Futures Personal, Social, Global (Draft Outline)

Richard A. Slaughter, Dept. of Education, University of Melbourne

Global aims

The curriculum attempts to provide students with the concepts, tools, skills, strategies and understandings that will permit them to take an active and responsible part in shaping their own lives and the futures of Australia in the 21st Century.

Over a period of two years, students will achieve a high level understanding of future study, global issues and strategies for moving toward a sustainable society.

The curriculum will encourage the development of positive, empowering attitudes to the future and the ability to engage in responsible social innovation. It will also encourage the development of values such as: long-term vision, personal responsibility, self-actualisation, personal empowerment, commitment to problem resolution, appreciation of shared ends, and respect for life.

Global Objectives

Semester 1: Introduction to the futures field

The primary objective of this semester is to introduce students to the symbolic, intellectual and methodological resources of the futures field in a manner appropriate to their ages and abilities, and in ways which will support and empower their own views of futures.

Semester 2: The state of the planet

The objective of this semester is to examine 'global health' via a range of specific indicators in order to understand the global context of human life and culture, and the pattern of threats and opportunities at the beginning of the 21st Century.

Semester 3: Social innovation and personal empowerment

The main objective of the third semester is to demonstrate through experiential, analytic and research methods how personal empowerment and responsible, ethically sound actions can create useful social innovations.

Semester 4: Paths to sustainability

The objective of the final semester is to examine the notion of sustainability. That is, to explore developmental paths toward it (including the possible roles of individuals, groups and governments); to consider impediments and strategies by which they might be overcome; and develop a clear view of the main requirements for achieving a sustainable society in Australia.

Semester 1: Introduction to the Futures Field

Objectives

To introduce students to the knowledge-base of futures studies and some key applications of futures work.

To familiarise students with futures concepts, tools, imaging processes, organisations and the work of representative individuals.

To develop a foundation for the values skills, attitudes and competencies that are needed to explore and understand personal, socil and global futures.

Subject matter

Values of the industrial era, and emerging values.
Maps of the futures field, including an outline of the knowledge base.
Futures concepts.
Futures methods and tools.
Futures organisations (including NGOs and Institutions of Foresight).
The lives and work of exemplary individuals.
Some applications of futures work (including planning, forecasting, consulting, social innovations etc).
Short, medium and long-term thinking.
Discounting the future and re-valuing the future.

Learning experiences

Values clarification exercises.
Use of maps of the field to explore typical activities.
Overview of futures concepts and in-depth exploration of a selection of them (see below).
Introduction to, and use of, simple futures methods and tools (see below).
Investigation into the range, distribution and work of futures organisations (such as the World Future Society, the World Futures Studies Federation, the Club of Rome, the Australian Commission for the Future and other Institutions of Foresight).
Review the lives and work of exemplary futurists (eg. Robert Jungk, Hazel Henderson, Elise Boulding, Jim Dator).
The role of short and long-term thinking in Australian society and culture (eg. business, politics, education).
How future discounting works.
The foresight principle: what it is and how it works.

Depth studies

Investigating the messages and meanings of images of futures in popular culture.
Dealing with young people's fears about futures; the empowerment principle and how it works.
Exploring the 200-year present project (interviewing grandparents, parents; constructing an historical perspective; using this to develop a futures perspective).
Research project using a sequence of futures methods or tools.

Support materials

1. For students

Revised and/or up-dated editions of *Investigating the Future* (BFEP/CFF/ABA,1988, unpublished) and *Futures Tools and Techniques* (Slaughter, R., FSC, Melbourne,1990, out of print). Back issues of *21C*.

2. For teachers

Preparing for the Future: A Practical Classroom Guide (Hicks, D., World Wide Fund for Nature/Southgate Pubs, London, 1994, forthcoming). *Education for the 21st Century* (Beare, H. & Slaughter, R., Routledge, London, 1993). *Futures Concepts and Powerful Ideas* (Slaughter, R., FSC, Melbourne, 1991, out of print). Studying the Future (Slaughter, R. ed., CFF, Melbourne, 1989). *Teaching the Future* (Kauffman, D., ETC Pubs., Palm Springs, 1976). *Futures Unlimited: Teaching About Worlds to Come* (Fitch, R. & Svengalis, C., Nat. Council for the Social Studies, Washington DC, 1976).

Semester 2: The state of the planet

Objectives

To develop a broad global overview of the state of the planet.

To understand the implications of major trends, issues, problems and alternatives.

To develop a clear view of possible solutions and the role of individuals, organisations and governments in implementing them.

Subject matter

The limits to growth thesis revisited.
Simple global dynamics: overshoot and collapse; equilibrium models.
Outline of the global problematique.
Multi-sector criteria for assessing global health.
Overview of key current trends in Australia and abroad.
Outline of expected future trends, innovations, problems.
The ambiguous role of technology and technical change.
Sustainability (developed in semester 4).

Learning experiences

Practical work on exponential growth using micro-organisms, simulations, historical examples.
Case studies of growth in finite systems. Case studies of islands (eg. Bermuda, Madagascar, Tasmania).
Modelling the dynamics of growth (using World3 - Meadows).
Comparing/contrasting different conceptions of growth, (eg., quantitative and qualitative; material and non-material).
Personal health criteria (as starting point) and the relevance of 'health' in the context of the global system.
What might sustainability mean?
What might a sustainable society look like?
Focus on specific problems and issues (eg. global warming, tropical forests, economic and trade imbalances, population growth etc).

Depth studies

Use Brown's criteria (from *Vital Signs 1993*) and apply them (a) in Australia and (b) in a contrasting environment.
Investigate specific projects that address an aspect of the global problematique.

