

Exploring possibilities: an evaluation of the short-term effectiveness of the Secondary Futures process

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Executive summary

This evaluation was commissioned to collect information about the effectiveness of Secondary Futures in promoting futures thinking and change in secondary education. It was intended that this information could feed into the ongoing development of Secondary Futures in Phase Two of its project.

The Labour Party's 2002 pre-election policy pledged its commitment to setting up an independent body to consider the future of New Zealand secondary schools. This promise was realised with the launch of Secondary Futures in September 2003. The project was tasked with stimulating futures thinking about the role and purpose of education and to create a guiding vision for secondary education. Through a range of engagements with educational stakeholders, including workshops, meetings, and presentations, Secondary Futures set out to achieve six objectives for Phase One of their project:

1. Creating space to contemplate the future;
2. Providing tools to resource thinking about the future of education;
3. Sharing trends for the future direction of New Zealand society;
4. Sharing information about possibilities to make more students more successful;
5. Eliciting people's preferences in relation to the future of the New Zealand education system;
and
6. Supporting change by taking information to others.

Four key theoretical areas appear to underpin the Secondary Futures project and provided a theoretical frame for the evaluation. The first is *futures studies*, which is a collection of theories and tools that allow people to imagine possible futures in order to begin to "create the future every day". The second is a *complex systems* approach, which assumes that sustainable educational change is unpredictable, networked, and transformative, but should be guided by vision and core values with careful attention to inputs. This contrasts with a managerialist paradigm operating in many schools and organisations, which focuses more on predictable outputs. Thirdly, knowledge and understanding about successful *school change*, which incorporates both complex systems and managerialist ideas, advocates for a whole-school approach to working towards goals in a flexible and ongoing manner. The fourth is *dialogue*, in which a range of methods facilitate a space for exploration, negotiation, and transformative change.

Three research questions guided the evaluation:

1. How do participants perceive the effectiveness of the Secondary Futures process?

2. How do participants' expectations and perceptions of secondary education change as a result of their engagement with the Secondary Futures process?
3. What are the outcomes and actions that result from participants' engagement with the Secondary Futures process?

The research questions encapsulate and go beyond the scope of the project's Phase One objectives, which were focused on stimulating thinking and eliciting preferences, as opposed to actively directing change. Each research question provided a different theoretical lens through which to judge the effectiveness of the Secondary Futures process.

The evaluation incorporated two main methods: a document analysis was undertaken utilising people's responses to feedback forms from 59 workshops; and interviews were conducted with 42 engagement participants and eight members of the Touchstone Group. Interviewees came from schools, the wider education system, and non-education sectors. Most had experienced more than one engagement with Secondary Futures, including participating in at least one workshop.

The findings suggest that the processes used by Secondary Futures were very effective in relation to their first four Phase One objectives: creating space; providing tools; sharing trends; and sharing information about possibilities. Participants valued Secondary Futures for their thought-provoking tools and activities, allowing time out from daily pressures, and for the group-based learning environments that were well-established by the facilitators. Beyond the engagements interviewees appreciated Secondary Futures for retaining a good level of political independence, managing to bring together a range of stakeholders in a non-threatening manner, and raising the profile of futures thinking in New Zealand.

If change is framed as a linear process, thinking, talking, and taking action can be understood to be consecutive phases towards change. In most cases the Secondary Futures process was seen to extend participants' thinking, particularly in terms of helping people to adopt a futures lens on education. Although the whole engagement process was seen to encourage new thinking, of particular effect were the tools used, the focus on opening up possibilities beyond current constraints, and inclusive group discussion. Clarity on how secondary education could change for a better future was rated more negatively than other questions relating to the Phase One objectives. The tension between the aim of eliciting a shared vision and the aim of opening up possibilities is evident in futures thinking literature itself.

Four-fifths of interviewees considered that Secondary Futures raises the level of discussion about futures thinking outside of the engagements themselves. Participants had spoken to a range of people. They generally directed their attention to those at a similar or lower level on an educational decision-making hierarchy and mostly discussed what futures thinking could mean for their organisation.

Less than two-fifths of interviewees clearly suggested that actions followed on from engagements, while another fifth gave more qualified agreement. Considering that a greater proportion of feedback form comments stated an intention to act, it appears that good intentions were not

always followed through. Still, interviewees who had taken action as a result of their experience were most likely to have: sought further involvement with Secondary Futures; used the Secondary Futures tools elsewhere; or fed futures thinking ideas into organisational planning or policy development. The desire for ongoing connection with the project indicates that people find the engagement stimulating but that, as is suggested by school-based professional development literature, a one-off experience is not always sufficient for them to be able to translate the ideas into actions within their own environment.

Interviewees believed that there were constraints to making changes. While some constraints were seen to reside within Secondary Futures, the rest were located within organisations, particularly schools, as well as the wider education system and policy environment. Interviewees offered a range of suggestions to address these constraints and improve Secondary Futures as a whole. Suggestions mainly recommended that Secondary Futures should work towards having a greater sphere of influence, particularly in the domains of policy and practice. The suggestions provided also highlighted that there are conflicting views and expectations of the project.

Overall, the findings suggest that Secondary Futures has developed tools and techniques to successfully work with a range of stakeholders and open up futures thinking. However, the project has now come to a point where many stakeholders are asking “What happens next?” On the basis of the evaluation we suggest that Secondary Futures develop processes to help manage challenges that are symptomatic of the project attempting to adopt a systems change approach with stakeholders who operate within more managerialist environments. We also pose a number of questions that could be considered to help shape the focus and implementation of Phase Two. In line with the Secondary Futures principle of collective ownership, we suggest that this discussion should involve a range of stakeholders, and any decisions be clearly and widely disseminated.

1. Overview of the Secondary Futures project

The purpose of the Secondary Futures/Hoenga Auaha Taiohi project is to facilitate discussion and debate about the future of secondary education in New Zealand. Four Guardians protect the integrity of the project, and a wide range of stakeholders are involved—in engagements with Secondary Futures project team members, and as representatives on the Touchstone Group.

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the project's first phase of the Secondary Futures project. The evaluation design incorporated aspects of both formative and summative evaluation, and drew primarily on the experiences and perspectives of participating stakeholders.

In order to frame the evaluation that follows, this report begins with a brief outline of the nature of the Secondary Futures project.

The origins of the project

A number of reports and government directives contributed to the formation of the Secondary Futures project. The Labour Party's 2002 pre-election policy on early childhood and compulsory education stated its commitment to establishing a Secondary Education Advisory Group as:

– an independent body that will envisage what secondary schools might look like and how they might function 10, 15 or even 20 years from now, so we can shape our system to best help children achieve (Ministry of Education 2002, cited in Ministry of Education & Secondary Futures, 2004).

The Ministry of Education's 2002 *Briefing for the Incoming Minister* raised the importance of government working with and beyond schools to stimulate discussion and professional debate on the direction, purpose, and overall quality of teaching and learning in New Zealand (Ministry of Education & Secondary Futures, 2004).

Against this background, a Ministry-facilitated working group of education stakeholders was set up to guide the initiation of the Secondary Futures project. A report that had been contracted by the Ministry of Education fed strategically into the project's development (Codd, Brown, Clark, McPherson, O'Neill, O'Neill, Waitere-Ang, & Zepke, 2002). Based on a review of future-focused projects internationally, including work being carried out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), this report recommended a range of potential approaches,

including some that share similarities with the current format of Secondary Futures. For example, it suggested an open-ended programme of public discussion and elicitation with key features including: balancing expert-led and community-led initiatives; building partnerships within and beyond schools; and utilising demographic forecasting. The report also recommended undertaking projects that supported teachers to participate in critical action, and advocated that projects be undertaken in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (Codd et al., 2002, p. 68).

Early the following year Education Minister Trevor Mallard released *Education Priorities for New Zealand*. This report included a set of strategies designed to “future proof” educational institutions, and “a visioning exercise” designed to scope “the longer-term directions for secondary education” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 15). The decision to focus on secondary schooling was made for several reasons. Firstly, the primary sector was seen to have a “stronger sense of purpose and priorities”, while the secondary sector was seen to face more “varied and conflicting demands from the community” (Ministry of Education & Secondary Futures, 2004, p. 2). The secondary sector was also seen to be dealing with a range of critical risks and opportunities, particularly in the areas of student engagement, school leaver qualifications and the systemic impact of the NCEA and recent administrative and curriculum changes.

Based on this strategic planning, the Secondary Futures project was officially launched on 11 September 2003. Secondary Futures has close links with the OECD, and draws on its research and tools. New Zealand is one of four “inner core” countries in the OECD’s Schooling for Tomorrow (SfT) programme, the purpose of which is to develop and share futures thinking in education (OECD Schooling for Tomorrow website, 2005b).

However, Secondary Futures is unique in the New Zealand Government context and the international arena in three main ways:

- There is a high degree of autonomy. The project has an intention to build collective ownership, where the government “sponsor” is one of many participants (Ministry of Education & Secondary Futures, 2004, p. 3).
- The primary focus is on process. The project has “no specified deliverable products and timelines” (Ministry of Education & Secondary Futures, 2004, p. 3) and is able to experiment with issues and processes of promise (Miller cited in Secondary Futures website, 2005).
- There is a positive framing to the project. Secondary Futures is about “identifying and celebrating success” as opposed to focusing on problems (Ministry of Education & Secondary Futures, 2004, p. 3).

The operation of Secondary Futures

Key aspects of the way the vision for the project was translated into concrete actions and processes are outlined next.

Aims and objectives

As a whole the Secondary Futures project aims to stimulate thinking about the role and purpose of education 20 years from now. The website states that Secondary Futures is:

...creating a vision for secondary education to guide us for the future - and we need your ideas to help shape the vision. If we start thinking about the future now, it will help us anticipate what might happen, and work out what we need to do to be ready for it.

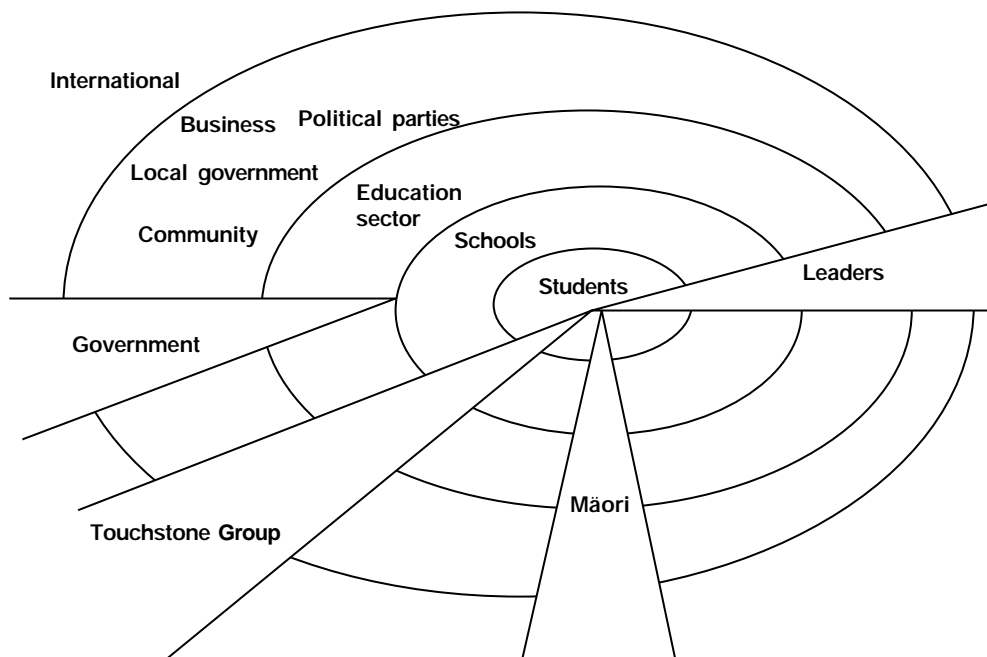
The project aims to seek the best *outcomes for learners* through the lens of the *future* (Secondary Futures website, 2005, Guardians Framework).

The project has been designed to progress through consecutive phases: Phase One (end 2003–mid 2005), Phase Two (through to mid 2006), and Phase Three (through to mid 2007). The six objectives developed in the first phase of the project are as follows:

1. Creating space to contemplate the future;
2. Providing tools to resource thinking about the future of education;
3. Sharing trends for the future direction of New Zealand society;
4. Sharing information about possibilities to make more students more successful;
5. Eliciting people's preferences in relation to the future of the New Zealand education system;
and
6. Supporting change by taking information to others.

Secondary Futures endeavours to incorporate a wide range of voices into national-level discussions, including youth, Māori and Pacific peoples, and those who are traditionally seen to be marginal to the education sector. Figure 1 demonstrates the range of stakeholders with whom Secondary Futures endeavours to engage.

Figure 1 **Secondary Futures stakeholders**



Engagements and tools

Secondary Futures has developed a range of types of participatory engagement, including workshops, conference presentations, meetings, conversations, website exercises, and specific projects. Their engagements have a dual purpose. They are intended to stimulate discussion that inspires thinking about preferences and steps towards change. In addition, they are intended to capture future-focused initiatives that are already happening “so that the way forward can be illuminated for others” (Secondary Futures, 2004, p. 7). The intention is that, by providing information and space for discussion and debate, participants will be able to contribute to the process of re-focusing New Zealand’s secondary education system for the 21st Century.

The primary means of engagement with Secondary Futures is through a workshop process. The timing of workshops is flexible, ranging between 2-hour and full-day sessions, with 3-hour workshops being the most common. The process that was envisaged for a standard, full-day workshop process has the following stages:

1. Getting started;
2. Warm up to futures thinking;
3. Opening up possibilities;
4. Deeper exploration of possibilities;
5. Review thinking;
6. Apply possibilities; and
7. Reflect and summarise next steps (Secondary Futures website, 2005, Conversations page).

Secondary Futures has developed a “toolbox” of activities to guide people’s thinking and discussion in their engagements. Two central resources are “trend cards” and “scenario cards”.

The trend cards demonstrate how society has changed over time and how it is expected to further change by 2025. The trend cards include illustrations of “timeshifts” in technology, probable demographic trends, and possible trends in wider society.

The scenario cards suggest a range of possible ways that education could be structured by 2025. They have been modified from six scenarios originally developed by the OECD’s “Schooling for Tomorrow” project. These scenarios include both “re-schooling” and “de-schooling” situations, and range from a close reproduction of today’s schooling to a complete reconceptualisation of schooling. Their titles are:

- Bureaucratic school systems continue;
- Schools focused as learning organisations;
- Schools as core social centres;
- Radical extension of the market model;
- Learning networks and the network society; and
- Teacher exodus and system meltdown (OECD Schooling for Tomorrow website, 2005b).

