unesco

Renewing the social contract for education

Directions for change

UNESCO International Forum on the Futures of Education

Suwon, Gyeonggido, Republic of Korea, 2-4 December 2024

UNESCO – a global leader in education

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners. UNESCO also leads eorts to respond to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.

Futures of Education

The International Commission on the Futures of Education was established by UNESCO in 2019 to reimagine how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet. The initiative incorporates extensive public and expert engagement and aims to catalyze a global debate on how education needs to be rethought in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty, and fragility.

unesco
United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

Published in 2025 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

© UNESCO 2025

This report is available in Open Access under the Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO (CC-BY-SA 3.0 IGO) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/igo/). By using the content of this report the users accept to be bound by the terms of use of the UNESCO Open Access Repository (https://www.unesco.org/en/open-access/cc-sa).

Images marked with an asterisk (*) do not fall under the CC-BY-SA license and may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the copyright holders.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this report do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors; they are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

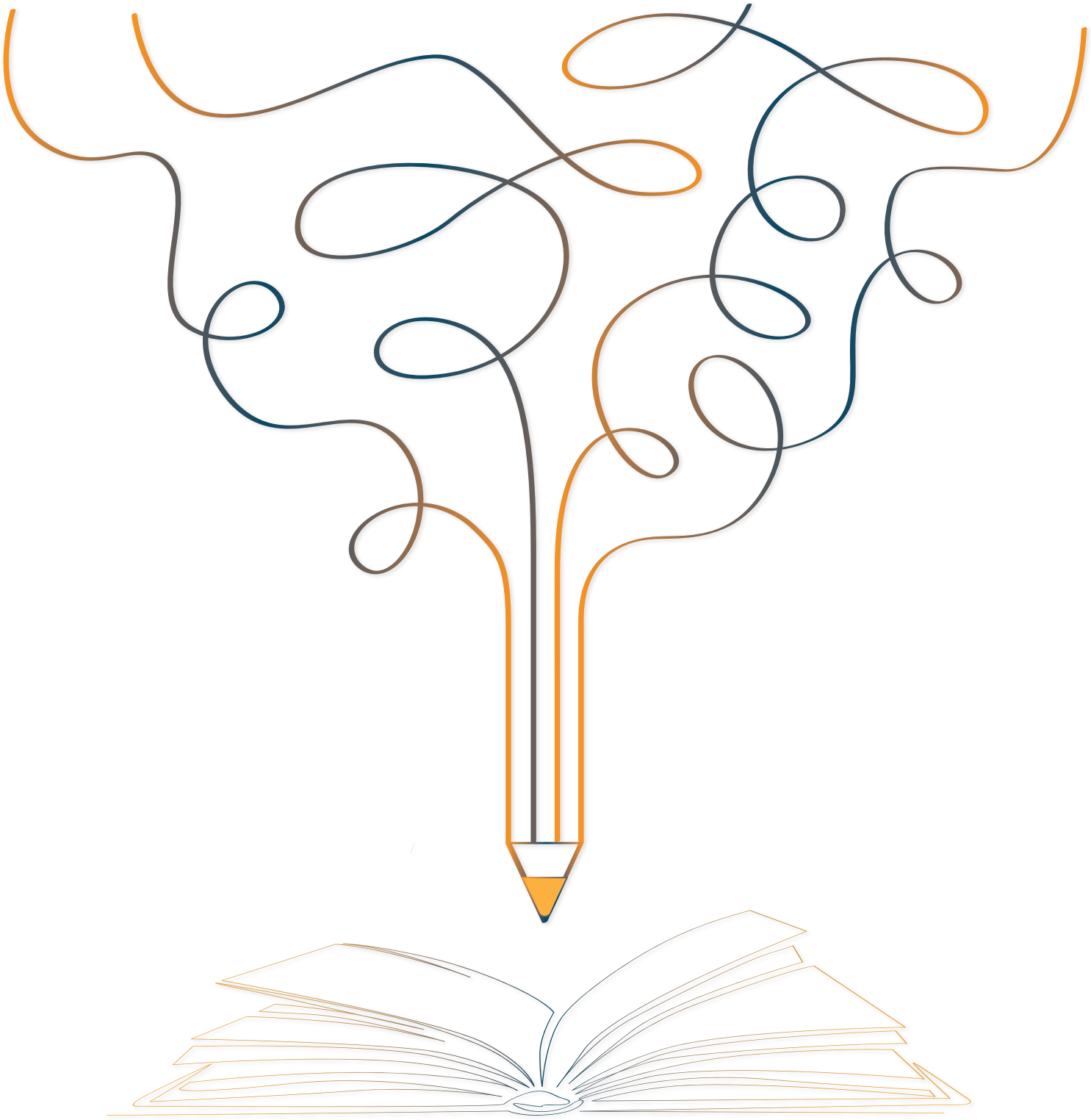
Cover and inside title page photo: Adobe Stock/stmool/dhtgstockphoto*

Designed by Aida Alhabshi

Printed by UNESCO

Printed in France

ED/FLI/2025/01



Contents

List of boxes 7
List of figures 7
Acknowledgements 8
Preamble 9
Transforming education to change course 11
Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for social education 12
The UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024 14
Carrying forward an evolving conversation: A roadmap for reading this report 15
Directions for change 18
Adopting futures thinking with a long-term view 18
Global macro trends project uncertain futures 18
Trends in education development 20
Exploring scenarios 21
From foresight methods to long-term vision 22
Overcoming policy tensions between short- and longer-term thinking 22
Envisioning human-centred approaches to technology in education 24
Technology must support and strengthen learning and human relationships in education 24
Integrating technology is an ongoing process that requires intentional human choice 25
Development of education technologies should come from within education 26
Publicly owned educational technology should be developed as an alternative 26
Supporting teachers on the frontline for change 26
Addressing the common global and regional challenges facing teachers is urgent 27
Teachers must be at the heart of conversations about the future 28
Social dialogue and teacher agency are crucially relevant for policy-making 30
Renewing pedagogy, curriculum and assessment 30
Pedagogy, curriculum and assessment must repair past harms and reimagine futures through care, justice and inclusion 31
Education for peace requires systemic, interdisciplinary responses to complex global challenges 32
Pedagogy for climate justice must challenge outdated paradigms and foster equitable transitions 33
Building lifelong and life-wide learning societies 35
Learning cities can strengthen inclusivity, social equity and well-being through education 35
Public spaces can become active learning environments 35
Learning societies can leverage digital transformation for education 35
Rethinking educational leadership 36
The roles and functions of school leaders need to adapt and change 36
Governments need to strengthen and professionalize school principals 37
Middle-tier and political leadership are critical to fostering collaboration and driving systemic change 37

Youth leaders bring first-hand understanding of challenges, fresh perspectives and innovative solutions ... 37

Reconsidering research paradigms and reimagining higher education as an inclusive bridge ... 38
Research requires an understanding of injustices, engaging diverse types and sources of knowledge ... 39
Future-oriented research must be interdisciplinary and contribute to policy, planning and action ... 39
Higher education is a public good that is integral to the right to education ... 40
Values beyond academic achievement should guide the transformation of higher education ... 41
Students and youth are co-creators in the transformation of higher education ... 41

