Title: Perceptions of Risks to Elite Secondary School Education in South Africa.

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Abstract

This study engages with the most important risks facing quality education in elite secondary schools in South Africa. It adopts a critical realist perspective that emphasises the importance of perceptions, as they shape the decisions and actions of those faced with risks. Through the use of surveys and in-depth semi-structured interviews, perceptions of a wide range of risks were explored: ranging from classrooms, to schools and their social contexts, to national and global political and economic factors. The perceptions of risks of different participants in this research varied considerably: with risk prioritisation tending to correspond to the risks a respondent was most directly dealing with. Several key risk themes emerged, including: the Middle Class squeeze; Race, Transformation and Political Vulnerability; Competition and the Neo-Liberal Order; Innovation and Change vs Continuity; and Fragmentation, Identity, and Social Capital. Further research is needed to aid decisions by practitioners around the specific requirements of 21st century education, as well as to find solutions to re-shape the political economy of quality teacher supply.

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List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress Party
BRICS	Association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (SA)
CPI	Consumer Price Index (SA) - official rate of inflation
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters Party
IEB	Independent Examinations Board (SA)
ISASA	Independent Schools Association of South Africa
NARIC	National Agency for the Recognition and Comparison of international qualifications & skills (UK)
NCTL	National College for Teaching and Leadership (UK)
NSC	National Senior Certificate (SA) - government schools final examination
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SAQMEQ	The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

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Chapter 1: Rationale, Context, Research Aims

Below in Chapter One the rationale, and context of the research are introduced. Chapter Two is a review of relevant literature pertaining to definitions and theories of risk, as well as risks in education, leading to specific research aims and questions. Chapter Three explicates the methods used in this research. Chapter Four sets out the findings from both surveys and in-depth interviews, while Chapter Five contains discussion of these results. Finally, Chapter Six presents conclusions of the research.

1. Rationale

1.1. Risks and Perceptions

Effectively identifying, assessing, and developing strategies to deal with risks (Clark, 2001; PSLA, 2009), is crucial for coping with uncertainties, and allowing an organisation to plan effectively for the future (Accounting Tools, 2018). Risks may threaten the survival of an organisation, and risk management has therefore become a significant industry of its own (CareersinAudit, 2013). Key to managing risks is assessing both the likelihood and potential impact of risks that are identified (Accounting Tools, 2018; NCTL, 2018; PSLA, 2009; Zurich Municipal, 2015a). However, "within a given social system, different experiences, cultural values and beliefs give rise to different perceptions of risk factors" (Von Kotze, 1999). To better understand decision-making within schools, in which risks can be important determinants, it is vital to analyse the risks that these schools perceive themselves to be facing. Based on a critical realist framework (see Chapter 3 - Methods), this research aims to explore perceptions among a range of key stakeholders in elite secondary school education in South Africa (SA), of the most important risks to high quality education in their schools, and by implication, among elite schools across the country.

1.2. Elite Secondary Schools in SA

Although the OECD average enrolment in private schools that are independent of government funding is only slightly more than 4% (OECD, 2017), in the developing world where governments may be failing to deliver services, private sector provision of education has grown very rapidly (Edwards, 2017). While there are a small number of high-performing state secondary schools in SA, typically referred to as 'former- Model C' schools (that were only for white children under apartheid), these schools are very much under the control of the government, and likely to be increasingly so as legislation is being tabled that will remove the significant independent powers of their governing bodies (Mabuza, 2017) – at which point the ability of even these schools to

act on or consider risks may be directly constrained by government policy. Independent schools have considerably more autonomy, including fairly significant curriculum and pedagogical autonomy, until the final two years when the focus is on preparation for high-stakes final examinations that determine whether students are likely to be able to attend university and therefore significantly affect their life-chances and parents' perceptions of their return on investment in their children's education (Southall, 2016b). Among the private schools in developing countries and particularly in SA, the risks faced by low cost private schools and elite private schools are somewhat different. For low-cost schools, the most pressing issues may be economic survival, including attracting and retaining sufficient enrolment numbers, and basic quality of education provision (Sulaiman, 2014). Elite private schools also face additional pressures, identified in the literature, because of their high visibility and perceived elite status. This research therefore focuses specifically on elite independent secondary schools, defined in this study as: private schools perceived to be of very high quality and prestige within the country, charging substantial fees in local terms (Lewin & Sayed, 2005), often with relatively longer traditions, significant excess demand for places (waiting lists), and high average academic outcomes for students, most of whom are local in origin (thereby excluding 'international' schools). While they may be relatively financially stable and well-established, and theoretically free of control by state education departments, they are still subject to a significant number and wide variety of potential risks to delivering quality education. As explained below, the risks to education in South Africa are particularly diverse and, in some cases, acute, because of wider socio-economic and political pressures, although many of the risks are likely to also be experienced in elite education in other similar developing countries.

2. Context

2.1. Education in South Africa

South Africa is an almost completely economically unequal country: its Gini Coefficient[1] rises from 0.7 for income to 0.95 when wealth is factored in (Orthofer, 2016; The Economist, 2014). In 2015, with a population of over 50 million people, 45.5% of households in SA received some form of social grant (family or child payment, old age pension, disability benefit) (Stats SA, 2016), while in the same year, less than five million people (10% of the population) paid any form of personal income tax (Makou, 2017). However, the divide between haves and have-nots may now be somewhat less racialised than it was under apartheid: according to Cape Town

[1] A commonly used measure of income or wealth inequality in a country – with zero being perfect equality and 1 complete inequality.

University marketing professor John Simpson, in 2016 the black middle class had tripled to nearly six million people (while the white middle class shrank slightly to 2.6 million) and among the black middle class about 70% sent their children to ex Model-C fee-paying government schools or to private schools, and 78% were not happy with the standard of education in government schools (Brown, 2016). Interestingly, Simpson also predicted that growth of the black middle class in SA would slow down due to lack of access to quality education (Ibid). Dissatisfaction with SA's government-funded education system is not surprising given its poor performance: despite allocating to education approximately 19% of total government expenditure in 2014 (UNESCO Statistics, 2017), the results in literacy and numeracy are some of the worst in the world (The Economist, 2017), with the most recent PIRLS assessment showing that "78% of South African Grade 4 students can't read" (Spaull & Carel, 2017). Social inequality in SA is reproduced even between state schools, with the wealthier and better resourced government schools tending to have better teachers: a 2007 SACMEQ review of teacher capability showed that the worst performing 20% of Grade 6 teachers scored lower on the same mathematics test than the best performing 5% of Grade 6 pupils (Spaull, 2013, p. 5).

The South African Schools Act of 1996, legislated to reform the national public education system after the end of apartheid, was intended to allow for both democratic participation and localised decision-making and accountability of schools to their communities, and to prevent flight of wealthier middle-class white parents and students from government schools at a time when public resources were extremely limited (Fiske & Ladd, 2005; Hofmeyr, 2000). Controversially, this included schools charging compulsory fees to parents in all but the lowest income groups. In reality, community participation in school governing bodies (SGB's) in lower income areas was problematic, as parents typically lacked sufficient knowledge, skills and free time, to adequately oversee school policies, finances, and hiring of teachers (Chaka, 2005). This resulted in continued or worsening state school dysfunction, which in turn motivated many parents to move their children either to more expensive, better resourced state schools (Sekete, Shilubane, & Moila, 2001), or into private schools, and SA has experienced major growth in private schools: predominantly catering to the expansion of the middle class but also with a proliferation in 'low cost' private schools (England, 2012; Vally, 2017). While there were 1,570 independent schools in SA in 2012 (DBE, 2013), in five years to 2017 this had increased by 25%, to 1,966 schools (DBE, 2018). The total size of the private school sector remains relatively small by international standards, which suggests that allowing stratification among state schools may have actually worked as a strategy to prevent flight of middle class children out of the state schooling system

(Lewin & Sayed, 2005). For a comprehensive portrait of the attempted transformation of SA's education system after the collapse of apartheid, refer to Fiske & Ladd's "Elusive Equity" (2005), and for specific introduction to independent schooling in SA refer to Lewin and Sayed's (2005) work on Non-Government Secondary Schooling.

2.2. Elite Private Schools in SA

There are a significant number of prestigious private schools in South Africa charging fees which are substantial in comparison to local earnings (Business Tech, 2017). While lists of the most expensive schools are published regularly by the media, comprehensive data on fees charged by private schools are very difficult to come by: Lewin and Sayed's (2005) survey suggested that up to 21% of private schools were 'elite', which they defined as charging the highest band of fees, however their research sample included as many schools for which data was missing as for schools included in the 21% charging the highest fees. The elite schools are perceived to be of a relatively high standard, indeed many South African private schools also welcome and even market to students and parents from the rest of Africa. However, SA's independent schools have not been exempt from the perils of grade inflation that have proved rampant in the state sector (Business Tech, 2015), because the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) is required to teach the same final CAPS curriculum as the National Senior Certificate (NSC) and its examination questions and marking are both subject to inspection by the national schools oversight body, Umalusi, and in addition, public universities may not officially distinguish between examining bodies in their admissions processes (despite evidence that IEB students have better graduation rates once at university) (IEB, 2015). Nevertheless, independent schools in SA are undoubtedly an elite sub-set, with 2017 showing a national pass rate of over 98% among the nearly 12 000 candidates who sat their final school leaver examinations through the IEB (News24, 2018), as compared with the 2017 NSC examinations which were taken by over 650 000 students, with 75% of those students passing (Masinga, 2018). The NSC pass rate also does not reflect that more than half of the students who enrolled in compulsory schooling twelve years earlier had dropped out before reaching the end of their final year of school (Child, 2018), giving an effective pass rate of 37% (Fourie, 2017), and a clear gulf in performance between elite schools and most government schools.

2.3. Elite Studies and Development

In studying Education and Development some scholars and even departments within highly ranked Education Faculties, apparently believe that in middle-income countries, research

should, “focus on a development issue, which generally means focusing on rural areas or on issues pertaining explicitly to the marginalised in society” (personal correspondence: Anonymous Faculty Member, 2018). However, there is resurgent interest in the study of elites (Hertz & Imber, 1995), particularly in education (Deppe, Maxwell, Krüger, & Helsper, 2018; Maxwell & Aggleton, 2015), because it is important for social scientists to understand not only those who are affected or even excluded by social norms and stratification, but also to gain insight into those who are shaping and even perpetuating, or at least co-opting themselves into, those social divides. Research focusing on elites also stems from increasing realisation that the characteristics of social class and privilege (Brown, Reay, & Vincent, 2013) may not be adequately captured by economic or other quantitative studies of inter-generational mobility. While the focus of elite study in the global North has tended toward the exceptionally privileged (Sullivan, 2010), in developing country contexts such as SA greater understanding is needed of the impacts of both the exceptionally wealthy and the growing middle class, on dynamics of social equality and influence (Southall, 2016a).

Van Zanten (2009) pinpointed that research into elite schools must adequately connect education’s functions for recruitment into elites and, simultaneously, the exercise of power by elites. In SA, it is particularly important to study elite schools because a disproportionate number of powerful people emerge from these schools, and because of the tendency of these institutions to ‘assimilate’ black students into an elite school culture (Hunter, 2016; Southall, 2016a). While, some literature has acknowledged the ability of schools to act not only as filters for elite access, but also as agencies of local and increasingly globalised elite values and culture (Kenway et al., 2017), there is relatively little firm understanding of the potentially contrasting motivations and perceptions of risks to quality education among different stakeholders in elite private education in SA. This research aims to uncover some of these perceptions of risks and the prioritisation of these risks.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review considers definitions of 'risks', reviews several prominent concepts of risks, and examines risks specifically in Independent Education and in South African Education, and then arrives at specific research questions to be answered.

1. Risks: Definitions

Much of the literature on risk relates to specific sectors (e.g. the environment, health, insurance, nuclear technology) and uses a wide variety of terminology across these activities (OECD, 2003). Schools may therefore be said to face "concerns" (Broe, 2014), "problems" (RRAC, 2009), "difficulties" or "anxieties" (Hope & Oliver, 2005), "vulnerabilities" or "hazards" (OECD, 2003), or "challenges" (Zurich Municipal, 2015a), but this research focuses on 'risk' because it has become a common term in business administration and organisational management with which many school leaders and teachers are familiar, and 'risks' play across these various dimensions and lend themselves to being rated on a Likert-scale or ranked in order of importance. Risk may be defined as: the likelihood of injury, or potential damage or loss occurring, measured as the potential direct and indirect impact or severity of consequences or the loss, multiplied by the likelihood of it occurring (Attwood, 2004; OECD, 2003, p. 32,55; PSLA, 2009, p. 6). This could include not only actual damages, but also impairments to future choices or potential, making it quite difficult in some cases to pinpoint the impact of a risk or even its likelihood. Deeper debates about the meaning and definitions of risk can be found in Zinn (2010); but for the purposes of this study, risks have been interpreted broadly, and (as the methods chapter outlines) significant latitude has been given to respondents to both define and rank risks as they identify them, in order to gain insight into the perceptions of those operating in elite schools in SA.

2. Risk Concepts

The concept of risk is believed to date back to the European Renaissance, and the beginnings of a belief in the ability of humans to control or at least calculate and predict the dangers of their surrounding world, rather than simply being subject to luck or fate; risk has its origins in early capitalist investments, and insurance, and calculations of the likelihood of disastrous or damaging events, and subsequent financial hedging against these (Bialostok, Whitman, & Bradley, 2012, pp. 5–6). A variety of concepts of risk form the basis of the following discussion: the psychometric risk paradigm, cultural perspectives of risk, 'risk society' theories, and risk

discourse analysis (Hope & Oliver, 2005, p. 7). Other Risk concepts are also considered, including Black Swans and Positive Risk. While the exact parameters of each category may blur somewhat, there appears to be significant agreement in literature that these are the main concepts.

2.1. Psychometric Paradigm

The Psychometric Paradigm, associated with the work of psychologists of risk including Starr, Fishhoff, Kahnemann, Slovic, and Tverski, has involved efforts over the last 50 years to produce quantitatively scaled results of different people's reactions to various kinds of risks under different circumstances (Cambridge University, 2008) to provide a 'cognitive map' of risk perceptions (Hope, 2005). This is based on the premise of rational choices, in which individuals' risk perceptions are considered to reveal their implicit weighting of costs and benefits (Starr, 1969). Research in this tradition has uncovered a number of interesting facets of people's attitudes to and perceptions of risk, including (unless otherwise noted, all of the below from Cambridge University, 2008):

- preferences among people for risks that are voluntarily accepted rather than those in which they have no choice;
- white male effects, in which white males tend to perceive risks to be smaller than females or other ethnic groups (although it is hypothesised that these differences may be strongly linked to socio-economic and cultural backgrounds);
- optimistic biases, in which people underestimate risks that they themselves are facing (perhaps because they feel they have more control over these);
- availability biases in which risks that we can easily imagine or are more immediately available to us tend to be considered more likely (also known as the the Allais Paradox which shows that people tend to overstate low probability outcomes (Allais (1953) in OECD, 2003, p. 55));
- prevalence of risk compensation behaviour – in which people allow themselves to indulge in risk-inducing behaviours when they believe that a risk has been reduced, thereby balancing out the risk (e.g. when a protective barrier is erected people may build or carry out activities closer to the danger, thereby exposing themselves to higher risk).

As further psychometric studies have shown that individuals vary in their perceptions of the same risk issue, depending particularly on how a choice is presented or "framed" (Tversky and Kahneman (1981) in OECD, 2003, p. 55) and that relationships between lack of knowledge and

risk perceptions are complicated (Marris, Langford, Saunderson, & O'Riordan, 1997; Ellsberg (1961) in OECD, 2003), the psychometric paradigm has increasingly focused on risk perceptions, with emphasis on mental strategies or heuristics used to make sense of the world. This allows for the idea that "certain risks may mean different things to different people", however critics maintain that psychometric analysis "tends to underplay the importance of culture and politics in the social construction of risks" (Hope, 2005, p. 7).

2.2. Cultural Perspectives

Cultural approaches to risk stem from social anthropology – arguing that understanding attitudes and reactions to risk needs to be situated within the cultural and political society from which they arise (Cambridge University, 2008; Hope, 2005) and that "individuals' perceptions of risks cannot be studied as though they occur in isolation from the social world" (Boholm, 1996, p. 65). Anthropologist Mary Douglas argued that risks are the product of shared understandings within a culture and community, not of individual perception, and 'risk' is preferred over 'danger' because there is a suggestion of calculability, and therefore control, while Castel (1991) argues that 'risk' forms part of attempts to reduce heterogeneity by creating separation and grouping (both in Bialostok et al., 2012, pp. 14–18). Societies are therefore defined by their characterisations of risk: with risks tending to be associated with taboos, or subversive behaviour that transgresses social norms, and blame is then apportioned to those who defy social institutions (Douglas, 1966, 1992). Moreover, these individual views of risks can assume cultural power:

> "Douglas (1992) argues that each society, subculture or organisation elevates some risks to a high point while depressing others… risks are not 'given' but rather are selected through social processes. Thus, the decision as to what becomes labelled as a 'risk' gives an indication of the sort of community or society in which people wish to live. Being able to control what gets labelled as a risk is a position of power, especially as numerous competing claims often exist… The 'other' is a key concept in risk formation… certain marginal and stigmatised groups that are labelled as 'others' tend to have anxieties and fears projected onto them, becoming perceived as dangerous ['risky'] or 'at-risk'." (Hope, 2005, p. 10)

One controversial claim advanced by cultural theories is that individuals selectively attend to risks in ways that conform to their preferred way of life (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). This has led to an entire sub-category of risk study, 'Cultural Cognition', which posits that political controversies around risks such as climate change and gun control are driven by cultural polarisation around values, in spite of significant scientific comprehension (Yale Law School, 2018). Cultural approaches to risk in education highlight the focus on the 'at-risk' child, and the

parallels with epidemiology in both the strategies and rhetoric around this (Bialostok et al., 2012).

Critics of cultural theories of risk argue that they form a "strange loop" (van der Linden, 2016) with core concepts of the theory (including culture, group, political ideology) being defined in terms of one another, so that its logic is circular, and the empirical results have been "rather meager", with limited practical applications (Boholm, 1996, p. 66). It is argued further that this stems from the ambiguities and complexities of Douglas' scheme, combined with the diversity of conceptualisations among subsequent theorists (Wikipedia, 2018), that have resulted in "an inconsistent agglomerate of contradictory propositions [which] are a consequence of the theory's inherent conceptual confusions and inconsistencies" (Boholm, 1996, p. 66).

2.3. Risk Society

The Risk Society approach is based on perspectives of Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) of a society which is organised around the management of socially manufactured risks and the perception of a perilous future (both in Bialostok et al., 2012, p. 2), "combining an environmental consciousness with a belief that modernity is undergoing a transformation" (Hope, 2005, p. 8), so that dangers are related to either physical hazards or social and cultural insecurities. These theories focus on hazards that operate at a macro-political level, particularly structural conditions and impacts of government policy (Hope, 2005, p. 10). Beck and Giddens don't agree on whether risk has actually increased: Beck believes risks have increased as they are now not only natural hazards but also Anthropocene or 'manufactured' risks, which may be much longer-lasting in their impacts (e.g. radiation), but opponents instead see growth in risk perceptions as society has grown in mechanisms for labelling risks (Hope, 2005). In the latter view, while the increasing complexity of the world and potentially greater impacts of change in a situation of advanced unpredictability have brought risk further up the agenda, advanced modernity has also created "a climate of exaggerated anxiety" (Eastwood & Ormondroyd, 2005, pp. 32–33). Risk Society theory has a number of interesting implications for education, explored below in Risk Society sub-topics of: the Risk Agenda, Managerialism, and Post-Modernity and Diversity.

