

World 1: Trust yourself



Changing work and housing patterns have led to an increase in mobility as people relocate to regions far away from their established communities and social groups, shrinking their horizons to encompass only themselves and their immediate family group. People have been forced to look to themselves for support, rather than relying on any wider social structure, and have become more used to existing independently of others. At the same time, pressure on resources - principally water and energy - and the measures put in place to mitigate the effects of climate warming have constrained people's lives, and led to an increased sense among society that it is better to live within one's means than to be any kind of burden. Taking responsibility for oneself is the preferred response to these pressures, rather than looking to wider society or the government for help or solutions. A new mood of self-reliance has arisen, and with it the conviction that everyone has the right to live their life in the way they want, provided they don't impinge on anyone else trying to do the same thing.



This affects people's notion of citizenship and what it means to be a member of society. Rather than being based on an idea of what individuals might contribute to society, today citizenship is instead centred on an appreciation of what individuals do not take from society. Being a good citizen primarily requires the individual to ask for as little as possible, and to be as self-sufficient as they can be: being a burden on anyone, state or family, is irresponsible and regarded poorly. Individuals should take responsibility for themselves and be able to exist without needing support or impacting negatively on other people. They are stewards, maintaining their particular part of the planet in a way that doesn't interfere with anyone else.

One result of this newfound sense of independence is that the state is expected to do less. It does not play a part in people's everyday lives to any great extent, except insofar as it creates and maintains the conditions for the exercise of their individual liberty. The primary responsibility of the state is to maintain public order and the rule of law, and to provide national defences against the threat of force from other states. It has a mediating role, regulating when necessary (and not before) in cases of conflicting interests or potential monopolies: it has also an administrative role, in that it provides the mechanisms to regulate these interests, though this is a mechanism of last resort given the reluctance of government to be perceived as intervening on a large scale.

Discharging even these few responsibilities is difficult. New social attitudes and modifications to voting systems have led to a greater number of smaller political parties and a larger number of different interests represented at a national level, making it complicated for the state to act in a concerted or agile manner. As a result, citizens need to take much more responsibility for their own well-being. The provision of goods and service is largely privatised, with minimal state support for those without resources and no political support for anything that looks like a handout. Private organisations may support or sponsor local amenities: however, this support is transient and conditional on companies' other interests, and in general it is up to individuals to ensure their own welfare from their own resources and taking preventative measures such as maintaining health and wellbeing through regular exercise and good diet.

For the majority of people, this is in keeping with their principles of self-reliance. The principle of being able to “opt in” to schemes and groups, rather than being under any obligation to sign up to anything, is fiercely adhered to, even to the extent that language around memberships that are in all practical lights compulsory is framed in terms of voluntary association. When it is necessary to work with other people towards a common aim, organisations and associations come together out of self-interest, with strictly limited charters. Individuals are part of these groups for only minimal periods, working in effect to remove the need for the group’s existence.

The only group to which this transient attitude does not apply is the family. The family unit in this world is central, being in effect the first and last resort outside the individual. Family members provide support for each other across generations - parents helping children with access to education or a deposit for a house, children organising care for older parents - in the understanding that if these responsibilities are not exercised then the alternatives may be beyond the resources of many. Societal responsibilities in particular belong to the family, rather than the state or other organisations: they are accountable for the behaviour of children before the age of majority, with penalties for anti-social behaviour falling on family members and debts or other obligations left unfulfilled becoming the responsibility of other family members.

The composition of the family unit is more varied than in the early years of the century. Mothers are frequently older, with the consequence in some cases that they are actively contributing to childcare for less time. Traditional child-rearing (and bearing) roles, however, have expanded, with child-care responsibilities spread across genders and ages: this is a reflection of greater numbers of people choosing to exercise their individual right to construct their own family groups outside limiting notions of the “nuclear family”. Family units constituted around same-sex couples are increasing, as are diverse forms of parenthood (surrogacy, donation, adoption and so on).

These ties and responsibilities are the site of a key tension in this world, centred around the obligations between parents and children. On the one hand, families can act as a valuable source of support in the face of a highly individualistic society. On the other, the strong sense of personal identity current amongst individuals mitigates against their choosing to accept these obligations. Some place greater emphasis on “kinship” ties and the obligations that flow between them, with a broadening of the notion of “kinship” to include notions of fostering and adoption, patronage or warding. Others feel less obligation to acknowledge kinship ties that reduce their mobility and impinge on their ability to follow opportunities. The first option tends to be preferred within groups lacking resources and capital of various sorts, amongst older people and parents, while the second option is frequently preferred by offspring who are currently adequately resourced, or by poorer immigrant groups who resent supporting a population of older strangers.