Foundational principles in action ... 43

Recontextualizing the right to education in a digital era ... 43
Digital advancements alone have not fulfilled the right to education ... 43
Privatization must be mitigated to protect students' rights and best interests ... 44
Continuing to protect, adapt or reimagine education to ensure the right to education endures ... 45

Governing education as a common good ... 46
Case 1: Developing a network of innovative schools in Catalonia, Spain ... 47
Case 2: Community pacts for education in Italy ... 48
Case 3: Educational entrepreneurship to reflect local diversity in Southeast Asia ... 49
Case 4: Fostering involvement of civil society for the promotion of human rights in the Arab region 49
Case 5: Transforming local, national and regional governance in the Caribbean ... 50
Learning from diverse efforts ... 51

Spotlight on the Republic of Korea ... 52

National education policy and strategy ... 52
Education and care under government responsibility ... 53
Bold changes in the classroom ... 53
A virtuous cycle of local and national development ... 54

The case of Gyeonggido ... 54
Public initiative to renew education in a local context ... 54
Visits to schools and educational institutions ... 57

Catalyzing a global movement to renew the social contract for education ... 60

Strengthening diverse voices and efforts in a shared movement ... 60
Building momentum for renewing the social contract for education ... 61

References ... 62

Appendix ... 66

Forum concept note and programme ... 66

List of boxes

Box 1. Renewing the Social Contract for Education: *Prospects* 2024 special issue 17

Box 2. A message from youth: Gradually integrate AI and technological innovations fostering student and teacher agency, participation, purpose and humanity 25

Box 3. 'Imagine 2030 and the future for teachers.' Insights from two possible scenarios explored at a workshop the 2024 Forum on the Futures of Education 28

Box 4. A message from youth: Foster inclusive and creative learning environments 32

Box 5. A message from youth: Empower youth as co-creators and leaders of the societies and systems they will inherit 38

Box 6. A message from youth: Redesign academic spaces to foster engagement and innovation 42

Box 7. Three scenarios for considering the right to education in a digital age 45

Box 8. Visits to schools and educational institutes in Gyeonggido: Local experiences to renew the social contract for education 58

List of figures

Figure 1. The triad curriculum, pedagogy and assessment: Six interconnected dimensions 30

Figure 2. Instructional leaders: Possible impacts of middle tier leadership 37

Figure 3. Data and evidence, key to inform decision-making, policy and planning: Four main principles 40

Figure 4. Nine major education reforms in the Republic of Korea 52

Figure 5. A paradigm shift in Gyeonggido's public education system 55

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by the Future of Learning and Innovation Division at UNESCO under the guidance of Director Sobhi Tawil. Aida Alhabshi, Anastasia Christodoulelis, Jin Won Kim, Paula Razquin, Sobhi Tawil, Elena Toukan and Mark West contributed to the writing, editing and design of this report.

We are grateful to the following reviewers for their comments and suggestions: Lily Liu Bosen, Shermon Cruz, Elyse Gregory, Keith Holmes, Yiyi Liu, Kevin Martin, Renato Opertti, Maria Smirnova, Arathi Sriprakash and Mark West.

We also thank the many participants, speakers, contributors and organizers of the International Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, 'Renewing the Social Contract for Education', in Suwon, Gyeonggido, Republic of Korea. Their creative and enthusiastic dedication to unleashing the transformative potential of education threads across every page of this report.

Preamble

> We must find the balance between pragmatism and possibility, and reconcile urgency with long term vision. Sustainable solutions require thoughtful, systematic and forward-looking action.
>
> **Stefania Giannini,**
> Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

The Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, organized 2–4 December in Suwon, Republic of Korea, marks a new phase in UNESCO's efforts to lead the global debate on the futures of education. It comes at a time when the international education community is not only grappling with meeting global 2030 education commitments and targets but also beginning to consider what visions and frameworks for international cooperation in education might succeed the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The global SDG4 commitment to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' must remain the focus of current national and international cooperative efforts. However, mere *acceleration* of conventional educational and development models – that is, more of the same conventions and approaches to education – is no longer proving sufficient to respond to the growing complexity and uncertainty of our world. A broader vision is needed. Short-term political commitments and actions remain vital, but they alone will not enable the change of course required to address today's urgent challenges.

Indeed, addressing environmental crises, widening inequality, democratic backsliding, growing polarization, division and violent conflict, and appropriately steering the rapid development of AI technologies requires a radical change of course. As the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated back in 2021, 'humanity faces a stark and urgent choice: a breakdown or a breakthrough.'

Education has the potential to catalyse such breakthroughs, and education must be at the core of any policy agenda that aims to address future uncertainties and to ensure just, inclusive and sustainable futures for humanity and the planet. But if education is key to this change of course, it cannot be the same modes and models we have seen in the past – it must be transformed. Transforming education to help shape our collective future is an urgent political imperative.

Transforming education requires a long-term perspective, one that both looks back to understand past experience and also attempts to envision what lies ahead. A longer-term view is just as concerned with addressing past exclusions as it is with seizing opportunities and shaping the future. A long-term vision can help reframe our actions in the present, helping us to see what needs to be done differently today in order to rebalance our relationships with each other, with the planet and with technology.

Undoubtedly, addressing persistent inequalities in education inherited from the past remains a priority. We cannot aspire to a more just and inclusive future when current annual investments in education in low-income countries in the Global South do not exceed US$ 55 per child while exceeding US$ 8,000 per child in high-income countries. But how do we also move from the past to navigating an increasingly uncertain future?

This is the first generation that has everything it needs to end poverty and perhaps the last generation that can end the most cataclysmic effects of climate change. As such, those alive today have a unique opportunity to shape the fate of our planet. Addressing past inequalities while shaping longer-term futures requires imagining a *different* education – fostering solidarity and cooperation, transforming teaching and learning models, rethinking content and curricula, and nurturing our broader learning societies and knowledge ecosystems.

Such profound transformation does not occur overnight, but it does depend on what we do today. Turning our gaze to reimagine what education could look like far beyond 2030, we must shift efforts in ways that place equity, sustainability and agility at the core of any educational reform. As education systems are required to quickly adapt and even anticipate future crises, they must do so in ways that work towards these central goals. Innovation must be fostered to advance these broader aims, and education must be open to inspiration from other sectors. We are not there yet, but if we want to move from a culture of incremental reform in education to a culture of fundamentally transforming it, fostering innovation is essential. We must also create sustainable policy frameworks that ensure that education can be reformed and transformed beyond the shortsightedness of political cycles.

This requires changing mindsets, as well as wider cultural change. Unlocking the insights from collective intelligence of the many actors within a wide range of education systems, contexts and perspectives must be part of this change as we move forward together. We must ensure that students, teachers and communities have clear voices in transforming education and shaping the future.

The UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, held in the inspiring UNESCO Learning City of Suwon, was an important step. We warmly thank the government of the Republic of Korea for hosting and co-convening this important milestone forum in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Gyeonggido Office of Education and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO. The Republic of Korea serves as a remarkable example of the transformative power of education for national development and international cooperation.

We share this same vision – the vision of creatively imagining education as a basis for just, equitable, and sustainable futures. Let this be the beginning of a new phase of the Futures of Education initiative shaped by all of us together.