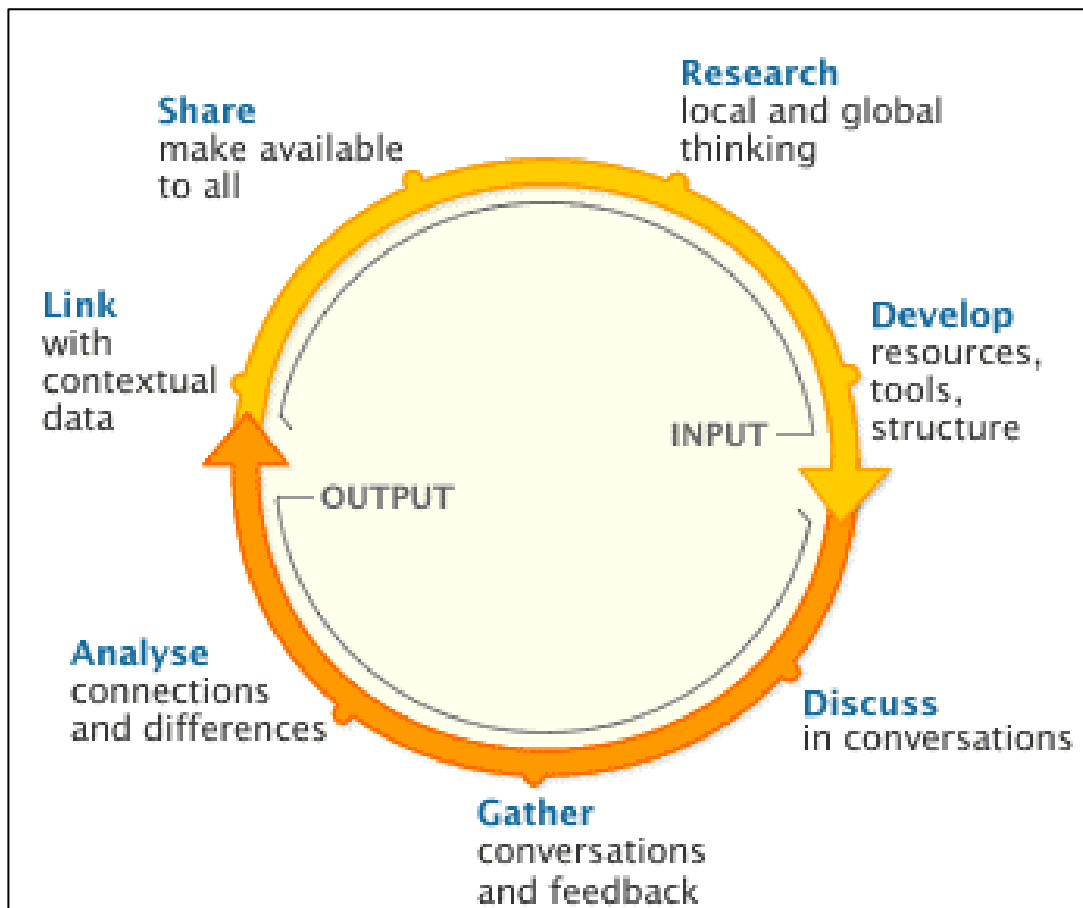
Secondary Futures revised these OECD scenarios to better fit with New Zealand culture and society (Secondary Futures, 2004; Durie cited in Tukutuku Korero, 2005). The 2002 Ministry of

Education commissioned review of futures thinking had provided some critique of the original OECD scenarios, including that they were primarily based on the assumption that wider society will continue as is (Codd et al., 2002). Secondary Futures addressed this by developing several “wildcard” scenarios beyond education specifically: for example, a situation in which a worldwide virus wipes out the internet.

Engagement as a research conversation

The Secondary Futures project has been envisaged as a *research* project that is based on a range of activities. Specific engagements are both informed by, and intended to contribute to, ongoing conversations about appropriate responses to educational futures. Figure 2 demonstrates this recursive process as an input/output cycle.

Figure 2 **Secondary Futures process**



Source: Secondary Futures website (2005, Research page).

As a result of their consultative methodology, the Secondary Futures team has developed a matrix to structure ongoing conversations and analyse emerging discussion (Secondary Futures, 2004). In this matrix, three questions are intersected with five themes.

The questions are:

1. What is the purpose of secondary education?

2. How can secondary education best enable young people for their futures? and
3. How could learning happen?

The themes are:

1. Students first;
2. Inspiring teachers;
3. Social effects;
4. Community connectedness; and
5. The place of technology.

Structure and key personnel

Three key groups have ongoing roles in the Secondary Futures project. They are the Guardians, the Touchstone Group, and the Secretariat. The roles of each group are described in Table 1. The four Guardians for the project were announced at the 2003 launch of the project. The Secretariat began in January 2004 and the Touchstone Group first met in May 2004.

Table 1 **Organisational structure of Secondary Futures**

Structure	Role
The Guardians	Four Guardians (Mason Durie, Gillian Heald, Bernice Mene, and Ian Taylor) provide overall leadership and direction for the project. The Guardians have three key roles: ensuring overall compliancy to project objectives and accountabilities; lifting the strategic influence of Secondary Futures; and general trusteeship to protect the integrity and relevance of the project.
Touchstone Group	The Touchstone Group is a reference group comprising representatives from key non-governmental education stakeholders, such as the education unions, the NZ Vice Chancellors' Committee, and Māori and Pacific teacher representatives. It provides a forum to raise issues, encourage debate, and trial tools for the ongoing development of the Secondary Futures project. Members also encourage discussion around the future of education within their respective organisations and sectors.
Secretariat	A small Secretariat, including a CEO, a facilitator, and a researcher, manage planning, research, and participant engagements. As an autonomous team within the Ministry of Education, it is able to retain political independence while benefiting from access to resources and infrastructure within the Ministry.

Table adapted from Secondary Futures website (2005) and Ministry of Education & Secondary Futures (2004).

Risks associated with the approach

Once the initial planning was complete, the Ministry of Education and Secondary Futures prepared a joint paper in which they outlined the initial design, setting out four key risks that emerge from the project's unique approach. These were as follows:

- managing high expectations across stakeholders;
- finding ways to engage with those who are less easily heard in education debate;
- protecting the project from other interests, events, and debates in the sector; and
- generating and maintaining interest despite having no stated end point or product (Ministry of Education & Secondary Futures, 2004, p. 3).

Before exploring how these intentions and risks played out in the first phase of the project, we look first at some key themes in the research literature that inform this evaluation.

2. Research insights on the challenges of future-focused change

A number of key ideas appear to have driven Secondary Futures' development. Some of these ideas are explicitly acknowledged within the project's documentation: for example, links to the OECD literature on futures thinking and scenario tools. Other ideas are implicit within the project's general purpose, its choice of "engagement" tools, and its intention to adopt a transformative approach to change, involving a range of sectors and decision makers.

In this section we briefly outline key ideas from four areas of educational research that connect to the Secondary Futures project. These are:

1. futures thinking;
2. systems thinking and complexity theory;
3. school change; and
4. dialogue.

Futures thinking

Scholarly work in what is called "futures studies" has been going on for at least 30 years (Husen, 1971 cited in Husen, 2002; Bell, 1973; Toffler, 1970; Touraine, 1971). Futures studies is not a coherent discipline, but is more accurately described as a "collection of methods, theories and findings" (Miller, 2003, p. 7) that help people to "think constructively about the future" (Bell, 1996 cited in Codd et al., 2002, p. 5). Prediction, forecasting, and possibilities mapping are three tools that can be used to imagine and illustrate possible futures (Miller, 2003).

Projects that draw on futures thinking can be plotted along three key axes:

1. Continuation to change: a project is based on an assumption that the future will either: be similar to the present based on an extrapolation of current trends (continuation); or be the result of radical and unforeseen transformation (change) (Codd et al., 2002).
2. Expert to participatory: a project is determined by either: a top-down process guided by key players in a sector (expert); or a bottom-up process which favours consensus (participatory) (Codd et al., 2002).

3. Exploratory to planning: the aim of the project is either: to open up future possibilities (exploratory); or to articulate an expected or desired future to work towards (planning) (Iversen, no date).

The third model points to a tension over the extent to which futures thinking should directly influence short-term or long-term planning. Some futures projects may aim to establish what the future will or should look like, thus offering a blueprint to plan for and build towards. However, according to Riel Miller (Miller, 2003, p. 6), the core aim of future studies is “neither prediction nor advocacy”. For him, imagining of possible futures is not about clarifying an expected future to react to, rather its purpose is to increase people’s understanding of the factors that interact to influence change. This type of reasoning suggests that, if people can be made more aware of future possibilities, their current decision making could take place with these complexities and future possibilities in mind. An important qualifier is that such decision-making processes do not have one specific future in mind, because the actual future is unknown. Nevertheless, the future is dependent on decisions made today and developing an understanding that we “create the future everyday” is an important goal of futures studies. Miller suggests that futures thinking is a:

navigational tool...not for planning the future, but for creating the future by changing the nature of decision-making in the present (Miller, 2003, p. 20).

The OECD’s *Schooling for Tomorrow* project distinguishes between a *vision* and a *blueprint*. Some form of vision is important to creating the future everyday (OECD *Schooling for Tomorrow* website, 2005a, p. 2). Visions are concerned with values and ideals, which could be achieved through various configurations, whereas blueprints are preoccupied with configuration in and of itself. Sterling (2001) makes a distinction between strategic planning and ecological design, which parallels the OECD project’s distinction between planning for a specific future and futures-infused decision making. He goes on to say that there needs to be a balance between vision and practicality, since “vision without action is useless, action without vision is directionless” (Sterling, 2001, p. 82).

According to the ecological approach, there are two principles of educational change. First, the process of change will influence the product of change, and second, while change can be “designed for” it cannot be predicted (Sterling, 2001, p. 80). This leads us to the question:

How can we design in an open and non-deterministic way, educational systems and institutions that promote healthy emergence? (Sterling, 2001, p. 80).

The use of terms such as “emergence” and “ecological”, along with a focus on the impact of current conditions on an unpredictable future, are features of what is known as “systems” thinking. The next section looks at some key ideas from this body of work.

Systems thinking and complexity theory

Complex systems theory can be applied to thinking about the overall purpose of education, the organisation and management of education, and the practice of learning and teaching. Complexity studies in science and in education are:

...both focused on the pragmatics of complex transformation. They both ask: How can we induce change when dealing with, and embedded in unruly phenomena and systems? (Davis & Sumara, 2005, p. 315).

Systems thinking of this messy and unpredictable type is often juxtaposed with linear, more managerial and orderly approaches to change. Such approaches tend to assume a more direct link between cause and effect, and to focus on one thing at a time, whereas systems thinking recognises that change may need to proceed on a range of fronts at once (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000). Table 2 summarises key differences between these two paradigms, as applied to educational change, following the discussion in Sterling (2001).

Table 2 **Key assumptions of two paradigms in educational thinking**

Area of difference	Managerialist paradigm	Complex systems paradigm
Overall approach	Managerialist	Ecological
Orientation to future	Predictable	Unknown
Focus of work	Output-oriented	Process-oriented
Assumption of change	Linear and stepped	Emergent
Expectations of learning	Gradual	Transformative
Leadership and relationships	Hierarchical	Networked
Analytic tools	Either/or thinking	Both/and thinking
Values	Evidence-based	Moral purpose

Unlike simple more linear systems, the parts of complex systems are seen to be capable of learning, if certain conditions are met. These include a level of diversity amongst the interacting agents/ideas/people, with the existence of sufficient common ground to maintain interactions and “compensate for one another’s lapses” (Davis & Sumara, 2005, p. 316). Transformative learning is a central idea in the complex-systems literature. Such learning goes beyond accommodating or reflectively adapting to new ideas (Sterling, 2001). It involves a paradigm shift, whereby the world is seen as if through new lenses (Davis et al., 2000). For systems thinkers, recognition of the need to move from mechanistic to complex systems thinking can be transformative in itself. Furthermore, such shifts can be made at the level of the individual, organisation, educational system, or society.

The idea that educational change should be sustainable is also a fundamental feature of the complex systems paradigm. Here sustainability is defined as the capacity of the education system to adapt and transform without losing its vision and core values (Fullan, 2005, p. ix). In order for

sustainable change to occur there must be a strong theory of education as well as a strong theory of change (Fullan, 2003).

The school change literature

Ideas surrounding school change appear to be moving from more managerialist thinking towards a complex systems approach. Leading literature appears to be attempting to meld together ideas from both paradigms, drawing together a focus on process, participation, and networked leadership (complex systems) alongside an emphasis on planning and incremental change (mechanistic).

Where once school change was expected to be defined, planned, and enforced by principals, current literature suggests that whole-school approaches are more effective. Successful school change occurs where the schools become committed “learning communities”, and where innovation, with its associated “risks”, is encouraged and supported by professional development and other resourcing (Hargreaves, Earl, & Ryan, 1996; Mulford, 2003). According to these authors, four key aspects of good school change processes are that:

- it is reflexively planned;
- it is ongoing;
- it is internally and externally driven; and
- there is a shared school vision.

Within this model, leadership takes on different characteristics and challenges. “Transformational principals” are key to encouraging a whole-school vision and creating collaborative structures (Hargreaves et al., 1996; Mulford, 2003). Leadership is no longer seen to be the territory of principals and management teams, but instead can reside at all levels of the school hierarchy as well as being located wider in networks. These new leaders are “systems thinkers” who “alter people’s mental awareness of the system as a whole, thereby contributing to altering the system itself” (Fullan, 2005, p. 40). They produce leadership in others while keeping the present and future in mind (p. 62). This type of new leadership is found predominantly at a “meso level”, which connects the macro-policy level with the micro-school level (Istance & Kobayashi, 2003, p. 16). This reduces the potential for individual isolation amongst schools in more decentralised education environments, because a connected leadership network can translate and direct in both directions.

This “go-between” nature of school leaders’ roles emphasises that in order for school change to be sustainable it needs to align with the wider education system. Without synchronisation across and within and across educational arenas (school, community district, state) there will be a risk that innovation is relegated to the periphery as opposed to bringing about systemic change (Fullan, 2003; Istance & Kobayashi, 2003). The openness and confidence needed for schools to

make change in turn necessitates a balance between policy support and overbearing compliance demands. According to OECD futures thinker David Istance:

The release of local energy through giving schools greater autonomy and support for networking and innovation will be undone if at the same time they are under intense pressure to conform (Istance & Kobayashi, 2003, p. 15).

Transforming the “ecology” of schooling, and teaching practice specifically, requires national coherence in the direction and organisation of education, including across the three “message systems” of curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy (Fullan, 2003; Queensland State Education, 2000; Russell, 2003; Stoll, MacBeath, & Mortimore, 2001).

Dialogue

The power of participation, discussion, and networking are unifying themes in the school change and complex systems literature. Talking within and beyond the educational sector is a central theme underlying the Secondary Futures process.

Methods for achieving the sorts of rich dialogue that can lead to transformative change include the “communities of inquiry” approach. Such communities take time to deeply consider and critique philosophical ideas about teaching and learning, enabling “members to become more analytical, reflective, critical, articulate” (Hill, 2000, p. 53). To achieve the depth of conversation necessary to such inquiry, learners need to be provided with space outside of the usual pressures of work in order to gain a new perspective on their environment (Brookfield, 2005).

The *school change* literature refers to “learning communities” that support ongoing reflective dialogue (Timperley, 2003) as well as “strategic conversations” which enable freewheeling but rigorous discussion, to enable creativity in planning and acting. The latter is underpinned by “strategic thinking”, which allows people to “see behind, beyond, through, in a process of continuous activity and reflection” (Mintzberg in Caldwell, 2000, p. 80).

