

2020 and beyond

Future scenarios for education in the age of new technologies

http://www.futurelab.org.uk/resources/documents/opening_education/2020_and_beyond.pdf

This publication is intended to challenge and disturb some of the assumptions underlying these discussions by reviewing current predictions about the development in capacities of digital technologies between now and 2020.

In producing this brief paper, we want to ask the questions:

- To what extent are we prepared, as a society and as educators, for the massive changes in human capabilities that digital technologies are likely to enable in the next 13 years?
- To what extent are our future visions for education based upon assumptions about humanity, society and technology that are no longer valid?
- To what extent can we, as educators, help to shape the developments of technology in order to enhance human development?

Predicting the future, of course, is notoriously unreliable. We only have to look back to the 1970s to witness the prediction that only three computers would be required worldwide, for example; or to the 1960s to witness predictions that we would shortly be living on the moon in fetching silver jumpsuits. The pace of technological change is both more rapid than we can ever predict, and monumentally slower than we had thought possible. This is not only because it is sometimes harder to achieve the breakthroughs that we had intended, or indeed easier because developments in one field unexpectedly assist researchers in another (think of the implications for human genomics of the massive increase in computer processing power over the last ten years). It is also because technologies enter into already existing social spaces – they are shaped by the existing social practices, human interactions and values that they encounter outside the laboratory. Again, we only have to look to the history of the record player to see how social practice can transform a technology – this device was originally intended as a personal recording machine rather than a replay tool which would spawn an entire industry and transform musical practices around the world.

Why, then, should educators consider some of the current predictions for developments in digital technologies?

If educators are to shape the future of education (and not have it shaped for them by external technical developments) it is crucial that we engage with developments in digital technologies at the earliest stages. We need to understand what may be emerging, explore its implications for education, and understand how best we might harness these changes. Without this early engagement we risk, as always, being the Cinderella sector of the technology world – constantly receiving the hand-me-downs from the business, defence and leisure industries and then trying to repurpose them for educational goals. Without this early engagement, we also risk designing educational practices and approaches that will be rendered obsolete and anachronistic in the context of new human-technological capabilities.

As Douglas Adams once observed, **“the best way to predict the future is to build it”**. We need to know the building blocks available to us as educators in the near future in order to know how we might use them and develop them for education.

Texto de <http://www.futurelab.org.uk/> el 19/9/2008