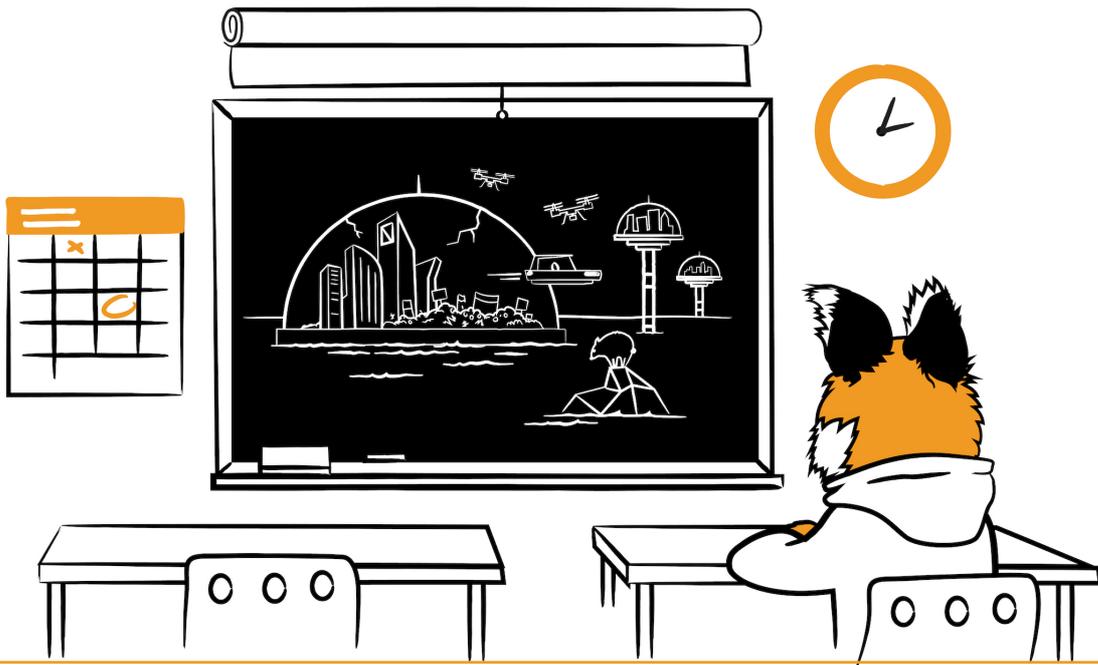




# Feedback from the Growing Foxes Virtual Education Roundtable

September 2020



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## Background

There is a common conception among people that school-based education is stuck in the past, tied to a legacy model designed for a different age. With a rapidly evolving context, an emerging new world of work, and an ever-increasing impact from technology, there is a need to update education to meet the demands of the future.

In response, ad hoc changes may do more harm than good. Therefore, there is a need to take a *strategic* view to fully evaluate and address these challenges. **Growing Foxes** sought to facilitate a conversation to meet this need. We decided to host an **Education Roundtable Discussion** on the future of education in Southern Africa, inviting a number of top minds across a broad spectrum within education and from the world of work.

Instead of structuring the discussion over a traditional face-to-face or time-pressured virtual webinar environment, we decided to facilitate the discussion through our **web-based platform** such that participants could weigh-in and discuss through a guided methodology over a longer period of time, with particular technological innovations driving more fruitful engagement.

The discussion happened over two weeks, with over 140 participants from South Africa, Namibia, Uganda, the United Kingdom, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The strategic insights from the discussion are captured below. The hope is that this work can be used as a framework for further discussion and action. If you would like to engage with us on this document, or be involved in any way, please contact us at [\*\*support@growingfoxes.com\*\*](mailto:support@growingfoxes.com)

*Disclaimer: Growing Foxes facilitated discussions with participants, and therefore the views below do not necessarily represent those of Growing Foxes. The document below represents a synthesis of the engagement of those views of the participants.*

## Who we are

Borne out of scenario consultancy, **Mindofafox**, **Growing Foxes** seeks to develop dynamic thinkers for a dynamic world. Central to this aim is to develop the capacity in people to use scenarios when strategically planning for the future.

The team behind **Growing Foxes** includes a fluid collective of dynamism and experience featuring leading strategists and scenario planners, intelligence theorists and analysts, philosophers, journalists and writers, educators, graphic designers and animators, and software engineers. Diverse talents united by a commitment to create the next generation of foxes.

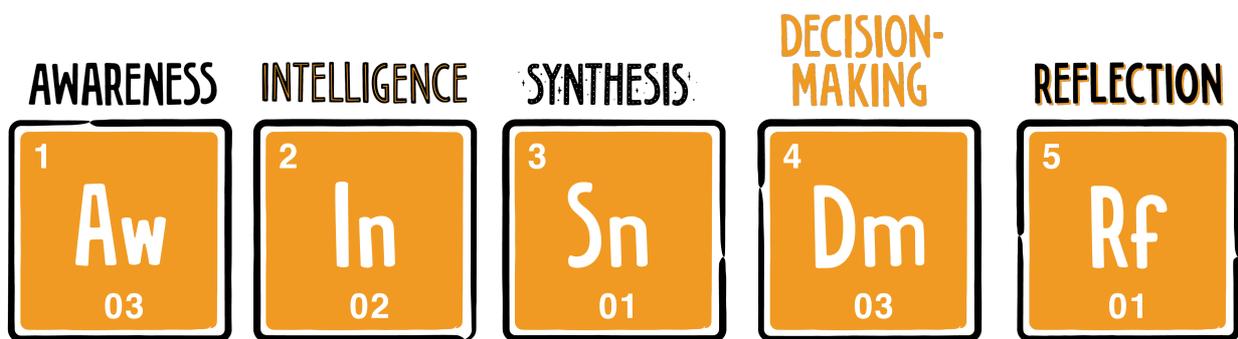
For more information, visit [\*\*www.growingfoxes.com\*\*](http://www.growingfoxes.com)

## Objective

To envisage possible futures for education in Southern Africa to 2030, and in so doing highlight the strategic areas needed to be addressed.