Futures *thinking* projects aim to “enhance dialogue about the ways ahead, including among those who normally avoid constructive communication” (OECD Schooling for Tomorrow website, 2005a, p. 2). As indicated by the complex systems literature, they encourage divergent thinking, where ideas are opened up and sparked off, rather than converging towards a single thought (Iversen, no date).

At the time the Secondary Futures project was launched the concept of “dialogue” was increasingly being used in policy discussions, partly because top-down approaches to policy making were not always successful in achieving the desired outcomes. For example, in 2003 the government funded a research project exploring how dialogue might shift entrenched viewpoints on genetic modification, in order to achieve “greater consensus” and “enhanced policy outcomes” (Cronin & Jackson, 2004, p. 6). A second example is the Constructed Conversations/Kōrero Whakaetanga project (Hipkins & Du Plessis, 2004).

In these contexts, dialogue is usually contrasted to debate. The latter involves taking a fixed position and arguing for it, whereas the former aims to provide a space for exploration, negotiation, and change (Public Conversations Project, 1992). According to the Public Conversations Project some key aspects of dialogue are that:

- facilitators establish a safe and respectful atmosphere;
- participants speak as individuals not as representatives or experts;
- exploration of complexity, uncertainty, and commonality is encouraged; and
- new insights emerge (Public Conversations Project, 1992).

Particular techniques and activities can facilitate dialogue (Cronin & Jackson, 2004). Secondary Futures developed its own toolbox of activities, including scenario and trend cards, to encourage workshop discussion.

Summary

The four areas of literature considered above can be summarised as follows:

- Futures thinking is concerned with vision, not blueprints, encouraging people to recognise that they create the future in the now.
- A complex systems paradigm contrasts with a managerialist paradigm and emphasises complexity, networks, and transformation, and the prospect of emergent, unpredictable outcomes.
- School change thinking is underpinned by aspects of both mechanistic and complex systems approaches, with new forms of leadership encouraging whole-school learning communities alongside ongoing professional development.
- Facilitated conversation, as dialogue supported by various tools and techniques (such as scenarios), promotes the open exploration and negotiation that can lead to the opening up of divergent possible outcomes.

The range of ideas covered in this section appears to underpin the Secondary Futures project, either explicitly or implicitly, and so has provided a theoretical frame for considering the evaluation methodology and findings.

3. Methodology

This section outlines and justifies the processes followed for the evaluation. It introduces the key research questions, describes the sampling procedures followed, and outlines the analytic procedures we followed.

The overall purpose of this evaluation was to collect information on how the Secondary Futures process has been able to promote future-focused dialogue and change related to secondary education, and to feed this information back into the Secondary Futures process. While one aim of the evaluation was to capture the short-term outcomes of the Secondary Futures process, we did not undertake a solely summative evaluation. Instead we incorporated a formative aspect, with the parallel aim of generating information and raising issues that might be helpful in guiding the Secondary Futures team as they refine their processes during the second phase of their work.

The evaluation approach we have taken can be broadly classed as a “stakeholder evaluation” (Green, 1988 cited in Duignan, 2003). We have focused on the effectiveness of Secondary Futures from the perspectives of stakeholders who were being directly involved. Our focus was on participants’ perceptions of the process, along with its perceived effect on their beliefs and actions immediately after the workshops, and up to 18 months after initial participation. These views are supplemented by the perspectives of the Touchstone Group, which has a key role in guiding the project’s methodology, creation of tools, and ongoing development. Therefore, stakeholders range from those who have been actively involved in the ongoing development of the Secondary Futures process, to those who have been briefly engaged in a one-off activity.

The research questions

Secondary Futures developed a set of evaluation questions which guided our research process and analysis:

1. How do participants perceive the effectiveness of the Secondary Futures process?
2. How do participants’ expectations and perceptions of secondary education change as a result of their engagement with the Secondary Futures process?
3. What are the outcomes and actions that result from participants’ engagement with the Secondary Futures process?

The interpretation of these questions poses interesting dilemmas in the light of the literature outlined in Section 2. For example, the term “effectiveness” in the first question can take on different meanings depending on the paradigm within which it is “read”. Similarly, the second and third research questions could also invoke differing interpretations of effectiveness. Question 2 is partially couched in a “complex systems” paradigm, looking at effectiveness in terms of new thinking (potentially even a shift towards a systems paradigm) supported by Secondary Futures. On the other hand, Question 3 is more aligned with a managerialist paradigm, considering effectiveness according to the action steps that follow involvement with Secondary Futures. There is the potential for “mixed messages” here, which as we shall see, has implications for perceptions of the overall success of the project.

We took the emphasis of Question 1 to be on participants’ own perceptions of effectiveness. Here we anticipated that concepts associated with effectiveness were likely to be interpreted as usefulness, enjoyment, and so on.

Given the tools that were used, Question 2 seems more concerned with whether the Secondary Futures initiative has supported people to shift their thinking towards the new complex systems paradigm. If so, what does new thinking look like, and what aspects of the process enabled this thinking to emerge? Inherent within the question is a consideration of the conditions for transformative thinking that could encourage people to look at education through new eyes. At the same time, Question 2 was intended to relate to Secondary Futures’ fifth Phase One objective. This involves eliciting preferences on the future of education in New Zealand and requires an exploration of whether and how Secondary Futures supports people to become clearer about possible futures at an individual level, while capturing the range and popularity of preferences at a more collective level.

Table 3 on the next page summarises the relationship between our three evaluation questions and Secondary Futures’ six Phase One objectives. Overall the research questions on the left encapsulate and go beyond the scope of the objectives on the right. It is of particular note that none of the six objectives clearly refers to “outcomes and actions” as a result of participants’ engagement (Question 3). Secondary Futures engagements do incorporate an action component, acting as a catalyst for people to “take steps to make students more successful in the future” and providing a forum to collect stories of excellence “so that the way forward can be illuminated for others” (Secondary Futures, 2004, p. 7). However it is important to reiterate here that a unique attribute of the Secondary Futures project as a whole is it has no official outcome measures or endpoint.

Table 3 **Research questions and Phase One objectives**

Research question	Phase One objectives
1. How do participants perceive the effectiveness of the Secondary Futures process? <i>(e.g. perceptions of process and relevance)</i>	1. Creating space to contemplate the future; 2. Providing tools to resource thinking about the future of education; 3. Sharing trends for the future direction of New Zealand society; 4. Sharing information about possibilities to make more students more successful;
2. How do participants' expectations and perceptions of secondary education change as a result of their engagement with the Secondary Futures process?	5. Eliciting people's preferences in relation to the future of the New Zealand Education system;
3. What are the outcomes and actions that result from participants' engagement with the Secondary Futures process?	6. Supporting change by taking information to others.

The evaluation explored outcomes and actions, particularly in terms of talking and acting beyond Secondary Futures engagements. We also looked at constraints to action within or outside Secondary Futures, and at suggestions made for change.

Sources of data

We drew on two forms of data. We undertook a document analysis of people's responses to the Feedback forms that Secondary Futures collect following workshops. We also conducted interviews with 42 engagement participants and eight members of the Touchstone Group. Both methods are detailed next.

Feedback forms

Secondary Futures facilitators ask participants to complete a feedback form at the end of a workshop. The forms comprise the open-ended questions presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3 **Feedback form questions**

Name
Organisation
Email contact
Q1. Next steps: What will you do now as a result of today's session?
Q2. Workshop: What are your thoughts about the way the workshop was run?
Q3. Other: Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Secondary Futures gave NZCER access to the database on which they have recorded responses to the feedback forms. Evaluative comments from all participants in a workshop are entered into a common text document, coded under the three feedback questions, and identified by the workshop group and date. Each comment was given a number, but the database does not record any details about individual participants. The same workshop document is also used to record the particulars of the discussion at the workshop¹. Workshop documents are uploaded into an N6 database, a software tool for qualitative data analysis.

Not every workshop document includes participants' responses to feedback questions (suggesting the feedback forms are not always used), and not all workshop documents that do include feedback form responses have comments under each question (suggesting that participants do not always respond to all the questions).

Within these outlined constraints, NZCER conducted a document analysis of participants' comments on the feedback forms. We began by conducting a text search on the N6 database to ensure that all participants' responses to the feedback questions were coded. Next we developed our own coding schedule to analyse the comments captured for each feedback question. This coding schedule was developed using data from a sample of workshops, while drawing on the three research questions, Secondary Futures' six objectives, and information matrix. Question 1 required the highest level of interpretation, so the coding carried out by one team member was reviewed by another and differences of opinion were discussed.

Interviews

Fifty interviews were carried out with engagement participants and Touchstone Group members.

Sampling and response rates

We used a purposeful sampling approach to select Touchstone Group members from the list provided by Secondary Futures. An invitation to take part was sent to 11 of the 21 Touchstone Group members. Of these one email address was not valid, one declined an interview, and one did not reply. Eight returned a consent form and were interviewed.

Secondary Futures' stakeholder database records the contact details of engagement participants and other stakeholders. We drew an initial random sample of 140 stakeholders stratified by sector (based on an expected response rate of 33 percent). Secondary Futures sent an email to this sample, including NZCER's Information Sheet and Consent Form (see appendices). People who agreed to an interview were instructed to return the consent form directly to NZCER. After a slow initial response, we extended the invitation to the all 671 contacts with email addresses in the Stakeholder Database². Secondary Futures sent one reminder email to the initial sample. Of the 140 emails sent in the initial sample 37 were not valid, and since this information was not

¹ Analysis of the workshop discussion was beyond the scope of this evaluation.

² The total database had 709 contacts, but 38 had no email address.

available for the extended sample we have assumed a bounce-back rate of 26 percent across the entire database. In the end, 58 stakeholders returned a consent form. We interviewed 42 of the 58 participants who returned a consent form³. Excluding the estimated bounced emails the consent form response rate was 12 percent, and the interview response rate was 8 percent.

Four factors probably account for the lower than expected response rate. Firstly, email is not a universally ideal medium for communication. Secondly, the invitation was sent out in the first week of the fourth school term. Thirdly, a short interview timeframe prevented sending out a series of reminders. Fourthly, the database itself included a wider range of stakeholders than were eligible for an interview. The latter was suggested by several emails and phone calls we received from people who had received an invitation, but had not participated in a Secondary Futures engagement.

We note that when response rates are low, those who are more likely to come forward may have strong views on a topic area (positive or negative), and/or see the topic as particularly relevant to them. This potential for bias was ameliorated by our multi-method approach.

In line with Secondary Futures' review of their databases, Appendix 1 offers our suggestions for how Secondary Futures could build on their data management processes to assist with their Phase Two monitoring and evaluation.

Data collection and analysis

Two interview schedules were developed in collaboration with Secondary Futures, one for engagement participants and the other for Touchstone Group members (see Appendices 2 and 3). Question areas were consistent across both, although the latter allowed for Touchstone Group members to provide an overview of the project, including how people from their organisation or sector have reacted to engagements. A balance of closed and open-ended questions was developed relating to the evaluation questions, Secondary Futures' Phase One objectives, and their information matrix.

Interviews were conducted by two NZCER interviewers via telephone, with the exception of four that took place in person and one by email. Each took approximately 20–30 minutes. Interviewers took detailed notes, with audio-taped records as a back up.

Following an approach similar to that used for the feedback forms, an initial draft coding structure was developed using a sample of interviews and interviewers' lists of emergent themes. Where appropriate the same coding structure was used across participant and Touchstone Group interviews.

³ People were excluded because their organisation or sector was sufficiently covered, or because their consent form arrived after our cut-off date.

The interviews were coded collaboratively, with each interviewer coding the responses they had recorded, followed by discussion of any unclear areas. The information from the fixed-choice and coded questions in the interviews was entered into an SAS dataset. Frequency tables were produced for the data. A chi-square was used to test for significant differences between groups in key questions. Statistical differences are indicated in the text with the phrase “were significantly more likely”. We only reported statistically significant differences where the p-value was equal to or less than 0.05. This indicates that there is a 95 percent probability that the differences observed were not a chance association.

The evaluation findings are presented in Chapters 4 to 9.

4. Background of the stakeholders in the evaluation

This chapter provides the background of the stakeholders in this evaluation. First we cover what is known about those who were represented on the feedback forms. Second we outline who we interviewed and what we know about their involvement in Secondary Futures.

Feedback forms

Fifty-nine of the 82 workshops in the N6 database had feedback form data recorded. Table 4 sets out the number of workshop documents comprising in the database overall, and how many documents had participants' comments under each of the three feedback questions.

Table 4 **Broad sectors of workshops (n=82)**

	Entire database	Q1 – Next steps	Q2 – Workshop	Q3 – Other
School-based	25	12	14	14
Wider education	52	29	30	36
Non-education	5	3	3	4
Total workshops	82	44	47	54

Note: Table shows numbers of workshops (not participants)⁴.

The earliest workshop was held in April 2004 and the most recent in August 2005. Workshops were coded to three broad sector groupings according to the workshop's title, which referred to the name of the organisation or group it was held for⁵. About half as many workshops were run within schools than within the wider education sector. Of the school-based workshops we surmised that *at least* 15 appeared to comprise teachers⁶. However data on individual participants is not recorded, nor is it possible to know how many are in the database.

⁴ Just because a workshop title suggests that a workshop was run with a particular group, organisation, or sector, we cannot assume that all participants were necessarily members of that type of group.

⁵ A Google search was conducted to identify organisations that were unknown to the research team.

⁶ They were assumed to be teachers if the workshop title explicitly included the term "teachers" or "school staff".

Interview data

Interviewees

We allocated interviewees to one of the three broad sectors and two leadership levels according to their organisation and position. Table 5 shows interviewees' sector and whether or not they were an educational leader.

Table 5 **Broad sectors allocated to interviewees by level of leadership (n=50)**

Broad sector allocated	General interviewees	Educational leaders	Total
School-based	2	16	18
Wider education	5	18	23
Non-education	9	-	9
Total interviewees	16	34	50

The majority (34) of interview participants were classified as educational leaders. Leaders within schools included principals, assistant and deputy principals, and board of trustee members. Leaders in the wider education sector included education policy makers, union executive members and co-ordinators, teacher education managers, and iwi authority education advisers.

Interviewees who were not leaders were grouped as a general category (16). Within schools, this covered non-management positions, including teachers and students. Within the wider educational sector, it included roles such as university teaching staff and educational consultants.

Despite teachers and students being target stakeholders for Secondary Futures, and the N6 database suggesting their involvement, only one student and one teacher returned a consent form (at least one other teacher who also held a leadership position replied). Therefore, we have paid particular attention to what we surmise to be teacher responses in analysis of the feedback forms.

Interviewees were also asked to identify which sectors they worked in, as shown in Table 6. This table shows that government agencies, businesses, and community groups were all represented.

Table 6 **Detailed sectors identified by interviewees (n=50)**

Interviewee's sector	Number of interviewees	Percent of interviewees
School-based	20	40
Wider education	18	36
Government	9	18
Business	7	14
Community	4	8

Note: Participants could make multiple responses, so numbers do not match those of Table 5, and percentages do not sum to 100.

Of the 50 people interviewed, 20 resided in the Wellington region (where the Secondary Futures Secretariat is located), 11 in the Auckland region, 11 in the South Island, and 7 were distributed across other areas of the North Island⁷. Participants ranged in age from late teens to over 60, although 80 percent of interview respondents were between 41 and 60 years old. Twenty-eight interviewees were male and twenty-two were female. This was an interesting finding because females have traditionally dominated the education sector. The slightly higher level of male participants is likely to reflect their predominance in leadership positions.

