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Making Education Relevant

Five Lenses for Rethinking the Future of Education

Latvia, 2026

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Foreword

Baiba Bašķere, Director of the Human Capital Development Department, Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia

Twenty years in the education system and thirteen in education policy teaches you to read a room and to recognise the particular exhaustion that settles over a planning meeting when everyone present understands, without saying so, that the document being reviewed is a ritual rather than a direction. Strategies are drafted, expectations are set and the targets chosen are ones the system already knows how to meet. Meanwhile, the questions that actually keep school leaders, youth workers and policy teams awake at night often go unaddressed. Not because people lack the courage to raise them, but because the structures around them were not designed to hold that kind of honesty.

I have spent much of my career asking how Latvia prepares its people for working lives that the labour market itself cannot yet fully describe. That question has never felt more urgent. The pressures are not new, but their convergence is: demographic contraction, sustained emigration, rural consolidation and the growing distance between what young people are being prepared for and what they will actually inherit. These are no longer challenges that a three-year planning cycle can successfully absorb.

From the Ministry of Economics, we see this distance in data: skills projections, vacancy rates, the widening gap between formal qualifications and the capacities employers describe when asked what they actually need. But data does not capture what I hear in conversation with school leaders and young people themselves: that the world they are entering looks less and less like the world the system was built to prepare them for.

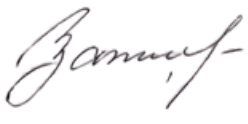
In a shrinking population facing continued emigration, every learner who is lost at the margins represents a cost the country is not in a position to absorb.

The quality of primary education, the core purpose of career education and the equalization of vocational and general secondary tracks - while still battling the perception that general education is the only true path to higher learning - are the ultimate test of how seriously the system views its own future.

What this white paper offers is something I have found genuinely rare in policy discourse: an honest attempt to examine the assumptions built into present decisions before those decisions become irreversible. The five lenses proposed are not yet another reform programme, but a set of questions that should precede any reform programme worth commissioning.

The Ministry of Economics does not set curriculum, but we do ask what a small, open economy needs from its education system. The answer is no longer simply more graduates with more qualifications. It is people who can belong somewhere, contribute meaningfully, navigate uncertainty and remain connected to the society they are helping to shape. Those capacities are not soft additions to the real work of education - they are the real work.

I offer this foreword not as an endorsement of every argument in these pages, but as an invitation to read them seriously, and to bring to that reading the same honesty that good policy, at its best, has always required.



Baiba Bašķere



Executive Summary

Latvia's education system is facing more than a familiar cycle of reform. Demographic contraction, emigration, rural consolidation, teacher capacity, digital change, labour-market uncertainty and questions of belonging are beginning to intersect. These pressures do not arrive as separate policy problems. They compound one another. Morin and Kern described this condition as polycrisis: a situation in which crises become linked, mutually reinforcing, and difficult to address through single-issue planning (Morin and Kern, 1999; World Economic Forum, 2023).

Despite spending more than any other EU country as a share of its budget on education, Latvia produces modest outcomes with significant geographical inequalities and a large share of adults with low functional skills (OECD, 2024b).

Education decisions made under these conditions outlast the planning cycle in which they are made. A curriculum anticipates what knowledge will count. A school building anticipates how children should move, gather and participate. A teacher development system anticipates what kinds of professional judgement matter. A youth participation process anticipates whose knowledge is trusted before policy, budget or infrastructure decisions are made.

This white paper takes that responsibility as its starting point. It offers five lenses for rethinking education in Latvia. The lenses do not prescribe a single reform path, but instead test the assumptions, relationships and knowledge practices through which education becomes relevant or irrelevant.

The five lenses are:

1. Lens One: Rethinking the Lens examines the metaphors and narratives shaping educational reform.

2. Lens Two: Rethinking Relevance frames relevance through belonging and contribution, not just labour-market readiness.

3. Lens Three: Rethinking Infrastructure examines how physical and organisational environments shape learning.

4. Lens Four: Rethinking Inclusion asks what it means to design education for and with those most marginalised.

5. Lens Five: Rethinking Interconnectivity applies systems thinking to how the knowledge moves through the system.

Each lens looks at the *relevance problem* from a different angle: how purpose, capacity, space, inclusion and system learning interact. The education experience is shaped by what the system believes education is for, what teachers are supported to cultivate, where learning takes place, whose knowledge is recognised and whether lived experience can alter decisions.

For policymakers, municipalities, funders and school leaders, the practical task is to use these lenses before reform hardens into delivery. Before a curriculum change, ask what future it assumes. Before a school consolidation decision, ask what forms of belonging and community life may be lost or protected. Before investing in digital skills, ask whether students and teachers are also developing the human competencies that make technical knowledge usable. Before describing policy as participatory, ask whether young people's knowledge has changed the problem being addressed. Before measuring inclusion, ask who helped define what inclusion should mean.

The purpose of this white paper is to give Latvia's education leaders a more precise way to examine the futures already being built into present decisions. The test is whether decisions are made timely, with wider forms of knowledge and with greater responsibility for those who will live with their consequences.

Introduction

The Challenge

Education systems are now operating within what Morin and Kern called a polycrisis: not a single dominant problem, but an interlinked condition in which ecological, technological, geopolitical, economic and social pressures compound one another. The World Economic Forum's recent risk work has brought this language into contemporary policy debate, warning that risks increasingly interact across domains rather than arriving as separate issues to be solved in sequence (Morin and Kern, 1999; World Economic Forum, 2023).

For education, the problem is that schools are often still governed through planning models built for more stable conditions. Curriculum reform, infrastructure decisions, teacher development, inclusion policy and youth participation are frequently treated as separate policy areas. In practice, they intersect and interact. A demographic challenge becomes a school consolidation challenge. A skills challenge becomes a teacher development challenge. A digital challenge becomes a democratic trust challenge. A participation challenge becomes a question of whose knowledge is allowed to shape the system.

For Latvia, the question of educational relevance sits inside a particular national context: demographic contraction, continued pressure from emigration, rural consolidation, teacher capacity challenges and the need to sustain a skilled population in a small, open economy. In this context, an education system that loses learners at the margins, or fails to connect learning with belonging and contribution, creates a national cost.

Latvia's education system produces reasonable results in terms of basic skills but struggles with geographical inequalities in access to quality education. The proportion of top-performing students is below the EU average (see Appendix 1). This is a paradox, considering that Latvia, compared to any other EU country, spends the largest share of its general budget on education (Krasnopjorovs, 2017). This mismatch between spending and outcomes points to deeper questions about efficiency, equity and the alignment of resources with the conditions that actually support learning.



An education system that loses learners at the margins, or fails to connect learning with belonging and contribution, creates a national cost.

Higher skills are strongly linked to better economic outcomes, stronger civic engagement and higher levels of trust and wellbeing (OECD, 2024a; OECD, 2024b). In Latvia, adults with higher skills are more likely to participate in lifelong learning, feel connected to democratic processes and report greater trust in others. By contrast, many low-skilled adults feel disconnected from politics and lack the tools to critically engage with complex digital information. This is a growing risk for modern democracies, especially in small, digitally oriented economies.

The challenge, then, is not only whether education can deliver more knowledge or more skills. It is whether education can remain relevant under conditions of polycrisis: as a system that helps young people belong, contribute, interpret complexity and participate in shaping the society they may choose to remain part of.

The Proposed Solution

This white paper, **Making Education Relevant: Five Lenses for Rethinking the Future of Education**, responds to this challenge by offering a structured way to examine the future of education in Latvia. It draws on futures thinking, global citizenship and sustainability education, OECD evidence on adult skills, systems thinking, inclusion research and the lived experience of educators and young people.

The argument is also methodological. In a polycrisis context, education systems need more than retrospective review and short-cycle planning. They need participatory and anticipatory forms of foresight that allow students, teachers, municipalities, families and communities to examine problems before decisions harden into policy, budgets, infrastructure or curriculum.

The five lenses are:

Lens One: Rethinking the Lens examines the metaphors and narratives shaping reform, showing how visible problems rest on deeper stories.

Lens Two: Rethinking Relevance argues that relevance cannot be reduced to technical competence or labour-market preparation.

Lens Three: Rethinking Infrastructure examines how physical and organisational environments shape movement, attention and belonging.

Lens Four: Rethinking Inclusion asks what it means to design education with those most excluded, treating them as credible knowers.

Lens Five: Rethinking Interconnectivity applies systems thinking to how knowledge moves between stakeholders.

The five lenses are not a linear sequence of reforms. Instead they function as a diagnostic structure to help decision-makers ask: what assumptions are being inherited, what capacities are being cultivated, what environments are being built, whose knowledge is being recognised, and how learning moves through the system.

The aim of this white paper is to make the outcomes of the **Future of Education: How Do We Make Education Relevant?** forum (Ķekava, Latvia on 16th April 2026) accessible and usable for policymakers, funding holders and educational leaders in Latvia and beyond. Its purpose is to support more precise, participatory and future-conscious decisions about what education is for, whom it serves and how it can remain relevant under conditions of uncertainty (Nodibinājums "Impulss Latvia", 2026).



Lens One: Rethinking Lens

Written by Doutzen Groothof and Rachael Smith

What worldview are we imagining the future from?

Across the world, organisations, schools, governments and communities are working hard to imagine better futures. We discuss innovation, adaptability, resilience, leadership, sustainability, AI and redesign systems, structures and strategies, hoping they will create the improvement we long for. But beneath these conversations sits a question we often overlook: What worldview are we imagining the future from?

Many of our unconscious stories about success and relevance emerged from our industrial and economic systems that measure efficiency and growth. These systems have brought us enormous advancement in various areas of life and living, but they also were key in the disconnect from nature, the doubts about our spiritual and emotional nature and connection, and in believing we should be independent.

