

**Transitioning into an innovative learning environment:  
Perceptions and experiences of longer-tenured and  
newly appointed teachers**

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## **Abstract**

Recent Ministry of Education (MOE) policy in New Zealand has encouraged schools to create Innovative Learning Environments (ILEs); environments that provide flexibility and openness so learning can be personalised according to each individual's strengths, abilities, languages, and cultures. Together, with the focus internationally of moving towards 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, many secondary schools are questioning their traditional single cell environments and are moving towards ILEs. It is apparent, as these open, flexible spaces are created, it is not just the physical environment that changes; an entire culture shift is required as teachers readjust their traditional roles and develop new skills. This study explores the experiences and support given to teachers as they transition from single cell classrooms into such an environment, and how this might differ for longer-tenured teachers compared to recently appointed teachers.

The research focused on a single case study of a New Zealand secondary school. An individual, face-to-face interview with the leader in charge of professional development was conducted, followed by two separate focus group interviews with each selected group of teachers to gain their perceptions and experiences. Then a review of relevant documentation was carried out so the documented support could be identified and compared to the teachers' perceptions of their experiences.

The findings from this case study identified both the challenges and support experienced by the participants. Both focus groups commented on expecting a pedagogical change but not the cultural change that accompanied the transition into the ILE. Their combined experiences indicated there was no single solution to supporting teachers in their transition but instead suggest the culture of the school was a significant factor. Providing structures and processes that allow collaborative practices and trust to develop were identified as essential for building a culture where teachers learn from each other. This case study may have implications for the support of teachers particularly in new schools that only have ILEs, as it has highlighted the shift needed in both cultural and pedagogical change by teachers as they transition into an ILE, and the type of culture leaders can encourage in their schools to support this.

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## 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 acknowledgments), 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 learning.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Yvonne Laberte". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending from the end.



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## Abbreviations

ERO	Education Review Office
ILE	Innovative Learning Environment
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement
NZC	New Zealand Curriculum
NZQA	New Zealand Qualification Authority
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLC	Professional Learning Community
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

With changes occurring globally both socially and economically, education has in recent years looked for innovative ways to equip students for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Internationally the focus has shifted away from single cell environments to Innovative Learning Environments (ILEs) as a means of delivering the skills and competencies needed for the future. Likewise in New Zealand, many schools have been changing the way they deliver the New Zealand Curriculum (MOE, 2007), as teaching and learning have evolved to meet the changing needs of the world around them. The MOE has supported schools by developing policies to ensure their property requirements meet these needs. In recent years, a number of schools have been moving towards ILEs; creating flexible learning spaces where student-centred learning and collaborative teaching practices are central to its development. For teachers to effectively use these spaces they need to be supported in developing both new pedagogies and ways of working together that are suited for these new spaces. The first part of this chapter introduces the issues that have led towards these changes in the educational landscape, providing insight into why teachers need to learn new skills and knowledge. This leads to the rationale which outlines the focus of the research; exploring teachers' perceptions of transitioning into an ILE, the support they received, and the challenges they faced. It is by gaining a clearer understanding of this transition phase that both leaders and schools will gain insights into how to best support teachers to effectively use the new spaces that are becoming increasingly common in New Zealand schools. The chapter ends by outlining the structure of the thesis and describing the six chapters involved.

## **1.2 Future focused education**

Major global, social and economic changes in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led educators to examine the role and purpose of education and ask whether current learning is the learning needed for the future (Bolstad et al., 2012). Several significant international projects have been undertaken to address the issue of what 21<sup>st</sup> century education should look like, including those from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (Delors et al., 1996), and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Dumont,

Istance and Benavides, 2010; OECD 2013, 2015). Dumont et al. (2010) in their project for the OECD identify the drivers for change as advances with ICT, the shift to economies based on knowledge and a demand of lifelong learners with the skills required to cope with the changing world. Their findings provide a knowledge base for designing learning environments that cultivate lifelong, self-directed learning, with the skills and competencies interwoven into the learning experiences so as to prepare learners for the future (Dumont et al., 2010). UNESCO commissioned a report on 21<sup>st</sup> century education suggesting a more integrated, socially-orientated and idealistic view on education that was much broader than the economic view of the OECD (Delors et al., 1996). It affirmed Dumont et al.'s (2010) concept of lifelong learning and introduced a new way of conceptualising learning. Delors et al. (1996) presented four pillars of learning that support education and life; learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. Bolstad et al. (2012) adopted a similar view of learning from their research on current practice and futures-thinking in education, when they suggested, "a much more complex view of knowledge, one that incorporates knowing, doing and being" (p. 14) needs to be used in the future. From their findings, Bolstad et al. (2012) have identified five key themes needed to provide a connected, coherent, future orientated learning system within New Zealand. These include a commitment to personalised learning, a curriculum that uses knowledge to develop learning capacity, the rethinking of learners' and teachers' roles, and the forging of partnerships with the wider community. To achieve these, Bolstad et al. (2012) suggest new meaning needs to be given to knowledge and new understandings need to be developed for learning. They propose teachers and students will need to rethink and restructure their roles, as teachers will no longer be transmitting knowledge for students to absorb. Both teachers and students will need to draw on their strengths and knowledge and work together to support learning in the classroom. As a result, a more complex view of what knowledge means must be developed in schools, with schools reorganising their learning systems; looking at how they resource and support them to reflect the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bolstad et al., 2012).

The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (MOE, 2007) document provides future focused issues such as sustainability, citizenship, enterprise, and globalisation for exploration; suggesting that students need to be future orientated and adaptable to deal with both the present and the unknown future. According to the MOE (2007) students will need to be inquirers who are innovative, curious and able to deal with uncertainty. Ananiadou and Claro (2009) confirm the

“current century will demand a very different set of skills and competencies from people in order for them to function effectively at work, as citizens and in their leisure time” (p. 6). They further suggest that these skills and competencies need to become the core of what teachers and schools care about if learners are to become citizens of the future. With these skills and competencies, learners will be able to deal with new situations and environments of the future that may have high degrees of uncertainty and complexity. Perkins (2014) states that the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics, even when strongly developed are not enough. What we conventionally teach may not develop the citizens who we want or need for the future. He goes on to suggest that what we have traditionally taught is no longer what it used to be; it has changed and new areas have emerged. Today’s learners need to “develop skills and attitudes that address some very broad challenges, like self-understanding, empathy, ethics, and collaboration and of course, good thinking” (Perkins, 2014, p. 199). These skills, attitudes or dispositions are often referred to as 21<sup>st</sup> century skills or key competencies, and can vary in their content but are important for living and thriving in today’s world. Dumont, Istance, and Benavides (2010) suggest schools currently prepare students with knowledge that is very different from the adaptive expertise that will be required by organisations, societies, and economics of the future. They define adaptive expertise as the “ability to apply meaningfully-learned knowledge and skills flexibly and creatively in a variety of contexts and situations” (Dumont et al., 2010, p. 16). As a result, schools need to refocus on developing both curricula and learning environments that promote the adaptive expertise. Globally there is a trend towards developing curricula and learning environments that are more responsive to the world and the complex ways of living in it; leading teaching and learning away from the traditional approaches of the past towards 21<sup>st</sup> century learning (OECD, 2013) in favour of more responsive, innovative and flexible learning experiences. The NZC (MOE, 2007) already provides a flexible and enabling framework for leaders and teachers to use, as a strong longer-tenured for promoting innovation. Leaders and teachers need to focus their attention on how it is being used and the type of environment where it is being delivered, to make sure it provides the learning needed for the future.

### **1.3 ILEs**

The OECD (2013) defines a learning environment as “an ecosystem that includes the activity and the outcomes of the learning” (p. 11). This includes both the learning taking place and its

setting. The OECD (2013) has constructed a learning framework consisting of three components: the pedagogical core, the formative cycle and partnerships to consider the key aspects of learning environments. The pedagogical core consists of learners, educators, content, and resources. In order to increase innovation, these elements can be thought about either individually or together as a whole, or the organisational dynamics that connect them can be redesigned. The formative cycle refers to the leadership and learning design, including feedback and reflection processes that lead to redesign and innovation. By continuously engaging in this cycle, schools can devise strategies for learning and encourage innovative practices. Finally, creating wider partnerships enriches the core and formative cycle as well as extending the learning environments' boundaries, resources, and learning spaces (OECD, 2013). The MOE (2016b) has adopted this view by the OECD of a learning environment and have summarised it as the "complete physical, social and pedagogical context in which learning can occur" (MOE, 2016c). The MOE believes ILEs deliver the NZC (MOE, 2007) as it was intended so students can develop the competencies they need for study, work, or lifelong learning while experiencing a future focused curriculum that engages and challenges them. As it remains future focused, it has the capability to adapt and evolve to the changing world around us (MOE, 2016c). ILEs are used to describe flexible learning spaces where teaching and learning can be done differently compared to traditional practices, offering both teachers and learners flexibility, agency, and connectedness (MOE, 2016b). Benade (2015) describes ILEs as creating open spaces where walls, corridors, and single-cell classrooms have been removed. He further states: "Open design encourages flexibility in learning and teaching, allows collaborative, team teaching, and is coupled with flexible, ergonomically-designed furniture that is easily moved and re-arranged" (p. 43).

As ILEs are more open than the traditional single cell classrooms, they can accommodate more than one traditional class of 25-30 students and several teachers simultaneously. The spaces can support individual, small, and large groups as well as whole class work; providing opportunities for innovative practices to expand traditional approaches to teaching and learning (MOE, 2016b). ILEs are designed to support modern learning practices, where student agency is expected. This is when students have the knowledge and capacity to direct learning and take responsibility for their own learning (Education Review Office, 2016). According to Szejnberg and Finch's (2006) multi-method study of 10 secondary schools in Poland, if students continued

to sit in traditional rows within the classroom, then teacher-centred approaches dominate the learning and innovation is lost. Therefore, the flexibility and openness of ILEs mean learning can be personalised according to each individual's strengths, abilities, language, and culture. Quality learning experiences can be created for students where they can work collaboratively within authentic contexts, bringing their own prior knowledge and interests (Osborne, 2013). ILEs encourage collaboration and inquiry not only for students but also with teachers; allowing them to teach in ways that best suit identified needs of students (MOE, 2016b). Gislason (2009) supports this by stating that physical designs used for teaching and learning facilitate collaboration as well as multidisciplinary teaching. He studied the impact of school architecture on teaching and social climate at a senior school with a focus on environmental studies. Gislason (2009) argues the open plan environment allows students to socially connect with a larger number of other students and positively contributes to the social climate of the school. Gifford (2002) agrees, as his analysis of environmental psychology found open learning spaces could have positive effects on student outcomes and result in fewer behavioural problems when teacher pedagogy is matched to the learning space. He further suggests there are decreases in anti-social behaviour when classroom environments are less crowded, as pedagogy, layout, and programmes all contribute to students feeling a sense of belonging.

The *New Generation Learning Spaces* project, a joint project by the University of Melbourne and Australian Research Council was carried out to evaluate the impact of physical learning environments on teaching and learning (Byers & Imms, 2016). In their comparative study of an ILE and conventional Australian classrooms, Byers and Imms (2016) found improvements in the achievement of over 15% in core subjects like Mathematics and English as students transitioned from conventional classrooms to ILEs. This is supported by the research from the University of Salford which found that well-designed classrooms in primary schools can improve learning progress by up to 16% in a single year (Barrett, Zhang, Davies, & Barrett, 2015). Their findings showed the best designs provided the appropriate level of stimulation, supported individualisation by offering different pedagogies for learning, and also had good quality physical features such as temperature, light, and air quality (Barrett et al., 2015). The MOE (2016a) agrees that when the core elements such as lighting, heating, ventilation, and acoustics are inadequately provided, there is an adverse effect on student outcomes. They further claim the more important aspect of a flexible learning space is its increased size as this allows a range of

different learning activities and groupings to occur as well as easy adaptation and reconfiguration to suit the learning needs of individuals (MOE, 2016a). The MOE (2016a) state that meeting the needs of learners is complex and requires a range of teaching techniques, spaces, and resources. While it is important to get the basics right and have the right lighting, technology, heating, ventilation, and acoustics, the main resource in the classroom is still the teacher. Byers and Imms (2016) support this comment, as their findings from the *New Generation Learning Spaces* project showed that the teacher's competency to facilitate the intended pedagogical function of the space was a major factor in its overall success. Having a flexible learning space or physical space is only one aspect of creating an ILE and as Blackmore, Bateman, Loughlin, O'Mara, and Aranda (2011) argue, "buildings alone are not enough; it is about relationships and changing cultures and practices" (p.37). There is a need to look closely at what is happening in those spaces in order for teachers to transition effectively and facilitate learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **1.4 Rationale**

With the focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and the new competencies and skills needed for the evolving world we live in, the MOE (2016b) and OECD (2015) have suggested ILEs as a way forward. As schools create flexible learning spaces in response to this suggestion, teachers are being asked to adapt and adjust to the pedagogical, cultural, and professional learning changes that accompany the transition into these spaces. This is requiring teachers to undertake professional learning to gain new skills and knowledge so they are able to transition effectively and then sustain appropriate teaching practices within the ILE. Gislason (2009) claims ILEs are less successful when teachers do not use teaching and learning pedagogies which suit the space, supporting the need for teacher professional learning and support as they transition. Unfortunately, as Byers and Imms (2016) have claimed, the literature has historically focused on the design of new spaces and not on its use, so there is currently marginal support for teachers to draw from. Blackmore et al. (2011) confirm this with their literature review on learning spaces and student outcomes, where they state there is little evidence on transitioning into new spaces but more focus on the design phase. They also suggest the literature focuses on perceptions and the quality of conditions, with little empirical evidence about how space is used and to what effect. Within the literature review discussed in Chapter Two, some current case study research has been shared but more research is needed to fully explore this area of



interest. It is with this gap in the literature in mind that this thesis was designed and undertaken. The aim of this research is to contribute to the limited knowledge around teachers' experiences when transitioning into ILEs and make recommendations on how to support teachers through this process effectively. This aim is supported by a single site case study and the following research questions:

- What are the perceptions of longer-tenured and recently appointed teachers of the support experienced in helping them adjust to an ILE?
- What are the pedagogical, cultural, and professional learning challenges that longer-tenured and recently appointed teachers experience when moving into an ILE?
- How can the pedagogical, cultural, and professional learning support for teachers when moving into an ILE be improved?

## **1.5 The setting of the research**

New Zealand secondary schools, sometimes referred to as colleges or high schools, are generally for students in Years 9 to 13, although a few secondary schools start in Year 7. The majority of secondary schools in New Zealand are state funded with the rest being either state-integrated or private schools (MOE, 2017). The NZC is the framework used by schools to set the direction for student learning and provide guidance for designing their own individualised programmes, so students can develop the competencies needed for study and work (MOE, 2016b). Most secondary schools tend to be structured physically as well as in terms of the curriculum they deliver, around the seven learning areas of the NZC. As a result, teachers tend to work collaboratively with other teachers who come from similar curriculum backgrounds and experiences. The exceptions to this are secondary schools using a theme based approach to delivering the curriculum. This may be taught across the whole school, only at a particular year level, or across a combination of subjects such as English and Social Studies. Schools often have form classes or a tutor group where one teacher monitors the students' progress and pastoral needs (MOE, 2017). The National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is New Zealand's main qualification for secondary school students in their last three years of schooling, administered by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). As students study programmes, the skills and knowledge they gain are assessed against standards. A range of

internal and external assessments are used to measure how well students meet these standards. When students achieve the standards, they gain credits which contribute to their overall certificates at Level One, Two, and Three respectively (MOE, 2017). The MOE's (2016b) goal is to develop students who are confident, connected, actively involved and lifelong learners; who can realise their potential and so are enabled to live full and satisfying lives. Schools are encouraged to engage with their communities in deciding the specific ways to develop a curriculum and consequently develop programmes for their school that is forward-looking, inclusive, engage and challenge their learners, and affirm the identities of their learners. This should be reflected not only in the curriculum and programmes of the schools, but also in their vision, structures, learning spaces, and relationships (MOE, 2016b).

Most of New Zealand's schools were constructed in the 1950s and 1960s (MOE, 2011) when the traditional approach of single cell classrooms was the norm; where it was one teacher, teaching one subject to one class at the same pace for generally one hour (Hood, 2015). The MOE (2011) recognises that approaches to teaching and learning have changed over the last 20 years; they state that "traditional approaches to teaching and learning are no longer enough on their own to give children the best education to prepare them for life" (MOE, 2016b, "the local context," para. 2). As classrooms are the most utilised space in schools, the MOE suggests schools need to adapt to reflect these changes. To assist schools in achieving this outcome, they have mandated the inclusion of flexible learning spaces; "many different sized spaces so they can support different ways of teaching and learning and be used for different types of activities" (MOE, 2016a, "spaces, storage, equipment," para. 1), as part of their *Ten Year Property Plan* (MOE, 2016d). The *Ten Year Property Plan* ensures school buildings are maintained and can support 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning. It is the Board of Trustees' responsibility to develop a *Ten Year Property Plan* so as to "plan for the right amount of space and to care for school property so that the school provides the best environment for student learning" (MOE, 2016d, para. 4). The use of flexible learning spaces support and enable a range of teaching and learning approaches to be used at any time to meet the needs of individual needs of students. It is the MOE's intent for "all schools to have vibrant, well connected, ILEs that encourage and support many different types of learning" (MOE, 2016a, "the impact of design," para. 1) in the coming years.

A case study approach was adopted as the research setting; using one New Zealand co-educational urban secondary school. A description of the case study school has not been given in detail for ethical and privacy purposes. The case school was built as an ILE, with learning spaces being open plan as well as specialist facilities being available such as art rooms, a dance studio, and a gymnasium. Teachers work in mixed teams in each open space or community, sharing a workroom that overlooks their teaching space. The NZC is taught using a mixture of traditional and themed approaches. The research involved interviews with one senior leader and two focus groups; one group of longer-tenured teachers and another of recently appointed teachers, and some review of publically available school documentation via the school website. Those involved in the interviews provided different perceptions to inform the research.

## **1.6 Thesis organisation**

This thesis is set out in six chapters and the chapters are organised as follows:

Chapter Two follows this introductory chapter and is a review of the literature relevant to this research. The literature review underwent two major iterations; the first one was prior to the data being collected, the second after the data had been analysed and themes identified. As a result, the literature has been structured into two parts. It draws from both the education and organisational theory fields, exploring first the development of ILEs and professional learning, and continuing with the effect of culture, theories of change, and impact of risk and trust.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology and methods chosen and applied to this research project. It includes an explanation of the analysis done and its validity; both internal and external and ethical considerations undertaken complete the chapter.

Chapter Four presents the transition of teachers into an ILE through the experiences and perceptions of one leader and two focus groups; longer-tenured and recently appointed teachers. Their findings are analysed and presented under three key themes of challenges, support, and future solutions.

Chapter Five is a critical analysis of the findings from Chapter Four along with the integration of relevant literature from Chapter Two. The findings are brought together in order to be critiqued to gain further insights on the transition into an ILE, resulting in a conceptual framework that is discussed.

The thesis concludes with Chapter Six summarising the findings based on the three research questions. Recommendations for leaders, and schools, and for possible further support for teachers and research are also made.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The concept of teaching is shifting as students have more access to technology and the world around is evolving (Benade, 2017), requiring teachers to move away from the traditional teacher-centred models of teaching to more innovative practices associated with collaboration and student-centred learning. With a future-oriented focus and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills being promoted by the MOE (2016b) and OECD (2015), new environments for learning are being created to support this promotion. Students are expected to take an active role in their future and teachers need to be able to help them learn effectively in this rapidly changing world (Timperley, 2011). Teachers, therefore, according to Guskey (2000), have to keep abreast of new knowledge and skills in teaching and learning and use it to refine their existing skills in order to meet the needs of students. The development of ILEs and related teacher professional learning, are pivotal shifts that are impacting on teaching. These two major shifts are discussed and critiqued in part one of this literature review. After the data collection phase, the literature review was restructured with a distinct second part added to look at the conceptual components of culture, change theories along with trust and risk which were sitting beneath these shifts, in response to the findings coming through. Part two presents these conceptual components from the field of organisational theory to provide a different lens through which ILE theory and professional learning can be viewed and critiqued. The components have been organised into three broad categories; effects of culture, theories of change, and the impacts of risk and trust. Part two then discusses these components and their relevance to this case study, providing extra insights to bring back into the education field. Analysing the conceptual components highlights the leader's need to be equipped along with these other frameworks to inform their decision-making as well as practice. Together, both parts synthesise together and confirm ILEs are not just a physical space but a "social" space (Benade, 2017); where the users of the space are influenced by the space and in turn influence and affect the space themselves. Gaining an understanding of those influences allows the transition of teachers into ILEs to be explored in depth.

## **2.2 Part One – ILEs and professional learning**

### **2.2.1 Research studies of ILEs**

ILEs are an area of emerging research. Two studies of particular global interest are the OECD's development of an ILE framework and the University of Melbourne's project on developing and sustaining innovative practices in ILEs. The focus of both these studies and ILE research in general has predominantly been on the space itself; its design and the impact this has had on technology and curriculum design. There has been little research conducted on the human resource; in particular, how people have impacted, utilised, and modified practices with the space. The contexts of the research studies discussed in this section are set around flexible spaces and ILEs, providing an overview of ILE research with an emphasis towards the human resource aspect. Some research studies that are a meta-analysis of different cases have been identified and will be presented along with some individual research cases.

Blackmore et al. (2011) reviewed over 700 primary documents as part of a literature review examining the connection between learning spaces and student learning outcomes in schools. A conceptual framework of four phases: design, transition and implementation, consolidation, and sustainability was developed to map the research in relation to teachers, learners, and the space. The review revealed gaps in the literature on how teachers and learners use the space with the discovery that most of the research focused on the design phase. This was supported by Cleveland and Fisher (2014) who reviewed methodologies and methods that had been used to evaluate physical learning environments. Cleveland and Fisher (2014) claim the information gained through evaluating building design could be used to inform decisions on both the effectiveness of the building design and how best to utilise the new environment to support pedagogical practices. Although there are a number of methods being used in various countries they found these methods focused predominately on the physical features of the environment rather than the connection between the space and learner outcomes (Cleveland & Fisher, 2014). Blackmore et al. (2011) identified five emerging themes for further study in their literature review; engaging both teacher and student voice with the ongoing redesign, the importance of relationships and changing culture and practices, teacher professional learning and pedagogy, exploring spatial pedagogies, and teaching and learning within both physical and virtual spaces. The use of communication technologies and the creation of cultural change and capacity via

professional learning and knowledge were also identified by the OECD (2015) as underlying themes common to strategies promoting innovative learning. The other themes identified were clarifying focus, engaging in collaboration and co-operation, and having change agents (OECD, 2015).

The OECD (2015) conducted a range of case studies over 26 countries and education systems to gain a deeper understanding of innovative practices. They asked the 26 participating education systems to submit examples of strategies or initiatives used to spread or sustain innovative learning. The underlying themes common to these strategies were summarised and have been used to confirm the ILE framework developed by the OECD (2015). The ILE, or “7+3” framework, consists of seven learning principles and three dimensions which overlay them. Earlier research by the OECD (2013) conducted 40 case studies to confirm what they claim makes an effective learning environment. The findings from these case studies confirm the seven learning principles are at the core of a learning environment, although they may not be realised in the same way and need to be interpreted in relation to their local context. They further discovered that particular innovative practices often addressed more than one principle at a time. As a result, the framework can be used to provide guidance for the development of ILEs and the conditions needed to optimise putting the principles into place (OECD, 2015). The framework is presented below (OECD, 2015):

Principle one: make learning and engagement central;

Principle two: ensure that learning is social and often collaborative;

Principle three: be highly attuned to learner motivations and emotions;

Principle four: be acutely sensitive to individual differences;

Principle five: be demanding for each learner but without excessive overload;

Principle six: use assessments consistent with learning aims, with strong emphasis on formative feedback; and,

Principle seven: promote horizontal connectedness across activities and subjects, in and out of school.