When asked for ethnicity, 43 identified as Pākehā, 6 as Māori, 1 as Samoan, and 3 as a “New Zealander”⁸.

Engagements

Participants were asked to explain how they had been involved with Secondary Futures. As shown in Table 7, workshops were the most frequent engagement, and were experienced by 40 interviewees.

Table 7 Interviewees’ engagements (n=50)

Involvement with Secondary Futures	Number	Percent
Attended a workshop	40	80
Attended a conference presentation	15	30
Assisted the development or trial of tools	10	20
Attended an introductory talk	9	18
Facilitated or co-facilitated a workshop	6	12
Read Secondary Futures material, including website	2	4
Other involvement	11	22

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because interviewees could give multiple responses.

Forty-two of the 50 people interviewed had experienced more than one engagement with Secondary Futures. This may have involved an assortment of the listed interactions or repeated engagement with one format. Three-quarters (31) of the 40 workshop participants had attended at least two workshops.

We asked interviewees to briefly explain who was at the workshop or other engagement that they most recently attended. Interviewees said that the number of people attending Secondary Futures engagements ranged from under 10 to over 50. Seventeen interviewees said there were between 10 and 20 attendees at their last workshop. Six had last attended an engagement with people from a single organisation, half (25) attended an engagement that included people from more than one organisation but within the same broad sector, and 11 attended an engagement that included representatives across multiple sectors. This information is not known for 14 interviewees.

⁷ One did not respond.

⁸ The total does not sum to 50 because interviewees could give multiple responses.

Table 8 shows the types of people attending engagements. More than half (28) the interviewees said that their last engagement had included school-based attendees. Of these, 25 noted that attendees included school leaders such as principals, assistant and deputy principals, and Board of Trustee members.

Table 8 **Sectors covered by attendees of engagements (n=50)**

Sector of attendees reported by interviewees	Number of interviewees	Percent of interviewees
School-based	28	56
Principals of new schools	6	12
Wider education	12	24
Tertiary	6	12
Government	7	14
Iwi/Community	7	14
Business	6	12
Other	7	14

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because interviewees could give multiple responses.

Table 9 demonstrates that Secondary Futures engagements were likely to involve more than one activity including: group discussion (41), the use of scenario cards (39) and trend cards (36), and hearing the Guardians speak (26).

Table 9 **Activities involved in engagements (n=50)**

Activity	Part of engagement	Not part of engagement	Not sure/unknown	Total
Group discussion	41	4	5	50
Scenario cards	39	6	5	50
Trend cards	36	5	9	50
Guardians spoke	26	13	11	50

Workshop activities

Forty interviewees had attended a workshop. Workshop attendees were significantly more likely than non-workshop attendees to have been engaged in group discussion and to have used trend cards. The former suggests non-workshop engagements may not always support open discussion. It is less clear as to why this pattern is repeated for trend cards but not scenario cards.

Some participants gave a detailed description of what happened at the workshop(s). Regardless of the length of time for the workshop, most suggested a fairly standard process was followed, where the cards were used to stimulate discussion in small groups, who then reported back to the full group and discussion continued. In some workshops participants were asked to focus on a specific area of education (for example teaching) or to give presentations (for example on a new initiative

in their school). Workshops appear to range from those that took a broad look at education, to those that were focused on a particular area relevant to the participants.

Two-thirds of workshop participants (25) had attended a workshop within the past 6 months, with the rest (15) having attended one up to 18 months ago. Just over half (23) had most recently attended a workshop that was up to 2 hours long, with the remainder being split fairly evenly between half-day and full-day workshops. Nearly half (17) remembered completing a feedback/evaluation form after their last workshop.

A note on the Touchstone Group

Outlining their involvement with Secondary Futures, the eight Touchstone Group members reflected on their participation within the group. Points raised were:

- The Touchstone Group brings different constituents together, but asks people to participate as individuals, not as representing the views of their organisation.
- Touchstone Group members have been chosen to ensure that often-marginalised voices are not lost in the education conversation, such as Māori, Pacific people, students, and groups traditionally considered to be outside the education arena.
- The Touchstone Group is inclusive, with good relationships between members.
- Touchstone Group meetings take a full-day, which is seen as creating the necessary space.
- Not being accountable to tangible outcomes and deadlines is new territory for many members.
- The Secondary Futures team has worked at encouraging Touchstone Group members to let go of thinking about the barriers in order to open up possibilities.

The Touchstone Group was seen by its members to have a “ripple effect” because: people involved are interested in the ideas; and members have a responsibility to involve people in their environment through ongoing discussion and/or facilitating workshops themselves.

Summary

The evaluation surveyed a range of stakeholders through an analysis of feedback form and interview responses. A range of Touchstone Group members and engagement participants were included in the interviews, with an emphasis on educational leaders.

Because the sample was small relative to the overall database, the findings that follow build an indicative picture as opposed to being fully representational. The small sample also prevented meaningful cross tabulations of responses by sector or type of engagement.

5. Perceptions of the Secondary Futures process

This chapter explores the information we collected in relation to the first research question, “How do participants perceive the effectiveness of the Secondary Futures process? We have emphasised perceptions of Secondary Futures engagement process and its relevance, particularly in relation to the first four Phase One objectives: creating space; providing tools; sharing trends; and sharing information about possibilities.

Feedback forms

The second question on the feedback forms asked “What are your thoughts about the way the workshop was run?” We coded participants’ comments as positive, negative, or unclear about aspects of the workshop. Comments that contained both positive and negative opinions were multiply coded. Table 10 shows that the majority of comments were positive.

Table 10 **Feedback forms: Comments on aspects of the workshop (n=646 approx)**

	Number of comments	Percent of comments
Positive	514	80
Negative	65	10
Unclear	67	10
Total	646	100

Many of these comments related to participants’ opinions in relation to seven aspects of the workshop process. Table 11 provides a detailed picture of these responses. Where participants referred to several aspects of the process in the same comment, the response was multiply coded. For this reason, the numbers in Table 11 do not match those in Table 10.

Table 11 **Feedback forms: Number of comments regarding aspects of workshop process by weighting**

Aspect of workshop	Positive	Negative	Unclear	Total
Facilitation and organisation	290	37	10	337
Level of interest/new thinking	179	14	14	207
Tools and activities	100	9	2	111
Group interaction	79	1	-	80
Level of enjoyment or fun	44	2	-	46
Relevance to current situation	9	7	-	16
Space to think	6	-	-	6
Total	707	70	26	803

Six of the seven workshop aspects were rated positively by 80 percent or more of those who commented on that aspect. Examples of comments within the three most commonly mentioned aspects included:

- **Facilitation and organisation (337 responses)**
 - Positive: Interactive, energetic facilitator—fun and friendly—excellent start to make participants feel at ease (school workshop)
 - Negative: Instructions need to be clearer, e.g. written on board. They were stated but a bit rushed, so for nearly every activity we were unsure what to do. I realise there was a time constraint (wider education workshop)
- **Level of interest/new thinking (207 responses)**
 - Positive: As third time around, the workshop still brings out different ideas to consider (wider education workshop)
 - Negative: Interesting, but I couldn't really see the central theme (school workshop)
- **Tools and activities (111 responses)**
 - Positive: Interesting, well-organised and designed discussion cards. A wide range of possible options of future learning given in last activity to push thinking (wider education workshop)
 - Negative: ...the picture cards took a long time when they weren't entirely focused to the topic (school workshop)

Relevance to current situation was the only aspect of the workshops that was fairly evenly split between positive (9) and negative (7) opinion. Although the numbers are small the comments suggest that some people found it difficult to reconcile the activities or ideas of Secondary Futures to their own situation (for example in their teaching).

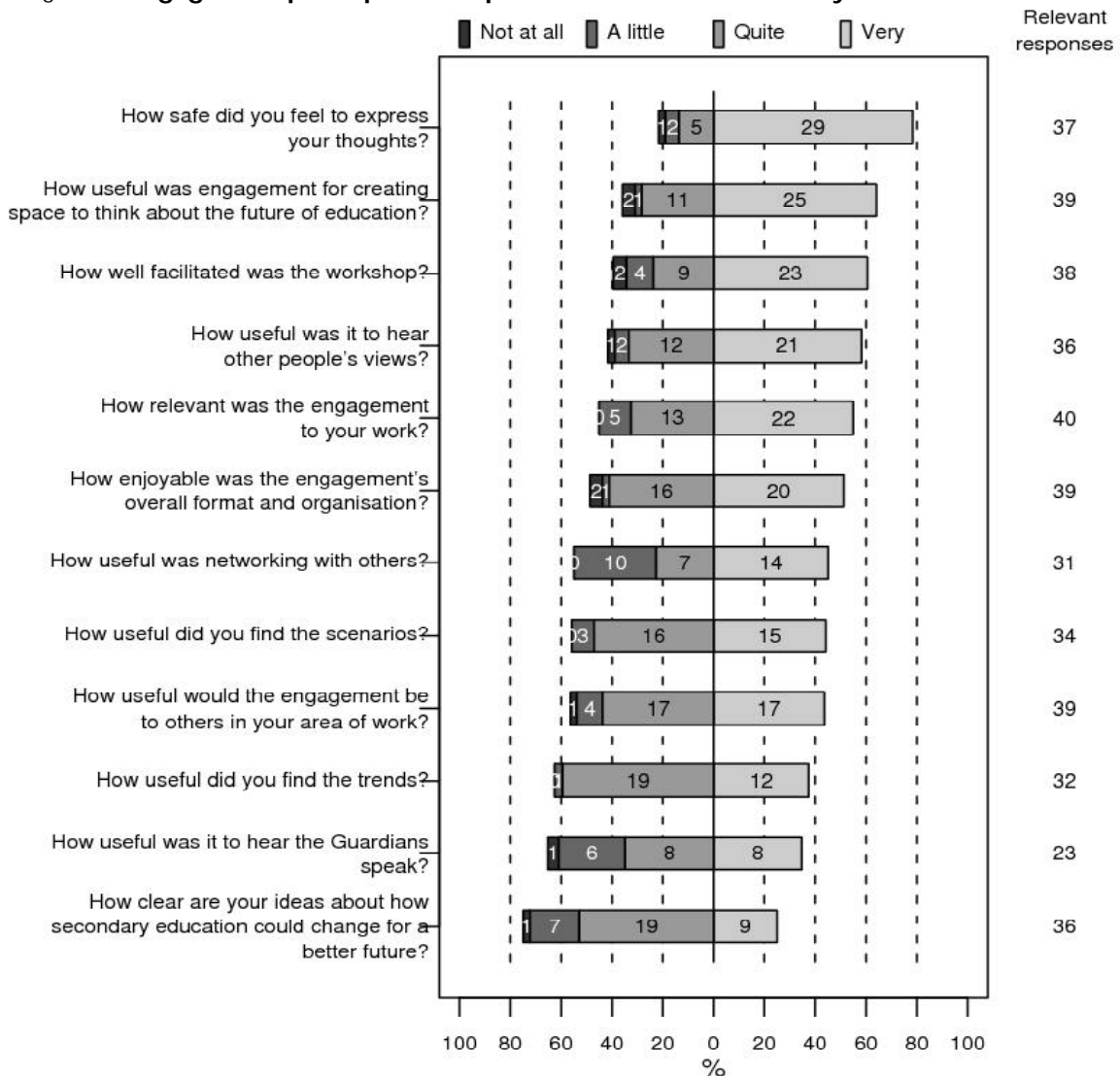
Interviews

Interviewees were asked to respond to a range of closed-ended questions about their perceptions of the process in relation to the Phase One objectives. Touchstone Group members and engagement participants were asked a slightly different range of questions.

Participants

Figure 4 shows the 12 Likert scale questions asked of participants. The response scale had four options ranging from “Very” to “Not at all”. Since respondents provided fairly positive opinions, the line between “quite” and “very” provides the clearest sorting mechanism. They are arranged in descending order with the most strongly positive response at the top.

Figure 4 Engagement participants’ responses on a scale from “Very” to “Not at all”



Note: Participants for whom a question was not relevant or not answered were disregarded from analysis. The right-hand column records the number of relevant responses, the actual numbers on the bars provide the number in each category, and the width of the bars demonstrates the proportion of relevant responses in each category.

Overall, participants were very positive, especially about:

- Feeling safe to express their thoughts (78 percent “very”);
- The engagement creating space to think about the future (64 percent “very”);
- The facilitation of the workshop (61 percent “very”); and
- Hearing the views of others (58 percent “very”).

The three question areas that were rated the most negatively were:

- Networking with others (55 percent “not” or “a little”);
- Hearing the Guardians speak (31 percent “not” or “a little”); and
- Having clear ideas about how Secondary Futures could change for a better future (22 percent “not” or “a little”).

Touchstone Group

Touchstone Group members were asked eight closed-ended questions, some of which necessitated a direct judgement about how well Secondary Futures has achieved its objectives to date.

Table 12 **Touchstone Group responses on a scale from “Very” to “Not at all” (n=8)**

Interview question for Touchstone Group members	Very	Quite	Little	Not at all
How useful is it for people to hear others ideas about the future of education?	6	2	-	-
Overall, how good do you think Secondary Futures is at creating space for people to contemplate the future of education?	6	1	-	1
How good is Secondary Futures at providing tools to resource thinking about the future of education?	5	3	-	-
How good is Secondary Futures at sharing trends relevant to the future direction of New Zealand?	4	3	1	-
How relevant are the workshops for people within your sector?	3	4	1	-
How good is Secondary Futures at helping people to become clearer about how secondary education could change for a better future?	3	5	-	-
How good do you think Secondary Futures is at sharing the information they gather?	1	2	3	2
How suitable is the workshop process for encouraging people to make changes in relation to possible futures?	1	2	4	1

Despite small numbers, trends across the Touchstone Group responses suggest that Secondary Futures is doing well at achieving its first five objectives. As is consistent with the scope of these objectives the Secondary Futures process appears to be better at encouraging thinking and sharing ideas than it is in helping people to make change. Secondary Futures is perceived to be doing less well on the objective of sharing the information they gather.

All interviewees

All interviewees, comprising Touchstone Group members and engagement participants were asked to explain what they considered to be the “single best thing” about the Secondary Futures process. Nineteen interviewees mentioned more than one aspect. Comments were fairly evenly split between the best things about the engagements (28) and best things about Secondary Futures more broadly (34).

The best things about the engagements were sorted by the aspects of workshops that had also been raised in the feedback forms. The top three were:

- The value of group interaction between engagement participants, including the benefits of sharing ideas, opinions, and learning from each other (13).
- The usefulness of tools and activities used within the engagements, in particular the scenario and trend cards (9).
- The success of the engagement in creating a space to think about Secondary Futures issues (7).

The top three best things about Secondary Futures in a broader sense were:

- Successfully bringing together participants from different sectors and organisations (15).
- Recognising and encouraging the importance of futures thinking (12).
- The perception of Secondary Futures as an independent agency (10).

Summary

Both the feedback and interview data indicate the Phase One objectives of Secondary Futures are being met. Questions related to “creating space” show that most participants felt safe to share ideas and opinions, found the engagement and activities to be enjoyable, considered the experience to be informative, and valued the opportunity to discuss these issues and learn from others.

