WHOLESALE & RETAIL SECTOR: Where to next?

a presentation by

the Diverse Trailblazers

ABOUT US

AYANDA MABASO
Mr Price

COCO NYUMBU
ASCO

FIONA ALLI
Bowler Packaging

JUSTIN VOLLENHOVEN
Woolworths

MPILO SICWEBU
Shoprite Checkers

NJABULO MDUNGE
Fujifilm

VELDA THOMAS
Takealot

INTRODUCTION

- Diverse squad of professionals from the Wholesale & Retail Sector – Food, Concessionary, E-commerce & Industrial
- Theoretical knowledge acquired **+** real-life immersive learnings from travel **=** tangible solutions for South Africa
- Key leadership frameworks to establish practical recommendations that drive sustainable practices & outcomes for the wholesale & retail sector
- Investigated key challenges faced by sector participants and unpacking an integrated solution that will introduce operation excellence, innovation, and enhanced business acumen to the sector
- SMEs that are suppliers to the sector by using skills development as a strategic and transformational lever
- Making the sector aspirational through driving entrepreneurship

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- **Problem:** Wholesalers and retailers face inefficiencies due to insufficient skills empowerment of SME suppliers in their supply chains

- **Proposal:** Unlocking value for Wholesalers & Retailers through targeted skills empowerment of SME's that participate in existing supply chains as suppliers

PREVAILING CONCERN

Concerns & challenges within the Wholesale & Retail Sector

CONCERN WITHIN WHOLESALE & RETAIL SECTOR

CONCERN WITHIN WHOLESALE & RETAIL SECTOR

Supply Chain Disruptions

- Geopolitical factors
- Infrastructure constraints and transport cost
- Regulatory and Bureaucratic Challenges
- Inventory Management & Demand Forecasting
- Lack of diversity in sourcing and Logistics strategies

Rising Operational Cost

- Inflationary pressures
- Volatile energy prices
- Increased regulatory compliance
- Supply chain uncertainties

Andriantomanga et al. (2023)
International Trade Administration. (2024)
Statistics South Africa. (2024)

CONCERN WITHIN WHOLESALE & RETAIL SECTOR

Talent Shortage

- Mismatch between education and industry need
- Low uptake of digital training
- Limited access to upskilling and reskilling programs
- Brain drain and migration of skilled professionals

Digital Transformation

- Enhance customer experience
- Supply chain optimisation
- Operational efficiency

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2022)

CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

Contextual Environment & Insights

SME RISKS: WHOLESALE & RETAIL SECTOR

Challenges

Skills Shortage: A lack of business and technical skills hampers the development and sustainability of SMEs

Financial Support: Many SMEs struggle to secure funding from traditional banks.

Opportunities

Digital Transformation: Adopting digital technologies can enhance operational efficiency and market reach

Collaboration: Between private sector entities can provide support in terms of training and skills development.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). (2021)
Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA). (2022)

World Economic Forum. (2022).

IMMERSION CONTEXT

	SME Contribution	Employment	GDP
South Africa: W|R Sector	44%	85%	21%
Dubai: W|R Sector	60%	33%	25%
Italy: W|R Sector	95%	15%	14%

South African Market Insights. (2017, March).

Masimo, (2025, May 21) Rome Business School.

