Education’s futures
- who benefits?

Professor Keri Facer,
Manchester Metropolitan University, Bristol University, Exeter University
@kerileef
k.facer@mmu.ac.uk
Overview

• disclaimer & aim
• risks
• sources
• assumptions
• key questions for education
• future-building schools?
• key leverage points
• This isn’t going to be about learning – about what teaching methods might be adopted, how to improve learning or ensure learning happens more efficiently...

• This talk is concerned with the strong possibility that socio-technical change over the next few decades may radically exacerbate social and economic inequalities, and asking the question –

  *what role should education play in the light of this possibility?*
RISKS
In talking about ‘the future’ and ‘education’ together, we risk

– too narrowly defining ‘the future’ because we have defined the purpose of education too narrowly
– assuming that childhood’s purpose is preparation for the future, rather than the right to exist in the present
– assuming that we should seek to future-proof education against futures imagined by others, rather than working to create the futures that we (or our students) might want
SOURCES
ASSUMPTIONS
• massive increases in computing power (and data)
• merging of digital & physical computing
• increasing collaboration and work at a distance
• working alongside sophisticated machines
• networks as a core feature of personal and institutional arrangements
• the unexpected and mythic impact of biosciences
• global population ageing
• energy and mineral resource scarcity and environmental degradation increase
• trends towards increasing inequality within country and persistence of gender, ethnic and religious struggles
KEY QUESTIONS FOR EDUCATION
• What (is) the future for the school?
• How do we shape a new intergenerational contract?
• What is the nature of the individual at the heart of education?
• What knowledge matters?
• What does economic resilience actually look like?
• What politics will help us to achieve our goals?
• What, then, is the future for the school?
the school is dead, long live the school

• Massive growth in resources to support informal learning
  – access not just information, but peer groups, teaching, assessment and learning communities outside the school
  – Problems of informal learning haven’t gone away – educational/cultural/social capital play out; ‘powerful’ knowledge difficult to access

• Fragmentation of formal education into disaggregated services (care, assessment, teaching)

• The disappearing school...
  – replaced with the more totalitarian learning society with the risks of failure devolved to the atomised individual?

• No – the school still matters – but ‘schooling’ may not...
inter-generational relationships

• What are schools for?
  – since 19\textsuperscript{th} C. Quarantining young people from the risks of adult society, teaching them the benefits of our wisdom...investment in y.p. for future economic and social benefit

• Disruptions
  – Children’s rights
  – Children’s competencies (digital...)
  – Demographic shifts - Adults as learners (incomplete/unfinished)
  – Competition for public resources between adults-children

• New models
  – Adult salesman/child consumer
  – Adult dictator
  – Competition

• The loss of the standard model of adult-child relations brings real risks to children without family support and protection.

• What is the school for?
  – The development of resilient inter-generational relationships that respect the capacities and resources of all ages as learners and teachers
the new ‘individual’ in education

• Personal cloud/networks
• Prosthetic enhancement
• Pharmacological enhancement
• Highly diverse forms of ‘individual’ in schools
  – How is that diversity handled? Will different forms of enhancement be compatible?
  – Assessment and learning for unique constellations of interdependence?
  – Education that teaches reflection upon networks and dependencies?

• What are schools for?
  – Reflection upon, development of and mobilisation of unique constellations of networks
what do we need to know?

Distinctive knowledges
• Collaborative Knowledge
• Embodied knowledge
• Dangerous knowledge

As we recognise the futility of defining a single body of valuable knowledge, will only some young people get access to ‘powerful knowledge’?

• What are schools for?
  – Discernment (who am I, where might I contribute/shine, what does that require?)
  – Multi-literacy (what tools can I mobilise?)
  – Responsibility (what choices should I make?)
what does economic resilience look like?

• Knowledge economy – growth of the networked institution (disaggregated corporations), growth of amateur-producers, deprofessionalisation of traditional roles...
• Radical polarisation of the workplace
• The fragility of globalisation and economic infrastructure in the face of resource constraints (rise of transition and other movements)

• Increasing middle class positional competition, increasing exclusion of the most vulnerable, a shrinking elite – collapse of the whole shooting match
• Development of alternative economic and social structures

• What are schools for?
  – To offer a viable new narrative about educational and economic wellbeing
  – To support young people to understand their interdependencies and resource maps
  – To support young people and communities to build their own economic wellbeing (through new models)
Economy/technology is not destiny...

- Economic, social and technological change remain influenced by politics...
- Digital meets democracy
  - Citizen journalism; accountability; aggregated action; open data; community prototyping; wiki government; public engagement
- New models of democratic engagement developing
  - ‘dutiful’ citizenship (voting/parties etc); ‘active’ citizenship (actions, engagement, non-aligned)

- The digital risks enhancing access for those who are already active...
- The different forms of citizenship risk increasing democratic deficit and declining political accountability

- What is the school for?
  - A key entry point to critical and reflective participation in all forms of political and democratic debate.
The future-building school

- Not a ‘future-proof’ school (defensive/adaptive)
- Future-building
  - A public space for discussing desirable futures for young people, parents and communities
  - A development space for identifying personal and collective strategies to create those futures
    - Knowledge, networks, politics, economic resources, tools
The components of the FB school

- **Intergenerational** (cross-age groups; adults as co-learners, and co-teachers)
- **Embedded** (connected to meaningful activity in the world, and to democratic local debate)
- **Networked learners** (able to make visible the different resources they are drawing upon, and access the wider resources of fellow-students and community as a whole)
- **Futures-literate** (playful, agentive, creative about possible futures, historically aware)
WHERE NOW?
Curriculum development through educational design – 2 projects

**Data democracy**
- Data in education – the ‘Moneyball’ moment
- Young people’s resource maps
- Wearable/shareable/delightful/ubiquitous
- Capture bio, environmental, social network, intentional, institutional and ambient life data
- Represent in different ways for different audiences
- Compare with others and use to build projects and interrogate the world

**Governance**
- Co-operative schools models -
- Collective community future visioning
- Asset Based and PD based approaches to communities
- Harnessing school resources
- Building school, student and community strategies in light of these visions, examples and resources
THANK YOU