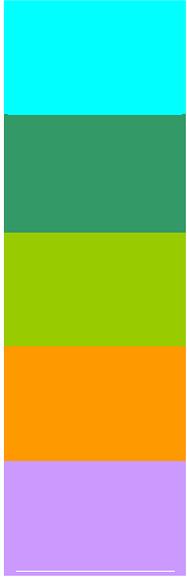


*OECD Schooling for Tomorrow Series*



# The Starterpack

---

Futures Thinking in Action



# PART I

## Getting started

---

### *Futures thinking in education*

We are living in an increasingly global world. This brings many challenges and problems, but it also makes it much easier to learn from those in other countries about areas of common interest. It helps those concerned about education in different countries to understand new developments and identify good practice.

**International sharing of experience and knowledge is at the heart of the *Schooling for Tomorrow* to help countries respond to new developments and concerns.**

Such international sharing is at the heart of the *Schooling for Tomorrow* Project (SfT). It has developed a wealth of insights into *futures thinking* in education. It has generated expert analyses, case studies, country reports and publications related to schooling and learning and what these might be like in the future and to help shape the future.

To introduce these insights to a wider audience, *Schooling for Tomorrow* has developed this Starterpack. Individuals, groups and stakeholders just embarking on *futures thinking* in education can use it to become aware of what might be done and now to be quickly operational as they set out in this direction. We know that the demand is there as various countries, organisations, and individuals have expressed interest in the experience.

“Getting started” provides an introduction. It introduces the Starterpack’s scope and intended audiences (Sheet I.2). It puts *Schooling for Tomorrow* into the wider context of OECD’s interest in *futures thinking*, and explains what *futures thinking* stands for (Sheet I.3), and the reasoning behind it (Sheet I.4). Finally it outlines the specific approach used in *Schooling for Tomorrow* (Sheet I.5).



## **Part I: Getting started**

*Futures thinking in education*

### **I.2. The Starterpack**

Scope and audience, contents and use

### **I.3. The *Schooling for Tomorrow* Project**

Its origins and what it has to offer

### **I.4. What and why?**

What is *futures thinking*? Why is it pertinent to education?

### **I.5. The approach**

The schooling focus, tools and analysis, collaboration with countries

## The Starterpack

---

This Starterpack shares the core experiences and lessons found so far in the *Schooling for Tomorrow* Project. It explains the Project's approach and presents the elements which have proved promising and effective in developing *futures thinking* initiatives for education.

### → Scope and audience

---

**The Starterpack is an “appetizer” of the tools developed to identify desirable and possible futures for schooling and the experiences of those who have used them.**

The Starterpack does not pretend to present all information from the Project. Instead, it draws a selection of what we consider to be among the most useful elements for country-based initiatives or those in education wishing to embark on *futures thinking*. Or indeed, it may be useful to those who just wish to get a flavour of what *futures thinking* in education and the OECD/CERI *Schooling for Tomorrow* Project is all about. The Pack is therefore an information brief, an appetizer, and a kick-starter all in one.

The target audience is all stakeholders in educational policy and practice:

- Policy-makers in ministries of education and other levels of government
- National and international organisations
- Professional networks and institutions
- Practitioners – school leaders and teachers
- Other stakeholders with an interest in education, including parents

What unifies these audiences is their interest in reflecting on – and influencing – the future of schools, learning, and systems.

### → Contents and use

---

The Starterpack has five main Parts (see matrix below) in different sheets, each of which is devoted to a specific issue. Each Part has a short introduction outlining what is presented in the chapter.

The Starterpack is a flexible tool to be used actively and selectively depending on the purpose in hand. Individual sheets can stand alone or be used in combination with others. They are intended to support work in various settings, such as providing an action brief on the use of *futures thinking* or informing a workshop on scenario development or a group using *Schooling for Tomorrow* insights to enhance its own design process.

Users themselves may wish to enhance the Starterpack as a working tool. For example, they may wish to enrich it by adding country-specific material, e.g. current education policy and strategy, school development plans, and project documents.

 **Overview**

This matrix gives an overview of the Starterpack to help navigate through it, with the numbering and thematic divisions of the five parts indicated by colour codes. The background will be further explained in the rest of this chapter (Sheets I.3-I.5).

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>Trends</b>	<b>Scenarios</b>	<b>Methodologies</b>	<b>Experiences</b>
<b>PART I</b>	<b>PART II</b>	<b>PART III</b>	<b>PART IV</b>	<b>PART V</b>
				
<b>1 Getting started</b>	<b>1 What is shaping the future of schooling?</b>	<b>1 What might schooling look like in the future?</b>	<b>1 How to go about it?</b>	<b>1 Futures thinking in action</b>
<b>2 The Starterpack</b>	<b>2 How to use trends?</b>	<b>2 The SfT scenarios</b>	<b>2 Using the SfT scenarios</b>	<b>2 The outset</b>
<b>3 The SfT Project</b>	<b>3 Fewer Children</b>	<b>3 Overview</b>	<b>3 Using the SfT Trends Tool</b>	<b>3 Getting started</b>
<b>4 What and why?</b>	<b>4 Inequality</b>	<b>4 Scenario 1</b>	<b>4 Basic considerations</b>	<b>4 The process</b>
<b>5 The approach</b>	<b>5 The Global Economy</b>	<b>5 Scenario 2</b>	<b>5 Other future-oriented methodologies</b>	<b>5 Benefits</b>
	<b>6 Working Less</b>	<b>6 Scenario 3</b>		<b>6 Lessons learnt</b>
	<b>7 The Expanding WWW</b>	<b>7 Scenario 4</b>		
	<b>8 Less Social Interaction?</b>	<b>8 Scenario 5</b>		
		<b>9 Scenario 6</b>		