## Methodology

To guide the roundtable discussion, Growing Foxes used a methodology developed by Mindofafox founders, and legendary scenario strategists, Chantell Ilbury and Clem Sunter. They have used the following methodology for the past 20 years to guide strategic conversations with businesses, organisations, governments and supranational bodies all around the world. The methodology consists of five pillars and ten concepts.



### Awareness

1. Context - the current state of education and how it's changed over the past 5-10 years.
2. Scope - the scope of education - currently, and for the next ten years.
3. Players - the stakeholders with the most impact on the state of education.

### Intelligence

4. Rules of the Game - the certainties for education for the next ten years.
5. Key Uncertainties - the key uncertainties that will impact education over the next ten years.

### Synthesis

6. Scenarios - the most realistic possible futures for education.

### Decision-making

7. Ethical compass - an examination of the moral and legal guidelines for any options.
8. Options - what options are available for education to take it into the best-case scenario.
9. Decisions - what can be done now, and in the near future, and by whom.

### Reflection

10. Meaning of Winning - what measurable outcomes will indicate education is on the right track.

## Awareness



### 1. Context: how would you define the current context in education?

- The education system in Southern Africa is in crisis. It is based on a structure that was inherently unequal, and despite progressive legislation, little has been done to address this inequality in real terms. Teacher unions drive the agenda, exerting undue influence at all levels, unfortunately at the cost of the learners
- The result is essentially two education systems: an independent system that produces largely top quality outcomes, and a state education system that is, to a large degree, failing. In many ways we are also still stuck in the past whilst the world has moved on.
- Furthermore, there's a difference in context for urban and rural learners. Whilst urban learners emphasise the need for enhancement in technology, rural learners' most pressing needs are more fundamental, and involve such things as food, clothes and safety.
- In South Africa, the split has emerged from the legacy of apartheid that left raw inequalities in the sector, and the scramble to bring some measure of parity to that. This has been railroaded by corruption and mismanagement at state and provincial government level, which is being compounded by a radical union force focused more on the political aspirations of individuals. There is also the pull from a rapidly changing global work sector that is demanding different skills from learners leaving schools.
- Policies around pedagogy, or rather critical pedagogy, are progressive, but execution is the issue. Sound intentions become translated into a national institutional framework, that is complex, leads to silos, and is not agile to the shifting contexts and world of work. This heavy, top-down approach might help whip some institutions into shape but it is squashing all the creativity and energy out of others. We need a more collaborative and respectful approach.
- To complicate matters, education is a political playing field where success is only measured in the pass rate. This is almost creating a stagnant youth that do not know how to problem-solve and become critical thinkers.
- There is a tendency for parents to judge schools by their national examinations results - essentially marks - rather than their children's levels of literacy and numeracy. Unfortunately this encourages cheating in exams.

- The public education system is stuck in a cycle of "bring in a change, back-track, make a revision, become more prescriptive." This ignores the context of individual schools and encourages a lowering of all schools to the weakest performing level.
- In the independent education sector, students are becoming increasingly empowered - they are finding their 'voices'. As a result they are expecting more from educational institutions in terms of the quality of education received, transformation, and addressing issues of racism, gender, homophobia, constitutional rights, etc.
- Any breakdowns are generally patched up instead of overhauled. The national education department is slow to react, slow to make change, and slow to recognise that the paradigm needs to shift, i.e. what education means in the 21st century, and what needs to be re-understood and re-evaluated.
- It's definitely a legacy model - but one that is slow to adapt. It's a horse-drawn cart in a world of electric cars.
- Public education is bogged down in an increasingly narrowing curriculum that ignores the really important role of education - to mould young minds into creating critical thinkers and fostering resilience in young people, so that they can actively effect positive change in the world. It feels like the curriculum currently values formative assessment and pass rates over creating adaptable, resilient, thinking agents for positive change.
- National advancement and development is dictated by the weakest educational links in the country, rather than allowing schools to try and work within dynamic systems that best suit the learners in their care.
- Especially in poorer schools where there are large numbers of learners in the classrooms, education is teacher-centred rather than investigative and learner-centred. These large classes continue to complicate the progress and quality of education especially in the foundation phase, as this is the only time in a learner's career that they will ever be taught how to read and write. To make matters worse, learners coming from homes where they look after younger children in the afternoon are not given extra time to complete assignments or the option of doing these assignments at school.
- Such schools in disadvantaged areas are under-resourced and have to deal with the real problems of a lack of infrastructure and a lack of capacity. Politically, this is very sensitive and thus mostly brushed under the carpet.
- There is a great deal of uncertainty around education policy. This is exacerbated by the political influence of unions that fail to take the interest of children as their primary objective.
- Globally, especially in more developed countries, education seems to have more successful outcomes. There is greater diversity of offering within education, aimed at an evolving world of work. However, in our context, we aim at keeping all children in mainstream academic schools up until the final Grade 12 exam.

