Teachers in change: An evaluation of the implementation of collaborative teaching in a New Zealand Year 7-13 school.

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Abstract

It is widely argued that educational change is needed to meet the needs of all learners in the 21st century. This project explores one school’s implementation of collaborative teaching in a newly built Innovative Learning Environment (ILE) from the perspective of teachers. The study also investigated how a resource developed using a model of collaboration can support the implementation of such a change initiative.

The study draws on the tradition of practitioner research. The data gathering methods used to collect qualitative data were interviews and a focus group. The focus group discussion investigated the aspects of implementation that supported or hindered teachers’ adjustment to collaborative teaching and the new ILE, and their views on what could be improved to further support teachers to adapt to the new way of working at this school. Four semi-structured interviews were also conducted with teachers who partook in the development of the collaborative teaching resource to ascertain if this process of collaborative resource development can be beneficial.

The key findings of the study highlighted the benefits and challenges of implementing change and of collaboration in this school. The findings were established through teachers’ views and opinions on a) the implementation process, including the collaboratively developed resource and b) teachers’ experience of collaboration, either through their teaching or their involvement in the construction of the developed resource.

The recommendations of the study are that the challenges teachers are experiencing in this change initiative could be alleviated through: school timetabling to allow teachers adequate time to collaboratively plan and form common goals; the aligning of new and old initiatives; the development of a collaborative problem solving approach between senior leaders and staff, and; a focus on practical strategy based professional development, including the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to aid collaboration.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Globally, education is facing large scale changes in an attempt to meet the needs of 21st century learners (Fullan, 2007; Stoll, 2010), and New Zealand is no exception. The Ministry of Education states: “Traditional approaches to teaching and learning are no longer enough on their own to give children the best education to prepare them for life.” (Ministry of Education, 2016b, p.4). In order to accomplish the goal of preparing learners for the future, changes in schooling are essential (Bhaskara Rao & Sridhar, 2003; Hargreaves, 2001; Rieser 2008; Robinson, 2010; Stoll, 2009). Hence, the New Zealand Ministry of Education is encouraging schools to move away from the traditional single cell model of teaching, where the teacher imparts knowledge to learners, to an open learning environment where teachers teach collaboratively to provide more personalised learning, and learners become more active participants in the learning process (Maharey, 2006; OECD, 2015). Collaborative teaching is therefore being developed as an important aspect of meeting the changing needs of education. As Friend (2000) points out, the role of meeting students’ needs in the 21st century is simply too complex for teachers to do on their own. Equally, organisations such as the New Zealand Education Review Office have been encouraging collaborative teaching structures for some time (Martin & Williams, 2012).

However, school wide reform is extremely complex and has been historically challenging for personnel across the education sector (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Wylie, 2013). No one school is the same and there is no one way of implementing change that will work for all (Slavin, 1998). What has been highlighted in literature is the fact that teachers play a vital role in a school’s ability to implement change initiatives successfully (Hargreaves, 2001; Terhart, 2013), and it is acknowledged that supporting teachers to make changes to their practices can be extremely challenging. Factors that can make school change difficult, are discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but include: ‘initiative fatigue’ (Ash & D’Auria, 2012; Kuh et al, 2015; Kuth, Ikenberry, & Jankowski, 2014; Reeves, 2006; Timperely et al., 2007); lack of time (Burtonshaw-Gunn, 2009; Fullan, 1991; Reeves, 2012); emotions
(Fineman, 2003; Hargreaves, 2004; Harvey & Broyles, 2010) and overall resistance from teachers (Harvey & Broyles, 2010; Timperley et al. 2007).

1.2 Context

This research was conducted using a practitioner research approach (Kincheloe, 2012) at a Year 7-13 New Zealand school. Although the study focused on the move to collaborative teaching in an Innovative Learning Environment (ILE), there were also a number of other changes occurring at the school, or had occurred in the build up to this large scale change. In order to provide some context to the findings of this study, it is important to outline these changes and provide a brief background to changes that have occurred in preparation for this larger whole school move to collaborative teaching. It is useful to consider that due to the roll out of ILEs across New Zealand, similar changes and challenges are likely to be occurring in a number of schools across New Zealand. Thus, while the findings may relate closely to the individual school, they may also have relevance for others undergoing similar changes.

In 2013, the school in which this study took place consisted of single cell classrooms with class sizes between 20-30 in junior classes and 10-25 in senior classes. Classes were based on a traditional model of teaching where individual year levels were taught specific subjects by one teacher in a single space designed to fit approximately 25-30 students. However, since 2013, before the current large scale shift to collaborative teaching in an ILE, the school introduced ‘Bring Your Own Device’ (BYOD), composite classes and Impact Projects. At the date of this research, Impact Projects were school wide and timetabled for one whole day per week; this began at the beginning of 2015. Students choose a community of Impact Projects to work in and these communities are run by a number of teachers working together. Some of these communities are subject specialist specific, for example Woodwork or Science, and the way in which each community is organised and managed can differ. Hence, although not solely based on a specific curriculum area and only provided one day per week, teachers in this school had some experience of working together to plan and teach.
At the beginning of 2017, physical changes to the school began and the first open plan learning environment was ready for use in the middle of 2017. Henceforth, at the time of this research, the structure of the learning timetable for years 7-10 was being redeveloped. Single cell subject teaching changed to cross curricular programmes, the duration of classes changed from 50 minute periods to 100 minute blocks and students chose contexts through which they learnt their core subjects. These contexts are based on two subject areas taught in a cross curricular manner, for example, Mathematics and Science taught through the context of Forensic Investigation. Each context includes at least one subject specialist teacher, for example the Forensic Investigation context involves a Mathematics teacher and a Science teacher. Other specialist teachers can also be timetabled to work in various cross curricular contexts alongside the subject specific teachers. This means some teachers can be part of a teaching team which incorporates subjects they are unfamiliar with, or they might be working with year levels with which they have had no previous experience. In order for these changes to happen, class sizes that were previously taught by one teacher at a ratio of 1 teacher to 30 students can now be at a ratio of 3 teachers to 90 students.

In short, the teachers involved in this study have experienced a change from individually teaching specialist subjects in single cell classrooms, to teaching larger groups of students in cross curricular contexts with at least one other teacher in an ILE. Teachers therefore have had to reconsider their approach to manage changes in the physical space, the timetable, class size, curriculum and pedagogy. Throughout this thesis, when the ‘new teaching structure’ is mentioned, it is the timetable, class sizes and change in curriculum delivery that is being referred to.

It is also important to note that the study only explored the perspectives of teachers. As outlined more specifically in the ‘Limitations’ section, the perceptions of senior leaders, students, parents or the wider community were not explored due to the scale and time restrictions of this research project. Please also note that the teachers involved in this study were volunteers.
1.3 Research Aims and Questions

Aims

1. To investigate factors that prevent and enable teachers to make the large scale pedagogical shift from traditional models of teaching to collaborative teaching.

2. To explore the value of the collaborative development of a collaborative teaching resource as one of these factors.

Research Questions

The project was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the benefits and challenges of collaborative teaching in an ILE, as perceived by teachers in this school?
2. How successful was the implementation of collaborative teaching, as perceived by teachers at this school?
3. In what ways can a collaboratively developed resource support the implementation of collaborative teaching?

1.4 Rationale

This study was motivated by an interest in exploring the experiences of teachers in a school as they undergo a major change to teaching structures through a school based attempt to meet the needs of students as suggested by the New Zealand Ministry of Education through its Statements of Intent (Ministry of Education; 2010b; 2011; 2013b). Teacher feedback gathered for a small scale pilot project undertaken in the school at the beginning of 2017 indicated that teachers in the school were experiencing a range of emotions in anticipation of changing to ILEs. This study then, focused specifically on teachers as essential for the success of this change initiative and in light of the challenges and complexities of change that
can be overwhelming (Stoll, 2009). Hence, this study aimed to identify and explore some of the challenges teachers face in the school as they move to collaborative teaching. The study also aimed to identify areas of success and areas for improvement in the implementation of the change itself.

There is a vast body of research available on collaborative teaching; however much of the literature is based on international studies and uses various terms for the same general notion of collaborative teaching, such as co-teaching, team teaching and co-operative teaching (Murawski, 2010). Thus, literature does not provide clear or easy to access guidelines or information on how collaborative teaching can or should be implemented in New Zealand schools, nor does it provide consolidated information on the characteristics of successful collaborative teaching. While this may be due to the complex nature of education and collaborative teaching, this study was interested in how teachers in this New Zealand school could be supported to undertake this pedagogical change. This research, therefore, concentrated on the teachers involved in one school’s change from single cell teaching environments to collaborative teaching environments. The focus on benefits and areas for improvement in the implementation of collaborative teaching are those that are perceived by the teachers at the school, and the characteristics identified by the teachers are those that lead to positive experiences for collaborative teaching.

As part of the study a small scale project was undertaken. The project aimed to design, develop and evaluate a resource to support collaborative approaches and was undertaken using a collaborative approach. The idea was to bring teachers together to collaborate around a particular purpose; in this case a resource that they could use in their teaching. While the product of this collaborative undertaking, the resource, was the initial focus of this project, what emerged through the study was the value of ‘how’ the resource was put together. So, the process of the development of the resource was explored further to identify if such an approach to resource development and teacher collaboration could be beneficial to the implementation of this change or future changes. Findings from this aspect of the project point to some important aspects for collaborative approaches.
The resource aimed to provide easy to access, time saving and practical support for teaching collaboratively. The development of this resource involved the input of one senior leader, one middle management leader and two teachers, all of whom were identified as having skills or knowledge valuable to collaborative teaching, and all of whom volunteered. The group communicated mainly online and a key aspect of their participation was to review and provide feedback on ideas and draft templates, useful for teaching, that were to be presented to members of the teaching staff. The resource was appraised by teachers who used it to establish its effectiveness in supporting them to make the change to collaborative teaching. The overall role of the resource in the implementation process was considered. It was anticipated that the development of the resource would directly impact the school by immediately assisting teachers by providing templates to help with planning and assessment, as well as developing teachers’ knowledge of collaborative teaching models and strategies.

The outcomes of this study will be of particular interest to the school of study in which the study was undertaken as it continues to face the challenge of implementing the change under study by identifying factors that were beneficial or disadvantageous in supporting the shift to collaborative teaching, and/or areas that can be improved upon as the change initiative moves forward. As mentioned above, it may also be of interest to other schools facing similar changes as such a change is being encouraged nationally through the Ministry of Education funding ILE buildings. Through this study, successes from this school’s experience can be identified in relation to the implementation of collaborative teaching, but also problems that have occurred, why they may have occurred and what may be done to resolve such problems moving forward.

1.4 Thesis Outline

Chapter One – Introduction

In Chapter One I describe the context of this study, specifically in relation to the past and current changes being experienced by the teachers in the school of study. I have also
explained the rationale for the research, set out the research aims and questions, and concluded with an outline of the thesis.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

In the Literature Review I briefly outline the literature relevant to the themes in this thesis, including a background to some of the changes evident in the New Zealand education environment. I have explored literature relating to collaboration, including collaborative teaching and learning. I have also explored the key themes in the literature that relate to school change including the challenges of change.

Chapter Three – Methodology

In Chapter Three I explain my epistemological and ontological stance and how these relate to the use of practitioner research. This chapter also explains why specific data gathering methods were chosen and how validity and ethical issues were addressed.

Chapter Four – Findings

In Chapter Four the findings of the study are outlined by theme and collated, based on the findings from interviews and the focus group discussion.

Chapter Five – Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

In Chapter Five I have discussed, with reference to the literature, how the findings have led to recommendations that may be considered in this school as it moves forward with the implementation of collaborative teaching in an innovative learning environment. The chapter also includes an outline of the limitations of this study and considerations for further study.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature associated with collaborative teaching and learning. The literature review focuses on three core themes: 1) educational change, 2) collaborative teaching, and 3) collaborative learning as an approach to teacher professional development. The literature reviewed relating to the first theme considers the kinds of change New Zealand teachers are experiencing and the challenges associated with school wide reform. The second theme outlines the educational approach referred to as ‘collaborative teaching’, alongside the challenges and opportunities it provides for students and teachers. The final theme being addressed in this literature review is a collaborative learning approach to teacher professional development. This outlines what collaborative learning is, and considers teacher collaborative learning as a form of on-going professional development and the possible effects it can have on pedagogical change.

2.2 Educational Change

2.2.1 Educational change in New Zealand: A brief historical overview

Internationally, schools continually face large scale change affecting all levels of the system (Fullan, 2007; Stoll, 2010); such changes are fast emerging and immensely complicated (Stoll, 2009). As Hargreaves (2004) acknowledges, teaching in itself, is a job that encompasses continual change with new student relationships each year.

The current emerging changes to learning spaces and teaching models in New Zealand have emerged from a tradition of change and educational reform. Indeed, there have been a number of changes in the New Zealand education system since the 1990s when the comprehensive revision of the school curriculum began (Ministry of Education, 2007b). The New Zealand Curriculum Framework and Te Anga Marautanga o Aotearoa (the National...
Curriculum for Māori-Medium) were published in 1993 but underwent curricula changes until 1999 (O’Neill, Clark & Openshaw, 2004). In 1996, there was clear evidence that school personnel were feeling the challenges of change when they expressed their concerns at the scale and speed in which change was being imposed (Ministry of Education, 2007b). Such concerns are outlined in the longitudinal study carried out by an NZCER project which monitored the impact of the 1989 education reforms known as Tomorrow’s Schools (Wylie, 1992). A review of this study pointed out that, although there were some positive gains to educational reform, there were a number of challenges being experienced by stakeholders throughout the education sector, including students, parents, staff, principals and trustees (Wylie, 2013). These challenges included, inadequate government funding, increased class sizes, increased workload and paperwork, a decline in parent school involvement and an increase in competition between schools (Wylie, 2013).

The 1993 New Zealand Curriculum Framework included essential skills (Ministry of Education, 1993, p.5) namely: communication skills; numeracy skills; information skills; problem-solving skills; self-management and competitive skills; social and co-operative skills; physical skills, and; work and study skills. However, societal and technological changes and an increasing diversity of learner needs prompted a review of these skills (Benade, 2012). Focus shifted to students leaving school as lifelong learners rather than having subject specialist knowledge (OECD, 2001). Following this, the 2002 Curriculum Stocktake Report recommended a cross disciplinary review of the curriculum to ensure high expectations for all learners (Ministry of Education, 2002). The recommendations led to more curriculum changes and the revised New Zealand Curriculum was launched in November 2007 (Ministry of Education, 2007b). This new curriculum made reference to a pedagogical shift which encouraged teachers to view teaching as an on-going inquiry process (Mutch, 2013). Progress of the implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007a) has since been monitored by the Education Review Office (Schagen, 2011).

Alongside the introduction of the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education 2007a), there was a reported shift in the understanding of knowledge and learning. Gilbert (2005) maintains that our understanding of what knowledge is and how it is formed has changed.
Learners are different and come to school with a background in digital technology (Stoll, 2009). Not only has our understanding of learning and knowledge changed, technology is emerging at a rapid rate and there is an impetus to prepare students for the possibilities of an uncertain future (Ministry of Education, 2007a; 2011; OECD, 2001; Stoll, 2009).

The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007a) states a vision for young people to be ‘confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners’ (p. 8). For schools to meet the vision of the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007a) and the future needs of learners, many have been continually implementing changes in various aspects of school life, including planning, assessment and evaluation practices, learning focuses, learner feedback and conversations, delivery methods and reporting (Fraser & McGee, 2012). During this time and amidst curriculum changes, the Ministry of Education also implemented a number of other policies and strategies to inform educational change, including but not limited to: Education’s Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2001 (Young-Loveridge, 2005), Numeracy Project 2001 (Bobis et al., 2005), National Certificate of Education Achievement (NCEA) 2002 and 2004 (New Zealand Qualification Authority, n.d.), Te Kotahitanga 2004-2007 (“Education Counts”, 2010; Bishop, Berryman & Wearmouth, 2014), National Standards 2010 (Hattie, 2010; Mutch, 2013), Ka Hikitia 2013-2017 (Ministry of Education, 2013a) and Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017 (Ministry of Education, 2015). In 2011, following political change, schools were facing further changes including “charter schools, league tables and teacher performance pay” (Mutch, 2013, p. 13).

The 2010 - 2015 Ministry of Education’s Statement of Intent (Ministry of Education, 2010b) of Intent stated, “We must have teaching and learning environments that are focused on the needs of students and that promote achievement. Teachers and students need fast and reliable access to a wider range of more powerful learning technologies” (p. 2). The strategic direction outlined by the Ministry of Education 2013 – 2018 focuses on developing an education system that “…equips all of New Zealand with knowledge, skills and values to be successful citizens in the 21st century” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p.12). These Statements of Intent led to at least two more major changes in many New Zealand schools: the introduction of digital devices into schools, and; the physical change to school buildings (Benade, 2017). This has led to schools implementing initiatives such as ‘bring-your-own-device’ (BYOD) and
changing traditional style classrooms into ‘Innovative Learning Environments’ (Wang, Bain, Hope & Hansman, 2016). In 2014, new educational policy led to the introduction of ‘Communities of Learning (COL)’ which encourages increased collaboration across schools and new roles including, a leadership role, teacher (within school) role and teacher (across community) role (Ministry of Education, 2016c). The implementation of COLs has been deemed complex as they “…challenge some of the traditional arrangements for teaching and school leadership…” (Wylie, 2016). Schools will be facing further curriculum change in 2018 with the introduction of the ‘Digital Technology’ curriculum area (Ministry of Education, 2016a).

Although based on research in the US, Nace (2015) states “With all these changes, it is easy to understand why teachers, administrators, students and parents are overwhelmed” (p.73). Similarly, New Zealand schools have been facing continued large scale change for the last two decades (Ministry of Education, n.d.). “Many countries have gone through radical changes in their educational policies over the past decade, perhaps none so astonishingly comprehensive as those in Aotearoa/New Zealand.” (Edwards, 2004, p.41).

