

Helping Students Realize their Full Potentials: Teaching Futures Studies in Singapore and Japan

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Abstract

When futures studies is introduced to undergraduate students who are majoring in other subjects, how can it be taught and what responses would students show to this discipline? Based on the author's experiences in teaching futures studies courses in a communications program in Singapore and in a business program in Japan, this paper presents one answer to the above question. The first half of this paper focuses on the author's teaching philosophy and pedagogy. The second half will present students' reflections during and after studying the futures studies course. This paper concludes that a futures studies course can help students discover their internal world and become more willing to contribute to betterment of their external world.

Introduction

In teaching a course, the teacher sees a certain value in the course and tries to convey it to students. In taking the course, it is not rare that the students attach quite different values to the learning. If the teacher and the students can share the same value in engaging themselves in the study of the course, however, they can jointly open up new perspectives and deepen the understanding of the other. This paper will show that futures studies can be an excellent course for both the teacher and the students to learn together.

Probably, most professors, except for professors in education, have never been formerly taught definitions of education and the roles of a teacher. They come to understand what education aims at and what they should do to achieve the goal based on their prior leaning experience as well as through their own teaching experience. I was not an exception.

My initial understanding was that education was to convey a certain knowledge to students who were less knowledgeable than the teacher. The basic assumption was that there was a knowledge

gap between the teacher and the students. Teaching activity was considered to conform to Claude Shannon's 'Communications model' and its effectiveness was measured by the amount of knowledge successfully transmitted to the students.

When I came to know Tekeji Hayashi's educational philosophy and his pedagogy, my eyes were opened up to a completely new definition of education and a truly exciting role of a teacher. Consequently my teaching philosophy and pedagogy transformed quite significantly. The occurrence of this transformation coincided exactly with the moment when I was offered an opportunity to teach futures studies for the first time.

The following sections will briefly introduce Hayashi's educational philosophy and present how it is incorporated into my teaching of futures studies.

Learning about Life beyond Knowledge

For Hayashi (1990, 1996), education can never be achieved without respect for the life of an individual person. He argues that

education can work only when and where the life of each learner is respected and treasured by the teacher as well as by the educational system. He regards education as the process by which the learner is facilitated and encouraged to contemplate the meanings of his/her life and the lives of all creatures on the earth. In Hayashi's view, the conventional concept of pedagogical effectiveness, measured in terms of the amount and accuracy of the knowledge successfully obtained by the learner, is rejected. What is crucial in education, he claims, are the changes that occur inside both the learner as well as the teacher.

Where the effectiveness of transmitting knowledge from the teacher to the learner is the main concern, knowledge is regarded as something predetermined. The teacher is believed to possess it and the learner tries to acquire it. If some learners have relevant information and are fast enough to acquire the taught knowledge, they are praised as good learners. This, in turn, defines other learners as slow or poor learners. In such a learning environment, how much information and knowledge relevant to the subject matter the learner has already had is an important factor to determine the effectiveness of learning.

In Hayashi's teaching, all learners start their learning from the same starting point, eliminating the structural advantage allotted to those who may have prior knowledge or information about the subject. This is possible because the process constantly challenges learners studying a new subject matter to scrutinize at the same time what they think they already know. He calls what must be scrutinized as "borrowed knowledge." In his class, borrowed knowledge that the learner has obtained from school, the media or other people does not work as an advantageous basis to effectively study the day's lesson. Instead, it is used as one important element that constitutes the lesson.

Scrutinizing is carried out using the Socratic way of inquiry. When a learner provides an answer to a critical question, the answer is then probed by asking further questions. Such a questioning gradually strips borrowed knowledge and taken-for-granted opinions from the learner and pushes him/her to the point where nothing else besides his/her own understanding and thinking can be of help. At this point, the learner realizes, for the first time, what little knowledge he/she has had and begins to seek his/her own answer. The most important role of the teacher in the process is to help the learner find out his/her ultimate answer, which will become his/her true knowledge. In some occasions, the learner acknowledges that he/she must abandon the answer that he/she first thought was right and this is remembered as an inner incident. Hayashi argues that the very first thing that the teaching must do is to cause those significant incidents to

occur inside the learner.

