

Element 19

Creative Resourcing

Aligning resources to meet modern needs creates new opportunities within an organisation and can support its vision. Our learning guides are our best resource - investing in them with Growth Programmes facilitates lifelong learning and strengthens culture.



Creative Resourcing

Resourcing in schools is typically suited to a traditional learning model needing updated. A traditional model often operates in a siloed fashion, where every teacher is allocated a specific resource budget for materials. Professional development opportunities are often decided by leadership and this limits the collective growth and culture of a learning community.

What is referred to as creative resourcing in a new learning paradigm not only includes materials to support learning, but human resourcing as well. Educators must become the most precious resource for a new learning paradigm to successfully embed and sustain itself.

Investing in the human resources of a learning community should be a paramount goal because this essentially drives and steers the collective vision of its community. Reimagining the role of the educator can empower them with the skills to guide the learning and the community in the right direction. This is how a vision, or preferred future emerges.

When the human resources of a community are given precedence, processes emerge to guide effective decision making. This includes decisions such as the allocation of materials and learning support, which should be done collectively.

Creativity and innovation are crucial components to reimagining resources in a new learning paradigm. Resourcing schools has often been reduced to talking about desks/chairs, textbooks and providing teachers, but it is so much more than this and includes; time; experience; digital; physical spaces; furnishing; culture; nature; locality; business and entrepreneurship. This list could be easily expanded, depending on the resourcefulness of the learning community.

The traditional teacher-at-the-front scenario must be replaced with a resourcing model that exemplifies optimum synergy, collaboration and support among all professionals. This can help solve the issue of time constraints that is one of the most powerful levers for change. Effective decision-making strategies around resourcing that can ensure the successful preparation, implementation and sustaining of a new learning paradigm.

Then	Now
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher-at-the-front approach limited the time educators had to focus on planning. • Material resources were acquired through an allocated budget. • Allocated resources often used up after a school year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A collaborative approach to learning which provides more opportunities to plan effectively and strengthens the learning culture. • The learning community collectively decides on its resourcing needs. • A digital age provides new resourcing potential.

Starting Questions

1. Does your learning community consider its decisions on resource acquisition in the long term?
2. Has your learning community changed its decision-making process around resource allocation recently?

3. Is your learning community conditioned to repeat the same process of resources allocation on an annual basis?
4. Do the people given control over the decision-making on resources consider your learning community's wider vision when doing so?
5. How much collaboration is given consideration in the decision-making on resources as a whole learning community?
6. Does your learning community take into consideration creative resourcing beyond the typical scenario of desks/chairs, textbooks and teachers?

Key Initial Actions

1. Analyse existing processes connected to resourcing the learning community. The analysis should be shared and guide better decision-making.
2. Strengthen statements around the vision and direction of the school so that there is clarity for everyone and it is sufficient to guide the requests for resources to implement the vision.
3. Identify areas where resources are not directed to supporting the broader vision and direction of the institution and adjust.

On-going Actions

1. Grow a culture of creativity and creative thinking within the wider community. Allow this to prompt creative ideation around resourcing and especially no cost / low cost ideas.
2. Aim to support all ideas for resourcing that supports the implementation of the wider vision and direction.
3. Preference resourcing decisions where resourcing requests are focused on a changing paradigm.
4. Help people see that whatever their role within the organisation, their contribution to the wider vision and direction is just as important as other contributions.

Further Reading

[Time Is an Essential Teacher Resource, So How Can Schools Be More Creative With It?](#)

[Ten Nonprofit Funding Models](#)

[Creative Resourcing Models for Schools \(PDF\)](#)

[Expert Perspectives on Creativity and Innovation in European Schools and Teacher Training](#)

[19 innovative classroom ideas to promote creativity](#)

Reflect

I recall with a level of retrospective amusement (and frustration) the response of a bank manager to a proposal to build a very different set of classrooms on urban fringe land in a sub-saharan country. The norm was very much to build a line of square classrooms with a connecting verandah. Each classroom was a replica of the others. There would be between 40-80 students in each space. The metal grills on the windows (often covering broken glass) gave such architecture an undeniable sense of being in a jail.