Dubai SME. (2023). *Dubai SME annual report 2023*

EduAction FOR SMEs

EduAction

Ascending SMEs

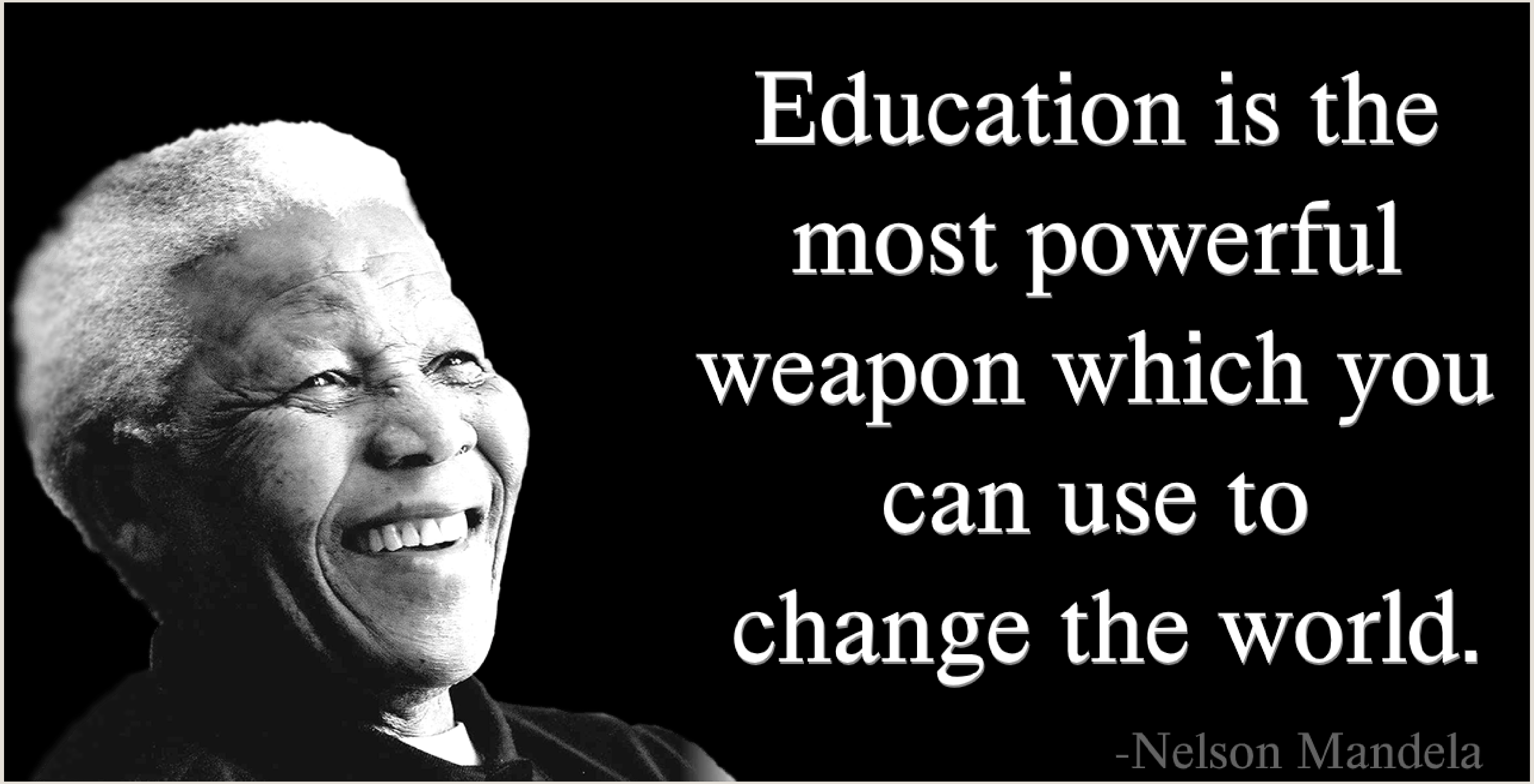
Multi-organisational knowledge coalition