Review *Beyond the Limits* and assess its recommendations.
Investigate the carrying capacity of the Australian environment and determine the optimum impact (impact = population x standard of living x technology).
How may energy dependency be reduced in Australia?
Create a detailed visual display illustrating the present 'state of the planet'.

Support materials

1. For students

Vital Signs 1993 (Brown, L. et al, Worldwatch, Washington DC, 1993). *Beyond the Limits* (Meadows, D. et al, Earthscan, London, 1992). Also material from newspapers, journals, data bases, NGOs and IOFs. *If You Love This Planet* (Caldicott, H., Norton, NY, 1992)

2. For teachers

As above + *Education As If People and the Planet Really Mattered* (Hutchinson, F. Adamantine Press, London, 1995). *The State of the World* (series) (Brown, L. et al, Allen & Unwin, 199-). Journal of the Australian Association for Environmental Education.

Semester 3: Social innovation and personal empowerment

Objectives

To explore the significance of social innovations in a range of contexts.

To develop personal empowerment and the skills to act as an agent of change.

To understand the links between personal empowerment and social innovation, and also the responsibilities involved.

To practice the skills appropriate to the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of a change project.

Subject matter

The nature and history of social innovations.
Aspects and models of social change.
Why social institutions and social systems resist change.
Social control and social innovation.
A change cycle - a model of change.
A social innovation process.
The foundations of personal empowerment.
Case studies of people and organisations who succeeded in bringing about constructive change.

Learning experiences

Survey of past social innovations in two different cultures.
Case studies of recently successful social innovations (eg. the emancipation of women, environmental protection, the peace movement).

Study of unsuccessful innovations. Investigation of why they failed.
Plan a future innovation using the Change Cycle.
Personal/group empowerment work (- as per existing proposal).

Depth studies

Plan and carry out a social innovation using one or more of the above models.
Evaluate the work of the Institute for Social Inventions in London, or of another comparable organisation.
Review the *Encyclopedia of Social Inventions* and associated literature.

Support materials

1. For students

The Book of Visions: An Encyclopedia of Social Inventions (Albury, N. & Yule, V. Inst. for Social Inventions, London, 1991). *The Last Whole Earth Catalogue - Access to Tools* (Whole Earth Co-operative, Calif., 199?). + Relevant biogs. and autobiogs.

2. For teachers

Future Workshops (Jungk, R., Inst. for Social Inventions, London, 1987). *Despair and Personal Empowerment in the Nuclear Age*; and *World As Self, World As Lover* (Macy, J., New Society Pubs., Philadelphia, 1983 & Parallax Press, Berkeley, 1991). *The Foresight Principle* (Slaughter, R., Adamantine Press, London, 1994, forthcoming) esp. chaps 8 & 9.

Semester 4: Paths to sustainability

Objectives

To explore the meaning of sustainability in relation to human culture and its global environment.

To understand the main impediments to achieving sustainability.

To appreciate and develop competence in the range of personal and social processes contributing to the above.

To explore means of moving toward sustainability in specific areas.

Subject matter

The outlook for the early 21st Century.
The uses and limitations of trend analysis (including 'megatrends').
Integrating material from different sources to assemble a 'big picture'.
Different interpretations of the meaning of sustainability.
Features of modern society that appear to be unsustainable.
Ways in which these 'problem areas' can be understood, investigated and reconceptualised (eg: growth, human and technical impacts, commercial practices, energy, ethics, governance etc).
Strategies for moving toward sustainability in one or more of these areas.

Learning experiences

The 'megatrends' approach and why it failed.
Critiques of standard economic assumptions.
Aspects of 'the new economics'.
Re-defining growth.
How human and technical impacts may be reduced.
Planning for sustainability - Australian and overseas examples.
Re-evaluating industrial-era beliefs, practices and ethics.
The ethical foundations of stewardship and intrinsic value.
Barriers and impediments to sustainability.
Social innovations and sustainability: what individuals, groups and governments can do.
Assembling an outline 'map' of the early 21st Century.
Developing an agenda for the 21st Century.

Depth studies

Use the World3 model to investigate the dynamics of a possible transition to sustainability.
Explore the ethical foundations for stewardship and the re-enchantment of nature.
Critically evaluate the Ecologically Sustainable Development consultative process in Australia.
Research progress (or its lack) toward sustainability in one key sector.

Support materials

1. For students

The Future Generations Journal (Malta). The Institute for the Integrated Study of Future Generations (Osaka, Japan). The Worldwatch Institute (Washington DC.) *Soft Energy Paths* (Lovins, A. Penguin,). *Living in the Greenhouse* (Lowe, I,). *Visions for the 21st Century* (Moorcroft, S. ed. Adamantine Press, London, 1992). *A Personal Action Guide for the Earth* (CFF, Melbourne, 1989).

2. For teachers

Our Common Future (Brundtland, G., Australian edition, 1989). *The Re-enchantment of the World* (Berry, T. Sierra Club, Calif. 1988). *Envisaging a Sustainable Society* (Milbrath, L. SUNY Press, NY, 1989). *In the Absence of the Sacred* (Mander, G. Sierra Club, Calif., 1991). *Awakening Earth: Exploring the Evolution of Human Culture and Consciousness* (Elgin, D., Morrow, NY, 1993). *Eye to Eye: Quest for the New Paradigm* (Wilber, K., Shambhala, Colorado, 1990).

(NB. The outline given above for the Years 11 & 12 proposal could also be used as a framework upon which to build a proposal for a tertiary professional development [Masters?] course for some of the teachers who would be involved.)

Richard A. Slaughter, The University of Melbourne, March 28th 1994