

Scenarios for the Future of Schooling

Introduction

The chapter presents six scenarios constructed through the OECD/CERI programme on “Schooling for Tomorrow”. Their purpose is to sharpen understanding of how schooling might develop in the years to come and the potential role of policy to help shape these futures. While this does not exhaust approaches to forward-looking policy thinking, scenario development is a particularly effective way of bringing together the “big picture” of strategic aims, the long-term processes of change, and multiple sets of variables. Perhaps surprisingly, forward thinking of this kind has been relatively little developed in education compared with other policy sectors, despite education’s fundamental characteristic of yielding benefits over very long time spans. Former Swedish Education Minister Ylva Johansson, in her conclusions as Chair of the Rotterdam conference described forward-thinking approaches in education as “woefully under-developed”. A major challenge for policy-making in this field is both to make it more genuinely long-term in vision and to integrate more effectively knowledge about education and its wider environment into the process of reflection and governance.

Proposing several scenarios underlines that there is not one pathway into the future but many, and they should not be expected to emerge in a “pure” form. Distilling the infinite range of possible futures into a limited number of polar “types”, however, stimulates consideration of the strategic choices to be confronted and the principal dimensions of change. The scenarios invite the questions: *a*) how probable, and *b*) how desirable, each is. These questions have been analysed by Hutmacher in this volume (Chapter 12) using

Need for policy reflection on long-term future of schooling...

... and for clarifying the desirable and the possible

earlier versions of these scenarios. The task for policy thinking is to consider what might be done to bring the probable and desirable as closely as possible into alignment, making the more desirable futures more likely, and *vice versa*.

The OECD schooling scenarios

The OECD “Schooling for Tomorrow” scenarios combine different elements – trends, plausible inter-relationships between clusters of variables, and guiding policy ideas. They are thus neither purely empirical (predictions) nor purely normative (visions). They have been constructed as alternatives for schooling *per se* rather than as educational extrapolations based on scenarios developed for other fields – the social, economic, technological, environmental, cultural, etc. – though, of course, education is strongly influenced by such factors.

These schooling scenarios have been constructed in a time frame of approximately 15 to 20 years – long enough for significant change to occur beyond immediate political cycles, but not so far off as to be remote to any but futurists and visionaries. The interest is as much in the intervening processes of change as in the fully-fledged scenarios themselves. They may be considered either as stable “steady-states” or as more volatile, and hence likely to set further cycles of change in train. The scenarios are bounded in age terms, covering organised learning from birth up to around completion of secondary education. It is for children and young people of this age range that public responsibility for education is most highly developed in OECD countries, raising a distinct set of policy issues compared with later learning for adults organised through highly diverse arrangements. The six scenarios are not specific to the primary or secondary phases, though it can be expected that certain aspects would apply more directly to one or other of these cycles.

**Two OECD scenarios
extrapolating
the status quo,
two describing
“re-schooling”
futures, two
“de-schooling”**

Two of the scenarios are posited on the continued unfolding of existing models (The “status quo extrapolated”), two describe the substantial strengthening of schools with new dynamism, recognition and purpose (described as “Re-schooling”), while the two final scenarios portray future worlds that witness a significant decline in the position of schools (“De-schooling”).

<i>The “status quo extrapolated”</i>	<i>The “re-schooling” scenarios</i>	<i>The “de-schooling” scenarios</i>
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”

To facilitate comparison, the scenarios have been constructed within a common framework of clusters of variables that were identified as critical dimensions in determining the shape of school systems: *a) Attitudes, expectations, political support; b) Goals and functions for schooling; c) Organisation and structures; d) The geo-political dimension; e) The teaching force.* Each scenario refers to the systemic “centres of gravity” of schooling arrangements rather than descriptions of particular schools or local cases. While, for instance, there will already be some examples of schools in OECD countries that fit the “re-schooling” features of Scenarios 3 and 4, these would only come about when the large majority of schools can be described as “key social centres” or as “focused learning organisations”.

Scenarios referring to whole systems, not individual cases

The “status quo extrapolated”

Scenario 1: “Robust bureaucratic school systems”

- **Strong bureaucracies and robust institutions**
- **Vested interests resist fundamental change**
- **Continuing problems of school image and resourcing**

This scenario is built on the continuation of dominant school systems, characterised by strong bureaucratic elements and pressures towards uniformity. Despite education being to the fore on political agendas, robust schools and systems prove to be extremely resistant to radical change, because of the strength of the vested interests of the powerful stakeholders. Resource levels do not pass the thresholds that would allow longstanding criticisms of schools to be laid to rest or quality to be generally assured.

Scenario 1: strong bureaucratic systems resisting radical change...

New tasks and responsibilities are continually added to the remit of schools, in the face of the problems arising within the other core socialisation settings of family and community, causing schools' financial and human resources to be continually stretched. The norms of completed years spent by students in schools and initial education continue to go up, and the diplomas so gained are widely regarded as the main passports to the next stages of life (though in reality the links are more complex). Despite repeated policy initiatives, the educational inequalities that reflect unequal social and residential home backgrounds/environments prove extremely resilient.