In contrast, many indigenous, nomadic and ancient cultures still practice a worldview that is earth-centred, where reciprocity is a shared value and people feel responsible to sustain life and nature. In this worldview, what could be called stewardship, contribution and sharing is natural - individual accumulation isn't. Knowledge comes through observation and relationship, not only through the rational ability of the mind. Ceremony and ritual are used with intention, as vessels of celebration, belonging and witnessing, so that people and other beings are seen and acknowledged for their place in the larger living system.

In any conversation about the future, it's important to widen the conversation and to challenge our assumptions - or at least become aware - from which we want to build that future, so that we can think outside of the boxes that confine our imagination. As Carl Jung once said: "Until we make the unconscious conscious, it will direct our lives and we will call it fate." So, if we are serious about reimagining education, organisations, leadership or community, we must seriously consider: Whose imagination is shaping the future?

> **In any attempt to imagine the future, it's important to widen the conversation and to challenge our assumptions.**

This question is not abstract. It becomes visible in the language education systems are built on. Policy language does more than simply describe education, it embeds assumptions about what children are for, what counts as success and what kinds of futures are considered reasonable. If those assumptions remain unexamined, reform can appear progressive while quietly reproducing the worldview it claims to move beyond.

Whose Future?

The metaphors surrounding youth and education need to change before reform can do more than rearrange the surface. The language a system uses about itself reveals the assumptions it cannot otherwise see, and education is rich with revealing language. Students are described as "a pipeline to be filled", or as "human capital to be developed" for the labour market. Each phrase reveals a worldview, and each worldview shapes what reform is able to imagine.

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), developed by Sohail Inayatullah (1998, 2008), offers a way of reading beneath that language. It works across four levels. At the surface sits the litany, the attainment and behaviour data that dominate public debate, alongside the rising rates of school refusal now visible across many systems. Beneath the litany lies the system, the structures producing those numbers, including overcrowded curricula and the narrow accountability measures schools are held to. Beneath the system lies the worldview, the assumption that education exists first to prepare young people for economic productivity. And beneath the worldview lies the metaphor, the deep story a culture tells about itself. In much of contemporary schooling, that metaphor casts the child as raw material to be processed for the workforce (see Appendix 2). The purpose is not to reduce school refusal to a single cause, but to show how a visible issue can be read through system conditions, worldview assumptions and deeper metaphors about the child, school and society.

This is where Inayatullah's concept of the used future applies (Inayatullah, 2008). A used future is one inherited from another time or context, still in operation long after it has stopped serving the people living inside it. In education the used future is visible in curricula written for an economy that no longer exists, and in the persistence of labour market readiness as the dominant measure of a system's success. These are not neutral inheritances; they actively shape what a child is understood to be for.

The question this raises for Latvia is direct: As the country that reforms its education system, how does it avoid handing the next generation a used future?

Education as Anticipatory Work

If CLA helps reveal the assumptions already operating inside the present, anticipatory design asks how those assumptions are carried forward. Education is never only a response to current needs. It is a commitment made on behalf of a future that young people will inhabit more fully than those designing the system today.

All education is anticipatory work. Every curriculum is a bet on the future students will inherit, an implicit claim about what they will need and what the world will ask of them. Amsler and Facer (2017) draw a distinction between anticipation that extrapolates from present trends and anticipation that examines the assumptions inside those trends and asks who they serve. The structural question for education is whether that examination happens for young people or with them, and whether the generations who will live longest with the consequences have a voice at the moment the bet is placed.

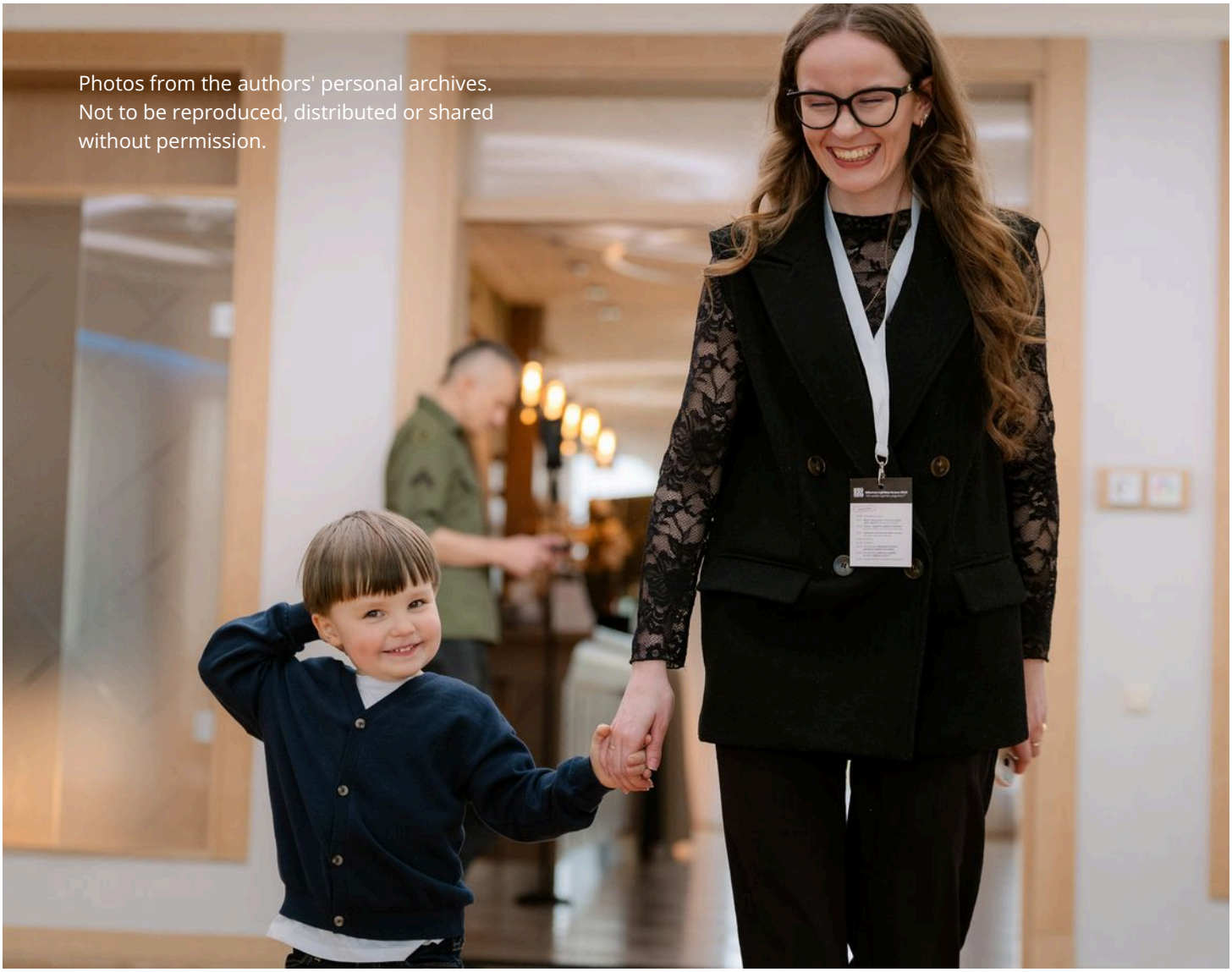
The Futures Triangle, also developed by Inayatullah (2008), makes the forces at work more visible. It maps the pressures on any system through three such forces. The push of the present captures the immediate pressures driving change, which in Latvia include teacher attrition and a contracting school-age population. The weight of history names the inherited structures and assumptions that hold a system in place. The pull of the future describes the images of tomorrow that draw a system forward. Applied to Latvian education, the diagnostic exposes an imbalance: the push and the weight are loud and well represented, while the pull is rarely articulated by the people who will actually inhabit it (see Appendix 3).

This imbalance is not always accidental. Inayatullah’s framework also coins the term ‘disowned futures’; the possibilities a system pushes away because they do not fit its current dominant logic. In education these are often the futures that would centre young people's lived experience over institutional convenience or short term economic objectives, or that would take the climate timeline seriously enough to reshape what is taught now rather than later. Disowning a future is rarely an ‘open’ decision. It often happens through the ordinary operation of structures built for other purposes.

The policy world has begun to start recognising this gap. The OECD argues that public institutions must give standing to those who will be affected by present decisions, not only to those able to lobby for themselves today (Tõnurist and Hanson, 2020). The World Economic Forum's work on intergenerational foresight makes a parallel case, framing current decision-makers as stewards rather than owners of the futures they shape (World Economic Forum, 2026). Wales (UK) has developed this the most intentionally, embedding the principle in law: the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 created a statutory Future Generations Commissioner with powers to hold public bodies to account for their long-term impact.

Latvia therefore needs to contemplate: Whose future has the current system already disowned, and what powers would a Future Generations Commissioner of Latvia need to be more than symbolic?

This returns the argument to where the lens began. If education is shaped by inherited worldviews and if every reform works from an image of the future, then the work is not only to imagine differently, but also to remember differently, and ask what forms of responsibility, reciprocity and stewardship have been displaced by narrower stories of progress. When education helps people experience themselves as part of something bigger, contribution becomes more natural and responsibility becomes meaningful.



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Lens Two: Rethinking Relevance

Written by Anthony Willoughby and Baiba Žiga

The Universal Human Competencies

Our sense of relevance does not come from knowledge alone, or from being "ahead" of others in technical ability. It grows from something much more fundamental: the feeling that we belong, that we are seen and that our contribution matters. To illustrate this, Anthony Willoughby has created the "Relevance Grid," (see Appendix 4) which argues that human beings thrive not when they maximise personal achievement in isolation, but when they sit at the intersection of belonging and contribution. When people feel that they are part of a community and that their actions make a meaningful difference, they feel visible, valued and alive.