The proposal put forward was to build a square building comprised of four classrooms clustered around a common and lockable resource sharing room in the middle and with a broad verandah extending the all-weather usable area. The walls between the four rooms would each have a double opening doorway to allow for movement and collaboration. The design had been kept minimalist so as to keep construction costs similar to expectations. One external wall in each space was to be open - open to the wide verandah and associated garden. Such verandahs and gardens are very common in the hotel designs in the region and enable a sense of indoor/outdoor. They can extend the operational space for little expense. The wider compound beyond the garden could still be secured with walls and gates, depending on the locale.

The community leadership loved the concept as for no extra construction cost, each class had the option of collaborating with neighbouring classes and the children could easily spill out onto the verandahs and gardens. Effective space was significantly increased by at least 300% and a significant improvement on conventional spaces. The plans were taken to the local bank for a potential construction loan application.

Upon viewing the plans, the Bank Manager's response to the building plans was quick - "but a classroom has to have four walls". Argh

Resourcing education is a never-ending task. And resourcing change in learning paradigms has its own unique challenges and opportunities, requiring a highly creative approach.

Key Ideas

1. Creativity in resourcing is one of the key actions that can support a change agenda.
2. Aligning resourcing to a vision will accelerate, support and unite change.
3. Time is one of the most important resources in a school, and 'one of the most powerful levers for change'¹

¹[Time Is an Essential Teacher Resource, So How Can Schools Be More Creative With It?](#)

4. Many governments or educational jurisdictions follow resourcing models that support a highly traditional approach to learning - and find it hard to break away from established mindsets and resourcing models.
5. Creative options exist if physical space, and wider concepts surrounding space, are viewed differently.
6. If a community moves away from teacher delivery of content to learner-led discovery, this can open up a host of additional resourcing and growth opportunities.
7. Processes that question the purpose of any resource purchasing can enable significant savings that can be redirected to other beneficial projects.
8. Investing in the human resource of learning communities should be a paramount goal.

Questions

- Resourcing within a community/institution/school tends to follow established protocols and practices. As with other areas of a school's operation, assumptions and practices should be questioned regularly. What could change?
- Do current models of resourcing support where the community wishes to be in one year, five years or ten years time?
- Are people conditioned to repeat orders on an annual basis simply because this has been the common model?
- Do those seeking resources (physical, digital or human) fully understand and embrace the organisation's wider vision?
- Will the resources last beyond the immediate year or two? Do they match a vision that might exist now, but will change?

1. Creativity in resourcing is one of the key actions that can support a change agenda.

Every context and every school has its own unique strengths, challenges and opportunities. But all schools and learning communities can benefit from creative approaches to resourcing around its vision. When working outside the traditional boundaries of school resource thinking, there is not only freedom, but immense opportunity.

A genuinely collaborative learning community should enable time to be freed up for collective preparation or professional development far more so than solo teachers in a separate classroom scenario. The challenge is to find, create or develop the opportunities for different thinking around resourcing.

Resourcing needs to be kept broad in its definition and understanding. Resourcing schools has often been reduced to talking about desks/chairs, textbooks and providing teachers. Resourcing concepts can be so much more than this - and always associated with a wider goal or direction. The following is a starting list - it could easily be expanded, depending on the resourcefulness of a community:

Human Resource	Core resource in any community; needs recurrent opportunities for personal and collective growth.
Time Resource	Time is one of the biggest limiting factors to change in a community; it needs to be valued as a core resource and protected.
Experience Resource	Schools or learning communities should be an integral part of a wider community, never separate; there is a vast wealth of experience in the surrounding wider communities that should be tapped into.
Digital Resource	We are in a new information age, a Renaissance that commenced with the advent of the world wide web; learning communities and schools should take advantage of this relatively new world (in historical terms).
Physical (built) Resource	The design of learning spaces can support the wider vision and direction of a community enormously, care should be taken to invest in critical aspects of the built physical environment, including acoustic engineering, agile designs and flow.
Furnishing Resource	Interior design and architecture is an influential resource; the variety, availability and diversity of furniture, spaces and opportunities will support a new vision or direction. There is no reason to replicate a chair/desk model into every space within a school or learning community other than viewing traditional layouts as part of a 'managing' imperative.

