# Untangling Teachers' Images of Their Futures Through Their Responses to the Futures Narratives of Children

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## Abstract

*A significant amount of research has been undertaken exploring individuals' images of a future. What often remains uninterrogated are the ways in which others' respond to these images of a future, as they are articulated through narrative discourses. This paper, then, seeks to address this void through the presentation of research which considers the ways that teachers' perceptions of "the future" are consolidated and challenged, as they work with children in a classroom setting.*

## Introduction

A "future narrative" implies that there is a singular story which is able to be encapsulated by a single person. "Future narratives" implies many stories about the same singular future. This article grapples with the novel idea of futures narratives which acknowledges the complexities of the multiple futures that are located within the narratives of an individual or amongst a number of individuals. This notion is linguistically and conceptually complex, and is explored through the untangling of teachers' narratives as they engage in professional learning. These narratives are located within a larger study, focused on the implementation of futures thinking within the everyday curriculum practices of an Australian primary school, educating students between the ages of five and thirteen years of age (Bateman, 2010).

This article is focused on the emergence of teachers' images of the future, which are articulated, challenged and reconsidered through provocations that occur as a result of

children's learning. In much of the research published about students' images of the future (Hicks & Holden, 2007; Nilsen, 1999; Ono, 2003), broader images of the future (Morgan, 2002; Polak & Boulding, 1973) and investigations about futures in education (Bateman & Sutherland-Smith, 2011; Gidley, Bateman, & Smith, 2004; Hicks & Gidley, 2012), there has not been an examination of the emergences which occur within the interactions between numbers of people as their images of the future are represented in some form. Using a premise of Vygotsky (as discussed by Miller, 2011) and Bruner (as highlighted by Bakhurst & Shanker, 2001), it is through our interactions and experiences that knowledge is constructed, and then subsequently challenged and reinforced through confrontations of differences in thinking or perceptions of the world. From this perspective, this research considers the juxtaposition of futures thinking from one person, or activity, to another through the discussions and curriculum actions of teachers.

## About This Research

This study draws upon critical ethnographic methodology (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). This approach, as described by Creswell (2002), is value-laden in its orientation. It seeks to disclose hegemonic structures and challenge the status quo. This research highlighted the ways in which education is valued for its capacity to equip students for 'the future', whilst simultaneously ignoring the development of explicit futures thinking capacities in curriculum policy. A powerful tenet of critical pedagogy is the belief that all students can become critical and engaged learners committed to transforming social inequalities and injustices (Shadduck-Hernandez, 2006). Many scholars in the futures studies field argue that a missing futures dimension within education, and the use of government policy as a means of cultural transmission, may inappropriately colonise students' futures (Bateman & Sutherland-Smith, 2011; Hicks, 2002; Inayatullah, Bussey, & Milojevic, 2006; Slaughter, 2004). To colonise their future challenges the very core of a world committed to access and equity for all children, regardless of their context.

This critical ethnography was situated within a single case study. Using multiple research methods, case studies aim to draw attention to what specifically can be learned from the single case or multiple cases under investigation. Stake (2000, p. 436) suggests that "a case study is both the process of inquiry about the case, and the product of that inquiry" Schools, through documents and government directions, claim a role in orienting students towards the future. The students themselves, who are working towards adulthood and their own futures, are influenced in their learning by their own perception of the future. The teachers are individuals with their own views and images of the future, as well as having a responsibility to guiding students' thinking about the future. Through participation in professional learning, interviews, document analysis and curriculum planning, this research identified a range of contested futures discourses and narratives held among teachers within this case study.

At a single site, over twelve months, this research sought to tease out the disjuncture between what curriculum policies advised *should* be taught in schools, and what *actually* occurred in classrooms, in connecting learning to explicit futures perspectives. The school at the center of the study was located in a low socio-economic area of an Australian capital city, and has a diverse cultural enrolment. Out of the 750 students enrolled, over 50 ethnicities were represented,

and a significant percentage of these families had arrived as refugees from other countries. The narrative environment in which this research was situated was a primary school classroom of 110 children, whose learning is the responsibility of a group of five teachers. The teachers had not previously used futures studies in their teaching and learning. It was originally in the author's role as a teacher educator that she became involved in working with the staff for the purposes of professional learning. Accordingly, this research also encompasses aspects of participatory action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) which incorporated the ongoing use of field notes to document observations, reflections and identified opportunities for future professional learning.