1

Learning management system

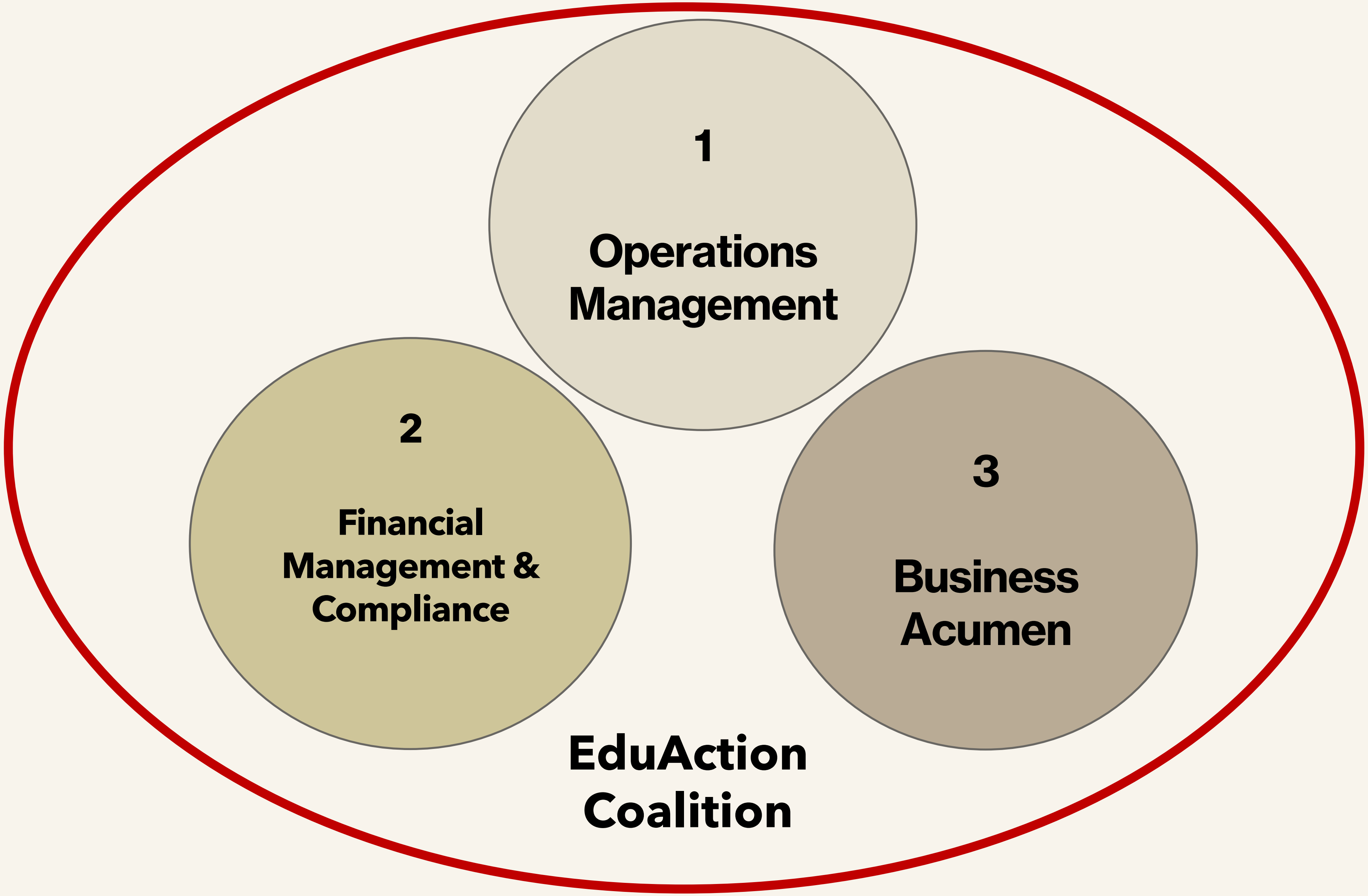
2

GROWING THE ECONOMY THROUGH SMEs

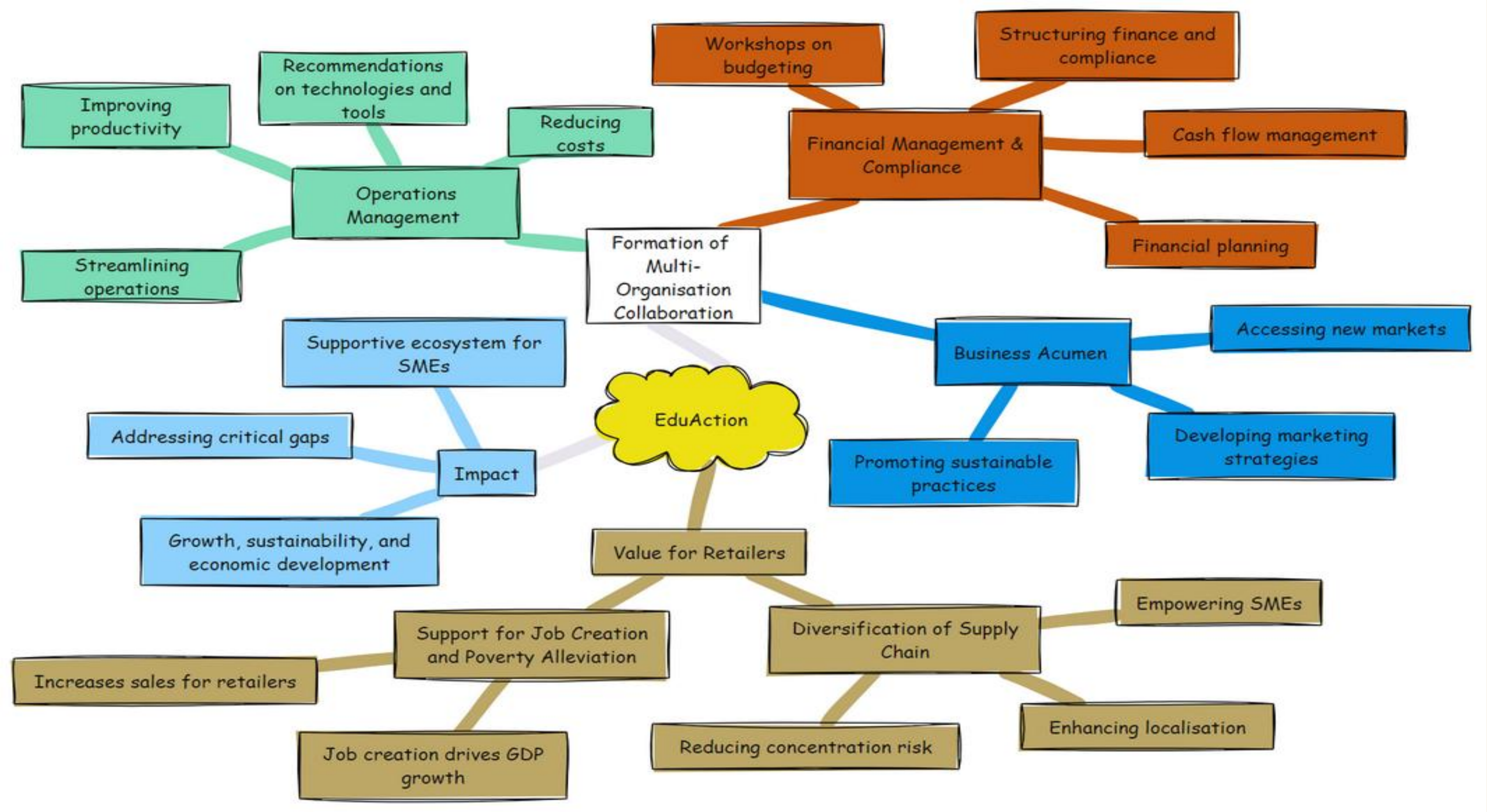


RECOMMENDATION

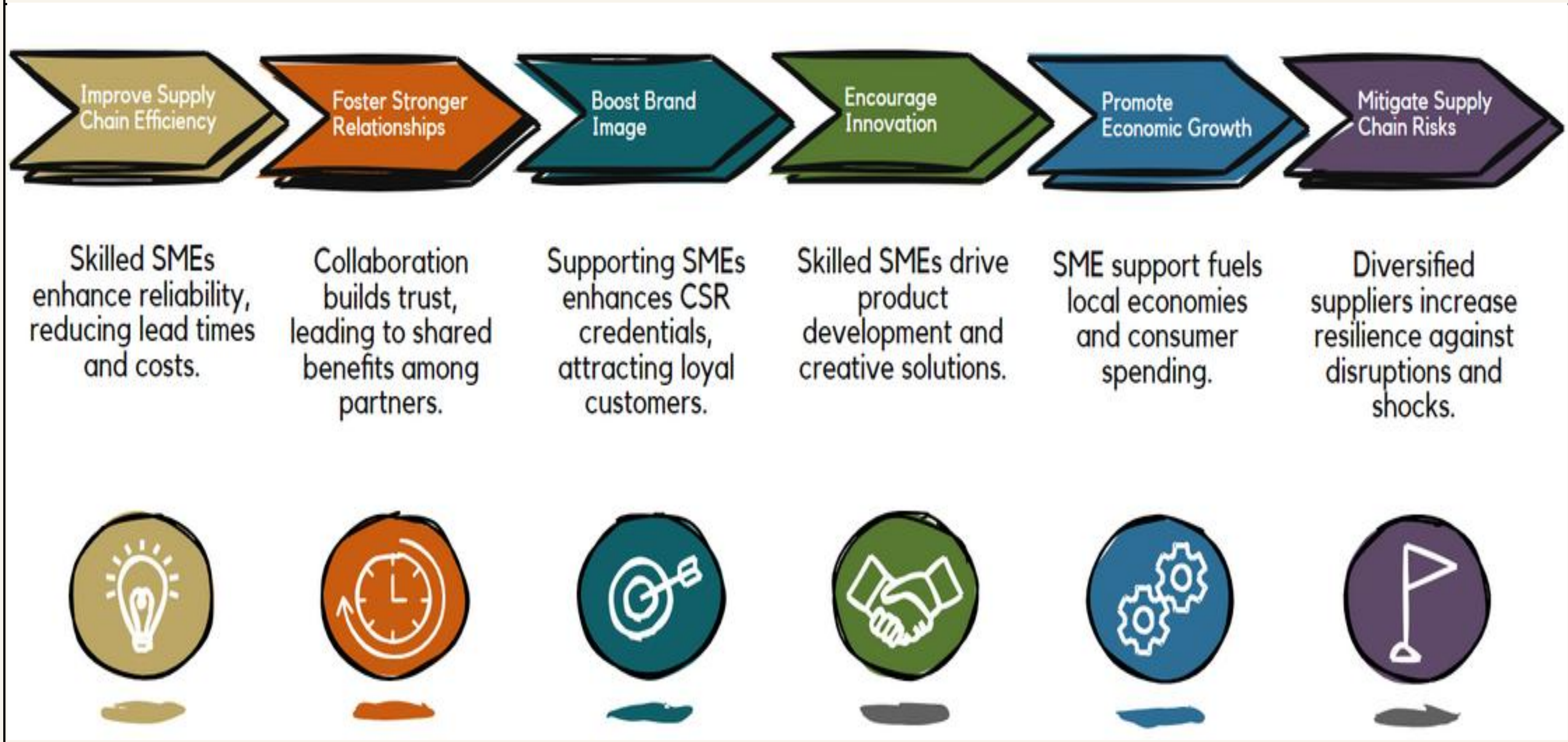
1. COALITION OF KNOWLEDGE HUBS



