Visioning Scenarios for Schooling for Tomorrow

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Abstract

This chapter takes as its starting point the OECD project on Schooling for Tomorrow. The report, What schools for the future? (OECD 2001) outlined six educational scenarios within one of three overall possible trends. The first trend saw the continuation of the status quo. The second trend re-visioned schooling with a strengthening of the place of schools either as core social centres or as focused learning organisations. The third trend shifted the focus away from schools as we know them by offering de-schooling scenarios. After outlining the development of these scenarios, the authors provide examples of three countries that have used the scenarios to encourage future focused thinking in their own educational settings. The focus then shifts to the Asia Pacific region where a study that examined the relevance of the scenarios to this region is discussed. This discussion leads to a more detailed look at the issues facing Japan before the chapter closes with an introduction to the concept of schooling for tomorrow in developing countries.

Introduction

In 1996, the Ministers of Education in member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) raised questions about how education might look in the coming century. OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) was commissioned to explore the idea and gather examples of "good practice" for wider dissemination. This exploration was to include alternative visions of "the school of tomorrow". Five years of intensive consultation and debate led to the construction of possible scenarios for schooling in the next 15-25 years. The scenarios were not seen as definitive alternatives but as discussion starters in order to clarify what the possibilities might be and how member countries might promote policies that would led to the outcomes most desired. One of the critiques of the process was that it was based mainly in developed countries, often with a "Western" world view, and therefore the scenarios did not give adequate representation to other perspectives, for example, from regions outside Europe and North America, or to countries whose economic situations were not sufficiently robust to be OECD members, but who nevertheless faced the same task of envisioning their future educational possibilities.

This chapter describes the OECD scenarios and outlines their applications in a range

of educational and policy settings, including across the Asia-Pacific region, before turning to countries whose schooling systems faced more pressing needs, such as meeting the aims for universal primary education, as outlined in the *Millennium Development Goals and Education for All* initiatives. The purpose of this chapter is to set the policy and practice context for the chapters that follow in which national and local systems in developing countries grapple with the issues they face before they adopt, adapt or develop educational policies to meet the aspirations of their respective societies.

Schooling for Tomorrow: the OECD Project

The report, *What schools for the future?* (OECD 2001), outlined five dimensions which underpinned the development of the scenarios. These were around:

> Attitudes, expectations and political support for education;
> Goals and functions of education;
> Organisations and structures;
> The geo-political dimensions; and
> The teaching force.

Using these dimensions, six scenarios were created. The six scenarios each were contained within one of three overall trends (See Table 1). The first trend saw the continuation of the status quo by either maintaining the robust bureaucratic organisation of schooling or by extending the market approach to education. The second trend re-visioned schooling with a strengthening of the place of schools either as core social centres or as focused learning organisations. The third trend shifted the focus away from schools as we know them by offering de-schooling scenarios that were caused by either a meltdown of confidence in the system and teacher exodus or by the move to a networked society.

Table 1. Six Scenarios for Future Schooling

The "status quo extrapolated"	The "re-schooling" scenarios	The "de-schooling" scenarios
Scenario 1: Robust bureaucratic school systems	Scenario 3: Schools as core social centres	Scenario 5: Learner networks and the network society
Scenario 2: Extending the market model	Scenario 4: Schools as focused learning organisations	Scenario 6: Teacher exodus - the "meltdown" scenario

Source: OECD (2001, p.79)

As Cogan and Kennedy (2004, p.505) remark, "Scenario building and development is not a new process and there are precedents for its use both in business as well as in broader policy making. Yet this was the first time that such a process was used in such a public way to talk about the future of schooling." Each scenario provided detailed descriptions of how the five dimensions might appear in these stylised contexts. This enabled educators and policy makers to determine which scenarios might best suit their educational contexts. Descriptions of each scenario are presented below in summary form (Cogan & Baumgart 2003).

1) **Bureaucratic systems**: Schools remain robust, bureaucratic organisations with strong pressures towards uniformity through well-defined curriculum and assessment strategies attuned to explicit standards.

2) **Market model**: Schools develop as extensions of the market model for education; governments encourage diversification and competition; change is stimulated by consumer demand and information on performance; monitoring of schools by public authorities declines as new providers introduce entrepreneurial management modes.