... while performing fundamental tasks not always well recognised

While schools are continually criticised for being outdated and slow to change – accusations such as being excessively bureaucratic, with teachers wedded to traditional instruction methods – some inertia may simply be inherent in the nature of school systems. It may only be expected in societies that expect a great deal from schools, seeking to include all young people for ever-longer time periods with ever-fuller curricula, while being unwilling to invest on the very large scale that might bring about fundamental, as opposed to incremental, change. Societies,

Scenario I

<i>Attitudes, expectations, political support</i>	<p>Education, especially schooling, is politicised, and to the fore in party politics.</p> <p>Despite continued grumbling about the state of schools from parents, employers and the media, most are basically opposed to radical change. More positive attitudes held towards local than overall provision.</p> <p>Possibilities for “playing the system” are important in ensuring the continued support of schools by educated parents resulting in pressure for the greater exercise of choice.</p>
<i>Goals and functions</i>	<p>Much attention focuses on the curriculum, with many countries operating a common curriculum and assessment system – aimed at enforcing standards or creating greater formal equality or both.</p> <p>Formal certificates seen as main passports to economic/social life – but while increasingly necessary are increasingly insufficient.</p> <p>Larger relative numbers and greater diversity of “older young” in initial education as the norm continues of staying on longer and longer.</p> <p>Continuing inequalities alongside policy endeavours to combat failure.</p>

Strong bureaucratic character of schools and systems continues. Dominance of the classroom/individual teacher model, but some room for innovation and of developing schools as learning organisations. Increased ICT use in schools but not radical change to organisational structures of teaching and learning. Growing but patchy connections between educational and “non-educational” community uses of school facilities.

Organisations and structures

The nation (or state/province in federal systems) still the main locus of political authority but squeezed by:

- decentralisation to schools and communities;
- new corporate and media interests in the learning market and;
- globalising pressures, including growing use of international surveys of educational performance.

The geo-political dimension

Highly distinct teacher corps, sometimes with civil service status. Strong unions and associations in many countries and centralised industrial relations. Professional status and rewards problematic in most countries. “Craft” models of professionalism remain strong. Growing attention to professional development (INSET), and efforts to retain teachers. This is partly in the face of major teacher supply problems, exacerbated by ageing.

The teaching force

including parents, may well prefer only gradual evolution in their schools. This scenario also recognises that schools perform many fundamental tasks (looking after children, providing protected space for interaction and play, socialisation, sorting and selection) that generally pass unnoticed compared with the obvious ones of imparting literacy, numeracy, disciplinary knowledge, and diplomas (Hutmacher, 1999). The question then is: “If schools systems were not in place for these purposes, what alternatives would serve them better?” Fragmentation in families and communities, the other settings in which children are socialised, reinforces the pertinence of this question (see Scenario 3).

Yet, even if school systems are excessively bureaucratic and slow to create such dynamism themselves, there may now be developments in train that will force disruption to the status quo. Among the most important of these factors are the growing power of learners and parents as “consumers”; the impact of ICT in eroding established school and classroom boundaries; and a potential crisis of teacher supply. (These factors are reflected in the scenarios outlined below,

New forces – such as ICTs or teacher crisis – may still break open the “status quo”

including “extending the market model”, “learner networks and the network society”, and “teacher exodus – ‘the melt-down’ scenario”.) It remains to be seen whether schools can accommodate such pressures, as they have many times before, or whether there will be major ruptures with the past.

Scenario 2: “Extending the market model”

- ***Widespread dissatisfaction leads to re-shaping public funding and school systems***
- ***Rapid growth of demand-driven “market currencies”, indicators and accreditation***
- ***Greater diversity of providers and professionals, greater inequality***

Scenario 2: market approaches to schooling expanding significantly...

Trends towards more market-oriented schooling models – of organisation, delivery and management – are much closer to the experience and cultures of some countries than others. In this scenario, these trends are extended significantly in the face of widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of relatively uniform structures of public school systems and with existing funding arrangements to provide cost-effective solutions. In response to these pressures, governments encourage diversification and the emergence of new learning providers through funding structures, incentives and de-regulation, and discover considerable market potential, nationally and internationally. Significant injections of private household and corporate finance are stimulated.

... stimulating widespread innovation, but creating difficult transitions and widening inequalities

New market “currencies” of indicators, measures, and accreditation of both learners and providers flourish, while direct public monitoring and curriculum regulation decline. Public education, schools and the government role do not disappear, despite greater privatisation and more mixed public/private partnerships, though outcomes depend greatly on the funding and regulation regimes being introduced and may differ significantly between the primary and secondary levels. In an atmosphere of shake-up, innovation and imaginative solutions abound as do painful experiences of the transitions. Alongside the positive features of fresh thinking are the seriously

enhanced risks of inequality and exclusion and of the public school system being relegated to “residual” status.

