

## FUTURES WHEEL



### MAIN FEATURES

|                                  |                    |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Reinforced skills (TASC Cluster) | AIM, CONSTRUCT     |
| Suitable for                     | Teachers, Students |
| Difficulty level                 | Middle             |
| Setting                          | Individual, Group  |
| Minimum number of participants   | 1 or more          |
| Average time length              | 60 minutes         |
| Special equipment                | No                 |
| Online version                   | Yes                |

## 1. DESCRIPTION

The future wheel is an exercise in which participants write on a piece of paper a word that represents a concept and/or an action, and identify in graphic form the future consequences related to this word. The futures wheel is a method for graphical visualisation of direct and indirect future consequences of a particular change or development. It was invented by Jerome C. Glenn in 1971 (Glenn, 1972), inside the so-called Future Studies approach, and it was originally intended to organise thoughts about future development or trend in human life. This tool can be very helpful for their thoughts and behaviours, and to imagine and forecast possible futures connected to their thoughts and behaviours. With it, possible impacts can be collected and put down in a structured way.

## 2. AIM / BENEFITS

The use of interconnecting lines makes it possible to visualise interrelationships of the causes and is very helpful in managing classroom climate, to let teachers and students be aware of possible resulting changes.

Thus, Futures wheels can assist in developing multi-concepts about possible future development by offering a futures-conscious perspective and aiding in group brainstorming.

In a school/classroom environment, the futures wheel can stress the concept of a systemic (and non-causal) approach to daily events occurring among students and teachers, and most importantly, conflicts related events inside an escalation dynamic process (the so-called “never-ending conflict”; Goldfien & Robbenolt, 2007).

Also, learning-related events can be analysed throughout this tool.

Teachers and students can work on their mindset in imaging and representing the complexity of the web of interactions among events, and this can be useful to stress their competencies in anticipating and planning their development goals and aims in the future.

## 3. COMPETENCIES CLUSTER(s) related

CLUSTER NR 3 AIM, and NR 1 CONSTRUCT

### *Why*

1. The first cluster involved in this exercise is cluster number 3, “Aiming”, which is based on the idea that students’ and teachers’ expectations (both in terms of classroom climate and subjects’ teaching/learning) mutually influence each other, clarifying their goals. More specifically, the exercise is future-oriented, in the sense that creating the wheel in each part can help teachers and students in finding solutions to be applied in the next stages and events of their classroom routines.

2. The second cluster involved is the number 1 in the framework, “Constructing”. Inside this cluster, the exercise focuses more on a “Cybernetic vision” and on a “Mutual influence awareness”, and highlights the idea that everyone involved in the classroom (teachers, students) have an active role in keeping the classroom climate. The classroom in this case, is a complex system, as well as the teachers’ and students’ life and relationships. It also takes into account the Vygotskian idea that every relationship is a process where all actors involved learn from each other.

In general sense, this strategy can help in managing teachers’ and students’ expectations (both in terms of classroom climate and subjects’ teaching/learning) and the mutual influence on each other. It can be useful in identifying what action can be taken, at classroom climate and/or at teaching/learning level, to reach such goals, starting from a problem/issue. And even more, the futures wheel can highlight a bit more the idea that everyone involved in the classroom (teachers, students) have an active role in keeping the classroom climate.

#### 4. HOW TO DO THE EXERCISE

##### ***Step 1 / Preparation:***

To start a futures wheel, print the future wheel template (or use a digital format, see the attached documentation) and choose the central term to describe a change that is running or a problem/issue to face and to evaluate in terms of consequences (this can be a learning path for students in a specific subject area, or a conflict in a small group of students, etc.).

It is even possible to choose more than one central term that can be placed on a large surface at the same time (i.e. a big sized poster).

##### ***Step 2 / Imagine***

Imagine this challenge actually occurs, and identify possible direct consequences. These can be positive, negative, or neutral. Write them in the first ring around the challenge in the centre.