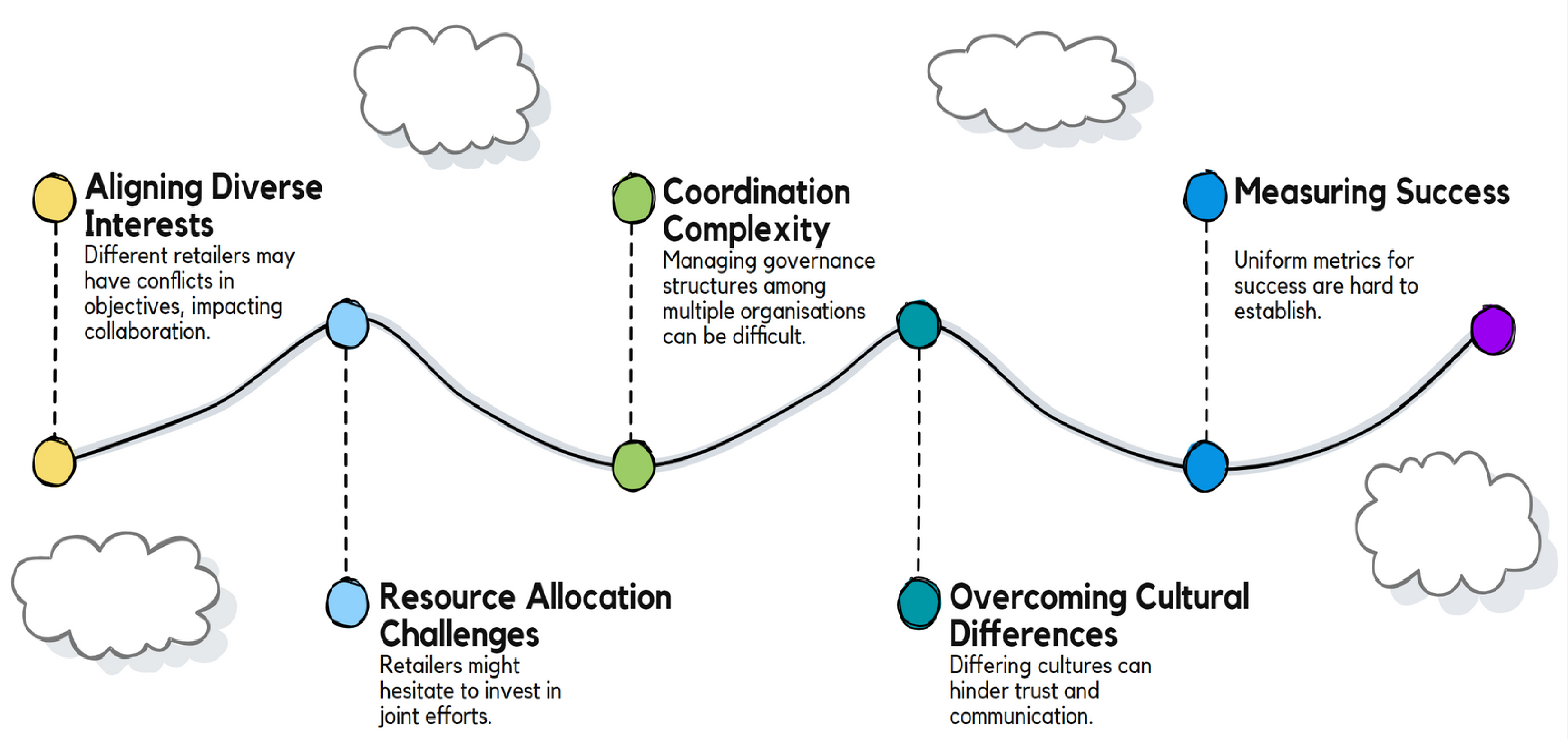
FORMATION OF KNOWLEDGE HUBS



EMPOWERING SMEs TOGETHER



CHALLENGES OF FORMING KNOWLEDGE HUBS



EduAction - SME LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

A MOBILE-FIRST, LOCALLY GROUNDED SKILLING PLATFORM.

INSPIRED BY DUBAI'S DIGITAL SKILLING MODEL AND ITALY'S ARTISAN SCHOOLS.

EMPOWERS SMES WITH REAL, MARKET-ALIGNED SKILLS AND CREDIBILITY.

EduAction is not just a platform – It's a strategic enabler for shared value creation, resilience, and inclusive economic growth.