The development of a much more market-oriented model for schooling is likely to depend on a number of factors. It would be fuelled by a substantial sense of dissatisfaction with established provision among “strategic consumers”, especially articulate-middle class parents and political parties, combined with a culture where schooling is already viewed as much as a private as a public good. Wide differences of educational performance would add weight to the criticisms, while the significant development of the “market model” in schooling would itself be supported by a degree of social tolerance of inequality. The nature of the teaching force could be a determining factor. A crisis of teacher supply (see Scenario 6) might well quicken the search for market-based models as it would for other alternatives. And, while a fragmented teaching force might be conducive to such changes through its impotence to resist them, a monolithic profession resisting innovation could conceivably produce the same result.

The business environment is likely to be highly influential, but in which direction is not necessarily clear-cut. On the one hand, more aggressive entrepreneurial cultures might be best for identifying new markets and approaches that break with convention. On the other, highly developed traditions of human resource development, with a deep understanding of “soft skills” and learning, might be needed to generate successful demand-oriented approaches of competence development, measurement and accreditation. Political tradition and government action would clearly be critical – in setting market terms, encouraging alternative forms of supply, permitting the exercise of demand. Its role would also be important in managing what could be a painful set of transition processes. Such responsibilities notwithstanding, this scenario assumes a diminished direct government role in provision.

There is substantial interest in market approaches in some countries and quarters and many pertinent developments (hence this scenario is included in “The status quo extrapolated”). But, they cover a bewildering variety: the enhanced exercise of parental choice, including in some

Dissatisfaction by “strategic consumers”: impetus for market solutions

Entrepreneurial and political cultures’ influence on schooling, but in which direction?

Many existing market examples but how far should they be extended in schooling?

Scenario 2

Attitudes, expectations, political support	<p>Significant reduced belief in the value of public education overall. Possible funding “revolts” by taxpayers.</p> <p>Divergent and conflicting positions expressed. Teachers’ associations unable to resist moves to greater privatisation.</p> <p>A political culture develops that supports extended competition across many areas of social, employment, and cultural policy.</p> <p>The stability of new market solutions highly dependent on how well they meet perceived shortcomings.</p>
Goals and functions	<p>Different indicators and accreditation arrangements become basic to market operations; “efficiency” and “quality” are prominent criteria. Decline of established curriculum structures defined in terms of programmes and delivery, re-defined as outcomes.</p> <p>Alongside strong focus on knowledge and skills, values and attitudes – such as attitudes to risk, co-operation and hard work – may be prominent and hence recognised as outcomes. Market-oriented schooling may also, in response to demand, allow greater reflection of cultural/religious beliefs.</p> <p>Stronger emphasis on information, guidance and marketing – some publicly organised, much private.</p> <p>Substantial tolerance of wide inequalities and exclusion. Possible tendency for greater homogeneity of learner groups.</p> <p>Lifelong learning becomes the norm for many. Clear boundaries for “staying on” in school lose meaning in the face of diversified educational careers.</p>
Organisations and structures	<p>Privatisation, public/private partnerships, voucher systems, and diverse management are the norm. Individualisation and home schooling flourish.</p> <p>Greater experimentation with organisational forms. Many existing programmes disappear.</p> <p>Possible big differences emerge between the primary and secondary sectors, with market models more strongly developed at secondary level.</p> <p>Markets develop in childcare and culture, not just employment-related learning.</p> <p>ICT is much more extensively and imaginatively exploited for learning.</p> <p>Networking flourishes where tangible gains perceived by all parties; otherwise competition inhibits co-operation. Copyright issues acute.</p>
The geo-political dimension	<p>Substantially reduced role for central providers and public education authorities. They still oversee market regulation, but much less traditional “steering” and “monitoring”.</p> <p>International providers and accreditation agencies become more powerful, but strong players, many private, operate at each level – local, national, international.</p> <p>Much more diverse set of stake-holders involved in educational governance.</p> <p>Funding arrangements, including absolute levels of resources, are critical in shaping new learning markets.</p>
The teaching force	<p>Less distinct teaching force, a wide range of new professionals with diverse profiles – public, private; full-time, part-time. Potential quality issues.</p> <p>The new “teaching professionals” in ready supply in areas of residential desirability and/or learning market opportunity. Otherwise, problems of shortages and speed of market adjustment.</p> <p>Flourishing training and accreditation for professionals to operate in the learning market.</p> <p>Transition problems until new markets become embedded.</p>

cases through vouchers; the involvement of the private sector in the running of schools or parts of systems; substantial household contributions for supplementary private tuition as in Japan or Korea, or for attendance at private schools (such as the oddly-named English “public schools”); the public funding of “private” institutions organised by particular cultural, religious or citizen groups; the corporate promotion of the e-learning market, and others. Is education a frontier on the point of being breached by the profit motive or is it so distinct that it will continue to resist? Much might turn on the *level* of education in question. Flourishing corporate initiatives in the ICT learning market at tertiary level, for example, stand in contrast with modest growth in schools. The further question then is about where the main boundaries will be drawn in the applicability of this scenario – between secondary and tertiary (in which case it would not be a schooling scenario as such)? Between lower and upper secondary? Between primary and lower secondary?

