

# Critical Futures Study: A Dimension of Educational Work

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## Introduction

Educational institutions are already in the futures business. They participate in a much wider enterprise often without knowing it, without reflecting on the processes whereby aspects of past cultures are brought into the present and used as raw materials in the construction of futures.

No architect, engineer or business executive could proceed for long on the basis of worn-out designs and purposes. But as sheltered, monopolistic institutions schools are approaching the Twenty-First Century long before they have come to terms with the Twentieth and, moreover, they still retain an unwieldy amount of baggage from earlier times. This is not to attack schools, nor to take a crude anti-historical view. What I want to emphasise is that the whole business of curriculum development, innovation and change is bedevilled by the continuing immersion of educational institutions in the past - not the past that actually occurred in unrecorded complexity and richness, but the past that survives in reconstructed bits and fragments replete with official myths, simplifications and endless omissions.

Schools, colleges and universities tend to behave as if the past were authoritative and the future a mere abstraction. Neither view holds water and competent historians will readily admit that their enterprise is much more provisional and open than is commonly believed. But few teachers, teacher educators or lecturers make a point of exploring the ways that education inherently refers forward to ends and processes which absolutely *require* a future. When I answer the question about 'what do I do' I'm no longer surprised by the raised eyebrows, the incomprehension. Futures? What does that mean? What does it have to do with education?

## Three comments

I want to offer three opening comments. First, in lacking a futures dimension, education takes on a repressive character. That is, it elevates a concern for the maintenance of knowledge (and therefore power) structures over human concerns. To render the future invisible, not worthy of discussion or study, is to strip away much of human significance in the present. For too long we have overlooked the fact that teaching and learning do not take place simply as a result of the pressure of the past. Statements of aims and objectives usually refer to purposes, goals and intentions that necessarily refer *forward* in time. So there is a contradiction in disregarding futures since some aspects of them are already present, already here in present-day teaching and learning. Futures concerns are so deeply involved in creating any humanly viable sense of the present that it is doubtful if we could act at all without them.

Like all other human activities educational work is embedded in time and it is axiomatic that such work cannot materially affect what has gone before. Whatever the precise purposes embodied in any particular educational offering they necessarily refer forward to future ends. While it is true that some activities are held to be worth doing for their own sake, and while it is earnestly to be hoped that good teaching and productive learning have immediate benefits, every lesson, exercise, tutorial, assignment and the like derive meaning both from what has gone before and what is hoped for or intended in the longer term. Qualifications, the development of abilities and skills, vocational training and preparation for life are not short-term concerns. They range out beyond the 'here and now' of immediate sensory perception to wider spans of space and time. They are true futures concerns. Few teachers would undertake the rigours of training if it were not related to personal and professional goals. Few students would remain at their desks if they were not persuaded of the benefit. It is not really possible to begin to discuss careers, personal development or social change without reference to the world of the future in which all of this is supposed to happen.

A second comment is that education for whole persons needs a futures dimension. We all require a future to guide our actions and decisions in the present. Yet the implicit model of personhood we have inherited from the industrial era overlooks this and much else besides. It recognises some of the mental and physical attributes of persons but deals scantily, if at all, with their emotional and spiritual aspects. By 'spiritual' I do not mean religious. There is plenty of religiosity around. But few recognise the inner person and its higher needs. The latter have not been a valued part of recent Western culture in the past and it is not seen as particularly significant now or in the future. Yet little can be more vital than to have a developed view of human growth and human potential that includes notions of peacefulness, caring and stewardship. This is part of the human basis for resisting the arrogance of technological and corporate hubris.

The industrial model needs to be replaced with one that gives due attention to the layered quality of persons and the world in which they live; also to the way in which we are all grounded in the physical world but also range upward through emotional and mental states to levels of functioning which can only be called spiritual. A worldview based on Cartesian logic and Newtonian calculation simply cannot cope with that. But the fact of the matter is that as we proceed from lower to higher levels we discover *emergent qualities*. Just as a watch is more than the sum of its parts and a living cell is much more than the sum of its chemical constituents, so the higher levels of human consciousness reach toward the transcendent. A worldview or curriculum that misses this is actually overlooking one of the most humanly significant features of our world in part since higher levels of awareness tend to be more tolerant and inclusive. They reach out to embrace broad spans of space and time and have therefore become essential in healing our planet, creating peace and moving toward new stages of civilised life.

