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Flexible Learning Spaces (FLSs) have become a defining feature of contemporary education in Aotearoa New Zealand, promoted as supporting collaboration, learner agency, and student-centred pedagogy (Benade, 2019). However, mounting evidence indicates that spatial redesign alone does not guarantee inclusive outcomes, particularly for neurodiverse students, including those with autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, whose sensory and organisational needs may be intensified within open, shared environments. Despite strong policy commitment to inclusion, limited research closely examines how teachers' professional judgement mediates these spatial conditions in everyday practice. This study addresses that gap by asking: How do teachers in FLSs adapt their pedagogy to support the learning of neurodiverse students? Employing a qualitative multiple case study design across three primary and intermediate schools in Auckland, the study draws on an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach (Smith et al., 2012) to explore teachers' lived professional experiences. Data will be generated through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, artefact analysis, and photographic documentation of unoccupied learning spaces, and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As the study is currently at the design and confirmation stage, this presentation reports the conceptual and methodological architecture developed to date, centred on teacher agency as the primary analytical lens and informed by inclusive education principles, Universal Design for Learning, and a sociomaterial perspective on spatial mediation. The study is positioned to generate close-to-practice evidence of how teachers navigate the affordances and constraints of FLSs, offering practical insight for teachers, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to strengthen equitable participation for neurodiverse learners within flexible classroom environments.

Keywords

Neurodiversity, flexible learning spaces, teacher agency, inclusive pedagogy

References

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