UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN
UWMILWAUKEE

Preparing for a changing world: scenario planning

Dr Shana Ponelis
Carnegie Capstone Conference, Kieviets Kroon
27-29 March 2019

Agenda

- Why scenario planning?

- What is scenario planning?

- How do you do scenario planning?

- What does scenario planning look like?
    - A few examples in higher education and/or libraries

2-

Why scenario planning?

- If you could look into the future, what might you see?

3

Why scenario planning?

- If you could look into the future, what might you see?
    - new industries, products, and services emerging from advances in IT
    - customers who expect world-class IT support
    - further increases in Internet-based communication and commerce
    - a global environment that is dynamic and unpredictable

4

Why scenario planning?

- If you could look into the future, what might you see?
  - new industries, products, and services emerging from advances in IT
  - customers who expect world-class IT support
  - further increases in Internet-based communication and commerce
  - a global environment that is dynamic and unpredictable

- What will shape the future?
    - **Change** in technology
    - **Change** in client/user expectations and demands
    - **Change!**

5

Why scenario planning?

- Libraries are facing a future of accelerating change:
  - Pervasive nature of the web
  - Financial pressures on libraries and their funding institutions
  - Perception that libraries no longer play a dominant role in the future of their institutions or communities (O'Connor & Sidorko, 2010)
  - ... ++

☞ We need to prepare for a changing world

6

What is scenario planning?

Types of futures	Driving forces	Types of thinking
Probable	Constants Trends	Definitive Scientific
Possible	Discontinuities Surprises	Speculative Imaginative
Preferable	Choices Images	Visionary Empowered

Source: King (1998)

7

What is scenario planning?

Types of futures	Driving forces	Types of thinking
Probable	Constants Trends	Definitive Scientific
Possible	Discontinuities Surprises	Speculative Imaginative
Preferable	Choices Images	Visionary Empowered

Source: King (1998)

- Continuous alignment of strategic direction with demands of environment is vital, particularly when speed of changes is rapid and scope extensive (O'Connor & Sidorko, 2010, p. 26)
- "… scenario method offers an escape from linear thinking on the future as an extension of the past" (Cairns & Wright, 2018, p. 81)
- Strategic planning without scenario planning often perpetuates the past (O'Connor & Sidorko, 2010, p. xii)

8

4

What is scenario planning?

Scenario methods:
- Have been used for several decades in government, by businesses, non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations, for example,
  - Shell
  - Anglo-American
- "Have particular value in exploring complex, ambiguous, and challenging problems facing society" (p. 7)
- Can be applied to achieve sustainable development in academic libraries (Bell, 1999)

9

Sources: Cairns & Wright (2018)

What is scenario planning?

Scenarios are:
- "Plausible stories about alternative [possible] futures … They look from the vantage point of the known past and the known present, into the unknown future. Some of the alternatives may be more likely than others. One or two may be almost inevitable." (Hannabuss 2001, p. 168-169)
- "stories that are constructed with informed views and knowledge ... allowing and cultivating new possibilities" (O'Connor & Sidorko, 2010, p. 2)
- Descriptions of future situations together with the progression of events leading from the base situation to the respective future situations (Godet 1987)
  - Situational – "snapshot" – descriptions of future situations
  - Developmental – "film" – train of events leading to a future

10

What is scenario planning?

Scenario planning:

- Seeks to straddle the need for certainty and the emergent property of complex systems.
- Attempts to anticipate possible futures in order to prepare for action as it unfolds.
- Does not describe a single future, but rather identifies multiple futures/viable options
- Provides a practical way to use what we know now, while calibrating the unknown to optimally inform future decision making
- Utilizes 2-4 plausible futures to manage through the high degree of uncertainty produced from complex systems, so some level of reasonably confident action can be taken.

11   Sources: Cronje (2017), Hannabus (2001), O'Connor & Sidorko (2010)

How do you do scenario planning?

