

# Schools must be made into places THAT WORK

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Several months after the publication of "Think. Order. Form. *Forwards*", COVID-19 threw the world into crisis. Crises force us to act. Crises break our routines and provide opportunities to stop and notice what really matters. Crises can unleash creativity and our inherent capacity for innovation, as evidenced by how resourceful many teachers have become in the wake of school closures. Distance learning has quickly developed into a catalyst for digitalisation. Roles are changing along the way, opportunities for individualisation are becoming clearer and being exploited, collaboration and mutual support are being put to the test again.

**"Distance learning has quickly developed into a catalyst for digitalisation. Roles are changing along the way, opportunities for individualisation are becoming clearer and being exploited, collaboration and mutual support are being put to the test again. At the same time, it is now glaringly apparent just how enormous the inequalities of opportunity in our education system are for learners from different backgrounds."**

At the same time, it is now glaringly apparent just how enormous the inequalities of opportunity in our education system are for learners from different backgrounds. So what a wonderful invitation "Think. Order. Form. *Forwards*" is in these circumstances. Forward thinking, lateral thinking, big thinking and thinking about the future with intellect, emotional intelligence and courage is very much the order of the day.

### CORONAVIRUS EDUCATION POLICY: DO OLD HABITS DIE HARD?

Unfortunately, a commensurately forward-looking mindset is not a feature of current educational policy.

Instead of using the crisis to take steps towards the much needed transformation of the education system, the re-opening of schools is focussed strongly on school-leaving examinations in traditional formats. This illustrates just how staunchly imprisoned in old models education policy still is. Children sitting *Abitur* (A-level) examinations, wearing face masks and spaced far apart, all to prepare them for the next year, the next phase – what madness is this, considering the existential challenges we face in the 21st century? I am deeply shocked, because the paradigm shift objectives stated in the national Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) action plan stand in stark contrast to the current measures, which are modelled on old systems.

### "FREE DAY": TIME TO LOOK FORWARD

Ideas for innovation in schooling, as presented in my contribution to the book "Think. Order. Form. *Forwards*" and to which there was a clear commitment in the policies of the ESD plan, appear to have been pushed into the background. It is, therefore, all the more encouraging that many schools are sticking to their guns and introducing future-oriented schemes. The "FREE DAY" concept, which was developed by the *Schule im Aufbruch* initiative as a specific format for school transformation, is currently striking a significant chord. Here, the idea is to establish one day in the week where at least four hours are reserved in the timetable for discussing future-related issues. This allows students to grapple with questions and topics that are relevant to them in mixed-age interest groups, to acquire forward-looking knowledge outside of any reference frameworks, to take action and to connect with NGOs or people with varying expertise. Twelve schools across several federal states are introducing a "FREE DAY" beginning in the new academic year, proving that it is possible and showing how it can be achieved. The concept works equally well during the pandemic, as the vision workshops planned in