Dimension one: innovate the pedagogical core;

Dimension two: become “formative organisations” with strong learning leadership; and,

Dimension three: open up to partnerships. (p. 18).

Based on their synthesis of case studies from different countries, the ILE framework outlines in broad terms what principles and dimensions are needed for an effective learning environment to occur. Using some research case studies, four examples will be presented to showcase some of the finer details of the OECD findings. They will be focused on teacher experiences as they deal with the pedagogical change associated with working in ILEs.

Campbell, Saltmarsh, Chapman, and Drew (2013) undertook research of teachers’ professional learning needs in three open plan primary schools located in Sydney as they adopted ILE approaches. As physical barriers were removed, teacher practices became more visible and de-privatised, with teachers working together to share ideas, skills, and practice. New forms of leadership and collaboration were reported and a wider appreciation and empathy for others was practised within the space. Campbell et al. (2013) confirm one of the key issues principals faced was managing successful teams of teachers. Principals within the case schools claimed successful teams did not occur automatically within communities and certainly not without explicit dialogue and help. Campbell et al. (2013) discovered teachers were resigned to accepting some teams would inevitably not work well together regardless of the amount of external support provided, and this could lead to breakdowns in collegial relationships. Principals spent time and effort providing strategies to minimise this problem. Another issue that emerged was the reshaping of leadership models within the school as there was an increased need for teachers to assume leadership roles as leadership become more distributed. Overall, practices of professional conversations, distributed leadership, and a culture of accepting failure was used to reshape teacher practice, although acceptance of failure was found to be compromised by national testing expectations. The teachers’ level of risk-taking, creativity, and innovation they were willing to engage with was challenged, as they felt constrained by the pressure of external accountability. Further and later research in the same case schools by Saltmarsh, Chapman, Campbell, and Drew (2015) on how teachers’ notions of structure inform classroom practice, identified tensions experienced by teachers between the perceived pedagogical practices required in open spaces and the traditional order and structure



understood by them to demonstrate professional competence. Teachers expressed a range of anxieties about how aspects of their practice, including failures and noise, would be viewed by those around them. It was acknowledged these anxieties became less over time, as some teachers became aware that having their practice viewed by others benefited their professional growth. These two studies highlight a number of issues teachers experienced transitioning into ILEs and how open spaces became a resource over time rather than a constraint, especially when teachers were willing to take risks, engage in co-learning, and be challenged.

Woolner, Clark, Laing, Thomas, and Tiplady (2014) also studied teaching staff needs in a school in England as they prepared to move to a large open space environment with the intention of facilitating inquiry learning. The study centred around an experimental week where inquiry learning took place in an existing large place, exploring the teachers' experiences. The senior leaders found the traditional roles of both student and teacher were challenged during this week; students became the experts while teachers became the facilitators of learning. Concerns were raised during the experimental week by teachers. These involved loss of personal space, need for collaborative planning, sharing a common language, collective responsibility, student behaviour, and noise. As a result, teachers may have observed and considered practices of others but it didn't automatically lead to the formation of collaborative practices as it was intended. The major challenge that emerged as practices were de-privatised was ensuring cultural norms were challenged and disrupted enough to produce new forms of practice. Leaders needed to deliberately support the process of changing the culture by providing systems and structures that addressed concerns and challenged existing norms. Woolner et al. (2014) concluded cultural change was needed to change the teaching and learning so it reflected the physical space; a change in expectations, intentions, and understanding of what teaching and learning were required.

An Australian study of junior secondary schools by Deed and Lesko (2015) interviewed 10 teachers across four newly purpose-built schools. Their research investigated how these teachers adapted as they moved into open learning environments over several years. They discovered teachers had a level of uncertainty about the appropriateness of their teaching methods as they initially entered these spaces. They recognised the possibilities the open

spaces provided but also the level of inherent risk that came from the increased interactions with others and the increased exposure it offered. As teachers adapted their practice, their new practices contained new elements as well as maintained the traditional ones they were familiar with. Deed and Lesko (2015) refer to this as hybrid pedagogies; both conventional and hybrid practices were present as the teacher made adaptive choices between them. Deed and Lesko (2005) found in any ILE, there were likely to be teachers at different stages of understanding of how to effectively use these spaces. This resulted in a set of temporary practices where there was no shared culture and no coherent pedagogical practices were visible, as teachers were constantly moving through stages of negotiation and experimentation. The need to move through these stages suggests that transition takes time and effort on the part of teachers, but also on leaders to help teachers stay focused on the journey and keep the vision of what they are aiming for at the forefront of their practice.

In New Zealand, Benade (2017) has carried out two studies focused on the use of digital technology and the emerging development of flexible teaching and learning spaces. The first study by Benade (2015), *"21<sup>st</sup> century learning"*, investigated whether introducing digital tools and working in flexible spaces brought about pedagogical change, in particular, change in how teachers reflect. Benade's (2016) second study *"Being a teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> century"* continued this focus, seeking to get an understanding of modern teaching practices and the transition teachers and leaders make as they deal with 21<sup>st</sup> learning challenges. Benade (2015) found teachers had to make a mental mind shift to engage differently to teach in flexible spaces as these spaces tested their beliefs about teaching and learning, requiring them to develop new skills, including the ability to engage in reflection. Benade (2017) claims the tool of reflective practice allows teachers to work collaboratively to critique each other and support changes to each other's practice, shifting their assumptions and values to cope with the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. Teachers had felt challenged by these changes but recognised a shift in thinking was required, although not all teachers had made the transition as they were not prepared to concede control over their class and the space. Benade (2015) concluded conceding control played a part in whether teachers were able to make the pedagogical change that came with working in a flexible space. He continues by suggesting this shift does not come easily to teachers and attributes this to a fear of risk-taking. Benade (2016) claims trust underpins collaborative reflection and if individuals are to alter their mindset, they need to be

open and transparent about their practice. Trusting an individual means opening up personal failings or beliefs to others which makes teachers vulnerable to betrayal (Benade, 2016). As a result, Benade (2015) claims teachers find the idea of public sharing highly risky and need high levels of trust to overcome this vulnerability. As flexible spaces increase the amount of public sharing due to the de-privatised practices that accompany it, trust is a key factor for leaders to consider and ensure is in place when teachers are working or transitioning into ILEs.

Across the four research case studies the researchers have commented on the shift teachers go through as they adapt to the new space. This was often in response to the de-privatised practices teachers encountered as they found their role needs to adjust to the new conditions of practice. As their practice reshapes, their assumptions and beliefs were challenged and a shift in thinking needs to accompany this change of practice. As a result, professional learning to support these changes has been highlighted as an important factor for the success of teachers in transitioning effectively. The case studies also mention relationship building, trust, and collaboration as being accompanying factors in helping these shifts to occur. These factors underpin the learning and teaching taking place, and are all related to leadership, which is critical in supporting these shifts to happen. Leaders are influential in providing the conditions and systems that support teachers in changing their practices through mechanisms such as collaboration and professional learning.

### **2.2.2 Systems of learning**

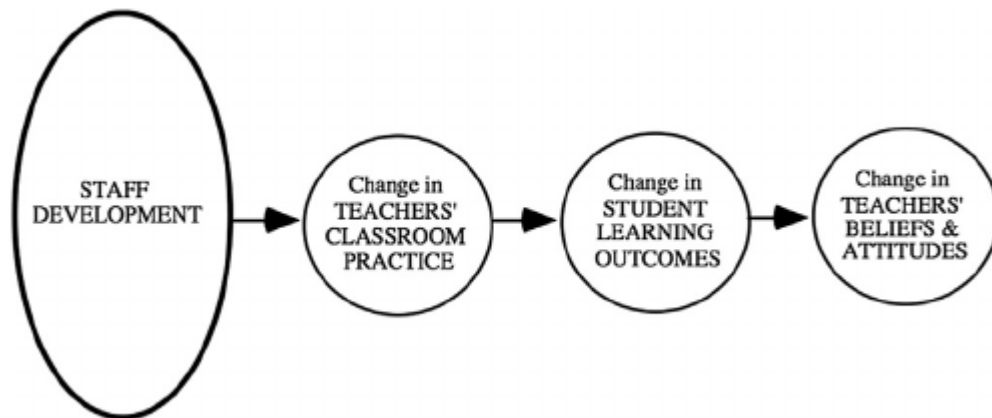
For professional learning to be effective, it needs to impact on the way teachers think and act (Timperley, 2008). Timperley (2011) claims professional learning is when teachers create professional knowledge in a way that challenges previous assumptions and creates new meanings. Alternatively, Guskey (2000) defines professional learning as a series of “processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so they might, in turn, improve the learning of students” (p. 16). He suggests it should be an intentional, ongoing and systemic process linked to a purposeful and clear vision, leading to continuous improvement and positive change. Timperley (2011) and Guskey (2000) both agree that learning needs to be ongoing and in-depth, as requiring new meaning to teaching practice is transformative rather than an additive change. Transformative change requires the deliberate change to beliefs, values, and norms, due to critically reflecting on experiences so

new perspectives are gained, instead of just adding to existing practices (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). Teachers' current perspectives are based on their past experiences, beliefs, assumptions and expectations, feelings and moods, or their personal agenda and aspirations (Larrivee, 2000). Their personal filtering system or screens allow only certain responses through, dependent on their interpretations, and this determines their actions. Only by repositioning themselves and adopting new lenses, can they gain new perspectives on why they behave the way they do and modify their practices (Larrivee, 2000).

Timperley et al. (2007) synthesised research evidence on teacher professional learning and development that promotes positive student outcomes. From this, they claim professional learning can be difficult for experienced teachers compared to teachers who are new to teaching, as they bring with them a wealth of knowledge and well-formed ideas about teaching and learning based on that experience. This can lead to difficulties as new information challenges the beliefs, values, and practices they have embedded over time and can create dissonance. Le Fevre (2014) in her case study followed 11 teachers in an elementary school located in the United States who were implementing a school-wide literacy initiative. She found that teachers experience vulnerability as they are forced to examine both previous and current beliefs and practices. This is particularly so when teachers' belief systems are built up over time and are embedded in personal experiences, so are often unexamined and unquestioned (Hannay, Mahony, & MacFarlane, as cited in Timperley et al., 2007). Larrivee (2000) suggests "teachers have to continually change the underlying beliefs that drive their present behaviour" (p. 301), through examining these assumptions, interpretations, and expectations. It is through examining these factors that they can learn to "be fluid and be able to move in different directions rather than be stuck only being able to move in one direction" (Larrivee, 2000, p. 294). Having different personal views of practice amongst teachers allows ideas to be shared and explored, and also allows unexamined assumptions about education to be challenged (Timperley, 2011), so teachers can actively engage with and apply new learning and change their practice. Timperley (2008) states that professional learning that builds new skills and knowledge congruent with existing teachers' understandings can be integrated quickly into practice but, when teacher's personal assumptions are challenged, new approaches are needed. Teachers are more likely to reject new ideas as unrealistic and inappropriate unless

they can be persuaded that the new approach has value, particularly when their assumptions are being challenged.

Professional learning is linked to teacher change and in the past, there was a belief this was being “done” to teachers (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). Here, teachers engaged in programmes that attempted to change their beliefs and attitudes by supplying new knowledge with the result of changing teacher practices (Guskey, 2002). Current professional learning is moving away from this towards seeing change as growth and learning; where teachers are seen as learners who work in learning communities. In line with this Guskey (2002) suggested a model for professional learning (see Figure 2.1), where changed teacher beliefs and attitudes occur after teachers have evidenced changes in students’ learning as a result of changed classroom practices.



**Figure 2.1: A model of teacher change (Guskey, 2002, p. 383)**

Other models, such as Clarke and Hollingsworth’s (2002), use similar domains but instead of a linear approach, interconnect the domains and provide a cyclic version with multiple entry points and connections. Similarly, Timperley, Kaser, and Halbert (2014) recommend using a collaborative approach which “is an ongoing spiral of inquiry, learning and action” (p. 6), that develops “collective professional agency either within a school or across a cluster of schools” (p. 5). They identify six phases (see Figure 2.2) that are closely linked with the OECD’s (2015) “7+3” framework which promotes innovative learning. Timperley et al. (2014) argue it is the collaborative inquiry process that matters, for it is difficult for individuals to do inquiry in isolation from their colleagues. They suggest because it is an ongoing cycle, teachers should continually use what has been learned to improve in other areas in the school as this will lead to embedded innovative practices.



**Figure 2.2: Spiral of inquiry (Timperley et al., 2014, p. 5)**

Timperley et al. (2014) claim as there is no one size fits all solution to teacher learning, it is through engaging in collaborative inquiry that teachers will have the confidence and insight required to engage and develop innovative practices. Richardson (1998) agrees that collaborative professional learning models such as professional inquiry, where reflection and change are ongoing processes, can help develop teachers and support a change in culture. Richardson's (1998) long-term study on the professional learning programmes implemented in two elementary schools in the United States, describes meeting with teachers in groups and individually to explore their beliefs and practices by discussing their videotaped teaching practices. Importantly, during the research there were no predetermined outcomes; teachers followed their own inquiries and change. As a result, teachers took responsibility for their decisions and could justify their actions to others. Benade (2015) also agrees that using processes of collaborative inquiry enable individuals to problem solve and inform their practice, building professional capacity. According to Benade (2015), the construction of collaborative teams enables teachers to make supportive yet critical comments and suggestions to each other in order to bring about a change of practice. However, he claims this requires a high level of trust if teachers are to benefit from such comments from their colleagues.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) discuss three types of teacher knowledge: knowledge for practice, knowledge in practice, and knowledge of practice. Each of these describes a particular type of learning and teachers' involvement in that learning. Knowledge for practice consists of existing knowledge about what "constitutes the basic domains of knowledge about teaching"

(Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 7) or what is commonly referred to as best practice. It is not based on first-hand experiences or observations of teachers; it is instead learned from attending workshops and professional meetings, pre-service training and other such contexts where outside experts provide the formal knowledge. Richardson (1998) claims programmes such as these are relatively short-lived, although they succeed with teachers whose beliefs match the assumptions aligned with the change being promoted. Professional learning is moving away from this type of knowledge as there is little evidence it impacts on teacher practice or student outcomes (Timperley, 2011). Timperley (2011) argues the difference is “professional learning requires teachers to be seriously engaged in their learning while professional development is often seen as merely participation” (p. 5). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) refer to the second type of knowledge as knowledge in practice; a type of teacher knowledge gained through reflection and inquiry in and on practice that comes from experience. They acknowledge experienced teachers as generators of knowledge, making it available to less experienced or less expert teachers through concepts such as master teachers, mentors, and other collaborative arrangements that support teachers working together. This fits with both Timperley et al. (2014) and Benade’s (2015) collaborative practices, where the constructs of reflection and inquiry form the basis for learning, and teachers create professional knowledge through interacting with colleagues in ways that challenge previous assumptions and create new meanings. The third type of knowledge, knowledge of practice, consists of local knowledge obtained through theorising and constructing teachers’ own experiences and connecting them to larger issues (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). They suggest that local inquiring can expand from classroom practices to curriculum development and eventually to whole-school reform. Inquiry is becoming an important skill set for teachers as learning approaches for both students and teachers change and adapt to fit the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs of both learners and teachers, particularly in relation to collaborative practices.

### **2.2.3 Collaborative practices**

According to Timperley (2003), there is a new professionalism in schools where “professional autonomy is replaced by a more collaborative approach where teachers discuss student achievement information, observe one another teaching, and modify their teaching methods in the light of achievement information” (p. 3). Hargreaves (2000) agrees that teachers are reworking their roles and identities as professionals in a much more collegial workplace than

ever before. He claims the role of a teacher has expanded over the years to include collaborative work and consultation and has moved away from the autonomy associated in the past with teaching and this now calls for new skills and dispositions. What he argues is teachers are turning more to each other for professional learning and support, to find a sense of direction in this 21<sup>st</sup> century world. The de-privatisation of practice is creating pathways for teachers to collaborate, share, and discuss both practice and beliefs as they work to improve student outcomes. Schools are increasingly expected to be professional learning communities where one type of pedagogical style is no longer favoured, and collegiality and sharing are the new norms (Timperley, 2011).

A literature review on human resource issues in education compiled for the MOE by Fullan and Mascal (2000) confirm that for professional learning to be effective it should be collaborative, active, connected, and ongoing. They continue by stating that learning communities should be developed at all levels as part of professional development because “if a teacher does not work in a professional learning community (PLC), where teachers work collaboratively, sharing passion and purpose for their work, then professional development is short-lived” (p. 34). Hargreaves (2000) supports this by stating that teachers learn best in PLCs. He further states that collaboration amongst teachers supports genuine dialogue about practice-based problems and challenges that lead to improved student outcomes. Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, and Thomas (2006) agree one of the key characteristics of a PLC is reflective professional inquiry; this includes reflective dialogue, examining of teacher practice through mutual observation, and applying new knowledge to create solutions to address student needs. Their other characteristics include having shared values and vision, collective responsibility, collaboration, and engaging in group and individual learning. Earlier research by them confirmed these five characteristics and identified mutual respect and trust, and inclusive membership, as extra characteristics (Stoll et al., 2006).

Levine (2011) also agrees a PLC exists when teachers develop and intentionally share norms, routines, and vision but adds that student learning can be improved by positioning “teachers in configurations and activities that allow them to learn and to enact change” (p. 32). For example, Osborne (2013) states the open and flexible spaces found in ILEs create opportunities for learning communities, as “having access to the teaching practice of your colleagues to model



and to be modelled to, supports the development of effective teaching practice far more than teaching in an isolated, private space” (p. 5). Teachers can explore their strengths and weaknesses due to the de-privatised practice, in an open and supportive environment leading to a more “robust continuously improving community of practice” (Osborne, 2013, p. 5). Osborne (2013) also suggests teachers new to the profession are offered more support than traditionally, as not only can their progress be monitored more easily but ongoing low-level mentoring can occur with those around them. Timperley et al. (2007) agree that activities like peer observation, collaborative planning, and review of student responses impact on teaching and learning. They also argue that participation in learning communities can either promote professional learning or work against it by reinforcing the status quo. This was illustrated by Le Fevre’s (2014) case study when she found a collegial culture developed between the participants of reinforcing the status quo due to the risks they perceived were involved in implementing the initiative. This presented difficulties when one teacher broke away from the group, as they felt they could not express their views or share their practice with other staff members for fear of public exposure. Le Fevre (2014) concluded the “need to construct safe contexts in which teachers have a sense of relational trust” (p. 63) if they are able to work collaboratively together. Bryk and Schneider (2003) suggest as teachers trust each other and feel supported they feel safe to try new practices as the sense of risk associated with change is reduced. The connection between how a collaborative culture of high trust supports teacher change was illustrated by Levine’s (2011) research into two high schools in California. He conducted case studies into how experienced teachers dealt with change, with the development of PLCs. Levine (2011) found that in the school with pre-existing norms and traditions, teachers who had a degree of experience collaborating with their colleagues found the process easier than those with lesser experience of collaboration. These teachers had become used to working openly collaboratively, build relationships of trust and consequently were better able to think about school-wide issues rather than just taking responsibility for their own classroom. The other school had no pre-existing culture of collaborative practices and was trying to establish new collaborative norms and traditions. In contrast, these teachers found the change overwhelming and felt neither prepared nor supported during the change. Levine (2011) concluded that when creating PLGs the importance of providing extra time to build trust and collegiality is crucial if successful collaborative cultures are to develop.

Collegiality has long been a focus in education literature. For instance, Hargreaves (1994) claims collegiality should be voluntary, development orientated, unpredictable and pervasive across time and space. Therefore collaborative cultures are created that result in activities such as joint work, mutual observation, and focused reflective inquiry. In such environments, teachers work collectively together, rather than simply being congenial and complacent. Little (1990) suggests schools may be described as collegial as they offer camaraderie and moral support to each other but their autonomy is free from scrutiny. She offers four types of collegial relations; storytelling, aid and assistance, sharing, and joint work as ways teachers work together. She claims they reinforce the isolated work of teaching rather than diminish it apart from joint work, which involves de-privatisation and a collective commitment to change (Little, 1990). While the other ways of working together may reinforce bad habits, joint work encourages teacher learning and the mastering of new knowledge as it challenges teachers' beliefs and assumptions. But this can only occur when all members of the community come ready to make a contribution to the development of the community and not simply to soak up what they can from other, more experienced members. Newcomers must enter ready to share their own unique opinions and ways of knowing, and be willing to contribute to the ongoing development of the community and not just replicate what is already in place. Doing so may require teachers to take risks and open themselves to public exposure and lack of privacy. However, it is also important not to lose the professional and practical knowledge, as well as insights experienced teachers bring from their long careers (Levine, 2011). Gurr and Drysdale (2013) argue it is the collective expertise in developing PLCs that creates the responsive environment needed for schools to be successful, where the learning according to Bolstad et al. (2012) needs to be future focused and appropriate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **2.2.4 Summary to part one**

The ILE case study research confirms there needs to be more than just structures in place to ease a teacher's transition into ILEs. The case studies highlighted the mental shift that teachers need to go through as they adapt to the de-privatised practices associated with these spaces. What was common in each case study was teachers learning to share the space; working collaboratively to increase the collegiality and communication between themselves. Likewise, professional learning has shifted toward collaborative practices where teachers are inquiring together to give feedback and support in order to improve student outcomes. Unfortunately,

collaboration by itself does not provide enough support for teachers when transitioning into ILEs, there are other conceptual components that need to be taken into account. For example, risk-taking and trust have already been mentioned in this section as having a role to play in supporting and encouraging collaboration. This has led to recognising that ILEs were not just physical spaces but areas where social interactions were also taking place. Part two of this literature review will further explore the other relevant conceptual components and the insights they provide in understanding ILEs and professional learning, and their contribution to collaborative practices.

## **2.3 Part Two – Conceptual components**

### **2.3.1 Effects of culture**

Culture has been identified and defined in a number of ways throughout the literature, often summarised by the simplistic phrase “the way we do things around here” (Deal & Kennedy, 1983, p. 140). Schein (2004) states culture is a product of the founders’ beliefs and values, its history and the collective experiences the organisation has gone through. As a result, culture is not static but instead constantly evolving as the learning experiences of the group members, and the new beliefs, values, and assumptions new members bring with them, modify the beliefs and values on an ongoing basis (Schein, 2004). He claims as the beliefs and values that result from these sources become taken for granted, they become the underlying basic assumptions that form the ultimate source of the groups’ values and actions. Hence, a culture is formed as these assumptions are shared and mutually reinforced throughout the organisation or group (Schein, 2004). Schein (2004) suggests there are three levels of culture where these deeply embedded assumptions form the essence of the culture at one end and the tangible artefacts at the other. Artefacts are the visible organisational processes and structures that are easy to observe but hard to decipher. They form the first, most observable level of culture and are the behavioural patterns and outward manifestations of culture. In the middle of Schein’s three levels are the espoused values; where the meaning of the artefacts becomes clear through examining the espoused beliefs and norms that rule the behaviour of the members of the culture. They state the rules of behaviour and desired traits and preferences of the group. The third level of culture consists of the basic assumptions which are non-negotiable and difficult to change as they become deeply embedded. These shared assumptions can guide and constrain the behaviour of the members of the group in the existing culture. Schein (2004) suggests that

any social group that has a shared history will form a culture shaped by each level of the culture and assumptions of the members determining its form. The embedding of a culture depends on the length of the group's existence, the stability of the group's membership, and the emotional intensity of the experiences they have shared.

