

FROM QUALITY STANDARDS TO A GLOBAL MASTER'S

Building a 'Star Alliance' in Futures Studies

INSIGHTS FROM LEARNING DAY,
DUBAI FUTURE FORUM 2025
WITH SOHAIL INAYATULLAH
& EVA OLOUMI



Introduction & Context



Introduction

On November 20, 2025, a diverse global group of futurists, including members of the Global Futures Society convened at the Dubai Future Forum to explore new pathways for international cooperation in futures education, from shared quality standards to the long-envisioned yet unrealized idea of a Global Master's program in Futures Studies.

The session, facilitated by Sohail Inayatullah, explored whether a 'Star Alliance' model (coordination through shared resources, faculty, and learning) could succeed where previous efforts had failed. He framed the discussion through reflections on three decades of attempts to build global futures education networks, which repeatedly stalled due to political volatility, institutional resistance, and intellectual property concerns, despite early initiatives beginning in 1994 and later efforts in 2001, 2016, and during the COVID-19 shift to online learning.

The participatory session was structured in three phases: a historical and methodological framing, facilitated breakout groups examining five thematic pathways and using futures triangles, scenarios and the Causal Layered Analysis model, and then a plenary report-back with live graphic facilitation and discussion.

THE FIVE THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS (IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)

UNESCO Alignment and Network Engagement, facilitated by Sobhi Tawil which examined how UNESCO’s network of 1,200 Chairs could support or connect with futures education initiatives.

1

Indigenous and Diverse Ways of Knowing, led by Emily Sharp and Cheryl Doig, which was focused on embedding Pacific, Indigenous, feminist, and spiritual epistemologies into global frameworks.

2

Global Certification Models, led by Doris Viljoen and Adam Sharpe, which explored modular, stackable, “Lego-block” style certifications that could bypass university gatekeeping.

3

Quality and Scholarship in Futures Studies, led by Ivana Milojevic, which addressed issues such as poor scholarship, plagiarism, and the need for rigorous standards.

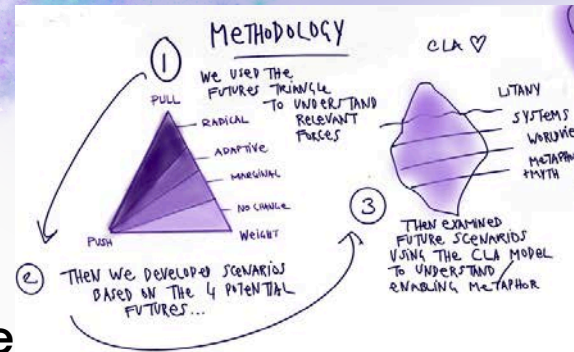
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Visioning a Global Master’s in Futures Studies, led by Kuo-Hua Chen which considered a high-level, long-term vision, acknowledging that institutional resistance remained a major barrier.

5



Methodology & History

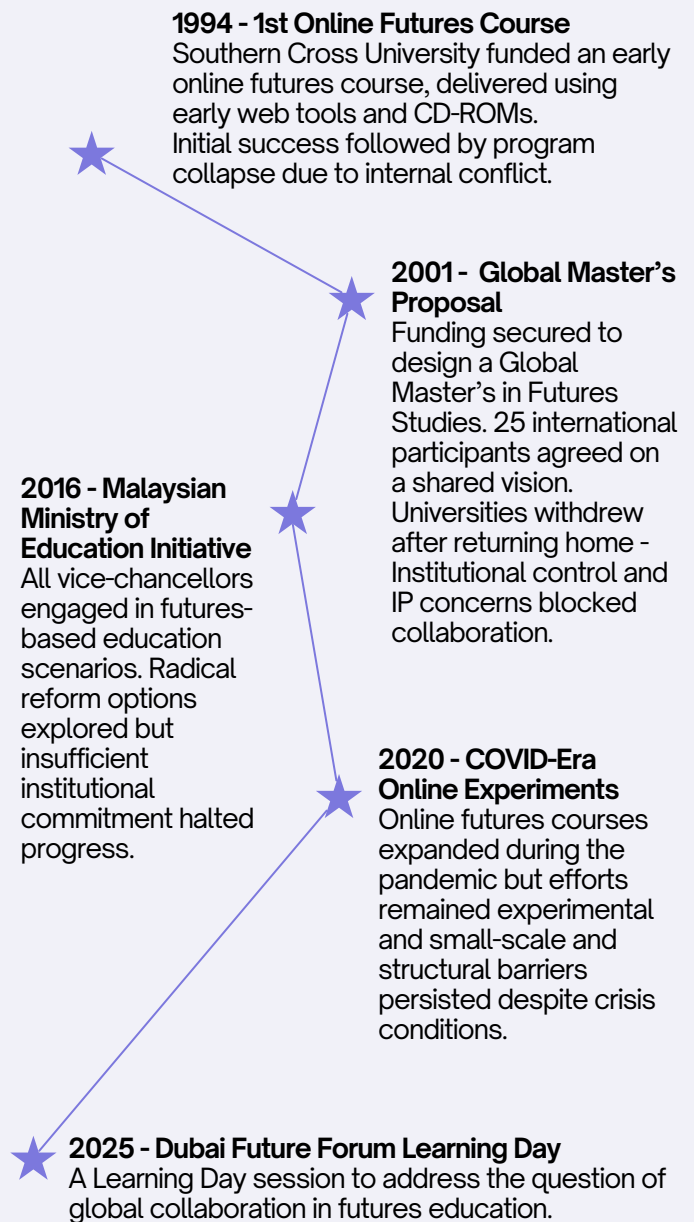


Timeline

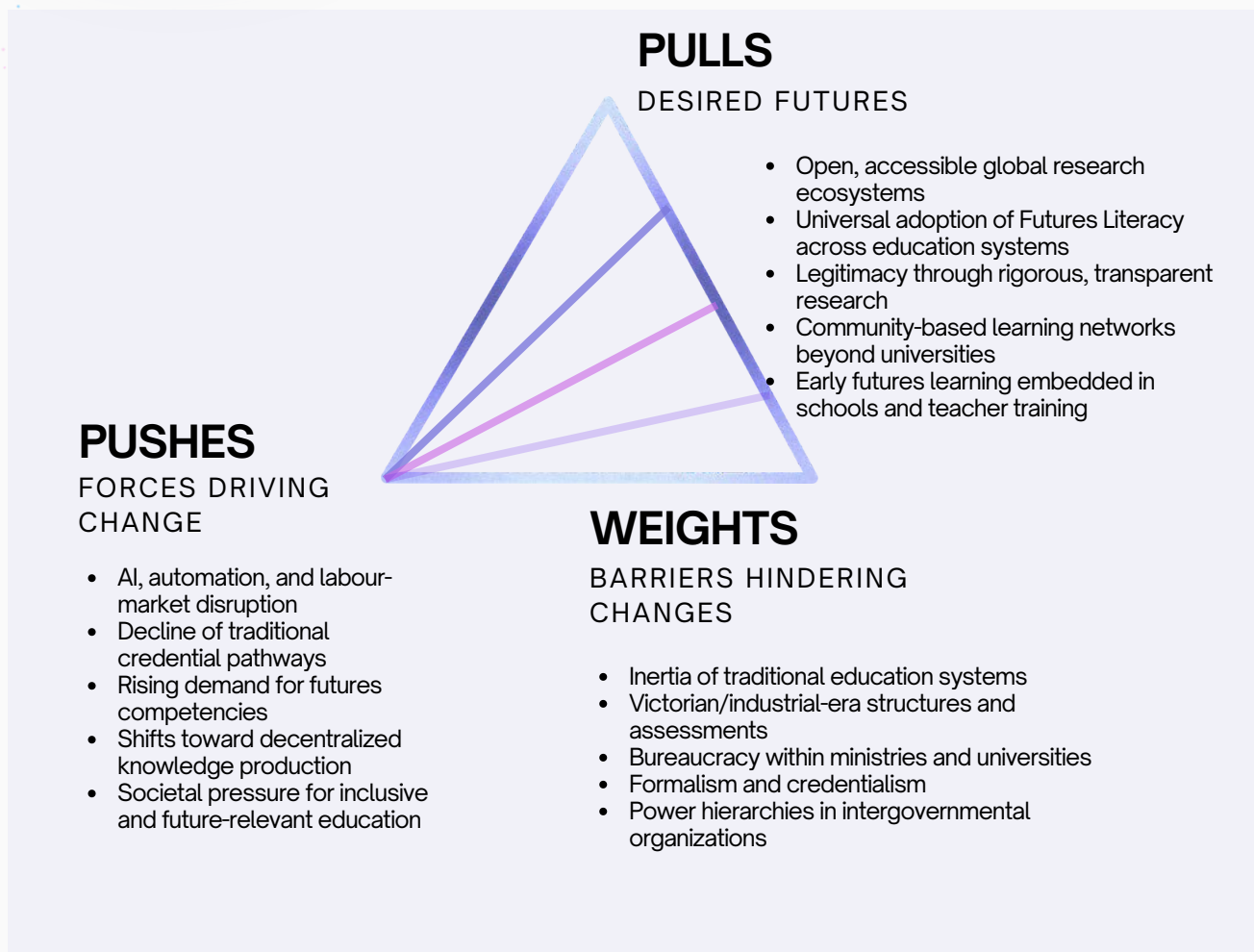
Theoretical Foundations for Analysis - Futures Triangles, Scenarios & Causal Layered Analysis