2.2.2 Challenges of Educational Change

It has been noted above that changes to schooling is presented as essential to preparing students as lifelong learners in the 21st century (Bhaskara Rao & Sridhar, 2003; Hargreaves, 2001; Rieser 2008; Robinson, 2010; Stoll, 2009). However, as Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) outline, educational change can be extremely complex. The rate and success in school wide change varies in different schools. As Slavin (1998) explains, for some schools, change can be like “…trying to build a structure out of sand” (p. 1303), but for others it is merely a case of planting the seed and giving it time to grow. So, what makes educational change more difficult for some than others? Several key challenges are identified as vital to educational change and it is recognised that teachers play an essential role (Hargreaves, 2001; Terhart, 2013).
Initiative Fatigue

‘Initiative fatigue’ is one of the most widespread and debilitating challenges associated with educational change (Ash & D'Auria, 2012; Kuh et al, 2015; Kuh, Ikenberry, & Jankowski, 2014). Reeves (2006) uses a garden as an analogy to explain how complex providing worthwhile professional development for change initiatives can be, where new, well researched seeds are planted among a garden consumed with weeds and struggle to grow. Reeves (2006) further emphasises this problem by highlighting the fact that there is an imbalance between new initiatives being implemented and old initiatives being discontinued. Timperley and Robinson (2000) also highlight the need to discuss discontinuing or adapting “what currently exists” (p.3). Not doing so can lead to initiative fatigue as participants feel overwhelmed and frustrated, which can result in the failure of initiatives (Kuh, Ikenberry, & Jankowski, 2014). According to Reeves (2006) initiative fatigue can also lead to feelings of resistance, fear and anger, ultimately resulting in people ignoring change efforts completely, and awaiting failure.

Initiative fatigue does not occur through malice and school leaders and policy makers are developing well intended initiatives to meet identified needs (Reeves, 2012). Both Reeves (2006) and Sterrett (2015) assert, that to tackle initiative fatigue, school leaders need to identify initiatives that can be stopped. Reeves (2012) suggests that leaders provide on-going support for any initiative. Similarly, Timperley et al. (2007) report that “Effective leaders actively supported the professional learning of their staff and, at times, participated themselves.” (p.xxxi). No matter how much energy, time and money is invested in the initial stages of implementation, successful change is unlikely if an array of changes are implemented in close succession and there are inefficient resources and support for each new initiative (Ash & D'Auria, 2012).

Time

Another significant challenge highlighted in the literature relating to school change is the issue of time. Indeed, for teachers time is a precious resource (Reeves, 2012) and an integral
part of initiative fatigue. According to Fullan (1991), school change is most successful when it involves high quality professional development that unfolds over a long period of time. Yet, the time required to participate fully in professional development and to upskill is extraordinary (Reeves, 2012). The success of an initiative can depend on on-going support in terms of time (Burtonshaw-Gunn, 2009). Gregory & Kuzmich (2007) suggest that there simply needs to be more time given to the implementation of new initiatives. It is acknowledged that drawing connections between old systems and new initiatives, so expertise can be built on and workload can be shared (Kuh et al., 2015), can help manage issues of time and workload. Timperley and Robinson (2000) point out that the fragmented approach to the implementation of school wide change often results in the addition and duplication of tasks. They emphasise the need for a systematic approach to school change where collegiality reduces workload associated with school reform.

**Emotional Barriers and Trusting Relationships**

It is evident that links can be drawn between ‘initiative fatigue’ and ‘emotional barriers’ to change. Hargreaves (2004) and Fineman (2003) assert that there is no such thing as change without emotion. Emotions are a natural part of change but when they impact negatively on the willingness of participants to engage with change, it becomes a problem (Harvey & Broyles, 2010).

Change and emotions can affect an individual in a number of ways including: stress (Fullan, 1993; Mikolajczak, Luminet & Menil, 2006; Timperley & Robinson, 2000; Volante, 2012); anxiety (Benade, 2017; Fullan 1993; Hargreaves, 2001; Volante, 2012); feeling overwhelmed (Kuh et al., 2015; Hargreaves, 2003); insecurity (Hargreaves, 2001); frustration (Ash & D'Auria, 2012; Reeves, 2012; confusion (Hargreaves, 1993); ill-preparedness (Hunt, Wiseman, & Touzel, 2009) and anger (James & Connolly, 2014). However, fear has been highlighted as one of the most prominent of these (Fullan, 2001; Koksal, 2017; Zimmerman, 2006). Fear can stem from feeling uncertain about the future and a fear of being inadequate in that future (Fullan, 2001; Zimmerman, 2006). Wherever the fear stems from, it will affect a person’s willingness to accept new initiatives and ultimately hinder the likelihood of
success (Fullan, 2001; Koksal, 2017; Zimmerman, 2006). Change and emotions are both complex (James & Connolly, 2014; Stoll, 2009) and no one solution can address them (Fullan, 2014); however with reference to emotional barriers, the literature surveyed did provide some suggestions.

Negative emotions associated with change can form when teachers are expected to implement an initiative from a ‘top-down’ approach (Smit, 2003). This ‘top-down’ approach refers to educational change being implemented from policy makers and school decision makers rather than from the staff or learners which can be referred as a ‘bottom-up’ approach (Veugelers & O’Hair, 2005). Crossley (2013) compares a ‘top-down’ approach to a ‘done-to’ approach (p.9). According to Liberman (1993), a ‘top-down’ approach can lead to teachers having little to no personal investment in the initiative. It is therefore suggested that change initiatives should involve a joint approach rather than a ‘bottom up’ or ‘top down’ approach alone (Crossley, 2013; Hargreaves, 2001; Veugelers & O’Hair, 2005). Similarly, the work of Gratton & Erickson (2007) suggests that when management models change it can have a positive effect on the implementation of an initiative.

Many researchers surveyed in the literature draw on the fact that participants of change benefit from understanding why the change is being initiated (Burtonshaw-Gunn, 2009; Cameron & Green, 2004; La Marsh, 2010; Palmer, 2004). Likewise, Weller & Weller, (2000) suggest that it is important to ensure that those involved know exactly how the change will affect their work. Burtonshaw-Gunn (2009) and Killion (2015) both highlight the importance of providing on-going support after the implementation of a change initiative. It is also possible that by including teachers as part of the change process, teachers will feel safer and see a manageable way forward, which Welbourne (1994) believes is vital for successful change. Put simply, Welbourne (1994), states that for change to happen, feelings such as fear need to be recognised and managed. If this is accompanied by trusting and supportive relationships, change initiatives may experience more success (Judge & Douglas, 2009). This can be linked to the findings of, Timperley et al. (2007), when they discuss the importance of developing an atmosphere of trust where ideas can be shared, challenged and critiqued in an open and safe way, creating a productive learning environment.
**Resistance**

‘Teacher resistance’ is discussed as a challenge to educational change (Timperley et al., 2007). It can be closely linked to the emotional barriers of change and initiative fatigue. Like fear, resistance is a natural reaction to change (Harvey & Broyles, 2010). Timperley et al. (2007) link teacher resistance to teachers feeling personally or professionally attacked, and as a result teachers try to preserve their self-esteem. Change is complex and conflict is an unavoidable aspect of it (Hargreaves, 2001). Whether the reason for resistance is linked to emotions, initiative fatigue, a feeling of being time poor, or having their professionalism challenged, it must be addressed (Loughran & Hamilton, 2016). Good (2008) states everyone involved in any change process needs to be committed and willing and this can take time to bring about.

As Harvey and Broyles (2010) assert, resistance does not resolve on its own. As with addressing emotional barriers to change, it is suggested that if participants know why change is happening, resistance can be alleviated; however this alone is ineffective. Harvey and Broyles (2010) believe the strongest strategy for addressing resistance is to begin with diagnosing the reasons for resistance by asking questions. This strategy allows the ‘changees’ to talk about their feelings and ‘changers’ to understand how to address concerns and move forward (Harvey & Broyles, 2010). Similarly, Timperley et al. (2007), point out there is no easy solution to such resistance but on-going theory engagement can help.

### 2.3 Collaborative Teaching

For the purposes of this thesis, the term ‘collaborative teaching’ is used to mean any two or more teaching professionals systematically planning, designing, instructing, and evaluating student educational goals, and where the instruction occurs in a shared learning space. It is however, important to note that the literature reviewed also referred to team teaching, co-teaching or cooperative teaching or characteristics of them, because, as Murawski (2010) and Reinhiller (1996) point out, collaborative teaching has been referred to as all of the above terms, and they are often used interchangeably.
Stoll (2009) suggests that, increasingly, students come to school with a completely different way of thinking due to their experiences with digital technology. In addition, with the vast speed of technological inventions, it is suggested that the future is uncertain and, educational change is necessary to prepare students for these uncertainties (Nace, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2010b; OECD, 2001; Stoll, 2009; and Timperley et al., 2007).

Friend (2000) maintains that teachers need to collaborate to successfully meet the changing needs of students, because no one teacher can do this on their own. Similarly, Bakken, Clarke and Thomas (1998) discuss the need for teachers to be involved in learning communities similar to the medical field, where colleagues participate in in-depth conversations that test and enhance their knowledge. Many researchers have also recorded that collaborative teaching benefits student learning (Cramer, Liston, Nevin & Thousand, 2010; Martin & Williams, 2012; Reed & Groth, 2009). In a 2000 report by the New Zealand Education Review Office middle schools were encouraged to use a collaboratively organised structure to address students’ learning needs (Martin & Williams, 2012). Stated simply, due to the complexities of education, the changing needs of students and the impact of technology, it is widely suggested that teachers need to work together to provide for students’ needs. So, can collaborative teaching help teachers to meet the changing needs of students, if so, how?

2.3.1 The Benefits of Collaborative Teaching

Teachers

Martin and Williams (2012) suggest that an advantage to teaching in a collaborative environment is that teachers can utilise their strengths (Martin & Williams, 2012) and can exercise preference over which aspects they teach, and how (Cramer, Liston, Nevin & Thousand, 2010). When discussing collaborative teaching, Fattig & Tormey Taylor (2008) discuss how teachers can address varying students’ needs in many ways throughout one lesson, including one-to-one, small groups, ability based groups and choice based groups. Cross and Walker- Knight (1997) state that collaborative teaching makes it easier to plan and provide students with more hands-on activities, because a range of teaching styles can be
used at the same time in the same subject due to having a number of teachers. According to Cramer, Liston, Nevin and Thousand (2010), collaborative teaching allows for unforeseen circumstances to be dealt with through a broader range of approaches due to having more than one teacher, which they maintain can benefit both teachers and students.

Some researchers suggest that collaborative approaches to teaching can promote reflective practice (Bakken, Clarke & Thomson, 2010; Kluth & Straut, 2003). Osterman and Kottkamp (2015) state, “Reflective practice thrives in an environment of open communication and collaboration” (p. 312). This is because people can ask questions and process their learning verbally with others. Through personal experience, Hobenbrink, Johnson and Westhoven (1997) state how being involved in a collaborative teaching structure promoted self-reflection in a group of teachers they reviewed and led to significant changes in teaching practice. When discussing a reflective process in terms of sharing, testing and redesigning with collaborators, Beninghof (2012) states that “Teachers who collaborate with colleagues develop instructional ideas that are more effective for students.” (p.10). However, Beninghof (2012) also points out that in a collaborative teaching structure, finding and setting time aside for regular reflection can be difficult.

A form of informal professional development is another possible benefit for teachers involved in collaborative teaching (Cramer, Liston, Nevin & Thousand, 2010; Cross & Walker-Knight, 1997; Hughes & Murawski, 2001). Indeed, Dieker & Murawski (2003) indicate that teachers who collaboratively teach, benefit from being available to share and assist each other in many of the stressful factors of secondary school teaching. Perhaps this is one of the reasons Dieker and Murawski (2003) found that teachers involved in collaborative teaching were more energised and creative. Similarly, Gately and Gately (2001), state “Teachers involved in collaborative partnership often report increased feelings of worth, renewal, partnership and creativity” (p.40).
Research undertaken in a collaboratively taught environment by Kluth & Straut (2003), demonstrates that students benefit from teachers modelling how to deal with real life scenarios, such as dealing with differences of opinion or the stress of shared responsibility, in respectful professional ways. Gately and Gately (2001) state that “…at the collaborative level, teachers become positive role models of effective communication skills for students” (p.41). Kluth & Straut (2003) also note that students appreciated the open and informal culture that the collaborative teaching model permitted. Similarly, but in reference to curriculum areas, McGinley and Bollin (2007) maintain that students benefit from witnessing how professionals from different disciplines approach the same problem, and that a cross disciplinary collaborative teaching model gives students the potential to witness and develop mutual respect for a wide range of disciplines. Such skills are essential for future professional collaboration (McGinley and Bollin 2007).

Murawski (2009) reports increased engagement of students in a co-taught class and also discusses how students in such environments receive more interaction with teachers, improve their academic achievement and show improved social interaction. In a case study carried out by Cook and Fink (2012), based on the collaborative teaching of music, it was suggested that students in collaboratively taught situations had the “best of both worlds” due to the range of skills, experiences and knowledge offered at the same time arising from having access to multiple teachers. Robinson and Schaible (1995) state the benefits of collaborative teaching for students include “…higher achievement, greater retention, improved interpersonal skills and an increase in regard for positive interdependence.” (p.1).

2.3.2 The Challenges of Collaborative Teaching

The challenges of collaborative teaching echo the challenges for implementing change. The issue of time is noted in the literature as a testing factor for teachers involved in meaningful collaboration (Friend, 2000; Kluth & Straut, 2003). Kluth & Straut (2003) state that collaboration may not be practical when time and resources are limited. However, Reed &
Groth (2009) highlight the fact that meeting time is frequently used ineffectively by groups of teachers as conversations about behaviour management often unnecessarily dominate in place of more productive conversations about planning. Friend (2000) states that schools should make collaboration a professional responsibility by acknowledging how much time collaboration demands and setting priorities about what is actually worth collaborating on.

Insisting on a culture that requires collaboration is not enough, a clear understanding of what collaboration means must be developed (Friend, 2000). Friend (2000) highlights the fact that the word ‘collaboration’ is used freely in school wide conversations but often comes to mean any group of two or more teachers doing any type of shared work. Friend (2000) elaborates further to point out that the use of the term itself can lead to misunderstandings as to what collaboration actually is. This, Friend (2000) maintains, leads teachers to inaccurately believe that they already know how to collaborate, when, in fact, they participate in gossip type conversations about collaborative team members that undermines the entire collaborative approach. Such conversations do not represent a team that is accepting shared responsibility, which Kluth & Straut (2003) highlight is essential for productive collaborative teaching.

Friend (2000) raises concerns about the fact that so much attention is focused on teachers’ satisfaction with working together rather than on the outcomes and potential improvements such interaction can have. It is suggested that preparing teachers to work collaboratively needs to be taught and supported, something Cramer, et al. (2010) report teacher education programmes have historically failed to do. Although, the OECD (2009) report ‘Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS’, points out, that it is almost impossible for teacher training to fully prepare teachers for the ever evolving challenges involved in their career.

Another challenge for those engaging in change towards a more collaborative approach is the fact that the literature on the effectiveness of collaborative teaching can be viewed as ambiguous (Friend, 2000), as there is limited data based evidence supporting the description of such practices (Miller, 2005), or which specific collaborative practices actually lead to improved student achievement (Miller & Burden, 2007). However, there are research based
studies available that provide some anecdotal recommendations based on the experiences of teachers, professors, students and parents who have been involved in a collaborative teaching approach, many of which are from international studies. These will be outlined in the next section.

### 2.3.3 Characteristics of Collaborative Teaching

According to Villa & Thousand (2000), effective inclusive instruction requires a shift in roles and responsibilities within school personnel. As mentioned above, through the work of Friend (2000), professional development on what collaboration is and the skills necessary to collaborate is essential. Reed & Groth (2009) state “to collaborate means more than just getting along well or even sharing ideas… it is about learning to function as a goal-oriented team that jointly builds knowledge” (p.15). Not only do teachers need support in understanding why and how collaborative teaching can work, they need practice (Timperley et al., 2007; Villa et al, 1996). A large body of research supports the need for teachers involved in collaboratively taught classrooms to be allocated common planning time (Clark & Clark, 1994; Fullan & Sharratt, 2009; Kluth & Straut, 2003). In fact, Murawski (2009) asserts that teachers in a co-taught environment must have time to share common goals and put effort into lesson preparation and planning. Gately and Gately (2001) actually state “Common planning time is essential if teachers are to become truly collaborative” (p.44). Robinson and Schaible (1995) suggest teachers tasked with collaboratively teaching a unit of work should discuss and agree on a number of aspects in advance, including course content, teaching philosophy, teaching methods, grading criteria and importantly, how differences of opinion will be dealt with amicably.

Other researchers such as Cramer et al (2010) highlight the link between effective collaborative teaching and shared responsibility. Smith and Leonard (2005) draw links between the ability to problem solve and effective collaboration. According to McGinley and Bollin (2007), collaboratively taught classes work better when students and teachers are in a shared space. It has also been noted that collaborative structures work best when they are
supported by the school and when likeminded people work together (Martin & Williams, 2012).

Jeffs and Bainster (2006) draw attention to the fact that technology has the potential to expand and improve collaboratively taught courses where online forums can be used to provide immediate and direct interaction, as well as the sharing of resources. Indeed, Nace (2015) points out “technology plays such a dominant role in society that it demands a place in teaching and learning… that will continue to be an intrinsic part of major shifts in education” (p.47). Trentin (2010), discusses ‘Networked Collaborative Learning’ and points out that technology allows for innovative learning experiences based on collaborative learning where groups can fully engage in collaborative work, which can be mediated and supported by teachers. However, Trentin (2010) highlights that there are obstacles to utilising technology to promote collaboration among learners, and at the forefront of these obstacles is the teachers’ skills and knowledge to use technology effectively in this way. Murawski (2009) points out that, collaborative teaching offers the perfect opportunity for teachers to utilise technology to engage and meet the needs of diverse learners while upskilling in their own use of technology. Murawski (2009) suggests this can occur when one teacher takes the time to learn a new technological skill and shares this new skill with colleagues in the collaboratively taught environment.