Transforming education to change course

> "It is by actively engaging in the dialogue and practice to build a new social contract for education that we can renew education to make just, equitable and sustainable futures possible."
>
> Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education[1]

Our world faces complex disruptions, unique opportunities and uncertain futures. We are at a critical juncture. The climate crisis, the expanding reach of artificial intelligence (AI), widening inequality and polarizing socio-political divisions, are accelerating in complexity and scale. As we look to familiar means to address these problems, the undermining of multilateralism and international cooperation – and, crucially, of the values and normative foundations on which they are based – compel reconsideration of what we mean by 'development'. We indeed face an existential choice between continuing on an unsustainable path or radically changing course.[2] But no trend is destiny.[3] There is yet time to imagine alternative future possibilities through a long-term vision of transformation.

A long-term vision implies both looking back and looking forward. Looking back, education has historically played complex and, at times, contradictory roles in the challenges confronting us both today and on the horizon. It has been a powerful catalyst for positive change, enabling generations to contribute to shared knowledge, to engage meaningfully in civic life, and to pursue both personal fulfilment and collective accomplishments. Yet, at the same time, many conventional modes of education have reinforced patterns of excessive individualism, relentless competition, unsustainable consumption, and exploitative relationships with people and the planet. These patterns can no longer be sustained. The conventional 'social contract' that inspires and informs the shared purposes underlying education and the organization of learning need urgent renewal by rebuilding trust and ensuring more meaningful participation of all involved (see Box 1 for another example of how this idea is being explored).

Knowledge, learning and education lie at the core of any serious attempt to imagine alternative futures. Together, they comprise humanity's greatest renewable resource. Education holds the power not only to respond to major shifts and disruptions but also to help us reimagine and redirect the paths ahead. It has unique potential to help shape just, inclusive and sustainable futures. But in order to fulfil this potential, education requires significant transformation.

Transforming education is not the same as simply reforming it. While reform often seeks incremental improvements within existing systems, transformation calls for a fundamental rethinking, shifting the underlying assumptions, paradigms, narratives, and approaches that shape the purpose of education and the organization of learning. It involves a deep renewal of the social contract for education – one that both addresses historical injustices and unleashes the power of education to help build more just, equitable and sustainable futures.

[1] UNESCO (2021, p. 142).
[2] UN (2023); UNESCO (2021).
[3] UNESCO (2021).

This renewal demands that we reimagine our shared futures and the aims and purposes of education. It requires that we rethink the roles and responsibilities of all actors involved in educational governance, policy-making and planning. It necessitates that we reconsider the roles, status and working conditions of educators, and reassess the content and organization of learning. It implies that we redefine the nature, design and use of research.

Transforming education does not mean ignoring lessons and accomplishments of the past. Rather, it invites us to ask three critical questions. First, what practices and accomplishments need to be preserved – what should be sustained, protected and strengthened within existing education efforts? Second, acknowledging that some policies and practices are no longer effective – or may even be harmful – what should we let go of or abandon? And third, what must we reimagine anew? Building alternative educational future trajectories will require transformation grounded in past accomplishments, informed by a critical assessment of present shortcomings, and guided by bold new visions for more just, inclusive and sustainable futures.

Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for social education

> The notion of acting together, the idea of interdependence at the global level is essential – that is why we are calling for education to be conceived as a public endeavour and common good, a global common good.
>
> **H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde**
> Chair, International Commission on the Futures of Education & Former President, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

This report synthesizes key ideas from presentations, dialogues and discussions at the International Forum on the Futures of Education, held in Suwon, Republic of Korea, 2–4 December 2024. It draws from session recordings, rapporteur records and concept notes from across the Forum, most of which can be viewed on the UNESCO Futures of Education website.

Yet, this is also more than the report of a single event. Rather, it is a contribution that aims to advance an evolving, worldwide conversation about renewing the social contract for education – those implicit or explicit agreements within society, among governments, communities and individuals, that underlie the purposes of education, the roles and responsibilities of different actors, and the principles that guide how education is provided and accessed. Such renewal implies a holistic, system-wide transformation – that is, a renewed vision of the purpose of education based on a set of ethical and normative principles. It also implies inclusive arrangements for governance and decision-making, as well as a rethinking of the roles of the range of constituencies involved in education as a public endeavour, a common good and a shared responsibility.

The 2021 report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education, *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*, provided the impetus and key reference of the International Forum on the Futures of Education 2024. The International Commission's report proposes a shared vision of the purposes of education to foster just, equitable and sustainable futures – one which rebalances relationships between humanity, the planet and technology. It offers a set of principles for dialogue, research and action for the renewal of the social contract for education. Based on a two-year worldwide process of public consultation facilitated by UNESCO, *Reimagining our futures together* is the latest in a unique series of 'once in a generation' reports on the development of education. Predecessors in this series included the 1996 'Delors Commission report', *Learning: The treasure within*, and the 1972 'Faure report', *Learning to Be: The world of education today and tomorrow*.[4]

[4] Delors et al. (1996); Faure et al. (1972).

Now available in some sixteen languages,[5] *Reimagining our futures together* has informed global education policy discussions and education research agendas. It has also informed national education policy dialogues and inspired innovation in teaching and learning in a number of national and local contexts. To date, launches and presentations of the report have been organized across the world, including in Abidjan, Bangkok, Barcelona, Beijing, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Lisbon, Manama, Madrid, Muscat, Oslo, Quito, Rome, Santiago, Seoul, Tunis and Ulaanbaatar.

The *Reimagining our futures together* report has also advanced global conversations on the transformation of education, including at such convenings as the RewirEd Summit (Dubai, December 2021), the 66th Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society (Minneapolis, April 2022), the 3rd World Higher Education Conference (Barcelona, May 2022), the 7th International Conference on Adult Learning and Education (Marrakesh, June 2022), the 7th World Assembly of the Global Campaign for Education (Johannesburg, November 2022), the 68th Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society (Miami, March 2024), the 18th Congress of the World Council of Comparative Societies of Education (Ithaca, New York, July 2024) and the African Union-UNESCO Forum on 'Transforming knowledge for Africa's future' (Addis Ababa, October 2024).

Most prominently, the report was the key reference for the UN 2022 Transforming Education Summit. H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde, then President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, addressed world leaders at the Summit in New York in her capacity as Chair of the International Commission, outlining the main recommendations proposed. The report was also referenced as a starting point to guide and inspire national consultations to transform education in the lead-up to the Summit.

> The concept of a social contract has, from the very beginning of human civilization, always existed. Whether it is implicit, in an implied arrangement of power balancing rights and obligations, or explicit, as expressed in constitutions or formal compacts of negotiated power. Put simply, the social contract for education is expressed implicitly or explicitly in the definition of the purpose of education in every society.
>
> **Didacus Jules**
> Director General, Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)

The growing pace and reach of this conversation is encouraging. The *Reimagining our futures together* report is designed as an invitation to public dialogue, collective engagement and co-construction around innovative policy, research and action, conscious that there will be different contextual responses to shared questions. The International Commission also called upon 'UNESCO to develop and sustain appropriate avenues for deliberation, participation and the sharing of experiences that relate to the many ideas put forward'.[6] The UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024 in Suwon, Republic of Korea, is a continuation of this global conversation about renewing the social contract for education, generating new insights and ideas shared by participants from around the world.