Modern merit-oriented narratives have often framed happiness and success through individual achievement, competition and upward mobility (Sandel, 2020). In this story, relevance is earned by outpacing others. Yet this is an incomplete account of human flourishing. Wealth, status and external achievement do not, by themselves, answer the need for connection, recognition or shared purpose. This is central to rethinking the relevance of education. Alongside the question "what can this learner know and do?" sits another: "where does this learner belong, and how can they contribute in ways that matter to others?"

The widespread language of "future skills" is useful only up to a point. It signals that education must respond to changing conditions, but it can also make social, emotional, relational and ethical capacities sound like later additions to the curriculum.

These capacities are not waiting for the future. They are universal human competencies: the capacities through which people build trust, resolve conflict, adapt to change, exercise judgement and remain connected to others under conditions of uncertainty.

Significantly, both global industry and international educational research have independently arrived at the exact same conclusion: the skills required for the future of business and life are, in fact, universal human skills.

On one hand, this is evidenced by leadership and organizational research. In his 2020 book The Future Leader, Jacob Morgan synthesized 140 interviews with CEOs and senior executives from some of the world's largest organizations, asking them: "What skills do leaders need to be ready for the future?" (Morgan, 2020). Morgan identified "The Notable 9," comprising four mindsets and five core skills. Of these nine, eight are fundamentally human-centred, while only the ninth explicitly highlights technology (see Appendix 5).

On the other hand, the European Commission arrived at an identical conclusion—highlighting exactly nine core skills as well—with its LifeComp framework (see Appendix 6). This research-based framework intends to orient citizens, educators, and policymakers in a non-prescriptive way, aiming to establish educational materials and resources that contribute to higher levels of personal and social development. All nine skills defined by LifeComp center around self-regulation, wellbeing, empathy, communication, and critical thinking, seeking to foster life satisfaction, self-fulfilment, and inclusivity through education.

The investment pattern does not yet reflect this. In many countries, including Latvia, policy attention has understandably focused on digital literacy, AI-related competencies and STEM profiles (OECD, 2023). These areas matter. The concern is not their presence, but their isolation from the human competencies that make technical knowledge usable in social, ethical and institutional contexts. A graduate may be technically capable and still struggle to collaborate, interpret uncertainty, resolve conflict or understand the consequences of their decisions for others.

> **A graduate may be technically capable and still struggle to collaborate, interpret uncertainty, resolve conflict.**

This is echoed in broader projections about work. The World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report 2025* projects that 39% of core workplace skills will change by 2030, with creative thinking, resilience, leadership and motivation among the fastest-growing demands. For education, the implication is that the familiar distinction between "soft skills" and "hard skills" obscures how people actually learn, work and participate.

There is also a futures' dimension to relevance. Young people need more than tools for adapting to conditions designed elsewhere. They need the imagination, agency and relational capacity to take part in shaping the futures they will live in. This connects universal human competencies to the wider argument of this paper: relevance is not only preparation for external demand, but participation in shared future-making.

Making these competencies visible in classrooms depends on teacher education and continuous professional development. The way teachers are prepared and supported determines whether they feel equipped to cultivate these capacities in practice.

In many countries, initial teacher education still focuses heavily on subject-specific content and classroom management, with limited emphasis on social-emotional learning, relational pedagogy, conflict resolution and ethics-in-practice. Continuous professional development is often fragmented, ad hoc and overloaded, leaving teachers struggling to keep up with rapid changes in digital tools while receiving less structured support on how to foster belonging, resilience and critical thinking in their students.

This creates a policy problem. If education systems expect teachers to cultivate belonging, resilience, ethical judgement and critical thinking, teacher education must give those capacities explicit time, language and practice.

This means:

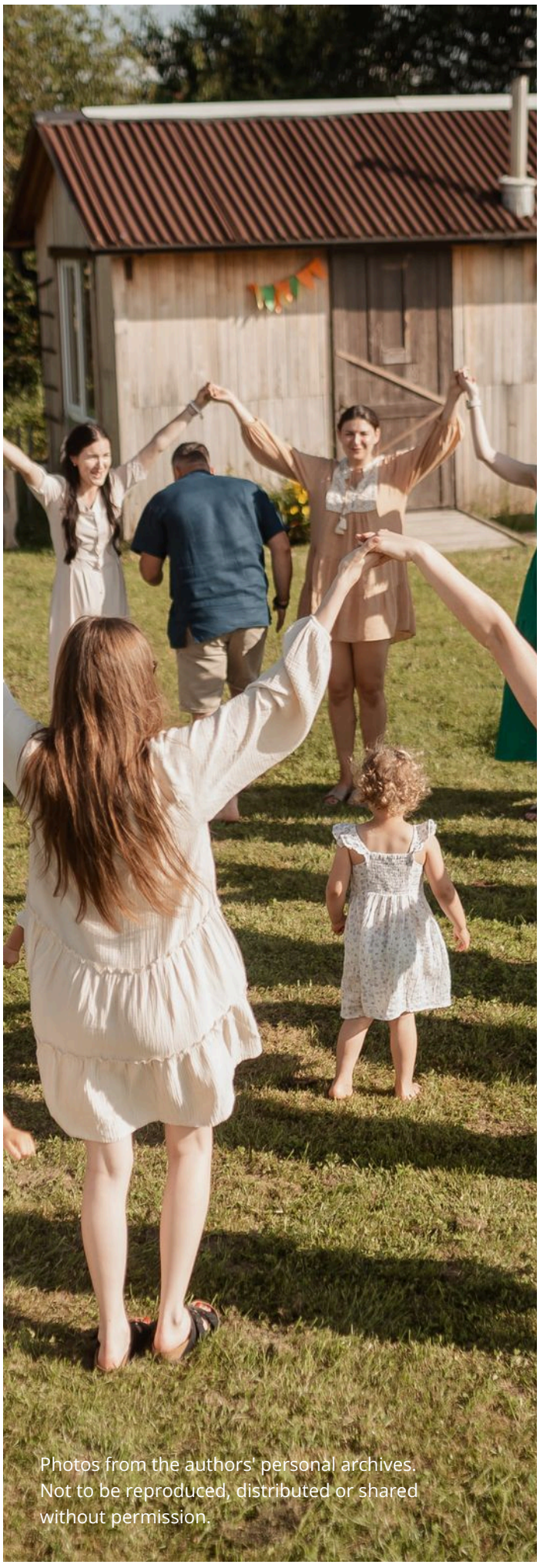
- redesigning initial teacher education programmes to include explicit work on social-emotional learning, relational leadership, ethics-in-practice and inclusive pedagogy;
- embedding ongoing coaching, mentoring and reflective practice that helps teachers connect curriculum content with students' sense of identity, belonging and contribution; and
- creating time and structures for teachers to deepen their own emotional literacy, resilience and self-awareness, so that they can model the competencies they are expected to teach.

Survey data from the State Audit Office Latvia (2024) show that the current model of teacher training is failing to meet these needs. 53% of teachers indicated that the courses did not provide the necessary competence improvement, citing reasons such as low quality, lack of time to complete them or topics that did not match their real-world classroom challenges.

This signals not only a gap in content, but a misalignment between the formal offer of training and the everyday realities of teaching.

If education is serious about rethinking relevance, it must treat teacher training not as a side programme, but as part of the core infrastructure that makes human-centred learning possible. This is about rebuilding teacher education from the inside, so that preparing teachers to cultivate belonging, resilience and ethical imagination becomes as central as preparing them to deliver curriculum content.

This brings us back to Anthony Willoughby's Relevance Grid: relevance emerges when young people experience both belonging and contribution. Education that concentrates on technical competence while leaving these dimensions implicit will struggle to produce graduates who feel seen, heard or meaningfully connected to others. Universal human competencies should therefore be treated as core educational capacities: named in curriculum, practised in classrooms and embedded in teacher education. For Latvia, this is not an abstract skills debate, but part of how the education system supports young people to belong, contribute and remain connected to the society they are helping to shape.



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Lens Three: Rethinking Infrastructure

Written by Elfyn Wyn Jones

From Classrooms to Learning Villages

School infrastructure is often discussed through estate management: capacity, compliance, circulation, maintenance and cost. A building brief embeds assumptions about childhood, authority, attention and trust before any lesson begins. Corridors, classroom layouts, thresholds, doors, furniture and timetables help determine what can be repeated, practised and recognised as learning. These concerns are necessary, but they do not exhaust the educational question.

> **16% of the variation in pupils' learning progress over a year came down to the design of the room.**

The Holistic Evidence and Design study at the University of Salford looked at 153 classrooms and 3,766 pupils and found that 16% of the variation in pupils' learning progress over a year came down to the design of the room (Barrett et al., 2015). This is significant because physical learning space is already part of what a school teaches. The question is not confined to attainment: one in seven adolescents experiences a mental disorder (World Health Organization, 2025), while the World Economic Forum projects that 39% of core workplace skills will change by 2030 (World Economic Forum, 2025).

School buildings are long-life public investments. Many of the children born today are statistically expected to live past the year 2100 (Fengler, 2020), experiencing life of the twenty-second century. The buildings commissioned for them may shape several generations of learners. Drawing from experience across the UK, the UAE, India and Europe, this section sets out five steps for rethinking how schools are built.

Step 1: Design Behaviours First, Buildings Last

Most school infrastructure projects finish the building and then try to retrofit pedagogy into it. By the time anyone notices the mismatch, the concrete has set.

The design process needs to begin before architecture, with an educational question: what forms of participation should this environment make ordinary? Embodied cognition research shows that thinking is shaped through bodily activity, materials, space and environmental interaction (Lynott et al., 2013; Irwin and Irwin, 2020; Shapiro and Spaulding, 2025). Lave and Wenger's (1991) work on communities of practice adds that learning is participation in shared practices, not only the transmission of content.