3) **Core social centres**: Schools function principally as core social centres under varied arrangements and in tune with the society's diverse needs; major investments in schools as key centres in the society leads to improved quality and equity, and well-earned recognition for far-reaching achievements (academic, social, cultural, vocational, community development, and in ICT).

4) **Focused learning organisations**: Schools develop as focused learning organisations, meeting individual needs and encouraging lifelong learning; they focus principally on knowledge rather than social outcomes; schools are well resourced, emphasise research and development, network with tertiary education institutions, and communicate internationally in developing best practice and state-of-the-art facilities.

5) **The network society**: Schools lose their unique identity following public dissatisfaction with their institutionalised role; they become part of a multitude of learning networks in the society, with leadership coming from various cultural, religious, and community organisations; local networks, contractual arrangements for teachers, and community and even individualised arrangements replace formal school systems.

6) **Meltdown**: Schools face a crisis (meltdown) with a lack of qualified teachers resulting from retirements in an ageing profession, low morale, and more attractive opportunities for recent graduates; schools face public dissatisfaction, and diversity and inequality in provision and outcomes.

Examples of Applications of the Scenarios in OECD Countries

In 2006, OECD published examples of how different education systems had taken up the notion of scenarios as a thinking tool for examining educational futures. Initiatives in four OECD countries are described in detail in the report, *Think scenarios, rethink education* (OECD 2006). Several are selected here for further elaboration.

Initiatives in Europe

The Netherlands government used involvement in the Schooling for Tomorrow project to drive a new philosophy which aimed to combine decentralization and more school autonomy with a greater involvement of stakeholders (parents, students and local communities).[1] One example was how the Dutch Principals Academy devised a set of five scenarios based on the original six OECD schooling scenarios and five societal scenarios from Ontario, Canada. These scenarios related more closely to the location of the Netherlands and the Dutch schooling situation. Their aim was to highlight key perspectives within alternative scenarios, which were as follows:

> In a united Europe;
> In a downward spiral;
> For community and environmental care;
> In a global market economy; and
> In a high-tech networking society.

By using these scenarios they were able to get educational leaders to debate important questions, such as: "Who 'owns' education? What is the role of politics, ideology and the professional? How to create variety without leading to segmentation? How to strike a balance between the demand and supply of education – what do children want to learn and what must they learn?" (OECD 2006, p.139).

FutureSight was another initiative, this time in England, designed to help school leaders build futures thinking capacity and to translate this into policy and practice.

Four sequential modules were designed to (a) introduce the concept of scenario building ("A stone rolling"); (b) to introduce the OECD scenarios ("Making it real"); (c) to reach consensus over a shared future ("Towards a preferred future"); and (d) to reflect on how this might be approached ("Re-engaging with the present"). As school leaders and education officials engaged with the process they came to appreciate four concepts – the importance of:

> Living with ambiguity;

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[1] This would place the Netherlands within Quadrant 4 of Ninomiya & Mutch's conceptual model outlined in the editorial of this issue.

Inhabiting the future;
Challenging of assumptions; and
Making values explicit.

Secondary futures in New Zealand

Secondary Futures was a project set up in 2003 to engage New Zealanders from all walks of life in discussion "about what the world, and education, will be like in 20 years" (www.secondaryfutures.co.nz), with a particular focus on the possibilities for secondary school education. As the futurist thinker, Riel Miller, stated:

I think Secondary Futures is bold, by international standards, and reflects independence that is unusual in international circles to pursue the unknown, take on issues and processes that are not necessarily tested but that have promise, and to be experimental (cited in Secondary Futures 2006, p.26).

Initial ideas were based on tools developed by the OECD, such as the Schooling for the Futures scenarios (OECD 2001). This project was jointly supported by the government and the education sector. Four "guardians" selected from representative high profile role models were the "faces" of the project. They were supported by a "touchstone group" (representatives of key stakeholder groups). The project gathered data on the nation's views under five key themes: Students First; Inspiring Teachers; Social Effects; Community Connectedness; and The Place of Technology. One of the guardians, Professor Mason Durie, outlined the aim of the project:

The aim is not necessarily to identify a definitive future, but to consider future possibilities, contemplate what values we want to entrench in that future, and how we might construct a learning system that is flexible enough to respond to whatever the future throws at us – and still allows more students to be more successful (Secondary Futures 2006, p.2).