[5] Available language versions at the time of writing include Amharic, Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Catalan, Chinese, French, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Kiswahili, Korean, Latvian, Mongolian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swahili.
[6] UNESCO (2021, p. 146).

The UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024

The first UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education (Suwon, Republic of Korea, 2–4 December 2024) was organized in partnership with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea, the Gyeonggido Office of Education and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO. This forum was not only a response to the International Commission's call for dialogue but a means for building further on the report's ideas and proposals through meaningful, cross-cultural, context-responsive dialogue and shared learning.

> Education has traditionally been viewed as constructing a solid fortress.
>
> However, the Gyeonggido Office of Education is now working to open the gates of the fortress and pave a new path for the futures of education.
>
> **Tae-Hee Yim**
> Governor, Gyeonggido Office of Education, Republic of Korea

Taking 'Renewing the Social Contract for Education' as its theme, the Forum engaged and invigorated a global multistakeholder education and social movement – elevating the contributions of students, teacher organizations, civil society, regional networks, researchers and educational leaders – to renew education as a human right throughout life, a public endeavour and a common good, and one of the most important shared responsibilities of states, citizens and societies. The International Commission on the Futures of Education was represented by the Chair, H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde, as well as a number of other Commission members.[7] The programme of the Forum gave students, youth and teachers a central role through which they actively contributed to the dialogues, fostering meaningful conversations to shape our shared futures. The quotes featured in boxes across the pages of this report all come from presentations of speakers and participants in the plenary sessions of the Forum.

Members of the UNESCO SDG4 Youth and Student Network[8] and national and international youth and university students residing in the Republic of Korea engaged and contributed to the deliberations, sharing their unique perspectives on the futures of education. For several months in the lead-up to the Forum, a group of some thirty youth worked on exploratory projects both online and in-person, researching and reflecting on specific themes: future AI issues for students; AI and teachers; youth participation, student movements and citizenship; and pedagogies, curricula and assessments for inclusive education.[9]

Youth and students discussed what they thought was working well and needed to continue, what had to be changed or abandoned and identified other questions which needed to be explored. Bringing in experiences from a range of contexts, they invited all participants to think critically about inclusivity and representation and to empower youth to actively contribute to the dialogues that shape their futures. The proposals on directions for change presented at the Forum are conveyed and highlighted throughout this report in a series of boxes titled 'A message from youth'.

[7] Abdel Basset Ben Hassan, Elisa Guerra, Doh-Yeon Kim, Karen Mundy, Fernando Reimers, and Serigne Mbaye Thiam.
[8] See UNESCO SDG4 youth and student network.
[9] One group developed a survey to gather students' perceptions and opinions on the use of AI in their education. Guided by UNESCO's report Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research (2023), the group developed a questionnaire to explore whether the issues discussed in the report were actually occurring among students, if there were other issues not considered in the report and how the use of AI was affecting students in reality. Another group interviewed student activists in universities.

In addition to students and youth, national teacher leaders engaged in the Forum, as did Education International, the global union federation that represents and stands as a voice of teachers and education support personnel around the world. A dedicated session engaged participants, including delegates from national teacher unions, to better understand the conditions required to bring about positive change in the teaching profession. It proposed a series of possible curated future scenarios where things went right, went wrong, or largely stayed the same and where current trends continued to play out – featured in the box titled 'Imagine 2030 and the future for teachers: Insights from two possible scenarios'. These scenarios opened the opportunity to reflect more creatively on what can be done today to catalyse positive change. The views and insights on supporting teachers on the front line for change were a key ingredient of deliberations. The Forum provided a space to exchange and share insights from diverse policy, practice and research experiences through dialogue and reflection around contextualized examples. While country conditions are unique, educational issues and challenges are not specific to any one context. Solutions can indeed be found when diverse constituencies from different countries and regions come together and engage in collaborative dialogue to address these shared challenges.

> There is a proverb: *"If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together."* We have to go together from now on. During the 20th century, there has been a very fast movement for humanity, but it was an individual movement, and it has reached our limit. It is quite natural, then, that this "go together" should be emphasized in the education for future generations.
>
> **Doh-Yeon Kim**
> Professor Emeritus, Seoul National University, Member of the International Commission on the Futures of Education

Finally, the Forum offered a unique opportunity to better understand national and subnational policy, strategies and public efforts to transform education in the Republic of Korea. On-site visits to ten schools and educational institutes in Gyeonggido further illustrated localized efforts to ensure inclusive, green and future-oriented educational approaches.

The Forum was grounded in the principles and long-term vision of transformation at the heart of the report of the International Commission. H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde expressed her hope that the insights, proposals and call for public dialogue and collective action presented in the report would serve as catalysts to shape futures for humanity and the planet that are peaceful, just and sustainable.

Carrying forward an evolving conversation: A roadmap for reading this report

Renewing the social contract for education is a continuous and collective undertaking – one that requires ongoing dialogue, creativity and action across diverse contexts. This report builds on the visions and proposals of the report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education while also elaborating on new experiences and additional themes. Some themes closely echo those outlined in the International Commission's 2021 report; some expand upon them in response to emerging shifts, while others chart new directions altogether. Each is grounded in the shared commitment to just, equitable and sustainable futures for humanity and the planet. This report is far from the last word on this question. Rather, it represents the latest contribution to a broader, evolving and participatory global conversation.

The sections that follow are organized around key themes that emerged from the UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, each offering insights and orientations for reimagining our futures and renewing the social contract for education.

The first set of key ideas speaks to **directions for change** that can be witnessed in efforts to renew the social contract for education, including the following:

- **Adopting futures thinking and a long-term view:** Emphasizing the importance of a longer-term view – both retrospective and prospective – as well as anticipatory thinking and future-oriented planning in shaping shared futures of education.
- **Envisioning human-centred approaches to technology in education:** Rebalancing ethical and purposeful use of technology in education to centre the interests of students, teachers, society and the planet.
- **Supporting teachers on the frontline for change:** Recognizing the central role of teachers as agents of transformation of, and for, change and the need to appreciate and support them meaningfully.
- **Renewing pedagogy, curriculum and assessment:** Reimagining pedagogy, curriculum and assessment to foster critical thinking, collaboration, solidarity and the capabilities to contribute to sustainable development grounded in social, economic and environmental justice.
- **Building lifelong and life-wide learning societies:** Embracing learning that spans throughout both life and also diverse public spaces beyond formal education, including by expanding the global network of learning cities.
- **Rethinking educational leadership:** Supporting system-wide leadership approaches that are adaptive, inclusive and anticipate possible future trajectories.
- **Reconsidering research paradigms and reimagining the future of higher education:** Strengthening the role of inclusive and collaborative research in learning from, and informing, educational renewal and transformation.

From these new directions, we can gain further insight into recontextualizing **two foundational principles** of a new social contract for education: the right to education throughout life and education as a common good.