Identify key factors	Identify critical uncertainties	Develop scenarios	Evaluate implications

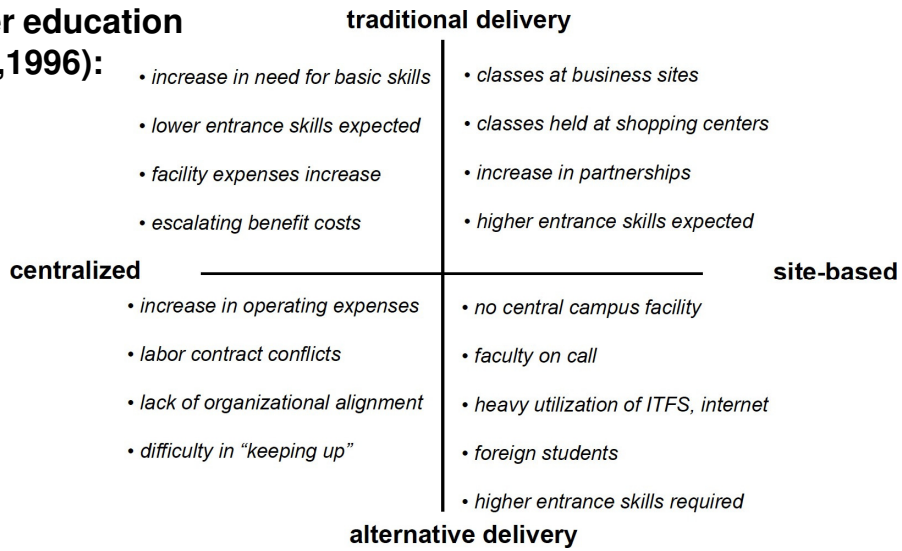|			
• Identify decisions and choices will need to be made in the future • Identify internal and external driving forces that can impact future decisions. • Involve and leverage a wide spectrum of stakeholders for a broad range perspectives	• Collect information on signals, changes, and trends • Identify key criteria to guide evaluation (i.e., high/low or more/ less importance, certainty, frequency)	• Define 3-4 most plausible scenarios • Discuss the likelihood of each scenario • Describe the future realities of each scenario • Flesh out the story for each scenario as if it has already happened. Be inspired by the best scenarios and shudder at the worst ones • Use metaphors or short names to describe end-state succinctly and capture attention	• Identify and evaluate the strategic choices and implications for each scenario • Confirm the future scenario(s) that will be used to inform future decisions • Identify 3-5 strategies for each scenario. Identify metrics or indicators that can show signs of progress or concern related to these scenarios.

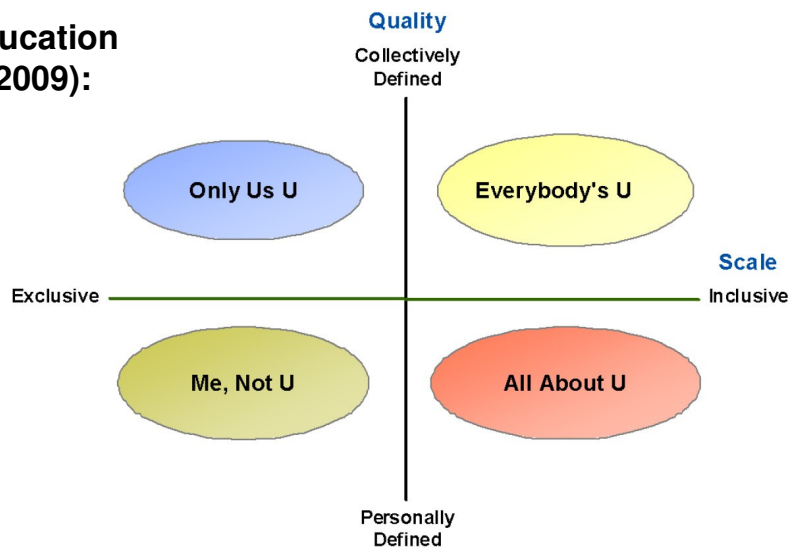## What does scenario planning look like?

Higher education (Riley,1996):

traditional delivery

• increase in need for basic skills	• classes at business sites
• lower entrance skills expected	• classes held at shopping centers
• facility expenses increase	• increase in partnerships
• escalating benefit costs	• higher entrance skills expected

centralized ──────────────────────── **site-based**

• increase in operating expenses	• no central campus facility
• labor contract conflicts	• faculty on call
• lack of organizational alignment	• heavy utilization of ITFS, internet
• difficulty in "keeping up"	• foreign students
	• higher entrance skills required

alternative delivery

13-   Source: Rieley, J. B. (1996). Scenario Planning in Higher Education.

What does scenario planning look like?

