# The Innovative Learning Environment in New Zealand:

# Supporting Teacher Transition

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# Abstract

The surge of teachers transitioning to innovative learning environments (ILEs), together with the knowledge that teachers have a large impact on student achievement, has prompted this study. Shifts to ILEs are supported by the Ministry of Education (2014b) building policy and aspirations for 21st Century learners (Ministry of Education, 2007; Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2016). However, very little guidance exists to aid successful transition. Thus, this study adopts an interpretive, case study approach and uses mixed methods to examine the key question of how teachers can be supported to transition from single-cell classrooms to ILEs.

The experiences of six New Zealand-based intermediate teachers are examined in detail. They see a need for transition processes to include all staff, regardless of the physical environment in which they teach. Feedback suggests transitions should be based on a whole-school vision that aligns with the principles of modern learning practice (MLP). A need for school management to lead the process and ensure systems are aligned to enable desired pedagogy is also emphasised. Well-planned professional learning development (PLD) grounded in dialogic sense-making can be personalised and can include a focus on interpersonal skills, MLP and developing student agency. The careful selection of teaching teams, and the implementation of evaluation systems to monitor the impacts of MLP and the physical environment, are also key to successful transition. When transition includes ILE design, architects and practitioners must work closely together to create a well-designed physical space that fosters desired practice. Findings from this study can be used to inform transition processes for policy makers, school leaders and practitioners.

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# Chapter One: Background

The aim of this section is to provide readers with a contextual overview of this study. In doing so, readers are informed of the key rationale for the adoption of innovative learning environments (ILEs) in New Zealand (NZ). They are also informed of the key terminology that is used throughout the study so that shared understandings can be established. Readers are immersed in the NZ context, both historic and current, within which this study sits. This section concludes with an overview of similar research and a clarification of the topic, scope and design of this study.

## Rationale

Each year, hundreds of NZ teachers are making the transition from a single-cell classroom to an ILE (Bradbeer et al., 2017). In NZ, these transitions are largely driven by government policy that stipulates the need to include modern learning environment upgrades in a school's 10-year property plan (Ministry of Education, 2014a) and a 21st Century educational paradigm aimed at nurturing the skills of critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and communication (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2016).

New Zealand's national curriculums are key in supporting the aspirations of a 21st Century educational paradigm. Our national curriculums are *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* (Ministry of Education, 2008). *The New Zealand Curriculum* is for English medium settings, whilst *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* is a Māori medium used in primary and secondary settings. The intent of both documents is to impart a vision of young people developing the competencies they need for study, work

and lifelong learning, so they may go on to realise their full potential. *The New Zealand Curriculum* vision is for young people to become confident, connected, actively involved and lifelong learners (Ministry of Education, 2007).

The Ministry of Education (2017) states that in expressing the intent of the national curriculums, ILE spaces have advantages because they are capable of evolving as educational practices change, thus supporting modern learning practice (MLP) and remaining future focused. This resonates with the Organisation for Economic Development (OECD) view, which is that learning environments are ecosystems, with everyone collaborating to prepare knowledge workers of the future (Istance, 2015).

To illustrate, it is useful to examine perceived advantages of ILEs, one of which is teacher collaboration. The increased level of teacher collaboration afforded by ILEs creates an ecosystem, generating multiple perspectives. When harnessed effectively, teachers exploit their individual and collective strengths, skills and interests to better respond to the diverse needs of learners and thus realise a 21st Century vision for teaching and learning. This view is supported by the Ministry of Education (2015), which advocates for collaborative practice precipitated in an ILE through co-teachers, visibility of practice, increased student choice and student agency. Furthermore, ILEs are cited for their ability to build organisational capacity, which leads to improved outcomes for students and allows educators to harness additional advantages, including job-embedded professional learning for teachers, and the use of diverse areas of teacher expertise to differentiate instruction, thus enabling smaller group learning (Ministry of Education, 2015).

The NZ Government's Educational Success initiative, Kāhui Ako / Community of Learning (COL), builds on the collaborative, ecosystem notion, encouraging schools to collaborate beyond their own physical confines by working together to help students achieve their full potential (Ministry of Education, 2018). This view is further supported by the Ministry of Education (2015) policy makers, who cite the power of collaboration in improving coherence and consistency between schools, which leads to more equitable outcomes.

The rationale for ILEs adopted in the current study can be summarised by stating that an environment characterised by collaboration and that is capable of evolving is essential in responding to the constantly changing needs of 21st Century learners, thus reflecting the intent of the NZ curriculums. If this rationale is to be realised, then the hundreds of NZ teachers making the transition from a single-cell classroom to an ILE must be supported. Just how to support teachers with this transition process is the subject of the current study.

In exploring this subject and in ensuring readers gain maximum value, it is paramount that readers have a common understanding of the key terminology that is referred to throughout the study. These terms are:

- innovative learning environments (ILEs),
- modern learning practice (MLP), and
- transition.

## Key Terms

### Innovative Learning Environments

A single-cell classroom can be defined as a room with four walls that has one teacher and typically holds between 20 and 30 students. In contrast, an ILE is

the term used by the Education Review Office (2015b) to describe a "flexible learning space, furniture and equipment where teaching and learning can be done differently. They have been designed to support modern learning practices, where student agency is enacted" (p. 31). The Ministry of Education (2017) states that an innovative learning environment includes physical space, social aspects and the pedagogy experienced by learners.

In NZ, ILEs are spaces that typically hold between two and four teachers, with a ratio of approximately one teacher per 28 students. Many alternative terms have been used internationally, including "open", "flexible", "agile", "modern" and lately, "new generation" to define these learning spaces (Fletcher, Mackey, & Fickel, 2017; Imms, 2016; Mahat, Grocott, & Imms, 2017). Wood (2017) cautions that while the language used to describe learning spaces is developing quickly, conceptual clarity lags far behind. The preferred NZ Ministry of Education term, "ILE", has been adopted for this research and is used to refer to flexible physical spaces designed to enable MLP.

**Modern Learning Practice**

As ILEs are designed to support MLP, a clear definition of this term is required. The term "MLP" is used throughout this paper to describe current, evidence-based conditions and strategies used by teachers to maximise learning. The individual and interdependent evidence-based variables that maximise learning are well documented (Mahat, Bradbeer, Byers, & Imms, 2018; Ministry of Education, 2007; OECD, 2013) in publications including *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) and the OECD's (2013) *Innovative Learning Environments*. Principles include, but are not restricted to, student-

centred learning, personalisation of learning, collaboration and the development of real-world skills (Mahat et al., 2018).

## Transition

The term "transition" is also central to this study. Thus, an exploration of this term is the focus of this section and includes:

- investigating the complexity of transition,
- outlining the differences as well as the relationship between change and transition, and
- acknowledging the opportunities for the transformation that transition presents.

### *The Transition Process*

Fullan (1993) describes any period or phase of change, such as transition, as complex and as requiring new skills, behaviours, beliefs and / or understanding. Deed and Lesko (2015) unpack this complexity by stating that transitions can be challenging and frustrating, and may subject teachers to differences in organisational and pedagogical cultures, which may in turn upset the effectiveness of their teaching. As teachers have the greatest impact on students' learning (Hattie, 2012), it is important that educators consider the changes required during teacher transition processes, such as those involving a change of level, a change of subject and / or a change in the structure of the learning environment, so that support can be given to teachers and student success thereby maximised. Some school leaders refer to Fisher's Process of Transition when guiding staff through change (Fisher, 2005). This curve-shaped model identifies key transition stages,

therefore supporting leaders to identify the stages of change different staff are experiencing and to tailor their support and encouragement accordingly (Fisher, 2005).

Transition from a single cell to an ILE is a complex process requiring strategic leadership. This view is supported by Durie (2015), who points out that strategic leaders require an understanding of change and a readiness to manage change to fully support teachers. Bradbeer et al. (2017) add that professional learning focused on understanding the relationships between teacher collaboration, pedagogy and physical classroom space supports teachers to adopt the collaborative approaches desired in ILEs.

### *Change and Transition*

Clearly understanding the nature of the situational change and the psychological process of transitioning to ILEs is crucial in maximising positive outcomes for both teachers and students. Seminal change author Bridges (2009) explains that there is an important difference between change and transition. Change relates to the external situation, or the actual event, and in the context of this research, change is about transitioning teachers from a single-cell classroom to a shared space, an ILE.

Osborne (2014) argues that education in NZ is currently facing the greatest period of change it has ever experienced; challenges include how to address underachievement, what to do with mobile devices and the implementation of ILEs. To illustrate the complexity of change required, Osborne (2014) draws on Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky's research (2009) that identifies two broad change

categories based on the impact the change has on people: technical or first-order change, and adaptive or second-order change (Table 1).

Table 1

Characteristics of Technical and Adaptive Change

| Technical (or first-order) change | Adaptive (or second-order) change |
|---|---|
| o An extension of the past | o A break from the past |
| o Within existing paradigms | o Outside existing paradigms |
| o Consistent with prevailing values and norms | o Conflicting with prevailing values and norms |
| o Focused, bounded, incremental, linear | o Emergent, unbounded, complex, non-linear |
| o Marginal | o A disturbance to all elements of a system |
| o Implemented with existing knowledge and skills | o Requires new knowledge and skills to implement |
| o Problem and solution oriented | o Neither problem nor solution oriented |
| o Implemented by experts | o Implemented by stakeholders |

*Note*. Adapted from "Inviting Innovation: Leading Meaningful Change in Schools," by M. Osborne, 2014, *Research Information for Teachers*, *SET2014*(2), p. 4. Copyright 2014 by M. Osborne. Adapted that with permission.

Osborne (2014) points out that, depending on the nature of change, no two schools are equally prepared to take on ILE changes. The same change can be experienced in different ways by people from different schools and within the same school. Heifetz et al. (2009), who further illustrates the complexity of change management, says, “the most common cause of failure in leadership is

produced by treating adaptive challenges as if they were technical problems" (p. 9). Osborne (2014) adds that it is crucial for leaders to adopt an approach of empowering and enabling people to contribute to, and see themselves in, the change they are bringing about.

Transition, although interdependent with change, is also distinct from change, as it refers to the internal psychological process that people must go through to adapt to the change, and the new situation it presents (Bridges, 2009). In the context of this research, my focus is on analysing the experiences of teachers involved in transitioning from a single cell to an ILE.

Preliminary findings made by Osborne (2018), focused on supporting teachers to transition at each key stage of ILE implementation, indicate that change should be values-based, participatory and incremental. He describes the three key stages of transition as preparing for change, implementing change and sustaining change (Osborne, 2018). These three stages are used in the current study to classify varying levels of support required by teachers throughout transition. Osborne's (2018) findings on the nature of change are compared to those of participants in the current work.

I acknowledge both the distinctness of change and transition, as well as the practical inseparability of the two terms; the physical shift to the ILE (the change) is not independent, and therefore, it cannot be separated from the psychological experience (the transition) endured by teachers. However, in meeting the aims of this research, it is the psychological transition experience of teachers that is the key focus of this research, rather than the act of physically shifting to a new environment.

### *Transformation*

My research explores the multiple variables in the process of ILE transition. Consequently, I stress the importance of being open to the ideas of Gilbert (2015), who sees a need for the development of new, radical thinking, which requires different capabilities within our current operating systems, and new ways of thinking about the system, in system terms. These ideas are particularly relevant as transition to an ILE presents an opportunity for educators to rethink the system and to challenge existing practices. This idea is further supported by Atkin (2018), who in the context of ILEs, challenges the term transition, and instead, advocates for a focus on transformation.

Atkin (2018) draws on the "the worlds we live in" model constructed by Holt (1970) (Figure 1). The premise behind this model is that if we only draw on our inner three worlds, lasting impacts will be minimal. What is required is fundamental change, achieved by also drawing on a fourth world, the world of infinite possibilities (Atkin, 2018). In the context of an ILE, this calls for individuals to not only adapt existing practice, but to transform practice. Atkin (2018) posits that this is done by engaging in open discovery and experimenting with approaches that have not as yet been heard of or even envisaged, with the goal of facilitating deep learning.

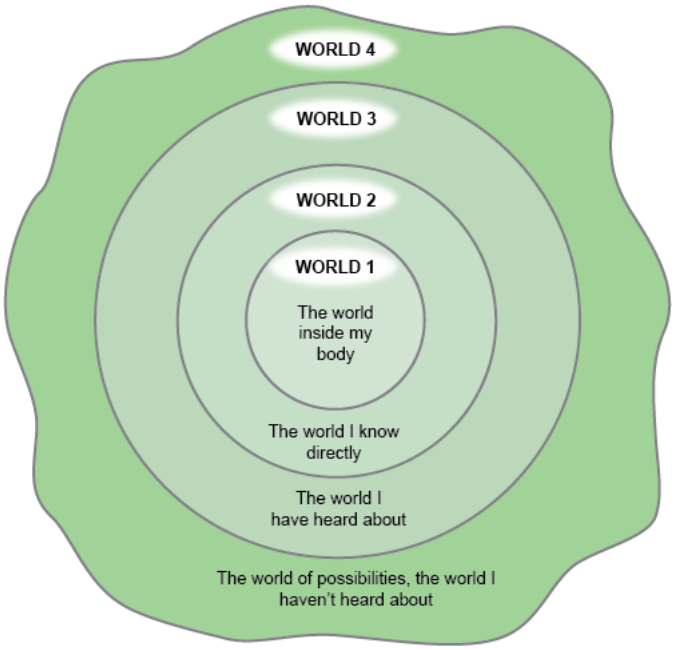



Figure 1. The four worlds we live in

*Note*. Adapted from "Values for a Learning Community — Learning to Know," by J. Atkin, 1999, *The Victorian Principals' Conference*, Melbourne, Australia, p. 15. Copyright 1999 by J. Atkin. Reprinted with permission.

The opportunities for new thinking afforded to educators inhabiting ILEs is further highlighted by Imms (2018), who cautions that change will be slow as it is part of two big machines with practices dating back hundreds of years: educational practice and design. He believes it defies logic to think such change will be quick (Imms, 2018). To decipher the depth of change required by teachers during transition, in the current investigation, I asked participants to identify if their experiences reflected first- or second-order change. In addition, the current study focused on the key skills, behaviours and understandings that contributed to each teacher's level of readiness, and the key barriers and enablers that affected the process.

## The New Zealand Education Context

In continuing to provide a contextual overview for this study, this section builds on the rationale for ILEs and the shared understandings of key terminology by providing readers with an overview of the historic and current "state of play" of ILEs in NZ.

### *Historic*

When considering transition to ILEs, the importance of a clear, evidence-based educational philosophy should not be underestimated; a good example of how important clarity is can be found in the open-plan concepts introduced into NZ education in the 1970s (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015). By the mid-1970s, there were over 200 open-plan units operating in NZ schools (Hammond, 2016). The educational philosophy of this era was underpinned by authority and discipline; conformity with the main teaching strategy meant whole-class, direct instruction with single desks in a row facing the front (Bennet, Andrae, Hegarty, & Wade, 1980; Martinho & da Silva, 2008).

The generic school vision reflected a post-war era philosophy of developing young people who could contribute to industry (Dovey & Fisher, 2014). The vision that emerged for the open-plan classroom was a direct contrast and consequently required educators to embrace a starkly different vision and pedagogy. This new approach favoured collaborative learning, teachers as facilitators of learning and the development of student agency; teachers gave students choices about learning activities, the pace of learning, where they worked and with whom they worked (Cameron & Robinson, 1986; Cuban, 2004; Horwitz, 1979). Curriculum integration, small group teaching, and a lack of formal

furniture were further tenets of the open-plan approach (Cuban, 2004; Horwitz, 1979; Hutchinson, 2004).

The vision for today's ILEs aligns perfectly with the NZ curriculum vision "to enable young people to become confident, connected, actively involved lifelong learners" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8). Further synergies and support for an ILE approach can be found in the field of neuroscience, which cites the importance of learning spaces and approaches accommodating variability amongst learners (Gronneberg & Johnston, 2015). Synergies can also be found in research into effective teaching and learning, which calls for teachers to work together to learn from each other and to increase collective expertise and capability (Hattie, 2015). This type of shared reasoning was a type of support network not available in the open-plan era (Cameron & Robinson, 1986; Department of Education, 1977; Ministry of Education, 2007).

Further lessons from comprehensive studies undertaken in the 1970s that are worthy of note include the results of achievement tests (students in open-plan spaces scored lower than those in single-cell classrooms); however, students in open-plan spaces achieved slightly higher in tests measuring creativity, problem solving, attitudes toward school, independence and curiosity (Horwitz, 1979; Peterson, 1979). In addition, and of particular relevance to this study, is the fact that teachers reported a lack of adequate preparation for working in an open-plan setting, and inadequate systems to support collaborative practice (Cameron & Robinson, 1986; Cuban, 2004; Department of Education, 1977). Higher stress levels due to noise and working with greater numbers of teachers and students, and the importance of positive staff relationships due to the intensity of

interaction demanded by the environment, were also reported (Cameron & Robinson, 1986; Department of Education, 1977).

The importance of having evidence-based practice and monitoring systems in place to ensure intended outcomes is voiced by Hattie (2012), who argues that educators must learn from history and build on evidence of good practice. Whyte (2017) highlights the need for adequate preparation for today's teachers transitioning to ILEs. She states that initial teacher education (ITE) providers can play a positive part in endorsing modern learning spaces and pedagogies based on lessons taken from factual research and the past open-plan era, which will allow students to have a greater chance of successful uptake than they did in the 1970s (Whyte, 2017). In summary, lessons from the failures of the open-plan era, including the importance of supporting teachers to transition, the need for an evidence base to support the change and the need for the change to enable learning, have had a significant impact on the direction and necessity of my research.

### *Current*

Education in NZ is currently undergoing a "sea change" under the new Labour–New Zealand First–Greens coalition government. Changes already implemented are the abolition of *National Standards* and charter schools. Further changes under consideration include amendments to the *Education Act 1989*, a review of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) system and of Tomorrow's Schools, a system of self-governance founded in the 1980s. For some, such changes are welcome, as they bring increased freedom and less

accountability; however, for others, a sense of unease and a lack of direction prevails.

My research examines the extent to which the schools involved in transitioning to ILEs have considered their vision in the face of such changes. I also examine underlying principles that have precipitated schools' transition from single cells to ILEs. The research idea underlying this study is supported by Biesta et al. (2015), who believes that problems with change lie in externally imposed systems, which alter the dynamics of schooling without developing a clear philosophy of education to underpin the change. Biesta et al. (2015) further explains that many schools fail to engage in the necessary professional dialogue, collaboration and sense-making that would enable them to make decisions about how the imposed systems may be reflected in their environment while staying true to their school's vision.

Research undertaken in this thesis contributes to a knowledge base that advocates for due attention to be given to ILE transitions, and for this process to provide stakeholder clarity around the overall aims and intended outcomes of ILEs. In addition, I aim to identify key themes that are crucial for a school to consider if they are to navigate a successful transition from single-cell classrooms to ILEs. If the mistakes of the past open-plan era are to be avoided, we must use the evidence available to carefully plan the way forward; a "building the plane while we're flying" (source unknown) approach is simply not acceptable.

### *Priority Learners*

The fundamental issue in NZ education is a "long tail" of underachievement: whilst NZ's best students perform with the best in other

countries, there is a group at the bottom, perhaps as large as 20 percent, who are currently not succeeding in our education system (Education Review Office, 2005). Thus, a focus of this study is on examining how ILEs can better meet the needs of priority learners.

New Zealand's priority learners are overrepresented by Māori and Pasifika students. Interventions focused on priority learners seek to accelerate their progress, with the goal of making achievement rates equal between ethnic groups. The 2017 Education Council's (2017) *Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession* attempts to support this issue by focusing on helping educators understand the unique status of Māori and Pasifika in Aotearoa–NZ and responding to their needs through culturally responsive practice. *Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners* (Education Council, 2011) is linked to these standards. Tātaiako focuses on teachers' relationships and engagement with Māori learners and with their whānau and iwi. It aims to support teachers to personalise learning for and with Māori by outlining five competencies that each teacher needs to develop to ensure Māori enjoy education success (Education Council, 2011).

A growing body of evidence shows that the key to improving academic and social outcomes is a culturally responsive approach. When designing ILEs, schools are encouraged to use Tātaiako and the Education Council's standards in conjunction with *Māui Whakakau, Kura Whakakau — The impact of Physical Design on Māori and Pasifika Student Outcomes* (Ministry of Education, 2016). This third document is used to review the current knowledge teachers and school leaders have when designing a culturally inclusive physical space and culturally responsive pedagogies. Such an approach is underpinned by whole schools and

individual teachers establishing educationally powerful connections and relationships with students, parents, families, whānau and communities (Education Review Office, 2015a). The Ministry of Education (2016) recommended that schoolwide PLD should allow teachers to maximise the cultural responsivity potential of the physical environment. In this study, I analyse whether transition processes include a focus on developing a culturally responsive space and if the processes reflect culturally responsive practice. Understanding if schools remain cognisant of the need for new spaces to meet the needs of Māori and Pasifika learners is therefore a key theme of this study.

**Existing Research**

Research into the complex process of transition is important if the desired vision and intended outcomes of ILEs are to be realised for both students and teachers. Lessons from the past (Cameron & Robinson, 1986; Cuban, 2004; Horwitz, 1979) and available evidence on change management, transition and effective teaching and learning must be embraced to aid the success of this developing NZ practice. Research in the general field of ILEs is lagging well behind practice. However, Imms (2018) states that while there is a lack of quantitative data, rich qualitative data exists.

A review of literature specific to transitioning to ILEs is scarce. Blackmore, Bateman, Loughlin, O'Mara, and Aranda (2011) point out that little attention has been paid to the processes and preparation required to transition to new spaces. Fletcher et al. (2017) call for further research on leading change and co-teaching in flexible ILE learning spaces. In addition, Whyte (2017) points out that apart from workshops conducted in schools by local experts — and apart

from some NZ academic research that considers what and how flexible ILE pedagogies look like — there appears to be a dearth of NZ-based literature describing what can be done to assist teachers to adjust their cellular pedagogy to flexible learning spaces.

A dearth of research integrating significant findings from other fields is also evident. For example, school-based architectural and environmental psychology literature ignores empirical research describing effective schools, school improvements, leadership and educational change (Burch, Theoharis, & Rauscher, 2010; Wood, 2017). Conversely, teaching effectiveness and school improvement literature ignores the physical classroom environment (Thomson, Jones, & Hall, 2009). Furthermore, there is no recognition of the influences of the physical environment on critical pedagogy, and no cognisance of the need to prepare teachers through ongoing PLD for the use of new learning spaces. In fact, current research ignores a significant body of change literature that refers to the need to address the affective dimensions of change, as well as teacher and student anxiety when undertaking fundamental changes in practice (Cotterell, 1984; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008).

Although cross-disciplinary research that integrates key findings and applies them to an ILE is limited, some recent studies can be found. These include research by Osborne (2014) on leading meaningful change and a study by Bradbeer et al. (2017) on the impact of the physical learning environments on pedagogy. These authors' findings served as useful background in determining key elements that are most likely to impact on teacher transition, such as change categories (first and second order) and the use of evaluation systems.

Other literature has provided useful background to my research. Relevant studies include research by the Education Review Office (2018) on characteristics common to New Zealand schools that are recognised leaders in innovative learning. International research describing how teachers perceive their transitions to ILEs has also been useful in highlighting a consistent theme, which is teachers' concerns about the configuration of new learning spaces and the use of furniture in that space (Mahat et al., 2017). This discourse, together with other considerations, such as the impact of teacher mindsets and the availability of PLD, has spurred the development of a matrix that identifies a common pathway teachers follow as they transition to an ILE. This pathway is currently under development as part of the Innovative Learning Environments & Teacher Change (ILETC) 2016–2019 Arc Linkage Project. This project is defined by a variety of change strategies that facilitate transition, and the development of tangible spatial learning tools that teachers can use to turn strategies into actions (Imms, 2018). However, Imms (2018) cautions that this pathway, to be tested by 2020, should be seen as a collection of resources to identify teacher needs, rather than as a one-size-fits-all solution.

O'Reilly's (2016) mixed-methods, NZ-based study and subsequent articles (Fletcher et al., 2017; Mackey, O'Reilly, Fletcher, & Jansen, 2017) also serve as useful background to this study. Their focus is on transitioning to flexible learning spaces (FLSs), and the studies have adopted an open-ended, holistic approach. The O'Reilly (2016) study was undertaken in response to the Canterbury earthquake and the subsequent rebuilding of schools in the region, which spurred a rapid transition from traditional classrooms to FLSs. Key components needed to support transition have been identified, and they include

the development of shared beliefs about student-centred pedagogy and the rationale for transition. The research also suggests that PLD focused on helping teachers cater to diverse learners' needs through collaborative approaches, student-centred communication and interpersonal skills is essential to successful transition.

Findings by O'Reilly (2016) are useful for comparison. The intent of the O'Reilly (2016) study was to identify elements effective in co-teaching relationships, whilst the current study's broader intent is to identify elements essential in transitioning to an ILE. Other key differences include the current study being confined to six NZ intermediate settings and to teacher participants, whereas the scope of the O'Reilly (2016) study extended to 15 primary and one intermediate school in Australia and NZ, and participants included both practitioners and leaders. In summary, the O'Reilly (2016) study allows a welcome degree of comparative analysis that assists in identifying the elements essential to transition, despite its differing terminology and contexts.

Although a paucity of other relevant research exists, it is important that the studies that do exist are used to inform the current work. The large number of teachers now embarking on transition highlights the need for additional, up-to-date information and at the very least, an emergent, somewhat organic, readily available consensus relevant to the NZ context that can provide teachers and educational leaders with an evidence-based starting point to support their transition journey. I found no such research in my literature searches — no scholar has focused solely on teacher transition to ILEs in a NZ intermediate context.

## Intermediate Schools

To ensure an in-depth focus on a clearly defined case in a currently under-researched, distinct NZ setting, I selected the intermediate school context. A middle school (also known as intermediate or junior high school) is an educational setting that provides schooling to students between the primary and secondary levels. There are currently 117 intermediate schools in NZ (New Zealand Association for Middle and Intermediate Schooling, n.d). Intermediate schools provide education to students in Years 7 and 8 only.

The Ministry of Education (2012) asserts that these years of schooling can be challenging for some students as they begin the physical, social, emotional and intellectual changes associated with early adolescence. The New Zealand Association for Middle and Intermediate Schooling (n.d) claim that a middle-school education must be responsive to the full range of needs, interests and achievements of students in this age group (10–13 years old). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education (2007) recognises the middle schooling pathway as a distinctly different learning experience to traditional primary and secondary schooling pathways. To meet the challenges of teaching "tweens", some schools choose to have composite Year 7 and 8 classes. In fact, increased student–teacher familiarity enabled by systems such as composite classes improve academic achievement (Hill & Jones, 2018) In this study, I explore how transition to ILEs can enable intermediate schooling visions. In addition, this study delves into intermediate teachers' perceptions of transition support specific to their context that should be provided during transition.

## Significance of Research

This research is of significant personal interest to me as my current role is Deputy Principal at an intermediate school with over 1,300 students currently enrolled. I currently oversee three ILEs with 12 teachers, and I am involved in the procurement process for an additional ILE that will be occupied by a further eight teachers by the year 2022. I will have a lead role in the design of teacher transition to this new ILE.

More broadly, this NZ-based research contributes to a richer understanding of this topic specific to the intermediate school context, and provides NZ educators, particularly leaders, with information on how to lead transitions, which increases the likelihood of the future success of ILEs countrywide. The Ministry of Education should also find this research informative in considering national support initiatives. In fact, the ultimate aim of this research is to formulate national recommendations for future transitions to ILEs.

## Research Design

With the aim of developing a set of recommendations for NZ educators to consider during transition from single cells to ILEs, the present study takes an interpretive, case study approach. This approach is appropriate because, in exploring the processes of transition, the concept of readiness and the associated challenges and recommendations, it is necessary to interpret responses, look at personal perspectives and discover negotiated meanings.

## Summary

This thesis is made up of six chapters. In chapter one, I have provided a contextual overview. I have identified key drivers for ILEs — government property policy and aspirations of the 21st Century education paradigm. The chapter has also identified and clarified key terminology: ILEs, MLP and the complex, psychological process of transition. Examining the historic and current ILE situation in NZ also comprises a significant portion of chapter one, particularly in grasping the lessons gained from the open-plan movement of the 1970s and in rediscovering the needs of priority learners. Finally, I have examined similar research before defining the unique scope and design of the present study. The information in this chapter has provided readers with the necessary background to delve into subsequent chapters.

# Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I explore broad themes significant to this research, and I apply these themes to the context of teachers transitioning to ILEs. The five themes are:

- vision,
- pedagogy,
- teacher disposition and selection,
- the physical environment, and
- systems and structures.

I draw on domestic and international contexts, together with current and historic literature, as part of my critique.

## Vision

Studies by Atkin (1996) and Sinek (2009) point unequivocally to the need for organisations to make explicit what they stand for and what gives direction to their actions. Atkin (1996) suggests that, too often, schools introduce new practices without evaluating these practices' congruence to the vision and values of the organisation. Atkin (1996) and Sinek (2009) further argue that acknowledging this dynamic process often involves working with externally imposed mandates and neo-liberal forces such as competition. To address this dilemma, Atkin (1996), strongly advocates for schools to work from the inside out, from internal values and beliefs to external practices (Figure 2).

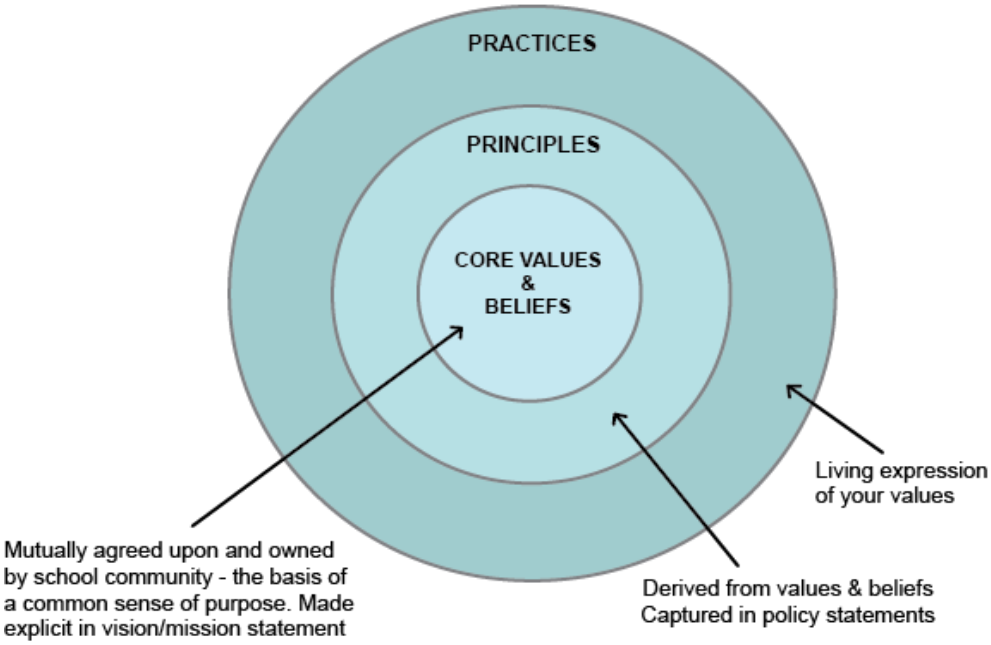



*Figure 2*. The relationship between core values, beliefs and practices
*Note.* From "Values and Beliefs about Learning to Principles and Practice", by J. Atkin, 1996, *The IARTV Seminar Series Victorian Principals*, Jolimont, Victoria. Copyright 1996 by J. Atkin. Reprinted with permission.

The *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) supports individual schools to develop their own values and beliefs. Whilst this document sets a direction for teaching and learning, its authors are quick to point out that it is a framework, rather than a detailed plan. Thus, the Ministry has stayed true to its Tomorrow Schools reform policy (Ministry of Education, 1988), which espouses the principle of community responsiveness by giving each school the scope to respond to the needs and interests of their learning community through the development of their own school vision, values and practices. This is further supported by the Education Review Office (2018), which urges school leaders to involve the community in developing a future-focused school vision.