Families are also an important site for informal economies - not just childcare or working in the family firm, but places where members can participate in exchanges of labour or

offer support for entrepreneurial activities, making use of resources that are hard to come by in the wider world. One example of this kind of support is the family data vault: cloud computing is perceived as risky and counter to notions of self-sufficiency and personal responsibility, and consequently some family groups have invested in secure data storage and management located within the home.



The family is the source of the “family curriculum”, addressing long-term values and attitudes towards society and the self that aren’t the direct concern or interest of any other group (for example, sex and relationship education). This informal curriculum varies a great deal between family groups. The family is also a site of play and exploration, valued as fostering the sorts of behaviours and habits that support self-reliance and independence. Board games and other formal rule-based games are used to support group play, reinforcing the idea that co-operation can only come about when mediated by rules and strict

processes, but more free and open-ended play and exploration are valued in children as demonstrating independence, autonomy and a spirit of enquiry. There is an expectation that children should be able to amuse themselves. This is supported by a general tendency towards “free range” parenting, with children afforded greater autonomy and mobility. A general feature of this world is that children are more readily viewed as individuals, and consequently afforded greater autonomy and independence, though perhaps at times they might appreciate more support or nurturing.

Play is important. However, work is more central to many aspects of life in this world, with many elements of society previously addressed by the public sector moving to the workplace. Many formerly public services are now the responsibility of the individual. There is a straightforward imperative to earn money and maintain savings in order to live a mainstream or conventional life. Consequently, being in employment of some kind, or at least ensuring some form of income, is a vital pre-requisite for existence.¹

Individual qualifications and accreditation are vital to gaining employment: for those that lack appropriate qualifications, employers increasingly accept the chance to examine an individual’s personal life stream, comprised of data aggregated throughout their encounters with other employers, contact with medical and educational institutions, and other personal data that may be relevant to a potential employer. In theory, an individual has as much right to reveal this sort of data as they have to keep it private, though there are concerns that those without qualifications are more likely to be forced to allow employers to assess their character and personal history than others, with all the room for discrimination and hypocrisy that entails. However, employers can’t deny

¹ The idea of being able to work throughout one’s life is not a given. Shirley Dex in her paper “Review of future of paid and unpaid work, informal work, homeworking, the place of work in the family (women single parents, workless households), benefits, work attitudes motivation and obligation” points out that older people are currently having difficulty finding work, although part time employment is already increasing in this age group. www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk/review-of-future-of-paid-and-unpaid-work-informal-work-homeworking-the-place-of-work-in-the-family-women-single-parents-workless-households-benefits-work-attitudes-motivation-and-obligation

people their opportunity to work on the basis of religion, gender or other personal attributes. Equal opportunity in general is protected, in keeping with the dominant idea that everybody has the right to try to succeed. Employment law has taken this on, together with many other of the unions' historic concerns.

Employers are no longer prepared to invest in education "for the common good", and instead reserve their taxes for delivery of skills and educational training to meet their particular needs. Training and development thereby become a contractual relationship between individual and employer - there is a sense of an exchange between the two - and are offered in exchange for commitment and loyalty, two qualities that do not otherwise come naturally to people. The new awareness within industry and corporate organisations that they must take responsibility for ensuring the skills they need to exist within the workforce has seen the notion of lifelong learning embraced more fully than in previous decades: indeed, the understanding that the skills for a particular role will be learnt within that role is sufficiently widespread that the term "lifelong learning" is little-used, though it retains its remedial sense when it is. Education in early life, from family and the state, has supported the development within individuals of general learning skills - it is the responsibility of industry to support the development of specific workplace skills, both technical or vocational skills and more general management and interpersonal abilities.².



Working for an employer is not the only way to earn money, of course, and in a world so concerned with independence there is plenty of support for self-employment, at least in terms of advice and de-regulation: loans and capital are still difficult. Sites of innovation and entrepreneurship are highly visible, and since most universities ceased to be public institutions, they in particular act as incubators for bringing new products and ideas to the market. The rhetoric of "being your own boss" has diffused throughout the workplace, with a majority of people in the workforce feeling that they are in charge of their work choices, mixing and matching their occupations and acquisition of new skills to suit their life choices. For those who would traditionally have been freelance consultants, this is little different; for those lower down the pay scale, the return for being able to talk about their career in such independent terms is often longer hours. The idea of "portfolio working" for many people is frequently less a selection of part-time activities that add up to full-time employment than it is a selection of full-time jobs. A culture of hard work and self-reliance can conceal overwork and economic hardship.

