to conduct this research at the case study school arose precisely because the school was seeking to evaluate and reflect on its two years of working in FLS environments. A critical consideration for the school was the long-term sustainability of

its teaching practices, and related to this, the influence of FLS practices on teacher well-being. This research also fulfilled an opportunity therefore to provide high-quality feedback to the school in report form to inform its on-going strategic planning.

Swawnborn (2010) suggests a range of strategies to mitigate the "lack of degrees of freedom" by "enlarging the number of data points, in one way or another" (p. 99). This research initially set out to interview four teachers, but I was able to increase the number of degrees of freedom in three ways. Firstly, by increasing the number of participants, from four teachers to eight. Secondly, diversifying the data collection methods by including the use of a focus group and observations in addition to interviews. Lastly the degrees of freedom were increased by presenting the results to participants in the study and using their ideas and reflections as extra data. This case study took an intensive approach which, as Swawnborn (2010) explains, "focuses on only one specific instance of the phenomenon to be studied, or on only a handful of instances in order to study a phenomenon in depth" (p. 3). By inquiring into the phenomenon (teacher wellbeing in the transition to FLS) in this specific context allowed the inquiry to delve into greater detail than would be possible in extensive research. The research also enabled me to examine the research question at both a micro-level (each individual teacher's experiences), and a meso-level (the school level experience within the organisation). In addition to using a case study method I took an ethnographic approach to this research which, as Atkinson (2015) asserted, while generating research that is ideographic, still leads to generalisable research findings that are different to other types of research, but 'equally informative' (p. 37).

Ethnographic approach

By absorbing myself into the culture of the organisation I consider this research to be an ethnographic study. As the researcher I positioned myself as a colleague and teacher concerned for the wellbeing of my peers. Many ethnographers describe their work as unfolding in "unexpected and unanticipated directions" as the design of the research becomes a collaboration between researcher and participants (Campbell & Lassiter 2014, p. 34). The emergent design of this research similarly took shape in response to the individual teachers participating and the organisational needs and responses of the school. By being with the teachers on a regular basis over a term I was able to adapt to

the complexity of the school context. As Campbell and Lassiter (2014) explain, making room for emergence in ethnographic studies does not lead to work that is 'haphazard or random', but rather opens up ethnographers to 'nuance and complexity' (p. 35).

My research started by spending time in the school with the teachers, both in the staffroom and in their teaching and learning spaces. Although lacking the longevity to be considered a true ethnographic study, the features of this research allow it to be described as a micro ethnography as I was able to participate in the lives of these teachers over the course of a term, observing, taking detailed notes and conducting interviews. Through observations of the teachers at work, and through spending time talking with the teachers after these observations, my field notes enabled me to develop ideas and questions for the next stage of the research (semi-structured interviews), based upon both the teachers and my own observations. Semi structured interviews "invite interviewees to express themselves openly and freely and to define the world from their own perspectives, not solely from the perspective of the researcher" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 47). In this way semi- structured interviews were well suited to this case study, utilising prompt questions that were pre-designed after observing the teachers in practice and having informal conversations with them, but flexibly worded to allow intuitive prompt questions to delve more deeply into areas raised by the interviewee. "In this manner, semi structured interviews invite interviewees to express themselves openly and freely and to define the world from their own perspectives, not solely from the perspective of the researcher" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 47).

The research also utilised an ethnographic approach to writing identified by Campbell and Lassiter (2014), as I "produced, shared and negotiated" (p. 130) the writing alongside the participants. After each interview a continuing dialogue was maintained through email and in person, allowing emerging ideas to continue to be developed. The interview transcripts were then shared with participants to enable further discussion, reflection and clarification of ideas. The case study participants were therefore included in the emerging design of the research and in the writing of the report which was then used by the teachers and school leadership team as part of their ongoing reflective practice. The way participants were represented in the research findings presented ethical challenges as it was important that when they read the findings, they could feel their ideas and views were fairly and accurately represented. The research process became more collaborative,

~~disrupting~~softening the power bias between researcher and researched, giving participants greater agency in their narrative descriptions of their experiences, thoughts, feelings and beliefs.

Participants always retain some power in terms of what they choose to share with researchers, and this can result in a distorted or misrepresented version of their lived experiences. Power is at play throughout the research process and can result in a discord between the research objectives and outcomes. In this case, a research objective was to establish an atmosphere and culture of trust to gain access to the authentic lived experiences of the participants (Atkinson, 2015).

Ethics

Atkinson (2015) asserted that "ethnography is among the most ethical forms of research" (p. 172). He based this claim on two key factors: the level of commitment the researcher has to the participants in ethnographic research; and also to issues he identifies in more commonly used research methods, such as randomised controlled trials, which he views as 'ethically flawed' and 'manipulative' (p. 173). As a teacher I was able to have professional practice discussions with the teachers participating and observe their practice before designing the interview and focus group questions. The required university ethics approval was granted before data collection took place by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 12 August 2019 (19/272). Because the interviews and focus groups were semi-structured, participants were able to lead the discussions and pre prepared questions became a reference tool to ensure that I had prompted participants to explore ideas that had emerged earlier in the research process. Transcripts of the interviews were then shared with the participants to enable them to reflect upon our discussions, and have opportunities to provide further insights and contributions, particularly in terms of emerging themes. In some ways this challenged the traditional role of the researcher as the expert who is in control of the project and yet removed from the realm of the researched (Atkinson, 2015).

Another way this research attempted to break this mould and disrupt the roles of researcher as questioner and participant as responder, was by allowing the participants to ask questions at all times throughout the process, empowering them to have agency

to control the interviews and guide the process (Charmaz, 2014). In this way I applied situated ethics rather than traditional principled ethics that are detached and seeking to be impartial and uninvolved. Vivat (2002, p. 240, cited in Preissle & Han, 2014) described how situated ethics requires mindfulness, an "absence of interest in making universal claims", and the application of principles of "both care and justice" (cited on p. 15). This emphasis on care for the participants is emphasised by Robertson (2000, in Preissle & Han, 2014) who raised concerns about the ethical considerations of ending the research relationship, implying the need for follow up care and support for participants. This was particularly important in this research for two reasons: as wellbeing is an emotive issue that may raise concerns that require follow up, referrals or the recruitment of outside agencies; and as an ethnographic case study the relationships that were formed between researcher and participants were deeper than they might have been had the research simply involved isolated interviews. One particular dilemma was how to ensure the wellbeing and welfare concerns that were revealed were addressed by the employer. Miller and Boulton (2007, p. 2204) state that informed consent between researcher and participants should be 'fluid and multi-facted' (cited in Preissle & Han 2014, p. 595), which may be at odds with fixed research ethics consent of institutions. Although confidentiality agreements were strictly adhered to, there were opportunities, through formal reporting to the school, to raise emerging concerns and allow the voices of participants to be heard.

Methods

Recruitment

All teachers at the case study school were eligible to take part in the research. Potential participants were briefed about the research project at a staff meeting and then received an email from the Deputy Principal containing the information sheet (see Appendix) and consent form, and my contact details (email and cell phone number). To volunteer to participate in the project teachers responded directly to me. There were no exclusion criteria. Most teachers at this school had previously worked in traditional, single cell classrooms prior to taking up teaching positions at the case study school. A few teachers were beginning or provisionally registered teachers who equally had valuable experiences and ideas to share about supporting teacher wellbeing. It was therefore

unlikely there would be more than the maximum number of participants allowed for in the research design. The teachers who volunteered to participate were then equally divided, by random ballot, between participating either in interviews or the focus group. The intentions and conditions of this research study were laid out clearly in the Information Sheets and there was no pressure on invitees to participate. There were no existing personal relationships between me and the potential participants.

Teacher participants had the opportunity through this research study to express and share their experiences and stories with a researcher who is also a teacher with a concern for and keen interest in teacher wellbeing. The research project was designed to explore and determine factors that are both detrimental to, and supportive of, teacher wellbeing in FLS. In this way, by participating in this study teachers had an opportunity for self-reflection, and to develop their own understanding and awareness. The teachers with experience of transitioning to FLS were able to provide enlightening insights that are not well known to educators generally or to policy makers in the Ministry of Education. They therefore became critical partners in this research study and have a vested interest in the findings of the research. Equally importantly is an unbiased representation of their different experiences that gives these both a fair hearing and a fair airing. Specifically, in this research, as it was conducted as an in-depth investigation at one school, the findings were returned to the school in report form, and the participants were situated as research partners in a fuller sense, as their experiences informed the school's strategic direction.

Participants

At all times in my conduct of the research, I remained open to all opinions, and ensured different perspectives were respected, and that all participants had their voices heard. In this way, I was actively displaying respect for them in their role as teachers, ensuring their professional status and integrity was recognised and affirmed. The participants' contributions were treated as strictly private and confidential and all participants were de-identified when writing up the research.

Observations

This study began with observations, taking an ethnographic approach as I immersed myself in the culture and situation of the participants. Although my role as

researcher was not primary, I was able to interact as a teacher in some of the sessions. Through my participation in formal and informal sessions, interactions and experiences at school I was able to observe and interact with the participants in their natural working environment. Both participation and observation are seen as key elements of an ethnographic study, where engaging in the everyday life of participants becomes an "analytic resource in understanding and documenting" (Atkinson, 2015, p. 40). By observing the teachers in action during lessons and participating in interactions in the staff room between lessons, and in staff meetings I gained an understanding of the nature of their lived experiences and collected valuable data through both descriptive and reflexive notes. These observations deepened my understanding, and later influenced my interpretation of the findings.

A weakness of this method of data collection, however, was the presence of, and interactions with students that meant private information was observed that could not be recorded. There was also a risk that my presence may have been seen as intrusive by the participants and/or the students that they were working with. In order to ensure my participation did not cause discomfort to anyone present, I was introduced as a fellow teacher to the students (not as a researcher). As I was only observing the teachers, not the students, this gave me the opportunity to relate to the students as a teacher and therefore participate more authentically in the sessions. I was also mindful of the need of teachers to have private conversations in the staffroom, that they may not wish me to participate in. There was also a limitation with this method as my presence in all situations may have caused biased responses, rather than natural, authentic behaviour. One of the advantages of this type of data collection method was that it gave me first-hand experience with the participants in an authentic, uncontrived setting. It was useful to observe aspects of teacher wellbeing, and factors that affect teacher wellbeing as they occurred, as it proved later to make potentially uncomfortable topics easier to discuss during interview sessions. Another strength of this research method was that I was able to record information as it occurred, without delay, through making both descriptive and reflexive notes. There were also some unexpected and unusual aspects of this case study that would likely have remained hidden without these observations. An important aspect of the observation method was the ability to observe the physical environment of the FLS at the school and how it influences the wellbeing of the participants. I was also able to

observe how the participants used the environment and the objects within it. This gathered valuable data as physical objects are also social and cultural, and "people do things with things, just as much as they do things with words" (Atkinson, 2015, p. 118). In this sense, through observation the participants were able to reveal with physical objects, some ideas that may not have arisen with words in subsequent interviews. Data from my participation in these observations then informed the development of questions for the next stage of the data gathering – semi-structured interviews.

Semi - Structured Interviews

The interviews were carried out with four teachers working in FLS at the case study school. Transcripts were made of the data from the recorded from these semi-structured interviews. The teachers who participated in these interviews had transitioned to working in FLS from traditional classroom settings. The primary aims of each interview was to explore the thoughts and feelings of participants on notions of wellbeing (what constitutes wellbeing for teachers), and how it is experienced by teachers; and secondly, their experience of teacher wellbeing at that school. I was particularly interested to understand the participants' perspectives on what supports teacher wellbeing in the transition to, and when working in FLS. These issues were explored through planned questions and discussions, activities, and also through probing questions that arose in response to emerging ideas and themes. All the interviews were carried out face to face in one of the private office spaces at school, away from the open public spaces.

A benefit of this method of data collection was the opportunity for participants to provide me with background information about their experiences. By gaining an understanding of the historical background to their experience of transitioning to FLS, we were together able to identify factors that were important in ensuring their wellbeing. In contrast to the observations, these interviews gave me greater control over the data collection. Although interviews were semi-structured to allow room for emerging ideas, the planned line of questioning ensured I gained the data I needed. A potential limitation of this method is that information is not gained directly through observing phenomena in the field, in its natural setting, but rather filtered through the eyes of the interviewee. Also, some participants were able to express their ideas and experiences more articulately than others. From the transcripts of the data collected from semi-structured interviews,

key themes and ideas were identified and used. The emerging themes and ideas from the interviews were used to inform the design of questions for the final stage of data collection – a focus group to be carried out with four more teachers. Follow up discussions enabled me to take back major findings and themes to the participants for further discussion, which provided them with an opportunity to comment on the findings and develop their own ideas and understanding.