In the absence of an abundance of empirical evidence and because the shift to ILEs in NZ is highly controversial and is therefore subject to much media and

parent criticism (Eder, 2018), it would be wise for schools, at the very least, to demonstrate consensus and competence in articulating their school's vision and purpose for change. Unfortunately, research indicates that consensus is not commonplace and is often not part of the process of transitioning (Biesta et al., 2015; Wood, 2017). Instead, schools seem to be signalling that day-to-day operational tasks take precedence over discourse focused on long-term values and beliefs (Biesta et al., 2015). This is also the case in schools that have previously reported a clear sense of purpose and structures. Such an approach can result in teachers driven by short-term goals becoming too focused on process, rather than longer-term significance and impact (Biesta et al., 2015).

Consequently, the issue of teacher agency may emerge. In the context of an ILE, this could be exemplified by teachers feeling confused, unsure of how to act, dissonance between colleagues, knee-jerk changes to practice and teachers seeking top-down practice directives. This lack of agency is contrary to research that indicates characteristics of ILEs such as openness can enable increased teacher agency and possibility (Deed & Lesko, 2015). Biesta et al. (2015) believes the key to enabling teacher agency is rich discourse about teaching and education, which gives teachers ownership of the vision for the ILE and awareness of the beliefs they and their colleagues hold. The current research resonates with Atkin's (1996) ideas around congruence of vision, principles and practice, and the importance of a vision and values approach to change.

Research conducted by O'Reilly (2016) in NZ has taken educators' thinking further by defining the vision components that need articulating in order to avoid ad hoc, reactive changes. O'Reilly (2016) believes that teachers and leaders require a clear understanding of the student-centred learning environment,

effective pedagogy, collaboration and co-teaching, and that educators need to develop shared beliefs. Wood (2017) adds weight to this argument by pointing out the multiple ambiguities in flexible learning spaces, and that teachers' efforts to be all things to all people come at the expense of discussing and attempting to define a shared purpose of education.

Recent research on mind frames offers depth to this theme by defining important teacher beliefs. Hattie (2012) identifies eight mind frames, such as "I want to talk more about learning than teaching"; "I teach through dialogue not monologue"; and "my fundamental task is to evaluate the effect of my teaching on students' learning and achievement" (p. 83). Hattie (2012) concludes that teachers and school leaders who develop these ways of thinking (beliefs) are more likely to have major impacts on student learning. Biesta et al. (2015) takes this point further by positing that the absence of detailed dialogue about purpose severely limits possibilities for action to develop a good education.

When values and vision can be collaboratively constructed and can drive changes to practice, collective wisdom and improved outcomes for students can result (Biesta et al., 2015). Timperley (2007) suggests teachers be given opportunities to have their pedagogical theories engaged and challenged, after which they should be given the time to translate their theories into practice. This revisiting process could assist with developing consistency schoolwide, and could provide opportunities for teachers to consider and refine their pedagogy (Masters, Birch, & Hattie, 2015; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). Rogers (2002) supports these ideas by stating that quality processes establish a common purpose and common aims, and that such consolidation can result in a powerful

equilibrium when teachers understand that their "individual accountability is balanced with collective responsibility and interdependency" (p. 48).

Case study research done in NZ by Whyte, House, and Keys (2016) provides examples of vision-led development, including transition processes. Transition processes involve repositioning to a culture of collaborative and collective responsibility, based on the belief that collaborative teachers have the most impact (Whyte et al., 2016). This process supports a connection between culture and vision. Fullan (1993) supports this approach, advocating that re-culturing, as well as re-visioning, is essential in leading change.

The depth at which a school's or a teacher's stated values and beliefs are lived is also worthy of attention. Argyris and Schon (1974) suggest that people have two different theories of action, hence the concepts "espoused theory" and "theory-in-use". Espoused theory is described as the world view and values people believe their behaviour is based on. Theory-in-use is described as the world view and values implied by their behaviour, or the maps they use to take action. Argyris and Schon (1974) suggest that people are unaware that their theories-in-use are often not the same as their espoused theories, and that people are often unaware of their theories-in-use. They assert that these theories of action determine all deliberate human behaviour. Argyris (1980) further suggests that effectiveness results from developing congruence between theory-in-use and espoused theory.

Research into this espoused versus (vs.) theory-in-use debate in the context of education has found that espoused theories are not always theories in use (Harnett, 2012). Other similar research has examined if teacher mind frames reflect actual practice and has found that, in the main, participants' mind frames

do seem to reflect their practices (Hattie, 2012). The importance of making implicit theories explicit so they can be tested is significant to this study, as it is through such teacher dialogue that deeply held school visions will be shared and realised.

In the context of an ILE, Morrison (2018) suggests that ILE spaces become innovative only when teachers make use of the possibilities that the space affords. This is significant to values-driven development. Biesta et al. (2015) argue that for such innovation to happen, collective development and consideration of individual teachers' beliefs must occur.

Evaluation is another reason why a vision- and values-driven approach is crucial. In an ILE without a frame of reference or a clear vision, what can be evaluated? Timperley, Annan, and Robinson (2009) assert that for teachers to reframe beliefs, to improve practice and to increase collaborative expertise to better meet student needs, goals must be set and these must be realistic, meaningful and related to student achievement, self-regulation and well-being. Put simply, stakeholders must be committed to unambiguous, shared goals that can be articulated and that give direction to pedagogy (Timperley et al., 2009). New practices should be evaluated based on these goals. Similarly, logical evaluation can be achieved by asking how well educators are achieving what they value and believe, and by asking how well the current NZ classroom situation matches the vision of what is possible (Atkin, 1996).

The dynamic nature of values-driven development situated in an ILE is worthy of note. Such a process is far from linear and finite; its underlying principles seem to best fit with complexity theory (Snyder, 2013). Dovey (2010) describes ILE spaces as "places-in-becoming determined by how teachers and

students navigate and negotiate socio-spatial complexities to form pedagogical alignments" (p. 122). Indeed, ILE spaces undergo ongoing change as new spaces are made and remade (McGregor, 2004). In conjunction with these changes to practice, effective collaborative processes are continually reviewed and revised (Gajda, 2004). Blackmore et al. (2011) label this complex process of integrating culture, organisation and teaching practice as education "serially redesigned" (p. 37).

Further research has suggested that values and beliefs discourse results in a shared vision, purpose and coherent goals, and that such discourse is increasingly complex and vital to the process of transitioning to an ILE if collective wisdom, teacher agency and success are to emerge (Alterator & Deed, 2013). I would add that this highly complex, iterative process should be ongoing, as should the process of evaluating pedagogy against these goals. It is also important to acknowledge that beliefs can change, and should do so, in the context of an evidence-based, reflective, innovative environment. In summary, the absence of attention to an organisation's vision during the transition process could, at best, result in a mishmash of competing ideas, and could leave educators wide open to public criticism in an already controversial context. Consequently, a focus of this study is exploring the presence of vision-led development and its impact on teacher transition.

## Pedagogy

If transition processes involve collaborative discourse about values and beliefs, then discussion around the congruence of teaching practices should occur. This has already been highlighted by the iterative attention to pedagogy in the

previous section on vision. The focus of this section is teacher pedagogy. This section is organised into four subsections:

- congruence to vision;
- professional learning focused on pedagogy;
- pedagogical leadership; and
- culture.

**Congruence of Vision**

Timperley (2007) emphasises the importance of principals leading school development and embedding a school's vision by aligning it with PLD and specific goals. O'Reilly (2016) agrees, adding that once a rationale for a new paradigm is established and articulated, expectations for teacher practice must be made explicit. Atkin (1996) captures this thinking by asking the following question: "How will a suggested new, or different, practice improve our ability to achieve what we value and believe?" (p. 5). Atkin (1996) advocates for schools to strive for congruence between core values and practices. Robinson et al. (2009) strongly suggests that such congruence is particularly important when new innovations are being implemented.

The impact of teacher practice should not be underestimated. Hattie (2009) reminds educators of the importance of the teacher, confirming that teacher quality has a large effect on student achievement (accounting for 30% of the variance in achievement), second only to the student's own motivation (which accounts for 50% of the variance in achievement). Hattie (2009) uses the term "expert teachers" to explore teacher pedagogy, describing expert teachers as those

who understand concepts resulting in instruction that is more integrated, more coherent and at a higher level of abstraction.

With such a clear rationale for a focus on teacher pedagogy, it is surprising to note the relative absence of a focus on pedagogy during transitions to ILEs. Participants in O'Reilly's (2016) study were unanimous in the recommendation for PLD on pedagogy for co-teaching during ILE transitions. However, just over half (52%) of teachers surveyed had been engaged in PLD related to the transition to co-teaching, and only 56% of those who had received training thought they had received adequate, quality PLD (O'Reilly, 2016). What follows is therefore an exploration of pedagogy for teachers transitioning to ILEs. Specifically, I attempt to define what support should be provided and how the support and training should be organised.

**Professional Learning Focused on Pedagogy**

Professional learning development that combines pedagogical theory with models of practice is powerful to educators because it enlarges their knowledge platform, and therefore, their repertoire of strategies to draw on. This idea is supported by Timperley (2007), who states that theory and practice need to be integrated to encourage "teachers to use their theoretical understandings as the basis for making ongoing, principled decisions about practice" (p. 11).

Research has shown that teachers need multiple opportunities, such as modelling and coaching, to absorb new information and to translate it into practice (Hattie, 2009; Timperley, 2007). Furthermore, teachers must engage in continuous dialogue that demands the articulation of values and beliefs, and their congruence to practice, both existing and emerging (Atkin, 1996). Sarason (1982)

claims that it is vital for implicit theories to be made explicit. In addition, effective PLD focuses on integrating theory and practice as they relate to curriculum, teaching practice and assessment knowledge (Timperley, 2007). External expertise to challenge teachers' existing assumptions and to develop new knowledge and skills is also crucial for effective PLD (Timperley, 2007). Significant to this argument are the findings that beliefs and personal constructs can work to undermine innovation, because teachers adapt innovative material and approaches to fit their implicit, unconscious theories of life (Sarason, 1982). Thus, PLD principles are significant to the ambiguous ILE space. The ambiguity inherent in the ILE indicates the need for PLD to support teachers transitioning to ILEs, and to include an exploration of MLP (Deed, Lesko, & Lovejoy, 2014).

Blackmore et al. (2011) explain that the purposeful linking of different theoretical, disciplinary and practical perspectives of openness can result in a pragmatic realisation of the contextual advantages of ILEs. Lackney (2008) stresses the importance of this dimension, and asserts that many teachers have limited capacity to "understand and effectively use physical instructional space for a pedagogical advantage" (p. 7). To increase capacity, Mackey et al. (2017) advocates for a significant evidence base to assist teachers to conceptualise space as a pedagogical tool. Timperley (2007) agrees, cautioning educators to resist completely abandoning existing pedagogy, however, in favour of a new regime based on ideological arguments of the 21st Century. In support of this argument, Alterator and Deed (2013) state that a hybrid pedagogy is more likely to result from the friction between routine and possible practice within open ILE spaces.

That said, I believe a starting point for exploring MLP as part of teacher transition to ILEs should include an analysis of ideas from the open-plan era,

including the philosophy of student-centred education. Other researchers point to the writings of Dewey, Vygotsky, Piaget and Montessori, influential educators who espouse a more humanistic, child-centred philosophy of teaching and learning (Cleveland, 2011).

As discussed in chapter one, evidence-based variables that maximise learning are well documented in publications, including the effective pedagogy section of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) and the OECD's innovative learning environments (ILE) project (OECD, 2013). Both documents identify principles of learning, which include learners at the centre, collaboration, relationships and personalised learning. In developing a deep understanding of these principles, teachers benefit from PLD content that includes unpacking what student agency is, how to shift the locus of control from teachers to students, co-teaching and how to plan collaboratively (Education Review Office, 2018).

Literature that explores the pedagogies enabled by the various spaces that can be created within an ILE, and the type of behaviour these pedagogies precipitate, is also useful. This focus includes Mahat et al.'s (2017) adaption of the work of Dovey and Fisher (2014), a typology of teaching and learning practices. The modified Dovey and Fisher (2014) typology draws on fundamental spatial settings for learning to create a typology of six teaching approaches that can be defined as assemblages attracting pedagogies ranging from whole-class to individual-student teaching practices (Mahat et al., 2017) (Figure 3).

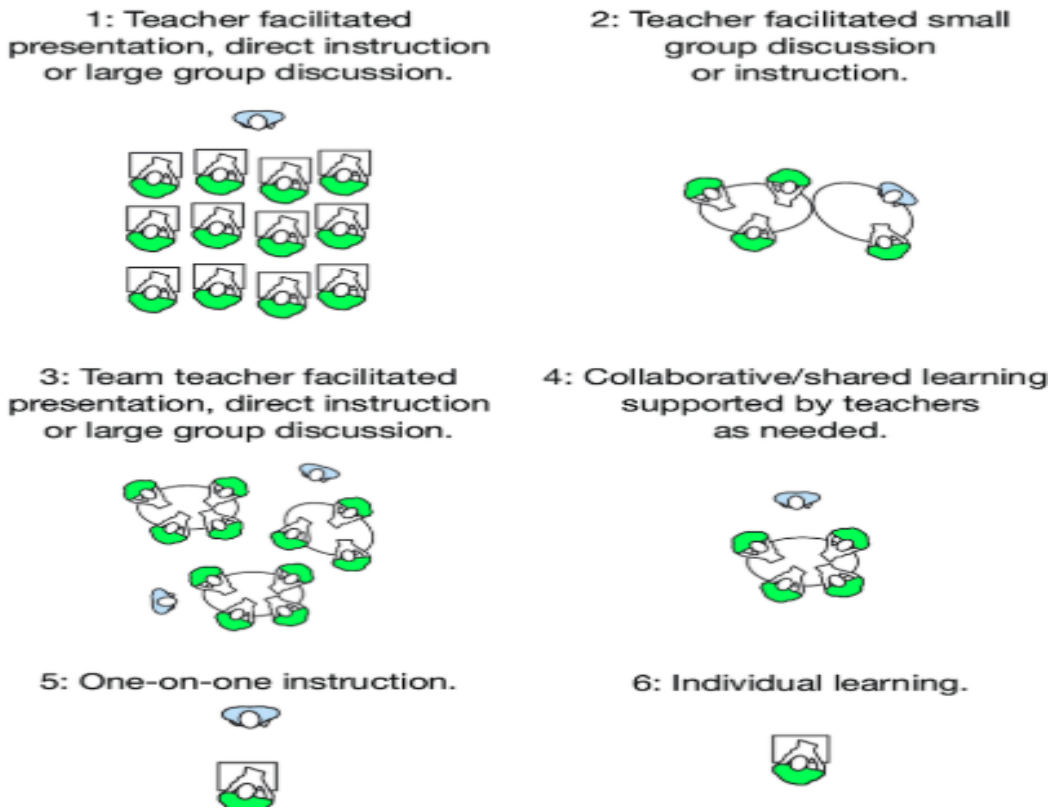



*Figure 3*. Typology of teaching approaches
From " ' In the Real World …': Teachers' Perceptions of ILEs" by M. Mahat, L. Grocott, and W. Imms, 2017, *ILETC Phase 1 Teacher Workshops*, Melbourne, Australia, University of Melbourne. Retrieved from http://www.iletc.com.au/publications/reports/ Copyright 2017 by Mahat et al. Reprinted with permission.

Research by Nair, Fielding, and Lackney (2009) adopts a similar approach by conceptualising different settings for different activities. They also explore the use of the language around campfires, watering holes and caves to recognise the roles of formal, social and reflective learning (Nair et al., 2009). Further work by Friend and Cook (2010) identifies six commonly used co-teaching strategies worthy of consideration for ILEs, from one teach–one observe through to full co-teaching (Figure 4).

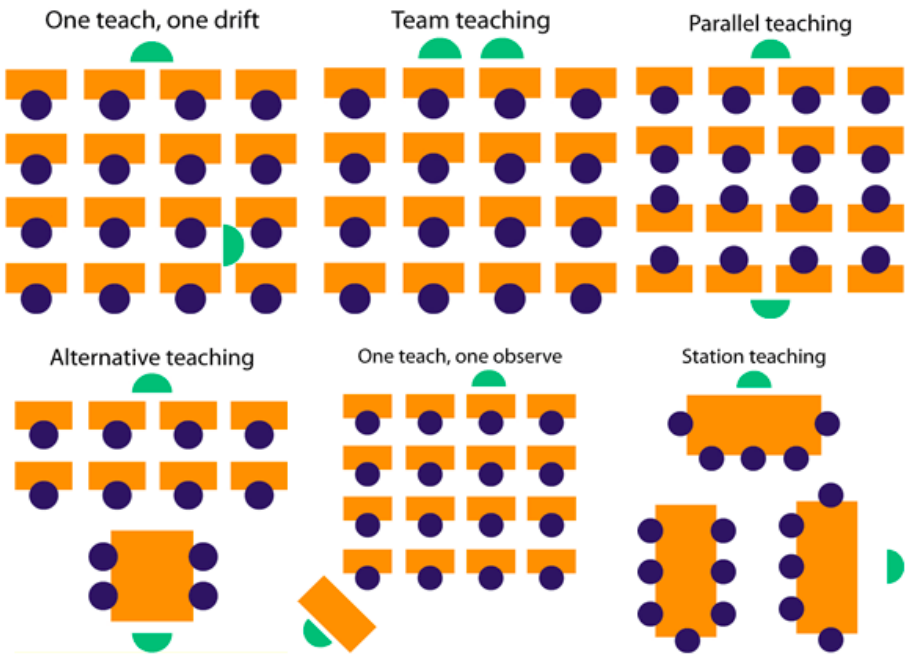



Figure 4. Co-teaching arrangements

*Note*. From "Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals, by M. Friend and L. Cook, 2010, p. 16. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc. Copyright Pearson Education Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Benade and Jackson (2017) caution that active teaching and instruction is still important and that differentiated workshops can be framed as must do' activities and small group rotations. Staff visits to live ILEs should also be an integral part of their immersion in ILE pedagogy. The need for PLD focused on pedagogy in practice is further supported by Benade and Jackson (2017), who believe that teachers are eager to know what works, and how this translates into actual teaching practice.

## Pedagogical Leadership

Leadership that encourages the exploration of new possibilities is crucial to the success of an ILE. In relation to teacher pedagogy, this involves facilitating pedagogical discourse grounded in values and beliefs to encourage teachers to explore new possibilities, to thrive on change and to initiate explorations into the unknown. The emergent ILE pedagogy that results can be described as a hybrid pedagogy emerging from conflicts that arise between routine and possible practice (Deed & Lesko, 2015).

Alterator and Deed (2013) state that it is necessary for teachers to remain innovative by exploring what is possible, not just what the system honours. Diamond (1982) labels this type of innovation as a "finished beginning, a starting point from which adaptations can occur" (p. 167). Similarly, Thomson and Blackmore (2006) refer to the ILE transition process as serial redesign. "White space" is yet another phrase coined to illustrate the tenuous link between pedagogy, physical space and collaboration (Cherry, 2005).

The ideas of emergence, hybrid pedagogy and adaption connect with a strategic management theory known as "complexity theory". In times of major change, things are not simple, or even complicated — instead, they are complex, and they need to be managed as complexities (Gilbert, 2015). Figure 5 illustrates the Cynefin framework on which complexity theory is based. It can be used as a problem-solving tool to help define a situation by the five "domains" defined by cause-and-effect relationships. This can be useful in helping teachers in assessing a situation more accurately and responding appropriately.

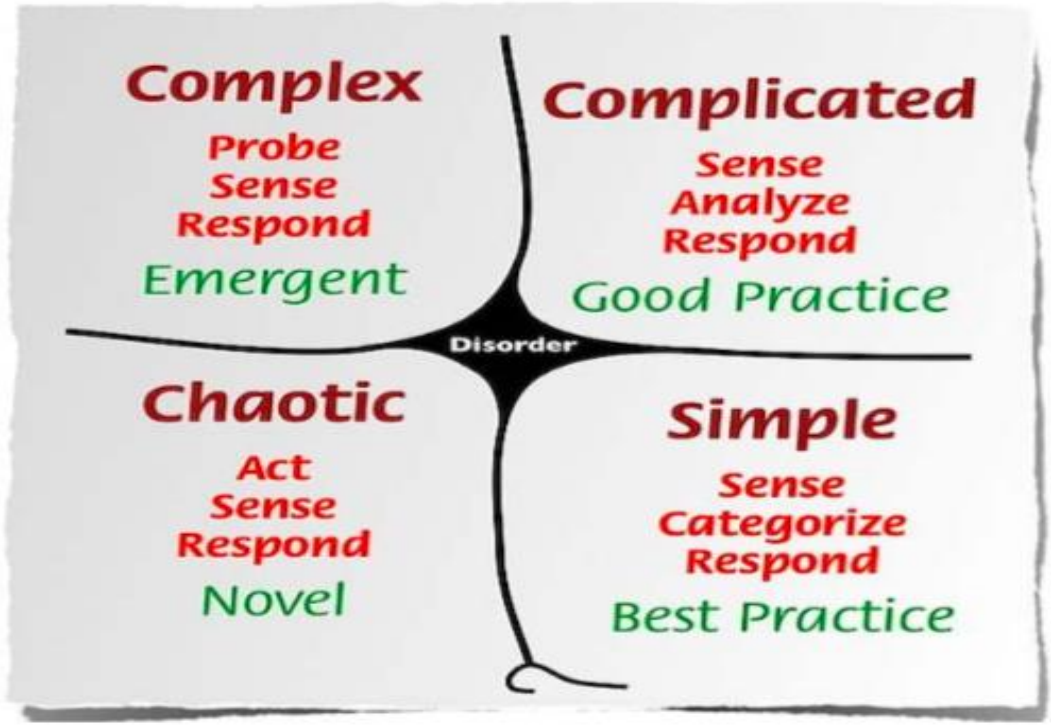



Figure 5. Snowden's Cynefin framework

*Note*. From "Cognitive Edge" by D. Snowden, 2005. Retrieved from http://cognitive-edge.com. Copyright D. Snowden. Reprinted with permission.

Research indicates that a good place for educational leaders to start is to develop strategies that focus on maximising the quality of all the elements in the system, and the number, density and depth of interactions between the elements (Gilbert, 2015). In an ILE this would involve assessing interactions between a wide variety of stakeholders including teachers, leaders, students, whānau, designers and special education practitioners.

A leadership style characterised by complexity theory would see schools transitioning to ILEs steering loosely in the direction of goals geared towards creating a highly functioning, emergent system that adapts in unexpected ways to support student achievement. Although this study focuses on the experiences of teachers, the impact and actions of leadership are key themes examined as part of

this study. There are clearly significant impacts of teacher pedagogy on student learning and new opportunities that emerge in an ILE for creative pedagogy. This study contributes new findings and supports existing literature related to teacher PLD focused on pedagogy.

## Culture

An exploration of pedagogy is, however, just one part of the equation. The culture in which PLD resides could be just as significant as PLD content (Alterator & Deed, 2013; Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Ort, 2002). Research in this area has indicated the importance of leaders developing shared values and vision; collective responsibility for pupils' learning; collaboration focused on teachers' learning; individual and collective professional learning; reflective professional enquiry; openness, networks and partnerships; inclusive membership; and mutual trust, respect and support (Friend, Reising, & Cook, 1993).

A case study conducted in NZ reported that PLD involving a team exploration of challenges was an effective collaborative practice (Whyte et al., 2016). Through this process, solutions to problems emerged; for example, a need for additional time for teachers to communicate eventuated in the introduction of tuakana–teina time, which enabled PLD to take place during the school day (Alterator & Deed, 2013). Tuakana–teina is also a model for buddy learning. An older or more expert tuakana (brother, sister or cousin) helps and guides a younger or less expert teina (originally, a younger sibling or cousin of the same gender).

Such a culture must be in place to make explicit the implicit values and beliefs that exist individually and collectively between teachers in ILEs. There is a need for teachers in ILEs to be flexible in their pedagogical beliefs and practices

(Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas, & Wallace, 2005). In order to change habitual practice, teachers have to consciously and willingly ask questions about their experiences in new contexts (Whyte et al., 2016). In fact, adaptability emerges from the dynamic process of questioning and making sense of contextual practice (Alterator, 2017; Desforges, 1995). Alterator and Deed (2013) describe the process of developing a coherent pedagogy as a continual process of negotiation as teachers make sense of how to respond efficiently and effectively to the affordances of open learning environments. In developing a staff culture conducive to such deep learning, Osborne (2016) reinforces the importance of leaders understanding the nature of change and building change readiness. In addition, Osborne (2016) advocates for leaders to be fully engaged with PLD processes and to promote useful sense-making.

In summary, current literature identifies the importance of a professional staff culture characterised by support, enquiry and the deprivatisation of pedagogical practice focused on better meeting the needs of students. The active role of leadership in shaping culture is acknowledged as paramount. The presence or otherwise of such cultures during transition in intermediate settings is explored as part of this study.

## Teacher Dispositions and Selection

The grouping of teachers in an ILE is significant to the ILE's success and can impact on student progress (Mackey et al., 2017). Larrivee (2000) asserts that "bad collaboration is worse than no collaboration", and that a "disciplined collaboration" should be employed in ILE formation (p. 1). This infers a need for guided collaboration, which is thus a key role of school leaders.

Also of interest is the finding that more teachers in an ILE equates to a corresponding increase in relationship dynamics (Hargreaves, 2001). Putting systems and processes in place to ensure the right mix is therefore a crucial leadership responsibility, and one that should be applied to both current staff and recruitment processes (Hansen, 2009). In fact, the Campbell, Saltmarsh, Chapman, and Drew (2013) case study found that management choosing the teams did not work. Nor did friends choosing to work collaboratively, because they liked each other and believed they were like-minded (Campbell et al., 2013). Generally speaking, the successful grouping of teachers means maximising teacher ownership and choice (Timperley et al., 2009).

An analysis of each teacher's skill set and perceived "fit" is inherent in the ILE teacher selection process. Alterator and Deed (2013) state that what is required is a teacher skill set rich in relational and interpersonal dimensions, and balanced with disciplinary traditions of knowledge and pedagogy. Furthermore, teachers' capacity to work together to solve problems is a critical factor. Teacher collaboration in professional learning communities (PLCs) is also seen as having the potential for significant positive impacts on student progress (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Ottesen, 2007). Conversely, conflict can be a strong, negative emotional experienced between teachers attempting to collaborate closely. Negotiating via PLCs is "seen repeatedly as a problem, not an opportunity" by some teachers (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 524).

Further ideas on teacher characteristics best suited to ILEs can be found in the research of Hattie (2012), which iterates that teacher traits required in an ILE are common in more progressively minded teachers, thus suggesting that a prerequisite for teachers keen to transition could be a willingness to learn and

openness to change. This idea is supported by the research of Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008) that support teacher adaptability as a key feature of successful engagement with open-plan ILE settings.

The Dweck (2008) model of fixed and growth mindsets also provides a useful model of desired traits. Dweck (2008) found that people's theories about their own intelligence had a significant impact on their motivation, efforts to adapt and approach to challenges. Those with a growth mindset believe their abilities are malleable, and are more likely to embrace challenges, which means they persist despite repeated failures (Dweck, 2008). Further characteristics of a growth mindset that are significance to the ILE space include:

- a desire to learn,
- openness to learn from criticism,
- inspiration taken from others' successes,
- persistence in the face of setbacks, and
- a sense of free will.

The Education Review Office (2018) report into *Leading Innovative Learning in New Zealand Schools* found that both teachers and innovative, successful school leaders needed to have a growth mindset, committed to working in new ways.

The intensity of an ILE, based on a continual demand to make adaptive choices, also has implications for teacher dispositions. Teacher proficiency with technology, the technological support available and the compatibility of the technology to the pedagogy and environment are important factors that can impact on teacher success when transitioning to what is often a technologically advanced, embedded learning environment (Osborne, 2016).

Knock's (2018) research on teaching teams in ILEs points to the significance of all teachers being on the same page and being able to "learn, unlearn and relearn quote" (Toffler, 1971). Knock (2018) believes same pageness is sustained by leadership that is characterised by a distributed team culture generating explicit norms, problem-solving and resolution strategies. She also advocates for a team that shares a "language", and the need for adequate time to be set aside for collaboration and planning (Knock, 2018). Because desired teacher traits are multifaceted and are significant to the success of an ILE, this study explores the teacher selection processes used during transition.

## Physical Space

Supporting teachers to transition to the physical space of an ILE is often the starting point in the transition process. Unfortunately, for some teachers, the starting point can also mark the end of transition support. This section examines the significance of the physical space in the transition process. Herein, I also examine teachers' involvement in the ILE design process, and the dispositions required of teachers to maximise the advantages offered in that space.

### The Significance of Physical Space

Research has proved the significance of physical space, both in supporting student achievement and in supporting a school's overall vision for learning. A well-designed primary school boosts children's academic performance to the tune of 16% (Barrett, Zhang, Davies, & Barrett, 2015). Furthermore, good quality acoustics, lighting, heating and ventilation are associated with improved outcomes in NZ (Wall, 2016).

Barrett et al. (2015) conclude that as quality teaching is the biggest driver of student outcomes, the space needs to suit the school's specific teaching and learning needs. The space also needs to be flexible to support changes to teaching and learning practices. This connects with the ideas of McGregor (2004), who states that space is relational, or created through interactions that can be made and remade. This idea is inseparable from ILE pedagogy; the ever-changing arrangement of pedagogy and space is the nexus of the social and the spatial (Wall, 2016).

Physical space is also significant in its ability to enable or to inhibit the school's vision. This view is supported by Hattie (2009), who states that learning space design hinges on an analysis of needs, learning modes and existing space use, all supporting components of vision. Thus, in New Zealand, Māori and Pasifika cultures should be considered in school designs, ensuring a culturally responsive environment is created. This may include whare kai and outdoor spaces with native plants (Ministry of Education, 2016).

**The Design Process**

Research on the process of designing ILEs sends a resounding message that as part of transition, educators and designers must work closely together. Siloed thinking on either side does not support effective design. Both parties must develop their understanding of pedagogical demands and physical structures (Clarke, 2016; Cotterell, 1984). Designers are not educators, but they must understand teaching practices if school design is to be successful in supporting student achievement (Oblinger, 2005). Models of other types of buildings can be useful, as are considerations of virtual and informal environments (Wall, 2016).

Researchers also recommend that teachers be made aware of alternative designs and be included in redesign processes (Clarke, 2016; Osborne, 2016).

An alternative design approach known as responsive design is compatible with ILEs. This approach focuses first and foremost on the social environment and on how the physical environment can be structured to support social realities (Lippman, 2010). In short, it is about the environment adapting to the people, rather than the people to the environment. The focus of designers adopting this approach is to explore the nature of the interactions between people and their environment (Lippman, 2010). Regardless of the design approach, the implications are that transition must maximise collaboration between practitioners and designers and must support teachers to develop their understanding of the possibilities for teaching inherent in flexible physical structures and spaces.

Traditionally, teachers have made the most of the physical environment they have been given. With the exception of wall displays and the odd change to desk configuration, few changes are ever made to the physical learning environment. In the context of ILEs, Kuuskorpi and González (2011) advocate for teachers to develop their understanding of the impact of the environment on behaviour, and to demonstrate enough confidence to modify their environment to meet students' and teachers' goals and needs. Cotterell (1984) adds that teachers need to feel and exhibit control over the stimuli within the ILE. Furthermore, the physical space should be kept in a lived-in state of ongoing negotiations to enable the desired pedagogy (Kuuskorpi & González, 2014 ). Thus, teacher dispositions favoured for transitions to ILEs include inner confidence and adaptability.

Morrison (2018) challenges the term "flexible" and instead uses the term "responsive" to describe ILEs. She believes teachers need to view the

environment as a tool to solve problems (Morrison, 2018). This view requires teachers with a mindset that asks how can we imagine, rather than what the environment can provide. Furthermore, Morrison (2018) reminds us of the need to utilise the power of the young mind by observing how students naturally occupy the space and using their reactions as a guide to co-constructing the space and the pedagogy.