Finally, we need to admit that, as currently constituted, school and university curricula fail to provide a critical purchase on the underlying causes of the world problematique comprised of interlocking global dilemmas. Given that the sources of most world problems lie within the paradigms and systems of valuation and thought that support the Western way of life, they contribute to the problem by unthinkingly reproducing obsolete world views. The practical power of our technology and organisational ability has been purchased at an enormous price: pollution, conflict, alienation, social decay, ecological breakdown and nuclear stalemate. Yet these uncomfortable features of the world tend to be denied or ignored. Yet, a moment's thought will confirm that any map that omits areas of danger or risk is hardly worth having. It follows that ways are needed of coming to grips with the underlying belief systems and approaches to knowledge that have brought our civilisation to this dangerous and unstable condition. While some groups find this essential and constructive work threatening or even subversive (perhaps because of entrenched interests or dated knowledge) it cannot be overstressed that understanding 'the breakdown' is an essential precursor to cultural innovation and recovery. I'll return to this below.

Futures in education is therefore most centrally concerned with negotiating and exploring new and renewed understandings about our present cultural transition beyond the industrial era. It has a role to play in defining and creating a more just, peaceful and sustainable world. Visions and views of desirable futures always precede their realisation. Yet today positive visions are in short supply.

### **Necessity of forward thinking**

To think ahead is still dismissed as being 'speculative' despite the fact that human civilisation has created dynamic processes of change which may very well alter, or eliminate, sentient life upon the earth. Such is the power of obsolete world views. Empiricists will even ask how one can study something which does not exist. But I have come to realise that the future (or futures) represents *a principle of present action and present being*. Without it there would be no plans, purposes, goals, intentions, meanings ... or curricula. A present without any future component would be too sparse, too narrow, too arid for the exercise of human intentionality. Indeed, a little reflection will reveal that futures are constitutive of human consciousness. To the extent that futures are ignored, repressed or predetermined human agency itself is under threat. It is characteristic of our species that, while the body may be time-bound through biological necessity, the mind, spirit and imagination are not. In this view there is an organic quality to futures. They are very much connected with everyday life and the wider implications thereof.

A less liberating interest in futures arises from the attempts of powerful groups to secure their own ends. Bertrand de Jouvenel called this 'colonising the future'. He was referring to the organised attempt to impose some certainty or structure upon that which lies ahead. Planning has certainly become unavoidable and such

efforts are entirely reasonable when motivated by some notion of the public good. Yet it remains a fact that much of the expertise of futurists, planners and forecasters has been monopolised by purely commercial, bureaucratic and strategic military concerns. This certainly remains the case in the USA and Europe. So on the one hand there is a widely-shared but diffuse interest in futures and on the other a diverse group of experts committed to a range of enterprises and ends. But this sketch leaves out two important items. One is the existence of a multi-faceted international futures movement which acts as a kind of counterbalance to professionalised futures research. The other is the development of critical views that draw upon and reinterpret material from the whole spectrum.

### **What does 'critical' mean?**

My own view is 'critical' in at least three senses. First, it developed from a critique of the shortcomings of dominant American approaches which were in some respects superficial, misleading and ideologically naive. Second, I drew explicitly upon the critical theory of Jurgen Habermas and his associates of the Frankfurt school. Third, the perspective attempts to be open and self-critical (reflexive) about assumptions, values and meanings. In this view there is little interest in attempting to forecast future events. Rather, the available material (including forecasts, scenarios, arguments, images, etc.) is deployed in processes of *interpretive negotiation*. As I have noted elsewhere, transformations of meaning occupy a central place in this perspective. The ideological content of futures problems is recognised, as is the crucial role of language and presupposition in mediating all attempts at communication.