Focus Group Interview

Triangulation is a method of collecting data from several different sources with the intention of increasing the validity and credibility of the findings. In order to strengthen the research this final stage of data collection utilised a focus group. This triangulation of data both strengthened and tested the validity of the findings from the observations and interview stage with a second group of teachers. This collective contribution to the research provided an opportunity for teachers to collaborate, share and reflect on ideas and experiences. A strength of this is that new ideas emerge from the process, and new knowledge is created in this collaborative environment. It also revealed that the multiple meanings uncovered by this research may be temporary in nature, with the possibility for changes, additions and subtractions (Benhabib, 1995).

A potential limitation of the focus group is that some participants may dominate the interview, while other voices may not be heard. Participants may also be influenced by the ideas of others and be unwilling to offer alternative ideas. In this session, 3 out of 4 members of the focus group actively participated, and there was an atmosphere where all ideas were valued and respected. Of all the data collection methods, this session was the most emotive for the participants. However, in addition to the subjectivity of me as the researcher, is the subjectivity of emotions. Moral and ethical decisions are not 'merely rational acts' but are "grounded in human emotions and occur in the context of human relationships" (Preissle & Han, 2014, p. 588). The relationship between teacher emotions and teacher wellbeing mean the two cannot be considered separately in this study (Bower & Carroll, 2017; Owen, 2016; McCallum & Price, 2010). With this understanding the focus group was guided through a series of questions and activities designed to explore how they define wellbeing as a group, and what wellbeing means to them as teachers. We then explored how they look after their own wellbeing at this school, and how they

support the wellbeing of their colleagues. Lastly, we considered the wellbeing of a team, and how this differs to, and relates to, the wellbeing of individuals. The collaborative process of the focus group strengthened this data and provided ideas that did not emerge in the individual interviews.

Data Collection and analysis

Data was collected over 10 weeks on site at the school through three methods: observations, semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview. Interview and focus group recordings were transcribed, and field notes were typed up in preparation for data analysis. Data analysis of the transcripts identified, categorised and classified key themes and ideas using coding, with the support of NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. This analysis process enabled the findings to be analysed in relation to FLS policy and explored how the lived experiences of the participants relate to the beliefs and agendas behind the FLS policies.

Chapter Four: Research Findings

Introduction

The main aim of this research was to identify and critically examine factors that influence the wellbeing of eight selected teachers working in FLS within an ILE. Participants were asked to identify their notion of wellbeing and how their teaching experiences within FLS support or undermine their wellbeing as a teacher. Specifically, interview and focus group participants were asked: *What is your notion of wellbeing? What does wellbeing mean to you as a teacher?* These interview questions were used to gather data to answer the overarching research question: *How is teacher wellbeing affected by the transition to Flexible Learning Spaces (FLS), how do these spaces challenge teacher wellbeing, and what are the factors that can support teacher well-being in practice in FLS?* During the data collection I used three different research methods to enable: interviews, observations and a focus group. Using three research methods enabled me to develop a more comprehensive understanding and test the validity of my findings through the convergence of information from different sources.

Participants

A group of eight teachers (Table 1) volunteered to participate in this research project – six women and two men. Three had been teaching for over ten years, four had been teaching for between five - ten years, and one was a beginning teacher with less than two years' experience of teaching in FLS.

Themes

The findings from both the interviews and the focus groups were aggregated into a common set of themes that arose during data analysis. The first theme that emerged from the data was 'attitude'. This theme explores how a teacher's beliefs, values and emotions influence their wellbeing. Findings in this theme particularly concerned attitudes towards challenges and change; and collective attitudes towards others. Secondly, the influence of relationships on teacher wellbeing was the next emergent theme in the findings. The quality and nature of relationships with colleagues and students was found to have a

significant influence on wellbeing. Thirdly, 'collaboration' as a theme explored the profound influence of team teaching. Pedagogy was the fourth theme of importance within the findings as the importance of the philosophy underpinning teachers' practice became apparent.

Table 1 - Participants (Identity Changed)

Teacher	Gender	Ethnicity	Length of time teaching
Melanie	F	New Zealand European	5 - 10yrs
Ayla	F	Other	Over 10 yrs
Tammy	F	Mâori	2 - 5 Years
Carline	F	New Zealand European	5 - 10 years
Pete	M	Other	5 - 10 years
Grace	F	Mâori	Over 10 years
Tim	M	Mâori	Over 10 years
Amanda	F	New Zealand European	Over 10 years

Participants recognised that the knowledge and understanding behind their teaching practice, and the teaching practice itself, played a considerable role in determining their wellbeing. Lastly 'leadership' surfaced as the theme within the data. This theme concerns the structure, organisation, style and practices of leadership within the case study school. These aspects of leadership were found to increase teacher

wellbeing by supporting professional development, valuing teacher's work and improving work-life balance.

Attitude

> *I think there are situations in every job and environment where output demand or mental fatigue or circumstances like that are going to be a feature of any industry. So I think if you make wellbeing about those things for yourself and can't step aside from those things and make wellbeing a completely separate facet to that, I think you would struggle in any industry.* Tim, Interview participant, August 2019

Tim was a teacher in the focus group who summed up a view that had been consistent with all participants – that a teacher's attitude is key to their wellbeing. He stated that external factors, for example, healthy relationships and systems, are important; but if an individual does not have a positive attitude to the new ways of working, and the new processes that take place in a FLS, then their wellbeing, and the wellbeing of others, will be negatively impacted. This participant held the view that teaching as a profession is not any more stressful or detrimental to wellbeing than other careers, but rather one's disposition or attitude towards the profession's challenges determine the effects on one's wellbeing. The ability to separate oneself from external forces and maintain control of one's responses was a consistent theme in these findings.

Attitude to change

All the participants reported that they had successfully transitioned into teaching in FLS, and what they shared in common is a positive attitude to the changing role of the teacher and the new demands that teaching in FLS brings. They demonstrated a positive attitude to change and a favourable view of what they thought of as progress in education. The participants all described a shared desire to do something different in their teaching, and to break from traditional teaching practices and spaces. They also expressed joy and satisfaction in having the freedom to try new ideas and practices.

One participant described her profoundly negative experience when she started teaching in a FLS after a long career in schools with traditional classrooms. She described how the experience was so bad initially she wanted to resign from her job. At first this

participant was horrified by what seemed to her to be a complete absence of learning in the FLS. She described how in hindsight she had come to realise she simply did not recognise the learning that was happening because on the surface the students appeared to be just "doing their own thing". Her initial response was to want to leave her new job and return to teaching in a traditional school setting. What enabled her to persist was what she described as the unfaltering support and encouragement of her colleagues. She continued to watch and learn from her colleagues, and after only a few weeks this participant described how her "eyes were opened" to this new vision of teaching and learning. She explained that this experience meant she now "understands the value of what we are doing here".

One of the most remarkable findings was that the challenges described by this participant were also the factors that came to increase and support her wellbeing. The difference was a shift in her perspective and a resulting change in attitude. She was able to recognise differences in how learning happens and how students experience learning in FLS classrooms compared to traditional classrooms: "In a traditional school you teach them content more than skills, here you're teaching them skills." Participants expressed the view that the challenge of working in a FLS, and the way in which it changes the role of the teacher, actually supported teacher wellbeing in several ways. The nature of this challenge was seen to promote teacher wellbeing by empowering teachers to develop and grow; by giving them the freedom and autonomy to try new things, by becoming learners themselves and from the satisfaction of knowing they could excel for their students:

> we need to unlearn and relearn, and that's exactly what I'm doing here
> and that's why I'm enjoying it so much. I'm unlearning the traditional
> ways and relearning how to connect it, how to make sense for the
> kids. In a traditional school I couldn't do that.

The scale of the learning needed by teachers to adapt to teaching in FLS was also a common finding, as one participant stated: "I came in with a huge learning curve, I think everyone did." These ideas were echoed in the data from all participants. Another teacher explained that teaching in FLS requires also becoming a learner: "it sort of flips us and

helps us empathise with what the students go through. I personally think that's a good thing as a teacher to learn."

Culture of humanity

The collective attitude or culture of the team of teachers was also described as supporting wellbeing by working through a process of "continually asking questions, having deep conversations and being supported through that". In this sense, problems are shared challenges that are creatively solved as a team whose collective attitude is "a culture that allows these things." This attitude was portrayed as a 'culture of humanity', also described as a sense of compassion for teachers. The participants gave an example that there is no naming and shaming towards teachers who are seen to be underperforming, which can be a typical part of other school cultures. Instead this school culture fosters wellbeing by supporting and uplifting its teachers with a combination of high expectations and low stress. One participant gave an example:

> a teacher who we know has struggled this year to get to school on time almost every day, and have we said anything that's a gripe about that? No, because we're aware of it, and we're aware of the circumstances why, and the focus is on once that person is here, then we get on with the job knowing that they're ready to go.

The participants shared the view that the culture of their school was to value teachers with care and compassion as human beings, understanding that they have lives outside of school, whilst respecting their professional integrity.

Respecting professional integrity was another important factor in a collective attitude that supports wellbeing. One teacher identified wellbeing as a feeling of empowerment, describing that when her wellbeing needs are not being met, she "second guesses herself" and does not feel powerful in her decision making. Conversely, when her mental, physical, spiritual and social needs are being met, she believes her wellbeing is high and consequently she feels a sense of empowerment in her work. She explained these various facets of wellbeing (mental, physical, spiritual and social needs) as cups that need to be filled through activities. Another teacher agreed and expanded on this idea that her wellbeing also involved a sense of feeling valued, describing her professional wellbeing as a sense of belonging, of being comfortable in her own skin. She also identified that she was more productive in her work when her wellbeing was high.

This collective 'culture of humanity' also defines and shapes teachers' attitude towards events and attitudes towards others and seems to be key to ensuring the wellbeing of teachers in this study. One participant criticised what he saw as 'token gestures' and superficial attempts to increase wellbeing that he had experienced in other schools. Instead, he suggested that schools should focus on fostering the constructive attitudes that determine wellbeing levels, for instance by addressing how events are responded to, how activities are conducted and teachers' relationships. He believed that addressing wellbeing issues is achievable for schools:

> I don't think it's as hard as people make out, and I don't think it's as simple as putting a laminated card up in the staffroom saying, this week is drink more water week, or this week is let's walk instead of taking the elevator week. It's got to go back to what is the core of the way we as a school, as a mini society, what is at the core of the way we're operating as human beings with other human beings? That will solve your wellbeing issues.

Relationships

The value and importance of relationships were found to be a significant factor in upholding wellbeing for teachers. Conversely, unhealthy or negative relationships were found to potentially decrease wellbeing. Relationships with both colleagues and students, were found to have changed in FLS, as the physical spaces and designated times allow authentic, high trust relationships to evolve.

Relationships with colleagues

Relationships were identified by all participants as a primary factor supporting their wellbeing. Participants described how valuing, fostering and nurturing strong relationships with their colleagues is an integral part of their school culture. One of the school mottos is "people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." This emphasis on strong relationships is the bedrock of the school culture and it was described that the "whole school runs like this, from the top down". Focus group participants agreed that when thinking of their personal wellbeing, their thoughts would turn to the relationships that support it, one participant describing these relationships in this way:

> I see wellbeing at this school, as based off the relationships that I have with my colleagues. I consider them to be quite strong and so that helps with my own personal wellbeing as a teacher, is that I know that I have a team of teachers around me that I can trust, that I can count on, that I can vent to, that I can talk to personal things about. That's what I instantly think of is that my wellbeing is based on the relationships that I have with my colleagues.

Teachers reported that they were given time, resources and space to develop effective and supportive working relationships with their colleagues. For example, every other week the whole team meets each morning, and on rotation, every second week, teachers meet in their teaching teams. Time and resources are put aside to support this work as professional development activities focus not only on teaching and learning, but on team building and developing working relationships. For example, all the participants reported that being trained in how to use the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) The participants described a feeling of empowerment in learning how to use the HBDI model, which enabled them to better understand themselves and their colleagues. In the staff meeting room, a colour chart maps the dominant thinking preferences of all members of staff, visually representing how the members of the teaching team relate to each other. One teacher gave some examples of how the HBDI model facilitates communication and creates understanding between people who perceive the world in different ways:

> We know that blue brain people are big picture strategists and so they're pretty void of emotion and so that's sometimes really hard for red brains who are full of emotion but lack big picture points of view. And then your yellow creatives who will see all lots of different ways to get to a solution and won't be able to pick one. Where your greens who are your detail people and they can't cope if everything's not itemised in bullet points or tabled and scheduled. And so that's the space we work in. Those dots on that in green, yellow, red, blue map there, that's our whole team so we know where everyone sits.

The chart not only maps the dominant thinking type of each staff member on typical days, but also how that thinking preference changes during times of increased pressure and stress. In challenging situations this means that teachers can identify why their colleagues respond in certain ways, again creating greater understanding and facilitating harmonious

relationships that support wellbeing: "it makes tough conversations a lot easier as well, because you take it back to default thinking and you frame it up through those lenses". Teachers reported that with this knowledge they were also able to identify who might best meet the needs of a particular student or colleague in different situations. One participant explained how positive team dynamics and open, authentic communication are essential for wellbeing and how using the HBDI model supports this. For example, a challenging situation might be discussed in terms of dominant thinking: "well of course he didn't cope with that situation with that kid very well because he's got a whole lot of red, and that kid was needing a real bit of love and care right there".