Cultures are created and recreated as organisations face external and internal challenges and learn to deal with them. What is considered accepted norms and cultural understanding can be challenged or fragmented as organisations are subjected to pressures; coercive, mimetic, and normative (Kondra & Hurst, 2009). Normative pressures are a consequence of professionalism as professions attempt to legitimise themselves via formal education and professional networks by determining an appropriate way to act. Normative values and assumptions work at a tacit level of understanding as professions maintain their own control over their membership (Kondra & Hurst, 2009). Coercive pressures have both informal and formal processes that are externally imposed on the individual or group. They are often rules and regulations that are linked to clear reward structures and discipline processes, either enforced by peer groups informally or more formally by professional and government regulations (Kondra & Hurst, 2009). Alternatively, mimetic pressures usually result when members face uncertainty. Kondra and Hurst (2009) state new employees are often uncertain about what behaviours are expected; the norms and values of the new culture. According to Kondra and Hurst (2009), this "lack of clarity leaves individuals little choice but to mimic others to behave in a manner deemed acceptable" (p. 49). They further claim mimetic behaviour can be useful in rationalising the gaps between espoused and observed behaviours and being able to interpret and create new meanings for them.

### **2.3.2 Theories of change**

One way of conceptualising change is to place it into two categories; technical challenges or first-order change, and adaptive challenges or second-order change (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2004). Technical challenges build on past or existing models and solutions, so are consistent with teachers' prevailing beliefs and norms. They can largely be implemented on existing skills and by outside providers. Adaptive challenges require shifts in people's thinking with existing beliefs and norms being challenged and redefined. This often requires new solutions and structures to be implemented, as well as requiring new knowledge and skills by the teachers involved. If leaders do not take this into account when managing

change, they may find it difficult to get the support needed for change to occur (Waters et al., 2004). The extent of technical compared to adaptive challenge will vary depending on how significantly the innovation differs from the past and how this conflicts with their current beliefs and norms (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Osborne (2013) suggests that as change occurs, leaders need to be aware of the importance of understanding whether teachers are experiencing technical or adaptive challenge and adjust the support being offered accordingly. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) state “the most common cause of failure in leadership is produced by treating adaptive challenges as if they were technical problems” (p. 19). Waters et al. (2004) suggest an effective way to bring people on board and ease the uncertainty that comes with adaptive challenges is collaboration. Challenging problematic beliefs, introducing new beliefs as well as processing new understandings fit with the definition by Timperley et al. (2007) of a PLC. This suggests teacher collaboration and learning communities may be successful mechanisms to navigate the way through the adaptive challenges which require second order change processes.

Research by Argyris and Schön (1974) indicates people have mental maps they consult with in regards to how to act in situations; these maps guide their actions and behaviours. Argyris and Schön (1974) suggest two theories of action are involved; theory-in-use, which governs the actual behaviour and the espoused theory, the words used to convey what we do or in particular what we would like others to believe we do. There is often a mismatch between people's espoused theory, what they communicate to others and what behaviour their current theory-in-use displays to others (Argyris, 1994; Argyris & Schön, 1974). This can cause challenges for people, making them aware of the gap between their espoused theory and theory-in-use so they can bridge that divide and “walk the talk”. According to Argyris (1977), this can be achieved through double loop learning. Argyris (1977) states “organisational learning is a process of detecting and correcting of error” (p.116). When something goes wrong people look for strategies that fit with their current values and assumptions and enable the present policies or practices to continue; this is single loop learning. Single loop learning occurs when beliefs and frameworks are taken for granted and any reflection is focused on making adjustments to systems. Alternatively, double loop learning requires the current values and assumptions to be questioned which may lead to them being modified and shifting the way they are framed. It requires people to use both advocacy and inquiry to critically examine their underlying

assumptions to bridge the gap between their espoused view and their theory-in-use. Often people and organisations create defensive mechanisms to minimise either embarrassment, risk, or appearing incompetent that may result due to the existence of this gap. As a result, organisations can be prevented from understanding themselves and being able to adapt and change as required (Argyris, 1994). Having environments where trust and risk-taking are the accepted norms provide people with the support needed to engage in double loop learning and examine their assumptions.

### **2.3.3 Risk and trust**

Transitioning into an ILE requires teachers to engage with new ideas that may conflict with their mental models and necessitates learning new skills and knowledge, thus engaging with adaptive challenges (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). They may experience a loss of confidence as they face the gap between their espoused values and actual behaviours and require support to transition through this. Heifetz and Linsky (2004) claim it is not a matter of resisting change as they make this change but instead resisting loss. They suggest that when you ask someone to change you are challenging how they identify themselves. They may be being asked to close the distance between their espoused values and the actual behaviours they display, and this can be a difficult process as what they are giving up may have real value to them. Leaders need to acknowledge and respect the loss that teachers are experiencing as they are going through an adaptive challenge. Therefore, leaders need to identify the loss at stake and provide contexts for people to help move through these losses (Heifetz et al., 2009). Zimmerman (2006) describes this feeling of loss as a type of denial and suggests, like Heifetz and Linsky (2004) that acknowledgement needs to be given if successful change is to take place. Heifetz et al. (2009) suggest successful change has a component of conservation present as well as loss; where the best of its traditions, history, and practices are taken into the future. This, along with acknowledgement, can help ease the transition for teachers in a changing environment.

Le Fevre (2014) claims risk is an inherent part of change although a teacher's perception of risk can inhibit the extent to which they engage with new pedagogical practices. Although their espoused theory tells them it is important to implement the change, often it is seen as too great a risk to do so. Le Fevre (2014) confirms this with her case study research implementing a literacy change initiative in the United States. The teachers agreed to de-privatise their practice,

reduce dependence on textbooks, and increase student voice; their espoused theory. The findings revealed 10 teachers did not make any change due to the perceived risks of losing control and time, and fear of public failure and embarrassment. As Le Fevre (2014) states from their perspective, the risks outweighed the benefits so their theory in action became to maintain the status quo. This encouraged them to keep their beliefs and views that shaped their actions to themselves and avoid testing them in an independent and objective fashion. They were able to avoid any feeling of embarrassment, vulnerability, or incompetence that might result from exploring these beliefs and views (Argyris, 1991). Timperley (2008) agrees change involves risk but “before teachers take on that risk, they need to trust their honest efforts will be supported, not belittled” (p. 16). She claims change is as much about emotions as it is about knowledge and skills. If teachers’ emotional issues are ignored, they are likely to close themselves off to learning and disengage from the change process. Furthermore, people have a tendency to feel secure doing things in a familiar way and disrupting these patterns can lead to a fear of the unknown. This can result in not only rejecting the new change but also in reverting back to their former methods where they feel safe (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, as cited in Zimmerman, 2006).

According to Tschannen-Moran (2014) trust works to bind people together in order to increase the cohesive, co-operative relationships needed in schools for them to be productive. It also reduces the friction between people, encouraging effective dialogue to occur so people have confidence in each other’s words and deeds. The result is the building of PLCs and practices of cooperation, collegiality, and openness (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). This building takes time and effort of those involved, especially with the direction and commitment needed from leaders. Tschannen-Moran (2014) further claims trust reflects the extent teachers are willing to rely on and make them vulnerable to each other. She suggests that extending trust requires risk-taking, as it increases the potential for betrayal and harm. Zimmerman (2006) supports this by claiming trust creates the social conditions for not only collaborative PLCs to develop but for supporting risk-taking amongst teachers to occur. Cranston (2011) carried out a study with 12 principals in Canada, examining how they described the nature of relationships and either the presence or absence of trust amongst their staff in PLCs. His findings support that relational trust is important for developing norms for risk-taking, safety, and change orientation but also for fostering collaboration and a willingness by teachers to grow professionally. As Cranston (2011)

states, “trust allows teachers to feel comfortable with each other and to work and learn more effectively together” (p. 65). Tschannen-Moran (2014) suggests schools that cultivate trust reap the benefits of collaboration which leads to greater adaptability and innovation. Le Fevre (2014) supports this and further states building trust amongst teachers and leaders is essential for creating an environment where people are willing to take risks; failure is recognised as possible but not punitive and teacher inquiry is encouraged, leading to effective and lasting change.

#### **2.3.4 Summary to part two**

Each sub-section has presented literature and research allowing the conceptual components of culture, change theory, and risk and trust to be discussed and provide insights into understanding ILEs and teacher professional learning. This has been required as collaborative inquiry by itself was not enough, as Benade (2017) claims teachers need to be open to learning and be willing to reflect constantly, in an environment of trust. Nor was the assumption by the OECD's (2015) research that ILEs lead to improvement robust enough due to the short period of time research has occurred in this area. As a result, this literature review needed to draw research from the organisational theory field to gain extra insights to bring back into the education field. The conceptual components have added their own separate understandings as well as underpinned the concept of collaboration; the common theme found in both the ILE research studies and professional learning. They will be used to critique part one as well as provide a grounding to understand the case study school in which the research is located.

### **2.4 Summary**

This chapter has synthesised and critiqued relevant literature and research from the fields of education and organisational theory to provide an in-depth background so as to allow for the exploration of teachers' transitions into ILEs. Part one was centred on the shifts that have occurred in the areas of professional learning and ILE research studies; highlighting the common theme and importance of collaboration. It was inherent that ILEs were not just physical spaces where visible teaching and learning took place, but places where trust, relationship building, and collaboration also occurred. Professional learning may change mind frames and shift thinking but this occurred alongside the conceptual components that underpinned and supported it. Part two explored these conceptual components that underpinned these two major shifts and the part they played in supporting and encouraging the shifts seen. It requires a multi-



faceted approach and understanding of components such as culture and change if schools are to gain insights into how teacher's transition into ILEs. As Blackmore et al. (2011) remind us, it is not enough to just change buildings to bring about change in teacher practice; there needs to be change in teacher beliefs and relationships, as well as the culture within schools. Previous research on ILEs has shown itself to have been focused on the space itself and research around the human resource is sparse, so there is limited understanding on how teachers transition into ILEs and are supported during that transition. This research project has been designed to add to this understanding and bring some clarity to this area. The next chapter will outline the research design, including the methodology and methods chosen, data collection and analysis used, and the ethical considerations taken into account to investigate the research questions.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the qualitative research undertaken into teachers' perceptions and experiences of transitioning into an ILE. It presents, in detail, the methodology and methods chosen and applied to this research study of ILEs. The purpose of qualitative research in this research study is to achieve an understanding of the participant's thinking by describing both the process of how they got to thinking the way they do and their interpretation of the way they think. Qualitative research is not intended to describe outcomes or possible futures but what happened in that particular setting for them at that time (Merriam, 1998). The ideas that come from such research represent the meanings given to real-world events by the people who live them, rather than the preconceptions or meanings held by the researcher (Yin, 2016; Merriam, 2009). The positioning of the study from an interpretive perspective is described and critiqued in order to explain the rationale adopted for this research design. Parts of the research design, including case study design and context, semi-structured interviews, and coding analysis are examined in more detail. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of the ethical considerations that were taken into account.

### **3.2 Research Methodology**

Qualitative research is a type of inquiry into how people interpret and make sense of their world and their experiences in it; understanding the meaning they have constructed (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative research is thought of as being highly descriptive because it uses data from participants to support the findings of the research. It is also thought of as inductive, as researchers gather data to build theories and concepts rather than test hypotheses (Merriam, 2009). Researchers should begin the inquiry process by engaging with philosophical assumptions about ontology, the nature of reality; epistemology, how they know that reality; and methodology, the particular practices used to attain knowledge of it (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007; Krauss, 2005). Researchers adopt various interpretive paradigms to address these assumptions. A paradigm is a set of basic beliefs which represent a worldview that guides an investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher can select an interpretive paradigm such as positivist, constructivist, or critical, from which to take an epistemological stance. Epistemology is a "way of understanding and explaining what it means to know" (Crotty,

1998, p.10). Selecting an epistemological stance allows the researcher to align the theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods used for the research investigation. Constructivism is one such stance; where knowledge is believed to come from our engagement with the realities in our worlds. In other words, the meaning is constructed and not discovered as an end product. In this understanding of knowledge, different people may construct different meanings, even in relation to the same phenomena. These meanings are formed through interaction with others and through the historical and cultural norms that operate in their context (Creswell, 2005). While coming to understand how that reality is constructed, it is just as important to understand the ontology; the nature of the reality being studied and its characteristics. As each person experiences their own personal point of view, different realities will exist of the phenomenon being studied, including those of the researchers (Krauss, 2005). This research was studied from an interpretive perspective, as the aim was to understand the transition to an ILE from the participants' perspective, how they interpret their experiences, and what meaning they attribute to those experiences. This was assuming there was no single observable reality but rather multiple realities or interpretations of an event (Merriam, 2009) from the participants involved and their interpretations would construct the findings of the research.

Thus a case study was adopted as this type of approach provided a variety of participants' perspectives using multiple data collection techniques, to examine the experiences of teachers as they transitioned into an ILE from a single cell environment. Such an approach emphasised their personal perspectives and interpretation, allowing insights into the participant's motivations and actions to be gathered, resulting in both depth and a rich understanding of the situation.

### **3.2.1 Case study**

The focus of case study research is on the issue, where the individual case is used as a mechanism to understand the issue. It provides a holistic description and explanation of the phenomenon being investigated by uncovering the significant factors that characterise it (Merriam, 1998). Case study research can be useful in educational settings as it allows issues such as transitioning into ILEs to be thoroughly examined, so as to bring about understanding which can affect and perhaps improve practice. Yin (2009) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p.18). He claims it should be the preferred method when the researcher has little or no control

over behavioural events, and the focus of the study is on a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2016). Stake (2005) on the other hand argues that case studies are less about the research process and are more about the case itself. As Stake (2005) claims it is “not a methodological choice but instead a choice of what is to be studied” (p.443) with its purpose being “not to represent the world but to represent the case” (p.460). Merriam (2009) approaches case study research differently for she claims “a case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p.40).

This latter definition fits with this research being conducted from an interpretive perspective with the emphasis on the interpretation and analysis given to the participants’ experiences. Exploring the issue of transitioning into an ILE through a bounded system has allowed the research to be kept within the scope as well as provide depth. Creswell (2003) uses time or place as measures to bind a case and in this research, the context of just one school has been the bounded system. Guba and Lincoln (1981) warn that having a small amount of data can lead to oversimplification or exaggeration of the phenomenon when analysing. Therefore it is important to note that a case study is not an account of the whole but just part of the phenomenon. Yin (1994) agrees by stating that a case study does not represent a sample and in fact, such little data provides little basis for scientific generalisations to be made. This limitation of a case study means researchers may generalise to theoretical propositions but not to populations as seen in other research methods (Yin, 1994).

Case study knowledge is seen as being highly descriptive, particularistic, and able to enhance people’s understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1998). It is for these attributes that case study was chosen as the research design. Particularistic, for it is focusing on a particular situation, event or phenomenon and what it may reveal; transitioning into a selected school’s environment. Descriptive, as it provides a rich description of the participants’ experiences and the meaning that is interpreted by them. This has allowed in-depth knowledge and understanding of teachers transitioning into ILEs to be explored and insights to be shared.

### **3.3 Research Design**

#### **3.3.1 Context**

For the purposes of this research, a state co-educational secondary school was selected. The following criteria were used in the selection process; a secondary school that operated as an ILE; an ERO report that indicated that the school was operating in an innovative way; and a school that had operated long enough to have established both longer-tenured and newly appointed teachers. This particular school had within the last ten years been built to fit the description of a physical environment as well as made changes to their pedagogy to that of an ILE as outlined by the MOE (2016a). It had had two ERO reports that indicated their practices were well established within the school, which added to the validity of the case, and met the research criteria. The case school was also easily accessible to the researcher who was situated in the same city, allowing for ease of data collection.

#### **3.3.2 Participants**

The participants involved were from two groups, management and teachers; a senior leader in charge of Professional Development; and teachers, who would form the focus groups. The focus groups formed two separate groups; comprising of either longer-tenured teachers or teachers newly appointed within the last three years to the school. There were nine teachers from the selected school who had volunteered to participate in the research as part of the focus groups. Five participants were selected to be part of the newly appointed teacher focus group; as they had been appointed within the last three years. They varied in their teaching experience but all apart from one had less than ten years of teaching experience overall. They taught over a range of curriculum areas and none held any role of management responsibility within the school. One was a first-year teacher who had just started their teaching career. Four other teachers were selected to be part of the longer-tenured focus group. Initially, this group was to include only teachers who had been present at the time when the school opened. But this proved to provide too small a group so the criteria were broadened to any teacher who volunteered who was not a newly appointed teacher within the last three years and wished to be involved in the research. Using these criteria, two teachers who had been part of the foundation team that operated in the first and second year of the school opening were selected as well as two teachers who joined during the fourth and fifth year of the school's operation. Again they taught in a range of curriculum areas, although in this case several had roles of responsibility


within the school. All had over ten years' worth of teaching experience except for one teacher who had started as a beginning teacher in the school's first year of teaching students.

### 3.3.3 Data collection

The case study “does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p.28). As Yin (2009) claims, multiple methods can be used such as interviews, documentation, direct or participant observation and physical artefacts. The three methods chosen to be used in this particular case study were an examination of web-based documentation, focus groups, and face-to-face interviews (See Appendix A).

**Table 3.1: Research Design**

Research Design - Case Study School		
Web-based documentation related to the schools' system structures including professional development	Interview with senior leader in charge of curriculum and professional development	Focus group (newly appointed) - teachers appointed within last three years
		Focus group (longer-tenured) - teachers with long tenure at the school

 Time

Interviews are used to help understand the world from the subjects' point of view, clarify the meaning of their experiences, and discover their lived world (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Although reliant on the participant's ability to recall and to articulate their experiences accurately, it is a useful technique to gain participants' perceptions (Yin, 2016). Interviews can range from unstructured, where open-ended questions are used to structured, where predetermined short and clearly worded questions are used. Semi-structured interviews have features of both structured and unstructured interviews and have the advantage of using both open and closed questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Hence, semi-structured interviews were used with both the senior leader and the focus groups to gain their perceptions and experiences of transitioning into this school. There was no set behaviour for the semi-structured interviews that took place; they followed a conversational mode (Yin, 2016). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009)

claim interviews are close to conversations but differ as they have a purpose and follow a particular approach and technique. In this case, interview guides were devised that focused on certain themes which came from the literature review and used open-ended questions so as to get the participants to engage in a discussion from their perspective. Therefore the participant could change the direction of their thoughts during the interview so, as the researcher, I needed to listen carefully throughout the interview. This can be demanding, as a large amount of mental energy is required to listen for the meaning behind words and phrases used by the participants, so I could judge whether I needed to probe for further clarification. Generally, I found participants were content to share their thoughts and experiences, and with prompts of encouragement, they had no problems sharing their experiences. The open-ended questions also allowed participants to answer questions in their own sequence (Yin, 2016) which meant they sometimes answered a question within another question. Due to this, I found I did not adhere rigidly to the interview guide. If participants started to provide information that seemed relevant to the research, I also allowed the conversation to move in the direction of interest. This often allowed a topic to be explored more broadly and eliminated the need for follow-up questions.

An individual, face-to-face interview with the leader of professional development was used to provide the senior leader with a better opportunity to communicate what was important to him or her because it was his or her interpretation as a senior leader of the teachers' needs that has informed the support and guidance currently offered. It was a focused interview (Yin, 2016) where the senior leader was interviewed once for a period of fewer than two hours. S/he was interviewed before the focus groups so I wasn't influenced by the teacher's responses during this interview.

Focus groups were used in the interests of efficiency to interview the other participants as there was not enough time to interview each participant individually. This allowed me to speak with several people at the same time which was appropriate, as Yin (2016) comments the participants had the experience in common so were able to share some similar views. Yin (2016) also comments that focus groups can allow people to "more readily express themselves when they are part of a group than when they are the target of a solo interview with you" (p.149). They also get to hear other participant's responses and make additional comments

beyond their own original thoughts (Merriam, 2009). The key for the researcher is to try and induce members of the focus group to express their opinions with the minimum direction (Yin, 2016). This was achieved with both groups; especially with the newly appointed focus group where the group was highly interactive and used each other to direct and guide the conversation. This group required little direction by me throughout the interview process. There was just one stage where I directed two questions to one participant as I felt they had contributed little and I wanted their contribution to be part of the research. I found similar views were expressed around the challenges and support received both within and between the two groups although I did observe differences between the two focus groups.

Yin (2016) comments that “focus groups have their own dynamics that you need to manage” (p.149) and this was particularly true of the longer-tenured focus group. They seemed to require more direction; there was less interaction and they tended to take turns going around in a circle to answer the questions. On occasions, I directed particular questions at participants to get their response as I felt they had more to offer and had not been given the chance or had taken the opportunity to do so. There was one participant who tended to dominate the conversation by the length of his monologues. I needed to adopt a firm but a polite style that controlled this over-talkative person but also, stimulates the reticent ones without influencing the direction of the conversation. This was often helped by other members of the focus group who also recognised the situation. At two points of the conversation, one member of this group asked a question of another member and I needed to quickly decide whether I felt this helped or hindered my research. I did not stop the conversation as I made the decision that it was helping the other member address the question I had asked.

In all interviews, a room that was quiet, free from distractions, and had a comfortable climate was used. In the case of the focus groups; a room at the school that was large enough to accommodate the group and did not contain artefacts relating to school leadership and hierarchy was also asked for, so participants were comfortable. All interviews were audio recorded using the voice memos application on an iPhone to ensure the accuracy of information. Permission was sought and gained from all participants via a consent form (See Appendix C) and an information sheet (See Appendix B) that explained both the use of digital recording and other ethical considerations. Digital recordings were preferable as they were



silent and not intrusive during the interviews. Transcripts were sent to participants for checking, critiquing, and final approval. In the case of the focus groups, only each participant's individual contribution was extracted and sent.

According to Yin (2009), the most important use of documentation is to corroborate and add validity to evidence from other sources. Web-based documentation detailing the school's professional development programme and outlining the school's system structure was found in the public domain. This was used so the documented expectations could be identified and compared to people's espoused theories. There was no actual written documentation were used in this research so no direct quotes have been used as a result. This also lessens the possibility of links being made to these public domain documents, so the school remained anonymous.

#### **3.3.4 Analysis**

Analysis, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), is a complex procedure that involves going back and forth to the data, using both inductive and deductive reasoning as well as description and interpretation. Yin (2016) outlines a three-stage process of analysis; starting with compiling the data which consists of careful and methodical transcribing of the original data. This is followed by disassembling of the data; a formal process of assigning codes to construct categories. Categories are informed by the research purpose, knowledge of the researcher or meaning made explicit by the participants themselves (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although everyone uses categories to sort experiences, Yin (2016) suggests that the most successful stance comes from permitting the events from the data collecting to drive the categories and therefore the meaning that is constructed. In this case, as each interview transcript was completed, codes were constructed for each set of questions and different coloured sticky notes were used to indicate the common categories on the three different transcripts (see Figure 3.2). Then as patterns started to emerge categories were re-coded to get the final themes across the three groups. These were compared to the document analysis and the findings of the literature review for collaboration.



**Figure 3.1: Analysing interview data**

In this reassembling phrase, Yin (2016) states the importance of making sure the researcher's preconceptions are minimised and do not create bias. One of the main advantages of using multiple methods of data collection is that it allows rich descriptive data to be gathered (Yin, 2009; Merriam, 1998). But as Yin (2009) suggests this can mean there are more points of interest that are generated than points of data. This highlights how the integrity of the researcher impacts on the research process; it relies on your instincts and abilities to decide what data is used or not used, what code to construct or not, what theme to discard or not. The researcher has the "exclusive privilege to interpret and report what the interviewee really meant and to frame what an interviewee says in his or her own theoretical schemes" (Kvale, 2006, p.485). To counter this, it was important to ensure I listened to the participants' answers, capturing their mood as well as understanding the context they had perceived their world from. I was responsive but remained neutral and impartial during the interviews, mindful not to be seen to have taken a stance on their experiences as they talked. My experiences as a long-serving teacher as well as my findings from the literature review could have informed my perceptions and I was conscious of this throughout the research. It was important not to be trapped by these perceptions and to be open to contrary findings. To assist with this, I reported my findings to a

critical colleague and received alternative explanations and suggestions as well as incorporated strategies, which are outlined in the next section of the research.

