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Professional standards in futures work

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Abstract

The question of professional standards in the futures arena is a major, but unresolved issue. The paper begins with aspects of a rationale. It then seeks to briefly define Futures Studies (FS) and to answer two questions: what is a futurist, and how can one become a futurist? It summarises various proposals for establishing standards including Bell's for a code of ethics. A number of questions about professional capabilities and behaviour are posed and some provisional answers are given. Several implications are derived for the World Futures Studies Federation as a 'peak body'. The paper concludes that for FS to fulfil its potential it must pursue quality in every area. © 1999 Dr Richard Slaughter. Published by Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

All fields of study must, at some point, confront the issue of professional standards. Otherwise it is hard to tell good work from bad and impossible for the field to move on, develop and grow. Futures studies (FS) has emerged from obscurity and is now an active, internationally-recognised field of study, research and action. But the question of professional standards remains largely unresolved. Previous attempts to address the issue seem to have produced little agreement and even less action to implement agreed standards.

This paper is the result of an initiative of the World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF) and was commissioned by its executive council, of which the author is a member. It attempts to draw together the thinking of a number of futurists who are interested in seeing their chosen field become more widely accepted and able to perform a range of tasks effectively and well. A number of proposals and recommendations are put forward for further discussion and action.

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2. Elements of a rationale

There are at least four reasons why futures practitioners should be interested in, and actively supporting, attempts to develop a coherent set of standards for the field.

2.1. *Self-definition*

At present anyone wishing to call themselves a futurist can do so without fear that this claim will be challenged or that it need be substantiated. This means that a wide variety of gurus, charlatans, self-publicists and amateurs are hawking their wares without compunction around the world and, in some cases, bringing the field of FS into disrepute. This obviously misrepresents what ‘real’ futurists consider that they are about and impairs the wider search for legitimation. Some clear ways are needed of defining who is a futurist (and who not) and of assessing the quality of their work.

2.2. *Legitimation*

All fields of enquiry must pass through a process of academic, professional and social legitimation. There is simply no other way for them to be taken seriously. This is particularly so in the advanced and interrogative discourses of higher education and enquiry. Dislike though we may the often abstracted, self-serving and “ivory tower-like” aspects of some university administrations, these institutions nevertheless contain many of the intellectual gate-keepers of our time. It is essential that FS not only reach the necessary standards of intellectual and methodological rigour, but also be widely seen to do so.

2.3. *Effectiveness*

The study of futures is not sf, and it is certainly not entertainment. It embodies a number of serious attempts and sustained aspirations to:

1. create a new level of awareness about the historical situation (context, dilemmas) of humanity;
2. to provide some essential tools that will allow us to guide our delicately-poised and over-extended civilisation toward more desirable ends than those now in prospect; and
3. to clearly distinguish some of the many alternative structures, policies, courses of action, social innovations etc. that are, or could be, involved.

Clearly these are historically-unprecedented tasks. It follows that the attempt to pursue them, and all the many sub-tasks and projects associated with them, must be carried out such that stated aims for any such work be unambiguously achieved, or, at least properly and seriously engaged. Hence there is a need to define the nature

of different kinds of futures work and to identify appropriate standards and measures of effectiveness with each.

2.4. *Quality control*

Associated with the above is a need to know how, in any context, to tell good work from bad. A brief summary of 'good work' is: work which is clearly productive and which achieves the positive aims and goals that it set out to achieve. 'Bad work' may be defined as work that is mystificatory, unclear, aligned with the interests of regressive social entities and/or motivated by lower-level human motives such as power, greed, or, in a word, ego. Hence the self-understanding of futurists needs to be of a very high order such that they can frame tasks correctly and make sound judgements about the quality and value of what they produce.