This kind of thorough examination of knowledge is crucial, asserts Hayashi, for the learner to uncover things buried deep inside, such as thoughts, assumptions, values, hopes, and fears. Hayashi stresses that teaching is not the work of conveying knowledge but is the work of letting the learner comprehend human beings beyond knowledge. He teaches to help the learner understand his/her life as well as others' lives. He warns that this goal can never be achieved by making learners compete with one another for the amount and accuracy of knowledge. He argues that uncovering the true self can only be accomplished when the life of each learner is equally valued. He never sees the learners as just a mass.

When a teacher tries to help the learner understand humans and their lives, Hayashi states that the teacher cannot escape from looking into and bringing up his/her own life, too. These comments from a teacher observing Hayashi's teaching style are indicative: "I have realized that what a teacher thinks in the skin of his head and communicates with the front of the mouth reaches only the skin of the students' ears and can never penetrate into their inside" (Hayashi 1990, p. 255). This comment suggests that what is taught can reach the learner only when it is truly from the teacher being as one life. For this to occur, the teacher needs to confront his/her own learning struggle—that is, his/her inner incidents—just like he/she forces the learners to do.

Applicability to Futures Studies

As noted, the definition of education and the pedagogy advocated by Hayashi quite naturally lends itself to the teaching of futures studies. In the following, I will discuss several of the most important ways.

First, most students in schools and tertiary institutions have neither heard of futures studies as a subject nor have been given many opportunities to think about the future under their educational system. As a result, they have little knowledge about the future and do not know ways to perceive the future. Almost all learning materials in futures studies are completely new to students. This fact makes it natural that all students start learning this subject from the same starting point in terms of both knowledge and experience.

Second, in order to think about the future—inherently uncertain to all of us—we need to question a number of things that we have taken for granted and that we would not otherwise question consciously. The questioning continues until all the superficial answers are gotten rid of and thorough answers are found out. Only those answers can be of help to identify some degrees of certainty in the uncertain future.

Third, the questioning not only can provide students with more concrete understanding of the external world but also help them realize their internal world. Almost for the first time in their life, they may reconsider themselves and gain a better grasp of who they are, what they value and, where they are going. There is an intimate relationship between learning life and learning futures studies.

I began to teach futures studies in Singapore a few years ago, and am currently teaching it in Japan. The following two sections give an overview of what and how I have been teaching futures studies as rooted in what I learned from Hayashi's teaching.

Teaching in Singapore

From 1996 to 2000, I was mostly teaching information and communications technology-related courses in the School of Communications Studies at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. In the year 1999, I came across a chance to teach a course called "Selected Topic" for around 20 senior students. The topic of the course was to be determined by the lecturer. Without hesitation, I decided to try to teach futures studies. It became the first offering of futures studies in the university.

Foundations of Futures Studies

The course was conducted as a weekly seminar, consisting of two 90 minute sessions.

The first session every week was devoted to reading Bell's (1997) *Foundations of Futures Studies: Human Science for a New Era*. We proceeded to learn selected chapters one - by - one over 14 weeks of the semester. Each student prepared a synopsis of the assigned reading as a weekly assignment. In the class, students would explain one of the key issues identified in the reading. From there, the Socratic way of inquiry began. The target of the inquiry was not only the student but also all the students in the class. I asked for comments on or questions about the student's explanation from other students. The comments or questions raised were fed back to the original student, and were directed to other students if the student was not able to provide a further explanation. Such an elaboration and examination of key issues in the reading continued until they reached a certain consensus or they acknowledged that there were divergent opinions.

I played mostly the role of facilitator. I let as many students as possible express their thoughts and feelings, and reminded them that they needed to listen to others attentively. I also kept emphasizing that we were looking

for not 'the' predetermined answer but our own answer, which could emerge only from such questioning and discussions. To each issue all students made some contributions. The whole process also turned out to be a refreshing experience for all students because for the first time they were able to learn about their classmates on a deep level—an opportunity that was neither offered nor expected in other courses.

Practical Study of Futures Studies

In the second 90 minute sections through the semester, a variety of exercises to help students deepen knowledge of futures studies were conducted. They included: exercising futures thinking; reconsidering interconnectedness of the past, the present and the future; viewing a video; a visionary tour; a field trip; and, scenario writing.