This paper focuses on one aspect of the broader study, working with a group of teachers, during their curriculum planning and reflection meetings. Professional learning teams were utilised as part of a reflexive cycle where the teachers would implement their own futures learnings in the classroom, and then bring back to the professional learning team the responses from the students, in order to generate new directions in their thinking and practice. These sessions included the introduction of futures tools, media and concepts for the teachers' professional knowledge, as well as a reflection of what had occurred as the previous week's tools had been used as part of curriculum in a learning space of children, ranging between 11 – 13 years of age. The data that are of interest are the interpretations of children's futures narratives by the teachers, and how these narratives challenged the teachers' future time perspectives, and, in many instances, challenged the ways that they perceived the broader role of education.

The analysis of data was twofold, and incorporated analytic bracketing and narrative analysis. Analytic bracketing is described as "an orienting procedure for alternately focusing on the whats and then the hows of interpretive practices in order to assemble both a contextually constructive picture of everyday language-in-use" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 500). For the purpose of this paper, the bracketing included the organization of data amongst discursive futures (how futures were talked about), and futures discourses in action (the application of futures thinking in response to others' images of the future). "The constant interplay between the analysis of these two sides of interpretive practice mirrors the lived interplay among social interaction, its immediate surroundings, and its going concerns" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 500).

Narrative analysis has also been applied to the transcripts of the teachers' planning meetings, in light of the analytic brackets, and is represented through a series of meta-narratives, which foreground key futures discourses. Clandinin (2006) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) acknowledge the multiple forms and stories that contribute to a narrative research methodology. In this research, the interpretations and observations of teachers about student work form story threads, which enable the representation of consolidated and re-forming images of the future. Rogers (2007) suggests that as different story threads are played against one another, newly generated narratives are associatively positioned. "Listening in this way, one begins to discern contradictions and specific ways of shaping a narrative" (Rogers, 2007, p. 110). The emergent story threads began with the teachers' participation in explicit future professional learning, with the listening for futures time perspectives present amongst these individuals at the outset of the project.

## The Story Threads or Narratives of Teachers

Drawing upon the narrative methodology outlined in the previous section, and through an earlier analysis (Bateman, 2010), I will present three main story threads or narratives of the teachers involved in this study. These threads represent a macro-narrative encompassing the main themes of the study at three main stages. They draw upon the analytic bracketing undertaken across all of the data collected across the project, to provide an insight to the changing futures time perspectives articulated by teachers through their examination and implementation of futures in curriculum practice. The construction of these narratives, through story threads, was developed using the dominant phrases and concepts identified through the transcripts of the teachers' planning discussions.

The first story thread represents the discussions of the teachers at the introductory stage, or when futures studies was new to them. The second story thread represents the discussions of the teachers within the cycle of professional learning, as they were implementing their futures learnings as classroom curriculum. And, the third story thread is the reflection from the teachers of how the explicit futures dimensions had changed their practices and perspectives. Subsequent to the presentation of the story threads, I will draw six micro-narrative themes from the threads. These themes provide some challenges in thinking about the complexities of embedding futures time perspectives within the everyday educational practices of societies, when such thinking is not embedded within the paradigmatic worldview in many parts of the world.

### Story thread 1: At the beginning of the journey

We're teachers and our job is to educate students for the future. For every year that a child is in school, he or she will learn all of the skills he or she needs to be employed and to contribute to society. That is why we teach the skills that we do, such as literacy and numeracy. The whole world values these things as the most important thing to learn as seen by ranking systems, which pit education system up against education system. Much of what we teach is in a curriculum document written by the government of our country, or a part of the country. There are not enough hours in a day to teach other things which are important for children to live their lives. That is up to parents.

