

Introductory overview



The Introductory Overview explains the origins and purpose of the ILE Handbook, and how it is based on the entire *Innovative Learning Environments* project run over the decade since the mid-2000s. It outlines how it is a practical resource aimed at those in education leadership, policy and practice. The concepts, assumptions and terms specific to ILE are presented, as is the way the project has been organised.

The four main chapters in the Handbook are outlined briefly: the ILE Learning Principles; the “7+3” framework; learning leadership and evaluative thinking; and transformation and change. Each chapter is introduced by a concise, non-technical summary of the theme plus a set of practical tools, intended to guide leadership, self-review and professional development. The Introductory Overview concludes by describing how the Handbook is located in a rich tradition of OECD/CERI work on innovation.

This Handbook is the culmination of the *Innovative Learning Environments* (ILE) project run over the decade since the mid-2000s from the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) at OECD. The Handbook is aimed at those working in education leadership, policy and practice who are looking for succinct frameworks and practical tools to help them to innovate in their own settings.

Each of the four chapters in this Handbook is introduced by an overview section offering a concise, non-technical summary of a substantial body of international reflection on learning and innovation. Each chapter is underpinned by a full publication, plus other papers. We intend these overviews to be useful in their own right, as well as providing introductory texts to the accompanying tools.

Each of the chapters goes on to present a set of practical tools, intended to guide leadership, self-review and professional development. In a small number of cases, these have been prepared by others working closely with the ILE project. The tools themselves are broadly conceived so as to be useful to different audiences, for different purposes, in different settings. Because of this range, we do not offer detailed advice on how to use them and with what kind of facilitation. They differ too in the time foreseen to get the most from them, from the explicitly long term to those that can be exploited in a single workshop session, with others in between.

Concepts and terms in ILE

ILE has been grounded in a set of assumptions that has served both as a philosophical approach and as a frame to organise the different strands of operational work. *First*, we have based ILE firmly in knowledge about how people learn and the circumstances in which they do this most powerfully. *Second*, we have compiled and been inspired by concrete innovative cases, and have used these to inform framework development. *Third*, we have sought not only to identify desirable features of learning environments but have addressed how those features might be fostered, especially through learning leadership. *Fourth*, we moved beyond individual cases to ask how to grow, spread and sustain innovative practice at greater scale.

For ILE, a “learning environment”:

- is an organic whole embracing the experience of organised learning for given groups of learners around a single “pedagogical core” (explained below); it is larger than particular classes or programmes
- includes the activity and outcomes of learning, rather than being just a location where learning takes place
- enjoys a common leadership making design decisions about how best to optimise learning for its participants.

We have been open to different understandings of “innovation” in all the systems, schools and settings that have contributed to the ILE study. We did not impose a single OECD definition on what we consider innovative practice which would have been far

too restrictive and “top-down” and fail to recognise innovation’s dependence on what it is trying to do and in which context. In avoiding being categorical about innovative practices, we have operated with a general, open understanding of innovation summed up as: *fresh ways of meeting outstanding challenges in a spirit of openness to disciplined experimentation.*

The Handbook is divided into four chapters, each sub-divided into overview and tools. Four main ILE publications were prepared between 2010 and 2015 and each underpins a chapter in this Handbook. These are:

- *The Nature of Learning: Using Research to Inspire Practice*, 2010
- *Innovative Learning Environments*, 2013
- *Leadership for 21st Century Learning*, 2013
- *Schooling Redesigned: Towards Innovative Learning Systems*, 2015.

The OECD has also published a number of official Education Working Papers from the project. One of these, by Lorna Earl and Helen Timperley on Evaluative Thinking, is the source for the treatment of evaluation in Chapter 3. All of these came after an initial report published in 2008 that served to scope the broad terrain (with the title *Learning to Innovate, Innovating to Learn*).

The Principles of Learning

The first chapter presents the Learning Principles themselves, and it also recasts around teachers and educators. These Principles maintain that learning environments should: make learning and engagement central; ensure that learning is understood as social; be highly attuned to learners’ emotions; reflect individual differences; be demanding for all while avoiding overload; use broad assessments and feedback; and promote horizontal connectedness.