Higher education (Gartner, 2009):

Quality
Collectively Defined

Only Us U   Everybody's U

Scale
Exclusive ──────────────────── Inclusive

Me, Not U   All About U
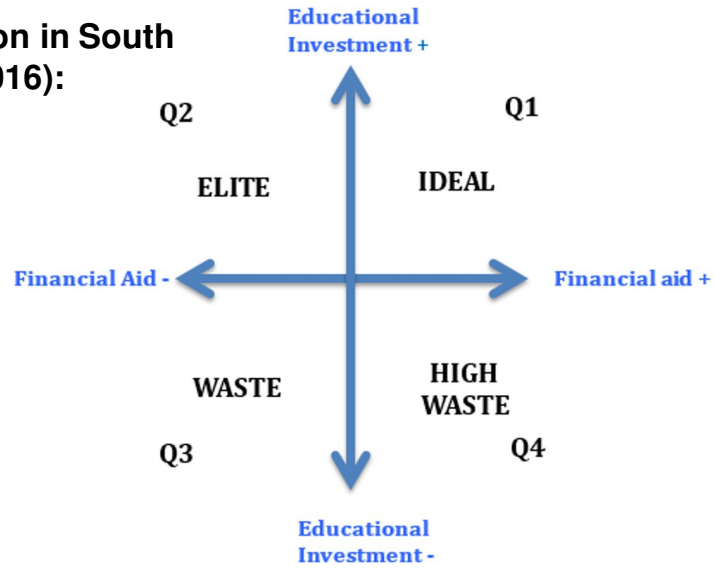
Personally Defined

Source: Gartner (September 2009)

Source: Lowendahl, J-M, & Harris, M. (2009). *Four 'Business Model' Scenarios for Higher Education: An Introduction to Strategic Planning Through Storytelling.* Gartner Research.
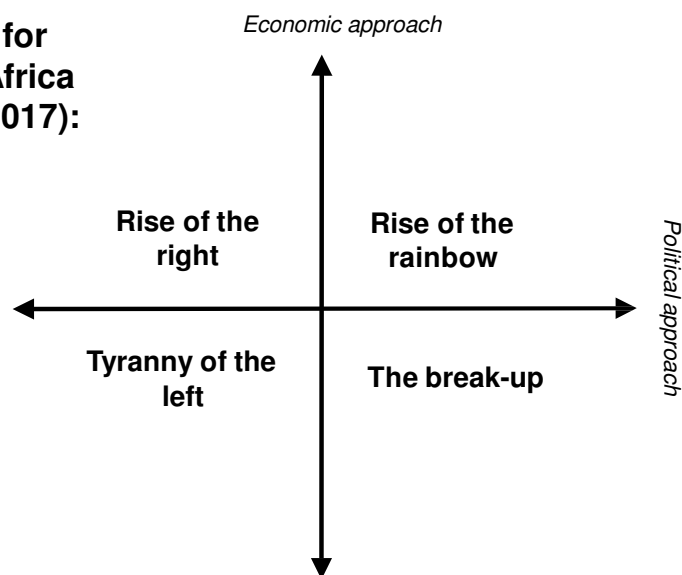
What does scenario planning look like?

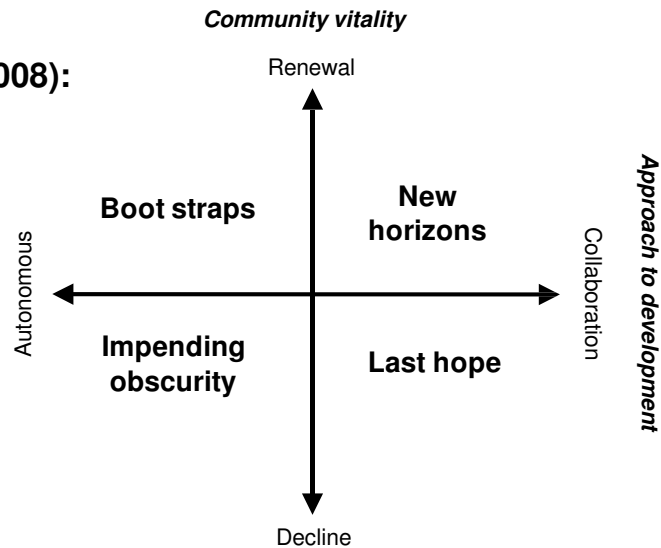**Higher education in South Africa (Shay, 2016):**

Educational Investment +

Q2

ELITE

Q1

IDEAL

Financial Aid -   Financial aid +

WASTE

HIGH WASTE

Q3

Q4

Educational Investment -

Source: https://theconversation₁.₅c-om/higher-education-in-south-africa-hangs-in-the-balance-here-are-four-scenarios-63233

What does scenario planning look like?