We care about the children we teach. We want them to be happy and healthy, and not to face the hardships that many of their families do. Unfortunately, many of the children we teach will have similar lives, as that is all that they know. We want to make a difference in their lives, but there is only so much we can do. And, their families only know what they know. But, the world is changing and maybe they will find their place and have some different opportunities.

We're not sure what the future will be like. We wonder if some of the things in popular science fiction might come true, such as flying cars and automated wardrobes. We guess it will be very much like today but with more technology, and possibly more war. And, all of the climate change information is quite worrying. To be honest, we don't really think about a lot of this stuff. There just isn't time. But, now that you've asked us about it, maybe we can think about it a little more.

**Story thread 2: Implementing futures learning in the classroom**

We've never thought about the future in this way, or the futures as more than one. We have enjoyed the chance to work with each other as a group to learn about structured ways with which we can do this. Our favourite tools, which are most simple to use and apply to many activities, are the Y-Diagram, temporal scanning matrices and consequence wheels. It was the scaffolded way of thinking that gave us our confidence and made thinking about different futures manageable.

The children in the classroom are enjoying this work and the opportunities to engage thinking that connects their classroom learning to the rest of their lives. What is most interesting to us is how differently the children in our classes think about the future compared to us. And, it is incredible when we take the time to hear about their reasoning, such as how their backgrounds influence how they see their own future, and how their image of the future is so strongly connected to their values and their traditions. There have been many times when a child has told us things that they believe and we have had to stop ourselves from telling them that their image of the future cannot be so. Our resistance to their images are based on our own previously unconsidered images of the future.

We are having some other issues as well in our futures teachings. We have had some parents who have felt unhappy with some of the futures that their children have considered. These parents question what rights we have had to ask their children to think differently about their world. Some parents have suggested that the ways that their children are thinking about changes in families and housing are offensive or a clash of their values. Some other parents have felt the same way about advancing technologies, and how they are contrary to their religion. This is the first time that we have had to simultaneously educate the parents of the children in our classroom. It does make us realise how many constraints are upon a classroom in preparing students for futures, which may be different in aspects to the lives they are living now.

Our students are flying with futures thinking. At times, we have felt a little redundant as the teachers, except to help translate the resources in ways that are accessible to children. But, we are learning all the time about our curriculum and our pedagogies, as well as all of the futures studies. The students are highly engaged and there is real energy and interest in what everyone is studying. There seems to be a motivation to get the standard curriculum out of the way so that we can focus on futures with as much time as is available.

**Story thread 3: A reflection on what happened**

The professional learning sessions we had were very useful. We were quite hesitant in the beginning and cynical about where all of this fitted in to our professional lives. However, the more practice we had in using futures tools and examining different resources, the more confident we became in thinking about more than one possible future. In fact, during the whole process, we noticed how much the term the future is thrown around, without any articulation. We laughed frequently about being on *futures high alert* so that even when an advertisement came on the television and mentioned the word, we brought it back to the planning table for a critical analysis.

In all seriousness, the ways that we have thought about our role as educators who are educating for the future has changed. We all think that it is true that

beforehand, we had taken the future for granted, as well as what we were teaching in preparing students for the future. In this project, we have put the futures first, but as we have begun to plan for the next curricula for our classrooms, we are all confident to integrate the futures into whatever concept is being developed. We are also able to anticipate some of the things, which might be challenging, in terms of communicating our intent with parents and ensuring that resources are accessible for children.

In terms of the students, we have learned most from them. The students challenged everything we had thought about the future, through their discussions, use of tools and analysis of others' images of the future. Things we had assumed that they would think underestimated their futures thinking capacities. Much of this underestimation was underpinned by our own early inadequacies. The students brought tremendous amounts of creativity, and were able to draw upon, or locate robust disciplinary knowledge to engage in their futures learning. All of us articulating futures, made explicit connections between what and why learning was taking place. In many ways, it made the prior and usual curriculum look fairly small.