### **3.4 Validity**

#### **3.4.1 Internal validity**

Internal validity deals with the question of how much of the research findings match reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research assumes there is no one single reality and the researcher offers their interpretation of the multiple realities given. So the researcher must do as much as possible to ensure their findings are valid. Creswell (2005) identifies eight strategies for validating research findings and recommends that a research study use at least two of these strategies. This case study used methodological triangulation, rival explanations, member checking of data, and clarification of researcher bias.

It is the combination of methods in a case study that allows for a rich description of the phenomenon to be gathered and a complete picture to be seen (Yin, 2009). This multiple method approach not only improves the quality of the evidence but also increases the confidence in the evidence by allowing it to be used for triangulation (Stake, 2010). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) define triangulation as an “attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint” (p. 195). By checking the findings against other sources and perspectives it can be assured that the findings are not simply an outcome of a single method or source. The more the findings are in agreement, the more the researcher can have confidence in them so the bias is reduced and validity increased. Patton (2002) cautions, that although the goal of triangulation is to have an agreement within the data sources, there will be inconsistencies due to the strength of the different approaches used. He sees these inconsistencies not as weakening the findings but as an opportunity to delve deeper for further meaning.

Patton (2002) identifies four types of triangulation; triangulation of sources, triangulation amongst investigators, triangulation of theory, and triangulation of methods. He defines triangulation of methods as checking for consistency of the findings between different data collection methods. Denzin also uses similar definitions in his typology of triangulations, where methodological triangulation is defined as using different methods on the same object of study

(as cited in Cohen et al., 2011). This terminology was selected to describe the triangulation used for this case. Methodological triangulation was used in two ways; first, by triangulating the data, findings from more than one source of evidence are converged so that consistent, dependable data were collected. This was seen during the interviews as participants collaborated and validated each other as part of the conversation. Cohen et al. (2001) identify this as combined level triangulation where both individual and interactive group responses were being collected at the same time. This provides two levels of analysis to use in order to gain a meaningful understanding of the phenomenon being studied; individual and group. Secondly, methodological triangulation was seen by triangulating multiple sources; when each source was analysed separately and conclusions were compared. This was seen between the interview groups as their transcripts were compared and converging lines of inquiry were seen and patterns emerged. Just as areas of convergence increase confidence in the findings, areas lacking convergence or “areas of divergence open windows to better understanding the multifaceted, complex nature of a phenomenon” (Patton, 2002, p.559). Just as important was the lack of convergence with the senior leader’s interview and the need to explore “rival” thinking (Yin, 2009). I had to conduct the analysis with a sceptical mind that was open to identifying and testing these rivals, and decide whether to revise and broaden the patterns emerging from this data to account for them. It was during the analysis phase that I became aware the research was moving towards culture as being the driving change the participants were dealing with and not pedagogical change as I had anticipated. Yin (2016) claims a study can be strengthened by recognising that every facet of the research method is open to rival explanations. Its credibility is enhanced according to Patton (2002) when the researcher engages “in a systematic search for alternative themes, divergent patterns and rival explanations” (p.553).

From an interpretive perspective, understanding is co-created between the researcher and participants so member checking of the data was also included as a method of increasing credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider member checking as “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p.314). Data can be tested with members of those groups from whom the data were originally obtained to establish the validity of its account. It provided the participants with the opportunity to assess the adequacy of data as well as to confirm particular aspects of the data. This was particularly important in this case study as the transcripts provided

the rich descriptions used for the construction of meaning. All participants including the senior leader were provided with the opportunity to check their transcripts for accuracy and to return them to me with any necessary amendments. The focus group participants were sent only sections that were relevant to them to check. There were no changes made by any participants.

As the researcher is the primary means for data collection and analysis, they are able to respond and adapt during the research process. This can be seen as an advantage as the researcher can add to their understanding, check the accuracy of their interpretation, and further explore responses for clarification. There are, however, concerns that arise with this type of inquiry. In particular how their own cultural, historical, and personal experiences could shape their ability to interpret and collect the data. Even unconsciously they could shape their findings according to these biases (Patton, 2002). Therefore it is important for them to identify and monitor these biases, acknowledge how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009) and to critically self-reflect during the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research is, as Stake (2010) claims subjective. Yin (2016) claims the researcher must disclose his or her own personal role and traits that might have an influence on the study. Personally, I had never worked or been involved in an ILE so had no preconceived ideas about the support and guidance that participants may or may not have received. I carried out this case study so I could learn more about ILEs, the implications for professional development and teachers' experiences related to this. But I was mindful that I held a position of authority within my own school and would be interviewing people in the focus group who may feel threatened by that position. So it was important when interviewing all participants, including those in similar educational roles, to position myself as a researcher only and hold this role throughout the research process.

### **3.4.2 External Validity**

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest the rich, thick description of a case study provides enough description for readers to determine whether their context matches the research context, and therefore whether the findings can be transferred to their own situation. Thus Merriam and Tisdell claim the external findings can be applied to other situations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also agree this can be used as a means for achieving external validity; when you describe the

phenomenon in enough depth, conclusions drawn can be transferred to other settings and situations.

As many schools are showing an interest in moving towards ILEs where the learning is future focused, I believe this research will be of interest to many in the education sector. Leaders may use the understanding around the issues involved with ILEs gained from this research to inform changes within their own school; on supporting teachers in changing their current practice to work within a newly developed innovative learning area. By researching both longer-tenured and newly appointed teachers, insight has been provided into effective support mechanisms that can be applied to their own situation. Although I concede that as this research only focuses on a single site case study, the findings may be non-representative and cannot be generalised to the whole population with confidence.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

Stake (2005) claims “researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world, their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict” (p.459). Therefore it is the researcher’s responsibility to uphold the ethical rigour within the research design by addressing the issues of informed consent and confidentiality. I underwent the process of gaining ethics approval for my research design from Auckland University of Technology and met with an ethics advisor as part of this process. The ethics advisor helped my thinking around focus groups and interviews, and the need to separate them into different research spaces. A discussion was had about how in this case there was no need for exclusion criteria as the scope of the research questions were already determining the parameters. As a result of this advice, approval was given, and the participating school and participants were approached. It was made clear to the participants that this research was for academic purposes and their participation was absolutely voluntary.

The privacy of the participants was of importance and was protected throughout the research process. Their confidentiality was assured and maintained, so participants were comfortable that their identities would not be used in the research. Each participant was given a pseudonym as well as any other teacher mentioned by the participants in the interviews. The names of the pseudonyms used had no connection to any person employed at the school, whether they were involved in the research or not. This was to ensure confidentiality and any likelihood of

identification by those reading the report. There was avoidance of any specific job titles and unique school groups or initiatives that were mentioned during the interviews, and consideration was given when including information from official school documentation about identification.

In selecting the participants for the interviews, I had attained a staff list from the school's publically accessible website. Members of staff were emailed about the research and invited to participate. Once the volunteers for the focus groups and the senior leader had agreed to be involved in the research, an information sheet (see Appendix B) and consent form (see Appendix C) were emailed to them. As research is an interpersonal situation, a conversation that occurs between two partners about a theme of mutual interest (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), the participants were given time to view these documents before I arrived to conduct the interview. To help establish this partnership, I had provided the participants with an information sheet that outlined the aim and purpose of the research, and the benefits to me, them, and the community. They were also given time both before and after their interview to ask questions and clarify their understanding of the research and the consent form. I went through the information sheet and consent form and explained, in particular, the participant's consent and privacy issues before asking them to sign the consent form before the interview started. The interview did not take place until the participants have signed the voluntary consent form.

During the interview, I was aware that the participants may experience a level of discomfort or embarrassment due to being audio recorded so made sure that the digital recorder was discretely positioned and allowed an informal time at the start before starting the questions. This section was edited out from the audiotape at a later time. As the interview continued, I monitored awkward pauses or times when I thought a participant might feel embarrassed about not being able to answer the question being asked. It was stressed to the participants that their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary and that they were entitled to refuse to answer any question without the need to justify their reasons. I was aware that the participants might feel they were at risk as they were being asked to betray confidentiality agreements with other staff or risk harm to professional relationships by offering up private information for public consumption. They may also have felt uncomfortable worrying about disclosing information in front of the other participants in the focus group, and how this would remain confidential. Participants may have found through the course of the interview (or upon later reflection), that

their stories brought unsettling feelings. Unfortunately, there was insufficient opportunity to build strong trust relationships between the participants and myself, or to offer any follow-up support should any adverse reaction be experienced by the participants given the one-off nature of the interview. Therefore, it was critical that all communication around the concepts of informed consent, confidentiality and the risk of harm as outlined on the information sheet or discussed in person was transparent and clear before any divulging of sensitive information could take place during the interview.

### **3.6 Summary**

A qualitative methodology was adopted for this research to understand the way people interpreted and made sense of their experiences of transitioning into an ILE. This chapter explained how an interpretive perspective was used as the approach to developing a deeper understanding of this transition and the support they received. It outlined the research design and methods used to explore the meaning individuals constructed about this phenomenon. The coding used for analysis as well as the interviews, in particular with focus groups, used to provide the data were examined. As codes emerged, consistent patterns were seen from both groups which are discussed further in Chapter Four. The strategies used to ensure credibility and reliability were described and discussed, providing evidence to the trustworthiness of the findings of this research. Throughout this research ethical practices were upheld and all ethical considerations were adhered to, and these were addressed at the end of the chapter. The overall methodology has allowed rich descriptive data to be attained, which has led to the findings in Chapter Four to be analysed and discussed.



## Chapter Four: Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the transition of teachers from a single cell environment into an ILE through the experiences and perceptions of two teacher focus groups, and an interview with a senior leader. The interviewees are introduced and their findings analysed under three key themes; challenges, support, and future solutions. The senior leader had been a founding member of the school and had held the same senior leadership position throughout that time. The school had a distributed leadership model so all senior leadership members were curriculum leaders, which led to a shared responsibility for progressing all areas of the curriculum. Their role was to build the capacity of teachers across the curriculum. The focus groups were split into two groups, recently appointed and longer-tenured teachers, and were identified by their pseudonyms throughout the research. The recently appointed teachers were volunteers who had been appointed within the last three years. Their teaching experience varied but all apart from one had less than 10 years of teaching experience overall. All had actively participated in the interview, interacting with each other and their comments, apart from one who was more hesitant to share their experience.

**Table 4.1: Recently appointed teachers**

Person	Number of years teaching	Number of years at ILE	Pseudonym
A	6	2	Cameron
B	18	3	Sherryn
C	4	1	Daniel
D	8	1	Richard
E	1	1	Kylee

The longer-tenured teachers were volunteers who were not a newly appointed teacher within the last three years and wished to be involved in the research. All had over 10 years' worth of teaching experience except for one teacher (Suzanne) who had started as a beginning teacher in the school's first year of teaching students. These participants tended to be more thoughtful in their responses and waited their turn to share their experiences. These participants were of various ages and social and ethnic backgrounds. They had taught in a variety of single cell classrooms before transitioning to this school, which was their first experience of teaching and working in an ILE.

**Table 4.2: Longer-tenured teachers**

Person	Number of years teaching	Number of years at ILE	Pseudonym
A	16	8	Gavin
B	7	7	Suzanne
C	26	4	Anthony
D	25	5	Lisa

The school was a co-educational, urban secondary school that was structured into areas commonly called communities. A community at this school was considered the combination of two shared spaces or “learning commons”. A shared space was where a mix of three to five different subject classes operated together in the same line,<sup>1</sup> engaging in different pedagogical activities with different teachers. These spaces would typically be open plan with three additional shared areas of use; goldfish bowls for group work, breakout areas that could be closed off for small groups of up to 12 students to work in, and a larger presentation area where groups could go when work was quieter or louder than the norm. Teachers worked alongside each other so were in a position to observe and share practices across the learning areas. Each space was arranged based on the teachers’ perceptions of students’ needs in their space, so each varied in their actual design layout. The teachers were physically based in these areas, sharing a work area that overlooked the teaching space so could continue to interact informally as they planned and prepared lessons. The principal arranged teachers in their team structures, shifting them on an annual basis, so there was constant motion between the communities resulting in shifting membership.

## **4.2 Senior leader experience**

### **4.2.1 Challenges of transitioning**

During the interview, the leader expressed how s/he felt it was not the space that was the challenge when transitioning into the ILE, but the curriculum. It was about how the curriculum was being enacted in those spaces, and what the school was trying to achieve pedagogically in those spaces. The emphasis was on the teacher having an understanding of the shared language that had been developed over the years in the school, and realising the intent behind the structures and systems that had been designed. These differed from a traditional model in a single cell environment, and it took time for some teachers to get comfortable with those changes. The leader expressed how new teachers coming into the school often thought they

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<sup>1</sup> A line is a period of time on the timetable where a group of classes run at the same time.

knew what it was all about, but did not realise how challenging it actually was until they were there and working in the environment.

Lots of people espouse particular theories about what they want and they want to do and when they are here, it is quite, quite a different experience for them. (Leader)

The leader said that for teachers, there is “no sense of this is my own individual space. The community is big and open”. The leader suggested this required teachers be more collegial and cooperate together as they had shared ownership of the open space. They were required to be more respectful of each other and engage in sharing their practice. Because of the nature of the space and its increased visibility, teachers were open to seeing different practices on a daily basis. As a consequence, the leader believed teachers were better organised and had to be well planned for their lessons. The leader also commented the high visibility made it harder for teachers to adapt when they came into this environment. Consequently, it was important “to create a culture by [which] we want to learn together” and be clear about the expectations around that.

The leader explained how teachers who started here at the beginning have had to challenge the status quo of what was always accepted as the way to do things in other schools. They have moved with the school, developing and designing it into its current state. As a result, they understood the intent behind the thinking and decision-making as they were part of the process and therefore had a clear understanding of the school’s way forward.

Interestingly when I talk to some of the teachers who have been here from the beginning . . . they feel they don’t recognise themselves as teachers now, they have changed so much. (Leader)

For new teachers just coming in, they have just started this journey and according to the leader, have yet to find their way. The major challenge for these teachers from the leaders’ perspective was not to fall back into their old mental models as they make this journey. It would be an easy thing to slip back into what is comfortable for them especially as they are being asked not just to adjust to this new teaching environment but also to the new ways the school operates.

#### **4.2.2 Support given during transition**

The leader described a four-prong approach to support being offered to teachers to help them transition into the ILE. The leader saw the transition as a stressful process that teachers went through but said that the school provided a lot of support, both formal and informal, to help them. The leader explained it became easier for the teachers as they got their heads around the processes, although admitted it was a different experience for everyone. The leader commented, for some “it’s like [a] duck to water, it’s just easy for them” while for others it was more challenging. The goal was to give teachers “access to as much information in a way that will work for them as possible” but not to overwhelm them in the process.

The school used professional inquiry as for their professional development framework. Professional inquiry was seen as an opportunity to challenge teachers’ beliefs and current theories, and for teachers to reflect more deeply on their practice. As a formalised structure of support, it helped teachers develop their responsibility towards students learning by offering support through the use of a critical friend who worked alongside them. This helped teachers to explore and develop aspects of their pedagogical practice, supporting the changes needed as they adapted to fit with the ILE context around them.

Another formalised structure offered to teachers was the opportunity to attend regular meetings for beginning and new teachers to the school. These meetings occurred once every week or every couple of weeks, depending on what was happening in the school calendar, so support was timely and relevant. Although these were important, the leader saw the informal structures within the school as providing more support to teachers than the formalised ones. The leader explained how teachers worked in teams throughout the school, either in cross-curricula community teams or in department teams. These teams provided an informal support where teachers could build their understanding of the processes and systems around them. In particular, the leader believed teachers had “constant access to somebody [team leader], who should know or could share their expertise with you about what’s happening and what you can do in different situations”. The team leader was seen to have a key role in supporting teachers.

As the leader stated:

The team leaders are there to help support teachers, not about disciplining the students, it's about helping teachers build their capabilities in those spaces.

Each teacher shared a space with the people in their community before, during, and after school, so the leader expected the ensuing relationships to be very strong. They assumed the strong relationships would provide support as teachers needed it. The leader explained there were, "open door opportunities that you can go and talk to anyone" so the teacher wasn't restricted to their community for seeking support, however strong those relationships might be.

We have an open door process in our admin area so people will just come in and talk about things as they need to, and we encourage that. (Leader)

According to the leader, teachers were able to approach the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) if they wanted to check their understanding of systems or gain more understanding of the intent behind decisions. Although informal in nature, this was viewed as an effective support mechanism because it was assumed to transcend the systems and structures of the school. "It's absolutely huge and you can't underestimate that", the impact of transitioning into an ILE has on teachers. From the leader's perspective, it required a whole system change and that meant providing a high level of support to match.

#### **4.2.3 Future solutions for support**

From the leader's perspective, there were certain fundamentals that would never change, such as the vision and aspirations for what the school wanted the curriculum to achieve for students. The leader saw these as the "enabling constraints" that the SLT and the school worked within, as it was always iterative.

What we are doing is checking each time, are we getting there . . . when we're talking about new systems . . . it's actually tweaking it to make it easier to use, more effective, all of those things. (Leader)

The leader believed the school constantly modified systems to get closer to the vision and aspiration of what they wanted to achieve. While the fundamentals were not up for negotiation as the leader stated:

Our curriculum, our aspirations, that's really what we're founded on. But what's up for negotiation is how we get there, how do we improve things to get to that? And that's exciting as then people own parts of the whole process.

The leader saw this as a moving process, working together with teachers to negotiate improvements to the support structures. The leader did not necessarily see it as important to actually identify any systemic or structural changes needed, but rather viewed it was more important for teacher mind-sets to shift a little bit at a time.

#### **4.2.4 Conclusion**

The leader's perception of the challenges faced differed to those of the focus group teachers; s/he was more focused on the expected espoused aspects of the transition, while the teachers were focused more on the realised practice aspects. The leader's perspective came from a pedagogical point of view which was more idealistic and vision focused, where the learning environment was not based on a common curriculum area. As a result, although s/he acknowledged the challenges that teachers experienced, s/he believed teachers were able to cope with the transition with an underlying change of mindset.

As a founding member the leader had been involved in the development of the current systems and their iterations, so s/he were able to articulate with clarity about the support structures and their proposed outcomes. This resulted in the leader having a wide view of the support and what was being offered, which was reflected in the variety of support structures s/he recognised within the school. For example, s/he was the only participant to include professional inquiry as a support structure. The leader's perspective on the support was closely aligned to the web-based documentation which outlined the espoused theory of the school.

The leader recognised it was a different experience for every teacher as they transitioned into the ILE, so the amount of support needed to match this variation to be effective. Part of the

school's practice was to annually reflect on these support structures and adapt them to meet the changing needs of teachers. While the leader did not give any specific examples for the future, s/he stated everything was "up for negotiation" with the teachers. From his or her perspective, it was important to work together to improve the structures and look at what was or was not working well. It was a collective responsibility to build the network of support needed to help teachers, in what s/he acknowledged was a difficult task of transitioning from a single cell environment to an ILE.

### **4.3 Longer-tenured teachers**

#### **4.3.1 Challenges of transitioning**

The perceptions of longer-tenured teachers were viewed through their lens of having more experience in the school than most others. As a result, they approached the questions about their experience of transitioning into an ILE quite differently compared to the recently appointed teachers; seeming to see it more as a series of opportunities that had been created for them, rather than challenges they had to face. As a participant commented although they knew it was a bit of a challenge they weren't resistant to the change, for they had come to that particular school to be part of an ILE and its way of learning.

We know that when we were applying for the job that was their vision. And so basically we signed up for the job we knew we were getting ourselves in for.  
(Gavin)

They had transitioned from single cell environments into the ILE with the distinct choice of wanting to be part of a shared pedagogy and culture. The participants may have had different expectations of what they thought they wanted or what they thought the ILE environment would be, but they knew they wanted to do things differently. This may have meant more cross-curricular activity; repositioning assessment less as a driver; and a more flexible use of space, time, and choice of activities. They certainly were unsure what it might look like at that stage. Lisa recounted how "nobody said anything to me about how things could be and might be or should be". However, they came with a purpose, some with a passion but all with a commitment to be behind the vision and culture building of the school; to be part of that development but also to develop themselves as teachers and professionals.

One of the key opportunities mentioned by three out of the four participants was the ability to learn from each other; whether it was going into each other's classroom space, standing at the photocopier together, or just wandering through people's classes. These were seen as opportunities to watch, hear, and see how individuals operate if teachers were open to exploring different perspectives. This was perceived as not something easily done in a single cell environment nor encouraged as part of normal practice. It was, however, encouraged at the school and seen as a way to improve not only teacher practice but also as a way to understand and get to know the students more.

It was an eye-catching experience because I was immediately watching and hearing other teachers teach, which I had never had that opportunity before unless you went into formally observe somebody in class. (Lisa)

The participants commented the flip side of this was that they were also on what they called "display". There was a feeling of exposure where they very quickly observed who else in their community was displaying practices that weren't fitting in with the culture of the community around them, and in some cases even causing dissonance. However, the type of dissonance where one teacher could cause problems and dominate in a community was seen to be rare. The participants all agreed that it was more common for teachers to self-consciously moderate their behaviour and a sense of equilibrium to naturally develop. Again this was seen not as a challenge to overcome but instead as an opportunity to learn how to negotiate, listen to each other, and collaborate; to consciously build the culture within the school. A feeling of harmony was generally felt in the communities as teachers self-moderated their behaviour as part of that collective culture.

The participants did see that all staff needed to take responsibility for these spaces, and this was an area that still needed conscious culture building. It was posing challenges or opportunities for open learning conversations at this latter stage of the school's growth around the issue of the use of space. These conversations were straightforward ones that focused on the constant moving of furniture, leaving rubbish around, or keeping pathways clear for wheelchair access. These issues were seen as minor points of the bigger picture, which was building an awareness of the collective use of space amongst the teachers and students. It was



felt that if they could consciously build awareness and responsibility of the school's culture, and embed it into people's practices, then the school would operate as an intended ILE.

Just because you are in a modern learning environment doesn't mean your pedagogy automatically changes . . . It's not just the space though is it? It's not the whole thing.  
(Gavin)

I also think moving from a single cell to an ILE, if your culture is innovative you're created an ILE . . . I think culture is the key. (Anthony)

As longer-tenured teachers, their challenge and concern in those beginning years were around getting the school's culture on the right track as this influenced both teacher practice and how the school functioned in the future. The participants recognised the importance of being respectful to each other, and the shared spaces if they were to develop the culture they envisioned.

#### **4.3.2 Support given during transition**

There was a consensus by all participants that teachers new to the school were, as Suzanne commented about her own experience, "dropped in the deep end and . . . I got a lot more support than most people get". The participants felt from their perspective the transition from a single cell environment into the ILE was so different it took teachers up to six months to adjust.

Even with someone with 20 odd years' experience, I still had to come in and begin again as a new teacher. I felt I had to learn again . . . it was in a different space with a different culture. (Anthony)

The team structure within the school had provided the only support mechanism for three out of four of these participants. The support they had received came informally from colleagues around them; from their community teams and departments. There was a culture of collegiality that allowed questions and help to be sought without feeling judged and to watch those around them for pedagogical support.