2.3.1. The Risk Agenda

One clear impact of 'Risk Society' has been the growth of "Western society's obsession with safety [which] has led to the emergence of an influential cottage industry of risk experts – risk

analysts, risk assessors… who have produced a plethora of theoretical work based upon universal generalizations of low-probability and high-consequence occurrences in order to identify, assess, and eliminate or reduce the possibility of loss, disaster, or misfortune" (Bialostok et al., 2012, p. 3). In education for example, there is a significant online presence covering 'risk in schools': from insurance companies (Broe, 2014; Corluccio, 2014; Fraser, 2018), legal firms (Ellis Whittam, 2018), and even accounting firms (Moore Stephens, 2018), all highlighting a range of risks spanning: profitability, litigation, reputation, and governance. In most cases these lists of risks tend to be somewhat self-serving as they tie in with products or services offered by the companies highlighting the risks. This is contextualised by Hope& Oliver's observation:

> "concern about risk in education has also been fuelled by the development of a multi-billion dollar risk alleviation industry… Anxiety about risk in education is not merely recognition of actual dangers but also reflects the increasing use of the concept of risk… within education… as a political device, securing funding or justifying policy positions." (Hope & Oliver, 2005, p. ix)

Other examples include Tony Attwood's (2004) guide to risk assessment for UK schools which, after a few broader remarks in the introduction, focuses almost entirely on 'health and safety' type risks; while many American experts' perspectives on risks in education appear to focus particularly risks of litigation and what a court of law would look for in determining negligence, or where legislation such as anti-bullying and harassment laws, could have major implications for schools' responsibilities (Broe, 2014; Minor & Minor, 1991).

When media headlines (frequently pinpointed as a driver of the risk agenda) demand 'something must be done', the dilemma for decision-makers and leaders is distinguishing when that "'something' is to do more and when it is to do less" (Berry, 2011, p. 4). In response, Britain's Risk and Regulation Advisory Council (now the Better Regulation Commission), has led 'an experimental offensive' against the mishandling of risk in society (RRAC, 2009), focusing on how distorted perceptions of risks can encourage poor policy-making and unnecessary laws (Berry, 2011), leading people to feel that government is interfering too much in their lives. To date, appeals to rational thought have not worked (Berry, 2011), and the tendency in modernity continues to be increasing regulation and a proliferation of risk-related industries.

2.3.2.Risk Society – Managerialism

One of the influences of the focus on 'risk society' has been a tendency to resort to controlling and negative 'managerial' measures, in which government policies and regulations are

interpreted by regulatory and assessment bodies as yardsticks, so that success is defined by what can be measured (Eastwood & Ormondroyd, 2005) and the fear of failure and need for control have resulted in an agenda aimed at eliminating risk and failure entirely (Berry, 2011; RRAC, 2009). Eastwood and Ormondroyd (2005) illustrate this change by explaining how in the past, if you died at sea it was the weather, whereas now society seeks to blame human behaviour – so if a child dies on a school trip then the teacher who organised the trip must be responsible, and the risk assessment was inadequate (p. 42), with the result being curtailment of school trips and loss of educational opportunities. O'Neill's (2002) work on the breakdown in trust in modern society, has shown that managerialist practices, which can result in more paperwork for practitioners and less emphasis on their traditional role, are counter-productive, especially when teachers are too focused on the administrative parts of their jobs and rigid, top-down systems, and incentive structures based primarily on examination achievements, to think about positive risk-taking and innovation and creativity (Eastwood & Ormondroyd, 2005, pp. 37–44).

Managerialism has also come under attack as a front for a neoliberal agenda for education in which marketization (including league tables and state selectivity), competition (especially through assessments and standards) between both schools and countries – e.g. competition within PISA (Grek, 2009; Ozga, 2012), and even privatization, are posed as the solutions to risk (Peters, 2012, p. xv-xiv). A powerful performance accountability culture brings with it standardised curricula (Alexander, 2001) and additional layers of bureaucracy and performativity (Denning, 2013; Thomson, 2016), that may perversely result in mundane, dumbed down education (Eastwood & Ormondroyd, 2005, p. 40).

2.3.3.Risk Society - Post-Modernity and Diversity

The relative uniformity of the modern period has given way to much more fragmented representation of the individual in postmodern society – with plurality sowing seeds of confusion and uncertainty, as the "risk of a society based upon a multiplicity of roles, is a risk of lack of identity for the individual, and a prevarication in decision-making" (Oliver, 2005, p. 46,52). Giddens sees increasing risks emerging particularly from the social fragmentation that results from the replacement of local networks of kinship and community (often underpinned by religion), by an abstract and impersonal global economy (Eastwood & Ormondroyd, 2005, p. 33). Beck agrees that in modern capitalism both risks and rewards are increasingly assumed by

individuals rather than being collectivized or aggregated across traditional social ties, and that even middle and upper classes cannot escape the really big risks (Bialostok et al., 2012, pp. 7–8).

Two seemingly contradictory risks emerge, for secondary schools in particular, from this fragmentation in postmodern society: first, that significant investments in educational opportunities may not find commensurate opportunities in further education or the global labour market (Brown, Lauder, & Ashton, 2010; Oliver, 2005, p. 53) as the requirements for high quality education constantly shift and schools are forced to adapt; and second, that school culture and tradition itself may increasingly be both a risk, and at risk. Postmodern plurality also links closely to the challenges and opportunities offered by increasing diversity. In public discourse around education, excellence and diversity are frequently linked together, although the two may sometimes be difficult to reconcile, particularly when attempting to fulfil both social engineering or social justice perspectives as well as market-driven imperatives (Adamson, 2005, pp. 215–6).

2.4. Risk Discourse Analysis

The Risk Society approach raises some pertinent points about a growing risk agenda, as well as increasing managerialism and the challenges of managing risks in the face of social fragmentation. But it does not satisfactorily explain why the term risk seems to be in such rapidly increasing use. The general improvement in human life (Norberg, 2016) experienced particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century, is seemingly at odds with the increasing presence of the concept of 'risk' in public and academic debates – as highlighted by Zinn's (2010) study of the dramatically increased frequency of the term 'risk' in articles in major US and UK newspapers during the century. The fourth concept, Risk Discourse Analysis, links the growing presence of 'risks' in language, to governmentality (Dean, 2009), suggesting that governments utilise publicity outlining appropriate, risk-free behaviour, as a mechanism to encourage self-governance by individuals and organisations, and to foster predictable and controllable social activity (Bialostok et al., 2012; Hope, 2005). This helps to explain why Beck's idea that once we know about risks, we can act to reduce them, does not appear to be true of many of the modern risks, particularly those linked to uses of technology and damage to the environment.

Risk discourse in education considers how government policies and media coverage may construct risks, and perceptions of risks that encourage self-policing by students and schools. For example, the achievement of a certain level and kind of literacy now becomes the

responsibility of the learner, who faces the risk of illiteracy, and therefore may not even consider the appropriateness of content they are learning (Bialostok et al., 2012, pp. 10–12), nor that schools may be part of a process of labelling academic capabilities and resulting self-fulfilling prophecies (Hope, 2005, p. 13; Tzanakis, 2011) in which social class (Bowles & Levin, 1968) may play a far more powerful role than the willingness of the individual or their school.

While much of the Discourse view of risks overlaps with Cultural theories of risk, highlighting the roles of the media and other institutions in shaping views of and responses to risks, it differs in the extent to which these risks are posited as a mechanism for control. While attractive in some ways, this view of risk seems overly instrumental when one considers the inherent challenges of control posed by increasing social fragmentation and complexity, also noted as part of Risk Society theory. The idea that some group has control may seem comforting, indeed it fits into the narrative of seeking to blame others for the threat posed by risks, but the complex adaptive systems that form modern societies mean that control is actually very limited (McNulty, 2012), even for those who apparently possess great political, economic, or social power.

2.5. Other Risks

2.5.1. Black Swans

The Complete Guide to Business Risk Management notes that catastrophic changes are virtually impossible to plan for, so it is simplest to "assume a reasonably consistent future" (Sadgrove, 2015, p. 521). According to Nassim Taleb (2008) the greatest risks are in fact likely to be extremely rare events with tremendous impact, that retrospectively may appear to have been highly predictable: he calls these 'Black Swans' (after the idea that all swans were by definition white until explorers arriving in Australia saw the first black swans). The increasing complexity of the world means that the ordinary events that tend to be focused on and studied as risks, even modelled into multi-decade forecasts, are relatively inconsequential, while large, random deviations [Taleb gives examples including the sudden demise of the Soviet Union, the spread of the internet, and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and resulting terrorist events] tend only to be recognised after their impact has occurred (Taleb, 2007). The over-arching risk is the apparent lack of awareness of humans' limited predictive abilities and their willingness to take far-reaching decisions with confidence, built on an assumption that society has tamed uncertainty (he calls this the Great Intellectual Fraud); with a tendency to focus on the 'normal' with 'bell curve' methods of inference that completely fail to account for large deviations or rare

shocks that produce the most significant events – something Taleb (2007) calls an "aggressive ignorance".

In education, Taleb's ideas have interesting implications, first in terms of what Donald Rumsfeld famously called "unknown unknowns" (Graham, 2014) - the things we don't even know we don't know, such as possible calamities for the future of learning, knowledge or skills. For example, one possible black swan for the education sector is rising risks of intellectual labour being replaced by artificial intelligence and linked experiments with universal basic income (Haverman, 2018) as pre-cursors to a de-coupling of academic education and human capital development - i.e. that interpersonal skills and emotional labour, not typically overt features in academic curricula, could be dominant in future human success. Perhaps more important is Taleb's emphasis of the hubris and resulting risks involved in sweeping decisions being made based on very limited perspectives: for example that education continues operate largely as it has done for more than a century, often with increasing political direction and bureaucratic targets, despite only indirect measurement, via assessments and teaching observations, of the effectiveness of both teaching and learning processes (Barton, 2018), and few wide-spread solutions for why so many children stop enjoying school at an early age (Gray, 2009; Kohn, 1999; Willingham, 2009) and thereafter begin to learn less effectively. While the Black Swan theory is something of an unfalsifiable proposition, given that it focuses on the arrival of unknown risks, which, by definition, only become known once they are detected, it does raise the important spectre of risks to education that may not have even been considered by those who are too close to the subject matter.

2.5.2.Positive Risks

Risks tend to be seen as a negative factor, often ignoring the positive upsides (Hope, 2005; PSLA, 2009). Any activity where the outcome is uncertain could be defined as a risk, but undertaking a new venture or project to expand or improve can be vital to growth or development (PSLA, 2009). Hope (2005) uses the example of risky and 'extreme' sports and their popularity with young people as an illustration of the educational potential of risk taking: with the demonstration of skills in many of these potentially dangerous activities forming an important part of their learning process (pp. 14-15). Schools themselves may become so focused on 'risks' related to assessment results and school rankings or ratings, that they neglect to question the content, pedagogy, and values espoused by the curriculum. For example, Dame Judith Hackitt, the UK National Chair of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) commented that: "embracing risk

and danger was preparing children for real life and adulthood… schools were failing children by being too risk-averse" (Fairclough, 2016, pp. 87–88). The UK's National Union of Teachers echoed this, referring to schools as 'exam factories', in which fears over school inspections and results have been harmful to teacher-pupil relationships, the well-being of students, perceptions among students of the purposes of education, and the breadth of the curriculum (Hutchings, 2016). While the teaching profession increasingly appears to be considering that benefits of positive risk-taking may be overlooked (Barton, 2018; Fairclough, 2016), this risk is still relevant because the ability of teachers to defy power structures in which they operate is very unclear.

The different concepts of risks outlined above focus variously on individual rationality (Psychometric), cultural and societal forces (Cultural and Risk Society), discourses around risks with underlying control mechanisms, as well as unknown risks (Black Swans) and the risk of not taking risks (Positive risks). The interpretation of findings in Chapter 5 looks at links between these concepts and the risks highlighted in this research.

3. Risks in Education

This section focuses on particular risks to independent schools, and to education in SA.

3.1. Risks in Independent Schools

Much of the literature on risks to independent schools is based on UK, and to some extent Australian and American schools. The National College for Teaching and Leadership (UK) published guidance in 2018 on risk categories for schools, including: Strategic, Compliance, Financial, Operational, and Knowledge Management risks.

- Strategic risks are associated with operating in the education industry – including activities of other competitor schools, changes in demand or among customers, changes to education services, and changes in government policies;
- Compliance risks largely deal with regulations and laws and are strongly tied to expectations of proper organisational governance;
- Financial risks involve funding and incomes (also emphasised by Fraser (2018));
- Operational Risks include staffing, systems, and supply of goods and services;
- Knowledge Management Risks involve intellectual property, technology, and systems and technology staff) (NCTL, 2018).

Accountants Moore Stephens (2018) also add as key risks for schools: the welfare and development of pupils (including health and safety, curriculum, pastoral support, and maintaining and improving academic results); cashflow management (including maintaining pupil numbers, credit control, raising funds for infrastructure expansion, and credible means-testing and bursary policies); as well as governance (including managing reputational risks, legislative and regulatory compliance, and realistic strategic planning). AON Insurance Australia's Independent Schools Risk Report (2017) repeats many of these, but also highlights: brand and reputation risks (including media scrutiny and social media intensifying the impact of negative events); cyber risks (including social media policies and cyber bullying); and talent management and staff engagement monitoring (which schools apparently lag behind other industries in measuring). Zurich Insurance (2015) also emphasised increasing polarisation of wealth and reduced disposable incomes and affordability of education for parents (also Espinoza (2016)). The tendency of insurance, legal, accountancy and other firms to focus their view of risks to education around services they can offer to schools re-confirms the Risk Discourse view that 'risks' are being highlighted and shaped by those who benefit from the increased perception of these risks.

Elite schools also face substantial political risks around perceptions of inequality or elitism (Zurich Municipal, 2015b), making them targets of potentially disproportionate media scrutiny (Carman, 2013). Some critics are philosophically opposed to the concept of private education, seeing this as a potential social injustice that opens up education to a neo-liberal, private sector agenda (Curtis, 2015; Macpherson, Robertson, & Walford, 2014; Seldon, 2001). In the UK a major political risk is the potential for a change in the tax status of independent schools as charities, which would prove financially catastrophic for many (Carman, 2013).

Increasing attention is also being paid to risks within teaching and learning – including psychological and well-being risks (Attwood, 2004; Hope & Oliver, 2005) for both students and teachers. With teachers increasingly under pressure around examination results, and buffeted by the profession's low social esteem and poor remuneration, combined with increasing administrative burdens under managerialism, all of these pose continuing risks to schools for recruitment and retention of quality teachers (Mehta, 2013; Sahlberg, 2011; Taylor, 2018; Zurich Municipal, 2015b). The OECD (2001) noted in its outlook for modern education, several added pressures for students, including: extended adolescence and increased costs as children now enter the workforce much later, as well as a squeeze on the economically active generation with

the larger number of surviving dependents over 65; a potentially bewildering array of educational and career options being offered to children who often need to make decisions about these before they become adults; the emergence of digital natives with very different relationships to technology and information from previous generations; the increasing generational shift described by Robert Putnam in "Bowling Alone" (2000), toward individualism, fragmentation of social capital, and isolation in modern society; and increasing household dependence on double-incomes which leave families 'work-rich but time-poor' (OECD, 2001, p. 26). The changing role of parents is a growing risk to education, including their potential (in)ability to inculcate in their children essential life skills and basic values (Lenon, 2017), and also parents' relationships with and expectations of independent schools, which they may increasingly view as an investment proposition from which they demand high returns (Carman, 2013). Schools must continually consider academic risks, including debates around grade inflation (Jones & Soo, 2017; Walsh, 2010), and curriculum choice and adaptability of curriculum to increasingly globalised twenty-first century education (Andain & Murphy, 2008; Bhardwa, 2017; Resnik, 2012).

3.2. Risks in SA Education

Elite secondary education in SA faces several additional or enhanced risks both in the macro (political and economic) environment as well as within education itself. The rapidity of change and turbulence in the political climate of SA means that this section also draws substantially on 'grey' literature for analysis of risks facing the country at present. The Economist Intelligence Unit's 'South Africa Country Risk' report (2017) emphasised significant political risks stemming from high-level contests for power. This issue appears to have been somewhat addressed since: in early 2018, long-standing State President Jacob Zuma, a controversial figure noted for his alleged involvement in significant corruption, was recalled by the ruling ANC and replaced as President by former anti-apartheid trade union activist and business tycoon Cyril Ramaphosa (McKee, 2018), a move which seems to have brought considerable renewed optimism to the country's political outlook. SA's membership of BRICS is belied by weak economic performance, with annual growth less than 1%, and official unemployment over 30%, much of which is due to the poor educational standards and low educational attainment and skills of much of the population[2], which poses a significant risk to the country's economic structure as well as its

[2] Itself a consequence of the damaging legacy of deliberately inadequate education provision during apartheid (Hofmeyr, 2000; Ndlovu, 2017))

political stability (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2017; EulerHermes, 2017; McKee, 2018; Walker, 2018).

SA's tremendous economic and social inequality (as noted earlier), with its roots in the systemic oppression of apartheid, has resulted in a national programme of affirmative action or Black Economic Empowerment (Tangri & Southall, 2008), and a broader agenda of 'transformation' seeking to redress historic and ongoing discrimination on the basis not only of race or ethnicity, but also gender, sexuality, disability, and other historic forms of disadvantage. Despite having an extremely liberal and progressive constitution that grants extensive political rights to the country's citizens; socio-economic rights to a decent standard of living, free of violence and oppression, have not been achievable to date (Oosthuizen, 2016; Ramphele, 2008). In education, the legacy of inequality and continued privilege of the white minority is starkly reflected by the country's top schools: although independent schools as a whole are relatively integrated, with 58% of students being Black and 72% black[3], the high-fee elite independent schools have made much slower progress on diversity – among ISASA high-fee member schools (charging over R30 000 per year [approximately £1 700]) in 2014 only about 18% of students were Black and 29% black overall; and among teachers in ISASA schools, only 17% are black with 8.5% Black educators (Hofmeyr, 2015, pp. 272–3). Prejudice has been part of this: Sekete et al. (2001) found in interviews with various school heads that there was resistance to recruitment of black teachers, who were perceived to be less qualified and less willing to be involved in extra-mural activities (p. 51).

Diversity is not a uniquely South African issue, as Dominic Carman (2013) noted that elite English schools are dominated by white Heads, despite Britain's growing ethnic diversity; but the issue is more problematic in SA given that the near-total dominance of white leaders in South African independent schools is drawn from a minority racial group. The lack of transformation in schools raises significant risks for the fostering of, and encouragement of, multi-cultural awareness among all students, and may reduce discussion of the very real problems around diversity of race, culture, gender and socio-economic background among learners, resulting in risks for effective inclusion and diversity in forming school culture (Sekete et al., 2001, pp. 54–77).

[3] In South African terminology and affirmative action legislation important distinctions are made between Black Africans – approximately 80% of the population, and other groups who are not ethnically white (whites constitute 8% of the population) – typically denoted by use of the term "Black" (with a capital B) for Black Africans, and "black" for the broader ethnic groups who are not 'white', including Black African as well as mixed race 'Coloured', Indian and Chinese (CIA, 2018).

Persistent social and economic inequality has produced increasing radical populist political pressures, with the relatively economically neo-liberal ANC seemingly under attack from the Marxist-revolutionary inspired EFF, a group that rose to become the nation's third-largest political party in the 2014 national elections (Mbete, 2015). Factions of the ruling ANC and corrupt allies fomented a deliberately racialised narrative in 2017 (with the aid of British PR firm Bell Pottinger (Cave, 2017)) to distract from poor governance and allegations of rampant corruption, blaming 'white monopoly capital' for SA's economic and social divisions (Du Preez, 2018; McKee, 2018). In education this populism had notable effects, with universities, despite having already made efforts to ensure representativeness of their student body through differentiated access criteria for particular courses for students of different racial groups (Anthony, 2014; Solidarity, 2015), facing continuing government and popular pressures. For example the University of Cape Town (highest ranked globally among all African universities although it has fallen from 107th to 171st between 2011-2018 (THE, 2018)), was recently threatened with removal of its authority to teach law degrees in the face of continuing low throughputs of Black law graduates (Andrews, 2017; Davis, 2017). Universities have also been increasingly threatened by the, at times violent, '#feesmustfall' movement aimed at abolishing tertiary education fees, which politicians appear to have pandered to, with then-President Zuma unilaterally announcing in late 2017 the intention of making tertiary education free, while the EFF encouraged prospective students to arrive in their tens of thousands at universities to demand free tuition (Du Preez, 2018). Protests around de-colonisation of university curricula are not uniquely South African (Le Grange, 2016; Turner, 2018), but have also extended to apparent ambitions to de-colonise the national secondary school curriculum (Govender, 2017), despite considerable potential for instability and risks created by the apparent lack of ability in most South African state schools to adequately teach the existing curriculum (Chisholm, 2018; Mavhungu & Mavhungu, 2018).