- Whatever focus there is on the evolving world of work and the need for transformation of education tends to focus narrowly on skills and vocational training. Not that this is unimportant, but sight must not be lost of the philosophy underpinning education, training and development as well as curriculum and instructional design, and the broader aim of critical and empowered, participatory citizens. Thus, for example, strategic and scenario thinking at different levels are critical in the learning and development of the 'youth' and 'adults'.
- To fill the wide gap in the education sector, there has been a rise in the past two decades of for-profit private schooling. This is attracting an increasing share of the educational market. Effectively, education has become a thriving business. New chains of private schools applying immense pressure on the old and established schools. A shift from "traditions" to "traditions and innovation" as key differentiators for schools.
- Literacy has now evolved - it's no longer only about reading and writing. There is an increasing demand for digital literacy in learners.
- The understanding is growing in teachers that education needs to become more dynamic and involve more active participation from the students in order to prepare them for the ever-changing future. The problem is that putting certain teaching practices in place to facilitate this kind of learning environment often requires resources that many schools just don't have. Unfortunately the value proposition is under question as the economic return from formal education is dwindling.
- Most education of young people remains focused on delivering knowledge (or maybe even just information) rather than developing skills. With information having become cheaper, often free, the focus on *using* the information, rather than simply *absorbing* it, is more important.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has forced schools and educators to re-examine the way they deliver their content. It has highlighted the areas that need to be adapted in order to meet the future needs of education. Whilst there are teachers who have changed with the times and are coping well, some teachers need to think about where they are going in the future. The delivery of content has had to change in a very short period of time. This has highlighted the fact that adaptability is vital for staff development as well as for schools in general moving forward.
- The current context of education is premised on the predictive probability of the future. However, the pandemic has shown just how difficult it is to prepare an educational curriculum that will meet the objectives in the future. Hence the need to consider scenarios. The pandemic has served to enlighten senior education policy makers that curricula need permanent adjustments and downscaling to the fundamentals to improve the quality over the quantity of education.

- The lockdowns have forced teachers to adopt more technological approaches to the problem and run lessons via platforms such as Zoom and Google Classroom. The advantage is that teachers and school managers have been encouraged to think beyond normal bounds and come up with innovative solutions.

## 2. Scope: what is 'education'?

- Developing youth to be able to explore, and evolve in, the ever-changing world around them. Furthermore, to allow them to be able to become critical thinkers and diverse people.
- Creating opportunities for individuals to become confident in themselves in order to experience learning through discovery without fear of failure. It should enable them to acquire skills and apply knowledge that defines likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses in order to contribute to the world in a significant and meaningful way. It is the root of a self-sustaining existence.
- It is a relational process; organic as much as it is organised. It is also not a one-way process.
- The ideal is to push individuals towards themselves in a process of unlocking what is already inside them: talents, aptitudes, interests, and prior knowledge. In this, they are challenged and honed to become the best version of themselves.
- Paulo Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed,' points out: There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.
- A question educators should ask is how purposeful are they in producing the individuals that can ably respond to the complex challenges that our country faces today?
- At high school, education is not only the academic aspect but also the emotional and social side of it. If you want to educate and prepare young people for the 'big' world you need to focus on teaching young people resilience, to have boundaries, what is expected of them in the work place, teaching professional behaviour, team work, communication skills, responsibility, accountability...the list is endless. A successful person/ entrepreneur/ businessperson will be someone who has a holistic education - not only academic knowledge but also critical thinking skills, practical skills, social skills etc.
- It is about teaching the mind/brain to process information through critical reflection and be able to apply this knowledge to existing and new situations. These activities will be carried out in a context of reflecting on values that underpin how we engage with knowledge and each other. With younger children this will be predominantly skill-based, using content as the vehicle to develop these skills. As children get older, applied skills and critical reflection would come into play. The output of education should be a person who can function in, and

contribute to, society, whilst being fulfilling to themselves. There must be something in the system to build such capacity.

- For teachers anyway, education used to be about being the knowledge-holder and imparting that 'knowledge' for the purpose of examination with the hope that the end result would be an 'educated' learner prepared for whatever the world threw at them. At the same time, however, teachers probably yearned to teach like Robin Williams' character John Keating in *Dead Poet's Society*. Theoretically that should now be possible. If young people can now access 'knowledge' on their 'smart' phones, should educators not be playing more the role of a 'facilitator' and less as a traditional 'teacher'?
- In doing so, education should be the process of moulding *active*, resilient, critical thinkers who can be independent, *lifelong*, *adaptable* learners. It is enabling learners to develop a love of learning, empowering them to realise that they are able to continue to learn throughout their lives. Education is about igniting a yearning for knowledge and then being able to apply that knowledge and skills to life and other questions, problems and scenarios that one faces.
- Education is ideally what teachers can use to broaden the horizon of their learners, to help them figure out who they are, where they fit into the world and help them question what is presented to them.
- Education is less about facts and more about teaching modes of thinking, equipping life-long learners with the skills to critically engage with the changing world. Education should be integrated and work across subjects rather than compartmentalising subjects.
- Currently, however, instead of doing this, teachers are expected to parent and discipline. They are also expected to be social workers, psychologists and specialists in special needs. While the academic scope narrows, the expected role of teachers has broadened in such a way that it requires a superhuman skill-set to do properly. This is a major problem.

### 3. Players: who are the key players in education, and what are their roles?

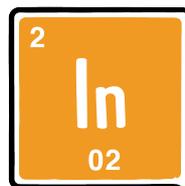
**NOTE: All these role players make for a dynamic, but exceptionally challenging playing field, called 'a school'.**

PLAYER	ROLES
1. Curriculum designers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create the patterns of play.</li> </ul>
2. Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach how the patterns are connected.</li> <li>• The critical interface between the school and the learners.</li> <li>• Primary role: transfer skills, educate and inspire.</li> <li>• Secondary roles: social workers, police officers, counsellors.</li> </ul>