Empowering SMEs to compete.

Scaling Skills, Building Trust.

SME TO TRUSTED SUPPLIERS

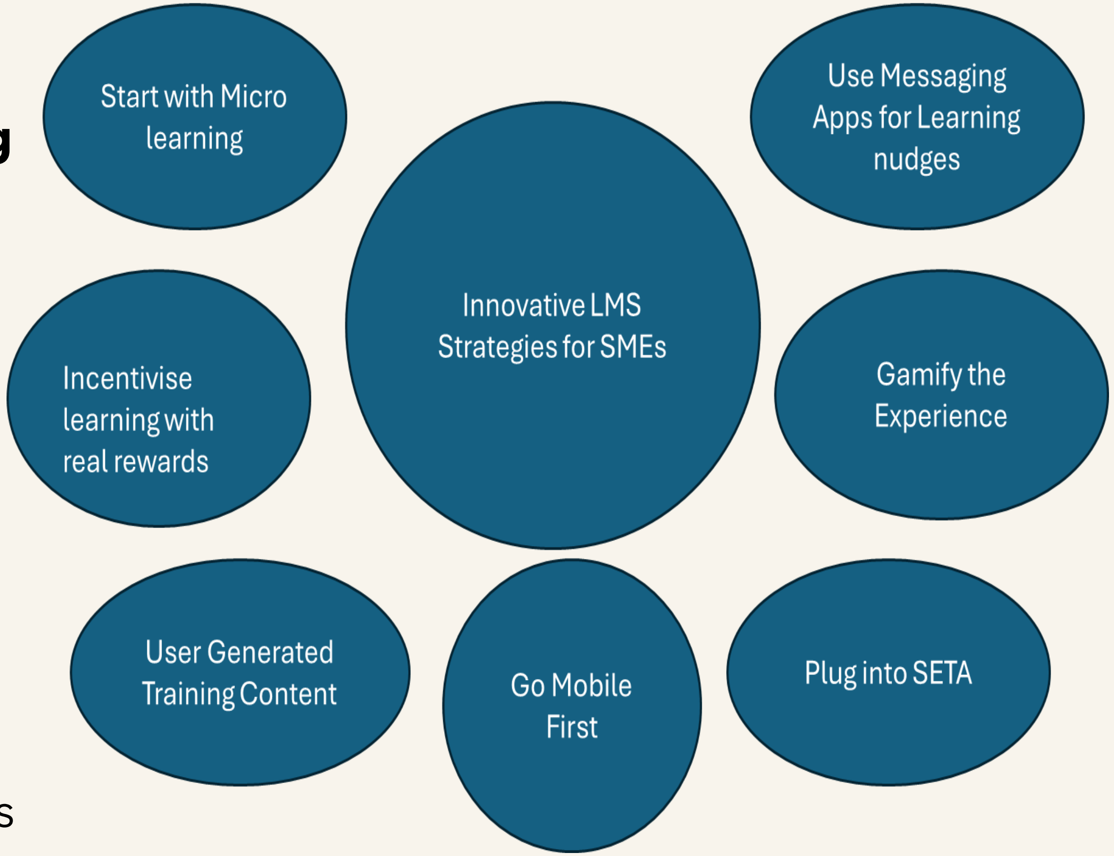
📌

Why *EduAction* matters as a transformational tool to bridge the gap among SME suppliers – unlocking potential.

✅ Addresses skills gaps & market inefficiencies in supplier networks.

✅ Acts as a knowledge base for SMEs engaged in retailer supply chains.

✅ Strengthens the committee's ability to support real-world business challenges.



📌

Strategic Benefits for Retailers & Suppliers

✅ Upskill suppliers to enhance product quality, reliability, and innovation.

✅ Builds resilient supplier ecosystems that reduce dependency on large businesses.