There have been growing concerns that SA independent secondary schools face direct risks of anti-elitist and populist politicking, with the Gauteng provincial Minister of Education repeatedly calling for the abolition of the IEB examinations (Mabena, 2018), and personally involving himself in the resolution of alleged racist controversies taking place internally at a leading Johannesburg independent school (Chabalala & Herman, 2017). Increasing legislation from government is itself a growing risk for schools, with ISASA identifying 246 pieces of legislation in the three years to 2014 affecting independent schools and publishing 78 analyses of those that

most affect its members (Hofmeyr, 2015, p. 275). Much as seems to be the case in England (Carman, 2013), the top elite schools also particularly risk being the target of media and public vitriol.

Nevertheless, demand for independent schooling has grown significantly in SA: enrolments at independent schools from 2000-12 almost doubled, while public school enrolments grew by only 2.3% during the same period (Hofmeyr, 2015, p. 265). Much of this growth has been in low-cost independent schools however, and the elite schools remain unaffordable for many South Africans, particularly the Black majority, which increases the schools' financial and political risks: with even some World Bank economists considering this to be a deliberate 'over-pricing' of education in order to limit black attendance at these schools (Selod & Zenou, 2002). This view fails to recognise that top independent schooling fees have grown rapidly worldwide, as schools compete for pupils and families that can afford to pay full tuition fees, while also investing increasing sums in impressive physical infrastructure, reduced class sizes, and paying premium teacher salaries in order to attract the best staff (Carman, 2013). The transformation agenda in admissions policies and sometimes violent unrest on university campuses has also prompted increasing interest in tertiary education outside South Africa. There is a growing risk, however, that the international acceptability of the IEB matric to foreign universities may come into question – it is already not accepted as sufficient for undergraduate application to Oxbridge (Cambridge University, 2017; Oxford University, 2017), and several elite schools have introduced international curricula such as A-levels, with global measures of quality in mind (Kenway & Fahey, 2014), although this risks being perceived as entrenching the relative social isolation of these schools, or even being seen as unpatriotic. From the above, it is clear that a significant number of potential risks, some of them in conflict with each other, face quality education in South African elite secondary schools.

4. Research Aims and Questions

Education shapes the future generations of a country. By seeking understanding of the risks facing education, particularly among well-resourced independent South African schools that are more able to choose their own responses to their surrounding environment and less dependent on government department foibles (this would constitute an entirely different study), this research aims to better understand the risks that are likely shaping SA's future and may also have implications for education in similar developing countries.

The following questions have guided the investigation:

1. What do key stakeholders in elite secondary school education in South Africa perceive to be the greatest risks for high quality education in their schools? **(A)**
    a. How do these stakeholders prioritise these risks / what order of significance do they place these risks in? **(B)**
    b. Do different groups of stakeholders perceive the risks very differently? How does the positionality of a respondent affect their perceptions of risks? **(C)**

In the chapters that follow the above are referenced as per the letters in bold after each question.

Chapter 3: Methods

Answering the key research questions required information from stakeholders both about how they define and perceive various risks **(A)**, as well as the priority they gave to these risks **(B)**. Differences in perceptions among various stakeholders **(C)** were also explored for patterns among types of respondents. These questions were answered using a survey and follow-up interviews, based on a critical realist perspective (see below). This chapter considers: (1) the philosophical assumptions of studying risk, (2) issues relating to access and sampling, (3) the choice of research instruments, (4) data analysis, and (5) ethics and (6) limitations of the research.

1. Philosophical Assumptions: Risk and Epistemology

The phenomenon of risk tends, in social science literature, to be situated somewhere between realist and social constructionist epistemologies. Realism portrays a tangible, material world which can be measured objectively to arrive at absolute truths, while social constructionism says that the world and our understanding of it is built up through social processes; between these two is a 'critical realist' approach, based on the belief that all knowledge is grounded in particular perspectives, in which risks may be asserted as objective in nature, but the perception of these risks is intermediated by social forces and actors, including the state, scientific communities and the media (Hope, 2005; J. Maxwell, 2012). Critical realism therefore aligns closely with qualitative research driven by in-depth semi-structured interviews (Yeo et al., 2014), to glean the perspectives of different stakeholders, as it is their beliefs, motivations and perceptions **(A,B,C)**, not necessarily objective facts, that inform both individuals' and institutions' actions and choices for education (Holme, 2002).

2. Access and Sampling

Maurice Kogan, who recognised early on the importance of researching 'the powerful in education' (Walford, 1994), pinpoints gaining access to interviews with these actors as one of the core challenges for research. Obstacles to access can include: a lack of time available among interviewees, fear of negative repercussions from participation, and an organisation culture in some cases that does not favour openness; but also on the positive side, there may be an altruistic desire to contribute to knowledge, and a self-interested desire among participants to promote their own views or to gain exposure for themselves or their institution (Kogan, 1994). To avoid concerns about reputational risk, either for individuals or the schools agreeing to participate, but also to avoid politically correct, 'corporate' answers by school heads, all

potential interviewees were advised up-front that the interviews would be conducted on an anonymous and confidential basis, so that the identities of respondent schools and interviewees are known only to the researcher and the research supervisor (see also Appendix 2).

The sample taken was a purposive one (Gomm, 2008), aimed at accessing heads, staff and other stakeholders from a range of what are typically acknowledged as 'top' private schools in SA (Business Tech, 2016, 2017). Getting them to agree to participate frequently involved leveraging introductions from mutual acquaintances (including former colleagues of the researcher). Principals who agreed to their school's participation shared a link to the voluntary survey via email to their staff and governing body members[4]. The 10 schools that participated in both the survey and interviews represent a cross-section of the South African elite educational landscape: including schools from 4 different provinces; in the two largest metropolitan areas and also three smaller small rural towns; single sex and co-educational schools (although it was somewhat disappointing that only two all-girls schools agreed to participate); multiple faiths (including at least one non-Christian school); and also day schools, and mixed day- and boarding. All were English-language schools[5]. Neither the survey nor the interviews constitute a statistically representative sample of any kind, however the variety of schools and stakeholders involved made it possible to glean interesting insights into perceptions of risks to elite secondary education in SA.

3. Research Instruments

The initial online risk survey (see 3.1 below) was followed up with in-depth face-to-face interviews in the field (3.2 below).

3.1. Surveys

3.1.1. Why use surveys?

An online survey was chosen as the first stage of research to allow access to respondents in South Africa while the researcher was in the UK, and to allow completely anonymous responses, while also narrowing down the focus of the research by establishing the main risk perceptions

[4] Generally, Heads have supreme operational decision-making power but a governing body gives strategic oversight and direction and its members collectively act as a sounding board and check on the power of the school head.

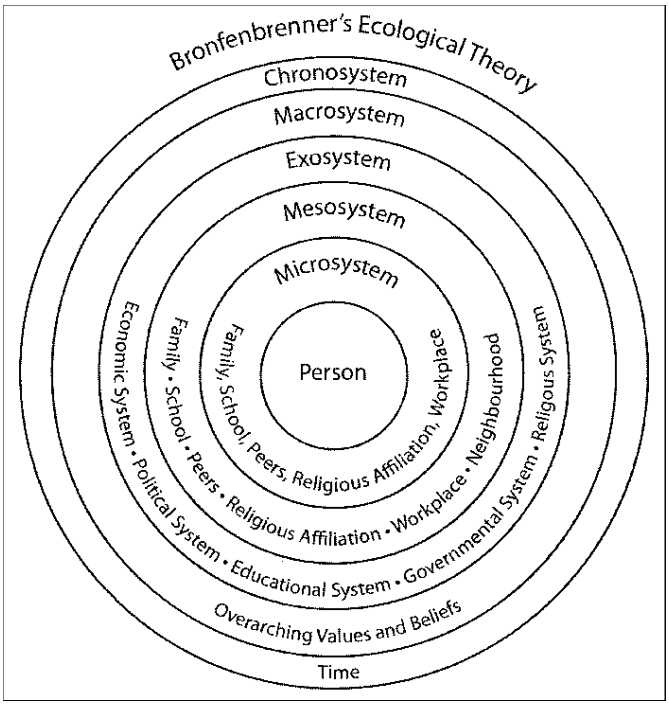
[5] This is not a snub of other languages, the British colonial legacy has meant that elite independent schools are overwhelmingly English-speaking although they are attended by many children from Black African and Afrikaans-speaking families, while schools in Black African and Afrikaans language are overwhelmingly state schools (Colditz, 2018)

(A) and priorities of stakeholders **(B)** in advance of interviews (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011b; May & Sutton, 2011). Beginning with surveys also allowed respondents themselves to consider and arrange their thoughts around the risks to education before participating in interviews – which several interview participants remarked was itself a valuable exercise.

3.1.2.Constructing the Survey

To understand what stakeholders perceive to be the greatest risks to quality education, the survey included an initial list of a wide range of possible risks to elite private education (the researcher used previous experience as a teacher in an elite private school in SA, as well as the literature on risks to guide this), and also included the option to rate "Other" and to complete a text box describing other risks omitted from the survey. This initial list of risks was also considered against parts of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, for various levels of risks that could impact elite secondary education (rather than an individual person) (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1: Ecological Systems



(Stanger, 2011)

For the full listing of risks see **Figure 2** below.

To understand more about how these risks were prioritised **(B)**, this listing of risks was presented in an online Qualtrics™ survey which asked respondents to:

- Rate or Score risks using a Likert-scale (including an option to tick 'not applicable')

- Rank their top 5 risks: from top risk to 5th most prominent risk
- Fill in a descriptive text box explaining why each of these risks was ranked so highly
- Rate their perceptions of risks in a section entitled Risks and the Big Picture – also using a Likert-scale.
- Fill in optional text boxes on:
    - Overall Levels of risk
    - General Comments about risks to high quality private education
- The survey ended with various (voluntary) demographic questions including: age, years experience, subject taught, gender, home language, ethnicity, experience in a government school, experience in education outside South Africa

These demographic questions, and nuances in interview responses, also yielded data on how respondents' identities may have been associated with different perceptions of risks **(C)**.

Figure 2: Survey Listing of Risks

RISKS TO EDUCATION
1.Recruitment of quality teachers
2.Retention of quality teachers
3.Teaching to the test and 'grade-oriented' learning
4.Technology and pace of change / curriculum relevance to 21st century
5. Student changes: 'digital distractions' and low academic engagement
6. Single-sex education: lack of interaction across genders
7.Emotional pressures on students and staff
8.Ensuring physical safety from violent crime
9. Ethics, integrity and morals of student body (as a whole)
10. Drugs, alchohol or other substances - negatively affecting learning
11. Grade inflation within IEB exams
12. IEB links to government syllabus & weakening of standards
13. Lack of social integration in community (also in school itself)
14. Racial tensions in community (also in school itself)
15.Pressures to fit in socially in middle / upper class lifestyles
16.Changing roles of parents: increasing parenting by schools
17. Rising costs of operating private schools
18.Problems for parents affording private school
19. Anti-elitism in populist rhetoric
20.Political uncertainty
21.Emigration of citizens
22.Concerns about instability and possible danger in South African universities
23. Other – please fill in below

A test version of the online survey was piloted with a range of people including a former South African teacher and a former member of a South African private school governing body, to probe the relevance of the risk items and the accuracy of the questions. Some minor adjustments were made at this stage to re-phrase and avoid any potentially leading statements in the survey (for example splitting social integration issues and racial tensions into two separate risks). The interface of the survey itself proved to be one of the most intractable issues, requiring

several discussions with Qualtrics™ staff to design a ranking device that subsequently allowed for each ranking selection to be commented on by respondents. (To read the full survey please refer to Appendix 4.) Further details of the survey responses are in Chapter 4.

3.2. In-depth semi-structured interviews

3.2.1. Why use interviews?

The qualitative feedback given in the survey responses varied widely in detail and clarity, and the researcher therefore followed up the survey with face-to-face interviews, which allowed for greater establishment of rapport as well as more flexibility to pick up on non-verbal cues and modify lines of enquiry during the interview (Robson, 2011), in order to deeply understand (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) respondents' feedback on risks **(A, B)**, their motivations and perceptions of risks **(C)**, and to probe their ideas about responses to these risks. The strength of using interviews was that the direct interaction allowed for thoroughness, where a questionnaire may have been answered hurriedly, but the weaknesses were that interviews might be vulnerable to the biases and subjective perceptions of the interviewer (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011a) (see section 5 below), and that time pressures (Rowley, 2012), a very real constraint in interviewing busy people, narrowed down the numbers of participants, and often precluded delving specifically into links between identity and risk perceptions **(C)**.

3.2.2. Conducting the interviews

Heads of the 10 participating schools were required as part of the research to give their name at the end of the survey and to participate in a one-hour face-to-face, recorded interview, while any other respondents who chose to take the survey could also voluntarily give their contact details. Those who did were invited to a 30-40-minute recorded interview (typically the duration of a free lesson for teachers) although some interviews went on for much longer, particularly where interviewees had a lifetime of education experience to share. Respondents' survey feedback was the starting point and major focus of follow-up, in-depth face-to-face interviews which were semi-structured and intended to allow interviewees to focus on the risks that they perceived most acutely **(A)** and to which they had given highest priority **(B)**. For more detail on the interview approach please see Appendix 5.

4. Data Analysis

Survey responses using Likert-scales were analysed using basic statistical calculations to measure strong positive and negative responses (items rated or ranked high and low risk) **(B)**, as

well as ways in which the identity of groups of respondents **(C)** as school heads, teachers, or other roles, possibly were associated with their perceptions of risks.

The qualitative results across the surveys and the interviews were combined - initially using Structural (Namey, Guest, Thairu, & Johnson, 2008) or Utilitarian question-based coding which, "both codes and initially categorizes the data… to examine comparable segments' commonalities, differences and relationships" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 84). This meant combining all qualitative feedback according to the numbered risk categories in the survey (per **Figure 2** above). In some cases data also had to be "cleaned" (Moser & Kalton, 1971) and re-categorised where it became clear that a survey or interview response given under one category, turned out to be more about another risk category (for example where a survey respondent may have described risks under the category of 1. 'Recruitment of teachers', but a substantial portion of their answer related to 2. 'Retention of teachers').

A two-step process of secondary qualitative data analysis was then conducted: firstly grouping the various phenomena among these risk items according to Risk Strata (see Chapter 5), then using "themeing" to categorize and cluster groups of recurrent experiences or repeating ideas, and to winnow these down to essential over-arching themes with linkages to higher-level theoretical constructs that may help to summarize what is happening or why a risk may be perceived as it is (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; van Manen (1990) in Saldaña, 2013). The outputs of this secondary analysis (all in Chapter 5) form the Themes, which are linked to Recommendations for education decision-makers to consider (see Appendix 9), and suggestions for Further Research.

5. Ethics

In accordance with research ethics guidelines of the university (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2), consent forms were obtained from all interview participants (Appendix 3), and downloads of survey data from the password protected Qualtrics survey tool, and recordings of the interviews, were stored only on the researcher's password protected laptop as well as secure backup services offered by the university.

While the interviews were anonymised, care has been taken to offer reciprocal benefit to those who willingly gave their time and insights to this research. Besides the potentially cathartic and reflective benefits (Hutchinson, Wilson, & Wilson, 1994) of the interview itself, which several

heads of schools commented on as a valuable exercise in their strategic thinking, the findings and recommendations of the research were also shared not only with heads of schools, but with all interview participants.

By their very nature, interviews involve dynamics of power, including: defining the situation, the framing of the topic, and the course of the interview itself (Kvale (1996) in Edwards & Holland, 2013). The positionality of the researcher as a privileged British - South African white male, with significant educational experience outside South Africa, was considered as a potential negative factor for interview neutrality (Gubrium& Holstein (2011) in Yeo et al., 2014). However, gaining access to elites has been a major stumbling block for obtaining greater understanding of their perspectives (Goldstein, 2002), and the researcher was able to do this because of their background in teaching at an elite South African school and also frequent interactions with various members of other schools as a sports referee.

Putting the interviewee at ease and building rapport by explaining the purpose of the research and the researcher's own background and the ethical commitments of the research (for example beginning interviews with further reassurance of the anonymity of both the interviewee and their school), had to be balanced with being willing to 'probe' further in interviews to tease out the full meanings of responses (Yeo et al., 2014). Bearing in mind the conscious decision inherent in acceding to be interviewed, interviewees were usually more than capable of emphasising their perspective (Edwards & Holland, 2013) and not being steered by the interviewer. Controlling the cadence and direction of the interview was important for keeping dialogue on track during the limited interview time, and also particularly given that the interviewer has a severe hearing impairment. Michael Bloor identifies the emotion management and emotional labour of interviewing as a potential risk to the well-being of the interviewer (in Edwards & Holland, 2013). While directly interviewing those making decisions in elite education gave tremendous insight and food for thought, it was also exhausting seeking to engage rigorously and thoroughly. With careful reflexive practice (Hsiung, 2008) it nevertheless proved entirely possible to conduct a thorough, in-depth, but culturally sensitive (Awad, Patall, Rackley, & Reilly, 2016) investigation, and fortunately, interview participants were generally collegial in their approach and very supportive of the work being carried out.

6. Limitations of the Research

Major limitations of the research included which schools participated, who responded, issues with the survey categories, and accuracy of perceptions of respondents.

While the range of schools and staff participating in this research was good, there are some caveats: it is not clear why so few of the girl's schools contacted were willing to participate (although this parallels Carman's (2013) experience that male heads in English elite schools were much more willing to be interviewed than females), nor why only one black teacher participated (see Chapter 4 Section 1.1). Among the elite schools included there are significant areas of the country that were not covered (although these areas have far fewer elite schools), and it was also difficult to gauge how participation was spread across the schools as school name was not a required response from participants (in order to protect anonymity), and from one school it was only possible to identify a single response (the head).

The categories of risks given in the survey in some cases were found to have conflated different risks – for example survey risk Number 4 (**see Figure 2**) merged "technology and pace of change" with the related but sometimes entirely separate risks around "21st century curriculum" (including internationalisation). Number 14 conflated racial tensions in the community and racial tensions within schools, although these arguably are often intertwined, and overlapped with Number 15 around social divides between the school and the surrounding populace. In responses to risk #12 on IEB-government links, it became clear that respondents were less worried about whether the IEB is independent enough, more about whether what little independence it has may be under threat.

The ability of respondents to accurately rank perceived risks and the possible haphazardness of their selections was potentially problematic. There were wide variations in how much detail participants gave in their responses, and some appeared to take much more care than others. Given research (Schreiber (1976) in De Vaus, 2012) which has documented that the same respondents may vary in their answers to uniform questions as straightforward as age, gender or place of birth, perhaps this variance in feedback is simply part of the joy of human inconsistency. Importantly, neither the survey nor the interviews purport to be representative samples of South African elite education from which definitive extrapolations of meaning can be made. This research can only aim to understand the perceptions of those who participated.

Chapter 4 – Findings

This chapter presents a summary of the results of the surveys and interviews – including (1) participant demographics (helping to identify associations for **(C)**), survey respondent (2) ratings and (3) rankings of risks **(B)**, how they (4) perceived risks overall **(A)** as well as how their (5) identity may be associated with their perceptions of risks **(C)**. Section 2 of the chapter focuses on amalgamated qualitative feedback from surveys and interviews, presented by risk number from the survey, to explore how participants defined **(A)** and prioritised **(B)** the various risks they perceived, and Part 3 considers ways in which respondent identity **(C)** may have affected these perceptions. Analysis and interpretation of these findings is given in Chapter 5.

