

# Book Review

## *Futures in Education*

The AFI monograph, *Futures in Education: Principles, practice and potential* by Jennifer Gidley, Debra Bateman and Caroline Smith is a welcome and valuable reference and resource for those interested in futures in education. Gidley, Bateman and Smith tackle the difficult tasks of characterizing what is meant by futures or foresight in education; describing its current state; mapping extant principles and practices and identifying key areas in futures in education that could serve to progress the goals of futures education.

The monograph is made up of two chapters, several appendices and tables. The first chapter, written by Gidley, is "Futures/Foresight in Education at Primary and Secondary Levels: A Literature Review and Research Task Analysis." The second chapter, "Futures Education in Australian Primary and Secondary Schools: Mapping Current Principles and Practice" is written by Bateman and Smith.

Gidley's work on futures/foresight in education at primary and secondary levels is a thorough insightful assessment of futures in education today enhanced by her thoughts regarding a possible future of futures education. The scope of futures of education research in the literature review is organized into three major areas: the research with youth (mostly in school settings) which explores their views and visions of the future; the actual teaching of futures concepts, tools and processes in school settings; and the speculative research into transformative educational models and approaches which have futures/foresight thinking as part of their worldview. The task analysis illuminates strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the research. The notes and bibliography at the end of this chapter are extensive.

Chapter one begins with a brief discussion of ten key concepts in futures education developed in large part by Richard Slaughter. In addition to the ten key futures concepts Gidley includes additional futures concepts with particular significance to youth futures: one or many futures; probable, possible, preferred and prospective futures; personal vs. global and optimism and pessimism. Table 1 Exploratory Typology of Futures in Education with Young People is particularly informative. It explores four futures orientations: probable, possible, preferred, and prospective and how they relate to types of futures studies and their underlying paradigm.

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Research exploring youths' views and visions of the future is covered next. Here Gidley reviews numerous research projects conducted by Eckersley, Hutchinson, Hicks, and Inayatullah to name a few. Research into the effects of age differences, gender differences and cultural diversity of views and visions are covered. The literature review covering the research on youths' views and visions reaffirms the need for more and new research methods in this area.

*The need for more and different forms of research with youth on these issues was stressed by Gough (1987).*

*We have to be cautious about taking the survey results at face value. The children ... may be telling themselves and the researchers stories about alternative futures, including futures they want to avoid. We need alternative research designs to get out the deeper, underlying attitudes. The results so far are only scratching the surface.*

Next Gidley addresses the practice of teaching futures concepts, tools and processes in school settings. Here readers find Richard Slaughter's ideal picture of



futures in education and potential levels of implementation of futures in education. A list of the scope of the tools and methodologies available for teaching futures in schools is also included. Numerous instances of futures in education being applied globally are noted. These include: the works of David Hicks in curriculum innovation in the UK; Paul Torrence's Future Problem Solving Program; and Thomas Lombardo's work at the Futures Institute, Rio Salado College, Arizona. Several futures based curriculum innovations originating in Australia and New Zealand including one developed by Kathleen Rundell and Richard Slaughter for the Board of Senior Secondary Schools Studies are mentioned. Gidley observes that due to lack of systemic support for teachers in their schools most have not been widely adopted.

Of particular interest was the research indicating a link between empowerment and futures education. The Re-Imagining Your Neighborhood (RYN) project is offered as an example of a futures project that is effective in empowering youth to develop a greater sense of hope and possibility. This comes as no surprise to those who have been involved in youth futures education; however it is heartening to know

researcher to explore this area. Recently, research in rural Australia explored the possibility that futures processes might reduce clinical levels of hopelessness. Gidley notes that more research is needed in this important area.

