

FUTURE-READY LEADERSHIP: DRIVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

**The Role of Leadership in Strengthening
Foresight**

By

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Presentation Outline



- African Proverbs
- Strategic Foresight: Concept and Its Importance
- The Role of Leadership in Strengthening Foresight
- Agile and Adaptive Leadership
- Lessons from Practice

African Proverbs



The eye of the master
does more work than
both his hands

Ghanian
Proverb

Meaning:

- The proverb emphasizes the importance of vision in leadership
- Effective leaders are those who can foresee potential challenges and opportunities

He who does not look
ahead always remains
behind

Swahili proverb

Meaning:

- A leader who fails to anticipate the future trends and changes will inevitably fall behind

Strategic Foresight: Concept and Its Importance



- Structured and systematic approach of exploring plausible futures to anticipate and better prepare for change - [OECD 2014](#)
- A systematic and collaborative way of analyzing different possible futures - [European Commission](#)
- Provides a set of tools and methods for exploring the future, giving us confidence to face uncertainty of the future and ability to adopt

- Strategic foresight offers organizations the ability to anticipate change rather than simply react to it
- Vecchiato, 2012; Rohrbeck et al., 2015.
- Strategic foresight empowers organizations to make wiser long-term decisions by systematically exploring potential futures and connecting those insights to today's strategies.

- However foresight often fails to achieve its full potential because many initiatives remain detached from core decision-making, appearing as isolated projects or theoretical exercises with little influence on strategy - [Iden, Methlie, & Christensen, 2017](#).
- This disconnect limits foresight's capacity to drive meaningful impact.