3. A note on professionalisation

The process of establishing professional standards in futures work will obviously have the effect of staking out territory and excluding some from participation in certain activities on the grounds of inexperience, lack of rigour etc. But this does not mean that those who are excluded on the basis of collectively-decided professional standards should be also excluded from the wider cultural ramifications of futures work which, by definition, involves everyone, or should do so. Rather, the establishment of standards should be seen as part of the necessary *modus operandi* of any field of human endeavour. Drivers without fine motor control do not enter professional racing. Writers who cannot spell or master syntax do not (often) get published. Similarly, those who choose to make futures studies a profession must expect that they will necessarily submit to the standards established in that context. Those who reject such standards should be free to challenge them. Indeed, challenging orthodoxy is a necessary part of the evolution of disciplines. But this should never mean that shoddy work is acceptable or that non-standard claims of validity, truth and effectiveness should be uncritically adopted.

What is being sought here is a set of collective judgments about what matters in FS which can be used to establish viable professional standards. The latter will certainly evolve over time as the collective judgements of the profession themselves evolve and change.

In summary, professional standards are necessary for the reasons given. The fact that they will give rise to some challenges and perhaps even conflicts (over definitional power, for instance) in no way diminishes the need for them. On the contrary, the further development of FS and its wider implementation now depends, to no small degree, on the formulation and acceptance of such standards. If this does not happen, then FS will be relegated to the sidelines and will not achieve its full potential.

4. Background to futures studies

Informal futures thinking is as old as organised human activity. The shaping of stone axes, the building of stone walls, the many ways that human societies have prepared for the contingencies of famine or war—all show that humans have long sought to understand ‘what the future holds’ and to use this knowledge in their day-to-day affairs. The oracle at Delphi achieved mythological significance in this sense and the ambiguous quatrains of Nostradamus have provided generations of soothsayers with a reliable source of material to profitably bedazzle the uninitiated. These long-standing sources of interest in the future are grounded in perennial psychological and practical needs (routine predictability, avoidance of hazard etc.). But with the advent of the industrial revolution the innate patterns of traditional human needs were transformed. Briefly, the settled world of tradition was disrupted by a series of powerful processes which included urbanisation, industrialisation and colonisation. The multiple effects of these widespread revolutions rendered the future more problematic than it had ever been historically. Quite new forces were beginning to enter history, particularly those driven by new technologies [1].

By the beginning of the 20th century these processes had overturned traditional ‘settled’ ways of life entirely, vastly increased the human population, established a global infrastructure of unprecedented impact and reach, and started to undermine the ecological integrity of the planet. Historical events such as the sinking of the Titanic, the first and second world wars and, finally, the dropping of the first nuclear bomb in 1945 completed the process of making ‘the future’ problematic. The insight steadily dawned that there was no longer ‘a future’ at all but, rather, a vast array of possible futures, some of them not particularly pleasant, which beckoned (or repelled) according to one’s insights, interests and aspirations.

It is from this macro-historical shift that the formal study of the future emerged. At first the motivating interests were either literary or strategic. The former led to the well-known literature of Utopianism and speculation on ‘things to come’. The latter focussed initially on the logistics of mass warfare and, later, the internal strategic needs of large organisations such as government departments and corporations. War-gaming largely gave way to strategic management and marketing. Forecasting, trend analysis and scenarios were the main methodologies. But then a number of early futures pioneers began to see the possibility of a very different futures enterprise. This later, more facilitative and egalitarian approach, was taken up by educators, social innovators and others, some of whom called themselves “futurists”. The first futurist meetings were held in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which is when the World Future Society, the World Futures Studies Federation and the French organisation *Futuribles* began. The methods favoured by these later groups were more focused on imaging, visioning and public involvement in the collective process of future-building.

Since then, the field has diversified and matured. Futurists now work for the military, for corporations, for educational organisations, for themselves and occasionally even for governments. While the first rapid growth of interest in FS occurred in the USA and Europe this was, I think, for historical reasons, not substantive ones. That

is, it was these two regions that encountered modernity first—in the form of free-ways, shopping malls, suburbia, pollution and so on. They also had the resources to pursue the dreams of modernity and to find out that those dreams had unexpected costs and dangers. However, and it is a very significant ‘however’, the impulses that drive futures work cannot, and should not, be identified exclusively with these two areas. Hence it is a mistake to over-identify futures work with North America and Europe. Rather, we should recognise that, while there is a preponderance of practicing futurists in these places, the same underlying impulses are also operating elsewhere too. But the historical conditions of the “non-West” are frequently such as to mitigate against a similar rapid development of futures interest and capability there. There are multiple reasons for this. They include: the after-effects of colonisation, poverty, exploitive economic relationships, regional warfare and cultural conflict.

