



## **REFLECTION TOOLS FOR TEACHER QUALITY**

### **Title**

FUTURE SCENARIOS

### **Goal**

By developing scenarios for the future of schools, the participants are challenged to identify the way trends in society and schools influence the schools and the qualities that teachers will need

### **Targetgroup**

The target group for this tool can vary. It can be used with teachers, teacher educators, student teachers, headmasters and policy makers (and also in mixed groups) both in an institutional, national or international setting. The group can have a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 24.

### **Description/Summary**

The goal of this reflection tool is to stimulate reflection on future demands on teachers. The tool stimulates collaborative thinking and reflection on future developments both inside and outside schools that will influence the role of and professional demands on teachers.

The tool is creative, collaborative and stimulates out-of-the-box thinking.

The scenario method consists of three phases:

1. Analysis: analyzing relevant trends and developments in society and schools, identifying driving forces and define the impact and unpredictability of each driving force
2. Development: Two driving forces (high impact, high unpredictability) are selected and are used as the axes in a two dimensional scenario model. The group is divided in four subgroups, each responsible for the development and description of society, schools and the teachers' role and professional qualities within a specific scenario.
3. Reflection: the scenarios are presented and discussed using a variety of questions:
  - What is the most likely future?
  - What is your most desired future?
  - What is your worst case future?
  - What qualities do teachers need in each scenario? What similarities and differences are there in the scenarios with respect to teacher qualities?
  - What are the consequences for teachers (preparing for one or all scenarios)? What are the consequences for you?



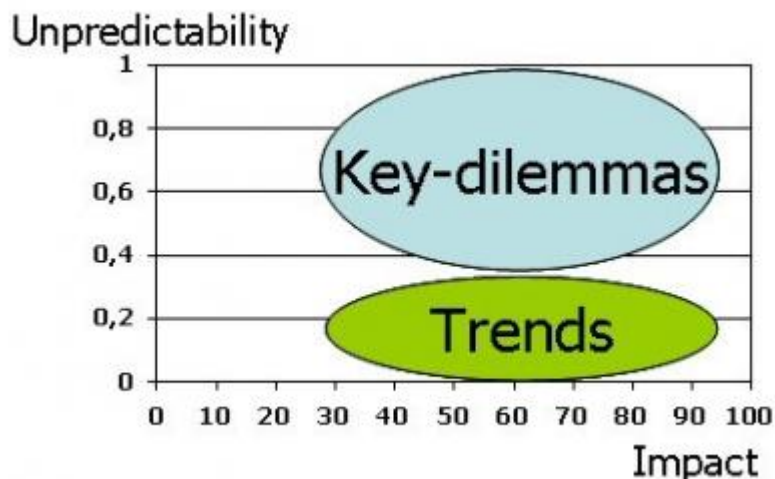
## Identifying Teacher Quality

### Methodology:

#### Phase 1: Analysis

As an appetizer, the participants are asked to open up their mental models by transferring themselves to the future by making a timeleap. They are asked to describe a day in their life in the future (e.g. 20 March 2020). (Some) participants can also be asked what questions they have about the future (and that could be answered by an Oracle or seer).

After presentation of their day-in-the-life and future-questions, key elements are identified and discussed, trying to locate the underlying trends, dilemmas and developments. It is important to keep the perspective as broad as possible. Therefore, the facilitator can verify that as many different perspectives are used as possible (covering developments in society, economy, technology, politics, etc.). In the discussion the number of trends and dilemmas need to be reduced to a maximum of 15 driving forces. These driving forces are mapped on a diagram with respect to their impact on the central issue and on their unpredictability.

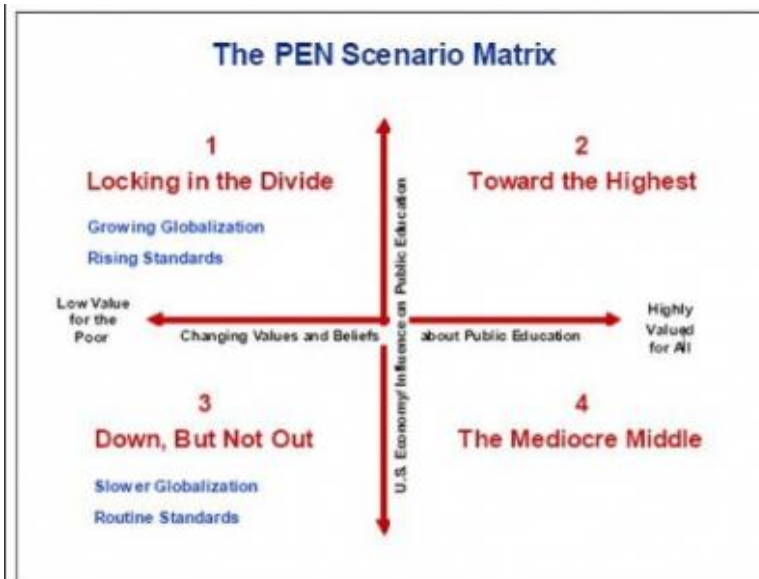


#### Phase 2: Development

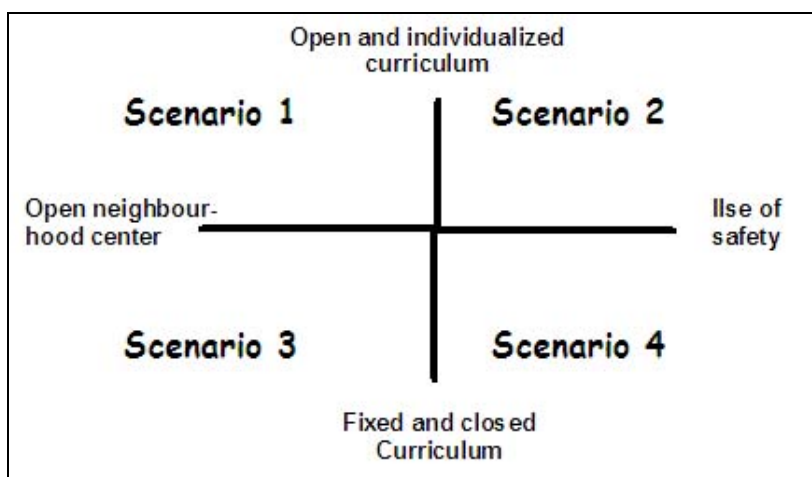
From the driving forces with the highest impact and unpredictability, two (independent) driving forces are selected to be used as the axes of the scenario matrix.