Groups were instructed to apply familiar futures methodologies to pushes of the present, pulls of preferred futures, and weights that resisted change using **Futures Triangles** and to use their outputs to create the basis of four possible **futures scenarios**: 1) no change, 2) incremental change, 3) adaptive change, and 4) transformative change.

Groups then used the **Causal Layered Analysis Model** to examine current conditions and a future scenario to unpack the litany, systems, worldviews, and underlying metaphors that may enable future global collaboration.



UNESCO Alignment & Network Engagement Group



With a focus on how Futures Literacy and futures-oriented education could evolve within and beyond UNESCO's global network of Chairs, ministries, and institutions, the group discussion reflected a tension between existing hierarchical systems including universities, ministries, intergovernmental structures and a desired future of distributed, transparent, community-driven learning ecosystems.

Recognizing UNESCO's unique role as a credibility-builder, the group acknowledged that current credentialing and educational models are increasingly outdated, exploring how UNESCO might shift from a top-down authority to a catalyst and connector, fostering rigorous research, early futures learning in schools, and open, decentralized knowledge networks.

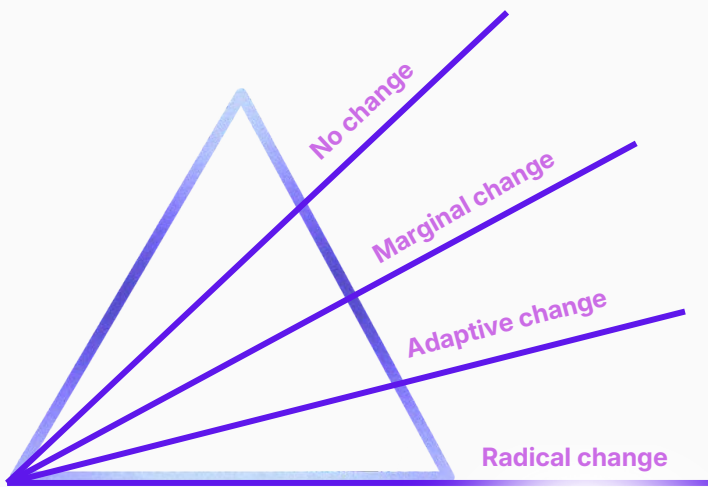
UNESCO Alignment & Network Engagement Group - Scenarios

No change - UNESCO remains embedded in formal institutions and ministries, with slow, limited expansion of Futures Literacy.

Marginal change - Some outreach to citizens and collectives expands, but power hierarchies and structures largely remain the same.

Adaptive change - UNESCO becomes a catalyst for knowledge transfer and collaboration; networks evolve beyond government systems and expand in flexible ways.

Radical change - Learning and research become fully transparent, accessible, and distributed. UNESCO's role shifts to supporting decentralized networks of individuals, communities, and collectives creating futures education outside the traditional university model.



UNESCO Alignment & Network Engagement Group - Causal Layered Analysis

Current State

Credential systems collapsing. Universities facing decline or bankruptcy. Rigid "born-learn-work-die" lifecycle shapes education. Limited credibility and uneven adoption of Futures Literacy.

Centralized, formalist education systems. Multilateral structures that are slow and bureaucratic. Deplatforming pressures. Heavy interdependencies anchoring UNESCO in institutional hierarchies. Token-based, top-down assurance mechanisms.

Individualism dominates learning. Formalism & credentialism define value. Industrial-era assumptions frame education. Capitalist priorities shape institutional incentives.

Dinosaurs / Jurassic Park → outdated, lumbering institutions. "Collapse" as underlying narrative. Aspirational hopes overshadowed by structural inertia.

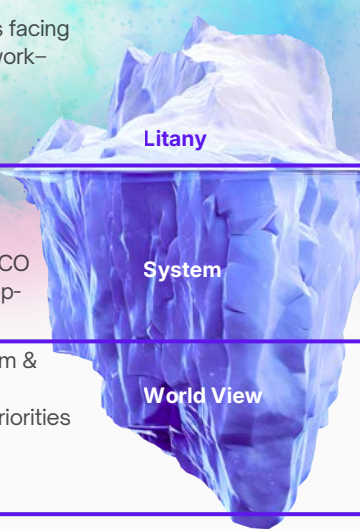
Future Scenario

"Credentials are dead — long live peer evaluation". Legitimacy emerges through community and network validation. New forms of recognition appear.

Multilateral but decentralized learning networks. Constellation governance models. New token systems for verification. Flexible, open, interdependent infrastructures. Deplatformed, democratized knowledge flows.

Purpose-led and value-driven learning. Collectivism and community orientation. Decentralized and cooperative knowledge creation. Learning as shared capability rather than institutional property.

Starting murmurations; self-organizing coherence. Mycelium; deep, distributed intelligence. Surfing; adaptation and balance. Immortal jellyfish, phoenix, ouroboros; regenerative learning. Autopoiesis; self-creating, evolving ecosystems.

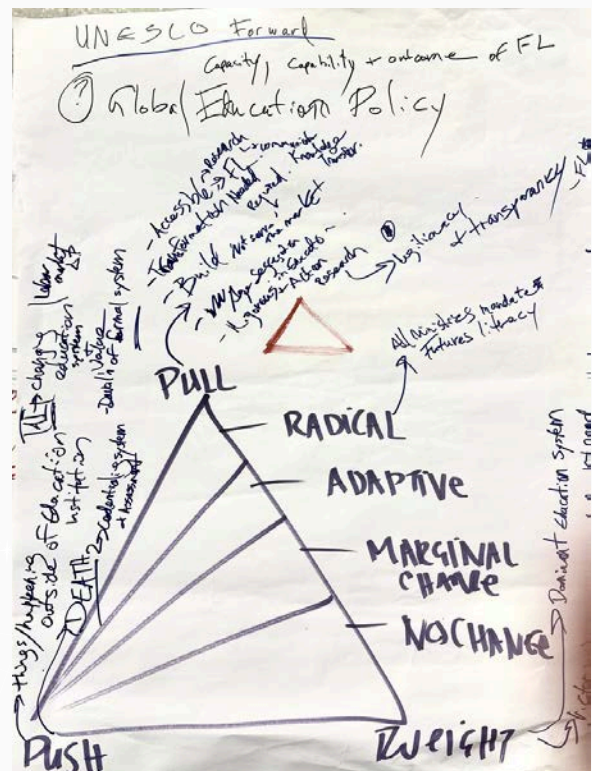
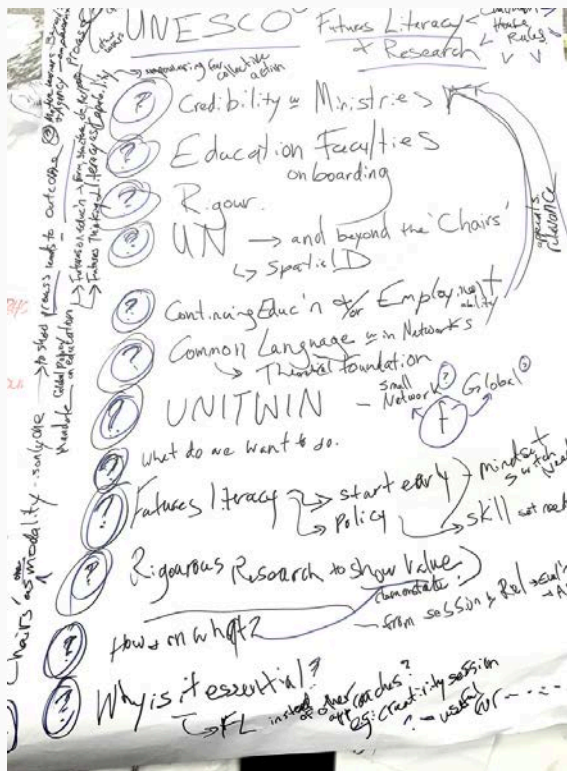