The Role of Leadership

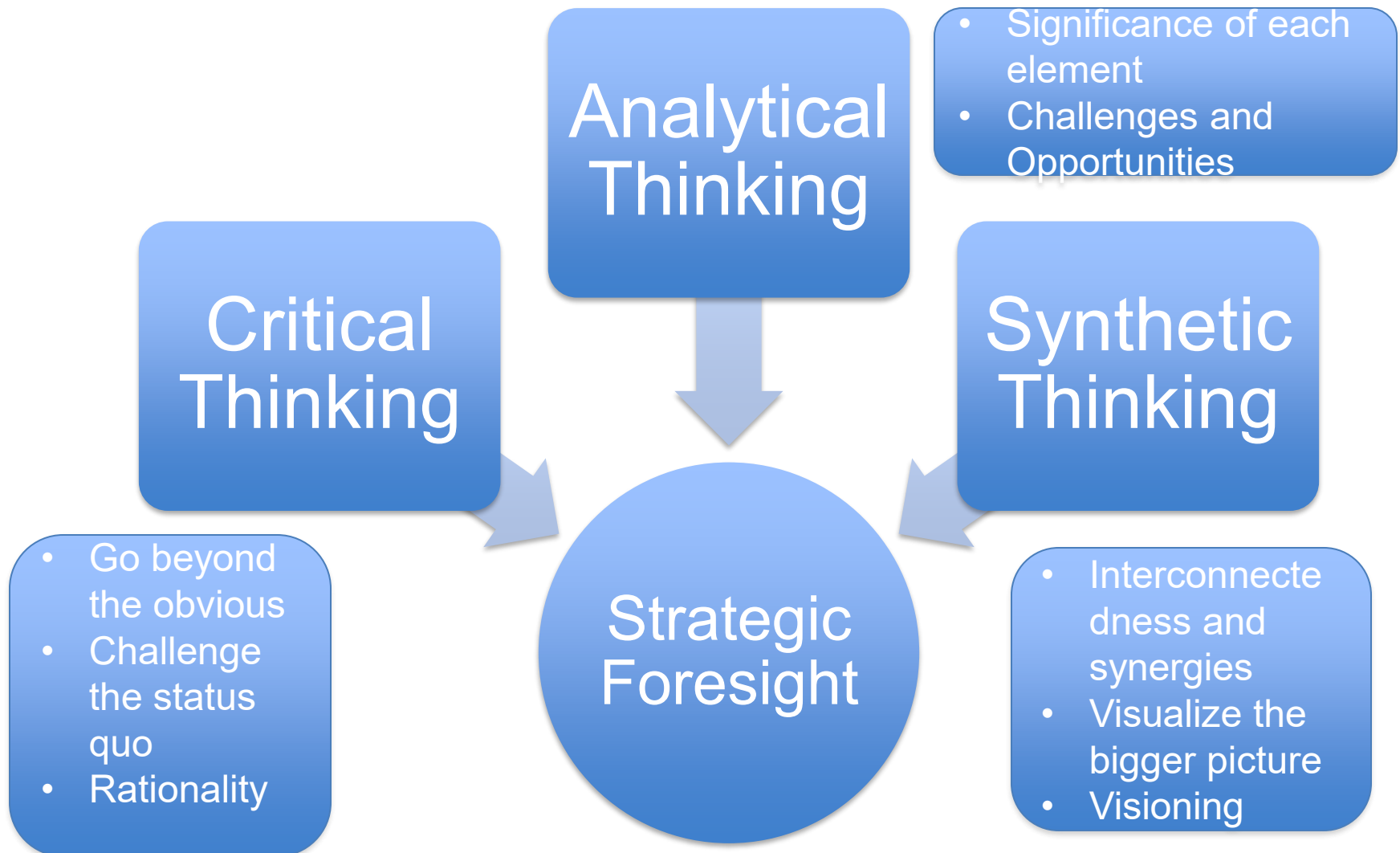


- Leadership provides the critical bridge between foresight and strategy. Leaders have the authority and responsibility to turn foresight insights into strategic priorities.
- By allocating resources, legitimizing future-oriented thinking, and embedding foresight into governance systems, leaders ensure that foresight becomes a living capability rather than an occasional exercise (Burke, 2021).

- Leadership is the decisive force that transforms foresight from an abstract exercise into a tangible organizational capability.
- Leaders set the direction, mobilize resources, embed foresight into daily routines, and foster a culture that is prepared to act on signals from the future.
- Fundamentally, it involves exploring different potential futures to inform better decisions today. Unlike traditional forecasting, which often simply extends current trends, foresight recognizes that the future is uncertain.

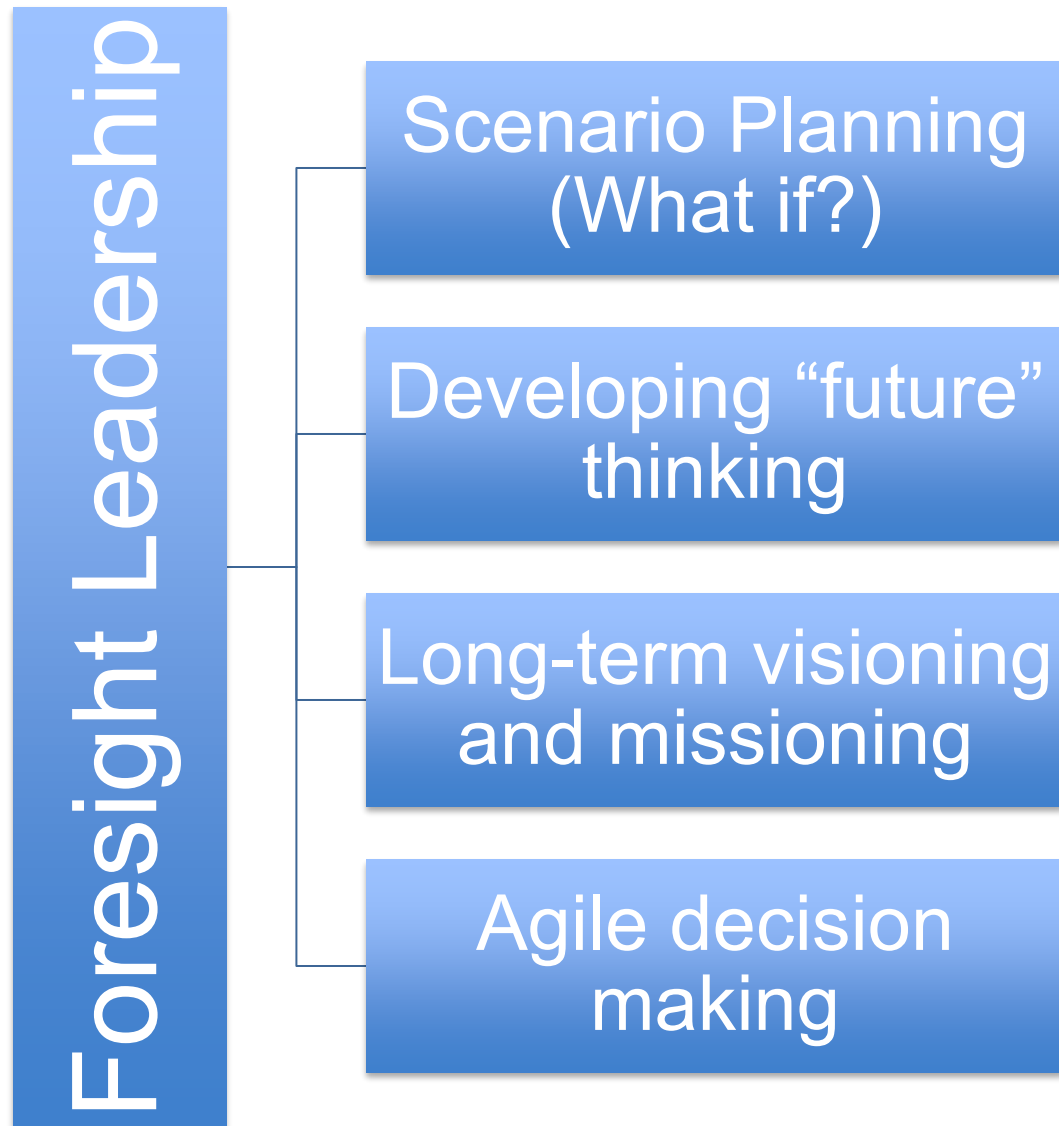
- Instead of trying to predict exactly what will happen, it helps Leaders prepare for a variety of possibilities, enabling them to adapt and act wisely regardless of the outcome (Slaughter, 1997; Vecchiato, 2012).
- For foresight to deliver real value, leaders must actively institutionalize it, moving it from the periphery to the core of strategic decision-making