Country-context, for example, South Africa in 2030 (Cronje, 2017):

Economic approach

Rise of the right

Rise of the rainbow

Political approach

Tyranny of the left

The break-up

16-

What does scenario planning look like?

**Nebraska public
libraries (Busch, 2008):**

Community vitality

Renewal

Boot straps

**New
horizons**

Autonomous

Collaboration

Approach to development

**Impending
obscurity**

Last hope

Decline

17-

What does scenario planning look like?

Academic libraries (2012):

Scenario 1: "It seems likely that the providers of unbundled degrees, whether primarily OER like MITx or profit-driven like StraighterLine, would have little need for physical libraries. For one thing, no library means significant cost saving which helps keep tuition low or non-existent. These organizations have no research agendas nor do they seek grants, so there would be no faculty needing huge book and journal collections. Just as the case is now with some online higher education providers, **library services, if available, are marginal**. They can always purchase access to a set of resources that would adequately qualify for whatever passes as accreditation. They might even go to the trouble to pay a librarian to look after all of it for them."

Source: https://educationfutures.com/blog/post/the-future-of-academic-libraries-an-interview-with-steven-j-bell
18-

Scenario 2: "Another scenario might involve unbundled academic libraries that would offer different types of resources and services. A student might connect with one library for help with a question on ancient Rome, but contact another depending on the subject matter or the service needed. This might involve some **extended version of resource sharing where academic libraries would serve more than their own local community**. We do that now, but think of it on a much larger scale and for much more than just content sharing. Who pays for it? Perhaps the students, who might pay a fee to access the services and content on a per-use basis, or they might get "library credits" from the institution providing their unbundled course that could be used to obtain service at a participating library. An unbundled system of higher education might require academic librarians to think more entrepreneurially about how they operate."

How do you do scenario planning?

- Need to be look beyond what is expected, push boundaries to consider the unthinkable, radical alternatives.
  - Ought to challenge conventional wisdom about the future of the organization [that is, challenge what is considered implausible]
- Should have a basis in fact but move rapidly beyond them.
- In contrast to forecasting that provides *one* future word, the goal of scenario planning is to provide 2-4 different sets of answers to inform future decision making.
  - Should have "decision-making utility," that is, the ability to provide insight and help understand an issue/decision
- A strategy is built around each of the 2-4 futures and there are early indicators developed around each strategy to enact contingencies.
- The benefit is, when the changes occur, organization is prepared for a host of future possibilities (have multiple fall-back options) rather than focusing on one projected reality.

19   Source: Cronje (2017)

Parting thoughts

"Scenario planning enables organizations to be better prepared for an uncertain future and to assess the robustness of current strategies and plans across a range of possible and plausible futures." (Cairns & Wright, 2018, p. 81)

Parting thoughts

"[The future] is what happens while you are busy making [strategic] plans."

– with apologies to John Lennon

Page -21-

Comments? Questions?

Dr Shana Ponelis

☎ +1-414-229-2514

⌨ ponelis@uwm.edu

References

1. Bell, S. J. (1999). Using the scenario approach for achieving sustainable development in academic libraries. Available at: http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/conferences/pdf/bell99.pdf (accessed March 28, 2019).
2. Busch, N. (1998). Preparing Librarians for the Twenty-First Century. In: Joan Giesecke (Ed.), *Scenario Planning for Libraries*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
3. Cairns, G. and Wright, G. (2018). *Scenario thinking: preparing your organization for the future in an unpredictable world*. Second edition. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
4. Cronje, F. (2017). *A Time Traveller's Guide to South Africa in 2030*. Tafelberg.
5. Hannabus, S. (2001). Scenario planning for libraries. *Library Management*, 22, 4/5, 168-176.
6. King, J. (1998). Scenario planning: Powerful Tools for Thinking of Alternatives. In: Joan Giesecke (Ed.), *Scenario Planning for Libraries*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
7. O'Connor, S., & Au, L. (2009). Steering a Future Through Scenarios: Into the Academic Library of the Future. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship,* 35(1), 57-64.
8. O'Connor, S., & Sidorko, P. (2010). *Imagine your library's future: Scenario planning for libraries and information organisations*. Oxford, UK: Chandos Publishing.

23-

Recommended reading

1. Ringland, G. (1998). Scenario Planning: Managing for the Future. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

2. Staley, D. J. and Malenfant, K. J. (2010). *Futures Thinking for Academic Librarians: Higher Education in 2025*. Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL). Retrieved from: http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/issues/value/futures2025.pdf (accessed February 24, 2019).

24-