

C&S: CONSEQUENCE AND SEQUEL

Thinking is almost always short-term because the attraction or repulsion of a course of action is immediate. We are interested in what happens next: the future can look after itself. As we shall see in the later section on values and emotions, society has created all sorts of devices to make us think in a more long-term fashion.

The C & S thinking task is an instruction deliberately to consider the consequences of an action or decision. Four time zones are suggested: immediate consequences up to 1 year; short-term from 1 to 5 years; medium-term from 5 to 20 years; long-term over 20 years. These time frames are arbitrary and can be varied. They can also be specified to suit the situation.

In doing a C & S there is the usual deliberate attempt to focus on the frame of the moment. Just as in the PMI the thinker focuses on the Plus, Minus and Interesting aspects in turn, so in the C & S the different time zones are focused upon in turn. The exercise is surprisingly difficult, partly because it is unnatural. The difficulty also arises from our reluctance to assign time zones. We can appreciate that a consequence may happen 'sometime' but be very hazy as to when that might be. The C & S is a usable tool for getting rid of that haziness.

For example a C & S on a major breakthrough in solar energy technology could show the following: *Immediate* (up to 1 year): rapid change in stock market prices of companies involved; a great deal of talk and speculation; slight fall in oil prices; new designs for buildings show provision for solar energy panels.

TIME SCALE

Immediate: The immediate consequences of the action. *Short-term*: What happens after the immediate. *Medium-term*: What happens when things have settled down. *Long-term*: What happens much later. The actual timings will vary from situation to situation. For example with a new electric power station, immediate is five years, short-term is ten years, medium-term is twenty years and long-term is up to fifty years. With a quarrel with your friend, immediate is now, short-term is one day, medium-term is one week, and long-term is one month.

For each situation set the specific time scales before starting to do the C&S.

Short-term (1 to 5 years): further fall in oil prices; much less development than expected; property prices in desert cities start to rise; Third World countries borrow money for big schemes.

Medium-term (5 to 20 years): some projects are operating, others have failed; better appreciation of those areas where solar energy is most useful; two further steps in the technology; oil prices are now beginning to rise again; hydrogen is being tried as fuel for cars.

Long-term (over 20 years): sharp division of energy uses according to pricing and convenience; solar energy beginning to have major use except with transportation systems; price of oil rising faster -for transportation and chemical feed-stocks.

When doing a C & S the time frames will vary according to the subject matter. For example, with a new clothing fashion: immediate might be up to 1 month; short-term up to 3 months; medium-term 3 months to 6 months and long-term over 6 months. You need to specify the time frames in advance.

As an exercise, do a C & S on each of the following situations. Set your own timings in each case for 'immediate', 'short-term', 'medium-term' and 'long-term' consequences.

- 1 All school exams are abolished.
- 2 Everyone shares a job with one other person.
- 3 Petrol becomes extremely expensive.

4 Life is discovered somewhere in space.

5 An anti-gravity machine becomes possible.

6 Marriages last only five years.

The experience scan that is attempted with such tools as CAF and C & S is part of the general broadening of perception that has more to do with wisdom than with cleverness. It should be noted that with the C & S there can be no certainty on any of the points: all thinking about the future is speculative and is based on 'may be' and 'could be' even though these may have different degrees of likelihood.

Never mind about the 'sequel' part, treat this perception tool as 'consequences'. The tool is pronounced 'C and S'.

You could make a case for saying that this is the most important of all the thinking tools in real life. If your thinking is going to result in action of any sort (decisions, choices, plans, initiatives etc.) then that action is going to take place in the future. So you have to look at the consequences of that action.

Will it work out?

What are the benefits?

What are the problems and dangers (risks)?

What are the costs?

The C&S is both exploration (into the future) and also evaluation. It is something like making a road map. If you see that the road ahead is a bad one, you do not take that road.

Even if the C&S were used by itself and used effectively, this alone would have a powerful effect on thinking skills.

Young people often have a great deal of trouble with the C&S. This is because they do not usually think of the future. The future is vague and far away. Next week is the maximum length of future.

Also, someone else is looking after them and doing future thinking for them.

There is a relationship between C&S, CAF and OPV. What happens in the future may be considered as a factor. What happens in the future will affect other people. What happens in the future is also a matter of values. The black hat and the yellow hat can also be used to assess future consequences.

In doing a C&S you should also keep in mind 'position'. Something you do may put you in a better 'position' to do something else. For example you go to work for a TV station at very poor wages. But you are now on the spot and in a better position to become a TV journalist.

RISK

Will it work out as I hope it will?

What might go wrong?

What are the actual dangers?

Another way of looking at risk is to ask yourself:

What is the worst thing that can go wrong?

If you can imagine the worst and still face it, you may want to go ahead with your action.

You could also ask:

What is the ideal (best) outcome?

In between these two you might ask:

What is the most likely outcome?

CERTAINTY

You can never be certain about the future. You can never have full information about the future. That is one of the reasons why thinking is so important. When we look at the future with a C&S there are different levels of certainty or uncertainty.

I am sure that things will turn out like this.

This is the most likely outcome.

It could be like this, or like this.

This is a possibility - but I cannot be sure.

I have no idea what will happen.

We often do have to act with low levels of certainty. We cannot always wait for full certainty (which may never become available). The important point is to be aware of the level of certainty. If you really are guessing - then know that you are guessing.

the earth's atmosphere) is going to occur much earlier than expected. What effect do you think this news will have on the thinking of politicians? Do a C&S with respect to politicians.

A new medicine is discovered that will allow people to live to the age of one hundred years. This medicine is extremely expensive. Do a full C&S.

There is another OPEC type crisis and the price of gasoline is suddenly trebled. Do an immediate and short-term C&S.

There is a mysterious and very severe illness that is caused by kissing. There is an outbreak in the town where you live. Do an immediate and short-term C&S.

EXERCISES ON C&S

1. What would happen if there was a method for teaching dogs to speak? Do a C&S on this: look at immediate and long-term consequences.
2. With increasing automation it is possible that in the future people will need to work only three hours a day. What do you think would happen? Do a long-term C&S on this.
3. Supposing some research shows that watching TV for hours on end is bad for the brain. Do a C&S (immediate and short-term) on this.
4. A new law is passed that children over the age of ten are required to work ten hours a week. Do a full C&S on this.
5. Your best friend with whom you do everything is involved in a serious car accident. Your friend goes into hospital and is going to be there for six months. Do a full C&S on how this will affect your life.
6. New evidence shows that the greenhouse effect (warming up of the earth's atmosphere) is going to occur much earlier than expected. What effect do you think this news will have on the thinking of politicians? Do a C&S with respect to politicians.
7. A new medicine is discovered that will allow people to live to the age of one hundred years. This medicine is extremely expensive. Do a full C&S.
8. There is another OPEC type crisis and the price of gasoline is suddenly trebled. Do an immediate and short-term C&S.
9. There is a mysterious and very severe illness that is caused by kissing. There is an outbreak in the town where you live. Do an immediate and short-term C&S.