Objectives two, three, and four comprise the “tools and activities” of the Secondary Futures process. Participants spoke positively of the scenario and trend card activities and there was a strong emphasis on the benefit of group discussion and interaction. Although the majority of participants found their engagement to be relevant this did not necessarily assist them in developing clarity of thinking about change.

6. How Secondary Futures influences thinking

In line with our second research question, we were interested in whether Secondary Futures engagements encouraged participants to think differently about education in any way. In relation to the fifth Phase One objective we also examined the data to ascertain if the process was able to elicit people's preferences regarding the future of education in New Zealand.

Feedback forms

The feedback forms suggest that many participants experienced a change in thinking. Responding to the question "What will you do now as a result of today's session?" many comments indicated an intention to think further about ideas and issues raised in the workshop. Table 13 shows how comments about thinking further were divided across three areas.

Table 13 **Feedback forms: Thinking is the next step (n=168)**

Types of thinking	Number of comments	Percent of "thinking" comments
Think about future	80	48
Think about present	70	42
General comments about thinking	18	11
Total "thinking" comments	168	100

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding.

The majority of comments clearly referred to thinking further about the ideas and issues raised by the engagement, and were roughly split between those who mentioned that they intended to think about the *future* (80 comments), and those who mentioned thinking in relation to the *present* (70 comments).

Participants in the first group intended to think about the future in a way that did not explicitly connect to a consideration of the present:

Think about the future of education. (School workshop)

Just be more aware of the learning possibilities of the future. [Student] (School workshop)

Comments varied in terms of their specificity about thinking about the future. One area mentioned was expectations or feelings about how teaching or teachers in the future will be different. Nine comments expressed anxiety about what the future may bring:

[I'm] starting to feel inadequate about my ability to prepare students for this unknown future. (Wider education workshop)

Some participants intended to integrate futures thinking into their present reality, and were more reflective about how the future might relate to their current situation. Many comments suggest that participants may have adopted a new lens through which to examine their current environment:

Be more aware of the impact of today's decision on the future of tomorrow. (Non-education workshop)

Give some thought to courses I am involved with in training secondary teachers—taking into account future students they will be teaching. (Wider education workshop)

A few (18 comments) did not specify exactly what they would think about, for example, “I need to keep pondering.”

Interviews

As shown in Table 14, half (25) the interviewees considered that engagements with Secondary Futures had changed their thinking about education (or others' thinking, in the case of Touchstone Group interviews). Eleven interviewees provided more qualified agreement; nine believed that the engagement reinforced what they had already been thinking, while two Touchstone Group members believed engagements only sometimes changed participants' thinking.

Table 14 **Interviews: Do engagements change participants' thinking? (n=50)**

	Yes	Qualified yes	No	Don't know	Total
Participant	23	9	8	2	42
Touchstone Group	2	2	2	2	8
Total	25	11	10	4	50

Those who indicated that workshops or other engagements had led them to think about things differently, or had reinforced their related thinking, were asked to describe what this thinking was about. The most common responses (19) related to a general shift towards thinking about the future, seeing the importance of futures thinking, and taking a longer-term view:

It made me think a lot about how schools might be structured in future. (Leader, wider education)

About half as many people (9) spoke of how the engagement led participants to question their personal or organisational assumptions around education and/or broaden their perspective:

It started a process of thinking more conceptually about teaching and society's impact on education. (General, wider education)

I'm more aware of the tendency of people who have been through the education system to maintain constraints and repeat what we know. (Leader, wider education)

One government employee stated that their main shift in thinking was in how they framed questions. They had moved from asking "What should schools be doing?" to "How should learning happen?"

If thinking had changed or been reinforced, we asked what it was about the Secondary Futures process that supported this shift. Patterns of responses to this question are summarised in Table 15.

Table 15 **Interviews: What leads to change or reinforcement in thinking? (n=50)**

Aspects of engagement supporting a shift in thinking	Number of participants	Percent of participants
The activities/tools used, especially scenario/trend cards	22	44
The way the engagement opened up possibilities	17	34
The involvement of others and group discussion	12	24
The whole workshop process	7	14
The way futures thinking integrated into current situation	7	14
The examples of current innovations that were shared	6	12
The role of the facilitator	5	10
The time it set aside for thinking about the issues	4	8
The role of the Guardians	3	6
Other	4	8

The most common response, given by nearly half the interviewees, was that the activities and tools used in engagements allowed them to see things differently or more strongly than before:

Great activity to start this off, very good. Love all the cards that facilitate/drive discussions. (Non-education)

The second most common reason was that the process opened up possibilities. Comments highlighted the Secondary Futures' approach in helping participants to start to let go of the present and imagine far into the future:

[It] allows people to take greater leaps in their thinking rather than think it's not realistic. (Touchtone Group)

[It's] a useful frame to think about education...you remove current constraints to be able to widen your thoughts. (Leader, wider education)

The third aspect that supported change in thinking was the involvement of other participants. Group-based engagements allow people to hear the views and experience of others as well as help clarify their own thoughts. For some, simply being in a room with people they would not otherwise have discussions with widened their thinking about education.

A school leader noted that only during participation in their second workshop were they able to make a shift from thinking about the future to linking this to the now.

Ten interviewees felt that workshops or other engagements did not lead to thinking differently. The reasons that people gave included that the process:

- does not offer anything new, particularly for people already “converted”;
- is not threatening enough to shift thinking; or
- involves non-school people who do not know enough about schools.

One Touchstone Group member explained that they did not see thinking differently to be the aim:

[The aim is to] promote thinking rather than necessarily changing thinking...it facilitates a platform for thinking to occur. (Touchstone Group)

When people were asked how their thinking had altered, few offered an explicit preference for education’s future.

Summary

Overall we can say that, in most cases, the Secondary Futures process extended people’s thinking. Those who had not necessarily thought about education through a futures lens were helped to begin this thinking. Those who had already adopted a futures lens often reinforced and extended their thinking. However, the engagements did not extend thinking for some interviewees.

Thinking itself may be as much about opening up future possibilities and alternatives, as it is about narrowing down personal preferences. As we saw in the Chapter 5 (see Figure 4), the question “How clear are your ideas about how secondary education could change for a better future?” was rated fairly low in comparison with other closed-ended questions. The eight Touchstone Group members were split between those who responded “very” (3) and “quite” (5) when asked to rate how good they thought Secondary Futures is at helping people to become clearer.

7. How Secondary Futures leads to talking and acting

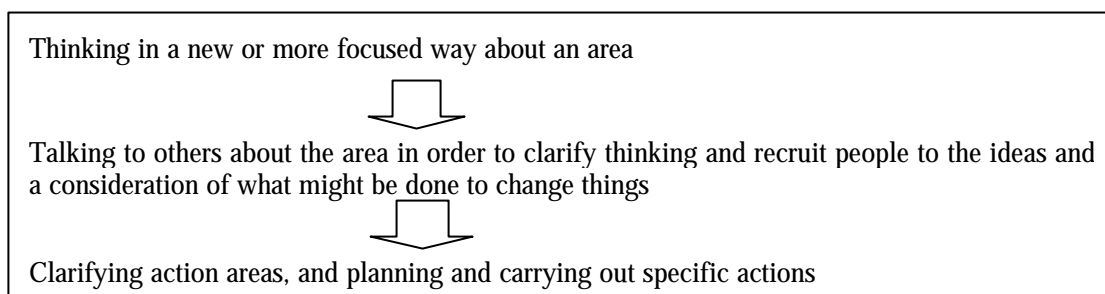
Our third research question was about the outcomes and actions that may emerge after participants' engagement with Secondary Futures. As mentioned in Chapter 3, only the sixth Secondary Futures Phase One objective, "supporting change by taking information to others", has some relation to outcomes and actions. As we saw in Chapter 5, Touchstone Group members were asked to draw on their overview of the projects to answer the question, "How good do you think Secondary Futures is at sharing the information they gather?" Overall their responses rated more negatively than for any other Likert scale question. The one member who suggested Secondary Futures was "very" good said this was only if people went to its high-quality website. This chapter provides a fuller exploration of outcomes and actions than indicated by the objectives.

Change continuum

If change is framed as a linear process, talking and taking action can be seen as stages that follow thinking in a hierarchy of possible levels of response. In this section we first explore talking, and then other actions, as potential outcomes of the Secondary Futures process. The linear relationship between these types of outcomes is clarified in Figure 5. While we treat these outcomes in this order for the purposes of the evaluation, it is important to recognise that in reality relationships between the three outcomes may be much messier, with many instances of thinking and/or talking interposed with actions.

Figure 5 illustrates how these thinking, talking, and acting categories can be seen to form the key stages of a linear action continuum.

Figure 5 **Change continuum**



Feedback forms

A section of the feedback forms asked participants to record what they expected to be their next steps following the workshop. We were able to assign nearly all responses to one of the three change phases. Comments that referred to at least one of the stages were coded to the most overtly active level that was relevant. For example, if a participant recorded that they would think further about an issue and talk to others about it, they were considered to have “reached” the talk stage, and hence coded to one of the talk nodes. Table 16 sets out the intended change progression of comments indicated on the feedback forms immediately after participation in a workshop. Note that Chapter 6 discussed the range of comments at the “thinking” stage.

Table 16 **Change continuum suggested by feedback form comments (n=474 approx)**

Level on continuum	Number of comments	Percent of comments on continuum
Thinking as a next step	168	35
Talking as a next step	92	19
Acting as a next step	214	45
Total comments on continuum	474	100

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Beyond the think stage, about a fifth (92) of all participants whose comments were placed on the action continuum aimed to discuss the workshop or emergent ideas with others, and nearly half (214) had some intention to encourage or implement action.

Interviews

Four questions were used to unpick outcomes and actions amongst interviewees. To explore *talking* as an outcome, we asked engagement participants “Have you discussed the engagement(s)/workshop(s), or the ideas you had from it, with others?” and we asked Touchstone Group members, “Do you think that the Secondary Futures process raises the level of discussion about the future of education in New Zealand beyond people’s direct participation in the workshops?” To explore potential *action*, we asked engagement participants “Have you taken any actions on the basis of your workshop experience?” and Touchstone Group members “Have you seen changes happen as the result of people taking part in the Secondary Futures process?” All interviewees were asked to explain their answers in detail.

Engagement participants’ and Touchstone Group members’ responses to questions about thinking, talking, and acting are presented as an action continuum in Table 17. Responses that indicated a shift in thinking were explored in Chapter 6.

Table 17 **Change continuum suggested by interviewees' responses (n=50)**

Level on continuum	Yes	Qualified yes	No	Don't know	Total
Engagement shifted thinking	25	11	10	4	50
Engagement led to talking	39	1	7	3	50
Engagement led to action	18	10	18	4	50

Table 17 demonstrates that interviewees were less likely to claim that engagements had led to or reinforced action (28) than thinking (36) or talking (40), and nearly two-fifths (18) explicitly claimed that engagements did not lead to action. This differs from the action continuum of feedback form comments, where acting was claimed to be the most common intended next step.

Talking

Feedback forms

The 92 comments that were coded to the “talk” stage were split into comments that suggested talking for the sake of *discussion*, and those that implied that talking may set the scene for moving towards *action*. Table 18 shows that the former outweighed the latter.

Table 18 **Feedback forms: Talking is the next step (n=92)**

Types of talking	Number of comments	Percent of talk comments
Talking for the sake of discussion	71	77
Talking for the sake of action	21	23
Total talking comments	92	100

Comments regarding talking for the sake of discussion were about stimulating discussion and awareness regarding Secondary Futures concepts in participants' environments:

Stimulate/provoke discussion on the future of learning among friends, colleagues, and in the community. (Wider education workshop)

Some of these discussions had the potential to set a context for possible change in the future:

Begin debate within my own school on some of these issues. (School workshop)

The talking for the sake of action category encompassed comments that covered talking about actions that could be taken for future change:

Be more proactive in discussions with school management, whānau, personnel when discussing achievable goals/targets and impact for the future, i.e. strategic direction for improving Māori student achievement. (Wider education workshop)

Interviews

As shown in Table 19, four-fifths (40) of interviewees considered that Secondary Futures has raised the level of discussion about possible futures or associated ideas in education. As one interviewee put it, Secondary Futures “got people talking”, which they saw as no small achievement considering “the first step in change is starting to examine the issue and discuss it” (Leader, wider education).

Table 19 **Did the engagements lead to ongoing discussion? (n=50)**

	Yes	Qualified yes	No	Unknown	Total
Participant	35	0	5	2	42
Touchstone Group	4	1	2	1	8
Total	39	1	7	3	50

We asked to whom participants had spoken after the engagements. Nineteen interviewees mentioned school leaders. Other people and groups mentioned included teachers and students, union representatives, education advisers and consultants, government employees, iwi and community members, and the business sector. Where appropriate we compared the position of the participant with the position of others with whom they had spoken.

Table 20 demonstrates that, in comparison to their own roles, participants were most likely to speak with others at a lower level in educational decision-making hierarchies, than with those higher than them. This may reflect the weighting of our sample towards educational leaders who have a role in supporting people below them. For example, school principals appear more inclined to discuss Secondary Futures with others in the school management team (same level) and/or teachers (down hierarchy), than with policy makers (up hierarchy). This analysis does beg the question of who should take responsibility for feeding ideas upwards towards the top tiers of decision making. In participatory processes it is important that the ideas of the grassroots are heard by those above them.

Table 20 **Direction of discussion on the educational decision-making hierarchy (n=50)**

Others spoken to	Number of interviewees	Percent of interviewees
Down hierarchy	15	30
Same level in hierarchy	9	18
Up hierarchy	1	2

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because not all interviewees' responses were coded.

Most who said they talked about their involvement in Secondary Futures with others discussed it in a positive light. However a couple of interviewees noted that some of their conversations were fairly sceptical, such as discussing that the Secondary Futures process could not change the thinking of teachers who are set in their ways or alternatively discussing that the Secondary Futures project was a step behind other futures thinking teachers. Secondary Futures was talked about along two continuums:

- explicitly (e.g. advertising the project) or implicitly (e.g. drawing on the ideas without naming the project); and
- formally (e.g. at a meeting) or informally (e.g. in the staff room).

People were most likely to discuss what futures thinking might mean for the organisations that participants worked within (15). For example, one principal had spoken to students, staff, and parents, and said “Everything is up for grabs so let’s explore what we want.” The second most common response was simply reporting back the content of what had occurred at a workshop (8).

The seven people whose responses suggested that engagements had not led to further discussion gave reasons such as being too busy to follow up and not being in an appropriate forum to do so. Some said that not enough people knew about the project to spread the word, and three gave no reason for not taking part in ongoing discussion:

[There is a] question about how ‘one-off’ experiences about that [can] translate into ongoing thinking or debate. (General, wider education)

Acting

Feedback forms

In total, 214 comments were coded to the “action” stage of the change continuum, suggesting that there was an intention to take possible actions. Participants were from a spectrum of workshops, from teachers to government employees. Table 21 demonstrates that the majority of comments related to six specific action areas.