Lity

System

World View

Myth/Metaphor



UNESCO Alignment & Network Engagement Group - Takeaways



A SHIFT FROM A RIGID, INSTITUTION-CENTRIC EDUCATION MODEL TO A DECENTRALIZED, NETWORK-DRIVEN LEARNING ECOSYSTEM

Authority moves from institutions → communities

- Current systems rely on formal credentials, university gatekeeping, and centralized assurance.
- The future model replaces this with peer evaluation, network legitimacy, and decentralized trust structures.

Structures evolve from hierarchical → constellation-like

- Instead of top-down governance, the system becomes polycentric, adaptive, and interconnected — similar to starling murmurs or mycelium networks.

Worldview shifts from individualism → collectivism

- Education becomes purpose-led and community-based, emphasizing shared stewardship rather than competitive credential accumulation.

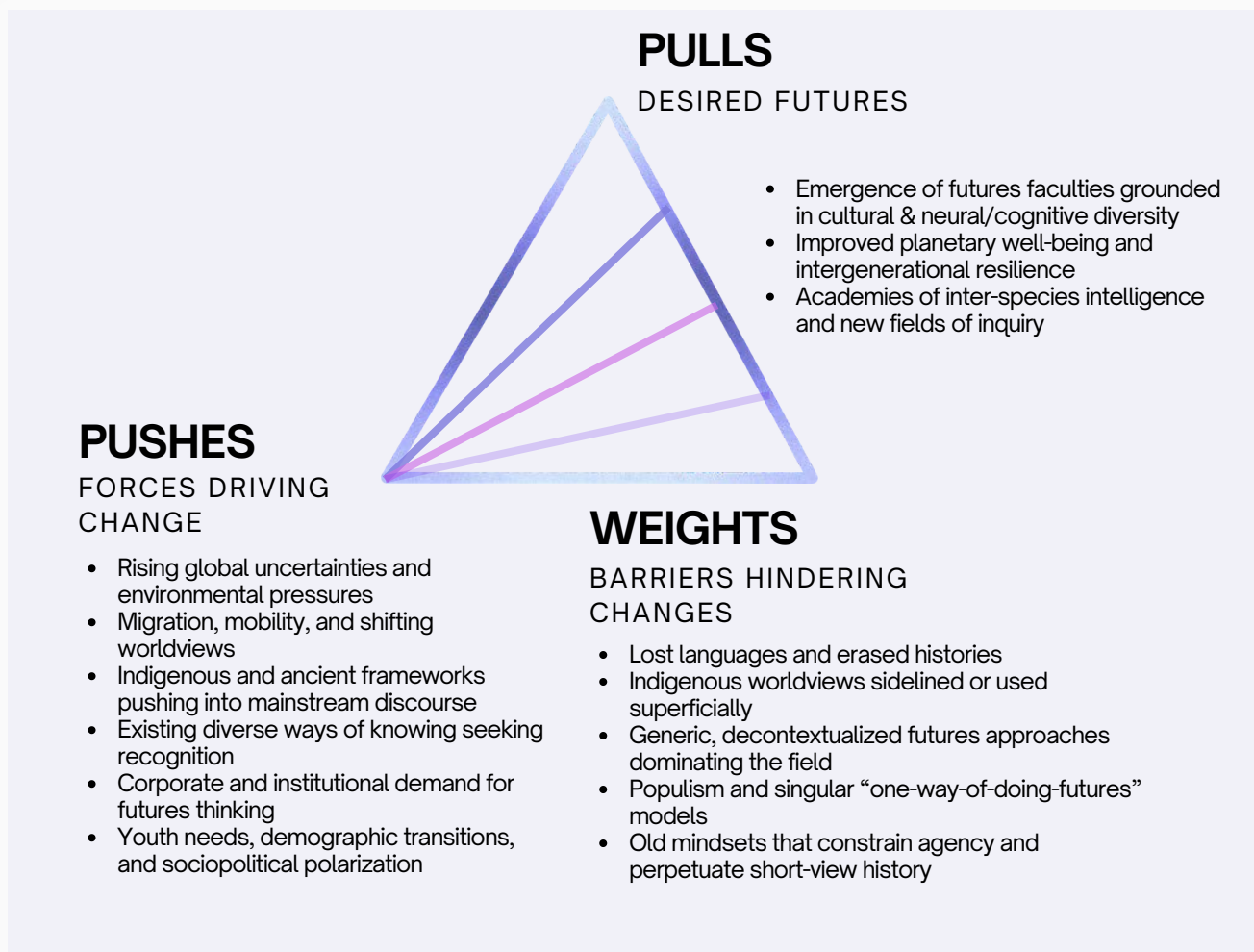
Education transforms from industrial → regenerative

- The metaphors shift from dinosaurs to phoenixes and mycelium — signaling a move to systems that grow, adapt, and renew themselves.

Futures Literacy becomes a core capability, not an add-on

- Where Futures Literacy is currently peripheral and inconsistently applied, the envisioned future embeds it deeply across communities, networks, and early education.
- In essence, the shift is from credentialing systems anchored in the past to adaptive, living learning ecosystems rooted in collective intelligence.

Indigenous & Diverse Ways of Knowing Group



Exploring how global futures education must move beyond Western technocratic models to include Indigenous, cultural, intergenerational, & context-specific epistemologies, this group focused on marginalization of diverse worldviews, Indigenous knowledge “in the passenger seat,” lost languages, and offerings shaped by Western academic pathways, emphasizing that authentic global futures work requires plurality, deeper recognition of multiple notions of time, relational systems, family structures, and collective decision-making.

They highlighted rising demand for inclusive futures frameworks amid global uncertainty, climate change, migration, and cultural resurgence, while noting major barriers such as colonial mindsets, short-termism, generic models, and slow institutional change. Their scenarios envision a shift from rigid, linear futures education to a coral-reef-like ecosystem; interconnected, locally grounded, guided by elders, and collectively stewarded.

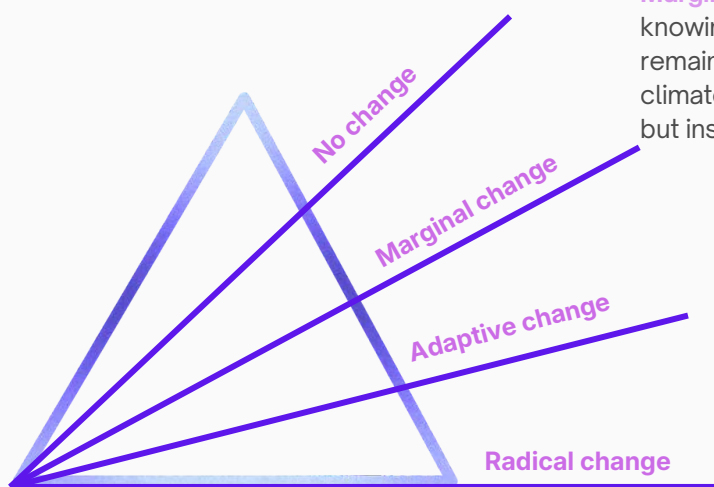
Indigenous and Diverse Ways of Knowing Group - Scenarios

No change - “Business as Usual”: Futures education continues as a linear, industrial “production line.” Indigenous knowledge remains marginal; youth and diverse communities stay at the receiving end. Systems regenerate themselves without real transformation.

Marginal change - “A Bigger Wheel”: Localized ways of knowing are included, but mostly at the edges. AI and tech remain underused system-wide. Futures methods inform climate discussions and diverse worldviews begin to surface, but institutions remain centralized.

