

# Time Capsule of the Future

David Parsons

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Technology has transformed how we live our lives. Instead of calling distant family and friends on the phone, you can now video message them, for free, on your touch screen mobile device.

A phone call from the airplane no longer costs the price of a flight, and you can surf the web, stream movies and chat digitally from your seat, even in Economy Class. No more snail mail and difficult collaboration on documents which just fill up your email inbox with countless edits, you can now co-create in The Cloud with people from all over the world (even if you don't really understand what 'The Cloud' actually is). The list goes on and on.

In 2009, "Generation X" author Douglas Coupland, asked the question, "What if we were to receive a time capsule not from the past, but from the future - would we pay more attention?" He suggested that, instead of thinking about what we might want to give to some future generation, we might consider what we could send back 20 years into the past, to illustrate what astonishing changes we have experienced over that period. Think about all that has changed in the world since 1997, particularly in terms of digital technologies and all the useful (and probably not so useful) things that we now take for granted.

Now, consider how education has changed since 1997. Would a 1997 recipient of your box of wonders be amazed? Probably not. Much of our educational infrastructure and administration still follows the 19th century industrial model of subjects and periods and fixed term days and the delivery and examination of content. Many a secondary school classroom still has rows of chairs and a whiteboard at the front. Digital devices are to be put away in schoolbags and only used surreptitiously.

Teachers talk for hours to bored and disengaged students about content that can be found delivered much more engagingly on YouTube.

We increasingly have to ask, what's the point? Why are we preparing students for 1997 who will leave school in the 2020s? How will these graduating students help us to solve the chronic problems the world is facing if they haven't already experienced real world learning?

This educational time capsule is, however, beginning to fundamentally change. Schools and teachers are beginning to embrace the opportunities that digital tools - commonly used by the working population but so often denied to students in the classroom - offer to teaching and

learning. An increasing number of schools have embraced change and redesigned their physical environments, their curricula, and their attitudes to digital tools to provide a skill based vision of how 21st century students can apply their learning to the real world..

Part of this quiet revolution is The Mind Lab by Unitec's part-time in-service postgraduate programme that more than 2,000 New Zealand teachers have already passed through.

The purpose of this programme, generously supported with scholarships by the NEXT Foundation, is to transform New Zealand education from the inside, several hundred teachers at a time.

Teachers cannot be expected to be able to integrate digital technologies into their teaching and learning without help from experts, peers and even their own students and whanau. It is not just about adding computers to classrooms, simply doing that achieves nothing. Students need to be given opportunities to develop relevant 21st century skill sets, and 21st century teachers need to know how to foster and leverage these skills with the support of contemporary tools.

Perhaps the most important thing teachers can gain from the programme is to be engaged in a community of practice that goes beyond the subject, the school, the decile, even the country, and enables them to plug into knowledge, skills and ideas from the best educational minds, freely accessible over the Internet. In a few years perhaps an educational time capsule really will be worth sending back into the past to amaze and impress the previous generation.

To find out more visit [www.themindlab.com](http://www.themindlab.com)