PLAYER	ROLES
<b>3. Education departments</b>	
<b>a. National departments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop national policy and enable its implementation.</li> <li>• Should be constantly reviewing this policy to align it with current and future market trends.</li> </ul>
<b>b. Provincial departments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpret national policy and translate into provincial policy and practice, and the allocation of resources.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Principals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be the strategic and visionary leaders to take their schools to new heights (however, normally bogged down by admin and HR issues).</li> <li>• Play a pivotal role in bringing community and school together.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Parents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link between the school and the learners - represent the needs of their children.</li> <li>• Play an important role on school boards and in fundraising.</li> <li>• Becoming increasingly vocal.</li> <li>• Usually have preconceived ideas, expectations, constructs, even fears, about the school's position, intention and 'service'.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The critical stakeholders - without them there would be no need for the system. The end-point in the system but should have more of a say in the shape and function of the system.</li> <li>• Become future influences for this schools.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Alumni</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play a key role in fundraising.</li> <li>• Support sporting and cultural events at schools.</li> </ul>
<b>8. Higher education institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drivers of the outcomes of basic education in that they help provide demand for the necessary skills and measurements of the success of the output.</li> </ul>
<b>9. Places of worship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key part of community and the pastoral care of learners and their families.</li> </ul>
<b>10. Teachers' unions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary focus is on the senior political players within them, and the teachers, not the learners.</li> </ul>
<b>11. Administrators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The interface between provincial departments and schools.</li> </ul>
<b>12. Businesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help provide sponsorships and other financial support.</li> </ul>
<b>13. School governing bodies and management teams</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shape the ethos of a school, and its priorities.</li> <li>• Key for the successful operation of a school.</li> </ul>
<b>14. School governing bodies (such as FEDSAS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence school-leaders decisions, especially for the quintile 4 and 5 schools.</li> </ul>
<b>15. Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support schools - events, etc</li> <li>• Can provide logistical and infrastructural help.</li> <li>• Help determine the immediate environment for a school.</li> </ul>
<b>16. Politicians</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence (interfere with) departments of education.</li> </ul>
<b>17. Psychologists and therapists</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of pastoral care of learners and their families.</li> </ul>
<b>18. Private education institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To a degree, set the bar for state schools in terms of the depth and quality of education.</li> <li>• Need to run their schools as businesses - an added consideration.</li> </ul>

PLAYER	ROLES
19. The 'market' for skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continually evolving.</li> <li>Ultimately sets the demand for skills for learners leaving school, and therefore, by extension, what they should be learning.</li> </ul>
20. Big tech players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine the content that young people enjoy interacting with and can therefore steer educators in the direction of how to create content. Can inform or distract learners</li> </ul>

## Intelligence



### 4. Rules of the Game: what certainties will hold for education over the next 10 years?

- The human connection will remain vital.
- By law, children will need to attend school.
- Learners will need to learn, and spaces of learning will be needed where learners will be taught. For the foreseeable future, these spaces will be largely brick-and-mortar.
- Parents will need to work, and therefore the education of their children will need to be outsourced to education institutions. Having said that, the demand for homeschooling will increase, as will online learning.
- Educators (teachers) will still be needed, but technology will increasingly be part of the learning process.
- There will be inspirational, hard-working teachers and there will be lazy teachers.
- Education will need to be blended and more integrated.
- Assessment will remain part of the learning process.
- Competition will remain between schools for learners and paying parents.
- The demand for a good education for their children will be a priority for parents; as the world of work changes, probably increasingly so.
- Affluent parents will support an examination structure that will give their children greater international access to both tertiary education and job opportunities.
- The gap between well-resourced and poorly-resourced schools will not shrink enough. More affluent schools will adapt quicker.

13. There will be a gap between school 'knowledge' and the skills needed for the market place. A backlog will remain in supplying poorer (largely rural) schools with much-needed infrastructure.
14. Schools that adapt to the changing world of work will be in strong demand.
15. Tech - and to a degree AI - will play an increasing role. Schools will need to have the requisite connectivity.
16. Subsequently, the role of the teacher will demand change.
17. Learners will remain largely more digitally literate than the rest of the education sector, including those creating content.
18. There will be an increase in the variety of learning paths post-school.
19. The tech-led world of work environment will continue to evolve, and the expectation will remain on the education sector to do the same. The education sector will always play catch up.
20. The government will be the dominant force in funding education and steering the curricula. This suggests how children are taught will not change anytime soon.
21. Unions, especially teachers' unions, will play a role in influencing this. Their focus will remain on the political aspirations of their major players and, more broadly, on teacher members, not learners.
22. The importance of entrepreneurship at primary and secondary school level.
23. The exponential growth of open content and online platforms.
24. The quality of the education system will be linked to the country's economic competitiveness.
25. Learners will become increasingly activist with respect to their rights, their own learning, the learning environment, and the broader issues around the environment. They will become increasingly vocal about it.
26. Young people will have enquiring minds and therefore need - and want - to learn. They will prefer that learning process to be a social activity.
27. A need to focus on basic and advanced skills - lighter content, more application.

## 5. Key Uncertainties: what uncertainties could shape education over the next 10 years?

1. Internet connectivity, access to data and the supply of connected devices to, especially poorer, schools.
2. The country's economy - will it grow, stagnate or decline?
3. The political climate in the country.

4. The degree of social harmony or dissonance.
5. The level of infrastructural support to schools.
6. How adaptable the national department of education is to the changing world of work and new global trends in education.
7. Whether education policy-making is increasingly centralised due to political pressure, or schools are given more independence to shape their own education structure and activities in order to encourage adaptation.
8. The arrival of another pandemic and its disruptive impact on education.
9. The financial support for schools (and therefore their sustainability).
10. Emigration of learners, parents and educators.
11. The long-term impacts of the Covid-19 lockdown on education (things such as contact-learning, work procedures, skills needed and teaching methods).
12. Political change at national, provincial and municipal levels, and the impacts thereof.
13. The priority of education for the government as reflected in budget allocations.
14. A new national curriculum, and whether there will be a shift in assessment criteria. If so, whether educators will be allowed to provide input.
15. Stability of electricity supply to power support for the requisite technology.
16. Whether the training of teachers will adapt with respect to the changing world of work.
17. The appeal of teaching as a profession, and the quality of people wanting to be teachers.
18. The impact of AI on education.
19. The impact of social media on learners.
20. Specifically in South Africa: the future of the IEB - will it still be allowed to function?
21. What the admission criteria for higher education institutions will look like, and the value of a degree for access to the workplace.
22. The impact of online education structures.