Nevertheless, the impulse to comprehend the vast panorama of the span of possible futures is universal and is beginning to be expressed in forms other than those pioneered by Western futurists. Evidence of this can be seen in the work of non-Western futurists such as Adesida, Yamaguchi, Yazaki and Kim. The intellectual frameworks that emerge from the fusion of Western and non-Western thinking arise from the work of those who draw on a wider range of sources than were available to the early pioneers. The work of Nandy, Sardar and Inayatullah is critically important here. Collectively, it is beginning to sketch out a more universal and de-colonised vision of FS. It is a vision that draws fully on the work of Western pioneers but also brings into play concepts, frameworks and exemplars from other cultures. Thus it is now possible to consider different cultural conceptions of time, different ways of understanding ‘growth’ or ‘progress’, different images of, and designs for, the global system. Futures studies has thus become grounded in a vast array of associated fields and cultural understandings. This provides for much of its richness; but it also underscores the need for some sort of order, some kind of standards.

5. What is futures studies?

The above leads to the question about what is futures studies? Two answers from the 1970s are as follows. The first, from Prof. Henry David in 1970 proposes that: futures research may be defined as ‘the intellectual form in which a society renders account to itself of its probable and possible futures’ [2].

A more detailed formulation was suggested by Eleonora Masini and Knut Samset in 1975. In their formulation:

futures studies... is a field of intellectual and political activity concerning all sectors of the psychological, social, economic, political and cultural life, aiming at discovering and mastering the extensions of the complex chains of causalities, by means of conceptualisations, systematic reflections, experimentations, anticipations and creative thinking. Futures studies therefore constitute a natural basis for subnational, national and international, and both interdisciplinary and trans-

disciplinary activities tending to become a new forum for the basis of political decision making [3].

Another attempt to define the emerging field of FS was made by Roy Amara in 1981. He wrote in the dominant American empirical tradition and saw it as an exploration of possible, probable and preferable futures [4]. However, by the 1990s it was perhaps more appropriate to consider it as an emerging ‘metadiscipline’. ‘Meta-’ because of the way it integrates material, data, ideas, tools etc from a wide variety of sources; and ‘discipline’ because when done well it clearly supports disciplined enquiry into the constitution of human futures [5].

At the end of the 1990s it is possible to distinguish four main ‘traditions’, or paradigmatic ways of framing and approaching futures work, within FS. These are as follows.

1. The empirical/analytic tradition

This is basically data-driven, positivistic, often corporate and hence identified most strongly with North American sources. The names of Herman Kahn and Julian Simon are often identified with this approach.

2. The critical/comparative tradition

This is a more socially-critical approach which recognises different approaches to knowledge and its use, and different social interests. It takes a more comparative approach and is linked with this writer, Hazel Henderson and Sohail Inayatullah, among others.

3. The activist/participatory tradition

This is very much about facilitation and activism. Hence it has links with some of the social movements that are close to FS, such as the peace, women’s and environmental movements. The approach is expressed most directly in workshop formats such as those created and implemented by Robert Jungk, Elise Boulding, Warren Ziegler and Joanna Macy.

4. The multicultural/global tradition

This more recent approach springs from the emergence of FS, and its underlying concerns, from many non-Western contexts. It has been supported by UNESCO and by the courses run in various countries by the WFSF. Those associated with this arena include Zia Sardar, Tony Stevenson and Sohail Inayatullah, as well as a growing number of non-Western futurists.