The following section discusses two of the themes investigated – "Students First" and "Inspiring Teachers".

The *Students First* report (Secondary Futures 2006) grouped the responses from its nation-wide community consultation under four headings or "platforms". The report begins, "New Zealand has told us that, in twenty years time, these will be the preferred platforms for how learning is organised around students' needs..." (p.1). These platforms are evidenced when:

Student and teacher design a customised learning programme;
Learning happens from more than one site;

Several modes are used for learning; and

A network of learning and other services is available for each student.

From its consultation, the report also distilled what were seen as the four "capacities" that students would need to succeed:

The capacity to learn;

The capacity to participate in future society;

The capacity to be part of the New Zealand tradition; and

The capacity to value self and others.

Inspiring Teachers (2007) sets out the four roles that teachers need to perform so that students can develop the capacities listed above:

Catalysts of knowledge discovery;

Heralds of change;

Champions for Aotearoa [New Zealand]; and

Scaffolders of self-worth.

The Asia-Pacific Study

The Asia-Pacific study was conducted by members of the Pacific Circle Consortium (PCC) – an organisation of educational institutions and agencies based in the Asia-Pacific region with particular interests in intercultural understanding and cooperative research undertakings. The researchers wished to see if the scenarios had applicability beyond the OECD. The first phase of the study was led by Professor John Cogan of the University of Minnesota and Professor Akira Ninomiya of Hiroshima University. They developed the survey instrument and gained support from both PCC and OECD to proceed. Eleven societies[2] from five different regions participated (See Table 2).

Table 2. Societies Participating in the Asia-Pacific Study

Region	Society
Oceania	New Zealand
	Australia
South East Asia	Thailand
	Vietnam
East Asia	Hong Kong S.A.R.
	Mainland China
	Taiwan
North East Asia	Japan
	Republic of Korea
North America	United States
	Mexico

Source: Mutch (2004, p.179)

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[2] The word "societies" was used rather than country or nation because of the complex political relationship between China, Hong Kong SAR and Taiwan.

The researchers in each society identified high profile educational policy-makers and copies of the survey were then distributed to them. A minimum sample of 25 was requested from each society. In all, 307 educators responded ranging from policymakers at the highest level to representatives of all levels and sectors of the education system. Survey respondents were asked to rank the six numbered but not named scenarios, firstly in terms of the desirability of each scenario, secondly in terms of the probability of each scenario occurring in their setting and then finally to give an overall ranking.

Although there were some minor differences across societies, and most notably between societies in Oceania and North America, and those in South East, East, and North East Asia, a surprisingly high level of consensus emerged from the findings. Those scenarios regarded as being most desirable were those associated with re-schooling, that is, Scenarios 4 (learning organisations) and 3 (social centres) – in that order. The least likely Scenario was 6 – the meltdown scenario.

In contrast, respondents thought these desirable scenarios had a relatively low likelihood of implementation and the scenario thought to be most probable was the status quo, Scenario 1 (bureaucratic). The second scenario thought to be most probable was the scenario emphasising a market approach to education (Scenario 2). However, this scenario was not ranked nearly as highly as Scenario 1(bureaucratic) although it did receive relatively higher ranks in East Asia and North East Asia than in other regions. (For more detail, see Kim & Mutch 2004) A summary of the desirable and probable scenarios is included as Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Most Desirable and Most Probable Scenarios by Society

Society	Desirable Scenario	Probable Scenario
New Zealand	4	1
Australia	4	1
Thailand	4	1
Vietnam	4	1
Hong Kong SAR	3	2
Mainland China	4	3
Taiwan	4	4
Japan	4	1
Korea	4	2
Mexico	3	1
United States	4	1

Source: Mutch (2004, p.180)

The second phase of the Asia-Pacific study sought to understand why educators and policy leaders, who thought that re-schooling scenarios were the most desirable, considered that the status quo, particularly, the bureaucratic system would prevail. Six of the original societies agreed to participate in this phase (Australia, Hong Kong SAR, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand and the United States). The results were six case studies that firstly outlined the historical, economic, political and socio-cultural forces that shaped the educational policy making context in each system and, secondly, presented the results of interviews with selected key policy makers.[3] Japan was not able to participate in Phase 2 of the Asia-Pacific Study but the following section describes in detail some of the issues that Japan faces as it makes decisions about its directions for future schooling.