The following were identified as the **two pivotal uncertainties** with the least predictability but highest impact for education over the next 10 years:

1. The culture within education with respect to change; and,
2. The relevance of the education.

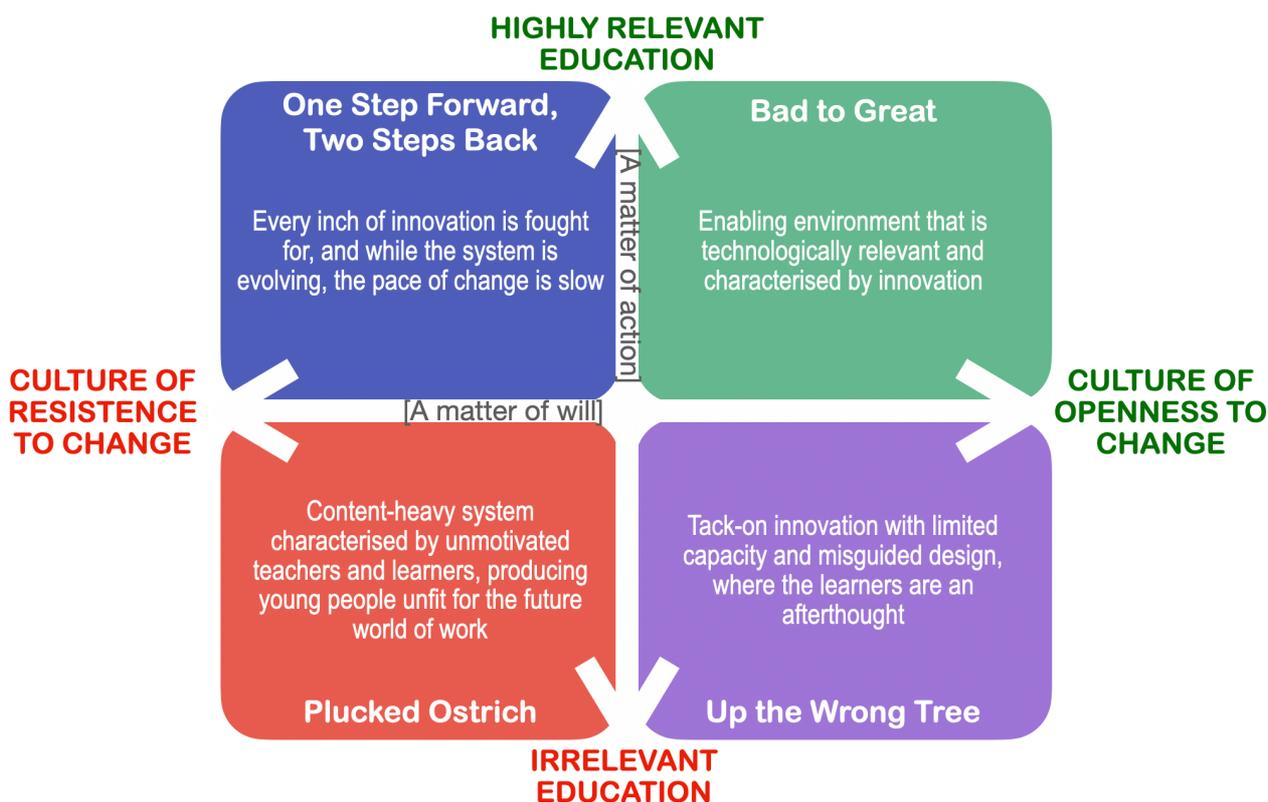
Expressed as variables along intersecting axes - open to change versus resistant to change; and highly relevant education versus irrelevant education - four possible scenarios were identified.

## Synthesis



### 6. Scenarios: the possible futures that could play out, and the current position

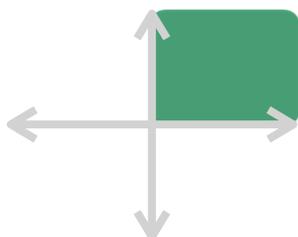
#### 6.1 The Education 2030 Scenario Gameboard



#### 6.2 The Education 2030 Scenarios Explained

##### 6.2.1 Bad to Great

##### Highly relevant education within a culture of openness to change (best-case)



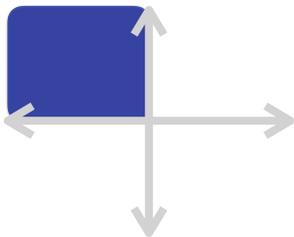
- An enabling government policy that allows for innovation.
- Privatisation is encouraged and happening to a greater degree.
- The uptake of technology has been enabled by a lowering of costs.
- Greater autonomy at a school/district level.
- Less siloed approach to different subjects.
- A less mark-driven approach to assessment.

- The process of learning is also assessed.
- Blended classrooms with teachers taking on more of a facilitation role.
- All stakeholders working together for an improvement of the educational offering.

- DBE officials or PED officials see their role as supportive rather than supervisory.
- Learners have good critical thinking skills.
- A range of people involved with learning, not only teachers.
- Students are adaptable to the demands of the future.
- Education takes place beyond the boundaries of the school - virtually (open-sourced) as well as in other educational institutions. Greater collaboration between centres of education.
- Teachers are committed to life-long learning.
- Learning takes place in the context of cross-subject/age projects.
- Multiple post-school leaving certificate paths: entrepreneurial, technical, vocational, apprenticeship, academic -- none of which have any stigma attached to them as they are all relevant and worthy paths.
- Creative arts enjoy equal status to the STEM subjects.
- Teachers are well qualified, well remunerated and genuinely valued by society.
- School heads are brave and innovative.
- The drop-out rate is non-existent: kids enjoy being at school and they see the relevance of what they're learning.

### 6.2.2 One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

#### Highly relevant education within a culture that is resistant to change



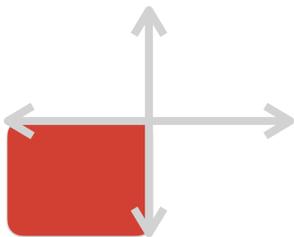
- The gap between well and under-resourced schools will widen further.
- There's a rise in the demand for private, on-line and home-schooling models. The gap between schools widens. Not just in terms of resources, but also the approach to education. Schools are in danger of becoming even greater silos and focusing inwards rather than outwards, unless they start working more closely together.