Anchoring Strategic Foresight



- VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) and TUNA (turbulence, uncertainty, novelty, and ambiguity) require leaders to think critically, analytically and synthetically to create resilient and agile institutions
- Leaders need to anticipate surprises, adapt quickly, and spot opportunities in the midst of disruption.
- Foresight encourages organizations to learn and grow.
- By challenging long-held beliefs and sparking open conversations, it brings together different viewpoints and helps teams see the bigger picture (Weick, 1995).

Agile and Adaptive Leadership



Characteristics of Agile Leadership



Flexibility and
Responsiveness

Teamwork and
Communication

Agile
Leadership

Continuous
Improvement

Iterative Processes

Lessons from Practice: Kenyan Public-Sector Case Studies



- **Vision 2030:** National Foresight in Action. Kenya's long-term development blueprint, Vision 2030, transformed foresight into national governance. Leadership established the Vision 2030 Delivery Secretariat and linked five-year Medium-Term Plans directly to the national vision. This alignment institutionalized foresight at the heart of Kenya's planning system (Government of Kenya, 2007).
- *Lesson: Long-term visions must be backed by delivery structures and anchored in short- and medium-term plans.*

- **County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs):** Localizing Foresight. Counties are required to produce five-year CIDPs that align local priorities with national goals. Governors and county executives lead consultations and scenario planning processes, ensuring that foresight is localized to issues such as climate resilience, infrastructure, and livelihoods.
- *Lesson: Leaders must adapt foresight to local realities and involve diverse stakeholders to build legitimacy and ownership.*

- **Kenya School of Government (KSG):** Building Foresight Capability. KSG incorporates foresight into its leadership training programs, equipping senior public managers with tools for horizon scanning and scenario analysis. These programs expand the pool of leaders capable of embedding foresight into their organizations.
- *Lesson: Investing in leadership training strengthens foresight capabilities across government and ensures sustainability.*

- **COVID-19 Response:** Applied Contingency Foresight. The establishment of the National Emergency Response Committee during the pandemic demonstrated how leadership operationalizes foresight under pressure. Leaders relied on contingency planning to introduce rapid measures, such as travel restrictions and relief programs, underscoring the value of agility in crises (Ministry of Health, 2020).
- *Lesson: Leaders must institutionalize contingency triggers and embed post-crisis learning into future foresight cycles.*

CONCLUSION



- Strategic foresight is indispensable in navigating uncertainty, but it is leadership that ensures foresight becomes a true organizational capability.
- Leaders not only endorse foresight but actively weave it into vision, governance, processes, resources, and culture.
- The Kenyan experience demonstrates how foresight can be institutionalized at both national and local levels, integrated into leadership development, and applied in moments of crisis.

THANK YOU