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## **SCHOOLING FOR TOMORROW AND THE INTERNATIONAL TOOLBOX FOR FORWARD-THINKING, INNOVATION AND SCHOOL SYSTEM CHANGE**

### **Introduction – Schooling for Tomorrow**

The work of OECD's CERI – the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation – is defined by four main themes:

- Innovation and the management of knowledge;
- Learning and teaching;
- Human and social capital;
- A focus on the future.

The Schooling for Tomorrow programme addresses all four themes with a particular relevance to the fourth.

Schooling for Tomorrow has been a prominent activity in CERI for a number of years. It was launched with an international OECD/Japan seminar in Hiroshima at the end of 1997, with subsequent international conferences in Rotterdam, Poitiers and (now) Toronto, as well as numerous expert seminars. It has constructed scenarios for the future of schooling, which have served in many arenas as stimuli for thinking about strategies for change, including the 2001 OECD Ministerial-level conference, and has brought in the innovative long-term perspectives originally devised in OECD's International Futures Programme as a new strand of reflection. It has worked extensively on ICT and education and studied networks and innovation. On these different subjects, the project has produced a series of OECD publications<sup>1</sup>, as well as booklets, reports and articles. More recent work is presented below. This paper presents the Schooling for Tomorrow Toolbox for Forward-thinking, Innovation and School System Change, shown in summary form in Figure 1.

### **The Importance of the Futures Perspective and the International Toolbox**

The value of Schooling for Tomorrow and of building the international Toolbox for Forward-thinking, Innovation and School System Change at its core can be understood in terms of outstanding problems and challenges confronting education and decision-making today. First, despite the fundamental impact of schooling on societies and economies over the very long term, a great deal of educational policy and practice continues to be dominated by the short term. This means that the necessary methods for long-term thinking to address complexity and change remain seriously under-developed. Second, education's own knowledge base is largely tacit and fragmented, despite knowledge being education's overt business, so exacerbating the first problem. Third, decision-makers at all levels are operating in contexts of complexity, diversity and decentralised responsibility, in which traditional approaches do not work as effectively as in the past.

Schooling for Tomorrow is engaging these problems and challenges by developing new analytical and leadership tools. Through international exchange and experimentation it seeks to bring together innovative approaches, techniques and methods – the tools - that can foster informed dialogue and professionalism, and promote the strategic and the long term. At the core of this project is the International Toolbox for

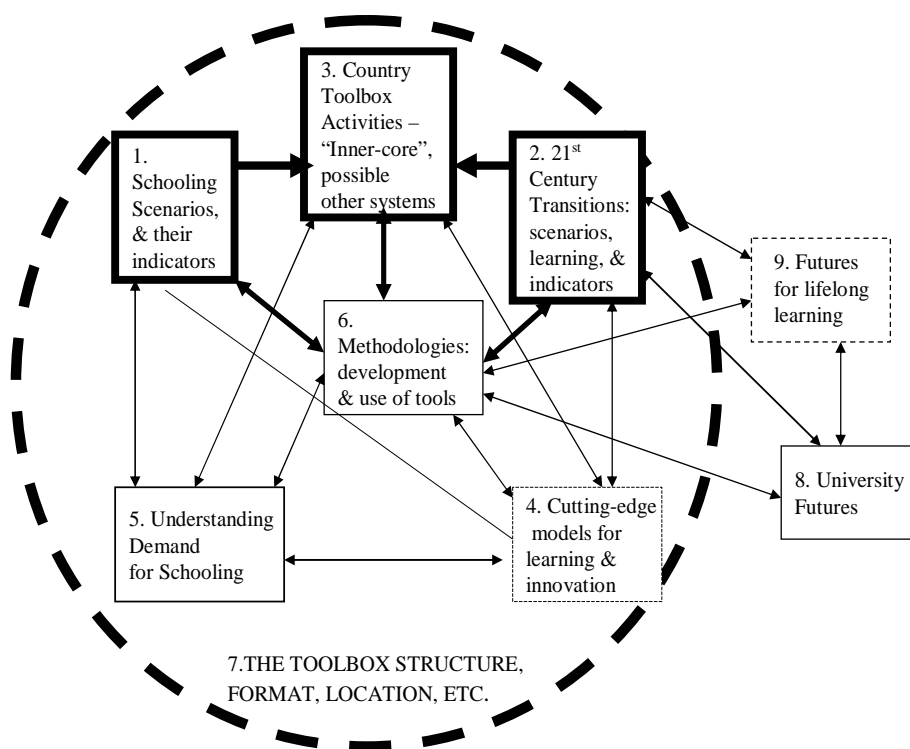
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<sup>1</sup> *Networks of Innovation: towards new models for managing schools and systems*, 2003; *What Schools for the Future?*, 2001; *Learning to Change: ICT in Schools*, 2001; *Learning to Bridge the Digital Divide*, 2000; *Innovating Schools*, 1999.