Critical futures study is not value-free, nor does it aspire to be so. Rather, it is openly committed to what Jurgen Habermas called the 'emancipatory interest'. That is, the fundamental human concern for freedom from oppression, mystification, repressive power relations and ideologically distorted communication. In practice, that translates into concern for human development, well-being, and the articulation of convivial and sustainable futures. That seems to me to be an eminently productive basis for educational work. By drawing broadly upon the futures field as such and on traditions of enquiry that have not been widely associated with it, critical futures study proposes a mode of discourse that can be widely applied in a variety of fields.

### **The futures field as an educational resource**

When people ask how one can study something which 'does not exist' they are implying three things. First, that they are implicitly referring to empiricist traditions of enquiry that tend to value only the tangible and the measurable. Second, that they have not given much thought to values and meanings that are in no way diminished by their non-material status. Third, that they have not looked seriously at the futures field. If they had, they would know that powerful groups such as governments, trans-nationals and the military spend a great deal

of money on the kinds of futures work of benefit to them. Why educational systems have not yet done the same on any broad scale is an interesting question. In fact futures have been taught now for over twenty years. While some of the ideas may seem new they are not untested in practice. How, then, does one begin?

The first thing to note is that there is indeed a broad field of study, research and practice involving futures. The subject matter of the field has sometimes given rise to quite spurious dismissals of futures. But if one looks through any of the journals, magazines or books associated with it, the subject matter is very clear. It ranges from forecasts, plans, surveys of various kinds, through careful analyses of particular issues to explicitly partisan statements about hoped-for or intended futures. Nor should we leave out of this sketch the branch of speculative writing which has used the future as an imaginative backdrop. For it is often within the context of stories that the human significance of futures can be most productively explored.

There are many implications for educational studies and development. One is that underlying notions of temporality subtly condition the way we understand and approach pedagogic tasks. Another is that negotiations of meaning are centrally involved in processes of cultural continuity and change. In the former instance it is worth noting that Western linear time, while having undoubted practical benefits, also has a number of drawbacks. It reifies and separates past, present and future (though they are in fact richly interconnected). It is anthropocentric and scientifically inaccurate in presupposing a simple one-way flow. But its biggest drawback is that it tends to 'make the present vanish'. That is to say, the present has been 'chopped up' by progressively more exacting measurements so that it has seemed to disappear beneath perceptual thresholds. This minimal present corresponding to the 'here and now' of western linear time is something of a disaster. In an interconnected and interdependent world the last thing we need is an alienating present which maintains an illusion of separateness and isolation from the universal process in which we are immersed. Of immensely greater benefit is the notion that reconnects us with the wider pattern, what I refer to as an 'extended present'. There are major interpretive choices to be made here. I have taken up Elise Boulding's idea of a two-hundred year present stretching about 100 years in each 'direction'. In educational terms that's just about right for it embraces the living context we have inherited and are presently creating. Here, then, is one category of meanings to be reinterpreted and renegotiated. There are, of course, very many others.

Educational institutions have often been accused of being inward-looking, isolated and incapable of change. That's not really surprising given their history. Nor would it matter if the wider context were static. In that case history would indeed reign supreme. But in the early 1990s such a stance has little credibility. The proper business of education is neither to uncritically purvey reified aspects of the past nor to try to predict the future. Rather, it is to mediate past and future in the continuing reconstruction of the present. What does this mean?

## Reconstructing the present

In the first place, it implies that there needs to be a much more even-handed concern with past and future, a more productive *temporal balance*. The forward-looking aspects of existing courses can be debated and explored. Opportunities exist on every side to open up moribund subjects by permitting futures issues and problems to enter. A number of tools and techniques from the futures field have been adapted for educational use and many of these can be deployed across the curriculum.

In developing a critical approach to futures I have moved freely from one research front to another on a variety of fields. Among them are hermeneutics, critical linguistics, post-structuralist literary criticism, transpersonal psychology and speculative fiction. Each contributes to an *interpretive perspective*. The latter has numerous implications for educational work and underlines the central importance of negotiations of meaning in that context. In this view, teachers, lecturers and writers have much in common. They are each in the business of producing texts or discourses which appear to be authoritative. The author is in charge of the text, the teacher of the classroom. Both types of work are grounded in conventions about power, knowledge, truth and so on which tend to be taken for granted. Naturalistic writing and authoritarian teaching both invite us to see the world in this particular way and to close off other interpretive choices. Clearly, some degree of authority is useful and unavoidable, but if it suppresses the interpretive autonomy of the reader or student it is fundamentally unproductive and humanly repressive.