At the Ridansh Centre of Design and Innovation (RCDI) in Ahmedabad, India, learning takes place within one large, flexible studio space, where traditional classroom boundaries are replaced by an environment designed for collaboration, creativity and innovation. Students aged 8 to 18 work across robotics, design thinking, entrepreneurship, AI, biomimicry and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The invitation is to enter learning as a participant, maker and contributor.

RCDI is a design and innovation centre, but the argument is not confined to STEM: an English, languages or humanities space can also be designed for inquiry, dialogue, evidence, interpretation, performance and public argument.

> **Most school infrastructure projects finish the building and then try to retrofit pedagogy into it. By the time anyone notices the mismatch, the concrete has set.**

Step 2: Replace the Corridor with the Village

A child in a typical secondary school walks down a long corridor many times a day. Corridors take up considerable space, yet much of that space has only one recognised purpose: transit.

The term "village" is significant. It recalls the relational and intergenerational learning discussed in Lens One: observation, contribution, responsibility, story, apprenticeship and shared place. In infrastructure terms, a learning village is a smaller, legible community within a larger school: places to return to, people children recognise, mixed-age encounters, shared commons, quieter rooms, thresholds rather than closed doors and spaces where activity and retreat both belong.

Belonging should not be seen as merely a pastoral concern. Where sense of belonging flourish, so do academic attainment and progress. Across 82 studies and over 60,000 secondary-age students, school belonging correlates with academic achievement, motivation, self-concept, self-efficacy and engagement, and negatively with absenteeism and dropout (Korpershoek et al., 2020). Reggio Emilia schools in Italy have treated the physical environment as the "third teacher" for over half a century, making pupils active participants in their education (Malaguzzi, 1998).

Step 3: Bridge the Gap Between the Teacher and the Architect

When a school commissions a new space, two professional languages meet: teachers know where learning breaks down and where a room works against the task and architects know how a building is planned, costed, regulated and built. The risk comes when the architectural brief is written before the educational problem has been understood (Barrett et al., 2019).

The Innovation and Design Centre at Nord Anglia International School Dubai, now known as DICE, is useful because the brief began with a curriculum problem rather than a procurement template. Two teachers asked what students might do if Design, Computing and Enterprise were no longer kept apart. Walls were removed between standard classrooms so teachers and students could experience the change before the final design was fixed; the purpose-built centre then organised workshop spaces, reflection corners, glass-walled mentoring rooms and a central common space around identified learning behaviours. Two things happened immediately: teachers started teaching together and children of different age groups started working with and learning from one another. According to the supplied DICE case study (Nord Anglia International School Dubai, 2023), the gender gap in Design and Technology collapsed at IGCSE and IB level and confidence and inclusivity rose.

Step 4: Group by Problem, Not by Subject

Most schools are organised by subject: the maths block, the science block, the humanities corridor. These groupings have administrative rather than intellectual value and they become limiting when the problem requires movement

across forms of knowledge, because complex problems rarely arrive in subject-shaped packages.

The OECD Learning Compass distinguishes disciplinary, interdisciplinary, epistemic and procedural knowledge (OECD, 2019). Interdisciplinary and project-based learning ask students to connect concepts, methods and evidence across domains. Infrastructure can support that movement or quietly return students to separated territories.

The Dupoto framework offers a shared visual language of nine icons, each representing a learning behaviour and translating into sensory design, pedagogy and spatial zoning (see Appendix 7). Drawing on village-based knowledge systems, it treats places such as the campfire, the river and the mountains as different learning territories. DICE applies the same principle in practice: it offers a real-world problem and lets the child move across Design, Computing and Enterprise as needed.

Step 5: Hand Agency Over to the Children

Student agency is often named as a curriculum aim, but it is learned through repeated opportunities to make decisions that have consequences. The OECD defines student agency as the capacity to set a goal, reflect and act responsibly to effect change (OECD, 2019). Ryan and Deci's work on self-determination adds the importance of autonomy, competence and relatedness for sustained engagement (Ryan and Deci, 2020). Yet a child can spend thirteen years inside a school building and never make a single material decision about how it looks, feels or operates.

In Dupoto programmes run with student councils, including at Shireland Collegiate Academy, the framework is used in reverse. Instead of staff briefing the architect on behalf of children, children help brief the adults: What do you want your school to feel like? Where do you go when you need to think? What would make you walk into this room and start working?

Furniture is one visible example. Many schools buy one chair and replicate it across the whole school. The repetition makes a claim about bodies, attention and conformity. When students have choices, furniture becomes part of the pedagogical brief rather than a procurement afterthought. In Dupoto programmes where this has been tracked, the reported effects include higher performance, increased creativity and a stronger sense of ownership over the space.

Building a New Reality

For Latvia, arguments at the foundation of these five steps are immediate and urgent. The Ministry of Education and Science (IZM) projects that, based on current birth rates, 34% fewer children will start first grade in autumn 2030 than in 2024. IZM's former Director of Vocational and Adult Education, Ingus Zitmanis, has stated clearly: the current network of educational institutions is not adapted to the projected reality (Kuncevičs, 2026).

This demographic state is already driving infrastructure reforms, including the consolidation and reorganisation of schools. To date, more than 100 schools in Latvia have been reorganised, many with reduced education levels or closed entirely. The Union of Latvian Municipalities notes that, out of 271 Latvian secondary schools, one-third (90 schools) do not meet IZM's criteria (LSM, 2024).

As Latvia commissions new buildings or redesigns existing ones, the question needs to be asked with seriousness: what is the territory of a school teaching the children inside it, and what evidence will show whether the space is doing what it promised?

Lens Four: Rethinking Inclusion

Written by Imogen Sanchez-Harvey, Madara Budova and Rachel Quick

Stake in the Future

Too often, when we talk about "inclusive education," the people most affected by the system, those at the margins, are treated as objects of policy rather than as co-architects of it. This includes children with special educational needs and disabilities, Roma communities, migrants and second-language students and many others who are "designed for" rather than designed with.

Globally, the number of students identified with additional needs, including autism, is rising, and governments are under pressure to expand support and inclusion (OECD, 2026; UNESCO, 2020). Policy language increasingly celebrates "inclusive education," but the reality on the ground often remains segregated: some students are moved into different classrooms, schools or tracks, while the mainstream structure stays largely unchanged (Dwyer et al., 2026). In Latvia, this pattern is clear for several groups at the margins.

> **Policy language increasingly celebrates "inclusive education," but the reality on the ground often remains segregated.**

Many Roma children have historically been placed in segregated or special-class initiatives rather than fully integrated into mainstream education, often with weaker evaluation and lower quality provision. A 2004 report by the Latvian Human Rights Centre found that among Roma aged 15+ surveyed, 24.3% had not completed the fourth grade, compared with only 2.1% of the general population who had not completed primary education. Similarly, a 2020-2021 national analysis on inclusive education in Latvia shows that while 67% of municipal schools are implementing inclusive education, many still refuse to enroll children with special needs, and many are effectively placed in parallel or semi-segregated tracks (Spundiņa, 2021). Migrant-origin students, meanwhile, have access to school, but often face barriers in language, integration and culturally responsive teaching, limiting their access to the context-aware education that could best support their learning (Ahrens et al., 2021). Addressing these barriers requires moving past abstract policy promises. As Budova (2022) notes in her research on overcoming communication and developmental disorders in the school environment, successful inclusion is entirely dependent on the quality of a child's surrounding support network, requiring teachers, families, speech therapists and psychologists to act as a unified, multidisciplinary team.

Research also demonstrates strong evidence that inclusive, multicultural societies do not just tolerate diversity - they thrive on it (Mezzanotte, 2022; UNESCO, 2020). Inclusive education, when done well, supports social cohesion, reduces prejudice and strengthens the common good by giving all young people a stake in the same future.

From Tokenism to Co-Design

Although research and policy increasingly recognise the importance of marginalised voices, opportunities for participation in educational design remain limited and are often

tokenistic or mediated through adult interpretation (Newson et al., 2024). This is reflected within the research landscape itself. For example, one meta-analysis showed that only 9% of participants in autism research were themselves autistic (Roche et al., 2021), demonstrating the extent to which such perspectives have often been marginalised within knowledge production. This absence contributes to a cycle in which assumptions about students with additional needs are reproduced without substantial engagement with their lived experience.

A more equitable and genuinely inclusive future requires educational environments to be co-constructed alongside the students most affected by them rather than designed solely on their behalf. In this preferred future, inclusion is not measured only by how many students are "placed" in mainstream settings, but by how much they are involved in shaping the conditions of their learning.

Achieving this future requires a significant conceptual and practical change in how educational provision is understood and implemented. Accommodation is insufficient when existing systems remain largely unchanged. Co-design requires learners to help shape those systems from the outset.

It also requires a different relationship between support and partnership. Traditional models of support frequently locate difficulty within the individual learner, framing educational responses around remediation or behavioural adjustment. Partnership-oriented approaches recognise students as collaborators whose perspectives can inform more responsive and effective educational environments. Such approaches challenge hierarchical relationships between educators and learners by valuing lived experience alongside professional expertise.

Finally, this change depends on epistemic recognition (Fricker, 2007). Recognising students as credible knowers means acknowledging that their experiences and perspectives have legitimate authority within discussions about educational design and practice. This involves not only listening to students, but incorporating their contributions into decision-making processes in meaningful and sustained ways.

