Keri Facer. ***Learning Future, Education, Technology and Social Change.*** Routledge Publications, 2011. 192 pages. US$ 44.95.

Learning Future, Education, Technology and Social Change by Keri Facer is an informative book drawing on over 10 years of research on digital technologies, social change and education. The writer makes a compelling argument for thinking differently about the future for which education might need to prepare. Packed with case studies from around the world, the book helps to bring into focus the risks and opportunities for societies and for schooling over the coming two decades.

Most people recognise that current education systems are not meeting the needs of individuals and 'society' and several books have been written on the future of education. In this context, Keri Facer investigates the scenario of education, technology and social change over the coming two decades by considering nine assumptions about socio-technological change. These include that in next 20 years there would be significantly increased computing and communication at a distance will be taken for granted by the large majority of people. Moreover, working and living alongside sophisticated machines and networks will increasingly be taken for granted and biosciences will produce unpredictable breakthroughs and important new stories about us. Population is ageing globally and energy, mineral resources and climate warming will remain significant issues. And finally we will be facing radical national and global inequalities.

It is on the basis of these assumptions that the writer of this book argues that there is a need to rewrite the relationships between education, socio-technical change and the future in order to find solutions to problems like inequality and environmental degradation. Contrary to the viewpoint that rich educational ecosystem outside the school walls would be more important, the writer takes the stance that local schools would be more imperative. This is because there would be a dire need to create accessible spaces where we can work out on how to cope with the disruptions to intergenerational relationships that are promised by ageing populations and environmental degradations. Moreover, we would require curriculum and pedagogy that teach us how to live with our collective, multimodal and sometimes dangerous knowledge resources.

Furthermore, the writer argues that there is a need to have embodied educational relationships that emphasise the connection between our knowledge and the lived impact of our decisions upon people. In addition to that if we want to challenge the present social and economic systems, there would be a need to create schools that are capable of supporting communities and students to come together to imagine and build sustainable future for all. Facer takes the stance that local schools need to act as a powerful democratic resource and a public space that allows its students and communities to contest the vision of the future that they are presented with, and to work together through the spaces of traditional and emergent democratic practice, to fight for viable future for all.

Over the next 20 years, such a schooling system could plausibly be built drawing upon the changed socio-technical resource we will have at hand and building upon a new relationship between a school and its wider educational ecosystem. The writer gives many examples of such schools all over the world and illustrates how new curriculum, governance arrangements, technical systems and pedagogies can go a long way towards achieving such a change in the relationships between schools and the future.

While concluding, Keri Facer argues that building such schools requires wisdom, creativity, passion of educators, policy-makers, researchers and technologists. It also requires action in multiple areas such as building new governance and accountability arrangements for schools, ensuring that schools have the right to create a local curriculum, building tools for mapping students and schools' wider education ecology, and reconnecting education with housing, economic, transport, environmental policies.

This book makes an important contribution to the literature on the future of schooling by challenging conventional thinking about 21st century schools and by opening new avenues for thinking about the future of education that we might want.

Zain Rafique

National Defense University,
Islamabad.