Kluth & Straut (2003) inform us that there are many ways to implement good collaborative teaching but not all approaches and characteristics will work for every school, hence it is important that school personnel become inventive, strategic, flexible and reflective about creating a collaborative teaching model that meets the needs of their own school and its students. Indeed, as Parr and Timperley (2010) point out, any intended professional learning with a change related goal, should involve the development of a shared understanding of the purpose and focus of that learning with those involved, as well as the intended outcomes or goals.
2.4 A Collaborative Learning Approach to On-Going Teacher Professional Development

With the speed of technological and societal changes, knowledge and skills are quickly and constantly becoming out-dated (Grosemans, et al., 2014). As pointed out by Timperley et al (2007), on-going professional learning is needed to assist teachers to meet the ever-changing student demographic and knowledge base. Thus, it is acknowledged that teachers’ professional development is a career long process (Richter, Kunter, Klusmann, Lüdtke & Baumert, 2010). Kwakman (2003) states that it is a teacher’s own responsibility to stay up to date. So, as asked by Guskey & Kwang (2009), how do teachers keep themselves up to date in a time restrained profession when high quality professional development takes even more time?

2.4.1 Collaborative Learning

‘Collaborative Learning’ can be defined as “an educational approach to teaching and learning that involves groups of learners working together to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product” (Laal & Laal, 2012). In the 2012 OECD publication ‘Preparing teachers and developing school leaders for the 21st century: lessons from around the world’, ‘collaborative learning’ is referred to as students engaging with each other during the learning process where classrooms become “…vital, creative environments not only for acquiring knowledge, but also for learning the communication skills required in today’s society and economy” (p.42 ). Dillenbourg (1999) points out that it is extremely difficult to define ‘collaborative learning’ because it is so complex, but broadly, it is “a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together” (p.1). Added to this is the fact that, although two or more people rely on each other to accomplish the intended learning or complete the intended task, they are still accountable for their own learning (Luzet, 2013).

With reference to student learning, the 2012 OECD publication named above states that “research on collaborative learning provides evidence of its positive impact on academic achievement” (p.42). Roberts (2004) also highlights the fact that the benefits of collaborative
learning are widely known. When discussing why collaboration leads to learning, Luzet (2013) draws the connection between collaborative learning and the historical work of Vygotsky and his ‘Social Development Theory’, which argues that effective learning occurs in collaboration with more knowledgeable others. Luzet (2013) maintains collaborative learning promotes deep and lateral thinking. However, one’s readiness and openness to learn is vital (Luzet, 2013), and effective collaborative learning takes meticulous planning on behalf of the instructor or teacher (Barkley, Cross & Cross, 2014; Luzet, 2013). That stated, the exact role of a teacher or instructor in collaborative learning is debated by some. Bruffee (1995) suggests that those involved in collaborative learning should have the autonomy to govern themselves, yet, Johnson, Johnson & Smith (1998) suggest it is the responsibility of the teacher or instructor to ensure the group are interacting effectively and intervene when necessary. Indeed, Roberts (2004), points out that collaborative learning is not new, people have been informally learning in groups for decades, yet we have historically developed many learning structures, in all areas of education, which focus on learning individually and often fail to utilise the potential of collaborative learning.

2.4.2 Teacher Professional Development

In the report ‘Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS’, (2009), ‘Professional Development’ is defined as activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics (OECD, 2009). Beaty (1998) provides a similar definition with the addition of the development of attitudes and ethical principles that underpin teaching practice. Borko (2004) discusses professional development as a way of teachers to upskill to meet new standards; with it being viewed as an opportunity for teachers to improve pedagogical skills and content knowledge (Eaton & Carbone, 2008). According to the OECD 2009 report, teacher professional development can vary in delivery and be formal or informal. The Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) points out that “much professional learning is informal and incidental and occurs in meetings after school.” (Timperley et al, 2007, p. xxiv). Grosemans, Boon, Verclairen, Dochy and Kyndt (2014) view formal professional development as being structured, whereas informal professional development does not have predetermined outcomes, and often occurs individually or in collaboration with others.
The literature suggests that research provides an ambiguous link between professional development and changes to long term practice or improved student achievement (Borko, 2004; Coburn & Russell, 2008; Cohen & Ball, 1990; Guskey & Yoon, 1997; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Spillane, 1999; Timperley et al., 2007). Formal methods of professional development have often been perceived as irrelevant and ineffective by teachers themselves (Guskey & Kwang, 2009; Odfer & Pedder, 2011). This could in part be a result of teachers having to prioritise short-term over long term goals due to lack of time (Richter, et al., 2010), and even more likely because traditional professional development approaches are often unrelated to practice and lack follow up support (Abdal-Haqq, 1996). The ineffectiveness of some professional development may also be linked to the failure to recognise and understand the complexity of professional practice (Timerpley, et al., 2007). In fact, characteristics that have been deemed valuable to more successful outcomes of professional development include appropriate content and adequate duration (Timperley et al., 2007), and providing opportunities for active learning and collaboration (Borko, 2004; Eaton & Carbone, 2008; Timperley et al., 2007). Reflection is another key characteristic that is needed to lead to more positive professional development outcomes (Guskey, 1986; Timperley et al., 2007).

Coburn (2001) maintains that for professional development to change practice it must engage teachers’ current belief systems. Timperley et al. (2007) suggest that the in depth understanding of the theory behind new learning is often poorly understood because the professional development process did not challenge teachers’ current beliefs, which results in limited or short term changes to practice. Timperley et al. (2007) also suggest professional development should involve drawing connections between an individual’s pre-existing knowledge, beliefs and attitudes, the situation in which they practice and the new learning to be acquired. In fact, very closely linked to the barriers of change outlined earlier, Spillane et al. (2002) draw links between teacher’s emotions and change, in that professional development efforts can sometimes fail because it challenges one’s self-esteem, and this challenge is not always addressed in the professional development process.
2.4.3 Collaborative Learning and Teacher Professional Development

Grosemans, et al., (2014) argue that teachers are beginning to favour informal ways of learning as they realise how ineffective formal professional development initiatives can be to their daily teaching. With reference to more formal professional development, Parr and Timperley (2010) highlight that, “many professional development efforts…have met with relatively small and typically unreliable achievement gains…” (p.159). Hence, informal learning is becoming more widely recognised (Cunningham & Hillier, 2013) and as pointed out by Parr and Timperley (2010), in an educational setting there are multiple contexts available in which teacher professional learning can occur. Desimone (2009) highlights the fact that professional learning can occur in a number of contexts including the classroom, observations, and group discussions or mentoring conversations. Borko (2004) even suggests professional learning can occur in hallway conversations.

In their study of ‘Continued Professional Development’, Cordingley, Bell, Rundell and Evans (2006) define collaborative continued professional development as “teachers working with at least one other related professional on a sustained basis.” (p.1). In their study, based on collaborative ‘Continuing Professional Development’ (CPD) where teachers worked with at least one other teacher over time to build on existing knowledge and practice, it was stated that collaborative CPD resulted in “improvements in both teaching and learning and many of these were substantial” (Cordingley et al., 2006, p.1). Within the context of this study, the findings reported that teachers became more: confident, willing to take risks, enthusiastic about working collaboratively, committed to changing practice, and knowledgeable. Cordingley, et al. (2006) also reported positive outcomes for students as a result of their teachers’ CPD including: increased motivation, improved performance, improved organisational skills and the development of a wider range of classroom based strategies. However, these outcomes were based on certain characteristics and how the on-going collaborative professional development was carried out, which we will explore further in the next section.
2.4.4 Characteristics of Effective Teacher Collaborative Learning

For a collaborative learning approach to work for teachers, Cordingley, et al. (2006) highlight the need for external expert involvement. This has also been supported by the work of Harwell, Gunter, Montgomery, Shelton and West (2001) who state professional development needs to collaboratively combine expert and practising teacher knowledge. It was also noted that although a collaborative learning approach was deemed effective, it could be painful at first due to the possible need to challenge the beliefs and opinions of those one is working collaboratively with (Cordingley, et al., 2006). As Verberg, Tigelaar and Verloop (2015) discuss, critiquing the work of others can be a challenge for many. This highlights the need for trusting relationships and a supportive environment for constructive criticism (Van den Bergh, Ros & Beijaard, 2015), which Day and Sachs (2006) state is necessary for professional learning.

‘Communities of Practice’ (CoP), a term devised by Lave and Wenger (1991), is described as an environment where one is encouraged to re-evaluate one’s understanding of learning and knowing. Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to CoP as learning through social interaction with others who share passions, interests or professions. In essence it is how people engage in a social process of learning. Wenger and Trayner (2015) summarise CoP as “… groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (p.1). The learning that evolves from CoP is not necessarily intentional. The CoP have three core components: the domain, the community and the practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The collaboration of teachers to support professional learning can be viewed in terms of a CoP where: the domain refers to teachers who “…value their collective competence and learn from each other” (Wenger-Trayner, & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p.1); the community refers to the interactions teachers have during joint activities and discussions to help and learn from each other, and; practice refers to how teachers “…develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems” (Wenger-Trayner, & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p.2).
Patton and Parker (2017) discuss the importance of safe but challenging spaces in which collaborative approaches can be used to share experiences and ultimately increase knowledge and skills. However, Patton and Parker (2017) link the benefits of such collaborative approaches to the involvement of likeminded colleagues. Gutierrez and Kim (2017) noted three main characteristics to informal teacher learning: an understanding of classroom dynamics; shared ownership, and; reflective practice to connect and resolve ideas. The need for a reflective approach to professional learning has also been discussed by Parr and Timperley (2010) through an on-going inquiry approach that encompasses inquiring into “leadership practice, facilitation and teaching practice” (p.159). According to Verberg, Tigelaar and Veerloop (2015) teacher collaborative learning can foster critical reflective thinking, however this requires active involvement of participants and this kind of commitment can vary from teacher to teacher. Van den Bergh, Ros and Beijaard (2015) discuss the link between successful professional development and teacher self-directed learning; however they point out that teachers’ commitment and motivation to self-directed learning also varies greatly. Overall, teachers require different amounts and types of guidance, and meeting the needs of this variance can make continued informal professional development challenging (van den Bergh, Ros and Beijaard, 2015).

It is acknowledged that teacher professional development can be messy and complex (Patton and Parker, 2017; van den Bergh, Ros and Beijaard, 2015; Timperley et al., 2007). A collaborative learning approach to professional learning can allow for flexibility in approach (Cordingley, et al., 2006). It can provide teachers with a way of designing their own professional learning that is current, meaningful and can be directly applied to their teaching; Cordingley, et al. (2006) even reported that teacher-to-teacher collaboration in the form of coaching or joint planning or development was beneficial to those involved, but also to the school wide initiative being implemented. However, although professional development is widely researched, teacher collaborative learning still lacks substantiated research evidence (Grosemans, et al., 2014; Guskey & Kwang, 2009; Patton & Parker, 2017). It is noted that teacher collaborative learning needs more study (Doppenberg, 2012) and as called for by the Best Evidence Synthesis (Timperley et al., 2007), there needs to be ‘…a systemic response to the development of expertise, for the integration of theory and practice, for school and classroom-embedded research and development, and for on-going commitment to collaborative inquiry into the links between learning and teaching.’ (Timperley et al. 2007).
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology undertaken in this research project. The theoretical basis for using this methodology will first be outlined, followed by the forms of data collection used. Finally issues of validity and reliability will be considered, and the ethical issues outlined.

The project reported on in this thesis involves the exploration of the implementation of collaborative teaching in a Year 7 – 13 New Zealand school, including an evaluation of the development of a collaborative teaching resource used by teachers within the school. As outlined earlier, the project was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the benefits and challenges of moving to a collaborative teaching model in an ILE, as perceived by teachers in this school?
2. How successful was the implementation of collaborative teaching, as perceived by teachers at this school?
3. In what ways can a collaboratively developed resource support the implementation of a change initiative?

In order to meet the aims of the project and answer the research questions, the methodology being undertaken in this project is based on ‘Practitioner Research’ (Middlewood, Coleman & Lumby, 2012).

3.2 Epistemology and Ontology

Before delving further into this particular methodology and the suitability of it for this research project, it is important to outline one’s ontological and epistemological position, as these directly influence the methods chosen. Indeed, Bracken (2010) points out that it is
imperative the researcher’s ontological and epistemological positions are closely aligned with the methods for data gathering and interpretation. Dilts and DeLozier (2000) suggest this is because one’s ontological position affects the ‘filters’ one applies to his/her world. Hence, as the researcher, I must be aware of the beliefs and ‘filters’ that have influenced my research choices and interpretation of data.

I hold the epistemological view that knowledge can be developed in social contexts. This stance of ‘social epistemology’ is discussed by both Goldman (1999) and Kotzee (2013). Goldman (1999) suggests that to share true information between people social practices must be studied. Kotzee (2013) indicates that “…one may best understand how to foster the growth of knowledge by thinking about those social institutions” (p.2). It is, therefore, in keeping with my epistemological stance that I believe the answers to my research questions can be found in the social context in which they are relevant, which is the school and its teaching staff.

As outlined by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), I hold a subjective approach to social science which very much favours an interpretivist approach over a positivist one. Bryman (2001) discusses how positivism, in terms of social phenomena, has existence that is separate from the ‘actors’ within it. Cohen, et al (2007) refer to the views of positivism that state social phenomena can be researched in the same way physical phenomena can be, using general laws and theories. I hold a differing view. With particular attention to the fact that my research is based in an educational setting, I believe social phenomena cannot be based on an approach of general laws and theories that generate ‘scientific fact’. I hold the belief that organisations, such as schools, are much more complex than the positivist approach allows for. I hold the interpretative view that events occur and knowledge is gained through interaction within a social context as a whole, not in isolation.

In my view, interpretations of social phenomena are essential for any research involving human behaviour and, as discussed by Davidson and Tolich (2003), social phenomena are ever changing. Cohen et al (2007), outline the limitation of the positivist approach to take account of such complexities. It is the practitioners in the school of study that hold the
answers to my research questions. Their answers are individual and complex, yet essential to understanding the factors that have enabled and prevented them engaging with the changes this research project focuses on. This view is in keeping with the anti-positivist stance outlined by Cohen et al (2007) where, “…the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the on-going action being investigated…” (p. 15).

3.3 Practitioner Research

The belief in an interpretive paradigm has led to a methodology guided by Practitioner Research. In “Practitioner Research for Educators: A Guide to Improving Classrooms and Schools”, Robinson and Lai (2006) discuss this methodology in terms of teachers enquiring into teaching practices with the aim of improving the teaching and learning at their own school. A qualifying statement for practitioner research also outlined in literature states the person undertaking the research is both researching and practising, and, in education, can be referred to as ‘teacher researchers’ (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lowden & Hall, 2011).

As the researcher in this study, I carried out research and practiced at the same time within my own school. In completing this research, the aim was not only to improve my own practice but also to stimulate conversation and share the outcomes of the study with other practitioners so they too benefit from being involved in the research and gain value from the research findings. This ‘sharing’ as a form of learning is highlighted as a key characteristic of practitioner research by Mentor et al. (2011). The overall aim of the project and the researcher’s epistemological and ontological stance align closely with a practitioner research methodology. As outlined above by Robinson and Lai (2006), and further supported by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1998) and Campbell, McNamara and Gilroy (2010), practitioner research aims to bring about change. This project seeks to bring about change by developing an understanding of the factors that can positively or negatively affect the implementation of a change initiative, as well as assisting teachers within the setting to upskill through their involvement in a collaboratively developed resource.
Alongside this, practitioner research was chosen for its ability to be a flexible and situationally responsive methodology (Cohen, et al., 2002), as well as being a powerful tool to give a voice to those the researcher works with and for, building collegial relationships that improve practitioner knowledge (Payne, 2008).

However, practitioner research can suffer from criticism. For example there are concerns about the ability of practitioners to undertake good research (Oolbekkink-Marchand, van der Steen & Nijveldt, 2014) and concerns about robustness in process. Nevertheless, while practitioner research is imperfect (Coleman and Lumby, 1999) it does have much to offer teaching practitioners, namely; its ability to empower practitioners (Kincheloe, 2012), and validate their practice. It can also add a practitioner voice to the debates surrounding educational change and reinforce the idea of educators as self-regulating professionals (Kincheloe, 2012); it can clarify understandings around educational processes and enhance practitioner learning (Coleman and Lumby, 1999).

As an approach, practitioner research allowed me to work alongside colleagues to identify significant challenges being experienced in the school’s change initiative and establish possible solutions, or at least recommendations for supporting teachers in this time of change. As pointed out by Cardno (2003) and Coleman and Lumby (1999), collaboration with colleagues can be a positive aspect of practitioner research and yield positive outcomes for organisations.

### 3.4 A Qualitative Study

Creswell (1994) directly links the interpretive paradigm to a qualitative paradigm, in that a qualitative researcher also believes in the subjective nature of social phenomena and that reality is constructed by those within the social context of study (Creswell, 1994). Nonetheless, similar to the differences of the positivist approach versus the interpretative approach, the differences between qualitative and quantitative data should be considered when carrying out practitioner research (Campbell, McNamara & Gilroy, 2010).
As outlined by Creswell (1994), a quantitative approach aims to draw connections between variables that can establish generalisations among a wider population. However, this particular research aligns more closely with Creswell’s (1994) outline of a qualitative paradigm, in that it aims to gain meaning within a particular context: the school of study, and provide understanding within that context: the evaluation of the implementation of collaborative teaching, specific to the school and its personnel. Also in keeping with this research, a qualitative approach places value on the participant’s involvement, rather than the detached acquisition of numerical data in a quantitative approach (Creswell, 1994). As with all practitioner research, the answers to the research questions have most relevance to those within the context of the research, particularly the participants (Robinson & Lai, 2006).