Relationships between staff were considered by participants to be 'really strong', but some teachers identified room for improvement. It was felt by some participants that not all teachers were being supported or encouraged to fulfil their potential. One teacher explained:

> our relationships here between staff are great, but they could be better. But it's that whole thing, what we do for kids is the best that we can give them, but then we just need to transfer that to give it to each other too.

When probed to elaborate and describe how this might happen, she explained that teachers need to adopt the same level of care and approach towards their colleagues as they do for their students. For example, just as a teacher might affirm and compliment a student, so teachers should not "forget how empowering it is to tell [an adult] this is what I see in you" This participant felt that acknowledging and encouraging the potential in teachers could be further developed within relationships between colleagues, and in general, the level of care and compassion shown to students could be applied to colleagues.

Relationships with Students

Teachers participating in this study also identified the relationships that they have with students as an important source of their wellbeing. The consensus in these findings was that student wellbeing and teacher wellbeing go "hand in hand" and furthermore, teacher wellbeing was regarded as key to both student wellbeing and achievement. "If you don't have happy teachers then the learners sense that". Student achievement and

teacher wellbeing were therefore in a reciprocal relation. Teachers felt their own wellbeing was dependent not only on the positive interactions they have with students but on the sense of professional satisfaction and achievement they experience when students make progress with their learning and development. Furthermore, these teachers strongly believed that the better the relationships they have with their students, the more progress students will make in their learning. The complex and interdependent nature of the relationships between students and teachers were therefore seen as profoundly impacting teacher wellbeing; and that fostering deep and positive relationships between teachers and students is critical.

Designated times enable teachers to build these strong connections with students. Teachers reported that they form particularly strong bonds with the students in their tutorial groups. One focus group participant described the tutorial group as her 'touchstone' that kept her 'grounded and balanced', reminding her of why she is in her job. All the participants described their great sense of empowerment and satisfaction in being able to meet the needs of the students in their tutorial groups. One participant, Melanie, explained: "I'm their person at the school and their advocate. I'm the one that they can go to for the next four years. That's quite powerful and a lot of the parents appreciate that."

The 'authentic' nature of the relationships teachers have with students was consistently identified as another feature key to teacher wellbeing. Several examples were given of students who were experiencing difficulties and displaying challenging behaviour, that in traditional schools may have been a source of considerable stress for teachers, and a challenge to their wellbeing. Because their ILE school fosters authentic relationships between teachers and students, teachers are able to put the students first and not be forced to take a particular action due to school policy, that may actually undermine their own professional judgement. One participant acknowledged that "lots of schools say relationships matter", but asked, "do they really matter?" The case study school has had 'virtually no' stand downs or suspensions since opening. Instead the teachers work hard with students, parents, whānau and outside agencies to resolve problems. Teachers clearly felt a strong sense of satisfaction and achievement that as a team they were doing everything possible to enable each student to realise his or her

potential. This is accredited to the strength of relationships with students and was consistently identified as a key source of wellbeing by the participants.

Collaboration

Collaboration was identified as another significant factor that can also impact teacher wellbeing either adversely or favourably. Teaching teams were usually observed working with one or two teachers as leaders and presenters, and the other two or three teachers in the background observing and supporting individual or pairs. The presenter was usually the leader of the integrated studies teaching team, but commonly had one other teacher beside them while presenting. This teacher would support the presenter's ideas, reinforcing key points, asking clarifying questions, and on occasion 'policing' some minor behavioural issues (for example, non-regulation uniform). This introductory part of learning sessions would last between five and fifteen minutes whereafter students would move into corners of the open space or into break out rooms to work in groups of two or three students. After this introductory time the teachers who been taking a discreet role would join the presenters and begin to circulate, checking for students' understanding, and monitoring progress. At all times teachers were observed looking relaxed, happy and confident.

Skills for collaboration

A poignant conversation in the focus group emphasised the importance of building professional trust, and the shift in mindset required when transitioning to FLS. This mental shift was seen by participants to affect wellbeing because "wellbeing is based around people's philosophy of teaching". Challenging one's teaching philosophy therefore challenges one's wellbeing. Some teachers described the experience as "quite frightening", especially when associated with the sense of being judged. Furthermore, the participants also recognised that shifting to teaching in a FLS means losing the power that comes from teaching in a closed classroom. The focus group agreed that to foster wellbeing required understanding how to "encourage that shift", yet "being open to being vulnerable can be hard.'' Fostering professional trust and explicitly modelling risk taking and 'safe to fail' practices were identified as keys to encouraging the mental shift. Amanda described the high trust needed to collaborate in teaching teams and the

significance of being able to balance autonomy and respect for difference, with openly sharing ideas, creations and resources.

Challenges of teaching teams

Team teaching can be a source of conflict that can also challenge teacher wellbeing too. Participant Tammy described collaboration as "great as long as you are getting along with your team and everyone is pulling their weight, but of course you get some team members that aren't and some people probably deal with that a bit better than others." The interactions that were observed between teachers were always positive and supportive, however, there were usually at least one or two others in the teaching team who seemed to interact less with their colleagues, and even with students. This observation may explain the views of some of the research participants – that three teachers in a team was an optimal number, and five was too many to work effectively. Some strategies were in place to establish expectations for team members. These 'group norms' are agreed at the start of the year and reviewed regularly. "While I would still say that collaboration is already better, overall I think there are frustrations when one or two people in a team are pulling... doing most of the work. I guess that's when wellbeing is affected" (Melanie).

The challenge of collaboration is compounded by the requirement that participants have to learn how to work with a new team every year. All participants, however, identified numerous benefits of team teaching and all agreed that the opportunity to learn from colleagues supported their wellbeing. The experience of teaching in teams provides opportunities to see other teachers teach, and, in the process to gain valuable ideas and to share reflective feedback with fellow team members. The participants felt they were learning faster and growing more from this exposure than any other professional development they had received.

Teachers also collaborated through online platforms using professional learning threads like Facebook discussions to enable the sharing of teaching practice. These online platforms facilitated the 'deprivatisation' of teachers' work, meaning there are 'no walls' between teacher's practices, so planning, development and reflections are shared, as well as delivery. One online platform that helps to create the sense of community that upholds teacher wellbeing is the 'pics' discussion which

> gets lots of traffic, whether they were at Mathletix last night or at the Globe Theatre earlier yesterday, or some art they created in a science lab, of all places, presenting at NZQA, whatever's happening around the school in a day, there's just so much to be shared. I think it's that and, again, I think that is a key part of our sense of community." (Pete, interview)

The absence of doors that may otherwise hide or exclude, was also seen to support open and authentic relationships. The open plan offices and teaching spaces create transparency and support the high trust model established at the school. Participants described how the physical spaces removed a sense of hierarchy within the staff, creating a feeling of "we are all in this together." Open plan spaces were also found to support effective relationships with students by removing the focus on teachers from the front of the classroom.

The role of leadership in securing teacher wellbeing

The leadership structure, organisation, style and practices are viewed to positively influence the wellbeing of teachers at this school. This was revealed by members of the leadership team who participated in an interview and the focus group. Teachers also reported on the role of the leadership team and strategic school policies in effecting their wellbeing. One of the school leaders who participated in the focus group described how she does not feel pressure to make decisions on her own, and she never feels isolated in her leadership role as she continually collaborates with her colleagues and uses them as sounding boards to explore and examine ideas. She explained that in previous leadership roles in other schools she felt immense pressure to make decisions alone and felt isolated by the physical and organisational structures of those previous schools. In her current position she works in an open plan office space and has daily opportunities to connect with her colleagues and learners which she believes upholds her wellbeing nurturing social, mental and emotional needs.

Specialist classroom teachers

The school leaders' strategic actions support the wellbeing of their staff; a view echoed by the teacher participants. Specific initiatives prior to this 2019 study included the employment of two specialist classroom teachers (SCT), who were specifically tasked

with the development and wellbeing of the Provisionally Registered Teachers (PRTs). While one was Ministry-funded the other was funded directly by the school, signifying the commitment of the leadership team to the wellbeing of the PRTs, new teachers transitioning into FLS. The leadership team put these strategic supports in place to help new teachers identify what is important, prioritise their work and develop their skills, knowledge and abilities to teach in a FLS in a deliberate way. As one teacher described, new teachers "don't know what they don't know", thus, their daily work lives may be overwhelming. A further example of the commitment to supporting teacher wellbeing at the school was the appointment of a teacher to lead an inclusive design programme, working with learning designers (middle managers) to support students with additional learning and/or behavioural needs. The leadership team believed that these strategic appointments demonstrated their willingness to live out the high-trust model they frequently spoke of.

Valuing teachers work

One teacher talked about her wish to leave the profession before she moved to the case study school. In her former job, she believed was reaching burnout due to the high stress in her work. One contributing factor was a feeling of being judged and not validated in her work. In her new school she felt valued, claiming: "I am literally a part of something great, and I am important." This participant believed the leadership at the school was a key factor in supporting her wellbeing, through its structure, policies and approach to wellbeing. She described examples of the care extended to teachers, such as ensuring all teachers are 'off the floor' for one hour during parent teacher conferences to meet together in the staffroom for dinner. This was in contrast to experiences of herself and colleagues at other schools where parent conferences may see teachers working a 14-hour day during without a meal break, or perhaps only a few crackers on the run. At other times of the year teachers are encouraged to participate in activities to support wellbeing, for example group outings and mindfulness sessions. She believed that the leadership team at the case study school did 'walk the talk' with regard to the wellbeing of their staff.

Finding work - life balance

Balancing work and home life were also a consistent theme in the research findings. Particularly teachers who had children found that the school supported their wellbeing by encouraging a healthy work - life balance. The leadership team preferred teachers to be at school in the mornings before the students for essential planning and communication, rather than taking work home with them. Leaders reported having difficult conversations with staff who were being seen to be working too many hours in school or taking work home. The leadership team challenged teachers to consider what they could do to look after themselves better, and how they could organise their work to get it completed in school hours. Accordingly, the leadership team ensured time allocation in the day for planning and administration and sought to lighten teacher's workload in other ways, particularly administration tasks. For example, mark loads are greatly reduced by student led assessments. Performance goals related to student achievement are not set and teachers do not face competition with each other to meet student targets.

Another essential factor in supporting teacher's wellbeing was to take a high trust approach to personal leave. Thus, sick days or the need to leave school early is not questioned. All the participants agreed that this was not the case at their previous schools, where the need to care for a sick child for example, created anxiety that was detrimental to their own wellbeing. The focus group reported that at the case study school, teachers are encouraged to take a day off when they need to take care of their own wellbeing, and their professional integrity trusted to make that decision. It is no longer the case that physical sickness is the only valid reason for taking a sick day. The Hauora model of health and wellbeing adopted by the school means that mental and emotional health are valued as integral to the health of an individual, and legitimate reasons for taking sick leave. Taha wairua, (spiritual health), is also a pillar of the Hauora model promoted by the leadership team, and spaces are set aside within the school building for spiritual practice. Teachers and students are therefore also able to take time out within the school day to practice religious observances that fall within the school day.

Pedagogy

The space doesn't drive the pedagogy; the pedagogy drives the space. But if you're not willing to change your pedagogy and your pedagogical approach, the space may not help you.

The focus group participants saw the pedagogical approach they are taking in FLS supporting their wellbeing by breaking down barriers between students and allowing all students to work harmoniously together. Because students in years 7 - 10 are not separated or segregated by age they become completely comfortable and familiar with working with students of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. This makes work easier for teachers as one participant explained: "they [students] would know how to interact one across multiple year levels, so it wouldn't be like, 'oh, I've got a Year 7 and then a Year 10 class and they physically can't interact, it's all weird'." Teachers' wellbeing is enhanced because students are no longer segregated and can work harmoniously together. It was also felt that the physical spaciousness of the learning environments contributes to helping students feel calm, giving them room to move freely about their activities, in turn helping the teachers to feel calm and confident.

The findings of this research show that in this ILE power is shared, and as a result the pressure is taken off teachers to hold all the responsibility for learning activities. Students are expected to be in charge of their own learning: "You're not always the holder of knowledge and it's not expected that even the team is that. You're now a facilitator working alongside the students which makes it much more interesting." The pedagogical approach also alleviates the pressure and expectation for teachers to shoulder sole responsibility for student achievement and success. The participant teachers also did not believe they were expected to be all things to a diverse range of students. Instead, their collaborative teams teaching provided students with a mosaic of knowledge, experiences, ideas, and perspectives. Student agency and collaborative teaching practices therefore support the wellbeing of teachers. Collaborative teaching practices enable the skill sets, knowledge and learning of both students and teachers to evolve and grow. An openness, and open mindedness, is contributing to the developing culture at the school that may also support wellbeing.

