Understanding pedagogy as integral to innovative learning environments

The curriculum places learners at the centre of teaching and learning. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles are a foundation for developing an ILE that meets the needs of all learners.

Definition of an ILE

An ILE is an ecosystem that includes learners, educators, families/whānau, communities, content and resources. It is a holistic concept. It is future focused – capable of adapting as educational practices evolve and change.

In mid-2015, the Ministry of Education adopted the OECD's terms:

- **Innovative Learning Environments (ILE)** to refer the learning ecosystem – people (social), practice (pedagogical), and physical/property (QLE)
- **Quality Learning Environments (QLE)** to refer to the physical part of a learning environment.
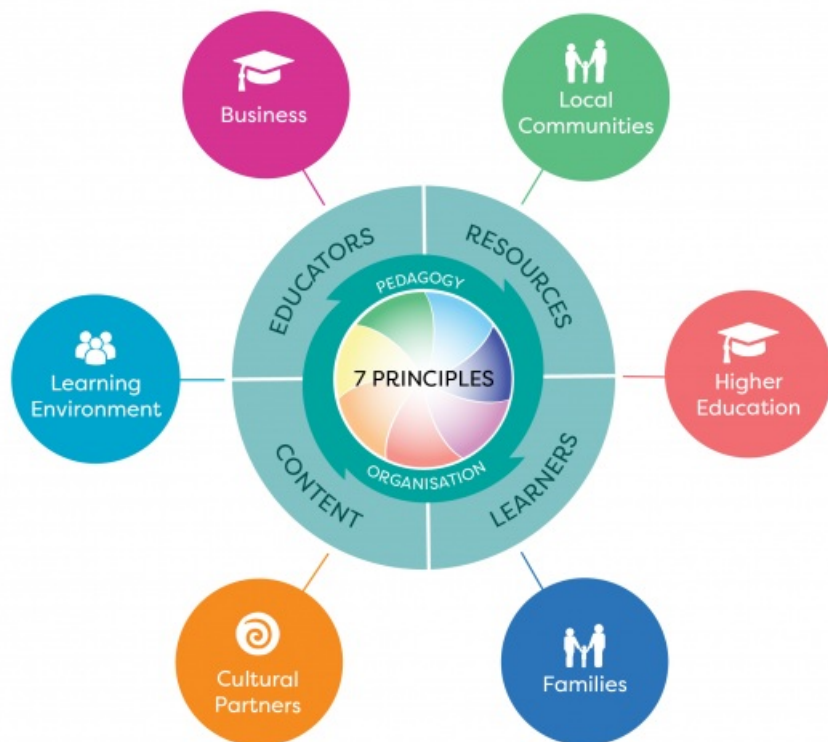
An ILE is an ecosystem that includes the activity and outcomes of learning. It includes the physical, social, and pedagogical context in which learning occurs.

- Seven principles – All of the seven principles of learning should underpin the design of ILEs, including planning, relationships, and activities.
- Pedagogy and organisation – Learners, educators, content, and resources form the pedagogical core of an ILE.
- Partners – Planning in collaboration with teachers, students, and your school community is fundamental to developing your ILE.

Source:

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ILE pedagogy

An ILE includes the physical, social, and pedagogical context in which learning occurs. As you plan to include **all** learners from the outset, consider the following.

1. Universal design for learning (UDL)

UDL is a research-based framework that informs planning and delivery of the curriculum with the needs of all learners in mind from the outset. Identify potential barriers to learning. Plan teaching approaches and a classroom/school design that is inclusive of all, creating a learner-centred environment. Use the **Universal Design for Learning guide** for further support.

2. Equity and diversity

Diversity encompasses everyone's variations and differences, including: culture, background, learning needs and preferences.

Equity has two related dimensions:

- Fairness – ensuring personal and social circumstance (such as gender, socio-economic status, or ethnicity) are not an obstacle to achieving educational potential.
- Inclusion – students' identities, languages, abilities, needs, and talents are recognised and affirmed, and their learning needs are addressed to ensure an agreed standard of education for all.