The need for flexibility is another key difference that leads this particular researcher to favour a qualitative approach because, as pointed out by Creswell (1994), the qualitative approach is much less fixed than the quantitative approach. Indeed, quantitative data can sometimes be ambiguous but qualitative data allows for information to be more fully interpreted and understood (Menter, et al. 2011). As this research relies on participants sharing their views, opinions and attitudes towards a large change initiative, it is vital the form of data collection chosen allows the researcher the opportunity to seek further information if necessary. For all of the above reasons, a qualitative approach to data collection has been selected for this research project.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The methods chosen in a research project are extremely important as they can play a significant role in the precision and honesty of participants’ responses (Menter, et al. 2011). The methods of data collection chosen for this research include a focus group and interviews. These methods have been compared with other methods and deemed most likely to obtain the qualitative information necessary to answer the research questions and meet the research aims. Before exploring the chosen methods more closely, reasons for not choosing other forms of data collection will be briefly outlined.
Although surveys and questionnaires can provide useful information, they were not chosen in this case as they favour a more positivist approach to research. Such methods rely more heavily on the motivation and ability of participants to complete them (Menter et al., 2011). Questionnaires are also less flexible, in that corrections cannot easily be identified or resolved (Mitchell & Jolley, 2013). Overall, questionnaires are more limited in their ability to collect qualitative data (Mitchell & Jolley, 2013). Such methods focus on rational answers and can fail to acknowledge the emotional dimension of qualitative data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) required in this research study.

### 3.5.1 Interviews

As outlined above, this research aims to evaluate and understand the factors that assisted or hindered the implementation of a school wide change initiative, in this case, collaborative teaching. Following the initial stage of implementation, four teachers involved in the change initiative and the collaborative development of a teaching resource, were interviewed to establish whether or not their involvement in such a collaborative process assisted them in their own change experience to collaborative teaching. Menter, et al (2011) maintain this type of research is precisely when interviews work best “…when the research questions require you to elicit information on people’s perceptions, attitudes and meanings.” (p.127). Campbell et al. (2010) also highlight interviews as a frequently used method and maintain, as long as the form and structure are chosen carefully, interviews can yield valuable results in practitioner research. Menter, et al. (2011) emphasise how the findings of such interviews are not to make generalisations, but to provide information on specific social actions and processes, which aligns with this research project.

As discussed, this research is embedded in social epistemology; hence it is complex. It deals with the views, opinions and feelings of the teachers within the social context of their school. The research requires the acquisition of qualitative data and interviews are deemed a valuable way of acquiring such information (Middlewood, Coleman & Lumby, 2012). To help ensure this qualitative information is valuable and accurate, interviews allowed the researcher to adapt the questions and direction of the interview to meet the needs of the research questions.
(Middlewood, Coleman & Lumby, 2012; Menter et al., 2011). This flexibility played a vital role in obtaining relevant information by allowing the researcher to delve deeper to gain further understanding or clarification (Middlewood, Coleman & Lumby, 2012), all of which are fully embedded in the social context (Menter et al. 2011).

As suggested by Campbell et al. (2010), after careful consideration of the data required, including the need to be flexible, semi-structured interviews were favoured over structured interviews for this study. Unlike structured interviews, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to further explore and shape the interview to meet the research objective (Menter, et al. 2011). Indeed, Newby (2010) discusses the ability of semi-structured interviews to obtain deep and rich qualitative data. Semi-structured interviews were favoured over unstructured interviews because the research has a specific topic to gather information on, namely the experience of implementing collaborative teaching, and can guide the direction of the interview. As Menter, et al. (2011), point out, unstructured interviews are used more often when the researcher has little idea about the key issues or processes being addressed in the research, which is not the case in this research project.

However, to achieve the outcomes of interviews suggested above, careful consideration was needed to ensure the interviews met the proposed benefits (Campbell et al., 2010, Menter et al., 2011). The following considerations are outlined by Menter et al. (2011) and were followed in this research approach. The personal face to face nature of interviews can affect participants responses in a number of ways. Participants can sometimes: be influenced by the interviewer through general differences or power dynamics; find it difficult to respond to emotionally charged questions in a face to face situation, and/or; feel their responses are restricted by the time line of an interview. Menter et al. (2011) point out that these considerations can be addressed through careful planning, awareness and skills of the interviewer.

These points are also supported by Campbell et al., (2010) with further emphasis on building an honest and open forum with the participants from the beginning and being mindful of the use of open and closed questions. It is for these reasons that careful and conscientious efforts
were made to develop open, honest and mutually respectful relations between the interviewer and the participants. The interview process and types of questions were also explained carefully to each participant in advance to pre-empt any potential uncomfortable conversations. In this research, it is difficult to state exactly how much impact pre-existing positive relationships had over the suggested strategies outlined above; nonetheless, both seem to have had a positive impact on addressing such considerations.

3.5.2 Focus Groups

For the purpose of this research, a focus group was chosen to obtain information from seven teachers directly involved in the implementation of collaborative teaching but not involved in the planning or development of the collaborative teaching resource. The aim of this focus group was to, firstly, discuss the factors that enabled or prevented their shift to collaborative teaching, and secondly, to evaluate the ability of the collaborative teaching resource introduced as part of the implementation, to assist them in this shift.

As stated by Krueger and Casey (2014), a focus group is a special type of group that brings people together who can all relate to a particular topic, with the aim of understanding how they feel and think about that topic. This is exactly what was required from the focus group in this research study. The discussions occurred in a relaxed manner and according to Krueger and Casey (2014) such discussions can best occur when there are between five and ten participants. Menter et al. (2011) highlight the ability of focus groups to collect rich qualitative data, where participants are free to use their own words. However, Menter et al. (2011) and Wilkinson (1998) describe an even more valuable characteristic of focus groups; the ability of group discussions to elicit more elaborate and detailed participant responses that can be difficult to achieve using other methods. As with interviews, focus groups allow for the complexity of information required to answer the research questions in this study.

Focus groups do however have limitations and these were considered before they were carried out. One such consideration is the group dynamics. One participant can dominate the
group conversations and other group members can feel reluctant to share their views in the group setting (Menter et al., 2011). In this study, this was managed by making a conscious effort to help participants to “…feel comfortable, respected and free to give their opinions without being judged.” (Krueger & Casey, 2014, p.7). Krueger and Casey (2014) also point out how careful the interviewer must be to encourage responses without influencing or showing judgement towards participants. By remaining conscious and mindful of this, it appeared participants in this study did not feel judged and verbal confirmation suggested they felt free to share their views and opinions openly. Time can also be a concern when conducting focus groups, coupled with the possibility of participants veering off topic and the focus group taking even more time to achieve the necessary information, or indeed not providing enough on topic information, to answer the research questions (Krueger & Casey, 2014). These concerns were managed through careful planning and conscious management of the focus group when it was in action, using the strategies suggested by Krueger and Casey (2014). The management of both the interviews and the focus groups in this research were assisted by the researcher following Kvale’s (1996) criteria for an effective interviewer which includes: being clear but gentle and sensitive, and; open but critical enough to ask further questions.

3.6 Analysis of Data

Both the semi-structured interviews and the focus group produced qualitative data. As pointed out by Babione (2014) and Campbell et al. (2010) the analysis of qualitative data is complex as it involves the exposition of the participants’ interpretation of an event. More importantly, Campbell et al. (2010) draw attention to the fact the researcher must be aware of personal biases or preconceptions when analysing such data.

In preparation for analysing the data in this study, both the interviews and the focus group discussion were voice recorded. Alongside this, key points were recorded in chronological order during the process to assist in the analysis of data, a strategy suggested by Campbell et al. (2010). The recordings were transcribed before further analysis began. During the analysis of data an analytical stance was undertaken. Not only were the words considered, but how the
words were said. This is deemed important by both Campbell et al. (2010) and Menter et al. (2011). With reference to the focus group this went further by also focusing on the group dynamics in which the conversation occurred (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

A coding process was carried out to analyse the data. This process began with creating a ‘first code’ by identifying concepts or themes that related very closely to the research questions, in some cases this first code used the actual words used by participants and memos as further reference points (Campbell et al, 2010; Menter et al., 2011). Following this, recurring phrases, sections of texts and patterns were identified and highlighted (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994) before being grouped together to form categories. Common characteristics and properties were then used to create sub-categories (Campbell et al. 2010). In the final step the highlighted pieces of texts and identified word patterns were ‘charted’ (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994) by being placed under the overall themes identified at the beginning to ensure any themes or concepts were not overlooked (Menter et al., 2011).

### 3.6.1 Validity

The complexity of the data being gathered, demands that the researcher is aware of his/her own filters and bias since these can heavily affect the validity of the findings (Menter et al. 2011). For this reason, as the researcher, I was continually mindful of, and reflective of, my own personal values, beliefs and background and how, at times I had to step back from my own beliefs in order to stay open to the perspectives of others.

In general, practitioner research makes reference to the ‘trustworthiness’ of a research project (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 2007; Kincheloe, 2012) rather than its ‘validity’. One way trustworthiness was maintained was through the use of a ‘critical friend’ and participants. From a practitioner research perspective a ‘critical friend’ is a key characteristic to producing more rigorous data (Campbell et al, 2010, Carr & Kemmis, 1986, Menter et al, 2011). In this research, a key stakeholder was involved throughout the research process to review, question and stimulate reflection for the researcher. Participants also acted as reviewers of the
information by being provided with the opportunity to review and challenge the main points highlighted in the results of both interviews and focus group discussions.

Trustworthiness is referred to be Mentor et al. (2011) when they suggest the use of “… a combination of data from various sources to increase the credibility or trustworthiness of your study findings” (p.36). In this study interviews and focus groups involved a range of teaching staff with various roles and responsibilities. In this way, responses from varying perspectives allowed the research to study the implementation of collaborative teaching in this school from more than one viewpoint, which can create more confidence in the findings (Middlewood, Coleman & Lumby, 2012). A total of eleven teachers participated in this study and shared their views on the implementation of collaborative teaching.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The complexity of ethical concerns in social research is discussed by Cohen et al. (2002). Campbell et al. (2010) also refer to how complex ethical considerations can be and highlight the importance of considering the rights and responsibilities of participants in order to avoid discrimination and bias. Menter, et al (2011) maintain, trust and transparency must be established with participants, as well as assurance of anonymity, which will allow the researcher to more truly discover the participants’ viewpoints and feelings on the research matters. With specific reference to qualitative data, the need to ensure no harm can come to participants as a result of the research is highlighted by a number of researchers (Campbell, et al., 2010; Cohen et al., 2002; Menter et al., 2011; Morgan, 1997). Morgan (1997) pays particular attention to the invasion of privacy of participants. Macfarlane (2009) discusses the potential ethical issues that can arise due to conflicts of interest, which Menter et al. (2011) link to the dual role of the teacher as a practitioner and researcher. Oliver (2010) points out how ethical considerations are of on-going concern throughout the various stages of the project. The following steps were taken at the various stages of the project to address the ethical concerns in this research study.
3.7.1 Access and Acceptance

Despite being a researcher and practitioner in the specific context of study, permission to carry out the research was sought and granted to establish a formal agreement with the principal and senior management of the school. Establishing a contractual agreement is a strategy outlined by Cohen et al. (2002) to help anticipate and resolve any possible ethical issues. Forming the basis of a researching relationship is also discussed and supported by Oliver (2010).

3.7.2 Voluntary Informed Consent

As suggested by Cohen et al. (2002), participants received a detailed account of the research study and what their involvement entailed, as well as the fact that their participation was voluntary. Participants were also made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that they could choose to have their data withdrawn up to two weeks prior to data analysis. As suggested by Oliver (2010), within this informed consent, participants were made aware of the details of confidentiality, including who had access to the data and how the data would be kept. As discussed by Tolich (2001), gaining fully understood informed consent is linked, and vital, to other ethical considerations as it has serious implications on the autonomy and well-being of participants. In this research, consent forms, as well as the information shared with participants to inform them of all aspects of the research and implications of their involvement were reviewed by an ethics committee.

3.7.3 Discrimination and Bias

McFarlane (2009) links this to the fact that a good researcher needs to be impartial and objective to produce authentic results. Auster, Wylie and Valente (2005) discuss the importance of remaining open minded and being receptive to new ideas even after a process has begun. Throughout this research a conscious effort was made to remain mindful of the varying views and opinions of participants. As explained by Menter et al. (2011) eliminating
all bias can be difficult, regardless, a conscious effort was made to remain as objective as possible by the researcher being cognisant of personal beliefs and values.

3.7.4 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Although it is difficult to assure full anonymity in this research due to the use of face to face interviews and a focus group, participants were made aware of this from the beginning. However, participants were assured that the information they provided would only be used for research purposes, as suggested by Struwig and Stead (2001), and that there would be no identifiable traces of exactly which data came from which participant, as discussed by Cohen et al. (2002) and Loue (2014). Every effort was made to ensure confidentiality and participants were assured that no names would be used in the writing up of this thesis.

3.7.5 Trust and Transparency

In pursuit of trust and transparency, all staff, prior to volunteering to be a participant in the research project, were made aware of the purpose and intentions of the study. Following this, participants were invited and encouraged to ask questions and voice any concerns they had throughout the process, a strategy discussed by Loue (2014).

3.8 Conclusion

Overall this research study used methods that were in keeping with an interpretative paradigm and a practitioner research methodology. Ethical approval was sought and granted by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC). Fortunately no major ethical dilemmas occurred in the study and the findings have been validated as much as possible within the time frame and scope of this research project.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The project reported on in this thesis involves an exploration of the implementation of collaborative teaching in a Year 7–13 New Zealand school. This chapter includes discussion on the role of a collaboratively developed resource in the implementation process.

Research Questions

The project was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the benefits and challenges of collaborative teaching in an ILE, as perceived by teachers in this school?
2. How successful was the implementation of collaborative teaching, as perceived by teachers at this school?
3. In what ways can a collaboratively developed resource support the implementation of collaborative teaching?

As outlined in the Methodology section, the findings of this study emerged from the analysis of data derived from a focus group, as well as semi-structured interviews. The focus group was comprised of seven teachers from a range of subject areas and year levels. This group included experienced and newly trained teachers; four of whom were primary trained and three secondary trained. Teachers in this group held expertise in the following subject areas: English, History, Physical Education, Religious Education, Technology and Social Science. Questions covered the perceived benefits of collaborative teaching and the way in which the school-wide implementation of collaborative teaching occurred. Focus group members, whilst not developers of the resource, had been invited to use it and were asked to discuss the usefulness of the resource in relation to the implementation process. The four semi-structured interviews were carried out with teachers and leadership members who were involved in the development of the teaching resource. The semi-structured interviews focused on how, if at
all, their involvement in developing the resource benefited their own teaching and their perception of the effect the resource had on the change to collaborative teaching in an ILE. Interviewees were also asked to comment on their perception of the school’s overall implementation of the change initiative.

There were three main areas that I was interested to explore in this research. Firstly, there was an interest in teachers’ experiences of collaborative teaching which was brought about by a change in teaching spaces; secondly I was interested in teachers’ views of the implementation process and; thirdly I wanted to explore the value, if any, the collaboratively developed resource had on the implementation of collaborative teaching at this school.

A review of literature found no definitive outline available on what and how collaborative teaching can be implemented in a New Zealand school. For this reason, I was also interested in identifying some possible aspects of successful collaborative ways of working by exploring those ideas with colleagues undergoing this change in practice. By exploring my current practice environment, which was in the process of undergoing significant and numerous changes, I hoped to uncover some key ideas regarding successful collaborative teaching, the implementation of change and the possible link between collaboration and professional learning in times of change.

The analysis of data was guided by these research goals and was informed by the literature review I had undertaken prior to data gathering. Data analysis thus focused on: 1) Teachers’ perspectives of the benefits and challenges of changing practice to increased collaborative practices; 2) The implementation of a change initiative, namely collaborative teaching; 3) the role a collaboratively developed resource can have on the implementation of a change initiative, and; 4) Possible aspects of positive collaboration, as experienced by teachers in this study.

It is of interest to mention that although senior and middle management members were involved in both the interviews and focus group, the questions sought their views and
opinions as teachers involved in the change rather than their leadership role in the initiative. It is worthwhile to note however that interviewees held a minor leadership role in the implementation process as they were involved in the development of the resource. Focus group members however were teachers who were invited to use the resource but had no specific leadership role in the implementation process.

4.2 Collaboration: Perceived Benefits and Challenges

In response to the benefits participants perceived they had experienced to date through collaboration, both the focus group respondents and interviewees highlighted a number of positive aspects of being involved in collaborative teaching (focus group and interviewees) or the collaborative development of the resource (interviewees), as well as challenges. In this context, collaborative teaching is being referred to as collaboratively planning and instructing cross curricular programmes in a shared innovative learning environment. Collaborative teaching groups in this context varied from between two teachers to 50 to 60 students or three teachers to 75 to 90 students.

4.2.1 Collaboration: Perceived Benefits

Informal Professional Development

The focus group respondents stated the new collaborative teaching structure allowed them to learn from other teachers in the areas of behaviour management and curriculum expertise without having to set up formal meetings or observations. This was viewed positively. Similarly, through the collaborative experience, all interviewees commented on benefiting from listening to others. Interviewee 1 stated… “It’s amazing what you learn when others put their ideas in”. Focus group members maintained that planning with others opened them to new perspectives and highlighted moments of “Wow, I hadn’t thought of that!” Interviewee 2 referred to this as a benefit and described it as gaining wider perspectives and experiencing “Ah, ha!” moments.
Although, not all interviewees reported clear improvement in their knowledge of collaborative teaching, they did acknowledge how collaboration leads to the practising or challenging of various skills. For example, interviewee 1 stated the collaborative experience challenged one’s ability to “compromise” and interviewee 2 believed the collaborative experience involved practising one’s “communication and negotiation skills”. With reference to collaborative teaching Interviewee 1 also stated that, “Teachers have said they are learning a lot from one another.”

Interviewee 2 reported having learnt different ways of approaching classroom situations and different skills and techniques to use in various circumstances. Interviewee 2 also stated, “You sub-consciously pick up things and find yourself using them”. Interviewee 3 shared the view that one learns a lot about other curriculum areas when working with other curriculum experts in the new collaboratively taught structure, and continued to point out that “…it feels good when you learn”. Interviewee 4 stated “The planning has been amazing, the ideas that come out of it by bouncing off each other are amazing.”

All participants acknowledged that collaboration led to learning from others, in one way or another, and many touched on the fact that collaboration stimulated new ideas and creativity.