Schooling for Tomorrow in Japan

So far the discussion in this chapter has centred on summaries of initiatives in different contexts. By using Japan as a case study, a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay of historical, political, social and economic issues can be observed.

What will Japan be like in 20 or 25 years hence? Some things will have changed and some things will remain unchanged, throughout society as well as in the schooling system, even though it appears that everything seems to be changing so quickly. Japanese schooling over the past 150 years has been characterized by two main challenges: modernization and democratization. Since the Meiji restoration in the 1860s, schooling and other social systems have been modernized, or "Westernized", and since the end of the World War II in 1945, schooling, as well as other political and social programs have been democratized or "Americanized". Japanese schooling has dramatically changed and it has faced far-reaching reforms.

In order to undertake these changes, the Meiji Government sent official delegations and students to foreign countries to learn what these modern systems might be and how the Government could best prepare for modernizing the system. The government introduced political, economic, military, legal and educational systems from France, Germany, England, and the United States. One main feature of those systems was that they were "centralized systems" and so the schooling system also came to be centralized. The school curriculum was developed by the government and teachers were trained at the National Teacher Training Schools.

The General Head Quarters (GHQ) of the Occupied American Government attempted to introduce a decentralized system of education boards after WWII. However, the board of education system was highly politicized and they became so critical of the reforms that were introduced to decentralize systems of educational administration that they remained to some extent controlled by the national government in terms of the power distribution between the

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[3] See the 2004 theme issue of the *International Journal of Educational Research 41 (7-8)* titled "Schooling for the future in Asia-Pacific societies" edited by John Cogan.

Ministry of Education and the Local Boards of Education. The national course of studies became the standard which every local government was required to accept and implement.

A Scenario for Schooling for Tomorrow in Japan

In order to describe future schooling, it is necessary to predict some possible changes and suggest those that might remain unchanged. One of the most likely possible trends is the demographic change that Japan is facing through a declining population together with an ageing society. Another possible trend is the fact that Japan will continue to compete with other countries for increased economic and social growth. It also will not escape the impact of globalization. ICT will influence social and economic progress. Further possible concerns are the world-wide issues of global warming, environmental issues, the energy crisis, and food scarcity. This could lead to a wider socio-economic divide in our societies.

 In order to meet those socio-economic and demographic challenges, the present schooling system needs to be more flexible and adaptable. How it does this, will present a possible future schooling scenario for Japan. What follows are some key issues and their possible outcomes in a future scenario.

This future schooling scenario will cover the following issues: the decreasing number of schools, students and teachers; extending the retirement age of teachers; expanding higher education opportunities; centralizing or decentralizing the system; compulsion or greater choice; national or school-based curricula; teacher or student-centred pedagogy; ICT-based or conventional teaching methods; and the place of community support.

(1) <u>The decreasing number of schools, students and teachers</u>
According to estimates of future population trends, within 50 years the population of Japan will be two thirds of the present figure. In one hundred years it will be one third. Population decline is inevitable because of low birth rates. There are currently 20,000 primary schools, but in the very near future there will be far fewer. Public schools are beginning to be integrated because of the decreasing numbers of students each year. In rural communities, especially, many schools will be forced to close.

In the ultra-ageing society, there will be fewer people who are interested in and concerned with education policies, so schooling will be of less interest to taxpayers. National budgets for education will decrease, while the budgets for health and care will increase. The preparation of the next generation will not have such high priority in future public policies.

(2) <u>Extended retirement age of teachers</u>
Because of the extended life-expectancy of Japanese men and women to their mid 80s, the conventional retirement age and system will cease to match society's needs. Many Japanese now will have to spend their "second lives" of more than 30 or 40 years after retirement in their homes and communities. In the ultra-ageing society, retirement age will be extended to 65 or even 70. Teachers are no exception. Of course, teachers may quit

teaching before retirement age, but they may not be able to earn the pension until the requisite age.