Forward-thinking, Innovation and School System Change, which defines the agenda of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Forum on Schooling for Tomorrow, Toronto, June 2004. The different Toolbox components mapped in Figure 1 and discussed in this section are:

1. Schooling scenarios, including indicators;
2. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transitions, learning and indicators,
3. Operational Toolbox activities with “inner core” and other countries;
4. “Cutting edge” models for organising learning and innovation;
5. Understanding demand for schooling;
6. Methodologies for the development and use of tools;
7. The International Toolbox itself;
8. University futures (related CERI activity, not elaborated in this note);
9. Futures for Lifelong Learning (related activity, not elaborated).

**Figure 1: The International Toolbox for Forward-thinking, Innovation and School System Change and Related Activities**



Note: The figure shows the tools and the Toolbox within the main circle, with related futures activities included in the figure but outside the perimeter. The bolded boxes and arrows show the principal Toolbox activities to date.

## ***1. The Schooling Scenarios***

The six schooling scenarios have been a prominent feature of the project for some time and they represent one of the main tools in the International Toolbox (see background documentation). They have served as the basis of numerous dialogues about the future of schooling in OECD and different countries, and for this purpose they have served well in their current form. The more that they have so been used, however, the more limitations have been identified. These were discussed at a small meeting of experts held in March 2004, which advised that further conceptual refinement is needed, particularly of the scenario dimensions. This would both improve their value and consistency and be a prerequisite to operationalising them through indicators. The intention to pursue the operationalisation of the scenarios through indicators of the dimensions also received strong support, as being a critical step towards ensuring that the scenarios can be a powerful tool for policy purposes.

The development of indicators of the scenario dimensions – that will serve to show whether systems are moving towards or away the different scenarios – will represent a major advance in the analytical Toolbox armoury. Progress on this front has been limited in the first instance by the lack of rigour and consistency in the scenarios as currently formulated and only then by questions of data availability. The important first step for Toolbox purposes will be to identify an ideal core indicator set. A further step would be to match these to available data where these exist, which for the most part will be national rather than comparative in coverage.

## ***2. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transition Scenarios***

From the outset of the Schooling for Tomorrow project there has been recognition that rigorous thinking about the long-run future of schools requires assessing the broader context of societal change. That is why a major strand of Schooling for Tomorrow, presented initially at the Rotterdam conference and included in the 2001 publication, involved collaborating with the OECD International Futures Programme's (IFP) work on long-run societal change (see: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/12/42/1903212.pdf> ). 21st Century Transition scenarios have continued to play a prominent role, involving different methodologies and addressing different questions. They now have become a Toolbox component in their own right, and this also helps to avoid confusion with the schooling scenarios (see background documentation).

The IFP five-year project on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transitions provided a multi-dimensional analysis of radical technological, economic, social and governance changes which set the stage for exploring the learning societies that schools might be operating in a couple of decades from now. From this base, the methodological, analytical and applied dimensions of these scenarios have advanced considerably. For instance, all “inner-core” initiatives have engaged with them and “possibility-space” methodology and there have been a number of events and publications using the scenarios of the learning-intensive society. Two tracks have been pursued: one for schools, the other for universities. They would benefit considerably from further work on quantitative and qualitative scenario indicators, more explicit models of how and where people learn, and the nature of the demand for learning. Field testing and experimentation in further “inner-core” country activity will allow a clearer test of the links between the different types of scenarios and specific tasks, particularly strategic policy making, hence underscoring the inter-connections between the different futures activities summarised in Figure 1.

## ***3. Operational Toolbox Activities – “inner core” and other countries***

The volunteer “inner-core” systems are currently, England, Netherlands, New Zealand and Ontario, Canada, with Australia joining in 2004. They are developing, using and evaluating forward thinking to meet concrete challenges already arising in their own systems. The focus of their “toolbox” activities has

ranged from the broad engagement of a wide range of stakeholders in reflection on the long-term futures of their systems through to a targeted dialogue with particular stakeholders such as school leaders. The OECD scenarios, suitably adapted, have proved to be the effective catalyst for certain dialogues while in others, new tools have been developed. Each volunteer system has engaged a study team to record and reflect on the use of these tools, these evaluations making a valuable input to national policy thinking while contributing to this international resource. These initiatives are presented in detail in the documentation for this Forum.

While it has been an essential step in the Toolbox process to begin with intensive collaboration with a small number of systems as the “inner core”, the limitations of such reliance on a few countries become increasingly apparent. The number and range of countries in the “inner core” are necessarily small, and their demands on Secretariat resources intense. As more countries use the existing tools and wish for their experiences to be recorded for international purposes, and as more develop new approaches for forward-thinking, the need for the active input of country experiences outside this inner core group becomes increasingly pressing. If the Toolbox is to be truly international, the range of country inputs will certainly need to be broadened. Discussion of how this might be done is one major purpose of this Forum.

#### ***4. Models for organising learning and innovation***

The above scenarios are “macro” in addressing schooling and change in society as a whole. While they may be suggestive of ways of organising learning and stimulating innovation, they do not provide tools specifically geared to stimulate reflection about cutting-edge approaches at the “meso” and “micro” levels. This lack has been identified in some of the Schooling for Tomorrow events in the “inner core systems”, especially by those most closely engaged in shaping learning and its environments. There may well be need, therefore, to develop a complementary set of tools to enter into the Toolbox as well as methodologies for making bridges across the macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis and reflection.