**Investment and Support**

Participants reported feeling an increased sense of collegial support through their involvement in collaborative teaching. For focus group members this was through collaboratively taught classes and for interviewees this was through the collaboration involved in developing the resource. More specifically, interviewee 4 maintained listening to others’ feedback led to more confidence in sharing personal views and opinions, because it provided an example of what was expected regarding the type and focus of feedback required to develop the resource. Participants reported feeling less isolated than they had sometimes felt in the single cell teaching environment and made specific reference to the day to day
running of a classroom, where teachers in a collaborative environment are able to “share the load”, “problem solve” and “celebrate” together. One similar benefit participants recounted was being guided by their colleagues in terms of what to do and how to respond in particular situations.

As a result of collaboration, respondents noted a stronger sense of community among teachers across the school, where they reported noticing a new sense of a “shared collective” developing across different classes and subject departments. They believed this was evident through the increase in teaching and learning conversations that were occurring amongst teachers throughout the school in informal conversations and settings. Indeed, interviewee 1 also highlighted an increase in learning conversations across school departments and subjects, where subject specialists were now discussing commonalities between different subject areas. Interviewee 1 maintained this was a positive result of the new collaborative teaching structure introduced at the school.

Participants reported feeling a stronger sense of community developing due to more people having “a say” and being invested in the success of the collaboration. Interviewees 2 and 4 in particular referred to the benefits of a group of people having input into the work rather than the outcome being the result of just one person. Interviewee 2 stated “…people see more value in things if they are developed by more than one person.” Interviewee 2 elaborated on this further to discuss how the investment of a greater number of people can lead to the spread of positivity. Interviewee 3 stated “…you get way more buy in” if the directives of the change initiative are “not coming from one or two people who say how it should be, so it is not a dictatorship, it is actually a shared common goal”.

Overall, a greater sense of empowerment and a growing sense of a shared collective, led those involved to feeling more invested in the success of the initiative. This was highlighted by teachers in this study to be a positive aspect of collaboration that continued to evolve through the new collaborative teaching structure.
*Self-Reflection*

Through the increased conversations brought about by the need to plan together, participants reported an increase in their own self-reflection. The focus group members noted that their self-reflection occurred more “naturally” from working and discussing different perspectives with others. When interviewees were asked to outline any benefits they believed occurred through their involvement in the collaborative development of the resource, interviewee 1, 2 and 3 all reported that self-reflection occurred more readily. Interviewee 1 discussed how reflection was “occurring more as a group” as a result of discussing what was going well or not so well. Interviewee 2 stated “…if you see the need for self-reflection the collaborative structure does encourage people to reflect more.” This point was reinforced further by interviewee 3, who said quite simply, in reference to “robust discussions” about the purpose of the collaboration, that “…conversations force you to reflect more”.

Self-reflection in this case was linked closely with the fact that collaboration involved communicating with others and sometimes challenging others’ ideas. Participants noted this as a benefit of collaboration.

*The Results of Collaboration*

Participants involved in the development of the resource noted that their collaboration led to a more useful resource because they felt the information and templates developed by the group eventuated from the input of a number of people rather than only one person. An example of this was outlined by interviewee 4, who commented on the changes that were made to a planning template designed for staff to use; these changes occurred after two group members trialled using the template and suggested amendments. The template was initially designed by two other group members but through trialling, group discussions and sharing the workload, interviewee 4 feels the template improved to meet its intended aim of supporting teachers.
Similarly, interviewee 2 highlighted how collaborative discussions led to changes in the “Forms of Agreement” (Appendix F) to better meet its purpose. “Forms of Agreement” were documents designed by the interviewees as part of the collaborative teaching resource to assist teachers in the initial stages of working as a collaborative group. Their aim was to establish working guidelines and procedures among the members of a collaborative teaching group, as well as common classroom management and behaviour goals. Interviewee 2 also viewed the changes to the “Forms of Agreement” as positive and put this down to the fact it had “multiple peoples’ input”. Interviewee 3 believed this was not only to do with having developed the resource as a group, but also because a starting point or “skeleton” was provided by other members of the group which led to in-depth discussions about its purpose, and allowed the suggestions and outcome to grow “exponentially”. Interviewee 4 also mentioned the fact that when ideas are established it is easier than starting from scratch and feedback can be used to improve upon the initial ideas.

This notion connects to the perceived benefits outlined earlier by focus group members through the “Wow” moments they experienced in the collaborative planning process. Focus group members also agreed, although did not discuss in detail, that through collaboration “There are some amazing things happening in collaboratively taught classes”. However, focus group respondents clearly acknowledged that the outcomes of collaborative teaching were not yet reaching their potential due to a number of challenges, which will be outlined below.

4.2.2 Collaboration: Perceived Challenges

Workload: “Starting from scratch”

Both interviewees and focus group participants revealed that teachers involved in the new collaboratively taught cross curricular programmes have experienced an increase in their workload. The focus group members believed that part of this increased workload was due to the fact that not only have teachers shifted to collaborative teaching, they have also had to adjust to an entirely new teaching and learning structure which involves teaching subjects in
cross curricular contexts. Hence, the focus group maintains teachers are “starting from scratch” in terms of teaching content, and also sometimes content knowledge, as teachers are teaching subject areas or year levels they have not necessarily taught before. The notion of “starting from scratch” was also acknowledged by interviewee 4. Interviewee 4 expanded on this notion to highlight the fact that this aspect may improve when the two year curriculum cycle renews and some teaching programmes may be able to be repeated; nonetheless interviewee 4 maintained the workload for some teachers is currently huge.

**Workload: Time and Meetings**

Despite the fact that all participants acknowledged the importance and value of meeting, participants reported challenges in maintaining meeting times as they added to a continually increasing workload. Interviewee 1 highlighted how essential these meetings were to collaborative teaching and this was also affirmed by interviewee 2 who stated, “…the extra meetings adding to workload are all important.” In direct response to questions about workload, the focus group respondents highlighted “lack of time” as a concern. Focus group members shared how difficult they have found it to keep and maintain the new regular collaborative group meeting times; this could involve four extra weekly meetings, alongside attending the usual staff and professional development meetings.

With reference to the development of the resource, interviewees 2 and 4 both reported time as a challenge. Interviewee 2 stated “It was not that I found it to be a waste of time, it was just extra to do. It added to the load”.

In summary, participants stated that attending so many meetings was one key element resulting in teachers feeling “snowed under”. In short, participants expressed that they enjoy, and see benefit in, working with others and developing new ideas, but explained how the time and workload involved in doing so, currently seems unmanageable and unsustainable.
**Class Sizes**

Focus group respondents noted that many of the challenges they are facing in collaborative teaching are exacerbated by large class sizes. Where previously the student teacher ratio was approx. 1:30, the new structure, based on larger groups with more teachers has a ratio of approx. 2:60 or 3:up to 90. Focus group members maintained that although this new organisation of classes allowed teachers to experience some of the benefits of collaborative teaching, including the benefits of learning from, and feeling supported by, others, they believed classes of more than 75 students were simply too big and lead to more challenges, such as classroom and behaviour management, than successes. Interviewee 1 shared the view that big class sizes “did not help” in the overall change to collaborative teaching. According to focus group members, in some cases, large class sizes force teachers into situations that reflect “crowd control” rather than collaborative teaching. Focus group members also believed the excessively large class sizes forced teachers to plan more manageable “one dimensional” tasks. This sentiment was shared by interviewee 4 who stated that big class sizes push teachers to revert to “old ways to cope” and used the example of teachers splitting groups into three even groups to reflect the old single cell structure. Interviewee 4 elaborated further on this to point out that it is “…difficult to manage over eighty students and keep track of who teachers have touched base with”. However, interviewee 4 also shared the personal belief that “…there are solutions to this, but I don’t know what they are yet”.

With reference to class sizes, participants noted that while the teacher-student ratio had not changed, there was a change in the number of people in one space at one time. Participants highlighted the fact that class sizes of over 75 students were challenging and despite collaborating with other teachers, they were currently finding it difficult to meet all students’ needs. All participants would like to see class sizes capped in future, although the numbers on this varied. Interviewee 1 and 3 suggested 75 students should be the maximum class size, whereas the focus group members suggested 60 students should be the maximum for any one collaboratively taught cross curricular programme.
The discussion about large class sizes led focus group members to discuss behaviour management and their belief that teachers are struggling to collaboratively manage behaviour. The focus group members suggested this was for a couple of reasons: 1) teachers feel there is no clear or consistent behaviour guidelines for students across the school, in that some behaviour is acceptable in one class but not in another, due to individual teachers having different standards in terms of what they deem acceptable and; 2) now that students are in larger groups, less positive behaviour has a “bigger audience” and is affecting more students. Interviewee 2 agreed with these views and added the fact that collaboratively managing behaviour can be more challenging, because students can “play teachers off against each other”. This participant highlighted how important it is that teachers in collaboratively taught environments are “on the same page” ensuring that behaviour management is addressed in the same consistent way, thus students are getting the same message.

Similarly, the connection between large class sizes and behaviour management drew participants to share their concerns about student-teacher relationships. Focus group members noted the difficulties of forming positive and meaningful relationships with students in such large class sizes; they maintained while time was being spent on behaviour management other students were being neglected. Interviewee 2 shared this view and maintained that “teachers’ ability to build positive relationships with students” was impacted by large classes. Focus group members noted the ratio between teacher and students has not changed but highlighted that the dynamics of 1 teacher to 25-30 students varies greatly to that of 3 teachers to 75-90 students. Members stated that there are “more working parts” to manage and consider.

Stress

Stress was closely linked by participants to workload and time and was highlighted by most of the participants. The participants linked feelings of stress to feeling dissatisfied in their current ability to meet students’ needs. In some cases, teachers felt “defeated” and “like
failures”. The focus group suggested that the feelings of worry associated with fears of letting colleagues and students down exacerbated feelings of stress, and that this impacted on their personal lives.

4.3 The Implementation Process

There were some slight differences in the findings from the interviews and the focus group discussions on the aspects that were perceived to have been supportive and disadvantageous in implementing collaborative teaching in an ILE at this school; namely around the role of the collaborative teaching resource, which will be discussed later. However common themes can be identified from both data gathering activities.

4.3.1 Vision and Preparation

The focus group respondents and interviewees all acknowledged that the change to collaboratively taught cross curricular programmes had been in preparation for considerable time. Interviewee 1 reflected on images the principal had shared in 2010 that directly relate to the current changes. Focus group members stated that they supported the change and were unanimous in stating that they wanted the change to work for students and teachers. Interviewee 1 commented on the fact that “…teachers are trying to meet the needs of the students”; this echoed the views of interviewee 4 who stated “…people want it to work, otherwise they would not have put in the amount of effort they have.” Interviewee 4 also stated the belief “…it is absolutely possible to make this work”. Interviewees 2 and 4 shared the opinion that they, and others, understand why the school is making the change. Interviewee 2 acknowledged that, although “…some still disagree; there has been enough PD for them to know why.”

Hence, the preparation for implementing this school wide change has been a long process. Teachers are supportive of the change, and believe they understand the theory behind why the change is occurring. They appreciate the preparation that has gone into the move and when
asked, the majority of the focus group members could explain the key benefits of collaboratively taught cross curricular programmes for both students and teachers. Focus group members made specific mention to preparing students for a rapidly changing future.

4.3.2 Organisation and Planning

Despite this long term planning, both focus group members and interviewees highlighted a strong concern regarding the lack of time to plan and prepare for the day-to-day practical side of teaching collaboratively. Interviewee 1 stated that last minute changes to collaborative groups and teacher timetables “did not help” in the overall implementation of collaborative teaching. This sentiment was also shared by interviewee 2 who stated that last minute changes affected collaboratively taught programmes negatively. Focus group respondents also commented on the effect last minute timetable changes had to their workload and stress levels, particularly when they had helped plan and prepare for one programme but were suddenly moved to another collaborative teaching group for an entirely different cross curricular programme. Interviewee 4 discussed how “unnerving” it can be to not know which programme you are teaching or who you are collaboratively teaching with “in time to plan ahead”.

Interviewee 1 noted that the planning templates and suggestions made to staff at the beginning were not fully utilised by staff. However, interviewee 3 noted that teachers needed more help during the planning stage, and interviewee 2 stated “different people struggled with different aspects” of the resource. Interviewee 3 suggested a critical colleague type conversation happening at the planning stage to help teachers further develop ideas or to simply provide support at this planning stage. Yet, this study’s findings point out that this is not possible if teachers do not know in advance which programmes they will be teaching or with whom.
4.3.3 Pre-existing and New Initiatives

Participants noted the challenge of new initiatives being implemented on top of, or alongside, old initiatives, and believe that not all old and new systems are complementing each other. Again, the focus group respondents referred to workload and how attempting to complete the “old systems” and the “new systems” is time consuming. Participants stated that not all systems are supporting, or reflecting, the recent structural move to collaborative teaching. The focus group members urge that old systems be reviewed on their own “individual merit” to reflect and support the new system, and stopped or adapted where possible. This view was also shared by interviewee 4 who specifically mentioned the reporting system as being one system that has not been reviewed to suit the new collaborative teaching structure.

4.3.4 Professional Development

Focus group members and interviewees shared the view that the professional development that was available provided little support for the practical aspects of collaborative teaching. Focus group members and interviewees highlighted the need for professional development to provide day to day strategies for running collaboratively taught classes. The focus group members stated that there are skills and knowledge within the school staff that, if tapped into, can help address the challenges and concerns being experienced in the collaboratively taught programmes. Participants suggest this should be the focus of upcoming professional development, rather than a continuation of external expert, theory based professional development.

These views were shared by interviewee 4, who claimed that the theory based professional development “has not been useful for some time” and suggests this is because the professional development has spent too much time on “ice breaker” activities. Interviewee 4 also suggested that more recent professional development failed to acknowledge that the majority of teachers attending these professional development sessions are “experienced teachers” who need actual strategies on how to use the “space and teach effectively” in the
new collaborative teaching structure rather than being taught “how to teach”. Interviewee 2 also stated the wish for a shift to more practical “strategy” based professional development.

4.3.5 Teachers’ Perceptions of Student Uptake

The focus group respondents believed the implementation process was particularly unsuccessful in two key areas: 1) preparing and scaffolding students during this time of change, and; 2) preparing and getting parents and caregivers on board with the change. The focus group respondents maintained that what is expected from students changed, in that they now need to manage themselves in larger class sizes, have more choice about which context or learning programmes they choose, which peers they choose to work with and which teacher they choose to approach with questions, or for help. Yet, focus group members maintain students have had little preparation to face or understand these changes. Focus group members suggested students need support on self-managing and making choices that are based on their individual learning needs rather than being with their friends. Likewise, the focus group members maintain parents do not understand the new structure or implications of it. The result of this, according to focus group participants, is that concerned parents are now requesting meetings and email communication with individual teachers which, participants state, is adding to the issues of workload, time and stress.

In contrast, interviewee 1 reported that parents have given positive feedback about their children discussing their collaboratively taught cross curricular programmes in positive ways at home. Interviewee 4 reported observing how positively students are engaging in, and talking about, the new collaboratively taught programmes. Interviewee 4 also highlighted not hearing any negative comments from students about not getting their chosen programme choices, and feels this is a positive aspect of the implementation process.

It is highly possible, despite the differences being reflected in these findings; namely that focus group members report concerns regarding lack of student scaffolding but interviewees report positive feedback from students and parents, that both findings are accurate and have
simply resulted from the complex nature of change and education, and indeed, perhaps more simply that they reflect the perceptions of different people.

4.3.6 Relationship Tension

Some participants suggested that as a result of the changes a “disconnect” has been experienced between management and teachers. Focus group members suggest this is because no senior leadership members are actually involved in the day-to-day running of collaboratively taught classes in an ILE. Interviewee 4 believes the tension has developed due to the stress levels of everyone involved in the change initiative. Indeed, the focus group respondents shared the view that senior leaders have worked hard and are heavily invested in making the changes work for the school, but suggested such high levels of personal investment from both staff and senior leadership members may be leading to people responding “defensively” rather than constructively, hence exacerbating feelings of tension.

The study highlighted that all participants acknowledged that senior leadership and staff share the common goal of wanting to make the change work and meet student needs but, also highlighted the need for senior leadership to work more closely with teachers to develop a constructive and collaborative problem solving approach. When asked what they felt a constructive and collaborative problem solving approach could look like and how it could be developed in their school, the focus group members suggested small group forums where the dynamics of such a small group allow one senior leader to listen to the views, concerns and suggestions of teachers. Creating smaller forums where teachers are enabled and feel more comfortable sharing their views and opinions was suggested as helpful because, as some participants stated, they did not feel comfortable sharing their views in larger whole staff meetings or that the time was not available in whole staff meetings to discuss concerns.

The focus group members maintain that small group discussions may alleviate the feelings of tension between staff and leadership. One focus group member discussed this in terms of senior leaders “modelling” collaboration. In keeping with this, interviewee 4 maintained
teachers need to feel like “…they are being heard” and believed this would go a long way in alleviating the relationship tensions that have currently developed due to the stress involved in the change initiative. Interviewee 1 pointed out that senior leaders may be listening to staff feedback, but highlighted the fact that teachers may not feel “listened to” because actioning feedback immediately may not be possible or may cause more workload issues or stress. Yet, as pointed out by interviewee 4, “Heavy workloads are leading to higher stress levels, which are affecting relationships across the school”.

These findings highlight the complex nature of change where participants acknowledge sharing a common goal with leaders, but how the heavy workload and stress involved is placing strain on workplace relationships. Participants strongly suggest developing a stronger collaborative problem solving approach in the school where senior leaders and teachers work more closely together to find solutions and provide support in times of change.

4.4 Collaborative Teaching Resource

With reference to the collaboratively developed resource, the focus group respondents, who were users but not developers of the resource, stated that it was useful in helping them make the change to collaborative teaching, particularly the practical type templates it provided. However, the focus group participants explained they were not taken through the resource thoroughly enough or made aware of everything that was contained in the resource; they believe they did not use it to its full potential. It was noted by some that they may be able to use the resource more effectively the second time round.