To summarise, the physical environment does have an impact on learning, and consequently, teachers need to take ownership of the ILE space, viewing it as a tool that can be manipulated to enable pedagogy that leads to improved outcomes for students. Leaders need to enable active involvement of practitioners and students throughout design and work processes, with all parties acting to bread down professional silos to enable a better understanding of shared context. Closer working relationships can yield effective ILE designs and therefore, success for both teachers and students.

## Support Systems and Structures

This section begins by examining the role of leadership in enabling appropriate support systems and structures. It then focuses on two highly relevant systems: PLD and evaluation.

### Leadership

Teachers transitioning to ILEs require a variety of support systems and structures (O'Reilly, 2016). Ensuring these are in place and aligned with other school systems is a challenge for leaders. Gunter and Thomson (2007) state that leadership of successful change requires alignment of vision, resources and PLD,

together with leadership and active participation by leaders. In fact, effective leaders adopt a distributed approach and have a clear vision of the transformation they wish to bring about. They are also effective change managers, adept at leading the transformation of pedagogy and maximising the benefits offered by ILEs (Education Review Office, 2018; Robinson et al., 2009).

A further challenge for leaders in supporting transition is knowledge of the transition's resourcing requirements: the tools needed, and the accompanying PLD necessary to support staff. This challenge indicates a need for leaders to remain well-informed about research and practice in the ILE space. Osborne (2018) believes teacher transition must be as well-designed by leaders as the actual facility itself. He reiterates the three key stages of transition (preparing, implementing, sustaining) and the key role leaders have at each stage, and he draws attention to the need for simple, safe first steps that yield "wins" as part of a process of understanding humans' natural resistance to change (Osborne, 2018). This resonates with the idea that relationships with resistors are key (Fullan, 1993). Osborne (2018) believes another key job of school leaders is to stand as role models in risk-taking and to support their teachers to engage in helpful sense-making. Such actions strongly support the development of a culture that values innovation and thinking.

**Professional Learning and Development** An exploration of PLD focused on pedagogy was undertaken earlier in this chapter. However, the focus of this section is the school's overall teacher PLD system related to ILE transitions, inclusive of the strategic focus, strategic provisions and the desired approach. O'Reilly (2016) highlights the importance of this focus: "collaborative teaching

teams are likely to lead to improved student outcomes, but only with significant professional development incentives and supportive school cultures" (p. 18). Furthermore, there are direct benefits to student achievement when teachers participate in effective PLCs (Robinson et al., 2009). Clearly, transitioning to ILEs requires the provision of significant PLD grounded in a PLC approach.

Characteristics of an effective PLC as defined by Friend et al. (1993) were cited in the "Culture" section of this chapter. These ideas are further supported by Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung (2008), who state that "participation in professional learning communities can either promote professional learning or work against it (by reinforcing the status quo)" (p. 205). Timperley et al. (2008) describes successful PLD communities as those focused on "opportunities to process new understandings and their implications for teaching, the introduction of new perspectives and challenging of problematic beliefs, and an unrelenting focus on the impact of teaching on student learning" (p. 205).

In addition to developing an effective PLC, it is important that NZ educators take heed of research related to the most appropriate PLD foci for teachers transitioning to ILEs. To date, research suggests that developing teachers' understanding of possible pedagogical approaches, and developing their spatial and collaborative literacy, should be key foci if the benefits of ILEs are to be realised (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002). Research by Vescio et al. (2008) further suggests that in addition to enhanced collaboration, communication and interpersonal skills, teachers also need the knowledge and skills to meet diverse student needs through collaborative approaches and knowledge on how to develop capability in using systems and technologies to facilitate such collaborative practices.

Researchers are united in recognising the "in-situ" PLD opportunities that ILEs present (Bradbeer et al., 2017; Cameron & Robinson, 1986; Campbell et al., 2013). In-situ PLD can be defined as the moment-to-moment PLD that takes place in a shared teaching situation simply because teachers are exposed to the styles and actions of their colleagues during the course of a regular school day. This practice of teachers working collaboratively and assuming collective responsibility for delivering a fit-for-purpose curriculum is also known as the deprivatisation of practice (Education Review Office, 2018).

I have found this concept is particularly significant for provisionally certified teachers (PCTs), whose competency appears to develop at a much faster rate when in an ILE with a team of teachers who possess many expert qualities. This view is supported by research from the 1970s open-plan era that disclosed significant benefits for beginner teachers, and teachers who were less proficient (Cameron & Robinson, 1986). To further illustrate, research investigating teachers' use of digital technology marvels at the increase of in-situ PLD generated through the connections generated by collaborative teaching in an ILE (Blannin, 2018). Connectivism is also described by Siemens (2005) as a theory of learning for the digital age, or viewing learning as a process of connecting specialised nodes or information sources.

However, two schools of thought exist on how PLD should be structured. The first approach is more linear and traditional and the other, which is more organic and teacher-centred. The more traditional PLD model is controlled and planned in a measured way by teachers or leaders and can be described as a "one size fits all" approach. Bradbeer (2016) favours the more organic, teacher-centred approach. He suggests that professional development "cannot be pre-planned —

it must be lived" (p. 306). This viewpoint acknowledges the significant socio-cultural elements of teacher development and the importance of teachers being able to learn within the context of their own classrooms, and in a collaborative manner with their colleagues.

In the NZ context, educators are currently being supported to implement an increasingly organic, collaborative and personalised approach to PLD (Hargreaves, 1994; Larrivee, 2000). Teaching as inquiry is a key support framework for this development. This framework is identified in the NZ curriculum as one of the components of effective pedagogy. It acknowledges that teaching strategies work differently in different context for different students. Thus, teaching as inquiry provides a framework for teachers to follow in exploring the impacts of their teaching on their students (Ministry of Education, 2007). This framework is influenced by the research of Timperley et al. (2008), who have modelled teaching as inquiry focused on promoting valued student outcomes (Figure 6).

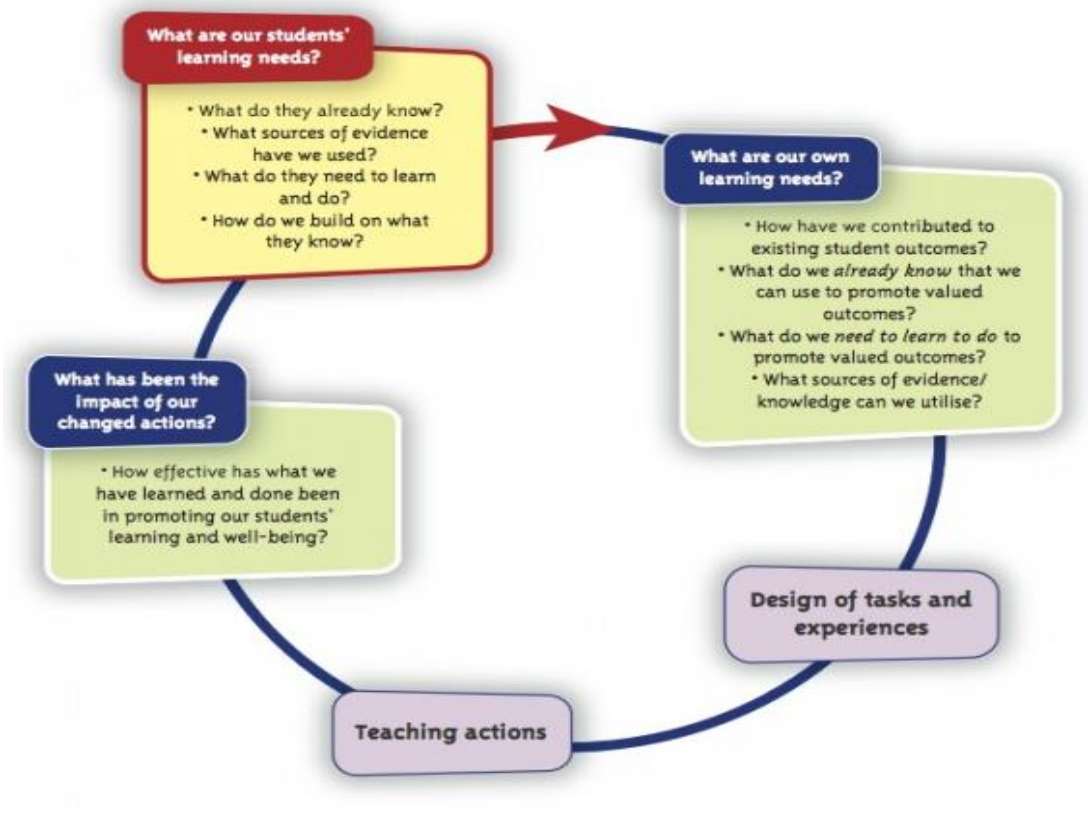



*Figure 6.* Teacher inquiry and knowledge-building
From "Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration", by H. Timperley, 2007, p. 34. Copyright by the Ministry of Education. Reprinted with permission.

This approach is further supported by Tuckwell's (2018) research on designing teacher learning. Tuckwell (2018) believes that teacher learning is fundamental to change and should be collaborative, action-oriented and co-designed. Imms (2018) adds that teacher development during transition will often be highly individualised. He supports the growth of multiple ILE-relevant mind frames as first mooted by Zierer and Hattie (2017). Clearly, in managing PLD to maximise readiness for transition to ILEs, the challenge for leaders is to balance a personalised, organic approach with a schoolwide PLD system that reflects high expectations, is focused on improved outcomes for students and ensures all staff

develop teaching capabilities as per the *Code and Standards for the Teaching Profession* (Education Council, 2017).

**Evaluation Systems**

The final theme to be explored in this literature review is the place of evaluation systems in transitions. The use of teacher inquiry models (discussed in the preceding section) in exploring the impact of teacher actions on student outcomes should not be overlooked as an integral part of any evaluation system. However, given that there is little rigorous evidence attesting to which learning environments are more appropriate for 21st Century pedagogy (Byers, Mahat, Liu, Knock, & Imms, 2018), Whyte et al. (2016) suggest a more direct, standardised approach may be required. Yet, the development of evaluation approaches that assess the effectiveness of physical learning environments in supporting pedagogical activities is in its infancy in NZ.

Researchers have called for the development of evaluation methods that make explicit the connections between pedagogy and space (Datnow, 2011). A recent study concludes that the evaluation tools utilised do not always measure the learning characteristics ILEs were designed to achieve (Byers et al., 2018). Thomson and Blackmore (2006) refer to the process of continually reflecting upon what is working well, what is not working well and the prototyping of strategies as "serial redesign". They advocate for this process to involve regular feedback from parents, students, staff and community. These ideas resonate with tenets of a connectivist approach that calls for multiple interactions between stakeholders (Siemens, 2005). Teachers support the need for evaluation, noting the importance of the cycle of improvement, a tool that they use to ensure

direction-setting and resourcing processes, core activities of learning, and enabling systems and infrastructure, are monitored and improved (Sala-Oviedo & Imms, 2016).

Recent work by Cleveland and Fisher (2014) provides a resource of definitions, examples and tools designed to assist educators to reflect deeply and to act on the trials and tribulations arising within collaborative learning environments. Implications of the research by Sharratt and Planche (2016) also indicate that transition processes must include rigorous evaluation systems. Such systems must link back to the intended outcomes of the ILE and school vision, and must enable measurable, meaningful outcomes to inform the "push, pull and nudge factors of physical environments in supporting desired teaching and learning practices, activities and behaviours" (Cleveland & Fisher, 2014, p. 24). This view is supported by Bendikson (2015), who advocates for networked leaders to apply "tunnel vision" by focusing narrowly on measuring intermediate outcomes that provide essential feedback on progress towards ILE goals (p. 2).

The culture in which evaluation processes exists is also important. The Education Review Office (2018) calls for school leaders to develop a culture of continuous improvement to support their vision. These policy makers also recommend that leaders are supportive of experimentation while quickly addressing elements of strategy if they are not working (Education Review Office, 2018).

## Summary

This literature review chapter has highlighted critical themes that weave together to underpin transition. These include vision, pedagogy, teacher selection

and dispositions, the physical space, and systems and structures. An investigation of teachers' perceptions of the impacts of these and other variables on successful transition is therefore highly relevant and has led to the following research questions:

1. What level of readiness did six teachers from six different intermediate schools feel in making their first transition from a single cell to an ILE?
    - What factors contributed to these feelings?
    - What was the nature of change required?
2. What do these teachers perceive as challenges in transitioning to an ILE?
3. What do these teachers recommend is put in place in the future to support teachers who are transitioning to an ILE?

# Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter starts with an explanation of why this study is important educational research. I then elucidate the theoretical assumptions underpinning my research methods. The rationale for the selection of research procedures is explored in relation to validity, reliability and effectiveness in generating new knowledge to support successful teacher transition from single-cell classrooms to ILEs.

## Educational Research

Educational research is a subcategory of social science research. What distinguishes educational research is its focus on the improvement of teaching practices and learning systems for the benefit of all concerned and society at large (Mutch, 2005). The current work is important educational research because it focuses on enhancing our understanding of processes that support teachers' transition to ILEs. The aim is to give teachers the knowledge they need to be well-equipped to provide the best possible learning programmes. In doing this, the current work makes known, or at least makes known in terms of a new context, that which was not known before: the barriers and enablers for intermediate teachers who have already transitioned from single cells to ILEs.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, results from the current work support teachers who have not yet transitioned to prepare for transition, and therefore, increase the likelihood of ILE success. This study will be of interest to educational leaders, many of whom are at different stages of managing the transition process. The Ministry of Education should also find this study informative in considering national support initiatives. The theme has significant value to the wider

educational community because it explores ways of improving pedagogy and investigates the implications of educational policy and innovations (Creswell, 2002).

To build new knowledge on this issue, it is necessary to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers at key points in the transition process. New knowledge on this topic is important because there is little research currently available, and there are large numbers of teachers involved in transitioning to ILEs in NZ. With these facts in mind, I selected the most appropriate research paradigm, and considered the most relevant theoretical perspectives, ontology, epistemology and methodology.

## Research Paradigms

The design of any research is influenced by belief systems, mental models or frames of reference — paradigms — used to organise reasoning and observations (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The term "worldview" has been used to describe the paradigms that guide researchers' actions (Creswell, 2009). Identifying these paradigms is essential in making sense of different perceptions of the same social phenomena, and research itself. There are three key paradigms: 1) critical, 2) positivist and 3) interpretivist theory (Neuman, 1994).

**The Critical Paradigm** Critical research takes a neutral approach to social study in an effort to uncover truths that have been overlooked (Cranford, 2018). This involves a reflective assessment, digging beneath surface appearances and direct analysis of social phenomena. The concepts that frame an area of enquiry are themselves subject to critical analysis (Anyon, 2009; McLaren & Giarelli,

1995; Rasmussen, 2013). Critical research can be a powerful way to explore the past, present and future, and to connect education with wider political and social agendas that often aim to seek redress for disadvantaged groups (Anyon, 2009). Critical theorists have been reproached by other scholars, however, because they focus on a deliberate ideological–political agenda (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Because this study was not driven by reflective assessment, nor by the need to change conditions for disadvantaged groups, critical social research methodology was deemed incompatible.

**The Positivist Paradigm**

The positivist paradigm seeks to apply the natural science model of research to investigating social phenomena (Nudzor, 2009). An idea or theory is tested, and generalisations are made from the findings (Mutch, 2005). Bishop (1997) describes positivist research as structured, predictable, measurable and impersonal. Positivist researchers prefer exact quantitative data, and they use surveys, experiments and statistics (Cohen et al., 2011). Critiques of positivism cite its narrow lens of observable, measurable facts and consequent rejection of human thoughts and emotions (Cohen et al., 2011). According to Cohen et al. (2011), the positivist researcher regards "human behaviour as passive, essentially determined and controlled, thereby ignoring intention, individualism and freedom" (p. 7).

Some tenets of positivism are relevant to the current work, because this study adopts a mixed-methods approach that includes the use of quantitative data, and it seeks to generate themes, or generalisations, from the data. However, on the whole, positivism was deemed incompatible with current research objectives

because this paradigm is primarily focused on linear causality deduced from quantitative objective measures and does not value the idiosyncratic experiences of individuals. It also derives theory purely from an inductive logic (the generation of theory), rather than deductive logic (the testing of theory) (Cohen et al., 2011).

**The Interpretivist Paradigm**

The interpretivist paradigm resonates strongly with the objectives of the current work. Interpretivism has dominated research in education over the past three decades (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The interpretivist approach stresses the importance of individuals' subjective experiences, and the focus is on understanding the ways in which individuals create, modify and interpret the world. A concern for the individual and a focus on enriching interpretations dominates interpretivism (Cohen et al., 2011). The purpose of interpretive research is to "clarify how interpretations and understandings are formulated, implemented and given meaning in lived situations" (Radnor & Buckingham, 2001, p. 4). The interpretivist paradigm resonates with my research philosophy, too. The points highlighted below illustrate how the interpretivist paradigm guided my study, acting to enhance the story of teacher transitions to ILEs.

Research subjects (the teachers) acted intentionally and created meaning through their actions (Blumer, 1969). The focus was on understanding teachers' experiences in a comprehensive, holistic way, with the focus on the whole being more than the sum of its parts (Cohen et al., 2011; Nisbet & Watt, 1984). Theory did not precede this research, it followed. Theory was emergent and arose from the findings, requiring me to abandon personal assumptions. Theory was

grounded in data generated by the research, aka "grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Because I worked directly with personal experiences to build theories, the data revealed deeper meanings via detailed participant responses. Events and individuals were unique, affected by context. "Thick" descriptions representing the complexity of the context were preferable to simplistic interpretations (Geertz, 1973).

Critics of researchers working within an interpretivist paradigm believe that its supporters may have gone too far in abandoning scientific measures of substantiation: many of their reports may, in fact, be inaccurate and misleading (Cohen et al., 2011). The interpretivist perspective is treated by some scholars as a lesser methodology relevant only to the early stages of research (Nudzor, 2009). Critics have attacked the belief that interpretivist research can provide a more meaningful understanding of social phenomena than that obtained from scientific data, and they have pointed out that interpretivism has failed to provide any agreed doctrines supporting qualitative research. The criticism about lack of reliability takes its credence from the subjectivity inherent in interpretivism (Nudzor, 2009).

Dichotomies between frames of reference have led to what is commonly referred to as "paradigms wars" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). However, many researchers see the divide between paradigms as overstated, and argue instead that finding a common ground is possible (Burgess, 1982; Creswell, 2002; Gorard & Taylor, 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Combined approaches, including multi-methods, mixed methods and integrated research have been developed as a result. Consequently, I have adopted the "common ground", mixed-methods

approach for the current study, which I describe in the "Mixed Methods" section of this chapter.

## Ontology and Epistemology

Ontological, epistemological and methodological components underpin a paradigm and inform the researcher's concept of social reality. Exploring the three components of social reality helps uncover a researcher's implicit and explicit assumptions, thereby equipping the researcher to recognise and mitigate potential biases. A personal "ontology and epistemology create a holistic view of how knowledge is viewed and how we see ourselves in relation to this knowledge, and the methodological strategies we use to un / discover it [the knowledge]" (Patel, 2015, p. 2).

### Ontological Assumptions

Ontological assumptions relate to the researcher's views on the nature of reality and how truths are derived. Two strikingly different ontological perspectives exist — the objectivist and the subjectivist. The objectivist approach to ontology seeks to find a single truth or reality. This view can be defined as post-positivism, or viewing social reality as external to individuals, a "given" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 6). Discovering the universal laws of society and human conduct is the goal of the objectivist researcher (Barr Greenfield, 1975). In contrast, the subjectivist approach to ontology is defined as nominalism, or viewing social reality as created in one's mind; it is heavily dependent on an individual's feelings, tastes and opinions (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Research

underpinned by a subjectivist approach aims to discover how people interpret the world in which they live (Cohen et al., 2011).

The subjectivist approach to ontology, defined as nominalism, is most closely aligned with the current work. To illustrate, my aim was to gain a deep understanding of the experiences and perceptions of teachers who have transitioned from a single cell to an ILE. The study was structured in a way that forced the participant to explore the impacts of surrounding external realities, such as physical space and professional learning, and their own subjective reactions. This process enabled further probing of participants' individual idiosyncrasies, thus enabling me to gain an understanding of how each teacher created meaning to guide their actions. I gained insights into subjects' values and beliefs, a pivotal achievement for the nominalist researcher seeking thick data. The nominalist approach also aligned well with my research objectives because there were no universally held views amongst NZ educators regarding successful transitions to ILEs at the time of this study. Nominalist ontology emphasises a process of reaching an understanding about the individual case, rather than the general consensus (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). My interest was in a subjectivist, relativist social world rather than an absolutist, external reality (Cohen et al., 2011).

**Epistemological Assumptions**

Epistemological assumptions relate to the researcher's views on how knowledge is acquired, constructed and communicated (Creswell & Piano Clark, 2011). As in ontology, two distinct perspectives exist. The epistemological, objective approach (known as positivism) favours scientifically verifiable, quantitative methods, such as experiments. Positivism is expressed in laws, or

law-like generalisations, and although pertaining to the social world, is more pertinent to the description of natural phenomena (Cohen et al., 2011). In contrast, the subjective approach to epistemology can be defined as interpretivist; knowledge is considered personal and humanly created. The approach favours qualitative methods, such as interviews. An interpretivist analysis is focused on explaining the individual case (Cohen et al., 2011). Rather than act as a detached, objective observer, my role was to examine ILE transition through the eyes of the participants. Thus, the subjective view of social reality fits with the present study.

The goal of this study was to explore the multiple experiences, perspectives and interpretations of teachers transitioning from single cells to ILEs. In keeping with the subjective epistemological approach, my role was not to reduce and generalise participants' experiences but to suspend my own predispositions in a quest to capture data that truly represented the complexity of the situation. My task was to discover patterns within people's words and actions, and in presenting my findings, to remain as true as possible to the construction of the world as the participants originally experienced it (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

## Methodology

Methodologies link theoretical frameworks to methods; they influence decisions, including which tools and data collection methods are used. Methodologies I used were driven by the interpretivist paradigm. The research I conducted can be defined as a collective case study utilising a mixed-methods approach.

**The Collective Case Study Approach** The main characteristics of case study research are that it is narrowly focused, provides a high level of detail, and is able to combine both objective and subjective data to achieve an in-depth understanding (Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, 2018). Case studies are highly appropriate in "understanding processes, events, projects and programs and to discover context characteristics that will shed light on an issue or object" (Becker, 1968, p. 233).

A number of terms can be used when researchers conduct study using more than one case. These are commonly referred to as collective case studies, cross-case, multicase, multisite or comparative case studies (Merriam, 1998). The term "collective" has been adopted to describe this case study. A collective case study encompasses a number of cases used to investigate a phenomenon, population or general condition (Stake, 2003). Thus, the collective case study methodology was appropriate in the context of this study, because six intermediate school teachers from six different schools were recruited as research participants so describe their experiences of transition.

The collective case study approach was also appropriate because this study aimed to understand both the single case and the collection. Understanding the collection was about examining the six cases for uniformity and disparity to develop evidence-based assertions about the process of transitioning to an ILE. It also meant understanding each single case, or each teacher and the school in which they worked, and the impacts of contexts on individuals. Themes related to context could then be illuminated. In a collective case study, Stake (2006) warns there is tension between the single case and the collection as each vies for more

attention. This tension is coined by Stake (2006) as the "case-quintain" dilemma (p. 1).

Stake (2006) explains that in collective case studies, often the cross–case analysis dominates the report, while the individual case reports are more like supporting synopses or statistical summaries. In the current study, I have attempted to present an analysis of both (individual and collective cases) as complementary tools to understand the phenomena of teacher transition. The rationale for multiple case analysis is "to understand the quintain — both its commonality and its differences across manifestations. Each case is studied to gain understanding of that particular entity as it is situated" (Stake, 2006, p.40).Mixed methods

I blended quantitative and qualitative data collected from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to underpin a robust, mixed-methods approach. **"**Mixed methods" in the current work meant a combined approach adopting a pragmatic philosophy, which I used to answer complex questions (Creswell & Piano Clark, 2011). I sought to be flexible, and in doing this, I selected a range of methods that were appropriate to the research problem under investigation (Burgess, 1982). I used mixed methods to give absolute precedence to the research purpose, which was to retell participants' stories about barriers and enablers to successful ILE transition.

## Process and Selection of Participants

In selecting participants for this study, the principals of 15 intermediate schools known to have ILEs were contacted by email. My education networks, including the NZ Intermediate Facebook page, were useful in identifying schools

with ILEs. This email provided an overview of the intended study and requested permission for the school to be involved. If the principals were happy for their school to be involved, I then shared the teacher eligibility criteria and requested the names of all teachers who met the criteria. An email to those teachers inviting them to be involved followed (Appendix A, "Information for Research Participants"). This email outlined the purpose of the study, what was involved for participants and an anticipated timeline. It also explained that participation was voluntary and that all information about the school and the individual would be treated confidentially. Questions were encouraged, and the right of participants to express concerns to me or my supervisor was also explained.

Once the six teachers from six different intermediates had been identified, consent forms were posted or delivered for signing. Teachers were then sent a web link of the questionnaire and given two weeks to complete it. Participants were thanked for their responses via email and were informed that the semi-structured interviews would be arranged at a time and place suitable to them within the next four weeks. The results of the questionnaire were then analysed, which helped me develop themes for subsequent semi-structured interviews. Participants were then contacted via email with some possible times for interviews. Semi- structured interviews took place on an individual basis within a two-week timeframe. Each of these processes is explained in more detail in the sections below.

**Sampling** A sample size of six was deemed appropriate due to the qualitative nature of the study, the time allotted, resources available and study objectives. Patton (1990) advocates for the consideration of these variables when making

decisions regarding sample size. This is supported by Creswell (1998), who recommends 5–25 participants for collective case studies. Interestingly, Yin (2009) cautions scholars not to overanalyse the issue of sample size, because a case study is not a sample, and its purpose is to help develop a broader theory. Sampling criteriafor inviting research participants were as follows. I selected teachers: who were fully registered;

- currently teaching in an ILE;
- who were employed at least 0.6 full-time equivalent (FTE);
- who had transitioned from a single cell to an ILE; and
- who had taught Year 7 or Year 8 students, or both, in an intermediate context.

Bounding a case study with criteria is supported by Hitchcock and Hughes (1995), who stated that "boundaries allow for definition, may be defined by an individual in a particular context, at a point in time, may be defined by role, [or] may be shaped by organizational or institutional arrangements" (p. 322). The key rationale for setting criteria is to identify and limit the many variables that are operating at once. Setting criteria also enables the implications of variables collected from many sources to be explored through the use of more than one tool for data collection (Cohen et al., 2011).

## Data Generation

Data were generated via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information about the ILE transition experiences of intermediate teachers and what they perceived as challenges and enablers to successful transition. I felt that a questionnaire was an

appropriate way to seek facts, either in the present or the recent past, because I wanted to study a particular group so I could generalise about them. This approach is supported by Mutch (2005). The purpose of the semi-structured interview was to triangulate data by delving more deeply into elements uncovered in the questionnaire. Interviews helped reveal the motivations of respondents and their reasons for responding in the ways they did. Interview responses enabled me to test the validity of preliminary hypotheses gained from the questionnaire data, and to adequately process unanticipated responses to situations.

**The Questionnaire**

As the current study involved a small sample (six teachers), the questionnaire content lent itself to being more open. "The smaller the size of the sample, the less structured, more open and word based the questionnaire may be" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 381). I took the time to carefully design and refine the questionnaire. I heeded expert advice to make sure "each question [had] a bearing on one of the variables [I was] studying". I also made sure my "techniques [were] not 'fishing expeditions' in which all sorts of 'interesting' questions [were] asked" (Bouma, 1996, p. 64). In addition, each question was critiqued to ensure it measured what it claimed to measure. This requirement was attended to in the design and coding stages of the research process, and through piloting the method with a few respondents. This vetting approach is supported by Mutch (2005).

The questionnaire had a total of 26 questions. These were organised into three main sections (Appendix B, "Questionnaire"). The questionnaire was sequenced so that unthreatening, closed, factual questions were asked first. These questions were used to check the eligibility and to help participants feel relaxed.

Subsequent sections moved to open-ended questions utilising a semantic differential, a variation on a rating scale, to focus on degree of teacher readiness, and ILE transition challenges and enablers. Rating scales combined flexible responses with the ability to determine frequencies, correlations and other forms of quantitative analysis. They afforded me the freedom to fuse measurement with opinion, quantity and quality (Cohen et al., 2011). Questions utilising a semantic differential also enabled the potency or overall significance of a variable to be measured (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957). Such sequencing was a "move from objective facts to subjective attitudes and opinions through justification and to sensitive, personalised data" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. '398').

I analysed the wording of each question with a focus on avoiding common pitfalls including built-in assumptions, double-barrelled questions, and leading or negative questions (Mutch, 2005). Once constructed, the questionnaire was piloted with two colleagues who met the research criteria but who were not taking part in the study. They checked for clarity, and consequently, ambiguity was reduced through subsequent changes to two questions.

The survey was created using the free version of Google forms. The weblink was then individually emailed to five of the six participants. Identifying a sixth participant proved more difficult and involved further identification and contact with school principals. All participants were informed that the survey would take between 30 and 40 minutes to complete. Five of the participants were emailed the survey on July the 9th and completed it within the set two-week timeframe. The sixth participant was emailed the survey link on the 30th July and completed it on the 10th August.

All participants completed the survey electronically and answered all 26 questions. Five of the six participants added more information in the optional "Further Comments" box at the end of the questionnaire. Correspondence was designed to consider informed consent, intrusion, confidentiality, anonymity and non-traceability.

**The semi-structured Interviews**

A semi-structured one-on-one, face-to-face interview with each of the six participants followed. Three were completed using the video conferencing tool Skype, and three were completed in person. Each interview took between 45 and 60 minutes. These were completed between the 20th and the 31st of August.

The goal was to provide rich descriptions of situations in order to illuminate particular ideas, views and experiences (Mutch, 2005). In addition, and quite purposively, semi-structured interviews were used to further check the validity of questionnaire responses. Individual interviews were not transcribed due to time constraints, but they were audio-recorded, and comprehensive field notes were taken. These can be found in Appendix C, "Field Notes from Interviews". Field notes were made available to each interviewee on a confidential basis, and participants were given the opportunity to comment, check accuracy and provide further clarification.

A semi-structured interview can be defined as an interview where a set of guiding questions is used, but where the interview is open to changes along the way (Mutch, 2005). The goal of the interview was to create an interpersonal encounter so respondents were more likely to disclose private aspects of themselves, thus supporting interview validity (Kitwood, 1977). I felt that "the

more the interviewer becomes rational, calculating and detached, the less likely the interview is to be perceived as a friendly transaction, and the more calculated the response is also likely to be" (Kitwood, 1977, p. 274), and I acted accordingly.

I also felt that validity and reliability could be at risk by 1) poor rapport between me and the interviewee, 2) changes to question wording, 3) poor prompting and 4) biased probing (Oppenheim, 1992). I therefore sought to reduce bias by commencing each interview with a brief discussion aimed at making connections and putting the participant at ease, and through the use of an "interview guide" approach (Patton, 1990, p. 18). In addition, as part of the introductory phase of the interview, I included a review of the research purpose, and reassured participants about confidentiality and anonymity. In summary, I aimed to conduct a respectful, professional interview while establishing a positive, open rapport with participants.

Interview topics were specified in advance in outline form (Appendix D, "Interview Guide"), and the sequence and working order was adapted as the interview progressed. Some flexibility without altering the theme of the questioning was appropriate because it increased the comprehensiveness of the data collected, enabled further prompting where there were gaps and allowed an opportunity to clarify and summarise.

Throughout, I remained cognisant of potential shortfalls, namely that salient topics may have been inadvertently omitted, and that subtleties in my delivery could have resulted in substantially different responses, thus reducing the comparability of responses, which may have weakened data reliability (Greenfield & Greener, 2016). To maximise reliability, research has suggested relying on structured questions with the same format and sequence of words and questions

(Cohen et al., 2011). I deemed highly structured questions were inappropriate for these interviews because they did not enable important but unanticipated issues to be raised. My view is supported by Silverman (1993).