Teachers will have to stay in teaching until the new retirement age of 65 or 70 years. Physical conditions will negatively influence their work in the schools. Older teachers, female or male, may find difficulties in playing with or disciplining children. They may have more difficulty teaching physical education to young students. Teaching will no longer be a life-time profession. It is doubtful that they will stay in their teaching jobs until the age of 70.

(3) <u>Expanded opportunities for higher education institutions: Higher Education for All?</u>

At this time in Japan, higher education opportunities are sufficiently available for those who wish to access them. If students are not concerned with which university they attend, they can find places without a waiting list. In Japan, "Higher Education for All" is not a product of the imagination. It is a reality.

In the future, universities and colleges, on the other hand, will have to compete with each other to recruit enough students. If they fail to have a sufficient number of students, they may have to close their doors. During the past "Lost 15 Years" in Japan, more than 220,000 companies and enterprises became bankrupt. In the near future many universities and colleges may also become bankrupt if they fail to provide attractive programs and quality education. There will become two groups of universities and colleges: "Winners and Losers". The winning universities will expand their capacities and amalgamate with other small but unique universities and colleges under their umbrellas. Monopolization of quality and better opportunities for higher education will be future trends. Large and high quality private universities will form alliances and will be the most popular providers of higher education. The national universities will be unified into groups and become more privatized. The cost of higher education will rapidly increase, although government scholarship programs will not expand accordingly, so a number of students will not be able to study at university or college although the capacity is available.

Universities and colleges will have students whose academic levels may be lower than expected. New functions and services will need to be provided to meet the needs of these new and diversified students on campus. Many top high school graduates will want to study abroad at prestigious universities in the United States or England because the costs of education will be similar to those of the leading Japanese universities. Japanese universities will be less attractive to top Japanese and foreign students.

(4) <u>Centralized or decentralized systems?</u>

Currently, there is one central and national government with 47 provincial (local) governments. Schooling is controlled by the national government and managed by local governments. The national government provides subsidies for schooling in various ways. Once local governments receive their national public subsides, they need to be accountable to the government and the people. Teachers' salaries, school buildings, textbooks, and others matters are subsidized by the national government. The courses of studies are regulated by

law. Textbooks are scrutinized and authorized by the national government and only those authorized textbooks are to be used in schools.

There are currently debates around the decentralization of administration, including authorities of tax and financing. 47 prefectures could be integrated into 9 or 10 large regions (like the United States), and they could be given more power and authority, becoming independent from the national government. Education could be delegated to regional administrations.

By 2020 or 2025, Japan may have such a decentralized system, if local regions can find more industries and enterprises in their regions to fund income through taxes. If they are not able to guarantee revenue, it will be difficult to implement such a decentralized system. The national government will not be as willing to provide funding to local regional governments. At the same time there could be a greater divide in terms of affluence and wealth across the regions. Megalopolises will have greater wealth and advantage compared to smaller rural regions. Decentralization could give rise to new inequalities in Japan.

(5) Compulsory schooling or greater school choice?

What about compulsory schooling? What might it look like? It has been one of the major aspects of modern schooling. Governments had the power to compel parents to send their children to schools which they prepared, either for the welfare of children or the sake of the nation state. Schooling is regarded as something every child has a right to: the right to education. In Japan every child must go to a school in their community; schooling at home is not an option. There are nine years of compulsory schooling.

As demands and needs for education become diversified and, in a sense, personalized, parents may have different expectations of what education could be like in schools. They are likely to think that schools should adjust to their needs, rather than that they should adjust to common systems of schooling. Therefore compulsory schooling will need to change to adjust to those personalized demands of future parents. The system will need to become more flexible. One of the changes could be an expansion of school choice and home schooling. At this time, there are some cities where school choice programs have been developed so that parents can choose any one of the public schools for their children at the beginning of their compulsory schooling. School choice will be a very popular educational policy in Japan, and then not once, but every year they could choose any school for their children to attend.