The Wherry School and the ASSK Programme

Research conducted within The Wherry School in Norwich, England provides an example of this approach in practice. The school has developed the Autism Specific Skills and Knowledge (ASSK) programme, a student-driven curriculum designed to position autistic learners at the centre of educational development by responding directly to their identified needs, experiences and priorities (see Appendix 8). The programme draws on an evidence-based approach, teaching students about the neuroscience of autism alongside social, emotional, and cognitive aspects of experience, with the intention of supporting self-understanding and self-advocacy.

Findings from the present research indicate that students perceived ASSK as effective, reporting that it supported them in developing a deeper understanding of themselves, with one participant noting that "understanding yourself helps you understand the world better." Rather than being experienced as purely instructional, the curriculum was described as personally meaningful, with self-understanding emerging as a central mechanism through which learning was experienced.

This development of self-understanding can be interpreted through Freire's (1970) concept of critical pedagogy, which foregrounds the development of critical consciousness as learners come to recognise and reflect upon the conditions shaping their experiences. In this sense, students' accounts point towards an emerging form of critical awareness, in which understanding oneself becomes a foundation for interpreting one's wider educational and social context.

Students also perceived ASSK as transferable, suggesting that it should be implemented within other educational settings. This extends the significance of the findings beyond individual experience, indicating that participants not only identified personal value in the curriculum but also recognised its potential relevance for other autistic learners. These findings suggest that autistic students can engage in reflective and evaluative judgements about educational provision and identify mechanisms that support both personal understanding and wider educational improvement.

Inclusion for Building Resilient Societies

Rethinking inclusion means moving beyond rhetoric and placement numbers to a model where inclusion is co-created with the students most affected by it. In Latvia, this is not just a question of improving access for Roma children, students with disabilities and migrant-origin learners; it is about building a society that sees their voices, knowledge and lived experience as central to its future.

> **Rethinking inclusion means moving beyond rhetoric and placement numbers to a model where inclusion is co-created with the students most affected by it.**

The Wherry School and the ASSK programme show that when students are invited to understand and name their own needs, they can develop self-awareness, agency and a sense of purpose. This is a vision of inclusion that is not about fitting people into existing structures, but about changing those structures so they are shaped by the people who use them. For Latvia, rethinking inclusion in this way is not only an ethical imperative. It is part of how a society decides whose knowledge counts in the future it is building.



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Lens Five: Rethinking Interconnectivity

Written by Baiba Žiga and Rachael Smith

Perpetuating on Participating?

When talking about "changing the education system," many invoke powerful language: we want to "revolutionise" it, "break it down" or "start from scratch." But Donella Meadows, in her book Thinking in Systems (2008), reminds us that a system is not just a monolithic thing to be destroyed or replaced; it is a dynamic structure made up of three core elements: purpose, elements and interconnections. In the context of education, the elements are the visible parts - students, teachers, buildings, budgets and policies. The interconnections are the relationships, flows of information and feedback loops that link these elements together. And the purpose is the underlying goal or logic that shapes why the system exists and how it behaves.

Meadows argues that an important function of almost every system is to ensure its own perpetuation. This means that when we act inside the system - teaching, governing, designing, campaigning - we are often unconsciously helping to maintain its existing structures, patterns and priorities. Therefore, before jumping to "changing the system," we first need to ask: What system are we actually part of and what is it that we are perpetuating by participating in it?

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When people try to change systems, the most obvious route is to change its elements. In education, that often means swapping curricula, introducing new technologies or replacing staff. But Meadows points out that changing elements usually has the least impact on the functionality and long-term perpetuation of the system. She uses the example of a football team: if you replace all the players, the game itself still runs by the same rules, with the same purpose and interconnectivity; the "team" may look different, but the system barely notices.

Changing the purpose of a system - its underlying goals and values - is much more powerful, but it is also the hardest. In large, deeply embedded systems like education, power to redefine the purpose rarely sits in the hands of any one person, group or institution. It is negotiated across ministries, political agendas, cultural norms and historical path dependencies.

Where people often have the most realistic leverage is in interconnections. When relationships, information flows and decision-making loops change, the system can be thoroughly altered. The game may look the same from the outside, but its behaviour becomes different; in some cases, it can become almost unrecognisable.

This has a crucial implication for education: much of the current energy around "system change" is focused on fixing or replacing elements, while the connective tissue remains largely untouched. When we neglect interconnectivity, we risk keeping the system in motion, even while we think we are changing it. That is why rethinking interconnectivity must be

at the heart of how we approach education. That begins with assessing the information flow: How is knowledge gathered, filtered, shared and acted upon among policymakers, practitioners and students. Whose voices are treated as legitimate and whose are deferred, mediated or ignored?

> **Much of the current energy around "system change" is focused on fixing or replacing elements, while the connective tissue remains largely untouched.**

This lens asks us to treat interconnectivity as a core lever of change. Inclusive, participatory communication, from the classroom to national policy, is not an add-on feature of the system; it is part of its connective tissue. When students, educators and society are treated as co-designers of those connections, rather than as passive recipients, the system becomes more responsive, more resilient and more genuinely representative of the futures it is meant to serve.

In Latvia, this tension is visible in both policy and practice. The Ministry of Education and Science has developed a youth policy framework that explicitly names participation, information accessibility and equal opportunities as core principles. The Youth Policy in Latvia is founded on the Youth Law and the Guidelines for the Development of Children, Youth and Family for 2022–2027, which stress that young people should be involved in decision-making and public life and that youth organisations and student self-governments should be supported.

However, research on political participation in Latvia shows that despite these policies, youth are often underrepresented in concrete decision-making, especially in education-related legislation and financing (Graudiņa, 2022). The analysis finds that since 2009, youth participation in all forms of political activity has declined, including young people running for office or shaping local agendas. This gap reveals a mismatch between the formal purpose of the system (inclusive, participatory youth policy) and the actual interconnections between young people and decision-makers.

At the same time, there are emerging examples of new interconnections that already alter the system's behaviour. In Latvia, student-led initiatives such as Eco-Schools and other youth-driven projects are creating new information flows between schools, NGOs and local communities. These networks show that changing the way students connect with one another and with adults can alter the behaviour of the education system without necessarily changing its formal structures or curriculum.

Strategic Foresight and the Work of Interconnection

If interconnections are one of the most realistic leverage points in an education system, the question becomes practical: how does knowledge travel? The systems context above shows that relationships, information flows and feedback loops shape what the system can notice and act upon. A student council may name a problem that never reaches municipal planning. A teacher may understand why a reform is failing before that knowledge has any route back to policy. The issue is not only whether voices are present. It is whether knowledge can move far enough to change the frame. This aligns with OECD's Trends Shaping Education 2025, which treats scenarios and stakeholder narratives not as predictions, but as tools for testing assumptions, exploring implications and guiding action in the present.

Latvian youth policy already names participation, information accessibility and equal opportunities as core principles. The Youth Law, the Guidelines for Child, Youth and Family Development 2022-2027 and the Youth Policy Implementation Plan for 2025-2027 provide a formal basis for involving young people in decision-making and public life.

Yet the evidence already cited suggests a gap between formal participation rights and influence over decisions that become concrete in legislation, financing, local agendas and education policy. Consultation can still arrive after the problem has already been defined.

Futures thinking is the disciplined practice of examining possible, probable and preferable futures in order to make wiser decisions in the present. Strategic foresight applies that practice to organisations, systems and policy: not to predict the future, but to surface assumptions, test alternatives and widen the range of decisions available before commitments harden. The World Economic Forum's work on intergenerational foresight extends this concern to long-term risks, trade-offs and impacts across generations (World Economic Forum, 2026). In Lens One, this appeared as a worldview question: whose imagination is shaping the future? In Lens Five, the same question becomes procedural: at what point are students, teachers, municipalities, families and youth organisations invited to examine the frame itself?

The Futures Cycle was developed as one response to this problem. It is a six-phase participatory and anticipatory design method developed through postgraduate research at Edinburgh Futures Institute, University of Edinburgh: Envision, Reframe, Speculate, Shape, Resonate, Embed & Sustain (Smith, 2025). Its genealogy draws on established futures methods, including Inayatullah's Futures Triangle and Causal Layered Analysis, narrative foresight, speculative design and the Cones of Possibility (Inayatullah, 2008; Milojević and Inayatullah, 2015; Voros, 2003; Smith, 2025). A fuller methodological account is provided in Appendix 9.

The educational relevance of the method is clearest in its use with staff as well as students. At The Wherry School, the Futures Cycle was piloted through a curriculum and staff CPD redesign project. Futures thinking was used not as a standalone professional development activity, but as a way for staff to examine inherited assumptions about curriculum, learner need, professional agency and implementation. This links directly to Lens Four's discussion of The Wherry School and extends it into the professional conditions that make student-centred change possible.

For Latvia, school consolidation offers one possible use. Consolidation is often discussed through enrolment, transport, building efficiency, staffing and cost. These questions are necessary. They are also incomplete if asked too late. A Futures Cycle process would ask what forms of learning, belonging and community life should survive reorganisation; what the language of "optimisation" clarifies or hides; and how students, teachers, families, municipalities and youth organisations might test alternatives before a decision becomes a technical plan.

This is where the five lenses meet. Education becomes relevant when purpose, relevance, infrastructure, inclusion and interconnection inform one another. The test is not whether young people, teachers or communities were consulted. It is whether their knowledge changed how the system understood the problem, tested alternatives and carried learning forward.

Conclusion

Latvia's education system is navigating an interconnected set of pressures - demographic, technological, geopolitical social - that compound one another in ways no single reform can resolve. This white paper has not offered a blueprint, but something more durable: five lenses through which the assumptions built into present decisions can be examined before they harden into infrastructure, curriculum, policy and practice.

Lens One asked whose worldview is shaping the futures being built and whether education risks handing the next generation a future designed for a world that no longer exists.

Lens Two argued that relevance cannot be reduced to technical competence or labour-market readiness: it grows from belonging and contribution, and depends on teacher education that treats human capacities as core rather than supplementary.