Debates about the extent to which texts (or curricula) are essentially open structures continue. Some argue that texts are structures from which readers can generate a wide range of meanings while others believe that the range of plausible meanings is rather limited. In fact, I doubt if the question can be resolved at such a general level. What I will suggest is that since each reader/student brings a unique set of capacities, understandings and potentials to bear upon a text/curriculum there is latitude for some degree of interpretation. It is vital that individuals are not trapped by unregarded conventions and practices into simply decoding discrete and finished structures of meaning. In educational terms there is much to be gained by regarding people as co-authors who, given the chance, are fully capable of calling forth meaning, purpose and intention from a range of sources. The distinction between passive decoding and active interpretation is crucial. It is the difference between object and subject. One approach forces individuals back to inferior and dependent states while the other opens up options for development and participation. Thus, to be involved in the continuing reconstruction of the present attracts a number of core meanings. It suggests that students be encouraged to interpret in both 'directions' away from the present rather than be presented with sequences of givens which merely require passive conformity. Since any liveable notion of the

present embraces aspects of past and future, this amounts to a continuing process of interpretive reconstruction.

One of the central themes of the futures field is that underlying all human differences are certain commonalities of interest. These include food, shelter, companionship, a healthy environment, peace and justice. Whatever one's position or viewpoint, these underlying interests provide a basic framework for enquiry and for curriculum development. The all-too-obvious differences that arise are arguably less important than the shared fact of a common underlying agenda. But what the analyst, protester and teacher have in common goes beyond this. For each, in his or her own way, and with greater or lesser clarity and awareness, attempts to plot a course through a changing world. This involves reading signals from the environment, interpreting them, making decisions and acting.

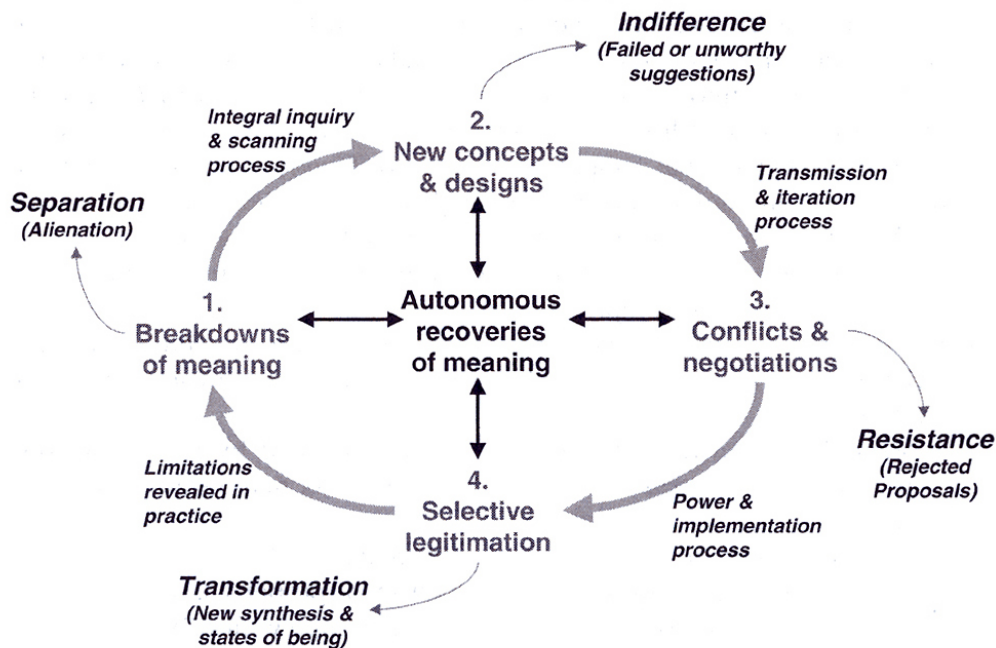
### **Negotiating change - A cycle of transformation**

It is regrettable that pundits, commentators, children's books and most media productions involving futures tend to misdirect students and to focus on the external construction of the future by technology. For underlying the surface of technical change there are important human processes. These have to do with *transformations of meaning*. We can distinguish at least four stages. To begin to be aware of them is to open up whole new areas of enquiry and action. In so doing we penetrate to the core of critical futures work.