## Data Analysis

Data analysis was completed in two stages. First, I examined and analysed questionnaire responses, and second, I analysed interview audio recordings and field notes. The analysis was a process of "data reduction", whereby the raw data were reduced to a manageable form (Cohen et al., 2011). This involved cross-checking data and applying coding conventions (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin, & Lowden, 2011). This sequence was appropriate and allowed for a thickening of the results, for assertions to be challenged and new ones to be added. It also meant the volume of raw data remained manageable for the researcher.

### Stage 1: Analysis of Questionnaires

The questionnaires generated both qualitative and quantitative data, and therefore, the two datasets required different forms of analysis.

#### *Qualitative Analysis*

Qualitative data made up the bulk of the information. I used thematic analysis to derive categories from the data. The emergence of patterns and themes drove the analysis. This approach is supported by Mutch (2005, p. 176). I examined the text and used keywords to capture items of interest. Coding involved looking for repeated words, strong emotions expressed as key phrases,

and significant concepts that indicated the emergence of a pattern or theme. An example of a qualitative question eliciting such responses was:

> "What do you recommend is put in place in the future to support teachers transitioning from a single cell to an ILE, during the first 5 weeks of teaching in an ILE?"

Identifying salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that linked respondents and settings together was the most intellectually challenging phase of data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

### *Quantitative Analysis*

Quantitative data was generated through the two questions with a semantic differential (i.e., a variation on a rating scale). The first question to which this analysis was applied was:

> "Reflect on your degree of readiness to move to an ILE when you first heard. Rate 1–4, 1 being not at all ready, and 4 being fully ready."

In order to analyse responses to this question, each individual's response was translated onto a line graph. Summary statements could then be made.

The second semantic differential question inquired into the level of challenge each of 17 variables posed on a four-point scale (from "no challenge" to "significant challenge"). Variables included appropriateness of physical space, access to appropriate PLD and vision for teaching and learning. Further coding of the 17 variables was required during the analysis of this question. This was done by a process of coding to determine five broad themes. These were: PLD, students, teachers, physical space, parent/community and leadership style. The

value attributed to each theme by each respondent was then calculated to determine the mean. The means from each theme for each individual were then ranked in order to illustrate the themes that posed the greatest to the least amount of challenge (Appendix E, "Coded Responses").

Displaying data in graphs and reducing data to totals and then ranking it allowed me to seek patterns and to apply comparisons. This process followed the commonly accepted three-step model mooted by Bouma (1996): 1) select categories; 2) code data; and 3) present data (p.164). From this point, further themes emerged for inclusion in the semi-structured interview guide. Member checking of the ranking also took place during the semi-structured interviews.

**Stage 2: Analysis of Semi-structured Interviews**

Following the analysis of the questionnaires, the semi-structured interviews took place. These were important in checking responses had been interpreted accurately and in probing for deeper meaning about some of the key themes that had emerged. They also gave the researcher an opportunity to gather further important information that had been omitted from the questionnaire and now seemed highly relevant. Interviews also gave respondents an opportunity to talk freely about their transition experience and therefore for new and unanticipated ideas to emerge.On completion of each interview, further information from the field notes and recorded interview was added to the draft Findings. This process involved checking accuracy, making modifications and adding further information. This process enabled the analysis to be thickened by increased detail and quotes. Further new and unanticipated insights were also added during this analysis. This approach is supported by Mutch (2005) who

suggest the goal is to provide rich descriptions of situations in order to illuminate particular ideas, views and experiences.

## Presenting the Findings

As alluded to above, the data was presented in a way that was most appropriate to display the findings that had emerged. In this study this involved utilising a range of display methods including statistical analysis for quantitative and thematic analysis for qualitative.

Findings were organised under key ideas. Both quantitative and qualitative data were displayed in tables, line graphs and text, which were combined to support or reject a hypothesis. In presenting the findings, I also took heed of Stake's (2006) advice that most readers want cross-case analysis, aka an understanding of the aggregate, or the issues that string the cases together.

## Collective Case Study Validity, Generalisability and Reliability

Additional strengths of collective case study methodology include the ability to extrapolate findings to other, similar situations. In this study, this could relate to ILE transition at other schools and levels. A case study should also be immediately intelligible to others, which appealed to me because my aim was to inform busy educational professionals who needed to make sense of information quickly. Finally, the ability of a case study to embrace unanticipated variables and illuminate the experiences of intermediate teachers with different skill sets was appropriate for this study (Nisbet & Watt, 1984). Critics of case study methodology have cited the difficulty in generalising results, the problems of observer bias, and the inability to easily cross-check results, potentially leading

the researcher to be selective, biased and / or subjective (Nisbet & Watt, 1984). However, generalisation is possible. In fact, an understanding of the analytical, rather than statistical, nature and aims of case study generalisation is key to the collective case study approach. My aim was to generalise based on the responses of six ILE intermediate teachers to arrive at a theoretical extension linked to existing research. My goal was to support theoretical statements by providing hard evidence. This form of generalisation that combines description and evaluation is common and widely accepted in case study research (Cohen et al., 2011; Stake, 2006). Indeed, "inclusion of multiple cases is a common strategy for enhancing the external validity or generalizability of your findings" (Merriam, 1998, p. 40).

Validity and reliability were further attended to in this study through the careful construction of questionnaire and interview questions. Indeed, internal validity relates to the agreement between different types of data, thus ensuring transparency in findings and interpretations (Cohen et al., 2011). I used data triangulation to support concurrent validity. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1990). I applied triangulation by using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to collect data. A collective case study approach also supported triangulation of key ideas as themes emerged from extracting the experiences and perceptions common to all, or most of the teachers involved in the research. Stake (2006) states that, in any collective case study, "the process of triangulation occurs throughout the fieldwork and analysis, it means being redundant and sceptical in seeing, hearing, coding, analysing and writing" (p. 77).

I minimised bias arising from selectivity and the risk of inadvertently using the study to support my own prejudices by engaging in the process of reflexivity. Reflexivity involved cultivating an awareness and consideration of how my personal history and position influenced my research decisions (Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias, & DeWaard, 1992). It involved me "consciously stepping back from action in order to theorise what is taking place, and also stepping up to be an active part of that contextualised action" (Attia & Edge, 2017, p. 34). To illustrate, in this study reflexivity involved me remaining cognisant of the historic, local and political places at the centre of this research topic. I also had to take into account how the interpretive paradigm on which my research sits underpinned every aspect of what I did.

Reflexivity also involved ongoing analysis, throughout all stages of the research, of both my stated and unconscious hypotheses, analytical processes and evolving conclusions. For example, as I had been heavily involved in the design of an ILE already, I had to be able to recognise and suspend my personal judgements of this experience. In summary, adopting a reflexivity disposition supported the rigour of this study.

To further increase the reliability and validity of my case study approach, I prepared a chain of evidence (Yin, 2009). This involved providing an adequate level of detail to allow the research and results to be replicated by others (Cohen et al., 2011). This chain of evidence can be found in the information provided in this methodology chapter, and includes, but is not limited to the number of participants, the data gathering tools and the criteria for participant selection.

## Ethics Considerations

The current work required adherence to the University of Waikato's *Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations* (University of Waikato, 2018). A rigorous critique of the proposed methodology was integral to these regulations; this included the selection of participants, informed consent and the researcher–participant relationship.

### Selection of Participants

I used a form of non-probability sampling, called "purposive sampling", to select participants. In the current work, "the sample [was] chosen for specific reasons to expand … understanding of the phenomena and not to make broad claims" (Mutch, 2005, p. 50). Specific criteria for selection have already been outlined in the "Sampling criteria" section. Yet, Shenton (2004) suggests that a random approach can negate charges of researcher bias in the selection of participants; however, a case study methodology such as mine required capturing personal experiences within a defined, bounded area of research, and therefore, a random approach was not feasible. Voluntary teacher participation without the influence of the school principal and keeping potential participants well-informed were paramount considerations in selecting teachers. This was achieved by seeking permission from school principals for their school to be involved, and then by requesting the emails of teachers who were currently working in ILEs. These teachers were then contacted and were provided with an explanation of the research purpose and the criteria for involvement. If teachers met the criteria and were happy to be involved, they were provided with more details and consent forms.

**Informed Consent** Core principles of anonymity and confidentiality underpinned the informed consent process. I upheld anonymity by using code names for the participants and their schools. Confidentiality was assured through the careful handling of all electronic data and by ensuring participant and school locations could not be identified by address, telephone number or other means. In addition, no third party was used for data transcription or analysis purposes.

**Researcher–participant Relationships**Every effort was made to minimise the power of the researcher. This was particularly important, as one of the research participants was from my workplace in which I am a senior leader. I endeavoured to maintain what Shenton (2004) refers to as a "naturalist approach" (p. 63) by attempting to avoid participants "playing" to what they perceived my expectations of them to be. I conducted the research at my school with a teacher with whom I have a professional relationship that is underpinned by honesty and frankness. This relationship was and is of a reciprocal critical friend nature (Senge, 1990).

Other participants outside my school were not known to me; however, the notion of power was an issue I remained cognisant of in all interactions. I regarded each interview as a gift to me, as interviewees had the power to withhold information and to take the interview as seriously as they liked (Limerick, Burgess-Limerick, & Grace, 1996). In this regard, I perceived the interviewee to be the person in the position of power and treated them with the utmost respect.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methods I used to explore the experiences of teachers transitioning from single-cell classrooms to ILEs. The rationale for the

selection of research paradigms, methodology and methods were explained. I also focused on reliability, validity and ethics issues, thereby allowing readers to trust the findings that follow in Chapter four.

# Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter describes responses from online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The information is presented using a systematic, theme-based approach, and begins with a brief summary of how the data pertaining to each analysis were gathered. Findings are presented using a combination of individual and cross-case analyses. The first section presents key findings on the participants and their settings. This is followed by a section that explores teacher readiness to transition. The third section presents what teachers perceive as effective teaching in ILEs. The level of challenge posed by a range of variables is the focus of the fourth section. The final section is a summary of what participants believe to be essential in enabling teachers to successfully transition to ILEs. The final section is dedicated to findings that are specific to the intermediate context.

## Participants and School Settings

All six participants met the criteria specified for selection; this was verified during the selection phase and checked in the first section of the questionnaire. As documented in the Chapter Three, "Research Methodology", participants had to:

- be fully registered teachers;
- be currently teaching in an ILE;
- be employed at least as a 0.6 full-time equivalent (FTE);
- have transitioned from a single cell to an ILE; and
- have taught Year 7 or Year 8 students, or both, in an intermediate context.

Additional information about each teacher and their school setting was deemed useful in developing a contextual understanding. This information was gathered in semi-structured interviews. Table 2 contains data pertaining to each school setting.

Table 2

The School Setting for Participants

| | Roll | Decile | Co-ed | Years opened as an ILE | Proportion of ILEs in school | ILE purpose built or modified |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher 1 | 900+ | 0–5 | Yes | <4 | Minority | Purpose built |
| Teacher 2 | 900+ | 6–10 | Yes | <4 | Minority | Purpose built |
| Teacher 3 | 600–900 | 0–5 | Yes | <4 | Minority | Modified |
| Teacher 4 | 600–900 | 6–10 | Yes | >4 | All | Modified |
| Teacher 5 | 300–600 | 0–5 | Yes | >4 | All | Modified |
| Teacher 6 | 300–600 | 0–5 | Yes | >4 | All | Modified |

*Abbreviations*. Co-ed, co-educational; ILE, innovative learning environment.

Schools represented in this study included six intermediate institutions. These schools represented a range of deciles, from 2–10, with roll sizes of between 300 to over 900 students. All the schools were co-educational. The years that schools had been functioning as ILEs ranged from 1–7. Three schools had physical ILE structures; however, in one of these schools, the majority of environments operated as single cells. The remaining three schools had physical structures that were dominated by single-cell classrooms. The majority of ILEs were existing spaces that had been modified. Two ILEs had been purpose built.

The six teachers involved in this study had many years of teaching experience, ranging from 2–20+ years. Of the six teachers, three were also middle leaders (MLs) responsible for the ILE in which they taught. For all six teacher participants, the transition to an ILE did not involve a change of year level. Of the six ILEs that were the focus of this study, three were shared by a total of four teachers, one was shared by three teachers and two were shared by two teachers. Table 3 contains information pertaining to each teacher participant's situation in the ILE context.

Table 3

*Teacher Participants' Situations*

| | Years of teaching experience | Current role | Level teaching before transition to ILE | Level currently teaching in ILE | Number of teachers in current ILE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher 1 | 10–15 | ML | Yr 7 | Yr 7/8 | 4 |
| Teacher 2 | 20+ | ML | Yr 8 | Yr 8 | 3 |
| Teacher 3 | 0–5 | Scale A | Yr 7/8 | Yr 7/8 | 4 |
| Teacher 4 | 0–5 | Scale A | Yr 7/8 | Yr 7/8 | 4 |
| Teacher 5 | 10–15 | ML | Yr 7/8 | Yr 7/8 | 2 |
| Teacher 6 | 10–15 | Scale A | Yr 7/8 | Yr 7/8 | 2 |

*Abbreviations*. ILE, innovative learning environment; ML, middle leader; Yr, year.

## Visions for Innovative Learning

One of the items in the questionnaire required participants to briefly describe what they perceive as effective teaching in an ILE. This question was

asked early in the questionnaire because it was deemed important to explore from the outset what practice teachers were striving to implement during transition, and what commonalities and differences existed between participants.

Text from the six responding participants was coded by identifying keywords (Appendix E, "Coded Responses"). From these keywords, the themes identified in Table 4 emerged. Some themes were more prevalent than others; prevalence is indicated by counting the number of teachers who touched on the theme. Many teachers documented multiple ideas related to one theme; however, for the purpose of analysis, multiple ideas generated by the same respondent were counted only once.

Table 4

Visions for Effective Teaching in an ILE

| Vision for effective teaching | Teacher 1 | Teacher 2 | Teacher 3 | Teacher 4 | Teacher 5 | Teacher 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Student centred** — Relationships — Responding to diverse needs and interests | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ |
| **Pedagogy** — Responsive and varied — Collaborative — Active | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| **Teaching team** | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |

| Vision for effective teaching | Teacher 1 | Teacher 2 | Teacher 3 | Teacher 4 | Teacher 5 | Teacher 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| — Culture and dispositions | | | | | | |
| **Evaluation systems** — Continual reflection and adaptations | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |

*Abbreviation*. ILE, innovative learning environment.

As shown in Table 4, four key themes emerged, which illustrated key aspects of respondents' visions for effective teaching in an ILE. These themes were:

1. **Student-centred**: Five out of six teachers (83%) said that their vision for an ILE was to know all learners, to better respond to a range of diverse student needs and to utilise student voices throughout. This theme emerged from respondents' words and phrases, including "relationships", "know all students", "responsive", "inclusive", "use of student voice", "meaningful" and "students' needs catered for".

2. **Pedagogy**: Five out of six participants (83%) indicated that an effective ILE utilised a wide range of instructional approaches to respond to the different learning needs of students, thus offering students more choice and personalisation in their learning. This theme emerged from respondents' words and phrases, including "more choice", "active", "collaboration", "instruction at many different levels", "using many different styles", "contemporary", "MLP", "match approach to needs", and "to form groups based on needs and choices".

3. **Teaching team**: All six participants (100%) indicated that effective teaching in an ILE required working with a team of teachers with strong interpersonal skills and the ability to work collaboratively in all aspects of their role. This theme emerged from respondents' words and phrases, including "learning from each other", "sharing ideas", "open communication", "planning and teaching collaboratively", "sharing workload", "loyalty", "compromise", "shared buy-in" and "valuing all team members". This theme is explored in more detail later in this chapter.

4. **Evaluation systems**: Five out of six participants (83%) indicated that effective teaching in an ILE required continual review of pedagogy and the ability to adapt as required. This theme emerged from respondents' words and phrases, including "adapt", "change", "iterative" and "successful outcomes for students".

The above themes suggested that for all six teachers, there was a shared general understanding of the vision for ILEs. This vision was underpinned by an effective teaching team who were focused on a student-centred, flexible approach to responding to the needs and interests of students. Pedagogy that supported this vision was constantly evolving as part of ongoing review, and was characterised by both MLP and traditional approaches.

## Readiness

This section explores the nature of change required by each teacher, and the level of readiness each teacher felt at each stage of the ILE transition process.

### Nature of Change

Questionnaire respondents were asked to select the nature of change that best described their transition experience. There were two choices. Choice one was defined as mostly first-order change, and choice two was defined as mostly second-order change. First-order change was described as an extension of the past, knowledge easily learned using existing skills and consistent with existing school systems. Second-order change was described as a break from the past, requiring new knowledge and skills, emergent and inconsistent with many elements of the existing school system.

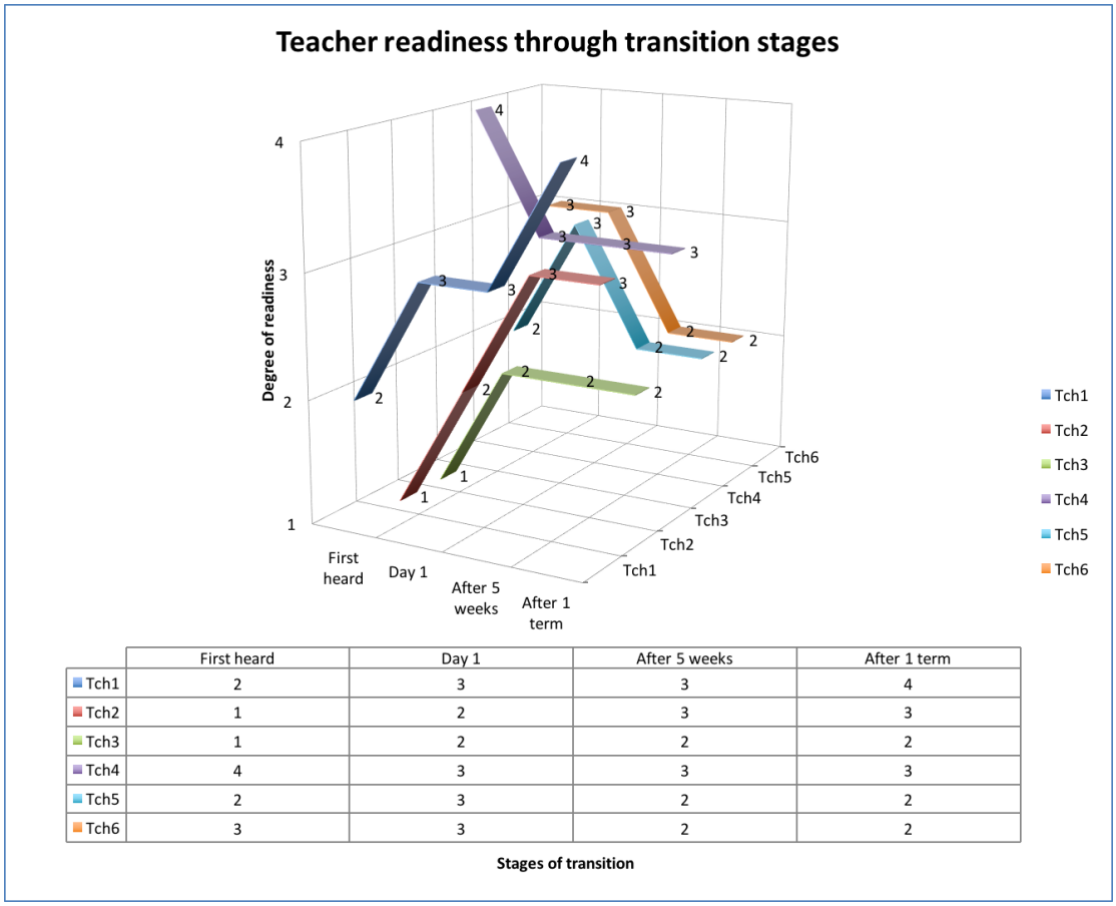
Half of the teachers (50%) participating in this study described the nature of change required by them as first-order change, while 50% of the teachers described the nature of change required by them as second-order change.

**Teacher Readiness Through the Transition Stages**

Teacher readiness at each of the four transition stages was a focus of this study. The four transition stages were defined as:

1. when the teacher first heard they were moving to an ILE;
2. day one in the ILE;
3. longer than five weeks in the ILE; and
4. longer than one term in the ILE.

In the questionnaire, teachers were asked to indicate on a semantic differential basis the level of readiness they felt at each stage. The number 1 was labelled “not at all ready”, and 4 was “fully ready”. Numbers 3 and 4 were not given descriptors, and indicated instead a tendency towards the descriptor it was closest to. Each teacher’s journey through the key stages of transition, and the associated senses of readiness they felt, are displayed in Figure 7.




| | First heard | Day 1 | After 5 weeks | After 1 term |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tch1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Tch2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Tch3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Tch4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Tch5 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Tch6 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 |

*Figure 7*. Teacher readiness for the transition stages

*Note*. The results are from the questionnaire only.

*Abbreviation*. Tch, teacher.

A key finding was that as teachers moved through the four stages of transition (first heard, day one, after five weeks, after a term), half (50%) of the participants (Teachers 4, 5 and 6) regressed or stayed the same in their degree of readiness, while the degree of readiness perceived by the other 50% of participants (Teachers 1, 2 and 3) improved throughout the transition stages.

A further finding was that over the four stages of transition, all six teachers experienced phases where they perceived they were making no progress in their degree of readiness. To illustrate, Teachers 1, 2, 5 and 6 remained fixed in

one of the phases of readiness through two consecutive transition stages. In contrast, Teachers 3 and 4 remained fixed in one phase of readiness for three consecutive stages of transition (Figure 7)

Other findings were:

1) After one full term in an ILE,
    a) one teacher (Teacher 1) felt "fully ready".
    b) two teachers (Teachers 3 and 4) felt the same degree of readiness as they had on day one.
    c) two teachers (Teachers 5 and 6) felt less ready after one term than they felt after day one.
    d) three teachers (Teachers 2, 5 and 6) felt the same degree of readiness as they had in week five.
2) On average, the least amount of readiness was felt when teachers first heard they were moving, and again after five weeks in the ILE.
3) Week five was a common time for teachers to feel a lack of progress; this was evidenced by three teachers (Teachers 1, 3 and 4) making no progress and by two teachers (Teachers 5 and 6) regressing by one level of readiness from the previous stage. One teacher (Teacher 2) did make a one-level increase in readiness at the week five stage of transition.
4) The mean readiness level of all teachers at each transition stage ranged from 2.167–2.600 out of a possible score of 4.000. Therefore, all scores fell within the second quartile. Mean levels of readiness were:
    a) first heard, 2.167;
    b) day one, 2.670;
    c) after five weeks, 2.500; and

d) after one term, 2.600.

The above analysis provides evidence that the majority of teachers felt a limited level of readiness throughout the four identified stages of transition to an ILE. To summarise, this is evidenced by half (50%) of the teachers regressing or making zero movement as they progressed through the stages of transition, an absence of steady progress, and teachers' average readiness levels all falling within the second quartile (2.000–2.999). Week five is worthy of note, as data indicated this was when teachers felt their second lowest level of readiness. The lowest level of readiness was reported when teachers first heard they were moving to an ILE.

## Challenges to Transition

This section explores the key challenges that impacted on each teacher's feelings of readiness. Although each teacher's experience was unique, the same key variables either supported or inhibited the transition experience. These variables have been coded into the following key themes: professional learning, the teaching team, leadership and school systems, time, the physical space, parents and community, and students' pastoral and learning needs. See Appendix E, "Coded Responses", for the coding that led to the generation of these themes.

The challenges to transition were initially explored in the questionnaire through the use of semantic differential questions, and thereafter, these challenges were explored more deeply in semi-structured interviews. This topic was significant in understanding transition variables that contributed to teacher progression or regression (Figure 7).

Responses were examined using both case-by-case (individual teachers) and cross-case (all teachers) analyses. Case-by-case analysis was important in identifying the impact of variables and in describing the variables in more detail within the context in which teachers were operating. These results are displayed in Tables 6–11 in Appendix F, "Case-by-case Analysis". Cross-case analysis was important in identifying the significance of variables across all intermediate contexts; these results are reported below in paragraph form as key themes.

**Cross-case Analysis**

What follows is a summary of the impact of transition across all six cases (the six teachers). These results are reported in paragraph form under the key themes that emerged. The following eight sections explore each of the key themes:

- professional learning — source, content and time;
- teaching team — selection, preparation, attributes, MLs, level of experience, workload and number of teachers;
- leadership and school systems — ownership of school vision, general systems and support from leadership;
- improving practice — reflection;
- time;
- physical space;
- parents and community; and
- students' pastoral needs.

### *Professional Learning*

Professional learning development posed a challenge for all participants. This was evidenced by five of the six teachers reporting that they received less than appropriate PLD during transitioning (Teachers 1, 5 and 6). They also reported or being left to initiate and manage this process independent of the senior leadership team (Teacher 2 and 3).

Positive data correlation was evident between PLD received and the overall level of readiness felt by the teachers. This was clear from the response of Teacher 4, who was involved in the greatest amount of PLD throughout transition and whose overall readiness levels were the highest of all six teachers (mean over the four stages, 3.25). Teachers 2 and 3 sourced their own PLD, and their readiness showed a slight increase throughout the stages of transition.

Negative correlation was evident in the responses of Teacher 6, who reported no involvement in appropriate PLD and whose overall readiness levels were low (mean over the four stages, 2.25), the third lowest of the six teachers. This teacher's sense of readiness declined through the stages of transition. Teacher 5's responses also represented negative correlation between PLD received and readiness. This participant reported limited involvement in appropriate PLD and had low readiness levels (mean over the four stages, 2.00). Teacher 5's sense of readiness was the second lowest of the six teachers, and showed a decline from day one onwards.

#### *Source of Professional Learning*

Professional learning relevant to transition, for those who received it, started well before the physical move and was dominated by external expertise

and professional outreach by the teachers themselves. Visits to other ILEs (within and outside of the teacher's own school) were deemed essential and proved extremely valuable prior to the move to the ILE. All but one teacher (Teacher 6) visited other ILEs as part of the transition process.

Relevant expertise was often perceived as not being available within the school. Only two of the six schools had a senior leader with experience in ILE teaching. Consequently, some schools looked to outside PLD providers for support. This included accessing a mentor and attending relevant conferences. The importance of this external support is exemplified in this quote from one participant who did not, in their view, receive adequate support: "Ongoing support, and more support (from outside the team), would have been useful to help reflect on what is working and what isn't" (Teacher 2).

All six teachers had taken responsibility for extending their knowledge by doing their own professional reading and research. Trialling MLP while still in a single-cell environment was deemed as valuable PLD by all six teachers; however, not all teachers had had the opportunity to do this. Trials included collaborative planning, flipped learning and teaching, flexible grouping, responding to student voices and offering students more choices. One participant said, "[It's important to] experience co-teaching classes as much as possible. Over the years I had done this, so I was familiar with aspects such as accountability, shared reporting, expectations and assessment, as well as transitions" (Teacher 1). Once in the ILE situation, interviewees cited in-situ PLD as highly valuable and particularly significant when they were grouped with teachers who had been in an ILE before.

*Themes of Professional Learning*

No PLD themes were common to all teachers' responses; however, teachers had clear ideas on what themes would have been useful. Respondents remarked that PLD focused on the following would have been useful as part of transition:

- understanding more clearly the reasons for the change and the pedagogical principles that underpin it;
- cooperative teaching strategies;
- developing self-management in students;
- getting to know ILE colleagues;
- developing and sustaining positive, productive collegial relationships;
- how to have critical conversations; and
- looking at systems and models that others working in ILEs utilised for planning, assessment and reporting.

The importance of understanding the reasons behind the change and a vision for what was possible are reinforced in the following quote:

> You need to get teachers excited about it, if you're just told you have to plan together and do all this stuff, you're like, why? Because we had spent quite a bit of time looking at the stuff (MLP) behind it we were so excited. We knew what we wanted it to be like, we had this vision in our head — that's our goal, that kept us going when it got really tough. (Teacher 3)

A mentor with experience teaching in an ILE was seen as extremely useful in facilitating the appropriate reflection, and in supporting with ideas and resources. One teacher experienced this. This teacher stated, "Our mentor was

incredible at helping us refine our systems and work out how to get what we wanted" (Teacher 3). The remaining five teachers suggested that a mentor would have been useful.

Two of the six schools had provided all their staff with PLD in the form of staff meetings targeted to the needs of teachers transitioning to ILEs. Topics fell under the themes of MLP, student agency and collaborative teaching. However, it was common for teachers new to a school and to an ILE to receive no induction specific to ILEs prior to joining the ILE. One teacher said:

> Teachers coming in new to open learning environments need support, some kind of transition. Many are just thrown in. They need to get their head around the type of teaching, the relationships that need to be going on, before they are just thrown in, or it doesn't work for the teachers or the kids. (Teacher 5)

*Time*

The most common time for participants to engage in relevant PLD was prior to moving to an ILE. As time progressed, PLD that focused on coaching and mentoring, characterised by evidence-based reflection, was perceived as valuable. Most teachers did not engage in ongoing, formal professional learning relevant to teaching in ILEs once they had moved into the space. Teachers reported that ongoing PLD, including visits to schools and networking with others on systems used for planning and assessment, would have been useful.

*Summary*

In summary, PLD provided to teachers transitioning to an ILE varied across schools, and was commonly limited to a few ILE visits, and for some teachers, a few dedicated staff meetings. Some correlation was evident between the amount of PLD received and a teacher's level of readiness. Generally, transitioning teachers took on the responsibility to source their own PLD such as readings, relevant networks and appropriate courses. Trialling MLP while still in a single cell was deemed highly valuable. PLD that was focused on the rationale behind the change, cooperative teaching models and interpersonal relationships with colleagues; and on developing student skills, such as self-management and student agency, were also seen as important by participants. Ongoing PLD that involved networking with other colleagues and expert mentoring was perceived as highly valuable once the teacher had made the transition.

### *The Teaching Team*

Many key messages emerged about the importance of a teaching team that worked well together. These messages arose from both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews.

*Selecting the Team*

Maximising ownership and choice in choosing the team of teachers who would transition to an ILE was important, as was the necessity of selected teachers wanting to teach in an ILE. One participant stated, "A real good discussion with senior management about who would work well together is vital;

collaborative teaching can go quite wrong when teachers are put together who have very different teaching styles" (Teacher 4).

*Team Preparation*

An existing good relationship with those with whom the participant would share the ILE was seen as important in supporting teachers to feel confident. Working with the proposed ILE team prior to the move was also seen as important preparation. Components of preparation included getting to know one another personally and professionally, planning, co-teaching and discussing expectations around structure and routine. Some of these ideas were voiced by Teacher 2: "Setting up the team long before you move [is important]. Building the relationship between the team members so you know how you work together and can start thinking about strengths and weaknesses [is crucial]". Conversely, the adverse effects of not working together prior are reflected in the following participant quote:

> I found after five weeks that my colleague and I had different expectations around noise levels and expectations around transitioning, etc. Because the environment has been set up so the doors can be slid over, the doors started to close more often. (Teacher 5)

*Team Attributes*

Attributes of effective teams commonly cited were:

- complementary strengths,
- good communication skills,

- trust,
- the ability to compromise,
- consideration for others,
- a willingness to try new things,
- valuing each other and others' strengths,
- open-mindedness,
- risk-taking,
- supportiveness,
- flexibility,
- an ability to relate well to all students, and
- an ability to stay focused on successful outcomes for students.

The importance of some of these attributes was reinforced by Teacher 4: "[The] main thing is that you compromise and let people do the things they are good at and don't take over". Conversely, challenges cited were diversity within the team in terms of what was considered effective practice, and team members with different teaching styles.