It's the exposure to a whole lot of other stuff that [is] going on around you . . . you're hearing things, seeing things, you're seeing ways certain individuals operate here, and how they operate over there. (Lisa)

It's that opportunity to steal other people's ideas, isn't it? (Gavin)

The team structure had in the participants' views "evolved and emerged", becoming more formalised over the years. As Anthony claimed, the school took "great credit in being a new school each year", changing its structures on a regular basis. As a result, the participants had had varying degrees of how effective the support they received through the team structures had been. Lisa stated, "I came in at a time when . . . they didn't know what it [the community team] was, what it was for, the power of it", whereas Suzanne found "I had the benefit from my department, and my team and this gaggle of beginning teachers that I was part of . . . so it was all about the collegiality". Despite the varying degrees of effectiveness, there was agreement that the collegiality and collaboration helped with their transition into the ILE.

Suzanne had had a different experience to the rest of the focus group; she been offered the opportunity to attend weekly beginning teacher meetings. As a first-year teacher, she met with other similar teachers, the Specialist Classroom Teacher (SCT) or a Deputy Principal, to discuss challenges, look at strategies to deal with the school's structures, and discuss teaching and learning. The school had put these meetings in place to offer support, build capacity around teaching and learning, and understanding of the school's structures.

It was less about the structure and the programming as it was about the collegiality of having those other beginning teachers alongside me. (Suzanne)

The recipients, as Suzanne indicated found more benefit from the ability to meet as a group and the collegiality gained from it. This reinforced how in the early stages of the school, collegiality was not only a key support mechanism for the participants but had been the most effective means for transitioning into the ILE.

### 4.3.3 Future solutions for support

The activity the participants mentioned as the most useful once they had transitioned into the ILE was to do more observations. This included teachers coming and sitting in their space as well as having the opportunity to go and sit in other teachers' spaces. They saw the benefit of it occurring not just in specialist subject areas but also extending across all the areas of the school such as tutorials. The participants felt it built good practice, up-skilled the teachers on how things were done in the ILE, and kept things transparent and open. They came up with suggestions to increase the number of observations currently occurring; for example, Suzanne proposed:

I am also seeing sort of invitation grids where there is also a board that is always up in the staffroom, and if people think they're doing something that's kind of cool at the moment, they just put in this line we're doing this . . . if you want to pop in for 10 minutes and see what we're doing.

It was suggested by Lisa that teachers may benefit from just having time when they first arrive to wander around; to sit, watch, and get a feel for the place. The participants agreed that being able to observe and see others in action, instead of just swapping ideas, was the best way to develop an understanding of how best to manage the change required for teaching in the ILE. For the participants, this included encouraging the walk-in culture; where teachers and SLT would walk around communities and just "drop in" to observe the teaching and learning occurring.

I would like to see SLT visibly learning from us, and walking around in communities, and going up to kids and saying 'how's it going' . . . just being more visible and encouraging the culture. (Anthony)

And encouraging more of [those] walks in. (Gavin)

Yeah. (Lisa and Suzanne)

There was agreement by the participants that, as Lisa claimed, “we do people a real disservice” by currently throwing them in and expecting them to make this mental shift. There was a suggestion to provide mentoring, especially to those who were finding it challenging; to work alongside a more experienced teacher so they can be coached through the different structures that operate within the ILE.

If I was doing it again I would have a teacher come in and be mentored, work with another experienced teacher. (Lisa)

There was an acknowledgement by Gavin that, “part of that is resources isn’t it? . . . even if it’s for a few months it’s going to mean bigger classes for everybody else”. The participants agreed there were resourcing concerns but felt existing teachers would be happy to be part of a mentoring system, as there was a culture of inclusive collegiality that underpinned the teacher interactions with each other. The participants stated how the existing teachers were keen to work on the systems and structures of the school to improve outcomes for students and were flexible enough to adapt and change when needed.

Anthony suggested this culture could be enhanced by having meetings where teachers and students share how it is going, what the challenges are and what is happening with them. As he said, “we have a lot of meetings about process . . . what I think we need is meetings about outcomes”. Giving the teachers opportunity to meet, may allow them to find common experiences, and use them to build and increase the collegiality that already existed. The teachers would have a greater opportunity to contribute their insights and be given a voice. Although systems were reviewed annually, the participants agreed there was often little change being made in response to their feedback or it’s being changed for no reason.

There are a few things that we do but aren’t necessarily still critically examined, and we’re doing them because we’ve [always] done them . . . or we don’t [do] something . . . and not everyone has a good understanding of why we do what we’re doing. (Gavin)

According to the participants, having this platform to share experiences would lower their sense of frustration that comes from having a lack of voice and further develop the inclusive culture.

#### **4.3.4 Conclusion**

This focus group consisted of teachers who had been in the school for a number of years and so had been through numerous developments and iterations of systems and structures. These longer-tenured teachers were the builders of the current systems and the culture often espoused in the school. As a result, they were more conscious of the challenge of building the school's culture when they started rather than the need to adapt to it. The challenges they identified were based on building this initial culture and embedding it. From their perspective, this was still an ongoing challenge for both students and teachers alike, in developing and embedding it further so it was evident in the practice of new teachers and subsequently in the behaviour of the students.

These longer-tenured teachers came from experienced backgrounds, and most had been teaching for over 10 years. This experience had provided them with a firm understanding of curriculum and school matters to relate to and use during their transition. They identified fewer support structures being offered during their transition than the other groups, as many of the support mechanisms evolved or were developed after their arrival in the school. They could, however, still see further development was needed in the future to make the current structures more viable.

The longer-tenured teachers agreed with the leader that teachers needed to be given a voice, although their perspective was teachers should be given more of a voice than they had currently. They suggested teachers needed these opportunities to further embed the culture within their practice as well as engage collegially with each other. Each of their suggested future solutions highlighted the longer-tenured teachers' belief in building the collegial relationships and culture within the school. Their solutions required teachers to either informally engage in learning conversations or develop learning communities and partnerships with each other while receiving both feedback and support. The informal nature of each solution emphasised the importance, from the participants' perspective, of how unique the learning was for each teacher. There was a need for differentiated support as what each teacher was going to learn or needed to learn, was going to be different in every case. The downside of this would mean resourcing pressures on the school to provide such a complex differentiated system of support. They

agreed with the leader that providing support was an individual solution and there was no one solution to suit everybody or one system to solve the problem for everybody.

## **4.4 Recently appointed teacher experiences**

### **4.4.1 Challenges of transitioning**

The recently appointed teachers had all expressed excitement about their transition into the ILE, and at the thought of being able to do things differently than they had previously in their single cell environments. The participants had come expecting to be part of a school-wide culture of innovation and not just part of a culture established around 'Balkanised' subject departments they may have experienced at their previous school. However, all of them mentioned how they found the transition challenging and how it differed from their expectations. Three participants commented they hadn't been in the school before agreeing to come and work there, and they had been surprised by the difference and the number of challenges they had to face. Cameron, for example, explained he knew, "it was an open plan environment but I didn't really know what that meant till I got in here". Daniel agreed as he commented:

I was terrified when I first came here. I took the job without having set foot in the school as well. I knew it was open plan but it was just like being back at the very first day of teaching for me. Having come from single cell coming into here, I did find it really challenging.

Four out of the five participants stated how they felt it was a challenge being in a shared teaching space as they always felt on display. They expressed an unspoken expectation that they always felt they had to be the best teacher, to be on their "game", demonstrating good practice as everyone could always see them.

There was no moment when I could just sit back a little bit and kind of relax; I was always having to be the best teacher I could be in every lesson. (Richard)

This expectation was right there from the first day, and from their perspective was a consequence of the open shared space. Although they acknowledged this allowed them to see

what good practice looked like and provided learning opportunities for growth, it also created a feeling of nervousness and apprehension amongst the participants.

It's very hard to know what the best thing is to do, but you have the advantage as you watch what everyone else is doing as well. So you watch them as much as they watch you. (Sherryn)

Definitely. (Cameron)

So it gives you a bit of confidence in that way. (Sherryn)

Kylee suggested this could lead to the feeling you were being judged, although nobody felt this had actually explicitly happened at the school. There was still a tendency to feel more exposed than other teachers, particularly if new to teaching. Both Sherryn and Cameron felt the exposure to others led to a feeling of not knowing whether their style of teaching or subject was fitting in with the rest of the community; they were always wondering whether they were doing things right. As Sherryn commented, "I still find it very hard now when I'm the one at the front doing the talking when everyone else is doing their quiet work at the side".

It was agreed by all the participants that being considerate of others was an important part of working and teaching in the community. They needed to become more inclusive and communal in their approach to make working in such an environment successful. This was seen as a challenge for some participants when they transitioned into the ILE as they found other members of staff were not as considerate as others, and this strained relationships within the communities at times. One participant mentioned noise as a particular challenge, but something they felt that could be managed through good relationships. Although all participants agreed that whether the noise was a challenge or not depended on what subject you were teaching, within what line and what community you were teaching in, and whether the relationships in the community were strong enough to deal with it.

The participants found they spent the majority of their time with the members of their community; either working together during tutorial time, sharing space during teaching time or

spending non-contact time in their work area. They discovered they got to know other subjects and teachers better as a result and learned new pedagogical ideas by sharing good practice.

You get ideas of practice and talk; have conversations as educators than just with specialists, that is quite good. (Daniel)

As a result, the participants were not in close proximity to their departments and found communicating with them a challenge. This differed from their previous single cell environment where they were used to being in the same area or sharing a room with them, so were able to discuss subject related topics at any time. This represented some challenges for them, not having that contact that they were used to and wanting it, especially near the beginning of the transition when they were still adjusting to the ILE.

Classrooms in single cell environments are very much a teacher's personal space, where they display teaching resources on the walls and arrange furniture in particular patterns to suit their teaching needs. Both of these were mentioned as challenges by the participants as they dealt with the loss of control over a personal space as they transitioned into the shared space in the ILE. They found their past teaching resources were no longer usable and they experienced low student agency as students couldn't see their work on the walls. The participants also mentioned how they had no control of the moving furniture, either before the period, during the period when students just came in and removed desks, or after the period when it was rearranged again.

Normally you know I would sit down and figure out this year I want my desks to look like this because I'm trying to achieve this effect . . . it just becomes pointless here, spending 20 minutes trying to organise desks, and the next day they were completely different. (Daniel)

Along with the loss of personal space, they also experienced a loss of control that came with operating within these shared spaces. No longer being in their single cell classroom meant they no longer had control in many ways. They found they couldn't regulate the temperature, the desks, the noise, people moving through their space and even the students in their space. In a



closed environment, the smallest change or movement can get the attention of the students, and the teachers mentioned how they would use this to help manage a room and the learning occurring within it. Within the open space, students pay less attention to those small changes so the approaches to classroom management need to reflect this.

If you're in a single cell class you move from one spot to another, attention changes, students will actually turn around and look at you . . . if you do that here, they [are] just like 'oh she's just walking somewhere'. (Kylee)

A participant also commented how difficult it was to feel in a large class in the open space that they had everybody on board in the learning process, where all students were engaged and focused. Students were inclined to move around during class and centre their learning on themselves rather than the teacher because "their mindsets are not based on classes and walls; they are very much into the flow and movement" (Daniel).

Redefining their role within the classroom was a big challenge for the participants; the control they had and where that locus of control was now being positioned. The participants had to let go of the idea of being the centre of the learning and of the classroom, and having control over their personal space. In the shared space, the individual teacher was no longer the centre of control it was shared throughout the community with both students and other teachers.

#### **4.4.2 Support given during transition**

The first support mentioned by the participants was the meeting held every second Wednesday, where the focus was on the school's structures and the different ways things were done at the school. It was voluntary and open to beginning and new teachers to the school. For many of the participants, they spent this time identifying the label the school was using and applying it to their past knowledge. Richard, for example, explained how "my time there was spent when whoever it [was talking] about what's coming up, to say learning dialogues I would be saying 'oh, I see you mean parent teacher interviews', I know how to do those". There was a general view with the participants that there was, as Sherryn stated, "a lot of support for the different ways we do things . . . [but] when we talk about support for moving into an ILE . . . there's a bit of a difference". The participants expressed how they had been given no support for the

transition into an ILE, for developing teaching and learning strategies for open spaces. This was missing and they assumed left for them to resolve for themselves.

Upon further reflection, the participants did talk about the informal support they had received from colleagues. Both Sherryn and Cameron made reference to team leaders' availability for support, and how for them, the team leader was the person to go to for assistance. All participants commented on how this openness and availability to help was found throughout all teachers and communities, and not just found amongst the leadership staff.

I guess for any questions though, no-one has ever turned around to me and [said] "I don't know how to answer that" or 'I don't know', or wouldn't give advice, they definitely would . . . they have gone out their way to ensure I have felt comfortable about any questions. (Cameron)

I never felt there was that eye rolling culture that you get at some other staffrooms where you've been here for a month, you should know that. You know, we don't have that here. (Richard)

From the participants' perspective, they explained how the teachers around them understood it did not matter whether you were a new or experienced teacher, the environment was new and support was needed. There was a culture within the school where they wanted you to be confident in what you were doing, and were always prepared to be helpful as a result. Cameron commented this was seen at all levels within the school: "it's not really a hierarchy . . . you can walk into any space, anytime with anyone and have a conversation . . . there's no restriction". This openness and sense of collegial support had been, from the participants' perspectives, a conscious decision made by the teachers who had been there longer than them. It had developed into an embedded culture of collegiality, supporting teachers as they transitioned into the ILE. The participants also saw how this informal structure could result in inconsistent practices. Daniel summarised the view of the other participants:

The informal structure possibly is more effective, it's just the downside of the informal structure is you can't have consistency for everyone, so some people are going to get a different experience to others.

This meant teachers' experiences could differ across different areas from year to year, and be seen as a flaw in the process of support. As Kylee shared, "it would have been nice to have a SLT who helped me, and a team leader who was more supportive but that's just what happened with me personally", whereas Cameron's experience was the opposite, "I think for me they have gone out of their way to ensure I have felt comfortable". As evident in the participants' own experiences within the focus group, variation can occur within different community teams or departments.

#### **4.4.3 Future solutions for support**

It was suggested by over half the recently appointed teachers that an acknowledgement by Pre-Service Teacher Education Providers, that single cell environments are not the only environment in which you might teach in the future would be useful. The participants thought having more diversity in pre-service practicum<sup>2</sup> would allow future teachers to gain an understanding of how to use open spaces so transitioning into an ILE would not be so challenging. These opportunities would provide teachers with some background to base their experiences.

[It] would have been cool to have had more knowledge to actually apply cross-curricula stuff and bring that into the school. (Kylee)

Although the participants saw merit in this idea, they acknowledged that for the majority of them and other teachers, their pre-service training had been a long time ago and was no longer relevant to their current practice. Richard stated, "you learn how to teach in an open space by teaching in an open space". Four out of five participants mentioned observations would be more appropriate for transition as it was timely and relevant. They believed it needed to be kept casual and positive, as illustrated in an example given by Richard:

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<sup>2</sup> A practicum is a period of practice school teaching during the course of Initial Teacher Education

Last period I noticed such and such, next time maybe if you try doing this you might find it easier, or I really like the way you did whatever, I thought it was really innovative . . . that I found really helpful.

Sherryn suggested having the opportunity to observe another teacher, a mentor who shares good practice with the new teacher. This person would not necessarily be a line manager but possibly another person who is there just to mentor and share good practice. She proposed it could go even further to team teaching; where someone works alongside the teacher to help them gain confidence in the space. She suggested by taking away the formality of someone watching, “people would relax and will learn more from it”.

Richard had had a different experience to the rest of the focus group; he had two days to just follow teachers around and watch when he transitioned into the ILE. This allowed him to, “just watch and see how we do it here”. He found it extremely useful and suggested this could become formalised as part of an induction programme. The other participants agreed it was an idea worth pursuing along with time given to new teachers to observe others.

#### **4.4.4 Conclusion**

The recently appointed teachers’ focus group was able to identify the largest number of challenges that present themselves to teachers as they transition into an ILE. Their perspective was based on their practice; how it actually affected them personally in the classroom and their teaching practice. As a group, they were less experienced in their teaching than the longer-tenured teachers, so it was likely this was an area of focus for them as they were still developing their practice. They had an emerging view of the school’s culture and the expectations that surround it but were not quite at the stage of developing and leading it.

There were some challenges that both the recently appointed teachers and longer-tenured teachers identified, though they did not always see the challenge with the same mindset or theme. Moving furniture was identified by both groups of teachers as a challenge; although recently appointed teachers saw the challenge as loss of personal space, while longer-tenured teachers saw using the shared space collectively as the challenge. The recently appointed teachers tended to focus at the surface level of the issue, while the longer-tenured teachers

were concerned about the deeper level such as building the school's culture. The recently appointed teachers identified a number of surface issues such as not being able to communicate with departments, display work on walls, or control variables in a room. This was understandable as they were less experienced with what was expected at the school and were dealing with the reality of what was affecting their practice personally.

The recently appointed teachers were more critical of the support structures than the other focus group and summarised what they thought was effective for teachers in the classroom. Both the recently appointed and longer-tenured teachers identified similar solutions that would help teachers to transition into an ILE. These were based on collegiality and the school having a culture of transparency and trust. The key solutions of observation, watching, and mentoring were all given as informal processes of support that relied on teachers forming relationships with each other as well as learning from each other. These particular participants saw each other as the greatest resource to gain support and to learn from.

## 4.5 Overall conclusion

### 4.5.1 Challenges

There are similarities between the groups in their experiences about the challenges faced when transitioning into an ILE, but there are also distinct differences as summarised below.

**Table 4.3: Summary of challenges experienced**

Theme	Challenge	Recently appointed teachers	Longer-tenured teachers	Senior leader
Being on display	Being visible	x	x	x
	Using a preferred pedagogy	x	x	x
Consideration of others	Lack of consideration	x	x	
Utilisation of space	Not displaying student work	x		
	Moving furniture	x	x	
Control	Locus of control moves away from the individual teacher	x		
	Keeping students the focus	x		
School structures and expectations	Communicating with departments	x		
	Understanding intent		x	x
	Understanding shared language	x		x
	Not using old mental models	x		x

The focus groups' challenges were centred around their practice, and fitting into the existing culture, while the leader's challenges were based on the espoused expectations. As a result, the leader's perception of the challenges being faced had few overlaps with the focus groups' perceptions, apart from the challenge of being on display. This common challenge of being on display also presented the solution of mimetic behaviour (Kondra & Hurst, 2009) used by both focus groups as a means to fit into this culture, and assume the "right pedagogy". The two focus groups acknowledged being visible and feeling critiqued, as they were unsure what the expectations were, became easier as teachers adjusted to the culture and pedagogical stance the school had. All participants acknowledged there was a mental shift required when transitioning to an ILE, with the leader highlighting how each individual had a different experience, due to their response towards adapting to the environment and the culture. The recently appointed teachers endorsed this as they recounted their individual experiences, and how it was more challenging than they had expected to adapt to the new culture.

#### 4.5.2 Support

The three different groups had a high degree of agreement about what support structures were being provided by the school, as teachers transitioning from single cell environments. What differed between the groups was the expected outcomes from the support offered. The leader assumed that there was the right amount, and variety, of support being offered to teachers, enough for each individual to choose what was needed or wanted. Alternatively, both focus groups indicated the amount of support was, from their perspective, lacking in regards to pedagogical support for transitioning into an ILE.

**Table 4.4: Summary of support mechanisms**

<b>Support mechanism</b>	<b>Recently appointed teachers</b>	<b>Longer-tenured teachers</b>	<b>Senior leader</b>
Expectations met	Partial	Partial as systems emerged	Assumed to be met though challenge acknowledged
Weekly meeting	x	x	x
Team structures	x	x	x
Open door policy	x		x
Middle leader support			x
Professional inquiry			x

There was no formal induction programme for teachers as they arrived at the case study school; which the focus group participants endorsed. Both focus groups commented that the weekly meetings currently provided did not support the pedagogical or cultural shifts teachers go through, instead of having a system's focus. Both sets of teachers felt more emphasis needed to be on the mental shifts teachers went through and supporting teachers in this.

There was a consensus among the focus groups and the leader that the team structures were the most promising support process; providing opportunities for teachers to observe, ask questions, and learn from each other. Mimetic behaviour was allowing pedagogical change to occur in the short term, although it is unlikely to be changing teachers' beliefs and assumptions. This type of cultural shift, where teacher beliefs, values, and assumptions are changing requires longer time frames as well as strong interpersonal relationships between teachers.

### 4.5.3 Future support

**Table 4.5: Summary of future solutions**

<b>Future solutions</b>	<b>Recently appointed teachers</b>	<b>Longer-tenured teachers</b>	<b>Senior leader</b>
Observations	x	x	
Mentoring	x	x	
Team teaching	x		
Watching only	x	x	
Pre-service teacher education	x		
Teacher's voice		x	x

The participants in the focus groups described different forms of collaborative practices as the most effective way of providing support. These solutions were practices that were, in some cases, already occurring within the school but not consistently across the school. The focus groups saw this as an opportunity to strengthen these collaborative practices and embed them as part of the school-wide culture. They agreed teachers had a high degree of collegiality that resulted from the team and community structures, and these could be the building blocks to introduce more formalised processes such as observations or mentoring. These processes would continue to use the mimetic culture already established, although concerns were raised at the variation teachers may experience. This resonated with the leader's perspective, who believed the collaborative culture, allowed teachers and SLT to constantly review and improve structures in the school to support teachers. All participants in the study believed the collegial

and collaborative culture that exists between teachers provided the most effective support, so was an important aspect of the school to develop for the future.

## **4.6 Summary**

This chapter has presented the participants' perceptions and experiences of transitioning into an ILE. In particular, their perceptions of the challenges they faced, the support they received, and the support they felt was missing and needed for future teachers. The similarities and differences between each focus group and leader illustrate there was little in common except for one common challenge and solution of understanding; the challenge being the high visibility associated with being in the spaces within the ILE. All participants agreed this differed from the single cell environment teachers had come from and required adapting to. It required a major shift in a teacher's mindset and how they positioned themselves within a classroom. The participants also commented on the collegiality that resulted from such an environment and the positive influence this could have on a teacher's transition. The two groups and one senior leader agreed that the most effective support mechanism was through the team structures. Although not formally structured, the collegiality provided allowed enough trust for teachers to feel they could ask questions or for help when needed. As mentioned by both focus groups, there could be variation in the level of support received due to the people involved in the communities. The next chapter looks at these similarities and differences in more detail, relating the research findings to literature and other research around supporting professional learning and the barriers that prevent it, and how this relates to ILEs.



## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Transitioning to an ILE requires adjusting to pedagogical, cultural, and professional learning change. This chapter presents an analysis of the findings reported in Chapter Four, taking into account both the aligned and non-aligned viewpoints of the participants of their experiences and the support they received. When there was a consensus among the participants' viewpoints, the opportunity has been taken to analyse these findings alongside the relevant literature and research. When there was no evidence of a shared understanding with the interview data, this provided an opportunity to analyse the discourses and any tensions that might exist relating to transitioning into an ILE. The chapter has been set out according to the themes that emerged from the participants' responses to the questions during the interview sessions. They provide an account of any significant or critical experiences along with an evaluation of the challenges faced by the participants, and how these related to their perception of transitioning into an ILE.

### **5.2 Adapting to the physical environment**

The participants had through their own agency made a conscious decision to come to the case school. They were aware things were done differently at the case school compared to schools with only single cell environments, and there would be a pedagogical change as they transitioned into it. What was unexpected by the participants and expressed by both focus groups and the one leader were the number of challenges, and the extent of the cultural change they would or did face. They knew the school was an ILE but were unaware of the impact this change would have on them until they were actually teaching in it. Kondra and Hurst (2009) state new employees are often uncertain about what behaviours are expected; the norms and values of the new culture. According to Kondra and Hurst (2009), this uncertainty causes newcomers little choice but to mimic those around them to understand how to behave in an accepted manner. This is particularly true regarding the cultural expectations which cannot be found in staff handbooks or other documentation but instead only through observing others. They further claim mimetic behaviour can be used to rationalise the gaps between espoused and observed behaviour or to interpret behaviours to create new meanings for them (Kondra & Hurst, 2009). This was consistent with the findings of the case study as the participants mimic existing members of staff on ways to learn how to adapt to being in the flexible space when they

transition into the ILE. Achieved through the team structures, participants observed each other and developed new teaching and learning practices for these spaces. It may or may not have matched their expectations but allowed them to be accepted and belong as part of the existing culture.