Teachers and lecturers are more aware than many that uncertainty, depression, frustration and fear often appear to be the dominant emotions of our times. Third world populations have seen the material cornucopia of the West and yet, broadly speaking, it is denied to them. On the other hand, the rich, and relatively rich, populations of the industrialised world have many of the material goods but have lost a coherent view of where they are going or why. The nuclear sword hangs over us all. Many of the values and beliefs that sustained the social landscape and gave it coherence have fallen, or are falling, apart. Work, leisure, defence, gender, progress, health and so on have lost much of their earlier significance. We are, in other words, living through a **BREAKDOWN OF INHERITED MEANINGS**. This is the first stage of a 'transformative cycle', or T-cycle for short.

The point is this: whereas unreflective immersion in the breakdowns of unemployment, racism, crime, poverty and meaninglessness is certainly a cause for depression and anger, it is of enormous value to see that the breakdown is often structural. It is not *merely* the result of individual failure or bad luck. However well-off we may be, we are all affected. So, first, we can recognise a society-wide process which affects everyone and for which we are all responsible. Second, we can begin to move out of the sense of guilt and/or depression which results because, having brought the breakdown to full consciousness, we are now open to new choices and possibilities.

## The Transformative Cycle\*



Recognition of the breakdown is a kind of ground-clearing exercise (though in fact it is also continuous and parallels the other stages). It alerts us to search the cultural environment for anything which might be helpful in resolving the problem. Here we reach a second stage. For a highly significant part of the futures field is engaged in evolving proposals, suggestions, practices which explicitly address the breakdown. Many people who put forward these RECONCEPTUALISATIONS (or new proposals) would not, perhaps, think of themselves as involved in futures. Yet that is just what they are involved in. For in elaborating possible solutions they are setting up possibilities which invite individual and social responses. This occurs in almost every conceivable area. The difficulty is that much of this solution-oriented work never makes it into the mass media which are dedicated to relatively trivial ends such as marketing and reality-avoidance. Most proposals simply fall by the wayside and are lost. Some fail because they are inappropriate or impractical. In any event, this takes us on to the third stage.

Since far more proposals are fielded than can ever be taken up, some kind of winnowing process is unavoidable. At present the process is obscured by power politics, lack of knowledge and lack of appropriate forums. New proposals often reach the stage of NEGOTIATIONS AND CONFLICTS without ever having had the benefit of wide public discussion. If you think of the sheer effort and cost of mounting opposition to the siting of nuclear power stations or cruise missiles, it is immediately obvious why many other possibilities seem to disappear without trace.

Conflicts occur because the new impacts upon the old and someone always has interests bound up in the way things were. The crucial capacity here is to be able to move from a position of open conflict to one of negotiation. That involves



organisation, support, commitment, a suitable arena and the equalisation of power relations (if only for the purposes of discussion). To the extent that this occurs there is a chance for innovations to be taken up and legitimated. This is, in fact, the final stage of the cycle. SELECTIVE LEGITIMATION refers to innovations and proposals which are taken up and incorporated in the new pattern. Examples would be the emancipation of women, preventative health measures, smoke-free restaurants and nuclear-free zones. However, we cannot assume that under present conditions the solutions which are accepted are the right ones or the best available. Often they are not. Nevertheless this outline of the cycle does place in context many activities which hitherto may have been considered in isolation. As a workshop method, teaching tool and research approach the T-cycle has a variety of uses.

