# Developing your 2020 vision

In the previous section, I attempted to convince you that you and your school could benefit from an updated vision.  If I was successful, you may be passionately pursuing that 2020 Vision right now.  If, however, you'd like some input and suggestions on how to develop this vision, see if any of the following exercises resonate.

## *Beyond the 3 Essentials*

In defining what traits students need to be successful in our digital era, I made the case for three characteristics that I suggest are essential: self-initiative, critical thinking and lifelong learning.  Why not just go with these? Uniformity and consistency fuelled mass production, but one beautiful truth of the 21st Century is that we can free ourselves from the artificial box this put us in: we no longer have to do everything the same way!  In fact, it's the unique expressions of excellence that create innovation and new norms.  So while I beseech you and your school to *at least* create a vision around empowering your students' self-initiative, critical thinking and lifelong learning, you should not feel constrained to only target these goals.

### A Process for Discovering your Vision: Starting Where You Are

One of the most effective professional learning activities I've had the pleasure to facilitate with whole-school audiences targets the collective generation of what all staff members see as "their job."  Recalling the 3 Stonecutters example, finding out how people see their job reveals a lot about their sense of purpose.  Here's the process:

*Creating a Shared Vision – Part 1*

1. Staff members team up in small groups – departmental or interdisciplinary, whichever is better suited to generating discussion given the culture of the school.

2. Without any elaborate prompting (or mention of vision or stonecutters), I ask each group to reflect on and discuss what they see as their jobs.  Each group then writes down a description that includes everyone's views.

3. Next, using collaborative writing software like Google Docs or a variant of EtherPad, each group, one-by-one, develop one statement that includes every staff member's input.  The idea is that the first group will essentially type in their statement.  The second group reviews the first's entry and edits it to include any aspects that the second had in their statement, but were missing in the first's.  This process is continued until every group has had the opportunity to contribute or "tweak" the single description of "our job."

4. Of course, the statement gets a little ungainly and sometimes sprouts bullet statements, but the important thing is not the word smithing, but the fact that the statement is inclusive of every staff member's contribution.

5. Often, I will orchestrate the order of the group input, so that the group including the school leadership or principal make the last contribution.  This allows for a "stamp of approval" coming at the end of the process as it does.

6. The input and organic nature of the statement is best revealed if the software, such as EtherPad / PrimaryPad, can "replay" the editing showing how it evolved with each group's input over time.

To make this activity not only manageable, but an excellent experience and learning model, I couple it with another concurrent task so that when a group is not the one editing the statement, everyone is engaged in meaningful learning. Typically I provide a collection of "Look to Learn" activities and set teachers the task of discovering the key elements of the learning format that will be debriefed later in the day. Feedback is that participants enjoy both the authentic challenge of collectively describing the job they do with students as well as immersing themselves in a discovery learning experience.

***Creating a Shared Vision – Part 2***

The second part of this exercise combines what was generated in the first part with any vision statements that might already govern the school. This could be from the government, the district, sector or school or, perhaps, not exist at all. When there is a clear vision statement, I like to "prod" the whole staff with the comment, "Oh, by the way, here's your *real* job." Regardless of whether a worthy or an "only worth the paper it's printed on" version of a vision statement exists, it's always an interesting exercise and makes people refocus their purpose and aims.

Again, we use collaborative writing software to create a collective document. In this case Google Docs are even better than EtherPad / Primary Pad because it allows for more formatting tools like colors, bold and italics.

1. We begin with the verbatim vision statement that's been handed down or inherited. I have this pre-loaded on a Google Doc. Everyone considers the statement.

2. If the given vision statement comes from a funding body for the school, then an "Ah-Ha!" is that this time people can't edit-out or delete any aspects they don't like. This is what they're getting paid to do! What they can do is judiciously add anything that may be missing. I say judiciously because a bloated vision statement doesn't do anything for focusing an organization's efforts. This step encourages even more professional discussion as everyone carefully reads both visions, looking at their just-created statement about "our job" to see what aspects are already included in the inherited statement.

3. When a vital aspect from the staff-created vision is determined to be missing, whoever thinks this shares their perspective with the whole staff vocally. If everyone agrees, then the phrase is added. I recommend using a different color so it's clear which parts are home grown enhancements and which are mandated. During this phase, it's important, again, not to bog down in the wording so that you don't lose momentum. Continue making additions until everyone is content that the "real" vision statement includes all the vital aspects from the staff-generated version.

4. I suggest that once this review and addition process is complete, that a task team of self-nominated volunteers smooth out the wording so that it sings or at least has a nice ring to it. When this is done, the revised draft should be circulated through the school's best means of communication, giving everyone a last chance to offer further refinements or whole additions. Realize that anything added at this point, must

review approval by the whole staff – it would undermine the authenticity of the process and thus the vision if someone's pet issue got added without passing everyone's vetting.

