

# Ten Features of the Future of Learning Beyond School:

## *How Can We Build Back Better?*

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# Who Am I

- Teaching at the university level since 1973
- Psychologist by training but have taught in both statistics programs and in business schools
- Now act as Chief Innovation Officer for Contact North | Contact Nord
- Now working on strategic foresight as a teacher at the University of Toronto (OISE) and University of Alberta and Athabasca University (MBA)
- Created the world's first fully online MBA in 1993-4 and have been building and working with technology enabled learning experiences ever since
- Worked for 15 years at the Open University (UK) and for 14 years at Athabasca University



# What Will I Explore..

- **The social, economic and political challenges facing colleges, universities and training organizations in Canada.**
- **The five big challenges colleges and universities face as we begin to imaging a post-pandemic world.**
- **The ten dominant change features of post-secondary education post-pandemic.**
- **The three imperatives for a different future which are required from policy makers and institutional leaders.**

## Key Elements of the Future

*"Prediction is very difficult, especially if it involves the future" Niels Bohr*

# 01

### Technological Change

Technology has changed so many aspects of our lives from healthcare, through retail and transportation. More rapid change to come.

# 02

### Growing Inequality

We offer small businesses A characteristic of our age is growing income and social inequality. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer, and the middle class suffers

# 03

### Changing Demographics

Canada is shifting to a grey country – more seniors living longer, fewer births and a greater reliance on immigration.

# 04

### Changed Economy

In a generation we have shifted from a manufacturing economy to a service economy, and we are now shifting to a green economy.



## Key Elements of the Future

*All of these forces are at work together to change our social economic dynamics – we are in the midst of a revolution....*

# 05

### Environmental Change

Not only is the climate changing, but we are experiencing more extreme weather events and water challenges.

# 06

### Changing Patterns of Work

“Gig” work is now the fastest growing domain of employment in Canada – short term, on demand work.

# 07

### Fast Changing Corporate Landscape

98% of Canadian firms are small – less than 1% are large. Small firms die faster than large ones.

# 08

### Globalization

Supply chains, labour and systems are now global. While some seek to return to “local” – it is a real challenge to do so.



## There Are Other Issues

**That lay beneath the surface of many developments we are witnessing**



### Indigenous Futures

Indigenous communities and persons continue to struggle to secure the education, skills and opportunities they need to thrive.



### Social Trust

Social trust in government, institutions and the professions is falling. News media is not trusted as a source of news. Communities have reduced trust in other communities.



### The Shifting Role of Government

Government struggles with purpose and its role in the face of the pandemic and its consequences

## The Biggest Issue



### **What is the Meaning and Purpose of Our Lives in an Age of Change and Disruption?**

Anyone working on mental health, addiction, police services, education and social service will tell you we have a new crisis of meaning and purpose.

- ✓ Building resilience, social trust and compassionate communities is key to all of our futures
- ✓ Strengthening emotional intelligence and each person's wellbeing is mission critical
- Finding ways to engage with different views and accept diversity in inclusive ways is a key task for all

# Implications for Universities and Colleges

- University and colleges need to be much more responsive to the shifting needs of the labour market and the economy
- Refocusing of the work of higher education away from narrow bands of niche knowledge towards general competencies and capabilities (OECD) and to “learning to become” (UNESCO)
- Increased access and a strong focus on equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Reduced system complexity and greater efficiency.
- Rethinking finances and a growing focus on performance-based funding
- Supporting the shift to the green economy and green energy systems

# We Have Already Seen...

- Permanent closures
- Mergers and clustering
- Pause and Rethink – Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection
- Shrinking and Focusing
- Opening the Envelope – use of targeted funds from government
- Going Digital and Getting to Scale – e.g. Arizona State University
- Keep Calm and Carry On (also known as “a wing and a prayer”)

# Barriers to Transformation

- Governance and decision making and the absence of courage
- Faculty resistance and the role of unions
- Weak understanding of the link between purpose and the design of learning
- Money and investment
- Market dynamics and the elephants in the room - MOOCs

# The 5 Big Challenges for Universities and Colleges

# Five Challenges

- **Demographic shifts** – growing domestic demand and highly competitive markets for international students.
- **Financial precarity** – changing financial situations of Provincial and Federal governments
- **Changing market expectations** – shift from a supply led business model to a demand-led model and a recognition of skills by employers being more important than “qualifications”/
- **Changing frameworks for teaching and learning** – technology enabled blended, hybrid and fully online learning.
- **Globalization of the market** – 650,000 Canadian MOOC takers in 2020 and growing.



# 10 Key Responses

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

### Let's Establish the Foundation: Strengthen Literacy

42% of the Canadian workforce has literacy skills below those needed for the work that they do. Many college / university graduates have low literacy levels.



- ✓ A 1% gain in literacy levels across the workforce would produce a 5% gain in GDP - \$54 billion.
- ✓ Canada's productivity is low relative to other countries in part because we cannot produce outputs as quickly and as efficiently as others.
- ✓ Rework and error costs lives and jobs. In health care, it medical mistakes give rise 23,750 deaths a year and annual additional costs in excess of \$750 million.

# Changing How we Think About Schools and Learning

*Shift Away from our Current Thinking About Curriculum, Time, Classrooms and Shift to a Different Frame*

## 01

### **Modular**

Imagine learning based around key knowledge, capability and competence as modules to be mastered when needed, just-in-time.

## 02

### **Stackable**

Imagine being able to stack modules to master a domain - music, chemistry, math, mechatronics, drone navigation – for a recognized credential.

## 03

### **On Demand**

Imagine being able to completed modular, stackable learning on demand 24x7 with in-person, online and AI supports.

## 04

### **Authentic Assessment**

Imagine assessment based on competences and capabilities not exams – available 24x7.

# Imagine a More Flexible, Adaptive System

*Learning is no longer a K-12 + 2 or 4 Years System – It is Lifelong, On Demand and Based on Modular, Stackable Learning*

05

## Teamwork and Projects

Some modules are based on project work in a team and the teamwork counts for a lot

06

## Work-Based Learning

School, college and university students must do some of their work in a workplace or community organization

07

## Schools as Hubs

Schools, colleges and universities still offer modular learning, but also accept and give credit for learning at work, self-study or other forms of learning. They are hubs rather than gatekeepers

08

## Learning Budget

Every adult has a learning budget of \$250/year – grow this to \$750 and expand what it can be used for.

## Lifelong Learning as an Integrated Learning Experience



- Blur the distinction between credit, non-credit and work-based learning: its all learning.
- Expand work-based learning accreditation.
- Reimagine PLAR

## Some Themes...

- Developing an enterprise driven culture – responding to and creating demand.
- Rethinking time, structure and process.
- Adopting “less is more” as a mantra.
- Reducing accountability and focusing more on impact.
- Getting government out of the way but still very supportive – finding the balance.

# **The Key Words / Phrases to Help us to Build Back Better**

- Rethink
- Imagineering
- Fast
- Impact
- Engaged
- Integrated





**“The future will be better tomorrow”**

*Vice President Dan Quayle*



# Many Thanks!

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