There is increased activity within informal economies, a reflection of people's reluctance to involve the state in their lives and a determination to live life on their own terms, not mainstream corporate society's terms. Not everyone depends on money to support their

² The key issues highlighted by researchers that need to be tackled if workplace learning, vocational educational training (VET) and lifelong learning are to be better connected and to evolve and improve can be found in Lorna Unwin's paper "Connecting Workplace Learning and VET to Lifelong Learning" www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk/connecting-workplace-learning-and-vet-to-lifelong-learning

chosen lifestyle, with many subsisting on a combination of personal labour and exchanges of skills with others.

Some support themselves or supplement their primary income by participating in the flourishing creative economy. This is a liberal society founded on values that support and encourage self-expression, and the creative arts flourish accordingly. However, the lack of state support for the arts, and the collapse of traditional media business models have created a climate where artists and creators have a very different relationship with their audiences and the commercial world. Many different business models exist. Sponsorship of artists by individual brands is common and has led to a new form of the patronage once enjoyed by classical composers. For others, their art is subsidised by other elements of their work portfolio, or supported through directly engaging with a hard core of their audience at a grass roots level. Their audiences engage with them in a landscape defined by the death of analogue television and the reduced role of public service broadcasting. The BBC brand still exists, as a subscription channel and as a content reseller repurposing its archives, but the notion of a national broadcasting effort intended to “educate, inform and entertain” supported through public subscription has vanished.

The media landscape is more fragmented, with dissemination channels specialising in particular themes and interests. This move away from homogeneity is evident in people’s consumer choices as well. Shops and products that appear clearly differentiated from generic, national chains and offer consumers something that feels unique are successful. There is an increasing tendency for those who are able to produce their own food, mend rather than replace their clothes and to carry out repairs to property and belongings themselves: this DIY culture reflects the importance of self-reliance. Individuals are producers as much as they are consumers, turning what might in earlier days have been thought of as hobbies and leisure pursuits into something closer to work. Not all free time is spent in digital cottage industries: leisure is often as much for retreat from a tiring and often bruising world. Solitary sports and pursuits are valued, such as climbing or running, and outdoor pursuits are popular, both for the opportunities they present for individual mastery and the conquering of nature and for the personal value of experiencing the sublime³.

Education

Goals and outcomes

The underlying and fundamental question for education is “who am I?” - education is a means of supporting an ongoing and continual process of becoming for the individual. The aim for all learners in this world is to resource themselves at all levels, from basic survival to self-actualisation. Learning is a route to ensuring individual security through self-reliance, providing oneself with the skills and



³ This whole argument raises the importance of the work-life balance; how can we ensure that it exists and can be seen outside of equating family and employment issues? This is discussed in Terence Hogarth’s paper “Future Horizons for Work-life Balance”.

www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk/future-horizons-for-work-life-balance

dispositions necessary to exist and adapt with minimal recourse to support from others. Learners are offering more choices to their future selves. For some, this manifests itself in the pursuit of basic skills and functional abilities in practical disciplines: for others, their educational efforts are focussed more explicitly on the construction of the self in a process of flourishing and becoming⁴.

While these general points are reckoned to underpin all education, in reality there are three different and sometimes competing groups with a stake in education - the state, employers and the family. The state needs to ensure a minimal level of education in order to socialise people effectively, and provides this for early years and primary learners. The priority is to make sure that people have bought into the values and beliefs that underpin society, rather than to provide learners with any particular sets of skills.

Employers take responsibility for ensuring that the skills they need exist in the workforce, developing skills directly suited to the workplace, either through sponsoring further education institutions or providing opportunities within their organisations (this has replaced what used to be thought of as vocational training). One feature of this approach is that it has led to the creation of a vastly expanded market for “training wheels” courses and fast-track, modular offerings from educational institutions, in order to support gaps within learners’ experiences and to provide the kind of flexibility demanded of them by learners shaping their own learning histories.

The family group is the only one of the three directly concerned with the long-term interests of the learner. As well as helping to guide individual family members through the education system in a way that results in the most useful qualifications and routes of access to employment, families are expected to foster moral values, coping and emotional skills and useful habits of mind, such as focus and discipline.

There is great emphasis on offering learners choice, and as a consequence there is huge diversity amongst educational providers. Market competition has led to the creation of more specialist institutions of higher and further learning, often funded entirely by consortia of industry partners and located within business premises. Outside the mainstream of work-related provision, there are many alternative pedagogic approaches, some based on historic educational efforts such as Steiner and Montessori schools, others based on pseudo-scientific approaches towards learning, still others intended to further ideological or cultural agendas.