Home schooling is not currently allowed in Japan, but in the future, it could become popular. Thanks to the rapid innovation of ICT, information and learning opportunities will be available at any place and at any time. Interactive TV or two-way communication media tools will encourage home schooling. Some parents will choose home schooling opportunities because they want their children to be away from violent schools or from being bullied. Education providers will be diversified; some of them will be public and others will be private. There will be new and innovative providers of education in the future. They will reach students through very different learning styles such as mobile communication media. 3D technology will help children to join in learning activities as if they were in real classrooms

with teachers and pupils.

In this new world, governments and schools may not be able to compel children to stay in the buildings under the control of teachers. Children will choose schooling as freely as they wish. Diversified education providers will provide different styles of learning opportunities and learning materials, from which parents and children will choose. Schooling will no longer be one of the efficient means of selecting children for roles in future society.

(6) National curriculum or school-based curriculum development?

Globalization will force the national government to set up clear and high standards of education to compete with rival countries and economies. The Government will require schools and universities to educate students as they want in term of "outcomes". The knowledge-based society will be the case in Japan. Innovation is the only means by which Japan can enjoy its advantage. The Government will not leave the curriculum standards in the hands of teachers/schools or local governments.

In future people will have to decide which strategy will be more effective and of greatest use in making school and university education more effective, accountable and efficient in a knowledge-based society: national curriculum or school-based curriculum development? Decision-making on future schooling curricula will need to fit with the decentralization policy. Who can and should control schooling will be the old but new question.

(7) Teacher-centred or student-centred?

Those who are knowledgeable about school education, believe that schools should be student-centred. It is not unreasonable to expect that future schooling will, therefore, be student-centred. In a country like Japan where there has been a long tradition of respecting teachers, teachers have played a greater role not only in the teaching and learning process inside the school buildings, but also in helping young students develop socially in their communities. Teachers visit homes to talk to and help parents to discipline and educate their children. Teachers have been models for younger generations. Teachers will continue playing such important roles, while in the classrooms they may develop the more student-centred instruction and classroom management.

The changing nature of curriculum, which will give more emphasis to competencies, rather than knowledge and skill training, will lead towards more student-centred education.

(8) More ICT-based teaching or conventional teaching methods?

Students will be more likely to learn through information processing and learning opportunities such mobile communication tools, even the mobile phones will be a major player in learning in and outside schools.

In classrooms there will be plenty of ICT tools on the desks of teachers and students and on the walls. Classrooms will be connected to the main server computer, through which they are connected to the learning commons, resource centres, to other classes and/or to

other schools around the world. Even school textbooks will be "e-texts". Virtual experiments or simulations will be popular styles of teaching and learning; even field-studies will be provided virtually. Learning will be customized and individually tailored.

Conventional teaching styles will disappear in the future schooling scenario, but, as yet, no one really knows in which cultures of learning and teaching, students learn best, show better competencies, or achieve better outcomes. It is true that ICT will increase the cost of teaching and learning, will require more technical support services and will consume more hours and money but will it achieve the best results?

(9) Community support?

What will happen to the relationship between communities and schools in Japan? The demographic change will place a strain on communities, especially in rural areas. Some rural communities, where more than half are very old senior villagers (over 65 years old), will not be able to attract the younger generation and will face difficulties in living together as a supportive community. Many communities are already marginal. What will happen to those communities in the future?

In urban areas, the solidarity and the shared consciousness of a close community has been lost for many years since industrialization and times of rapid economic growth. Community-revitalization movements have not necessarily been successful in activating such community spirit in urban areas.

Schools have long been symbolic institutions in their communities and have played a key role in developing community identity. Communities will be weakened and begin to lose their identities. In the future schooling scenario we may find schools being isolated. Schools will find difficulty of looking for partners. Community-school partnership programs will become historical events. In the ageing society taxpayers will not pay attention to educating young children, and will not bear the burden of the high cost of schooling.

By raising the issues that could arise in such a scenario, it is hoped that educators and policymakers in Japan can plan for changes that will preserve the valuable features of the past, such as community cohesion and equitable access to education, while addressing the need to adapt the schooling system to an ever-changing world.

