

## Million Futures

### Findings

Million Futures is an online tool that presents six questions about future life and learning in the UK. Over the course of the Beyond Current Horizons programme, eight different questions were posed using this tool (six displayed at any one time) to provide the opportunity for anyone who visited the site to enter free text in response to these questions. In addition to the questions, lesson ideas were presented for teachers and students to use Million Futures in a more structured way. The results do not show whether the input was derived from classroom activities or less structured interaction with the site, however some input demonstrates that the answers were co-authored; for example, FL005044 was a response from the pupils of Southfields Junior School or FL003814 (Room 3), others appear to have been entered as part of a school exercise (FL004339 "I hope that I will passed this class"), whilst others are very individual responses (FL003565 "to be the next prime minister").

The limitations of the tool are particularly that it encouraged short responses, which are useful at providing a snapshot of wishes but impossible to extrapolate. For example, although a statement like "to build a better community" perhaps is a worthwhile aim, who constitutes the community and what would make it better is not shared through this site. Further, one question was prominent on the site (other questions required at least one more 'click' to access). This distorts the number of responses to a particular question.

In total, 1,539 entries were made against eight question prompts from 100 different countries. The majority of the site use was from the UK (3,002 visits), with 1,397 visits from the United States. There were more than 150 visits each from Australia, New Zealand, Spain, France and Mexico.

The Million Futures Questions:

No	Question text	Duration (days)	Days as featured question
1	What are your hopes for the future?	339	214
2	What do you want your community to be like?	314	0
3	What's your biggest worry for the future?	339	0
4	What of today's education do you want to see in 2025?	64	40
5	What skills do you think will be important?	314	0
6	What would you not want to see in any future education system?	123	30
7	What do you want your country to be like?	208	0
8	What should education be like for our grandchildren?	257	0

Responses to each question were analysed. We then also analysed data across all question responses against the following themes, which were derived from the BCH challenges and the goals of the scenario development work.

During the analysis a further sub-category emerged (W8) for inputs that did not sit comfortably within the pre-defined list but that clustered around issues of environmental change.

<b>W: World view</b>		<b>E: Education view</b>	
W1	Generations and lifecourse	E1	Educational goals
W2	Identities, citizenship, communities	E2	Educational 'personnel'
W3	Knowledge, creativity and communication	E3	Educational Institutions
W4	Work and employment	E4	Educational methods
W5	State/market/third sector	E5	Educational tools
W6	Scientific and technological	E6	Educational outcomes
W7	Shocks and discontinuities	E7	Beliefs about education
W8	Environment		

## Million Futures questions responses

### Q1: What are your hopes for the future?

This question was the one first displayed when entering the Million Futures site for the first 339 days. It was answered 538 times, which is over a third of all responses. An analysis of the views shows that most had generic aspirations that encompassed large communities: they wanted world peace, to stop wars, to ensure all had a good education and everyone was happy. Given the nature of the question there are also many personal responses, so hopes that they will get a specific job, have a good education, get married, and have some material object. Although a proportion of these are specific hopes for existing families, especially their children, usually on the lines of health, happiness and education. Interestingly technology was rarely mentioned, and when it was there was a concern it was used in a productive manner rather than defining what type of technology would exist.

### Q2: What do you want your community to be like?

This question remained on the site for 314 days and received 120 comments in total. Respondents want their future community to have high levels of social capital, ie be friendly, caring and supportive. They also want their community to be free from violent crime and other social problems such as drugs. In addition, an ideal future community would be diverse and tolerant of difference. Some people elaborated on how such a community might come about in the future. Good quality, clean local facilities (including schools) were often mentioned as having a role in bringing people together and reducing anonymity.

"A community that communicates rather than commutes. Restore smaller units of habitation and work. It has to be easier with the availability of an infrastructure based on modern technology."

"I want my community to have no poverty and much less crime. I would like better schools, stronger families and no drugs."

### **Q3: What's your biggest worry for the future?**

This question remained on the site for 339 days and received 196 comments. The most common theme was about catastrophic global events that are beyond the control of the individual – most commonly climate/environmental collapse or another world war. Indeed many people saw these two things as linked. In addition, quite a number of people mention specific environmental fears about animal extinction and the loss of clean drinking water.

To a lesser extent, people mention their personal worries about the impact of the current or future economic crises, declining health or becoming overweight, the safety of loved ones and so on.

"Irreversible climate change leading to greater scarcity of resources and inter and intra national violence."

"Dying young. Not getting a job and having to work in a supermarket."

### **Q4: What of today's education do you want to see in 2025?**

This question remained on the site for 64 days and received 106 comments<sup>1</sup>. Teachers are seen as absolutely central to education and people want the best teachers to inspire children now and in the future. They also feel it is important that teachers give children a grounding in basic skills such as literacy and numeracy.

Another key theme emerging from responses to this question is that people want learning to be good fun, creative and sociable. For some, this means keeping and developing subjects which engage young people such as music and sport. There was also a clear desire for innovative technology which inspires learning but does not replace personal relationships.

"Dedicated staff who love teaching. Bright hopeful children who love to learn. And... books books books."

"More music and PE facilities and great teachers."

### **Q5: What skills do you think will be important?**

This question remained on the site for 314 days and received 159 comments in total. The reoccurring terms in these comments suggest that communication skills, creativity, using new technology, and lateral thinking were viewed as important skills for the future. Another theme that emerged was the ability to adapt and be flexible (with regards to other cultures, and generally to the world as it changes). Skills to do with being able to source or prepare your own food were also featured in the comments. The term 'learning' appeared frequently, both in relation to possessing learning skills, but also in relation to the concept of being able to 'learn to learn'.

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<sup>1</sup> This question seemed to receive a higher than average number of unusable responses, eg "we'll all be dead". It seems this is because the site/this question was being used as part of a school lesson? Therefore the true sample size is smaller.

### **Q6: What would you not want to see in any future education system?**

This question remained on the site for 123 days and received 207 comments in total. One of the most frequently occurring terms was 'teacher' – mostly in comments suggesting (unsurprisingly) people don't want to see 'bad' teachers (ie ones that are ignorant, incompetent, apathetic, dictatorial, etc). Another concept that emerged was that of 'technology taking over'. Many comments suggested people don't want computers to replace traditional tools or methods, so teachers and students end up relying on technology. Bullying occurred relatively frequently in the comments received, as did the idea of overcrowded classrooms.

### **Q7: What do you want your country to be like?**

This question remained on the site for 208 days and received 42 comments in total. The reoccurring terms in these comments suggest that people want a country they can be proud of ("...and worthy of global respect"), but also one where respect is an integral part of its make-up. Another theme that emerged was that people wanted their country to be full of opportunity. Other features of the ideal country were that it should be friendly, exciting and clean.

### **Q8: What should education be like for our grandchildren?**

This question remained on the site for 257 days and received 94 comments in total. The key reoccurring terms suggest that popular opinion of the future education is that it should be challenging, exciting and fun, fair and relevant to the needs of the individual learner as well as the needs of society. Two other key themes involved the use of digital technologies: which were seen as both important for advancing practice, but also as overbearing of traditional skill development and the ability to work without technologies. The second key theme was the role of teachers, their future role being described as very important as creative, multi-tasking and reactive, though not necessarily tied to a school or subject.

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