These features and goals of education are shaped by the nature of the society described above. Below, we present two different possibilities for education in this world. In one, the values of the world and the characteristics outlined above have led to an education system capable of sustaining itself and wider society in that form. In the other, these values and features have given rise to an education system that is unsustainable and must eventually lead to change.

⁴ For a broader discussion on the role of schools and education see the paper “Arenas for learning and the road to citizenship” by Oskar Lindwall and his colleagues.

Scenario 1: Informed choice

The state has gradually reduced its role in many areas of public life, including education, in keeping with the widespread appetite for minimising government. This leisurely pace of withdrawal has ensured that the many different providers of education have had time to evolve a system of education that is able to accommodate their diverse requirements. Industry, mainstream education providers, universities and sites of further education, families and learners themselves have been able to work together and let a patchwork learning landscape emerge: all these stakeholders have recognised that it is in their own interests to ensure that lines of communication and representation exist that allow them to work towards their own ends in awareness of other groups' activity. In particular, the hearts and minds of industry and the commercial sector have been won by the argument that training the workforce for the short term is ultimately a short-sighted approach, and that they are well-placed to foster the development of longer-term workplace skills, such as those that support good management practice or interpersonal relationships. This has been a slow and cautious process, much like the process of switching from analogue to digital television in the early part of the century, but one that has given people time to adapt and an opportunity to respond, resulting in a system well-placed to integrate different and potentially conflicting needs. Crucially, this system is able to recognise the equivalences between different experiences that are needed for different life careers to be equally valued: this interoperability is necessary if people are able to move between different spaces within this patchwork.



Learning is a bespoke, life-long journey

Establishing such a system of mutual independence has been made possible through a common understanding of education as a long-term process, one centred on the learner's history and experience. Learning is seen as a process that looks forward and looks back along a journey lasting the length of the lifecourse. Running throughout all areas of education and underlying the majority of learning encounters is a pedagogy of recognition and acknowledgement: the central questions for educators are "What does the learner bring? Where have they been?" An individual's personal history and context are recognised as providing essential context for their learning experiences. This



Coherent individuals, comprising a range of skills, competencies, interests and experiences

approach is one that lends itself easily to supporting what used to be called "lifelong learning", in that these questions can be as easily asked of a teenager as they can be of their grandparents. Indeed, it's understood that richer and deeper learning experiences are often enjoyed by older people who have amassed more experience that can be brought to bear on their education.

The locus of activity and agency is the individual, and it is their responsibility to direct their own personal learning journey, choosing areas of

interest, identifying new directions and disciplines, selecting the most appropriate forum for addressing their particular learning need. However, in this they are supported by mentors from their learning institutions, their place of work or other communities who value apprenticing or other means of inducting learners into their communities of practice. These mentors are at the heart of the decision-making process, ensuring that the choices made by the learner are right for them, advising them on the educational offerings that might be available to them and encouraging them to consider their future goals and see their learning choices as part of a coherent educational trajectory. The emphasis on recognising learners' personal and educational histories presents risks for those who might be limited or constrained by their learning careers to date - mentors have a role to play in ensuring that this isn't the case.



Build a curriculum with your mentor that takes account of your history & long term needs

Paying for mentorship, whether as part of a school or as a private tutor, is a burden that falls on the family group⁵. They have an additional role to play in delivering the "family curriculum", using available resources and capital: this is often simply an informal commitment to passing on values and attitudes that the family and wider community feel would be beneficial to individual learners, often expressed in an emphasis on the "educational" benefit of certain activities. Families have always done this to some extent - the difference today is that these activities are much more frequent and the learning aims more explicit, reflecting both the greater educational burden placed on the family unit and the greater depth to which learning is embedded in areas of life outside formal education. Learning is not necessarily a replication of parents' ideas of classroom learning, however: there is a great emphasis on play and its relationship with learning, at all ages, with particular emphasis on play's capacity for encouraging autonomous behaviour and independent exploration.



Learning is a route to self-reliance and security, to becoming who and what you want to be

Children especially are expected to be able to amuse themselves and to have experienced boredom at some point. This is not purely to support the development of independent thought, but also a reflection of the way children are thought of. Childhood is a state frequently idolised as a time of innocence and freedom from responsibility; however, placing anything on a pedestal is a way of avoiding engaging with it, and children are often

⁵ The paper "The dynamic relationship between knowledge, identities, communities and culture" by Ken Jones looks at the impact of wealth on educational achievement; an issue that is important if it is the family that is responsible for delivering not only a family curriculum but the access to educational support in general. www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk/the-dynamic-relationship-between-knowledge-identities-communities-and-culture

placed in the position of taking responsibility for their own lives earlier than they might want.