The leader believed it was a different experience for each teacher as they transitioned into the ILE, due to their individual response to the physical environment and adaptation to the cultural change. It came through in the findings that the recently appointed teachers were adapting to the physical environment, while the longer-tenured teachers believed for them it was a case of adjusting to the environment more than adapting. They commented they had come to the school to be part of the building of both the vision and culture. They had not just fitted into an existing culture like the recently appointed teachers had. As a result, they had been through several iterations of systems and structures; part of the developing and decision-making as adjustments were made to the original designs. Schein (1992) states culture is a product of the original members' beliefs and values as well as its history and collective experiences. Organisations evolve as the group members undertake learning experiences and adjust their underlying assumptions to fit with the new meanings acquired. Culture, according to Schein (1992), is not static but is fluid and dynamic as members' experiences shift and adjust the shared assumptions, and newcomers bring new beliefs, values, and assumptions to be considered. The experiences of the longer-tenured teachers support Schein's view, as they commented on taking responsibility for the development and embedding of the culture. This was evident in their actions as some longer-tenured teachers had been founding members of staff and had determined the initial values, while others had been part of the refining and strengthening as the school had matured.

### **5.2.1 Redefining roles**

The consequences of the de-privatised space were well established within the school and had been experienced by the recently appointed teachers as they transitioned into the school. In particular, Benade (2017) argues that students have more flexibility and mobility, and greater autonomy for their learning. The recently appointed teachers shared experiences where they found students were not focused on the teacher and the immediate surroundings but on movement and flow. This was a considerable challenge that the teachers encountered as it

differed to their existing perceptions of classroom norms. As a result, the recently appointed teachers had to redefine their role in the classroom and where the locus of control was now being positioned. A report on future learning by Bolstad et al. (2012) supports rethinking both student and teacher roles, claiming in the future teachers will no longer transmit knowledge for students to absorb. Roles will need to be restructured so they draw on the strengths and knowledge of both students and teachers in order to support learning. Woolner et al. (2014) confirm the traditional roles of teachers and students are challenged when teaching in open spaces, with their study of exploring teacher experiences on preparing to move into an open space environment. As part of the Woolner et al. (2014) study, an experimental week took place, where inquiry learning occurred in an existing open space, to explore both teacher and student experiences. Senior leaders commented that a noticeable difference was the reversible roles; students becoming the experts in the classroom while teachers became the facilitator of the learning. According to the OCED (2013), one of the principles of ILEs is allowing students to self-regulate their learning which, for the recently appointed teachers in this case study, meant taking their current theory-in-use as they transitioned and reworking it to fit this new mode of teaching and learning.

In doing so, the recently appointed teachers commented on the feeling of loss associated with the transition, with losing their personal and privatised space or their control of operating in these shared spaces. The latter was reflected in their experiences as they gave examples where they felt no control over their space regarding the temperature, noise, desk arrangement, or student flow in and out of the space. As Heifetz and Linsky (2004) claim, loss can be a difficult process as what teachers are giving up has real value to them, so respect and acknowledgement need to be given in recognition of the loss. What they are being asked to give up may be challenging their beliefs and values as it attempts to close the gap between their espoused theory and theory-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Teachers may experience a loss of confidence as they face this gap between their espoused theory and theory-in-use, and support needs to be provided (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). This resonated with the recently appointed teachers' experiences as they had come to the school, wanting to be part of the school's vision. However, the new setting required them to make mental shifts to adapt to a different culture and a different way of being and utilising learning spaces. They commented this was more challenging than they had expected and support was required to help them adapt.

### **5.2.2 Being on display**

One of the key challenges mentioned by both focus groups and the one leader was being on display to colleagues when teaching in these flexible spaces. This was a major difference from a single cell environment, which had resulted due to the removal of the physical barriers and teaching practice becoming more visible. Participants commented on feeling “exposed” and having a sense of nervousness and apprehension as a result. Teachers in the study by Saltmarsh et al. (2015) also expressed anxiety about how aspects of their work would be viewed by others as they started teaching in an open environment. This study was conducted with three open plan primary schools located in Sydney where they found these anxieties lessen over time, with some teachers finding as their work became more visible to their colleagues it was actually of benefit to them. Campbell et al.’s (2013) earlier work studied how these three open plan schools were shaping teaching practices and the challenges this presented for professional learning. Their study shows how teachers become more exposed for others to see and critique when working in an ILE, and as a result, new cultures of practice emerge where teaching is seen as a shared practice. This was consistent with the findings in the case study school, where participants acknowledged they gained opportunities for learning and growth by being on display, as well as received support, despite the unspoken expectation they felt to demonstrate good practice.

Both focus groups commented on this unspoken expectation to fit into the culture already present within the communities. The longer-tenured teachers mentioned how the exposure highlighted any differences between teachers and the dissonance this could cause. It was an unspoken understanding by the participants that there was a “right pedagogy”, of which they felt they were expected to be a part. Deed and Lesko’s (2015) research into how teachers adapt as they move into open plan spaces confirms teachers have a level of uncertainty about the appropriateness of teaching methods as they initially enter these spaces. Although they conclude teachers are likely to be at different stages of understanding how to effectively use these spaces, so no stable conventions or routines are visibly seen. They claim there are no preferred or “right” ways to do it as teachers are constantly moving through stages of negotiation and experimentation. Levine (2011) supports this and further suggests everyone has something to contribute to the community. Newcomers should not simply learn from the experienced teachers, as they have their own unique opinions and ways of knowing. He claims

it is important not just to replicate what is already in place but for everyone to contribute to the ongoing development of the community. He acknowledges that doing so requires teachers to take risks and open themselves up to exposure and lack of privacy.

Transitioning to an open, flexible space required the participants to change their way of thinking and teaching, as they had to adapt to the de-privatised practices. They were being exposed and expected to work more with each other and share ideas, skills, and practice as there were no barriers to open discussion and observation of practice. This expectation to work more with others brings with it a degree of risk as they have to examine their current assumptions, interpretations, and expectations that are driving their current behaviour (Larrivee, 2000). Le Fevre (2014) claims risk is an inherent part of change, although a teacher's perception of risk can inhibit the extent to which they engage with new pedagogical practices. Her case study following 11 teachers as they implemented a literacy initiative, revealed the teachers expressed a reluctance to visit each other's classroom, due to a fear of being judged and any subsequent embarrassment. As a result, there was no sign of de-privatisation of practice and the status quo continued. She concluded trust was an essential component of change as it builds an environment where people are willing to take risks. Both Zimmerman (2006) and Timperley (2008) agree, with Timperley further suggesting trust is so important, that if it is ignored teachers are likely to close themselves from the learning process completely. Zimmerman (2006) concurs by suggesting people feel secure doing things in a familiar way and disrupting these patterns can be unsettling for them. She argues that unless strong relationships and trust are present, they will revert to their former methods where they feel safe. Certainly, the participants in this case study did not explicitly mention trust being part of their environment or whether they were willing or supported to take risks. This does not suggest it was not happening or present but their responses support the opposite; they perhaps were content to mimic what was currently happening and fit into the existing culture, instead of creating new practices and evolving the current culture.

According to the MOE (2016b), ILEs offer both teachers and students flexibility, agency, ubiquity, and connectedness. Teachers move to ILEs with these expectations as this is the espoused view that has been given to them by the MOE (2016b) and OECD (2015). The reality they found in this case school was a culture where, as the longer-tenured teachers commented,

teachers self-moderated their behaviour to fit with the collective beliefs and values of the school. It was still challenging and required mental shifts from their previous ways of teaching and learning, but their agency did not have as much influence to bring about any major changes as it would have if they had used it to create new practices. They might be adapting to the environment just as the longer-tenured teachers were adjusting to it as time passed, but overall the culture was fairly homologous; the teachers were merely confirming it. This may have been due to external pressures as Campbell et al. (2013) found in their study; the culture of their case school was being compromised by national testing expectations. These external factors influenced the culture formed by the level of risk-taking, creativity, and innovation the teachers were willing to engage in compared to the pressure felt from the external accountability measures. The performative pressures of NCEA could be affecting the development of the culture in this case school, as they feel pressurised to deliver the results the community expects of them as well as stay true to the vision they originally designed the school and its practices. This could be causing the resulting teaching environment for the teachers to be the homologous culture that was evident in the open, flexible space.

### **5.3 Collegiality as support**

The support the participants believed they received for transitioning to the ILE was a result of the collegiality that transpired from being in and using the flexible space. This was apparent during their interviews and featured strongly in their accounts of experience. Both focus groups and the one leader commented that the main support came from the team structure. The team structure was a function of the flexible space arrangement; where inter-disciplinary teachers taught and shared a work area in an open learning space. Thus the open space allowed teachers to observe each other, share practices, and collaborate together. Osborne (2013) supports the opportunities found in ILEs, of being able to model and having good practices modelled back, effectively developing the teaching practice of those involved. Timperley (2011) also argues the de-privatisation of practice in ILEs creates opportunities for teachers to observe each other, and discuss and share their teaching and learning practices compared to single cell environments. Osborne (2013) further suggests this de-privatisation of practice can lead to exploring teachers' strengths and weaknesses in a supportive and inclusive environment that creates a continually improving community. In this case study, the team structure used

exploration as teachers mutually observed each other and as one participant commented, stole ideas from each other to change their own practice on a regular basis.

The participants saw the team structure as a support to see good practice in action and to gain insights on how to adapt pedagogical practices to the new space, through the relationships with their fellow colleagues. Although they were receiving pedagogical support, it was the change to a different culture of expected practice that required the most adapting to, as they were being asked to work in ways that were new and uncertain to them. Heifetz and Linsky (2004) identify this as second-order change; where shifts are required in people's thinking that challenge their existing beliefs and norms. They suggest new skills and knowledge are required by teachers to make the adjustment, both cultural and pedagogical changes in this case. Guskey's (2002) model of professional learning suggests teachers need to apply their new learning to the classroom and see changes in student outcomes before they will change their own beliefs and attitudes. This fits comfortably with the team structure as teachers were challenging their old assumptions and creating new meaning and knowledge to deal with the second-order change. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) claim less expert teachers gain knowledge through experiences such as master teachers or mentoring; where collaborative relationships with more experienced teachers support them. They identify this as knowledge in practice; practical knowledge gained from reflection or experience. There are similarities to this study with transitioning teachers using the established teachers as mentors or master teachers to support and share practices with them within the team structures and changing existing beliefs and practices as a result.

Participants in both focus groups gave future suggestions for support, like the current structures, that centred on collegiality and collaboration. Their preference was observations, both by them and by others, observing them to give feedback. Little (1990) calls this joint work, where de-privatisation and collective commitment to change allows collegial relations between teachers to effectively occur. Unlike storytelling, sharing, aid, and assistance, the other forms of collegial relations which can reinforce bad habits and the isolated work of teaching, joint work promotes collaborative practices and improved outcomes. De-privatisation of practice refers to the idea of teachers sharing with others their teaching practices and therefore their beliefs about teaching and learning. By informally observing each other, discussing and reflecting on their

practice, and sharing their teaching knowledge, this idea of joint work evident in the case study school fits with Little's (1990) description of collegial relations and supports collegiality as the basis of the support structures within the school. This also resonates with Cranston's (2011) findings on trust; teachers would not share, observe, and de-privatise their practice without the norms of safety, risk-taking, and change orientation being firmly in place. Cranston's (2011) study of 12 principals from Canada described the relationships amongst their staff within learning communities, and the presence or absence of trust and its effects. He found not only do the norms mentioned above develop as trust grows but it also fosters collaborative practices. This culture of trust and collegiality could provide some explanation of the high number of "joint work" suggestions made by both focus groups as future solutions of support.

### **5.3.1 Espoused views theory and theory-in-use**

The leader believed the support given; the team structure, weekly meetings, and professional inquiry gave teachers the support needed to transition successfully into the ILE. S/he acknowledged it was challenging but believed the structures and systems in place would meet teachers' needs if they chose to use them. These structures were also found in the school documentation with their outcomes clearly defined; there was a clear alignment between the leader's view and the documentation. Argyris and Schön (1974) refer to either an individual or an organisational espoused theory as the set of assumptions they would like to be seen as true. They are the worldview that conveys what the organisation does and stands for, as well as what they would like others to believe they do. In this case study, they are articulated through the school's documentation, website, and publications for teachers, students, and the wider community to view. However, as Argyris and Schön (1974) state, a different set of assumptions can govern what is actually done, the theory-in-use.

The focus groups had a different perspective; they agreed with the leader about the types of support available but had a different view of the outcomes that transpired from them. An example of this was the weekly meeting; this was a voluntary meeting for new teachers to attend to discuss issues. The leader saw these meetings as timely and relevant for teachers for that period of time, while both focus groups believed they were focused at a systems level instead of a pedagogical level so were lacking. They gave examples of these meetings where the focus was on reports, conferencing, data analysis, and other systems that operated within



the school, and how they would have preferred some reference to strategies for working in the classroom instead. This mismatch of expectations and outcomes is typical of what Argyris and Schön (1974) argue occur between people's espoused theory and the theory-in-use. For example, although the leader espoused the school as highly adaptable, flexible, and responsive to change and improvement, in reality, the changes they made appeared minor to the teachers, allowing the school to carry on with its espoused current policies and systems. In situations like this Argyris (1977) suggests double loop learning is needed. Double loop learning allows for changes that modify the underlying norms, practices, and assumptions by getting people to surface their guiding values. This leads to a deepened understanding of assumptions and brings less of a misalignment between the parties involved. This resonated with this case study as the leader had not appeared to have fully identified the underlying beliefs and assumptions the teachers held about the support structures. This was holding the school back from modifying its knowledge and practice according to the experience gained; hence an opportunity for learning was not being fully utilised.

### **5.3.2 Different experiences**

The participants commented strongly in the findings on the support structures found within the communities, clearly linking the open space with collegial relations. This raised the assumption that the group shared and were mutually reinforcing. They assumed that as they were working under the same conditions and adapting to the same open spaces as colleagues in other parts of the school, the collaboration and collegiality they were experiencing was occurring across the school. Schein (2004) identifies these basic assumptions as the unconscious, taken for granted beliefs, perceptions, and feelings that explain a culture. In spite of believing they received collegial support in their communities, it was agreed by both focus groups and the one leader that individuals experienced different outcomes and levels of support when transitioning into this ILE. Individuals in the focus groups were able to give examples of fellow teacher experiences compared to their own that highlighted this variation. The difference in experience was considered to be of concern to the participants as it led to inconsistencies in community practices across the school, as well as creating dissonance with their underlying assumptions. Schein (2004) claims any social group that has a shared history will have evolved a culture. The strength of the culture will depend on the length of its existence, the stability of its membership, and the emotional intensity of the experiences they have shared. According to Schein (2004)

when there are certain beliefs and values within the organisation working at cross purposes to other beliefs and values, this could lead to situations of conflict and uncertainty. As Schein (2004) explains these situations of conflict or uncertainty result from the insufficient stability of membership, shared history of experiences or the presence of many different subgroups with different kinds of experiences. The structures in the case school possibly encourage this scenario as the principal reallocates the team structures every year, redistributing teachers into new groups so stability is compromised as well as the shared history and experiences that are built up each year. The uncertainty created could weaken and distort the culture, changing its homologous texture. There was an assumption on the participants' part as they transitioned into the ILE that the culture of the school would be homologous, that they would have similar experiences and support. What was apparent from their experiences was that different levels of cultures existed and a more complex situation than first thought was revealed.

These basic assumptions the participants believed and shared, like Argyris and Schön's (1974) theory-in-use, guide the behaviour of members of the group, telling them how to perceive, think, and feel about things (Schein, 2004). Schein claims this is the deeply embedded, intangible level of culture that is usually invisible, while the artefacts are the tangible, observable level. This makes the artefacts easy to recognise; the visible signs that are seen, heard and felt by individuals (Schein, 1994). As a result, the participants were able to learn by assimilating the artefacts and observed behaviours into their practice by observing and mimicking those around them. Learning and gaining an understanding of the basic assumptions was seen as more complex as teachers need to undergo adaptive changes; a mental shift in their thinking was required (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). Under such conditions, people will examine and expose their assumptions for critique and engage in dialogue with each other. This reflects the shared assumption the participants have about the way learning occurs at the school, although this espoused view does not match their experiences. Double loop learning could be used as a way of surfacing and addressing this perceived misalignment. For example, the school espoused a singular, homologous culture but in reality, it had multiple groups with variations of norms of trust and relationship building. This was the result of the range of distinct challenges each group had developed due to the individuals involved, the initial values and assumptions they brought with them and the lack of stability within groups due to the annual turnover. The implication of

the variation was the differentiated support the teachers would need as they transitioned into the ILE since there was no singular binding culture.

There is a current emphasis in New Zealand schools on teaching as inquiry as for the preferred professional learning approach, where teachers are challenged to think about their learning as well as their students. Teachers are being asked to examine their current practices using student data and explore relevant literature that challenges their assumptions and offers new possibilities (Timperley et al., 2007). Cultures of trust, effective relationships and systems that allow teachers to meet in groups to reflect and engage in dialogue contribute to the conditions needed for such processes to occur. In this case study, the participants provided no explicit evidence in the findings of any of these conditions existing within the school, which does not imply they were not happening but was a noticeable silence on their part. On one hand, this may have been a constraint of the focus group and the participants may not have felt they wanted to talk about it in the interviews. On the other hand, it may be that due to annual changes to team structures, the collegial relationships have not formed long enough to build enough trust for the participants to recognise and mention them as significant factors. These factors have significant roles to play in the transition of the teachers into the ILE. Without interaction between teachers to engage in productive dialogue they are unable to examine existing assumptions and make alterations, or take risks to create new practices and evolve the culture.

#### **5.4 A conceptual view of the findings**

ILEs can attract teachers who are willing to adapt, have a growth mindset, and are open and flexible like the spaces they come to teach in. They are prepared to change their practice as teachers and look for new avenues of learning in order to achieve this. The interviews and documentation from the case school highlighted how teachers learn as they transition into an ILE but also what they concede in the process; the control, power, and influence that come from the autonomy of a single cell environment (Benade, 2017). As Argyris and Schön (1974) suggest, this creates anxiety for them as their espoused view and theory-in-use collide, as they realise ILEs are more complex than they had assumed. Individually they were being challenged to question their original assumptions and modify them to fit into this new way of thinking; to engage in double loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974). To add to this complexity, each of the

participants in the case study contributed to the building of the school's culture by offering a different perspective. The leader along with the school documentation provided the espoused views that were forming the assumptions, philosophies, and goals of the school's culture (Schein, 2004). The recently appointed teachers had not fully adapted their own values and assumptions to match the school's espoused views as they had not been there long enough to have been through this process. So they were acting on their own espoused view which closely aligned to their theory-in-use, bringing new thinking and beliefs into the school. Although the recently appointed teachers had not fully engaged with the school's espoused views as yet, the longer-tenured teachers had helped develop and design the vision and direction of the school so were supportive of the leader's espoused views. However, they were conscious of the existence of the gap between the espoused view and their theory-in-use and acknowledged the mismatch between what they were saying and what they were doing (Argyris & Schön, 1974). They were a hybrid group; agreeing with the leader and the assumptions that were underpinning the school's culture while practically upholding a different view in the learning space.

One of the espoused assumptions held as part of the culture was that individuals would engage in collaborative inquiry in order to improve their practice; inquiring not just into their practice but also into the values and assumptions underlying those practices (Benade, 2017). Benade (2017) claims reflective practice allows teachers' values and assumptions to change their existing practices to emerging innovative practices. This implies further consideration should be taken by the SLT in relation to how the groups or communities are reorganised based on their thinking and design each year. As result members of staff have to reform any relationships or collaborative practices that possibly develop within these groups. Benade (2016) and many others in the literature reviewed for this research, claim trust and relationships that support trust building takes time to develop as well as underpin collaborative inquiry processes. On an individual level, it seems unlikely collaborative inquiry could be easily implemented within this time frame for trust to become well-established. This may account for both focus group participants commenting how the espoused view was not the theory-in-use on how they learned to fit into the school's culture (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Both focus group participants felt they learned through mimetic behaviour; copying the behaviours and practices of those around them so they became accepted and belonged as part of the existing culture (Kondra & Hurst, 2009). If

the individuals are copying behaviours and enabling the current policies and practices to continue, this suggests that single-loop learning is being encouraged and double loop learning is unlikely to occur. As the teachers are not questioning their values and assumptions as double loop learning requires them to do, they do not modify and shift their thinking (Argyris & Schön, 1974). On the other hand, reflective practice asks teachers to use collaborative inquiry to critically examine assumptions and engage with double loop learning in order to shift assumptions and values as they undertake new learning and understandings. Consequently, the espoused view of learning seems to encourage the growth of new learning and experiences via collaborative inquiry contributing to the subcultures of the groups or communities and possibly the overall school culture, while the theory-in-use encourages the continuity of the same culture is reinforced. This seems to be resulting in a mismatch of outcomes both at an individual level for the learning taking place, and for the development of the culture at a group and school-wide level.

During the interviews, the participants in the focus groups were not prompted by me to go to a deeper level; to bring forward the concepts of relationships, trust, and collaborative inquiry and to see whether they would disclose it as part of their culture. They did not mention it in the interviews which suggest it was either so implicit within the school and communities that they did not feel a need to mention it, or it was not there at these deeper levels. This could be due to the participants working in a policy environment that is not conducive to providing the support for the assumptions that had been espoused by the leader and supported by the longer-tenured teachers. The longer-tenured focus group alluded to the tension they felt, between the pressure of performativity, and the vision, and flexibility they felt was part of working in an ILE. Kondra and Hurst (2009) refer to these pressures as coercive; informal and formal processes that are externally imposed on the individual or group. Whether the pressure comes from performativity expectations of the local and wider community or the expectation by the MOE (2016b) and the OECD (2015) on what an ILE should be like, they are testing the assumptions of the individual, the group, and the school community. Therefore the impact of the lack of stability of groups on the culture as the existing culture is reinforced becomes contrary to the expectations of the flexible, collaborative spaces the teachers are working.

Part of the culture assumed it was conducive for both teacher and student learning that teachers did not work with the same people in their communities every year. There does not appear to be any questioning of this assumption; there seems to be an acceptance by teachers as it had always been like this. As a participant commented using another context, there was a lack of questioning assumptions within the school which suggests this may be a norm. This raises an interesting question as the espoused view of the school was; it was innovative, flexible, and ever-changing. As one participant said during their interview, the school prides itself on its ability to change every year. The senior leader supported this with their comment on how the school was constantly reflecting and looking for ways to improve. Although at the same time, without even noticing and being able to acknowledge it had happened, they seem to have taken a pre-determined position towards a fixed culture that was static, homologous and inward focused. One of the outcomes of a mimetic approach to learning is that it leads to a school-wide homologous culture. As each new teacher learns from the more experienced teacher, they develop the same ways of doing things and espouse the same views; there is no questioning of the current beliefs and actions. As Schein (2004) states, culture is the product of the groups' learning experiences as it faces external and internal challenges, which asks the question whether mimicking and learning the same behaviour leads to the authentic development of a culture. If there are fewer collective experiences over time from which the group can shape and challenge their assumptions, can the culture be a changing entity or is it instead static? As new members arrive with new thinking and shifts do occur within a group, does this get transferred to the whole school? Or does the group instead break down and go back to the preferred, dominant culture it had before?