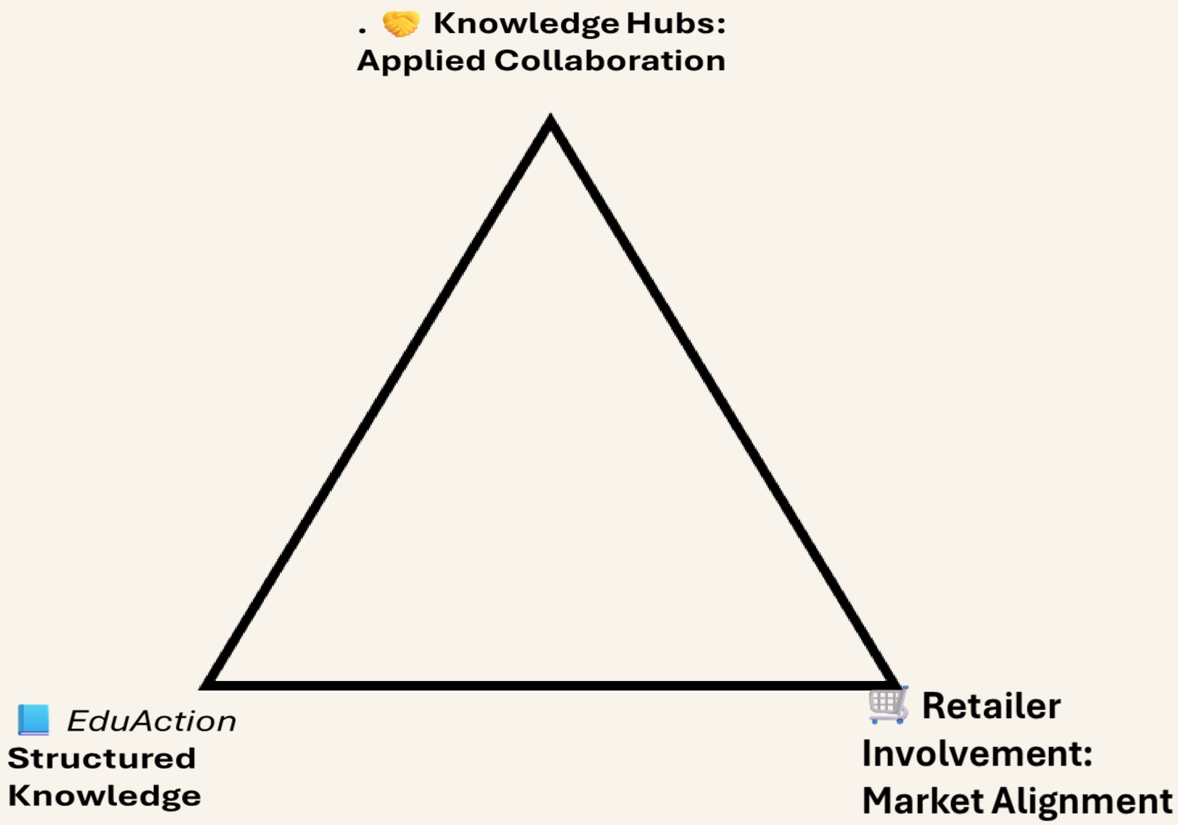
✅ Aligns with corporate supply chain transformation efforts, driving local empowerment.

INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK

The Knowledge Hubs alone lacks long-term structure for impact.

◆ ***EduAction***

Provides continuous learning
& development, making the model scalable.



- ◆ ***EduAction*** = Formal skills training & structured knowledge base.
- ◆ **Knowledge Hubs** = Real-world mentoring, solving practical challenges.
- ◆ **Retailer- backed** = industry-aligned growth & local supplier development.

It's not training or mentoring – it's both, working together, with the market pulling SME's forward.

IMPLEMENTING *EduAction* FOR SUPPLIER DEVELOPMENT

- 🧩 **What It Does**
- 📈 **Builds Capacity**: Delivers practical training in operations, finance, and business strategy.
- 🤝 **Drives Inclusion**: Ensures access for SMEs of all sizes, locations, and literacy levels.
- 🔗 **Enables Integration**: Prepares SMEs to meet quality, compliance, and performance standards.

<table>
<tr><th>Topics</th><th>Focus Areas</th><th>Key Benefit</th><th>Learning Outcome</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Business Process Improvement
Building efficient, scalable, and reliable internal processes</td><td>• Operational efficiency
• Cost reduction</td><td>• Improved financial health
• Better compliance</td><td rowspan="2">• Understand and apply lean business proceses
• Identify inefficiencies and adopt digital tools
• Design scalable operational workflow</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Financial literacy
• Governance structures
• Access to funding</td><td>• Enhanced decision-making
• Stronger market positioning</td></tr>
<tr><td>Business Process Improvement
Building efficient financial health and sustainability</td><td>• Strategic thinking
• Market understanding
• Leadership development</td><td>• Analyse decision-making
• Stronger market positioning</td><td>• Analyse competitors
• Develop strategic business plans
• Foster innovation</td></tr>
</table>

MAKING LEARNING WORK FOR SMEs

Why Traditional Training Fails

X SMEs can't take staff offline

X Long training is expensive & disruptive

X One-Size fits all content lacks impact

The LMS Advantage

✅ Micro- content: short videos, quizzes, infographics

✅ Role – Specific modules

✅ Mobile Friendly , learn anytime

✅ Gamification: badges, points, leaderboards

This is not just learning –it's smart, scalable enablement designed for the real SME environment.

It fits their time. Their tools. Their Reality.