The previous three story threads represent the dominant themes that emerged from the first analysis of the transcripts of the teachers' professional learning sessions. They tend to pertain to how their teaching philosophy and curriculum orientation were challenged and critiqued, characterized below as representations of key discourses of teacher thinking. Six micro threads were also picked up in the analysis and are presented in the subsequent section. These themes tend to reflect their concerns for how to make this work in the future. These themes include: Teachers' images of the future; Connecting and contesting images of the future; Positioned as passive in perceptions of the future; The place of futures in a crowded curriculum; Futures as an ethical inclusion, and, practical barriers to teaching futures.

## Intertwining The Story Threads: Six Themes That Help Us to Understanding The Narratives

The analytic brackets used to analyse the dominant themes of discursive practice, for the purposes of this research, were informed by literature and research in the fields of futures time perspectives (see, for example Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999), futures education (Bateman, 2012; Hicks & Gidley, 2012) and futures studies (Bell, 2005; Inayatullah et al., 2006; Slaughter, 2007). Through the analysis of the constructed story threads, as representations of key discourses of teacher thinking in this research, a number of factors became clear as to the problematique of 'teaching futures'. In this section, I return to the data and use specific quotes from individual teachers to more closely illustrate the micro-threads described. Their narrative phrases provide a closer insight into what was used to construct the broader story threads.

In the first instance, teachers had not considered the explicit images of the futures, which were associated with their roles in the classroom. Secondly, as these images of the futures were articulated, there was an increased cognition of the diversity and conflicts of images that were subjectively valued and constructed, juxtaposed with "others' agendas and constructions" (Teacher 3). Finally, there were tensions about the place of futures within classroom practices, arising from

the teachers' reflections about the roles of "outsiders in challenging what is known and valued in the home environment" (Teacher 5). These ideas are more deeply examined through the following six themes, which can be identified within the story threads.

## Teachers' images of the future

The teachers found it difficult to generate images of the future. They found it much easier to critique images, which others had generated. Early on in their professional learning, the teachers focused on a future which had been represented in the media, and which was previously referred to as pop-futures (Slaughter, 1995b). It was clear from their discussions that these external images had strongly influenced many of the assumptions they made about the singular future each of them assumed the others shared (Bell, 2005). In outlining their views of the future, the teachers brainstormed many single ideas or events, and were unable to construct a narrative, which grows the ideas and events into a cohesive scenario.

Hesitantly, teachers outlined technological advances, environmental crises and further globalisation as "things that are going to happen in the future" (Teacher 2). In this way, they highlighted global futures, which were "outside of their control" (Teacher 3). Whilst the teachers felt excited about possible advances in technology, this also led to fear. The environmental crises, which were "likely" to led to a feeling of hopelessness (Hicks & Holden, 2007). In thinking about the ways in which globalisation would impact their lives, the teachers were concerned about the impacts of "moving around" on the stability of children's lives. There were many instances in early conversations where teachers articulated their anxieties about the future and I suggest that it is these futures anxieties which inhibited their capacities to articulate images of the future.

It was not until the teachers began to examine other peoples' images and questions about the future that they were able to reflect upon, or build their own thinking about, the future. Through their collaborative reflections, the teachers would "bounce ideas off each other which would make me think about it more deeply each time" (Teacher 1). Moreover, through the curriculum work they were doing, they were generating new images and critiquing images in more sophisticated ways:

> Looking at the student work taught me about what I thought about the future. Sometimes I went into the class thinking one thing, and then I would listen to what some of the students thought and completely change my mind. When you first asked me what I thought would happen in the future, I honestly didn't have a clue. I learned it by using the ways that other people think about the future (Teacher 4).

Without the external stimulus of the facilitator in professional learning, and without an explicit development of temporality, I would argue that these teachers were stuck. They were unable to generate futures thinking, which demands rich, interdisciplinary thinking. From a research perspective, and also in regard to classroom pedagogy, I suggest that the very act of asking someone to simply articulate an image of the future is paralysing, because in this study, the complexities and frames involved in futures times perspectives were multilayered.

**Connecting and contesting images of the future**

There was a clear disjunction in the ways that the teachers thought about their personal futures in relation to broader notions of futures, and specifically in connecting their futures perspectives to their practices within the classroom. It was interesting to note that prior to their engagement in futures professional learning, the teachers all assumed that the other teachers thought about "the future in the same ways as I did" (Teacher 1).