There are four tools in this chapter:

- **Tool 1.1** *How well do we embed the Learning Principles?*
- **Tool 1.2** *Building on the Learning Principles through a Spiral of Inquiry.*
- **Tool 1.3** *Learners at the centre – what do they think?*
- **Tool 1.4** *Teacher-focused to be learning-centred.*

The “7+3” framework

This chapter presents the framework first published in the 2013 ILE report *Innovative Learning Environments*. It is called “7+3” because it combines the 7 Learning Principles with 3 fundamental arenas of innovation: the pedagogical core, learning leadership and partnerships. The chapter uses the framework to understand different aspects of technology.

There are four tools in this chapter:

- **Tool 2.1** *How well are we implementing the ILE framework?*
- **Tool 2.2** *How can we innovate our pedagogical core?*
- **Tool 2.3** *Getting the most from our partners.*
- **Tool 2.4** *Tapping into the multiple possibilities of technology.*

Learning leadership and evaluative thinking

Learning leadership is discussed around interrogatives about such leadership: Why? What? Who? When? Where? How? The chapter also presents the guiding orientations concluding the 2013 report *Leadership for 21st Century Learning*. Evaluative thinking is presented as a series of steps which are continuous rather than one-off. These are: defining the innovation; multiple stakeholders, different contexts; identifying the purpose(s) of evaluation; getting on with it; framing evaluation questions; collecting fit-for-purpose evidence; organising and analysing the evidence; making sense of it all; interpretation as building knowledge; and capturing and mobilising the new knowledge.

There are two tools in this chapter:

- **Tool 3.1** *Towards shared and formative learning leadership.*
- **Tool 3.2** *Evaluating educational innovation.*

Transformation and change

The chapter draws especially on the 2015 ILE publication *Schooling Redesigned: Towards Innovative Learning Systems*. It presents the case for re-thinking learning ecosystems, describes features of innovation strategies and initiatives, offers the means for depicting networked learning ecosystems, and presents a set of scenarios for the future of the teaching profession. These four are: “Teachers in educational monopolies”, “Specialist professionals as hubs in schools”, “A system of licensed flexible expertise” and “In the open market”.

There are four tools in this chapter:

- **Tool 4.1** *Explaining why our initiative will work.*
- **Tool 4.2** *How advanced is our system towards the “7+3” framework?*
- **Tool 4.3** *How horizontally connected is our system?*
- **Tool 4.4** *Teachers in learning futures.*

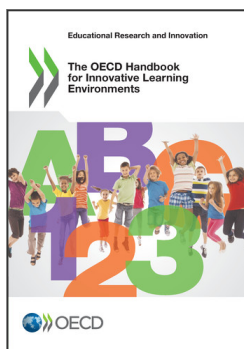
ILE in the longer stream of OECD innovation analysis

This Handbook is at the confluence of different streams and methods. Our focus is deliberately on learning – innovating learning environments and learning ecosystems – while targeting those within education who can make a difference by transforming the learning that goes on in their schools and systems.

Our practical ambition has consequences for methods of work and this Handbook is an unusual output for OECD/CERI. The Handbook's practical format as an aide to positive change reflects the importance of balancing the analysis of innovation with the provision of tools to facilitate such change. With the *Innovative Learning Environments* project we have been able to profit from a wide range of relevant analysis – from the nature of learning, to innovative cases, to leadership, to strategies and policies. We hope that this Handbook as a practical resource will help guide educators in many different communities and countries to engage in disciplined innovation.

Finally, we can locate the ILE Handbook in the long-running dedication of the OECD through CERI to understanding and promoting innovation. From the decade 1998 to 2008, the *Schooling for Tomorrow* project created scenarios and worked with futures thinking in systems. In the following decade with Innovative Learning Environments, the focus shifted to learning and came much closer to schools and classrooms, while linking back especially into the “meso” network level. Now in 2017 CERI has launched a new study on *Innovative Pedagogies for Powerful Learning* to take the innovation endeavour even more deeply into heart of the matter – teaching and learning.

In this context, the ILE Handbook is not the end point of a corpus of reflection even if it is the final product of a particular international study. It is one resource in the rich mix of analyses and reflections that we hope will inspire innovative change and suggest ways in which this might be done.



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