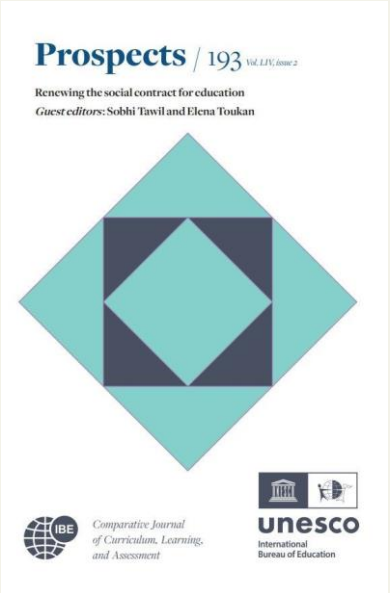
- **Contextualizing the right to education in the digital era:** Re-examining the right to education throughout life in light of accelerating digital transformations and new patterns of inclusion and exclusion. This section includes three scenarios for considering future implications that approaches to digital technology could have for how the right to education and learning is expressed in various possible policy contexts.
- **Governing education as a common good:** Exploring governance approaches that reflect education as a shared societal project, a public endeavour and a common good. This section includes five case studies presented at the Forum of efforts from around the world to apply this in practice through democratic participation, context-embedded innovation and inclusive decision-making.

Finally, this report concludes with observations about how the many efforts from all stakeholders can be effectively leveraged and channelled in a global movement to transform education. The role that UNESCO can play in providing mechanisms and a platform to support these efforts in futures thinking, research, idea generation, dialogue, policy and practice is also expanded upon.

- **Spotlight on the Republic of Korea**: Exploring the Republic of Korea's national and Gyeonggido's provincial education policies and practices towards achieving a reimagined social contract for the future of education.
- **Catalysing a global movement to transform education:** Highlighting the need for collective momentum, solidarity and sustained engagement at all levels.

Together, these themes aim to further open possibilities for those committed to transforming education in pursuit of just, inclusive and sustainable futures for humanity and the planet.

Box 1. Renewing the Social Contract for Education: *Prospects* 2024 special issue



This collection of viewpoint papers was published in a special issue of *Prospects* in 2024 (Vol. 54, No. 2) under the title *Renewing the Social Contract for Education* and included 30 original papers. It is but one of many examples of responses to the International Commission on the Futures of Education's invitation to engage in dialogue and research.

The contributions engage critically and creatively with the idea of a new social contract – one that both repairs past injustices and unleashes education's transformative potential to address the challenges of our times and those ahead. Authors explored not only what needs to be renewed in education – its purposes, values, pedagogies and practices – but also how transformation might be democratically governed, resourced and collectively undertaken. They revisited foundational principles including education as a human right throughout life, as a public endeavour and as a common good. At the same time, they interrogated current governance arrangements, widening power asymmetries and the rapidly shifting roles of diverse actors across education systems.

Trust, shared values and genuine collaboration emerged as recurring themes – both as prerequisites for a renewed social contract and as outcomes to be cultivated. The think pieces also foreground the importance of futures thinking and radical imagination, inviting readers to move beyond reformist impulses and towards transformative change. By grounding global principles in diverse local and thematic contexts, this special issue contributed to the broader project of renewing education as a shared social undertaking in ways that are inclusive, future-oriented and anchored in justice and collective responsibility.

Directions for change

This section examines directions of change emerging from insights on current efforts to renew the social contract for education. A key shift in perspective comes from adopting futures thinking approaches and from a commitment to long-term perspectives that move beyond short-term reactions and policy cycles. Drawing from a long-term approach, this section explores possible trajectories of change across key domains, ranging from discussions about fostering human-centred technologies, renewing pedagogy and curriculum approaches, reorienting the purposes and practices of assessment, rethinking leadership models, and strengthening collaborative and transdisciplinary research in shaping educational futures, among others.

Adopting futures thinking with a long-term view

Global macro trends project uncertain futures

We have more information than ever before, yet, for many, the future feels increasingly uncertain. Certain trajectories of the past hundred years, such as the impact of mass consumption on societies, could accelerate, while others, like the nature of jobs, could veer sharply in the opposite direction. The population might not increase at the same pace and there is no guarantee that standards of living enjoyed by future generations will rise as they have in the past few generations. This growing volatility makes it difficult to rely on past trends to forecast future realities. This uncertainty presents challenges for educational policy and planning, but it also offers an opportunity for imagining a range of possibilities and their implications for the present.[10]

> The future is not a blank slate. The future contains a memory of the past, especially when it comes to our values. Relationality in foresight is reality for many communities in the world. It's not just about data.
>
> **Shermon Cruz**
> Executive Director, Centre for Engaged Foresight, Manila

Demographic shifts and inequality on the rise

Ageing populations: Life expectancy is increasing. Projections from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries show a sharp rise in the proportion of people aged 80 and above by 2060, particularly in East Asia. Such a rise has profound implications for social support systems and lifelong learning.[11]

A demographic dividend and the potential of youth: Forty-one per cent of the global population is under 25. That is 1.2 billion young people aged 15–24, each a potential change-maker.[12] The failure of societies to provide adequate education, employment and opportunities for meaningful participation could turn this demographic dividend into a source of instability and inequality.

[10] Burns (2024).
[11] Burns (2024).
[12] Burns (2024).

Urbanization: Today, more than half the world's population lives in urban areas, and the share is continuing to grow. By 2050, an estimated 70 per cent of the global population is expected to be living in cities. Urban growth raises new challenges for educational equity, infrastructure and education's connections to nature and community.[13]

Rural populations: While the overall share of people living in rural areas is expected to continue declining, the total number of rural residents exceeds 3.5 billion. The absolute number of people living in rural areas is greater than any previous point in history, particularly across the Global South,[14] requiring context-responsive educational systems and policies in rural and remote areas.

Increased inequality and concentration of wealth: Although global poverty rates appeared to decline in recent decades, the number of people living on less than US$ 6.85 per day now exceeds 1.8 billion – and has actually increased since 2019.[15] It is not clear which direction trends in poverty will take in the decades ahead. Meanwhile, the concentration of extreme wealth is on the rise with the number of billionaires tripling between 2010 and 2025.[16]

Environmental stressors

Overshooting the Earth's limits: Since the 1970s, humanity has been consuming more resources than the planet can regenerate – a growing ecological overshoot. The uneven distribution of this burden, especially on the most vulnerable, highlights the urgency of climate justice.[17]

Shifting investment to clean energy: Since 2016, global investment in clean energy has outpaced that of fossil fuels. Education systems can respond by fostering ecological literacy, sustainability skills and climate resilience at all levels.[18]

Digital technology's expanding reach

Growth in internet connectivity: Roughly 5.5 billion people – 68 per cent of the global population – accessed the internet in 2024. This is a significant increase from only 1 billion people in 2005. However, around 2.6 billion people still remain offline. Youth (from 15 to 24) are more likely to use the internet than older populations, with 79 per cent of the world's youth connecting to the internet in 2024.[19]

Increasing saturation of mobile phone use: Globally, four out of five individuals 10 years or older own a mobile phone.[20] While this mobile phone usage signals advances in opportunities to communicate and access information, it also ushers in new concerns about the socialization of children.