At the outset of the course, three things were highlighted: our ability to think about the future; alternative possibilities for the future; and, a force working from the future. First, I had the students imagine and write about their own future 20 years later. Most of them found the task quite difficult. They thought and discussed about causes of the difficulty.

After the discussion we moved to a large car parking on the campus. There I instructed them to walk individually from one end in the parking to a specific car parked at the opposite end. They departed at the same time and measured individually the time of their arrival. They were also told to pay attention to what they would do and what they would see while walking from the start to the goal.

A couple of male students stopped to gaze at their preferred car; one female student had a chat with a campus guard; and two students suddenly stopped because one car was moving backward. Some students took the route that was most shady and some others chose the shortest path to the car. In reporting their routes, they came to pay attention to two facts: that all of them had reached the car regardless of whatever they did along the way and whatever route they took; and, that they had kept an image of the car in their mind. In this exercise, they unconsciously demonstrated that they had an ability to think about a scene that would be realized in a future time (i.e., getting to the car in a few minutes later), that they had seen many routes leading to the goal, and that the image of the car had pulled them towards the goal. It was asserted that they possessed an ability to think about the future, although yet to be developed further, and that utilizing the ability wisely would be more likely to bring about what they would like to see in the future.

Following the above exercises, the interrelationship

among the past, present and future, concepts of possible, probable and preferable, and three approaches to deal with uncertainties such as the fatalistic, rapid response and purposeful approaches were discussed (Paskins 1997).

The above introductory session worked effectively to help students recognize that futures studies was not an abstract academic field but had an inseparable connection to what they took for granted in daily life.

While futures studies aims at contributing to the well-being of humans, its relevance as well as value to the individual student is emphasized from the beginning in my teaching. Unless each student has a firm belief in the importance of futures thinking at the individual level, he/she would not be so willing to expand it to national and global levels. In order to let them become aware of the importance of futures thinking from the individual to the global level, I showed a video program called *The Power of Vision*¹ to the students. The video effectively depicts the intrinsic relationship between the future and the present, the power of the image of a preferable future, and the necessity of taking actions towards the preferable future. The starfish story at the end of the program, which illustrated the impact on the world of an individual's small action, planted a lasting impression in each student's heart.

Related to the premise that the future lies in our hands and that we have the ability to shape what will happen in the future, the students discussed evidence of the premise from real people and/or non-fictional writing. The more cases they recalled, the stronger they believed in the truth of the premise. Advantages of the purposeful approach were emphasized again in the discussion that followed.

One session was devoted to examine similarities and differences of futures studies and five academic fields such as natural sciences, performing arts, humanities, social sciences and applied sciences (Dator 1996). Through this examination, the place of futures studies in relation to other academic disciplines became much clearer for students.

The other exercise I once conducted was a visionary journey using the scripts designed by Markley.² The students imaginatively traveled through a series of historical eras both past and future. After the journey, they first exchanged their experiences and feelings in a small group, and later reported the outcomes of the discussion to the class. This exercise worked to trigger their sense of connectedness with future generations and helped them to reconsider their current roles and responsibilities.

We also went on a field trip to a grassy area surrounded by trees in the campus. The students were asked to remember what they saw and how they felt at

the grassy area. Returning to the school's modern building, they did the same thing. Then we examined similarities and differences in feelings between the grassy area and the human-made building. They reported that they had felt more relaxed and open in the former. Considering the reasons for that, they came to find out that such feelings were attributed to the living presence of the trees, grass, and insects at the place, none of which existed in the building.

At this point, I presented a bunch of grapes on my hand in front of them and asked what they were. They initially provided some obvious answers such as food or a kind of fruit. Asking further, one student pointed out that it was life. Then all the students began to realize that what they ate as food was in fact lives of other beings such as plants, animals and fishes. From the field trip and the discussions that followed, they realized not only that their lives depended on other lives in nature, but also that they could live only because they were supported by other's lives.

I spoke to the students about the importance of life as one of my values. I told them that their lives were necessary for my life and my life should be so for them. From there, they began to look inside themselves and tried to identify what their values were. Most students had never been aware of their values and an internal reflection began to occur inside them. This is precisely the kind of "inner incident" to which Hayashi referred.