1. Survey Results

1.1. Survey Respondent Demographics

There were 86 completed responses to the survey across the 10 schools that agreed to participate. Survey participants included a range of stakeholders: heads of all 10 schools, several members of school governing bodies, a substantial number of teachers (with widely varying experience-levels, career entry-points, and ages), and various 'Other' education professionals. Respondents included: a broad range of subjects taught among both teachers and school heads; nearly-even male-female split; most respondents were older and more experienced and predominantly English-speaking (for full details please refer to detailed respondent demographics in Appendix 6).

Most disappointingly, of the 82 respondents who divulged their ethnicity, there was only 1 participant who did not identify themselves as 'white'. Elite schools in SA tend to be predominantly staffed by white teachers - partly because many older teachers had their career prospects largely determined by apartheid employment policies. But since 1994 elite schools have made various efforts to diversify their staff contingents, however these have not been entirely successful (see discussions of 'Transformation' in Section 2 below). Given that the sample of schools and the total number of survey respondents is not intended to be statistically representative, participation in the survey was nevertheless sufficiently wide to give a diverse range of perspectives of the risks facing elite education in SA.

1.2. Respondent Risk Ratings

Respondents to the survey were asked to rate the various risks on a Likert-scale, the risks rated as "High Risk" by a significant proportion of respondents (more than 35) included:

Risk rated as '5 - High Risk' by more than 35 respondents*	# in Survey
17. Rising costs of operating private schools	51
18. Problems for parents affording private school	45
7. Emotional pressures on students and staff	39

*average 86 total respondents for whole survey – not all survey questions answered by all respondents (35 > 40%).

Combining the above "High Risks" with "Moderate" risks, gives a similar picture, as both tables show 'Rising Costs' as the highest risk, with 'Affordability for parents', and 'Emotional pressures on students and staff', also rated highly. However, the combined ratings additionally identify at least moderate risks associated with 'Digital Distractions', 'Political Uncertainty', and 'Concerns about…South African universities'.

Combined rating of '4 Moderate' and '5 High' Risk by more than 70 respondents	# in Survey
17. Rising costs of operating private schools	79
7. Emotional pressures on students and staff	78
18. Problems for parents affording private school	73
5. Changes in students: 'digital distractions' and low academic engagement	72
20. Political uncertainty	71
22. Concerns about instability and possible danger in South African universities	70

Some items were also commonly rated as posing 'Low Risk':

Most prominent among items rated 'Low Risk' or 'No Risk' (more than 35)	# in Survey
8. Physical safety from violent crime	54
6. Single-sex education: lack of interaction across genders*	45
13. Lack of social integration in community / in school itself (may include religion, social class, political outlook)	37

*out of 77 respondents – several respondents marked 'not applicable'

With SA's reputation as a dangerous country, from an international perspective it might come as a surprise that 'Physical Safety' was the item most likely to be ranked 'Low Risk' or 'No Risk' by respondents. This reflects that these schools are exceptionally well-guarded and safe environments, particularly in comparison to the dangers of government schools where media reports of violence among students (Nthate, 2017) and towards teachers (Dlamini, 2018) are increasing. It may also point to the importance of perceptions of risk **(C)**: for South Africans a

level of crime that might be intolerable to others may have become normalised. Similarly, for teachers whose careers have been in single-sex education (most elite private schools are single-sex, although some have specific classes integrated with a brother or sister school), they may be passionate supporters of single-sex education, seeing it not as a risk, but a benefit of their elite schools. The relatively low rating of 'Lack of social integration' is highly problematic and may reflect some of the problems of social divisions emphasised by many interviewees.

1.3. Respondent Rankings of perceived risks

Respondents were also asked to rank their top 5 risks from 1 being highest risk to 5 being 5th highest risk. To sort the rankings, a point score was allocated (100 points for ranking 1, 80 points for ranking 2, 60pts ranking 3, 40pts = 4, 20pts = 5) to each item to give a cumulative total ranking across all respondents.

Cumulative Ranking - Top Risks (% total ranking points)	
1. Recruitment of quality teachers	11.5%
7. Emotional pressures on students and staff	11.3%
2. Retention of quality teachers	8.8%
17. Rising costs of operating private schools	7.8%
16. Changing roles of parents: increasing parenting by schools	6.5%
Top 5 Items % total ranking points	**45.9%**

The results of these rankings do not appear to tie entirely into the earlier ratings: for example, 'Affordability of schools for parents' was rated highly as a risk yet is much less prominent among risks ranked. However, high ratings could be applied to an unlimited number of risks, whereas the ranking forced respondents to pick their top 5. It may also be that being forced to rank risks allowed respondents not only to consider the level of risk, but also the likelihood of that risk occurring (PSLA, 2009), a key aspect of effective risk analysis. Thus, while 'Recruiting Teachers' and 'Retaining Teachers' may not in general score as highly on risk ratings, they were ranked very highly, which suggests that they are looming larger in the minds of respondents **(B)**.

1.4. Respondent Perceptions of Risk Context - "Risks and the Big Picture"

The attitudes of respondents to the overall risk situation revealed perceptions that risks are increasing, but also that schools can mostly manage the risks to quality education, and many even felt that schools have a role in bringing about changes to the underlying causes of the risks.

Responses to other items were less clear-cut, and varied considerably according to the identity of the respondent **(C)** (see 1.5 below).

Strongly Agree or Somewhat Agree with Question	**Combined %**
Significant risks to quality education in our country have increased recently.	86%
Risks to quality education in elite private schools are mostly manageable by the schools.	71%
It is the role of education in elite private schools in SA to bring about changes to the underlying causes of the risks.	66%
Strongly Disagree or Somewhat Disagree with Question	
The overall level of risk to elite private schools is low at the present time.	57%

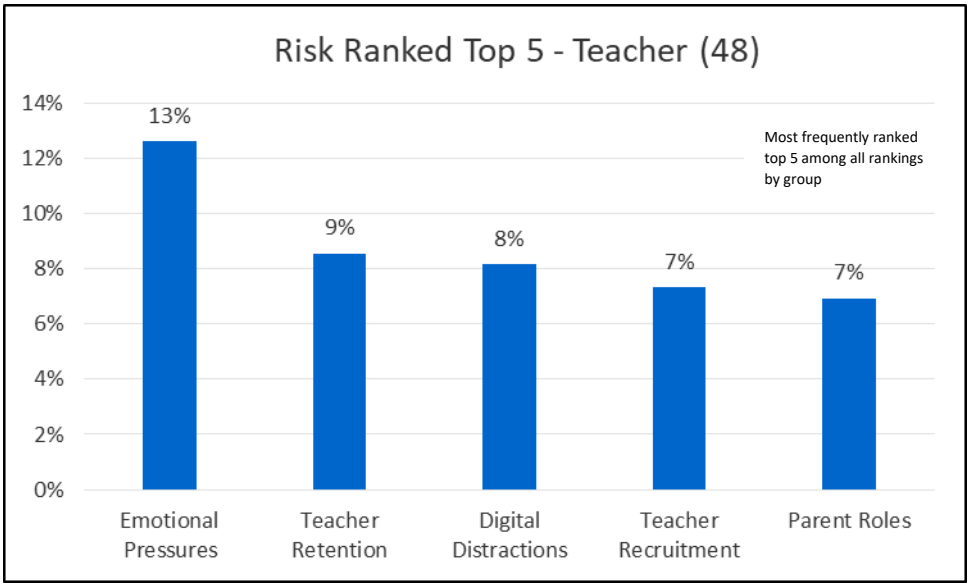
1.5. Respondent Identity and Risk Perceptions

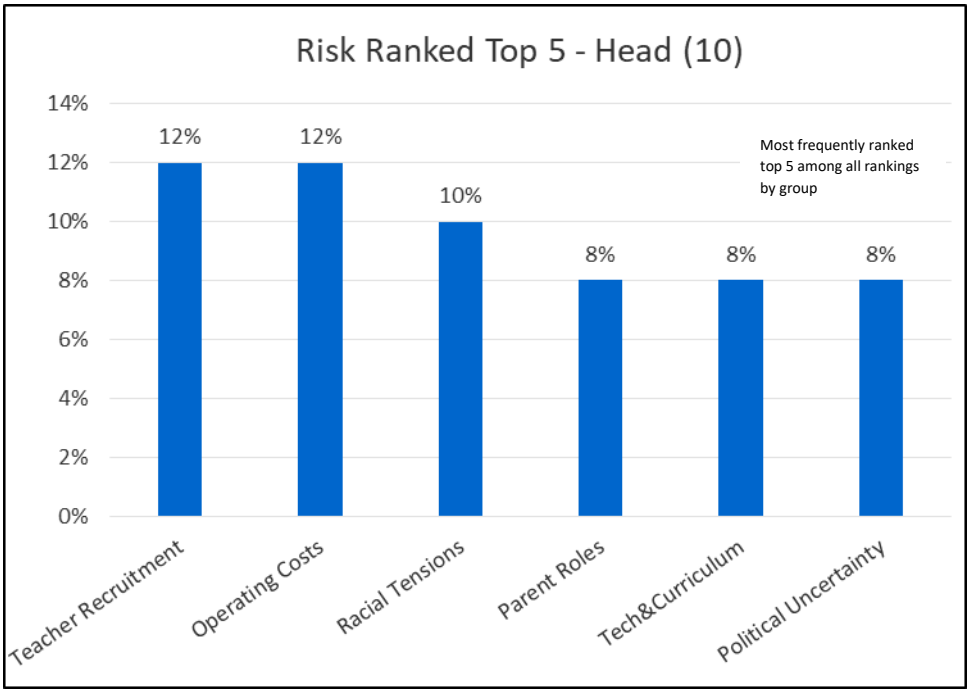
There were some interesting differences in how groups of respondents perceived the risk situation given that they all were members of the same 10 schools **(C)**. Note, however, that these percentages must be caveated by the fact that only 10 school Heads responded, while 48 respondents classified themselves as Teachers, and 'Other' (including Teacher-Manager) and 'Governing Body' roles were too diverse to be accurately situated in-between these two groups):

PERCEPTIONS OF RISKS: BY TYPE	TEACHERS (48)		HEADS OF SCHOOLS (10)	
Response Item	Strongly + Somewhat Agree	Somewhat + Strongly Disagree	Strongly + Somewhat Agree	Somewhat + Strongly Disagree
Overall Level of risk is Low	40%	50%	40%	60%
Risks mostly manageable by schools	69%	21%	60%	20%
Most significant risks are outside of schools	52%	27%	60%	40%
Significant risks have increased recently	88%	4%	70%	30%
I, personally, can affect the risks	21%	56%	40%	40%
Role of education to bring about changes to risks	60%	19%	90%	0%

Most notable was a much stronger disagreement from some school heads, that risks have increased recently (30% disagreed), as compared with only 4% of teachers disagreeing. Heads of schools were also much more likely to agree that education has a role in addressing the causes of risks (90% vs only 60% of teachers) and were much more evenly divided regarding whether they personally could affect the risks (40% of Heads agreed, compared with only 21% of teachers).

Perceptions of rankings of risks by the two groups were also different:





While both groups agreed in their high ranking of risks around Teacher Recruitment and Changing Roles of Parents, significant differences also emerged as Heads of schools highly ranked 'Rising Operating Costs', 'Racial Tensions', 'Technology and Curriculum', and 'Political Uncertainty', while Teachers rated 'Emotional Pressures on Students and Staff' as their top risk and rated 'Digital Distractions' highly. Further interpretation of differences in perceptions **(C)** is in Section 2 below and Chapter 5.

2. Qualitative Results

As discussed in Chapter 3, these results combine Qualitative Responses to Surveys and In-depth Interviews. A total of 43 in-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted (out of 86 survey responses), including all 10 school heads, several members of governing boards, various 'other' staff including marketing professionals, school psychologists, chaplains, and others, as well as a diverse range of teachers. The risks findings below are presented according to their numbering in the original survey (as per **Figure 2**), and interviews highlighted several linkages between risks, denoted below as a reference to a different risk. However, owing to constraints of space, some risk items covered in the survey and interviews will not be discussed in these findings (see **Appendix 7** for these) as they were given much lower priority except by a minority of respondents **(B)**. Time constraints in interviews also severely limited possibilities to discuss perceptions of the overall risk situation or the influences of identity on risk perception **(C)**, which are therefore explored below in a more limited way.

1.Recruitment of quality teachers

Risks around teacher recruitment stemmed from low numbers of quality entrants, "the production line is thin", said one headmaster, while other teachers described the profession as "not appealing", and "not a valued and well-paid profession". Further risks included: wider options today for entrants to the job market, the emphasis of neo-liberal society on earning money, and the rapid rise in housing costs meaning that many teachers perceived they could no longer afford to live near elite schools unless heavily subsidised by their employer. Many also observed that students at elite schools were themselves extremely unlikely to enter the teaching profession, while entrants to teacher training in SA generally tended to be lower-performing students with a "poor knowledge base" in both pedagogy and even subject content, and several interviewees lamented the dissolution of teacher training colleges as further constraining entry to the profession. The growing necessity of dual-income families where both spouses have career opportunities was an added difficulty in recruiting quality teachers, especially outside of major metropolitan areas where well-paying opportunities outside education were severely limited. Most elite schools have intern training programmes to try to develop their own pool of recruits, but these efforts seem to be isolated rather than collaborative across schools, and often have very mixed motives including both recruitment of 'transformation' candidates (see #14 below) as well as covering sports coaching requirements.

2.Retention of quality teachers

Despite teaching being a relatively 'recession-proof' career, retaining quality teachers was also noted as a significant risk, with challenges including: poor career and salary progression (with low annual pay increases despite rapidly rising middle-class living costs) – particularly in comparison with corporate promotion opportunities, and overseas teaching positions; increasing difficulty in developing and retaining all-rounders who are strong both academically and in extra-curricular activities (especially elite sports coaching); growing workload and pressure placed on teachers from schools and parents (see #7); and continued use of traditionally hierarchical leadership models in schools (and low levels of diversity among school leaders – see #14), that disenfranchise the teachers who are tasked with implementation of changes. As one respondent noted,

> "The ability to adapt and change is essentially down to the teaching staff. If they are not adequately consulted they feel undermined and ignored. Negative emotions often arise out of these situations which directly affects the efficacy the teacher and their motivation to work."

One interviewee observed that these factors seem to create the greatest risk of having high-calibre teachers leave, while those who entered the profession either believing it to be an "easier option", or with low ambitions and motivation, were more likely to remain.

3.Teaching to the test and 'grade-oriented' learning

A number of respondents perceived risks in an increasing obsession with results, and a tendency for students only to be willing to work on assignments that are 'for marks'. This in turn provokes fixation with "exam content", often at the expense of "broader enriching material", "critical thinking", "off topic discussion", "collaborative work", and a general "lack of engagement with wider ideas", and over-emphasis of competition over experimentation and participation. There were strong links between this risk to quality education and the pressures of university entrance (#22), as well as growing emotional pressures on students (#7).

4.Technology and pace of change / curriculum relevance to 21st century

This risk category should have been two separate items – curriculum, and technology. Within curriculum several respondents noted that elite schools in SA have tremendous scope for experimentation and freedom, given that students are only studying toward an externally set final examination in Grades 11 and 12, yet many respondents felt their school was making rather limited use of this independence. Some respondents perceived a risk that schools are teaching with "outdated methods and content", still following 'traditional' practices including timing (meal times, bed times, lesson duration and times), colonial uniforms, and 'traditional' subject areas. Efforts at cross-curricular and collaborative learning risked challenges of effectively

blending scaffolded subjects such as maths and sciences with other skills-based areas of cross-curricular study, while significant collaboration among students was elusive or artificial (one respondent argued that real collaboration requires specialisation to the point where each participant can offer deep expertise the others lack, and this unlikely to develop in secondary school). As a result, efforts in these areas were often noted as tentative or not fully integrated. Several respondents discussed concerns around the need for 21st century skills and holistic education, including: "self-regulation and self-motivated learning", "ability to communicate and present properly", "skills, character, cross-curricular learning", "networking, self-employment, problem-solving", and "leadership and ethics development". Another risk was significant uncertainty around what such learning should include, and one headmaster noted that "21st century education is still not clear, and we are already well into the century!"

Curriculum risks also included questions around the relative strength of local CAPS curriculum and IEB examinations, compared with other programmes including A-levels and International Baccalaureate. While some teachers were glib about the IEB's comparability to global qualifications and university entry, others pinpointed the trend of increasing adoption of A-levels and other international curricula by elite schools as clear evidence that academic standards in SA, even in elite education, are perceived to have fallen. One head described the offering of an international curriculum as "insurance" against a possible decline in local standards. Heads also linked retention of the local curriculum with patriotism and their school's South African context, and most considered that an international curriculum would be best delivered in parallel to, rather than in replacement of, the IEB matric. There were noted regional differences, with only one Province's independent schools having sufficient confidence in the rigour of the government examination boards to not take the IEB examinations.

Technology was largely felt to be an underdeveloped area of possibility by respondents, with the future perhaps holding potential for individualised, more flexible learning. All examinations and most assignments were still being hand-written, except by students with disability-related concessions. But currently many respondents saw technology as a risk rather than a support, mostly used for traditional teaching methods and administrative duties rather than to "unleash" learning. Many noted that teacher training in technology has not been adequate, and one school head commented that "humans are slow to change", particularly when compared with the speed of technological innovation. Much more was said about technology risks in #5 below.

5. Student changes: 'digital distractions' and low academic engagement

Teachers were often scathing about technology as a risk to education, citing: the increasing need to 'police' students constantly to ensure they were not being distracted or playing games on devices in class, the reduction in face-to-face conversation among students in hallways, and the general feeling that technology is a part of marketing a top school, but it may not actually be helping students to learn or to interact with each other. Some also felt that the immediacy of technology has negatively affected student's perseverance, including a tendency to "copy-and-paste" without thinking, increased cheating (for example using Google Translate for language assignments), and the sheer distraction and time taken up by what one school project measured was up to 400 messages per day being received by some senior students via their smartphones.

For school leaders, another risk lay in how best to respond to technology: on one hand banning technology entirely is a poor preparation for the outside world, on the other, younger adolescents may have weakly developed self-control, and less ability to judge the appropriateness of their digital interactions. Bullying and harassment in the digital world was noted as a major risk, with the jurisdiction of the school over this and its liability for such actions by students, worryingly unclear. Potential media-hype around poorly judged comments or social-media opinions is a significant risk (#23), with one survey respondent noting that journalists now trawl social media looking for controversial comments by children attending elite schools.

7. Emotional pressures on students and staff

A significant number of respondents commented on this issue and ranked it very highly, including both general pressures, as well as specific risks to staff and students separately. Many noted a sense that these pressures are increasing, as new demands and activities continue to be added but little seems to be taken away, while the negative political mood of the country (#20) and economic pressures also add "emotionally draining" uncertainties for students and teachers. One head of school did suggest however, that the climax of this trend may be near, as there is growing emphasis on mindfulness and reflective practices.

Teachers feel themselves to be under ever-increasing pressures – including requirements for responsiveness in communications (staff at one school believed they were required to respond to all communications within 48 hours), lack of trust and support from parents who increasingly treat teachers as service providers (#16) which is exacerbated by the high fees charged by these

elite schools (#18), the emotional labour inherent in the sheer quantity of interpersonal interactions per day, and an increase in self-policing by teachers, afraid that any banter or chastisement of students of colour could result in allegations of racism (#14). Another risk was the increasing number and complexity of social and emotional issues for teachers to manage alongside delivering the school curriculum, with increasing potential for a teacher being blamed if deeper emotional issues in an adolescent were not detected early, despite their lack of training in psychology and full slate of other commitments.