*Middle Leaders*

Middle leaders were members of an ILE in three schools. Characteristics that were cited as important for MLs included the ability to draw out individual strengths, to ensure all ideas were heard, to lead in a distributed way, to ensure workload was shared and to support evidence-based reflection. Being assertive when required was also valued. Where there was no identified leader within the team, Teacher 4 reported that power struggles often emerged and were detrimental to progress.

*Teacher Experience*

Having teacher(s) with experience teaching in an ILE was useful in supporting the transition of teachers who had not taught in an ILE. One study participant said, "Transition was helped by a supportive team of teachers who were on the same journey and with ones who had been in ILE before" (Teacher 1).

Mixed feelings were apparent about the place of provisionally certified teachers (PCTs) in ILEs. Questionnaire respondents remarked that PCTs received ongoing PLD as they were surrounded by more experienced teachers. Respondents also remarked that it was important for PCTs to have an equal voice and the opportunity to try out their ideas. It was also deemed as important that PCTs did not lean on more experienced teachers, but instead, had opportunities to develop their full repertoire of teaching skills. One study participant thought it would be more difficult for a PCT to start in a single cell than in an ILE. The general consensus was that it was advantageous for PCTs to experience teaching in both a single cell and an ILE during their career. Teacher 1 stated:

> It (ILEs) could be overwhelming for a PCT. They also need a chance to go to a single cell to find out who they are. Otherwise, they could be constantly told to do things rather than doing it their way. Everyone needs to have an equal say.

*Workload*

As transition progressed, the need to ensure workload was distributed equally between all teachers in the ILE was seen as important, as was the need to continue building relationships between team members.

*The Number of Teachers*

Scaffolding the number of students and teachers to collaborate within the ILE was seen as useful during the early stages of transition. Some respondents started with their own class, and as confidence grew and relationships strengthened, they worked collaboratively with more teachers and students. Teacher 4 stated, "We struggled to work as a four [person team] and started off as a two, and that helped with confidence".

***Summary***

In summary, the ability of the teaching team to work together effectively was seen as vital, and the cost of not getting it right was huge for both students and teachers. A mix of "same pageness", as well as complementary strengths, was a theme that came through in determining who could work well together. The development of successful teams was supported by giving teachers a voice in deciding who would work together. Identifying the team as early as possible was also useful in allowing the team to begin preparation. Continuing to strengthen professional and personal relationships between team members, and ensuring workload was shared, were factors seen as vital to ILE success. Scaffolding the numbers of teachers collaborating together was also cited as useful for both teachers and students.

### *Leadership and School Systems*

Key messages that emerged from the questionnaire and from semi-structured interviews were organised into the following sub-themes:

- ownership of vision,
- general systems,
- reflection systems,
- leadership support, and
- time needed to transition successfully.

These are explored in the sections below.

#### *Ownership of Vision*

Of the six teachers, one reported having a shared vision that made the school's aspirations clear regardless if teachers were in a single cell or in an ILE. The teacher who reported the shared school vision expressed that this vision was underpinned by MLP, where students were at the centre of all decisions. Student–teacher collaboration, and students as active participants in learning, were key to the vision. In this school, the leadership team took overall responsibility for leading the transition to ILEs. Systems and structures, including PLD and curriculum delivery, were increasingly aligned to the vision as time progressed. The teacher participant from this school reported feeling supported in transitioning to ILEs:

> [The] principal and DP [deputy principal were] right on board — not sure [the] principal had experience, but [the principal was] into it and passionate. Totally driven from the top. Very supportive. Some of

> our leadership team had taught in ILEs. [It] was a whole-school vision. Was a lot of push-back, but now everyone is doing it. Leadership was really open to me trialling and testing things, to see if they worked. (Teacher 4).

Conversely, the other five participants experienced challenges in coping with unclear visions for effective teaching, or they perceived there were separate visions for ILEs as opposed to single cells. Challenges included a lack of direction and knowledge from leadership, a split across the school in relation to the "way we do things around here", and change initiated by externally imposed mandates with no internal exploration of alignment to the school's vision. Teacher 6 said, "No shared understanding that I've heard about, why we are in ILEs, could have been done before I got here." Another teacher expressed the perceived rationale for change: "It was like, 'We need to redo some on our buildings, this is all we'll get funding for, it's the latest thing, off you go" (Teacher 3). Teacher 2 felt a split school vision acutely. This participant said:

> [There] should be one vision and desired pedagogy for whole school; we have two. [The] ideal is that you might have some physical ILE spaces, but I feel everyone should be doing it. Even if you are working in a single-cell classroom, there should still be collaboration with the other classes, working with them as much as possible.

The perceptions of staff and the varying approaches were captured by this participant:

> We were nicknamed the zoo for quite a while because we would have kids outside and doing all types of crazy things; for a while, it [ILE] was kind of ridiculed, until they realised it was actually working and

the results were good. [It] needs to be a school vision rather than just 'you guys go off and do this other stuff'. (Teacher 3)

The following comment illustrates the perceived lack of direction from leadership: "We didn't really have any in-school support. We did it ourselves, so we approached [the] principal to say we wanted to go to [a] conference, [and] they said whatever we needed to prepare was fine".

To summarise, all participants agreed that the preferred approach was to have one vision for effective teaching and learning that was owned by all and driven by the leadership team. Participants believed that most aspects of ILE practice were possible to enact in single-cell classrooms and should be part of an effective transition process.

### *General Systems*

There was a correlation between effective school systems and the ownership of the school vision. This was evident in the one school where the ILE vision was also a whole-school vision, as it was in the schools where a shared whole-school vision was not evident.

In the school where the participant reported there was a clear whole-school vision, the school leadership team had been involved in facilitating staff discussions and in exploring the alignment of existing systems, as well as adapting and exploring new ways of working. In this school, the teacher participant I interviewed reported feeling ownership in system decisions and felt supported by these systems, which enabled smooth transition to the ILEs.

In contrast, when the school vision was reportedly unclear, or perceived as separate for ILEs as opposed to single cells, teachers transitioning had to negotiate

systems that did not align. This was reported as stressful, ad hoc and as a situation that often left these teachers feeling unsupported by leadership.

Further points that emerged were that senior leaders needed to be realistic and flexible in addressing the needs of ILE teachers, and that they should be prepared to adapt existing systems and expectations. Participants commented that senior leaders should also facilitate discussions that explored new ways of working. Facilitating this process in advance of teachers encountering the issue was seen as advantageous. Teacher 1 stated:

> Allow opportunities to think through things like assessment, parent meetings and things that will pop up that will require thought that weren't expected. It was clear that some systems needed to be different, but there was a lack of direction on how it could look.

Teacher 3 stated:

> We were trying to offer more flexibility for our students, there were quite a few things that we wanted to change because it didn't really suit the way we were working. Responses from senior leaders were 'no'; well, it was 'yes' to start with, and then curriculum heads who had been doing the same thing for many years said 'no'. They were concerned about some of the logistics, such as moderation and school-wide consistency.

Other issues were cited. Timetabling was the biggest issue. Consulting ILE teachers about how events worked for them was considered helpful. A small timetabled event where each class was expected to leave the classroom

environment, if not timetabled considerately, could throw out several days of routine.

Composite Year 7 and 8 classes were common in five of the six schools. This composite was cited as a key school structure in supporting new Year 7 students to transition to ILEs, because relationships with and expectations of Year 8 students were pre-existing, and therefore, these students played a key role in modelling the culture of the ILE for their younger Year 7 peers.

*Leadership Support*

Support from the senior leadership team in terms of release time, care, and an understanding that transition is stressful and requires lots of team time was a key theme. This support was particularly important early in the transition process. The value participants placed on leadership support is captured in Teacher 1's words:

> The first 5 weeks are super challenging, so I suppose a bit of TLC [was important] for those teachers, as cortisol levels went through the roof right at the start when adjusting to the noise, stimulation and general human overload.

Senior leader(s) taking a genuine interest in the programme and its progress also featured as a key theme. One participant suggested that a senior leader should be involved in the transition.

> A senior leader that was part of the transition, along with the team, would have been good as they could be our support person. We feel like we have done this on our own; we feel like we are doing a really

> good job and happy with what's happening, but no-ones [is] really aware of what's going on. (Teacher 2)

A further quote highlighted the expected level of involvement from senior leadership:

> Leadership was good in terms of paying for PLD and giving us time to visit [other] schools, but we were kind of set loose to do our thing. The principal was like, 'I trust you as long as you can show it is meeting all the criteria'. (Teacher 3)

A support and guidance approach from senior leaders, rather than imposing ideas or research, was preferred by all six teachers. All teachers agreed that the key factor in developing effective teaching and learning in an ILE had to be the students, not what senior leaders perceived as a good idea. Teacher 6 said, "The student's needs have to come first, over what senior management think is going to be cool for their school". Another stated:

> When we started, we were expected to embrace [an] integrated curriculum, [and a] daily learning journal (personalised timetables); this did not work. Too much, too soon. [We] had to pull back, [and] introduce [ILEs] slowly. Not just stick with it because someone wants this vision. (Teacher 5).

### *Improving Practice — Reflection*

All participants reported engaging in ongoing trial and error, collaborative reflection about their practice and how it could be improved. The continual, iterative and reflective nature of ILE transitions was expressed by Teacher 5:

> We are always tinkering with the way we do things — what might work for one group of students won't necessarily work for the next group. We had to let go of our own ego and make sure we were putting the students at the front of everything we did. [It] didn't matter how great we thought our ideas were — if they didn't work, we changed it.

It was widely accepted that teachers reflected more than they would in a single cell. One participant said, "We reflect on a daily basis, [and] have become far more reflective because we talk about it together" (Teacher 2). Reasons cited were increased trial and error, and reflection, including disparate views on effectiveness, the increased accountability in an ILE, the multiple experiences and adaptations that could be drawn on, and the fact that complacency was less likely when more than one person was involved.

Teacher reflection systems in all but one school were informal and ad hoc. They did not follow a specified model and were dominated by just-in-time verbal communication. The one school that used a more formal model of reflection about ILE progress had integrated it into the school's coaching and appraisal system. This system had been implemented school wide and involved regular coaching conversations about progression, with a middle or senior leader base. Trials and tribulations were documented using a blog. Evidence of student progress was a big part of these discussions.

As time progressed during ILE transitions, all respondents indicated that teacher reflection, formal or informal, became increasingly evidence based through the use of academic and pastoral data. Student voice was noted by all participants as an important source of evidence. Teacher 6 said, "Students also

need a voice[to] ensure they are giving feedback about how it is working for them". In one school, the teachers co-constructed a desired ILE vision with students, and the vision was used as the basis for student reflections. The participant described the process:

> We asked the students to work in small groups to come up with a list of skills / behaviours that will be necessary for the ILE to be a success. We refined their lists to 5 behaviours: collaboration, communication, creativity, curiosity and commitment. These underpin everything we do. Having a common language helps tie things together and is something we refer to regularly. We use these as a starting point for our student reflections. (Teacher 4)

Involving an expert from outside the ILE team to support with regular reflection and next steps was seen as useful, as was encouragement from the senior leadership team to trial new approaches.

### *Time*

The large amount of time required to support teachers to transition to ILEs was spoken about extensively by all participants. The collaboration required of teachers in an effective ILE meant more time was required of teachers to meet together to discuss every aspect of practice. One participant said, "We met every day after school for the first 4 weeks, only briefly, to discuss what was successful and what needed to change, instead of carrying on with things that just didn't work" (Teacher 2). These meetings were deemed necessary so all perspectives and ideas could be heard and so that shared ownership prevailed. Additional time was also needed to get to know others, to engage in relevant PLD, to plan, to

discuss expectations, to discuss issues as they arose, to develop new ideas and to reflect and adapt the programme. Teacher 2 said:

> After 5 weeks, we were thrilled that what we had put into practice had been really successful, but we were still aware that it was early days, and that after the initial wave of excitement and enthusiasm of students and teachers, things may change. [We] knew where [we] wanted to be, knew what worked and what didn't.

Teachers also commented that it took lots of time to build relationships with students in the ILE. The more students in an ILE, the harder this was. Time was also required early in transition to teach students the explicit skills and expectations required in an ILE. In summary, it was reported that changes to teacher practice, new ILE routines and structures, and the development of desired skills and knowledge took large amounts of time due to the collaborative nature of decision making in an ILE.

### *Physical Space*

The appropriateness of the physical space and the availability of desired furniture were the two variables categorised under the theme "physical space". Three of the six teachers cited physical space as their greatest challenge, and they commented on the day-to-day negative impact it had on their programme. Poor physical space had limited flexibility, poor acoustics and consequently, teachers could not activate the desired teaching and learning. This included not having an adequate number or appropriate size breakout spaces, not having doors that could be closed, or not having flexible walls. The importance of flexible breakout spaces of an appropriate size was stressed by Teacher 5: "Walls and doors are

really important; if you can't close the doors, every now and then it makes it really hard." Teacher 1 agreed: "Being able to have a whānau area big enough for each class is important."

Noise was a major issue for three of the six teachers. This resulted in an inability to engage in certain teaching and learning activities, such as parallel teaching, energisers and dance. It was remarked by two teachers that the constant and stressful battle with noise was not associated with the amount of noise made by each student, but rather, the combined noise level created by the number of students occupying the space. These teachers were constantly making changes to their programme that were driven by minimising noise.

Only one of the six teachers described their space as highly effective. This teacher said noise was not an issue; bi-fold doors could be closed, there was a central space that was shared by all, and there were enough breakout spaces that were of an adequate size. Interestingly, four of the six participants had modified existing classrooms to create collaborative spaces. There was no correlation evident between purpose-built spaces and the level of challenge posed, however, as one of the two purpose-built spaces was still reported as suffering from a lack of breakout spaces and noise issues. Piloting an ILE using a modified collaborative space, such as a hall or library, occurred in two schools. This was seen as advantageous to transition because the pilot highlighted what did and did not work, and therefore, what was desired. This participant stated:

> Our space was an old library turned into an ILE. You couldn't shut off any doors. We had four classes in one big space. [It] was a little bit of a disaster, but we learnt a lot. But it didn't work because you did need to shut off sometimes. (Teacher 4)

Teacher input into the design of the ILE spaces was limited. There were many reasons for this. The most common were that spaces were already modified, and therefore, design options were extremely limited. Another reason was that the teachers in the study were not formally identified as occupying an ILE, or were not teaching at the school when the spaces were designed. However, when new furniture was to be purchased, teachers had input. It was common for teachers transitioning to an ILE to request the permanent removal of existing furniture and / or the purchase of new furniture.

### *Parents and Community*

Support and buy-in from parents and the community was categorised under the theme "parents and community". A key message that emerged was the need for intermediate transition systems to include an early focus on educating parents and whānau about the rationale of ILEs, and how they would operate for their child. If this was not done, it could become a negative factor in teacher transition. All six schools held parent meetings at the beginning of the school year to outline the rationale and how the space would operate. Some schools utilised external mentors to support this process. These processes and their impact were described by two participants. Teacher 2 said:

> One hurdle we had to overcome was the mixed attitudes of both students and parents who had had prior (and not necessarily positive) experiences with ILEs at their primary schools … Parents had the perception that ILEs were more suited for junior (Year 1–4) classes. We met with parents early in the year to put their minds at rest.

Teacher 4 concurred. "We held a parent–whānau meeting and got an outside expert in. Our principal was there and involved, showing her full support."

Other enablers key to gaining parent support included assigning each student to one teacher who had ultimate responsibility for them and acted as the point of contact for parents and whānau. Teacher 2 stated, "Our parents felt very strongly about the need for students to identify with one teacher". A further enabler was the situation in which a student transitioned with their existing teacher, or other teachers, with whom they already had a positive relationship.

### *Students' Pastoral and Learning Needs*

Students' needs, including pastoral and behavioural needs, and those associated with priority learners, were items categorised under the theme "students' pastoral and learning needs". Key messages that emerged were the importance of building relationships with students and using the ILE space to respond to needs, especially those of priority learners. Teacher 1 stated, "Scaffold the kids into the environment, build the relationships, swap over for a few things, [and] then slowly open up the space".

Homeroom groupings (one teacher and approximately 30 students) remained in place at five of the six schools. These were seen as essential in ensuring all students had a teacher who was ultimately responsible for them, and that strong student–teacher relationships were developed. Three of the six teachers I interviewed had a preference for two-to-three-teacher ILEs as they felt that it was too hard to build meaningful relationships with more students. "The more kids, the more likely for them to go under the radar" (Teacher 5). Teacher 6, who worked in a two-teacher ILE but without homeroom groupings made the

following comment: “I don’t feel I have as much as a handle on the students as I did in single cell. We share all 60 kids. You don’t have the same relationship”. Interestingly, Teacher 1, who did have a homeroom class, was also concerned about relationships:

> I don’t feel like I have a class culture like I used to. I probably have a better connection with all the kids in the house in a general sense but it has been at the sacrifice of my class.

Participants said the physical space and the learning programme needed to be manipulated to respond to student needs. Consequently, most teachers started the year with just their homeroom group; then, as relationships were strengthened and students gained more of the required ILE skills, the space and the number of teachers and students collaborating was increased. The most common need cited was students having the skills to work collaboratively. Teachers also had to teach students how to transition effectively from one activity to another. The importance of supporting students to manage themselves was iterated by teacher 5: “Students need to be able to manage themselves. If they can’t, then programme and environment need to respond”.

Of equal importance was teachers knowing who the priority learners were in their whānau class, and in the whole ILE. Shared teacher ownership of these students was seen as advantageous as it enabled teachers to feel supported, the students to receive more pastoral and academic support, and for the students to feel less marginalised as a priority learner than they would have in a single cell, because there were more priority learners than there would have been in a single-cell environment. An ILE also afforded the exploration of multiple teacher

perspectives on how priority learners could best be supported, and how the environment and learning programme could best respond to their needs.

## Enablers to Transition

Section 4 of the questionnaire explored enablers to successful transition at three key stages: before (while still in single cell), during (first five weeks of teaching in an ILE) and after (10–40 weeks after the transition). Section 4 was designed to explore the various components that teachers recommended for inclusion in future quality transition programmes. The topic was explored further in semi-structured interviews. Cross-case analysis was applied because responses were not bound to the participant's individual context, and because it was combined advice from the teachers that was sought. Combined advice allowed common themes to be illuminated. These findings have been organised in tabular form according to the following transition phases: before, during and after transition (Table 5).

Table 5

*Transition Support by Phase*

| SUPPORTING TEACHER TRANSITION FROM A SINGLE CELL TO AN ILE | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Before the move to the ILE**<br>Preparation | **During - first 5 weeks**<br>HIGH STRESS- Settling in, trial and error phase | **After- btw 10-40 weeks after move**<br>Increasingly evidence- based approach |
| Establish a clear and shared staff vision for the change<br>• whole school vision is desirable<br>• driven by a supportive and knowledgeable leadership team<br>• alignment of pedagogy and school systems to vision.<br><br>Try modern learning practices in your classroom and experience co-teaching to any degree possible<br>• flipped learning, dynamic grouping, project based learning, increased use of student voice to influence programmes<br>• collaborative planning, teaching and assessment, expectations and routines<br><br>Engage in relevant PLD including:<br>• understanding the rationale for the change<br>• visits to ILEs<br>• staff meetings on modern learning practice included collaboration and student agency<br>• self-directed reading and research<br>• utilising external ILE expertise<br>• staff intrapersonal skills including personality profiles, and having difficult conversations.<br>• exploring models used in collaborative spaces i.e. to record student progress, for planning, for management.<br><br>Careful selection of teachers and the composition of teams to work in ILEs<br>• maximise teacher ownership of the process<br>• select teachers well in advance<br>• ensure willingness and buy-in from teachers<br><br>Meet regularly with your proposed ILE team to:<br>• establish expectations and systems<br>• build relationships with team members- professional and personally<br><br>Involve parents and whanau<br>• hold meetings to share rationale and way of working<br>• have support from senior team<br><br>Maximise input into the design of the space and the purchase of furniture.<br>• Ensure provision for breakout spaces, movable walls and good acoustics. | Support from senior leaders:<br>• genuine interest and monitoring of progress<br>• empathy and understanding<br>• extra release time for teachers to meet<br>• freedom and encouragement to trial new approaches<br>• openness to review school systems to ensure they are supporting the ILE/ whole school vision.<br><br>Ongoing PLD<br>• a mentor to support with rigorous reflection and new ideas<br>• networking with others in ILEs<br><br>Regular Reflection - engage in an iterative process of trial and error<br>• focused on the needs and interests of students and overall ILE goals<br>• experiment with traditional and contemporary pedagogy<br>• utilise the space and the teachers to respond to learners needs'<br>• utilise student voice<br><br>Develop a staff team culture and implement systems to ensure:<br>• all voices are heard<br>• the utilisation of teachers' strengths ensuring everyone is valued<br>• the even distribution of teacher responsibilities<br>• a forum for regular, potentially difficult staff discussions<br><br>Scaffold students' introduction to the ILE<br>• start slow<br>• consider starting with one teacher :one class activities for the the majority of the programme , extend as student readiness increases and relationships strengthen<br><br>Plan and facilitate learning experience aimed at:<br>• getting to know all students<br>• co-constructing a shared ILE vision<br>• establishing a collaborative culture including routines and structure<br>• the explicit teaching of skills required to work in an ILE | Student -centred focus<br>• maintain a relentless focus on responding to the needs and interests of all students<br>• increased use of student voice to inform review and next steps.<br><br>Iterative and increasingly evidence based process of trial, error and reflection<br>• keep taking risks and trialing new approaches<br>• adapt the environment<br>• utilize academic and pastoral data<br>• consider building this process into the school appraisal system<br><br>Relationships<br>• continue to strengthen relationships with all students and staff<br><br>Systems<br>• continue to be involved in reviewing and adapting school systems and expectations<br>• monitor staff responsibilities to ensure efficient and fair distribution and to ensure that the practice of all teachers is being developed and their strengths utilised.<br><br>Ongoing PLD<br>• with mentor to support with rigorous reflection and new ideas and to ensure the focus on important issues including priority learner progress.<br>• networking with others working in ILEs |

## Transition Specific to the Intermediate Context

The results of the current work relate to an intermediate school context. In an effort to determine participants' opinions about how applicable the results would be to other school contexts, and conversely, which results were specific to intermediate school settings, the following question was asked in the online questionnaire: "Is there anything specific to the intermediate context that you think is necessary to support teachers transitioning to an ILE in an intermediate context?"

Three themes were commonly assumed by participants to be specific to the intermediate context.

1. **Composite classes**

As all Year 7 students were transitioning to a new school, and for some it was their first time in an ILE, composite Year 7 and 8 classes were hailed as a key school structure in supporting student transition. This was because the Year 8 students were aware of the expectations and culture of the ILE already, and could support and model desired behaviours.

2. **Parent–whānau engagement**

Parents of intermediate school students came with mixed experiences and opinions about ILEs. In supporting transition, it was deemed important to hold parent–whānau meetings that focused on sharing the rationale and day-to-day ILE practices, and why these were relevant and desirable in an intermediate school context.

3. **Timetabling**

A school system that considered the needs of an ILE in timetabling school-wide activities such as technology, camp, life education, use of the gym and language lessons was seen as an issue more likely to be commonplace in any intermediate setting. Splitting classes within an ILE across timetabled events could be extremely problematic and was seen as having a "ripple effect" on the whole collaborative programme.

## Conclusion

Chapter 4 has presented the information gathered from six intermediate teachers based at six different intermediate schools. They shared their experiences transitioning from single-cell classrooms to ILEs. Each teacher had a unique transition experience, and for the majority, this was characterised by limited levels of readiness, a lack of steady progress and a need for further support throughout the transition phases. A lack of appropriate PLD, including knowledge of MLP and the ability to trial such approaches while in single-cell environments, affected ILE transitions.

Enablers to successful transition included having a clear and shared whole-school vision, the alignment of school systems to the ILE vision, ongoing processes supporting trial and error and collaborative reflection, and time for teachers and students to adapt to the ILE space and develop the required skill sets. Involvement in the design of the physical space, and keeping parents informed about the rationale behind the change, were also recommended as important in successful transition. Limited variables were seen as specific to the intermediate setting, and instead, it was the view of the participants that, in general, the findings of the current investigation would also be useful to any primary teacher

transitioning from a single cell to an ILE. Chapter Five interprets and discusses these findings in the context of the relevant literature.

# Chapter Five: Discussion

## Introduction

This study has focused on the experiences of intermediate teachers making their first transition from a single cell to an ILE. In exploring this topic, I have examined each teacher's readiness levels, their key challenges, and finally, their recommendations for other teachers involved in transitions to ILEs.

In the previous chapter, I have reported on findings from the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews I conducted with the six intermediate teachers on an individual basis. I then organised responses into themes, or main components essential to a successful transition process. These themes are:

- vision,
- pedagogy,
- teaching team,
- physical space,
- support systems and structures inclusive of leadership,
- PLD and evaluation systems, and
- the needs of students and parents / whānau.

In this chapter, I interpret and discuss the findings in relation to the above themes, with a specific focus on the implications for schools embarking on ILE transition. Throughout my discussion, I make links to the relevant literature to confirm or extend what is already known, while exploring contradictions that arise from the analysis.

## Vision

The development of a future-focused, school-wide vision has emerged as fundamental to successful transition. I found vision development processes to be important, because they aided teachers to understand, to have input into, and to feel united about ILEs. The shared understanding and direction that emerged from vision-led school development resulted in teachers feeling confident and supported. Indeed, when values and vision drive practice, the link results in collective wisdom centred on shared goals (Biesta et al., 2015). The absence of vision-led development, in contrast, contributed to teachers I interviewed feeling that the ILE lacked a shared philosophy, and consequently, a trial-and-error approach dominated teacher practice. A lack of vision also resulted in teachers feeling unsupported, increasingly distinct from the rest of the school, and uncertain if their practice was desired or successful.

These findings resonate with the ideas of Atkin (1996) and Sinek (2009), who advocate for organisations to make explicit what they stand for and what gives direction to their actions. These authors are united in their beliefs about the congruence to vision and values, particularly when new innovations are being implemented.

My results also revealed that for effective, whole-school visioning to take place, it is important that school leadership teams are well-informed by research about the change they wish to bring about. The contrary was evident in most schools evaluated in this study, with the majority of teachers feeling that their senior leaders were too busy and / or had no research-based knowledge relevant to MLP and /or ILEs. This resulted in teachers feeling isolated and unsupported during transition, and contributed to tension between teachers and leadership.

Consequently, in supporting teacher transition, this study advocates for senior leaders to develop in-depth, evidence-based knowledge about ILEs and MLP. In developing this knowledge, it is important to engage with external mentors and to network with other schools. Without in-depth knowledge of ILEs and MLP, principals assume a support role, leaving the teachers themselves to adopt an experimental approach to leading the change process.

The importance of school leaders being well informed and leading the change they wish to bring about resonates with the ideas of Timperley (2007) and the Education Review Office (2018), which emphasise the importance of principals leading the development and embedding of a school's vision, and the need to align vision to PLD and specific outcomes. Such processes would support teachers to feel a shared and clear sense of direction. It would also support coherence between teacher actions and the attainment of school vision.

The need for school leaders to lead the re-visioning process and to possess the necessary ILE and MLP knowledge reveals the challenges faced by many NZ principals in regard to their multiple roles. The challenge for NZ principals is in managing the demands of their multiple roles as organisation manager, as supported by Tomorrow's School's legislation, and their role as 21st Century learning leaders in an era characterised by change. "Principals as learning leaders" was lacking in the transition experiences of the majority of teachers participating in this study. The implication for the education system and for individual schools is clear — to ensure that the principal has the capacity, amongst his or her many other tasks, to remain abreast with research. With this knowledge, the principal can lead learning with confidence and credibility.

The importance of a school having one vision and one set of modern learning principles to unite and give direction to all teachers, regardless of the space in which they teach, was also an important finding. Results showed that it was vital for teachers to have the opportunity to explore ILE definitions with a view to developing a school-wide understanding about physical space, social aspects and pedagogy as experienced by learners. Such a shared understanding aided and abetted the development of a whole-school vision and aligned principles that underpin practice, where such a shared understanding existed.

In fact, this study suggests that the term "ILE" is challenged, and that terms such as "MLP" or "innovative learning practice" are more appropriate in uniting all staff in a shared vision, because they are more inclusive of both single-cell and collaborative spaces. The merit of a united, collaborative approach is supported by Biesta et al. (2015), who advocate for values and vision to be collaboratively constructed as change drivers. This idea is further supported by Rogers (2002), who discusses the importance of quality processes that lead to common purposes, and the powerful equilibrium that results as teachers understand both their individual accountability and the collective responsibility. Key implications for schools are that transition is not seen as a process relevant only to teachers making a physical shift to an ILE. Instead, this study suggests that schools adopt a broad definition of the term ILE so that transition processes are relevant to all staff regardless of the physical environment in which they teach.

In embarking on the process of developing a 21st Century vision, placing the needs of learners at the centre of all decisions is a key driver. Having an effective and highly reflective teaching team who utilise a variety of MLP to respond to the needs and interests of students is ideal. This finding resonates with

research including O'Reilly (2016), Education Review Office (2018), and OECD (2013); these authors advocate for visions to be underpinned by principles that place learners at the centre. Implications in the NZ context are that future-focused, vision-led development processes should begin with the vision expressed in the NZ national curriculums and the OECD's (2013) seven principles of learning. Once principles for effective learning are established, this study suggests that leaders ask how pedagogy, structures and environments might evolve to further enable curriculum aspirations. This reflective approach in the use of pedagogy is supported by the Ministry of Education (2017) and the *Standards for the Teaching Profession* (Education Council, 2017).

In summary, in identifying a future-focused vision, schools should adopt a broad definition of the term ILE, central to which is an understanding of MLP and an understanding that such practice can take place regardless of the architecture surrounding it. The development of this understanding should be driven by knowledgeable school leaders and should place learners at the centre, give direction to practice. The understanding should be shared to unite all staff.

## Pedagogy

In the process of developing a whole-school vision, the importance of involving all teaching staff in PLD focused on MLP cannot be underestimated. Involving all staff in PLD would result in staff recognising that MLP gives effect to the school vision, and therefore, it should be occurring in all learning settings (single cell or collaborative). Thus, a collaborative space is useful but not essential to desired practice. Such an approach is firmly supported by the Ministry of Education (2007), who urge schools to respond to the needs and

interests of their unique learning community by developing their own vision and set of desired practices.

My results showed the importance of immersing teachers in evidence-based models of different MLPs to facilitate whole-staff PLD. Findings suggest that such a focus is often neglected, and results in teachers utilising an outdated and limited repertoire of pedagogy. The need for PLD focused on MLP is supported by Deed et al. (2014) and by O'Reilly (2016); in their studies, participants were unanimous in their recommendation for PLD on MLP including developing student agency and co-teaching. This resonates with other research suggesting leaders should facilitate PLD that supports teachers to personalise learning to gain a full understanding of the concept of student agency (OECD, 2013).

However, my work highlighted a contrary view as well, which it that immersing teachers in MLP should not be to the detriment of traditional approaches, such as direct instruction. Instead, this study advocates for mixed traditional–MLP pedagogy to provide a number of strategies for best responding to the needs of their students. In fact, Timperley (2007) cautions educators not to abandon existing pedagogy in favour of a new regime based on ideological arguments of the 21st Century. An effective pedagogical approach incorporates a variety of teaching strategies including direct instruction, guided teaching and reciprocal teaching (Hattie, 2009). It is recommended that schools explore new practices but also embrace traditional, evidence-based teaching strategies to maximise learning.

In terms of MLP PLD, this study found that teachers benefited most from visits to other ILEs, and from having the opportunity to trial new approaches

while still in in single-cell classrooms. New approaches trialled included collaborative planning, work-shopping, flipped learning, flexible grouping and offering students increased choice. Teachers were able to experience pedagogy in practice and were able to see what was possible; these intricacies are well supported by the literature (Benade & Jackson, 2017; Timperley, 2007).

Interviewees said that ongoing professional discussion focused on exploring the new opportunities offered by space, pedagogy and collaboration were important for PLD. Key to this professional discussion was a focus on evaluating pedagogical approaches in relation to the school's vision and to valued student outcomes. Without the opportunity for rigorous targeted reflection, I found that practice was sometimes evaluated against teacher ease and workload rather than improved student outcomes. The need for rigorous evaluation focusing on impact is well supported by the literature (Atkin, 1996; Education Council, 2017; Hattie, 2009).