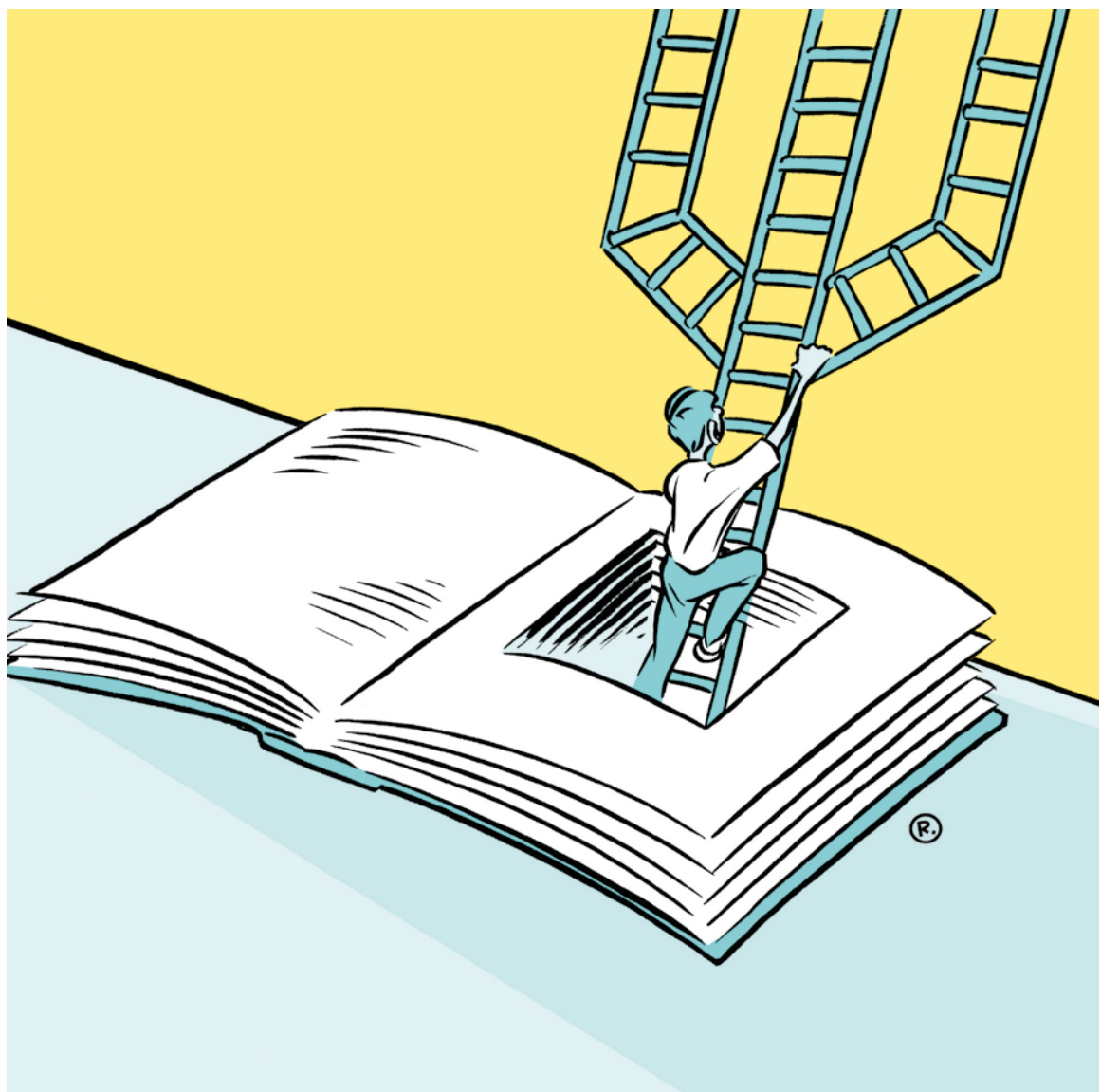
schools are being replaced by a series of "FREE DAY" digital events.

Meanwhile, new things are also happening at UNESCO. The global framework on Education for Sustainable Development 2030 (ESD for 2030), successor to the Global Action Programme, was adopted in November 2019. This framework calls very clearly for greater integration of young people into processes of social transformation, the motto being "Learning to Transform the World". To achieve this, spaces are needed where youngsters have the freedom to experiment with new, disruptive ideas and where there is a forum for and recognition of their potential as key stakeholders in overcoming the challenges of this transformation.

#### SCHOOLS OF TOMORROW: PLACES OF WORK AND PLACES THAT WORK

How wonderful. A "FREE DAY" offers scope for precisely this. Alfred Herrhausen gave us the idea that *"a company which is evolving needs something of a mini cultural revolution every 15 to 20 years."* The "FREE DAY" has this potential. A "FREE DAY" for future

thinking provides scope for inventive, pioneering ideas and solutions, drives creativity and innovation, creates a forum for designing the new things that want to enter the world. A "FREE DAY" allows passions and talents to develop, potential to be discovered and improved. Every school can introduce a "FREE DAY". In so doing, schools become places OF WORK, places THAT WORK and places of ACTION for globally responsible deeds. And if civil society, universities and companies were also to draw on a "FREE DAY" as a source of inspiration, we would be able to grow together effectively as a society, taking meaningful, responsible action for the future.





## **IMPRINT**

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