Emotional pressures on students were also perceived to be a significant risk in elite education. One school head described "huge psychological risks" that saw some students being institutionalised for stress or other emotional difficulties. Another interviewee with a lifetime of education experience, commented on how an 'overpopulated' world has created tremendous "competition for a place in the sun", while many interviewees also emphasised parental pressures (#16) on students, and the exhausting 'busyness' of many senior students, starting with pre-season sports training at 6am, and virtually no rest throughout the day, with many working late into the night to complete homework, and participation in compulsory Saturday sports fixtures often taking up the whole day. Some suggested that elite schools were inappropriate for those students who might be less at-risk in a less "type-A environment". Conversely, however, several respondents also commented on a lack of accurate perspective among students of their exceptional privilege (#13) relative to others. For schools this is a risk both in their responsibilities 'in-loco parentis' for student well-being, and the potentially damaging effects of high stress levels on schools' ability to facilitate quality learning.

13. Lack of social integration in community (also in school itself)

Concerns around social integration (excluding race - see #14) centred on two major themes in SA and in elite schools: socio-economic divides, and a sense of cultural fragmentation (the religious basis of elite schools was also sometimes mentioned - see Appendix 7).

<u>Socio-Economic Divides</u>

Several respondents described their school as a "privileged bubble", isolated from the real world, and noted a significant "disconnect" or even "insularity" in how students seemed unaware of their exceptional privilege given the very real deprivation in the country and even the immediate surroundings of their schools. Many felt that 'outreach' activities were too superficial, with one teacher describing how students experienced trips to informal settlements

or less privileged schools as like a “movie” from which they returned to their own normal lives – and suggested that perhaps students feel less guilt if they simply don’t acknowledge this issue among all the other pressures they face. Some respondents also noted struggles for students attending elite schools on scholarships, whose home-lives were much closer to the reality of the majority of SA’s population. One principal summed up this risk, noting that the social insularity and disengagement among elite school students merely mirrors “society at large”, and that the wider “reluctance to relinquish, and unwillingness to change”, may fundamentally underpin some of the national socio-economic divisions that could threaten the future of the whole country.

Cultural Fragmentation

A significant subtext to several interviews was that of cultural fragmentation – with participants noting an absence of shared cultural values and understandings in an increasingly individualist society: one teacher commented on how in the past any adult could reprimand a child for misbehaviour whereas now you “should mind your own business”. Another noted that students may be riven between different sets of values and ethos held by the school, its teachers, other students, and parents; producing “chameleon kids” who have ‘not firmly established their own core values and norms for navigating the world, before learning empathy and compassion for others’.

In opposition to this, one interviewee called the concern over risks of fragmentation, “the lie” of maintaining a single school culture, arguing that assimilation into a school may be closely linked to bullying or cultural chauvinism. This interviewee opined that young people need to be taught to consider and cope with multiple views before finding synthesis, so that one’s own values might be seen as ‘building a raft to float on a moving sea’. One school head similarly noted the difficulties of creating a coherent sense of belonging and purpose in an “identity-obsessed world” that seems to have lost cohesive narratives and instead is divided by pursuit of economic opportunities and individual ambitions. For elite schools there are real tensions between maintaining traditions that make these schools prestigious and avoiding the risks of being seen as intolerant of a plurality of values and cultural norms that are inherent in the diversity of South African society.

14. Racial tensions in community (also in school itself)

Risks from ‘Racial tensions’ included not only issues of racial transformation among both students and staff, and in the wider community, but also incorporated gender and sexuality aspects of transformation (see Appendix 7). Racial tensions and the risks they pose to elite schools in South Africa were well summarized by one response given to the survey:

> “Pressures to "transform" - a valid and necessary process - can be taken personally or result in stoking racial tensions. Most of the (predominantly older, white) staff are uncomfortable and feel defensive, and a significant "woke" portion of the student body are extremely vocal, impatient, and (in my opinion) very binary in their thinking on issues of race, history, and possible remedies for the current tensions. While is it both right and desirable that students and staff engage one another on these issues, it is often difficult to do so as tensions escalate.”

Heads of schools are acutely aware of the need for frank dialogue and mediation of racial tensions, but It became clear in this research that there are tremendous sensitivities on all sides, with schools utilising professional facilitators for such processes, as heads themselves did not feel qualified to deal with the potential for anger and hurt in the discussions. One school head spoke with quiet satisfaction of having invited guest speakers to “rattle the cages” of especially older white staff who had not fully considered their historic racial privileges[6]. Responses to this research were overwhelmingly those of white South Africans, many of whom felt that sensitivities around race have worsened, and some perceived a villainization of “European or white culture”, while several interviewees independently used the term “walking on eggshells” to describe their nervousness about race, and fear of being accused of racism, especially by increasingly “woke” students, many of whom are the children of Black politicians and government officials (#16). Several teachers spoke of having to apply different standards of discipline as they no longer felt confident to chastise a black student for misconduct, and one teacher mentioned their school using black staff in disciplinary hearings involving black students, as a safety mechanism. While there was concern that white students and teachers were feeling intimidated into politically correct narratives of race, gender and sexuality that avoid any contrary perspectives or critical discussion; there was also acknowledgement that black students and their parents were still feeling marginalized in elite schools by existing white-dominated power structures and the predominantly white teaching body. Underlying all of this was a significant fear among school leaders of “blow-ups” or possible front-page incidents that would subject the school to intense media scrutiny (#23).

[6] See Leathem (2018) for a clear explanation of white privilege in the South African secondary education context.

Transformation is a significant risk: there is acute awareness of the need to make elite school student populations more closely resemble the national racial profile, with several heads noting that, despite significant efforts to enrol up to 40% black students and to hire more black academic staff, their schools were still publicly perceived to be a "white island". Some noted a "shallow pool" of applicants among the 'Black Diamonds' or wealthy urban black families who could balance out the racial profile of the student body without needing financial assistance (#18). This may be compounded by Eurocentric school culture (e.g. the tendency of teachers to more readily pronounce European names than African ones), casual racism (students calling some peers 'bursary kids'), and potentially divisive historical legacies (e.g. colonial memorials or names of buildings and quadrangles that reinforce historical narratives of European and male superiority).

Failing to transform the teaching body to provide leaders and role models is also seen as a critical risk. However, there is extremely limited supply of black teachers with experience of high-performance schooling environments, with many capable candidates enticed to corporate work, while teachers in the government sector, the majority of whom are black, were often perceived to be unprepared for the significant academic pressures and extra-curricular workload placed on them in an elite education environment that contrasts starkly with their own education experiences. For a black teacher, elite schools may be experienced as an alien environment, in which they are often at a linguistic disadvantage, and where they may feel that they are not empowering their own community, but instead adding to the advantages of already privileged students.

16.Changing roles of parents: increasing parenting by schools

Several aspects of the roles of parents were presented as risks for quality education in elite schools. Respondents noted a polarizing tendency in parents' relationships with students, toward parents either being too detached or overly involved. Detached parents bring risks by imparting very little in the way of parental discipline or moral and spiritual guidance, often because of very limited family time and intense career commitments; or wanting to be their children's friend, particularly in divorced or split families. On the other hand, intensely involved 'helicopter' or 'lawnmower' parents (Brown, 2017) place tremendous pressure on schools and teachers as well as students (#7) to deliver "return on investment" for the fees they pay: believing that their child should always achieve exceptional results in all of their endeavours; "obsessed with winning but at the same time trying to cocoon their children from failure" and

the need for perseverance; and seeming to tie much of their own status to the achievement of their children.

Several long-experienced interviewees also noted a shift in parental attitudes over 20-30 years, noting the "growing lack of respect for teaching" and diminished trust in the teaching profession, including parents resorting to threats of litigation if unhappy with even the smallest decisions (such as which class a child is placed in within a grade). This may form part of the cultural fragmentation experienced in South African society (#13), and at least two heads of schools noted the importance of formal induction for parents (as well as new students) into the expectations and values of the school.

17. Rising costs of operating private schools

The rapid growth in costs of operating elite schools was a risk particularly strongly emphasised by heads of schools and governing body members, with many of the operating costs rising sharply ahead of official inflation (CPI). One respondent also noted the emergence of a "facilities arms race" among elite schools, using expansion of impressive sporting and boarding hostel infrastructure as part of their marketing, as well as competing directly against each other to secure the best scholarship applicants in areas including sports (#23), academics and music. Interviews with heads of schools also revealed a sense that financial strains could increase risks of schools being seen as 'service-providers' rather than partners, with a need for schools to be absolutely clear on their "bed-rock values" in order to firmly maintain their sense of identity. (See Appendix 7 for further discussion).

18.Problems for parents affording private school

Several heads saw affordability in tough economic times as a significant risk to the long-term viability of their schools (although teachers were not always as aware of this – see Appendix 7), noting media reports of increasing issues among for-profit private schools with their debtor books of unpaid school fees. One head admitted that maybe 25-30% of their students received some limited form of financial assistance and another described their school as one third parents who had "no issue" covering fees, a third for whom it was "a struggle", and a third who couldn't do it without "some support". Many heads expressed concern that the expense of elite schools is squeezing out middle class families and salaried professionals (replaced by entrepreneurs), narrowing the socio-economic diversity of the school body (#13). It was also heavily implied that rising fees present a significant barrier to increasing the racial diversity of

many elite schools (#14), which are often forced to provide significant funding to black students to enable them to attend, with black families more often being economically insecure in times of downturn.

19. Anti-elitism in populist rhetoric

There were concerns about populist political rhetoric targeted at perceived elites in South Africa – with one interviewee noting that the high fees at elite schools make them a target for "rabble-rousers" and populist "electioneering" for the 2019 national elections, especially given that the group served by elite schools is a very small political constituency, while the incumbent ANC faces potentially substantial political losses to the populist EFF. The debate around land expropriation without compensation (Gerber, 2018) was also mentioned as a risk to stability, especially in rural schools. Several school heads were confident that there will "always be a place" for the affordances (wider choice, academic rigour, reduced burden on the state) offered by elite private education. However, some saw anti-elitist sentiment as much more threatening, suggesting that "anything that isn't available to the masses is painted as anti-democratic", and one head noted:

> "[The] push for mediocrity for the masses is alarming: tall poppy syndrome may be ok in Holland or Australia where they have a very solid base, but being negative about excellence [in South Africa] where much performance is dismal, is problematic. If we stop innovation and opportunity for excellence we may be looking at a failed state."

It was clear from responses that there is much uncertainty around the potential risk that anti-elite rhetoric might be backed by political interference in these schools (#20).

20.Political uncertainty

While one interviewee believed that SA is part of a larger "global phenomenon" of increasing political uncertainty, "particularly in Western-oriented societies", for many in elite schools, particularly those aiming to attract overseas students (#17) or advertising world-class quality, a sense of political uncertainty was a significant risk. In one area of the country, service delivery by the local government was so bad that the school was forced to directly maintain surrounding public infrastructure, lest crumbling roads deter potential parents from enrolling their children in such an expensive school. Several school heads perceived an increasing risk of political intrusion into education (sometimes played upon by disgruntled parents (#16) threatening to involve politicians or the media (#23)), with a sense of uncertainty and even alarm about what rights or jurisdiction government ministers believe themselves to have (despite the schools not receiving any funding from government - although they are granted non-profit status) – in light

of the personal interventions and threatening statements of the Gauteng Minister of Education (as noted in Chapter 2). For some heads, the perceived political pressure was pushing them to consider overseas qualifications even more. One head suggested that it would be up to the elite schools themselves through their governing bodies, with ISASA appearing to be quite hesitant to act on behalf of independent schools, to meet with political leaders and "thrash out what it means for schools to be independent", to mitigate this significant political risk.

22.Concerns about instability and possible danger in South African universities

One school governing body member described "the prime KPI" [Key Performance Indicator] of an elite school as being, "entry to the best tertiary institutions for students". Many interviewees and a substantial number of survey respondents commented on growing interest among students and parents in entry to universities overseas. However, the significant local currency costs associated with overseas study for South Africans, tended to limit the total numbers of students for whom this is a real possibility, but the trend carries risks for elite schools because the wealthiest families who are most able to afford the high school fees, are also increasingly willing to send their children to complete school overseas. At least one respondent also noted an inherent risk in the elite school fixation on university entry when vocational or entrepreneurial routes might prove a much more appropriate post-secondary choice for some students.

23. Other Risks

Most of the survey responses noted under 'Other' risks actually fell within risks above. During the course of the interviews, however, two clear 'other' risks emerged: Media and reputational risk, and the divisive role of sports and marketing competition.

Several interviewees noted what one school head described as "catastrophic potential risks" from media scrutiny, with many feeling that elite schools have a "target on their backs", in part due to anti-elitist sentiment (#19), but also particularly around any allegations of racism, which one Head observed: "sucks objectivity out of the conversation" and tends to result in a person being deemed guilty before they're tried, "like being accused of paedophilia". For one school head, this media spotlight has troubling implications for development of staff into senior management, potentially deterring committed and conscientious educators with good leadership potential. Another interviewee feared that schools now risk making decisions not

necessarily in the best interests of individual students, but rather in response to fears of media scrutiny (for example removing a child who could reflect badly on the school).

Although sports were not noted specifically as a risk by any respondents, it emerged as a major part of the risks associated with intense marketing competition between elite schools. Observations included: comments around significant expenditure on top-quality sporting facilities and extensive transportation for sports fixtures; hiring teachers and teaching interns, including ex-professional sportsmen, who may primarily qualify as sports coaches rather than academic educators; pressures from some boards of governors for a 65% win rate in traditional sports - with one head describing these sports as being like "warfare" compared with a more relaxed atmosphere in other sports; added emotional pressures and even sports 'burn-out' among students who often end their sports careers when they leave school; vitriolic letters and pressure on teachers and coaches from parents; and competition between some schools to offer bursaries to the most able sporting applicants, despite the schools' growing financial pressures. Because in many elite schools participation in sports is compulsory, sports fixtures are often the most visible face of the school, with a clear link to the marketing and promotion of schools, with parents and alumni even judging the quality of the school by its sports performance against rivals. In response to these pressures, one high-profile school had publicly resolved that sports would only be an element of the school's total offering to students. While sports and competitiveness clearly have an important educational role in opportunities for the development of interpersonal skills, real experiences of success and failure, as well as iterative learning and perseverance, the demands of high-level sporting competition also appear to have insidious effects on academic outputs. One head remarked that adopting the International Baccalaureate would not work at their school because the time and intensity of the academic commitments would impinge on the school's sports programme. As another interviewee noted, it appears that the marketing of schools, especially through sports, has become a "tail wagging the dog".

3. Perceptions of Risks and Identity

The different job functions and hierarchical positions of participants seemed to affect their risk priorities **(B, C)** in surveys and interviews, as teachers often concentrated on classroom level risks ('Micro' risks - see Appendix 8), while Heads saw greater risks in 'Macro' level political and economic risks. The common ground between their risk perceptions lay in Meso issues (including Teacher Recruitment, Retention, Parental Roles) although even here there were

differences, as Heads were much more concerned about Curriculum and Operating Costs. Perceptions of risks tended to correspond to the risks a respondent was most directly dealing with based on their role and career stage. Perceptions also seemed tied to expectations of risk: in two participating schools there had been recent incidents of either armed robbery (not commonplace) or attempted mass-theft of tablet devices, neither of which was much remarked upon by interviewees, so it seemed that the commonality of crime in South Africa made it less likely to be perceived as a high priority **(B)**.

Personal experiences also seemed, anecdotally at least, to directly shape the risk perceptions of respondents and interviewees **(C)**. Heads with experience outside South Africa seemed more open to international qualifications – perhaps because of their in-depth perspectives of other world-class curricula. Teachers most concerned about risks stemming from Transformation, Ethics & Morals, and Drugs, often appeared to be either older, or more conservative in their personal values. One head raised interesting questions around the extent to which the risks to the future of their school's alumni in South Africa are real or perceived, seeing this as part of a narrative of "angry white men with no future in the country" - apparently contradicted by how many elite school alumni are doing exceptionally well and gaining or even creating many opportunities for themselves - but the narrative itself is shaping the choices of students and parents (both white and black), including considerations of overseas study or later work.

Chapter 5 – Discussion of Results

This chapter considers (1) risk strata and (2) themes that emerge from the risks findings and analysis and links these to the literature, (3) some links between literature and perceptions of risks, and (4) gives suggestions of areas for further research.

1. Risks: Strata

The array of risks facing quality education in elite secondary schools in South Africa can seem bewildering. Analytical grouping of these risks into different strata at which they primarily operate helped to sort logically the risks (see below Figures 3,4,5,6).