<p>Knowledge Resource</p>	<p>Textbooks and encyclopedias were once the place for content and knowledge; this is no longer the case. In fact textbooks are often out of date by the time they are published and accessible, such is the time needed to prepare a book for publishing. Knowledge is now a resource made far more democratic by the internet.</p>
<p>Cultural Resource</p>	<p>Communities are a reflection of the individual and collective cultures of its people; there is a rich cultural resource in every community and every context. Schools or learning communities need to think of ways to effectively tap into this resource.</p>
<p>Nature as a Resource</p>	<p>We live in a world with amazing environments; access to the natural environment is a rich resource. How many communities finish up with the closed habit of staying indoors?</p>
<p>Cities or localities as a Resource</p>	<p>The localities or cities surrounding any community are themselves a rich resource. An example of this is seen in Helsinki - the city was declared a learning resource in itself, 'When learning moves out into the surrounding society and close to world phenomena, deeper learning occurs and the learning process is connected to the learner's own world.'</p>
<p>Business Resource</p>	<p>Aligned to the notion of the wider society being a valuable and authentic resource, the business world that intersects with a community or school because of geographical proximity or associated with the wider adult community can be a valuable resource, opening up internships, providing learning experiences and network connections.</p>
<p>Entrepreneurship as a Resource</p>	<p>An entrepreneurial mindset and experience can create or connect a learning community to a creative and energetic resource, one that can be harnessed to support change processes in a learning community.</p>

2. Aligning resourcing to vision will accelerate, support and unite change.

One of the most helpful creative resourcing strategies when it comes to supporting the organisational vision is to align all resourcing processes to the vision. Budget or purchasing requests should only be considered if the terminology of the request aligns with the wider organisational vision. This is one way to ensure that every stakeholder understands and embodies the wider collective vision and direction.

Even requests for simple supplies (paper, paint, craft etc) should be made using terminology that aligns with the wider vision. This is one strategy that will force everyone to understand and enact the vision.

3. Time is one of the most important resources in a school, and 'one of the most powerful levers for change'.

A recurrent frustration for teachers is the pressure on time. One of the biggest opportunities of a collaborative team approach is that time should be able to be created for sub-teams to undertake preparation work or for some to attend off site development programmes.

As a learning community becomes more self-directed and independent, the programme itself becomes the driver, rather than the educator. This independence in learning can be utilised to create blocks of additional time for teachers/learning guides. If the learners are well immersed in their daily activities, then it is easier to organise for teachers or teams of teachers to attend day time professional development.

4. Many governments or educational jurisdictions follow resourcing models that support a highly traditional approach to learning, and find it hard to break away from established mindsets and resourcing models.

