



Dillon, R., Gilpin, T., Juliani, A. J., & Klein, E. (2016). *Redesigning learning spaces*. London, England: Sage Publications.

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Being involved in projects on modernisation of learning spaces since 2016, I enjoyed reading *Redesigning Learning Spaces*. This book is written by a group of enthusiastic student-centered educators and speakers who are devoted to changing educational landscapes and creating an engaging learning environment.

The authors share my belief that modern inspirational design is one of the key prerequisites for effective learning and open-mindedness for both students and teachers. It was interesting for me to explore the issue further in terms of how learning-space design may influence school culture and contribute to the development of healthy communities.

The book is quite short and embraces the authors' viewpoints, concepts and insights, which promote the idea of student-centered design. It is aimed to encourage a wider audience (students, educators, community members) to start changing their learning environment. *Redesigning Learning Spaces* could be a good starting point and resource for those who think about changes in learning spaces, but do not know where to start from and, therefore, need some initial guidance. However, the book would barely be helpful in respect of new ideas for those who are already in the process of learning environment transformations.

The book is organised in a Q&A format and structured around four domains:

1. Leading Change through Classroom Learning Space Design
2. Learning Space Change as a Lever to Shift School Culture
3. Shaping Learning Space Change for the Community; and
4. Learning Space as a Lever for Systemic Change.

In chapter 1, there is a reflection on: why to change learning environment? What are other experts saying about the elements of learning-space design? How does intentional space design impact student mindset and attitude? How should principals and teachers begin this process?

The authors apply Maslow's hierarchy of needs by assuming that learning spaces, where students and teachers spend much of their time, should be safe and comfortable in order to create a positive impact on open learning and effective cognition. To support this thesis, the authors refer to the University of Salford's study (2012), which indicates that "the classroom environment can affect academic progress over a year by as much as 25 percent" (23). Within this context, it is suggested to employ a flexible, collaborative-classroom, minimalist approach, and integrated technologies for creating learning spaces for actively exploring ideas, discovering connections and debating issues. At the same time, with reference to research done by Carnegie Mellon University (2014), the conclusion is drawn that "less in the classroom is truly more for learning" (5). The authors then raise an important issue of necessity for teachers to be dedicated to the students' voice which, being heard, creates a deep level of engagement in the changes and ownership of the results.

In chapter 2, the authors explore how changing learning spaces may aid in shifting school culture: what is the vision of your classroom? How do we begin the conversation about changes? How to start from ground zero and what are potential steps to begin the redesign? Why learning does not have to happen in a traditional classroom?

Starting the transformations, one should understand that there is a long way that needs to be properly thought through from an initial idea to further planning and expected results. Therefore, it is vital to reach a consensus among all stakeholders on the vision of future changes. As a point of focus for the journey of designing learning spaces, the authors draw attention to the "4 Cs": collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and communication. They further emphasise that redesigned classrooms also contribute to learning achievements of students with special needs, who are able to succeed there in ways that they may not have been able to in a traditional environment.

In chapter 3, the discussion shifts to the impact of learning-space design not only on students and teachers, but also on the entire community. Is shifting learning spaces a gateway to shifting the community at large? Can community and

schools create an ecosystem? What steps are necessary for effective communication to the community about innovation in learning space design?

The authors believe that learning must not be contained in the classroom. "Learning spaces that accentuate the opportunity to interact with the community speak without speaking that the true mission for students lies beyond the walls of the schools. ... this type of learning is a path toward deeper, more integrated college and career readiness ... [and] an opportunity to ... lower the drop out rate" (25).

On that account, there is a strong message about the importance of involving the community in the projects and communication. The authors urge not to underestimate the importance of small steps and quick results. It has a powerful impact on continuous efforts and positive emotions about the transformations and inspiration for further innovations. In the same manner, it is essential to regularly showcase the progress through social media, presenting before-and-after pictures and emotional face-to-face conversations with students and teachers. It allows the community to feel connected to the changes and also helps to fund the projects. In this respect, the authors give some suggestions on effective communication about innovations in learning-space design.

In chapter 4, the idea of "small steps" is further elaborated from the perspective of small changes influencing big systemic change: how can we think about learning spaces as deep levers of change? In what ways can teachers blend classroom design and technology to maximise change across the system? How can teachers use their resources to create systemic change?

The authors are convinced that "big shifts in culture can come from low cost actions" (17). Innovative educational spaces facilitate modern teaching and learning, enhance curiosity and out-of-the-box thinking, that eventually foster shifts in culture and mindsets. The sense of co-operation and partnership of all stakeholders can be of a great importance to changing community culture and cultivating common values.

Chapter 5 presents a few examples on how teachers may become real agents of change. Overall, the book provides a solid rationale and powerful motivation for learning-space transformation. Regrettably, the book lacks visual materials. In addition, more practical examples of projects could have been provided. From my experience in promoting such projects, I am convinced that visualised examples of changes are the best motivators and catalysts for actions. Thus, adding more visualisations and specific good practices would enrich the book and reach its audience better in order to start changing learning environments.