

FUTURES THINKING: EMPOWERING LEARNERS FOR TOMORROW

by:

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One of the duties of education is to prepare the learners for the future. But how can this be fulfilled if education itself is not ready for it?

With the development in technology, changes in the environment and complications in the society, there is a need for transformation to make education more relevant and responsive to the needs of the learners. The biggest challenge is to make the students ready for the world that doesn't exist yet. Similarly, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) inquires, "How can we prepare students for jobs that have not yet been created, to tackle societal challenges that we cannot yet imagine, and to use technologies that have not yet been invented?" (OECD, 2019).

In view of this, education leaders, in consultation with other sectors, crafted education plans aligned with the Philippine Development Plan that aims not only to address the major issues confronting Philippine education at present but also the potential demands of the future. Doubly challenging as they seem, these are inevitable realities that have to be dealt with and requires futures thinking.

Futures thinking is a creative and exploratory process that uses divergent thinking, seeking many possible answers and acknowledging uncertainty. It's a different mind-set to analytical thinking which uses convergent thinking to seek the right answer and reduce uncertainty. (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet-New Zealand, 2021). It is not merely attempting to predict the future and assuming that there is only one correct future. Furthermore, Futures Thinking is a cross-disciplinary approach to considering potential

futures through the exploration of trends and drivers for change that may lead to different future scenarios. This includes evaluating what scenarios are possible, probable and preferable futures. (Encounter Edu, 2022).

On the part of the school leaders, their vision should go beyond the premises of their schools. A school's vision is very significant because it is the goal that the school aims to fulfill in the future. Hence, setting of goals and planning for the school should include the school governing council, parents, students, community leaders and planners, economic and private sectors to capture the needs of the society. They must consider the existing situations; trends or present conditions compared to past; drivers or factors causing change; possible and probable future; wild cards or unlikely events that may have big impact on the future; and preferable futures (sciencelear.org.nz, 2017).

Meanwhile, teachers are also highly encouraged to adapt to the call of the changing school setting and the world. John Dewey once said, "If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow." Teachers need to reskill and upskill and rethink and reflect for them to develop learners' futures thinking and 21st Century skills including learning and innovation skills, information, media and technology skills, life and career skills and communication skills.

Lastly, everyone in the education system can contribute to futures thinking through research and innovation. Research results serve as important inputs to decision-making, policy formulation, evidence-based planning and innovations. On the other hand, innovations are new ways of doing things and new actions and solutions to solve problems. With these, education may empower the learners for whatever "future" they may face tomorrow.

References:

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet-New Zealand. (2021, November 3). Retrieved from [dpmc.govt.nz: https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-](https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-)