## Identifying Teacher Quality



From: Gerald Harris (2006): The future of public primary school education in the United States. (GBN Network)



The group is divided in four subgroups. Each group is responsible for the development of one scenario. The subgroups have to bring the scenarios to life both in text and in real life (by role plays, pictures, etc.). The scenario presentations should be convincing and positive ('this is the best scenario for the future you can think of, because ...')

### Phase 3: Reflection

The scenarios are presented by each subgroup to the other subgroups (or a wider audience). (Here some extra time could be taken by having a trial presentation where each subgroup receives feedback to improve their presentation).

After the presentation, the reflection starts by raising questions like

- What is the most likely future?
- What is your most desired future?
- What is your worst case future?



## **Identifying Teacher Quality**

In the next round, mixed subgroups are formed to discuss the consequences of the scenarios for the role and professional qualities that teachers need in the future, to discuss the differences with roles and required qualities today and the consequences of this, for individual teachers, personal development plans, school policy with respect to professional development programmes within the school, for teacher education, ...

### **Variations:**

When the participants go through all three phases of the scenario process they will need a minimum of two full days (concentrated or spread through a longer period). If the full process is scheduled in less time, the reflection in the third phase will lose much of its potential richness.

When the amount of time that is available for the scenario process is limited two alternative variations are possible:

1. The participants are given a set of scenario axes and focus on phase 2 (the development of the scenarios) and phase 3 (the reflection on the developed scenarios) This variation will require 1 full day.
2. The participants are given a set of scenarios and only focus on phase 3 (½ to 1 full day)

Both variations will miss the discussion on trends, developments and dilemmas in society and education. The effects of the scenario method in terms of an enhanced and shared understanding of developments in society and education influencing schools and teachers and increased ownership with respect to the scenarios will therefore be limited.

### **Background & Resources:**

The scenario method originates from the business environment as a tool for strategic development and decision making. However, the method has become increasingly popular as a tool for reflection, vision development and team building. The scenario method has been used as a reflection and learning tool in education in a variety of contexts. The feedback of participants has been very positive.

The method combines a rich variety of activities: group work, discussion, analysis, research, creative thinking, presentation, reflection. The discussion can reach a depth and broadness that is seldom discussed within teams of teachers in schools. The method can clarify underlying values and mental models of the participants.

The methodology is described in a variety of resources:

- [Teacher guidelines for an in-service course on the use of scenarios in education](#)

See this site also for a variety of papers on the use of future scenarios in education, published in a thematic issue of the European Journal of Teacher Education, 26 (1)



## Identifying Teacher Quality

- The scenario method for education: facilitator's manual
- Plotting Your Scenarios: An Introduction to the Art and Process of Scenario Planning (Peter Schwartz, Jay Ogilvy)

### Conditions:

With this reflection tool, two conditions are very important:

- **Time:** The scenario process is time consuming. To get depth in the discussions, it is necessary to take time to generate the knowledge of the participants (phase 1), to develop and illustrate the scenarios (phase 2) and to reflect on the consequences of the scenarios (phase 3). When time is not sufficient, the risk is that no time is left for the reflection (which is the most important phase in the light of the aim of the tool)  
The time frame can be condensed (2 days meeting) or (preferably) spread throughout a longer period with four half days, separated by two or three weeks with room for assignments.  
When this amount of time is not available, alternative solutions which demand less time are possible, but with a reduction in the richness of the outcomes.  
See the variations mentioned above.

**Quality of the facilitator:** The scenario process asks for a strong facilitator who has experience with the scenario method and can support and guide the discussions and process towards the development of the scenarios (especially the conversation on the identification and selection of driving forces).

### Materials:

- PC and data projector for an introductory presentation on future scenarios and on the specific theme that is chosen for the session
- Whiteboard or flip-overs and Post-its for capturing the results of the discussions
- Materials for the scenario-presentation

### Strengths & Weaknesses:

#### *Strengths:*

The scenario method does not take the here-and-now as a starting point, but stimulates pro-active and out-of-the-box thinking. It opens up reflections starting from a possible future situation (e.g. 2015 or 2020) and taking into account trends and developments in the wider society.

The scenario method combines a rich variety of activities: group work, discussion, analysis, research, creative thinking, presentation, reflection. The discussion can



## **Identifying Teacher Quality**

reach a depth and broadness that is seldom reached within teams of teachers in schools.

The method can clarify underlying values and mental models of the participants. Moreover, the method is fun to do.

### *Weaknesses:*

The method is rather time consuming. The first part (phase 1 and 2) is the entrance to the actual reflection on teacher quality in phase 3. This first part could be skipped and replaced by ready-designed scenarios (see variations above), e.g.

- OECDs scenarios What schools for the future?
- GBNs scenarios for the future of public education

However this first part plays a role in enhancing the understanding of developments in society and education influencing schools and teachers, in creating a shared understanding and increasing ownership with respect to the scenarios.