Conclusion

Five themes emerged from this research, providing valuable insights into factors that can foster teacher wellbeing, as evidenced by the voices of the participants. Attitude was found to be a defining factor in how teachers shape their experiences in FLS and determine whether teachers experience wellbeing. Specifically of importance, is the attitude of teachers to change within a new environment, requiring the ability to shift their mindset and having the willingness to learn. A positive mindset was also identified as part of the collective culture within the school, described by one teacher as a 'culture of humanity'. Defined by high levels of compassion and empathy, this collective mindset is also a feature of the relationships that foster teacher wellbeing.

Relationships of teachers with each other, and with students, were considered critical to ensuring teacher wellbeing. The quality of the relationships was important, but also an awareness and understanding of the nature of different relationships. Teachers related to each other in different ways at different times depending on their dominant thinking style. Learning about these styles enabled teachers to better understand themselves and others and foster stronger working relationships.

Positive attitudes and effective working relationships were both understood to ensure the success of collaborative teaching teams. Collaboration was the third significant theme to arise from this research, and more than any other theme it seemed to present both the greatest challenge and support to teacher wellbeing.

Deliberate leadership strategies contribute to conditions supportive of teacher wellbeing. The leadership team designed and delivered policies providing resources such as the specialist classroom teacher. Participants also explained that school leaders took a holistic approach to staff management using the Te whare tapa whā model. Recognising the four dimensions of wellbeing enables leaders to support teachers to find a healthy work - life balance.

Lastly, participants explained that the dominant pedagogy behind their school was another key factor in ensuring high levels of teacher wellbeing. This pedagogy removes many of the artificial constructs found in traditional classrooms, such as educating by age, and constructing the teacher as the sole expert. The pedagogy driving FLS in this school makes sense of the physical spaces. Underpinning this pedagogy, and indeed the other

themes, are the attitudinal factors outlined in the opening theme, which was found to be a prerequisite for each of the subsequent themes.

Chapter Five: Discussion – Teacher Wellbeing in Flexible Learning Spaces

Introduction

This case study set out to investigate teacher wellbeing in a new-build ILE school. The research sought to reveal both factors that enhance and enable teacher wellbeing, as well as the barriers and obstacles to teacher wellbeing within the school, that is characterised by Flexible Learning Spaces (FLS). In this chapter I discuss the findings of the research in the context of the existing literature in this area. The concept of wellbeing is examined again in light of the research findings. The paradigms and approaches that shaped this research are also discussed in terms of their impact in enabling or limiting the research. The research findings are discussed within the following emerging themes: psychological resources, social resources, leadership best practice and pedagogical approach. Finally, the benefits and challenges to teacher wellbeing of working in FLS are evaluated in light of the research findings.

Wellbeing as a concept

Ascertaining how the case study school defined wellbeing in its practice, and how participants understood wellbeing as a concept was critical in order to develop an understanding of factors that contributed to, or were detrimental to, teacher wellbeing. Joshanloo (2019) asserts that a person's own notion of the nature of wellbeing has a strong impact on how they assess their own wellbeing. Participants in this research demonstrated consistently that the Māori concept of wellbeing, 'Hauora', was used by them to understand their own wellbeing, and within the school to enable members of the school community to talk about their wellbeing in comprehensive terms. The Hauora

definition recognises that all four dimensions of wellbeing (Taha tinana/physical well-being; Taha hinengaro/mental and emotional well-being; Taha whanau/social well-being; Taha wairua/spiritual well-being) are needed for 'symmetry and strength' (Durie, 1994). This means that within the school, at all levels, wellbeing is understood to mean more than just physical or mental health. Teachers and leaders at the case study school use the Hauora definition as a working model to explore, define and develop teacher wellbeing. The theory propounded by Dodge et al. (2012), is similar to the Hauora model in this respect, agreeing that each individual needs to fulfil psychological, social and physical resources to balance wellbeing. However, in addition, the participants in this research consistently included a spiritual aspect of wellbeing which was largely missing from the literature. The findings of this research showed that teaching in FLS can affect a teacher's spiritual wellbeing, and strategic action by school leaders can contribute to a positive effect.

The findings showed that teachers did not view wellbeing as static, but rather described a variable condition that adapts by using internal resources to counter external influences. This validates the model "Definition of wellbeing" by Dodge et al. (2012, p. 230). This model is illustrated by a set of scales that show how individuals need to possess psychological, social and physical resources in order to meet psychological, social and/or physical challenges in life. If teachers experience challenges that outweigh their own psychological, social and physical resources, the equilibrium of their wellbeing is negatively affected. Participants described the balancing act of maintaining their wellbeing that was also described by Day and Gu (2013) who saw wellbeing as an unstable, fluctuating state where one's resources compete to counter the effects of passing conditions, events, thoughts and feelings. True levels of wellbeing can therefore be understood to be how effective a person's resources are in meeting life's challenges (Dodge et al., 2012). Psychological and social resources were both frequently cited by participants as key to maintaining the wellbeing. This chapter will now examine the nature and role of both psychological and social resources in maintaining teacher wellbeing.

Psychological resources

In order to have a positive attitude to change, teachers moving their practices to FLS need the right psychological resources to meet the new demands they will face. Psychological challenges to teacher wellbeing in FLS come primarily from the 'deprivatisation' of teachers practice in these spaces (Benade, 2017a). Participants were observed teaching in large open spaces shared with 8 - 10 teachers on the same floor of the building. Teachers described team teaching as one of the most important sources of support in terms of their wellbeing. However, they also acknowledged the unique challenges that team teaching brings. Not only do teachers need to have the confidence to practice their teaching in 'public', in front of their peers, but also to share their practice in a very public way. In the shift to FLS lesson plans are no longer personal property of the individual teacher, but shared experiences that evolve in collaborative processes. Power balances are also disrupted as student agency means the teacher is no longer at the helm. Teachers therefore need to be open to development, change and adjustment, depending on the needs of both their colleagues and students.

The crucial role that a teacher's attitudes and beliefs play in determining maintaining their wellbeing in the face of challenges was shown to be a key finding, reinforcing Hong's study (2012). Hong believed, however, that it is more valuable to focus on the process of how an individual teacher perceives and interprets their external environment rather than identifying factors or personality traits that promote wellbeing and resilience. The testimonials of the participants in this research agreed that the attitude of a teacher is significant in determining whether they will make a positive transition to teaching in FLS. Hong explained that an individual's psychological resources interact with external events and challenges. One teacher in this research elaborated that ability to separate oneself from external forces, and maintain control of one's responses, is essential to maintain wellbeing. The four major psychological constructs identified by Hong that are key to determining teacher wellbeing are: self-efficacy (beliefs about one's own capabilities which determine whether difficulties are perceived as threats or challenges), content specific beliefs (how difficulties are perceived as either external/internal, stable/unstable, controllable/uncontrollable); values (regarding the worth of teaching career); and lastly emotions (Hong considers teaching to be an emotionally charged career).

The participants of this study felt strongly that their psychological resources were responsible for changes to their wellbeing, rather than the challenges of teaching in a FLS. For example, having a positive attitude to change, and seeing the challenges of learning new ways of teaching as opportunities for growth, rather than a negative experience. Garcia and Rosenberg (2016) also regarded wellbeing as defined by the individual's ability to respond to life events, and not by external events. This ability is dependent on the influence of identity, and particularly self-narrative and how events are interpreted. A deficit in psychological resources creates what Joshanloo (2019) termed 'fragility beliefs', impacting negatively on wellbeing. Joshanloo found that fragility beliefs undermine resilience and the positive emotions that play a fundamental role in the ability to face life challenges and recover from negative emotions and negative events. The 'huge learning curve' experienced by the participants were perceived as opportunities rather than threats. The correct psychological resources therefore enabled participants to have the necessary attitude towards changing spaces, relationships and practice. Indeed, the benefits of collaborative teaching were identified by participants in this research as one of the key factors supporting their wellbeing. The participants recognised, however, that they had to make a shift in their thinking in order to capitalise on these perceived benefits of collaborative teaching. Teachers no longer saw themselves as solely responsible for imparting knowledge to one group of students. And rather than mourning the loss of their independence as a teacher in sole charge of a class, the participants welcomed the opportunities and benefits of team teaching and greater student agency. Internal psychological resources need to be in place to enable teachers to have a positive attitude to perceive changes as opportunities for growth, and the resilience to face challenges. This will allow collaborative practice to have a positive impact on teacher wellbeing.

Social Resources

Even with the necessary psychological resources, a successful transition to FLS is also dependent on the necessary social resources. Social resources include the nature and quality of relationships and a positive collective culture. Participants in this research identified that the quality of their relationships with colleagues and students was essential for maintaining their wellbeing, echoing the findings of Owen (2016) that positive relationships and engagements are key elements for wellbeing. On the other

hand, Kelchtermans (2013) alerted teachers to the *"double edged sword"* (p. 968, emphasis in the original,) of professional core relationships, which can be the most supportive or conversely the most destructive force in teachers' professional lives. Core relationships include those with colleagues, students, their parents, and senior leadership which can all contribute to positively wellbeing, or by contrast lead to "disappointment, self-doubt, low or negative self-esteem, increased stress or even burnout" (p. 968). Day and Gu's research (2013) also found that the nature of everyday relationships in a teacher's working life can affect wellbeing positively and negatively. Furthermore, they suggested that negative relationships may be detrimental to the psychological resources that are necessary for wellbeing. By contrast the psychological resources needed for wellbeing are reinforced by positive relationships with others:

> ongoing abuse, rancor, and insecurity profoundly threatens resilience as well as the personal attributes that might otherwise have fostered it. Conversely, the presence of support, love, and security fosters resilience in part, by reinforcing people's innate strengths (such as self-efficacy, positive emotions and emotion regulation). (p. 40)

Psychological resources are essential for teacher wellbeing, and these resources can be strengthened or diminished by the quality of professional relationships. A 'culture of acceptance' was reported to be a key quality responsible for fostering healthy relationships and teacher wellbeing at the case study school. Participants reported being treated with care and tolerance as human beings. They also took strategic action and deliberate efforts to improve their relationships with colleagues. Teachers learned how to work together using Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) which provided them with a composite view of the similarities and differences in each teacher's thinking preferences. Using this information, teachers were able to make adjustments in their behaviour, communication and team planning to improve understanding, processes and ultimately outcomes.

Teachers in this research also felt they were able to maintain individuality as a member of a collective teaching team. Liu et al. (2018) emphasised that although a lack of collaboration can be detrimental and lead to feelings of isolation; conversely an over-dependence on collective aspects can hinder intrinsic motivation, and a lack of autonomy can lead to dissatisfaction. Teachers at the case study school reported an equilibrium

described by Liu et al., as found within freedom from both 'individual isolation' and 'collective conformity' (p. 143). Acton and Glasgow (2012) also find that a balance between collegial support and respect for professional autonomy is key to fostering teacher wellbeing. Participants in this research described both the quality of professional relationships, and a balance between collaboration and professional autonomy, as crucial elements in creating teacher wellbeing.

Finally, the quality and nature of the teacher's relationships with students were also found to be integral to their wellbeing. This is also in line with previous research which highlighted the importance of teacher-student relationships as one of the most significant factors in fostering or inhibiting teacher wellbeing (Gibbs & Miller 2014; Harmsen et al., 2018; Milatz et al., 2015; Spilt et al., 2011). Teachers at the case study school described how their relationships with students were very different to those they had experienced in traditional classroom settings. Participants described their deep and genuine connections with students as 'authentic'. These relationships are founded on a high trust model that promotes student agency. This research also revealed the holistic nature of teacher-student relationships at the case study school. Teachers felt empowered to act in the best interests of each student, without having to adhere to the rigmarole of policy and rules. Of course, the school has policies and rules, but teachers experience a sense of freedom to be able to respond to students on a case by case basis without blindly following behavioural policy. Participants believe the school treats students as unique individuals, avoiding a 'one size fits all' approach. The structure of the school day and student groupings also create designed spaces and designated times that allow genuine, meaningful and trusting relationships to evolve. Moè (2016) proposed, however, that respectful and caring relationships start with leadership and trickle down through teachers to students. Participants in this research also recognised leadership practice as a significant influence on teacher wellbeing.

Leadership Best Practice

Effective leadership was found to be essential to supporting a smooth transition to teaching in FLS. Teachers reported that specific strategic actions taken by school leaders were critical to ensure the wellbeing of teachers working in these new spaces. This included the provision of specialist classroom teachers to support new and transitioning

teachers. A high level of support and care extended beyond beginning and inexperienced teachers. All participants described the school leadership's holistic approach to teacher wellbeing as one that seeks to support physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual aspects. Teachers at the case study school felt strongly about the important role of the school leaders in creating a climate that fosters wellbeing.