An underlying assumption of the cycle is that meanings, values, commitments and understandings have become less certain, more fluid and dynamic than perhaps they once were. Changes which once may have spanned centuries are now taking place in a few years. Since few schools were established with the express purpose of mediating change it is not surprising that they find it hard to cope. Nor is it surprising that individuals exhibit symptoms of uncertainty, stress and fear as they regress to the minimal present. However, longer-term views are attainable provided that the interpretive capacities involved are encouraged and developed. That, perhaps, is the central concern of critical futures study as a dimension of educational work. From within the extended present the processes of continuity and change look less threatening. Moreover, *individuals who know that they stand at the centre of their own history as agents rather than spectators are well placed to negotiate conceptions and images of futures worth living in.* The extension of concern beyond the alienation and narcissism of the 'here and now' represents a movement toward maturity which contrasts strongly with the regressions I have come to associate with naturalistic writing and authoritarian teaching.

In practice I have not found that the adoption of an interpretive perspective leads to any crisis of authority. Rather it is that the nature of authority has changed. In a futures context I am generally less interested in the ontological status of interpretations than in their fruitfulness. I expect plurality to emerge. I do not necessarily want a reader or listener to agree with me. I hope that others will contribute their own insights and negotiate their own meanings. It is not necessary to 'win' because the battleground metaphor is not applicable. The result is a much more relaxed and open style of teaching and learning. It is a participatory style which fully recognises the open-endedness of futures and the provisionality of knowledge.

Many popular books on futures tend to skate over important questions about language, meaning, power and fundamentally conflicting interests. In so doing they lose credibility and assume dependent readers who have been described as being 'shocked' by change (an external force which tends to be understood by the author but not by those he/she is addressing). By contrast, a critical approach provides access to meanings, commitments and understandings which tend to remain hidden precisely because they frame our world. The implicit

content of official discourse may, for this reason, be more interesting than the explicit content. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that futures worth inhabiting spring less from the think-tanks and convocations of professional futurists than from the vision and determination of those who have learned to resist the hard sell and bland reassurances from above.

Thus, to the extent that educators view students as makers of meaning and interpreters of culture there is a direct connection between education and the elaboration of sustainable futures. Even where this connection is absent, even in the case of the most hide-bound and ideologically regressive curriculum, there will always be forward-looking assumptions. Hence, from where I stand, some notion of futures study is a *sine qua non* of curriculum work.

### **Practical objectives**

The primary attitude objective of futures study in education is to help students develop a genuine sense of optimism and empowerment about their ability to determine their own life prospects. This results from possessing adequate information about their society and world, from an awareness of their own inner vocation (which is very different to a narrow vocationalism) or sense of purpose, and the opportunity to develop the skills of self-mastery. I suspect that this can only take place fully where students are regarded as agents (not spectators) and given the chance to develop autonomy through decision-making and choice. The imposition of knowledge structures in the form of stereotyped subjects works against the development of optimism and empowerment because it confronts students with pre-givens requiring accommodation and acceptance, not reconceptualisation and creativity. Futures is one of a number of interdisciplinary foci which hold out more nourishing options.

Careful person-centred futures work encourages students to be more confident about their own abilities. With this confidence, and with developing insight, they can be encouraged to refuse many of the artificial boundaries which our culture has read upon a seamless and indivisible world. Two consequences follow. First, the removal and reinterpretation of boundaries eliminates the causes of many conflicts. (The latter tend to look foolish when we perceive our common immersion in the same 'ground of being'). Second, they can explore their own immersion in wider processes involving energy, food, relationships and meanings. As this sense of inextricable *involvement* develops it provides the basis for a deeply-felt stewardship ethic. Many now believe this to be a crucial aspect of any liveable future.

A related attitude is the willingness to join with others in defining and working toward shared goals and purposes. It is all too easy to drift passively toward protest. But beyond protest lies the essential task of defining in positive terms just what is wanted and needed. Futures study provides tools and contexts for developing visions and views of futures worth living in. Students need to develop images of how they would like to be in the future. This 'future-focused role image', as it has been called, is not just a piece of wishful thinking, or need not

be. The views people create for themselves deeply condition what they believed to be worth attempting in the present. Many existing curricula function to obscure this important process, but it can be made explicit through stories, timelines, values clarification and many other futures exercises.