In the last few weeks of the course, the students, who were broken into groups of four, worked on writing three scenarios of 20 years regarding a theme that each group chose. To explore alternative futures, they used the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) as a method (Inayatullah 1998, 2002). It is a very useful method to explore possibilities from different dimensions and I find that it can be used with a little help even by first-time students. The students I was teaching depicted present problems concerning the theme, probed causes of the problems, looked into worldviews behind the causes, and identified myths underlying the worldviews. They drew four layers on a large sheet of paper, wrote down possibilities in each layer and, at the same time, linked those by considering causal relations among them. After the groups spent some time to work on the layers, they exchanged group members. One representative stayed in his/her group and explained the group's work to three students from the other three groups. This temporary exchange of group members worked very effectively to bring new insights and ideas from different perspectives. It became a trigger of a new round of exploration of alternative futures in the original group and helped each group expand as well as extend their horizon. Although the resulting scenarios remained incomplete (mainly because this was their first

experience to write scenarios), some of the scenarios succeeded in presenting broad scenarios of possible futures.

Logbook

Throughout the semester, weekly homework was assigned to the students after each class. The homework was to answer an important question that was closely related to the day's theme. For instance, when value was the theme of the class, the students were asked to identify their values. When the relationships between futures studies and other academic fields were surveyed, the students were asked to find out how futures studies was related to the study in which they were majoring. The students brought the question home, gave some time to consider it, wrote their personal answer on a notebook, and submitted it to me by the end of the same week. We called these notebooks "logbooks." I raised some questions to have the students extend what they learned in the class to a wider context. I posed other questions to see how they internalized what they had learned till then.

When this course started, it seemed likely that three hours of class time per week would be insufficient to expose students to futures thinking. The logbook homework was designed to let them continue to think between classes. Unexpectedly, the logbooks became an inevitable means of communications between each of the students and me. Logbook entries showed what kind of person the student was, what hopes and fears he/she held, and what changes were occurring inside him/her as the course proceeded. The logbook soon became another important platform where the student and I would teach and learn from each other, as well as being a place where the student's life and my life could communicate.

Teaching in Japan

Since April in 2000, I have been teaching Management Information Systems courses in the Department of Business Administration at Aichi University in Japan. In the department, each faculty member offers a seminar in his/her specialization, and there I have continued to teach futures studies for junior and senior students.

In each semester, the seminar is divided into two 90 minute sessions. As in Singapore, students learn foundations of futures studies in the first sessions and get involved in various activities and tasks in the second sessions.

One notable difference between my experience teaching in these two countries has been in terms of program length: in Singapore, I taught the course as a one semester unit, whereas I have been teaching it as a two-

year long seminar in Japan. As a consequence, more varied readings and more varied activities have possible in Japan.

I have added learning of future generations to the seminar as an important aspect of futures studies. For this theme, we read Allen Tough's (1991) *Crucial Questions about the Future*. Discussions about the nine crucial questions in the book have generated exciting and surprising exchanges of ideas and thoughts among the students. This book has been a significant trigger for students to start paying attention to what they are doing in relation to its consequences to future generations. It seems that with the learning from and discussions about the book the students have stopped linking the future only to their own future. They now understand the future as where and when future human beings just like themselves will be living.

I teach scenario writing in some detail for a semester. We use the Japanese version of Kees van der Heijden's (1999) *Scenarios* as a textbook. As my students major in business administration and the book discusses scenarios in the context of business, this segment of the seminar augments their study in the department. At the end of this segment, the students prepare three scenarios for the topic they selected.

In the Spring semester in the year 2002, we used some materials from Slaughter's (2000) *Futures concepts and powerful ideas*. One of the selected sections regarding time frames, levels of futures work, critical futures study and metaproblems in the book was assigned to each group of two students. Each group was in charge of planning, designing and facilitating one class using the assigned material. Through the series of student-led lessons, they became aware of different levels of futures work, paid attention to hidden pushing forces from the past and present to the future, and learned several aspects of the metaproblems such as instrumental rationality, reductionism and de-sacralization of nature, all of which they never noticed before.