Adaptive change - “Family Business / Lotus Model”: Globally agreed principles of foresight provide a shared foundation. Technology enables real-time contextual knowledge. Best-practice databases emerge from local contexts.. Futures education operates like a “family business”: collective responsibility, shared destiny, stewardship from elders, and a constellation-like governance model.

Radical change - “Collapse of Monoculture”: If dominant power-holders weaponize futures narratives, futures education becomes captured by a singular worldview. Oceania and other underrepresented regions fall further behind. Distrust widens. Plurality collapses into imposed futures.



Indigenous and Diverse Ways of Knowing Group - Causal Layered Analysis

Current State

20+ offerings across institutions, informal & virtual, with variable accessibility, cost, and quality. Futures education reflects dominant system, needs of “dominant learners”. Increasing gap between aspirations (plural, contextual futures) and practice.

Lack of standards/ shared frameworks. A system structured on western institutions and independent actors not communities, dominance of Western curricula, traditional academic incentives, gaps filled by independent consultants or corporate certificates.

Academic aualification perceived as only legitimate path. Dominant cultures shaping what counts as knowledge. Other worldviews “knocking” but unable to enter the closed club. Linear progress models suppress alternative ways of knowing & being.

“Futures production line” → rigid, linear, industrialized learning. “Stiff linear system” → inflexible & exclusionary.

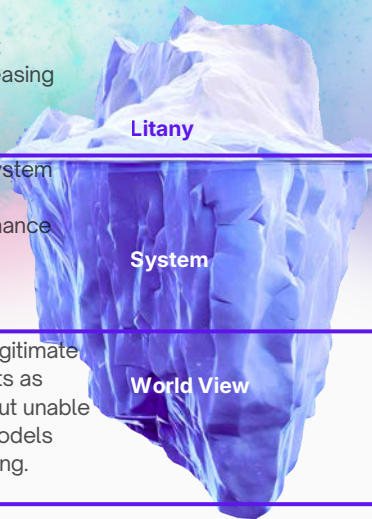
Future Scenario

Futures offerings become democratized. Quality is held alongside relevance & context. Access is broadened, diverse voices represented.

Shared collective “core principles”. Citizen assembly model to review approaches & offerings. Elders & context-grounded stewards guide learning. Collective, tech-enabled real-time, accessible offerings (e.g., shared PhDs, networked programs) replace siloed models.

Collective worldview: many ways of knowing & being. Participatory, transdisciplinary engagement. Multigenerational & cross-cultural exchange becomes normal. Futures grounded in inclusivity, contextual wisdom, & relational knowledge.

“Coral reef”; interconnected, alive, diverse ecosystem. “Sets of waves”; dynamic, cyclical, & context-sensitive learning.



Indigenous and Diverse Ways of Knowing Group - Takeaways



EVOLUTION FROM A CLOSED, WESTERN-DOMINATED FUTURES SYSTEM TO A PLURALISTIC, COMMUNITY-CENTERED ECOSYSTEM

Futures education shifts from exclusive → inclusive

- Currently, futures knowledge is defined by Western institutions and dominant learners.
- The future model democratizes access, giving equal value to Indigenous, feminist, spiritual, Pacific, and intergenerational perspectives.

Governance shifts from academic gatekeeping → collective stewardship

Instead of rigid academic standards, the future introduces:

- citizen assemblies,
- elders as stewards,
- context-responsive governance,
- community-driven evaluation.

Learning becomes relational, not bureaucratic.

- The worldview moves from linear → ecological.
- Today's system is a "production line."
- The future is a coral reef — interconnected, adaptive, deeply rooted in place and story.

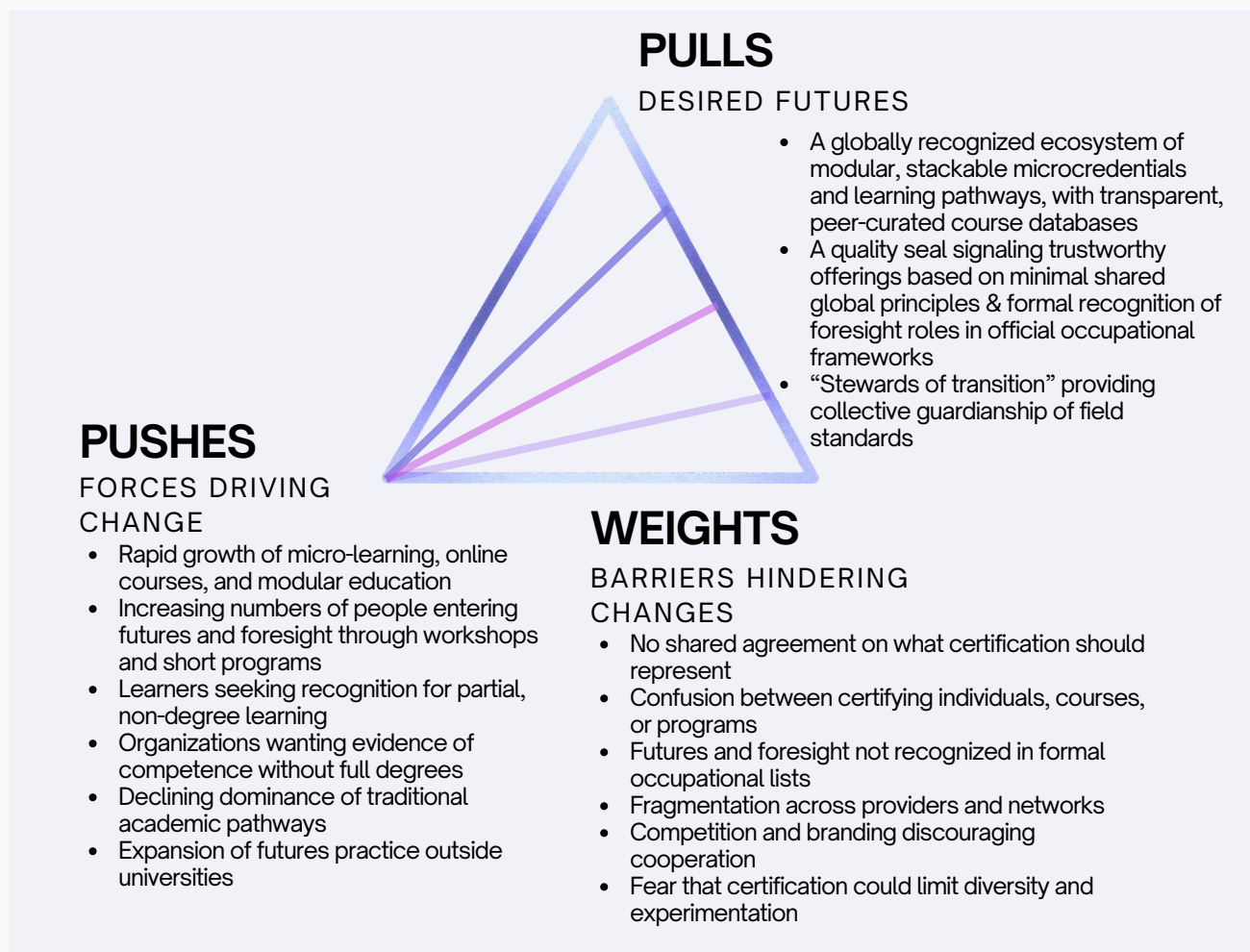
Authority shifts from degree-based legitimacy → community and capability-based legitimacy

- Professional futurists no longer require a single type of credential; legitimacy emerges from lived experience, cultural grounding, and collective evaluation.

Systems shift from slow and reactive → real-time, tech-enabled, accessible

- The future system uses technology to support inclusion rather than to reinforce hierarchies.
- In short, the shift is from a rigid, Western, linear educational model to a living, pluralistic, relational futures ecosystem infused with many ways of knowing.

Global Certification Models Group



This group focused on the future of certification, recognition, and professional pathways in futures and foresight. Their raw notes describe the current landscape as a “Wild West”: fragmented, inconsistent, and lacking clarity about standards, legitimacy, or recognized occupation pathways. Participants highlighted the prevalence of micro-courses, badges, unaccredited trainings, and competing claims of expertise, leading to public confusion, legitimacy issues, and mistrust (“charlatans,” “snake oil salesmen”).