Besides these four traditions, or paradigms, of futures work, there are also a number of substantive levels at which this work can take place. In 1993 I identified four possible levels, as follows [6].

1. *Pop futurism*

This is trite, superficial work. It is media-friendly and often seen in weekend newspaper supplements and on brief tv features. It is summed up by statements such as: ‘how science and technology are improving our lives and creating the future.’ This is the world of the fleeing image and the transient sound-bite. It is

eminently marketable, but bereft of theory. It arguably detracts from “real” futures work (ie. work with useful social consequences).

2. *Problem-oriented work*

This is more serious work. It looks at the ways that societies and organisations are responding, or should respond, to the challenges of the near-term future. So it is largely about social rules and regulations. It emerges most typically in, e.g. environmental legislation and organisational innovations, particularly in business—which often gives the impression of being ‘stranded’ at this level.

3. *Critical futures studies*

Critical work attempts to ‘probe beneath the surface’ of social life and to discern some of the deeper processes of meaning-making, paradigm formation and the active influence of obscured worldview commitments (eg. ‘growth is good’; ‘nature is merely a set of utilitarian resources’ etc). It utilises the tools and insights that have emerged within the humanities and which allow us to ‘interrogate’, question and critique the symbolic foundations of social life and—this is the real point—hence to discern the grounds of new, or renewed, options. Properly understood, the deconstructive and reconstructive aspects of high quality futures work balance each other in a productive fusion of methods.

4. *Epistemological futures work*

Here is where FS merges into the foundational areas that feed into the futures enterprise and provide part of its substantive basis. Hence philosophy, ontology, macrohistory, the study of time, cosmology etc are all relevant at this deep level.

Thus futures studies has developed both breadth and depth over the last forty years or so. It is now a globally-distributed metadiscipline which is taught in a number of universities and which increasingly has the ‘clout’, as well as the clarity and force, to impact policy debates and support the emergence of much-needed social innovations. It provides interpretative or propositional knowledge about the future, updates this regularly, assess the quality of emerging understandings and uses them for a range of socially-useful purposes. Twenty years ago such claims might have seemed far-fetched, but today they are arguably not so—a fact which is demonstrated by recent work such as Wendell Bell’s two volume opus *The Foundations of Futures Studies*, the *Knowledge Base of Futures Studies* series and a special issue of the journal *American Behavioural Science*, edited by Jim Dator [7–9]. In short, FS has come of age.

6. What is a futurist?

A futurist is someone who has learned how to study the future (as a symbolic realm of understanding) and understands how to use this knowledge to enable others to identify options and choices in the present. The point of studying the future is to move away from a passive or fatalistic acceptance of what may happen to an active and confident participation in creating positively desired futures. Some futurists work

for companies or government departments, some teach in schools or universities, some work for non-government organisations and consulting futurists work in all these areas.

Most futurists believe that the future can be shaped by the careful and responsible exercise of human will and effort. Futurists differ in many of their views, but most agree that individuals, organisations and cultures that attempt to move into the future blindly are taking unnecessary risks. So they would agree that we need to understand and apply foresight in our private, public and professional lives.

Futurists believe that ‘forewarned is forearmed’ and ‘a stitch in time saves nine’.

7. How does one become a futurist?

A futurist has learned about the futures field and become competent in its ideas and methods. A futurist has studied part of the futures literature, knows how to use some of its ideas and methods and is able to help others use futures ideas, knowledge and methods. A futurist is likely to take an active interest in a professional futures organisation such as the World Future Society or the World Futures Studies Federation. He/she is likely to communicate regularly with other futurists around the world and attend futures conferences. He/she will actively help others to understand and apply the forward view. It is not possible to become a futurist simply by appropriating the name (although unfortunately many people still do this at the present time, and sanctions have not yet been developed to prevent them from laying symbolic claim to the term and what it stands for).