Table 21 **Feedback forms: Acting is the next step (n=214)**

Actions intended	Number of comments	Percent of action comments
Specific action	192	90
<i>Further involvement with Secondary Futures</i>	46	
<i>Feed into planning or policy development</i>	37	
<i>Make changes in relation to technology, including ICT</i>	27	
<i>Use Secondary Futures tools or activities elsewhere</i>	25	
<i>Make changes to teaching and/or learning practice</i>	23	
<i>Seek new and relevant information beyond Secondary Futures</i>	8	
<i>Other specified action</i>	26	
General action	22	10
Total action comments	214	100

The most common action intended was to become further involved with Secondary Futures. Participants talked about visiting the website or seeking more information from the project. About half hoped to attend, suggest, or organise another workshop for themselves or others:

[I] would like to be more involved in the project. Suggest to more schools/institutions that they use the Secondary Futures scenarios/workshop. (Wider education workshop)

The second most common action was to feed the ideas raised into organisational plans and policy development. These comments suggested ways Secondary Futures concepts could assist with long-term or short-term planning:

Use similar techniques in my own planning to determine where the focus of our evaluation of major educational issues [could be]. (Wider education, workshop)

Other common actions mentioned were fairly evenly split between those that intended to:

1. use Secondary Futures tools and/or activities in other environments;
2. approach technology, including ICT, in a different way; and
3. develop teaching and/or learning practices.

For the first of these types of responses, participants mentioned either using the Secondary Futures tools or techniques within their own setting. People talked about how the activities would fit within their philosophies and the environment they worked or taught in, as well as how or why the tools could be customised:

Talk to teaching staff with card scenarios—what effect, if any, can we have on our school?
Talk to economics/social studies/geography teachers about usage of resources in classrooms.
(Wider education workshop)

For the second type of response, most expected to pay more attention to ICT facilities, skills, and uses, although a few mentioned that they wanted to avoid over-reliance on technology:

Think critically about where secondary education is going and learn new technology to use in classroom. (School workshop)

Participants who gave the third type of response intended to make changes to, or shift the focus of, their teaching practice. They discussed changes that they hoped to make in presenting information as well as encouraging more learner-focused tasks:

I will be careful to encourage students to enjoy learning co-operative skills and continue to promote [my school] as the school of choice for students in our area. I will keep asking myself why I do things. (School workshop)

The remaining specific actions mentioned included those that intended to seek more relevant information, such as “Read some more (or Google) on futurology”, plus a range of other actions that did not fall under common categories. A small percentage of these referred to generalised actions, such as:

Attempt to accept more diversity within the system. (Wider education workshop)

Overall, respondents tended to indicate changes that could be made within their own environment. For example, people from government workshops mentioned change in policy or training, school leaders mentioned change in planning, and teachers mentioned change in teaching practice. Still it seems, while some people wanted to explore changes in their individual actions, roles, or experiences, others were looking to effect change on a larger scale:

Make sure our focus on human values and community and environmental issues is not lost in a world where industry and technology and ‘economic progress’ is dominating. (School workshop)

Interviews

Table 22 shows that a minority of interviewees’ responses (18) clearly suggested that actions followed on from engagements. Just as many gave a clear “no” (18). Eight participants provided a more qualified response stating that engagements reinforced actions they probably would have taken anyway. Two Touchstone Group members claimed that engagements only sometimes led to action. People often qualified their response by saying Secondary Futures was a contributor rather than a sole cause of actions they took:

I don’t know if I could pinpoint a link [but it’s] part of that building block. (Leader, wider education)

Table 22 **Interviews: Whether the engagements led to actions (n=50)**

	Yes	Qualified yes	No	Unknown	Total
Participant	17	8	16	1	42
Touchstone Group	1	2	2	3	8
Total	18	10	18	4	50

The actions that interviewees had taken, or witnessed happen as a result of involvement with Secondary Futures (Table 23), followed a similar pattern to responses of those suggested on the feedback forms (Table 21). Further involvement with Secondary Futures was the most commonly mentioned action for both. Second most common for interviewees was using Secondary Futures tools elsewhere:

I used the cards at [my organisation] to kick off strategic thinking. (General, non-education)

Table 23 **Interviews: Actions that engagements have led to (n=50)**

Action taken following engagements	Number of interviewees	Percent of interviewees
Further involvement with Secondary Futures	10	20
Used (or modified) Secondary Futures tools	8	16
Fed into planning or policy development	8	16
Made changes in relation to technology, including ICT	3	6
Made changes to teaching and/or learning practice	3	6
Other actions	1	2

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because interviewees could give multiple responses.

Eight people spoke of incorporating their new thinking or discussions into policy or planning. School leaders tended to mention extending the usual 5-year planning towards longer-term visioning. A government employee mentioned that they had “Incorporated the thinking into policy documents in terms of directions for future of education”. They explained that this policy making was not about “trying to direct what the future is going to be” and instead is designed with new awareness “to be flexible enough to be fit for it and ready” for whatever the future may be.

The 18 people who reported that participation had not led to action, mostly provided a range of constraints that prevented change.

Constraints on change

All interviewees, both those who had taken action since their engagement and those who had not, were asked whether they saw constraints to making changes. Table 24 shows that there was overwhelming agreement that constraints do exist (42).

Table 24 **Are there constraints against making changes? (n=50)**

	Yes	Qualified yes	No	Not sure/ unknown	Total
Participant	36	0	0	6	42
Touchstone Group	6	0	0	2	8
Total	42	0	0	8	50

The next table shows constraints that interviewees mentioned. We classified these into three levels: internal to Secondary Futures; organisational outside of Secondary Futures; and structural at the system-wide level.

Table 25 **The location of constraints to change (n=50)**

Location of constraint	Number of interviewees	Percent of interviewees
Organisations	37	74
Education system	20	40
Secondary Futures	20	40

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because interviewees could give multiple responses.

Three-quarters of the interviewees mentioned at least one constraint to change that was located within organisations, and most interviewees spoke in relation to schools. Most commonly mentioned was that organisations do not have the resources or funding to support the planning or implementation of change (17). Second was that other priorities and pressures prevent change. Here interviewees mentioned competing time and workload pressures, demanding compliance activities, detailed and constricted planning and reporting requirements, and general day-to-day work demands that don't allow time for a wider perspective. The third most common perceived constraint was that schools and their communities are reluctant to change. Interviewees identified this reluctance to change from teachers (10), school leadership (5), and parent communities (4). An overall distrust of government-driven change processes, and of change itself, was noted, particularly in relation to perceived damage done by the move to NCEA:

It did enlighten me about how frightened the group was about change... I'm not in the frontline of education anymore and even I find it scary. (Leader, wider education)

Parents would be reluctant to have their children being the guinea pigs. (Leader, school)

Two-fifths (20) of interviewees considered constraints to reside at a structural or system-wide level, incorporating the educational policy context. Here nearly all the comments made (17) related to how or why the education system beyond individual schools is difficult to change. Some interviewees named key players outside of schools who were risk averse and reluctant to support change, such as education unions, policy makers, or government education agencies. Others spoke generally of the education sector having conservative attitudes that were counterproductive to innovation. A few put this down to the government playing too big a part in defining what and how schools should deliver:

The centralised state-dominated system makes it very difficult to express variety and experiment. (Leader, wider education)

Others did not see a centralised government's role in education as a problem in and of itself, but saw constraints in Secondary Futures not having the power to influence government:

[Secondary Futures] has a negligible influence on policy etc. because [it is] not part of the inside circle. (Leader, wider education)

Two-fifths of interviewees (20) suggested that the Secondary Futures process had implicit constraints. Most frequently mentioned was that Secondary Futures was not seen to be supporting change or producing outputs that could support change (13). Comments here demonstrate that people have different views as to the role of Secondary Futures. Participants mentioned that

Secondary Futures is focused on gathering information, it is not producing or “doing”, that the process is not threatening enough to encourage change, and that the project is viewed cynically by key decision makers as “soft-data” and a “talk fest”. Others suggested that action should not be the purpose because Secondary Futures is there to open up possibilities and provide a new platform for thinking in education:

I don't see Secondary Futures as something that should cause change now, apart from encouraging debate and discussion. (Touchstone Group)

Other areas of concern included that Secondary Futures has no strategy for follow up or for keeping new networks alive (6), and that the tools had certain limitations (4), such as being too technology focused or too extreme.

Summary

Three steps on a linear continuum of change were thinking, talking, and acting. According to the feedback forms completed immediately following a workshop, the number who intended to take further action was similar to the number who simply wanted to think further. These responses outweighed those who expected to draw others into the conversation. This contrasted with the interviews conducted up to 18 months following an engagement, where those who indicated that thinking had changed and those who had talked to others outweighed those who had actually taken further action. This rough comparison of different types of data suggests that immediately following an engagement a good proportion are inspired to act, but they are not necessarily able to follow this through. Furthermore, for both feedback form and interview responses, the most common action provided was to seek further involvement with Secondary Futures, suggesting people are not necessarily ready to “go it alone”. Still, a range of other actions, such as changes in planning and policy, or adjustments to teaching and learning practice, were also mentioned.

A shift in thinking and an increased level of discussion about the possible future of New Zealand education, as well as a wider consideration of alternatives, are noteworthy outcomes of Secondary Futures. They are in line with the Secondary Futures project's engagement purpose and Phase One objectives, which are about providing space, tools, and examples to inspire thinking and illuminate the way forward. Furthermore, when viewed from a complex systems approach, change is not necessarily expected to be gradual and cumulative. On the one hand this partially questions the assumption that thinking, talking, and action can be measured as steps towards change. On the other hand it suggests that, although it is difficult to predict when a tipping point towards system wide change may occur, a critical mass of thinkers, talkers, and actors is clearly crucial.

Our interviewees overwhelmingly suggested that the potential for change is undermined by constraints operating at the organisational/school level and a structural/national policy level, as well as within the Secondary Futures process itself. The main perceived constraint internal to Secondary Futures was that the project is not focused on outputs or outcomes, although some also

suggested that this should not be the role of Secondary Futures. In a similar vein Touchstone Group members suggested Secondary Futures is not doing as well at sharing of the information it gathers as it is with other objectives.

8. Suggested improvements

A range of suggested improvements to the Secondary Futures project was provided by the feedback forms and interview data.

Feedback forms

Participants were not explicitly asked to provide suggestions for improvements on the feedback forms completed immediately after a workshop. However, under the third and final question, “Are there any other comments you would like to make?” a few comments (35) gave clear suggestions. The main suggestions included improving the tools used, for example making the cards more visual and less mutually exclusive, being clearer about the purpose of the activities and Secondary Futures itself, and allowing more time for the workshop as a whole, or certain sections of it:

More information needs to be shared with clear objectives of today’s sessions. (School workshop)

Need to develop a range of tools for different audiences—consider different types of prompts. (Touchstone Group workshop)

Interviews

Given that interviewees were generally positive about the engagement process (see Chapter 5), and may have no longer held a detailed memory of what occurred in the engagement, it is not surprising that the majority of suggestions for improvement were about the general role of Secondary Futures as opposed to detailed recommendations for the workshops. Table 26 shows that interviewees’ suggestions fell across three main categories.

Table 26 **Categorisation of interviewees' suggestions for improvement (n=50)**

Suggestion arena	Number of interviewees	Percent of interviewees
Internal to Secondary Futures	33	66
Practice-oriented	19	38
Policy-oriented	18	36

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because interviewees could give multiple responses.

The main suggestions that were *internal to Secondary Futures*, which could be associated with both (or neither) policy and practice, were:

- Raise the profile of Secondary Futures and expand the project, necessitating increased resources (17).
- Disseminate what Secondary Futures is finding, including what people are saying and common preferences (9). For example, produce summaries and communicate them widely.
- Clarify the purpose and direction of Secondary Futures within the project itself, and work towards greater transparency with stakeholders and participants (5). If change is an objective, then there needs to be a greater consideration of Secondary Futures' strategies.

Other suggestions included: improving the tools (4); making the workshops longer (3); extending the focus beyond secondary education (3); and sharing more about the Secondary Futures process to support other sectors to consider it (1).

The *practice-oriented* suggestions, which were about enabling Secondary Futures to have greater influence over teaching and learning, were:

- Work with schools in a more ongoing way, including adapting engagements to individual schools, taking a whole-school approach, working with teachers who are not already "thinking outside the square", and maintaining contact or providing better follow-up (11).
- Capture and spread initiatives that work, focusing on what is successful or innovative in the present and supporting "cross-pollination" between schools (5).
- Enable schools to gain the resources, funding, and time required for thinking, talking, planning, and action (4). Some suggested this may require supporting schools to step outside, or more strategically work with, current compliance requirements.

The *policy-oriented* suggestions, which were about enabling Secondary Futures to have greater influence the whole education system, were:

- Influence the system by feeding into structural change and policy (14). It was suggested that Secondary Futures needs a stronger mandate (and resourcing) from the government to be able to influence policy. While most thought this was better done from an independent position, one stated that absorption into the Ministry of Education and its policy process would be an appropriate next step.
- Better engage with key decision makers and create champions of the cause (8). While one person believed Secondary Futures should bring on board some key policy people previously

overlooked, another stated that Secondary Futures needs to better solidify and co-ordinate pan-ministry networks amongst the public service leaders who are already supportive.

- Take a stance and develop statements in relation to education policy and practice (4). This may involve statements on what is a shared vision of New Zealand secondary education, even if it is to say that the vision is one of difference and flexibility in the system.

Eight interviewees either qualified or warned against suggestions made within the above categories. The main qualifications raised were that:

- the focus of Secondary Futures should be creative approaches to learning rather than being about teachers and industrial concerns;
- any suggestions or initiatives encouraged by Secondary Futures should be evidence-based rather than advocating for innovation without ensuring it has positive outcomes and is sustainable;
- the focus of Secondary Futures should be opening possibilities rather than adopting an “outcomes or policy development model”; and
- the organisation should remain “small and nimble” rather than becoming a big bureaucratic organisation whose message, flexibility, and energy are weakened.

Summary

Obviously there are conflicting views and expectations of this initiative. People did not give many suggestions about Secondary Futures at the workshop or engagement level specifically. This supports the finding that people valued the engagement process. The majority of the suggestions that were made detailed ways Secondary Futures could work towards having a greater sphere of influence, by better feeding into policy and practice in order to bring about more widespread futures thinking in education and system-wide change. Not all of the suggestions provided were necessarily seen to be the responsibility of Secondary Futures itself, although they were considered important for Secondary Futures’ long-term effectiveness. Reflecting on the range of suggestions made, it seems that this could be achieved by:

- training others outside of Secondary Futures to facilitate a greater number of workshops with both policy and practice groups;
- expanding the Secondary Futures project to engage people in the policy and practice arenas, and to enable the team to put time and resources into producing findings/statements relevant to policy and practice;
- attracting and co-ordinating champions across both policy and practice; or
- keeping going as is and hoping that a critical mass/tipping point will be reached.

The qualifications made to the above suggestions signal that any developments will need to strike a delicate balance between the interests and concerns of policy and practice stakeholders. To be overly associated with policy could undermine credibility with people “at the coalface”. As one

Touchstone Group member pointed out, Secondary Futures should not be captured by any one group, be that a Ministry or a union, but that it still needed to find a way to inform policy and practice in New Zealand, and to draw the government's attention to certain findings from the project.

9. Influences on people's experiences and suggestions

Eight of the interviewees had been engaged as part of a “principals of new schools” group run by Secondary Futures. As a whole, these respondents were particularly positive about Secondary Futures. For this reason we have looked at their situation in more depth.