Moving from today’s disorganized ecosystem toward a modular, interoperable curriculum system built from “Lego-like” blocks that learners can stack, combine, and validate across networks, the group emphasized peer-reviewed quality, curated databases of offerings, & minimal shared standards that support clarity without enforcing uniformity, revealing strong aspirations for a recognized foresight profession, a seal of quality, and a shared curriculum, while noting heavy barriers such as lack of recognized occupational categories.

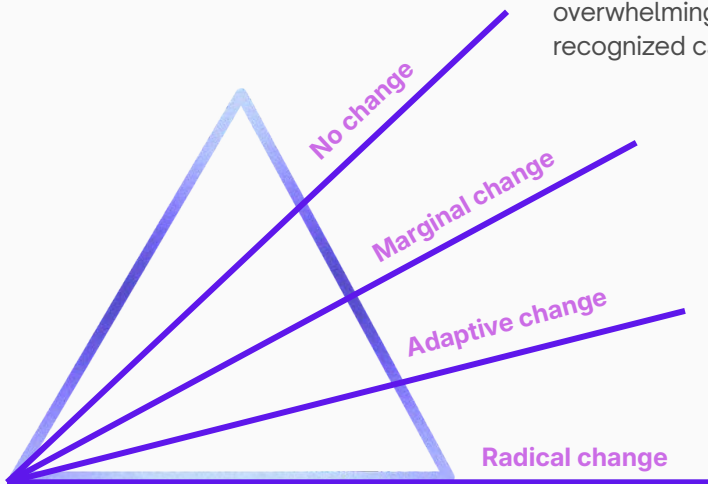
Global Certification Models Group - Scenarios

No change - “Wild West Forever”: Fragmentation persists; no shared quality indicators. Techno-individualism and commercial opportunism dominate. Snake-oil reputations and charlatanry continue to erode trust. Learners face an overwhelming, confusing credential marketplace. No recognized career paths or occupational standards.

Marginal change - “Patchwork Credentials”: Universities add minors, 25-credit modules, or micro-courses, more languages, more flavors — but still fractured. Informal agreements and gut-feel institutional approvals. Ecosystem expands but without interoperability. Credential communities form but remain siloed.

Adaptive change - “Ecosystem of Curriculum”: Free or funded accessible training reduces barriers. Mini online trainings, peer-reviewed badges, and curated networks emerge. Databases catalog courses by skills, context, and quality signals. Regional futures organizations (Africa, APFN, Latin America, Europe) begin aligning minimal standards. Collaborative incentive structures replace gatekeeping. Interoperability grows across institutions and networks.

Radical change - “Global Futures Standards / PISA for Futures”: UNESCO, regional bodies, and professional networks agree on minimal global elements without enforcing uniformity. Foresight becomes a recognized profession with official occupational codes. A globally interoperable credential system emerges, with pathways from microcredentials to full degrees. “Tomorrow” becomes the north star: quality, democracy, accessibility, and stewardship embedded in a shared global framework. Standards are light-touch, enabling creativity while ensuring legitimacy.



Global Certification Models Group

- Causal Layered Analysis

Current State

Futures and foresight are frequently questioned or dismissed (“What is futures?”, “Can you predict the future?”, “Get a real job”). Futures is often reduced to consulting or prediction and struggles with legitimacy, funding, and mainstream recognition.

Lacking shared understanding & recognized accrediting bodies. Fragmentation across consultants, academics, & corporate units. Absence of standards, low-quality offerings & “false prophets erode trust. Institutions police boundaries without providing pathways.

Learning is considered legitimate mainly through traditional degrees, while partial learning is seen as risky despite demand for flexibility. Certification is torn between gatekeeping and illegibility, and recognition remains institution-centric even as learning spans networks, careers, and life stages.

Lego blocks that don’t snap together; many useful pieces exist, but without a shared logic they fail to form recognizable structures. Plateau; abundance of offerings without forward movement or clear progression.

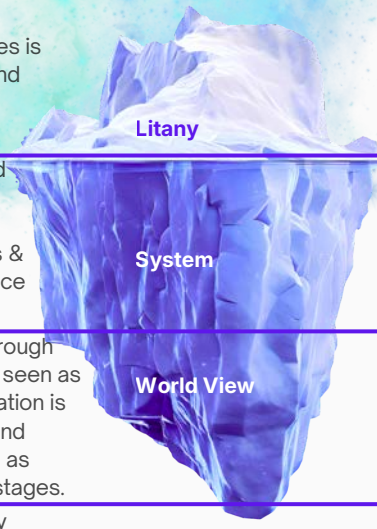
Future Scenario

Learning pathways with multiple entry points (short courses, micro-credentials, immersive programs, degrees) that connect coherently from learning to work. Employers & institutions interpret credentials more easily, partial learning is recognized without forcing a single linear path.

Peer-curated ecosystem curriculum with transparent infrastructures that map offerings by skills & context. Modular, Lego-like components interoperate across universities, think tanks, & networks. Badges & micro-credentials stack into meaningful pathways.

Certification shifts from gatekeeping to navigation. Legitimacy comes from demonstrated capability & contextual relevance, validated through networks rather than institutions. Futures learning is understood as lifelong, modular, & adaptive, with multiple valid ways to build competence over time.

Ecosystem of curriculum; a connected, evolving learning landscape rather than isolated offerings. Lego system that snaps together; modular pieces designed to connect, recombine, and scale into recognizable pathways. “Goodbye gatekeeping”; guidance and interoperability replace exclusion.



Global Certification Models Group - Takeaways



SHIFT FROM GATEKEEPING CREDENTIALS TO A NAVIGATIONAL SYSTEM THAT CONNECTS MODULAR FUTURES LEARNING INTO COHERENT, TRUSTED PATHWAYS

Recognition shifts from fragmented signals → navigable pathways

- Currently, learners and employers face a confusing landscape of micro-courses, badges, and partial credentials with little guidance on how they connect. The future model makes pathways legible, enabling learners to move coherently from learning to work without relying on a single, linear degree.

Certification evolves from gatekeeping → navigation

- Rather than policing who belongs, certification supports learning journeys. Recognition helps interpret and connect modular learning across contexts, reducing exclusion while maintaining clarity.

Systems move from isolated offerings → interoperable curriculum ecosystems

- Disconnected programs and platforms give way to an ecosystem of curriculum, where Lego-like modules stack and translate across universities, think tanks, and networks. Interoperability replaces institutional silos.

Authority shifts from single institutions → peer and network validation

- Legitimacy no longer rests with one accrediting body. Instead, transparent databases, peer curation, and network validation provide trust and recognition across diverse learning environments.

