



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Futures of Education

LEARNING TO BECOME

Youth webinar series

Background

The Youth webinar series on the futures of education is a collaboration between the [Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth](#) and [UNESCO](#).

Currently our world is home to 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 to 24, the largest generation of young people in its history. Close to 90 per cent of this youth population live in developing countries. What is more, their numbers are expected to continue to grow, especially in the least developed regions. With such numbers, it is clear that sustainable development and peace cannot be achieved unless we involve young people and create the conditions that allow them to reach and unleash their full potential. Therefore, the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth advocates for the empowerment and meaningful participation of young people and recognizes and promotes the positive contributions made by youth to advance sustainable development, peace building and human rights advocacy.¹

UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative aims to mobilize the many rich ways of being and knowing in order to leverage humanity's collective intelligence. It relies on a broad, open consultative process that involves youth, educators, civil society, governments, business and other stakeholders. The work is guided by a high-level [International Commission](#) of thought-leaders from diverse fields and different regions of the world. In November 2021 the Commission will publish a report designed to share a forward-looking vision of what education and learning might yet become and offer a policy agenda. The Futures of Education initiative catalyzes a global debate on how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet.²

Objective

This webinar series, targeting and led by youth, will explore young peoples' perspectives on how education needs to be reimagined looking towards 2050 and beyond. The webinars will address broader questions around young people's views on the possible and fundamental transformations in how societies, politics, economies and cultures may be organized in the future, and more specifically, how education systems and schooling may look like. The webinar series will explore the futures of education, focusing on three main themes: indigenous issues, technology, as well as education for persons with disabilities.

¹ <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/>

² <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/>



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Format

The 90-minute webinars will provide a space for dialogue, each featuring a [Young Leader for the Sustainable Development Goals](#) appointed by the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth in 2020. Other panelists may include members of the International Commission on the Futures of Education, educators, innovators, and policymakers. The discussions will target broad and diverse audiences of youth and education practitioners. The webinars will dedicate time for an exchange of ideas of panelists and engage with online attendees through Q&A. The events will offer simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Spanish.

The three proposed events in the framework of the Youth webinars on the futures of education are the following:

1. **The futures of indigenous education and knowledge – Thursday, 18 February, 15:00-16:30** Paris time

Indigenous approaches to being, living, learning and relating to communities are traditionally sustainable and can help secure inclusive and equitable futures. Indigenous knowledge systems have often been marginalized in the past and indigenous peoples regarded as in constant need of aid, their academic achievements stemming from culturally disadvantaged backgrounds. This stigmatization fails to acknowledge the special value and unique perspectives that indigenous peoples bring to the classroom, community and culture.³

The United Nations recognizes that more work is needed in this regard⁴, especially to protect, revitalize, preserve and promote indigenous languages and knowledge⁵. The Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) was designated by the General Assembly in 2019 and UNESCO is taking the lead on it, along with advocating for equal dignity of all cultures.

This webinar will explore how indigenous education and traditional knowledge contribute to more relevant and inclusive education, and how it can help contribute to the future we want:

- What is the role of education in ensuring that indigenous communities have a voice in decision making?
- What are some of the promising practices for engaging rural, disadvantaged and out-of-school indigenous youth, both male and female, in learning that should be maintained or scaled up in the future?
- How and why should efforts be dedicated to change the perception of indigenous languages and traditional knowledge and enhance their inclusion in education?
- What tensions exist between indigenous education where traditional knowledge is passed down from one generation to the next, and the increased prominent role of technology in education?
- What needs to change in the future to ensure more inclusive and equitable education systems that embrace cultural diversity?

³ Moore, S. J. and Nesterova, J. 2020. *Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing for a sustainable living*. Background paper commissioned by UNESCO for the Futures of Education initiative.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374046/PDF/374046eng.pdf.multi>

⁴ [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), 2007

⁵ [The UNESCO Policy on engaging with Indigenous Peoples](#), 2017



2. Technology and the futures of education – Thursday, 11 March, 15:00-16:30 Paris time

Advances in digital communications and artificial intelligence are fundamentally transforming the way we live, work, communicate, process knowledge and learn. While these technological disruptions hold great promise for improving human welfare, they also raise serious ethical, social and political concerns. The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have exposed and further aggravated this fragility and uncertainty and have reinforced the need to consider longer-term futures to inform our actions in the present.

This webinar will discuss the different ways technology can help advance the sustainable development agenda and particularly education, aiming to contribute to more equitable and inclusive education systems:

- In what ways can AI and personalized learning contribute to better inclusion in education?
- What are some promising practices of integrating AI solutions in mainstream education systems?
- How can current education systems prepare young people today for an AI-powered future? What are the greatest ethical and privacy concerns of AI solutions in education? How can they be overcome in the future?
- In what ways has COVID-19 made a long-term impact on the use of technology in education?

3. The futures of education for persons with disabilities– Friday, 19 March, 15:00-16:30 Paris time

Addressing inclusive education is of utmost priority if we are to meet the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We have come a long way from ensuring that all people, irrespective of their sex, age, race or ethnicity, ability, location, or other social characteristics, have equal rights to access and benefit from quality education. However, people with disabilities are still combating blatant educational exclusion and we still have a long way to go in removing all the barriers that prevent them from having equal rights to education.

Some of the main barriers that continue to disadvantage students with disabilities, neurodiversity or learning differences, include inadequate funding and access to appropriate education, physical inaccessibility, failures to make accommodations, and negative attitudes and stereotypes. Large-scale exclusion of children and youth with disabilities also remains the reality in many countries, it is estimated that 32 million, or 1 in 3 children with disabilities are out of school.

This webinar will discuss effective practices and inclusive policies for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties, exchange experiences, and identify necessary transformations for education systems in the future:

- What are the main stereotypes and misconceptions about education for students with learning differences?
- What needs to change in teaching and learning practices in the future to ensure inclusiveness with regards to disabilities?
- How to address violence and bullying in schools of learners with disabilities?
- What is the role of the community in supporting more inclusive practices in schools?
- What lessons can we draw from COVID-19 with regards to the future of education for learners with disabilities?