## The *Schooling for Tomorrow* Project

*Schooling for Tomorrow* is one of the central projects within OECD's *Centre for Educational Research and Innovation* (CERI). The Centre has established an international reputation for pioneering educational research, opening up new fields for exploration, and combining rigorous analysis with conceptual innovation.

### → Its origins and challenge

**“The Directorate for Education’s mission is to assist members and partners to achieve high quality lifelong learning for all, contributing to personal development, sustainable economic growth and social cohesion.”**

*CERI brochure 2007*

“Building new futures for education” is one of six strategic objectives which have been set for the OECD's educational work by senior policy-makers in its member countries to fulfil its mission of “assisting members and partners in achieving high quality lifelong learning for all”.

CERI began its work on futures in the late 1990s. Its focus has mainly been on schools and schooling, but the approach to futures work has since stimulated new departures so as now to include higher education in the *University Futures* Project.

The origins of work on schooling futures began at an OECD meeting on lifelong learning of countries' Ministers of Education in 1996. The ministers pinpointed the crucial role of schools in laying the foundations for lifelong learning and asked the OECD to identify and assess different visions for schooling. The project was officially launched at an international conference in Hiroshima in November 1997.

At the core of this work is the persistent paradox that although education is about long-term investment in people and society, its decision-making tends to be predominantly short-term. Longer-term perspectives in policy and practice are the exception rather than the rule. We lack even the tools and terminology to develop such perspectives.

*Schooling for Tomorrow* set out to develop frameworks and tools to be useful for people in many different situations in many countries for thinking about alternative futures for education.

### → How far it has got

*Schooling for Tomorrow* has developed into an internationally-recognised Project through stages. As regards the specific *futures thinking* work this has gone through three phases.

**Phase One** laid the groundwork, with analyses of trends and methodologies. The key outcome was a set of six scenarios for schooling systems.

**Phase Two** used the six scenarios in co-operation with several volunteer countries and school systems to explore how *futures thinking* could inform concrete challenges for educational leadership and policy-making.

**Phase Three**, which began in mid-2005, has expanded to more countries, collecting results more systematically. They collaborate on applications of *futures thinking* to educational reform and innovation. The recorded results will form part of the *Schooling for Tomorrow* international knowledge base, which will be consolidated and systematised for online use by educators, leaders and policy-makers. Finally, an updated and refined “Trends Tool” is being developed based on OECD research and analysis to further help users work with *futures thinking*.

## ➔ What it has to offer

---

*Schooling for Tomorrow* now has four different forms of *futures thinking* material and information made available in different forms (publications, knowledge base, shorter published materials, etc.):

### 1 Ready-to-use scenarios

This is a set of six scenarios depicting alternative futures for schooling. They have been instrumental in kick-starting *futures thinking* processes in educational contexts.

### 2 Trends Tool

This tool consists of analyses of the trends that seem most likely to influence the development of education systems in OECD countries, directly or indirectly. Its purpose is to ensure that the scenarios are integrated and consistent within their wider environments.

### 3 Practices

Based on the experiences made in a range of countries, *Schooling for Tomorrow* can illustrate how *futures thinking* in education has been applied and what has been learnt through these practices.

### 4 Reflections on methodologies

Partly based on the practical experiences as well as more theoretical contributions, the project has also reflected on different methodological approaches that can be particularly useful for *futures thinking* in education.

The scenarios, the trends, and practices/methodologies define the main sections of this Starterpack on *futures thinking*.

Under the broad *Schooling for Tomorrow* umbrella, we have also looked at related innovation and learning issues: understanding the demand as well as the supply side; moves towards “personalising” education; networking; and the role of ICTs; with recent work starting on new models of learning and innovations.

## What and why?

---

*Futures thinking* offers ways of addressing the future; it is not about gazing into a crystal ball. It illuminates the ways that policy, strategies and actions can promote desirable futures and avoid those we consider to be undesirable. It is about stimulating strategic dialogue, widening our understanding of the possible, strengthening leadership, and informing decision-making.

### → What is *futures thinking*?

---

*Futures thinking* allows us to reflect on fundamental change over the next 10, 15, 20 or more years.

It offers a multi-disciplinary approach to examining transformations in all major areas of social life, including education. It probes beneath the surface of received opinion in order to identify the dynamics and interactions that are creating the future.

While the future cannot be predicted, one can look forward to a range of possible futures and ask which of these are the most desirable for particular groups and societies. There is a variety of methods to do so – qualitative and quantitative, normative and exploratory. They help illuminate what is possible, the choices for decision-making, and can inform the assessment of alternative actions.