Aspects of their background appeared conducive to Secondary Futures purpose. Participants were already somewhat future focused prior to engagement with Secondary Futures. They were leaders of new schools, some of which were developed to offer an alternative to existing schools. Most had received funding for intensive planning of their schools. Some noted that they had recruited staff who shared a similar vision. While these background commonalities suggest features that may lead a group or individual to be more ready for Secondary Futures involvement, the following aspects of their engagements were under the direct control of Secondary Futures:

- Multiple shared workshops allowed this group to build a network and establish an ongoing relationship with Secondary Futures.
- Full-day sessions created a space for sustained focus, deep discussion, and a variety of activities.
- Workshops were tailored to different topic areas enabling deeper thinking in areas particularly relevant to their situation.
- Participants worked on Secondary Futures tasks between workshops, for example preparing presentations on a given topic.
- Participants shared current experiences and innovations, empowering other participants to take similar risks.

These features give some indication of the type of experiences that can lead to a more positive experience of Secondary Futures. They are also widely accepted as features of good teaching practice.

Summary

Looking across all interviews, it seems that the more positive opinions were often associated with people's familiarity with futures thinking and comfort with the prospect of change. Table 27

details these influences, further suggesting that those who were more positive were also thinking in ways that were more aligned with a complex systems paradigm.

Table 27 **Features associated with perceptions of Secondary Futures**

Less positive about Secondary Futures	More positive about Secondary Futures
Too busy dealing with day-to-day tasks	Appreciate time to step outside day-to-day priorities
Futures thinking not seen as relevant to now	See futures thinking as key to present decisions
Cynical or reluctant about systemic change	Expecting and encouraging of systemic change
Self not seen as having a role in change	See self to be responsible and empowered to change
See change as one-directional (top-down or bottom-up)	See change as dependent on people at all levels and the relationships between and within levels
Assume future will be similar to present	See future as unknown or radically different

People’s opinions about, and suggestions for, Secondary Futures were influenced by both their existing orientation to futures thinking and by their experiences with Secondary Futures. Some interviewees appeared to be more positive or negative about these concepts prior to meeting with Secondary Futures and interviewees’ work environments allowed more or less space for the integration of the ideas. Likewise, participants in a “principals of new schools” group were enabled to engage with the Secondary Futures process, partly because they already had a commonality with the Secondary Futures agenda and partly because they were given ongoing support to work with the project (both through a series of workshops and by their position as a new school). The findings indicate a need for multiple engagements or ongoing dialogue to support the integration of ideas and movement towards change. Although part of the purpose of Secondary Futures is to engage people in futures thinking and other complex systems ideas, it must be noted that people’s preconceptions and work environments do influence the evaluations and suggestions they offer .

10. Where to next for Secondary Futures?

This section of the report draws on the findings from our evaluation to discuss some of the implications for the Secondary Futures project as it enters its planned second phase.

We found the processes used by Secondary Futures to be very effective in relation to its first four Phase One objectives: creating space; providing tools; sharing trends; and sharing information about possibilities. Interviewees were markedly positive about their engagement experiences in relation to all these areas. The workshops, in particular, were demonstrably successful in creating space for people to think about the future. The workshop process offered time out of daily pressures, enjoyable and thought-provoking activities, and opportunities for sharing ideas with others. The tools, especially the scenario and trend cards, were considered to be well developed, stimulating, and user-friendly.

Interviewees commended the workshop facilitators and other staff for bringing together a wide range of people into rich conversations. Both feedback forms and interview comments indicated that many participants had been stimulated to think further about the issues raised and adopt a futures lens on education. However, as is to be expected in an exploratory project of this nature, the evaluation also uncovered some interesting questions and tensions, which we now address.

Eliciting futures preferences

Phase One of the Secondary Futures project included the objective of eliciting preferences about the future of New Zealand's education system. Although Secondary Futures appears to be successfully opening people's eyes to future possibilities and alternatives, few interviewees actually stated a clear preference for education's future when asked to explain their new thinking. In fact, they did not rate their clarity on how secondary education could change for a better future as positively as other aspects of the project.

There is an interesting tension here. In the futures thinking literature the aim of encouraging a shared vision for the future coexists with the aim of encouraging divergent thinking about future possibilities and recognising that the future is unknown (Codd et al., 2002; Iversen, no date; Miller, 2003; OECD Schooling for Tomorrow website, 2005a). Similarly, the school change literature supports the importance of developing a common vision, with clear goals for any change, at the same time as it also emphasises the need to allow for flexibility and movement as

change unfolds (Boyd, Bolstad, Cameron, Ferral, Hipkins, McDowall, & Waiti, 2005; Russell, 2003; Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore, 1995; Stoll & Fink, 1996).

The imperative to open up possibilities is typically associated with a systems change paradigm, where properties of emergence that can transform the system depend on diverse inputs (Davis & Sumara, 2005). But the objectives of eliciting preferences and developing clear goals better match a more managerialist paradigm that favours the pursuit of predetermined outcomes. While this tension was particularly evident when addressing this objective, it was also apparent in other aspects of the project.

The challenges of systems thinking

As is appropriate to the challenges faced, many aspects of the Secondary Futures process were compatible with thinking and acting within a systems paradigm. These aspects included the participatory approach that facilitated reflective conversations, the use of materials that opened up a range of possibilities for an unknown future, working with networks of leaders, and attempting to distribute leadership for futures thinking more widely across the sector (Sterling, 2001).

The last of these aspects raised some interesting challenges. If those who returned a consent form are fully representative of Secondary Futures' participants, then Secondary Futures has succeeded in covering a range of participants and sectors, but with a weighting towards educational leaders. These people inherently hold the most power, as individuals, to influence change. While some stakeholders did engage in ongoing discussions about the future, in general they spoke to others at similar or lower levels on the educational hierarchy. For example policy makers said they talked with others in a similar role, principals talked with teachers, and so on. Most commonly, people discussed the implications that futures thinking might have for their own organisation. While research in school settings shows that the role of school leaders is pivotal in initiating, managing, and sustaining change (Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves et al., 1996; Harris, 2002), systems thinking suggests that leaders of change need to come from all levels of the education hierarchy. Furthermore, as leaders of change, they need to interact freely across the levels of the system. While principals can obviously facilitate the necessary interchanges in their own school, they do need to be willing to distribute leadership opportunities. And they need opportunities to talk with those in education policy contexts because they too are positioned in a hierarchy. Ways to achieve this more complex networking could be addressed in the second phase of the project.

From a systems perspective, futures thinking needs to increase people's awareness that they are creating, not reacting to, the future every day (Miller, 2003; OECD Schooling for Tomorrow website, 2005a). However, some participants found it easier than others to see ways they could integrate futures thinking into their present reality. Analysis of the feedback forms, completed by a wider range of participants than the interviews, suggested that some people who did think more about the future as a result of attending a workshop, did not always see ways to connect these insights to their current situation. This leads us to a consideration of the tension between futures

thinking as an abstract exercise and actually taking concrete steps to transform the present into the future.

Challenges for taking action

Secondary Futures' Phase One objective "supporting change by taking information to others" has a clear outcomes focus. This is suggestive of an action dimension, with engagement intended to be a catalyst for possible next steps towards change. Touchstone Group members were less positive that this aspect of the overall project had been achieved than they were about other aspects. However, analysis of the data indicates that some participants have taken further actions. Interviewees' responses suggest that the engagements have led to further discussion about possible futures in education, beyond their direct participation in workshops. A shift in thinking is a first step towards change, with some participants following this up with conversations about possible futures, or about the project itself. Actually doing something was less common.

A comparison of data from the feedback forms and from the interviews suggests that more participants intended to take action at the conclusion of a workshop than actually claimed to have acted up to 18 months after an engagement. It seems that good intentions did not always translate to actions, despite many participants being involved in multiple engagements. Doubtless this relates at least in part to the dominance of immediate work pressures, and as such is beyond the direct influence of Secondary Futures.

Interestingly, further involvement with Secondary Futures was the most commonly mentioned action, in both feedback form and interview data. Using the Secondary Futures tools elsewhere was the second most common action taken by participants. This desire for ongoing connection with the project is indicative of a wish to engage in continued dialogue about futures thinking, and of positive feelings about previous engagements with the project. It suggests that people find the experience valuable but a one-off engagement is not always sufficient grounding for them to be able to act confidently within their own environments. This suggestion is supported by the finding that those with a pre-existing positive orientation towards futures thinking or educational change appeared to get the most out of Secondary Futures intervention. It seems that a one-off process is less likely to work with those who are perhaps most in need of new perspectives for thinking about the future.

This finding is supported by literature about effective professional development, which suggests that one-off sessions, and in particular those attended by only one staff member from a school, are less effective (Burt & Davison, 1998; Scott & Murrow, 1998). Several of NZCER's own studies have shown this in relation to other professional development contexts. For example, to be most effective, ICT professional development for teachers needs to be linked to school goals, and be well planned and developed regularly over a period of time rather than taking the form of one-off events (Waiti, 2005; Waiti, Maniapoto, Bolstad, & Wylie, 2003). Such findings raise interesting

questions of sustainability that Secondary Futures may wish to address in the next phase of the project.

There are other issues that impact on sustainability. Nearly all interviewees suggested that they faced practical constraints to change. These were most commonly seen to exist within schools themselves, but also within the wider education system and policy environment. At the moment the Secondary Futures process is generally not seen to directly advocate for, nor feed into, policy development. Instead the initiative appears to be working at the level of attempting to shift the thinking of those who may be able to influence policy, or for that matter practice, towards a futures thinking complex systems paradigm. This “indirect steering” creates interesting ongoing challenges for the project.

It is interesting that the six principals of new schools were amongst the most active in initiating ongoing actions as a result of their engagement with Secondary Futures. This group was more future focused to begin with, and since they had recently established new schools, they were in a better position than many other participants to act on perceived constraints. They could also draw on the ongoing professional development conversations and experiences available to them as a group, thereby better meeting the challenge to work within best-practice models for professional development. They interacted with Secondary Futures on more than one occasion. Their responses suggest that the set of conditions within which they interacted with the project are more conducive to achieving the project’s goals than were briefer types of engagement.

Where next for Secondary Futures?

To date, Secondary Futures has successfully worked with a wide range of stakeholders to open up futures thinking. Nevertheless it appears to have come to a point where stakeholders are asking “What happens next?” Many would like ongoing contact with the project as they think about ways to translate future-focused challenges into current actions.

Secondary Futures stakeholders are spread across the policy-to-practice continuum of education and they offered a range of suggestions for improving processes, particularly in relation to feeding into educational change at either a school-based or system-wide level. How might Secondary Futures address these multiple challenges that participants face when contemplating action on their newly acquired futures awareness?

The interviewees’ responses point to the challenges inherent in continuing to promote a systems change paradigm, while keeping in mind that many stakeholders, including policy makers, operate within an environment more attuned to a managerialist paradigm, with associated constraints that are not likely to disappear in the short or medium term. The following overarching suggestions could help Secondary Futures to develop processes better aimed at managing the tensions that inevitably arise:

- Support participants to work with systems thinking ideas, for example moving from linear to systems planning approaches which acknowledge the inherent uncertainty of outcomes and the importance of diverse inputs (Fullan, 2005). Support school leaders to set up systems thinking dialogue approaches within their schools. For example, the tools could be provided to participants as stand-alone resources, with suggested discussion processes, which they could then use with other groups to guide ongoing discussions.
- Target participants with the greatest ability to champion systems thinking, such as policy developers and managers, but try to ensure that they can share meaningful conversations with others from very different levels of the education hierarchy. Work to ensure that systems thinking becomes embedded in policy and future-oriented change becomes possible at a national level.

Although not all of Secondary Futures stakeholders would necessarily consider these activities to be within the project's mandate, we note that even those interviewees who did not view outcomes to be the project's central focus also wanted the project to have system-wide impact. Perhaps the greatest challenge of a systems framework for change is that it calls for "working on everything, and everyone at once". However, the reality is that Secondary Futures is a small organisation operating with very real constraints, and seemingly facing some tricky decisions. Collective ownership is essential to the project, but some stakeholders currently appear to interpret the purpose(s) of Secondary Futures differently. Accordingly it seems essential that Secondary Futures openly discusses and clarifies its mandate, and ensures that any decisions are effectively communicated to its stakeholders, including future workshop participants. The following questions, which arise from the evaluation findings and conclusion, could be considered when addressing challenges for the implementation of Phase Two of the project:

- Where does Secondary Futures want to position itself between seeding ideas and providing ongoing support for change?
- What is, or could be, Secondary Futures' role in influencing change in practice?
- What is, or could be, Secondary Futures' role in influencing change in policy?
- In the case of limited resources should any particular group of stakeholders take preference? (For example, educational leaders, school communities, and/or other specific groups?)
- What is Secondary Futures' role in eliciting, reporting, or advocating for collective (and competing) preferences, and/or a vision (or multiple visions) for secondary education in 2025?

Secondary Futures has successfully raised awareness of futures thinking and the challenges that education faces. While solving these challenges is beyond the remit of the project, addressing the questions raised here might help clarify participants' expectations of the extent to which Secondary Futures can provide ongoing support for change. In this way, the project could continue to evolve in its second phase.

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Appendix 1: Data management for Phase Two evaluation

In line with Secondary Futures' current review of its databases, the following lists offer suggestions about how Secondary Futures could build on its data management processes to assist with monitoring a Phase Two evaluation.

The following points detail improvements that could be made to the feedback forms themselves, and the process of recording and analysing participants' responses:

- Include a statement where participants can agree or disagree to their details being handed to a third party for the purpose of research and evaluation.
- Include a range of closed-ended questions, which address Secondary Futures' objectives and engagement purpose (similar to those developed for the interviews).
- Make evaluation forms anonymous by separating contact details from evaluation responses. Add postal addresses to the contact details. A closed-ended question on the participant's sector should be added to the feedback form.
- Record consistent and complete data about workshops, including additional information such as number of attendees, number that returned a consent form, facilitator, or organisations represented.
- Develop a process to enable participant-level data, such as organisation and sector, to be an analysed field in the N6 database.

Overall, the above points would allow for more accurate and complete feedback immediately after workshops. The data itself would be anonymous but easier to analyse, and could be attributed to sectors at the participant level instead of workshop level. It would also allow Secondary Futures to monitor how many people it had engaged with over a set period. The following list comprises suggestions for the stakeholder database:

- Endeavour to complete all fields.
- Standardise sector groupings, for example: school-based, other education, government, community, business, local council, other.
- Add a "target categories" field to supplement sector, such as Māori and youth.
- Add a "participation field" to clearly separate those who have attended an engagement from those who have not. Alternatively keep two separate databases: "participants" and "stakeholders not yet engaged". Participation details could also record the type of engagement attended (such as workshop or introduction talk), and/or the date of attendance. Ensure that all those who have attended a workshop are entered as participants.

- Develop a process for updating email addresses, and/or ensure that postal addresses are consistently recorded.

Addressing these points would allow Secondary Futures and evaluators to more accurately and completely target specific audiences, including separating out past participants. Using postal addresses would enhance response rates, and provide back-up for when email addresses bounce or are not a preferred medium for contact.

