

Futuring for the Future Generation

Improving the conceptual foundation of futuring and educational ideas in higher education

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Project description

The grand challenges of our time, like the ecological crisis, require us to engage more explicitly and fundamentally with the future. Different scholars emphasize the importance of ‘futuring’ to explore a potential path forward (Hoffman et al. 2021, Pelzer and Versteeg, 2019). Our ability to engage with the future, is through an important extent shaped through our education. Proponents of the idea of ‘futures literacy’ maintain that both in our educational and professional practice, we should pay much better and more systematic attention to the future (Hicks, 2012; Miller, 2007). Our particular interest is in geography education at high schools, where a future generation of citizens are taught about how the bio-physical system works. Working at the interface of the social and the physical lends itself well for futuring approaches, both because the wicked problems that are at stake – like climate change – suffer from a crisis of the imagination (Ghosh, 2016) and because ecological time scales typically go way farther into the future than we are used to from an anthropocentric perspective.

Building on this promise, a range of interesting educational initiatives has been undertaken, like the Geo Future School in the Netherlands. However, we observe that the conceptual grounding of these initiatives could be improved, by synthesizing different emerging debates that typically do not interact. These debates include:

- citizenship and democracy (e.g. Dewey and Rogers, 2012 [1927]).
- imagination and futures (e.g. Pelzer and Versteeg, 2019)
- futures literacy (e.g. Miller, 2007)
- subject specific – here: geography - education (e.g. Béneker and Van der Vaart, 2020)

The aim of the project is to conduct a literature review and convert this into an academic paper. This paper will be an independent contribution to the debate, but will also function as the scaffolding for different futuring initiatives in Dutch geography education.

The tasks of the Bright Minds Assistant include:

- Conduct a systematic literature review.
- Collaboratively write a draft paper/report.
- Write a 2-pager that can be used in follow-up discussions with geography teachers.

Job requirements

- An interest in futuring, imagination, education and a willingness to synthesize the academic literature on this topic.
- The ability to write in English for an academic audience.
- An interest in geography education is desirable, but not necessary.

References

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- Hicks, D. (2012). The future only arrives when things look dangerous: reflections on futures education in the UK. *Futures*, 44(1), 4-13.
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