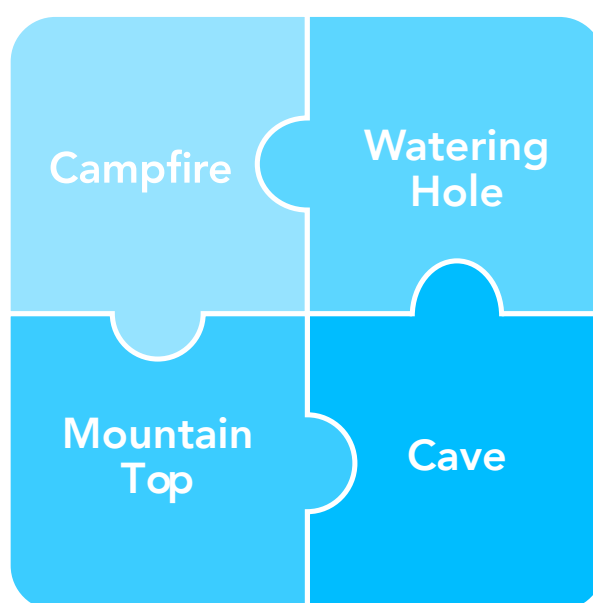
Traditional resourcing models look at space per student, desks per child and teacher-student ratios fixed on predetermined bureaucracy-set rates. This will vary depending on the authority. Resourcing is often reduced to ensuring that every child has a desk and chair (or a shared desk and bench), textbooks and exercise books.

There are immense opportunities when moving away from this mindset. If the aim is to create a variety of learning spaces, then the traditional algorithms are no longer suitable. This does not necessarily equate to increased building costs. A more open approach to spatial design can reduce construction costs with less walls and associated services infrastructure. A more holistic perspective on flexible space that can be used for multiple purposes is warranted. Additionally, furniture requisition can potentially more closely match user choice, especially if purchased progressively.

5. Creative options exist if physical space is viewed differently.

What about professional space or co-working space or spontaneous space? It is possible to view space - and learning spaces in particular - in multiple ways. Thornburg creatively viewed learning spaces in terms of campfires, watering holes and caves². Spaces where people can gather, work together in smaller groups or work independently. Thornburg has also spoken of life being a space for learning as well.

The common view here is that every space is unique - and the cultural setting has an important role to play in the use of space. If the topic is entered into from a creative mindset, then the options and opportunities will grow.



6. If a community moves away from teacher delivery of content to learner-led discovery, this can open up a host of additional resourcing and growth opportunities.

There is potential for creating more opportunities for collaborative teacher planning and learning design when a learning community moves away from a traditional organisational model. The traditional role of teachers places accountability for raising performance squarely on to single teachers. In a community which focuses on learner-led discovery within a team context, the emphasis necessarily shifts to whether the learners are empowered to learn and steering them toward independence. In this context, staffing presence can be varied far more readily, depending on the activities and planning. This in turn can enable team members to take time out for programme design and collaborative planning because the programme itself becomes the driving force for the learner directions, not a teacher 'out the front' approach.

²[From the Campfire to the Holodeck: Creating Engaging and Powerful 21st Century Learning Environments](#)

7. Processes that question the purpose of any resource purchasing can enable significant savings that can be redirected to other beneficial projects.

Schools are often large institutions - and institutions all have their rules of operation. It is easy for processes connected to auditing existing resources and consumables and the re-ordering of supplies to lose track of actual supplies and needs. It is often just a question of managing people and resources creatively. Resourcing processes that actively challenge choices can be very helpful. Essentially 'pitching' ideas before decision making can ensure effective purpose-spending.

8. Investing in the human resource of learning communities should be a paramount goal.

When it comes to resourcing priorities, the recurrent emphasis should be on the human resource - and ensuring that the community have a clear understanding of their role in growing the wider vision and applying that into their specific contexts. It is also important to provide recurrent access to desired professional development, none the least being that teachers can be the best examples for the community of what it means to be a lifelong learner in practice.

A final point - many people become teachers/learning guides because they are passionate about people, topics and projects. It is important to encourage everyone to maintain their professional strength in areas of passion. Science teachers need to be scientists; art teachers need to be artists; language and literature teachers need to be writers and speakers. Ensure teachers have the time to grow their passions - and keep this as visible as possible to younger learners, as role models can have a powerful impact.

Act Now

1. Analyse existing processes connected to resourcing the learning community. Consider multiple domains: human; spaces and buildings; essential supplies and desired supplies.
2. Strengthen statements around the vision and direction of the school so that there is clarity for everyone - sufficient to guide the requests for resources to implement the vision. Request that any orders or resource requests are framed around the institutions wider vision directions and statements.
3. Foster a collective envisioning process where people become strong in interpreting the wider vision into all aspects of the community operation.