Similarly, the need for ongoing professional discussion focused on the impact of pedagogy is well supported by the literature, including Timperley (2007), who cites the importance of robust PLD that integrates pedagogical theory and practice. Further support can be found in the work of Atkin (1996), who insists that teachers engage in continuous dialogue demanding the articulation of values and beliefs as related to existing and emerging practice. Therefore, school leaders would be wise to plan a PLD transition programme that provides ongoing opportunities to explore the theory and practice of MLP in relation to valued outcomes.

In developing good transition practices, it is evident from this study and the literature that time is essential for teachers to meet together to explore all

perspectives and so that shared ownership can prevail. Time spent with an experienced mentor providing guidance and support was also found to be extremely valuable. Time, mentoring and multiple opportunities, such as modelling and coaching, are necessary to absorb new information and to translate it into practice (Hattie, 2009; Timperley, 2007). It is clear that schools should consider how their existing systems can be organised to enable additional time for teams to meet and for quality PLD to continue throughout transition, which was a clear desire voiced by participants in this study.

The importance of PLD existing within a culture that encourages innovation and risk-taking was a valuable finding. This view was reflected in study participants' remarks about the need for leadership to support innovative practice and to accept that changes in practice will be constant as teachers explore how to best respond to the needs and interests of their students. The importance of the teachers themselves remaining agile, open-minded and willing to try new pedagogical approaches in response to students' needs and interests was also clearly voiced. In fact, Alterator and Deed (2013) describe the process of developing a coherent pedagogy as a continual process of negotiation as teachers made sense of how to respond efficiently and effectively to the affordances of open learning environments. Transition enabling transformative ideas and emergent practices are key to good student outcomes (Atkin, 2018; Gilbert, 2015). Leaders modelling this mindset are also useful.

In summary, this study found that when staff were united in a future-focused vision and in its associated pedagogy, any physical classroom environment, be it a single cell or a shared space, was deemed suitable for enacting desired practice. Consequently, the focus of PLD in transition

programmes should be on immersing all teachers in the theory and practice of a variety of MLP and traditional approaches. Such a focus should be ongoing and should involve evaluating the merits of each approach against the school's vision and student outcomes. For this approach to be successful, it must exist within a culture that values and models risk-taking and that affords teachers adequate time to embrace new pedagogies.

### Teaching Team

My findings suggested that consideration should be given to how well individual teachers will work together in an ILE. The importance of getting the team "right" is well documented in the literature: Mackey et al. (2017) asserts that the grouping of teachers is significant to the ILE's success and can impact on student progress. Hansen (2009) concurs by stating that the processes used to support the right teacher selection should be applied to current and new staff. Teacher involvement in the decision making that leads to the formation of teaching teams was also identified by participants in the current work as essential. Indeed, stakeholder involvement is critical to change management — it is crucial for leaders to adopt an approach that empowers and enables people to contribute to, and to see themselves as integral to, the change they are bringing about (Osborne, 2014).

Participants in this study also advocated for the early identification of proposed ILE teams so they could begin conversations, and if possible, begin working together early in the transition process. However, it can be assumed that as most of the schools involved in the current work had two separate visions and a lack of understanding of what was required in ILEs, many staff were not

forthcoming in showing interest in this shift in thinking. One teacher remarked that if the whole-school was on board, it would have been easier to gain buy-in from other teachers. Thus, it seems that schools should consider stakeholder voice in the formation of teaching teams, which could begin with collaborative practice such as planning and workshopping across single-cell classrooms.

Having teachers in the team who had prior ILE experience was deemed useful by study participants. This was because of the repertoire of ideas and strategies these teachers came with, and the benefit this had in supporting the whole team. A mix of complementary strengths and some "same pageness" within a team was also cited as important by study participants. This finding highlighted the pivotal role of leadership in supporting the development of "same pageness". Clearly, processes that lead to the development of a shared vision, pedagogy, language and expectations must be facilitated. Knock (2018) also says that a key role of leadership is to develop and sustain same pageness.

Middle leaders in an ILE team were an inadvertent focus of this study. Findings showed that all six ILEs had a designated ML. In fact, three participants were the designated ML. Teachers I interviewed stated that important characteristics of ILE MLs included leading in a distributed way by promoting collaborative practice, ensuring collegial relationships were strengthened and utilising individual strengths. One teacher shared a prior experience in which no ILE leader had been designated; this resulted in a power struggle, which ultimately undermined success.

Two of the three ILE leaders remarked that they felt more aware and involved in the day-to-day practice of their team members once they were in the ILE. The ongoing collaborative reflection and the visibility of practice in an ILE

made the identification of strengths, and coaching and mentoring needs, much easier than in a single-cell environment. It also challenged the merits of traditional "walk-through" components of appraisal systems, thus indicating the need for a review of these systems' relevance.

Little NZ research is available about the role of MLs in transitioning to ILEs. However, the very idea of having a designated ML for one to three teachers is arguably contrary to the ideas and aspirations of systems thinking and transformative change, both of which call for new, radical thinking rather than simply tweaking existing ways of working (Atkin, 2018; Gilbert, 2015). Although the focus of this study was not on the role of MLs, results inferred that a designated ML is important and that a key focus of their role is to achieve distributed leadership through collaborative practice. They should be focused on all team members developing their practice to best meet the needs and interests of all students.

In addition to identifying characteristics of effective teams, study participants were very forthcoming and fluid in their thinking about the attributes required of individual teachers who worked collaboratively in ILEs. A will to teach in an ILE was one resoundingly important factor. Individual attributes that reflected strong interpersonal skills, including being a good communicator and being considerate and supportive, were also seen as important by participants. Alterator and Deed (2013) concur, citing the importance of a teacher skill set rich in relational dimensions, and the wisdom in acknowledging the importance of these skills in working together to solve problems.

Furthermore, study participants cited the value of individuals who had a growth mindset (Dweck, 2008; Education Review Office, 2018). The growth

mindset includes the ability to be flexible, open-minded, willing to take risks and try new things. Indeed, teachers in ILEs must be able to "learn, unlearn and relearn" (Knock, 2018). Teacher traits required in an ILE are common in more progressive-minded teachers (Hattie, 2012). Clearly, teacher adaptability is essential (Vescio et al., 2008).

To conclude, teachers involved in the current work suggested that the composition of the ILE teaching team has a huge impact on teacher, and consequently, student success. Maximising teacher input and ensuring teachers were willing ILE participants supported the formation of successful teams. An ML with a distributed style who orchestrated a team to play to its strengths was clearly important to teachers I interviewed. Desired teacher characteristics were adaptability, a growth mindset and good interpersonal skills. Clearly, schools should therefore involve teachers in the formation of teaching teams. Arguably, what should precede this process is the development of a shared staff understanding of dispositions and skills supporting collaborative practice.

## Physical Space

The quality of the physical space and the ability of teachers to manipulate the environment were identified in this study as factors key to effective ILE transition. The physical space was seen by many teachers as their greatest challenge. In fact, problems with the physical environment led teachers to abandon some teaching and learning activities, including group lesson energisers and parallel teaching. This tension highlights the negative impact of teachers not being involved in the initial design stage. It also shows a lack of understanding that exists in the education sector about effective ILE design. Furthermore, as

some teachers I recruited into this study did not have a clear understanding of ILE pedagogy, their ability to support the design process was undoubtedly limited.

To avoid some of these tensions, I urge school leaders to support teachers to have a clear ILE vision to build educators' knowledge of design principles. I also urge school leaders to fully involve key practitioners in the design process. Failure to produce an effective physical design leads to an alarming situation: some ILEs are limiting the extent to which teachers can respond to the needs of their students. Quality teaching is the biggest driver of quality outcomes, and the ILE space needs to flexible to suit each school's specific learning environment (Barrett et al., 2015). Furthermore, inadequacies in ILE spaces indicates that many ILEs are falling short of the Ministry of Education (2007) vision for ILEs to be capable of evolving and adapting to embrace the national curriculum.

In exploring the variables that contribute to a quality physical space, this study identified the need for:

- quality acoustics,
- an area big enough for the number of students occupying it,
- an adequate number and appropriate size of breakout spaces, and
- flexibility of space, including doors that can be closed and walls that can be moved.

The value of a well-designed physical space in supporting desired student outcomes is well documented (Barrett et al., 2015; Wall, 2016). In fact, a well-designed space can boost academic performance by 16% (Barrett et al., 2015).

I hold a contrary view to that of optimistic publications urging educators to envisage and design physical environments for learners who are engaged in self-directed and co-operative learning (Partnership for 21st Century Learning,

2016). Instead, I suggest that design principles are strongly influenced by a school's vision, desired pedagogy and the opinions of teachers working with students in collaborative environments. The trials and tribulations that teachers experience when attempting to respond to students' needs should be viewed as important design challenges. If fact, learning space designs hinge on an analysis of needs, learning modes and existing space use (Hattie, 2009).

In exploring the impact of the physical environment, it is interesting to note that this study found no correlation between purpose-built spaces and the level of challenge posed. These findings signal that, regardless of the resourcing available, a lack of knowledge on appropriate ILE design principles exists across the board. I would also suggest that in a time-poor education sector, appropriate resourcing is not allocated to fully engaging teachers in the design process, and consequently, teacher involvement is of a casual nature at best. This view is well supported by research advocating teachers and designers to develop their understanding of pedagogical demands and physical structures (Clarke, 2016; Cotterell, 1984). Teachers I interviewed had zero to limited input into ILE designs or modifications.

In considering the potential of a well-designed physical environment, I believe the design of physical spaces should also allow teachers to use the environment innovatively. Teachers can actively manipulate an ILE environment to respond to problems and can experiment with completely new approaches. Previously published research is clear that teachers need to view the environment as a tool to solve problems (Morrison, 2018).

In summary, it is crucial that educators are fully engaged in the design of physical spaces if they are to attain desired outcomes. Leaders may wish to

consider facilitating closer links between architects and teaching practitioners. Closer links may become easier over time as the number of teachers with experience in ILEs increases.

## Leadership

As discussed in the "Vision" section, a key role of school leaders is to facilitate the development of a shared rationale for change enabled by MLP. This section explores other important roles and attributes of senior leadership. For the purposes of the current study, a senior leadership team includes principals, deputy principals and assistant principals.

Ensuring school systems and structures align to desired practices emerged as a key role of senior leaders during the transition process. The alignment of systems and structures was found to be beneficial to teachers because the alignment demonstrated coherence and support for desired practice. Senior leaders involving teachers in the alignment of existing systems to identified new ways of working was also seen as positive by interviewees. This involvement supported teachers to have a voice in shaping the new systems.

Conversely, when senior leaders were not proactive in aligning systems to desired practice, the teachers themselves had to adapt existing systems ad hoc, and in some cases, had to endure the extra workload of working through both the existing school system and the adapted one. These experiences were reported as stressful and chaotic, and often left teachers feeling unsupported by leadership. Furthermore, this philosophical split often resulted in two systems, one for use in collaborative spaces and one for use in single cells; this situation was detrimental to the attainment of a shared school vision and aligned ways of working. To

prevent this situation, I urge school leaders to facilitate a review of existing school systems in light of the "new" future-focused school vision and desired pedagogy. This review process, dependent on whole-school, vision-led development as discussed in the "Vision" and "Pedagogy" sections above, would ensure school systems and structures were appropriate and enabling for all staff.

To exemplify the impact of systems, I have explored the following examples: appraisal systems, PLD systems, and the use of homeroom structures. I believe the results from this study should encourage senior leaders to be proactive in evaluating the appropriateness of existing school-wide appraisal systems. In facilitating the development of new systems, senior leaders should embrace processes inherent in ILEs, such as regular reflective practice and collaboration, as well as integrating new requirements such as the Education Council (2017) *Standards for the Teaching Profession*.

School-wide PLD systems should also be planned well in advance by the senior leadership team, and priorities should be reflected in the school's strategic plan. This study has shown that teacher experiences in ILEs were more positive when leaders had a PLD plan dominated by a focus on vision-led development and the exploration of MLP. This kind of forward, strategic thinking by senior leaders can maximise coherence and help teachers avoid additional and unexpected workload. Questionnaire and interview notes from this study showed that senior leaders with a greater understanding of the challenges faced during transition were proactive in ensuring school systems and structures enabled ILE practice and were realistic. These findings resonate with the conclusions of O'Reilly (2016), whose study participants commented on the importance of

leaders "holding the vision" (O'Reilly, 2016, p. 101). Visionary leaders drive the change process through PLD and by freely providing resources and facilities.

Another example of a school structure that requires careful consideration by senior leaders is the use of homeroom classes. "Homeroom" is the term used in this study to refer to a group of approximately 30 students who have been assigned to a specific teacher. Participants in the current work said the use of homeroom structures was important in the early stages of transition as it limited the number of students and teachers collaborating within the ILE. These structures were commonly used to start the day and were used most at the beginning of the year. Homerooms were reported to be a useful scaffold because they enabled the designated teacher to firmly establish discipline, routines and meaningful relationships with each of the homeroom's 30 students. Teachers reported feeling ultimately responsible for their homeroom students. In addition, the structure was favoured by parents and whānau as it meant they had one teacher who was their first point of contact for matters relating to their child.

The teachers I interviewed did not see a homeroom as detrimental to collaborative planning, problem solving or shared ownership of learning. Instead, teachers I interviewed considered homeroom structures to be a useful transition scaffold that enabled the foundation of solid student–teacher relationships. This foundation was key to further successful collaboration across the ILE. The literature also recommends that when working in a team environment, each teacher should take on the ultimate responsibility for the pastoral care and related administration of a group of students (Education Review Office, 2018).

Homeroom structures are somewhat contrary to the recommendations espoused in ILE literature, which pursue an ideology where all teachers in a

shared space are collectively responsible for all the students that occupy the space; this is sometimes known as an "ours" rather than a "mine" philosophy (O'Reilly, 2016). Homeroom structures also appear to be in conflict with the principles of transformation, which call for an absence of constraint from the "known" (Atkin, 2018). However, in an educational paradigm where the importance of relationships is paramount (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2012; New Zealand Association for Middle and Intermediate Schooling, n.d.), I believe that it is important for leaders to seriously consider homeroom classes as a necessary and useful structure to retain for at least some of the day and some of the year.

Another issue associated with relationships was study participants' perceived optimum number of teachers who should share a collaborative space. Participants had a preference for two- or three-teacher ILEs, because they felt that it was too hard to build meaningful relationships with more students. These findings are supported by Hargreaves (2001), who claims that a greater number of teachers in an ILE equates to a corresponding increase in relationship dynamics. It is clear that educators must be realistic about the total number of students that one teacher can form quality, authentic and learning-focused relationships with. This consideration should be key in the design of physical spaces and the organisation of collaborative teaching teams.

**Well-being**

Senior leaders were also seen by study participants as having a role in the well-being of teachers. Support from senior leaders was viewed as particularly important during transition due to the increased stress levels that were reported. Reasons commonly reported as contributing to increased stress were high noise

levels, more time needed to work collaboratively and the constant negotiations required in decision-making. Other research also cites increased levels of stress due to the intensity of interactions demanded in ILE environments (Deed & Lesko, 2015). Clearly, senior leaders must make provision for teacher well-being during transition including additional release time, listening to teachers facing challenges, and displaying empathy. Furthermore, senior leaders who are knowledgeable about ILEs, MLP and the process of transitioning will be aware of the increased support required and therefore be prepared to provide appropriate support.

**Coaching and Mentoring**

Senior leaders and external mentors providing support in the form of coaching and mentoring also emerged as important to teachers transitioning. Participants recommended that this support involve the facilitation of:

- the sharing of practice
- appropriate reflection,
- the sharing of ideas, and
- the sharing of resources.

Well-known education researchers support coaching, mentoring and deep learning that involves teachers in developing new knowledge and skills through multiple opportunities to challenge their own assumptions, to integrate theory and practice and to make implicit theories explicit (Hattie, 2009; Sarason, 1982; Timperley, 2007). This approach is particularly relevant in transitioning to the ambiguous ILE space (Deed et al., 2014). In embracing these findings, I suggest that formal mentoring is integrated into a school's appraisal process. This could involve

coaching from members of the senior leadership team. It is highly likely that senior leaders have both the experience and the ability to coach teachers to exploit the opportunities the ILE space has to offer.

### Connections

Results from this study suggested that during ILE transition, senior leaders are critical to ensuring connections within and across the education sector. Within the school setting, leaders are in a unique position to facilitate meaningful collaboration between the different learning environments, namely single cell and collaborative. In doing so, practice continues to be shared and the whole-school vision strengthened, thus avoiding a situation where two ways of working exist. Senior leaders who actively make connections across the education sector so that knowledge and experience around ILEs and MLPs can be shared are invaluable. Leaders can embrace the NZ Government's *Educational Success initiative, Kāhui Ako / COL* by encouraging schools to collaborate beyond their own physical confines (Ministry of Education, 2018). An underlying message from participants in the current work was that leaders need to be highly attuned to the transition experience and well equipped to respond to the needs of teachers. Collaborating widely was also hailed as a key to success.

## Evaluating Impacts

In this study, I identified the importance of school processes designed to evaluate the impacts of pedagogy and of the physical environment. Given the recent emergence of the ILE and the need for the profession to continually inquire into how to maximise its benefits, evaluation has become critical, a way of

tracking the impacts of pedagogy and the physical environment on desired outcomes. While participants' schools had existing reflection and evaluation processes in place, these were largely informal, ad hoc and did not focus on a set of measurable outcomes; participants often commented on this lack. The need for rigorous evaluation systems resonates with many scholars who advocate for evaluation models that align with the wider school vision, and that are capable of measuring progress against intended outcomes, such as student achievement goals and the impact of various pedagogical approaches (Atkin, 1996; Bendikson, 2015; Datnow, 2011; Sharratt & Planche, 2016; Timperley et al., 2009).

In developing evaluation processes, this study suggests the integration of existing school systems, such as appraisal, coaching and mentoring by senior leaders and / or external facilitators, with teaching as inquiry processes. Coherence between evaluation processes and the school's vision, desired practice and outcomes is also key. In addition, evaluation processes explicitly focused on utilising a range of evidence, including achievement data and student voice, are essential to any ILE transition. However, it is important to note that study participants expressed reservations about introducing evaluation processes that were too rigid and formal. Teachers were concerned that such systems could be detrimental to innovative practice, and would impede the rich, frequent and collaborative reflection that was naturally occurring in an ILE context. These views highlight the need for leaders to develop evaluation processes that capitalise on naturally occurring school processes; maximise coherence and synergies between systems; and link back to the attainment of the school vision and desired student outcomes.

A review of available models here and overseas shows the development of evaluation models is very much in its infancy, perhaps signalling the complexity of the task (Byers et al., 2018; Cleveland & Fisher, 2014). Despite this, it is my view that the development of evaluation models is critical given the dearth of quality evidence that demonstrates the connection between ILE-type learning environments and impacts on student learning outcomes (Byers et al., 2018).

A culture of continuous improvement is fundamental to the success of evaluation processes. In exploring work cultures with participants, I found that teachers had to be adaptive, reflective and responsive. They had to innovatively deliver the curriculum in a way that engaged and supported each student's learning. Teachers also needed to be proficient at evaluating the success of a particular strategy and not be too proud to dismiss it if it was not working. Being able to continually adapt practice was also an important skill, as a strategy that was highly successful for one group of learners may have had the opposite impact on other learners. In fact, for innovation to occur, a culture of continuous improvement must be the norm (Education Review Office, 2018). School leaders must nurture a culture that values innovation and risk-taking and that insists on the ongoing evaluation of the impacts of teaching practice on desired outcomes.

In summary, the development of school processes that evaluate the impact of pedagogy and of the physical environment is an important ILE transition task. Such processes should exist within a culture of continuous improvement, align with the school vision and be capable of generating rich evidence about the impact of pedagogy and the physical ILE environment. An examination of natural reflection processes already occurring in schools would be a useful

starting point, as would a bid to integrate teaching as inquiry and the *Standards for the Teaching Profession* (Education Council, 2017).

## Professional Learning and Development

The importance of PLD focused on MLP and characterised by dialogue, a coaching and mentoring style and opportunities to take risks and evaluate practices, are topics that have been explored in previous sections of this chapter ("Vision", "Pedagogy" and "Leadership"). This section investigates further key ideas in relation to PLD.

From this study, it was clear that the majority of teachers were not offered PLD appropriate to transition and / or were left to source their own PLD independent of the senior leadership team. This contributed to low levels of teacher readiness. These results also highlight the absence of a school-wide PLD strategy for teachers transitioning to ILEs. O'Reilly (2016) also found that teachers considered the lack of relevant and evidence-based PLD to be a limiting factor during transition. Indeed, "collaborative teaching teams are likely to lead to improved student outcomes, but only with significant professional development incentives and supportive school cultures" (O'Reilly, 2016, p. 18).

In exploring what content would be deemed as appropriate PLD, I found several key themes. These included a focus on cooperative teaching models, interpersonal relationships with colleagues, developing student agency and collaborative systems for planning, assessing and reporting. Research supports the inclusion of such content in a PLD programme (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Vescio et al., 2008). Darling-Hammond et al. (2002) also state that supporting teachers to develop their spatial literacy is fundamental to ILE

transitions. This finding echoes the need for designers and educators to work more closely (Clarke, 2016; Cotterell, 1984).

The highly unique nature of each teacher's transition experience was also illustrated by interview participants I recruited. Clearly, teachers have varying individual needs and aspirations for PLD, which suggests that PLD should include variety in content and modes of delivery, and should provide choices for the learner. This personalised approach is supported by Fisher (2005) and by Imms (2018), whose transition pathway matrix (under development) emphasises a plethora of resources that can be used to support the varying needs of teachers.

The need for transition PLD to commence well before the physical shift to an ILE, and for PLD to be ongoing over a period of approximately two years was another idea that emerged from this study. Reasons given for the long commitment to PLD included the variety of content that teachers needed time to make sense of, and the ongoing professional dialogue that was required as knowledge about ILEs increased. An appreciation of the time required for vision-led development, together with ongoing checks for alignment between practice and vision, also featured in participants' responses. Teachers' desire for PLD to be ongoing and for the process to start before the physical shift are supported in the academic literature: Osborne (2018) advocates for professional support to be well designed and considered by leaders, and available in increments throughout each stage of transition.

In terms of delivery modes and PLD style, I recommend a package containing a mix of internal, external, self-directed and school-wide PLD. This mix should include whole-staff PLD, coaching and mentoring by senior leaders and external mentors, visits to other ILEs, self-directed study and teacher action

inquiries. The very essence of a pre-designed PLD package is in direct contrast to the recommendations of recent research, which favours a socio-cultural approach, suggesting that PLD cannot be pre-planned because teachers need to learn within the context of their own classroom, and in a collaborative manner, with their colleagues (Bradbeer, 2016). However, if educators are to avoid one of the key failures of the open-plan era — to provide the necessary PLD support to teachers (Cameron & Robinson, 1986; Cuban, 2004; Department of Education, 1977), a selection of planned content for teachers to choose from should be made available. The design of a PLD package is bound by ideology to be collaborative, dialogic sense-making aimed at enabling a school's vision and exploiting the possibilities of MLP. This approach resonates with other scholars' increasingly organic, collaborative, action-orientated, personalised approach to PLD (Hargreaves, 1994; Larrivee, 2000; Tuckwell, 2018).

Results from questionnaires and interviews strongly suggests an approach grounded in PLC principles. Communities of learning enable personal and school-wide sense-making of any new content, thus providing cohesion and value in terms of the school's overall vision and goals (Robinson et al., 2009). Robinson et al. (2009) also conclude that there are direct positive impacts on student achievement when teachers participate in effective PLCs. In summary, teachers require ongoing, personalised, quality PLD to embrace new educational paradigms such as ILE. It is the job of school leaders to design and facilitate this PLD package. The risk of not doing so could be detrimental to teachers' and students' successful transition and ongoing positive educational outcomes.

## Parents and Whānau

In nurturing effective relationships with parents and whānau, the findings from this study reveal two important ideas. Both ideas are significant to teacher transition because attention to them, or lack of, has a direct impact on the level of challenge experienced by teachers during ILE transition. The first is the importance of parents and whānau feeling secure during transition to ILEs. I found that there was a need for one teacher to be identified as the point of initial contact for each student, in agreement with the Education Review Office (2018). This finding was discussed in detail in the "Teaching Team" section of chapter five; participants identified the need to scaffold collaboration by first developing relationships with their homeroom classes.

The second idea, particularly relevant to the intermediate context, is the need for a transition process to include detailed communications to parents / whānau about the rationale and logistics of ILEs. This was seen as important by study participants, particularly in Year 7, as the school context was new and incoming families came with mixed experiences and opinions about ILEs. Teachers saw support from the senior leadership team and / or ILE experts as important in presenting a united, evidence-based front to parents and whānau. This finding is in agreement with Education Review Office (2018) literature.

Strengthening relationships with parents and whānau is paramount in schools moving from being merely friendly to extending learning into the home, which can lead to accelerated student progress (Education Review Office, 2015a). The challenge for the two-year span intermediate timeframe is in achieving authentic engagement with parents and the wider community so that these

stakeholders feel their voices are heard. They have a valuable role in developing and supporting the school's vision.

### Students

The ability of teachers to analyse and respond to the needs of students is key to successful teacher transition. If teachers see this task as unwieldy, they will find transition challenging. The "Teaching Team" and the "Parents and Whānau" sections of this chapter describe the importance of teachers developing authentic relationships with each student, and their parents and whānau. The teachers I interviewed also identified the need for educators to be deliberate in their efforts to accelerate the progress of priority learners. Composite classes were also cited as useful in supporting students' transitions to ILEs.

ILEs were found to have some advantages in supporting priority learners. This included teachers grouping priority learners with similar needs so support, such as teacher aide hours, could be utilised more flexibly between students in the group. This was also suggested by the priority learners themselves as it prevented them from feeling singled out, which was often the case when in a single-cell classroom. It was also common for teachers participating in this study to share with their colleagues who the priority learners in their home group class were. In doing so, teachers reported feeling supported because a shared sense of responsibility was assumed for the priority learning group. This sharing was very effective because it enabled the exploration of multiple teacher perspectives on how priority learners could best be supported. The ability of ILEs to engender shared responsibility for priority learners is reinforced in a recent NZ study (Education Review Office, 2018). These findings are encouraging. A school's

capacity to accelerate outcomes for priority learners is of fundamental importance in improving the "long tail" of underachievement that exists in NZ (Education Review Office, 2005).

Māori and Pasifika students are overrepresented in the priority learners' group (Education Review Office, 2005). In exploring how to respond to the needs of priority learners, it is important that the needs of Māori and Pasifika learners are considered throughout all phases of transition. The Ministry of Education (2016) has urged educators to consider the needs of Māori when designing and / or adapting physical spaces. There is, however, no evidence in this study of an explicit focus on the design of a culturally responsive physical environment. Nonetheless, this study identifies that the very nature of an ILE, and a culturally appropriate, purpose-built or modified building affords value to many elements of Māori identity, language and culture. These elements include:

- signage in te reo Māori,
- increased connections to outdoor space,
- inclusion of a kīhini (kitchen) in the new designs,
- the blessing of new buildings by kaumātua (elders),
- the inclusive nature of an ILE, and
- Year 7 / 8 composite classes that enable collective learning and tuākana–tēina relationships.

In exploring the needs of Māori priority learners, I also found that the collective skill set afforded by multiple teachers in an ILE usually meant that at least one teacher had expertise in culturally responsive practice and could therefore model this practice in the ILE. This was useful in immersing all students in the ILE in Māori language and culture and in supporting less

competent teachers to develop a culturally responsive teaching style. It is for these reasons that I suggest school leaders consider the team's ability to collectively respond to Māori identity, language, and culture as they select ILE teacher candidates.

It is also crucial that educators remain cognisant of the inability of teachers to develop quality relationships with all students, particularly when the ILE exceeds three teachers. Given that relationships and engagement with Māori learners is fundamental to culturally responsive practice (Education Council, 2011), this finding must be given key consideration if the potential of ILEs to improve outcomes for priority learners is to be realised. The Ministry of Education (2016) advocates for collective consideration of the design of physical space, the development of relationships with Māori and Pasifika students, whānau and the wider community, and the ability of teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching pedagogies.

The use of composite Year 7 and 8 classes emerged as one of the most useful systems available to support transition of students and teachers. Composite classes were experienced by most study participants. Relationships with and expectations of Year 8 students and their parents / whānau were pre-existing, and therefore, ILE-experienced students played a key role in modelling ILE culture and expectations to the incoming Year 7 cohort. Empirical evidence produced by Hill and Jones (2018) adds further weight to the increased student–teacher familiarity afforded by having the same teacher and composite classes. Students assigned to the same teacher for a second time in a higher grade showed improved academic performance (Hill & Jones, 2018). Clearly, composite class structures are ideal in the ILE context.

In summary, the need to keep priority learners, in particular Māori and Pasifika learners, at the forefront of transition decision-making is crucial. Respondents I interviewed were positive about the capacity of ILEs to reflect culturally responsive practices and for teachers to work collaboratively in the ILE space to respond to the needs of priority learners. Results from the present enquiries encourage the use of composite classes in the intermediate school environment.

## Transition by Phase

The need for transition to be a continuous process commencing long before occupation of the collaborative space was discussed in the "Professional Learning and Development" section of the chapter. Interviewee responses I obtained resonate with the ILE transition process described by Osborne (2018) as encompassing three key phases: preparing, implementing and sustaining change. The following section discusses key content that emerged at each of the three transition phases.

### The Preparation Stage

Elements considered crucial in the preparation stage of transition included professional learning focused on supporting teachers to develop strategies and systems for MLP, including visits to other ILEs and opportunities to trial MLP. This finding is in agreement with O'Reilly (2016). Professional learning focused on the development of interpersonal skills was also deemed important by practicing teachers (Alterator & Deed, 2013). Communicating the rationale and logistics to parents and whānau, and teacher input into the physical design of class

areas, were common themes in my research journey. In addition, teacher input into the composition of the proposed teaching team was also seen as important preparation for transition.

Physical space was a key challenge cited by participants in this study, which indicates that more attention should be applied to this element. Mahat et al. (2017) suggests that teachers are initially most concerned about configuring the new space and the use of furniture in that space.

### The Implementation Stage

A focus on activities aimed at developing relationships with students, and on facilitating the development of the desired ILE skills and culture are recommended for the implementation phase of transition. The success of teaching and learning founded on the quality of relationships built between the teacher and student is well supported (Education Council, 2017; Education Review Office, 2018; Hill & Jones, 2018).

### The Sustaining Change Stage

The sustaining change phase of transition indicates a need to explore how school-wide systems enable desired practice. An increase in evidence-based reflection and the use of student voice during this phase is advised because developing these "habits" informs further change. Support for an ongoing focus on evaluating the impact of pedagogy is widespread (Bendikson, 2015; Education Council, 2017; Hattie, 2009).

### Ongoing Elements of Transition

Study participants identified elements of transition that should continue throughout all phases of the process. These included PLD content focused on strengthening relationships, and activities aimed at cementing ownership of school vision and coherence of practice. The interrelation of vision and practice is well documented by Atkin (1996), the Education Review Office (2015a), the Ministry of Education (2007) and Sinek (2009). Clearly, transition is a unique process for each teacher, and therefore, it needs to be personalised if quality outcomes for students are to be achieved. Although the findings from the present study provide a useful steer regarding the scope, general content and timing of ILE transition elements, I believe the needs and interests of individual teachers must take precedence when planning ILE transitions.

## Elements Specific to Intermediate Contexts

By limiting the focus of this study to the intermediate context, and by making use of available literature, it has been possible to decipher to some degree which transition elements are relevant to primary school settings, and which findings are specific to the intermediate context. The comparison indicates only a small number of ILE elements are specific to the intermediate context. While these findings are also applicable to primary school settings in a general sense, they are considered to be more critical in the intermediate context. These elements have already been mentioned throughout this chapter; however, the purpose of this section is to reinforce and provide additional commentary about these elements.