- Small centres of excellence will spring up from unexpected sources thanks to 'activist' principals and teachers. These 'rogue' centres will epitomise foxy thinking and be able to provide the much needed passion and energy necessary for relevant and quality education to happen.
- While some schools remain as is and don't move forward, with the aid of activist teachers and principals, schools might start working together and partnering for greater quality.
- Possible growing interest in overseas curricula.
- Resistance to change won't only come from government: those whose businesses run on the status quo will also resist shift.
- Could cultivate a generation of learners who will continue to resist change throughout their professional and personal lives.
- Opportunist/entrepreneurial publishers and IT service providers will see an opportunity in the fragmented system.

- Government will increasingly dig in its heels as it clings to power.
- Centralisation of policy.
- There are two general elections in South Africa between now and 2030. Will the country see ANC power-base diminished? (Big pivot-point in the whole picture).
- Unions will probably see resistance to change as protecting its members.
- A rise in the demand for “out-of-the-box” schools, some fly-by-nights and some more sustainable (eg Generation or Green School).
- Rogue schools and rogue teachers will “do their own thing” despite attempts to control and inhibit change.
- Fragmented education, silos in terms of quality.
- Perhaps schools will employ teachers for their skills and less for a formal teaching qualification.
- There are teachers - generally older - who are afraid of change, or just counting down the days to when they retire.
- Teaching staff are fragmented, and tensions may rise between old and new ways of teaching.

### 6.2.3 Plucked Ostrich

#### Irrelevant education embedded within a culture resistant to change (worst-case)



- Stick with assessment model driven to Matric, lowering the bar as we go.
- Focus is on making results look better.
- Content-driven rather than skills-driven; prescriptive rather than free and creative.

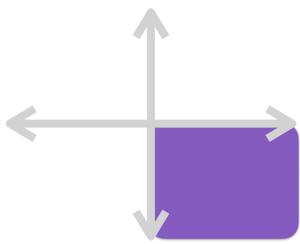
• Information-memorisation is building resentment - it is impossible for students to remember everything without the critical thinking skills to access the knowledge when needed.

- Education content is low/irrelevant and mismatched.
- Remain tied to traditional education system.
- Worst-case scenario that results if we stick to the status quo.
- Political agency remains the same, and increases in influence.
- Regional isolation rather than integration.
- Increase in unemployment.
- Elections, already focused on job creation, will continue to be even more so.
- Gap between rich and poor increases – poor stay poor and rich stay rich.
- Brain drain – young people starting to leave the country.
- Government has more control over system - learners, teachers and parents have very little say. DBE is becoming increasingly authoritarian.
- More people disenfranchised - learning enough to stay poor.
- Civil instability, leading to further economic suffering.
- We are creating followers rather than leaders.

- Things are easier to criticise rather than fix.
- Teachers are caring less – teaching is about livelihood rather than vocation.
- Teacher training is superficial.
- AI becomes an attractive option in that it provides better quality at a lower cost. Important to note: the less creative you are the more likely you are to be replaced by AI.
- Subject advisors becoming dictators – putting everyone under a single umbrella, encouraging others not to surpass other schools.
- Curricula are dumbed down.
- Equity not supported.
- People with access to data will educate themselves.
- Because education is seen as increasingly irrelevant, parents search for more alternatives to mainstream education.
- Learners will lack a voice and lose their creativity.
- The oases of quality in public education will continue to diminish in capacity and number, leading to a stagnant, irrelevant, poor quality public education system.

### 6.2.4 Up the Wrong Tree

#### Irrelevant education but there is a culture open to change



•There's a glimmer of hope. An admission that there is a major issue in education encourages dialogue and an openness to ideas to change the quality of education.

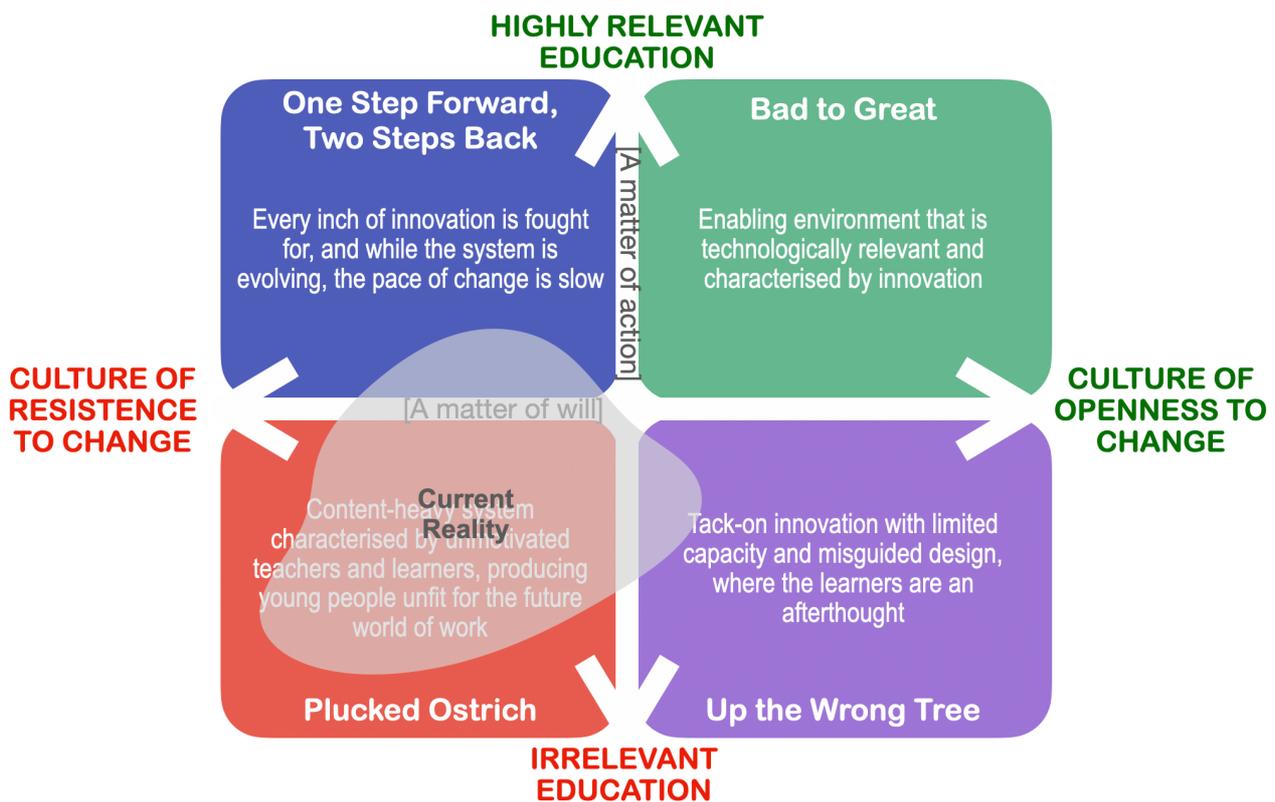
•Technology uptake during the lockdown period is a catalyst for blended learning approach; however, the nature of the uptake has led to poor quality of educational outcomes.