Schein (2004) states cultural identity is established over time. If the principal is reorganising teachers in their communities each year, Schein would suggest these communities do not have the components to form a strong culture, if one at all. According to Schein (2004), a culture strengthens the longer the group is together with the same membership and are sharing appropriate learning experiences. Subcultures may feed into the school-wide culture, but do not seem to have the stability to establish and strengthen their own culture, as subculture groups may not be together for long enough to build relationships and trust between themselves. This leads to a further question; can a culture be embedded by a group over time if trust is not present? Or can enough trust be built within a group for a culture to even be properly

established over a short period of time? And does this account for the position taken towards a static, homologous culture that seems to have developed in the communities? However, if teachers were able to be in stable groups for long periods of time, build relationships, and establish trust without the high turnabout of shifting within groups, could they in five to 10 years' time have an impact on the school influencing the culture development? Currently, there is a stable group within the school, who stay the same and have an established culture; the SLT. If the subgroups in the communities cannot establish themselves or their culture, it may mean this stable group is seen to be determining and shaping the culture, and therefore the practice of the other teachers, rather than an emerging collaborative group as espoused. They possibly become the privileged group who decide on what the school does and what its beliefs, values, and assumptions will be. The findings suggest the SLT have become the voice that is articulating the espoused culture; the public layer of culture being held up as the schools' beliefs and values (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

There are challenges and opportunities both ways for reorganising the teachers into communities each year to work collaboratively. But as long as teachers understand how to transfer their knowledge of organisational learning that they have gained from their old group into the new, it provides opportunities for the ILE to do things differently. Systems need to be in place that allow for this to happen as if they are not then the organisational learning is damaged or lost. Heifetz and Linsky (2004) identify this as an adaptive challenge, where not only are new solutions and structures needing to be implemented but also the new knowledge and skills of the teachers involved. Adaptive challenges require teachers' prevailing beliefs and values to be challenged and shifted, unlike technical challenges which build on existing or past models and solutions (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). As in any case, though the systems might be in place, teachers need to be actively involved in giving their input, as the longer-tenured focus group brought to attention during their interview when they commented on their lack of voice. The building and embedding of a culture that offers support to ensure change is managed effectively needs the input of all groups within the organisation or school. Walters et al. (2004) argue that collaboration is an effective way to ease the uncertainty that comes with adaptive challenges and bring about change. The collective values and assumptions teachers bring, and the learning experiences the group as subgroups and as a whole go through, shape and develop the culture that reflects the group's learning at that moment in time. This provides clarity and

understanding for leaders to make decisions and give support to teachers at a school-wide level.

## **5.5 Summary**

This chapter has used the findings from Chapter Four to discuss the experiences teachers had as they transitioned into this ILE, highlighting the differences between the different groups of participants. Recently appointed teachers were adapting to the ILE; having to redefine their roles and deal with the exposure that accompanies the de-privatised practices of flexible, open spaces. Longer-tenured teachers were adjusting to these environments as they were part of the development and decision-making that occurred to the original vision and design. Both focus groups and the one leader agreed collaboration offered the main support to teachers as they transitioned into the ILE, although there were differences in the focus groups and the leader's perspective about the support teachers received as they transitioned. The leader's espoused view about the support offered did not fully match the focus groups' theory-in-use. These differences in views were explored along with the outcomes and challenges they revealed for each group of participants. Using relevant literature and research, it has been possible to identify possible alignments between the participants' viewpoints of their experiences as well as the support they received. Of interest has been the mismatch between the views or gaps that have been revealed, as well as the tensions and discourses of the non-aligned viewpoints. In Chapter Six, these will be explored further and the implications for leaders, in terms of decision-making and types of support needed, will be discussed.



## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

With limited research available both internationally and in New Zealand on how flexible spaces were being used and to what effect, this case study research was designed to contribute to the knowledge around teachers' experiences when transitioning into ILEs. The aim of this research was to look at the issue from both the longer-tenured and recently appointed teacher's perspective and make recommendations on how best to support them through the transition process effectively. This aim was supported by the following research questions:

- What are the perceptions of longer-tenured and recently appointed teachers of the support experienced in helping them adjust to an ILE?
- What are the pedagogical, cultural, and professional learning challenges that longer-tenured and recently appointed teachers experience when moving to an ILE?
- How can the pedagogical, cultural, and professional learning support for teachers when moving to an ILE be improved?

This chapter explores the influence the culture of the school has on a teacher's transition and the link this has to supporting teachers. In particular, the implications of a shifting culture are discussed in more depth, using the experiences of the case study school as an example. As a result, the importance of teacher groupings as well as the interweaving concepts of risk and trust in supporting teachers are brought to the surface; issues that not only support teacher collaboration but cultures of innovation and growth. It continues with suggestions of support for the future that have resulted from the research. Finally, I conclude by sharing some recommendations as well as the limitations of this case study research, which may be of use as leaders seek a way forward in addressing the issue of teachers transitioning into ILEs.

### **6.2 Experiences of culture**

Initially when asked about their perception of the support they received as they transitioned from a single cell environment to this ILE, both the longer-tenured and recently appointed teachers claimed there was little or none given. The case school did not have an induction or transition programme that formalised this process. There was instead an assumption that the existing

culture of collegiality would provide the support needed. On further reflection, both focus groups commented on the team structure found within the communities, and the culture of collegiality and support this provided. The recently appointed teachers were transitioning into a culture that was already established, and their experiences suggested they had to adapt to it. They learned the new behaviours that allowed them to fit into this existing culture through mimetic behaviour (Kondra & Hurst, 2009). ILEs are more prone to mimetic behaviour by their very nature, due to the de-privatised spaces that invite observing and copying new pedagogical practices from existing staff members. An outcome of adopting mimetic behaviours is fixed behaviours being experienced by the group. This then can create a tension between innovation and flexibility to occur and a resulting culture that is not changing or evolving. This may have presented challenges to the recently appointed teachers as they found the espoused views they expected to find in an ILE of flexibility, agency, ubiquity, and connectedness (MOE, 2016b) may have been missing or not as evident as they had thought. Consequently, this may require leaders to watch and monitor these mimetic behaviours to make sure they are meeting not only the students' needs but are developing a responsive culture that delivers these espoused views.

The culture had evolved at the case school as Schein (1992) claims, by the group members undertaking learning experiences and adjusting their underlying assumptions to fit with the new meanings they acquired. The longer-tenured teachers had been part of this process, adjusting to the new environment as they went through several iterations of systems and structures. This implies a certain amount of stability being experienced by the group as they made adjustments not to a fixed culture but to a fairly constant culture that was changing in small ways consistent with the groups' beliefs and values. By contrast, the recently appointed teachers were initially outside of this culture and by implication did not have enough influence to shift the culture. So the existing culture was maintained, reinforcing the assumption that the existing culture was the right way and did not need changing. Eventually, as trust and relationships develop and the collaboration between teachers strengthens, the recently appointed teachers will share their ideas, beliefs, and values, and the assumptions will be realigned with this new information. The difficulty in this case school study was there had been a conscious decision by the leadership team to rearrange the teachers in their groups or communities every year. This has implications for the depth of collaboration that could and can develop between the teachers, the level of trust, and by implication, the degree of risk the teachers were prepared to take. As collaboration

is the key support indicated by the participants in the findings, this raises the question of how leaders can increase the level of collaboration within schools so teachers can be supported in their transition, especially if there are structures present that are changing the dynamics between groups on a regular basis. Collaboration needs to be encouraged to operate in a way where it leads to a dynamic and innovative culture where teachers can all actively contribute. Leaders should ask how they can encourage or strengthen this type of culture within their schools that develop collaboration so as to support teachers but also to help them overcome the challenges they face as they transition into ILEs. Leaders will need to relook at their structures and environments and see how they can increase positive relationship building so trust is high and teachers are willing and feel safe to contribute. This may involve creating a culture where relationships are not only fostered but can be built quickly and re-established amongst teachers as they find commonalities.

Both focus groups indicated being visible was their biggest challenge when transitioning into the ILE, although they saw this from different perspectives. The recently appointed teachers thought it provided learning opportunities as well as creating a feeling of nervousness and apprehension, while the longer-tenured teachers saw it more as a series of opportunities that had been created for them to embed the school's culture. These differing perspectives could be partly due to the difference in tenure with recently appointed teachers having less time to adjust to the school on a cultural level and not seeing themselves as the creators of that culture. On the other hand, the longer-tenured teachers expressed responsibility for embedding and shaping the school's culture, even if they felt their voice wasn't always heard or recognised by the school's dominant, stable group; the senior leadership team. This senior group did not change on an annual basis; their membership change was gradual which set them apart from every other group in the school. Because they have this time together, their group would be more likely to develop high levels of trust and to take the risks needed to establish the patterns of innovation seen within the school. This raises the question about whether 12 months is long enough for trust to build for innovation to occur and what would happen to the other groups in the school if they were given the opportunity to stay together and not move annually. It is an interesting and vital point as both the recently appointed and longer-tenured teachers saw increasing collegiality as the most promising support mechanism for teachers to use when transitioning into ILEs. In particular, observing and learning from other teachers were seen as

key ways to adjust to the new environment as it was recognised by both groups that there was no one solution to fit everyone's needs. These different needs could be met by collaborative practices; where teachers take what they need from observing others in action. Increasing the level and depth of collaboration to provide this support could possibly be problematic if the groups were being moved annually. Importantly leaders would need to ensure that 12 months is long enough for trust to be established so teachers could learn from each other and try new practices. The mechanisms for building trust are important for leaders to monitor but also their mechanisms for evaluating the level of trust that exists between teachers. Without these levels of trust being established, teachers are less likely to discuss their practices and learn from each other. This practice of re-grouping raises questions not just about innovation and growth, but also about how teachers receive support in their transition into the ILE and consequently lends itself to further investigation.

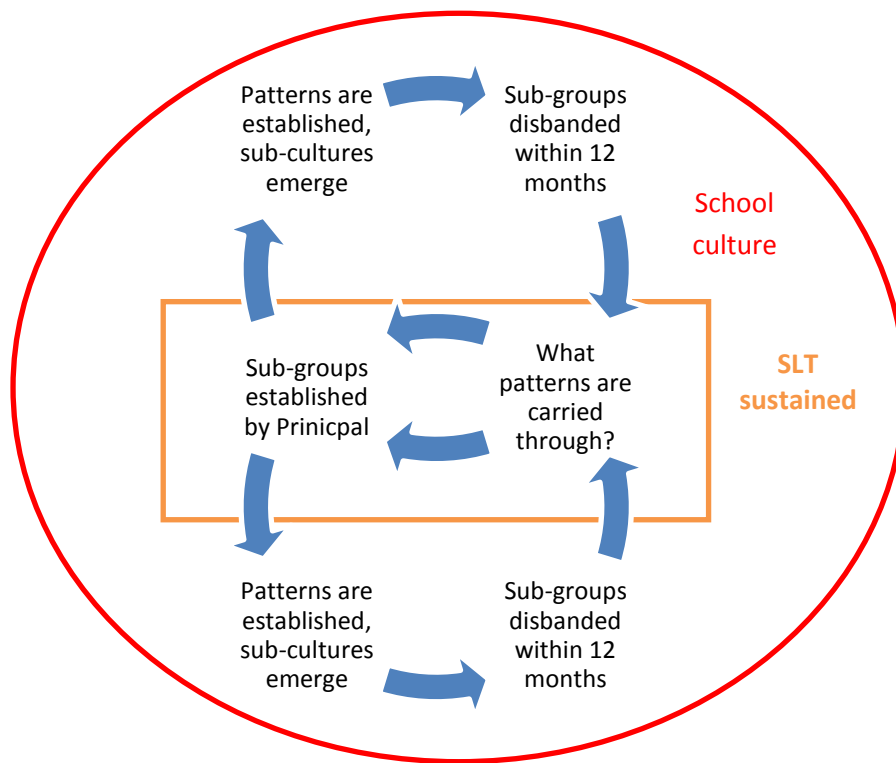
### **6.3 Implications of a shifting culture**

Innovation requires some form of fragmentation of sub-cultures to provide new ideas. It is important, however, that these sub-cultures do not become detached from the dominant culture, but maintain the developing of it. When the culture is shifting and evolving, there needs to be an element that is not fixed but constant within it, such as the value placed on relationships. This requires the membership of the sub-cultures or groups to have some level of stability for relationships to develop. Which poses the question: to what degree are stable relationships required to sustain these sub-cultures so innovation can result? Traditionally, secondary schools have structural fixtures that allow relationships to develop within the learning areas of the curriculum but not across the school. As a result, these groups or departments have common pedagogical backgrounds, content, and experiences, which translate into similar beliefs, values, and perceptions. Changes in membership tend to be gradual over time which allows relationships and trust to form, and a stable culture to be established. Although the membership stays the same and relationships and trust can be well-established, the culture has the potential to become fixed over time as there is no new input of ideas, which can lead to poor flexibility and innovation.

In contrast, ILEs present the opportunity to use an approach where groupings can be changed more regularly and at a school-wide level, increasing flexibility and innovation. This can also

occur with the coming and going of teachers if schools have a high turnaround of staff. In the case school study, the groups were arranged in mixed learning areas, where human capital was valued on pedagogical expertise instead of subject expertise. This in itself may represent challenges for leaders in establishing equality in teachers' mindsets around how capital is attributed and distributed across groups. If they did not see themselves as equals this would affect the ability of members of the group to establish relationships and trust between each other. Another factor affecting the group dynamics was that the members were assigned groups based on the principal's decision and then 12 months later, the groups were disbanded. So if new groups are being established, there are questions about what they were carrying through with them to these new groups and conversely what is being lost as each new group is being formed. Whether schools are intentionally or unintentionally changing groups on a regular basis, there are implications for leaders to consider, in terms of both the patterns and sub-cultures that have been established and in terms of innovation.

In this case school, there was an unquestioned cycle (see Figure 6.1, p.104) of groups breaking up and being re-established on an annual basis. These patterns were sustained by a fixed group of people who were lying outside it; the SLT. The SLT were the only group in the school who did not disband annually, instead of remaining together and as a result, were themselves part of the school's culture. They held the responsibility for fixing the patterns within the school by breaking and re-establishing the groups, shaping the school's overall culture, assuming with good intentions behind their decisions. There is an assumption that leaders shape culture but are not part of it (Lumby & Foskett, 2011). In this case study the leaders thought they were controlling the culture by increasing the innovation from the outside, but in reality, their group shifted the culture of the school from within, by influencing the culture of other groups. In any school, there is always an aspect of the culture being controlled by SLT or by the structures in the school that SLT have put into place. In schools that do not break up on an annual basis, the SLT are controlling the culture by choosing to have fixed groups across the school.



**Figure 6.1: Cycle of innovative learning groups**

The difference in the case study school compared to most other secondary schools was the opportunities and challenges that were available to teachers as a result. For example, the findings brought to the surface the cultural aspect around the mimetic behaviour displayed in the ILE. Although this behaviour may be found in other secondary schools, it was more obvious or visible in the ILE, where it is brought to a whole new level of opportunity for those present.

There was an assumption that SLT were using this cycle of groups breaking up and being re-established as a means to develop and stimulate innovation; creating a culture of trying new pedagogical practices that used collaborative practices as its mechanism for doing so. On one hand, breaking up patterns of behaviour and allowing new practices to be visible can allow innovation to happen. On the other hand, it might be cutting short the establishment of trust between teachers for them to take responsible risks and trial new practices. It questions when is the right time to break patterns up, disrupting the building of relationships and trust between teachers that would still allow them to reap the benefits of new ideas and innovation. If teachers were spending more time together in a collaborative space such as an ILE, does this mean the amount of time needed to establish trust would become less, so annually breaking up has less

effect on the overall teachers' relationships. It could be argued that spending more time together and sharing practices helps break down barriers and establish trust and risk-taking practices more quickly between teachers. If so, this could be important in providing support for teachers as they transition into ILEs as well as in other areas of teaching and learning where trust and risk-taking are key factors.

Alternatively, this cycle of breaking up groups could be used to help dissolve unhealthy relationships that are working against student learning and achievement. This comes with risks, and leaders would need to be mindful that restructuring is not used as a means to fix interpersonal relationships. If teachers are involved in an unhealthy relationship, and it is not being addressed through productive dialogue, then this is shifting towards what Argyris and Schön (1974) label as Model One learning; where behavioural routines and assumptions are being reinforced. They claim this type of learning inhibits the detection and correction of error, resulting in defensive behaviours and mistrust. If the school simply waits until the 12 months re-grouping to deal with the problem, then the teachers are not learning or changing their behaviours or assumptions. Whether or not a school does break groups up or not, there needs to be productive dialogue occurring between teachers, alongside trust and collaborative practices which help support teachers to learn from each other. Argyris and Schön (1974) identify this as Model Two learning, suggesting trust as a key factor if teachers are to open up their practice to each other. Leaders should be developing trust within schools so dialogue, collaborative practices, and relationship building are strengthened. It is not about how schools are being structured or whether groups are breaking up annually or not, but instead whether Model Two learning is apparent, alongside trust and collaborative practices so teachers can be supported in their transition into ILEs.

## **6.4 Support for Transitioning**

### **6.4.1 Learning through mimetic behaviour**

Teachers undergo mental mind shifts as they experience the pedagogical and cultural changes that accompany the transition into ILEs. In this case study school, both focus groups claimed the most effective way they learned how to blend into the existing culture was through mimetic behaviour; watching those around them, either informally or formally, and copying their behaviours. Teachers could observe pedagogical behaviours in action that were providing

effective learning experiences for students and choose to incorporate them into their practice. In secondary schools like the case study school, recently appointed teachers are coming into an environment where the groups are breaking up on an annual basis and have not been clustered around learning areas. As a result, the recently appointed teachers are observing a wide range of teachers from different learning areas that are constantly changing every year. This allows for a broader range of pedagogical behaviours that could be viewed, chosen, and incorporated into their behaviours and practice. If the secondary school was not breaking up annually but was still not clustered around learning areas, teachers might have a range of different styles to view but this could become static over time as new ideas were not being introduced regularly into the group. In secondary schools where groups did not break up, but there was clustering around learning areas like in most traditional schools, there is likely to be a smaller range of pedagogical behaviours for teachers to view. In these cases, leaders should make sure they introduce formal structures like peer observations, that allow teachers the opportunity to view behaviours in other learning areas so as to provide different pedagogical viewpoints for teachers to learn from. When there is less variation for teachers to mimic and learn from, there may even need to be more formal structures introduced such as coaching and mentoring. Leaders may choose to have these formalised structures as part of the school structure for provisional registered teachers who may need more guidance or simply make formalised structures available for those who wish to be involved. As the learning process is unique for each individual, the type and amount of support being offered will vary depending on the individual and their needs.

#### **6.4.2 Collaborative practices**

Both the literature (Levine, 2011; Little, 1990; Timperley et al., 2007) and this case study suggest collaborative practices provide the best opportunities for teachers to receive support and feedback on their practice. The existing teachers or teachers who have already had some experience working in this type of environment should be looking beyond just copying behaviours and leaning more towards what Little (1990) refers to as “joint work”. This is where a teacher opens up their professional practice to scrutiny by others, so common understandings can be built collaboratively as a result. The open spaces of the ILE promote such opportunities and allow pedagogical as well as cultural development within groups. The participants in the case study saw observations as the most useful example of this, commenting on the mimetic



culture experienced within the ILE. However, wanting a mimetic culture established to support team learning but not wanting it as the dominant culture can create tension. If there is too much mimetic behaviour, there is a possibility that teachers will become clones of each other, just copying each other and presenting the same practice which doesn't enhance team learning. In fact, this describes an aspect of groupthink (Decuyper, Dochy & Bossche, 2010), where they mime each other so much teachers believe the group behaviours are the norm and the best way of doing things, not realising there are alternatives that can lead to innovation. As a result, leaders must encourage other aspects of team learning and collaborative practices to flourish as well as this mimetic culture. Team learning is only beneficial if teachers change their practice and innovation results. This allows the culture of the school to evolve, although evolution might be slow if mimetic behaviour only reinforces existing practices that stymie innovation. The existing teachers might be inadvertently controlling this culture as their contributions to the ongoing learning become more limited over time. The contributions of the recently appointed teachers are important as they may arrive with new ideas that differ to the current culture. The existing teachers cannot expect these recently appointed teachers to come into the current culture and just mime what is there. This may happen at the start but after some time, the recently appointed teachers will have built up enough trust in their group to express their ideas which may be divergent to the current culture. The existing teachers should be open to accepting these new pedagogical ideas as well as to doing things differently. There has to be an acceptance that the culture can change and these existing teachers should be culturally and pedagogically open to new ideas. It is by working collaboratively teachers can share their practices and learn from each other, therefore providing support in helping each other transition into the ILE as well as establish an ongoing cycle of improvement.

#### **6.4.3 Ongoing professional learning**

The case study school provided no formal induction programme at the start of the year for recently appointed teachers. The participants supported this view, as their experiences suggested it was of more use to learn while you were doing it. This fits with both Benade (2015) and Timperley et al. (2014), who argue teachers should reflect on their practice, questioning their theories of action in order to improve their teaching and learning. As a result, professional learning should be an ongoing process where teachers can inquire into the assumptions that underlie their behaviours which build the patterns of culture around them. This can be best

achieved through learning communities where feedback and support can be offered in order to bring changes in practice. Leaders can provide opportunities for teachers to engage in this type of collaborative reflection; either in groups already established within the school or in specially designed professional learning groups. In either case, teachers are creating new professional knowledge or meaning by interacting with each other and challenging previous assumptions and ways of practice. Not only does their practice change, but they are building a culture of collegiality and trust as they start to work together towards improving student outcomes. It is important that enough stability is provided so that trust and relationship building can occur, as well as still have enough individual expression that allows students' needs to be met and innovation to develop. Developing a culture where both modelling and individual expression concurrently occur is an important part of the professional learning support that teachers need to receive. This was supported by the findings of the case study, where both focus groups suggested an informal process of observing others on a regular basis and not just swapping ideas would be the most useful approach for the future. This may allow individuals to not only see modelling of good practice but also encourage collaborative interactions between teachers, where conversations around pedagogy are common practice. Leaders should be encouraged to create opportunities for teachers to have productive dialogues about their practice, fostering conversations where teachers share practice and work collaboratively. Both existing and recently appointed teachers would benefit from this exchange of pedagogical ideas and practices as well as work together to build the cultural norms of the school.

## **6.5 Recommendations**

As many schools are beginning to adapt their premises to reflect flexible learning spaces and adopt innovative learning practices alongside this, research into how teachers and leaders have made that transition into ILEs will become more prominent. There will be a need not only to explore just purpose built ILEs but to research schools that have transformed from single cell environments into ILEs. ILEs present opportunities for schools to do things differently and in the process challenge teachers' assumptions pedagogically and culturally, as well as challenge their professional learning beliefs and values. As a result, teachers will require support as they make this transition, whether they are longer-tenured or recently appointed teachers, each facing their own set of challenges. It has become apparent from this case study that leaders need to provide a degree of stability for teachers, no matter who they are if they are to make

this transition effectively. With stability comes the ability of teachers to forge bonds of trust and form relationships which provide the platform for engaging in learning. Trust and the level of trust present has become the key ingredient in terms of whether the teachers can manage the challenges and the transition into an ILE. Therefore leaders need to provide conditions that are both collegial and congenial so to encourage the development of trust between teachers.

As leaders create and support opportunities to work together they encourage conversations, frequent dialogue between teachers, and shared or “joint” work (Little, 1990), and responsibility for student outcomes. By providing these opportunities to work collaboratively, relationship building can be fostered between teachers and trust built. The case study findings have also brought to attention the need to further explore the amount of trust that needs to be established in an ILE; can ILEs operate with less trust present compared to traditional schools due to the shared spaces. The case study’s findings also raise the question of whether spending time in an ILE changes the amount of time needed to develop collaborative practices between teachers. This suggests further research is needed on the effect flexible spaces have on establishing trust and relationship building between teachers and the amount of time needed to develop these practices. Consequently, this leads to the question of whether collaboration can take place when less trust is present, and what effect would this have on the level of innovation that occurs in these spaces.