### Parent–Whānau Induction

The first element specific to the intermediate context is that of inducting parents–whānau into ILEs. Many parents and extended whānau may have never encountered ILE before, and therefore, the goals and logistics of this new approach must be clearly communicated. Intermediate schools amalgamate students from a number of different primary schools, resulting in a conglomerate of parents and whānau, schools and ILEs, and experiences and ideas. It is therefore crucial that communication and induction are thorough, enabling stakeholder views to be valued while clearly outlining the distinct and new context of the intermediate school's ILE programme. As discussed in the "Vision", "Leadership" and "Parent and Whānau" sections of this chapter, this process should be supported by school leaders and a united staff, who together have a clear understanding of the rationale for change and the principles that underpin it. Communications to parents should be aligned to the school's vision, grounded in research and applied to daily teaching practice.

**Composite Classes**

The second element found to be highly relevant to the intermediate context was the composite Year 7 and 8 class structure. As discussed in the "Student" section of this chapter, composite classes were seen by participants as useful in supporting students from both levels. Year 7 students were provided with Year 8 role models, and Year 8 students, together with their whānau, had pre-existing relationships with ILE teachers and with other students.

**Timetabled Events**

The final variable found to be specific to the intermediate context was the impact of timetabled events on an ILE. The age, stage and curriculum expectations of intermediate students usually means an increase in timetabled events in comparison to a primary school setting (New Zealand Association for Middle and Intermediate Schooling, n.d.). The most common events are technology seminars, education outside the classroom (EOTC) and health and physical education (HPE). More attention must be given to the timetabling of these events in an ILE because participants in the current study reported that splitting classes within an ILE across timetabled events can be extremely problematic, and that such splits can have a detrimental effect on the whole collaborative programme.

## Limitations to the Current Research

A limitation of this study was that it examined only the perceptions of teachers who had transitioned to ILEs. Gathering the perceptions of school leaders would have generated a deeper understanding of the issues raised and of possible remedies. A further limitation was restricting the school context to intermediates. Although the narrower focus allowed an in-depth analysis, it also restricted the generalisability of research findings.

Limitations were also evident with the use of a rating scale (a semantic differential) to evaluate questionnaire responses. Rating-scale items were used in the questionnaire to reveal teachers' levels of readiness, and the level of challenge posed by a range of variables. While these items enabled participants to quickly select a box to tick, it was impossible to know how carefully each participant considered each item. A further challenge was the subjectivity inherent in the

scale, which made comparison between participants' selections problematic. Efforts were made to increase the validity of scale items by probing for more information during the semi-structured interviews. This was helpful; however, it did sometimes result in a mismatch of meaning between the scale item and the interview response. For example, Teacher 1 scored high in readiness (second best score overall), but this teacher's comments at interview indicated otherwise.

## Recommendations for Future Research

The inference that ILEs may be better for responding to the needs of priority learners and / or displaying culturally responsive teaching practice is an important, albeit unanticipated study finding. Further research focused on the ability of ILEs to respond to the needs of priority learners is highly recommended. Such research could be scoped to include teachers who are identified as utilising MLP, or those who are working in ILEs characterised by collaborative teaching. Once the scope is defined, a mixed-methods approach involving priority students, their whānau and their teachers could be adopted.

The suggestion from some teachers that developing strong, learning-focused relationships with students is more difficult in an ILE is of concern. Consequently, detailed research on the theme of developing powerful student–teacher connections in an ILE is advised. A large-scale study gathering perceptions from both students and teachers that aims to identify teacher strategies and dispositions that eventuate in strong connections, is recommended.

As indicated in the "Limitations to the Current Research" section of this chapter, the current work encompassed the perceptions of only a few teachers. In developing a richer understanding of the role of leadership during transition, it

would be useful to conduct another study to explore school leaders' perceptions of their role in supporting ILE transitions. Comparing and contrasting the views of teachers and leaders would be useful in increasing the rigour and the validity of key findings.

The topic of school appraisal systems, and the appropriateness of some elements for ILEs, emerged frequently during the course of this investigation. I have made recommendations regarding the role of senior leaders and the integration of external frameworks, such as the *Standard for the Teaching Profession* (Education Council, 2017) in school appraisal systems. I have queried the appropriateness of traditional walk-throughs in a context where all practice is deprivatised. I have also questioned the rigour of teacher reflection. Consequently, this study leads me to recommend that further research is undertaken on the topic of teacher appraisal in an ILE setting, or a setting characterised by MLP. Such research should evaluate existing systems from the point of view of both appraisers and appraisees. This recommended study should seek to inform the education sector of an appraisal system that would be meaningful and fit for purpose.

# Chapter Six: Conclusion

This chapter capitalises on the evidence of previous chapters to satisfy the overall research aim — to provide NZ educators with a set of recommendations to inform future ILE transitions. The first section is a list of overall recommendations deemed essential for educators embarking on ILE transition. The second is a diagram that summarises the fundamental components of an effective transition programme.

## Recommendations

- Further attention to the development of rigorous transition processes is required. Like in the open-plan era, the quality of the transition process has an impact on teacher readiness, and consequently, teacher effectiveness (O'Reilly, 2016).
- All teachers should be involved in transition. However, transition processes should be focused on meeting the needs of 21st Century learners and must be applicable to any physical classroom space.
- School leaders need to take further responsibility for leading transition. Staff must be united in the rationale for change, the development of a whole-school vision and aligned pedagogical principles. The development of a school-wide PLD plan is integral to success.
- Modern learning practice should underpin 21st Century learning. This practice can be enacted in both single cells and collaborative learning environments.
- More structures are needed to underpin transition processes, such as:
    - the exploration of evidence-based pedagogy;

    - the implementation of evaluation systems; and
    - general research on leading innovative learning.
- The physical environment does have an impact on learning. To maximise positive impact, designers and educators need to work closely together, learn from relevant research, and from teachers and students already occupying ILEs.
- Transition is a highly unique experience for each teacher; therefore, a transition programme needs to maximise choice by including a variety of PLD content and different modes of delivery.
- In terms of priority learners, unanticipated findings suggest the collective wisdom offered by teachers in ILEs increases the likelihood of culturally responsive practice and enables shared responsibility for the needs of priority learners. More research is recommended in this area.

## Fundamentals of an Effective Transition Programme

- The need for a whole-school vision and the exploration of MLP is reinforced in Figure 8. This figure also summarises other components highly recommended for successful transition.


Figure 8. Key transition components

If the above recommendations are adopted together with the components of an effective transition programme, it is likely to result in teachers being well prepared to meet the needs of 21st Century learners.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Information for Research Participants

Date

Dear _____,

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in a study that aims to investigate from a teacher's perspective, the experiences of teachers in different school settings transitioning from single-cell classrooms to Innovative Learning Environments. This study will provide key data that will form the basis of my thesis for a MEd Leadership at the University of Waikato and inform and guide subsequent conference/colloquia presentations and publications.

The study will enable me to gain insights into the experiences of teachers who have made their first transition to an Innovative Learning Environment, the enablers and challenges and the recommendations they have to support future transitions.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and the information you share and your school will be treated confidentially and will not be shared with anyone; this includes your school principal and the leadership team. Should you agree to participate it will involve an online questionnaire which will take no more than 30 minutes to complete and a face to face interview lasting no more than 60 minutes. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity and that of your schools.

You are welcome to ask any questions about the study at any stage. Once you have given your consent, I will make the online questionnaire available to you. Following this and at a time and place suitable to you, I will complete a face to face interview. The general themes will be made available to you prior to the interview.

You have the right to express any concerns about the process or other matters to myself or my supervisor, Anthony Fisher, whose contact details I have included overleaf. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and data from the questionnaire and/or semi-structured interviews can be removed up until September 01 when analysis will commence. You will need to advise me in writing of your intent to withdraw if you choose to.

It is anticipated the data gathering will commence on June 29 and conclude by August 31, 2018. An electronic copy of the thesis will become widely available and it will be lodged permanently in the University’s digital repository Research Commons.

Any questions or concerns regarding the study can be directed to myself or my supervisor, and I have included our contact details below.

Rochelle Jensen
rochellej@tauranga-int.school.nz
Phone 021 552 964

Anthony Fisher
anthony.fisher@waikato.ac.nz
Phone: (07) 838 4466 Ext. 7836

If you are willing to participate, please return the consent form to me.

Thank you for considering this request.

Kind Regards

Rochelle Jensen

Consent Form

I.....(print your name), have been fully informed about the study and consent to participate.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time up until September 1st when analysis commences. I will advise the researcher of my intent to withdraw in writing should I decide to do so. Following notification of my decision to withdraw, any information pertaining to my involvement to that point will be destroyed.

I understand that while no absolute guarantee of anonymity can be given, the researcher will make every effort to protect my identity and privacy and that of my school's through the use of pseudonyms. All information shared by me will be treated as confidential. I understand that five years after the conclusion of the study any personal details which might enable the identification of participants will be destroyed.

I understand that an online questionnaire containing both open and closed questions and involving no more than 30 minutes of my time will be used to collect general information about my transition experiences.

I understand that this will be followed by a semi-structured interview of no more than 60 minutes. Here I will be asked both open and closed questions. The date and time of this interview will be negotiated to ensure it is suitable to me. The interview will be digitally recorded and interview notes will be taken during the interview to ensure my responses are accurately recorded. I may decline to answer any question during the interview and know that I will have the opportunity to review and comment on the written summary of my interview responses prior to analysing and reporting.

While ownership of the analysed data and any subsequent publications will be the property of the researcher, my own interview data is owned by me, as a participant.

I am aware that I have the right to express any concerns about the process or other matters to the researcher. If these concerns are not resolved to my satisfaction I may withdraw from the study.

Signature.....
Date.....
Phone.....
Email.....

## Appendix B: Questionnaire

Section 1 of 6

# Transitioning to an Innovative Learning Environment.

This research aims to support intermediate teachers transitioning from single -cell classrooms to ILEs by developing a set of recommendations for successful transition.

Please note that the information you share including the name of your school and your name will be treated confidentially and will not be shared with anyone. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity and that of your school.

This questionnaire will take approx. 30 mins to complete. A structured face -to- face interview will follow at a time that is suitable for you.

Many thanks for your support.
Rochelle Jensen - 021 552 964

Email address *

Valid email address

This form is collecting email addresses. Change settings

Name: *

School Name: *

Short-answer text

Are you a fully registered New Zealand teacher ? *

- Yes
- No

What is your current role? *

- Teacher
- Middle Leader
- Deputy Principal
- Principal

Are you teaching in an ILE for at least a 0.6 component? *

- Yes
- No

During your teaching career, have you made a transition from a single cell to an ILE? *

- Yes
- No

Are you currently teaching in an ILE at an intermediate school? *

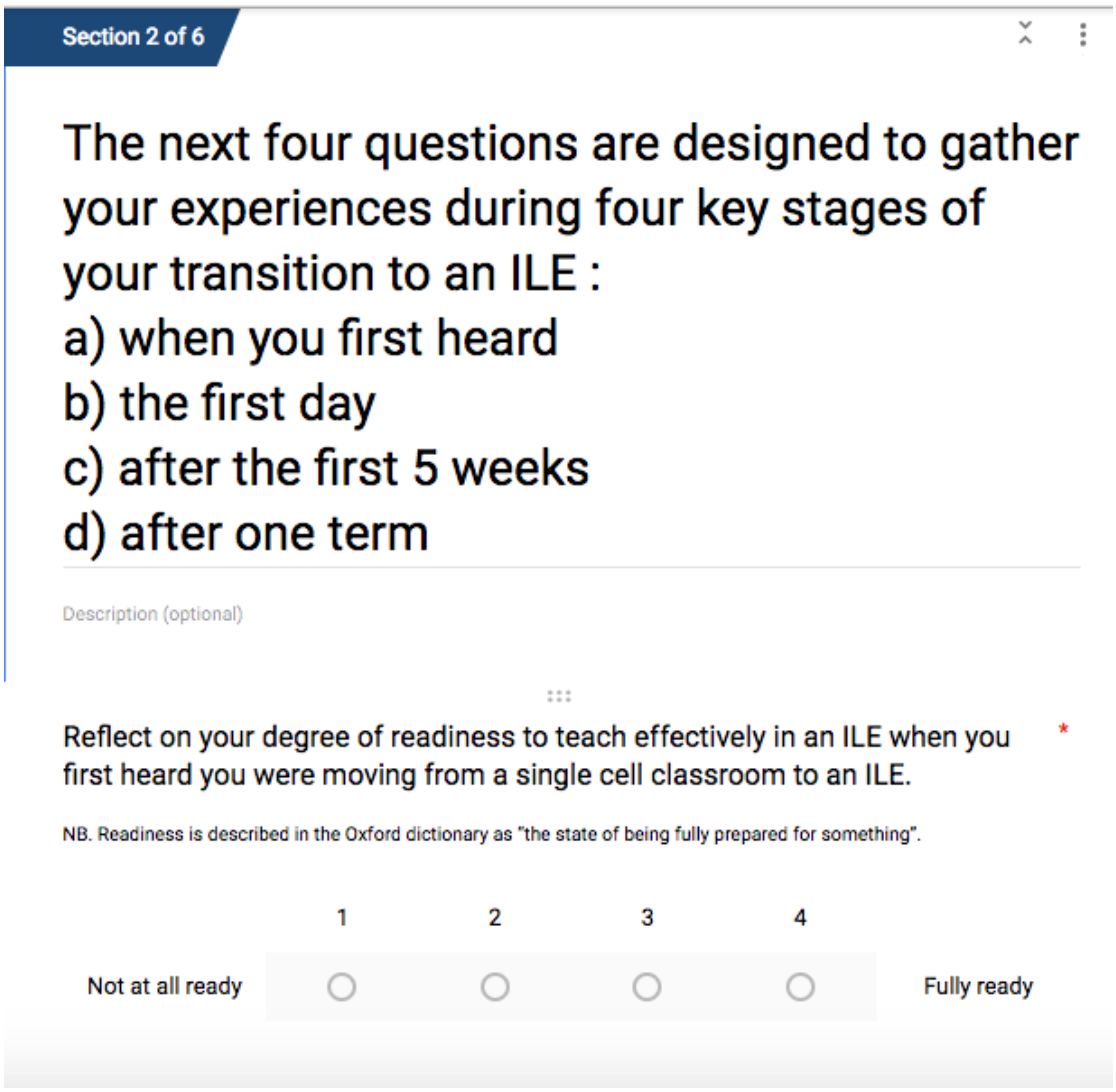
- Yes
- No
- Other...

What level were you teaching in the single-cell before you transitioned to an ILE? *

- Junior - Y0-Y3
- Middle - Y4-Y6
- Senior - Y7-Y8
- Other...

What level are you currently teaching? *

- Year 7
- Year 8
- Year 7 and Year 8
- Other...


Section 2 of 6
The next four questions are designed to gather your experiences during four key stages of your transition to an ILE :
a) when you first heard
b) the first day
c) after the first 5 weeks
d) after one term
Description (optional)
Reflect on your degree of readiness to teach effectively in an ILE when you first heard you were moving from a single cell classroom to an ILE. *
NB. Readiness is described in the Oxford dictionary as "the state of being fully prepared for something".
1
2
3
4
Not at all ready
Fully ready

What contributed to these feelings? *

Long-answer text

Reflect on your degree of readiness to teach effectively in an ILE after the first five weeks in the ILE *

NB. Readiness is described in the Oxford dictionary as "the state of being fully prepared for something".

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not at all ready | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | Fully ready |

What contributed to these feelings? *

Long-answer text

Reflect on your degree of readiness to teach effectively in an ILE after the first term in the ILE *

NB. Readiness is described in the Oxford dictionary as "the state of being fully prepared for something".

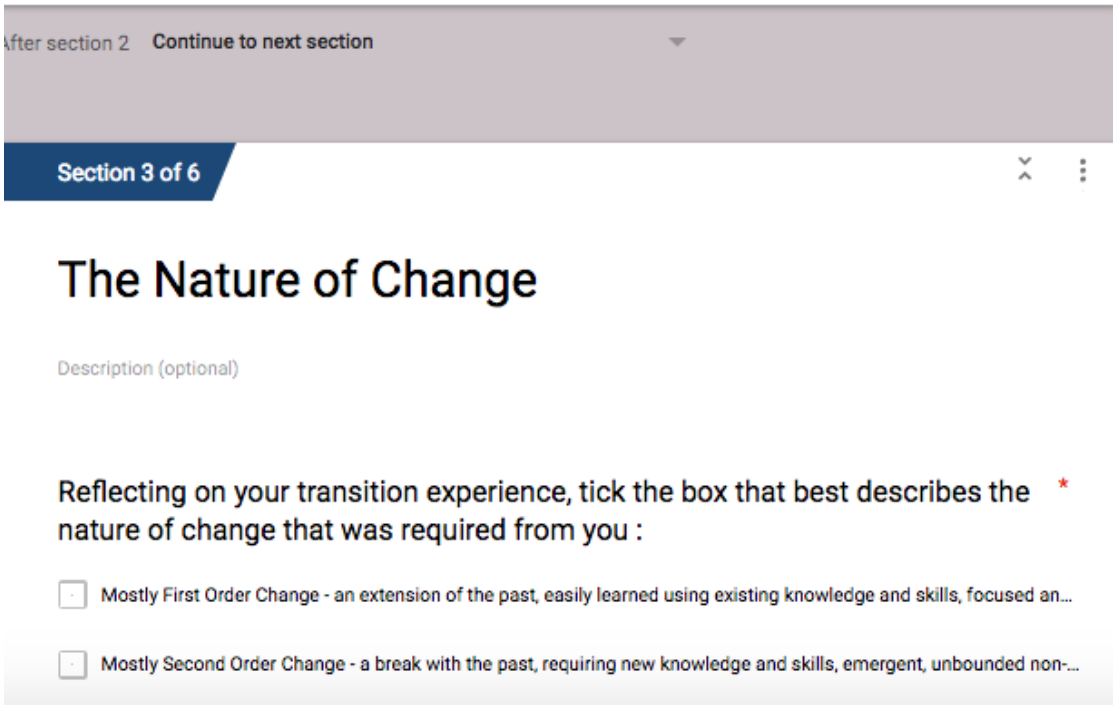
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not at all ready | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | Fully ready |

What contributed to these feelings? *

Long-answer text

Briefly describe what you perceive as effective teaching in an ILE : *

Long-answer text



# Challenges

This section aims to gather your feedback on the greatest challenges experienced during your transition experience.

**Please consider the following elements in relation to the level of challenge they posed for you during your transitioning to an ILE** *

| | No Challenge (an eff... | Limited Challenge | Some Challenge | Significant Challenge ... |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Students' needs inclu... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Support, buy-in from ... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Appropriateness of th... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Availability of desired ... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Access to resources i... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Leadership of the cha... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Vision for teaching an... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Alignment of school s... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Access to appropriate... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Teacher beliefs and ... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Teacher knowledge, s... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Learning accountabili... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| EQ, social and collabo... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Meeting the needs of ... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Shared understanding... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Knowledge of co-teac... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| PLD - availability and ... | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Section 5 of 6

# Enablers

What do you recommend is put in place in the future to support teachers transitioning from a single -cell to an ILE ?

Before - while still teaching in a single cell *

Long-answer text

During - the first 5 weeks of teaching in an ILE *

Long-answer text

After - between 10 - 40 weeks after the transition *

Long-answer text

Intermediate Context - Is there anything specific to the intermediate context that you think is necessary to support teachers transitioning to an ILE in an intermediate context?

Section 6 of 6

## Section title (optional)

Description (optional)

Further Comments (optional)

Long-answer text

## Appendix C: Field Notes from Interviews

| Transcript – Semi-structured Interview - Teacher 1 |
|---|
| **Content:**<br>1. Completed general info. tables pertaining to the teacher and the school.<br>2. Discussion re themes below. |
| **Content:** |
| Teaching Team<br>• Importance, characteristics, skill set, optimal number, place of PCTs …<br>-Prefer 3 or 4. 2 is risky, easier for there to be a personality clash or for one person to be too dominant. More teachers, more options for co-teaching.<br>-Improves your practice, everyone should have to do it. If went back to a single cell I would be a better teacher. Learnt through watching them, sharing ideas, resources, ways of tackling. Exposes you to way more, gets you out of a rut.<br>-Because you can't teach the same way you did in a single cell, I have been forced to throw out stuff that I probably just would have kept recycling over and over. Opens up your scope.<br>-Days I dislike it are when I'm tired, just want to shut down and do my own thing.<br>-You have to compromise all the time and that makes you a better teacher. You have to give some things up. Pick your battles.<br>-How teams decided - you need people that want to be there, but I think everyone to a certain degree should be exposed to some kind of collaborative structure in terms of own professional growth but ultimately you need buy-in.<br>-Need ownership into team going in. It is hard so you do need to make some things easier in terms of structure and systems.<br>-Careful selection - personality matching.<br>PCTs |

-Good for them. Could be overwhelming for a PCT. They also need a chance to go to single cell to find out who they are. Otherwise they could be constantly told to do things rather than doing it their way. Everyone needs to have an equal say.

-Planning is shared, for maths we stream so plan for different groups.

-This term struggling as I don't feel like I have that vibe with my class, the we do things this way. We have this as a whole house but it's not as concentrated.

Professional Learning

- Type /content/ time PLD was available, recommendations for appropriate PL, whole staff of just for those moving to ILE.

-I had a tech block where I went to two syndicates and had a look around. Then we have had two ILE huis.

-Was going in with tchs. who had been there before.

-Looking at the models it seemed like everyone was still finding their way. Didn't feel like I had to know a lot about it even though I was coming in as the leader. Principles of effective teaching still remain. Still non-negotiables and then we have gone with let's see what works. Trial and error.

-Useful PLD would have been: visiting other schools, having a look at planning and working out how others plan stuff, some things are specific to your env. working with staff effectively, and co-tch. models - knowing other ways to do it instead of just trying to work it out yourself and reinvent the wheel. Working collaboratively while in single cell with those whom you are going to work with.

-Spend as much time looking at other models and visiting them.

-ILE hui are good - two a term would be good. Need one in middle of term. Time and place for middle leaders to talk about the nature of dealing with your other teachers. Maybe one from each team and communicate from different perspectives.

-Senior leaders' role to support transition - implement a system so teachers get to spend time in ILE. Actually experience it. All that system stuff, you need to be able to see it and do it, be it.

Come to ILE hui - sharing ideas and resources. Hear the day to stories.

Time to observe ILEs.

Different co-teaching models.

Emotional intelligence - staff.

Matching korero - mainstream with a mainstream syndicate.

Parents / Community Relationships

- What supports / hinders the development of this relationship?

-Addressed parents at start of year, we have had no real issues.

School Vision

- How formulated? For whom? Student input?

-Not sure there is a different vision, the pedagogy we want is different, it is understood we do things differently in an ILE. We could do that.

-Lack of vision articulated. There is a different vision I don't know what it is. MLP in a single cell env. is definitely possible because in a way when you have your group there is a time when you need to shut shop.

-Heaps of benefits to ILE but think you could do all those things in a single cell if your teachers were truly collaborative. The only thing about an ILE is you are forced to logistically, if you don't, it's torture. Still need to have time with our whānau class to keep that kind of stuff going but everything else can be done. Advantages are teacher workload with planning, marking - we are more efficient. When you are on the job it's harder but the time out of that is easier, more streamlined.

-In terms of teacher well-being - great to have those other adults to bounce off. Good for teacher well-being.

-You are not going to click with all your kids and they are not going to all click with you.

-It's good for the kids to have a range of teachers, can share difficult kids around. We have dynamic grouping; our inquiry groups aren't linked to any of our natural groupings and they are the best groups we have. Bhv. is so good. Formed by teachers - split bhv., TAI ...

-The expectations are the same, however not all systems fit.

-Single cells get boring really quick. Would prefer ILE if great team. Impact of team is absolutely huge. You can see this even with relievers, they are not on same page.

Systems Alignment

-School systems - alignment. It is clear that this is a bit different but lack of direction re how it could look.

-ILEs need priority in terms of choosing some aspects of timetabling. Our whole programme relies on one timetable, i.e. the Mandarin. Not being precious, just a domino effect. Creature of habit, school-based timetables are flicked out with a year change - doesn't work with ILEs. Things need to adapt. Anything to avoid being split.

-Huge amounts of trial, error and reflection - systems that may have worked in term 1, won't necessarily work in term 3, naturally always inquiring, going all the time. More formal system may become a pain in bum. In a team of four people, complacency does not tend to happen because someone gets sick of it.

"We think we are doing okay, it's hard to know."

Allow opportunities to think through things like assessment, parent meetings and things that will pop up that will require thought that weren't expected.

It was clear that some systems needed to be different, but there was a lack of direction on how it could look.

<u>Change Management and Leadership</u>

- Role of leadership team, explore first or second order change.

-Middle leader role - have more discussions with my team around their teaching and planning, more involved in their day-to-day practice as opposed to going in, you don't get a really authentic idea of what's going on. I feel more involved in their everyday practice.

-The first 5 weeks are super challenging, so I suppose a bit of TLC [was important] for those teachers, as cortisol levels went through the roof right at the start when adjusting to the noise, stimulation and general human overload.

<u>The Environment</u>

- Importance of, significant elements, design involvement?

-Need to be able to close off.

-Start small with numbers - and then scaffold out.

-Scaffold the kids into the environment, build the relationships, swap over for a few things, then slowly open up further.

-Need a whānau area big enough for each class is important.

Students

Priority Learners / Culturally Responsive Practice

- Env. better? How teachers supported to better meet their needs?

-Don't feel like I have a class culture like I used to, been hard to connect with my class as we are constantly moving around.

-I probably have a better connection with all the kids in the house in a general sense, but it has been at the sacrifice of my class.

-Need whānau classes - needs to be accountability for everyone, so no-one falls through the cracks.

-PLs - better deal - yes and no. We can stream and target more. One group has 40, the other has 18, they get a bloody good deal. Same for writing. I think they do to be honest. It's not so obvious who they are, they don't know.

Summary

Ways to Support Transition:

-Opportunity to actually witness it.

-Have someone that has been in there before - transition was helped by a supportive team of teachers who were on the same journey and with ones who had been in ILE before.

-Trial MLP in own class. Over the years I had done this, so was familiar with aspects such as accountability, shared reporting, expectations and assessment, transitions.

-Know who you will working together with in advance.

-In my experience, transitioning to the environment was made easier by already having teachers in the ILE who had been there before. This could go either way, but I think relying my team for the first few weeks and trusting their experience was so important.

-I had met with members of my new team who had been working in an ILE for a couple of years prior to this and heard about their experiences. I visited two ILEs at the school upon learning I would be in one where I was able to seek out and plan genuine next steps in furthering my knowledge.

-Experience co-teaching classes if at all possible. Over the years I had done this, so was familiar with aspects such as accountability, shared reporting, expectations and assessment as well as transitions.

Transcript – Semi-structured Interview - Teacher 2

**Content:**

1. Completed general info. tables pertaining to the teacher and the school.
2. Discussion re themes below.

**Content:**

Teaching Team

- Importance, characteristics, skill set, optimal number, place of PCTs …

-All very experienced, 5 years +.

-We had all worked together before moving to the ILE.

-We were asked who was interested. Team leaders who said yes then asked their team.

-Characteristics - flexibility is the biggest thing, need to be able to cope, support each other.

-Teachers need ownership of decision to be in ILE. Now other teaches want to be in it, but no-one wants to move.

Professional Learning

- Type / content / time PLD was available, recommendations for appropriate PLD, whole staff or just for those moving to ILE?

-Conference in Wellington re MLE.

-Put together student agency unit, did last year. All classes did that this year. Had huge impact. Common language.

-Started working collaboratively in single cell spaces. Did maths programme on lesser scale in single cells. Science and soc. science were done on rotation system.

-We do a lot of reading ourselves, seek out info. from other schools.

-External support via an experienced mentor would be useful to help reflect on what is working and what isn't.

-We visited a couple of schools, mostly full primaries.

-Models of planning, etc. would have been useful. We weren't sure what the expectations were.

-We don't think our planning is as thorough as it was when we were in single cell.

Parents / Community Relationships

- What supports / hinders the development of this relationship?

-Parents felt very strongly about the need for students to identify with one teacher. Had prior experience and not all positive. As we were first, we communicated very thoroughly. Preparing students for college and single-cell environments was a concern for parents.

-One hurdle we had to overcome was the mixed attitudes of both students and parents who had had prior (and not necessarily positive) experiences with ILEs at their primary schools … Parents had the perception that ILEs were more suited for junior classes. We met with parents early in the year to put their minds at rest.

-Parent meeting early in year. Shared rationale.

-We have had no negative parent interaction. No questioning. A lot less than previous years.

School Vision

- How formulated? For whom? Student input?

-Two visions - single cell and ILE. Lots of tchs. anti as were around in open plan era.

-Should be one vision and desired pedagogy for whole school; we have two. Ideal is that you might have some physical ILE spaces, but I feel everyone should be doing it. Even if you are working in a single-cell classroom, there should still be collaboration with the other classes, working with them as much as possible.

-Now they're starting to see how it is working, I think interest is growing. Property plan to open up further spaces.

-Principal has awareness of ILEs, particularly overseas.

-If one teacher left, not a big impact, but if more than one left it would be a big challenge as we did so much preparation and work, no-one else has been a part of that.

Change Management and Leadership

- Role of leadership team, explore first or second order change.

-We didn't really have any in support from management. We did it ourselves, so we approached principal to say we wanted to go to conference, they said whatever we needed to prepare was fine.

-We don’t really have any management that would have any idea what's going on in there.

-Regular meetings with other team leader in ILE, doing same sort of things but different approach.

School Systems

-No specific hurdles. Although when working collaboratively, school-based activities impact on a shared space more, e.g. hearing and vision testing.

Senior Leaders

-We would have liked one of our 4 to be involved in the process. They have a lack of knowledge so if we did have a parent jumping up and down, they would have no idea and couldn’t come in and support us.

-Someone that was part of the transition along with the team would be good as they could be our support person. We feel like we have done this on our own, we feel like we are doing a really good job and happy with what’s happening but no-one’s really aware of what’s going on.

Middle Leader Role

-No hiding. Tchs. are a lot more accountable, can’t be off task.

-Team leader, you get to see a lot more of their practice, highly visible.

Adaptive Pedagogy / Teaching Programme / Review

-We met every day after school for the first 4 weeks, only briefly, to discuss what was successful and what needed to change, instead of carrying on with things that just didn't work.

-Reflect on a daily basis, have become far more reflective because we talk about it together.

-We have asked for a review mtg. with our senior leaders present.

Maths - Highly Effective

-Mon - starter task - all classes complete. Check understanding.

-Tues / Wed / Thurs – workshops - each tch. runs a workshop except one who is the rover.

-We run traffic light system - red - no und. - expected to be at a workshop. Orange - think I’ve got it.

-Set open tasks.

-Fri - assessment task.

-Tchs. meet at end of day to decide what will happen tomorrow. Needs to happen on the day.

Respond to needs. May need to run workshops again.

-Kids response is outstanding. Only have to shoulder tap 10 kids to say 'hey you need to go to workshop'.

-Student like the choice of whether they go to workshop or not. We also let them work with one learning partner.

-Like the fact there is a roving teacher.

-Plan on Google docs. Names of kids who have attend are on this. Similar thing for literacy. Writing we all take separate things and the kids rotate through them.

-Finding lots of efficiencies.

-*First 5 weeks adapting our voices, being considerate to each other, we notice how well we do this when we get a reliever in who isn't aware.*

<u>The Environment</u>

- Importance of, significant elements, design involvement?

-Noise is not a factor in our space. Highly effective space. We can be taking workshops with doors wide open and we don't hear each other.

-Tch committee had input into design. Our BOT took control. I could have been involved if I wanted to but didn't think I was going to be at the school the following year.

-Highly effective design. We all have bifold doors that can be closed when required. Central space and three ind. spaces.

-External doors on all three spaces. No demarcation on centre space. Workshops are all in three spaces. Each teacher and student has a designated classroom.

