

UNESCO launches global consultation on the Futures of Education initiative

22 January 2020



Knowledge and learning are humanity's greatest renewable resources for responding to challenges and inventing alternatives. Yet, education does more than respond to a changing world. Education transforms lives, and the world.

In September 2019, UNESCO launched the Futures of Education initiative to reimagine how knowledge and learning can shape the futures of humanity in a context of increasing complexity, uncertainty and precarity. From climate change to growing inequalities, artificial intelligence to learning outcomes, UNESCO wants to respond to challenges, as well as opportunities that will impact the education and well-being of future generations. It is now asking people from around the world to share their views on what the future of education should look like.

What is the Futures of Education?

The Futures of Education initiative looks at 2050 and beyond, and seeks to understand how education can shape the future of humanity and the planet. The initiative is catalyzing a global debate on how knowledge, education and learning need to be reimaged in order to address today's and tomorrow's challenges.

The initiative uses the concept of futures in the plural in order to recognize that there is a rich diversity of ways of knowing and being around the world. It acknowledges that there are multiple dimensions to the future and that there will likely be various desirable and undesirable futures. The project will mobilize voices from around the world. It relies on a broad, open consultative process that involves youth, educators, civil society, governments, business and other stakeholders.

How exactly will the initiative work?

UNESCO has convened an independent International Commission under the leadership of President Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia to develop a global report on the Futures of Education for release in 2021. The members of the commission are thought-leaders in education, politics, academia, the arts, science and business. They will focus on rethinking the role of education, learning and knowledge in light of the tremendous challenges and opportunities of predicted, possible, and preferred futures. The commission will also carefully consider inputs received through the different consultative processes that will include youth, educators, civil society, governments, business and other stakeholders.

How can I contribute to the report?

Consultations across world regions will tap the visions and aspirations of a wide range of stakeholders under the understanding that innovation and ownership of the future need to be locally anchored as well as globally discussed. The goal is to generate discussions and debates

around the world to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to have a say and share their views on the future of learning.

UNESCO has launched a set of online platforms to invite people from all over the world to offer their opinions and visions.

From children and youth to educators, researchers, representatives from civil society, and business and technology – every perspective counts. Contributions will be collected through different channels, including a short survey, submissions in writing as well as through artwork. All of the writing, artwork, and survey submissions will be carefully analyzed and will inform the global report on the futures of education.

Why is UNESCO producing this report now?

The Futures of Education is the latest in a series of global reports commissioned by UNESCO every quarter a century to grapple with the challenges that the future holds in store and to inspire change and issue policy recommendations for education.

The first of these reports, Learning to Be: the world of education today and tomorrow was developed in 1971-1972 and prepared by a commission chaired by Edgar Faure, a former Prime Minister and Minister of Education of France. The Learning to Be report warned of the risks of inequalities, privation and suffering and emphasized the universal features education. The Faure report called for the continued expansion of education and for lifelong education.

From 1993-1996, a second international commission under the leadership of Jacques Delors, former President of the European Commission and former French Minister of Economy and Finance, prepared a report entitled as Learning: The Treasure Within. This report further emphasized the importance of a humanistic approach to education and established “the four pillars” of education, namely: learning to be, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to live together.

Among other important UNESCO publications on education in the intervening years is the 2015 report. Rethinking Education: towards a global common good?, which proposed a rethinking of education and knowledge as global common goods. The Futures of Education report will build on this tradition of launching landmark global reports on education.