Lens Three showed that physical and organisational environments are already teaching something about authority, attention, trust and participation, and that Latvia's impending school consolidation decisions are, simultaneously, decisions about what forms of community life and belonging will survive reorganisation.

Lens Four insisted that inclusion, done well, means more than placement in a mainstream setting: it requires treating those most marginalised as credible knowers whose lived experience can change how problems are understood and addressed.

Lens Five brought the argument together by asking how knowledge actually travels through the system and whether it can move far enough to change the frame before decisions become irreversible.

Taken together, the five lenses point toward a single, practical responsibility: the decisions being made now are anticipatory acts. A curriculum is a commitment made on behalf of a future that young people will inhabit more fully than those designing it today. A school building will likely outlast the planning cycle that produced it by several generations. A participation process that arrives after the problem has already been defined is not participation, but performative consultation.



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The immediate task for policymakers, funders and educational leaders is not to wait for a complete reform programme, but to apply these lenses in a timely manner. Before a consolidation plan becomes a construction tender, ask what forms of belonging and learning it assumes will survive. Before a teacher development programme is commissioned, ask whether it gives teachers the language, time and relational structures to cultivate the competencies they are expected to model. Before a participation process is declared complete, ask whether what young people contributed changed the problem being addressed or merely confirmed a decision already made.

Latvia has real assets to build on: a legal and policy framework for youth participation already exists and student-led initiatives are already creating new information flows between schools, municipalities and communities. The question is whether those practices can become the connective tissue of the system, rather than exceptions to it.

The futures this system builds will be judged not by their stated intentions but by who was trusted to help shape them, whose knowledge was treated as legitimate and whether the young people who will live longest with the consequences had a genuine stake in their design. That is not a question Latvia can defer. It is already being answered in every curriculum decision, every building commission, every consolidation meeting, every moment a student's experience is heard or set aside.

The work of making education relevant is, finally, the work of deciding what kind of society Latvia is choosing to become, and choosing to become it with the people who will inhabit it most fully.

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Baiba is an award-winning consultant and international expert in leadership development. For the past decade she has specialised in culture strategy, high-performance teams and change management for NYSE/FTSE100 companies, agile startups, non-profits and public institutions. As Impulsum's founder, Baiba uses data- and science-backed methodologies to close the gap between leadership intention and impact. Currently together with an expert team she is delivering transformative, measurable programmes for Latvia's educators, organisational leaders and entrepreneurs.



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Madara brings over a decade of experience in Latvian education, combining music teaching with practice-based research in pedagogy, therapy and child development. Her work explores how creative, emotionally safe environments support communication and self-expression, particularly for children with developmental difficulties. This expertise shapes her commitment to inclusive, human-centred learning. Currently, she leads the foundation "Impulss Latvia," designing leadership and self-awareness programmes for youth, educators and parents.



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Rachel has over three decades of educational experience, serving as a Headteacher and systemic school improvement leader since 2003. Currently the Principal and CEO of a specialist Single Academy Trust for autistic learners, she focuses on adaptive curricula, Executive Functioning and digital pedagogy. Rachel advises on NPQ programmes, serves as an Ambition Institute Visiting Fellow and holds multiple trusteeships across the arts, agricultural education and vulnerable youth provisions.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Low achievement and top performance in mathematics of 15-year-olds in Latvia, PISA 2015, 2018 and 2022 (%)

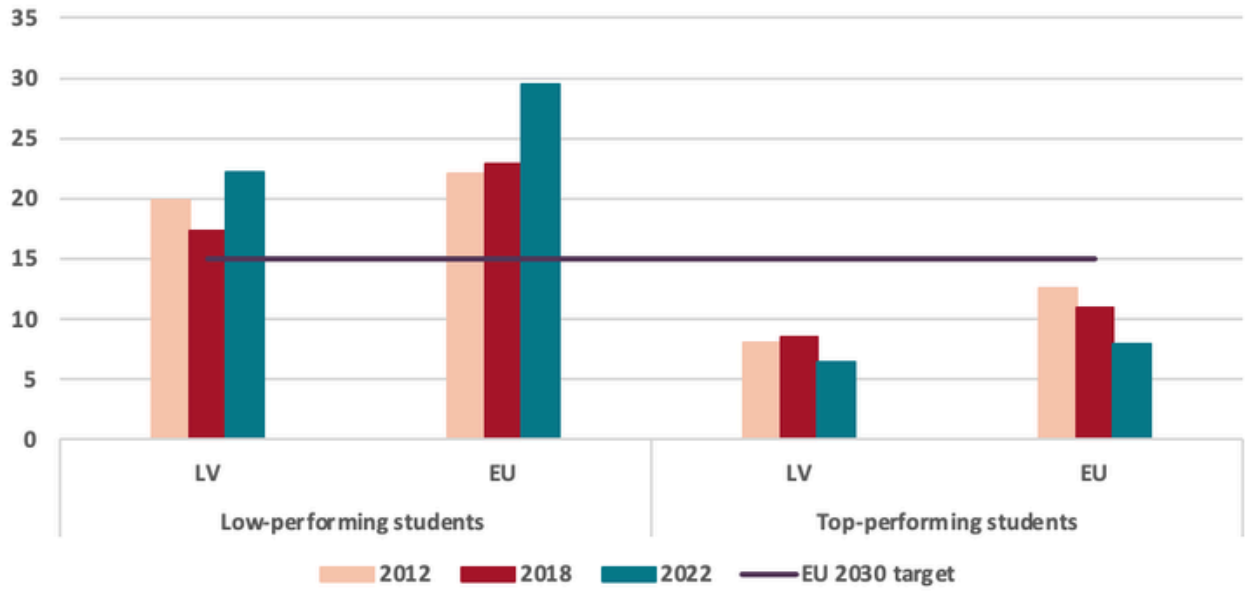


Figure 1. *This bar chart represents the share of low-achieving and top-performing 15-year-olds in mathematics in Latvia, based on PISA results from 2012, 2018 and 2022. Throughout this period, Latvia consistently had fewer low-performing students compared to the EU average, with rates fluctuating between 19.9% and 22.2%, while the EU average rose from 22.1% to 29.5%. For top-performing students, Latvia also remained below the EU average, increasing from 8% in 2015 to a peak of 8.5% in 2018 before dropping to 6.4% in 2022. The EU average share of top performers decreased from 12.6% in 2012 to 11% in 2018, then further declined to 7.9% in 2022.* ***Source****: PISA 2022, OECD.*

Appendix 2: Causal Layered Analysis of School Refusal



Figure 2. *This figure applies Inayatullah's CLA method to school refusal, moving from visible symptoms to Latvian system pressures, underlying worldview assumptions and deeper metaphors about the child, school and society.* ***Source****: Adapted from Inayatullah (1998, 2008). Latvia-specific interpretation developed for this white paper.*

Appendix 3: The Futures Triangle

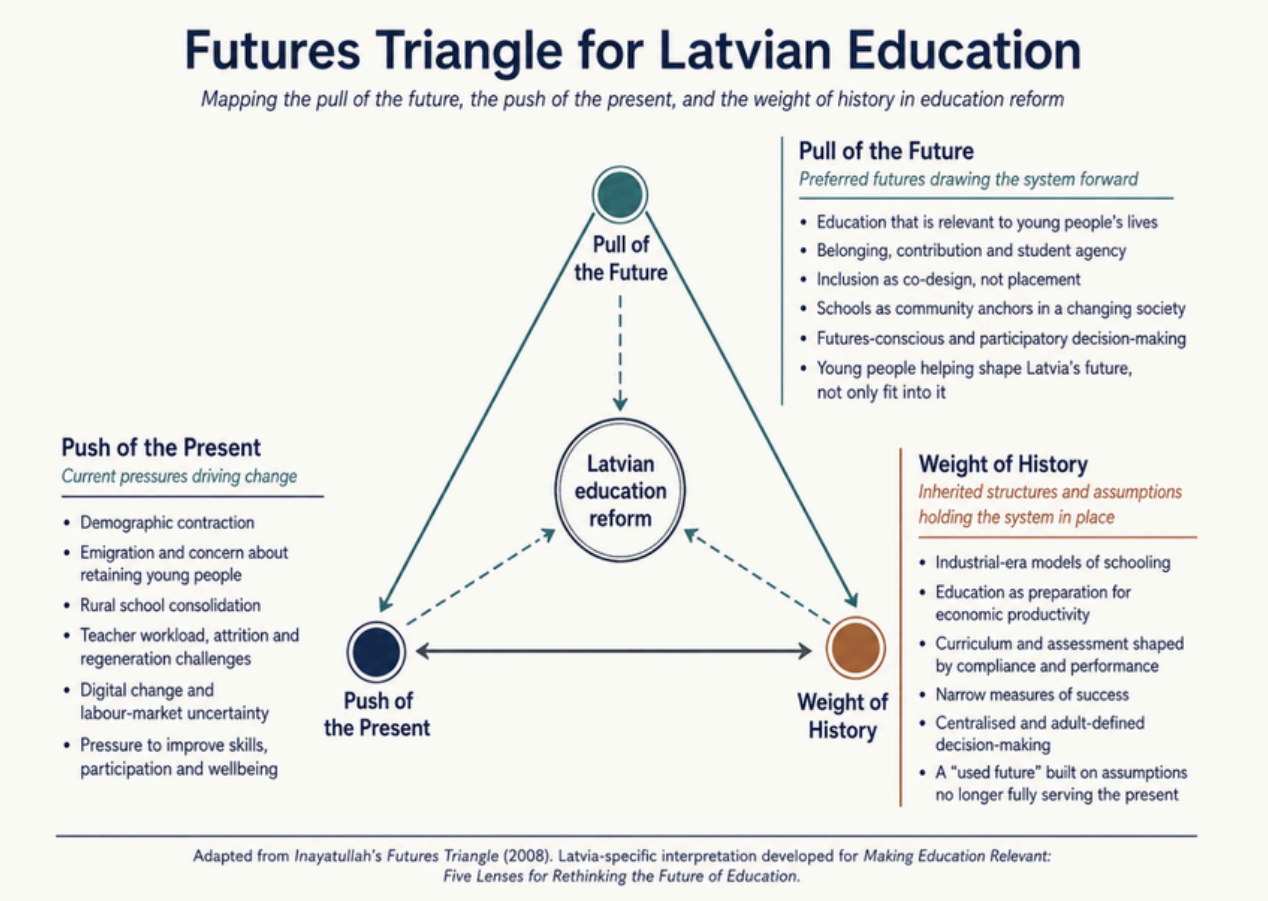


Figure 3. *This figure applies Inayatullah's Futures Triangle to Latvian education, showing how present pressures, inherited structures and preferred futures interact in shaping reform.* ***Source****: Adapted from Inayatullah (2008). Latvia-specific interpretation developed for this white paper.*