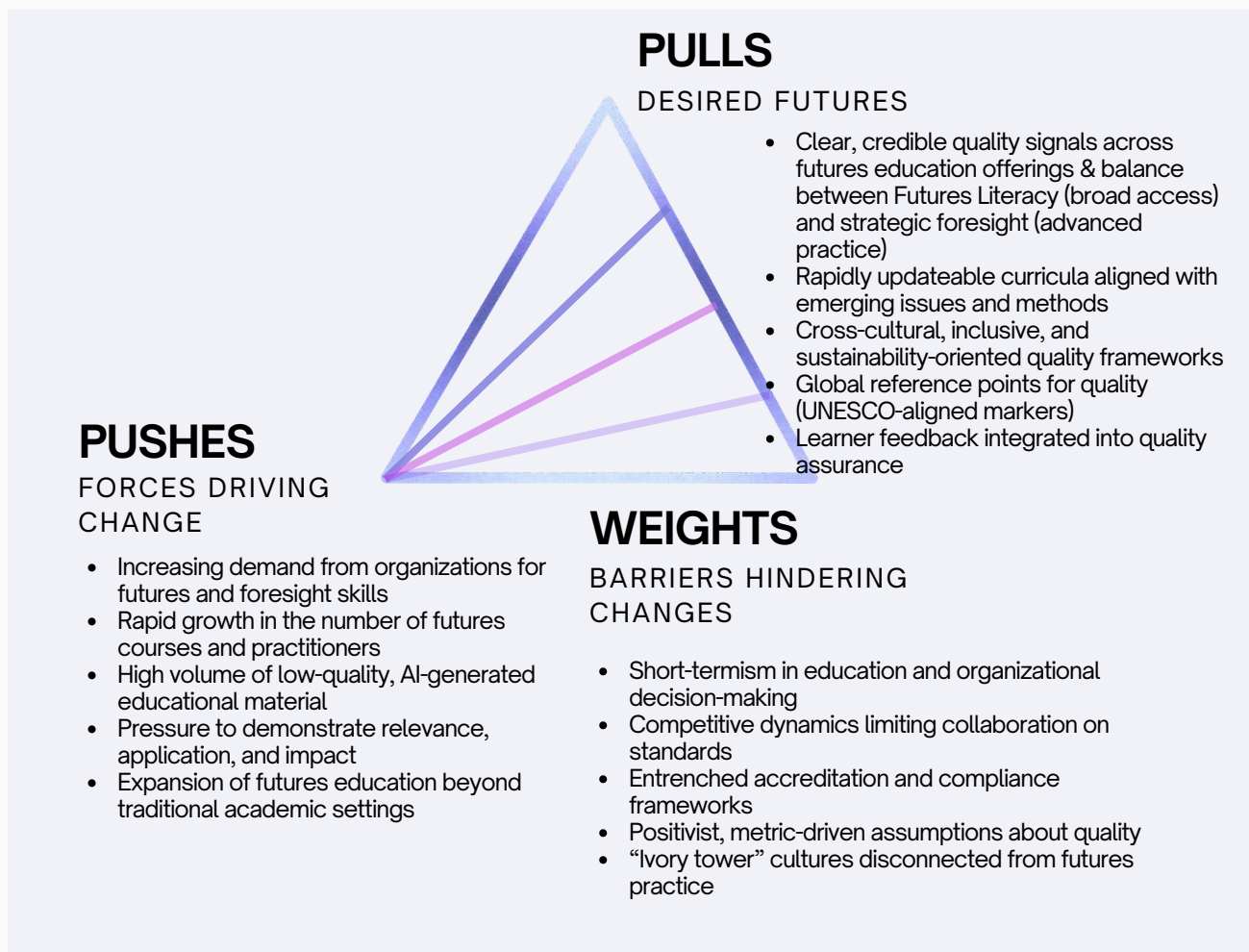
Learning pathways expand from degree-centric → lifelong and modular

- Futures learning is no longer confined to full degrees. Micro-credentials, short courses, and immersive programs become meaningful components of lifelong professional formation, without collapsing diversity into uniform standards.

Coherence is achieved without uniformity

- Light-touch shared reference points enable alignment across regions and providers while preserving experimentation, plural approaches, and contextual relevance.

Quality and Scholarship in Futures Studies



The Quality Standards group examined how quality in futures and foresight education has traditionally been defined through grades, accreditation, and institutional authority, and why these mechanisms are increasingly misaligned with contemporary futures practice. Their discussion highlighted the continued influence of industrial-era assumptions (positivism, quantification, and compliance) that shape how quality is measured, often disconnecting evaluation from learning outcomes, relevance, and application.

They explored how quality could be reframed as a dynamic, context-sensitive process rather than a fixed institutional label. Outputs emphasized maintaining rigour while increasing adaptability, introducing shared reference points without uniformity, & strengthening learner centered feedback loops to ensure that quality frameworks remain credible, and responsive.

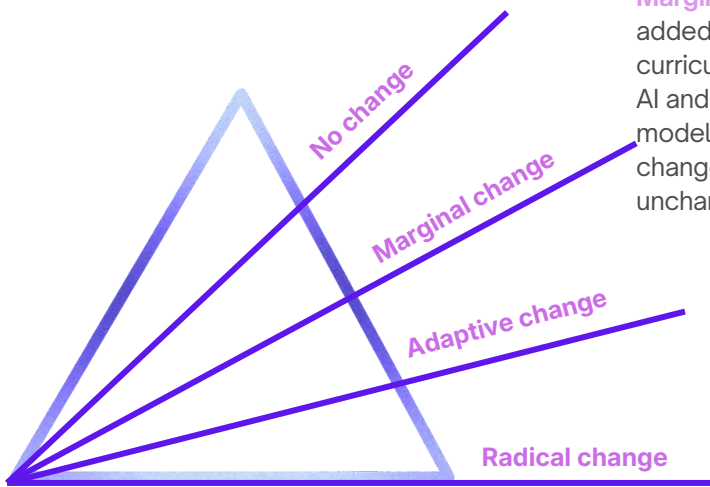
Quality & Scholarship in Futures Studies Group - Scenarios

- **No change** - “Quality as Compliance”: Performance judged by grades and narrow metric & inconsistent quality across programs. Accreditation systems continue to define legitimacy. Futures education remains marginal and assessed using criteria from other disciplines. Slow accreditation cycles limit adaptation.

Marginal change - “Quality as Add-On”: Futures electives added within existing accredited programs, or with minor curriculum updates without changing evaluation logic. AI and new tools incorporated into traditional assessment models. Local improvements in quality without systemic change. Accreditation structures remain dominant and unchanged.

Adaptive change - “Shared Reference Points”: Shared quality reference points emerge (e.g. Futures Literacy) & Multiple pathways recognized within common frameworks. Light-touch endorsement by global or regional bodies. Learner feedback integrated into quality evaluation. Faster updating of curricula and standards. Balance achieved between rigor, relevance, and inclusivity.

Radical change - “Global Futures Erasmus”: Quality redefined beyond grades and accreditation. Learners build personalized futures learning pathways across institutions. Distributed futures centers of excellence emerge globally. Evaluation focuses on capability, systems thinking, and application. Mobility and transdisciplinary learning become standard. Quality maintained through transparency, peer review, and networks.



Quality & Scholarship in Futures Studies Group - Causal Layered Analysis

Current State

There is little or no quality control across futures and foresight offerings. The field is fragmented, with wide variation in rigor, depth, & relevance. "Anything goes" dynamics prevail, & quality is rarely discussed explicitly. Market-driven offerings proliferate, & box-ticking approaches replace deeper learning.

Fragmented support for futures & foresight across institutions & regions. Curriculum shaped by capitalism & techno-individualism with no coordinated system for maintaining quality or shared thresholds. Competition reinforces silos rather than collaboration.

Branding prioritized over scholarship, learning colonized through dominant narratives, tools, & methodologies instead of critical, plural exploration. Quality is equated with market success rather than epistemic robustness or societal relevance.

"Wild West"; unregulated, fragmented, individualistic, and driven by claims rather than shared norms.

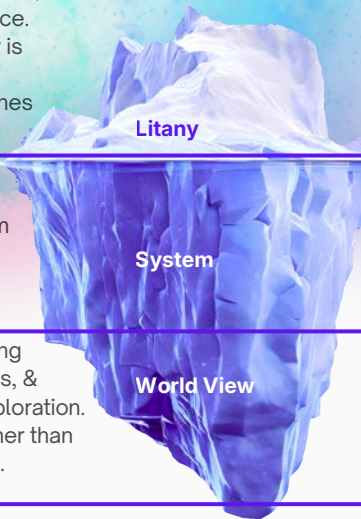
Future Scenario

Minimal common elements and shared quality thresholds are agreed upon across the field. Quality becomes a visible and discussable dimension of futures education and practice.

Regional & global futures bodies are connected through shared frameworks. Coordination across networks enables multiple pathways & approaches. Learner feedback & peer review become central mechanisms for maintaining quality.

A balance between global coherence & local relevance is established. Eco-paradigms, sustainability, & planetary commons shape how quality & scholarship are understood. Futures education is oriented toward long-term societal & planetary well-being.

Shared standards as scaffolding for tomorrow. Common ground supporting diverse futures practices rather than enforcing uniformity.



Quality & Scholarship in Futures Studies Group - Takeaways



SHIFTS FROM COMPLIANCE AND BRANDING TO SHARED SCHOLARLY REFERENCE POINTS THAT SUPPORT RIGOR, RELEVANCE, AND CREDIBILITY AT SCALE

Quality shifts from compliance → adaptive rigor

- Current systems rely on grades, accreditation cycles, institutional branding, and narrow metric-driven evaluation. The future model reframes quality as dynamic, transparent, context-sensitive, and continuously evolving. Quality becomes visible and discussable rather than assumed through institutional authority.

Scholarship shifts from fragmented competition → shared scholarly reference points

- The current field resembles a “Wild West”: fragmented offerings, inconsistent rigor, low-quality AI-generated material, and minimal shared thresholds.
- The future model introduces light-touch shared frameworks and minimal common elements that support coherence without enforcing uniformity. Shared standards function as scaffolding rather than control.