Concerns about digital 'addiction' are on the rise: Problematic digital use has surged in the past two decades – rising dramatically during the pandemic – with over 80 per cent of United States teens (ages 13–17) in 2022, for example, reporting feeling 'addicted' to their smartphones.[21] Globally, 'smartphone addiction' has risen from less than 10 per cent in 2010 to nearly 35 per cent in 2021.[22]

---

[13] OECD (2022).
[14] World Bank (2025).
[15] World Bank (2023).
[16] Peterson-Withorn (2025).
[17] Lin et al. (2021); OECD (2022).
[18] IEA (2024).
[19] ITU (2024).
[20] ITU (2024).
[21] OECD (2025).
[22] Meng et al. (2022).

Changing labour markets

Slower net employment growth: Simultaneous trends are changing employment structures across economic sectors and occupations. On the one hand, a general economic slowdown is expected to impact job creation and potentially lead to the displacement of certain jobs. On the other hand, technological and societal changes are creating new jobs and demands for new sets of professional skills. [23]

Shifting labour market structures: Demographic trends are impacting labour markets. Ageing populations will increase demand for healthcare and the care economy. Demand for education, training and employment is expected to rise in places where youth populations are growing. AI and technology could create new jobs while also displacing or replacing others. Climate trends could lead to the creation of new kinds of jobs in sustainability and adaptation.[24]

Persisting global disparities in unemployment: The global unemployment rate is at its lowest level, at 4.9 per cent.[25] However, global disparities inequalities persist. Unemployment rates are slightly higher and are even increasing for low-income countries (at 5.3 per cent in 2024), for women (currently at 5.5 per cent), and most importantly, for youth (13 per cent).

Trends in education development

> Rupture should be anticipated as an opportunity and not as a threat.
>
> **Kais Hammami**
> Director of the Strategic Foresight and AI Center of ICESCO

Amid these global shifts in socio-economic trends, environmental stressors and technological advances, education systems face mounting pressures and are themselves revealing critical trends. The following trends reported by UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5 on *Leadership in Education: Lead for Learning* [26] reveal a trajectory that is veering far off-track in achieving global educational targets and commitments set for 2030:

Stagnation in school enrollment: Since 2015, the global out-of-school rate has stagnated, falling only from 17.2 per cent to 16.1 per cent by 2023. The fact that this stagnation predates COVID-19 suggests deeper structural challenges.

Declining learning outcomes: Between 2012 and 2022, the share of students reaching minimum proficiency in reading dropped globally from 59 per cent to 47 per cent. In mathematics, it fell from 41 per cent to 36 per cent. The declines are more pronounced in middle-income contexts, particularly in reading, where proficiency fell 14 points compared to 6 points in high-income countries.

Declining investment in education: While total education spending increased slightly between 2010 and 2022, the share of government spending decreased moderately compared to the share of households. As a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), government spending on education declined slightly from 4.5 per cent in 2010 to 4.3 per cent in 2022.[27] Although aid to education reached a record high in 2022, Official Development Assistance (ODA) for education is expected to decline by 14 per cent for education as donor countries announce reductions in support to developing countries.[28]

[23] WEF (2025).
[24] WEF (2025).
[25] WEF (2025).
[26] UNESCO-GEMR (2024).
[27] UNESCO-GEMR (2024).
[28] UNESCO-GEMR (2025).

These trends point to declining political priority accorded to education at a time when commitment is crucial for transforming education towards just, equitable and sustainable futures. Understanding these trends is an essential step in steering their trajectory.

If the future of education is not a fixed path, then, how can futures thinking enable education to better envision and navigate its dynamics and tensions?

Exploring scenarios

Futures thinking is not a luxury – it is an essential and urgent aspect of equitable and sustainable education policy, practice, planning and research. Attitudes about the future shape actions in the present and determine whether we are reactive, proactive, pre-active or passive.

Methodologies, including scenario analysis, anticipatory thinking and foresight, can enable people to take action towards, or away from, possible outcomes in building a new social contract for education. What role will teachers play in the future? To what extent will societies and governments cede control to markets and automated technologies in education systems and governance? Will students be treated as citizens or as consumers in the future of education? Examining these and other extensions of emerging trends can help paint different pictures of what possible futures could look like. For example, after extensive analysis of the various trends and tensions in and around education, the OECD constructed the following four possible scenarios for schooling in a hypothetical timeframe of approximately 20 years.[29]

Scenario 1: Schooling extended – Continued expansion of access to schooling in its present form. While the role of teachers evolves, they remain central to the learning experience. Formal certification continues to be important for economic and social success.

Scenario 2: Education outsourced – Conventional education systems give way to a combination of diverse forms of private, community-based, online, home schooling, tutoring and other learning alternatives.

Scenario 3: Schools as learning hubs – Schools act as learning hubs in broader learning ecosystems, becoming more open to community outreach and a key part of interconnected networks of learning spaces.

Scenario 4: Learning anywhere, anytime – Dedicated educational spaces and teaching professionals give way to learning anytime, anywhere possible through digital technology and AI.

Scenario thinking offers a tool to help imagine diverse futures for education. Its aim is not to predict what *will* happen but to broaden understanding of what *could* happen. Exploring scenarios from numerous organizations and contexts allows participants to step outside present constraints and experiment with radically different possibilities. They sharpen awareness of what is at stake in the choices faced today and clarify the implications of present decisions. By surfacing tensions, uncovering implicit assumptions and making room for multiple perspectives, future thinking exercises can support more thoughtful, deliberate and conscientious decision-making about possibilities to pursue – or to avoid.

[29] OECD (2020).

From foresight methods to long-term vision

While scenarios can be useful in provoking thought, providing insight and guiding planning, they are by no means 'roadmaps' or blueprints; nor (depending on the methodology) do they always identify what participants would find most widely beneficial or consistent with their values and aspirations. To inform vision and action, they require contextualization in a dynamic approach to complexity and change, as well as a clear sense of commitment to humanity and the planet.

The Report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education presents a normative vision grounded in enduring foundational principles: the right to education throughout life and education as a common good. It articulates an aspirational horizon shaped by principles such as equity, solidarity and sustainability. This vision can be enriched by the methods and mindsets of futures thinking. Scenario and other futures thinking exercises help test that vision against real-world uncertainties, explore pathways for translating ideals into action and remain alert to risks that could undermine shared aspirations.

Different audiences can derive value from the interplay between foresight thinking and a long-term vision that aims to renew the social contract for education, fostering just, equitable and sustainable futures. Youth, for example, can use scenarios to explore their hopes and anxieties about the future and to recognize their agency in shaping it, anchoring their aspirations in shared principles such as equity, inclusion, justice and sustainability. Teachers might engage with scenarios to anticipate shifts in their roles and practices, while a long-term vision helps them remain rooted in education's deeper purposes. In diverse national contexts, especially those facing acute instability or volatility, foresight thinking – coupled with long-term vision – can support decision-makers in navigating uncertainty, weighing the consequences of potential implications or immediate courses of action.

Futures thinking also invokes complex emotions, including curiosity, fear, hope and apprehension. Recognizing and creating space for emotions can foster intergenerational and collaborative futures thinking. Involving and learning from young people and grassroots communities is essential to challenging and unlearning previous assumptions that pervade education. Future-oriented conversations can better inform international education frameworks, agendas and national education systems.