Figure 3: Macro Risks

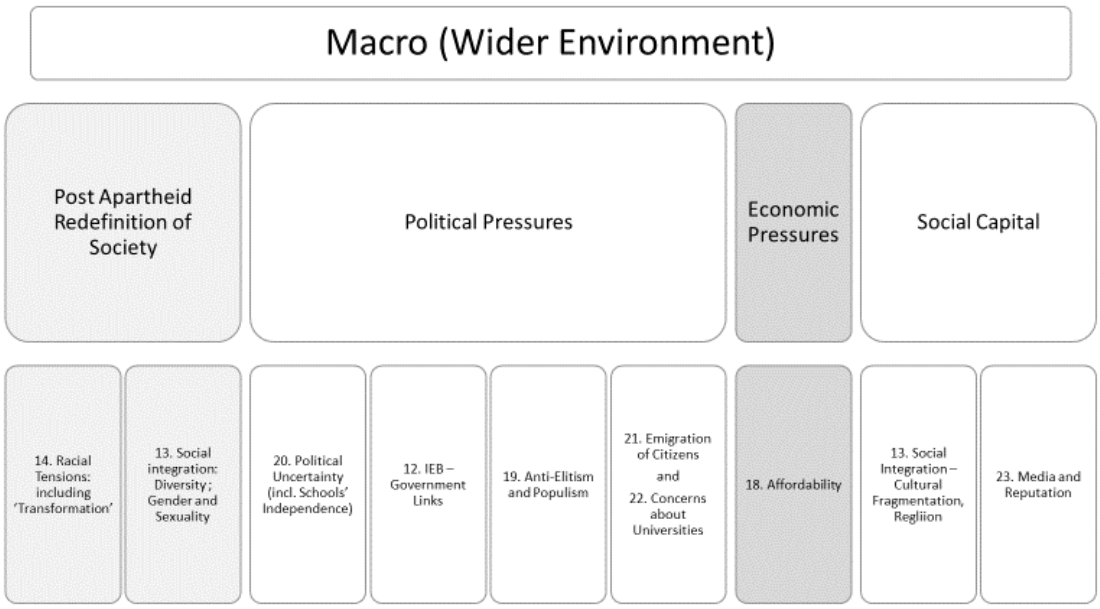


Figure 4: Meso Risks

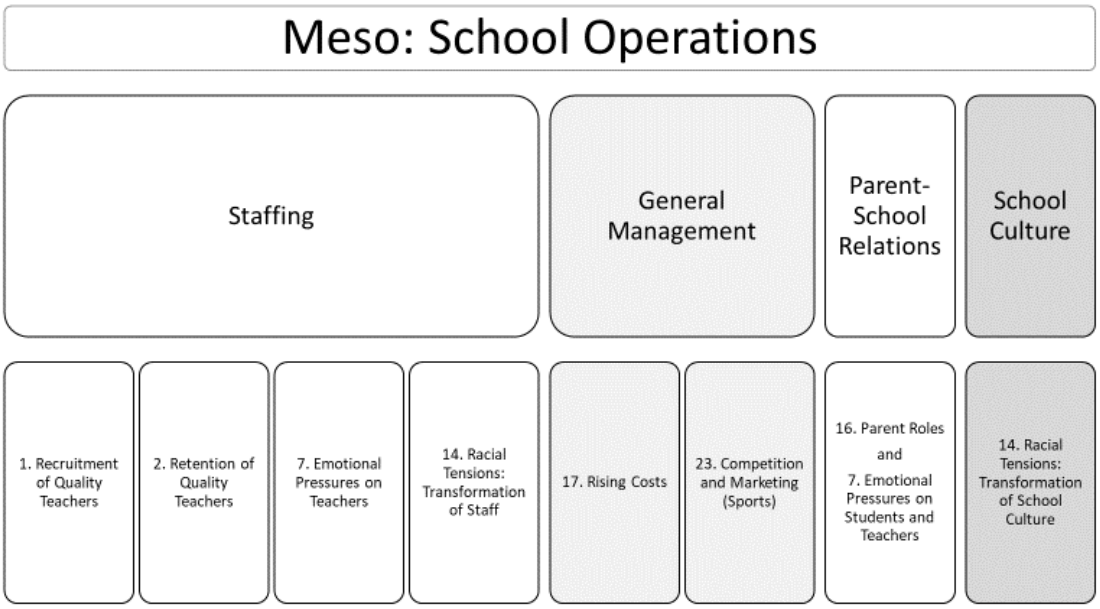


Figure 5: Micro Risks

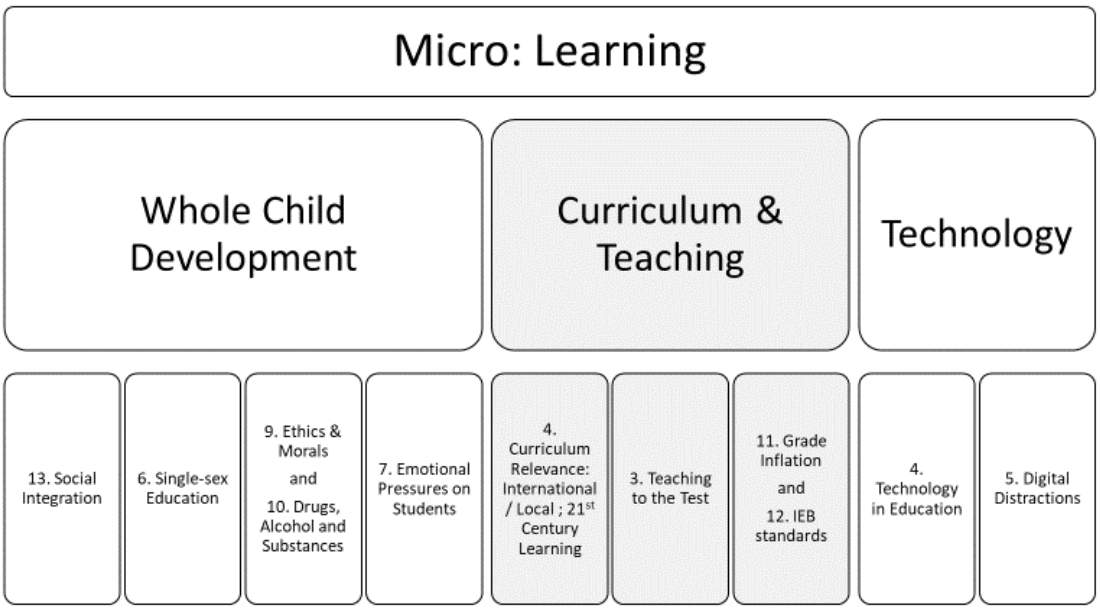
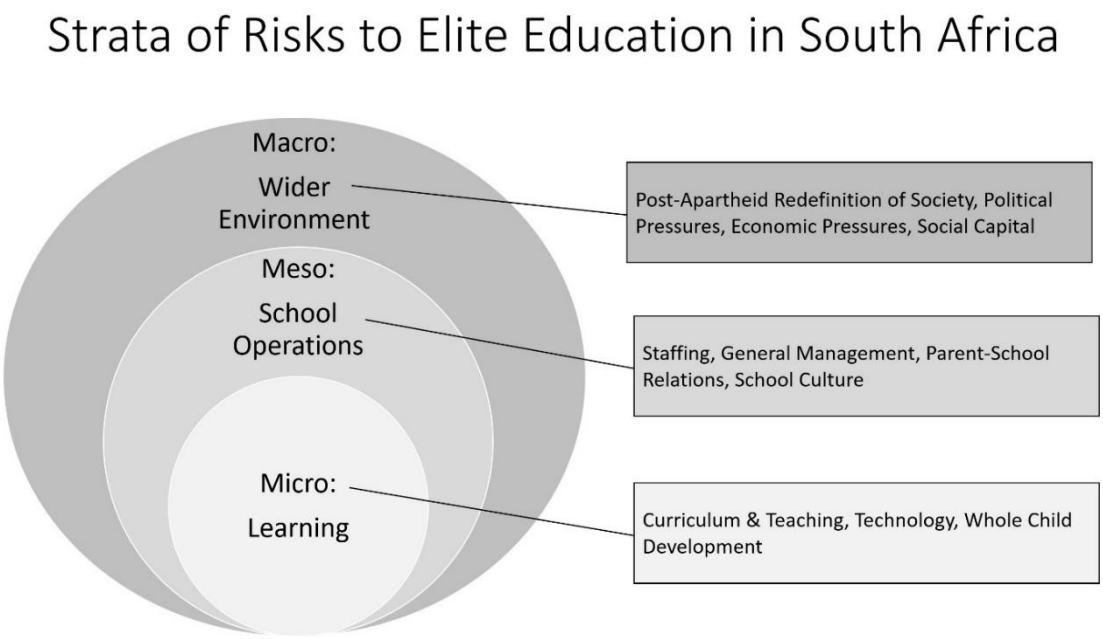


Figure 6: Strata of Risks



For more explanation of these Risk Strata see Appendix 8.

2. Risks: Themes

From the surveys and interviews what emerged from stakeholders was a clear prioritisation **(B)** of risks around:

- operating costs and affordability of elite education,
- quality teacher supply,
- emotional and parental pressures on both teachers and students, and
- issues around racial transformation and political vulnerability.

The in-depth interviews and more detailed survey responses also exposed considerable risks **(A)**, that were not necessarily explicitly categorised by participants or straddled several risks, including:

- competitive pressures between schools;
- risks around curriculum and pedagogical adaptability; and
- a confluence of various risks around culture, identity, and community / social fragmentation.

Analysis of these risks findings suggests some key themes **(A)** around perceived risks of concern **(B)** for a significant number and wide range of stakeholders in South African elite education, including: the Middle Class squeeze; Race, Transformation and Political Vulnerability;

Competition and the Neo-Liberal Order; Innovation and Change vs Continuity; and Fragmentation, Identity, and Social Capital. These themes are explored below.

2.1. Middle class squeeze

The findings of risks stemming from rapid inflation of private education costs and concerns around affordability of elite schooling, are not uniquely South African, and these risks were highlighted in literature from several other countries. However, South African elite schools do not yet seem to have considered risks to their non-profit organisation status; a threat that could prove catastrophic (Carman, 2013). Developed 'Western' countries have already seen a long-term middle-class squeeze (Erickson, 2014; Warren & Tyagi, 2003) in which the costs of maintaining an apparently middle-class lifestyle, including housing and quality education, are becoming increasingly unsustainable for people earning theoretically middle-class incomes (OECD, 2016). This is intensified by the shift from "conspicuous consumption" (Currid-Halkett, 2017) among the wealthiest, to investment in aspirational expenditures including the cultivation of children's aptitudes and especially their education – a trend which is widening class divides even in less unequal societies than SA. Solutions for the squeeze on the middle class are not clearly agreed upon and are mostly situated at the level of government policy (Ehrenfreund, 2017; Thompson, 2016). This bodes ill for SA, where political rhetoric seems largely focused on the marginalised, and the middle-class risk being deemed 'elites' amidst such dire inequality. The added precariousness of many members of the black middle class (Khunou, 2015; Mattes, 2015), is unfortunately likely to exacerbate transformation pressures on elite education. Perceptions of risks around affordability, cost escalation, and widening socio-economic divides in education, are well-founded and are shared internationally, with solutions not easily forthcoming.

2.2. Race, transformation, political vulnerability

Risks around racial tensions and pressures for transformation are reported in the findings, and SA's focus on race forms part of what Mary Douglas' Cultural Perspectives (Douglas, 1966, 1992) of risks would call a 'taboo', which blames and even stigmatises the individual or specific institutions for 'transgressions' that are a risk to society. In SA this vilification is reinforced by media hype and anti-elite sentiment, and it significantly increases the political vulnerability of elite schools. This also fits into a wider Cultural Cognition (Yale Law School, 2018) of persistent racial rather than socio-economic class tensions in SA, undergirding continuing support of political leaders who are increasingly socio-economically distant from the people they claim to

represent - also a wider global trend (Fiorina & Levendusky, 2006). This process of racial transformation has clearly captured SA's "sociological imagination" (Mills, 2000) and the key to unifying the individual experiences of elite schools and wider social and historical forces in the country may lie in elite schools helping outsiders to understand their role and efforts in the country's future success. Elite schools with powerful black citizens as PTA leaders, politically influential black governing body members, and black school Heads, are much less likely to be vilified or victimized, and may risk less political vulnerability.

2.3. Competition and Neo-liberal Order

The pernicious effects of managerialism highlighted in Risk Society theories are the root of risks facing schools around their increasing competition against each other in marketing (and sports), relationships with parents, and the intensifying pressures being placed on children and teachers to achieve measurable, marketable results in all areas of school life. Despite their purported religious values and desire for a holistic education, many schools seem to have implicitly accepted a neo-liberal order of market-based competition and human value based on future earnings potential. This aligns clearly with a Risk Discourse, in which many stakeholders in elite education have become blind to the true source of some of their risks. The scope of schools to actively challenge the materialistic and individualistic values of South African society seems little-exercised, particularly given the emphasis in the findings on the trust often placed in schools to impart values education. The perception of many principals that education can address the underlying foundations of risks faced by their elite schools, neds to be tested much more explicitly in this arena.

2.4. Innovation and Change vs Continuity

Education in secondary schools across the world still tends largely to be delivered in a 'factory model' (Leland & Kasten, 2002; Serafini, 2002), as it was over a hundred years ago (Denning, 2013), despite risks of irrelevance to the demands of the modern world. Elite schools in South Africa face numerous risks stemming from this, including from poor utilization of technology and uncertainties over how best to limit harms and distractions from the digital world, limited and tentative attempts to innovate curricula and to adopt 21st century learning, and uncertainties over how best to re-shape school culture and practical arrangements to accommodate the needs for both change and continuity. Implicit in many descriptions of this risk was the suggestion that many elite schools are not taking enough Positive Risks – and may fail to be bold enough in undertaking many kinds of radical transformation, not only racial or social, but also

educational. This also links to managerialism, as schools need to revive professional trust in teachers and encourage real experimentation instead of focusing on narrow education metrics.

2.5. Identity Fragmentation and Social Capital

Risk Society theories noted the increasing risks inherent in Post-modernity and Diversity – and how the resulting cultural fragmentation opens up more of life to intense public contest (as seen in Brexit or the election of Donald Trump), so that even the notion of elite or selective schooling itself may become highly contentious (Seldon, 2001). The findings (particularly risks #13,14,16) show that for many stakeholders it may be difficult to identify what the 'culture' of a school ought to be, and to navigate between very different communities that the school serves, when articulating its core values. This is crucial, as ethical risks are rarely combatted inherently by regulations or procedures, but by the integrity and examples of leaders embodying and sustaining an organisation culture (Gebler, 2006, pp. 337–39). It has been argued in the literature that risks can be combatted better if shared across an entire community (Beck (1992) in Bialostok et al., 2012) – for elite schools this should involve deliberately inculcating a strong sense of belonging and cultivating social capital (Putnam, 2000, 2017) among students, parents, teachers, and across these schools. As one school governing body member noted, elite school traditions are reinvented (see also Hobsbawm (1983)) and must be continually reshaped to be relevant and appropriate to the needs of today.

Many of the risks outlined in the above themes are common internationally and are identified in a piece-meal fashion in various literature, but the added risks to elite schools that seem to have a particularly South African flavour, especially those stemming from social, political and economic pressures, may in fact be shared particularly by elite and other private education institutions in democratic, culturally diverse, middle-income developing countries (e.g. India, Brazil, Chile, Indonesia) facing similar post-colonial socio-economic and political transformations and pressures. To deal with these risks and to enhance quality education, the recommendations (which are also being shared with all interview participants) are that elite secondary schools in SA: engage in wide collaboration; deliberately reshape their identities to cultivate pluralist values; prove their public value by delivering innovations – especially in curriculum and learning; and consider the potential macro-scale effects that could begin with micro-level changes in the social and cultural roles of their schools. For more information see Appendix 9.

3. Analysis of Perceptions of Risks

Various risk concepts in the literature also help to make sense of diverse perceptions of risks **(C)**. The Psychometric Paradigm – which highlighted the importance of optimistic biases, or preferences for risks perceived as voluntarily accepted, helps to explain why risks relating to crime were given such low priority by respondents. A sense of control also explains why so many more Heads than teachers expressed confidence in their own ability to affect risks, and in the ability of schools to act on the causes of these risks. Conversely, the sense among teachers that they and their students are under significant emotional pressures, may be closely tied to their feeling less able to control many risks. This has significant implications for school management, as greater decision-making participation among teachers and even students could potentially do much to alleviate their perceptions of emotional risks. Significant variations in respondent perspectives on whether risks are increasing (teachers mostly said yes, a significant minority of Heads said no), parallels the disagreement between Beck and Giddens in Risk Society theories, over whether risks themselves are increasing, or if mechanisms for labelling and perceiving risks have increased.

4. Areas for further research.

This research has often raised more questions than answers. However, two key areas of uncertainty warrant specific research: how should 21st century education be enacted in a secondary context, and how can the political economy of teacher quality can be fundamentally altered?

The wide variations in conceptions of 21st Century Education (Bakhshi, Downing, Osborne, & Schneider, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Jerald, 2009; Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012) are problematic for practitioners seeking to ensure future-relevant secondary education. Compounding this are Brown et. al.'s (2010) warnings around the future of the higher education race for qualifications and even the future of skilled work. These changes were alluded to among the Black Swan risks to secondary education, and they beg major questions about how secondary education should be adapted to best suit the future needs of students? What balance is best between learning content (which is expanding exponentially (IBM, 2006)) or skills? Or between developing academic and / or inter-personal capabilities? Education research often walks a tightrope between strength in diversity and weakness in ambiguity (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2014), but for respondents at the coalface in SA's elite secondary schools, there is

a sense that while the education being delivered may not be relevant enough, answers on exactly how best to change this are disparate and unclear.

South Africa, like many countries, also faces systemic shortages of qualified, quality teachers (Santiago, 2005). It is not merely a retention issue (Ingersoll, 2002), but a political economy of generally low-quality incoming teacher supply (CDE, 2017). While there is much research to suggest links between education and cultivation of democracy, there is limited research suggesting how already individualistic, free-market, democratic developing countries can radically and at scale, alter the overall capabilities of their teacher population (as opposed to massive single-generation shifts in literacy and education possible in command systems). In many developing countries with limited resources, the private sector is simply taking over education from weak or dysfunctional governments, a solution with troubling implications for equity and justice (Macpherson et al., 2014; Walford, 2013), even in nations less riven by ethnic, economic and other social tensions than South Africa. Necessary shifts in this political economy seem most likely to emanate not merely from technocratic changes, but also from pursuing cultural shifts in the value and recognition (Sahlberg, 2015; Schleicher, 2018) given for key contributions to society made by teachers and schools.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

While different stakeholders agree broadly regarding the most significant risks around securing quality teaching staff, and cost pressures on both schools and parents; teachers were more concerned about emotional pressures on students and staff, as well as distractions from digital devices, whereas school heads often took a more macro-perspective, perceiving significant risks from the political and cultural sphere, and challenges from modernity for curriculum relevance. The variations in perspectives on risks of different stakeholders tended perhaps unsurprisingly to correspond to the risks a respondent was most directly dealing with.

The various risks were analysed into themes of: Middle Class Squeeze; Race, Transformation and Political Vulnerability; Competition and Neo-liberal Order; Innovation and Change vs Continuity for elite schools; as well as Identity Fragmentation and Social Capital. Many of these are risks are shared across education systems and institutions internationally, but perhaps are felt most acutely by elite schools in similar developing countries.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - CUREC Approval

1.

From: Laura Molway
Sent: 20 February 2018 15:38
To: [redacted]
Cc: Ann Childs; Education Research Office
Subject: CUREC 1A Approval - REF ED-CIA-18-111

Dear [redacted]

Title: Risks to Elite Secondary School Education in South Africa – Perceptions of Key Stakeholders

The above application (reference number ED-CIA-18-111) has been considered on behalf of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to DREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly, approval has been granted.

If your research involves participants whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question (this includes those under 18 and vulnerable adults), then it is advisable to read the following NSPCC professional reporting requirements for cases of suspected abuse

http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/questions/reporting_child_abuse_wda74908.html

Should there be any subsequent changes to the project which raise ethical issues not covered in the original application you should submit details to research.office@education.ox.ac.uk for consideration.

Good luck with your research study.

Appendix 2 - Participant information sheet

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY
Tel: +44(0)1865 274024 Fax: +44(0)1865 274027
general.enquiries@education.ox.ac.uk www.education.ox.ac.uk

As a former History and Business Studies teacher at [redacted], I am currently studying a full-time Masters in Comparative and International Education at Oxford University in England. As part of this degree, I am conducting my thesis research into elite secondary schools in South Africa to understand more about perceptions of the most significant risks to high quality private education for these schools.

All participation in the survey is entirely voluntary, and any responses will be kept anonymous and anyone who agrees to take part has the right to withdraw at any time. The second phase of the research will be to follow-up the survey with in-depth face-to-face interviews later in the year, with the head of each respondent school, and also with selected staff members and governing body members (from among those that have expressed a willingness in the survey to be interviewed), from a range of elite secondary schools across the country. With the participant's consent I will audio record these interviews. Participants will be asked for their permission to use direct quotes.

What's in it for you and your school? First, there is an opportunity for every respondent to explore their own views of risk and to express these under conditions of anonymity. Second, while individual responses, and their schools, will be anonymised, the general findings of this research and subsequent analysis, will be shared with all participant schools; allowing decision-makers to understand how others in the sector perceive the landscape around them, and hopefully giving them new insights and depth for their own risk analyses or teaching practices.

What happens to the data provided?

The **research data** will be stored confidentially on the Principal Investigator's password protected computer within a separate confidential folder and within a locked cabinet for paper documents.

All research data and records will be stored for a minimum retention period of three years after publication or public release of the work of the research, in accordance with the University of Oxford's Policy on the Management of Research Data & Records.

Who has reviewed this study?

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (reference number: ED-CIA-18-111).

Who do I contact if I have a concern about the study or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please contact the researcher, [redacted] or their supervisor Dr Ann Childs [+44(0)1865274006], who will do their best to answer your query. The researcher should acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how they intend to deal with it. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the relevant chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter in a reasonably expeditious manner: Chair, Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee; Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD

Will the research be published?

The University of Oxford is committed to the dissemination of its research for the benefit of society and the economy and, in support of this commitment, has established an online archive of research materials. This archive includes digital copies of student theses successfully submitted as part of a University of Oxford postgraduate degree programme. Holding the archive online gives easy access for researchers to the full text of freely available theses, thereby increasing the likely impact and use of that research.

If you agree to participate in this study, the research will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be published open access.

If you have any queries or would like more information with which to reach a decision, please do not hesitate to contact me at: [redacted]

Many thanks for your time and consideration,

[redacted]

[redacted]

Appendix 3 - Interview Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM: Interview

CUREC Approval Reference: ED-CIA-18-111

Risks to Elite Secondary School Education in South Africa – Perceptions of Key Stakeholders

Purpose of Study

This study intends to answer the following questions:

1. **What do key stakeholders in elite secondary schools in South Africa perceive to be the greatest risks for high quality education in their schools?**
    a. **How do these stakeholders prioritise these risks / what order of significance do they place these risks in?**
    b. **Do different groups of stakeholders perceive the risks very differently?**

1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences.
4	I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.
5	I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.
6	I understand how this research will be written up and published.
7	I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.
8	I consent to being audio recorded
9	I understand how audio recordings will be used in research outputs
10	I agree to take part in the study

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

Appendix 4 - Full Survey

Qualtrics Survey: Risks to Elite Education in South Africa

The survey was accessed via an online link emailed to staff and members of governing bodies by the school head, the online version was accessible on either a computer or smartphone and looked like this:

The following pages contain a Word-document version of the full online survey.