5.  Congratulations!  You now have a vision that has benefitted from whole-staff contribution and thus ownership and buy-in.

## But the Shared Vision is only a Draft!

The previous process only takes a few professional learning sessions and then some committee time, so for a little investment, a lot has been achieved. If we stopped here, we would have a better tool for concerted action than already exists.  But we may not have a 2020 Vision, only a fantastic one for the 20th Century.  We need a vision that looks forward, that anticipates the unpredictable, that entertains what's different to satisfy our vision of true learning unfettered by the strictures of mass production schooling.  Three exercises are offered to further each aspect.

### The Augmented Learner

Just as no one could have predicted the iPad would evolve out of the World Wide Web back in 1994, who knows what the current forays into augmented reality will bring in 10 years' time?  We tend to be amazed by things like MIT's Sixth Sense and Google Glass but don't consider what they will morph into within a few short years of becoming reality.

Whether it makes it into your vision statement, we should all look to 2020 with a few certainties firmly fixed in place: no, we can't envision what gadgets and services may emerge, but given trends, we can make some assumptions.

The first main trend is "personalization."  Just as we went from clumsy Amazon recommendations to downright helpful suggestions, technologies will continue to improve their ability to know what we want.  In fact, Google's chief search designers say their goal is to "know what you want before you do."  The main focus of this effort obviously targets predicting what we might be willing to spend money on.  However, the same technologies also make it more likely that learning experiences will be tailored to the particular needs of individuals.  Companies are already making moves in this direction with reading programs for early years students and mathematics skills customized for each learner.  For the purpose of thinking about the near future and how to help our students succeed, let's assume that teaching students to "find things" won't be very important.  This includes resources, but also "right answers."  In fact, as curricula shift from one-size-fits-all seat time experiences to all-fit-to-one's-size competency performances, software will more efficiently provide "the next lesson" better than we can in a one teacher-to-30 students scenario.  So what will students need with all this learning at their fingertips (or glasses, or implant…)?  Brainstorm the traits students will need when their appropriate next learning hurdle is provided for them.  These might have something to do with mastery or knowledge management or ???

A second trend is "Big Data."  Of course this relates to technology's ability to personalize content and experiences to individual users, but another aspect to think about is a broader data-informed profile of learner characteristics.  Schools, like most organizations these days, are "data drains:" almost all the massive amounts of data gathered on students are lost.  Sure you can find the reports you wrote, national test scores could be retrieved and the students might even be able to dig out the homework you handed back with detailed notes on what could be improved. All these – and just about any others you can think of – still qualify as going "down the drain."  Where is the comprehensive database collecting and

crunching all this information?  Imagine if most of our students' learning performances were recorded and aggregated to reveal patterns of learning and habits of mind?  Now imagine that not only you, but the students and their parents had access to this information.  Every student's knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities would be apparent so that what's yet to be learned is not a mystery, but a choice and a process of ongoing mastery and development. In the wrong hands this is reminiscent of Big Brother, but if professional educators and school leaders take active roles in the design of such systems, I see it more like "Big Mother:" a benevolent spirit looking out for our children's best interests.  This is why transparency is so important – knowledge *is* power so it's vital that this knowledge is firmly in the grasp of students and their families with professional educators helping plan a path to increasing sophistication and excellence.  In looking forward to 2020 and setting a vision for students and the school's role in supporting them, if learners and those responsible for them have access to this kind of information, what will they need to make the most of this previously undreamt of opportunity?  Again, you may not alter your vision to accommodate this element, but knowing it's around the corner may encourage that needed shift from a "teacher-driven" to a "learner-managed" orientation.  Your vision might also recognize that goal-setting and making inspired choices become desirable skills when more data-informed decisions are possible.

A third trend is "disintermediation."  Of course this also relates to the two previous trends, but it's worth considering on its own.  Even back when a student sat at a desktop computer in a school lab, disintermediation had begun.  If you recall from the earlier section (Truth 5), disintermediation is the situation where the "intermediary" (the "teacher" in our case) is "dis'd" or taken out of the loop because now there is the learner and what he or she is learning through the computer, unmediated by the teacher.  This is what drove "teachers" crazy in the early days of computers and the Web: "how will they know whether it's true?" "what is the source of the information and is it good enough?" "they're not meant to learn that until next year!"  Now that people comprehend how "out of the loop we are" and students have gone from desktops at school, to laptops, to tablets and phones, most have come to accept that if we invite 1:1 technology in, we are also handing over control to the students. As mentioned, disintermediation flows on naturally from the previous trends of personalization and Big Data, but I mention it here because it's no longer a possibility or an occurrence, but the *de facto* situation, the norm. What this suggests for your vision is that delivery of any content by a teacher is highly unlikely in 2020.  And while this has implications on what all of us educators will be doing then, the point here is that it should focus us very clearly (20-20) on the fact that mediating the minds of learners will rest with learners themselves.  Perhaps this is as it should always have been, but our current vision of a codified and delivered curriculum is more akin to "popping open the cranium and dropping in the knowledge."