Becoming a futurist is likely to include several of the following activities:

- mastering a specific area of the futures literature;
- contributing to the futures literature;
- becoming proficient in the use of one or more futures methodologies;
- taking a course in FS at a tertiary institution or via distance education;
- teaching others to be futurists or to develop futures skills;
- taking part in futures conferences;
- being actively involved in one or more social innovations;
- helping to further develop the field and to enhance the quality of its work;
- understanding the rationales for futures work and communicating these in appropriate ways in a variety of contexts and media; and
- listening to “other voices” and bringing them into the global futures conversation.

Or, as Jim Dator put it in 1972, “I would think it much preferable for each futurist to be positively engaged in furthering the techniques, methods and theories upon which we can base a science of the future” [10]. While some might debate the claim to ‘science’, the notion of being *positively engaged* is perhaps one of the keys to being a futurist.

8. Establishing quality in futures work

Quality is perhaps more essential in FS than in many other fields. Since the subject of the field (i.e. ‘the future’) is problematic, it follows that futures work should be carried out according to the most rigorous professional standards. This amounts to a reversal of the popular view of FS as ‘flaky’, ‘speculative’ activity that is often dismissively associated with crystal ball gazing. The reversal of popular misconceptions is a priority task for the field since they constitute an impediment on the path toward full legitimation and acceptance. In this context, it should be noted that second-rate futures work is worse than none at all since it provides spurious grounds for the dismissal of the whole enterprise.

There have been a number of attempts to outline just what ‘quality’ in futures work means. In 1973 Yehezkel Dror set out six features of good futures studies and six ‘commandments’ for practicing futurists. In this view, good futures studies involved the following elements.

1. Value sensitivity explication and analysis.
2. The appropriate use of creativity and imagination.
3. A commitment to improving methodology.
4. The integration of multidimensional and combinatorial elements.
5. A clinical attitude together with deep human concern.
6. Diverse outputs.

The six ‘commandments’ were as follows.

1. Every person coming to a conference on futures studies should... read at least ten books on futures studies methodologies.
2. Ideas must be developed in depth.
3. The desired outputs of futures studies should be such that specific activities can be oriented toward more specific goals.
4. Strict self-discipline is essential.
5. Combine an open mind with selectivity.
6. The number of basic assumptions which serve as bases for thinking in FS should be increased [11].

These add up to a demanding intellectual agenda. In 1981 Roy Amara set out a more ‘user friendly’ framework to help practitioners know ‘how to tell good work from bad’. His criteria are summarised below.

Testing conceptual explicitness

1. Are the futurists basic premises about the field made explicit?
2. Are the specific purposes of the activity made explicit?
3. Are the principle values espoused by the producers of the output made explicit?

Testing analytical clarity

1. Are the processes and methods used to achieve results made explicit?
2. Does the product include a description of change processes?
3. Is there enough time to act?

Testing a product's usefulness

1. Is the product clear and specific?
2. Is the product credible?
3. Is the product effective in changing perceptions or guiding action?

Four other criteria are mentioned as desirable by Amara. They are: plausibility, reproducibility, value explicitness and impact explicitness [12].

More recently, Dror returned to the topic in an essay on Futures Studies for Contemplation and Action, in which he depicts some of the dangers facing FS. He wrote:

Futures studies is wide open to well-intended but ignorant dramatists because, firstly, it lacks clear criteria for quality assessment, and secondly, it is not based on any well-defined domain of knowledge. "True believers" proudly raise the flag of futures studies, and make self-assured predictions on whatever they happen to regard as desirable or undesirable. Charlatans and would-be gurus crowd every futures studies meeting, encouraged by the irrationality of post-modern public debate, propelled by the mystical charm of the new millennium [13].

To deal with these concerns, he proposed a number of quality criteria. In summary, these are as follows.

1. Clarity about the foundations of FS.
2. The ability to engage in 'thinking in history'.
3. Making explicit assumptions about human nature.
4. A frank examination of values.
5. Taking a broad view of the future context.
6. The critical use of imagination.
7. The ability to engage in work characterised by 'sophisticated uncertainty' [14].

To these we should also add the following.