Another advantage of teaching futures studies to the same group of students for four semesters over two years is that they have more opportunities to apply what they learn in projects. At the end of one semester, each of the students prepared as a term paper a speech targeting junior high school students. The speech aimed at convincing them of the importance and attractiveness of nurturing the ability of futures thinking from their ages. Although a real speech was not made, the project helped each student internalize their understanding of futures studies and present it in a way that younger people could understand.

Another project was for each student to come up with a few crucial futures-related questions, to ask them

to three of his/her acquaintances such as friends and parents, to have discussions with them, and to report the results in a term paper. This project was designed to give them an opportunity to spread what they had learned to other people who knew nothing about futures studies. Even in such a small circle of communication, the students were surprised by reactions and opinions of other people and learned much about similarities and differences between themselves and other people.

In the fall semester, 2002, the students will invent and implement one big project in which they will try to make the best use of their past learning in futures studies for the benefit of other people. This task has been given to them expecting that they play the role of messenger about futures studies to a wider group of people, who may be ordinary adults, parents, or young school children. I hope that through the project the students will deepen their understanding of futures studies and become more content with their capacity to contribute to a wider community with their knowledge and experience.

Reflections of the Students

In the previous sections, we have discussed expectations and methodologies from a teacher's perspective. As mentioned earlier, if the teacher and students can share the same value in a course, its outcome will be significant. This section excerpts a collection of the students' reflections written in logbooks and other papers as a way to examine what the students learned and how it was internalized.

Possibilities and Hope

"I learned about the possibilities that the future holds. As such, I know the future is fluid. Anything can happen. This in turn results in my being more open-minded and less stubborn in my pursuit of certain goals. I realized that I should not limit myself. Life is full of possibilities. I just want to say how much I have learned from the starfish story and how much I believe in the power of vision and hope. I feel that hope is very important. Hope is the one last source one can hold on to even in suffering. I do agree that futures studies is about hope and optimism and vision, because since anything can happen, it is entirely up to you to make it happen."

"Futures studies allowed me to open up my mind. I used to be narrow-minded in the sense that I limited possibilities of the future. I used to be discouraged by the fact that no matter how hard I tried to do something, somehow my efforts would not be rewarded. Then with this course, I realized that perhaps I have not considered the

alternatives in doing things or even the factors most likely to deter my efforts. Hence, futures studies has helped me by making me realize that the possibilities of a future are infinite and that it's possible to work towards the preferable future."

Options

"There is always more than one answer or solution to anything and I should not be quick to jump to a conclusion soon after I have digested a situation. Generally speaking, futures studies has forced me to weigh my options more carefully, made me realize that I do have options in the first place and to help me temporarily put aside my mindsets and free my imagination. I must admit that at times it was much easier to resort to quick-fix solutions and also more comforting to return to tried-and-tested methods. But exercises like scenario development and CLA all trained me to free my imagination and be a more flexible person."

"Another thing that this course taught me was that we need to be meticulous in coming up with an action plan. While in the past my action plans were based on gut feel, now things have become more complex, with more variables to consider. In order to come up with a comprehensive plan we need to consider factors beyond the immediate. In fact the need to consider different mindsets and alternative solutions to problems seems pretty new for me. It has opened my mind to other options that the biases of my gut feel have failed to consider. These alternatives might be better or worse, but the main idea I realized was that to be aware of all options would make the action plan more comprehensive."

Open Mind

"Futures studies taught me to look at a thing from multiple perspectives. Assumptions, worldviews, pushes and values need to be considered. Since becoming aware of this, I have become more open to different opinions. By examining a difference in opinion or action from many angles, it would be possible to find out an agreement or even to come up with a new idea."

"I used to judge others' opinions based on my own criteria. The lesson on values helped me not to refuse but to analyze others' opinions and actions on the premise that they may hold different values and thinking. In this way, I have become more open to differences and have tried to understand others before rejecting them."

"I am constantly gaining better understanding about my classmates, how they feel, and what they think. I think this brings me a greater perspective on how others see things, instead of being confined to my own way of thinking. This, in some way, helps to change my think-

ing and makes me more willing to listen to what others say."

