

# COVID-19 – The greatest Reset – some points for reflection.

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# Contents

1. COVID-19 as a macro-reset
2. What lies ahead
3. Skills development and employment
4. Provider range
5. Inequality in the training space
6. Digital disruptor
7. Reconceptualization of the qualifications model
8. Quality Assurance as an ineffective control tool in the system
9. Post- Covid-19 - A reset for skills development models

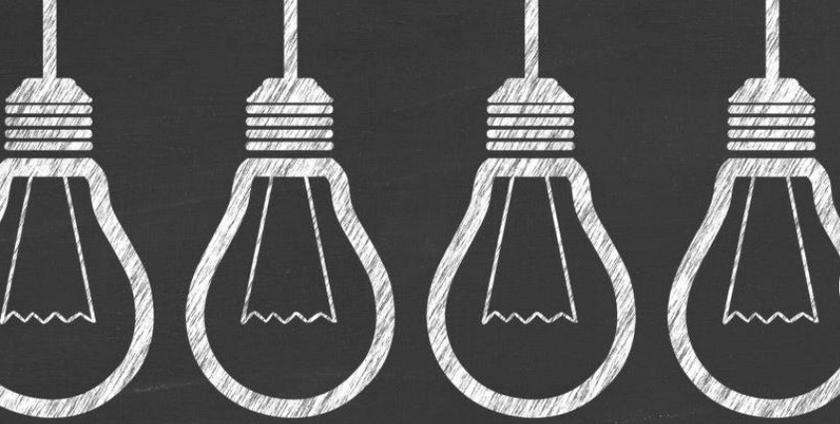
# 1. Corona as a macro-reset

- An **interdependent world** of deep systemic connectivity- all risks affect each other through a web of complex interactions.
- **Velocity** – everything now runs on fast forward than before, with richer cities moving faster than poorer ones. Corona is also progressing in break-neck speed making it impossible to catch up with it.
- **Complexity** – a pandemic is a complex adaptive system with many different components ( economic, psychological, biological, etc.) – complexity creates limitations to knowledge and understanding and overwhelms the capacities of politicians.
- A pandemic disrupts systems, patterns, paths and development – so has Covid -19.

# 2. What lies ahead

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- Unemployment situation bound to deteriorate further until a sustainable economic recovery begins.
- “Automation anxiety” is therefore set for a revival giving way to excessive pessimism because we human beings find it much easier to visualize what is disappearing than what is coming next
- What are the indications for future growth?
  - The green economy spans a range of possibilities from greener energy to ecotourism to the circular economy
  - The social economy spans other high-growth and job-creating areas in the fields of caregiving and personal services, education and health
  - Education is also an area of massive job creation, particularly when considering primary and secondary education, technical and vocational education and training, university and adult training together
  - Health, as the pandemic has demonstrated, requires much greater investment both in terms of infrastructure and innovation as well as human capital.
  - Governments likely to grow as they act as direction-setters and providing incentives for commercial innovation capacity through a fundamental rethinking of markets and their role in our economy and society
  - The technology sector to grow and become the primary tool that enables operations in all fields



# 3. Skills Development and employment

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- The genesis of the skills development discourse comes primarily from the Trades Development discourse in SA – process was mapped from industry to college
- As the need of growing targeted training for other occupations grew, same model of trades development was utilized
- Employment post-training always greatest when industry is closely working with the providers; e.g. Education, Health, Engineering, etc.
- Establishment of SETAs during a gap period when DoL training centres were closing – available money without a solid history of provider base and very weak connections to employment

# 4. Provider Range

- Large Public institutions like TVET college providing a wide range of programmes –general /technical/ vocational/ short courses and with Government as an Executive Authority
- Large Private organisations providing a number of programmes for a fee or funding and accountable to their boards and registered as a company.
- Medium-sized training organisations who have niche areas in the skills development area, established as for non-profit entities, and accountable to their boards
- Small entrepreneurs who look for funding opportunities in order to provide training. These tend to look for training partners once funds are acquired. The area of training focus is determined by the funds available.
- Providers who may be small or medium-sized, who operate for a fee, totally at the behest of the Head of the institution with no accountability to the country's regulatory system
- Employers

## 5. Inequality in the Skills development space

- Education outcomes are the most important asset required to reduce inequality and poverty
- Progress has been made in improving educational outcomes over the last 25 years
- The greatest difference seems to be between those who have been able to access post-school education and those who have not
- Post school education designed around limited interventions designs and leaving out multitudes of individuals
- Covid-19 has made the differences visible between those who could continue working during lockdown in the quiet space of their homes and those who could not even irk a living and had to queue for hand downs.

# 5. The digital disruption

- Pre-Covid-19, the 4IR has always been on everyone's lips, and the virus accelerated its demand in all areas
- Every Skills Provider suddenly confronted by the need to be digital – ASAP
- Provider's response has been slow and chaotic
- Limited history of developing online technical programmes in the country
- Infrastructure in the country very poor for Providers and Learners
- No guidance from the Regulator
- With the frantic panic from Providers, there is bound to be billions of online courses for all kind of things.

# 6. Provider choices of qualifications

- Interventions in the post-school system are about our concept of what skills development ought to be.
- There are generally 4 streams designed for Providers in the technical and vocational space:
  - A broad vocational education system that upgrades the general education of individuals whilst introducing them to the occupations (NVC)
  - A curriculum designed to support those already at work and aiming to develop their theoretical understanding of their areas of work (NATED)
  - A curriculum that purports to bring all components of a technical and vocational education in one place, namely: theory + practice + work experience (Occupational).
  - Short courses / skills programmes / part-qualifications
- Programme choices made by providers depend entirely on availability of funds
- Students struggle to access, go through, and exit the programmes for different reasons
- Workplace learning is difficult for all qualifications – it is not working
- The role of short courses underplayed in a system where qualifications acquisition is a dominant discourse.

# 7. Accreditation as an Albatross in the system

- Accreditation has been defined as a central function to engender quality in the system and to ensure that there is no proliferation of providers in the system.
- Providers do not like accreditation – but it is that thing they have to do in order to get funded.
- Accreditation is not liked by Quality Councils. Otherwise, why do they take such a long time to service providers?
- Who actually benefits from this exercise and how do we know if the country benefits from this service?



## 8. Post- Covid-19 - A reset for skills development models

- COVID-19 has exacerbated the inequalities that already existed in the country. Unemployment and Poverty in the increase
- Two Priorities in the country's developmental trajectory:
  - Investment in people
  - Strengthen institutional delivery ( National Development Plan Commission, 2020).
- QCTO has to locate itself in this framework and re-think how it is to contribute to this mandate. To be mindful of how varied the field it traverses is and not provide “one size fits all”

# Rethinking the model (continued)

- PEOPLE:
  - Being mindful of the range of individuals who require skills development interventions at all levels and being proactive in ensuring that the bottom is continuously taken care of appropriately to support livelihoods – *a rising tide lifts all boats*
- PROVIDERS:
  - Putting more focus on strengthening the provider base than the selection of the fittest. Support and monitor growth
- PROGRAMMES:
  - For a widening economy
  - For all types of needs in addition to qualifications in full time study and in public institutions
  - Interrogation of work experience learning requirement in all qualifications and to find alternatives

# Rethinking the model (continued)

- DIGITAL PROVISION:
  - The skills development space in a limbo in the establishment of the system
  - QCTO needs to take a lead in developing a platform to be utilized by providers in a common system (e.g. India National Skills Development Council).
- POST-SCHOOL COHERENCE
  - Need to strengthen the navigation of students into, within and out of the post-school system
  - Not only a QCTO responsibility, but a huge role to play