Appendix 4: The Relevance Grid

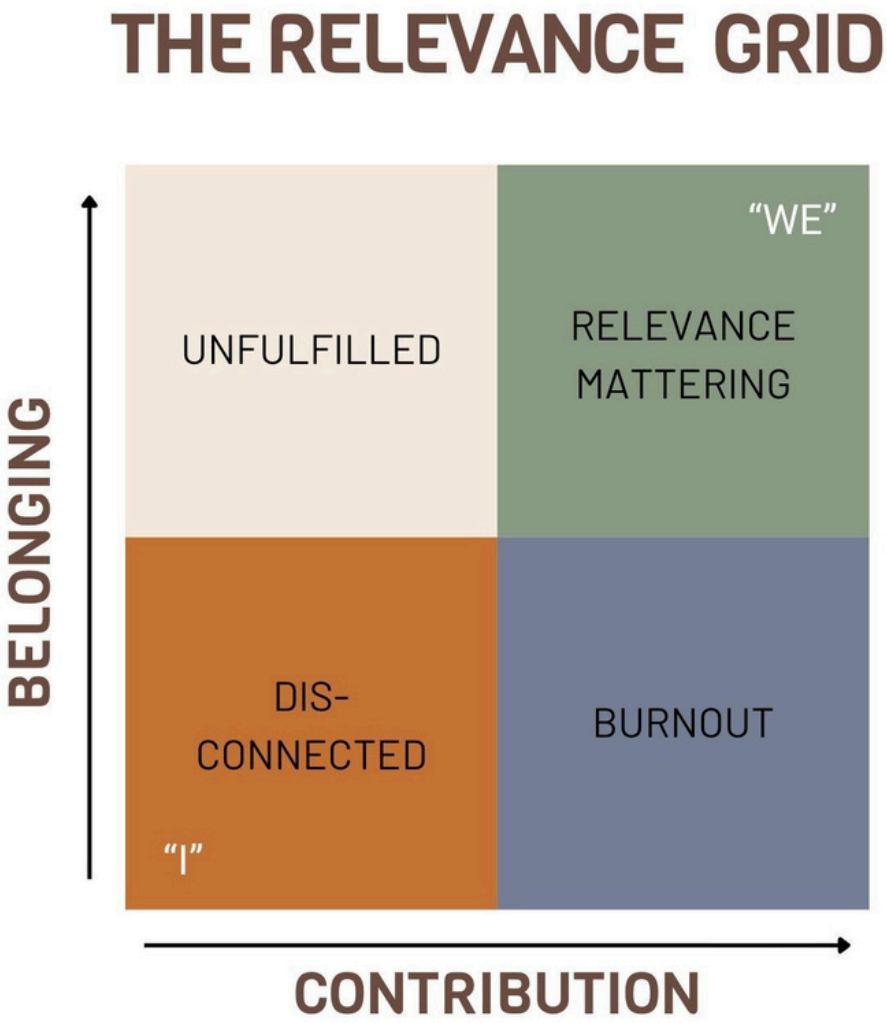


Figure 4. *This grid maps human experience across two dimensions: belonging (vertical axis) and contribution (horizontal axis). When individuals focus only on personal ambition and self-interest, they experience low belonging and low contribution and feel Disconnected. High belonging but low contribution leads to Unfulfilment; high contribution but low belonging leads to Burnout. Only when both belonging and contribution are high do people experience Relevance and mattering, feeling seen, heard and knowing that their contribution matters. The grid illustrates how, through belonging and contribution, we move from a state of "I" to "We".* ***Source****: Anthony Willoughby, personal archives, 2026; The concept was presented at the Future of Education: How Do We Make Education Relevant? forum (Ķekava, Latvia, 16 April 2026); forum recording available on YouTube (see Nodibinājums "Impulss Latvia", 2026). Used with permission.*

Appendix 5: The Notable Nine: Skills and Mindsets for Future Leaders



Figure 5. *This figure presents an adapted version of Jacob Morgan's "The Notable Nine" from his book The Future Leader: Nine Skills and Mindsets to Succeed in the Next Decade. Morgan interviewed 140 CEOs and senior executives from large global organisations and asked what skills leaders need to be ready for the future. From their responses, he identified four mindsets and five core skills: global citizen, servant, chef, explorer, coach, futurist, technology teenager, translator and yoda. In this adapted version, the language has been contextualised for Latvia and the education sector.* ***Source****: Adapted from Morgan (2020).*

Appendix 6: European Commission LifeComp Framework

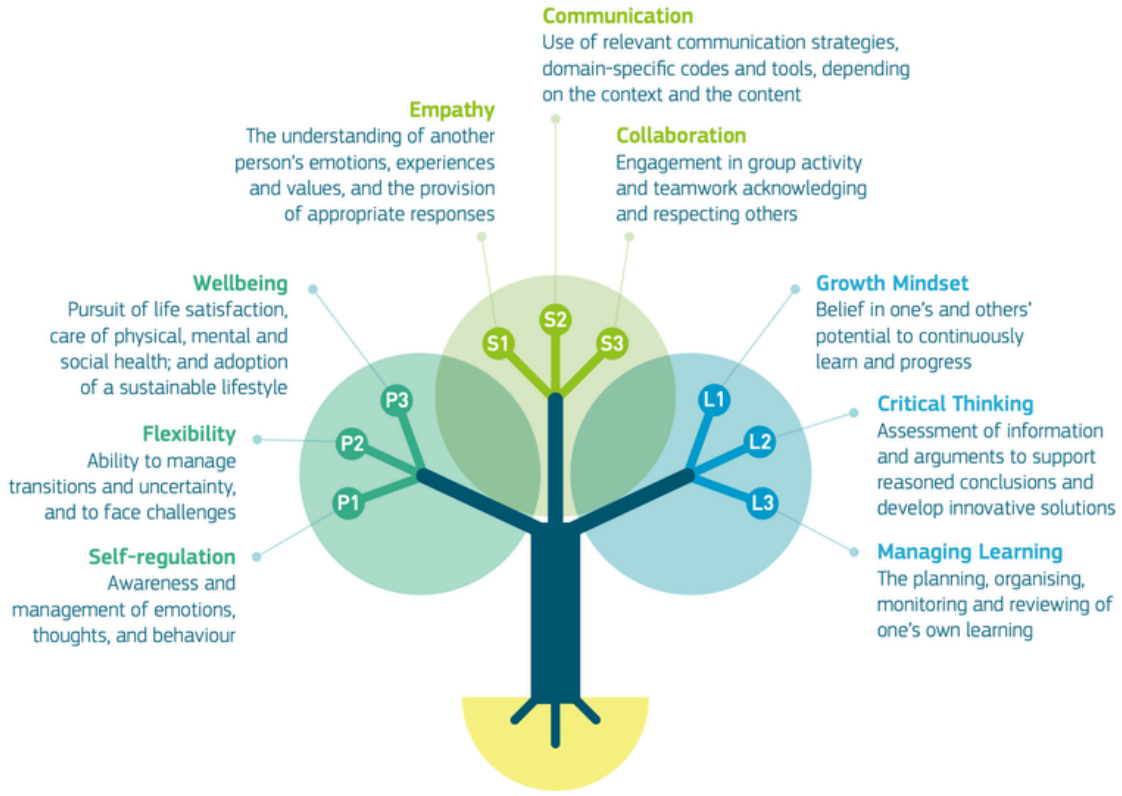


Figure 6. *The European Commission's LifeComp research framework for the development of personal, social, and learning to learn competences. The framework is structured as a tree with three main branches, each comprising three universal future competences: Personal Area (P): P1 Self-regulation: Awareness and management of emotions, thoughts, and behaviour. P2 Flexibility: Ability to manage transitions and uncertainty, and to face challenges. P3 Wellbeing: Pursuit of life satisfaction, care of physical, mental and social health; and adoption of a sustainable lifestyle. Social Area (S): S1 Empathy: The understanding of another person's emotions, experiences and values, and the provision of appropriate responses. S2 Communication: Use of relevant communication strategies, domain-specific codes and tools, depending on the context and the content. S3 Collaboration: Engagement in group activity and teamwork acknowledging and respecting others. Learning to Learn Area (L): L1 Growth Mindset: Belief in one's and others' potential to continuously learn and progress. L2 Critical Thinking: Assessment of information and arguments to support reasoned conclusions and develop innovative solutions. L3 Managing Learning: The planning, organising, monitoring and reviewing of one's own learning.* ***Source:*** *European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC). Retrieved from the report: "LifeComp: The European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence" (Sala, 2020).*

Appendix 7: Dupoto Nine Icon Framework for Learning Experiences

	Icon	Descriptor
	**Campfire**	**Connection & Collaboration** – Who are the people, mentors and communities that help us learn, share ideas and grow together?
	**Feathers**	**Wisdom & Reflection** – What knowledge, experiences and perspectives can we share, gather and apply to our journey?
	**River**	**Challenges & Adaptability** – What obstacles, changes or uncertainties must we navigate, and how can we move forward with confidence?
	**Mountains**	**Achievement & Ambition** – What have we accomplished so far, and what new heights are we striving to reach?
	**Spears & Shield**	**Skills & Values** – What strengths, tools and principles help us succeed while staying true to who we are?
	**Mammoth**	**Purpose & Vision** – What is our big challenge, opportunity or long-term goal that gives direction to our efforts?
	**Swamp**	**Barriers & Problem Solving** – Where are we stuck, and what creative approaches can help us overcome difficulties?
	**Tree**	**Growth & Development** – What knowledge, skills and experiences are we nurturing today to shape our future?
	**Village Hut**	**Belonging & Community** – How do our relationships, culture and shared values influence who we are and what we contribute?