Risks in Education in South Africa

Start of Block: Block 1

Q1 Please mark below your role in your school

- ○ Head of School (1)
- ○ Teacher (2)
- ○ Governing Body Member (3)
- ○ Other - Please fill in (4) _____

Q2 Scoring Risks to Your school

Below is a list of potential risks to delivering quality education in **your** school.

Please give each of these a rating out of 5 (1 being no risk, 5 being highest risk) or n/a if not applicable.

There is space at the bottom to add other risks absent from this list.

	High Risk 5 (1)	Moderate Risk 4 (2)	Neutral 3 (3)	Low Risk 2 (4)	No risk 1 (5)	Not Applicable (6)
1. Recruitment of quality teachers (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
2. Retention of quality teachers (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
3. Teaching to the test and 'grade-oriented' learning (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○
4. Technology and pace of change – curriculum relevance to 21st century (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
5. Changes in students: 'digital distractions' and low academic engagement (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○
6. Single-sex education: lack of interaction across genders (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○
7. Emotional pressures on students and staff (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○
8. Physical safety from violent crime (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○

9. Ethics, integrity and morals of student body (as a whole) (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Drugs, alchohol or other substances - negatively affecting learning (12)	○	○	○	○	○	○
11. Grade inflation within IEB exams (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
12. IEB links to government syllabus - leading to weakening of standards (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
13. Lack of social integration in community / in school itself (may include religion, social class, political outlook) (14)	○	○	○	○	○	○
14. Racial tensions in community / also in school itself (15)	○	○	○	○	○	○
15. Pressures on students to fit in socially in middle / upper class lifestyles (16)	○	○	○	○	○	○

16. Changing roles of parents: increasing parenting by schools (17)	○	○	○	○	○	○
17. Rising costs of operating private schools (18)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Problems for parents affording private school (19)	○	○	○	○	○	○
19. Anti-elitism in populist rhetoric (13)	○	○	○	○	○	○
20. Political uncertainty (20)	○	○	○	○	○	○
21. Emigration of citizens (21)	○	○	○	○	○	○
22. Concerns about instability and possible danger in South African universities (22)	○	○	○	○	○	○
23. Other (23)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q3 If you have ticked 'Other' above, please explain what other risk(s) you identify as being particularly significant (100 words or less).

_____

_____

_____

Q4 Ranking Risks to Your school

Please select the 5 risks that you believe are most significant for delivering quality private education in **your** school.

To do this,
-first drag your top 5 risks as outlined below to the top of the list, then
-drop them into the box, then
-order them in priority within that box from top risk (1) to 5th most significant risk (5).

In the next question you will be given the opportunity to explain these choices.

Select your Top 5 Risks
_____ 1. Recruitment of quality teachers (1)
_____ 2. Retention of quality teachers (2)
_____ 3. Teaching to the test and 'grade-oriented' learning (5)
_____ 4. Technology and pace of change – curriculum relevance to 21st century (6)
_____ 5. Student changes: 'digital distractions' and low academic engagement (7)
_____ 6. Single-sex education: lack of interaction across genders (8)
_____ 7. Emotional pressures on students and staff (9)
_____ 8. Ensuring physical safety from violent crime (10)
_____ 9. Ethics, integrity and morals of student body (as a whole) (11)
_____ Drugs, alchohol or other substances - negatively affecting learning (12)
_____ 19. Anti-elitism in populist rhetoric (13)
_____ 12. IEB links to government syllabus – weakening of standards (4)
_____ 13. Lack of social integration in community (also in school itself) (14)
_____ 14. Racial tensions in community (also in school itself) (15)
_____ 15. Pressures to fit in socially in middle / upper class lifestyles (16)
_____ 16. Changing roles of parents: increasing parenting by schools (17)
_____ 17. Rising costs of operating private schools (18)
_____ Problems for parents affording private school (19)
_____ 11. Grade inflation within IEB exams (3)
_____ 20. Political uncertainty (20)
_____ 21. Emigration of citizens (21)
_____ 22. Concerns about instability and possible danger in South African universities (22)
_____ 23. Other (23)

Carry Forward Selected Choices from "Ranking Risks to Your school

Q5 Explaining Rankings

Please explain each of your choices of the top 5 risks in the previous question - **why** do you rank these risks so high?

○ 1. Recruitment of quality teachers (1)

_____

○ 2. Retention of quality teachers (2)

_____

○ 3. Teaching to the test and 'grade-oriented' learning (3)

_____

○ 4. Technology and pace of change – curriculum relevance to 21st century (4)

_____

○ 5. Student changes: 'digital distractions' and low academic engagement (5)

_____

○ 6. Single-sex education: lack of interaction across genders (6)

_____

○ 7. Emotional pressures on students and staff (7)

_____

○ 8. Ensuring physical safety from violent crime (8)

_____

○ 9. Ethics, integrity and morals of student body (as a whole) (9)

_____

○ Drugs, alchohol or other substances - negatively affecting learning (10)

_____

○ 19. Anti-elitism in populist rhetoric (11)

_____

○ 12. IEB links to government syllabus – weakening of standards (12)

_____

○ 13. Lack of social integration in community (also in school itself) (13)

_____

○ 14. Racial tensions in community (also in school itself) (14)

_____

○ 15. Pressures to fit in socially in middle / upper class lifestyles (15)
_____

○ 16. Changing roles of parents: increasing parenting by schools (16)
_____

○ 17. Rising costs of operating private schools (17)
_____

○ Problems for parents affording private school (18)
_____

○ 11. Grade inflation within IEB exams (19)
_____

○ 20. Political uncertainty (20) _____

○ 21. Emigration of citizens (21)
_____

○ 22. Concerns about instability and possible danger in South African universities (22)
_____

○ Other (23)
_____

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Block 2

Q6 Risks and the Big Picture
Exploring overall perceptions of risk to quality education in South African private secondary schools: please answer the following questions to explain your views of the overall level of risk to **your** school.

	Strongly Agree (1)	Somewhat Agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	Don't know / Not Applicable (6)
The overall level of risk to elite private schools is low at the present time. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Risks to quality education in elite private schools are mostly manageable by the schools. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
The most significant risks to quality education faced are outside of the school, not inside it. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Significant risks to quality education in our country have increased recently. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Elite private education in South Africa is in a very strong position. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○

I, personally, can greatly affect the most significant risks to quality education. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is the role of education in elite private schools in South Africa to bring about changes to the causes of the risks. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○

*

Q7 If you have further comments on your answers to the above question about overall levels of risk, please use the space below (100 words or less).
[you will be asked in the next question about any more general comments you may have]:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q8 General Comments
If you have any further comments about risks to high quality education in elite private secondary schools in South Africa (either your own school or private schools more generally) please use the space below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

End of Block: Block 2

Start of Block: Block3

Note that ranges of choices in Q9 below have been concatenated for space so visible are only the first (1) and last (X) choice given to respondents.

Q9 Background Information

The remaining questions in this survey ask for more information about you as a respondent, in order to understand how career and life experiences may affect perceptions of risks.

Please remember that all responses to this survey are anonymous and that you also do not need to submit your name or contact details.

What is your age?

▼ 21-25 (1) ... Prefer not to say (7)

Q21 For how many years have you been a teacher / member of a school governing body?

▼ 1-3 (1) ... 40+ (7)

Q12 What subject(s) do you teach? (Please leave blank or mark n/a if not applicable or if you prefer not to answer this question).

_____

Q13 Gender

▼ Male (1) ... Prefer not to say (3)

Q14 Home Language

▼ Afrikaans (1) ... Prefer not to say (12)

Q15 Ethnicity

▼ Black (1) ... Prefer not to say (7)

Q16 Have you been involved as a teacher or member of a governing body of a **government school** in South Africa?

▼ Yes (1) ... No (2)

Q17 Have you been involved as a teacher or member of a governing body of a school **outside** South Africa?

▼ Yes (1) ... No (2)

Q18 The next question is entirely voluntary (except Head of School) and you may choose to remain anonymous.

However, without the below details it will not be possible to follow up this survey with an in-depth interview to further explore your perceptions of risks.

Please provide your name and email address.

Head of School must please fill this in for their survey.

○ Name (1) _____

○ Email address (2) _____

Q19 If you are happy with all of your responses please click below arrow on the right to submit.

End of Block: Block3

Appendix 5 - Interview Guides

NOTE: *In practice the timings outlined in these guides turned out to be quite unrealistic, and most interviews were dominated by discussions of risks and explanations given in the survey responses, with sometimes a very short period at the end of the interviews to cover perspectives directly.*

Perceptions of Risks to Elite Secondary Schools in South Africa

Interview Questions with **Head of School**

Introduction:

Thank-you for agreeing to participate in the follow-up in-depth interview. Your participation in this interview is voluntary, and you have kindly agreed to sign the consent form agreeing to this interview, and to the recording of this interview.

Your answers will be kept anonymous and any direct quotations used will be edited to ensure that neither your identity nor the identity of your school can be traced.

There are no 'right' answers in this interview – the purpose of this research is to understand the perceptions of teachers, school leaders, and governing body members in elite private secondary schools.

Procedure:

This interview should take no more than an hour to complete, and during that time you are under no obligation to answer any question that you are not comfortable with.

We will use a semi-structured format for this interview, that is, I will use an outline of guiding questions to ensure that we cover some key points during the interview – but the intention is to spend our time on the parts which you feel are most significant or most important. The intention is to begin by delving into some of your survey responses, and then to broaden our discussion from there.

Having shared an outline of the interview with you before-hand, please do let me know if there are particular aspects of the interview you'd like to spend more time on?

Questions:

1. Identifying information: Please tell me your name, position in the school, number of years experience, and any other identifying information which you feel is important to understanding your views.

2. Tell me about the key risks to quality education that you identify as most relevant for your school. **(15-20 mins)**
   Prompts: individual survey response in terms of highest rated risks, comments on risk ratings

Probes: why most relevant? How does risk X manifest itself or what has made you aware of it?

3. a. How much control or influence do you feel that your school has over these risks? **(10mins)**
   b. How much control or influence do you feel that you personally can have over these risks?
   Prompts: what is the school's role in relation to reducing these risks?
   Probes: have you experienced any particular difficulties in attempting to deal with these risks?

4. How do you see your identity and your school's identity affecting or shaping your perceptions of these risks? **(10mins)**
   Prompts: social class, race, language, 'culture' of school, religion
   Probes: how would you characterise the school's identity?

5. Blind spots or wider issues – are there other issues beyond education or that were not part of the survey that you feel are very relevant or concerning with regard to risks to education? **(10 mins)**
   Prompts: macro-environment risks, media 'sensationalism', Taleb's Black Swans
   Probes: where does the role of the school end and the wider society begin?

Interview Questions with **Other Respondents**

Introduction:

Thank-you for agreeing to participate in the follow-up in-depth interview. Your participation in this interview is voluntary, and you have kindly agreed to sign the consent form agreeing to this interview, and to the recording of this interview.

Your answers will be kept anonymous and any direct quotations used will be edited to ensure that neither your identity nor the identity of your school can be traced.

There are no 'right' answers in this interview – the purpose of this research is to understand the perceptions of teachers, school leaders, and governing body members in elite private secondary schools.

Procedure:

This interview should take no more than half an hour to complete, and during that time you are under no obligation to answer any question that you are not comfortable with.

We will use a semi-structured format for this interview, that is, I will use an outline of guiding questions to ensure that we cover some key points during the interview – but the intention is to spend our time on the parts which you feel are most significant or most important. The intention is to begin by delving into some of your survey responses, and then to broaden our discussion from there.

Having shared an outline of the interview with you before-hand, please do let me know if there

are particular aspects of the interview you'd like to spend more time on?

Questions:

1. Identifying information: Please tell me your name, position in the school, number of years experience, and any other identifying information which you feel is important to understanding your views.

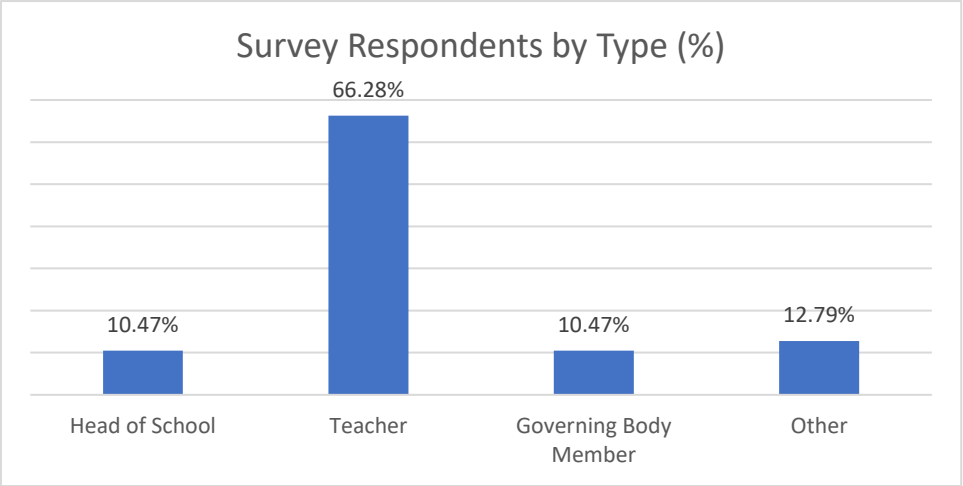
2. Are there aspects of your views on the key risks to quality education that you would like to expand on further? **(10 - 15 mins)**
   Probes: are there things you felt you weren't able to capture in the survey responses? What made you choose some risks over others? How does risk X manifest itself or what has made you aware of it?

3. How do you see your identity and your school's identity affecting or shaping your perceptions of these risks? **(5mins)**
   Prompts: social class, race, language, 'culture' of school, religion
   Probes: how would you characterise the school's identity?

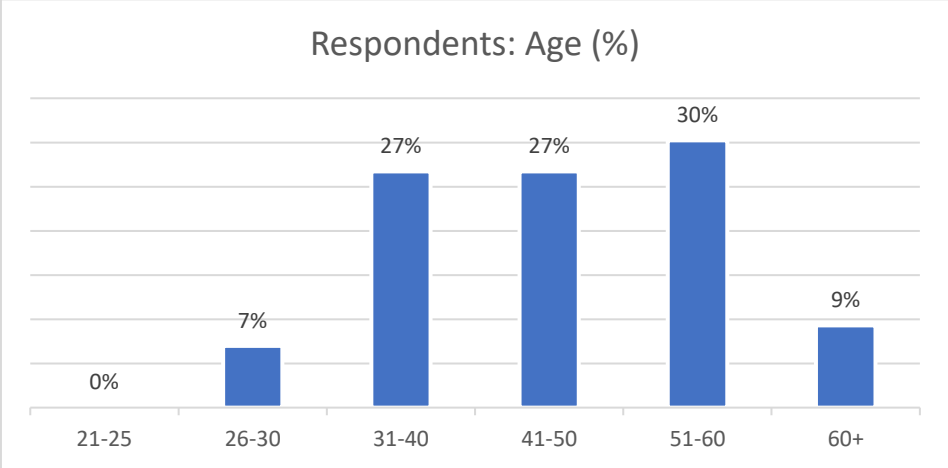
4. Blind spots or wider issues – are there other issues beyond education or that were not part of the survey that you feel are very relevant or concerning with regard to risks to education? **(5 mins)**
   Prompts: macro-environment risks, media 'sensationalism', Taleb's Black Swans
   Probes: where does the role of the school end and the wider society begin?

Appendix 6 - Survey Respondent Demographics

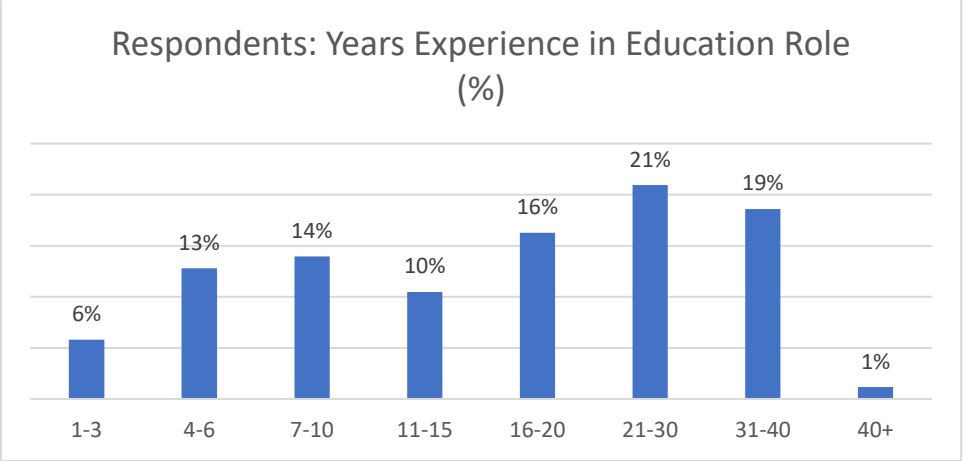
Below are graphical depictions of various aspects of the demographics of the survey respondents.



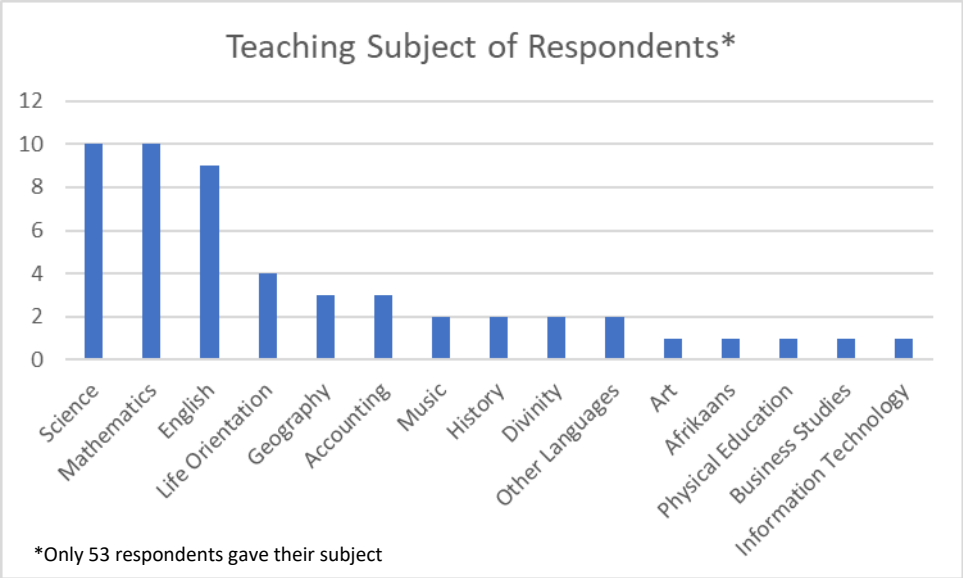
'Other' responses included: Psychologist, Librarian, Marketing, Strategy, and other Management, as well as Teachers who also have managerial roles as Head of Department.



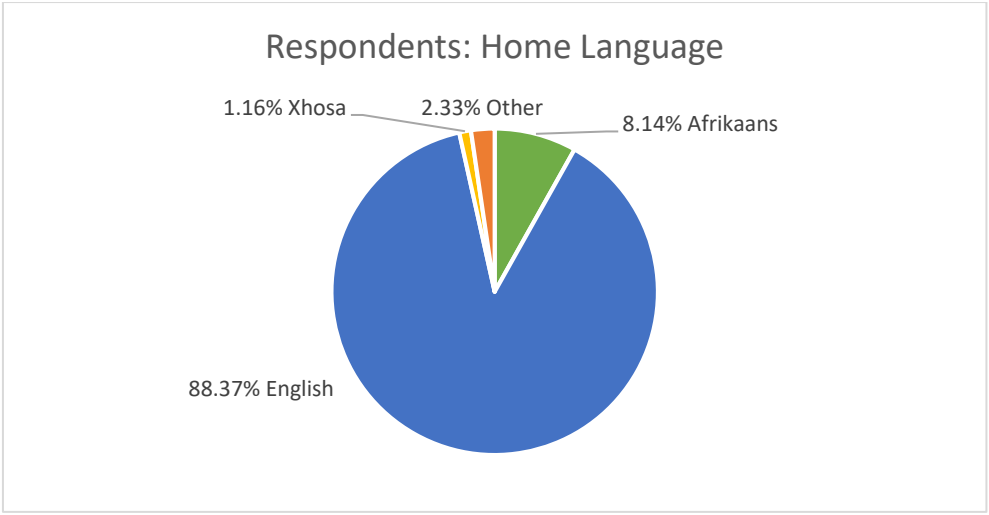
Interestingly, the respondent ages suggest very few early-career teachers participating, and no interns or trainee teachers completing the survey. It is not clear if this was due to lack of time, interest, or confidence.