Overcoming policy tensions between short- and longer-term thinking

Any policy agenda concerned with sustainable development must include education at its core, but it has proven challenging for education planning to keep pace with global trends in practice. Part of the challenge lies in the tension between a crisis-thinking mode and the need to take a long-term perspective when making political decisions. In moments of urgency, it is normal to seek quick responses. However, remaining in a perpetual crisis mode can trap education systems in a cycle of reaction instead of proactive transformation.

Finding the right balance between the long-term nature of meaningful educational transformation and the short-term nature of political and policy cycles requires guiding principles. The International Commission on the Futures of Education, for example, translated its foundational principles for the right to education throughout life and education as a common good into guidance around fostering pedagogies of solidarity and cooperation, responsive curricula, teachers' involvement in policy and planning, inclusive learning environments and collaborative learning societies.

> We're talking about sustainable futures, but the issue of sustainability itself also needs to be interrogated.
>
> **Ebrima Sall**
> Executive Director, TrustAfrica

Short-termism in political leadership, however, limits continuity of vision and action and reinforces the status quo. The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5 shows that within two years of their appointment, more than half (51 per cent) of education ministers leave office. Such quick ministerial turnover hampers sustainable efforts towards transformation and is linked to poor outcomes in education.

Short-termism encourages institutional amnesia. Lessons from the past that could inform future decisions with nuance and insight are all too often lost. The shutdown of education systems worldwide during the COVID-19 pandemic provided a unique opportunity to implement immediate solutions while maintaining a future-oriented perspective. However, this was not achieved everywhere equally.

Looking ahead, ministries, leaders and policy-makers could ground change in principles that place equity, sustainability and justice at the core of any educational reform. Part of transformation is being able to constructively respond to, and even anticipate, the likelihood of future disruptions that may arise. Education can be open to inspiration, innovation and exchange with other sectors, embracing a truly intersectoral approach. Policy frameworks must become increasingly context-responsive and forward-looking, yet flexible enough to evolve beyond shorter-term election cycles and the volatility that they can engender.

This all requires a change in mindset and in the ways in which education systems conceive, translate and implement policy. Strengthening foresight in education policy and planning requires a shift in focus from the next election cycle to the next generation cycle. It is about a paradigm shift in politics, policy and society as a whole. It is not simply about changing leadership but about a shift in culture regarding how possible futures are imagined, by and for whom, towards what aims or shared visions, and how this is translated meaningfully into education policy and practice.

International education development projects and programmes are often characterized by short- and medium-range timelines to address crises and ensure progress towards internationally agreed-upon global goals and targets. Alone, emergency responses and incremental adjustments to education lack the scope, purpose and ambition needed to nurture a deeper, more collaborative vision for the future. Short-term approaches need to be complemented by a courageous longer-term vision – one that both builds on our past achievements and reflects on what is needed and possible in the future. An earnest and serious examination of the prospects and realities that future generations will inherit must be the foundation of forward-looking dialogue and commitments for our shared futures.

> Together, we redefine education as a transformative force, building an inclusive social contract rooted in human rights, shared responsibility and collective progress. This journey calls for sustained collaboration, ensuring every voice contributes to shaping a just and equitable future.
>
> **Abdel Basset Ben Hassen**
> President, Arab Institute for Human Rights

Envisioning human-centred approaches to technology in education

> We're aiming at using that technology for the best of us but using also the best of us with the technology.
>
> **Daniel Baril**
> Chair, Governing Board of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning & Director General, Canadian Institute for Cooperation in Adult Education

Digital technologies become more powerful and versatile by the month. They carry both novel opportunities and novel risks for education. The 'digital revolution' is still nascent, and questions about how it is – or should – impact education are far from settled. At their best, digital technology can help advance aspirations for inclusive, good quality and human-centred education based on the principles of social and economic justice, equity and respect for human rights. Technology interventions, however, are far from educational panaceas. Digital literacy needs to help prepare young people and adults alike to lead productive lives in a digital age within shared ethical frameworks.

Countries and education systems around the world are asking urgent questions: What can digital technologies do now to accelerate progress towards national and international goals for education? What are the educational implications of AI – a class of technology that is forcing societies to reconsider how information and knowledge are produced and curated? How can education systems ensure that digital technologies and AI are sufficiently accessible, safe, culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of communities and individuals? These, and many other pressing questions, demand thoughtful exploration and informed action.

Technology must support and strengthen learning and human relationships in education

The *Reimagining our futures together* report warns that humanity and planet Earth are under threat and calls for rebalancing our relationships with each other and the living planet as well as with technology. Achieving this balance requires a shift away from technology solutionism – an approach that assumes digital tools are the optimal and inevitable solutions to complex educational challenges – and towards a more measured perspective on the role of technology in learning. Technology should be viewed as a tool to thoughtfully support and strengthen human-centred education rather than as a replacement for human relationships and pedagogical depth.

A deep concern is that digital gadgets impede children from developing social connectivity and interpersonal skills. Digital technologies and AI may mimic teaching but cannot replace what teachers and schools offer – spaces for nurturing confidence, character, mentorship, social-emotional support and opportunities to develop citizenship skills. Teachers are pivotal in human and cognitive development, prompting and guiding ethical thinking and fostering critical reflection in learners. Teachers mould the character and develop the human being.

Furthermore, educational technology can reduce the burden of routinized work, freeing up more time for educators to engage with learners. It can also allow for tranquil spaces for leisure and teacher/student engagement that can stimulate thinking and imagination for a better and more just world. However, when driven by commercial or techno-managerial logics, educational technology – and technology in general – risk narrowing educational aims to metrics and efficiencies.

> Education is about passing on what we think are essential values, skills, knowledge and ideas about the future, and I think those should not be dictated by AI or digital means.
>
> **Farida Shaheed**
> UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

Now, more than ever, we need teachers to lead the way in shaping a better future, and they need to be part of the decisions about the choice, creation and use of educational technology. If teachers' voices are not at the table, discussing and collaborating with education technology (EdTech) companies, we will not see the changes we envisage in a new social contract for more just and equitable futures of education. Education is not simply a means to acquire and reproduce knowledge – it is a human, social, cultural and ethical endeavour rooted in participation, equity and flourishing. No matter how powerful, AI and digital platforms cannot replicate the mentorship, emotional support, socialization and ethical guidance provided by human teachers and learning communities. Nor can they account for the diversity of learners' personal, cultural and social realities, especially in linguistically diverse, marginalized or under-resourced contexts.

Integrating technology is an ongoing process that requires intentional human choice

Integrating technology is not a one-time decision, a solitary policy or a single best practice. Balanced relationships with technology requires both movement and constant correction. Movement involves experimenting with new technologies to gauge their educational benefits. Correction means regularly readjusting to realize the educational benefits of technology while addressing the novel risks and unintended consequences that technology may introduce.