***Summary for the Augmented Learner***

If your vision does not clearly see that students are 100% responsible for their own learning, consider modifying it. You're not making this statement about ownership for learning to divest the teaching profession of the responsibility but out of recognition that finding information, packaging learning activities and developing new learning in the minds of students has been taken over by digital technologies and properly resides with the students. Shortly we'll discuss the vital role of the educator (and schools!) in this "augmented learner" future scenario, but our purpose now is to see whether we're empowering students to manage their own learning or falling somewhere short of the 2020 reality.

**Global Inspiration**

As we have seen in a previous section, different countries have different visions that have then created different schools and practices.  Before moving on from your vision, I suggest reviewing what other countries and educational systems do to see whether there is anything that you would like to incorporate. Perhaps you'll want to create task teams to explore and research interesting differences globally. Many of the ideas may have more to do with policies such as assessment and teacher training, but at this point we're looking for anything that provides inspiration. For example, since 2000, students in Denmark completing their comprehensive secondary exam have used a computer.  Do your students?  Additionally, since 2009, Denmark has captured the world's attention as it's taken the next logical step: "Danish pupils use web in exams" declared the BBC[1]. At that time 14 colleges across Denmark piloted the open access, but all schools were invited to participate by 2011. Are your students anywhere near having open Web access during their Year 12 exams?  If they aren't, what's the good reason they aren't? If they are, should they be prepared? How would you do that?  Similarly, this country believes that it's a more challenging and relevant exam if it covers more than one content area (say, Business Studies *and* English), so they do.  Do yours?  Should students use knowledge from different content areas to construct new understanding? Is this something that happens in the real world? If so, when and how do you prepare them to be successful at this?  You might imagine that such heresy would send your system into content area "turf wars" and it's certain that while some countries have spent the last ten years squabbling about why these changes aren't possible, Denmark has experimented and made the innovations work. Hmmm.  Could our vision take in more possibilities?  What if the potential *learning*, not logistics and the status quo, drove our purpose? It can.  Now's the time.
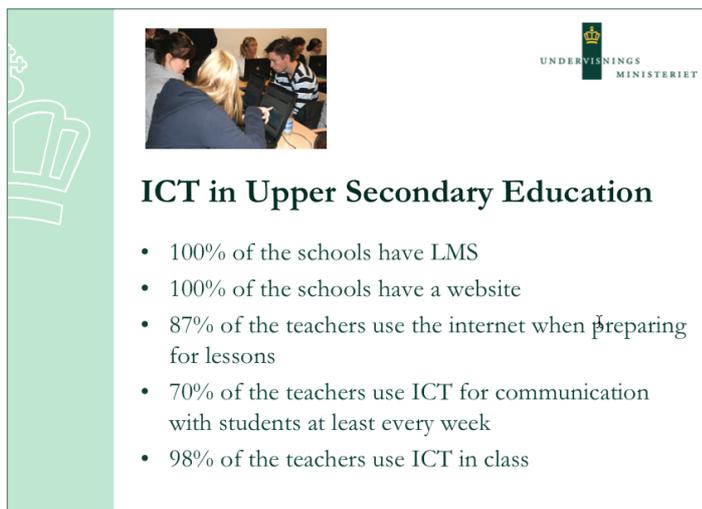
**ICT in Upper Secondary Education**

- 100% of the schools have LMS
- 100% of the schools have a website
- 87% of the teachers use the internet when preparing for lessons
- 70% of the teachers use ICT for communication with students at least every week
- 98% of the teachers use ICT in class

**Flourishing of Human Fulfillment**

The last area to consider challenges the core of last century's model: whereas the previous goal was uniform consistency, what's desired now is for each person to surpass uniformity to achieve personal excellence.  Isn't this the best guarantee against the unknown?  Changes in global economies, shifts in local demographic and employment patterns, emergence of new professions due to technological advancement, demand for different resources and subsequent business opportiunties, declining manufacturing and burgeoning service sectors, climate-induced disruptions giving rise to new industries – when the future is so certain to change, let's help our students to fulfill all their potentials and to thrive on learning and adapting to change.  Does individual flourishing appear in your vision?  If not, are you at least determined to nurture it?  Will your whole community remember this when things get confusing?

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[1] "Danish pupils use web in exams," published November 4, 2009 and retrieved from the Internet on February 16, 2011 from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/8341886.stm

## *Conclusion*

The world's greatest hockey player ever, the legendary Wayne Gretzky is famous for many things.  One is a quotation on the secret to his success.  He said, "I skate to where the puck is going to be."  We can sit, watching from the stands, marvelling at what technology will enable or we can look to "where the puck is going to be" and anticipate our opportunities to help our students succeed.  Let's make sure we're "in the game" by having a 2020 vision of what learning can look like and thus stand a better chance of achieving our goal.