1. Futurists should be aware of the futures tradition they are working in and the cultural assumptions embedded within it.
2. Any particular piece of work should be located at one or more of the four main levels (from pop futurism to deep epistemology).
3. High quality futures work will often require the integration of 'hard' (quantitative) methodologies with 'soft' (interpretative) ones.

In short, and contrary to popular misconceptions, FS is a profoundly challenging and very sophisticated activity that demands high standards, sound methodologies and clear, transparent, expression. (It is for such reasons that I believe that, as a general rule, understatement is infinitely preferable to overstatement in FS.) It follows that active steps are needed to establish quality standards and to rid the field of charlatans and self-promoting publicity-seekers.

9. Two propositions about FS

This is as good a place as any to introduce two propositions that I will half-seriously term Slaughter's two 'laws' of FS.

1. High quality futures work cannot be based on ego; it is an expression of shared transpersonal aspirations to help create a better world.
2. The ultimate purpose of FS is to open out productive 'mind spaces', precursors of in-depth social innovations that, taken together, create the foundations for more advanced stages of civilised life.

The first proposition takes the notion of FS a long way beyond merely practical or empirical work. It suggests that FS is grounded in a process of transpersonal realisation, both individual and collective. In this view, the traps of ego are active impediments to high quality futures work. The second outlines what may be the basic dynamic of FS: the move from images to shared actions to positively desired futures. These indicate, to some extent, the deeper enterprise within FS and reveals why immersion in this field can be both uplifting to the human spirit and very demanding in other ways.

It follows that, besides 'lifting our game' by consciously carrying out futures work in accordance with the highest intellectual and practical standards, the field also needs a professional code of ethics.

10. A Futures code of ethics

At the 1976 Dubrovnik 5th World Conference on Futures Studies, working group 1 (on ethics) produced the following general guidelines.

The elements of a professional ethical code should derive from the idea that future researchers are actors in a political reality which amongst other things implies:

1. the obligation to stress explicitly your value basis, the future realities you want to promote, and the underlying presuppositions your work is based upon;
2. the obligation to develop with others theories and test conclusions also in other perspectives than your own, and
3. the obligation of attempting to give all relevant information about your work in

such a way that it can be understood by people in general, not only those on the same professional level [15].

From here, occasional references to ethics and values have been made. For example Fowles drew early attention to what he called “the problem of values in futures research” [16]. Boulding drew on a set of specific values in outlining her case for building a “global civic culture” [17]. Kidder carried out an interesting piece of inter-cultural research which revealed what he called “universal human values” [18]. But it was not until 1993 that some of these ideas and proposals were codified by Bell and presented as a formal proposal for a professional code of ethics. Bell defined professional ethics as:

those virtues, values, prescriptions, or proscriptions that define proper behaviour for a person occupying a particular occupational role requiring specialised training or learning, such as a doctor, lawyer, teacher, minister etc. There are codes of conduct that define both exemplary and prohibited behaviour for members of a professional group, including their behaviour toward their clients, be they patients, students or parishioners [19].

From here, Bell lists an hierarchy of ethics and obligations. In summary, they include the following.

1. General obligations that futurists share with everyone (such as) honesty, respect, trustworthiness, not doing harm etc.
2. Obligations that flow from the most general purpose of the futures field: to maintain and improve the well being of humankind—all humankind now living and in the future—and the life-sustaining capacities of the earth.
3. Obligations that flow from futurist roles as scholar-researcher, teacher, practitioner, and activist.... Paramount is the search for truth, perhaps the most basic value of the futures investigator.
4. Other general commitments, such as working to create and maintain the kind of society in which the open and free enquiry necessary for the proper conduct of futures research is possible, keeping the findings of futures research open to the public, and treating all people with respect and fairness, recognising their human dignity [20].