The “re-schooling” scenarios

Scenario 3: “Schools as core social centres”

- *High levels of public trust and funding*
- *Schools as centres of community and social capital formation*
- *Greater organisational/professional diversity, greater social equity*

In this scenario, the school comes to enjoy widespread recognition as the most effective bulwark against social fragmentation and a crisis of values. There is a strong sense of schooling as a “public good” and a marked upward shift in the general status and level of support for schools. The individualisation of learning is tempered by a clear collective emphasis. Greater priority is accorded to the social/community role of schools, with more explicit sharing of programmes and responsibilities with the other settings of further and continuing education/training. Poor areas in particular enjoy high levels of support (financial, teaching, expertise and other community-based resources).

Scenario 3: schools as high status, community institutions providing bulwark against fragmentation

Greater resource equality, experimentation, school autonomy, and shared roles...

Overall, schools concentrate more on laying the cognitive and non-cognitive foundations of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for students to be built on thereafter as part of lifelong learning. Norms of lengthening duration in initial schooling may well be reversed, and there is greater experimentation with age/grading structures and the involvement of learners of all ages. Schools come to enjoy a large measure of autonomy without countervailing central constraints, as levels of public/political support and funding have been attained through a widespread perception of high standards, evenly distributed, thereby reducing the felt need closely to monitor conformity to established standards. Strong pressures for corrective action nevertheless come into play in the face of evidence that any particular school is under-performing. There is more active sharing of professional roles between the core of teachers and other sources of experience and expertise, including different interest, religious, and community groups.

... help schools contribute to the development of social capital

Scenario 3 describes a strengthened, creative school institution available to all communities, meeting critical social responsibilities while silencing critics. This scenario fits a longstanding tradition advocating that closer links be forged between schools and local communities. More recently, such arguments have acquired an added urgency and relevance with the fragmentation occurring in many family and community settings, raising new concerns about the socialisation of children. In response to these concerns, the school could thus become a much-needed “social anchor” and constitute the fulcrum of residential communities (Carnoy and Kennedy respectively in Chapters 5 and 10 in this volume). In Chapter 1, we have seen that some analyses suggest that “social capital” may be in a process of erosion in a number of OECD countries to the detriment of individual well-being, society and the economy. In this scenario, the school is instrumental in arresting this trend, benefiting in the process from the positive impact on educational achievement of strengthened infrastructure and belief in the values upheld by schools.

Scenario 3

<p>Wide measure of party political and public agreement on goals and the value of public education; funding increases.</p> <p>High-trust politics with extensive co-operation between authorities, teachers, employers, and other community groups in relation to schools.</p> <p>The role of schools as centres of community activity/identify is accorded widespread recognition.</p> <p>Educated classes and media supportive of schools, giving them greater freedom to develop their own pathways as centres of social solidarity/capital in different partnerships.</p>	<p><i>Attitudes, expectations, political support</i></p>
<p>The role of schools continues in transmitting, legitimising and accrediting knowledge, but with greater recognition and focus on a range of other social and cultural outcomes, including citizenship.</p> <p>More diverse forms of competence recognition developed in enterprises and the labour market liberate schools from excessive pressures of credentialism.</p> <p>The lifelong learning function is more explicit.</p> <p>Possible reversal of trend to longer school careers, but less clear-cut boundaries between school participation and non-participation.</p> <p>Inequalities reduced but diversity widens and social cohesion strengthened.</p>	<p><i>Goals and functions</i></p>
<p>Strong distinct schools reinvigorated by new organisational forms, less bureaucratic, more diverse.</p> <p>General erosion of "high school walls". Wide diversity of student body; greater inter-generational mixing and joint youth-adult activities.</p> <p>Sharp divisions between primary and secondary levels are softened; possible re-emergence of all-age schools.</p> <p>ICT is strongly developed, with particular emphasis on communication (by students, teachers, parents, community, other stakeholders). Networking flourishes.</p>	<p><i>Organisations and structures</i></p>
<p>The local dimension of schooling substantially boosted, supported by strong national frameworks, particularly in support of communities with weak social infrastructure.</p> <p>New forms of governance are developed giving various groups, enterprises, etc., a bigger role.</p> <p>International awareness and exchange is strong, but supra-national control is not, encouraging local diversity.</p>	<p><i>The geo-political dimension</i></p>
<p>A core of high-status teaching professionals, but not necessarily in lifetime careers.</p> <p>More varied contractual arrangements and conditions, but significant increases of rewards for all.</p> <p>A prominent role for other professionals, community actors, parents, etc.</p> <p>More complex combinations of teaching with other community responsibilities.</p>	<p><i>The teaching force</i></p>

This future for the place called school would call for very major changes in most countries – more than would normally be feasible even over a 15-to-20-year time period. The scenario is predicated not only on important

The scenario's demanding pre-requisites may be unrealistic

re-definitions of purpose, practice and professionalism, but also on the new definitions being widely endorsed by the main stakeholders throughout society. Generous resourcing would probably be called for, given the need for very even patterns of quality learning environments across all communities and for establishing high esteem for teachers and schools, though some of this might be attained through more cost-effective resource use. Greater flexibility of action would also be needed. If schools could rely on the existence of universal opportunities for continuing education and the certification of competences outside education, this would be a major step in liberating them from the excessive burdens of credentialism; in these circumstances such flexibility might well be more attainable. However desirable any of these prerequisites to this scenario may be, they are not necessarily very likely in the foreseeable future.