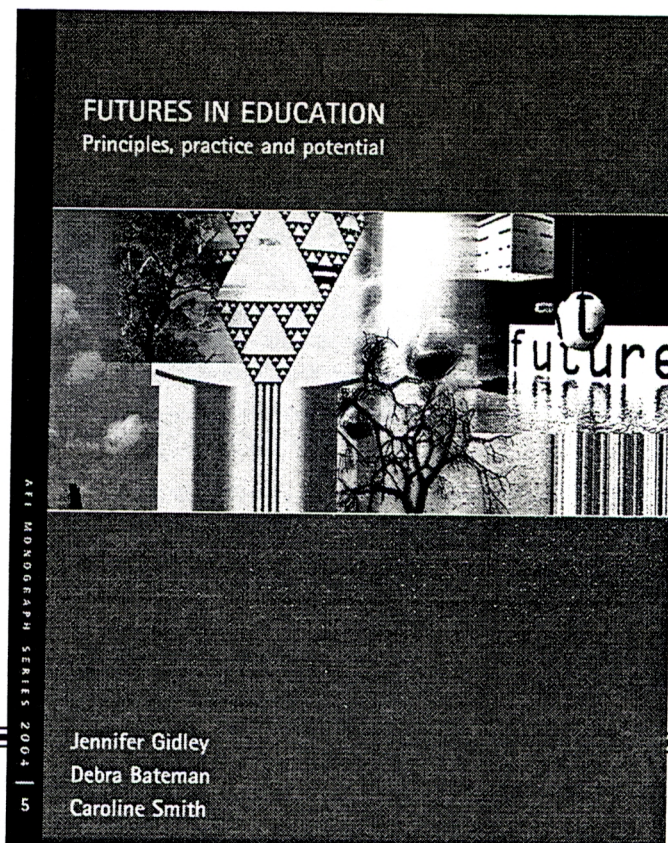
Gidley analyzes the progress of futures in education over the past forty years by comparing major contributions to her typology in Table 1 of the monograph; by demonstrating how the framework connects with Slaughter's emerging Integral Futures Model; and concludes by describing the "state of play" in futures education according to Ken Wilbur's all quadrants, all levels Integral scheme.

Gidley proposes "two new perspectives that "old school futurists" need to take on board: the empowerment-oriented, action research component which has been lying dormant since the mid-nineties and the integral futures model which is newly emerging." In concluding Gidley suggests eight research focus areas for futures education. They are:

1. Psychological dimensions of future in education
2. Diverse ways of knowing
3. Developing integral consciousness

that empirical evidence backs up what futures educators have known intuitively for some time.

The review revealed limited research into the psychological implications of futures in education. Martha Rogers is credited with being the first futures



4. Socio-cultural diversity
5. Cultural resources
6. Human/social futures
7. Tackling the social systems
8. Cultural foresight- some speculative big picture research ideas

Chapter 2, Futures Education in Australian Primary and Secondary Schools by Bateman and Smith maps the current principles and practices of futures education in Australian Primary and Secondary Schools. It is comprehensive and informative. Bateman and Smith begin with an audit of the current State and Tertiary curriculum documents to find out if Futures Education is implicit within other curriculum areas or explicitly mentioned. The authors discuss briefly the Futures Education knowledge of Curriculum Consultants. The original report, from which this chapter is derived, provides an overview of knowledge, programs and practices within five selected schools identified by key individuals in the Futures Education community as having Futures Education to



varying degrees within their programs. The information was collected through interviews of staff members and focus groups conducted with groups of students who were engaged in Futures Education. Interview questions were circulated for expert review on the World Futures Studies Federation email discussion list. Key themes, conclusions and recommendations that may further the development of social foresight through Futures Education in schools concludes the chapter.

Bateman and Smith's survey reveals the current state of explicit Futures Education is immature.

*Explicit FE is that which attempts to develop Futures literacy, drawing widely upon Futures Studies literature for processes and content, and expressed in curriculum statements and outcomes that clearly problematise the future.*

Of the four curriculum consultants interviewed, not one possessed extensive knowledge of Futures Studies, although they were aware of it and interested in professional education in Futures Studies. The consultants view Futures Education as "implicit" within other curriculum areas particularly developing a sustainable future. Curriculum documents confirm that teaching about the future appears in a variety of ways that can be considered implicit or explicit.

However, Bateman and Smith assert that "explicit Futures

*Implicit FE is taken to mean the plethora of statements and curriculum outcomes that refer to the future, but frame it as taken for granted, unformed by the FE literature as evidenced by the lack of explicit Futures literacy comprised of language, concepts and tools.*

Education is still the missing dimension in education." Curriculum documents from Tasmania, South Australia and Queensland are analyzed and the authors find that all contain an explicit Futures Education approach, seeking to develop futures thinking, skills and concepts.

In spite of the underdeveloped state of Futures Education the authors conclude the "stage is set for Futures Education to be widely adopted in Australian education." With their eye towards prospective futures for Futures

*Clearly curriculum developers have come to a realisation that consideration of future options and alternatives is vitally necessary in today's world.*

Education in Australia, Bateman and Smith wrap up their report with a list of nine actions or recommendations. These recommendations are a call to action in which all futurists have an important role to fulfill. If we answer this call the education sector could become "a powerful and central player in the emergence of social foresight."

The AFI monograph, Futures in Education: Principles, practice and potential is a substantial contribution to the field and a practical reference and resource for those interested in Futures Education.

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