Futures Studies and Religions

"At the beginning, I felt that futures studies contradicted my beliefs. However, as I went to talk to others, I realized that there could be a balance. Planning the future does not need to mean that you are defying God's plan for you. You can plan the future with God. So in that way, futures studies changed my outlook. I used to leave everything to God and take whatever will be will be. I need to have a direction where I can walk. God also wants us to seek Him and find out what He has in store for our lives."

"At the start of this course, I was in somewhat of a dilemma. How do my beliefs as a Christian function in with the principles of futures studies? As the course progressed, it gradually became clear to me that they were not only non-contradictory but in fact complemented each other well. Futures studies does not refute that there can be the existence of a supernatural influence and control over our future. It does not assume that humans have the ability to control what the future holds, either. What I believe futures studies strives to do is to examine and prepare for various possible and probable futures that may take place. The effort of a futurist is not aimed at deriving 'the' future but instead at providing a glimpse into various futures. The Bible teaches that God has planned everything from the beginning and that He is all knowing. But this does not imply that humans have no control over this predetermined future. God gave humans free will-the ability to decide for themselves, to make choices about their lives. With this ability to make our own decisions, futures studies becomes for a Christian a useful tool in future planning."

"To the extent that futures thinking includes our goals, values and attitudes in coming up with various futures and ultimately the preferred future and guides us to work towards it, it actually works in tandem with religion. This is because when we inject our goals, values and attitudes into planning and working towards the preferred future, we are already putting God's (whichever one believes in) teaching into use, and if we abide by it, it will lead us to the future that is in line with what God wants for us."

Futures Studies and Other Academic Courses

"The futures studies course has changed the way I look at academic subjects. It showed to me that not all subjects needed to be learned from the textbook, within the textbook environment. When you said that the exam-

ination was not at all important, I felt that I was learning this subject for myself and not to excel in any test. When I study this subject, my aim is not short-term, but to learn and to assimilate. After all, the class seemed to move very slowly at times. But on retrospect, I felt that it was probably better, as it allowed us more time to learn from each other, to discuss our individual attitudes, to explore ourselves in the process, something that I have seldom experienced in my whole life as a student."

"Futures studies taught me to think about my future, and thinking back to the courses I had taken over the past years, I realize that I should have taken them more seriously. I could not even remember the theories I learned in the past, and so I am not able to apply them to future incidents. I have spent so much time studying communication, and yet never thought of preserving the knowledge for future use because my priority then was short term: just to pass my examinations and get my degrees. Futures studies made me realize that what I have learnt is valuable and should be put to good use in the future."

"What is more important is that futures studies forces me to confront the fact that every thing, or in this case, every course is connected in affecting the world. In a sense, it really makes whatever I have studied seem so much more real and applicable. However, many of these subjects see themselves in isolation, instead of being connected to other subjects. Further, many of these subjects seem to treat the subject as the end itself, instead of the means to make a better world. Finally, these subjects do not seem to see the need to engage the future. Instead, they usually are trapped in the past and, at best, the present. Hence, I see a disparate relation between futures studies and other courses: while futures studies embraces all of them, these courses do not seem to, as yet, embrace the essence of futures studies."

"I see in futures studies more of an extension of many other fields of study, rather than a field standing on its own. This is because futures studies is about thinking of the future of something. Though I do recognize that any approach to futures studies is holistic with the involvement of experts of relevant fields, I feel that futures studies can be effectively developed if there are futurists in different fields. I do believe that futures studies has a relevance to every field of study that has a tomorrow, a future to talk about."

"Futures studies is entirely different from what I have ever taken in my four years in the school of communication. Instead of constantly being fed information, I was encouraged to think for myself and to broaden my scope of thinking, and widen my perspectives. Futures studies has helped me to make sure that I do not see the end of the road. That has benefitted me tremen-

dously as I am able to be more creative in problem solving. I personally feel that futures studies should be introduced earlier in the school's curriculum. Teaching students to take a purposeful approach in their studies will greatly benefit individuals. I believe that futures studies can help students obtain a different perspective to education itself. Futures studies has taught me to open up my horizons, and not to see things in a myopic way. Futures studies has aided me to see what I have learnt in a big picture."