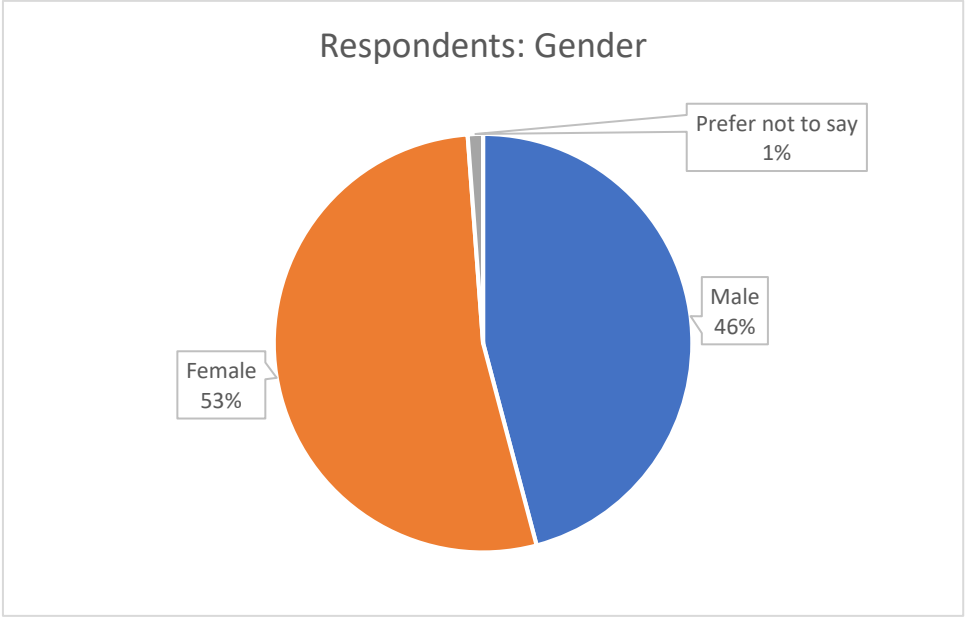
A significant bias toward more experienced teachers is perhaps partly explained by the compulsory participation of Heads of schools, who tend to have many years of experience.



Responses broadly align with the expected staffing contingent at a top private school, with students required to take both Mathematics and English, while teachers often classify themselves broadly as Science specialists but teaching is split between Physical Sciences (Physics and Chemistry) and Natural Sciences (Biology).



However, disappointingly few teachers of Afrikaans or other African Languages (a second language is compulsory) responded. Many teachers whose home language is Afrikaans are teachers of other subjects (not Afrikaans) in English-speaking schools.



A survey of teachers would expect a slight skew towards females, given their dominance within the teaching population, however the heads of schools (even at girls schools) includes significantly more males, and girls schools are under-represented in the sample of participating (2 of 10), while elite boys schools make particular efforts to hire more male staff (for pastoral and sports coaching reasons), all of which may help to explain the almost even participation of male and female teachers in the survey.

Appendix 7 - Additional Qualitative Findings in Surveys and Interviews

The following risks were also discussed by survey respondents and in interviews, but were much less prominent and / or have been removed to the appendix owing to constraints of space. Numbering of risk categories is as per **Figure 1**

6. Single-sex education: lack of interaction across genders

This was not noted as a risk by many respondents, with many seeing gender segregation as vital to academic performance. One boys school head did note the positive side of his school being great camaraderie, the negative being that the school was "sports-mad" (#23). Some female staff noted particular concerns around definitions of masculinity and "patriarchal attitudes" in boys schools, and aggressive feminism among girls that sees boys as an enemies or sexual adversaries rather than friends.

8.Ensuring physical safety from violent crime

Very few respondents had much to say about this as a concern. One governing body member did however comment on the significant cost of security provision as yet another factor in the rising costs of school operation (#17).

9. Ethics, integrity and morals of student body (as a whole)

Several staff members felt strongly that this was a significant risk, while many others did not note it at all. From the interviews, it appeared that those who did emphasise this were quite socially conservative. They noted morally questionable examples and messages from mainstream media and entertainment and links to digital media and devices. Others believed that risks around ethics and integrity stemmed from increasingly individualistic values and growing uncertainties in a "post-modern" world (#13) that is loose and uncertain. One school governing body member raised particular concerns around the growing tendency of elite schools to view discipline issues as risks to the image and marketing of the school, asking how an incident might reflect on the school, rather than being strong enough as institutions to create a safe space in which students might learn from their errors and experience the forgiveness inherent in the religious basis of almost all elite schools in the country (#13).

10. Drugs, alcohol or other substances - negatively affecting learning

Many of the respondents regarding substance risks were the same ones who noted moral and ethical risks. Those viewing this as a growing risk pinpointed the advent of drug ordering on the

internet, as well as the complicity of parents in supplying alcohol and turning a blind eye to partying, and the rise of Uber for independent transportation, as all compounding this risk.

11. Grade inflation within IEB exams

At least one teacher did note that the numbers of distinctions per student at elite schools has clearly risen over time, and another teacher commented on how much their school's class average mark for maths has risen, but it was much less clear whether these shifts linked to additional effort by both staff and students, or lowering standards. Several teachers did however also comment on reduced levels of reading ability or having fewer numbers of exceptional students who were well ahead of their reading age, as well as sharp declines in reading for pleasure, particularly among boys, with some blaming digital distractions and gaming for this.

12. IEB links to government syllabus & weakening of standards

Responses to this item varied considerably, with some only considering risks from either government pressures on the IEB, or weakening examining body standards, but many did also recognise the inherent linkage between these two. Regarding the IEB itself, at least one school head noted that the organisation leans on a small handful of very capable people, who might be difficult to replace, to deliver most of its work, while the IEB has been slow to create scope to ensure that it remains world class – with the Advanced Placement programmes in English and Maths seen as a very tentative attempt in this direction. Another head also noted that the AP papers in the IEB are not officially recognised as part of university entry and felt that students should be able to choose either AP or regular papers, but should not be taking them in parallel as this usually means taking the AP courses before or after normal school hours (adding further pressure on the most able students).

13. Lack of social integration in community (also in school itself)

<u>Religion</u>

The religious basis of most elite schools was also perceived as being at risk by several respondents. Many students and parents appear increasingly keen to opt out of the religious element of the school, but "put up with faith" because it is a good school. A school head did note that traditional religious views on gender and sexuality (see 'Transformation' in #14) did also generate resistance, particularly from feminists. One governing body member linked the decline in religion to an increasing marketization of education as a process for development of

human capital rather than a holistic education. It was striking how many school heads emphasised their faith at some point in the interviews, while very few teachers ever did, suggesting that schools themselves may contain widely varying attitudes to religion, and that elite schools may be the vanguard of attempts to rekindle or revive religiosity that appears generally to be in decline in South Africa, certainly among wealthier and more urban citizens.

14. Racial tensions in community (also in school itself)

Transformation - Race

One governing body member noted that the smaller pool of black applicants to elite schools was in part due to what they termed the 'Black Tax': successful black earners were likely to be supporting over a dozen dependents, so that even quite wealthy black families tend to send their children to stronger government schools or lower-cost private schools. The conflicted identity position of many black students at elite schools is also a fascinating subtext: many of the most 'woke' students are struggling, as one teacher pointed out, to reconcile their own privilege with a family and social narrative of historical struggle and injustice, and often seem to be simultaneously playing both economic and social trump cards (with many apparently highly successful families still being described as 'disadvantaged' in national economic transformation processes).

Transformation - Gender and Sexuality

Some interviewees noted that the nervousness of 'white schools' around race has tended to overshadow risks in other transformation issues around race and sexuality. Several staff, particularly in girls' schools, remarked on the emergence of a post-binary world of student and staff gender and sexual identity, with many unconscious biases (e.g. gendered school uniforms) still needing to be worked through. Schools need to offer scope for discussion around these issues, and to be open to debate, as well as supporting parents, many of whom seem particularly uncomfortable or poorly informed about these issues.

15.Pressures to fit in socially in middle / upper class lifestyles

Pressures to keep up with the lifestyle of peers seems to be an added risk of attending elite schools, with respondents noting that this may add to financial pressures for parents (#18) as well as emotional pressures for students. In the case of students on scholarships these pressures are likely to be particularly acute.

17. Rising costs of operating private schools

Interestingly, staff costs were perceived as a major driver of cost inflation, pushed up by competition between elite schools and also pressure from corporate employers and overseas school systems looking to poach capable teachers (especially in the Middle East); despite widespread acknowledgement that teachers in South Africa are not well enough compensated. Heads of schools highlighted various strategic responses including seeking to diversify school incomes by hosting various functions and activities on school premises (especially during holidays), merchandising, and a growth in weekly boarding provision for parents whose work made commuting to and from metropolitan schools onerous and expensive. In addition, several heads mentioned on-going efforts to attract students from all over Africa and even further afield, with at least one school having over 20% of their intake from outside South Africa. This also links to the fact that many elite schools have alumni living all over the world, for whom South African private education may be very well priced in a global currency (the most expensive elite schools in South Africa still cost less than £15 000 per year including boarding), although political risks (#20) constrain this export. Intensive efforts are also being made by many schools to grow their endowment funds from alumni and even corporate donations, noting for example that a substantial endowment income could help to cross-subsidise a more diverse and less privileged student body. At least one head spoke about countering these cost rises by reducing numbers of teachers or increasing class sizes, but admitted that parents would be opposed to their children being a part of such 'experiments'.

18.Problems for parents affording private school

It was concerning that at least some teachers seemed very un-aware in interviews of how many of their students may be from families who struggle to afford the school fees – this misconception may be compounded by vague communication around the issue from school management, and it risks a misguided tendency of teachers to see most of their students as being exceptionally affluent (which they no doubt are in national terms, but not necessarily relative to their peers). As one survey respondent noted:

"We cannot make the assumption that just because pupils are attending the school, that the parents are wealthy. Often we are inconsiderate, and expect money here and there for this and that, over and above the school fees. These hidden costs are problematic for many parents, and the pupils feel uncomfortable if they cannot contribute (to the raffle ticket, or the civvies day, for example)"

21.Emigration of citizens

This was not highlighted as a top risk by many respondents, however it was mentioned as an added concern that links to several other areas including enrolment of students (affordability), political uncertainty, and emotional pressures on students and teachers, and challenges for retention of quality teachers. One interviewee also emphasised a substantial risk for the supply of future generations of students, as those most likely to emigrate are the country's minority of well-educated, high-earning young professionals.

Appendix 8 - Risks Strata

Within the Micro or Learning stratum the risks in Curriculum and Teaching include: international vs local curriculum concerns, 21st century curriculum issues, teaching to the test, and grade inflation risks. Technology risks include not only technology use in education itself, but also digital distractions. Risks to Whole Child Development include social integration, single-sex education, ethics and morals, drugs and other substances, and emotional pressures on students.

At the Meso level, Staffing risks include recruitment and retention of teachers, transformation of the staff body, and emotional pressures on staff, as well as school management style and communications. Parent-School relationship risks centre on changing roles of parents, while General Management risks include rising operating costs, and pressures from school marketing and inter-school competition (linking closely with risks around school sports). There are also significant risks in developing and sustaining a School Culture that incorporates transformation issues and finds a balance between assimilation and integration of both staff and students.

Macro-level risks in the wider environment include Political Pressures – among these: threats to schools' independence, IEB-government links, anti-elitism and populism, political uncertainty and concerns over universities and emigration. Economic Pressures are dominated by the increasing risks to affordability of elite education. South African elite schools face additional pressures around the Post-Apartheid Redefinition of Society, which includes risks from racial tensions and transformation across South African society as a whole, and also other aspects of diversity (including socio-economic integration and gender and sexuality). There are also risks associated with declining social capital (Putnam, 2000, 2017) including cultural fragmentation, contests over religion in education, and intense media scrutiny.

These levels of risks have significant interplay, for example the difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers are directly shaped by Meso level risks around school management, school culture and also parent-school relations, as well as Macro level risks from wider economic pressures, as well as concerns over universities and declining social capital – particularly in the impacts on how teachers are perceived and valued (or not) by South African society. Some elements of risk also clearly permeate across all three strata – particularly tensions around race and socio-economic inequality, which are challenges for students, teachers, schools, communities, and the country.

Appendix 9 – Recommendations

Analysis of the key issues in the findings and discussion suggest a number of key recommendations for elite schools in South Africa aiming to deliver quality education, to combat the many risks they face, and will require serious action. These recommendations are drawn from discussions with interviewees in this research, as well as the researcher's background in organisational strategy, financial management and the management of non-profit organisations, as well as academic background in history and politics and development management.

These recommendations include: (1) greater collaboration among elite schools; (2) re-shaping school identity and culture to inculcate pluralist values; (3) adaptability and innovation (particularly around curriculum and learning trajectories); and (4) deliberate efforts to cultivate macro-scale (political, economic and cultural) changes by starting these at the micro-level within each school.

1. Collaboration

The findings suggest that one of the risks to elite schools is that they are in competition with each other, yet elite secondary schools in South Africa have more in common with each other than with most other schools in the country. Many of the risks they face could be much more effectively dealt with through collaboration rather than competition between them. For example, if their individual marketing power, currently focused on parents, were instead concentrated on building their collective brand and proving the value of innovative, independent education to the country's progress and development, it could do much to shore up public relations with government and reduce political vulnerability (especially given the reticence of ISASA to represent its members in the face of possible political encroachment). Similarly, much greater collaboration in teacher recruitment (pooling resources and administrative efforts devoted to internship schemes and partnerships with teacher training institutions) and retention (for example staffing exchanges between schools to aid career development), as well as group-wide staff development events, could address many risks in recruitment and retention. Offering access for parents to attend speakers and social events across these schools could do much to build inter-school networks and create additional value for parents in the school community. Similarly, major reductions in administrative work (and cost) might be achieved by running a single admissions process, requiring parents to rank their choices when making applications for their children to attend these schools – interviews would still be conducted by individual schools and Heads of schools, but the other costs could be

significantly pared down. Curriculum development and innovation is another crucial opportunity for collaboration (see 3.3 below).

2. Identity and Pluralism

Research findings highlighted risks around effective racial and social transformation of elite schools, seeking greater inclusivity while also dealing with risks stemming from what some respondents termed an increasing 'moral' or 'cultural' relativism. Elite schools need to take on a much greater leadership role in embodying a pluralist culture and identity that actively welcomes diversity, seeks to build understanding, fosters dialogue, and prompts the "encounter of commitments" (Eck, 2006) through deep engagement rather than relativism. Simultaneously, schools must be committed to their core values, and secure in their own identity: allowing them to tell parents and other stakeholders to 'take it or leave it' and avoiding risks of the marketing tail wagging the dog. But this set of values and expectations must also be communicated more explicitly: to teachers, who should be trusted but also expected to deliver high quality education services; to students, especially around appropriate and effective use of digital devices; and to parents, who should be thoroughly inducted into the ethos of the school and reminded that holistic education with support from families is paramount above examinations, sports, and other short-term fixations. It is a great asset to South African schools that there are no league tables for examination results, and these should be avoided at all costs, so that elite schools can incorporate a diverse range of students with different strengths and weaknesses. Ideally elite schools should agree not to publicise their results, as this forms part of the message that it is up to each child to earn their achievements, not the school or its otherwise-pressured teachers.

While plurality in avenues for student excellence is important, risks from overt marketing of school sports should be carefully considered by elite schools. A strong signal to parents and alumni would be better rewarding and publicly recognising the most academically qualified and able staff while significantly reducing the use of high-profile sports specialists or weaker academic teachers whose focus is sports (who are surprisingly numerous even at elite schools). Boys schools particularly should emphasise role models who do more to contribute to the development of society – including teachers.

3. Innovation

Another way for elite schools to combat the macro-political risks identified in the findings, and prove their social value, would be to collaboratively create successful innovations that could also

be used in state schools. Given the significant handicaps of the IEB (including Umalusi shackles, grade inflation, exclusion of AP subjects from university applications), elite schools may need to collectively take curriculum matters into their own hands in choosing whether to Africanise or Internationalise. This could include developing an entirely new African Baccalaureate – an internationally-competitive final years curriculum and school leavers' examination that provides a platform for high-achieving students to apply to world class universities, while also being well-versed in African knowledge and contexts. A successful effort would set up these schools as exporters of best practice on the continent and even inter-continentally. In junior grades, elite secondary schools must co-ordinate and collaborate in their various experiments to develop best practice for elusive 21st century learning (see Section 4): incorporating cross-curricular, skills-based learning which cultivates inter-personal as well as academic excellence, while not losing sight of core content knowledge needed. Another significant innovation with public benefits, desperately needed given dismal literacy rates in primary schools (Spaull & Carel, 2017), would be to develop replicable models for rapidly getting back on track students whose literacy or numeracy has fallen behind their grade level - for example by removing struggling students from all but three core subjects to address these deficits - and possibly including de-linking of age and academic level to prevent arbitrary promotion of weak students.

Opportunities to develop these educational innovations, should be primarily driven by collaboration among elite schools' staff, but worked in partnership with Education researchers in universities (as Eton College (2018) has done), offering avenues for further staff development as well as wider stakeholder engagement, and proof again to the public of the social contribution of these schools.

4. Adaptability and Macro role of the Micro

Elite schools need to form the vanguard against risks of social division by shaping future leaders and generating social change from within. In an age of diminishing social capital, the potential for schools to act as a bridge for greater understanding among their diverse stakeholders and communities should be much better publicised. For example, while the poor position of the teaching profession in South Africa is a national problem, elite schools could take on a role of challenging and re-shaping these perceptions, utilising the marketing and PR talents they have and building on their corporate networks via their parent body, to re-position both the profession and schools as institutions of learning and change. Similarly, development of the whole child should stem from a carefully managed balance between the school's "bed-rock

values" and a "raft" that provides each child stability and allows for failure and development of resilience, while also fostering adaptability, mental agility, and cultural fluency (Bennett, 1998; Scott, 1999).

While schools are looking to build endowments that can support students in need, perhaps they need to look at an even wider picture of how they could link up teacher recruitment efforts together with scholarships. Leveraging corporate partnerships, elite schools could offer the most talented working and middle class, and especially black, students not merely an elite school scholarship, but a linked bursary to an educationally appropriate undergraduate degree in Arts or Sciences and then a PGCE, in return for several years of teaching and exposure to corporate opportunities similar to those offered in various Teach For All programmes (TFA, 2018). While not all of these trainees would remain in education, it is likely that a gradual shift in the consideration of teaching as a valued profession could be engendered, particularly if the entry threshold places a significant premium on academic quality of applicants. Too many current interns are being recruited with mixed motives (including sports coaching and racial tokenism) leading to inconsistent quality.

Cultural adaptations are also necessary for elite schools' social relevance, and Africanisation of schools should extend beyond what is learned, to how it is learned and by whom it is taught. Efforts to transform schools should be wide-ranging, including dress code, languages in which assemblies and social functions are held, and incorporation of music, arts, and culture from a nuanced variety of African as well as international sources. Social linkages between those at elite schools and their surrounding disadvantaged communities need to be built much more strongly: elite school children would benefit from being deployed en-masse to provide regular after-school literacy and numeracy education, not from the cosy confines of their own privileged world, but in those communities. Not only would this remind elite students of their own privilege, but it might help them to better understand some of the challenges facing South Africa, imprinting this on the consciousness of potential future leaders. This might come with safety risks, but the risk of elite school students arriving at university wilfully ignorant of the reality of their country is a much greater danger both for them and the political vulnerability of their schools.