



"The future of the world is in my classroom today" – Ivan Welton Fitzwater

The future is now

Most professions can point to dramatic changes in the way they work, thanks to technological innovations, but teaching still looks and feels an awful lot like it did when today's teachers were themselves students.

Teaching is already a challenging job, one that has become more complex in a complex world. Great teaching will never become obsolete. The challenges that advancing technologies present to education can only be met by exceptional teachers and educational leaders. All educators will need to re-imagine their role in the classroom and across the school. However, the human factor of a skilled and passionate teacher will remain forever important. The relationships teachers form with students, to inspire them and lead them to greater things, will be more important than ever.

In the face of such rapid and radical technological and pedagogical progression, teachers will need to recast the way we think about how our students learn and the environments in which we encourage this learning to take place. None of this is really complicated—it just requires new thinking. Here are five considerations for teachers and schools of the future:

1. From School to Community. Our students are connected to the world beyond our classrooms in unprecedented ways. Social media and eLearning enable students to not only connect to distant places as well as to effect change within their own local communities. Our students are now involved in inherently connected learning experiences. Schools will need to move from the isolation of its boundaries to embracing the concept of connectivism – using the ability to leverage interdependence, crowdsourced knowledge and connect with others through such tools and media as blogs, podcasts, Twitter, etc and broad community partnerships.

2. Digital Literacy. Access to digital resources and social media means that learning is no longer confined to the bricks and mortar space of the classroom where the types of learning experiences

that take place are at the discretion of the teacher. Learning is now transparent, open and student-actualised. Digital literacy is a trend that involves the consumption, comprehension, and curation of digital media. It will be the role of schools and teachers to support all learners in making sense of the countless forms of digital media that they encounter daily.

3. From Standards to Habits. Under the Victorian Curriculum there is a move for curriculum design to embed a greater emphasis on Capabilities. Students are required to develop their critical and creative thinking, ethical, intercultural and personal and social skills as they learn to generate and evaluate key knowledge, clarify concepts and ideas, seek possibilities, consider alternatives and solve problems. All of this will require a paradigm shift from academic standards to critical thinking habits.

4. The significance of place. This new thinking is centred around the notion that learning can take place anywhere, anytime. Young people can access knowledge at a touch of a button. Therefore, schools need to commit to creating authentic learning experiences that enable learners to connect deeper with self, place and the other. This more personal exchange with real-world contexts will allow all learners to consider social change needed in local and global communities. It will allow for all learners to construct their own meaning not only in the classroom but outside the classroom and outside of school. And we cannot ignore that virtual reality ensures that the entire world is the new classroom.

5. The rise of Individualised Learning Plans. Alongside our changing notions of what constitutes a classroom, our ideas about the way teaching is delivered must also be reshaped. The old 'one model of teaching and learning fits all' is outdated and has no place in the agenda for today's schooling. As a result, teachers will need to develop individualised learning plans for students, which will enable each student to access curriculum designed at a pace that best suits their abilities and engages with knowledge, skills and wisdom that are most beneficial to them.

Literacy and numeracy will continue to be the building blocks on which all learning rests. Strong discipline knowledge still matters, not so students can regurgitate facts, but because it is fundamental to deep understanding, strong thinking skills and the ability to learn.

We will need to lift the bar much higher, free up space to enable students to delve deeper, to inquire as much as to answer and to apply their knowledge to real life contexts. The role of teachers in providing not the basic facts but the framework on which students can build deep understanding, to help students to learn how to apply their knowledge creatively and effectively, and to be divergent and critical thinkers. We need to teach students to find and make meaning in their learning not to simply master a list of skills.

Curriculum and co-curricular teaching and learning already extends well beyond the classroom and will continue to do so, and as education changes to suit the future's needs, the role of a teacher must also adapt and grow. It is each teacher's responsibility to empower students to take risks, be innovative and seize any opportunity thrown their way.

Considering a shift towards a more personalised learner experience, teachers of the future must be prepared to be data collectors, as well as analysts, planners, collaborators, curriculum experts, synthesizers, problem-solvers and researchers.

The future in the classroom is now. We are at a crossroads and we can't sit back and wait for the revolution to happen to us. We, all educators, need to lead the change.

Count me in.