For innovation to flourish, teachers need opportunities to share practices and ideas and to learn from each other. As seen in the findings it would be beneficial for leaders to make time for teachers to meet, especially across learning areas. In particular, it would be beneficial to build processes of professional learning into the culture of the school that encourages reflective practice, so teachers are not just swapping ideas but reflecting and watching others in order to challenge their existing assumptions and change their practice. Processes such as PLCs help build trust and collegiality between teachers (Tschannen-Moran, 2014), as they are not linked to teacher performance or evaluation but instead focus on working together to build professional capacity. This will become the leader’s responsibility to ensure such practices, as well as culture, are not only present but flourishing within their schools, if teachers are to transition into ILEs effectively and find the support they need and want.

The final recommendation is that commentary and research about teachers in ILEs should be taken from a socio-cultural perspective, as illustrated in this case study. The reason for this is that an understanding of subcultures, mimetic culture, and team learning is not evident in ILE studies I have viewed. These recommendations must be held in light of the limitations of this single site case study.

## **6.6 Limitations**

This research focused on one case study representing a well-established, purpose-built co-educational secondary school and so was limited by these parameters. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) claim findings like those recorded in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five can be transferred to other schools when the contexts are similar. The details of the case study school have been given to allow for this transferability. If a secondary school has a different setup, the reader will need to decide whether it is suitable to transfer the findings to their own context. Every organisation has its own culture and subcultures, so there might be aspects that are transferable while others may not be depending on the culture present. It is left to the reader's judgement, the degree of transferability to their own context. For example, as this case study was set in a secondary school, there may be a lack of transferability to the primary sector due to the differences in the school structures and systems, but similarities in culture would allow for some transferability.

The reader must also take into account that case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation due to the small but rich sample of data they deal with. This can lead the reader to make false conclusions about the situation or conclusions about the whole when the case study may be dealing with only a part of the situation. For example, in this case study, there was an intention to interview foundation teachers to gain their perspectives but as they did not make themselves available, the case study went with longer-tenured teachers. Although the longer-tenured teachers gave a different perspective compared to the recently appointed teachers, it was not the original intention in the design of the research. This is still an area that could be explored as more schools develop into ILEs, as the number of foundation teachers will continue to increase and their perspective still needs to be heard.

## 6.7 Conclusion

Transitioning into ILEs can create tensions for teachers as they adjust and adapt to the changes these environments bring. As a result, teachers are turning to each other for support and the professional learning needed to cope with the changing needs found in these environments. This increased collegiality can be found in the literature (Hargreaves, 2000; Timperley, 2011) as well as evidenced by the case study. The collegiality teachers were experiencing was an outcome of the opportunities to see and share each other's practice, resulting from the flexible spaces of the new environment. Although as Kruse, Louis, and Bryk (1994) state:

human resources—such as openness to improvement, trust and respect, teachers having knowledge and skills, supportive leadership, and socialisation—are *more critical to the development of professional community than structural conditions*. . . . The need to improve the *culture, climate and interpersonal relationships* in schools has received too little attention. (p. 71). [emphasis added].

It seems to be to the learner's advantage to promote and encourage these conditions within schools if we are to see the innovation and growth needed to build 21<sup>st</sup> century capabilities in both learners and teachers. As leaders face the challenges of providing these conditions for teachers as they transition into ILEs, it is apparent they cannot use or revert to their old ways of thinking and doing. They need to develop not only new ways of doing things but new lenses in which to view teaching and learning and establish new cultures within schools. If leaders are to approach these issues with success, they will require 21<sup>st</sup> century capabilities such as flexibility, problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity. Not only will students need these skills for the future but leaders will need to embed these into their leadership practice as well. As Benade (2017) reminds us, "space is an enabler of new and evolving pedagogies—it does not determine those pedagogical practices" (p.210). This relies on teachers and the communities they base their practices in. The pedagogical and cultural shifts both longer-tenured and recently appointed teachers need to undertake when transitioning into an ILE are not easy, and leaders will need to be capable of adapting and evolving in order to meet their individual needs. As this case study has highlighted, there is no "silver bullet" solution for leaders to embrace, it is instead a matter of building a culture of collaborative, trusting practices that teachers can engage with each other in, which may, in turn, foster the dynamic, flexible pedagogies needed in our rapidly shifting, independent, 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Interview Questions



### Interview Questions – Focus groups

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research and for taking the time to be part of this focus group. I am interested in hearing about your experiences of transitioning into this school, an innovative learning environment (ILE) from a single cell environment.

How did you find the experience of transitioning into this school (an ILE) from a single cell environment?

What challenges did you experience during this transition?

Why did you find them challenging?

Can you describe an experience where support was given to you as you transitioned into this ILE?

Did you find this support is effective?

How was it effective?

(How do you think the past pioneering teachers contributed to shaping the current practice?)

What do you think was missing in terms of support as you transitioned into this ILE?

What type of support do you think you needed more of?

If you could start all over again, what would you do, in terms of transitioning differently?

Is there anything else you would like to add or say?



## Interview Questions – Leader(s)

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research and for taking the time to be interviewed. I am researching the perceptions of foundation and newly appointed teachers as they transition into an innovative learning environment (ILE) from a single cell environment. I am particularly interested in your thoughts surrounding this area.

How do you think teachers find the transition into this school (an ILE) from a single cell environment?

What challenges do you think they face during this transition?

Why do you think they find them challenging?

What support do you think the teachers are offered at a school level as they transition into this ILE?

What support do you think each Faculty offers the teachers?

Do you think this support is effective? In particular which individual support offered makes the most impact?

How are they effective?

What do you think is missing in terms of support for teachers as they transition into this ILE?

What type of support do you think they need more of?

If you could change any aspect of the support offered, what if anything would you change?

Is there anything else you would like to add or say?

## Appendix B: Information Sheets



### Participant Information Sheet

#### Focus Group interviews

Date Information Sheet Produced: 22/07/2016

#### Project Title

Transitioning into an innovative learning environment; Perceptions and experiences of foundation teachers and newly appointed teachers.

#### An Invitation

Kia ora

My name is Fiona Lamberton and I am currently doing a 90 point thesis towards my Masters of Educational Leadership qualification. My research topic is:

What are the perceptions of both foundation and newly appointed teachers of the support experienced in helping them adjust to the pedagogical change of moving to an innovative learning environment (ILE) within the associated school culture?

I am looking for volunteers who haven't worked in an ILE before starting at this school so they can share their experiences about the transition of moving from a single cell environment. In particular, I would like to invite both foundation teachers and teachers who have been appointed in the last three years to the school, to be involved in two focus groups as part of this research. I am interested in hearing your perceptions and experiences about your transition into XXXX from a single cell environment. The focus group will consist of about eight-ten other teachers who will also be sharing their experiences. This is an entirely voluntary process and you can withdraw at any time during the process.

With many schools being encouraged to move towards innovative learning environments (ILEs), there are many teachers who are facing the same challenges that you have already been through. I believe your experiences have much to offer other teachers who have or are thinking about moving into ILEs.

#### What is the purpose of this research?

With the focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, many schools are questioning their traditional single cell environments and are showing interest in moving towards ILEs where the learning is future focused. As this requires a shift both in culture and pedagogical change for schools and teachers, I believe this research will be of interest to many in the education sector, as it will highlight these implications to leaders when making those changes, and how they may have influenced the support needed.

I hope to use the understanding and knowledge around the issues involved with ILEs gained from the research, to inform changes within my own school; on supporting teachers in changing their current practice to work within a newly developed innovative learning area. By researching both foundation teachers and newly appointed teachers, I hope to gain some insight into effective support mechanisms and be able to apply this to my own situation.

#### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Once I had gained permission from the Principal I sent out an email directly to everyone on your staff. The email addresses of all staff members are listed publically on your school's website. This information sheet was also sent with the accompanying email outlining the research.

If you fit the criteria of being a foundation or newly appointed teacher, then I would like to invite you to participate. I believe you have rich experiences that are worth sharing with others in the education sector.

### What will happen in this research?

There will be two separate focus group interviews consisting of eight to ten participants with foundation teachers, and another with newly appointed teachers who have recently come from a single cell environment. During the focus groups interviews, you will need to answer questions about transitioning from a single cell classroom environment into your current school environment. In particular, I will be asking you about the support and guidance you received and how effective you found it in helping you make that transition. All you need to do is provide your honest and true views on this topic. All focus group interviews will be audio recorded using voice memos application on an iPhone to ensure the accuracy of information. The interviews will occur on the school premises.

### What are the discomforts and risks?

Some possible discomforts you may experience might be; being audio taped or embarrassment if you could not answer a question being asked during the interview. You also may worry about disclosing information in front of the other participants, and how this will remain confidential. The nature of focus groups means that what you say is not kept between the researcher and yourself, it will be heard by other people in the group.

### How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Your role is limited to answering my questions and sharing your perceptions and experiences. You do so entirely voluntarily so it dependent upon you how much you choose to disclose. You do not need to answer any questions you find difficult or places you in any form of discomfort. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions.

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.

I will extract your contribution given during the focus group and provide you with a transcript of just your contribution from the focus group interview so you can review it and make corrections if you need to. There may be situations where it may be necessary to include your contribution along with another person's so the conversation flows and the meaning can be understood by both parties to comment on. I can assure you that both the identity of you and the school will remain confidential in the final manuscript as well as any subsequent communications or publications. Any involvement in the research, including your contribution that you share, will not be reported back to anyone in your school.

### What are the benefits?

At a personal level, the study will allow me to complete my Masters of Educational Leadership qualification by producing a 90 point thesis. I acknowledge that apart from the potential benefit of sharing your perceptions and experiences in the focus group, there are very few benefits for those who choose to be involved in the research. You may well benefit from the time taken during the focus group from your own personal reflections on the support and guidance given to you when transitioning into an innovative learning environment.

### How will my privacy be protected?

Your privacy is of great importance to me and will be protected; you can be confident that your identity will not be used in the research and your confidentiality will be assured and maintained. There will be no identifiable information used to describe you during the research process. Your name will not be recorded, except on the written consent form which will be stored separately from the transcript and any notes made by me during the focus group interview. You will be given a pseudonym and this will be used throughout the research process. No pseudonym given to anyone will use the name of any staff member within the school, whether they are involved in the research or not.

The school will also be given a pseudonym and any information used on the site to describe it will be deliberately vague so it will not be readily identified. Data will only be used for the purpose for which it has been collected, which is for the 90 point thesis. Once it has been used for this purpose, it will be destroyed after 6 years.

At no time will the school nor the Principal be informed who is participating in the research. But as the focus group interview will occur on school premises, there is the likelihood of other staff members seeing you and realising that you are participating in this research.

### What are the costs of participating in this research?

The focus group interview will take approximately one hour, although there may be some time needed at the start for answering questions and issues related to the research before the consent forms are signed. You also may need up to an hour to review the transcript when you are given this opportunity.

### What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have two weeks to consider this invitation and email me your willingness to be involved to [fionalamberton@xxxxxxxxxx](mailto:fionalamberton@xxxxxxxxxx)

### How do I agree to participate in this research?

Once I have received your email indicating your willingness to be involved in the research, a consent form will be sent via email to you. At the start of the focus group interview, I will go through both this information sheet and the consent form with you to make sure there is a shared understanding about the purpose and nature of the research and your role in it. I will explain your rights, consent and privacy issues as well answer any questions or issues before you sign the consent form. The focus group interview will not take place until you have signed the consent form.

### Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

I will email a one-page summary of the research findings to you.

### 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 Howard Youngs, [howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz](mailto:howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext xxx

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of ATEC, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 6038.

### Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

#### **Researcher Contact Details:**

Fiona Lamberton

[fionalamberton@xxxxxxxxxx](mailto:fionalamberton@xxxxxxxxxx)

#### **Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Dr Howard Youngs

[howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz](mailto:howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz)

921 9999 ext xxx

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11 August 2016, ATEC Reference number 16/291.



## Participant Information Sheet

### Leader interview

Date Information Sheet Produced: 22/07/2016

### Project Title

Transitioning into an innovative learning environment; Perceptions and experiences of foundation teachers and newly appointed teachers

### An Invitation

Kia ora

My name is Fiona Lamberton and I am currently doing a 90 point thesis towards my Masters of Educational Leadership qualification. My research topic is:

What are the perceptions of both foundation and newly appointed teachers of the support experienced in helping them adjust to the pedagogical change of moving to an innovative learning environment (ILE) within the associated school culture?

I would like to invite you to be interviewed as part of this research as I am interested in hearing your perceptions and experiences about the support experienced by teachers as they transition into your school from a single cell environment. I want to interview you as it is your interpretation as a senior leader of the teacher's needs that have informed the support and guidance being offered. This is an entirely voluntary process and you can withdraw at any stage of the process.

With many schools being encouraged to move towards innovative learning environments (ILEs), there are many leaders who are facing the same challenges that you have already been through. I believe your experiences have much to offer other leaders who have or are thinking about moving into ILEs.

### What is the purpose of this research?

With the focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, many schools are questioning their traditional single cell environments and are showing interest in moving towards ILEs where the learning is future focused. As this requires a shift both in culture and pedagogical change for schools and teachers, I believe this research will be of interest to many in the education sector, as it will highlight these implications to leaders when making those changes, and how they may have influenced the support needed.

I hope to use the understanding and knowledge around the issues involved with ILEs gained from the research, to inform changes within my own school; on supporting teachers in changing their current practice to work within a newly developed innovative learning area. By researching both foundation teachers and newly appointed teachers, I hope to gain some insight into effective support mechanisms and be able to apply this to my own situation.

### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Once I had gained permission from the Principal I sent out an email directly to the senior leadership team. The email addresses of all staff members are listed publicly on your school's website. This information sheet was also sent with the accompanying email outlining the research.

I have invited you as you are the leader(s) in charge of professional development and you can provide more in-depth information than is possible from the documentation I will review. I believe this will give you an opportunity to communicate what is important to you because it is your interpretation as a senior leader of the teacher's needs that have informed the support and guidance being offered. You can choose to be interviewed either on the school premises or at an AUT campus of your choice.

### What will happen in this research?

I will be reviewing the documents that detail the professional development and induction policies so the documented expectations can be identified and compared to everyone's perceptions of their experiences. I would like to have the opportunity to interview the teacher(s) in charge of professional development to get more in-depth information than is possible from the documentation. All interviews will be audio recorded using voice memos application on an iPhone to ensure the accuracy of information.

### What are the discomforts and risks?

Some possible discomforts you may experience might be; being audio taped or embarrassment if you could not answer a question being asked during the interview. You also may worry about how this will remain confidential.

### How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Your role is limited to answering my questions and sharing your perceptions and experiences of transitioning into an innovative learning environment. You do so entirely voluntarily so it dependent upon you how much you choose to disclose. You do not need to answer any questions you find difficult or places you in any form of discomfort. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions.

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.

I will provide you with a transcript to review and critique after the interview so you can review and make corrections if you need to. I can assure you that both the identity of you and the school will remain confidential in the final manuscript as well as any subsequent communications or publications. Any involvement in the research, including your contribution that you share, will not be reported back to anyone in your school.

### What are the benefits?

At a personal level, the study will allow me to complete my Masters of Educational Leadership qualification by producing a 90 point thesis. I acknowledge that apart from the potential benefit of sharing your perceptions and experiences in the interview, there are very few benefits for those who choose to be involved in the research. You may well benefit from the time taken during interview process from your own personal reflections on the support and guidance given to you when transitioning into an innovative learning environment.

### How will my privacy be protected?

Your privacy is of great importance to me and will be protected; you can be confident that your identity will not be used in the research and your confidentiality will be assured and maintained. There will be no identifiable information used to describe you during the research process. Your name will not be recorded, except on the written consent form which will be stored separately from the interview transcript and any interview notes made by me. You will be given a pseudonym and this will be used throughout the research process. No pseudonym given to anyone will use the name of any staff member within the school, whether they are involved in the research or not.

The school will also be given a pseudonym and any information used on the site to describe it will be deliberately vague so it will not be readily identified. Data will only be used for the purpose for which it has been collected, which is for the 90 point thesis. Once it has been used for this purpose, it will be destroyed after 6 years.



At no time will the school nor the Principal be informed you are participating in the research. But if the interview occurs on the school premises, there is the likelihood that other staff members will see you and realise that you are participating in this research.

### What are the costs of participating in this research?

The interview will take approximately one hour, although there may be some time needed at the start for answering questions and issues related to the research before the consent form is signed. You also may need up to an hour to review the transcript when you are given this opportunity.

### What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have two weeks to consider this invitation and email me your willingness to be involved to [fionalamberton@xxxxxxxxx](mailto:fionalamberton@xxxxxxxxx)

### How do I agree to participate in this research?

Once I have received your email indicating your willingness to be involved in the research, a consent form will be sent via email to you. At the start of the interview, I will go through both this information sheet and the consent form with you to make sure there is a shared understanding about the purpose and nature of the research and your role in it. I will explain your rights, consent and privacy issues as well answer any questions or issues before you sign the consent form. The interview will not take place until you have signed the consent form.

### Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

I will email a one-page summary of the research findings to you.

### 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 Howard Youngs, [howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz](mailto:howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext xxxxx

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 6038.

### Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

#### **Researcher Contact Details:**

Fiona Lamberton

[fionalamberton@xxxxxxxxx](mailto:fionalamberton@xxxxxxxxx)

#### **Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Dr Howard Youngs

[howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz](mailto:howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz)

921 9999 ext xxxx

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11 August 2016, AUTEK Reference number 16/291.

## Appendix C: Consent Forms

### Consent Form – Focus Groups



*Project title:* **Transitioning into an innovative learning environment; Perceptions and experiences of foundation teachers and newly appointed teachers**

*Project Supervisor:* **Dr Howard Youngs**

*Researcher:* **Fiona Lamberton**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 22 July 2016.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group are confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped 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, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, 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. However, once the findings have been produced, 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 ☐

Participants signature: .....

Participants name: .....

Participants Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

Date:

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11 August 2016 Reference number 16/291. Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.**

## Consent Form – Senior Leader



**Project title:** Transitioning into an innovative learning environment; Perceptions and experiences of foundation teachers and newly appointed teachers

**Project Supervisor:** Dr Howard Youngs

**Researcher:** Fiona Lamberton

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 22 July 2016.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped 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. However, once the findings have been produced, 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 ☐

Participants signature: .....

Participants name: .....

Participants Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

Date:

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11 August 2016 AUTECE  
Reference number 16/291**

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## Appendix D: Email Scripts

### Email for focus group volunteers



Kia ora

My name is Fiona Lamberton and I am currently doing a 90 point thesis towards my MEdL qualification. I am working on finding out ‘what are the perceptions of both foundation and newly appointed teachers of the support experienced in helping them adjust with the pedagogical change of moving to an innovative learning environment (ILE) within the associated school culture?’.

You are receiving this letter as I saw your name on the school website and I am wanting volunteers to be part of a focus group. I am looking for volunteers who haven’t worked in an ILE before so they can share their experiences about the transition of moving from a single cell environment. In particular, I would like to invite both foundation teachers and teachers who have been appointed in the last three years to the school, to form two separate focus groups as part of this research.

I am interested in hearing your perceptions and experiences about your transition into XXXX from a single cell environment. I am particularly interested in exploring the challenges you may have experienced, the support you received to meet these challenges and how effective you found the support.

The focus group will consist of about eight-ten other teachers who will also be sharing their experiences. This is an entirely voluntary process and you can withdraw at any time during the process.

I have attached an information sheet that outlines the research in more detail so you can make a fully informed decision to become involved or not. If you met the criteria for these focus groups and are interested in being part of them, please email me back with your response.

Thank you for taking the time to read both this email and the information sheet.

Nga mihi

Fiona Lamberton

## Email for PD leader volunteer



Kia ora

My name is Fiona Lamberton and I am currently doing a 90 point thesis towards my MEdL qualification. I am working on finding out 'what are the perceptions of both foundation and newly appointed teachers of the support experienced in helping them adjust with the pedagogical change of moving to an innovative learning environment (ILE) within the associated school culture?'

I would like to interview the leader(s) in charge of professional development as I am interested in hearing your perceptions and experiences about the support experienced by teachers as they transition into your school from a single cell environment. You are a rich source of information as you can provide more in-depth information than is possible from the school documentation on the documented expectations. But I particularly want to interview you as it is your interpretation as a senior leader of the teacher's needs that have informed the support and guidance being offered.

The interview would take about an hour of your time when it was convenient for you. This is an entirely voluntary process and you can withdraw at any time during the process.

I have attached an information sheet that outlines the research in more detail so you can make a fully informed decision to become involved or not. If you are interested in being interviewed, please email me back with your response.

Thank you for taking the time to read both this email and the information sheet.

Nga mihi

Fiona Lamberton

## Appendix E: Example of Focus Group Analysis

### Example of newly appointed teachers: Challenges

Example	Quotation	Sub-theme	Theme
M – pg1	But I still found it quite challenging to actually be in a space where I wasn't siloed and I was having to, I felt was always on show.	Being visible	Being on display
M – pg 1	..having to be on my very best behaviour and constantly having to have that best practice all the time. ... I was always having to be the best teacher I could be in every lesson.	Using a preferred pedagogy	
L – pg 1	.. that being on show (M: um) is very hard when you first get here. I'm quite happy with people watching me and me watching others I've been involved, but coming here is, is not still the same because its five or six people and it's a new person and they're like 'ah' they get to immediately see what you're like	Being visible	
L- pg 1	..you do find it quite hard because you don't know if you're doing the right thing.. It's very hard to know what the best thing is to do..	Using a preferred pedagogy	
L – pg 2	I still find it very hard now when I'm the one at the front doing the talking when everyone else is doing their quiet work at the side.	Using a preferred pedagogy	
A – pg 2	..but here you are exposed..	Being visible	
A – pg 2	..in terms of how you perform as a teacher because you do have that pressure..	Using a preferred pedagogy	
A – pg 2	...knowing how did my particular teaching style or subject fit with other teachers around in that same community	Using a preferred pedagogy	
H – pg 3	being on show, like first year of teaching and people can see what I'm doing which is good but also you feel very judged in a way.. not that it happened explicitly at all and it was probably all in my own head to be perfectly honest. But it was tricky.	Being visible	
M – pg 2	...you um have to be more communal in your approach, you have to be more inclusive in and so on in your teaching...		Consideration of others
A – pg 2	..you do have to be considerate though don't you..		
G – pg 2	normally you know I would sit down and figure out this year I want my desks to look like this because I'm trying to achieve this effect.. it just became pointless here, spending 20 minutes trying to organize the desks and the next day they were completely different.	Moving furniture	Utilisation of space

## Appendix F: Example of Theme Analysis

Example of being on display challenge

Recently Appointed Teachers	Sub-theme	Longer-tenured Teachers	Sub-theme	Leader	Sub-theme
M – pg1	Being visible	R – pg 3	Being visible	L – pg 2	Being visible
L – pg 1	Being visible	S – pg 4	Being visible		
A – pg 2	Being visible				
H – pg 3	Being visible				
L- pg 1	Using a preferred pedagogy	L – pg 2	Using a preferred pedagogy	L – pg 2	Using a preferred pedagogy
M – pg 1	Using a preferred pedagogy	R – pg 3	Using a preferred pedagogy		
L – pg 2	Using a preferred pedagogy	Ra – pg 3	Using a preferred pedagogy		
A – pg 2	Using a preferred pedagogy				
A – pg 2	Using a preferred pedagogy				