Interviewees, who were involved in the development of the resource, also shared the belief that teachers did not use the resource to its full potential. In fact, only one of the four interviewees believed the resource assisted the school in the change to collaborative teaching. Interviewee 1 stated that “The resource did not help the school’s overall move to collaborative teaching”. Interviewees shared different beliefs as to why they feel this happened. Interviewee 1 believed this was “… not the entire fault of the resource” and
suggested it was due to the fact that staff did not take the time to read the information on the resource and could have been down to “lack of engagement”. Interviewee 3 stated knowing for a fact that some teachers did not look at the resource and suggested this may have been because it was not “…in their face” and/or because it was an online resource and “…not everyone likes to look at things digitally,” or because they struggled to find the resource online.

Interestingly, those involved in developing the collaborative teaching resource reported benefiting individually from being involved in the collaborative process in one way or another. As mentioned previously, for some this was identified as practising skills such as negotiation or compromising, for others it was improving and increasing their ability to self-reflect. Interviewees, as resource developers, linked the collaborative process with the benefits of being able to have a say and the positives of being invested in something’s success. The results of whether or not they believed that being part of the process directly improved their ability to teach collaboratively varied. Interviewee 1 noted it did not, interviewee 2 was unsure and interviewees 3 and 4 stated it did assist them in their shift to collaborative teaching because they “knew what was expected” and had a “practice run” at using the templates.

4.5 Perceptions of What Works

4.5.1 Developing Shared/Common Goals

The findings of this study suggest that “common goals” are an important aspect of successful collaboration. One clear example of this finding is how participants believed they could have used the ‘Forms of Agreement’ (Appendix F) which provides a template for this, better in the beginning to ensure teachers within the collaborative group were all on the “same page”. Focus group respondents believed that the reason they did not use the resource was because they did not see the value in these forms at the time because they did not “know what they were looking for”. Interviewee 1, also commented on this fact stating “The Forms of
Agreement were not completed by all teachers” and believed if they had been, they may have helped resolve, or even pre-empt, issues that later arose. Interviewee 1 highlighted how collaboration can actually help group members to develop and clarify common goals which can have a positive effect in the collaborative process and overall outcome. Interviewee 2 also noted that the “Forms of Agreement” provided to teachers at the beginning were “beneficial and helped those that used them to establish common goals and guidelines”.

Although this was not an aspect that was fully utilised by teachers in the study, the participants clearly recognised that they believe in the benefits of collaborative group members having shared common goals and guidelines. Many participants discussed improving future collaboration by actioning this realisation through iteration.

4.5.2 Time to Collaborate

Another aspect of successful collaboration found in this study, which was referred to earlier and outlined by all participants, was the benefit of collaborative groups having the time to meet. Focus group members clearly felt time was a challenge but that having set meeting times was important to “plan”, “reflect”, “problem solve”, “moderate” and “complete reports.” This was also clearly noted by interviewee 4, who acknowledged that it was important that planned meeting times for collaborative teaching groups were timetabled. Interviewee 2 also stated “…having set times for groups to meet was important, particularly in the early planning stages.”

Interestingly, the development of the collaborative teaching resource was based on online communication rather than face to face meetings. Interviewee 1, 2 and 4 both complimented the use of digital technology to make this collaboration timely and effective, as outlined in the next section. However, interviewee 3 stated the fact that more face to face discussions may have been good during this process, although interviewee 3 was unsure exactly why this may have been beneficial.
4.5.3 Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Interviewees 1, 2 and 4 commented on the positive role ICT had on their ability to collaborate in the process of developing the resource. Interviewee 1 stated “ICT has a big role,” but acknowledged not everyone knows how to use the same programmes and platforms and this can affect one’s ability to collaborate. Interviewee 2 made direct reference to the use of Google+ in the collaborative development of the resource, and how having to use it resulted in up-skilling. Interviewee 4 referred to the benefit of being able to view “live changes” on templates and the positive aspects of being able to make use of the online comment boxes to view others’ feedback.

4.6 Summary of Findings

4.6.1 Benefits and Challenges of Moving to a Collaborative Teaching Model

The focus group participants and interviewees reported some key benefits they experienced through their involvement in collaborative activities. One benefit was related to informal professional development. Teachers felt they learnt from colleagues during the collaborative process; such learning ranged from curriculum content knowledge to strategies for classroom management. Another benefit reported by participants was how collaboration led to the outcome being of a higher standard because it was collaboratively planned and developed and trialled by other members in the group in comparison to being planned and developed individually. Participants also reported how the collaborative process promoted self-reflection and the fact that self-reflection occurred naturally through conversations with colleagues. The findings of this study also suggest that collaboration leads to, and helps develop a greater sense of community across the school. However, participants also highlighted the following challenges associated with collaborating with colleagues: workload, lack of time to plan, lack of time to meet, challenges of classroom management due to large class sizes and overall feelings of stress.
4.6.2 The Implementation Process

The positives highlighted by this research study with reference to the implementation process included the fact that, due to long term preparation and theory based professional development, teachers unanimously reported being “on board” with the change. As a result they were supportive of the change and willing to work hard to make the change work. This reflected the success of the implementation process in providing professional development and time for teachers to develop and accept the theory behind this change initiative.

The findings of the study suggest a number of areas the implementation process could have been improved upon, many of which also highlight the complex nature and challenges involved in school wide change. The administrative organisation is one such challenge. In this study participants reported the negative effects of not knowing their timetable in advance and how last minute changes negatively affected their ability to plan and prepare for collaboratively taught classes. Despite the fact that professional development was reportedly successful in developing teachers understanding of the theory behind the change, participants overwhelmingly stated professional development failed to provide them with practical support. As a result, participants reported feeling ill-prepared to implement the change on a practical basis. In addition, participants requested a shift in professional development to focus on practical strategies to address the immediate, practice based challenges being experienced in the new collaborative teaching structure. Participants also reported the need to provide more scaffolding and support to help students and parents understand the changes.

4.6.3 Collaborative Teaching Resource

The findings of the study cannot clearly confirm how successful a resource can be to support a change initiative. According to focus group members, who used the resource, this was mainly because the resource was not fully explained to teachers, and therefore teachers were unaware of the contents so did not use it to its potential. However, teachers noted they may use the resource and its contents more thoroughly in the next teaching iteration.
The findings regarding the actual collaborative process of the resource provided more concrete information. Those involved in the development of the resource would recommend such a process in future change initiatives because they believe it leads to teachers feeling more invested in the change initiative, which they maintain leads to the spread of positivity for the change initiative among staff. Participants involved in the development of the resource also highlighted the value of having a say in what and how support can be provided for teachers. Interviewees also reported feeling more prepared for the change through their involvement in developing and trialling resources designed to support the change initiative. As referred to previously, not all participants noted the process improving their own knowledge and ability to teach collaboratively. However, participants valued the opportunity to collaboratively develop a resource and acknowledged that it gave them an opportunity to practise a range of skills.

4.6.4 Aspects that lead to positive collaborative experiences

Some key aspects for successful collaboration were highlighted in this study. One aspect was the need and importance of making time available for groups to work together. The study found that the timetabling of common collaborative meeting times was valued by teachers but extremely challenging due to the increase in workload associated with the number of meetings involved. Both groups of participants drew attention to the benefit of collaborative group members having, and understanding, a shared common goal. Participants in this study suggested the early stages of collaboration was an important time to form common goals and understandings, and mentioned the benefits of using the “Forms of Agreement” to assist collaborative groups to do this despite the fact that the resource was little used by others. The use of ICT was also mentioned by interviewees as a key aspect that enabled and promoted collaboration to occur in a timely and convenient way.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the key themes from the research findings of this study in relation to the literature review. The chapter will then provide a conclusion of the implications of the research findings based on the three research questions, followed by recommendations for future practice, the limitations of this particular study and finally recommendations for future study.

The findings of the study have produced three key themes:

1) Recognising the complexity of change

2) The role of professional development in implementing school wide change

3) Possible aspects of successful collaboration

5.2 Recognising the Complexity of Change

This study highlights how complex and challenging implementing school wide change can be. This is supported by the work of a number of researchers, including Friend (2000), Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), Hargreaves (2001), James and Connolly (2014), Stoll (2009), and Timperley et al (2007). This study outlines a number of complexities involved in this school’s change to collaborative teaching which range from managing emotions and relationships to the logistical challenges of aligning administrative organisation to the changes. These complex challenges will be discussed in detail below.
5.2.1 Workload, Time and Organisation

Teachers involved in this school change initiative highlighted major concerns with time and workload. In fact the words “snowed under” were used to reflect how some teachers were feeling in the midst of this school wide change. Aside from the extra meeting times mentioned previously, teachers in this study voiced their concerns over increasing workload and the time needed to manage “old” and “new” school systems that do not align. Timperley and Robinson (2000) discuss how poorly organised systems can result in the addition and duplication of tasks. Teachers in this study believed old and new systems could be aligned much better to reduce workload but maintained this was not currently the case. This key finding is also supported by the work of Reeves (2006) who, with reference to initiative fatigue in schools, highlighted an imbalance of new initiatives being added and old initiatives being discontinued.

Teachers in this study also associated lack of time and increased workload to having to “start from scratch” because not only have teachers in this school made the shift to collaborative teaching but also to teaching subjects through cross curricular contexts. However, this is a complex matter. Fullan (2016) highlights the fact that change has to be initiated as continuing and on-going planning can add to workload with little or no difference in terms of whether change actually occurs. Reeves (2012) and Timperley (2005) also explain time and effort are essential for school wide change to occur, but the teachers in this school openly admit to struggling with the feasibility of the current workload and time involved in making this school wide change possible. In some cases, participants noted reverting to old ways in order to cope. As highlighted by Welbourne (1994), if change is to experience success, teachers need to see a manageable way forward. Therefore, this study concludes that if new initiatives continued to be added, placing more strain on teachers, any change is less likely to experience success. The work of Ash and D’Auria (2012) suggests that continuing to add to this school’s change process, without the aligning or discontinuing of old initiatives, could lead to the failure of the new initiative. Indeed, Reeves (2006) and Sterrett (2015) state that leaders must identify initiatives that can be stopped.
This study also highlighted the negative effect last minute timetable changes had on teachers’ ability to plan and prepare for collaborative teaching. In fact, if one reviews the literature about how essential time is to collaboration (Friend, 2000; Kluth & Straut, 2003), one could state, in this school, last minute changes completely undermined the collaborative process. This is something the school should aim to alleviate in future collaborative teaching.

Time, workload, last minute changes and not knowing their timetable well in advance were clearly noted by participants as aspects that increased stress levels and negatively affected their ability to teach collaboratively and meet the needs of their students. This finding is discussed and outlined further in the next section.

5.2.2 Emotions and Supportive Relationships

A key finding of this study highlights how a range of emotions can be experienced by those involved in change and the effect these emotions can have on relationships within the school. Teachers in this study reported feeling stressed, defeated and sometimes like they were failing students and colleagues. Such sentiments are similarly reported in the work of Fullan (1993), Mikolajczak, Luminet and Menil (2006), Timperley and Robinson (2000), Volante (2012), and Zimmerman (2006). Emotions, such as stress, were highlighted in this study to have had a negative impact on teachers’ ability to meet students’ needs. Similarly, the study found that stress was negatively impacting relationships school wide. In this case, as mentioned above, teachers reported increasing stress levels due to, or at least being exacerbated by, lack of time, along with the increased workload associated with the change initiative.

Although, in this study, tensions were reported between management and staff, teachers clearly acknowledgement that both senior leaders and teachers shared a common goal; there was recognition that senior leaders were also working hard to achieve school wide success. Reeves (2012) suggests school leaders make well intended decisions but need to provide on-going support to staff in times of change. This study shows that, although teachers reported
that pre-existing positive relationships existed among staff, the emotions associated with change have led to teachers feeling unsupported, resulting in the perception that teachers are not being “listened” to. Teachers need to feel supported as outlined by Timperley, et al (2007) and Reeves (2012).

One participant did acknowledge the fact that senior leaders were aware of the increased workload. However, they pointed out that the change needed to be initiated at some point, as continuing to plan for it was adding to workload without the concomitant change occurring. As mentioned above, this finding is strongly supported by Fullan (2007) who argues that until initial use of practices begin, those involved cannot make well-informed decisions about what is needed to lead to the change’s success. It is this complexity that this study has witnessed. Senior leaders are willing and trying to support staff, but the change process, which has increased workload and stress, needed to be implemented to meet the school’s future goal. It would be interesting to investigate, if, after the implementation occurred, whether or not senior leaders were able to review and make more informed decisions about how they provide teachers with support.

It is important to note that this research study occurred in the very early stages of this school’s implementation of collaborative teaching. Hence, the study concludes that in the early stages of this change initiative, the teachers involved in this study reported feeling stressed and unsupported. Timperley et al. (2007) maintain leadership support is extremely important for the success of any change initiative. It is also interesting to note that the teachers involved in the study were seeking to work collaboratively with senior management to make the change a success. Therefore, although the study highlights tension between staff and leadership due to feelings of lack of support, the findings also suggest all is not lost. Teachers are still willing and open-minded about the future success of the initiative, and perhaps, more importantly, shared common goal and understanding regarding the change initiative has been developed between staff and leadership. The importance of, and link between, developing a shared common goal and the success of change has been outlined by researchers such as Parr and Timperley (2010).
5.3 The Role of Professional Development in the Implementation of Change

As highlighted above, time is a key concern for teachers involved in this school wide change to collaborative teaching. According to Fullan (1991), quality professional development takes time. Interestingly, the participants in this study have unanimously highlighted the fact that they understand the theory behind why this change is occurring and are willing to support the school in this change initiative. This can be noted as a key success in this implementation of change, as many researchers link the benefits of participants knowing why a change is being initiated and the success of change (Burtonshaw-Gunn, 2009; Cameron & Green, 2004; La Marsh, 2010; Palmer, 2004.) Participants have clearly developed their understanding of the theory behind the practice, and report that senior leaders have obviously provided the professional development and opportunity for teachers to develop this knowledge. As Hargreaves (2001) and Terhart (2013) point out, teachers play an essential role in any school wide change. Without teachers’ support, and willingness, change initiatives are unlikely to experience success. This finding is further supported by the work of Good (2008) who states everyone involved in any change needs to be committed and willing.

Overall, this finding concludes that theory based professional development, forward thinking, along with the sharing of a future vision years prior to the change initiative, have played an important role in preparing this school and its teachers for the shift to the new collaborative teaching structure. Indeed, Timperley et al. (2007) highlight a strong link to on-going theory based professional development and addressing barriers to change such as teacher resistance, highlighting the fact that change is not something that happens immediately. Change takes time and vision (Fullan, 1991; 2016). It is noted however that the participants suggested that formal professional development now needs to move from a theory based focus to a practice based focus.

5.3.1 Practical Strategy Based Professional Development

The participants reported the failure of professional development to provide them with practical support for implementing the school wide move to collaborative teaching. Teachers
in the study reported the failure of formal professional development to meet their needs. These aspects are similarly identified in the literature on professional development, namely; too much time on theory; it did not reflect the prior-knowledge of its audience (Coburn, 2001; Timperley et al, 2007); and it did not relate directly to their practice (Abdal-Haqq, 1996; Timperley et al, 2007).

One participant in the study suggested teachers are simply missing the link to the formal professional development and their practice. Making links between professional development and practice is something Timperley et al (2007) suggest is extremely beneficial to successful professional development and should be made explicit. Whatever the underlying reason, teachers in this study viewed the formal professional development in a less than positive way. This is reinforced in literature, which suggests, if the professional development is perceived as being irrelevant and ineffective by teachers, then it will indeed be ineffective (Guskey & Kwang, 2009; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Teachers in this study wanted professional development that provided them with strategy based practical support for implementing the change on a day to day basis. Further to this, teachers in the study, shared the belief that the expertise and knowledge for such practical support could be found within the school staff, not from outside experts.

Research suggests effective professional development is actually the result of external expert involvement alongside staff being supported and provided with the opportunity to apply learning to practice (Harwell, Gunter, Montgomery, Shelton and West, 2001; Timperley et al, 2007). As this research has found that professional development was not perceived to have provided practical support for teaching collaboratively in an ILE, teachers became frustrated with the continued focus on theory based professional development by outside experts. It is possible that teachers’ frustration on this matter has led to the overall assumption that any future formal professional development will be equally ineffective; hence they have requested the opportunity to work collaboratively with the expertise held within the pre-existing staff. Grosemans, et al. (2014) draw attention to the fact that teachers can lose faith in formal professional development as they experience how little of its content actually applies to their daily teaching. It appears this is the case for the teachers at this school.
Providing more practical strategy based professional development would seem like a positive step in supporting teachers’ movement to collaborative teaching.

5.3.2 Informal Professional Development – Collaboration

Another key finding of this study indicates that teachers involved in collaborative teaching benefit from working closely with others to develop, plan and teach classes because they learn from each other, and as pointed out by name the ‘Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS’ report from the OECD (2009), teacher professional development can be formal or informal. Some teachers in this study noted that they were learning from others subconsciously, while others noted it was a result of being involved in conversations about learning and teaching. As highlighted by Timperley et al. (2007), much professional learning is actually informal and occurs incidentally. This is further supported by Grosemans, Boon, Verclairen, Dochy and Kyndt (2014), who discuss how informal professional learning often occurs in collaboration with others. However, this perhaps more specifically links with the notion of ‘Communities of Practice’ developed by Lave and Wenger (1991). Stated briefly, this link is evident as teachers in this study reported learning from others in their practice through social interaction that was not always intentional.

In this study, what and how participants reported learning from others varied. Some participants reported learning different skills and techniques that could be used in the classroom through observing other teachers in action, such as behaviour management skills; learning through observation is supported by the work of Desimone (2009). Participants more unanimously noted learning during the collaborative planning process where conversations helped group members to clarify their own thinking. Participants particularly noted the positive aspect of being exposed to ideas they had not previously thought of. They also reported learning content and curriculum knowledge from other expert group members. This is supported by the historical work of Vygotsky with reference to how people learn from interaction with more knowledgeable others (Luzet, 2013). Again this links to the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) in relation to ‘Communities of Practice’. Indeed, a number of
researchers support the finding that informal professional development can be a benefit of collaborative teaching (Cramer, Liston, Nevin & Thousand, 2010; Cross & Walker-Knight, 1997; Hughes & Murawski, 2001).

