ICED 2020 proceedings:

A future unlike our present. Contributions from the ICED 2020 Student Ambassadors[1]

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Introduction

Students around the world were invited, in 200 words or less, to respond to the following prompt:

> *What does the Future-Ready Graduate look like to me?*

What follows are the individual answers of the students who were subsequently selected as Student Ambassadors to join the conference.

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[1] The ICED 2020 Student Ambassadors were nominated by the ICED networks and selected in a competitive process with an eye not only to individual talent but to the creation of as diverse and international a group as possible. Their tasks at the ICED 2020 conference would have been to participate in a student panel discussion (plenary session); to attend the conference and record their thoughts daily; and to provide their verdicts at the close of the conference, from the student perspective. Their participation would have been fully funded. Not being able to host this wonderful group due to conference cancellation is one of the organisation committee's deepest regrets. Note: Joy Schuurmans Stekhoven was ETH Zurich's Student Ambassador and provided invaluable, regular input and help to the conference organisers from the student perspective and beyond. We thank her for her great efforts.

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Gabriel Reyes

As the first in my family to attend college, a significant challenge to my success was a lack of information pivotal in order to be "ready for my future." However, I realized that this information is not equitably accessible. Through my experience educated in an impoverished immigrant community in New Mexico, I've observed a significant lack of resources to support budding scholars who endure poverty. As a result, this provides additional barriers for low-income students to maximize their education and to progress academically and professionally into the future. Hoping to play a role in supporting low-income students in education, I am a first-year graduate student at Columbia working with Drs. Kim Noble and Daphna Shohamy exploring how poverty affects brain development and its impacts on learning and academic achievement. I was inspired to pursue a career as an educational neuroscientist after I observed a drastic shift in my future when resources—academic, professional, and personal—became available to me in college, but many students continue to lack access to the knowledge integral to succeed in today's society. Thus, I intend to devote a lifetime to investigating how experiences and resources contribute to different academic outcomes and how to ameliorate any gaps for those reared in poverty. The goal of my research is to provide insights on equitable teaching pedagogies, generate academic initiatives, shift educational policy integral to prepare students from the most economically vulnerable communities to equally be "future-ready" graduates.

Natalia Pérez-Luco Alarcón

Globalization, new technologies, fast specialized scientific advances and global warming – all these among other phenomena are changing the world as we know it at an exponential rate. These factors have influenced interpersonal and international relationships, both of which are increasing in complexity. Today there is a globalized multiculture as a product of the broad number of diverse people from across the world, who interact constantly through social networks and migratory processes. The objectives for sustainable development, reception of refugees from countries in humanitarian crisis, worldwide mobilizations such as gender inequality and the care of the environment are some examples of this.

How do professionals prepare for a world that is in constant change, that finds itself with the urgency of changing habits in order to take care of the planet and whose challenges are becoming more and more complex to embrace?

The great challenge for the teaching of future-ready graduates lies in strengthening competences that are not found in books nor in scientific journals, such as creativity, leadership, the ability to work in interdisciplinary teams and apply a systemic approach to the diagnosis and resolution of problems. It also lies in the development of communication skills to transmit knowledge and reach agreements, the ability to think critically about local and global realities along with a high level of social commitment, and to take into account the common good to build a society based on sustainability. As future graduates, we must be able to adapt to new challenges, be resilient agents of change able to work with other disciplines and innovate together to solve complex problems. For this, teaching that uses active methodologies that connect students with local and global social challenges is fundamental. Service Learning is a leading methodology for addressing these challenges.

Shuoyang MENG

There are three core missions that modern universities are expected to implement, namely teaching, research and public service. Correspondingly, future-ready graduates are expected to develop three kinds of capacities. Firstly, through teaching activities in the classroom, they should not only acquire professional knowledge and skills, but also build the ability to learn initiatively, which is important for keeping up with the fast pace of the knowledge society. Secondly, future-ready graduates, especially the ones at post-graduate level, should develop their innovation ability through participation in academic research activities. Despite the rapid development of the world, we are still faced with uncertainty that leads to disturbance, so future-ready graduates are expected to propose new insights, ideas or solutions with their innovation ability. Lastly, with learning and innovation ability, future-ready graduates should establish a sense of social responsibility, which means they should make contributions to the solutions of social problems like social inequality, public health and political issues etc. Such future-ready graduates will be the essential driving force of society and the sustainable development of the world will be effectively realized.

Olufunmilayo Arogbokun

Though the specifics of how the world is changing are difficult to pinpoint, common themes emerge. Among those themes are technological innovation, interdisciplinary and intercultural collaborations, and valuing community engagement. These same themes are often woven into university mission statements and goals for their graduates. Nonetheless, I have started to wonder: do unintended byproducts of academic course structures hinder the future-ready graduate from developing personal characteristics necessary to thrive in the future? I ask because as I contrasted my own university experiences, I noticed differences in course design and teaching approaches which created differing byproducts – not all of which were helpful.