Evaluation shifts from institutional authority → peer and learner feedback

- Existing systems privilege institutional accreditation and top-down legitimacy.
- The future model centers; peer review, learner feedback loops, network validation, transparent quality signals. Quality becomes relational and iterative rather than bureaucratic.

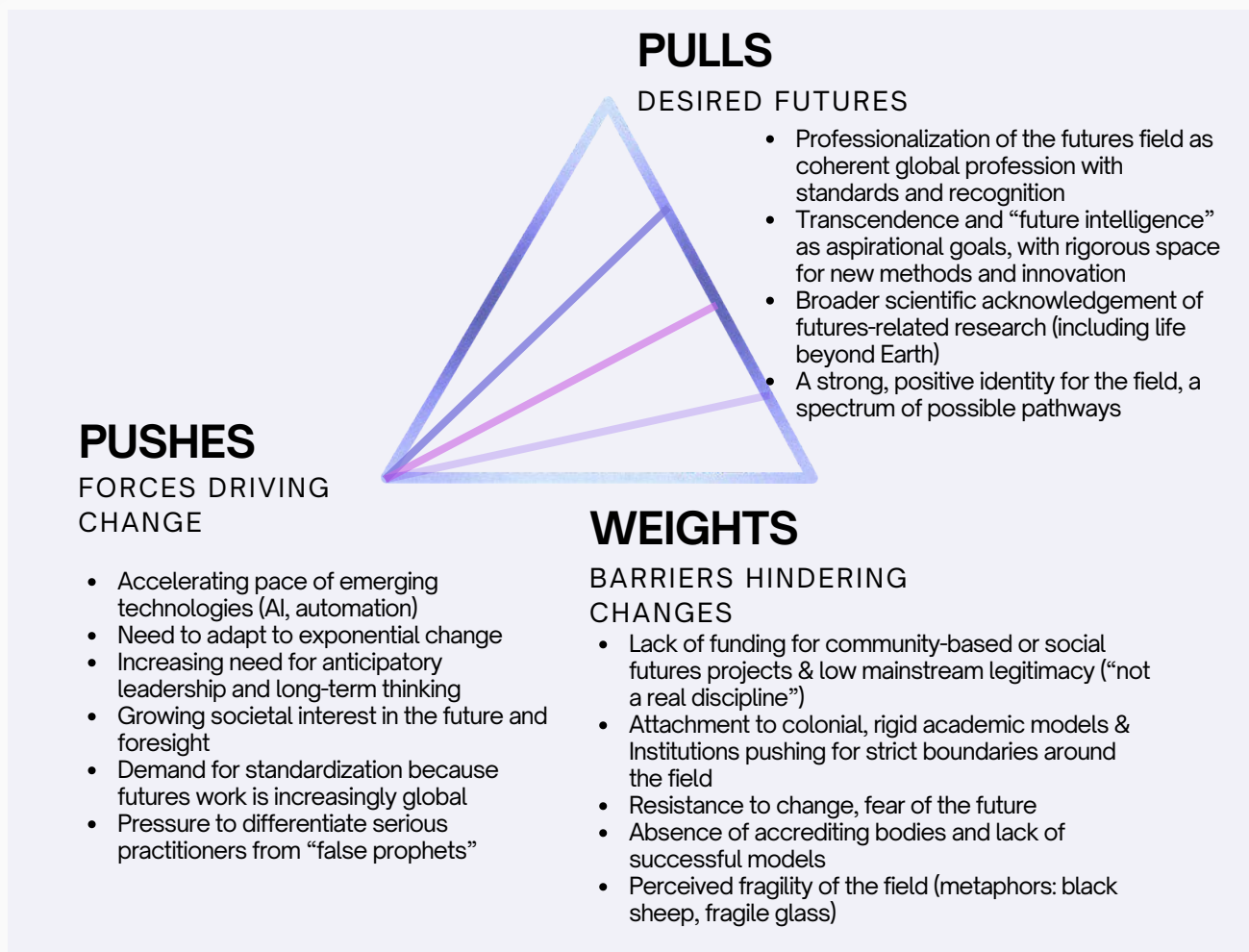
Futures education shifts from static curricula → rapidly adaptive learning ecosystems

- Current accreditation systems update too slowly for exponential technological and societal change.
- Future-oriented curricula become continuously updateable and responsive to emerging issues, methods, and contexts. Adaptability itself becomes a quality criterion.

Systems shift from slow and reactive → real-time, tech-enabled, accessible

- The future system uses technology to support inclusion rather than to reinforce hierarchies.
- In short, the shift is from a rigid, Western, linear educational model to a living, pluralistic, relational futures ecosystem infused with many ways of knowing.

Visioning a Global Master's in Futures Studies Group



This group explored the ambitious vision of creating a Global Master's degree in Futures Studies, a goal that Sohail described as historically “impossible” due to institutional politics, intellectual property concerns, and resistance from university leadership. This historical inability reflected the tension between professionalizing the field and confronting entrenched barriers such as funding constraints, lack of legitimacy, colonial education models, and skepticism about futures as a discipline

The group articulated an aspiration toward a coherent, globally recognized profession supported by rigorous methods & shared standards. Their scenarios reflected a movement from futures being dismissed (“get a real job”) to a future where the field is respected, grounded, and valued for anticipatory leadership and long-term human development.

Visioning a Global Master's in Futures Studies - Scenarios

No change - "Get a Real Job" / Futures as Fringe":

Futures continues to be misunderstood and the public asks: "Can you predict the future?" Institutions view it as vague, utopian, or dystopian. Economic rationality and short-termism dominate. Futures remains a fragile, marginalized field.

Marginal change - "Awareness but Not Acceptance":

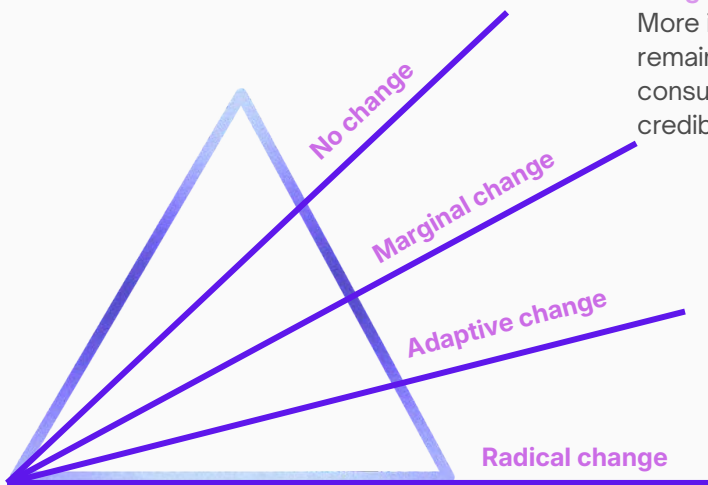
More individuals encounter futures concepts, but institutions remain skeptical. Futures work expands in business consulting but lacks coherence. False prophets dilute credibility. The field gains visibility but not deep legitimacy.

Adaptive change - "Professionalizing the Spectrum":

Futures Literacy expands across disciplines. Futures networks grow (mycelium metaphor). Excellence, quality, and anticipatory leadership emerge as shared values. The field becomes more grounded, optimistic, and connected. Futures work gains a clearer identity and sense of rootedness.

Radical change - "Bright Ocean Futures / Museum-Front Glass Sculpture":

Futures becomes a recognized global profession. The field is taken seriously as a long-term leadership discipline. Global Master's or equivalent structures form through networked universities. Practitioners are valued as advisors and system connectors.



Visioning a Global Master's in Futures Studies - Causal Layered Analysis

Current State

Futures is often dismissed or misunderstood (“what is futures?”, “can you predict the future?”, “get a real job”). Futures work is conflated with consulting or prediction. Educational pathways exist, but they are fragmented and lack visibility. Futures is rarely framed as a long-term leadership discipline.

Low understanding of futures field, lack of coherent professional pathways at the Master's level. Programs are siloed & collaboration across universities is informal & weak. Futures is not institutionally anchored as a profession, limiting coherence and mobility.