Closer ties to communities may widen not narrow inequalities

Furthermore, the problems relating to communities and social capital that make this scenario attractive could equally be the very factors that prevent it being fully realised. Far from equalising the effect of different socio-economic environments, the strategy of linking schools very closely with their communities might only serve to exacerbate the gaps between the vibrant and the depressed. Hence, without powerful mechanisms equalising resources and status, and without a strong sense of common purpose, the risk is that scenario would reflect, even exacerbate, existing inequalities between different communities [discussed in relation to “educational priority zones” (ZEPs) by Michel in Chapter 11]. These problems would need to be overcome if the future is to lie with this radical form of “re-schooling”.

Scenario 4: “Schools as focused learning organisations”

- ***High levels of public trust and funding***
- ***Schools and teachers network widely in learning organisations***
- ***Strong quality and equity features***

In this scenario, schools are revitalised around a strong “knowledge” agenda, with far-reaching implications for the organisation of individual institutions and for the system as a whole. The academic/artistic/competence development goals are paramount; experimentation and innovation are the norm. Curriculum specialisms flourish as do innovative forms of assessment and skills recognition. As with the previous scenario, all this takes place in a high-trust environment where quality norms rather than accountability measures are the primary means of control. Similarly, generous resourcing would probably be required, though there would be very close attention to how those resources are used in pursuit of quality. Professionals (teachers and other specialists) would in general be highly motivated, learning groups are small, and they work in environments characterised by the continuing professional development of personnel, group activities, and networking. In these environments, a strong emphasis is placed on educational R&D. ICT is used extensively alongside other learning media, traditional and new.

Scenario 4: most schools as “learning organisations” with strong knowledge focus...

In this scenario, the very large majority of schools merit the label “learning organisations”. They are among the lead organisations driving the “lifelong learning for all” agenda, informed by a strong equity ethos (thereby distinguishing Scenario 4 from the two “status quo” scenarios in which quality learning is distributed much more unevenly). Close links develop between schools, places of tertiary education, media companies and other enterprises, individually and collectively.

... and high levels of support, trust, and flexibility, and advance equity aims

This differs from the previous scenario by its stronger “knowledge” focus that is well understood by the public and avoids the risk of ever-widening social remits making impossible demands on schools. It assumes strong schools, enjoying very high levels of public support and generous funding from diverse sources, as well as a large degree of latitude to develop programmes and methods. The teacher corps remains a more distinct profession, albeit with mobility and using various sources of expertise, than in the “school as social centre” scenario.

But not typical of today's practice and with conditions hard to create

Scenario 4

***Attitudes,
expectations,
political support***

Wide measure of party political agreement on goals and on the value of education as a “public good”.
Very high levels of public support for schools, including through funding where this is judged necessary. Care taken to ensure the gaps between more and less endowed schools does not widen learning opportunities. Educated classes and the media are supportive of schools, permitting an environment of freedom to individualise their programmes. High-trust politics.
Schools work hard to maintain their supportive constituency and generally succeed in lowering “school walls”.

Goals and functions

Highly demanding curricula are the norm for all students. More specialisms catered for (arts, technology, languages, etc.) but a demanding mix of learning expected of all students, including specialists.
School diplomas continue to enjoy major currency, albeit alongside other forms of competence recognition. Innovative developments of assessment, certification and skills recognition for broad sets of talents. The lifelong learning function is made more explicit through clarification and implementation of the foundation role for lifelong learning. Extensive guidance and counselling arrangements.
A major investment made in equality of high quality opportunities – overt failure considerably reduced by high expectations, the targeting of poor communities, and eradication of low quality programmes.

***Organisations
and structures***

Strong schools as learning organisations with distinct profiles. Flatter, team-oriented organisations with greater attention to management skills for all personnel.
Team approaches are the norm. Intense attention to new knowledge about the processes of teaching and learning, and the production, mediation and use of knowledge in general. Major new investments in R&D.
Wide variety in age, grading and ability mixes, with more all-age and school/tertiary mixes.
ICT is strongly developed, both as a tool for learning and analysis and for communication.
Links between schools, tertiary education, and “knowledge industries” are commonplace – for INSET, research and consultancy.

***The geo-political
dimension***

Strong national framework and support, with particular focus on communities with weakest social resources.
International networking of students and teachers.
Countries moving furthest towards this scenario attract considerable international attention as “world leaders”.
Substantial involvement of multi-national as well as national companies in schools (but close attention given to widening gaps).

The teaching force

A high status teaching corps, enjoying good rewards and conditions. Somewhat fewer in lifetime careers, with greater mobility in and out of teaching and other professions.
More varied contractual arrangements but good rewards for all.
Major increase in staffing levels, allowing greater innovation in teaching and learning, professional development, and research.
Networking the norm among teachers, and between them and other sources of expertise.