Whatever the specific context of a particular learning experience, such an emphasis on a single lifelong learning journey means that outcomes of education are evaluated in the context of the learner's previous and subsequent learning experiences. Was it a natural progression from their previous learning experiences? Does it support their next step? Assessment is an iterative process, embedded in learning activities and providing a picture of the development of the learner over time, using the opportunities for recording, organising and presenting personal data offered by new technology.



Learning technologies take account of your past experience and present needs

Scenario 2: Independent consumers



Learning is an individual responsibility, educational providers are suppliers responsible for ensuring quality of delivery

Here, political expediency and public appetites for action have supported a rapid and concerted reconfiguration of the educational system by the state, changing state provision of education radically. Building on the early 21st century commitment to personalisation and choice, supported by the widespread belief in new models of education, the state has taken a much smaller role in delivery of education, making transparent many of the relationships and processes that were already in place in the early part of the century.

There has been a move away from a national curriculum, assessment and inspection as a result of a rhetoric of freedom that encouraged teachers, schools and wider society to see the government as removing obstacles to "doing what you do best" and enabling them to set their own curricula and targets.

The emphasis has been on the efficient use of public money, "tough medicine" and "cutting out the rotten wood". The speed with which this reconfiguration has been accomplished has left little time for avoiding collateral damage. In particular, the educational landscape encountered after minimal state schooling is fragmented and incoherent: the changes may have been the result of an ideological push, but there is no unifying ideology to bring the diverse providers of education



The learner has a clear understanding of their immediate needs

together in a common understanding of the goals of education.

This results in a widespread conception of education as a short-term process, in which the locus of agency and responsibility for identifying areas of educational engagement rests entirely with the individual, who is thought of not as a point on a lifelong journey but as a bundle of present needs and requirements.

Teachers as mentors still exist, but their role is broadly to help learners to find their own direction and to take responsibility for making their educational choices themselves, rather than to address wider issues of personal development or to equip them to evaluate their learning choices in the context of their educational career and future goals. A pedagogy of enquiry supposedly underlies this approach, in which learners are encouraged to ask themselves, "What do I need to learn? What am I interested in?" However, mentors frequently direct their efforts towards simply training learners to address only their short-term, immediate needs, looking for specific learning opportunities to overcome particular barriers, rather than fostering long-term dispositions or attitudes. The learner is the true motive force behind learning, and those who lack personal drive or motivation suffer⁶.



You are responsible for shaping your own curriculum and educational decisions



Technology enables learners to tailor a wide variety of educational experiences around their own needs

One source of this drive and motivation is the family. The family group has become vital in providing support for learners, now that so much responsibility for their own progress has been devolved to them: not only do they help learners find motivation, but they also help learners to set their own learning directions, demand accountability and value for money from learning institutions, ensure funds exist to support access to learning activities and make sure that learners have time and space to work through their courses undisturbed. There is often less time available for play, or any activity that seems frivolous: the focus is on collecting qualifications.

Learning is valorised as the pathway to success, with more time spent acquiring accreditation being equated to more success in life, and a direct relationship imagined between passing exams and having better jobs.

⁶ Section 6 of the paper "The R&D, knowledge, innovation triangle: education and economic performance" by Derek Bosworth looks at the need to encourage self motivated learners.
www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk/the-rd-knowledge-innovation-triangle-education-and-economic-performance

The focus on the acquisition of accreditation has led to the separation of the process of evaluation from the learning processes that prepare learners for evaluation. Companies and institutions offer examinations and evaluation activities as standalone products, based on standardised pedagogies and curricula that enable learners to put their own learning plans together by combining off-the-shelf packaged learning activities according to their perceived learning needs, before taking the final exam at their convenience (or when they can afford it). Bright learners or ones prepared to gamble might choose to prepare minimally for these standardised tests: well-resourced or more cautious learners might choose to invest more. Major employers and multinational companies prefer learners and employees to choose their own learning activities: this ensures standardisation of skills across the workforce, as well as a ready market for their course materials. For learners, using a recognised company's learning materials provides reassurance, not just that the skills addressed are relevant to the company, but that they can expect a certain level of quality. Trusted brands have an advantage in a crowded and diverse marketplace.



The translation of education into qualifications is critical for building a secure career and personal trajectory

This document has been commissioned as part of the UK Department for Children, Schools and Families' Beyond Current Horizons project, led by Futurelab. The views expressed do not represent the policy of any Government or organisation, and do not make any predictions about future events. For more information see <http://www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk/>