3. Seven principles of learning

To be effective for 21st century learning, all the seven principles of learning, summarised in the diagram below, are present.

Identify:

- how the principles will be enacted in your ILE
- what professional development is needed
- how you can design a space to support them.

Seven principles of learning

The learning environment recognises learners as its core participants, encourages their active engagement, and develops in them an understanding of their own activity as learners.

The learning professionals within the learning environment are highly attuned to the learners' motivations and the key role of emotions in achievement.

The learning environment devises programmes that demand hard work and challenge from all but without excessive overload.

The learning environment strongly promotes "horizontal connectedness" across areas of knowledge and subjects as well as to the community and the wider world.

Learners at the centre

The social nature of learning

Emotions are integral to learning

Stretching all students

Assessment for learning

Building horizontal connections

Recognising individual differences

The learning environment is founded on the social nature of learning and actively encourages well-organised cooperative learning.

The learning environment is acutely sensitive to the individual differences among the learners in it, including their prior knowledge.

The learning environment operates with clarity of expectations using assessment strategies consistent with these expectations; there is a strong emphasis on formative feedback to support learning.

Dumont, H. Istance, D. & Benavides, F. (2012). The nature of learning; Using research to inspire practice – Practitioner guide
http://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/50300814.pdf

All 7 principles should be present for an ILE to be effective.

Identify how they will be enacted in your ILE, how this informs your design of the space, and what PLD is needed.

Source:
Adapted from OECD by Ministry of Education
https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/innovative-learning-environments_9789264203488-en#page157

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Student-centred design

Use UDL principles to inform an inclusive design. Plan an environment that recognises students as the core participants and supports:

- learner agency – support students to understand their needs as learners, encourage active engagement and ownership of learning
- personalised learning – recognise and plan for students to learn in different ways, be sensitive to individual differences and prior knowledge
- inclusion – consider the infrastructure, technologies, and teaching approaches that enable all students to participate and achieve in an environment that meets their needs
- the social nature of learning.

Video hosted on Youtube http://youtu.be/8lOKS8Mv-8M

Three Christchurch schools share their learning space designs, which support educational practices that meet the needs of diverse learners.

No captions or transcript

Source:
Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (NZ)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lOKS8Mv-8M

Quality infrastructure

Quality learning spaces refer to the infrastructure element of an ILE. Access and choice for all learners is an important consideration when planning inclusive spaces. A QLS should:

- enable collaborative approaches
- be easily configured and used in different ways to enable a range of teaching and learning approaches across the day
- have quality acoustics, lighting, technology, heating, and air quality to support learning.

Be clear on your purpose

Peel everything back to see the "why", so options for change become clear.

The "why" is important – there can be many versions of "what" you build.

There has to be a clear purpose for each learning space – a general purpose space ends up being everything and nothing.

Plan for deep understanding of the rationale behind your space – this takes time.

Waimairi School case study

Source:
Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Primary-Secondary/Property/Design/Flexible-learning-spaces/Case-Study-Waimairi-School-WEB.pdf

Plan for diversity

Design flexibly. Spaces must be adaptable and future-proofed. Consider the types of spaces and design with specific learner's needs in mind. For example, how are students who are deaf or hard of hearing, have ASD, vision impairments, or physical disabilities included in spaces for:

- social and collaborative learning
- student-directed/teacher-directed learning
- independent work
- project work
- direct instruction?

Useful resources

Designing quality learning spaces

Use this page to think about some of the key features of school property design and how any upgrade projects will ensure a comfortable and effective learning environment.

Visit website

Accessibility design for people with learning support needs

Legal requirements for making your school accessible for students, their caregivers and staff with special needs.

Visit website

Designing learning environments

This section explores the relationship between the physical spaces of schools and teaching and learning, and offers case studies, research and links to other sources about making the most of the physical elements at school.

Visit website

Property design standards and legal requirements

All school building projects must comply with legal and Ministry design standards, and should follow best practice standards for school building projects.

Visit website