Individual teachers were able to identify some events that could occur in their personal future, and similarly, the teachers each identified things that would occur locally and globally. However, these events would remain isolated and disconnected from other contexts. In this, the teachers did not see the ways that each of their futures images would work alongside the images of someone else. In one session, for example, the teachers were reflecting upon student work. Previously they had concurred that families could take many shapes and forms but effectively the "essence of a family" (Teacher 2) would remain unchanged. In the work sample the teachers then focused on, the student had suggested that people would live in homogenous, talent-based groups in the future, and it would be their talents that were nurtured for the benefit of society, as opposed to the nurturing of the person. In this futures scenario, the family was no longer seen as the prime carer and foundation for the children in the world. In their interrogation of this student's ideas, the teachers saw the different ways that the different futures frames interacted:

> These students aren't thinking the way I thought they would. I thought you all thought the same as well. I don't like the way some of you are thinking. If your future is right, it will affect all the rest of our futures. My future isn't really only my future, is it? … I mean I can think what I want about my future, but what if the world's future doesn't work with it (Teacher 5)

In the absence of explicit futures consciousness and education, the teachers lacked the temporality required to explicitly embed futures thinking within curriculum and classroom practices more broadly. Thinking around these concepts was quite fragmented and, until temporality is integrated, much rhetoric remains within the notion of educating for a future. In this study, it was clear that teachers were able to talk about the future, particularly with the scaffold of the formal professional learning. Teacher capacities to enact and integrate these futures perspectives cannot be realised until increased consciousness of temporality is also developed.

**Positioned as passive in perceptions of the future**

Teachers assumed that the future would just occur. In this way, they perceived taken-for-granted futures in which they were powerless to make change. This is reminiscent of a paradigmatic description of the heliocentric worldview (Tarnas, 1988), dominated by religious thinking (Koltko-Rivera, 2004). Just as people believed that God would reveal himself during that time, these teachers were positioned, "waiting to see what will happen in the future" (Teacher 3) – when the future is revealed. In this position, a person is indeed powerless to participate within and contribute to shaping various layers of futures.

The teachers were concerned about how they would "deal with things which

might come up, and make the future pretty bleak to the kids" (Teacher 2). They were also concerned about the negative images that some of these students had, and how these could be "avoided in the classroom for everyone else" (Teacher 4). In some instances, the teachers were limited by the assumptions they held about students' futures, which in many ways reproduced the "hopeless feelings some of our kids have … you only have to see where they come from" (Teacher 5).

After many of our early sessions together, I noted in my journal the ways that the teachers "almost perceived the future doing things to them" (Field notes) or in other instances "merely waiting for the future to arrive" (Field notes). From phrases such as these, the teachers and their students were positioned as passive, and the future as active. It was a repressive force to be feared, in its unknown shape – inaccessible, looming and unfamiliar. This was interesting as a counterpoint to other descriptions of a future, which will replicate the past. This notion of competing futures perspectives, or futures in counterpoint within a person's thinking, might form the basis of future research in this area.

## The place of futures in a crowded curriculum

The teachers wanted to explore many different concepts within their curriculum, but never had time because of what had to be taught. In part, these time constraints are due to what is often referred to as the crowded curriculum (Crump, 2005). The crowded curriculum encompasses the pressures which teachers face in responding to mandated curriculum documents as well as any other local demands driven by policies or events within the school context and within the confines of its timetable and resources. The teachers experienced this pressure in a number of ways. Slaughter (2004) suggested that teachers required a greater professional status and increased autonomy in order to transform educational practices to include more explicit futures studies:

> Typically, there is a minister at the top; teachers and students are at the bottom – not unlike a 19th century army. The 'meat in the sandwich' is a layer of bureaucracy that must at all times obey prevailing political priorities. Teachers and students remind one of marginalized, disempowered "foot soldiers" (Slaughter, 2004, p. 195).