Inherent in all of this are many different types of skills: self-knowledge and empathy with others; reflexivity (the ability to stand back from one's immersion in social process and to critically reflect upon our debt to particular traditions and forms of knowledge); clarity about values, meanings and purposes; a broad or holistic understanding of global processes; the ability to understand and critique the images and plans of futures as they are represented (brought into the present) by powerful groups; understanding the differences between possible, probable and preferable futures.

It's worth emphasising here that the purpose of futures study is not to predict, not to say what will happen. That is the task of forecasters. The major concern is *to understand alternatives*. In so doing we introduce into the present a wide range of choices, e.g. in relation to energy, transport, lifestyle, relationships, etc. The exercise of considered choice is what leads us toward one future and away from another. So the term POSSIBLE FUTURES covers a very wide range indeed. Many things are possible, not all of which we will want to support. Fewer are PROBABLE and it is here that we will draw on forecasts, projections, scenarios and stories to grasp the range of what is currently considered likely. (Note that many issues seem to rise and fall with media coverage. Hence the latter is not a true guide to their importance). PREFERABLE FUTURES are those that we positively hope for and work to create. Some of the criteria we can use in constructing our images of preferable futures are closely related to the commonalities of human experience noted above: sustainability, health, peace, justice and so on. With appropriate help and support students of all ages and abilities find it relatively easy to engage in this process. The worries and fears which arise can be acknowledged, focused and directed toward constructive and creative ends.

## **Implementation**

It is common for those involved in curriculum innovation and course development to refer to the lack of space on timetables and the competition between subjects. But is futures study a subject? I'd suggest that at the tertiary level it is undoubtedly a coherent focus of enquiry and it can be treated as a subject in schools. But, on the whole, it is probably best regarded as a cross-curricular dimension. This means that problems of space and competition virtually disappear. What tends to happen is that once people have grasped the significance of futures, they simply change what they already do in small but significant ways. It is certainly no harder to teach futures than it is to teach anything else. 90% of the perceived difficulties are basically questions of familiarity. With a little background it is relatively easy to design and teach whole new modules incorporating futures ideas or simply incorporate futures materials, tools, ideas in existing programmes.

One of the most consistent findings of research is that students tend to find futures work exciting and rewarding. Neither threats nor persuasion are needed. Most already have natural interests in the unfolding of their lives and the context in which that process will take place.

## Conclusion

I've taught a range of futures modules and courses at secondary, undergraduate and post-graduate level and it is very clear that, given time to acquire a working knowledge of the area, most people find this perspective personally stimulating and professionally indispensable. A Masters student (Lancaster, UK) described it as 'a personal and professional lifeline'.

Those who remain immersed in obsolete ways of knowing and teaching will continue to doubt how, or even whether, futures can be studied. But others are finding the past of lesser interest than the range of alternative futures now confronting us. For, historically speaking, we have never been here before. Historical parallels relevant to the present global situation are tenuous at best. Nor does it require extensive study and research to take up the available tools and join with others to negotiate and explore futures worth living in.

With other curriculum initiatives which focus on the needs and aspirations of real people, futures studies can contribute toward the deeper shifts which could change the nature of schools and education. That shift has less to do with passing on a declining culture than about grasping the new and renewed sources of cultural vitality which have been suppressed during the industrial era. It is less about studying futures as a dry academic activity than about creating them through the choices we make in our daily lives and work. That is something that a dependent, wasteful and short-sighted society should carefully consider given that the mere *extension* of present trends leads to a world few would wish to live in or hand on to their children. If we want a peaceful, sustainable, convivial future, we will have to begin it now. In that process we will want to integrate futures into every aspect of teaching, learning and research.

## Notes

- For more information on the T-cycle, see AFI Monograph 4, Australian Foresight Intitute, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, 2004. Also available [here](#).

An early version of this paper was published in *Curriculum Perspectives* 6, 2, 1986 64-68. A longer version was published in Slaughter, R. *Recovering the Future*, Graduate School of Eenvironmental Sciences, Monash University, Melbourne, 1988, chapter 10.