During my undergraduate education, I studied abroad at Queen Mary University of London for one semester. My classes abroad were rigorous, but not as time demanding, which allowed time for community engagement and cultural exploration. Additionally, my grades abroad mirrored the pass/fail spectrum that I see in my graduate studies, rather than the intricate grading scale of A+, A, A- and so forth. In contrast, during my American undergraduate experience, myself and other students often felt an emphasis placed on letter grades and student rankings. Though my achievement abroad was still evaluated with grades, the student impact can differ as the two grading spectrums reflect the student differently (i.e. a "pass" is interpreted as satisfactory while the letter equivalent of a "B" often carries a connotation of lacking).

While demonstrating achievement is important, course structures and an emphasis on grades are impacting who students are becoming. Common byproducts of these structures are students who are anxious, non-collaborative, and hyper-focused on grades rather than learning course material for practical societal implementation. I believe that further investigating the unintended impacts of course design and teaching methods on students will be particularly helpful for educational developers as we discuss the future-ready graduate.

Ali Leota

One of the greatest treasures a student holds is the stories and knowledge of the cultures they bring with them along their educational journeys. As a proud Pacific young person navigating the world of academia, I want to help shift away from the deficit narratives of Pacific people by sharing our indigenous practices to benefit all people.

When I reflect on my Samoan culture we are often guided by the proverb, "*o le ala i le pule o le tautua* —the pathway to leadership is through service." The future-ready graduate is someone who is ready to take up the challenge to serve by utilising their education experiences as a tool to support their family and give back to their community.

A future-ready graduate is able to bridge communities together and collectively build foundations to ensure future generations can thrive and be confident. Being future-ready is about getting involved and using education as a lens through which to understand and explain our histories – all of our histories, not just those of the dominant cultures. A student that is proud of their identity, and is able to weave this with their learning environment truly is the future-ready graduate.

Goitsione Mokou

I am particularly interested in the future-ready graduate within the context of the Global South, with special regard for the Global South as a place from which to make meaning. The future-ready graduate within this context is appreciative of the rich meaning making activities within their own communities, working with communities as co-creators of knowledge; towards social transformation.

Within the context of the colonial university, the future-ready graduate in the Global South is necessarily committed to decolonisation and epistemic justice. They are committed to working towards contextually relevant research and theorisation of both local and global phenomena and, more importantly, to working toward healing those communities who remain dis-membered by colonial slaughter and other equally gruesome discursive practices within the disciplines of the colonial university. Working from within the zone-of-nonbeing, they necessarily disrupt.

This future-ready graduate cares deeply about the world and the relationships between their own field, practices and technologies, and the lives of the communities which inform or otherwise benefit from them (or not). With an orientation towards Being, they possess an earnest respect for all humanity and the whole being of the person (mind, body and soul). They in themselves and in their practice are not divorced from the body and the soul, and so reject the mind-body split.

The future-ready graduate within the context of the Global South ought to be able to use technology in a manner which seeks to re-member, reconciling the mechanical and the cognitive by centring Being and the becoming of persons and communities.

In conclusion

While much progress has been made by way of technological advancement in establishing networks and communities across the geopolitical landscape towards an imagined global community, this progress has not been able to quell the growing inequality in and vulnerability of our world. We find ourselves in a global community characterised by difference. Beyond the markers of difference which are influenced by our varying localities and questions of identity, there is a marked difference in our access to and ability to participate in this global community.

The future-ready graduate is entering into an unequal space where the power relations are skewed towards maintaining the interests (and inherent practices) of those who uphold/occupy the status quo. In imagining the future-ready graduate it is important that we bear in mind that there is no singular ideal, and neither is it necessarily desirable. Equity need not mean sameness; in the same way that the imagining of that which is global need not mean the negation of the local.

The future-ready graduate is also entering into a vulnerable space. Not only is the planet in the balance but the contemporary age of colonial modernity realised through the discourses of a white supremacist capitalist patriarchy (that is, racialisation and industrialisation) has raged a perpetual war against those deemed not white, not male. Genocide and epistemicide along with brutal practices of industrialisation have stripped earth and flesh.

Equity, service and re-imagined relationships with earth and flesh are some of the key sites of engagement when we imagine the graduates of the future. More needs to be done to provide access and resources to underprivileged students. A more radical approach is necessary: one that is informed by an inclusive, rather than a deficit model. Equitable pedagogies, radical shifts in policy and a decolonial orientation to the academy are a few examples of what is needed to imagine an academy and a world beyond colonial modernity, a future unlike our present.

A deliberate effort to bridge the gap between the academy and broader society are also important. Graduates need to be innovative in using their acquired and experiential knowledge to work meaningfully within communities. It also empowers communities to be agentic in deploying their knowledges and experiences in addressing present issues and imagining a different future.

Sustainability and practices that are good for the environment are chief concerns for our future-ready graduates.

This will all require a disruption of the current values and practices of the western academy. While cognitive skills remain important in realising disciplinary discursive practices, emphasis on the affective skills is necessary in allowing us to begin to meaningfully and critically engage those values and practices which have contributed to our present realities.