Appendix 2: Participants' interview schedule

Information from consent form

A1. Code:	_____
A2. Organisation:	_____
A3. Role/job title:	_____
A4. Sector:	<i>school</i> ¹ / <i>other ed</i> ² / <i>business</i> ³ / <i>govt</i> ⁴ / <i>local council</i> ⁵ / <i>community</i> ⁶ / <i>other</i> ⁷
A5. Taken part in:	<i>workshop</i> ¹ / <i>conference presentation</i> ² / <i>introduction talk</i> ³ / <i>other</i> ⁴

Involvement

1. Can you briefly describe how you have been involved with Secondary Futures?

Prompt if workshop: Can you briefly describe what happened at the workshop?

Prompt: What does your organisation do/what is your role in relation to education?

a) Trend cards <i>Y</i> ¹ / <i>N</i> ² / <i>Dk</i> ³ b) Scenario cards <i>Y</i> ¹ / <i>N</i> ² / <i>Dk</i> ³
c) Group discussion <i>Y</i> ¹ / <i>N</i> ² / <i>Dk</i> ³ d) Guardians spoke <i>Y</i> ¹ / <i>N</i> ² / <i>Dk</i> ³
d)

If they did not attend a workshop phrase ALL remaining questions as 'session', 'presentation' or appropriate alternative !!!!

2. How many secondary futures workshops have you attended?

*0*¹ *1*² *2*³ *3+*⁴

3. How many months ago did you (last) attend a workshop?

*0-3*¹ *4-6*² *7-9*³ *10-12*⁴ *13-18*⁵ *can't remember*⁶

4. How long did the workshop take?

0–2 hrs¹ 3–4 hrs² full-day³ can't remember⁴

5. Did you complete a Feedback or evaluation Form after the workshop?

Yes¹ No² Dk³

6. Who attended the workshop you were (most recently) at?

Prompt: What groups or organizations participated in the workshop?

Prompt: About how many people attended the session?

a) 1–9 ¹ / 10–19 ² / 20–29 ³ / 30–39 ⁴ / 40–49 ⁵ / 50+ ⁶ / DK ⁷
b) Students ¹ / Teachers ² / Principals ³ / Board of Trustees ⁴ / Other school staff ⁵ / Primary ⁶ / Secondary ⁷ / Tertiary ⁸
c) Other ¹³

Open-ended Questions:

If they answer 'no', try the prompts. If they still say 'no', then ask the No explanatory question.

If they answer 'don't know/ maybe', ask prompts. If they still don't know - ask the Yes & No explanatory questions if appropriate.

7. Did the workshop change your thinking about education in anyway?

Yes – What do you look at differently OR How do you see things differently?

No – Why do you think you still see things the same way as you did before the workshop?

Prompt: Is there anything that you look at with new eyes as a result of doing the workshop?

a) <u>THINK</u> Yes ¹ / No ² / Confirmed previous thinking ³ / Dk ⁴
b)

8. *If changed thinking:* What was it about the Secondary Futures process that lead you to change your thinking?

If not changed thinking: Was there anything about the Secondary Futures process that prevented you from seeing things any differently?

a) trends ¹ / scenarios ² / time to think ³ / Guardians ⁴ / facilitator ⁵ / other participants ⁶ / Dk ⁷
b) Other ⁸ ...

9. Have you discussed the workshop, or the ideas you had from it, with others?

Yes – Who have you talked to and what have you talked about?

No – Why do you think you have not talked to anyone about it?

a)	<u>TALK</u> Yes ¹ / No ² / <i>Confirmed same discussions</i> ³ / Dk ⁴
b)	

10. Have you taken any actions on the basis of your workshop experience?

Yes – What have you changed or done differently since the workshop?

No – Why do you think you have carried on exactly the same as you did before the workshop?

Prompt: For example, you may have done things like fed future-focused ideas into organisational planning, used the scenario cards elsewhere, increased your use of IT, or looked up the Secondary Futures website

Prompt: Have you made any changes as a result of taking part in the workshop?

a)	<u>ACT</u> Yes ¹ / No ² / <i>Confirmed same actions</i> ³ / Dk ⁴
b)	

11. Do you see any constraints to making changes?

Yes – What constraints have you experienced? What might have helped?

No – What do you think has made it easy for you to enact changes?

Prompt: Have you perceived any barriers to making changes that you had hoped to make?

Prompt: Is there anything outside the Secondary Futures process itself that you perceive to be a constraint?

a) <u>CONSTRAINTS</u> Yes ¹ / No ² / Dk ³
b) Internal to Sec Fut ¹ / External to Sec Fut ²
c)

12. What would you say was the single best thing about the Secondary Futures process for you?

a) <u>BEST THING</u> single ¹ / more than one ² / Dk ³
b)

13. Do you have any suggestions for how the Secondary Futures process could be improved?
 Yes –What are your suggestions?

a)	<u>SUGGESTIONS</u> Yes ¹ / No ² / DK ³
b)	

Closed-ended questions
 If they have not attended a workshop, phrase ALL questions as “SESSION” or alternative.

Now I am going to ask you ten summary questions. For each I want you to rate your response on a 4 point-scale, where 1=‘very’ and 4=‘not at all’.

All of them: 1=‘very’, 2=‘quite’, 3=‘a little’, 4=‘not at all’.

Also tell me if you didn’t do what the question is about.

14. How useful did you find the workshop for creating space to think about the future of education?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵

15. How enjoyable did you find the overall format and organisation of the workshop?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵

16. How well facilitated did you think the workshop was?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵

17. How useful was it to hear the Guardians speak?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵ / No opportunity⁶

18. How useful did you find the scenarios?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵ / Not used⁶

19. How useful did you find the trends?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵ / Not used⁶

20. How useful did you find it to hear other people's views during the workshop?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵ / No opportunity⁶

21. How useful did you find networking with others during the workshop?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵ / No opportunity⁶

22. How safe did you feel to express your thoughts in the workshop?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵ / No opportunity⁶

23. How relevant was the workshop to your work?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵

24. How useful do you think the workshop would be to other people in your area of work?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵

25. How clear are your ideas about how secondary education could change for a better future?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵

Catch-all

26. Just before we finish, is there anything else you would like say about the Secondary Futures process?

a)	<u>CATCH-ALL</u> Yes ¹ / No ² / Dk ³
b)	

Demographics

OK thanks very much for that. To finish I just need to get some demographic information from you.

27. What region of New Zealand do you live in?

<i>Northland</i> ¹	<i>Auckland</i> ²
<i>Waikato</i> ³	<i>Bay of Plenty</i> ⁴
<i>Gisborne</i> ⁵	<i>Hawke's Bay</i> ⁶
<i>Taranaki</i> ⁷	<i>Manawatu-Wanganui</i> ⁸
<i>Wellington</i> ⁹	<i>West Coast</i> ¹⁰
<i>Nelson</i> ¹¹	<i>Marlborough</i> ¹²
<i>Tasman</i> ¹³	<i>Canterbury</i> ¹⁴
<i>Southland</i> ¹⁵	<i>Otago</i> ¹⁶

28. Which age category do you fit within?

*Under 16*¹ / *16-20*² / *21- 40*³ / *41-60*⁴ / *61+*⁵

29. What gender are you? *Male*¹ / *Female*²

30. Which ethnic groups do you identify with?

*NZ European or Pākehā*¹
*NZ Māori*²
*Samoan*³
*Cook Island Māori*⁴
*Tongan*⁵
*Niuean*⁶
*Tokelau*⁷
*Fijian*⁸
*Other Pacific Nation*⁹
*Chinese*¹⁰
*Indian*¹¹
*Other*¹² _____

Thanks very much. We hope to complete the evaluation by the end of December. We'll send you a summary of our findings, if you said you wanted them in your original consent form (same?). And don't forget we still have to do the draw for a \$100 book voucher from all the returned consent forms! Do you have any questions?

2. Do you have first hand experience of the workshops?

$Y^1 / N^2 / Dk^3$

3. Who attended the workshop you were (most recently) at?

Prompt: What groups or organizations participated in the workshop?

Prompt: About how many people attended the session?

a) 1-9 ¹ / 10-19 ² / 20-29 ³ / 30-39 ⁴ / 40-49 ⁵ / 50+
b) Students ¹ / Teachers ² / Principals ³ / Board of Trustees ⁴ / Other school staff ⁵ / Primary ⁶ / Secondary ⁷ / Tertiary ⁸
c) Other ¹³

4. Can you briefly describe what happened at the workshop?

a) Trend cards $Y^1 / N^2 / Dk^3$ b) Scenario cards $Y^1 / N^2 / Dk^3$
c) Group discussion $Y^1 / N^2 / Dk^3$ d) Guardians spoke $Y^1 / N^2 / Dk^3$
d)

Open-ended questions

5. One of the aims of Secondary Futures is to create space to contemplate the future of education. Overall do you think that Secondary Futures is achieving this aim?

Yes – How do you think they achieve their aim?

No – What do you think constrains them from achieving their aim?

a)	<u>CREATE SPACE</u> Yes ¹ / No ² / Dk ⁴
b)	

6. Do you think the Secondary Futures process changes people’s thinking about education?

Yes – How do you see that the process changes people’s thinking?

No – In what cases does it not appear to change people’s thinking?

a)	<u>THINK</u> Yes ¹ / No ² / Sometimes ³ / Dk ⁴
b)	

7. If change thinking: *What is it about the Secondary Futures process that leads to changed thinking?*

If not change thinking: *Is there anything about the Secondary Futures process that prevents people from seeing things any differently?*

a) trends ¹ / scenarios ² / time to think ³ / Guardians ⁴ / facilitator ⁵ / other participants ⁶ / Dk ⁷
b) Other ⁸ ...

8. Do you think that the Secondary Futures process raises the level of discussion about the future of education in New Zealand beyond people’s direct participation in the workshops?

Prompt: Do people discuss their Secondary Futures experience with others?

a) <u>TALK</u> Yes ¹ / No ² / Sometimes ³ / Dk ⁴
b)

11. What would you say is the single best thing about the Secondary Futures process?

a) <u>BEST THING</u> <i>single</i> ¹ / <i>more than one</i> ² / <i>Dk</i> ³
b)

12. Are there other things that need to be in place to develop the effectiveness of Secondary Futures?

Yes -What would you suggest?

No - What would you say is the single best thing about the Secondary Futures process?

Prompt: What could Secondary Futures themselves improve?

Prompt: What could be done outside of Secondary Futures to improve their effectiveness?

a) <u>SUGGESTIONS</u> <i>Yes</i> ¹ / <i>No</i> ² / <i>Dk</i> ³
b) <i>Internal to Sec Fut</i> ¹ / <i>External to Sec Fut</i> ²
c)

Closed-ended questions

Now I am going to ask you ten summary questions. For each I want you to rate your response on a 4 point-scale, where 1='very' and 4='not at all'.

(All of them: 1='very', 2='quite', 3='a little', 4='not at all').

13. How good is Secondary Futures at sharing trends relevant to the future direction of NZ?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵

14. How useful do you think it is for people to hear others ideas about the future of education?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵

15. How relevant are the Secondary Futures workshops for people within your sector?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵

16. How good do you think Secondary Futures is at helping people to become clearer about how secondary education could change for a better future?

1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / DK

17. How good do you think Secondary Futures is at sharing the information they gather?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵

18. How suitable is the workshop process for encouraging people to make changes in relation to possible futures?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵

19. How good is Secondary Futures at providing tools to resource thinking about the future of education?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵

20. Overall, how good do you think Secondary Futures is at creating space for people to contemplate the future of education?

1¹ / 2² / 3³ / 4⁴ / DK⁵

Catch-all

21. Just before we finish, is there anything else you would like say about the Secondary Futures process?

a)	<u>CATCH-ALL</u> Yes ¹ / No ² / Dk ³
b)	

Demographics

OK thanks very much. To finish I just need to get some demographic information from you.

22. What region of New Zealand do you live in?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Northland</i> ¹ | <i>Auckland</i> ² |
| <i>Waikato</i> ³ | <i>Bay of Plenty</i> ⁴ |
| <i>Gisborne</i> ⁵ | <i>Hawke's Bay</i> ⁶ |
| <i>Taranaki</i> ⁷ | <i>Manawatu-Wanganui</i> ⁸ |
| <i>Wellington</i> ⁹ | <i>West Coast</i> ¹⁰ |
| <i>Nelson</i> ¹¹ | <i>Marlborough</i> ¹² |
| <i>Tasman</i> ¹³ | <i>Canterbury</i> ¹⁴ |
| <i>Southland</i> ¹⁵ | <i>Otago</i> ¹⁶ |

23. Which age category do you fit within?

*Under 16*¹ / *16-20*² / *21- 40*³ / *41-60*⁴ / *61+*⁵

24. What gender are you? *Male*¹ / *Female*²

25. Which ethnic groups do you identify with?

*NZ European or Pākehā*¹

*NZ Māori*²

*Samoan*³

*Cook Island Māori*⁴

*Tongan*⁵

*Niuean*⁶

*Tokelau*⁷

*Fijian*⁸

*Other Pacific Nation*⁹

*Chinese*¹⁰

*Indian*¹¹

*Other*¹² _____

Thanks very much. We hope to complete the evaluation by the end of December. We'll send you a summary of our findings, if you said you wanted them in your original consent form (same?). And don't forget we still have to do the draw for a \$100 book voucher from all the returned consent forms! Do you have any questions?

Appendix 4: Information sheet



Evaluation of Secondary Futures' Short Term Effectiveness: Information Sheet

What is the research about?

The New Zealand Council of Educational Research (NZCER) has been contracted to evaluate the short-term effectiveness of the Secondary Futures process. The Secondary Futures/Hoenga Auaha Taiohi project was set up over 18 months ago to facilitate discussion and debate about the future of secondary education in New Zealand. Secondary Futures are interested in the impact of their process, and how they can further develop and refine this process.

How is the research being carried out?

We would like to interview about 50 people who have been involved in this process as workshop participants, or through other types of activities. We will also analyse the feedback forms Secondary Futures have already collected.

Where do I fit?

We would like to interview you about what you think of the Secondary Futures' process, the impact of the process on how you or others think and act, and your suggestions for improvements.

The interview will take approximately 20–30 minutes. In most cases we will do the interview over the phone, but if you are based in Wellington Central we may be able to interview you in person. We will tape record the interview.

Your participation is voluntary, but we would greatly appreciate it if you took part in this research. If you would like to participate please return the consent form attached. Once we receive the consent form we will call you to do the interview, or set another time that suits you. We will be interviewing the first people who email/post us their completed consent forms, so we may not interview all those who return a consent form. However, all people who return a consent form will go into a draw to win a \$100 book voucher.

What happens after my interview?

Each interview is private and confidential. All opinions and data will be reported in such a way that individuals and organisations will not be identifiable. You may withdraw from this research at any stage. The information from all the interviews will be written up in a report for Secondary Futures later in 2005. We may also use it to write articles or presentations. If you choose, we can send you a summary of the research findings when the report is finished.

What do I do now?

If you are happy to be interviewed, please fill out and email (or post) the consent form to NZCER as soon as possible. The consent form is included in the email itself, and is also attached as a Word document. We will begin contacting interviewees in the next few days. You can find out more about NZCER and what we do at www.nzcer.org.nz If you have questions about the evaluation, please contact Josie Roberts at NZCER (04 384 7939, extension 751).

We hope to hear from you soon,

Josie Roberts
Project Leader, NZCER

5. I have taken part in a Secondary Futures:

workshop / conference presentation / introduction talk / other_____

Thanks very much – you will hear from us soon!