- There are ideas, but nothing with which to fuel them.
- Due to increased access to more information, stakeholders are more aware.
- Government is open to change, but has no capacity to understand the relevance of education, or how to implement a shift in the entire system.
- The revamp of Early Childhood Development (ECD) to tertiary may be considered too mammoth a task, leading to piecemeal changes that remain ineffective. Alternatively, they could allow capable schools more freedom which will only enhance the gap between performing and non-performing schools.
- Teachers take ownership, but are not empowered.
- Unless the financial situation of the sector is addressed, the much-needed fuel to fund such changes would be missing. Unless in-depth training of teachers happens, along with providing the necessary resources, many will just revert to habit and the path of least resistance.
- If the DBE embraces change, they will still need the active support of the unions, as well as the active support of teachers.

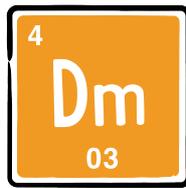
- The DBE becomes increasingly frustrated, authoritarian and panicked as each solution makes no real positive impact on education as a whole.
- Private sector has a bigger input to education, but places emphasis and funding in the wrong places.
- Access to data is poor due to poor infrastructure and access to devices.
- Teachers do not have a sense of belonging and their skills are outdated.
- Increased prioritisation on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, yet there is limited capacity to meet these needs.
- Inequality is increasing.
- There is a bubble of privilege where schools can afford to implement new thinking, but it is increasing the tension and frustration of those that can't.

### 6.3 The current reality

It emerged that different schools are currently in different places on the gameboard, represented as follows:



## Decision-making



### 7. Ethical Compass: what practice within education is currently legal but you consider immoral?

- Making it mandatory for children of a certain age to attend school but not ensuring schools have the most basic infrastructure - including toilets, classrooms, and running water - and resources such as desks and learning materials - for the safe and effective education of those children.
- Detention, particularly detention that is not fit for purpose, but purely a form of irrelevant punishment for the sake of "doing something".
- Separating learners into mainstream and special needs learners although we have a mandate for integrating all learners into inclusive schools.
- Teachers' unions obstructive action, ostensibly to 'protect' members against being held accountable for bad behaviour. It may be legal in terms of labour law, but when such action harms our learners and impedes their progress, it lacks morality.
- Schools that cling to colonial 'tradition' and by doing so either wittingly or unwittingly exclude minorities from full membership and identification with the school.
- Spoon-feeding learners - instead of encouraging them to think for themselves - thereby coaching them purely to answer exam questions.
- Commercial colleges or training-providers that have the necessary accreditation and who target vulnerable and desperate learners and parents from disadvantaged communities, and who provide poor education and learning facilities with the purpose to turn a profit.
- Progressing a learner to the next grade based on the fact that they move with the age cohort when in fact they are failing academically.
- Using tests and exams, where all students are tested according to a standard set of rules and procedures, as a way to measure progress and excellence.
- Forcing children to write exams in a second language.
- [Senior] Subject advisors using closed (school) social media groups (such as WhatsApp) to capitalise on their authority to promote their personal work or business.
- State or provincial education authorities providing fee exemption status to parents without reimbursing the school for fee income lost.
- Paying principals in proportion to numbers of learners. This risks stretching resources beyond optimum for all learners.
- Excluding children from classes because their parents cannot pay school fees.

- Examining and assessing learners from impoverished communities on the same level as learners from more well-to-do communities.
- Encouraging learners in danger of failing Matric exams to leave school before Grade 12 (legal if they are old enough) in order to protect the school's examination record.
- Having school policies around such issues such as hair without taking into consideration complexities of culture.
- Educators at schools charging a learner at the same school (sometimes same class) for extra lessons (when the learner's parents are paying school fees).

**NOTE: Any one of the above ethical dilemmas could result in reputational risk for a school.**

### 8. Options: based on the above scenarios, what options are available that are within your control to move education to the best-case scenario?