EQUITY-DRIVEN EduAction: CHALLENGES & MITIGATIONS

Challenge	**Solution**	**Measures & Impact**
🌐 Digital Divide	SMS /WhatsApp fallback	Equity in access (rural, low-literacy, multi-language)
💸 Cost of Rollout	Partner subsidies	SMEs gain knowledge, credibility, and access and Corporates gain reliable local suppliers
🎯 One-size-fits-all risk	Sector-specific tracks	Transparent SME expectations

This LMS isn't aspirational—it's practical, grounded, and built for the people it's meant to serve.

ASSESSMENT OF RECOMMENDATION

SME SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AS A STRATEGIC LEVER

- How does **equipping SMEs** contribute to long-term **resilience** and **sustainable growth**?
- In which ways does strengthening SMEs enhance supply chain stability, job creation, and competitiveness in the wholesale and retail sector?

- Inspired by Dubai's **"Open to trade"** through ease of doing business and its talent-driven economy, where business ecosystems thrive through streamlined processes.
- Rome's ITS, that brought Businesses and Government working together to upskill its labour force.
- Opportunity to create local "hubs of excellence" through corporate-led training and upskilling.

DRIVING SHARED VALUE

- How can financially secure SMEs contribute to both **economic stability** and **environmental sustainability**?

- Reflecting on Ethiopia's **"Resilience model"** of integrated, diversified business ecosystems (e.g., East African Holdings).
- Businesses thrive despite infrastructure and regulatory challenges through diversification and local ecosystem building eg the devices provided to farmers.
- Insights from Rome **"Made in Italy"** is not just about their craftmanship in finished goods but a deliberate strategy that aims to build the economy through upskilling its labour force.
- The Knowledge Hubs unite Retailers, SMEs, and stakeholders to address shared pain points.

CONCLUSION

- High impact recommendation – GDP; Reach
- Empowering the entire value-chain
- Key notable spill-over effects – Micro-economic impact
- Public-Private Partnership
- Understanding of time & financial investment
- Developing the aspirational nature of the sector by facilitating entrepreneurship
- Outcome: Unlocking value for Wholesalers & Retailers through targeted skills empowerment of SME's that participate in existing supply chains as suppliers

REFERENCES 1 OF 2

- Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). (2021). National Skills Development Plan 2030. Pretoria: DHET. https://www.dhet.gov.za
- Dubai SME. (2023). Dubai SME annual report 2023: The state of SMEs in Dubai. Department of Economy and Tourism. https://sme.ae
- Janice Johnston. (2025, January 24). *Trends for South African SMEs in 2025*. Edge Growth.
- Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA). (2016). *Seda annual report 2015–16*. SEDA.
- Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA). (2020). *SMME Quarterly Update 3rd Quarter 2019*. SEDA.
- Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA). (2023). *Annual Review of Small Businesses in South Africa 2022*. http://www.seda.org.za
- Small Enterprise Development Agency. (2022). *SMME Quarterly Update – 3rd Quarter 2022*. SEDA.
- Small Enterprise Development Agency. (2021). *SMME Quarterly Update – 1st Quarter 2021*. SEDA.
- South African Market Insights. (2017, March). *Contribution of small enterprises to South Africa's employment numbers*
- World Economic Forum. (2022). *The future of retail SMEs*. https://www.weforum.org

REFERENCES 2 OF 2

- Statistics South Africa. (2024). *Economic wrap-up for May 2024*. Retrieved from https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=17299[1](https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P61412/P61412January2024.pdf)
- Statistics South Africa. (2024). Wholesale trade sales: January 2024 (Statistical Release P6141.2). Retrieved from https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P61412/P61412January2024.pd
- tralac Trade Law Centre. (2024, August 1). *Unlocking South Africa's potential: Leveraging trade for inclusive growth and resilience*. Retrieved from https://www.tralac.org/news/article/16491-tralac-daily-news-1-
- Andriantomanga, Z., Bolhuis, M. A., & Hakobyan, S. (2023). *Global Supply Chain Disruptions: Challenges for Inflation and Monetary Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa*. IMF. https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2023/02/24/Global-Supply-Chain-Disruptions-Challenges-for-Inflation-and-Monetary-Policy-in-Sub-Saharan-530156
- International Trade Administration. (2024, September 10). *South Africa - Market Challenges*. Www.trade.gov. https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/south-africa-market-challenges
- Statistics South Africa. (2025). South Africa's youth in the labour market: A decade in review. https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=18398
- Department of Higher Education and Training. (2022). Skills supply and demand in South Africa. Labour Market Intelligence Research Programme. https://www.dhet.gov.za/Planning%20Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation%20Coordination/Report%20on%20Skills%20Supply%20and%20Demand%20in%20South%20Africa%20-%202022%20%281%29.pdf

QUESTIONS