### → Why *futures thinking*?

---

There is a tendency toward short-term thinking in both the public and the private spheres. In government, election cycles often determine the time horizon. Businesses may often focus on immediate financial reporting periods.

*Futures thinking* introduces perspectives to look beyond the straitjackets of immediate constraints. Existing attitudes and frameworks for action, far from being immutable, are open to change. *Futures thinking* can help to create an environment for deeply informed decision-making, ideally to smooth the transition toward a future with a sustainable balance between short- and long-term policy goals.

**To mobilise a system for sustainability, its leaders must go beyond fine-tuning the existing system. They must be willing to re-think and alter its major components.**

## → Why is it pertinent to education?

---

*Futures thinking* is relatively under-developed in education compared with a number of other policy sectors, such as energy, the environment, transport and pensions. This is despite education's fundamental impact on individuals and societies over the long term.

*Futures thinking* is pertinent to education because it clarifies and deepens understanding of the major forces which drive change in education systems, schools and communities.

**Governments and educational sector stakeholders invest resources, time, and effort in the present for a return that will come years if not decades later.**

Much educational decision-making focuses on the short term, looking to solve immediate problems or make established practice more efficient. Education's institutional cultures are much more geared up for looking backwards at the past than forwards into the future.

The neglect of the long-term becomes more problematic in a complex, rapidly changing world, with a growing number of stakeholders in schooling. As OECD countries move rapidly towards becoming knowledge societies, with new demands for learning and new expectations of citizenship, strategic choices must be made not just to reform but to reinvent education systems so that the youth of today can meet the challenges of tomorrow.

*Futures thinking* enhances the capacity to anticipate change, which in turn helps systems to grasp opportunities, cope with threats, develop creative strategies, and choose pathways of development paths. Rather than simply responding to change, education leaders and organisations can anticipate and deal with it proactively.

## The approach

---

The *Schooling for Tomorrow* Project has focused its interest on *educational futures thinking in action*. This refers to 1) tools for *futures thinking*, including methodological reflections and analyses of the possible developments that will shape schools in the future; and 2) active collaboration with countries and regions in this endeavour, applying and testing the tools. Together, this is building an international knowledge-base on *futures thinking* in education.

### → The schooling focus

---

The institutionalised arrangements of schooling are regarded by many futurists almost like dinosaurs from an earlier industrial era rather than appropriate for learning in the 21st century. For those in education, however, this is the daily reality. *Futures thinking* is about changing tomorrow through action, not just critique, today.

**The ultimate beneficiaries of successful *futures thinking* are the next generations of children. The immediate beneficiaries are those responsible for taking decisions about the educational system in which they will grow up.**

The Project considers the notion of “schooling” as all the arrangements for organised learning for young people: formal, non-formal or informal education during childhood and youth. The functions of learning during this period tend to be quite distinct from those of learning that comes later.

“Schooling” provides a manageable focus within the vast canvas of future learning, and is of immediate relevance to policy-makers, practitioners and other stakeholders engaged in education.

Some have asked why the scenarios are not about the future societies, cultures and economies in which education is located. The reason is two-fold. First, we do not believe that education is totally determined by their wider environments. Second, our aim has been to develop tools of relevance to people engaged in education, not construct futures that they may think are totally beyond their control.

## → Tools and analysis

---

Scenario development is central to the *Schooling for Tomorrow* Project. Scenarios have been described as “internally consistent and coherent descriptions of hypothetical futures, reflecting specific perspectives on past, present, and future developments”. The word “hypothetical” is critical – they are not intended to be totally realistic but to help clarify the directions in which we are going and how we might influence that pathway.

They are intended to serve as a basis for action, by helping decision-makers think strategically about institutional change, and by illuminating the links between policies and outcomes.

The scenarios are informed by OECD research and analysis. A Trends Tool reported next helps to anchor the scenarios in today's circumstances, and to consider major trends and their consequences in education and society. Alongside more tangible matters such as the ageing society, the knowledge economy, globalisation, and technology, it is also important to consider less-tangible ones such as changing values, social fragmentation, new forms of governance, to examine deeper processes going on.

Through these tools and analysis, *Schooling for Tomorrow* seeks to stimulate reflection on the major changes occurring in education and its wider environment, and to promote long-term approaches in decision-making.

## → Collaboration with countries

---

*Schooling for Tomorrow* is collaborating with initiatives in several countries, which have agreed to develop, use, and evaluate *futures thinking* in order to meet existing challenges within their educational sector. So far, much of this work has been most effective in capacity-building for strategic thinking and strengthening leadership.

The number of country-based “*futures thinking in action*” initiatives has expanded in Phase 3, covering an even wider variety of countries and initiatives.

These initiatives rely on the expertise and commitment within their own countries, while benefiting from OECD material and experience in other countries.

The country-based participation and reporting on aims, processes and effectiveness is building up an evidence base on *futures thinking in action* for a wider audience than the immediate participants.

*Schooling for Tomorrow* as an international project in application of scenario methodology is about a relatively new tool in the public sector especially in education. It has much longer been used in the private sector.