Teacher wellbeing was also increased by another leadership strategy that systematically removed teacher's performance targets and competition between teachers. By contrast teaching teams and collaborative practices were fostered. As McCallum and Price (2010) found, valuing teachers and their work effectively removes the conditions that decrease teacher wellbeing. Conditions detrimental to teacher wellbeing focus on performance data and create an elevated sense of surveillance, a growing lack of trust and an increased (unpaid) workload (Kelchtermans, 2013). My research found that this type of competition was deliberately avoided at the case study school because it is at odds with the pedagogical goals of collaboration and innovation that the leadership aimed to foster. Teachers' performance is not measured and monitored in ways that pit teachers against teachers, or students against students. Rather, students focus on the process, and set their own goals and targets, with support of their teachers, and measure their progress and achievement against the targets they have set for themselves. Wagner (2012) suggested the type of pedagogy that fosters innovation, collaborative teaching and learning is one where 'results' are not valued, but the process and experience is.

New Pedagogical Approach

Participants in this research agreed that changing the space does not necessarily change teaching practice (Benade, 2017a). My research at the case study school found a strong pedagogical philosophy behind not only the design of the learning spaces but every activity within the school. "The space doesn't drive the pedagogy; the pedagogy drives the space" (Pete, interview). This pedagogy no longer sees the teacher as the expert, keeper of knowledge, nor students as empty vessels to be filled. Participants reported an increased sense of satisfaction and wellbeing as they replaced transmission teaching styles with personalised learning and increased student agency. Teachers were committed to exposing students to the highest knowledge and found great professional

satisfaction in empowering them to use this knowledge creatively and innovatively. The New Zealand Curriculum was covered through integrated learning programmes. Teachers no longer needed to provide students with knowledge to store up for the future, or regurgitate for tests (Weinberger, 2015). This research found that traditional styles of assessment and standardisation were rejected by participants as counterintuitive to innovation and knowledge building. This echoes findings by Benade (2017a), where students used online blogs to share their learning reflections, and e-portfolios demonstrate their application of knowledge in new ways (Benade, 2017a). Teachers in this research reported that the change in assessments also contributed to increased teacher wellbeing by greatly reducing their marking and workload.

Pedagogy also drives the school's organisation giving teachers the freedom to work with students in a holistic way. The adoption of a personalised learning approach means there is no segregation by age in the school, and teachers are able to work with all students at any time (Robinson, 2013). Teachers described how there was no longer a sense of ownership by one teacher over a class, or a particular group of students belonging to one teacher. But rather as sense of whānau or family, where all members of the learning community, students and teachers, have a sense of belonging, and responsibility, to each other. Teachers reported decreased stress and increased wellbeing as a result of this collective responsibility and shared ownership.

One of the fundamental differences at the case study school is the removal of students facing the teacher's domain at the front of the class. Instead participants were observed collaborating in teams to support personalised, student - led learning. This enabled teachers to share agency with colleagues and students and relate to each other in new ways. This radical shift in power relations in the classroom was identified by participants as a significant factor in boosting their wellbeing. Teachers gained a great sense of satisfaction that students were liberated to become equal partners in learning. As Benade (2017b) explained, learning spaces are not neutral, they conceal social relations that place demands on teachers. In traditional classrooms one sole teacher has complete responsibility to impart knowledge to the students. Participants explained that in FLS teachers become facilitators, supported by a team of colleagues, to guide students on a personal learning journey of their own design. One participant described how the skill sets, knowledge and learning of both students and teachers alike, have evolved and

grown due as a result of this new pedagogical approach. This created a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction that was recognised by participants as significantly increasing their wellbeing.

Benefits outweigh challenges

Participants acknowledged the unique challenges of working in FLS, but always argued that the benefits outweighed the challenges. Team teaching, for example, created many opportunities that were viewed as valuable for teacher wellbeing. However, some teachers found the demands of 'wearing many hats' a challenge. The pedagogy behind these FLS meant that teachers were required to fulfil many roles for all students. The ability to teach across all subjects and age groups requires diverse skills and abilities. Participants who reported success as teachers in FLS, and high levels of wellbeing, demonstrated particular dispositions. These teachers exhibited vulnerability, and a willingness to learn new skills and ways of teaching. Through these sacrifices teachers found freedom in their teaching practice that allowed them to teach in a fluid, creative and highly flexible and responsive way. Teachers reported that the disappointment and internal conflict of working within the confines of traditional classrooms was eliminated. This led to greater wellbeing through decreased stress and increased job satisfaction.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This study explored the effects of flexible learning spaces on the wellbeing of participant teachers in one case study school. Through observations, interviews and a focus group I gained a deeper understanding of teachers' notions of wellbeing, and the factors they perceive increase or deplete teacher wellbeing. My research was guided by the following research question and sub-questions:

How is teacher wellbeing affected by the transition to Flexible Learning Spaces (FLS), how do these spaces challenge teacher wellbeing, and what are the factors that can support teacher wellbeing in practice in FLS?

- What constitutes wellbeing for teachers and how do they articulate this concept?
- What are the challenges presented by FLS, and how might these challenges affect teacher wellbeing?
- What are the opportunities and factors offered by FLS that might positively influence teacher wellbeing?

From the findings and discussion five conclusions can be drawn. These conclusions are inter-related and answer the main research question and sub-questions. The evidence from the investigation suggests that flexible learning spaces have the potential to impact teacher wellbeing in positive and negative ways. To ensure teacher wellbeing is supported in FLS five conditions supported the wellbeing of the participants: positive attitudes (individual and collective), healthy relationships (with colleagues and students), effective collaborative practices, deliberate leadership policies and actions to support wellbeing, and lastly, future focused pedagogical practices. Based on the conclusions from the study, recommendations are made at an individual teacher level, a collective teaching team level, and a leadership level. Finally, the limitations of the study and areas for future research are considered.

Conclusions

Changing practices in FLS do impact teacher wellbeing and this research identifies factors that can mitigate negative effects and cultivate increased teacher wellbeing. Conditions within FLS

Figure 3: Three levels at which factors determining teacher wellbeing are influenced.

have the potential to increase teacher wellbeing given the necessary factors are present. These factors are: a positive attitude, healthy relationships, collaborative practices, strategic leadership practices and pedagogy. This study revealed that the factors necessary to support teacher wellbeing in FLS were encompassed and effected at three different levels (fig. 3):

Individual: The psychological resources and individual actions of each teacher.

Collective: The relationships, collaboration and actions of teaching teams and groups.

Strategic: The leadership's philosophy, management, actions and school policy.

These levels are reflected throughout the conclusions.

Conclusion One: A positive attitude is key

The findings of this research confirm that a teacher's mindset and a positive mental outlook are absolutely key to maintaining teacher wellbeing when facing challenges, particularly in periods of change and transition. The teachers in this study

expressed a desire to change and saw themselves as both teacher and learner. As Cloninger (2013) explained, maintaining wellbeing in periods of change is dependent on perceptions of and attitudes towards that change. Cloninger found that attitude is important on an individual and a collective level, as maintaining a positive mindset in the face of adversity enables wellbeing to be maintained by individuals and groups. Joshanloo (2019) and Garcia and Rosenberg (2016) also found that negative experiences viewed with a negative attitude can compound challenging situations, as negative experiences come to be expected and anticipated. In order to maintain one's own wellbeing, teachers need a positive attitude to be able to face challenges and negative experiences with confidence, both as individuals, and collectively within their teaching teams.

A positive attitude changes the way in which challenging circumstances and situations are viewed, and this is influenced by one's values and beliefs. Participants in this research expressed that their wellbeing was dependent on satisfaction in their work, and in order to feel fulfilled in their work teachers need to feel as though they are providing a valuable service to the students. Hong (2012) also found that a teacher's attitudes and beliefs determined wellbeing levels. Hong's work focussed on the process of how an individual teacher perceives and interprets their external environment finding that a teacher's values, particularly how they valued the worth of a teaching career, affects wellbeing. Participants in this case study also recognised that valuing the worth of their role as a teacher can influence their wellbeing. These teachers also believed that their students were receiving a more valuable and worthwhile education than provided in traditional schools.

As described in more depth in conclusion five, at a strategic level, leadership teams must also take a positive attitude towards teachers and the teaching profession. Teachers also need to maintain a positive attitude in the work at an individual level, and this must be sustained in the collective attitude of teaching teams. At all levels of influence therefore, a positive attitude is a key ingredient in sustaining and elevating teacher wellbeing.

Conclusion 2: Healthy relationships are at the heart of teacher wellbeing

He aha te mea nui o te ao. He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata. What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people. The findings of this

study reinforce previous work of Kelchtermans (2013), Schleicher (2018), and Day and Gu (2013) who all found that positive relationships with both students and colleagues are essential for teacher wellbeing. This case study has revealed that healthy relationships are founded at individual, collective and leadership levels. At an individual level, healthy relationships are achieved through a positive attitude to others. At a collective level, healthy relationships are established through a collective ethos of caring, described as a 'culture of humanity'. Lastly, at a leadership level, healthy relationships are created through the removal of performance targets and competition between teachers, and the support of teaching teams and collaborative practices.

At an individual level, teachers need to possess a positive attitude towards others to enable healthy relationships to form with both colleagues and students. In this research participants described their relationships with students as 'authentic' and explained that these relationships are of a much higher quality and a greater depth than they have experienced previously in traditional classroom teaching. Previous research by Harmsen et al. (2018) concluded that future efforts to improve teacher wellbeing and reduce stress and attrition should be focused on improving student-teacher relationships. Conclusion five explores the changes in pedagogical practices that underpin the perceived improvement of relationships with students.

At a collective level, the nature of relationships within a team can either be beneficial for well-being or detrimental to well-being. As Kelchtermans (2013) identified, teaching teams acknowledge professional core relationships as either the most supportive or the most destructive working conditions in a teachers' professional lives. The participants in this study described the feeling of 'whānau' or family within teaching teams. Their descriptions revealed that the presence of support, love, and security actively supports wellbeing, as described by Day and Gu (2013). These teachers agreed that positive teaching teams create resilience by reinforcing the innate strengths identified by Day and Gu, including self-efficacy, positive emotions and emotion regulations.

At a strategic level, the leadership team at the case study school saw the quality of relationships within the school community as the foundation of the school. They took deliberate, strategic action to improve relationships between teachers using the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) which provided teachers with an

understanding of their own and others thinking preferences. Using this information, teachers were able to make adjustments in their behaviour, communication and team planning to improve understanding, processes and ultimately outcomes. As Moè (2016) asserted, respectful and caring relationships start with leadership and trickle down through teachers to students. At a strategic level, leadership practice that creates the conditions for healthy relationships to grow are an essential factor for teacher wellbeing.

Conclusion 3: Effective collaborative practice supports teacher wellbeing

Collaborative practices in FLS were found to support teacher wellbeing given the necessary conditions at individual, collective and leadership levels. At an individual level, teachers need to be open to sharing their practice with colleagues and have the courage to make their practice public. At a collective level, teams of teachers need to foster high levels of trust to be able to work together. At a leadership level, leaders must remove performance targets that create competition between teachers, and instead create the conditions for teaching teams to thrive. These conditions include allowing the time and space for teams to plan, teach and reflect together. Owen (2016) agreed that collaboration underpinned by healthy relationships, creates shared goals and values that support teacher wellbeing. Liu et al. (2018) described how teacher wellbeing is supported by the equilibrium found within freedom from both 'individual isolation' and 'collective conformity' (p. 143). In this sense, participants in this study also attested that they were able to maintain both their autonomy and individual freedoms, while benefiting from the collective aspects of team teaching.

Conclusion 4: Leadership policies enable the conditions for wellbeing

Teacher wellbeing cannot be achieved without guiding policy and strategic action at leadership level. Teachers reported that their wellbeing is dependent on the holistic support of the school's leadership team. This includes valuing teachers work and having a high trust approach to teachers taking leave based on the Hauora wellbeing model. The declining status of teachers negatively impacts teacher wellbeing. A number of researchers have pointed to the correlation between performance targets and negative impacts on teacher wellbeing (Dolton et al, 2018; Liu et al., 2018; McCallum & Price, 2015; Roffey, 2012). The New Zealand Ministry of Education also acknowledged the problem

and pledged to: "raise the status of the education profession, restore their trust and confidence" (2017, p. 1). Valuing teachers work in this way was identified by participants as a critical factor that increased their wellbeing.

Participants felt the leadership team supported them in an holistic way based on the Hauora model that values physical, emotional/mental, family/social and spiritual wellbeing. The high trust approach by the leadership team was identified by all participants as an important factor that increases their wellbeing. Particularly the trust in professional integrity that was shown for teachers to take sick days to support other aspects of wellbeing, not just physical. A whānau (family/social) health day, for example, could be taken to care for an immediate family member. A hinengaro (mental) health day, might be taken to prevent burnout or stress management. Time out was permitted for wairua (spiritual) health, to fulfil religious observances, for instance.