-25% in own space.

-75% we work collaboratively.

<u>Furniture</u>

-Principal felt strongly that collaborative spaces should be furnished identically as staff in these spaces would change.

-Thought it's not about tch. choice, it's about the space. Storage is an issue for us.

<u>Students</u>

-Made student agency a big part of our programme, the kids have taken to it like ducks to water.

-They have freedom and feel positive that they are learning.

-Ongoing assessment data shows great progress.

- Priority learners - env. better? How teachers supported to better meet their needs?

-When support teacher comes in, they are not withdrawn completely from space to work, are still within close proximity to rest of class. Not identified quite as explicitly as a priority learner.

Quotes / Key Messages

Have tch. team working together for the year prior allows strengths to become well known, trial systems to see how they work.

Drive has been from us. A lot of work been done but been driven by us.

Setting up the team long before you move [is important]. Building the relationship between the team members so you know how you work together and can start thinking about strengths and weaknesses is crucial.

Prefer ILE, shared responsibility, can work more efficiently. Can have fun doing it. Makes you more accountable. No sit down, shut up work.

Ongoing support, and more support (from outside the team), would have been useful to help reflect on what is working and what isn't.

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-As a team we had done a lot of preparation. Attended an ILE conference, visited other ILEs and focused on building student agency.

-All of us made it the focus of our teaching inquiry. Time to read, visit existing ILEs, attend PD and lots of discussion and reflection. We trialled a lot of things while still in our single-cell classes.

Developed a unit to start the year that promotes student agency. Trialled this in our single-cell classes so we could reflect and tweak before teaching in the ILE.

Transcript – Semi-structured Interview - Teacher 3

**Content:**

1. Completed general info. tables pertaining to the teacher and the school.
2. Discussion re themes below.

Teaching Team

- Importance, characteristics, skill set, optimal number, place of PCTs ...

-No of tchs. - 3-4 optimum, if 2 teachers there are limited options, one is likely to teach and the other roam, more options to respond with more teachers.

-PCTs - careful they don't lean on more experienced teachers, need to make sure strengths are utilised and weaknesses strengthened. Leader needs to make sure this happens.

-Skills - complementary strengths important, recognise strengths, flexible thinkers, willingness to try new things, relate well to kids / connect to all, get on with other teachers, teachers with passion.

-Essential to get the team right. New teachers in must have a say.

-Team leader - needs to be a facilitator as well as share views, lead in a distributed way.

-Get working together beforehand.

-Don't hold on to anything too tightly.

Professional Learning

- Type / content / time PLD was available, recommendations for appropriate PL, whole staff or just for those moving to ILE

-Our team sourced our own. Competed this and normal whole school PLD.

-Must first understand the pedagogy. Courses like Mind labs - digital and collaborative learning, CORE has a few online courses. I completed the Mind lab paper and a CORE ed. online course.

-Understand co-teaching models. Contemporary pedagogy.

-Guide on side - someone to bounce ideas off, ask the right questions. Angela from CORE was excellent. Came in for 1 day, we were all released. Had experience in ILE and in coaching and mentoring.

-Ongoing trial, error and reflection while in space. Need permission to keep changing. Iterative.

-Kept thinking we had to get it right.

-Reflected on is it working for the kids? What's the learning? Sometimes we thought this is great but then we thought more deeply, realised it was great / easier for us (teachers) but not good for kids' learning.

-Could have had a better reflection system to record the thinking, we could talk about it but no record to reflect back on.

-Piloted in hall for a year before move to ILE.

-Had worked collaboratively with some of the teachers while still in single cell. We planned together and did maths and inquiry together, some interest group teaching. Important to experience co-teaching as much as possible.

-Need to understand the pedagogy behind it, we did a couple of courses one was focused on digital and collaborative learning. Need to understand that it's being done because it's good teaching not because it's the latest fad.

-People need to get excited and passionate about it before they try and do it. If it's like, right you need to plan everything together and run workshops and you're like okay why. We spent a lot of time looking at the stuff behind it we were so excited about it so we knew what we wanted it to be like so we had a goal, a vision in our head this is what kept us going when it got really tough.

Parents / Community Relationships

- What supports / hinders the development of this relationship?

-Existing relationships with students and the parents of the Yr. 7's that would be coming with us, they trusted us.

-As we had been working collaboratively parents also knew some of the other teachers.

-We had a parent meeting prior to explain what we were doing and why.

-Whānau / home groups important so parents and students have a point of contact, a champion, so they don't get lost, have a sense of belonging.

School Vision

- How formulated? For whom? Student input?

-We need to redo some on our buildings, this is all we'll get funding for, it's the latest thing, off you go.

-No-one was really that excited about it so us three teachers thought, we're already doing that stuff, we'll go for it.

-None of the school was doing anything that we were doing.

Change Management and Leadership

- Role of leadership team, explore first or second order change.

-Need permission to keep changing.

-ILE vision formed without support of senior leadership. Not driven by leadership.

-It should be something that is happening for all. Everyone should be doing 'it'.

-It makes me a better teacher. Much prefer ILEs than single cells. My starting idea gets better with input.

-It is - collaborative planning, flexible grouping, utilising teacher strengths, responding to student voice, offering more choice.

-Senior leadership provided the time and space but what we did was quite separate, in fact we were known as the zoo for a while until other staff started seeing that is was working, our data was good and the kids were loving it. We had requests from many parents who wanted their kids in the ILE.

-Supported by leadership to attend PLD and to visit schools.

-School systems and curriculum tension - when we wanted to do things differently for example instead of all doing recounts, we wanted to be a choice of the genre used to meet purpose. Curriculum heads said 'no' as concerned about moderation, etc.

-Our school held tight to 2 year odd and even cycle, same units were wheeled out and dusted off year after year. Parents who were pupils used to joke about it.

School Systems

We were trying to offer more flexibility for our students, there were quite a few things that we wanted to change because it didn't really suit the way we were working. Response was 'no', well it was 'yes' to start with, and then curriculum heads who had been doing the same thing for many years said 'no'. They were concerned about some of the logistics such as moderation and school-wide consistency.

The Environment

- Importance of, significant elements, design involvement?

-Four rooms with walls removed.

-Very constrained by MoE guidelines about what was allowed on the available footprint. Couldn't have an outdoor covered area.

-Made it difficult as the space lent itself to four even groups.

-We were updated on what was happening, shown plan.

Priority Learners / Culturally Responsive Practice

- Env. better? How teachers supported to better meet their needs?

-Need 1:1, small group, had more capacity to provide this in an ILE, could peel them off, could offer them more choices.

-More perspectives, more ideas in the mix as to how to respond to their needs.

-More likely for them to find a friend / a buddy in the ILE as more kids to choose from.

Quotes

"We learnt don't hold onto anything too tightly. We changed things constantly."

"We just needed someone to give us ideas and to almost give us permission to keep changing because we kept thinking we had to get it right, and we had to have the systems once we realised we would never have the systems and it would change constantly and you couldn't take anything anyone else was doing and apply it wholesale you had to figure out what was going to work for you."

"Needed a more formal system that recorded what we were thinking so we could revisit."

"Needed someone to bounce ideas off."

"Person responsible for them, parents to know who to contact. Someone to champion those."

"We were nicknamed the zoo for quite a while because we would have kids outside and doing all types of crazy things, for a while it was kind of ridiculed until they realised it was actually working and the results were good. Needs to be a school vision rather than just you guys go off and do this other stuff."

"We were given freedom if not support, so were pretty much told off you go, fight your battles with the curriculum heads, go do what you have to do. The principal was like I trust you as long as you

can show it is meeting all the criteria. Not driven by leadership, good in terms of paying for PD and giving us time to visit schools but we were kinda set loose to do our thing."

"Role of SLT - time and space to discuss what was going on, make sure curriculum stuff is being met."

"If driven from the top and was whole-school thing, I think it would be amazing."

"Need to get teacher excited about it, if you're just told you have to plan together and do all this stuff, you're like why, because we spent quite a bit of time looking at the stuff (contemporary pedagogy) behind it we were so excited. We knew what we wanted it to be like, we've got this vision in our head - that's our goal, that kept us going when it got really tough."

"Our mentor was incredible at helping us refine our systems and work out how to get what we wanted."

"By the end of the first term I think we started to be aware of how much we didn't know about being in an ILE - we started to work with Core Education to help us shape our ideas and mentor us to be able to do what we wanted to do."

Transcript – Semi-structured Interview - Teacher 4

**Content:**

1. Completed general info. tables pertaining to the teacher and the school.
2. Discussion re themes below.

**Content:**

Teaching Team

- Importance, characteristics, skill set, optimal number, place of PCTs …

-4 teachers - work as a 2 and a 2. All 4 plan together, all do inquiry together, but we do 2 and 2 for core subjects - maths and literacy. This is so easier to track students, otherwise way too much to deal with. Did 90 last year that was a little bit hard. Team time as 4 in morning, Maths as 60.

-Prefer working closely as a '2-4 is beneficial for planning, sharing strengths, workload but too hard to know 130 kids well.

-The 4 do everything at the same time to make things easier. We share all the planning. We are all helping each other.

PCTs

-Mixed feelings. Starting in single cell was really hard, no one really helped. I learnt a lot. However, if start in ILE you learnt a lot. Both have benefits, give teacher the opportunity to do both.

-I asked to be in an ILE.

Characteristics:

-Main thing is that you compromise and let people do the things they are good at and don't take over. A lot of people like to. Definitely important that you are considerate of your team members and make sure they feel valued. Let everyone have their little bit.

Professional Learning

- Type / content / time PLD was available, recommendations for appropriate PL, whole staff or just for those moving to ILE.

-Quite a lot - Mark Osborne, push was in doing ILE / MLP practices in your class. Making case for the BOT. I was doing flipped learning, collaborative, team teaching with teacher next door.

-Led by leadership team.

PD - lots in first year and has been ongoing.

Our DP has experience in ILE, brought it here, lots of passionate leaders, he brought it here.

Was a whole-school vision. Was a lot of push back but now everyone is doing it.

Leadership was really open to me trailing and testing things, to see if they worked.

Lots of PD from my school and from my own research also helped.

-Visits to other schools - not really as not many schools around the region doing it. Did see some but they weren't using it to their best advantage.

-Ongoing PLD - not anymore as we have all had it, not a big staff turnover.

-Mark Osborne - spoke at school 3 or 4 times. Ulearn was good to begin with but we stopped going as we had progressed and wasn't as relevant. We wanted the next step.

Reflection

Had blog going where I was recording what I was testing and trailing.

Blog - coaching doc. Regular coaching, talk to team leaders. Reflective professional docs and progressions. So, we could see how far we had come. Big for our school is tracking, making sure we can monitor and track every kids progress. We have big spreadsheet; all kids are tracked. Big parts of our discussions were using evidence of student progress.

Parents / Community Relationships

- What supports / hinders the development of this relationship?

-Parents - mostly supported, getting a lot better. Decile 10 stigma - parents old-school, want to make sure their kids are learning all the knowledge. Osborne held parent meetings, principal supported.

-We held a parent–whānau meeting and got an outside expert in. Our principal was there and involved, showing her full support.

School Vision

- How formulated? For whom? Student input?

-Principal and DP right on board - not sure principal had experience but into it and passionate.

Totally driven from the top. Very supportive. Some of our leadership team had taught in ILEs.

-Really important leadership team are all onboard with the same vision and they support and back each other.

-Leadership team very excited and very open to me giving things a go. Was always going in and asking about ideas.

-Student voice - did big focus on teaching kids why we have different environments, 21st learning skills, why are we collaborating, what are the skills we need in the future, why aren't we sitting down in row desks. Lots of classes and teams have done inquiry into MLEs with their kids - the why, getting the kids and parents onboard.

-We asked the students to work in small groups to come up with a list of skills / behaviours that will be necessary for the ILE to be a success. We refined their lists to 5 behaviours: collaboration, communication, creativity, curiosity and commitment. These underpin everything we do. Having a common language helps tie things together and is something we refer to regularly. We use these as a starting point for our student reflections.

<u>Change Management and Leadership</u>

- Role of leadership team, explore first or second order change.

-Your leadership team needs to be onboard with what the teacher thinks they need to make it work.

<u>Middle Leader</u>

-Middle leader - needs to ask who is best person to do that? When you know someone has a lot on, you take on more for them. Some real efficiencies with ILEs. Using time wisely, teacher read - 3 teachers, kids choose a book. One teacher freed up per term.

<u>Systems</u>

-Moving forward, our school has definitely talked about how parent conferences and report writing might look at moment we write report and have conferences with our home room. Being able to meet with one teacher would have been nice. Reports are old school.

-Still tensions about how we do certain things like a maths assessment because there are conflicting views.

<u>The Environment</u>

- Importance of, significant elements, design involvement?

Our space was an old library turned into an MLE. You couldn't shut off any doors. We had four classes in one big space. Was a little bit of a disaster but we learnt a lot. But it didn't work because you did need to shut off sometimes.

Had input into furniture.

Quotes

"Would not like to go back to single cell. Would find it too lonely, too much work. Would rather hang out with my kids (in my class). Huge efficiencies!"

"Modelling collaboration with your colleagues."

"A real good discussion with senior management about who would work well together is vital; collaborative teaching can go quite wrong when teachers are put together who have very different teaching styles."

"We struggled to work as a 4-person team and started off as a 2 and that helped with confidence. Teachers are learning from each other, sharing ideas as well as the teaching."

"Had had some staff meetings about collaborative teaching and what this could look like."

"Discuss with students in your space why we have modern learning environments and discuss the benefits and challenges."

"Continue to get to know colleagues and all students well."

"Keep taking risks, keep learning, keep getting feedback."

Transcript – Semi-structured Interview - Teacher 5

**Content:**

1. Completed general info. tables pertaining to the teacher and the school.
2. Discussion re themes below.

**Content:**

Teaching Team

- Importance, characteristics, skill set, optimal number, place of PCTs …

-Absolutely essential to get this right, have worked in teams where it has been highly successful and not so.

-Team needs to be compatible. Relationships are so important.

-Power struggles can occur if there is not an identified leader.

-Characteristics include: teachers need to be able to let go of 'their way', compromise, honest and open with colleagues, need to be open to others ideas and comfortable with colleagues jumping in while you are teaching.

-Teachers need to have a say in who they work with. Need open conversations.

-Who I will be working with is a cause of angst at end of year - who will I work with? Where will I work? Our school seems to move teachers around a lot.

-Have to be willing to have the conversations about things not happy with, have them as they occur.

-# of teachers.

-The optimum number of teachers depends on space available, still must be able to 'close doors' off as required.

-PCTs - benefit from more confined space and numbers. They need to focus on building relationships with a smaller group and curriculum and learning first.

-They need to have some work around it. The two BTs we have are 'closed up'. One of them is high school trained. He needs to focus on the curriculum, learning that first. Another one needed to build relationships with her kids first. 60 kids were too many to start with.

-Agree more teachers, more options re co-teaching and choice possible for students. Always seems to be one that is controlling.

-We plan together so we know what's going on but we mix it up in terms of who is leading.

Professional Learning

- Type / content / time PLD was available, recommendations for appropriate PL, whole staff or just for those moving to ILE

-Didn't get a lot to start with and was not ongoing once we were in.

-We visited two local schools who had ILEs.

-Staggered - PLD focused on co-operative lng. strategies, was offered to those staff going into ILEs.

-Had to do both lots of PD. Tchs who were in it first had PLD. then the others.

-Ongoing – Thurs. morning 20min - rotate around teams. This gives us a look at how others are operating and is useful.

-PLD focused on relationships with colleagues would have been useful. When teachers don't get on the kids can see it.

-Sessions with teachers to decide what's really important - transitions.

-Visiting other schools was really useful because I could see for a whole day what it was like.

-Teachers coming in new to open lng env. need support, some kind of transition. Many are just thrown in. They need to get their head around the type of teaching, the relationships that need to be going on before they are just thrown in or it doesn't work for the teachers or the kids.

-We had a little bit of PLD around cooperative teaching models. One teaching - one roam, etc. Someone takes the reins generally, need to be okay with your colleagues jumping in. We work well because we respect each other.

-Would have been useful to have PD around helping the students to manage themselves.

-Ongoing - opportunities to visit other schools would have been useful and sharing of resources, a network for sharing ideas like planning, assessment, transition models.

Parents / Community Relationships

- What supports / hinders the development of this relationship?

We had lots of kids coming in with ILE experience. Parents has mixed view, some were not positive.

School Vision

- How formulated? For whom? Student input?

-When we started, we were expected to embrace integrated curriculum, daily learning journal (personalised timetables) this did not work. Too much, too soon. Had to pull back, introduce slowly. Not just stick with it because someone wants this vision.

- Agrees MPL can happen in single cells. Can still plan together, have some teaching happening together.

Have one vision and have PLD aligned. "Teacher move from year to year. Everyone should have done it from the start. Revisioning, get us all on same page. We change a lot around here. Commonality around what good practice is."

Change Management and Leadership

- Role of leadership team, explore first or second order change.

-DP has taught in lng. centres so knows what it is like and is very supportive.

School Systems

-Impt. that senior management support - was not a case of you have to be open all the time, it was a "if you feel your kids or you need it, do it but try and still scaffold kids and yourself toward further collaboration."

-This year everything done together - roll, speeches all with whole lng. centre.

-It's what the kids can handle. Each lng. centre has a different type of kid. 50 girls and two boys in this lng. centre. Some groups need a lot more scaffolding to work in this way.

The Environment

- Importance of, significant elements, design involvement?

-Prefer an ILE if working with a team that is compatible. Teaching improves. If team not compatible it can be awful.

-Bigger the ILE - more teachers, more students, more options for choice but will need a leader. As more potential for unrest, power struggles for everything to go terribly wrong.

-I prefer an ILE with one other teacher. Depends on space available.

-All our envs. have the potential to be ILEs. But out of 7, three are currently operating as ILEs; this is because some lng. centres have only 1 class (lng. centre numbers are developed through student

interest). Some do not operate as ILEs because of the students or teachers in them, i.e. BTs or highly active students who struggle with self-mgt.

-Walls and doors are really important.

-If you can't close the doors every now and then it makes it really hard.

Students

- Priority learners - env. better? How teachers supported to better meet their needs?

-Needs targeted as with team teaching one of us is teaching and the other is roaming and supporting those with high needs.

-Students need to be able to manage themselves. If they can't, then programme and environment need to respond.

-This will involve teaching explicit skills, changing structure and pulling back on expectations - tightening the programme, closing the doors.

-Needs of students (academic and pastoral) must remain paramount to all decisions. Scaffold according to what kids can handle. This depends of the type of kids; our learning-centred approach means some groups of kids are better at self-managing than others.

-More kids, more likely for them to go under the radar. We can keep an eye on all kids. We have our little cubbies.

-Scaffolding - we have done it before where we have 'closed up' for a term. Over time, opened the doors.

-Build the relationships, swap over for a few things, then slowly open the doors. With more experienced teachers can probably open the doors sooner; however, this depends on who you are working with.

-We are always tinkering with the way we do things - what might work for one group of students won't necessarily work for the next group. We had to let go of our own ego and make sure we were putting the students at the front of everything we did. [It] didn't matter how great we thought our ideas were - if they didn't work, we changed it.

Quotes

"I found after 5 weeks that my colleague and I had different expectations around noise levels and expectations around transitioning, etc. Because the environment has been set up so the doors can be slid over, the doors started to close more often."

"Paramount:

- Responding to needs of kids by modifying env. and tch. programme.
- Relationship with your teaching partner."

"Prefer ILE, two heads is good, but the kids need to be able to handle it."

Transcript – Semi-structured Interview - Teacher 6

**Content:**

1. Completed general info. tables pertaining to the teacher and the school.
2. Discussion re themes below.

**Content:**

Teaching Team

- Importance, characteristics, skill set, optimal number, place of PCTs …

-The greater the number the more of an issue noise is.

-PCTs - great for X, she is watching me model the whole time. We still have those formal meetings but they are a bit redundant.

-Also have a student teacher, they work well in this environment. Great to have an extra set of hands.

-The thing I love is the shared teaching, having partner I teach with, would be hard to go back.

-We work together all the time, we're a good combo must be awful for those that aren't.

-Was a mentor, so went with BT.

-Difficult for me as BT was learning the ropes. Particularly in regards to behavior management. I was worn out as I felt I was running the class. Better this year, we more on same page. Takes both of us to manage class.

-Characteristics of teachers for ILEs - flexible, give and take, tolerant, willing to try new things.

Professional Learning

- Type / content / time PLD was available, recommendations for appropriate PL, whole staff or just for those moving to ILE?

-Received nothing.

-Would have been useful to spend some time in an ILE. I was a specialist prior. It was straight in.

-No continual PLD. No induction.

-Regular PLD but focus at moment is Māori achievement.

-Different models would have been useful to see and read about.

-As we are all working in this way it would be useful to have sharing sessions, did this a lot at last school and it was useful.

-We have an LOL (leader of learning) that overviews us. Key role is to mentor and support. We don't see a lot of that. They do the data side, community liaison, next level communication with parents, input in IEPs.

-We have 3 LOLs (non-teaching) and a performing arts teacher who teaches part time.

-We have sport and GATE, which leaves a few classes with bhv. and lng. needs. Need to consider getting rid of GATE. Did this at last school and it evened out the needs.

-Did not trial any modern learning practices.

Parents / Community Relationships

- What supports / hinders the development of this relationship?

School Vision

- How formulated? For whom? Student input?

Why has school chosen to go this way?

-I don't know, I don't know what the vision was originally, not sure.

-I think the vision is to share our kids, share our environments. A means of improving our practice. The kids have more than one teacher they can go to. If they don't get on with one, they have the other one there.

-No shared understanding that I've heard about why we are in ILEs, could have been done before I got here

-Could be a place for both ILEs and single cells, could be some students who work better in a single cell, smaller env.

Change Management and Leadership

- Role of leadership team, explore first or second order change.

-Shouldn't come in over the top with something they think is a good idea and impose on us. We need to respond to the kids' needs - make the env. and programme fit as best we can.

-The students' needs have to come first, over what senior management think is going to be cool for their school.

-Leadership support to adapt space? Not open to request as once property budget is gone, it's gone.

Adaptive Pedagogy / Review

-Review - we are always trialling in here.

-Big integrated plan and out of that falls our literacy - 6 groups, we link them, ability but bring kids in and out and needs be. Maths - pretty much the same.

-Found workshopping really successful. We did our testing, they identified their needs and then we ran workshops.

-We might run the same workshop three times, they decide which day they will come. Was really targeted at what they missed rather than sitting on a group bored. The love it, more of a different model.

-Māori theme that runs through our integrated units.

-Try and mix it up every term. Lots of EOTC. We follow where the kids are leading through their learning. Lots of student voice.

-See a need, we respond. For example, doing speeches at moment we see a need like introduction, so we run a workshop, right, come into this workshop. Always two instructional groups going on.

-They need a voice to ensure they are giving feedback about how it is working for them.

-Actually, teaching hasn't changed but getting to grips, the noise was the big factor for us. Trying to manage with 60 and a BT was really difficult.

The Environment

- Importance of, significant elements, design involvement?

-Not sound proof, some better than others, just walls knocked down.

-Noise is a constant battle for us. We did decibel readings.

-We changed our programme to sort this - all did their own timetable. Noise was at a minimum, they weren't sitting with their friends. Match space to activity. Some students progressed well those that didn't were those that couldn't self-manage so we have gone back. Noise going up again. Noise main negative factor.

-Only one breakout space. No outdoor tables or flow.

-We tried parallel teaching but that was hopeless as they were distracted by each other.

Students

- Whānau class

-We don’t have whānau classes – 60-odd kids are designated to two teachers to share.

-60-odd is overwhelming sometimes, just with all the needs and to get to all those needs. So hard.

-Could be worth exploring having 30+ students assigned to each teacher for pastoral-type needs, who I am ultimately responsible for.

-I still don’t feel you have same handle on it as single cell. We share all 60 kids, do not have whānau class. You don't have that same relationship. All in together.

- Priority learners - env. better? How teachers supported to better meet their needs?

-Have to be so on to it and target those kids. We identify them really early and it's a matter of working pretty solidly with those kids. It is still difficult, we are lucky to have a learning assistant.

Quotes / Key Messages

-Do little trials.

-Look at models.

-Readings.

-Hear from people from other schools and how they found it.

-Really work out who is working with who, they need to have the same philosophy of teaching or if they can still get along even if they don’t.

-Building on it, scaffold it. Start with 30 and then build out, do some things together.

-Needs support from your leadership - with students who have high needs, like ESOL, lower learners. Flexibility with ideals and understanding.

-School systems around it and think about why are we actually doing this. Are we doing it because that’s always been done, or is it useful?

-How are we measuring if those kids are actually coping and progressing in there compared to a single cell. I know in here there are some kids that are progressing hugely but others we have real concerns with that I feel in a single cell you would be able to keep a closer eye on and get to them more easily.

-Good to have someone to bounce off, to have to talk aloud about your practice. Only one of our leaders has taught in an ILE.

## Appendix D: Interview Guide

| Semi-structured Interviews |
| --- |
| **Purpose / Format**<br>• Support tch. transition to ILE by und. exp. better. Challengers + enablers. Recommendations what transition could involve.<br>• Thank for questionnaire responses.<br>• Interviews - going deeper and gaining clarification of elements revealed in the questionnaire.<br>• Fill out ethics forms.<br>• Time required: 45 mins.<br>• Permission to record?<br>• Format - closed to start with - leading to open. |
| **Content:** |
| 1. Remind participant that all info. is confidential. School and teacher names will not be identifiable. Any elements that could match a teacher and school are removed.<br>2. General info. tables.<br>3. Questions below: |
| <u>Group in ILE</u><br>• How many are optimal?<br>• PCTs - place of in ILEs. |
| <u>Professional Learning</u><br>• What content of PLD would be useful?<br>• Any PLD - after moved in?<br>• Was PLD for all or just those going in?<br>• Trialling out MLP practice such as _____ in single cell and associated reflection was cited as valued PLD. |
| <u>Whānau Classes</u><br>• Necessary? Why? |
| <u>School Vision</u><br>• Should vision for ILE be just for ILE or for all?<br>• If working in a single-cell classroom should there still be focus on contemporary pedagogy? |
| <u>The Environment</u><br>• Where would you rather be - ILE or not? |

- Physical space - design involvement?
- Pilot anywhere? Hall.

Priority Learners / Culturally Responsive Practice

- Supporting transition.
- Env. better?

Change

- First- or second-order change - explain. Give examples.
- Explore complexity theory:
    - What is the role of senior leadership?
    - New styles emerge?
- Middle leaders - in pod with you? Characteristics?

Show table- does this capture …

4. Reflecting on your transition experience, what would you recommend as absolute essentials for schools to put in place to support teachers transitioning to ILEs? At which point would this be useful?

5. What do you view as essential for individual teachers to have in place to support their own readiness? At which point would this be useful?

6. What other factors do you think impact on the overall success of transitioning to an ILE?

7. Closing - is there anything else you wish to tell me?

Thank you.

## Appendix E: Coded Responses

| Vision for effective teaching in an ILE | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Themes and coding | **tch #1** | **tch #2** | tch #3 | tch #4 | tch #5 | tch #6 |
| **Student-centred**<br>• **relationships**<br>• **respond to diverse needs and interests**<br>**Coding – keywords / phrases used:**<br>adults responsible for all students, relationships with all students, students need to get best from their teacher, all learning needs are catered for, responsive to students, inclusive, diverse, student focussed, collaborative programme across the curriculum, meaningful and rich, students' needs are put first | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ |
| **Pedagogy**<br>• **responsive and varied**<br>**Coding - keywords used:**<br>instruction at many different levels, many different styles, choice + prescribed, more choices, ability to group based on learning needs / choices, use instructional approach that best meets needs, use the space well, respond to needs | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| **Teaching team**<br>• **culture and dispositions**<br>**Coding - keywords used:**<br>learning from each other, sharing ideas, sharing teaching, open communication, planning and teaching collaboratively, shared workload, having each other's backs, open communication, shared by-in, valuing all team members, teachers collaborate and work together, an effective working team | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| **Evaluation systems**<br>• **continual reflection and adaptations**<br>**Coding - keywords used:**<br>adapt and change, successful outcomes for students, need to be able to change if not working | | √ | | | √ | √ |

## Appendix F: Case-by-case Analysis

Table 6

*Teacher 1*

| Teacher 1: Experienced teacher, middle leader |
|---|
| Level of challenge<br>Variables ranked in order of challenge posed during transition. 1- Greatest challenge 2- next greatest challenge ... |
| 1= Physical space - too small |
| 1= Students' pastoral and learning needs — behavioural needs |
| 2- Professional learning — lack of relevant PLD |
| 3- Leadership + school systems — timetabling issues |
| 4- Parents + community — not really an issue, addressed parents as united front at start of year, shared rationale |
| 5- The teaching team — teachers in team who had already worked in an ILE was a huge help |

Table 7

*Teacher 2*

| Teacher 2: Experienced teacher, middle leader |
|---|
| Level of challenge<br>Variables ranked in order of challenge posed during transition. 1- Greatest challenge 2- next greatest challenge ... |
| 1- Leadership + school systems — limited leadership to support change process, the alignment of school systems to needs of ILE and a lack of systems to review the aims and effectiveness of ILEs |
| 2- Parents + community — parent and student concerns about the appropriateness of ILEs |
| 3- Professional learning — sourced own where we could, focused on student agency and models of other ILEs |
| 4- The teaching team — knew the team prior to occupation |
| 5= Physical space — excellent |
| 5= Students' pastoral and learning needs — limited |

Table 8

*Teacher 3*

| Teacher 3: Scale A teacher |
| --- |
| Level of challenge<br>Variables ranked in order of challenge posed during transition. 1- Greatest challenge 2- next greatest challenge ... |
| 1- Leadership + school systems — limited leadership of transition, limited vision for tch. / lng. in an ILE and limited consideration of appropriateness of school's systems for an ILE |
| 2= Professional learning — had to source our own, separate to school PLD, initial lack of appropriate PLD but then found some |
| 2= The teaching team — not all teachers were committed, essential to get this right, mix of skills required |
| 3- Students' pastoral and learning needs |
| 4- Parents + community — composite helped as had relationship with parents and students |
| 5- Physical space — not ideal as not flexible enough to allow for different numbers in groups |

Table 9

*Teacher 4*

| Teacher 4 |
| --- |
| Level of challenge<br>Variables ranked in order of challenge posed during transition. 1- Greatest challenge 2- next greatest challenge ... |
| 1= Physical space — modified, couldn't close off doors |
| 1= Parents + community — lots of questions, held parent meetings led by outside expert and principal |
| 2- Professional learning — a lot in first year, was on-going, external and internal. Hard to find models as we were early adopters. |
| 3- Students pastoral and learning needs |
| 4- Leadership + school systems — whole school, leadership team led the change, were supportive and passionate |
| 5- The teaching team — although in compositions of 4, we prefer to work 2 x 2 |

Table 10

*Teacher 5*

| Teacher 5 |
| --- |
| Level of challenge<br>Variables ranked in order of challenge posed during transition. 1- Greatest challenge 2- next greatest challenge ... |
| 1- The teaching team — just didn't work, we had different expectations |
| 2- Students' pastoral and learning needs — if students can't handle the openness and choice, approach needs to be changed |
| 3- Professional learning — lack of, couple staff meetings |
| 4- Parents + community — some negative views, many of our students have been in ILEs in primary schools so parents have strong views for and against |
| 5- Leadership + school systems — flexibility prevailed |
| 6- Physical space — ability to close doors when required was key |

Table 11

*Teacher 6*

| Teacher 6 |
| --- |
| Level of challenge<br>Variables ranked in order of challenge posed during transition. 1- Greatest challenge 2- next greatest challenge ... |
| 1= Physical space — not purpose built, poor acoustics, not enough breakout spaces |
| 1= Students' pastoral and learning needs — challenging behaviour and learning needs |
| 2= Professional learning — none |
| 2= Leadership + school systems — unclear vision, lack of reality re what is possible |
| 3- The teaching team — compatible |
| 4- Parents + community — generally supportive |