Schooling for Tomorrow in Developing Countries

So far in this chapter the focus has been on how scenario-building as a tool has been used to establish future possibilities for schools in mainly developed countries. These examples provide a background to discussions that have been taking place since before the turn of the millennium. Much of what has been discussed was based on the OECD/CERI Schooling for Tomorrow project which tried to identify possible scenarios in order to help educational policy leaders to determine future education policy by consideration of six possible scenarios. The possible futures in developing countries were not part of these discussions. OECD/CERI put more emphasis on innovation. They wanted policymakers

and educational leaders to prepare to meet the new demands of post-modern societies, and through innovative schooling practices, increase economic growth.

Such considerations provide a dilemma for developing countries. While some achievements are outside their reach, they are members of the global community and these trends are also part of their reality. The impact of globalization has been widely discussed in developed countries and is now a concern of developing countries as well, as described in the book: *The World Is Flat* in which Tom Friedman discusses how the world is "flattening". He claims we are now facing the third dimension of globalization: the first one was through governments; the second was through multinational companies; and the third is through the digital revolution. There are, he describes, ten "flatteners": the Berlin Wall, Netscape, Workflow software, Open Sourcing, Outsourcing, Off-shoring, Supply Chaining, In-sourcing, In-forming, and Steroids (such as personal digital devices, mobile phones, iPods, and so on). Developing countries are also faced with the challenges and opportunities of the flattening world. Friedman claims it will be no longer be of relevance to divide countries into "developed" and "developing" – it has no place in the new concept of the flattened world.

Although, scenario building in developing countries is still in its infancy, these countries have been well used to preparing for the future based on a range of development plans. Most countries have 5 or 10 Year National Development Plans which include what the policy leaders should be looking for and what the future schooling should be like. Within these plans goals are described and efforts are then focused on the achievement of these goals.

As well as development plans, policy leaders in developing countries could now consider new approaches to educational policies based on scenario building or the use of futures thinking tools. When working with scenarios it is important to acknowledge that there are a range of possible futures, but these possible futures can be desirable or not so desirable. By developing future schooling scenarios policymakers may be better able to shape future developments and plan for more desirable futures.

Developing countries may find it more useful to consider scenarios for future schooling based on the expertise in their own countries. This approach will give them new perspectives as well as new challenges when developing educational policies. They may focus their concerns on possible and desirable trends, and they may also examine possible but undesirable trends. They can articulate but not necessarily pay attention to outcomes which are not likely to be possible, although they may be desirable (or undesirable).

Developing countries face the urgent and necessary targets of improved socio-economic development, as described in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They have to achieve as close as possible to these goals by 2015. Many developing countries have put much time and many resources into achieving these goals. In the field of education, MDG Goal 2 aims for universal primary education: "To ensure that by 2012, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling." According to the *MDG's Report 2007*, from the United Nations, sub-Saharan Africa is not on track to achieve this goal nor is South Asia (according to the World Bank) [http://ddp-

ext.worldbank.org/ext/GMIS/] (2008.07.02).

Whether the goals will be achieved by 2015 or not depends heavily upon the quantity and quality of policies and inputs. Both governments and donor agencies need to work together to provide resources to increase primary school enrolment. Other issues to be solved include gender inequalities, children's labour issues, parental lack of interest children's education, and limited classroom and school facilities.

Considering the case of developing countries raises many questions. How can we describe the different characteristics of schooling in developing countries? What characterizes schooling at present and what characteristics will remain in future schooling? The six chapters that follow outline some of the commonalities and differences both between the case studies and between developed and developing countries. The discussion in this special issue is based on the premise that there are schools and there will continue to be schools. There is schooling now, and there will be schooling in some form the foreseeable future.

While future schooling scenarios can be devised by anyone, they should be prepared by those who live in the countries or who bring understanding and expertise relevant to the context. Many projects in developing countries have been at the whim of donor countries and aid agencies. Future scenario building is one way of working collaboratively towards a common goal. Perspectives around futures thinking may be different from country to country. To concerned scholars and policymakers these differences are important and significant. We all grapple with the same overarching issues but we may take different paths in solving them. In the choosing of those paths we can all learn from each other and ultimately build a world that shares a common humanity but values the diversity within.

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