At a strategic level, leadership practices and pedagogy have a profound influence on essential factors for wellbeing: a positive attitude, healthy relationships and collaborative practices. By valuing teachers' work the leadership team was seen to support the essential work of teams at a collective level. Leadership practices directly support or hinder the holistic wellbeing of teachers as understood by participants using the Hauora model.

Conclusion 5: Pedagogy must drive the spaces to support teacher wellbeing.

The conditions exist in FLS to support and even increase teacher wellbeing. However, this is dependent on the adoption of a future focused pedagogy at an individual, collective and leadership level. Participants identified that FLS can be highly beneficial for teacher wellbeing although "if you're not willing to change your pedagogy and your pedagogical approach, the space may not help you". At an individual level therefore, teachers need to be willing to adopt new teaching beliefs and ideas, including giving students greater agency over their learning, and sharing their practice with their teams. At a collective level, teaching teams must also adopt a pedagogy that will support collaborative practice. And finally, leadership teams must be willing to 'walk the talk' in terms of pedagogy. At the case study school, the principal is widely praised for practicing what he preaches in terms of future focused pedagogy.

At an individual level, Moè (2016) found that teacher wellbeing is dependent on teachers possessing autonomy to teach according to their passions, and the ability to choose activities they value. In this sense the pedagogy at the case study school covered the New Zealand Curriculum in a non-linear way, enabling teachers to pursue their interests and create learning opportunities that they believed would be the most valuable and beneficial to students. Teachers reported increased wellbeing from allowing students to have the freedom to direct their own learning programmes. The organisational structure of learning is also driven by future focused pedagogy that prioritises cross-curricula projects and personalised learning. This is underpinned by a high challenge, low stress approach to students learning that teachers also believed supports their wellbeing.

Recommendations for school leaders

Healthy relationships are at the heart of a school that supports teacher wellbeing, and these relationships start with leadership and trickle down through teachers to students. As Moè (2016) proposed, however, respectful and caring relationships start with leadership and trickle down through teachers to students. It is therefore important for school leaders to recognise their role in establishing and modelling healthy relationships within the school community.

The evidence in this study implies that the development of healthy relationships between teachers, and between teachers and students, in FLS should be an essential focus of professional learning development (PLD). The importance of a positive attitude at an individual, collective and strategic level ought to be a focus of PLD that specifically focuses on the four psychological constructs that determine teacher wellbeing: self-efficacy (beliefs about one's own capabilities which determine whether difficulties are perceived as threats or challenges), content specific beliefs (how difficulties are perceived as either external/internal, stable/unstable, controllable/uncontrollable); values (regarding the worth of teaching career); and lastly emotions (Hong, 2012).

Teachers need to understand their own, and their colleagues', dominant thinking patterns, to facilitate the effective working relationships needed for collaborative teaching. Psychological assessment tools can be a useful aid in developing this knowledge and understanding. Time should also be allocated on a regular basis for teachers to plan how to work together and review team teaching. Teachers also need to understand the

key pedagogical ideas underpinning the practice. Opportunities to develop this knowledge and regularly review this understanding are also important for teachers in FLS.

Recommendations for Teachers

The findings from this research indicate that teachers who make the transition to FLS require certain dispositions, and particular factors to be present in order to maintain their wellbeing. It is therefore recommended that teachers are aware of requirements of working within FLS, and the challenges and opportunities they present. Teachers must be willing to embark on the journey away from solo teaching in single cell classrooms, to collaborating in teams to deliver personalised learning experiences for students. These represent two radically different experiences of teaching, and teachers need adequate knowledge and preparation to successfully make the transition away from traditional classroom teaching and maintain their wellbeing.

Teachers also need to be willing to develop the psychological and social resources to support their wellbeing. Participants in this study who successfully made the transition to teaching in FLS viewed themselves as learners. They exhibited vulnerability and a willingness to learn new skills and ways of teaching. These teachers also placed great emphasis on the role of collaboration and team teaching in supporting their wellbeing. One teacher explained that when she thought about her own wellbeing, she immediately thought about the relationships she has that support it. High levels of teacher wellbeing were founded upon healthy relationships with colleagues. This may require a shift in thinking for many teachers for whom their relationships with students are paramount. Teachers enter the vocation to work with children and this is their priority. However, FLS require teachers to prioritise their relationships with their colleagues in order to balance their own wellbeing.

Recommendations for Teacher Education Institutions

In order to adequately prepare new teachers for work in FLS, teacher education programmes need to enable student teachers to experience the pedagogical principles and practices behind these spaces. The education needed to be a sole teacher in a traditional, single cell classroom is vastly different to the skills and competencies needed to work in collaborative teams to provide personalised learning through an integrated

curriculum. Just as teachers in FLS model the principles and skills they wish students to develop, so universities should model best practice through cross-curricular learning facilitated by teaching teams. Teacher training courses also need to educate pre-service teachers about the factors that support wellbeing. The attrition rate of beginning teachers has been steadily increasing, and a growing crisis in teacher wellbeing has made teacher attrition a global issue (Kelchtermans, 2017). In order to prevent good teachers from leaving the profession in 'alarming numbers' (Hong, 2012), teacher education programmes must prioritise wellbeing as a central focus. This case study demonstrates that with an understanding of the factors that support wellbeing, teachers are in a better position to address their own wellbeing needs, and address deficits that may arise.

Areas for further research

The evidence from this study confirms the factors that support teacher wellbeing for teachers who have made a successful transition to working in FLS. It is therefore recommended that further research is undertaken to discover how many teachers have left the profession after attempting to transition to FLS, or returned to teaching in traditional classrooms, and the reasons they have left. If the government wishes to increase the number of innovative learning environments with FLS, it will be important to understand the factors that drive teachers to leave the job.

Another area for future research is to assess the extent to which current teacher training programmes equip new teachers with the skills to maintain their wellbeing in FLS. Understanding the notion of teacher wellbeing is an emerging and relatively unexplored area of study. Assessing how wellbeing can be sustained in FLS is even less understood. An investigation into the current provision for ongoing teacher training through professional learning development would also be valuable.

This study has revealed that there are factors that support and factors that decrease teacher wellbeing in FLS. A logical development of this research would be to investigate how different schools prepare for and transition into FLS in ways that support the equilibrium of teacher wellbeing. Particularly schools that were not purpose-built innovative learning environments, but traditional schools that make conversions to create FLS.

Limitations of the research

This research was carried out at a school that was designed and purpose built as an ILE school, characterised by FLS throughout. Therefore, teachers recruited to the school understood that they would be working in teaching teams through collaborative practices. A limitation of this research is its applicability to existing (traditional) schools that wish to create FLS and establish collaborative teaching practices and personalised learning. In this situation teachers may not be willing to transition to new ways of teaching in FLS, and this may affect the factors necessary for teacher wellbeing, particularly a positive attitude and healthy relationships as this study has shown these are co-dependent.

Also, the participants in this study had all successfully made the transition to working in FLS. These teachers understood the importance of the pedagogy driving the spaces and saw challenges as opportunities for professional development. A limitation of this study, therefore, is that the voices of teachers who did not make a successful transition to teaching in FLS are not heard.

Another limitation of this study is that it represents the experiences of eight teachers within one ILE school with FLS. A greater number of perspectives could have been generated through the use of a questionnaire; however, this would have limited the depth of the data collected. In this study teacher interviews, observations and focus group enabled me to gather in depth data, and the findings may be applicable to similar schools.

Final word

Teacher wellbeing is usually discussed in deficit terms in research literature that focuses on stress and low retention levels in the profession, whilst research about factors that support teacher wellbeing is scarce (Hong, 2012; Roffey, 2012). In answering the research question, this study has contributed to an understanding of the factors that support teacher wellbeing. When considered in the light of previous research on the subject, the more general findings of this study can be considered applicable to all teachers. The findings of this research deeply informed my knowledge and understanding of the notion of teacher wellbeing, and the specific factors that support it. By revealing how these factors are affected and influenced at an individual, collective and strategic level, I have

been able to develop a comprehensive overview of the necessary conditions to maintain equilibrium in teacher wellbeing.

References

Acton, R., & Glasgow, P., (2015). Teacher wellbeing in neoliberal contexts: A review of the literature. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(8). Retrieved from: http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2015v40n8.6

Allen, R., & Sims, S., (2018). *The teacher gap.* New York, New York, NY: Routledge.

Bahr, N., Graham, A., Ferreira, J., Lloyd, M., & Waters, R., (2018). *Promotion of the profession.* Bilinga, Australia: Southern Cross University. Retrieved from: https://www.qct.edu.au/pdf/Promotion_TPQ.pdf

Beeby, C., (1986). The place of myth in educational change. *NZ Listener* 8.11.86. Retrieved from: http://ea.org.nz/place-myth-educational-change/

Beery, T. A., Shell, D., Gillespie, G., & Werdman, E., (2013). The impact of learning space on teaching behaviors. *Nurse Education in Practice 13*(5), p. 382 - 387.Retrieved from: http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1016/j.nepr.2012.11.001

Benade, L., (2015) The transformative educative prospects of flexible learning environments. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers Work, 12* (1), p. 9 - 13. Retrieved from: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/teachers-work/index.php/teacherswork/issue/view/8

Benade, L. (2017a). *Being a teacher in the 21st century: A critical New Zealand study.* Singapore: Springer Nature. Retrieved from: https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007%2F978-981-10-3782-5

Benade, L., (2017b) Is the classroom obsolete in the twenty-first century? *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 49*(8). Retrieved from: 10.1080/00131857.2016.1269631

Benade, L., (2019). Pedagogy in flexible learning spaces. In M. Hill and M. Thrupp. *The professional practice of teaching in New Zealand* (6th ed), pp. 213-235. Melbourne, Australia: Cengage

Benade, L., & Jackson, M., (2017). Introduction to ACCESS special issue: Modern learning environments. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*: Incorporating *ACCESS. Special Issue: Modern Learning Environments, 49*(8), p. 744-788. Retrieved from: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2017.1317986

Bolstad, R., Gilbert, J., McDowall, S., Bull, A., Boyd, S. & Hipkins, R., (2012). *Supporting future-oriented learning and teaching: A New Zealand perspective*. Report prepared for the Ministry of Education. Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER and Ministry of Education. Retrieved from: http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/publications/schooling/109306

Bower, J., & Carroll, A., (2017). Capturing real-time emotional states and triggers for teachers through the teacher wellbeing web-based application t*: A pilot study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *65*. p. 183-191.

Boyd, S., & Lawes, E., (2018) *Making a difference to student wellbeing—a data exploration*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research Retrieved from: https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/Student%20Wellbeing%20Report.pdf

Boyle, J., (July 12, 2017). Teacher wellbeing: Good New Habits goes global. *Education Central*. Retrieved from: https://educationcentral.co.nz/teacher-wellbeing-good-new-habits-goes-global/

Collie, R., & Perry, N., (2019). Cultivating teacher thriving through social–emotional competence and its development. *Australian Educational Researcher,* 46 (3), p. 365 - 582. DOI:10.1007/s13384-019-00342-2

Cooper, B., Sexton, S., & Gunn, A. C., (2017). Introduction to the Special Issue: How to educate a nation's teachers. Debating quality initial teacher education for today and for the future. *Waikato Journal of Education 22* (3), p. 3 – 7. DOI: https://doi.org/10.15663/wje.v22i3.580

Cloninger, C. R., (2013) What makes people healthy, happy, and fulfilled in the face of current world challenges? *Mens Sana Monographs.* 11(1), P. 16 - 24. DOI: 10.4103/0973-1229.109288.

Day, C., & Gu, Q., (2013) Resilient Teachers, *Resilient teachers, resilient schools : Building and sustaining quality in testing times.*. New York, NY: Routledge. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203578490.

Dodge, R., Daly, A., Huyton, J., & Sanders, L., (2012). The challenge of defining wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 2(3), 222-235. DOI:10.5502/ijw.v2i3.4

Dolton, P., Marcenaro, O., De Vries, R., & She, P., (2018). *Global teacher status index 2018*. London: The Varkey Foundation. Retrieved from: https://www.varkeyfoundation.org/media/4790/gts-index-9-11-2018.pdf

Education Counts, (2020). Retrieved from: https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/maori/105966/79522/he-apitihanga-te-aho-matua

Evans, R., (2012) Getting to no. *National Association of Independent Schools Magazine*, *Winter*. Retrieved from https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/winter-2012/getting-to-no/

Eyre, C., (2017) *The elephant in the staffroom: How to reduce stress and improve teacher wellbeing.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Garcia, D., & Rosenberg, P., (2016) Out of Flatland: The Role of the Notion of a Worldview in the Science of Well-being. Mens Sana Monographs (14: 1), p.133-140. Retrieved from: http://www.msmonographs.org/article.asp?issn=0973-1229;year=2016;volume=14;issue=1;spage=133;epage=140;aulast=Garcia

Gibbs, S., & Miller, A., (2014) Teachers' resilience and well-being: a role for educational psychology, *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, 20 (5), p. 609 - 621, DOI:10.1080/13540602.2013.844408

Gilbert, J. (2005) Catching the Knowledge Wave? The Knowledge Society and the Future of Education. Wellington: NZCER Press

Glazzard, J., & Rose, A., (2019). The impact of teacher wellbeing and mental health on pupil progress in primary schools. Leeds Beckett University

Gray, C., Wilcox, G. & Nordstokke, D. (2017). Teacher mental health, school climate, inclusive education and student learning: A review. Canadian Psychology 58, (3), 203-10.

Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, R. (2017). Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers (Vol. Third edition). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Harris, S., & Teschers, C., (2015) The notion of well-being in the New Zealand education system. *He Kupu* 4 (2), p. 71 - 81.

Harmsen, R., Lorenz, M., Maulana, R., & van Veen, K. (2018). The relationship between beginning teachers' stress causes, stress responses, teaching behaviour and attrition. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 24(6), p. 626 - 643. DOI:https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2018.1465404

Hong, J., (2012) Why do some beginning teachers leave the school, and others stay? Understanding teacher resilience through psychological lenses. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* (18: 4), p. 417 - 440. DOI: 10.1080/13540602.2012.696044

Jamieson, P., Fisher, K., Gilding,T., Taylor, P., & Trevitt, A.C.F., (2000) Place and space in the design of new learning environments. *Higher Education Research & Development 19* (2) DOI: https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/072943600445664

Joshanloo, M. (2019). Investigating the relationships between subjective well-being and psychological well-being over two decades. *Emotion*, 19 (1), p. 183-187. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/emo0000414

Kang, S., (March 23, 2019). A fast changing world. Will schools survive the 4th Industrial Revolution? Institute of Education, University College London. Paper presented at the Global Education and Skills Forum, Dubai.

Kariippanon, K., Cliff, D. P., Lancaster, S. L., Okely, A. D., & Parrish, A., (2018) Perceived interplay between Flexible Learning Spaces and teaching, learning and student wellbeing, *Learning Environments Research*, 21 (3), (p. 301 – 320).

Kelchtermans, G., (2017) 'Should I stay or should I go?': unpacking teacher attrition/retention as an educational issue, *Teachers and Teaching*, 23 (8), p. 961 - 977. DOI:10.1080/13540602.2017.1379793

Keogh, B., (February 25, 2018). Ministry and school clash over flexible learning spaces. NZ Herald. Retrieved from: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11999619

Kidger, J., Brockman, R., Tilling, K., Campbell, R., Ford, T., Araya, R., King, M. & Gunnell, D., (2016). Teachers' wellbeing and depressive symptoms, and associated risk factors: A large cross sectional study in English secondary schools. *Journal of Affective Disorders*. 192 (p. 76 - 82). DOI: 10.1016/j.jad.2015.11.054

Kwok-Wing,-L., (2014) Transforming New Zealand schools as knowledge-building communities. *Research Information for Teachers* 1. NZCER Press

Lazari-Radek, K., (2018). On the notion of wellbeing. *Analiza i Egzystencja* 43. DOI: 10.18276/aie.2018.43-01

Le Cornu, R., (2013). Building Early Career Teacher Resilience: The Role of Relationships *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 38 (4). DOI: 10.14221/ajte.2013v38n4.4

Leadbeater, C., (2018). The shape of things to come: personalisation & collaboration in education [PowerPoint slides] Retrieved from: https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=http://charlesleadbeater.net/wp-content/uploads/2005/09/Personalised-Learning.ppt&hl=en_GB

Liu, L. B., Song, H. & Miao, P., (2018). Navigating individual and collective notions of teacher wellbeing as a complex phenomenon shaped by national context. *Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 48 (1), p. 128 – 146.

Mathews, G., (2012). Happiness, culture, and context. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 2 (4), p. 299-312. DOI:10.5502/ijw.v2.i4.2

Matthewman, S., & Morgan, J., (2014). Sharpening New Zealand's future focus - a scenario stance. *Future Education,* 24 (1). Retrieved from https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/set2014_1_024_2.pdf

McCallum, F., & Price, D., (2010). Well teachers, well students. *Journal of Student Wellbeing*. 4 (1), (p. 19 – 34). Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267683202_Well_teachers_well_students

McGraw, A., & McDonough, S., (2019) Thinking dispositions as a resource for resilience in the gritty reality of learning to teach. *The Australian Educational Researcher,* 46, p. 589 – 605. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-019-00345-z

Milatz, A., Lüftenegger, M., & Schober, B.,(2015). Teachers' Relationship Closeness with Students as a Resource for Teacher Wellbeing: A Response Surface Analytical Approach. Front Psychology 23 (6). DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01949. eCollection 2015.

Ministry of Education, (2017). Towards a future - focused, learner - centred, Education Workforce Strategy to 2032. Retrieved from https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Information-releases/2018-releases/Final-Education-Workforce-Strategy.pdf

Moè, A., (2016). Harmonious passion and its relationship with teacher well-being. *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 59. DOI:10.1016/j.tate.2016.07.017

Nussbaum, M., (1988). Nature, Functioning and Capability: Aristotle on Political Distribution, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy,* (6), p. 145–84.

New Zealand Educational Institute, (28 January, 2019). Quitting teachers explain why they are leaving. New Zealand Educational Institute: Wellington, New Zealand

Owen, S.,(2016). Professional learning communities: building skills, reinvigorating the passion, and nurturing teacher wellbeing and "flourishing" within significantly innovative schooling contexts. *Educational Review ,*68, (4). Retrieved from: https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/00131911.2015.1119101

Powdthavee, N., (2015). Would you like to know what makes people happy? An overview of the data sets on subjective well-being. London School of Economics and University of Melbourne. Retrieved from: https://www.powdthavee.co.uk/app/download/3189581/Data%2B-%2BAustralian%2BEcon%2BReview%2B15.01.15.pdf

Ragoonaden, K., (2015). Mindful Teaching and Learning : Developing a Pedagogy of Well-Being. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books. Retrieved from: http://ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1021283&site=eds-live

Riley, P., (February 2018), Burnout: Findings from the New Zealand school leaders' occupational health and wellbeing 2017 survey. New Zealand Educational Institute: Wellington, New Zealand

Roffey, S., (2012). Pupil wellbeing -Teacher wellbeing: Two sides of the same coin?. *Educational and Child Psychology.* 29, p. 8 - 17.

Sadar, Z., (2015). Postnormal times revisited. *Futures,* (67), p. 26-39 Retrieved from: https://postnormaltim.es/sites/default/files/uploads/Sardar%20content/Sardar%20-%20PNT%20Revisited.pdf

Schleicher, A., (March 24, 2019). A world that educates students for their future, rather than for our past. Director for Education and Skills, OECD. Paper presented at the Global Education and Skills Forum, Dubai.

Spratt, J., (2017). Wellbeing, Equity and Education - A Critical Analysis of Policy Discourses of Wellbeing in Schools. New York, NY, USA: Springer International Publishing. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-50066-9

Spilt, J. L., Helma M. Y., Koomen & Jochem T. T., (2008, March). Teacher Wellbeing: The Importance of Teacher–Student Relationships. *Educational Psychology Review,* 20 (1). DOI: 10.1007/s10648-011-9170-y

Stansfeld, S.A., Rasul, F., Head, J., and Singleton, N. (2011), Occupation and mental health in a national UK survey. Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 46 (2), 101–110.

Swanborn, P. G. (2010). Case study research: what, why and how? Accessed from: http://methods.sagepub.com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/base/download/BookChapter/case-study-research-what-why-how/i82.xml

Weinberger, D., (2015). On Too Big to Know [Video file]. Retrieved from:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Zw6f4ygYGo

Appendices

Appendix A: Teacher consent form

Consent Form: Teacher Interview
Project title: Flexible Learning Spaces - Implications for Teacher Wellbeing
Project Supervisor: Dr Leon Benade
Researcher: Caroline Burns

○   I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 21 June 2018.

○   I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○   I understand that the interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed.

○   I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

○   I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. Once the findings have been produced, however, I understand that the removal of my data may not be possible.

○   I agree to take part in this research.

○   I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes○
        No○

Participant's signature:
        ....…………………………………………………
…

Participant's name:
        ....…………………………………………………
…
Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

Email:
Mobile:
Date:
Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEC Reference number type the AUTEC reference number
Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix B: Teacher indicative interview questions

Indicative Questions - Teacher Interview

In this interview, I would like to understand your perspective as a teacher who has transitioned to working in Flexible Learning Spaces (FLS). Apart from understanding your experience of working at this school, I'm particularly interested to have your perspective on what constitutes wellbeing for teachers, how teachers make the transition between traditional classrooms and FLS and how teacher wellbeing can be supported in the transition to, and when working in FLS.

My first set of questions will seek to explore your perspectives on the concept of wellbeing, and how it is experienced by teachers.

1. As a group how would you define wellbeing?
2. What does wellbeing mean to you as a teachers?
3. How do teachers look after their own wellbeing at this school?
4. How do you support the wellbeing of your colleagues at this school?
5. How do you experience wellbeing as a team of teachers?
6. What impact does your wellbeing as a team of teachers have on learner wellbeing?
7. In what ways do you think the FLS at this school support teacher wellbeing?
8. In what ways do you think FLS at this school challenge teacher wellbeing? .
9. What processes exist to support teacher wellbeing in teams teaching in FLS at this school?

10. In your experience, how does the wider school community (whanau, parents,

11. Are there any final comments you would add, that you think may have been missed?

I would like to thank you for your generous offer of this time we have spent together. Thank you for sharing your expertise and experience.

Appendix C: Focus group indicative questions

Indicative Questions - Teacher Focus Group

In this focus group, I would like to understand your perspectives as teachers who have transitioned to working in Flexible Learning Spaces (FLS). Apart from understanding your experiences of working at this school, I'm particularly interested to understand your perspectives on what constitutes wellbeing for teachers, how teachers make the transition between traditional classrooms to working in teams in FLS, and how teacher wellbeing can be supported in this transition.

My first set of questions will seek to explore your perspectives on the concept of wellbeing, and how it is experienced by teachers.

1. As a group how would you define wellbeing?
2. What does wellbeing mean to you as a teachers?
3. How do teachers look after their own wellbeing at this school?
4. How do you support the wellbeing of your colleagues at this school?
5. How do you experience wellbeing as a team of teachers?
6. What impact does your wellbeing as a team of teachers have on learner wellbeing?
7. In what ways do you think the FLS at this school support teacher wellbeing?
8. In what ways do you think FLS at this school challenge teacher wellbeing?
9. What processes exist to support teacher wellbeing in teams teaching in FLS at this school?
10. What processes exist to support teacher wellbeing during the *transition* to teaching in FLS at this school?
11. What do school leaders currently do to support teacher wellbeing at this school?
12. What can school leaders do differently to further support teacher wellbeing at this school?
13. In your experience, how does the wider school community (whanau, parents, BoT etc.) challenge and support teacher wellbeing at this school?
14. Are there any final comments you would add, that you think may have been missed?

I would like to thank you for your generous offer of this time we have spent together. Thank you for sharing your expertise and experience.

Appendix D: AUTEC approval

20 August 2019

Leon Benade
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Leon

Re Ethics Application: **19/272 Flexible learning spaces - Implications for teacher wellbeing**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 20 August 2022.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the <u>Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research</u> and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted. When the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all ethical, legal, and locality obligations or requirements for those jurisdictions.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact <u>ethics@aut.ac.nz</u>. The forms mentioned above are available online through <u>http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics</u>

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: <u>carrieb@whangamata.school.nz</u>

Appendix E: Participant information sheets

Participant Information Sheet: Teacher Observations

Date Information Sheet Produced:
3rd July 2019

Flexible Learning Spaces – Implications for Teacher Wellbeing

An Invitation
My name is Carrie Burns, and I am a Masters student in the School of Education at AUT. I am a secondary school teacher with 19 years experience. Over the last two years have been examining the idea of '21st century learning' and the development of flexible learning spaces. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study. What is the purpose of this research? I am now focussing on the question of how teacher wellbeing is influenced by the transition to teaching in flexible learning spaces (FLS). Furthermore, my study looks at how these spaces challenge teacher wellbeing, and the factors are that can support teacher well-being in practice in FLS. Understanding how the change to FLS affect teacher wellbeing is an unexplored area of vital importance. Teacher wellbeing is in crisis globally, making it a critical contemporary issue in education.

There is some evidence that the nature of FLS may produce conditions that support teacher wellbeing. There is also evidence that teacher wellbeing may be negatively influenced by the transition to FLS as traditional teaching and learning practices are not suited to the new environments. In this study I would like to discuss with you as a teacher, your understanding of the relationship between FLS and teacher wellbeing. I would also like to understand your experience of transitioning to FLS from traditional classroom teaching, to gauge your perspectives on factors that supported and / or challenged your wellbeing in this process. I also want to establish how your ongoing experience of working in flexible spaces either supports or undermines your sense of wellbeing.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?
You are a teacher who has experience of teaching in both traditional classrooms and FLS. My approach to you has been by invitation of your school as part of a review process. I have had no access to your private contact details.