4. Grow a culture of creativity and creative thinking within the wider community. Allow this to prompt creative ideation around resourcing and especially no cost / low cost ideas.
5. Aim to support all ideas for resourcing that supports the implementation of the wider vision and direction.
6. Preference resourcing teams who are an excellent example to others because their resourcing requests are focused on where the team wishes to take learning in a changing paradigm. In effect these people are the ones who will interpret the wider vision into their own practice and sub-community.
7. Create central supply areas, but with open access. There is a need to balance easy management of supplies with straightforward access
8. Engage the community in prioritising areas and requests for resourcing. Ensure that everyone with ideas and requests feels supported to some degree.
9. Identify areas where resources are not directed to supporting the broader vision and direction of the institution and adjust.
10. Help people see that whatever their role within the organisation, their contribution to the wider vision and direction is just as important as other contributions. Not everyone has to be part of the 'guiding coalition', but everyone needs to understand how their contribution helps grow the wider vision. In this way, emphasise as often as possible the core contribution that people aligned to the wider vision have as the pivotal resource of a community - the human resource.

Examples in Action

The following provide examples of creative thinking around resourcing. There would be many examples of this in every community - such is the creative nature of learning communities.

[Whole city as a learning environment](#)

"In Helsinki, the whole city is viewed as a learning environment in which learners and teachers can move around freely and learn about real phenomena in an authentic environment."

[Learning Space Design Lab \(c\) by Autens](#)

"A powerful workshop tool for collaboratively designing and redesigning learning environments based on how children learn, while transforming the shared pedagogical practice through a playful, creative method that mimics great project-based learning."

[How to start a d.school](#)

The California-founded d.school has looked at space and resourcing in the context of starting up a d.school. They stress that “there is no one-size-fits-all recipe”³; it’s really up to individual creativity, “every context and culture has its own quirks”.

[5 ways to innovate education in Africa](#)

1. Change the definition of ‘classroom’
2. Learn from what’s working and scale those interventions
3. Shake up financing models
4. Find a balanced way to introduce technology
5. Get local support

[Dimension: instructional and shared leadership](#)

A framework for Improving student outcomes. There are eight essential elements form the foundation upon which improvement is built.

[FISO Case Study - Making collaborative spaces at Brauer College](#)

FISO (Framework for Improving Student Outcomes). Strategic resource management is a critical factor in school improvement. Brauer College transformed its traditional school library into a popular ‘Maker Space’ where students can learn new skills and work.

[MOOCs](#)

MOOCs are free online courses available for anyone to enrol.

[NEMO Science Museum Amsterdam](#)

NEMO Amsterdam: A great example of a highly interactive learning environment

[The Better India](#)

10 of India’s most creative schools

Further reading

[How to promote creativity in the classroom](#)

[Time Is an Essential Teacher Resource, So How Can Schools Be More Creative With It?](#)

[Creativity in Schools: A Survey of Teachers in Europe](#)

[Creative Classrooms Resources New Zealand](#)

[How to Start a d.school](#)

[Educational Model for Promoting Creativity and Innovation in Primary Schools](#)

[Ten Nonprofit Funding Models](#)

[Creative Resourcing Models for Schools \(PDF\)](#)

[Design for the changing educational landscape: Space, place and the future of learning](#)

[Expert Perspectives on Creativity and Innovation in European Schools and Teacher Training](#)

[Design for Neurological Pluralism with Caves, Campfires and Watering Holes](#)

[Creating a Culture where its cool to be smart](#)

[The impact of a class visit to a participatory science museum exhibit and a classroom science lesson](#)

[What schools can learn from a science museum that makes learning irresistible for kids](#)

[19 innovative classroom ideas to promote creativity](#)