##### ***Step 3 / Identify indirect consequences***

Identify indirect consequences generated by the direct consequences. Use the connecting lines to help you think of what indirect results the combined effects of two direct results might generate. These lines are just a guide, feel free to ignore/remove as needed. The terms may be connected as nodes in a tree (or even a web). The levels will often be marked by concentric circles. You can identify different levels of consequences (e.g., direct, indirect, second level indirect, etc.). The template provides you an idea on how to proceed, but feel free to organise the levels of consequences as you like. Extend into new rings of indirect results as many times as desired. Feel free to go into third or more levels of consequences.

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#### **Step 4 / Conclusion**

To reach the end of the exercise, consider how to improve or manage the negative impacts, enhance and leverage the positive, and remove or energise the neutral.

### **5. DEBRIEF**

Teachers, individually and or in a small group, need to reflect on what they have produced in drawing a future wheel. When used with students, teachers will help them in a final reflection to find out the main insight. A sort of common conversation needs to be done at the end of the exercises, or just after a couple of days. Try to focus the conversation on the following points:

- What's a significant challenge you (or your group or your students) are currently facing?
- What are the main future events (involving teachers and students) that you're curious about, and how they might impact your daily life at school/classroom?
- What's something that you really have no idea about and are curious if it could potentially impact your daily life at school/classroom?
- For a given trend, what are some of the potential scenarios?
- If this is true, what would happen next?
- And do the effects start to group together? (That's where it starts getting interesting.)

### **6. SPECIAL MATERIALS**

Future wheel exercise needs at least one sample of the empty wheel to be printed (or the digital version, see below). A poster to use more than a wheel template would be useful as well.

### **7. TIPS AND TRICKS**

Aims and future objectives are mainly based on past experience and knowledge. Use these past references to choose a highly efficient core theme from which to start the mapping. Sometimes indirect effects are easier to recognize and describe than direct effects: if this suits your needs, also try to start from the external side of the map after the main concept has been identified.

There are other 2 versions (Version 2 and Version 3) of the future wheel methodology (Glenn, 2009). You can draw inspiration from them to enrich this exercise.

Version 2 contains different thematic triggers to be used to stimulate the mapping: psychological, social, cultural, political, economic, technological, educational, welfare and so forth point of view. Feel free to choose one or more of these point of reference to build up the mapping of the future (for example, if you want to start with a conflictual event in your classroom, triggered by previous social media interactions among your students, use the technological lens to describe this event,

along with the educational and social.

Version 3 has three time-based levels: historic, current and future. Emphasise the linkages among these three levels to let your mapping be more strong and powerful when used with your students.

It's good to colour-code each level. This makes it clear to all participants at a glance whether they are looking at "first", "second", or higher-order consequences. This makes prioritising implications easier. It should also be realised that consequences definitely need not always be negative.

It is essential that all teachers (and then students) understand the entire concept of the Futures Wheel before participating in the process. By having them work in pairs, they will quickly come up with useful ideas.

## 8. ON-LINE VERSION

There are several tools aimed at sustaining the digital version of the mapping of the future with the wheel. One of these is available on the Visual Paradigm website.

(<https://online.visual-paradigm.com/diagrams/templates/futures-wheel/futures-wheel-template/>)

Another one is available on Daniel Luz's website, called Holistic Futures Wheel (<http://www.damienlutz.com.au/holistic-futures-wheel/>).

## 9. REFERENCES

- Glenn, Jerome C. *Futurizing Teaching vs Futures Course*, Social Science Record, Syracuse University, Volume IX, No. 3 Spring 1972.
- Snyder, David Pearce. Monograph: *The Futures Wheel: A Strategic Thinking Exercise*, The Snyder Family Enterprise, Bethesda, Maryland 1993.
- Glenn, Jerome C. *Futures Wheel*, Futures Research Methodology Version 3.0, The Millennium Project, Washington, D.C. 2009.
- Goldfien, J. H., & Robbennolt, J. K. (2007). What if the lawyers have their way? An empirical assessment of conflict strategies and attitudes toward mediation styles. *Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution*, 22, 277-320.

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## 10. FUTURES WHEEL TEMPLATE (PRINTER-FRIENDLY)

