

Our place in the future

Thinking activity that supports learners to consider the future of their place. It introduces the idea of probable and preferable futures and their role as active citizens.

KS3 | 60 Mins | Group

KEY QUESTION: What role do I have in determining the future of where I live?

Background

How does the history of my place shape what it is like today? (buildings, names etc)

Thinking about how my place has changed, what might it look like in the future?

What are the forces that make a place change? To what extent are they local, regional, national or global?

What is my role in the changes that occur in my place?

What might my place look like in 20, 50, 100 years? How would I like it to look?

These are just some of the questions that we might ask to help us think about the future of where we live. They are the focus of Futures Education, what author David Hicks has called 'the missing dimension in education'.

One of the main approaches used in Futures Education is the idea of probable (or likely) and preferable (or desired) futures. This offers a powerful learning tool and quickly moves pupils towards some challenging ideas and questions:

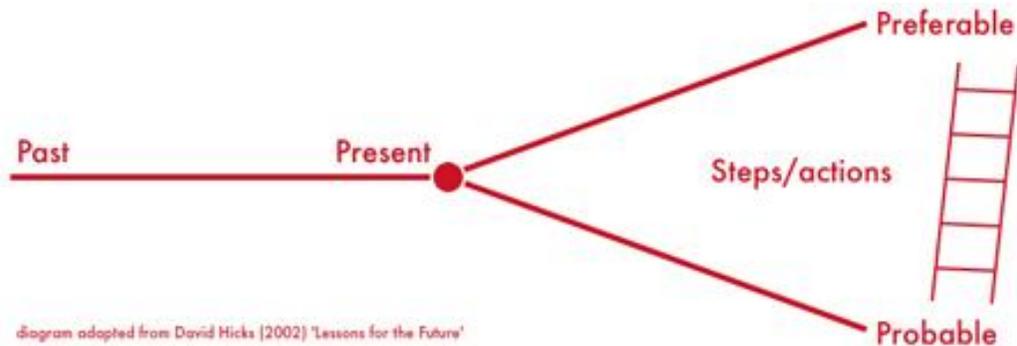
What are the factors that determine a probable and preferable future?

What are the agents of change that might move us from a probable future to a preferable future?

Is the preferable future, preferable for everyone?

What makes it preferable?

Activities



The view from here

1. Introduce the futures diagram and the idea of probable and preferable futures. Give learners time to really understand the method, perhaps by giving them a brief worked example.
2. Starting with what learners will know, ask them to consider their own place and how it might look and feel in the future. What are the present trends and what will happen if they continue?
3. Once you have explored this, ask learners to think more about the preferable future. What would they like their place to look like? How would they like it to be?
4. With their probable and preferable futures outlined, learners should be encouraged to consider how they might move from a probable to a preferable future. What steps might be needed? What part do/could they play? How are they/could they be active agents in making such change come about.
5. Learners can use the process of this activity to then reflect on what it means to be an active agent (citizen). How do they feel about their involvement in their place and in its probable and preferable futures? How much does active citizenship play a part in determining the futures of where we live?

Creative variations

There are many creative ways to approach this activity and link it with other curriculum or learning objectives. Here are some ideas.

Art

Use magazines as a stimulus to thinking and ask learners to cut out images/words etc to create an image/montage of their probable and preferable futures. What images do they choose and why? What does this tell us about the power of imagery?

WHERE DO WE LIVE?

Citizenship (role play)

Explore the role of a town/city mayor and the idea of creating a 'vision statement' (many cities have these and they could provide a stimulus to thinking). Now ask learners to come up with a proposal for the future of their place - their preferable vision. They could make reference to the probable and what they would do as mayor to make the transition from probable to preferable. You could even use an element of competition (apprentice style) to see who has the best bid. An opportunity to involve a local council representative as judge perhaps?

Literacy (writing)

Get learners to write short pieces (could be web/news article, letter, diary entry etc) about their probable and preferable futures. Encourage them to really imagine what it would be like to live in these futures. What would they feel? You could extend this or support this idea further by connecting to existing literature that deals with futures. You could focus on either a utopia (everything is perfect and ideal) or a dystopia (the opposite where everything is bad and negative).

Geography

Introduce the idea of 'development plans'. These are used by governments to state their plans looking ahead in normally 5 or 10 year blocks. Ask learners to imagine creating a development plan to move them towards their vision of a preferable future. They may need to string together several development plans to look ahead say 50 years. What would they prioritise in each plan?

Thematic learning - cross curricula

Another creative approach to this activity would be to decide themes and approach the idea of possible and preferable futures in this way. Each group could work on different themes or on aspects of a shared theme. They could then come together to share their ideas. Possible themes could include thinking about place in terms of equality, fairness, environment (water, food, energy etc), population, transport, housing....

An alternative would be to consider thematic learning through policy initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals or perhaps some Climate Change goals. How would my place look in the future if it were to achieve all of these goals?

To help you explore this possibility you can use the web link (right) to connect to the Millennium Development Goals and think about how your place might look if it were to achieve these? What would your place need to do to meet all of these goals?



Web Link

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

Based on original material created by The Linking Network and Lifeworlds Learning
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