Making a Difference

"I got a sense of unity through this course that we are all in this together and we should work together to improve our world. All of us can make a difference if we all try hard. I was always reluctant to believe that one person can make a difference. I am now convinced, however, that we each can do it one day at a time in the lives of individuals around us. It was a learning experience that had an impact on my life. I don't think I can say the same about my past college classes."

"We should not only think about the future but also act for the future, because we have abilities to do so. This conviction will be the source of my power."

"Regarding CLA, I feel that it is the most useful tool I have learned during this course. It sort of integrates all we have learned. I feel that this course taught us something that is very personal and valuable to our lives-to dare to dream for our future. Futures studies has subtly taught me that I should have the guts to dream what I want to do in my life and taught me what I should do now so that I can achieve my vision. Another thing that futures studies has taught me is that an individual's effort can be significant in eliciting a change that can affect the world."

"I do detect that I've regained some of the optimism and positive outlook I used to have. Your optimism and positiveness have sort of rubbed off on me after these weeks of listening to you. I started to recognize again that I can make a difference in my own life, and that I need to take a more pro-active approach to life. I believe that with a positive mindset, things will turn out more positively."

"I believe futures studies has inspired me to stay persistent in my aim to do something good for humankind. I want to make a difference in the lives of whomever I come across."

What I will Do

"The very first future studies class inspired me to constantly remind myself that life is how I make it out to be. I must admit that even though I was keenly aware

that I was myopic in many ways, this course has encouraged and propelled me on to keep an open mind, see things in different perspectives, and foster a broader outlook in life. This is a lesson in life and life-changing experience that I treasure and value very much, and I am sure that I will not forget it for a long time to come."

"Futures studies reinforces my belief that the future is what we make it to be. I begin to think about alternative futures, instead of a singular future. I think further about the future, instead of only the neat and/or immediate future. I am also trying to spread the thinking of futures studies to people around me. I start asking them questions about the future and encourage them to think about the future."

"I am extremely sure that I am more optimistic, concerned about the world around me, the need for one another, and the need to have goals. However, the biggest impact is that it has convinced me of the need to introduce the ideas of futures studies to as many people as possible."

"After going through the last few months of thinking about the future, it somehow seems strange that it is suddenly over. Does it mean that I stop thinking about the future from now on? I don't think I will stop thinking about the future, nor will I stop talking to others about it."

Conclusion

When I talked about life to the students as one of my values in the semester of 1999, several students gave me a comment saying that they were grateful for what I had shared with them. I first didn't see what was special about the talk compared to talks in the previous classes, but later noticed that they might like my talk because it revealed to the students who I was, where I came from and where I was going.

Through that semester, I kept encouraging all the students to feel free to present in front of the classmates whatever thought they came up with and whatever questions they had. The Socratic inquiry method was used to facilitate discussions and I made sure that all opinions and arguments were equally respected. The more such exchange of ideas and elaboration of answers was carried out, the more deeply they learned about other perspectives through their classmates. By listening to their classmates and internalizing their thoughts and feelings, each of the students was in fact struggling to discover who he/she was, where he/she came from and where he/she was going.

When I talked about my personal value, I was no longer a facilitator of their discussions. They regarded me as another person whose thought and feeling they could internalize to reflect on themselves. While the talk was

neither well planned nor nicely phrased, it just sprang from an inner learning struggle in my heart. This incident has convinced me that when I respect each of the students and speak to them from my heart my words can reach each one's heart.

As shown in the preceding section, the wide range of the students' reflections indicates that most students learned a great deal about themselves as well as about their future potential that had been uncertain to them for a long time. They had never paid serious attention not only to the future but also to their true selves. When they studied the former that was inherently uncertain, they concurrently understood the latter far more deeply than ever before. I doubt many other disciplines can play the same role as futures studies.

Once you understand your true self, you may begin to acknowledge others in terms of who they are, what they value, and why they behave in certain ways. Furthermore, once you realize possibilities and potentials in your internal world, you may become more willing to contribute to your external world. Many of the students' reflections showed that such willingness developed. I believe that teaching futures studies can empower the student and is necessary to pave the way for better futures.

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Notes

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- 2 www.d.uh.edu/futureweb/expfutgen.html

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