Many in education would regard this “learning organisation” scenario as highly desirable but at least two related sets of problems stand in the way of transforming the desirable into the probable. First, OECD analysis has shown that this model is very far from typical of practice in schools across different countries (OECD, 2000a). The scenario would thus call for radical breaks with established practice especially by and among teachers that, as discussed in relation to Scenario 1, could be extremely difficult to realise on a broad scale. Second, as with the previous scenario, the formulation begs questions of how to create a very supportive media and political educational environment, ensure such generous funding levels, and capture high status for schools and teachers where these do not already exist. Such conditions are far from being met in most countries at present, implying concerted strategies and investments to turn this situation around. Similarly, this scenario’s equality assumptions are highly demanding, at the same time as socio-cultural and educational inequalities remain firmly entrenched. In short, this scenario remains a good way off, whatever the progress in particular schools and pockets of excellence.

The “de-schooling” scenarios

Scenario 5: “Learner networks and the network society”

- *Widespread dissatisfaction with/rejection of organised school systems*
- *Non-formal learning using ICT potential reflect the “network society”*
- *Communities of interest, potentially serious equity problems*

Whether schools are criticised for being too reflective of unequal social and economic structures, or insufficiently reflective of diverse cultures, or out of tune with economic life, in this scenario these very different sources of criticisms take firm root. Dissatisfaction with available provision leads to a quickening abandonment of school institutions through diverse alternatives in a political environment supportive of the need for change. This is further stimulated by

**Scenario 5:
institutions and
systems
dismantled...**

Scenario 5

<p>Attitudes, expectations, political support</p>	<p>Widespread dissatisfaction with the institution called “school” – its bureaucratic nature and perceived inability to deliver learning tailored to complex, diverse societies.</p> <p>Flight out of schools by the educated classes as well as other community, interest and religious groups, supported by political parties, media, multimedia companies in the learning market.</p> <p>New forms of private, voluntaristic and community funding arrangements emerge in tune with general developments towards the “network society”.</p>
<p>Goals and functions</p>	<p>The decline of established curriculum structures with the dismantling of the school system. Key role for different values and attitudes.</p> <p>New attention comes to be given to “childcare” arrangements with the demise of schools. Some of these are based on sports and other cultural community activities.</p> <p>Hard to predict how far various measures of competence become the driving “currency”. To the extent that they do, strong emphasis on information, guidance and marketing through ICT, and on new forms of accreditation of competence.</p> <p>Possibly wide inequalities open up between those participating in the network society and those who do not.</p>
<p>Organisations and structures</p>	<p>Much learning would take place on an individualised basis, or through networks of learners, parents and professionals.</p> <p>ICT is much more extensively exploited for learning and networking, with flourishing software market.</p> <p>If some schools do survive, hard to predict whether these would be mainly at the primary level (focused on basic knowledge and socialisation) or at secondary level (focused on advanced knowledge and labour market entry).</p> <p>Some public schools remain for those otherwise excluded by the “digital divide” or community-based networks – either very well-resourced institutions or else “sink” schools.</p>
<p>The geo-political dimension</p>	<p>Community players and aggressive media companies are among those helping to “disestablish” schools in national systems. Local and international dimensions strengthened at expense of the national.</p> <p>While international measurements and accountability less relevant as systems and schools break up, new forms of international accreditation might emerge for elites.</p> <p>Bridging the “digital divide” and market regulation become major roles for the public authorities, as well as overseeing the remaining publicly-provided school sector.</p> <p>Groups of employers may become very active if these arrangements do not deliver an adequate skills base and if government unwilling to re-establish schools.</p>
<p>The teaching force</p>	<p>Demarcations between teacher and student, parent and teacher, education and community, blur and break down. Networks bring different clusters together according to perceived needs.</p> <p>New learning professionals emerge, employed especially by the major players in the network market. These operate via surgeries, various forms of “helpline” and home visits.</p>

the extensive possibilities opened up by the Internet and continually developing forms of powerful and inexpensive ICT. The result is the radical de-institutionalisation, even dismantling, of school systems.

What takes their place is part of the emerging “network society”. Learning for the young is not primarily conferred in particular places called “school” nor through professionals called “teachers” nor necessarily located in distinct residential community bases. Much more diverse cultural, religious and community voices come to be reflected in the day-to-day socialisation and learning arrangements for children in the “network society”. Some are very local in character, but there are also extensive opportunities for distance and cross-border learning and networking. The demarcations between the initial and continuing phases of lifelong learning come to be substantially blurred. While these arrangements are supported as promoting diversity and democracy, they may also bring substantial risks of exclusion especially for those students who have traditionally relied on the school as the mechanism for social mobility and inclusion.