He then considers the role of the futurist as consultant and provides some examples of unethical behaviour. These include placing self-interest above that of the client, withholding information and padding expenses. There is then a section on the relationship of the consultant to the client’s goals. The point is made that an option for consultants is to by-pass questions of professional values and ethics by the simple practice of adopting those of their clients. A number of cases of corporate greed are discussed, and Bell argues that goal clarification may be a useful first step in the consulting process. Another response is to “make sure that the actions they (consultants) recommend to achieve the client’s goals are examined also for their

consequences for other valued ends”—in other words, stakeholder analysis. He adds that clients “often welcome being informed of unintended or unanticipated consequences of their possible actions”. He then goes on to outline some of the practical steps that could be taken when an irresolvable conflict arises between the consultant and the client. There are three—keep silent, speak out or resign [21].

There follows a set of specific proposals which are specifically offered to the WFS and the WFSF for implementing such a code. Bell suggests the following measures.

1. Descriptions of ethical and unethical behaviour should be drawn up.
2. Procedures for filing complaints of ethical violations, mechanisms for investigating and judging complaints, ways of providing support for futurists under attack... and forms of punishments for violators be created.
3. The establishment of prizes for rewarding professional behaviour.
4. The circulation of a draft code to the members of the WFS and the WFSF.
5. The submission of a final draft to the officers of these organisations [22].

It should be noted that the proposals outlined here are explored in much more detail in Vol 2 of Prof. Bell’s opus on the *Foundations of Futures Studies* [7]. There would appear to be no good reason why proposals along these lines should not be implemented at the earliest opportunity. Indeed, such implementation should be regarded as a priority by all those who wish to see “good work distinguished from bad” and the field assisted in its long path toward wider acceptance professionally and in wider communities.

11. Professional capabilities and behaviour

By way of summarising some of the material presented here, it may be useful to approach the question of professional standards in futures work from a different direction. That is, by considering possible answers to commonly-asked questions. I will then attempt to suggest some of the specific actions that could be taken by the WFSF.

11.1. *What should professional futurists know?*

The origins, character and contemporary expressions of the field. The uses and limitations of the key methodologies. Ways of knowing and conceptual frameworks appropriate to futures work. Aspects of the futures literature. How to access key ideas and people in the field. An overview of the knowledge base of FS. Strategies for the implementation of futures work in a variety of contexts. A futures code of ethics.

11.2. *What knowledge of methods should guide their approach to methods?*

In-depth understanding of the origins, problematics, strengths and weaknesses of any method or cluster of methods. Ability to explain the assumptions behind a parti-

cular method or methods to no-futurists. Knowledge of which methods suit a variety of needs and purposes. Ability to recommend other practitioners when clients' needs fall outside an individual's professional competence. Knowledge of the distinctiveness and limitations of one's own competence. Professional judgement about when to say 'no'.

11.3. What qualifications are needed to carry out professional futures work?

It is highly desirable that a professional degree (Masters or above) in FS be gained in order to practice as a futurist. Where, for reasons of personal history, geography, cultural or social limitation, a long-term, and successful involvement in futures work can be demonstrated to a group of peers, this may, in some cases, be viewed as a secondary path to recognition. The point here is the quality of involvement in, and promotion of, the field, not self-promotion by an individual.

11.4. Where should professional qualifications come from?

A recognised program of university studies; sustained and successful attendance at professional courses organised, run by bona fide futures organisations, and staffed by professional, practicing futurists; or successful participation in a relevant distance learning program.

11.5. How should futurists behave?

In accordance with the highest professional standards set down in other relevant disciplines and with their own code of ethics.

11.6. How should unprofessional behaviour and substandard work be dealt with?

The former should be brought to the attention of an appointed ethics committee derived from the officers of one or more leading futures organisations. The latter should be empowered to impose sanctions on individuals and to suggest a process of mentoring to help individuals in professional difficulty. In the most extreme cases individuals should be asked to quit the field. Sub-standard work should continue to be critiqued in futures publications, web sites and through the normal process of peer review.

