Chapter 22
Designing Schools as Learning Centers

Martha Ann Davis McGaw
Davis McGaw Family Foundation, USA

ABSTRACT

There are several variables that need to be considered when rethinking education delivery for the 21st century. Designing schools as learning centers is more than just about restructuring the physical space of schools. Effective education leadership and administration must successfully align several often-competing goals. These goals include guiding a human-centered organization, consisting primarily of young, evolving learners while continually managing knowledge and information delivery and balancing the needs of students and teachers with the education policy requirements set by federal and state legislation and subsequently interpreted by school districts. This chapter explores the 'rethinking education delivery' theme through several topics such as learner's comfort levels, teacher-training and professional development, and school district leadership. A case study looks at a six-year research project focused on the effect of district and school leadership styles on teaching and learning.

INTRODUCTION

There are many variables which need to be considered when rethinking education delivery for the 21st century. Goldberg, in 1991, documented the role of environmental variables in motivating and assessing improved student performance. "This position is not a new or revolutionary claim, but a message that seems to need to be repeated because (schools) seem to just keep constructing buildings that merely reinforce an obsolete paradigm that will not prepare students for real world challenges. (Nair, 2011). However, designing schools as learning centers is more than just about restructuring the physical space of schools (Ripple, 2014; Nair, 2011; Rosenblum, S & Spark, B, 2002; Sabo, 1998; Goldberg, 1991; Chan, 1981).

Reevaluating education delivery will incorporate a range of topics as:

- **Learner's comfort level**- physically, mentally, and emotionally
- **Teacher-training courses** in colleges and universities (C/U)
- Teacher and school counselor **professional development**
- School district **administration's attitudes** towards delivery
- School **auxiliary personnel** understanding of the importance of their roles
- **Community** support and buy-in

Instead of centering focus on the actual purpose of education, the learner and learning, states and school districts seem to be fixed on the idea of learning requiring following a fixed pattern of education delivery, which occurs only in particular spaces and is delivered in a specific way. These are outmoded ideas of the industrial revolution. Spaces that allow for personalization, collaborative learning, self-directed learning, are environmentally conscious and connected to the broader community surrounding the school will be the schools of the future (Nair, 2011).

This chapter, focused on the educational system in the United States of America, considers how the educational process in America might be reconstructed to ensure the minds, hearts and bodies of learners are involved, and engaged, in the process of learning. According to David Gamberg, the superintendent of both the Southold Union Free School District and the Greenport Union Free School District, on Long Island, N.Y., school districts must do more than 'efficiently manage the system or pits stakeholders against one another' (Gamberg, 2012). Teachers must be effectively trained and supported in the classroom.

In response to an editorial, *What Defines a Good School?* (Gamberg, 2016), a teacher posted this comment: 'we definitely need to watch our words and avoid infusing a "standardization" in the definition of "what makes a good school" for it is the students who ultimately define their school, not the adults who often strive to classify and define the culture and components' to the detriment of the learners'. Following this student leadership theme, Chiquita Hall, an ISTE Student Technology Leadership Symposium member states, 'I've been a student for almost thirteen years, and never did anyone ask me how I wanted a school to be.' -- (Armstrong, 2002).

This chapter will describe how, in the American K through 14 education system, effective leadership and administration successfully aligns several often-competing goals (Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S. & Wahlstrom, K, 2004). These goals include:

- Guiding a human-centered organization, consisting primarily of young, evolving learners while
- Continually managing knowledge and information delivery and also
- Balancing the needs of students with the education policy requirements set by federal and state legislation

Partnerships created for restructuring school institutions and their classrooms while reshaping teaching and learning initiatives in the classroom are examined below. These partnerships will include deliver supportive tools and practices, including needs assessments and community input while being guided by evidence-based redesign projects already in place.

Topics explored and discussed include

- Why the need for re-thinking education delivery in America?

Related Content

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning: A Boon or a Bane for Pakistani ESL Learners?

Muhammad Mooneeb Ali (2023). *Mobile and Sensor-Based Technologies in Higher Education (pp. 56-82).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/mobile-assisted-language-learning/314901

Blockchain Technology Reshaping Education: Contributions for Policy

Maria José Sousaand Andreia de Bem Machado (2020). *Blockchain Technology Applications in Education (pp. 113-125).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/blockchain-technology-reshaping-education/249886

Visualizing Online Education in the COVID-19 Pandemic Based on the Bibliometric Method

Lei Liang (2022). *International Journal of Technology-Enhanced Education (pp. 1-19).*

www.irma-international.org/article/visualizing-online-education-in-the-covid-19-pandemic-based-on-the-bibliometric-method/315598

Multidimensional Faculty Professional Development in Teaching and Learning: Utilizing Technology for Supporting Students

Alev Elçi, Hüseyin Yaratanand A. Mohammed Abubakar (2020). *International Journal of Technology-Enabled Student Support Services (pp. 21-39).*

www.irma-international.org/article/multidimensional-faculty-professional-development-in-teaching-and-learning/255120

The Stories We Tell: A Student-Driven Systematic Analysis of Writing Center "AI" Policies

Tanshi Mohan, Vi Phan, Samantha A. Wilsonand Aurora Matzke (2025). *Impact of Emergent Technologies on Writing Centers and Pedagogy (pp. 243-276).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-stories-we-tell/379505