Economic rationality & short-termism dominate. Futures legitimacy is framed in binary terms (real discipline vs not). Anticipatory & long-term leadership is undervalued. Futures is seen as peripheral rather than foundational to governance and strategy.

Black sheep: marginal and questioned. Glass sculpture still being sculpted; fragile, unfinished, not yet fully visible.

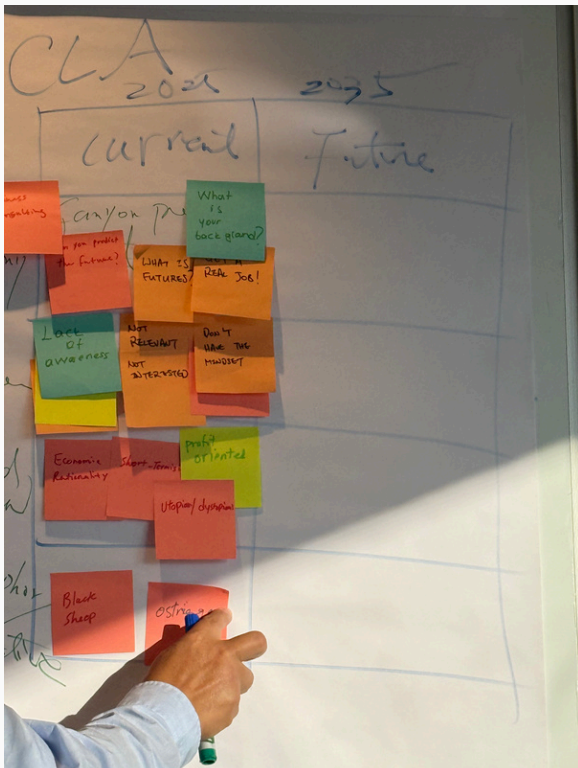
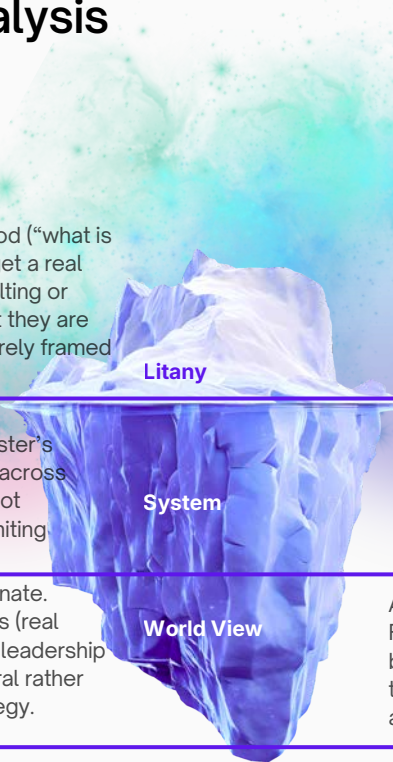
Future Scenario

Futures becomes a recognized global profession and leadership discipline. Practitioners are valued as advisors, sense-makers, and system connectors across sectors.

Global Master's pathways via networked universities, sharing curricula, faculty, & recognition while remaining distributed. Futures education operates as a coherent global architecture that supports mobility, collaboration, & professional formation without centralization.

A spectrum worldview replaces binary legitimacy. Futures roles vary in depth & form but are unified by anticipatory capability & stewardship of long-term systems. Leadership, scholarship, & practice are complementary rather than competing.

Mycelium network: distributed professional coherence. Glass sculpture at the front of the museum: visible, valued, legitimate. “Bright Ocean Futures”: expansive, generative, long-term orientation.



Visioning a Global Master's in Futures Studies - Takeaways



SHIFT FROM A MARGINAL, MISUNDERSTOOD PRACTICE TO A RECOGNIZED GLOBAL LEADERSHIP DISCIPLINE THROUGH NETWORKED LEARNING PATHWAYS

Futures shifts from marginal practice → recognized leadership discipline

- Futures moves beyond being perceived as consulting, prediction, or fringe work and becomes established as a long-term leadership and advisory capability essential to governance, strategy, and societal transformation.

Professional identity evolves from binary legitimacy → spectrum of roles

- Rather than asking whether futures is a “real” discipline, the field is understood as a spectrum of roles, depths, and pathways, unified by anticipatory capability and stewardship of long-term systems.

Education structures move from isolated programs → networked universities

- A single institutional model gives way to distributed, networked Master’s pathways that share curricula, faculty, and recognition while remaining globally coherent and locally adaptable.
- Coherence is achieved through connection, not centralization.
- Professional formation does not require a single authority. Mycelium-like networks enable coherence, quality, and legitimacy to emerge through connection, collaboration, and shared purpose.

Visibility shifts from fragile → publicly valued

- Futures becomes visible and trusted as a profession; no longer a fragile, half-formed practice, but a field confidently placed “at the front of the museum,” recognized for its contribution to long-term human and planetary futures.

The field moves from short-term rationality → long-view stewardship

- Economic short-termism is replaced by anticipatory leadership grounded in optimism, responsibility, and care for complex, interdependent systems.

Conclusion

Futures education now faces a structural challenge: connecting diverse knowledge, standards, and pathways into a coherent field.

The session surfaced a shared recognition that futures education is at an inflection point. Across diverse perspectives, participants converged on the insight that existing structures, rooted in industrial-era education models, rigid credentialing, and institutional gatekeeping, are no longer fit for the demands of long-term, anticipatory leadership in a rapidly changing world. Taken together, the five thematic working groups point not toward a single reform, but toward a systemic reconfiguration of how futures education is governed, practiced, recognized, and sustained.

The UNESCO Alignment and Network Engagement group highlighted the limits of institution-centric authority and articulated a shift toward UNESCO acting as a catalyst and connector within distributed learning ecosystems, with an emphasis on enabling legitimacy, coordination, and early Futures Literacy through networks that extend beyond universities and ministries.

The Indigenous and Diverse Ways of Knowing group foregrounded the epistemic foundations of futures education, calling for a move away from linear, Western-dominated models toward plural, relational, and community-centered approaches. This group emphasized that authentic futures work requires recognizing multiple notions of time, lived context, intergenerational knowledge, and collective stewardship as core, not peripheral, elements of Futures Literacy.

The Global Certification Models group focused on how learning is recognized and assembled, with certification serving not as a mechanism of gatekeeping or quality policing, but instead recognition as navigational infrastructure. Modular, interoperable learning pathways would allow diverse forms of futures learning to connect coherently across careers and life stages without collapsing plurality into uniform standards.





The Quality and Scholarship in Futures Studies group addressed the question of rigour. Moving beyond compliance, branding, and metric-driven evaluation, the group reframed quality as a set of shared reference points that balance global coherence with local relevance, scholarly depth with adaptability, and transparency with experimentation. Quality, in this view, becomes something that supports learning and credibility rather than constrains innovation

Finally, the Visioning a Global Master's in Futures Studies group articulated a high-level, long-term horizon. Futures is envisioned as a recognized global leadership discipline, supported not by a single institution but by networked universities and collaborative architectures. Professional identity shifts from binary legitimacy to a spectrum of roles unified by anticipatory capability and stewardship of long-term systems.

Way Forward

Together, these perspectives outline shifts from centralized authority to networked governance, from singular epistemologies to plural ways of knowing, from rigid credentials to interoperable pathways, from opaque quality signals to shared scholarly reference points, and from marginal practice to visible leadership discipline.

Further progress will require sustained research, coordination, and resourcing. This includes mapping existing futures education offerings across institutions, regions, and learning formats, identifying areas of convergence and fragmentation, and understanding how current initiatives already function as components of an emerging ecosystem.

Advancing this work will depend on collaboration across educators, practitioners, institutions, and funders willing to support shared infrastructure, experimentation, and coordination rather than isolated programs.

Metafutures and Paradeigma intend to work with interested partners to bring together relevant stakeholders, including philanthropic organizations, public funders, and institutional supporters, to support this next phase. This includes co-developing research agendas, mapping existing offerings, and facilitating the co-design of collaborative models for shared delivery, recognition, and governance. Such partnerships are essential to translating the insights of this Learning Day into durable pathways for cooperation, learning, and long-term impact.

What emerges is not a single model to be implemented, but an evolving futures education ecosystem capable of meeting the complexity, uncertainty, and ethical responsibility of shaping futures, collectively, inclusively, and with purpose.



Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. If you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please reach out:

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