Scenarios based around these ideas are among the most commonly proposed as “visions” for the future of schooling. They have the appeal of offering, for those in search of change, a clear alternative to the more school-based models outlined above. Scenario 5 can be understood as a feature of already-visible developments towards the “network society” (Castells, 1996), building on the potential of ICT to provide the means for learning and networking beyond time and place constraints. It is in tune with those messages of the broader lifelong learning agenda stressing flexibility, individualisation, and the role of non-formal learning. In relation to school-age learning, home schooling is growing and some predict this will quicken into the future, even if it is still relatively small-scale in most countries (Hargreaves, 1999). While sharing some common features with the “market model” of Scenario 2, the driving force in this scenario is co-operation rather than competition, again appealing to those in search of alternative “post-industrial” paradigms.

... and replaced by diverse learning networks as part of “network society”

Common ideas among futurists as a clear alternative to school-based approaches

**But is this scenario
feasible or
sustainable?**

Yet, it also raises serious questions of feasibility and sustainability. How well would such arrangements meet the range of critical “hidden” functions, including of socialisation, that has made the school such a universal model and so resilient (as discussed under Scenario 1)? What would happen to those individuals and communities who are not active participants in the “network society” and who have low social capital? It is possible that this scenario would actually deepen the “digital divide” (OECD, 2000c). This scenario, therefore, also runs into potentially severe inequality problems, raising the prospect of government intervention in ways that would undermine the very distinctiveness of this scenario. Does it really provide a feasible scenario for the 21st century or is it instead proposing a return to 18th/19th century educational arrangements (plus the Internet)? Along with such questions about feasibility are those to do with stability/volatility – does it describe a “steady-state” future or a transition point calling for further transformation?

Scenario 6: “Teacher exodus – The ‘meltdown scenario’”

- **Severe teacher shortages do not respond to policy action**
- **Retrenchment, conflict, and falling standards leading to areas of “meltdown”, or**
- **Crisis provides spur to widespread innovation but future still uncertain**

**Teacher supply
problems reach
crisis proportions
threatening
“meltdown”...**

This scenario can be regarded as an elaboration of a “worst case” in response to the question posed in conclusion of Scenario 1 – would the “status quo” survive were teacher shortages to turn into a real staffing crisis? This “meltdown” scenario comes about through the conjuncture of four main factors: *a*) a highly skewed teacher age profile resulting in outflows through retirement far out-stripping inflows of new recruits; *b*) a long period with very tight labour market conditions and general skill shortages resulting in severe difficulties both to recruit new teachers and to retain them in the profession; *c*) the upward shift in teacher rewards and/or staffing levels needed to make a tangible impact on relative attractiveness being viewed as prohibitively expensive, given the

Scenario 6

Widespread public and media dissatisfaction with the state of education in the face of the teacher recruitment crisis and growing sense of declining standards, especially in worst-affected areas.
Relative political impotence to address the loss from the teaching force given the scale and long-term nature of the problem and/or deep-seated cultural barriers to changes needed to set in train another of the scenarios. The education political climate becomes either increasingly conflictual or leads to consensual emergency strategies.

*Attitudes, expectations,
political support*

Established curriculum structures under intense pressure, especially in shortage subjects. Where main response is one of retrenchment, examinations and accountability mechanisms are strengthened in a bid to halt sliding standards.
Where the teacher shortage instead stimulates widespread change, major revisions of curricula undertaken – much more outcome- and demand-oriented and less supply- and programme-centred. New forms of parallel evaluation and assessment methods developed.
Inequalities widen sharply between residential areas, social and cultural groups, etc. Affluent parents in worst-affected areas desert public education in favour of private alternatives.

Goals and functions

Very diverse organisational responses to lack of teachers. In some situations, there is a return to highly traditional methods, partly through public pressure in response to declining standards, partly because of large classes. In other situations, innovative organisational responses using different forms of expertise (including from tertiary education, enterprises, communities), and diverse mixes of lectures, student groupings, home learning, ICT, etc. Intensive use of ICT as an alternative to teachers; ICT companies very actively involved. Wide disparities again possible between highly innovative and traditional uses.

*Organisations
and structures*

The position of the national authorities is strengthened in the face of crisis, as they acquire extended powers. It weakens, however, the longer the crises are unresolved.
Communities with no serious teacher shortages seek to protect themselves and extend their autonomy from national authorities.
Corporate and media interests in the learning market intensify.
International solidarity improves between some countries where initiatives develop to “lend” and “borrow” trained teachers, including between North and South.
Solidarity declines and protectionist responses increase the more generalised the shortages and where several countries are competing for limited pools of qualified staff.

The geo-political dimension

Teacher rewards increase as part of measures to tackle shortages.
Conditions of teaching worsen as numbers fall, with problems acute in worst-affected areas, exacerbating the sense of crisis.
Strenuous efforts made to bring trained – especially retired – teachers back into schools. Often only disappointing results, particularly where school politics and very conflictual and in areas of severe shortage.
In some countries, the distinctiveness of the teacher corps and role of unions/associations increase in proportion to their relative scarcity. In others, established conventions, contractual arrangements, and career structures are rapidly eroded.
As schools shorten teaching time, many posts created for semi-professional “child-minding”. The market in home tuition flourishes, possibly with government subsidies to lower-income households.

