

Dede, C. J., & Richards, J. (Eds.). (2020). *The 60-Year Curriculum: New Models for Lifelong Learning in the Digital Economy*. Routledge. 182 pp.

Review by Amy Claire Heitzman



Christopher J. Dede and John Richards's recent work, *The 60-Year Curriculum: New Models for Lifelong Learning in the Digital Economy*, is a comprehensive exploration of models and strategies designed to address the changing role of higher education and lifelong learning amid massive technological advances, increased human longevity, and the future of work. As faculty in the Harvard Graduate School of Education and well-known scholars in the field of educational technologies, Dede and Richards are well positioned to guide readers through the historical context of a 60-year curriculum and to synthesize a series of case studies designed to illustrate challenges and opportunities for postsecondary education in this heady time.

In the introductory chapter, Dede describes the term "60-year curriculum" (60YC), including its origins in university continuing education divisions, and argues that it "focuses on a transformational evolution of higher education toward novel strategies to enable adults to add skills . . . as their occupational and personal context evolves and shifts" over the life span (p. 1). From this, Dede outlines factors that undergird the need for learning to evolve toward long-term capacity building, which will enable learners to develop skills for inevitable career growth and change resulting from the emergence of longer life spans, massive advances in technology, and a changing political and climate landscape. Through a thoughtful review of historical and current adult learning frameworks, Dede recognizes challenges of the emerging economic context, arguing that although "human talent will become the most important factor" (p. 10), technology-driven change will fundamentally alter the ways learning must pivot to meet these new needs. From this analysis, the author suggests that the 60YC provides a way for higher education to ar-

ticulate a "pathway to a secure and satisfying future for our students" (p. 20).

The next three chapters explore challenges and opportunities for stakeholders, beginning with "Education, Age, and the Machine," in which Andrew Scott outlines the merging lines of technological change and increased longevity, suggesting economic challenges that will have considerable consequences for education. Among these is workers' need to reskill to utilize new technologies, coupled with an extension of career length needed to support an increased life expectancy. Amid these influences, Scott also identifies questions around ownership of learning in this new setting—who provides education, when, and where (and in what modality), as well as emergent demands for flexible, transparent, often stackable credentials, the nature of which are increasingly fluid amid continuous demands for upskilling.

In the next chapter, "Are We Ready for the Jobs That the Digital Economy Will Offer to Us?" Michel Servoz outlines the major areas in which the adoption of a 60YC must be manifested in order to address the disruption caused by digital innovations in youth, or foundational, education, and in a revision of postsecondary or adult education. Paramount in reconceptualizing the latter is the shift toward a "focus on . . . skills that are transferrable across jobs and will not be subject to automation" (p. 44). Such skills include digital literacy and learning to become adaptable to new circumstances leveraging competencies earned and blended over time with past experiences. In reinventing the latter, postsecondary education is called to build models wherein learners move in and out of higher education, not only as needed or desired, but across their lifetimes. Servoz concludes the chapter with an exploration of emergent models, both individual and collective, for financing the myriad transitions learners will undoubtedly

edly need over a longer career.

In “Employing the 60-Year Curriculum as a Strategic Approach,” Ann M. Brewer examines the strategic value for educational institutions of pivoting to learner-centric foci, using the 60YC as a framework. She begins by arguing for the adoption of design thinking as a foundation for learning opportunities, and for institutions to embrace cocurricular design, wherein they would “engage . . . adult learners, employers, and others within a collaborative design process,” with the result of meeting the needs of adult learners in active, authentic, and connected ways, recognizing the shift in learner agency within their own career paths (p. 61). Such a learner-centric focus emphasizes strong institutional relationships with diverse categories of students, understanding their needs and striving to meet them throughout their career trajectories. Following a case study highlighting the use of strategic student relationship management (SSRM), Brewer aligns the 60YC with such an approach, concluding that when institutions codesign learning processes, they help ensure that “innovations are actionable and scalable” (p. 69), addressing learners’ needs throughout their adult lives.

The next five chapters outline institution-specific models and strategies of the 60YC, beginning with Stephen W. Harmon and Nelson C. Baker’s chapter “Creating the Next in Higher Education at Georgia Tech,” in which the authors contextualize factors driving change in higher education and one institution’s response to these changes. Drawing on a case study of the innovative online master of science in computer science (OMS CS), which pioneered new levels of intentionality of learning design and significant increases in program scale, Harmon and Baker illustrate how that program’s success prompted Georgia Tech to consider change much more broadly, and in ways similar to institutions adopting a 60YC approach. Rapid changes in technology, increasing life span, and shifting demands for workplace skills all “combine to put increasing pressure on models of higher education that have gone largely unchanged for hundreds of years” (p. 75). These realizations prompted Georgia Tech to convene a commission charged with recommending how the institution will serve the learners of this future. Among myriad recommendations, two major themes emerged—

“deliberate innovation,” an internal set of processes designed to leverage new areas of exploration for the institution, and “lifetime education,” a recognition of the context of today’s learner, which drives institutional responses to education needs. The authors next describe the institution-specific initiatives resulting from these recommendations, as well as the emergence of a forecast model to help guide the institution through these initiatives.