The perceived control of curriculum from outside the site inhibits the practices and agendas for curriculum and learning within the site (Helsby & McCulloch, 1996). Whereas teachers often identify learning that is potentially meaningful and empowering to their students, such as futures education, their practices are inhibited by the ongoing and competing demands of everyday school life (Crump, 2005) within the context of their particular site and the specific group of learners (Brown & Campione, 2002).

## Futures as an ethical inclusion in curriculum

As the teachers' futures consciousness increased, they felt "anxiety" and "concern" about their responsibility in educating for the future. They became more critical in the ways they thought about the curriculum they developed within the learning spaces, as a result of the new futures lens. They realized that the curriculum being taught did not explicitly link to any specific notions of the future:

> This is like a moral dilemma, now. We have to teach what is written in the curriculum documents so that the students demonstrate what is meant to be learned … but we're also meant to be educating for the future. The futures stuff is really important for these kids. They [curriculum and futures perspectives] are not the same things. How do you decide which one to do? (Teacher 1).

The teachers became aware of the "power" associated with the curriculum choices they made (Teacher 2). There has been much written about the moral dimensions of teaching practices, particularly with the regard to curriculum choices (Reid, 2007). As a result of this study, I suggest that if curriculum writers were to become more attentive to the claims and roles of education, they could reduce some of this dilemma. In auditing the standards and outcomes through a lens such as futures, it becomes apparent that such an important dimension of education becomes another add-on, when in fact, as these teachers experienced, it is an essential learning. It was the added-lens of futures, through which these teachers viewed their practices, which made them reflect on "what we do, why we do it and how we do it" (Teacher 4), which is also the critical dimension of this study.

**Practical barriers to teaching futures**

As a final micro theme, teachers perceived many barriers/inhibitors to explicitly addressing futures in curriculum. These barriers included resources, cultural practices and religious beliefs and the students' abilities to think about the future. Each is now discussed.

Resources were one of the limitations teachers noted. Primary classroom teachers are innovative and resourceful people, and draw upon rich and stimulating visual and other texts to provoke learning. During early professional learning sessions, teachers began to identify resources they might use in developing a futures curriculum. In these instances, the teachers noted that 'the future' in film and television media is rated beyond a "general" viewing audience. Similarly, many of the books, which had been identified, were beyond the reading abilities of the students within this context. In subsequent planning sessions, the teachers sought information-based texts, which would inform students' independent inquiries on topics such as nano-technologies and robotics in our world. They often remarked that "translating these materials in a way which the children will understand is nearly killing me" (Teacher 4). The teachers experienced significant frustration that there were not sufficient curriculum support materials in the area of futures education

The second barrier teachers perceived was the notions of futures that were interpreted differently between different cultural groups and religions. At the beginning of the study, the teachers assumed that everyone thought about the future in the same way. In this regard, I am not talking about the images of the future, which students held, but their actual conceptualisation of time itself. In this study, there were two main things that occurred with regard to futures, religion and culture. In the first instance, the teachers found it difficult to understand the circular ways that some of their students thought about time:

> It is as if they don't see a difference between the past, present and the future … as if everything just keeps going round and round … they don't get it … or maybe I don't get it (Teacher 4, email

communication).

Secondly, the teachers were concerned with the ways the notion of the future was often linked to the students' mortality:

> They often say things like "we'll all die" or "the world will end" … and that's not really a problem. The problem comes when they start adding things to their future like "I'll be born again as a doctor" … and you know, not everyone thinks like that … and is being born again part of their future? (Teacher 5).

The perceived barrier or inhibitor in these instances is the ways in which teachers equate differences as deficits within the classroom(Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999). Through the planning sessions, we were able to identify ways that these differences in fact enhanced our curriculum and broadened students understandings and acceptances of diversity within their school, community and the world.

Finally, the teachers were in many instances bounded by their anticipation of the ways in which students would engage with futures thinking. In this study, prior to the introduction of futures into the classroom, teachers forecasted that "the students will find this very hard … If we don't get it, how will they?" (Teacher 2). There were assumptions made about the students' abilities to deal with the complexities of this unknown curriculum adventure. I suggest that these assumptions were based upon the teachers' *own* feelings of inadequacy, and an arrogance (Smith, 2004) which positions teachers as knowledge providers rather than as partners in learning (Shulman & Shulman, 2004).