Figure 7. *The Dupoto Nine Icon Framework provides a shared visual language for designing meaningful learning experiences. The framework connects curriculum, pedagogy, teaching and learning, learner behaviours, and environmental design into a single coherent approach. Each of the nine icons represents a distinct aspect of the learning journey, drawing on place-based metaphors from village knowledge systems (e.g. campfire, river, mountains) to shape how learning is experienced across curriculum design, classroom practice, staff development, student wellbeing, and the wider learning environment. Developed by Elfyn Wyn Jones as part of the Dupoto system and adapted from Anthony Willoughby's "Territory Mapping" methodology, the framework supports educators, school leaders, students, and designers in co-creating learning experiences that are authentic, connected, and purpose-driven.* ***Source****: Elfyn Wyn Jones, Dupoto Iconography Guide, personal archives, 2026. Used with permission.*

Appendix 8: The ASSK Curriculum Overview

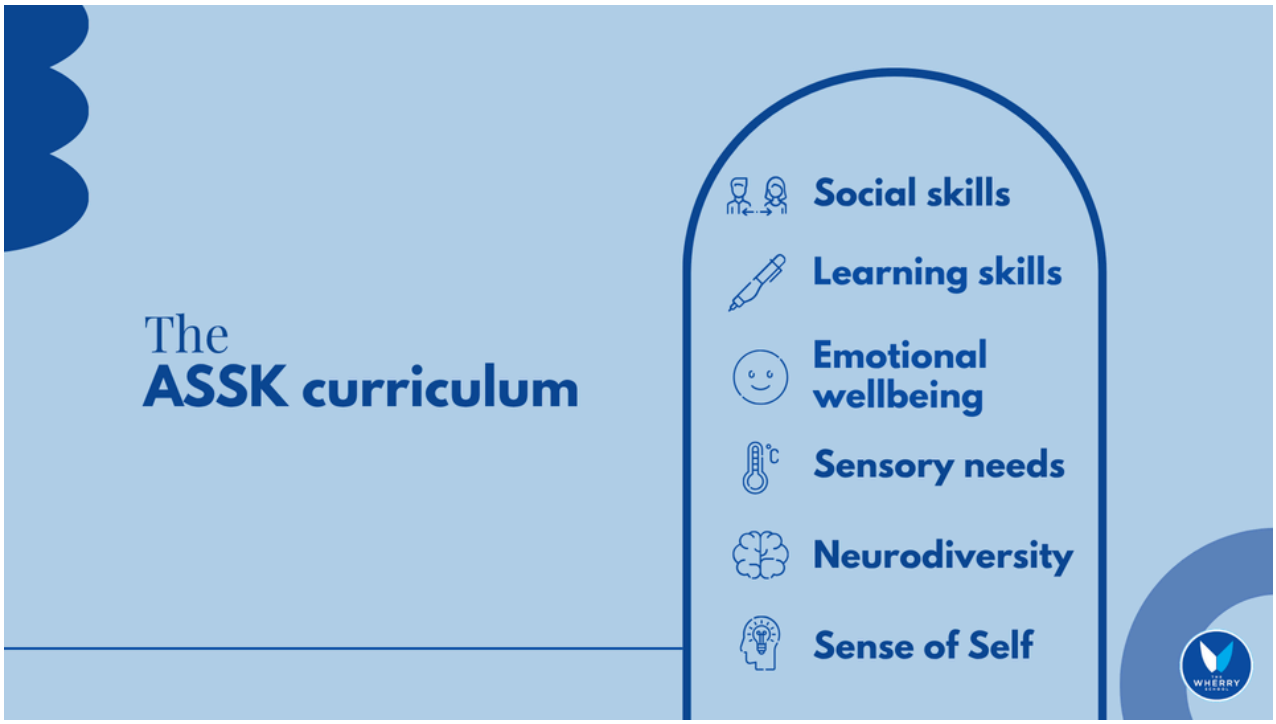


Figure 8. *This figure shows the ASSK curriculum, developed by teacher and PhD candidate Imogen Sanchez-Harvey at The Wherry School (Norwich, England). ASSK is a student-driven curriculum for autistic learners, focusing on six components: social skills, learning skills, emotional wellbeing, sensory needs, neurodiversity and sense of self. It teaches the neuroscience of autism alongside social, emotional and cognitive aspects to support self-understanding and self-advocacy.* ***Source****: Imogen Sanchez-Harvey, The Wherry School, Norwich, England, 2026. Used with permission.*

Appendix 9: The Futures Cycle

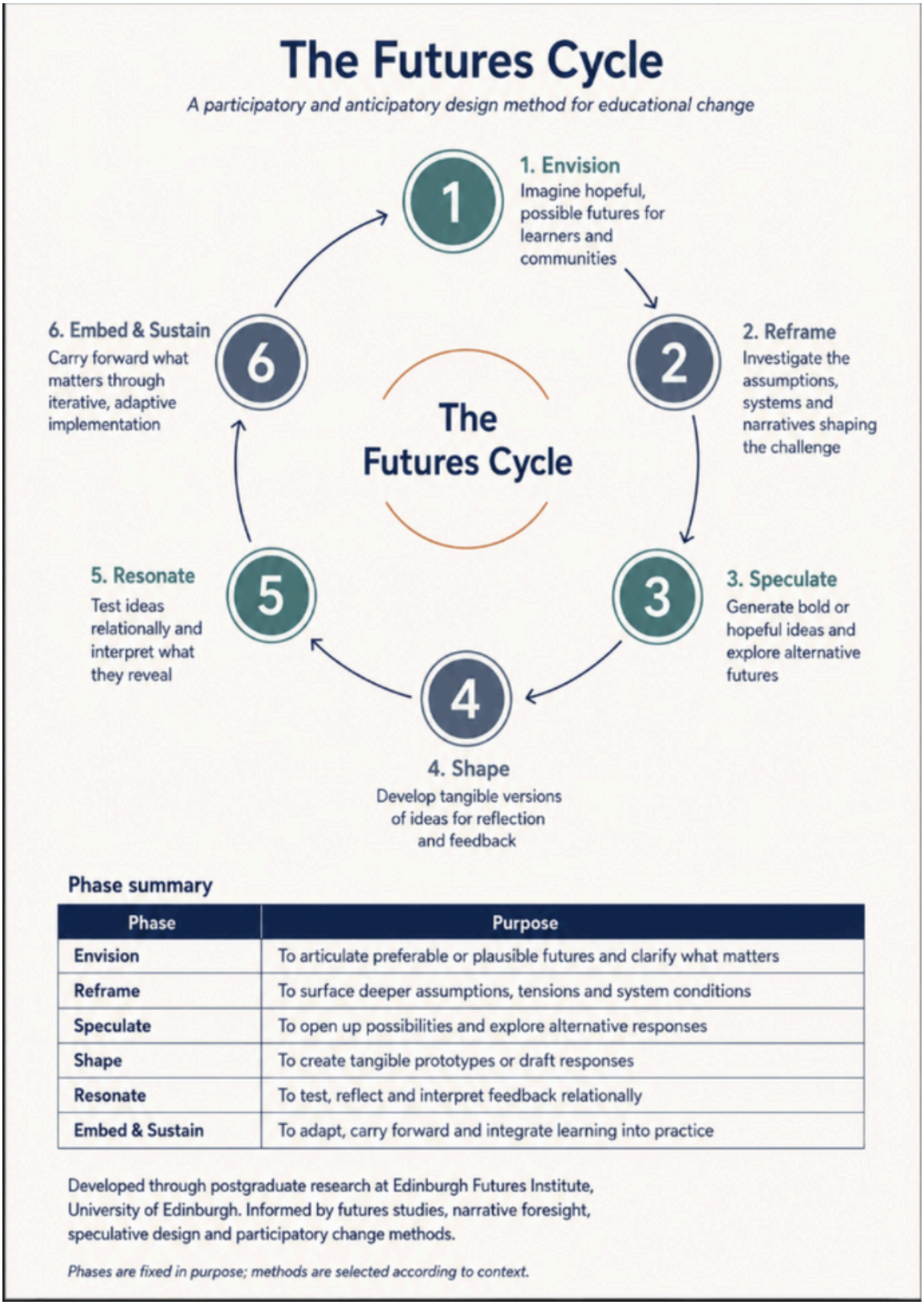


Figure 9. *The Futures Cycle is a participatory and anticipatory design method for educational change. It moves through six phases: Envision, Reframe, Speculate, Shape, Resonate, and Embed & Sustain.* ***Source:*** *Developed through postgraduate research at Edinburgh Futures Institute, University of Edinburgh. Informed by futures studies, narrative foresight, speculative design and participatory change methods.*

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