In “Known for Whom We Include,” Punya Mishra and Jacqueline Smith outline how the current model of linear educational design is inefficient in the context of the 60YC and illustrate how Arizona State University (ASU) has pioneered “iterative learning cycles [that] will empower the learner to evolve . . . and enable the university to respond in turn” (p. 102). Focusing on the importance of narrative identity, which recognizes and prioritizes the importance of learners’ varied and rich life experiences, the authors describe institutional efforts to innovate educational design at scale, including an evolving suite of E-to-B (education to business) options designed to address the upskilling needs of adult learners. The authors examine other areas of institutional progress undergirded by a narrative identity framework, notably tools designed to help learners explore career goals and trajectories, the establishment of flexible entry points and pathways toward a credential, and the creation of continuous learning opportunities for graduates.

In “Market-Driven Education: The Imperative for Responsive Design and Application,” Jason Wingard and Christine Farrugia describe the widening gap between the skills employers need in an increasingly evolving workplace and those possessed by graduates, and the implications of this trend for colleges and universities. The authors cite “weak employer engagement by higher education” as the principal culprit, noting that employers are often absent from curriculum development, as well as what is described as static curricula, in which courses of study cannot flex or adapt to market changes and lack work-based or real-world learning contexts (p. 105). In response, the authors outline a framework of employer engagement deployed at the Columbia University School of Professional Studies, in which employer perspectives are included in the classroom via a scholar-practitioner faculty model, industry input is embedded

in program curricula, and partnerships with employers provide experiential learning opportunities, all with the result of maximizing the employability of the School's graduates.

In "The Role and Potential of University-Based Executive Education and Professional Development Programs in the 60-Year Curriculum: A Case Example of an Intensive Residential Program for Higher Education Leaders," James P. Honan describes key challenges and opportunities associated with effectively meeting the needs of learners in the later stages of the 60YC continuum. By illustrating a range of intentional learning considerations, from curriculum and faculty development to a broad range of pedagogical opportunities, Honan examines future considerations and insights that this established program can contribute to the 60YC movement. Among these are strategic questions around optimizing learning outcomes, leveraging technology-mediated teaching and learning, creating program design in collaboration with executive education stakeholders, and addressing the challenges of scale such programs bring.

In "Implementing 60-Year Curriculum Learning at the Harvard Division of Continuing Education," Huntington D. Lambert and Henry H. Leitner explore the context and trajectory of infrastructure changes required to transition from "lecture pedagogy and administration-oriented processes to online and hybrid pedagogies, and learner- and faculty-centric processes" (p. 134). The authors recount unit-level pivots around educational technology, hybrid online and residential learning experiences, faculty-driven curriculum development, and learner-controlled, competency-based credentials replete with interoperability across an institution.

The concluding chapter by John Richards, "Assessment and Current State of the 60-Year Curriculum and Research Agenda for the Future," offers a distillation of the book's themes and implications and outlines two particular dimensions of research. Richards first calls for inquiry into how postsecondary education can pivot toward what he calls an "andragogical approach across the university," wherein learners are increasingly at the helm of their courses of study, and learning is dynamic and centered on transferrable competencies rather than discrete skills (p. 154). The second research dimension he suggests involves addressing

the structures of postsecondary education, such that universities adopt changes in infrastructure and processes to support a lifetime of engagement with learners to meet a lifetime of careers, not a lifetime career.

Overall, *The 60-Year Curriculum* provides a comprehensive exploration of challenges faced by higher education, synthesizing the confluence of increased human longevity with massive technological advances, describing in both expansive and specific detail opportunities for institutional change. Through historical context and case study, the authors have compiled a thoughtful compilation of frameworks, models, and next steps that will quickly become required reading for faculty and postsecondary administrators eager to help their institutions pivot to these new realities. Although several recent works call for a reconceptualization of higher education (Craig, 2018; Gavazzi & Gee, 2018 among them), this work provides a broad, inclusive approach, including balancing content from a variety of institutions, as well as a call for faculty as agents in this change, which is a welcomed opportunity.

Two modest observations about what this work might have also included would entail the role of the employer in the 60YC movement and the depth of demographical variances in today's learners. Considering employer perspectives, either via formal outcomes (hiring, promotion, etc.) or informally (the influence of a particular credential), would have been a welcome addition to this work. So too would have been some attention to the rise of noninstitutional (i.e., third party) credential providers, particularly salient to the discussion of lifelong learning. Similarly, the increasingly varied undergraduate student body, separate from adults seeking to return to school, often referred to as "Gen Z," is markedly different from the preceding generation (millennials) in how they approach and move through education, their interest in career development, their tolerance for risk and debt, and their plans for their own futures. It bears noting that higher education is entirely not ready for most of these new demands.

In conclusion, this work is a timely piece that smartly conceptualizes impending urgent challenges to the ways humans live and work, and that offers critically examined solutions to the challenges and opportunities presented by longevity and advanced technology.



About the Reviewer

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