Professional development is not without its complexity. As can be noted from the above findings, even in informal professional development, what teachers learn from the same experience can vary greatly. Indeed, in this study, one participant specifically mentioned the fact that some teachers needed more support in the planning stages of this change initiative than others. As pointed out by van den Bergh, Ros and Beijard (2015), providing professional development to meet the varied needs of teachers is a challenging task.

The findings of this study highlight this school’s need to trial a collaborative learning approach to professional development where teachers can build on the knowledge base held within the school, from people who are fully involved in the change occurring. Such a model of professional development could also allow for flexibility to reflect the needs, strengths and weaknesses of those involved. Such an approach is discussed by Cordingley, et al. (2006).

Overall, however, it seems likely that, despite the challenges, professional development should aim to have a balance between formal and informal, external and internal, and theory and practice. Timperley et al. (2007) suggests “…quality professional learning comes from providing opportunities for each teacher to engage at a deep level with ideas and approaches. They must have extended time to do this, they need access to external expertise, they need their thinking challenged, they need to learn alongside colleagues, and their leaders need to provide the right conditions for the learning.” (p.xii). Therefore, a conclusion of this study is that feedback from professional development should be gathered early and utilised, internal experts should work alongside external experts and a professional development plan should be monitored to ensure a balance between theory and practice is occurring and professional development is truly productive.
5.3.3 Reflection

Very closely linked with the finding of collaboration and informal professional development is this study’s finding that those involved in collaboration reported self-reflection occurring more naturally. Guskey (1986) and Timperley et al. (2007) suggest that reflection is actually a key characteristic of positive professional development outcomes. In this study, reflection occurring more naturally was linked by participants to the collaborative teaching process. However, different aspects of the process were highlighted to be a contributing factor to this. Some reported more self-reflection occurring because of the collaborative conversations that needed to occur in order to plan and run an educational programme; such a finding is supported by Osterman and Kottkamp (2015). Others reported self-reflection being linked to the sense of a “shared collective” and not wanting to let others down.

Overall, this finding suggests that self-reflection can play an important role in successful professional development and change in schools. As Hobenbrink, Johnson and Westhoven (1997) point out, teachers’ involvement in a collaborative teaching structure can promote self-reflection and they believe this can lead to significant change in teaching practice. In this study it was clear that the shift to collaborative teaching was evoking more self-reflection in participants but whether or not this was leading to substantial change in practice is still to be determined. Nonetheless, participants talked of a link between self-reflection and collaborative teaching in a positive way. Thus, self-reflection is an important aspect of both collaboration and change that should not be overlooked in school wide change initiatives.

5.4 Successful Collaboration

As mentioned in the rationale for this study, previous literature provides little substantiated research on what successful collaborative teaching actually entails (Miller, 2005; Miller & Burden, 2007), particularly in New Zealand schools. Yet many schools are being encouraged to adapt a collaborative approach to teaching in an effort to prepare students for their future. Hence, I found it valuable to report some possible aspects of successful collaboration as
experienced by teachers involved in this study and outline these below with links to the available literature.

In this study, a shared common goal was found to be an important aspect of successful collaboration. With reference to teachers in co-taught environments, Murawski (2009) highlights the importance of teachers having shared common goals. The work of Robinson and Schaible (1995) support this finding and highlight the need for teachers involved in collaborative teaching to discuss and agree on a number of aspects in advance, such as the goals and aimed outcomes of the educational programme they intend to teach.

Another key aspect for successful collaboration identified in this study is how crucial it is for collaborative groups to have time to meet. Clark and Clark, (1994), Fullan and Sharratt (2009), and Kluth and Straut (2003) all highlight the need for teachers involved in collaborative teaching to be provided with allocated common planning time. In this study, teachers were indeed provided with time to meet as a collaborative group. However, teachers in this study strongly noted how these meetings added to an ever increasing workload and issues of lack of time. Indeed, Friend (2000) and Kluth and Straut (2003) noted time as a testing factor for teachers involved in meaningful collaboration.

A final aspect that was linked to successful collaboration in this study was the benefit of ICT in the process of collaboration. Teachers in this study highlighted a number of ways ICT assisted them in the collaborative process, namely through: live and timely feedback from other group members; ease of viewing conversations occurring among other group members; the flexibility of responding to discussions at various times of the day and; the ability to share pre-existing or prepared templates for direct editing and commenting. This is in keeping with the findings of Jeffs and Bainster (2006) who highlight the benefits of ICT to assist collaboration through its ability to provide immediate and direct interaction. In this study’s findings, it was noted that, although ICT offered benefits to collaborating, it could also present challenges if one was unskilled and/or unknowledgeable in the technology being used. Such a challenge has previously been highlighted by Trentin (2010). However, this
study was also in-keeping with the work of Murawski (2009) in the fact that teachers reported up-skilling in their use of ICT as a side benefit of collaborating.

5.5. Conclusions

5.5.1 Research Questions

This research study evolved from an interest in the shift in education that is occurring in schools across New Zealand and focused specifically on one school’s implementation of collaborative teaching. The research questions arose from the overall aim of the research, which was to investigate the challenges of this change from the perspective of teachers and provide recommendations of how teachers in this school, and similar schools, could be supported in making such a huge pedagogical shift. The research questions are repeated below:

1. What are the benefits and challenges of collaborative teaching in an ILE, as perceived by teachers in this school?
2. How successful was the implementation of collaborative teaching in an ILE, as perceived by teachers in this school?
3. In what ways can a collaboratively developed resource support the implementation of collaborative teaching?

Summarised answers to these questions will now be outlined.

What are the benefits and challenges of collaborative teaching in an ILE, as perceived by teachers in this school?

To discuss the benefits and challenges of collaborative teaching as perceived by teachers at this school we will firstly review the definition outlined in the literature for collaborative teaching. Secondly, we will review aspects that lead to positive collaboration. Thirdly,
possible benefits and challenges of collaborative teaching as highlighted by the teachers in this study will be outlined. Finally, suggestions for improving collaborative teaching at this school will be outlined.

The definition for collaborative teaching outlined at the beginning of this research, which was derived from multiple sources including Cramer et al. (2010), Martin and Williams (2012) and Murawski (2009; 2010), states the term “collaborative teaching” to mean any two or more teaching professionals systematically planning, designing, instructing, and evaluating student educational goals. This definition is based on the fact that instruction occurs in a shared learning space. The research findings indicate that collaborative teaching at this school did indeed involve more than two teachers planning, designing and instructing an educational programme to meet the needs of students. However, as a result of the research it is suggested that reporting, moderating and reflecting could be added to this definition.

The research findings show some aspects that lead to positive collaborative teaching at this school. These have been outlined above and are repeated here, namely: teaching involved the collaborative group of teachers having: a shared common goal; common time to meet, and; the use of ICT to promote and allow ease in collaborating. The research found that these aspects were deemed, by the teachers involved, to have had a positive effect on collaborative teaching at this school. Some of these positive effects included: a growing sense of community and collegial support; learning from more knowledgeable others, in keeping with the work of Luzet (2013); being exposed to new ideas and perspectives, which seemed to be resulting in more creativity. The links between collaboration and creativity have also been suggested by Gately and Gately (2001). Furthermore, there has been an increase in, and more naturally occurring, self-reflection, which was also reported through the work of Hobenbrink, Johnson and Westhoven (1997).

However, the research also drew attention to a number of challenges. Three of these main challenges were: increased workload, which is a historical challenge found in many change initiatives (Wylie, 2013); lack of time, also historically a challenge for teachers (Reeves,
This research suggests four main aspects that could help improve collaborative teaching. Many of the points for improving collaborative teaching at this school have been touched on throughout the ‘Findings’ chapter but these have been summarised below.

The study concludes that time for teachers to plan is essential to the success of collaborative teaching. It is important that teachers know in advance which collaborative teaching programmes and groups they are in. This also means avoiding last minute changes to timetables and programmes. As pointed out by Friend (2000), and Kluth and Straut (2003), meaningful collaboration simply cannot occur if time is limited.

Furthermore, the study concludes that successful collaborative environments can be developed if the teachers involved share common goals. According to the participants in this study, teachers were not always on the “same page”. This may have led to an unequal sharing of the workload, as well as students receiving different information from teachers in the same programme and being able to play teachers “off” each other in reference to behaviour management. This conclusion suggests that this aspect of collaborative teaching could improve if teachers use the early planning stages to ascertain common goals and procedures for collaborative teaching. This finding is supported by Robinson and Schaible (1995) and could include the use of the “Forms of Agreement” (Appendix F) referred to by participants in this study.

The study also concludes that the use of ICT could play a beneficial role in successful collaborative teaching, as supported by Jeffs and Banister (2006). The study suggests the use of ICT may help to alleviate issues of lack of time, with particular reference to the struggles teachers reported in maintaining weekly collaborative planning meetings. As time and workload have been found in this study to be a major factor contributing to the challenges of collaborative teaching, the use of ICT for collaboration has been identified as a key aspect
this school could improve for successful collaborative teaching. Teachers in the study who used ICT in the collaboration process noted how ICT made collaborating convenient and easy.

A final finding of this study in relation to the improvement of collaborative teaching was that, in this school, large class sizes negatively affected teachers’ ability to teach collaboratively. This study showed that this was linked to a number of factors, including: classroom management of larger groups, for example ensuring all students receive feedback; behaviour management, and; relationship building.

Similarly, due to the complexity of change and varying strengths and weaknesses found in schools, leadership and staff would be advised to work collaboratively to address specific concerns and challenges that occur in their particular context at any given time. As Kluth & Straut (2003) inform us, there are many ways to implement good collaborative teaching but not all approaches and characteristics will work for every school, so it is important that school personnel become inventive, flexible and reflective about creating a collaborative teaching model that meets the needs of their own school, its teachers and its students.

*How successful was the implementation of collaborative teaching in an ILE, as perceived by teachers in this school?*

The findings of this study highlight some key areas of success that link to the literature in relation to implementing change in this school. However, the study also highlights areas this implementation process could have improved upon. These are outlined below.

An area the implementation that could have been improved upon is linked to organisational issues and the recurring concern of time. Teachers require adequate time to plan and prepare, therefore timely and reliable timetable information should be available. Last minute timetable changes can cause a large amount of disruption to teacher planning. This has a flow on effect
in terms of groupings, programmes, goal setting and teaching level organisation. As previously stated, the importance of allocating sufficient time to plan for collaborative teaching is widely recognised in previous literature (Fullan & Sharratt, 2009; Gately & Gately, 2001; Kluth & Straut, 2003; Murawski, 2009). The study therefore concludes school organisation must be meticulously planned in advance, ensuring time issues are alleviated when in pursuit of successful collaborative teaching outcomes.

The study concludes that, professional development plays a key role in the implementation of change but needs to be carefully planned and timed. Professional development that provides a balance of theory and practice (Timperley, et al 2007, Villa et al, 1996) is most helpful to teachers. This school’s professional development was successful in one way; it developed teachers understanding of, and support for, the change initiative. The study has found that introducing the theory behind the practice, and vision of change years prior to actually implementing the change, provided time for teachers to develop and accept an understanding of why the change was occurring. The study has concluded that teachers understanding why the change was occurring led teachers to viewing the change positively, alongside being willing to work hard to see the change initiative experience success. This highlights an aspect of this school’s success in the implementation process and is supported by a number of researchers (Burtonshaw-Gunn, 2009; Cameron & Green, 2004; LaMarsh, 2010; Palmer, 2004).

However, the role of professional development in the implementation process could have been improved by offering more practical strategies that could be directly applied to practice. As pointed out by Timperley et al. (2007), professional development should draw connections between participants pre-existing knowledge and the situation in which they practice; the professional development in this school’s implementation process reportedly failed to do this. The study also highlights the potential value informal learning groups can have on developing teachers’ knowledge and skills. As Reeves (2014) points out, we have been learning through informal groups for decades. Similar findings are supported by Borko (2004), Desimone (2009) and Grosemans, et al. (2014). Furthermore, the participants in this study believed the expertise and knowledge held within the staff was underutilised but see value in making it a focus of professional development moving forward. This finding can be
linked to the notion of ‘Continued Professional Development’ outlined by Cordingley, Bell, Rundell and Evans (2006), where teachers work with colleagues to build on their knowledge and expertise.

Unfortunately teachers in this study reported feeling unsupported due to not being ‘listened’ to, hence the study concludes that teachers overall sense of feeling supported could have been improved in the implementation process. As referred to earlier, both Reeves (2012) and Timperley, et al. (2007) highlight the importance of leadership support in times of change. Burtonshaw-Gunn (2009) and Gregory and Kuzmich (2007) also state how support is vital for the success of any new initiative.

Teachers in the study acknowledged the value and importance of common planning time, which, as mentioned previously, is supported by a large body of research (Clark & Clark, 1994; Fullan & Sharratt, 2009; Kluth & Straut, 2003). Hence, this study concluded that providing teachers with common planning time was a successful aspect of this school’s implementation process. Teachers in this school appreciated the fact senior leaders had filtered common meeting times into their timetable. However, it is important to note that, despite this, teachers still experienced challenges in maintaining these meeting times.

Another aspect identified by the study is the importance of managing teacher workload in relation to old and new initiatives. The study findings suggest that old and new initiatives should be reviewed to ensure teachers’ workload was efficient and manageable. Timperley and Robinson (2000) discuss workload in terms of the addition and duplication of tasks. As pointed out earlier, aligning or discontinuing old initiatives is something Reeves (2006) and, Timperley and Robinson (2000), state is an extremely important aspect of introducing change initiatives.

Change is extremely complex and the implementation process in this school, showed that even when teachers are willing, and positive about the change, there are a vast number of challenges that arise for everyone involved. This research draws particular attention to how
this complexity affects teachers’ levels of frustration and stress. It concludes that the emotions evoked by change can have a direct impact on teacher’s ability to teach collaboratively; such feelings need to be carefully addressed if a change initiative is to succeed (Harvey & Broyles, 2010; Loughran & Hamilton, 2016). This finding highlights the need for teachers to feel supported in their change journey, and strongly suggests a supportive and collaborative approach between senior management and staff which offers more practical support with less focus on theory. Aspects of such an approach are supported in the literature by Crossley (2013), Gratton & Erickson (2007), Hargreaves (2001), Timperley et al. (2007) and Veugelers and O'Hair (2005).

In what ways can a collaboratively developed resource support the implementation of a change initiative?

In relation to the collaboratively developed resource, which was produced as an aspect of this study, participants who used the resource found the practical templates it provided useful but reported not knowing the resource’s full potential for two reasons: 1) they were not taken through it in adequate detail, and; 2) they believed they did not know the importance of some aspects of the resource, because they did not “know what they were looking for”. Indeed in his book ‘The New Meaning of Educational Change’, Fullan (2016) refers to Ries (2012) who suggests innovations need to be developed through an iterative process.

Those involved in the development of the resource would recommend a collaborative development process in future change initiatives for two main reasons. Firstly, by being involved in the development of the resource they believed they were “having a say” in the implementation process. This creates a sense of being invested in the change initiative’s success. They were a part of the change rather than the change being “done to them”. This finding is supported by the work of Crossley (2013) and Liberman (1993). The second reason participants outlined for recommending this approach in future was due to the fact they felt more prepared for the change because they knew what “to expect” as they had trialled aspects of the change initiative in advance. Feeling prepared in the face of change can help alleviate
some of the negative emotions associated with change (Hunt, Wiseman, & Touzel, 2009), by helping teachers see a manageable way forward (Welbourne, 1994).

Overall, with reference to the role the collaboratively developed resource had on the implementation process, the study found that providing practical templates was beneficial and appreciated by teachers. However, the resource had limited effect on the overall implementation process for its users because teachers failed to see the value or have the time to use the resource fully. For those involved in the development of the resource, the study concludes that a collaborative approach to developing resources, such as a small collaborative group with the aim of developing resources for use within the school, can have a positive effect on change initiatives because it builds a greater sense of investment in the change’s success. This could be further developed by providing opportunities for more groups to be involved in the development of resources most pertinent to their group and then shared. Thus the benefit of the collaborative activity is shared in terms of the learning associated with the resource and the learning involved in the act of working together. Although, the study also highlights the fact that simply providing a resource is not adequate on its own, the introduction and on-going use of the resource must be encouraged and scaffolded.

The study concludes that, any change process is complex and that schools can be advised to ensure the following: professional development is utilised to support teachers with both theory and practice; teacher workload remains manageable; teachers feel supported, and; teachers feel part of the change initiative. Through the development of the resource the study concludes that a collaborative approach to developing resources for new initiatives has a lot to offer in providing teachers with a forum to have a voice in the change process. This could be undertaken at a more granular level that allows smaller groups of teachers to develop or adapt their own purpose-built resources which can then be shared widely. The study concludes that when workload becomes unmanageable and teachers feel unsupported it is inevitable the success of the initiative will suffer, but there are potential solutions to these challenges.
5.6 Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations have been devised with direct reference to the school of study but may be of interest to other New Zealand schools that endeavour to implement collaborative teaching in their school. The recommendations for practice have been categorised under two aspects: 1) recommendations for the implementation of collaborative teaching, and; 2) recommendations for improving collaborative teaching in the school of study.

5.6.1 Recommendations for the Implementation of Collaborative Teaching:

1. Professional development should develop a balance of theory and practice, and allow teachers the opportunity and time to apply new learning to practice (Timperley et al, 2007). In this school, to restore balance, it is recommended that professional development adopts an immediate focus on behaviour and learning strategies that can be used in the practical day to day running of a collaboratively taught class. Alongside this, it is suggested that professional development at this school focuses on utilising internal expertise. This research also recommends that teachers continue to be given the opportunity to be involved in the joint development of resources, similar to the development of the resource in this study, but this must be on a voluntary basis to allow teachers to maintain manageable workloads. Teacher feedback should be sought and utilised to ensure professional development is meeting the needs of its participants.