## Some Concluding Thoughts

This study reported the results of a teacher intervention in the form of professional development related to futures education. Shifts in their thinking were reported by way of sharing three dominant discourse threads or teacher narratives. Within these three discourse threads, six micro themes were identified and explored. This is important research for futures educators and educationalists more broadly, as schooling and the roles of schools and teachers are increasingly brought into question. Much has been written about the role of education in equipping a society for its future, within the broader global context. In the current educational landscape, systemic measurement tools are used to benchmark academic competencies such as literacy and numeracy, as inherent futures capacities. The difficulty in such mechanisms and constructions of key learning as core to a learner's and his/her society's success is that the notion of the future is based on a conception linked to previous futures, or a previous time.

It is not within the scope of this paper to enter into an ontological position about the role of education broadly. Suffice to say that if it is the case, as the rhetoric evidences, that educational institutions, through policy, curriculum and pedagogy, are futures oriented, then it is necessary to consider the explicit articulation of futures, concepts and skills through institutional practices. This is not a new idea. Toffler (1974) clearly foregrounded the disservice that educational providers offered students where futures thinking was assumed or implicit. There have been numerous other scholars whom have critiqued educational institutions broadly, regarding the

futures deficit (Hicks, 2002; Slaughter, 2007). Somewhat more constructively, in other publications, there has been consideration of the ways that curriculum, or what is taught in schools, can be a vehicle for the development of such futures capacities. This has been a useful starting point for thinking about futures education, or futures in schools; however, such an add-on approach fails to address the paradigmatic shifts that are central to these discussions.

In the same ways that educational test results call into question a teacher's capacity to teach disciplinary areas, such as maths or language, how are teachers' futures time perspectives called into question in their ability to construct, challenge and enable students to consider explicit futures? And, moreover, how can a society equip their policy makers with the futures skills, tools and knowledges that enable them to articulate possible, preferable, probable and plausible futures, in ways that they are able to perform as agents of foresight (Slaughter, 1995a)? An individual's capacity to think about the future is complex and bounded by the opportunities he or she has to actually exercise and develop this capacity. Furthermore, the interaction of the futures conceptions amongst numbers of people are all complimentary, challenging and confronted simultaneously. The complexity of negotiating multiple futures in this sense is magnified, and important in developing deep and critical futures time perspectives.

At a global level, these discourses incorporate billions of futures perspectives, assuming that every person has the opportunity to contribute. In the micro-level of a school classroom, and in the context of this research, it is the negotiation of thirty and one hundred students alongside an adult teacher, or multiple adult teachers, where it is required that everyone contribute. In each of the futures narrative pieces, there were many story threads which were intricate, layered and nested within the complexities of what it was being told or represented, for teachers in an educational setting. From this research, the dearth of opportunities for teachers and others to participate in these explicit futures discussions and learning activities was evident and startling, especially in light of an educational agenda that is intended to prepare our youth for their futures. And, from this research, what provides the greatest inspirations and aspirations is the richness of the tapestry of story threads representing what is possible when futures perspectives are explicitly brought into the classrooms of schools.

The narratives of teachers, reflecting on the futures learning of their students are powerful in representing shifts in practices, but more importantly, shifts in thinking. These shifts represent the beginnings of new story threads for potential educational futures. And, it is these story threads that need to disrupt the cultural narratives responsible for reproducing schooling for past generations' futures, with an assumption that those same futures will be replicated for our youth. There is much work to be done in this area.

By conclusion, there are four key recommendations that arise from this research. In the first instance, teachers require explicit professional futures knowledge, with the capacity to adapt tools and concepts for a range of learners. Secondly, global curriculum policies should incorporate futures education as an interdisciplinary learning area, by which future generations are able to explore, create, critique and collaborate futures narratives. Thirdly, the development of futures narratives should be supported through the development of resources that are accessible and considered across age groups and cultures. And, finally, interdisciplinary

collaborations of futurists and scholars must engage in the construction of their futures narratives, and make visible the tools and thinking which informs their construction.

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