There is no shortage of OECD work to inform such tools. CERI studies of knowledge management and previous Schooling for Tomorrow analysis have gone in depth into issues regarding networks and approaches to innovation. Case studies of innovative schools and the role of ICT from earlier CERI work show some of the models available. The OECD Programme for Educational Building (PEB) has an on-going focus on “designs for learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century” based on concrete examples in OECD countries. The CERI “What Works” series has focused on diverse school innovations, including in the current study on formative assessment and related teaching repertoires. Very recently, a joint OECD/UK event on personalisation of learning has opened up a number of fruitful avenues through its strong futures perspective. The challenge lies not in finding sources of information and inspiration to develop such tools, therefore, but in dealing meaningfully with the sheer volume of potential examples.

Two avenues are suggested. First, to identify key approaches to innovation policies in education that seem to have proved effective in making and sustaining change among leaders and practitioners. These would include approaches based on promoting knowledge management and networking. A second avenue would be to identify examples of innovative schools and other non-formal learning arrangements that offer genuine international interest as exemplars today of where others may want to follow “tomorrow”. These two directions would be significant extensions of the Schooling for Tomorrow project.

#### ***5. Understanding Demand for Schooling***

18. Better understanding “the demand for schooling” is an important component of the Schooling for Tomorrow activity and has been the subject for a recent request for national research syntheses.

[EDU/CERI/SFT(2003)12]<sup>2</sup>. It is important, first, in that it has become common to promote a shift from traditional models of schooling to dynamic futures in terms of the change from “supply-dominated” systems towards more demand-oriented arrangements. Yet, such advocacy lacks rigorous examination of the relevant terms and developments, still less close empirical analysis. Second, the schooling scenarios are distinguished one from another critically by such factors as public attitudes towards schooling, satisfaction levels with education’s achievements, participation and modes of governance - factors that also suffer from the lack of an established knowledge base. The deadline for completion of first drafts of these country reports is mid-June, and they will be discussed at a special meeting of national experts 20-21 September 2004. It is expected that this strand of the project will result in a substantial report in its own right.

## **6. Methodologies for the development and use of tools**

Given the under-developed nature of futures thinking in education, there needs to be explicit coverage as a section of the Toolbox on methodologies for the development as well as for the use of forward-looking approaches. Part of this section of the Toolbox will record the OECD Secretariat’s own reflections, especially as regards schooling and broader scenarios and models of learning and innovation (1, 2 and 4). Perhaps even more critical will be to record the lessons derived from the operational activities (3) for they refer to concrete applications to policy and practice, using a range of tools in combination. There may well also be value in syntheses and discussion of the futures literature, whether from education or other sectors, as a contribution to the International Toolbox. In all these cases, the format of contents and their adaptation to the needs of different potential users are critical to their use-value.

## **7. The International Toolbox itself**

As the Toolbox contents begin to take shape, it becomes important to consider the “box” as well as the “tools” within it. It will likely require both conventional paper-based reports/publications and be web-based. There is a host of questions to address concerning format, contents, quality, linguistic accessibility, and ownership as well as questions to do with diffusion and marketing. Whether the desirable can be implemented and maintained depends critically on resourcing and competence; the more ambitious is the Toolbox, the more it will require dedicated resources to create, maintain and extend it, especially if it is interactive as well as informative. The range of potential users adds to the complexity of the task. The Toolbox should be of value to leaders and practitioners and to those with responsibilities for policy and administration, as well as other stakeholders with an interest in education. It should be of value across all countries, not only those working intensively on Schooling for Tomorrow as volunteer systems. It will need to address linguistic issues related both to inputs from different countries and to the presentation of the Toolbox.

## **8. and 9. Futures for Universities and Lifelong Learning**

New work has begun in CERI on university futures with an international conference in Japan in December 2003. While specification of the directions to be taken by this new work is outside the scope of this note, it is clear that there should be close co-ordination to ensure that the lessons it derives inform the International Toolbox and *vice versa*. With further analysis of schooling scenarios (1), universities (8), and broad societal level transitions (2), it would also be possible for the focus to be extended towards lifelong

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<sup>2</sup> The country request has been structured around the following headings: i) *Demand and Views about Schooling in Society*; ii) *The Attitudes and Expectations of Parents*; iii) *Participation in Decision-making in the Schooling Process*; iv) *Pupil Choices and Values*; v) *Diversity in the Structure of School Systems and Influence over the Curriculum*.

learning more broadly if it is decided to strengthen CERI's futures focus. This would also draw on different models for organising learning (4) and the compilation of futures methodologies (6) which are not specific to schooling *per se*.

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Key areas described in this paper, were they to be implemented fully, require substantial inputs of human and financial resources in the OECD and participating countries. Questions relating to the directions to be followed by the Schooling for Tomorrow project are being considered by the CERI Governing Board at its May 2004 meeting. The discussion and advice at the Toronto Forum will prove an invaluable input in further shaping this project.