How do I agree to participate in this research?
With this information sheet is a Consent Form. Please complete it, scan it and return to my email address (at the bottom of the page), or, if we meet in person you can give it to me at the interview.
Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you

removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

I will arrange with you one convenient classroom observation time during Term Three. The idea is for the me to be a 'fly on the wall', simply taking notes of all that is happening. There will be no capture of voice, photographic or video data. At a mutually convenient time, I would like to de-brief with you after the observation for a maximum of 20 minutes. In the de-briefing, the focus will be on your experience as a teacher in that particular session and your wellbeing in that particular session. Questions will be asked about your personal and professional journey of transition to teaching in FLS.

Together, each observation and de-briefing will take no longer than one and a half hours. This process will be concluded with your participation in either an individual interview, or a focus group interview with you and your colleagues. The total process, over term three, will last approximately two to three hours. Observations will be completed between 5 – 30 Aug, individual interviews will take place between 2 - 13 Sept, and the focus group interview will be held in the week ending 20 Sept.

What are the discomforts and risks?

This should be a low-risk observation with the intention of observing your work in action as the voice, experience and perspectives of teachers is vital in understanding how to support teacher wellbeing in FLS.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

My observations are not intended to provoke negative attitudes; instead, my intention is to capture a snapshot of your experiences and viewpoints. I am committed to ensuring your professional status and integrity is recognised and affirmed, and that your voice is heard and correctly conveyed to the education community.

What are the benefits?

Teachers who have made the transition to teaching in FLS will have enlightening insights regarding teacher wellbeing that are not always well known to educators generally or even bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education. You are therefore a critical partner in this research study, and I am sure you will be supportive of the research. I will analyse the information I gather during this research study to prepare a written report. This research will make teachers' voices known through academic channels, like conferences and presentations, as well as a formal written thesis.

How will my privacy be protected?

You will be de-identified when I write up the research; comments made in observations are treated as strictly private and confidential. However, given the public nature of this research (eg going into an open learning area to observe), it will be impossible to keep your identity confidential. Comments and ideas you provide will be shared with the SLT at school and, although your identity will be excluded, it therefore it may be possible to attribute a particular idea or experience back to you.

As we will have face-to-face contact, I cannot offer anonymity, but my ethical conduct as a researcher is focussed on doing no harm to my participants.

What are the costs of participating in this research?
The only cost to you will be to volunteer no more than one hour for an observation, and possibly 30 minutes to review at a later stage.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?
Two weeks after the first invitation (there will be a reminder after the first week).
Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?
As and when my research becomes an 'output' this will be made available to those who have requested this on the Consent Form.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?
Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Leon Benade, email: lbenade@aut.ac.nz tel: (09) 921 9999 ext 7094
Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , 921 9999 ext 6038.

Participant Information Sheet: Focus Groups

Date Information Sheet Produced:
3rd July 2019

Flexible Learning Spaces – Implications for Teacher Wellbeing

An Invitation
My name is Carrie Burns, and I am a Masters student in the School of Education at AUT. I am a secondary school teacher with 19 years experience. Over the last two years have been examining the idea of '21st century learning' and the development of flexible learning spaces. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study. What is the purpose of this research? I am now focussing on the question of how teacher wellbeing is influenced by the transition to teaching in flexible learning spaces (FLS). Furthermore, my study looks at how these spaces challenge teacher wellbeing, and the factors are that can support teacher well-being in practice in FLS. Understanding how the change to FLS affect teacher wellbeing is an unexplored area of vital importance. Teacher wellbeing is in crisis globally, making it a critical contemporary issue in education.

There is some evidence that the nature of FLS may produce conditions that support teacher wellbeing. There is also evidence that teacher wellbeing may be negatively influenced by the transition to FLS as traditional teaching and learning practices are not suited to the new environments. In this study I would like to discuss with you as a teacher, your understanding of the relationship between FLS and teacher wellbeing. I would also like to understand your experience of transitioning to FLS from traditional classroom teaching, to gauge your perspectives on factors that supported and / or challenged your wellbeing in this process. I also want to establish how your ongoing experience of working in flexible spaces either supports or undermines your sense of wellbeing.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?
You are a teacher who has experience of teaching in both traditional classrooms and FLS. My approach to you has been by invitation of your school as part of a review process. I have had no access to your private contact details.

How do I agree to participate in this research?
With this information sheet is a Consent Form. Please complete it, scan it and return to my email address (at the bottom of the page), or, if we meet in person you can give it to me at the interview.
Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?
I would like you to participate in a focus group discussion for no more than one hour. Ideally, the focus group will take place at your place of work or other suitable venue. The

focus group will be digitally recorded, and we will discuss your experiences of wellbeing as a teacher during your transition from traditional classroom teaching to flexible learning spaces.

What are the discomforts and risks?
This should be a low-risk focus group; the content is not contentious, but hearing the voice, experience and perspectives of teachers is vital in understanding how to support teacher wellbeing in FLS.
How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?
My questioning and prompts are not intended to provoke negative attitudes; instead, my intention is to capture a snapshot of your experiences and viewpoints. I am committed to ensuring your professional status and integrity is recognised and affirmed, and that your voice is heard and correctly conveyed to the education community.

What are the benefits?
Teachers who have made the transition to teaching in FLS will have enlightening insights regarding teacher wellbeing that are not always well known to educators generally or even bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education. You are therefore a critical partner in this research study, and I am sure you will be supportive of the research. I will analyse the information I gather during this research study to prepare a written report. This research will make teachers' voices known through academic channels, like conferences and presentations, as well as a formal written thesis.

How will my privacy be protected?
You will be de-identified when I write up the research; comments made in interviews are treated as strictly private and confidential. As we will have face-to-face contact, I cannot offer anonymity, but my ethical conduct as a researcher is focussed on doing no harm to my participants.

What are the costs of participating in this research?
The only cost to you will be to volunteer no more than one hour for the focus group.

What opportunities do I have to consider this invitation?
Two weeks after the first invitation (there will be a reminder after the first week).
Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?
As and when my research becomes an 'output' this will be made available to those who have requested this on the Consent Form.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?
Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Leon Benade, email: lbenade@aut.ac.nz tel: (09) 921 9999 ext 7094
Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , 921 9999 ext 6038.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTEC Reference number *type the reference number*.

Participant Information Sheet: Teacher Interviews

Date Information Sheet Produced:
3rd July 2019

Flexible Learning Spaces – Implications for Teacher Wellbeing

An Invitation
My name is Carrie Burns, and I am a Masters student in the School of Education at AUT. As a secondary school teacher with 19 years experience. Over the last two years I have been examining the idea of '21st century learning' and the development of flexible learning spaces. This year I have been awarded a Teach NZ Study Award to study full time and complete my thesis. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study.

What is the purpose of this research?
I am now focussing on the question of how teacher wellbeing influenced by the transition to teaching in flexible learning spaces (FLS). Furthermore, my study looks at how these spaces challenge teacher wellbeing, and the factors are that can support teacher wellbeing in practice in FLS. Understanding how the change to FLS affect teacher wellbeing is an unexplored area of vital importance. Teacher wellbeing is in crisis globally, making it a critical contemporary issue in education.

There is some evidence that the nature of FLS may produce conditions that support teacher wellbeing. There is also evidence that teacher wellbeing may be negatively influenced by the transition to FLS as traditional teaching and learning practices are not suited to the new environments. In this study I would like to discuss with you as a teacher, your understanding of the relationship between FLS and teacher wellbeing. I would also like to understand your experience of transitioning to FLS from traditional classroom teaching, to gauge your perspectives on factors that supported and / or challenged your wellbeing in this process. I also want to establish how your ongoing experience of working in flexible spaces either supports or undermines your sense of wellbeing.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?
You are a teacher who has experience of teaching in both traditional classrooms and FLS. My approach to you has been by invitation of your school as part of a review process. I have had no access to your private contact details.

How do I agree to participate in this research?
With this information sheet is a Consent Form. Please complete it, scan it and return to my email address (at the bottom of the page), or, if we meet in person you can give it to me at the interview.
Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

I would like to interview you for no more than one hour. Ideally, the interview will take place at your place of work; if you prefer, the interview can be by video-call or telephone call. The interview will be digitally recorded, and we will discuss your experiences of wellbeing as a teacher during your transition from traditional classroom teaching to flexible learning spaces.

What are the discomforts and risks?

This should be a low-risk interview; the content is not contentious, but hearing the voice, experience and perspectives of teachers is vital in understanding how to support teacher wellbeing in FLS.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

My questioning and prompts are not intended to provoke negative attitudes; instead, my intention is to capture a snapshot of your experiences and viewpoints. I am committed to ensuring your professional status and integrity is recognised and affirmed, and that your voice is heard and correctly conveyed to the education community. Once interview recordings are transcribed, I will send you a copy for you to check to ensure your words are correctly captured, and providing an opportunity to request changes or deletions.

What are the benefits?

Teachers who have made the transition to teaching in FLS will have enlightening insights regarding teacher wellbeing that are not always well known to educators generally or even bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education. You are therefore a critical partner in this research study, and I am sure you will be supportive of the research. I will analyse the information I gather during this research study to prepare a written report. This research will make teachers' voices known through academic channels, like conferences and presentations, as well as a formal written thesis.

How will my privacy be protected?

You will be de-identified when I write up the research; comments made in interviews are treated as strictly private and confidential. As we will have face-to-face contact, I cannot offer anonymity, but my ethical conduct as a researcher is focussed on doing no harm to my participants.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The only cost to you will be to volunteer no more than one hour for an interview, and possibly 30 minutes to review a transcript at a later stage.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Two weeks after the first invitation (there will be a reminder after the first week).

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will receive a transcript of the interview. As and when my research becomes an 'output' this will be made available to those who have requested this on the Consent Form.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Leon Benade, email: lbenade@aut.ac.nz tel: (09) 921 9999 ext 7094

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , 921 9999 ext 6038

Appendix F: Consent form

Consent Form: Teacher Interview

Project title: Consultation and participation in the (re)design of school learning spaces

Project Supervisor: Dr Leon Benade

Researcher: Caroline Burns

○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 21 June 2018.

○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○ I understand that the interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed.

○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. Once the findings have been produced, however, I understand that the removal of my data may not be possible.

○ I agree to take part in this research.

○ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ○

No ○

Participant's signature:

....

Participant's name:

....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

Email: Mobile: Date:

Appendix G: Transcriber confidentiality

Confidentiality Agreement

Project title: Flexible Learning Spaces – Implications for Teacher Wellbeing

Project Supervisor: Dr Leon Benade

Researcher: Caroline Burns

○   I understand that all the material I will be asked to transcribe is confidential.

○   I understand that the contents of the digital recordings can only be discussed with the researcher.

○   I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.

Transcriber's signature:

             …………………………………………………………………………………………

Transcriber's name:

             …………………………………………………………………………………………

Transcriber's Contact Details (if appropriate):

Email:

Mobile:

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEC Reference number type the AUTEC reference number

Note: The Transcriber should retain a copy of this form

Appendix H: Ethics Approval Letter

19 August 2019
Leon Benade
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Leon

Ethics Application: **19/272 Flexible learning spaces - Implications for teacher wellbeing**
Thank you for submitting your application for ethical review. I am pleased to advise that the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) approved your ethics application at their meeting on 12 August 2019, subject to the following conditions:

1. Clarification about how the data is being stored and where that is happening. AUTEC advises that it needs to be stored on AUT premises once analysis has been completed;

1. Provision of an observation protocol, including clarification around how the observations of the teachers will take place, how consent will be obtained, how the classroom environment will be impacted, and how the students, other teachers and teacher aides present will be clearly excluded;

2. Reconsideration of the recruitment protocols given the limitations on the voluntariness of consent if the recruitment is done by the deputy principal;

3. Clarification of what level of confidentiality can be assured in these circumstances and inclusion of advice about this in the Information Sheet;

4. Provision of advice about the primary researcher's relationship with the school at which the research is being undertaken.

Please provide me with a response to the points raised in these conditions, indicating either how you have satisfied these points or proposing an alternative approach. AUTEC also requires copies of any altered documents, such as Information Sheets, surveys etc. You are not required to resubmit the application form again. Any changes to responses in the form required by the committee in their conditions may be included in a supporting memorandum.

Please note that the Committee is always willing to discuss with applicants the points that have been made. There may be information that has not been made available to the Committee, or aspects of the research may not have been fully understood.

Once your response is received and confirmed as satisfying the Committee's points, you will be notified of the full approval of your ethics application. Full approval is not effective until all the conditions have been met. Data collection may not commence until full approval has been confirmed. If these conditions are not met within six months, your application may be closed and a new application will be required if you wish to continue with this research.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, we ask that you use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.
I look forward to hearing from you,
Yours sincerely

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
Cc: carrieb@whangamata.school.nz