The teaching force

sheer numbers involved; and d) even when measures are proving effective, they require long delays before a noticeable effect results in greater numbers of practising teachers, making it still harder to break into the vicious circles.

... despite concerted policy measures

The scenario posits a staffing crisis in a context that differs in at least two important respects from that of the “baby boom” of the 1960s. First, the quality demands and expectations of students for extended educational careers have moved on substantially in forty years. Second, the attractiveness of school-level teaching as a career has declined against a continuing upward trend in the share of advanced-skill posts throughout the economy as a whole, posts that often enjoy greater rewards. This combination of factors comes together in this scenario in the form of a very serious crisis for schools, rather than assuming that the problems will always be “muddled through”.

Reactions to “meltdown” differ, from conflict and retrenchment to innovation and cohesion

As the teacher exodus takes hold and the scale of the “meltdown” crisis is recognised, potentially very different outcomes could be part of Scenario 6. At one extreme, a vicious circle of retrenchment, conflict, and decline sets in, exacerbating the inequalities and problems further. At the other, the teacher crisis provides the spur to radical innovation and change, with different stakeholders joining forces behind far-reaching emergency strategies. Even in that more optimistic case, “meltdown” would not necessarily be avoided. In between, a more evolutionary response to the crisis might be that rewards and attractiveness of the profession increase leading eventually to reconstruction. Whether actions taken would allow another scenario to take the place of “meltdown” would depend critically on the room for manoeuvre permitted by social and political cultures.

Proven resilience of school systems, but also signs in some countries give grounds for concern

There are many uncertainties in this scenario, therefore, and its value in some countries may lie less in its predictive power and more in sharpening awareness of the possibility of severe teacher shortages and their consequences. Some might judge it to be unlikely given the proven resilience and adaptability of school systems: they would argue that some matching of teacher supply and

demand will always be achieved and “meltdown” avoided, though perhaps with costs to be paid in educational quality. Even in quantitative terms, however, the previous chapter showed patterns and trends that might prove highly problematic. In certain countries, teacher salaries remain well below average GDP per capita even after 15 years’ service. Problems of an ageing profession are not universal but are acute in places. Where these, and other indicators of problematic attractiveness and recruitment, are found in combination, then indeed this form of “worst case” scenario may become much more likely.

Concluding remarks

As the methodologies for educational forward-thinking remain under-developed, there is much to be done in building up a “toolbox” of such approaches to inform the policy-making process. Scenarios, as presented in this chapter, are one vehicle for doing this. This is most effectively undertaken at the levels and among the stakeholders who are strategic in the change and decision-making process, stimulating dialogue among them. Used thus, they might well need to be reformulated in terms of the relevant realities for a particular country or setting. They might need to be distilled down still further from the reported six. This is to underline that these scenarios are not meant to be understood as a polished final of statements about the future but the starting point for a process of genuine engagement.

The OECD “Schooling for Tomorrow” programme has begun to use them in this way. These scenarios informed a major international conference held in Rotterdam towards the end of 2000, and were presented to the OECD Ministers of Education as part of their analytical material at their Paris April 2001 meeting. In the Rotterdam conference, participants completed a questionnaire on the desirability and likelihood of the different scenarios, and the results are reported and discussed by Hutmacher in this volume (Chapter 12). He has complemented this by repeating the exercise in a national (Swiss), as well as the international,

The scenarios: not polished final statements about the future but the starting point for dialogue and engagement

Such dialogue begun at international and national seminars, with broadly consistent results

seminar, as discussed in his chapter. He finds a broad measure of agreement across these different events. In general, the “re-schooling” scenarios receive the greatest endorsement. The Rotterdam participants in particular were sceptical about a future dominated by schooling markets. The bureaucratic “status quo” scenario is peculiar in being viewed as reasonably likely to occur but an undesirable future. With that exception, however, Hutmacher finds surprisingly little dissonance between what are judged to be desirable and expected futures – those perceived as preferable tend also to be thought the more likely to occur.

***Broadening
the consultation
process and the
methodologies***

This finding clearly cannot be generalised. Hutmacher is the first to acknowledge that the numbers responding were small and drawn from a very particular group – the informed and influential “insiders” of education systems. To arrive at a more accurate picture of views about educational futures, many more would need to be surveyed and drawn from a wider cross-section of relevant stakeholders. It would be particularly useful to know the views of influential “outsiders”. And, it would be valuable to move beyond surveying attitudes towards engagement in active dialogue. These directions are among those proposed by van Aalst in conclusion to his chapter in this volume (Chapter 8):

“People drawn from outside education will need to be consulted. An interactive process of matching trends with specific educational measures requires the imaginative dialogue between those within education and key stakeholders in the trends: identification of those who ‘carry’ a trend is important as is establishing channels of informed communication.”

He also argues for a range of approaches – rather than adherence to a single methodology based on scenarios or driving forces – including those “sensitive to weak signals about change”. Future CERI work will be looking to expand its range of approaches to forward-looking policy thinking in education.