1. Start intentional conversations - it is impossible to encourage change when the perception is that it is not needed. If done in neutral and supportive spaces, conversations will encourage an openness to change. Educators need to change their mindset.
2. To the purpose of starting such conversations, sharing the Education 2030 scenarios will help. The more players within education system who see them, the better. Plus they will provide a central reference point for conversations.
3. Prepare and present a convincing case for the the need for transformation of education.
4. Engage with the private sector to develop powerful partnerships.
5. Move swiftly - model the kind of thinking we want from students by being nimble and open and collaborative, and trust that almost anything will be better than the status quo.
6. Encourage the re-imagining of teacher training with a focus on more freedom in terms of the curriculum, and on facilitation (as opposed to traditional teaching) and developing the necessary skills for that. Teacher development is the crucial element in driving education towards the best-case scenario. Also, integrate technology more into training - teachers should be enabled in technological skills so they can use it appropriately. Furthermore, ensure a higher standard is needed for entry into teaching; this will help develop a corps of new teachers who are better equipped for the professional autonomy and collaboration, which should play a bigger role in education in the future.
7. Set up collaborative networks of schools - of all types - that can share expertise and support each other; each school is only as good as the weakest link in the network. This can start with schools in the same neighbourhood that also want educational changes and improvements, then grow outwards to connect with others in the same town/city. An organic growth that starts to build a collective force, so that schools (and school leaders) no longer feel quite so isolated. Having a university in the city is also an advantage as schools can tap into their expertise and their need for community engagement. That way partnerships between DBE and Higher Education can start to grow.

8. Reduce opportunities for competition between schools - the voices of 70% of the education system not participating in this dialogue need to be heard. If schools stop focusing as much on other schools as competition, and work more collaboratively, more emphasis can be placed on education for relevance and less on education for marks.
9. Keep fighting for the best-case scenario, step-by-step: get on to planning committees, curriculum development teams, etc.
10. Adapt technology into the classroom context in such a way that it complements teaching and learning. Introduction of interdisciplinary skills and integration of subjects in the day to day teaching and learning.
11. Provide more subject options that allow learners to do what they enjoy and could use later on in their career. Develop a more individually-curated approach to education.
12. Provide a platform for students' voices and for them to galvanise momentum to change the system.
13. Find opportunities to speak of the need to solve the huge issues of inequality and poverty that exist, and highlight the need for ethical people who will benefit education.
14. Push TVET and other alternative FET options with the same vigour that they push universities when talking to learners thus broadening the scope of what learners consider relevant.
15. Work together to overcome literacy barriers in *all* our schools, and access to education in *all* our communities.
16. Request some leeway to experiment with school set up, curricula, and teaching strategies, or take some leeway to experiment whilst meeting the basic requirements of the department. Document the strategies and changes made, and their effect differences, and publish and publicise them.
17. Focus on developing 21st century skills - critical thinking, creative problem solving, self regulation, and other soft skills.
18. Allow learners an increasing role in what they want to learn. Ideally subject choices should not be tied to lines.

## 9. Decisions: what do you consider are the *priorities* for change in education?

The guiding principle for any decisions about changes in education is the following: it's not about political game-playing, or about protecting any status quo; it's about the students and their *future*. As such, changes need to be made with the *future* in mind.

1. Teacher training:
  - Review entry criteria for teacher training - teaching needs to be an aspirational profession for the right people, fit for the future of education, not a passport for people with the wrong idea of education.
  - Review and update pedagogy. The depth of training needs to shift towards facilitation as opposed to current ideas of teaching; new ways of communication and engagement;

and integrating technology into more blended modes of education. It's about the development of future skills (such as critical thinking and creativity), not the simple passing on of 'content heavy' knowledge.

- Universities and schools should work together to prepare teachers for the *future*.
- Further training of current teacher corps in the technology needed to connect with, and educate, increasingly tech-savvy learners.
- Encourage a culture of professional development (as opposed to, say, political engagement).
- Encourage mentorship programmes for new teachers.

## 2. Curricula and assessment:

- Customised curricula; i.e. relevance in urban and rural areas to meet the needs of students, and in their language of proficiency.
- Curricula should be designed with flexibility in mind, instead of packing in as much as possible with little room for adaptation (a lesson learned from the Covid-19 lockdown). Schools should be able to have more decisions in what best fits their students.
- Assessment criteria need to move away from what is remembered (knowledge content) to what can be done (more skills-based), and with less focus on Matric.

## 3. More autonomy in schools with respect to policy-making; i.e. greater flexibility and freedom in the delivery of learning and implementation.

## 4. Activate learners to become more active agents of learning (as opposed to the passive receivers of knowledge content).

## 5. Become more learner-centric as opposed to teacher-centric (to this end, the largely political influence of teacher unions should be limited). The focus should be on:

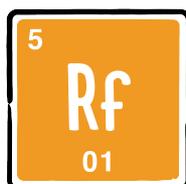
- Developing environments more conducive to learning - this extends from ensuring the basic infrastructure is in place in which education *can take place*, to ensuring learners feel *safe to come to school*, and to create an environment where learners *feel confident to engage* in the process of learning..
- Developing the necessary skills for the *future* world of work, to be confident and responsible citizens, and to develop an entrepreneurial mindset.

## 6. Schools should compete less and collaborate more - share best practice (and not just between like-minded schools, but between diverse schools).

## 7. Equip SMTs (senior management teams) and principals to engage effectively with change - this includes with unions.

## 8. Schools and municipalities should work closer together; after all, schools are pivotal players in towns and cities. This would enhance a bottom-up approach to growth and inclusiveness in the South African economy.

## Reflection



### 10. The Meaning of Winning in 2030 expressed as measurable outcomes

1. Reduced levels of unemployment (compared to 2020).
2. The gap between the haves and have nots in education is narrower. This will be expressed as fewer schools flooded with applicants because the spread of applications is wider.
3. A reduction in the school dropout rate - from grades 1 through to 12.
4. Both academic as well as skills-based education is valued by schools, learners and their parents.
5. School budget priorities have shifted towards teaching and learning (and less towards sport, as this can be an outsourced activity).
6. Young people are more equipped to think critically and independently, and to adapt and apply skills learned at school.
7. A blended learning approach is the normal.
8. Improved pay for teachers to reflect that they are considered professional, well-respected and vibrant.
9. A diverse economy that is growing.
10. A collaborative education ecosystem with a diversity of players.



**NOTE: These values need to be clarified and specified so as to be measurable.**

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