

Reflections on the Swinburne Master of Strategic Foresight Program

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Modernity has changed literacy and along with-it education systems. But, for all the talk of the modern education revolution, to me at least, we have neglected to examine the most significant means by which we are truly educated. By this I am implying the kind of education that can hold the somewhat opposing missions of teaching us both how to *architect a living/career* and how to actually *live*. Education as social process that helps define how to live, and the society we'd like to live in is perhaps one of the most unattended elements of any modern schooling.

This is education at its most ambitious. This had always been my hope for education, but it had yet to be my experience. Until now, there had been no place for me in school and university education systems. A mediocre student (at best) and 'anti-scholar if you will, more interested in unlearning the known than knowing it. I had never found a place of learning that accounted for the diversity of thought, ideas and way or seeing the world that I have now come to treasure. And yet, here I am against all odds, the first in my immediate family to finish high school and the second of 36 grand children to complete a university degree (the first to complete a Master's degree). But as much as it is a testament to my own efforts and commitment and curiosity, it is more so a testament to the life-changing education that I experienced during my Master of Strategic Foresight at Swinburne University.

I am reluctant to use a prism of career progress et al. as the lens in which to reflect and judge this experience. Burnishing the credentials list as a means of reflecting on the value of this education feels thin. But we live in a society intent on valuing such attainments. And to be fair, there has been a number of interesting and unlikely achievements as a direct result of this program like; the establishment of a foresight and design consultancy; senior leadership roles within a global start-up charged with redesigning democracy; the establishment (in progress) of a membership-based organisation focus on supporting workERS through 'future of work' transitions and the attainment of a student paper award as a result of a semester abroad at Turku University (Finnish Futures Academy).

But to me the real value lies in the education experience itself - one that bequeathed a gift of deep personal enquiry and meaning, far beyond its technical and career enhancing end. For this program the tenets of contemporary scholarship were not merely the packaging and distributing of 'facts' to fill intellectual gaps. Instead, this program offered an illuminating and life-changing learning enquiry into ourselves, our world and our emerging craft. It was deeply valued by students because of its ability to enrich the qualities of peoples' lives, both the intellectual development and the self-expansion and actualisation.

The MA Strategic Foresight program was delivered by educators who aspire to be of service in times where the value of modern education itself is being questioned. It was a life-affirming education delivered with poetic grace. The kind of education that by purposeful design protected the spirit of the learning enquiry from fossilised, dogmatic and routine transactions. These educators were not in the business of education by numbers or mindless modernisation. Instead, they were interested in the curation of deep relational learning experiences that magnified the spirits of learners - equipping them with the kinds of knowledge and sense-making required for the post-normal times we now inhabit.

This program, along with its masterful teachers has given me unshakeable confidence that modern education can refute what much of our society might otherwise tell us. It is a testament to the life changing impacts that education can have when it lives up to its true potential - the kind that touches the soul and the mind. I have always known education was important, but I didn't know what it was important for until now. (Originally written as a Swinburne Medal application.)