

# "So You Want to Teach the Future?"

## A Symposium on Teaching and Learning the Future – Overview

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Exploring the future is a boundless pursuit. Learning and teaching foresight challenge process and content. It is a dynamic pursuit that extends beyond classrooms, schools, colleges and corporate training rooms. Yet, we have come to a time in which strategies for approaching the future have become critical to a global citizen's core learning. Unfortunately, how one learns about the future, and perhaps how one teaches the futures are fundamental challenges. The perspectives, tools and techniques for effectively imparting futures knowledge and understanding are expansive and emerging. The spectrum of "how to" impart content and tools regarding the future is an ever-emerging issue.

With the gracious support of the Journal of Futures Studies editorial leaders, this issue of the journal launches the first of a three-part, three-issue symposium on teaching the future. In the June 2010 issue, "Teaching and Learning the Future: An Overview" the contributors frame the problem and challenges of teaching and learning futures and foresight. The second issue **Teaching and Learning the Future: Projects and Programs** in September 2010 will provide some specific examples of projects and programs that are "up and running." How would one go about delivering the foresight learning challenge? The December 2010, "Teaching and Learning the Future: Process" outlines some strategies for actually imparting foresight and futures. Across the three-issue symposium, the authors' work spans the life cycle and the content/process spectrum from the child development center to the corporate board room. Let's focus on the first issue. What are some considerations that need to be addressed when we "educate for foresight?"

In "Teaching and Learning the Future: An Overview" six authors investigate the rationale, assumptions and historical "location" of foresight teaching and learning. Peter Bishop and Kay Strong emphasize the value of foresight teaching in the backdrop in the ever-increasing pace of change. They demonstrate that change concepts and principles are fundamental for every learner. Verne Wheelwright elaborates the contextual and historical background as the "Next Wave" of futures learning. This new stage in its development reflects a growing desire to need, learn and use foresight tools, topics and approaches in living and working. Gary Marx, complements Wheelwright by pointing to the growing demand for the implementation of a futures mindset

through active learning and through focus on "real-world concerns." For Marx, futuring can be a model for envisioning community and public problem assessment and solutions.

Futuring and foresight are multidimensional. No single approach is sufficient to understand the future. Contributors Lombardo, Tiberius and Stein investigate the didactic nature of futures and foresight studies revealing multiple perspectives. Tom Lombardo explores the value of a variety of academic disciplines and interdisciplinary frameworks in addressing foresight. He explores the advantage of using a spectrum of views providing six examples for addressing the future from "futures education as integrative studies through "futures education through technology extrapolation." Victor Tiberius walks into the classrooms and programs of 20 futures and foresight programs. His content analysis of teaching objectives, teaching topics and content, teaching methods, media, and examinations reflects the panorama futures teaching. Dave Stein reminds us that teaching and learning futures is not without barriers. The structure of institutionalized education – its organization of process and content – often get in the way of foresight education. In addition, culturally hewn paradigms produce "hidden assumptions" for all learning.

This overview gets us started on a path that investigates the general "why," "how" and "why not" of foresight learning. Like some many good investigations of the future, the contributors challenge us to ask more questions. These questions lead us to creative structures and programs that support foresight training. A snapshot of these methods will be revealed in the next issue: Teaching and Learning the Future: Projects and Programs.

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