2. Teachers’ workload should be reviewed and reduced where possible through the aligning and/or discontinuing of old school systems (Timperley & Robinson, 2000; Reeves, 2006). This may help alleviate issues with workload and teachers feelings of stress and frustration.

3. Senior leaders should seek and act on teachers’ feedback throughout the implementation process. This could take the form of a collaborative problem solving approach, which as suggested by participants, could involve small group forums with one senior leader present to listen and record challenges and suggestions made by teachers. The small group forum may help develop a more open and supportive
environment for teachers to share their views and opinions. Harvey and Broyles (2010) highlight the benefits of letting the teachers involved in change talk about their feelings while leaders listen to understand how to address the concerns. This collaborative approach may also support the development of a joint approach to the change rather than a “top down” approach, which Smit (2005) reports as leading to more success in change initiatives. This approach may also help to alleviate feelings of tension between senior management and staff through the development of, or strengthening of, supportive relationships and environments, which are outlined as positive aspects of change and professional development by Day and Sachs (2006), Judge and Douglas (2009) and Timperley et al. (2007). Such a collaborative approach may also help to identify and provide support for challenges that arise as the change progresses.

5.6.2 Recommendations for Improving Collaborative Teaching in the School of Study:

1. Professional development should provide practical support on how ICT can be utilised to assist collaborative teaching through flexible, quick and easy communication. This may help address the challenge of time which has been deemed a challenge of collaborative teaching in this study as well as in the literature (Friend, 2000).

2. The administrative organisation of teachers’ timetables be completed and shared with teachers well in advance to allow teachers to plan and prepare for collaborative teaching. As stated above, time to plan is essential to successful collaborative teaching (Friend, 2000; Kluth & Straut, 2003).

3. Teachers should be provided with support and guidance in the beginning planning stages of collaborative teaching to develop common goals, guidelines and shared responsibility. These are deemed important aspects of collaborative teaching by teachers in this study and also in the literature (Kluth & Straut, 2003; Murawski, 2009; Robinson & Schaible, 1995).
5.7 Limitations

The findings of this study are limited in a number of ways. The study focused on only one school in the early stages of a change initiative and involved only a small number of participants. Hence, the findings are very specific to this school and a small number of its teachers. The participants were also volunteers. It is possible teachers who were less favourable to the change initiative chose not to participate in the study.

While senior and middle school leaders were involved in the study, the study did not directly provide opportunities for management to share their views on the many aspects outlined in the study. This limits the study’s findings because it is solely based on the views and opinions of teachers. Senior leaders did not have an opportunity to explain how or why decisions that affected teachers’ view and opinions had been made or the future plans of the implementation process to address challenges.

Although the study focused on the implementation of collaborative teaching, other large scale changes were also in play at this school, such as the move to an open learning environment and the introduction of cross curricular programmes, which involved teachers working in larger class sizes and in curriculum areas or year levels they had not previously worked in. This could have limited the findings because participants’ responses were not solely based on collaborative teaching; the primary focus of the study.

The study was also limited in that it did not delve deeply into some of the key areas that may have been of interest and add more depth to the research findings. For example, the finer details of the possible aspects of successful collaboration were not researched in enough depth to state how exactly these aspects eventuated in this school, or the challenges or criteria for establishing these aspects. Similarly, the idea about class sizes were raised in this study but this aspect was not researched in enough depth to make recommendations on what the ideal class size for collaborative teaching is or how to establish them.
Another possible limitation in this study was the fact that it was practitioner research, so although efforts were made to ensure participants openly shared their views and opinions, it is possible pre-existing relationships could have affected how accurate the responses were or how they were perceived.

5.8 Recommendations for Future Study

As highlighted by literature, and evident through the actions of many schools in New Zealand and globally, educational change is deemed vital to prepare students for a fast emerging and changing future. The shift to collaborative teaching in an ILE is one of these changes and is currently prominent in New Zealand. This study only focused on one school and its teachers in the early stages of a change initiative. However, as pointed out by Fullan (2016), change initiatives take time and it is often only when the initial steps have been taken can we begin to refine and continually improve them in practice. This study has not provided information on the future plans to support this change initiative and it did not include leadership, student or community voice. For these reasons I suggest a number of aspects of this topic that are worthy of further research, including:

1. A longitudinal study of this school, or a similar school, on the implementation of collaborative teaching in New Zealand schools to more fully establish effective implementation processes that lead to successful collaborative teaching.
2. More in-depth research on the characteristics of successful collaborative teaching in New Zealand schools and its effect on student engagement, motivation and achievement.
3. Research on how to develop, and the potential effect, a collaborative problem solving approach between senior leaders and staff can have on change initiatives.
4. A more focused study on the link between collaborative teaching and professional learning in New Zealand schools, and how to foster this link to be successful for teachers and students.
5. Research on how New Zealand schools can adapt pre-existing systems with a shift to collaborative teaching to ensure teacher workload remains manageable.
6. Research on the link between class size and effective collaborative teaching.
5.9 Final Word

This research was borne from my perception that colleagues were experiencing a range of emotions in anticipation of teaching collaboratively in an ILE at our school; such feelings were predominantly more negative than positive and I wanted to explore how teachers could be supported in this time of change. The development of the resource was seen as a way to support teachers in a small practical way. More prominently, the study provided teachers in this school with a voice. The study has made some recommendations that may help this school and the teachers move forward positively.

Personally, I have gained a vast amount of knowledge on the complexities of change in education, and a new appreciation for the potential value and benefit research can have in school change initiatives. Namely, I was naively surprised by how closely linked the findings of this study were to previous literature and have gained an understanding of how practitioner research can be valuably used to link the findings of previous literature to current contexts.

I have also gained a heartfelt appreciation for the staff and senior management in this school who have, to date, worked extremely hard to initiate this change with the goal of meeting the needs of students in the 21st century. Their journey, as outlined in this study, has only just begun, however the passion and commitment demonstrated by the participants in this study can only be commended. The research highlights the road ahead is unlikely to be smooth and more challenges are likely to arise but it is through such commitment and a growing sense of collaboration that I believe this school is likely to succeed in implementing successful collaborative teaching that meets the needs of students.

As the resource developed as part of this research project is online and specific to the school of study it has not been shared in the appendices. However, if you would like more information on the resource please email me on kayakfran@gmail.com.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title: An evaluation of support for collaborative teaching in New Zealand in a Year 7- Year 13 School.

Participant’s Name: 

Phone number: 

Email: 

I ______________________________ (full name - please print) 

Agree to treat in absolute confidence, all information that I become aware of during the course of participation in the above research project. I agree to respect the privacy of those involved and will not divulge in any form, information with regard to any participating person or institution and agree to not retain or copy any information involving the above project.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement and for any harm incurred by individuals or organisations involved, should information be disclosed.

Signature: .................................................. Date: ..................................................

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2017-1045

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 20th July 2017 to 20th July 2018. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Information for participants

Research Project Title

An evaluation of support for collaborative teaching in New Zealand in a Year 7- Year 13 school.

Synopsis of project

As our school faces the shift to collaborative teaching, this project has been developed to evaluate the support for teachers in making this shift. Part of this project involves the design and evaluation of a resource, and its ability, to assist teachers in this time of change. In more detail, the aim of the project is to investigate the nature of collaborative teaching at our school and evaluate the implementation process, including the collaborative teaching resource, used to help support teachers make this shift to collaborative teaching. The findings of the research may produce areas for further improvement within our school regarding our move to collaborative teaching and/or areas of support that may be beneficial for other teachers and/or schools when facing a similar change.

What we are doing

The resource will be designed and built collaboratively with an ‘advisory group’ drawn from teachers at our school. The implementation process and resource will be used and evaluated by a ‘focus group’ of teachers. Of interest to the study is the nature of the collaborative environment that emerges as the resource is built as well as the perceived effectiveness of the resource itself in the implementation process. Thus the study will focus on a) the perceived success/or not of the implementation process including the resource (focus group) and the nature/experience of the collaborative resource building experience (advisory group). Interviews will be conducted with both groups of participants.

What it will mean for you

Initially, if you are interested in being a participant in the project, you will simply respond to this email stating your interest.

Advisory Group Participants

If you have been emailed regarding your possible participation in the ‘advisory group’ and returned an email showing interest in being part of this group, I will contact you directly and we will arrange a time to meet. As an advisory member you will be involved in the development of the resource through
trialling and providing feedback on the contents of the resource. This is likely to take approximately 6 hours of your time. You will also be involved in a one off interview which will take approximately one hour and will be voice recorded. The transcript of this interview will be emailed to you to confirm accuracy and you will have the opportunity to clarify any points you wish. You will receive a copy of the project's findings.

**Focus Group Participants**

If you volunteer to be a member of the ‘focus group’ it will involve the following:
(Please note, if the project receives more volunteers than necessary, a selection will be made based on a range of subject areas and year levels.)

1. If you wish to discuss the project further, or in person, we can arrange a time to meet.
2. There will be a one off semi-structured interview with myself and the rest of the focus group members, during which I will pose some evaluative and open ended questions which can be discussed within the group. The interview is expected to last approximately one hour and is a one-off event.
3. Following the interview, you will be provided with the transcript of the interview to confirm its accuracy and you will have the opportunity to clarify any points you wish.
4. When I have completed the study I will produce a summary of the findings which I will send to you.

Participation is welcome from all staff members and all staff members are very welcome to contact me directly to discuss the project further.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This does not stop you from changing your mind if you wish to withdraw from the project. However, because of the project’s schedule, any withdrawals must be done before December 5th 2017.

Your name and information that may identify you will be kept completely confidential. All information collected from you will be stored on a password protected file and only you, the researcher and Unitec supervisors will have access to this information.

Please contact me if you need more information about the project. At any time if you have any concerns about the research project you can contact my supervisor:

My supervisor is Dr Lisa Maurice-Takerei, phone 815-4321 ext. 7338 or email lmauricetakerei@unitec.ac.nz

**UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2017-1045**

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 20\textsuperscript{th} July 2017 to 20\textsuperscript{th} July 2018. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix C: Participant Information Form
Appendix C: Participant Invitation of Interest

Participant Invitation of Interest

My name is Frances O Donnell. I am currently enrolled in the Masters of Applied Practice in the DCL Pathway at Unitec New Zealand and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to investigate the nature of collaborative teaching at my school and evaluate the implementation process, including the role of a collaboratively developed resource. The resource will be designed and built collaboratively with an ‘advisory group’ drawn from teachers at the school (volunteers with some experience/interest in the area of collaborative teaching).

I request your participation in the following way:

☐ Advisory Group Member
☐ Focus Group Member

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. The results of the research activity will not be seen by any other person in your organisation without the prior agreement of everyone involved. You are free to ask me not to use any of the information you have given (prior to 5th December 2017) and you can, if you wish, ask to see the Thesis before it is submitted for examination.

I hope that you find this invitation to be of interest. If you have any queries about this research, you may contact my principal supervisor at Unitec New Zealand.

My supervisor is: Lisa Maurice-Takerei phone: 815-4321 ext. 7338 or email: lmauricetakerei@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2017-1045
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 20th July 2017 to 20th July 2018. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix D: Interview Schedule – Advisory Group

Title: Teachers in change: An evaluation of the implementation of collaborative teaching in a New Zealand Year 7-13 school.

Aim:
1: To investigate factors that prevent and enable teachers to make the large scale pedagogical shift to collaborative teaching.
2: To evaluate the collaborative development of a collaborative teaching resource as one of these factors.

Researcher: Frances O Donnell

Advisory Group Interview Questions

- Can you describe your involvement in the development of the resource?
- Do you feel the team created a resource that was collaboratively developed, in that the overall outcome was of a higher quality than if it had been produced by one group member? Explain.
- To what extent do you think the resource developed supported the school’s move to collaborative teaching?
- Did involvement in the development process have an effect on your own knowledge of collaborative teaching? Explain.
- Did involvement in the development process have an effect on your skills and ability to collaborate? Explain.
- What, if any, were the positives of being involved in the development of the resource for you?
- What, if any, were the negatives of being involved in the development of the resource for you?
- If you were to repeat this process, what would you do differently, and why?
- Would you recommend a collaborative approach like this to other schools in a time of change?
- Would you like to share any other information about your experience in this process?
Appendix E: Interview Schedule – Focus Group

Title: Teachers in change: An evaluation of the implementation of collaborative teaching in a New Zealand Year 7-13 school.

Aim:
1: To investigate factors that prevent and enable teachers to make the large scale pedagogical shift to collaborative teaching.
2: To evaluate the collaborative development of a collaborative teaching resource as one of these factors.

Researcher: Frances O Donnell

Focus Group Discussion Questions

- Think about your overall experience in making the recent shift to collaborative teaching, what has gone particularly well?
- What factors do you think supported you to make this change?
- What factors do you think have or are preventing you from making this change as successful as possible?
- On a scale of 1-5 how would you rate the support provided for teachers to make the move to collaborative teaching?
  1 - Very poor   2 - poor   3 - good/OK   4 - very good   5 - excellent
- When and how did you use the collaborative teaching resource?
- On a scale of 1-5 rate the usefulness of the resource to meet your needs in this time of change.
  1– Not useful at all   2– Somewhat useful   3 - Useful   4 - Very useful   5 - Extremely Useful
- Which aspects of the collaborative teaching resource did you find particularly helpful?
- Which aspects of the collaborative teaching resource do you feel need improvement?
- Would you recommend a resource similar to this to support school staff in other times of change? Explain
- Suppose you were in charge of implementing the change to collaborative teaching and could make one change in the support offered to teachers, what would you do?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your move to collaborative teaching and/or the collaborative teaching resource?
Appendix F: Forms of Agreement

Collaborative Teaching Forms of Agreement
It is expected that, as a team, you discuss, set and agree upon how you will manage the classroom and student learning. The following are some points to consider when making such an agreement.

Preparation/Planning
How will you, as a team, ensure/monitor/reflect on the equality of workload?

Classroom management
Roll - When/how/who

Team teaching style - What model of team teaching will be used? When/Why/Who?

Student feedback - How will we know if each student has received feedback?
- What form of feedback will students receive, when and by whom?
- Will we have a record of feedback given to students? How?

Student work - How will resources be shared with students?
- How will student work be recorded and monitored?
- What is the expected standard of work and how will this standard be ensured?
- How can students seek assistance when necessary? (dedicated procedure or space or person?)

Student/teacher relationship
- How will you, as a team, establish and ensure positive teacher/student relationships?

Scaffolding/Extending
How will students' needs be identified and addressed?
Who and how will students who need extra support or extending be identified? What support or differentiation will be put in place and by whom? If groups are being created, who will make these groups or how/when will they be discussed? How will these groups and scaffold/extension be recorded?

Behaviour management
What behaviour expectations do the team, as a whole, have for students?
How will behaviour management be monitored?
How/Who will deal with students who are not meeting the set behaviour expectations?
What procedures will be followed with reference to behaviour management?

Assessments & Reporting
What types of assessment will be used (peer/self/teacher)?
How many assessments will be carried out during this programme?
When will these assessments be carried out?
How will assessments be recorded/filed as evidence? (electronically, hard copies?)
How will assessments be marked? How will marks be moderated? (all together as a team?)
How will the team record evidence for, and report on, each student’s progress and behaviour?

Reflection
How will lessons be reflected on? How will these reflections and actions from them be recorded?

Parent/Caregiver Communication
What process will be used for communicating with parents/caregivers? How will responsibility for parental communication be shared and kept consistent?

Collaborative Teaching Agreement
(Adaptation of CORE Education Essential Agreement)

Cross curricular context team ______________________
Team Members:

1) _______________________________
2) _______________________________
3) _______________________________
4) _______________________________
5) _______________________________

Team procedures

1. Day, time, and place for regular team meetings:
   - What are acceptable reasons for missing a meeting?

2. Preferred method of communication (e.g., e-mail, cell phone, wired phone, online, face-to-face, in a certain class) in order to inform each other of team meetings, announcement, updates, reminders, problems:
3. **Decision-making policy** (by consensus? by majority vote?):

4. Method for setting and following meeting **agendas** (Who will set each agenda? When? How will team members be notified/reminded? Who will be responsible for the team following the agenda during a team meeting? What will be done to keep the team on track during a meeting?):

5. Method of **record keeping** (Who will be responsible for recording & disseminating minutes? How & when will the minutes be disseminated? Where will all agendas & minutes be kept?):

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**Team Participation**

1. Strategies to ensure cooperation and equal distribution of tasks:

2. Strategies for including ideas from **all** team members (team maintenance):

3. Preferences for leadership (informal, formal, individual, shared):

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**Personal Accountability**

1. Expected individual attendance, punctuality, and participation at all team meetings:

2. Expected level of responsibility for fulfilling team assignments, timelines, and deadlines:

3. Expected level of communication with other team members:

---

**Failing to Fulfil Expectations**

1. Describe, as a group, how you would handle **infractions** of any of the obligations of this team contract:

2. Describe what your team will do **if the infractions continue**:  

---

*---------------------------------------------------------------*

a) *I participated in formulating the standards, roles, and procedures as stated in this contract.*

b) *I understand that I am obligated to abide by these terms and conditions.*

c) *I understand that if I do not abide by these terms and conditions, I will accept the consequences as stated in this contract.*

*---------------------------------------------------------------*
1) ___________________________________________ date ________________
2) ___________________________________________ date ________________
3) ___________________________________________ date ________________
4) ___________________________________________ date ________________
5) ___________________________________________ date ________________
Full name of author: Frances O Donnell

Full title of thesis/dissertation/research project ('the work'): Teachers in change: An evaluation of the implementation of collaborative teaching in a New Zealand Year 7-13 school

Practice Pathway: Negotiated Studies (Extended) DCL Pathway

Degree: Master of Applied Practice

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Principal Supervisor: Dr Lisa Maurice-Takerei

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Declaration

Name of candidate: Frances O Donnell

This Thesis, entitled: Teachers in change: An evaluation of the implementation of collaborative teaching in a New Zealand Year 7-13 school is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec Institute of Technology degree of Master in Applied Practice.

CANDIDATE’S DECLARATION

I confirm that:
• This Thesis represents my own work;
• The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
• Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee. Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: 2017-1045

Candidate Signature:  

Date: 28.01.2018

Student number: 1457519