11.7. Where does power and control lie in the environment of futures work?

Since FS is a broad, ramified and open field, power and control are not concepts (or realities) that thrive within it. Apart from that defined above, there is little or no instrumental power available or needed. However, great symbolic power can be wielded by respected individuals and professional organisations. So the power to tell apart, e.g., good work from bad, rests within all the processes of quality control and discrimination that are available to any such broad entity as FS, as mentioned above.

11.8. What can be done to reduce or eliminate the abuse of futures discourses, tools and methods?

Where abuse is suspected, a group of highly-regarded professional futurists should be assembled on an ad hoc basis to consider the matter. They should study the situation carefully and refer their collective judgements back to the appropriate ethics committee. A public determination should then be made.

11.9. Are there types of work that futurists should avoid?

Yes, those that conflict with their professional ethics, i.e., that are exploitive, dishonest, unreasonably self-promoting and which, in any way, bring the profession into disrepute. An evolving body of practice and judgement should be developed to adjudicate particular cases (as in conventional law).

11.10. How can good work be distinguished from bad?

Good work is productive work. It contributes in tangible ways to the fundamental purposes of the futures field, i.e., to the betterment, well-being, protection and further positive development of humankind within its environment, present and future. Bad work is work that cannot be assimilated to progressive values, needs or purposes. It detracts in some clear way from the futures enterprise and its projects. Bad work is a symbolic cost or tax upon the disciplinary entity of FS. It retards progress and adds to existing difficulties.

11.11. How can good work be encouraged and bad work discouraged?

By a pattern of rewards and sanctions determined by leading members of the international futures community and applied by clearly legitimate meta-organisational entities. Also by setting out clear qualitative guidelines for participating in various kinds of futures work [23].

12. The WFSF as a 'peak body' in the futures arena

The WFSF should be regarded as a peak body within the wider international arena of FS. This is obviously easier to explore as an idea than to implement. To implement requires that the WFSF continue to evolve and to develop organisationally and financially. In the past, all posts have been honorary and its financial capabilities have been limited. This is, to some extent, a reflection of the 'cultural' orientation of the WFSF (as opposed to more 'commercial' options). But, while the former is progressive and inclusive, and sustains many very vital values, something more hard-edged and capable is also needed if the issues discussed in this paper are to support a better-recognised and more professional body of futures practitioners. Here are some possible ideas for critique and further elaboration.

1. Work toward a 'lean but high quality' world council of international futures organisations with the WFSF as a participant in the process. The WCIFO would require 'hard' funding because its role would be a fundamental service to humanity.
2. Develop new sources of income, i.e., the WFSF could act as a broker for professional services, the latter to contribute back an agreed % of income to the organisation.
3. Liaise with UNESCO to upgrade the profile and involvement of the WFSF.
4. Work toward a professional secretariat and paid officers so that admin. support of the WFSF becomes a full-time activity. Improve the quality, range and frequency of publications; also of internet presence.
5. Continue and extend the present membership drive.
6. Take active steps to derive a Code of Ethics along the lines suggested by Bell.
7. Develop practical policy guidelines for different categories of activities such as business, government and education.

13. Conclusion

The approach of the new millennium provides a unique historical opportunity to re-focus the attention of humanity from the past and present to the emerging, but threatened, future. In order to accelerate social learning, the futures field urgently needs to engage in a serious "bootstraps" operation and lift its game in every area. While the open and facilitative aspects of futures work should not be dismissed or minimised, the field must move beyond its identification with limited areas, agendas and interests. In order to do so it will have to move beyond earlier Western models [24]. It will need to show itself capable of the highest professional standards in every area including: publications, consulting, public utterances by practicing futurists, work carried out in the public interest and in academic endeavours across the board. The standards demanded in higher education, as well as the legitimate demands of clients for high-quality innovative work, require that futures practitioners learn to perform their art, whether it be in writing, scenario building or teaching, such that they progressively receive professional sanction from the wide range of critics, incumbents and opinion-leaders that can be found in every vital field of human endeavour.

For Futures Studies to advance to the point where it is accepted as a relevant and useful globe-spanning metadiscipline it must pursue quality in every aspect of its work, both individual and collective.

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