How education changes in the face of technological innovation is entirely a human choice. It demands intentionality, collaboration and, above all, adherence to human rights principles and frameworks. Closing digital divides entails protecting and promoting the right of every person to public, free and quality education and ensuring that all learners engage with technological tools in an active, critical and creative manner. True educational transformation requires teachers, students, communities and other stakeholders to be at the table working together to define shared goals, share challenges and co-design solutions. Youth participating in the Forum proposed that such intentional integration be gradual, with a keen focus on fostering agency, participation, purpose and humanity (Box 2). Co-intelligence – a synergy between human creativity and AI – could potentially amplify the best of what human insight and AI have to offer, but it demands intentionality and collaboration.

Box 2. A message from youth: Gradually integrate AI and technological innovations fostering student and teacher agency, participation, purpose and humanity

AI offers transformative potential but raises educational challenges, including overreliance, overdependency, loss of agency, hindered critical thinking and privacy concerns. In an AI-driven era, teachers remain irreplaceable, providing emotional guidance and human connection that technology cannot replicate.

Youth at the Forum proposed a gradual approach to any AI integration in schools, prioritizing student agency and teaching AI as a support, and not as a substitute for reasoning. Education must empower students to engage with AI critically, balancing its benefits with autonomy. Youth envision a future where they are not passive consumers of technology but, rather, active participants who understand and control their interactions with AI. Policy-makers and educators should prioritize this balance to prepare future generations for meaningful, controlled interactions with AI.

AI should be a tool that supports what teachers do best – connecting with students and fostering caring learning environments. Youth believe that teachers' roles must be rethought to ensure that teachers are empowered determine how, whether and in what ways to use AI in their work. One strategy is to abandon the view of AI as a teacher replacement altogether. Ongoing teacher training programmes that enhance digital skills should be maintained. Further, imagining they were on a time machine, youth proposed introducing sabbatical years for teachers to grow, adapt, innovate and participate in collaborative networks. By supporting teachers with these tools, young people believe they can ensure that education remains human-centred, blending technological innovation with purpose and humanity.

Development of education technologies should come from within education

The education sector needs to take a research and development (R&D) approach to education technologies – as for other teaching and learning models and practices. Major investments are required to understand the educational value of new technologies and to develop these technologies in ways that maximize their potential and benefits. While R&D is standard in many other sectors, it is rarely so in education.

Technology companies that are disrupting education should provide financing for this needed R&D and should do so in a transparent and publicly accountable manner. Shifting the conversation from 'how do we integrate technology?' to 'how do we ensure technology serves human and educational priorities?' is a more deliberate and research-driven approach that can help orient educators. Prevailing techno-optimist mindsets – an understanding of technology as the complete solution to educational challenges – requires questioning. Instead, educational R&D should not only be subjected to measured expectations of possible yields but also be centred upon the best interests of students, teachers and society rather than profits, market benefits or presumed cost-savings.

Publicly owned educational technology should be developed as an alternative

> We need a public AI that's more than a regulatory function. We need public data set training, we need public algorithms and ultimately, we need large public language models. The same thing we did in the 50s and 60s – many societies created a school system, a public school system.
>
> **Daniel Baril**
> Chair, Governing Board of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning & Director General, Canadian Institute for Cooperation in Adult Education
> Rapporteur on the Right to Education

Education is a public endeavour and a common good that is not confined to schooling. Technology must enhance, rather than overshadow, education's public purposes and values. Privately owned EdTech platforms often make unverified claims while perpetuating biases and inequalities. EdTech companies are beginning to decide on educational requirements and achievements and sometimes insist that the company serves as the education officer. The larger danger, of course, is the reframing of education as a private and commercial good. To ensure a meaningful impact, EdTech must be ethical, inclusive and accountable, with independent audits at every stage to assess potential effects on human rights.

Publicly owned digital platforms for education could offer potential alternatives, enabling equitable access, protecting privacy and fostering non-discriminatory practices. By prioritizing community-driven solutions over proprietary interests, we can build reliable and impactful EdTech and AI that address educational challenges while keeping the focus on learners and learning.

Supporting teachers on the frontline for change

Educational institutions and teachers find themselves pulled and pushed by numerous factors beyond their control. For example, technological advances at times exceed even the most capable teachers' skill sets, while polarizing streams of disinformation breed mistrust and division within the communities where they teach. Education systems that approach teaching as a mere transaction have reduced one of the most complex and fundamental professions to simple content delivery. Yet, that which is easy to teach and test is also easy to automate, which raises a question at the heart of teachers' work: education for what purpose?

Higher-order reasoning, problem-solving and collaboration are of the utmost importance in renewing the social contract for education. Developing these abilities requires the recognition that teaching and learning are continuous and relational rather than static and transactional.[30] If the student/teacher relationship is the linchpin of those aspects of education that are most valued, how do we best structure, undergird and strengthen this vital relationship? Moreover, if education is to be about the use of contextualized knowledge in the wisest and most beneficial collective ways, how might we support our most important 'wisdom workers' on the frontlines of a changing world?

> Given our foundation in inquiry and the Socratic method, perhaps the term "teacher" in the current context might…embody the role of a "prompt engineer" guiding students, fostering curiosity and shifting the focus on the essence of who we are, the wisdom and knowledge we carry and the vision of the future we aspire to create.
>
> **David Edwards**
> General Secretary, Education International

A growing solidarity with teachers around the world needs to be reflected in the actions of governments, communities and stakeholders when developing holistic teacher policies and normative instruments that elevate teachers' working conditions, salaries and social status to sustain the humanity, agency and dignity of their profession. There is a need to rethink and support teacher education and development as a dynamic, creative and collaborative teacher-led continuum across teachers' professional career cycles. Teachers can serve as creative guides and facilitators in the learning process, creating new spaces for learning and innovation.

Reimagining teaching also entails recasting teachers as a collaborative professional community with full professional autonomy, while orienting them to take up future challenges to prepare learners to deal with the transitions facing the world. Teachers must be involved and engaged as leaders and key participants in public policy, social dialogue, knowledge production, research and academic networks.[31]

Addressing the common global and regional challenges facing teachers is urgent

Teachers across the world are grappling with low salaries, overcrowded classrooms, poor working conditions, declining appeal of the teaching profession and a significant teacher shortage. In some countries, teachers are displaced due to ongoing conflict or political instability. It is urgent to increase investment in public education and improve the working conditions and wages of teachers. This is becoming increasingly necessary in virtually every region, and governments everywhere will need to carefully consider their duties in the face of growing strain on the teaching profession. To support teachers in crisis regions, the international community could consider establishing a 'Teacher Solidarity Fund' for crisis-affected countries, as well as other measures of solidarity and international cooperation to support teachers' vital work, professional development and well-being.

[30] UNESCO (2021).
[31] UNESCO et al. (2024).

Teachers must be at the heart of conversations about the future

There is too much emphasis on unproven, non-evidence-based technologies being imposed on teachers. Teachers have grown sceptical of transformative 'educational technology' that lacks proper vetting by the profession. Teachers have adapted and grown to changes that come their way, integrating them into learning without losing sight of the core mission of the educational endeavour. The 'do no harm' principle should guide AI integration, considering the emotional and social well-being of students and teachers. While AI presents immense possibilities, its success in education depends on responsible and ethical implementation and must be teacher-led. AI must serve as a tool that supports human connection and critical thinking as well as address issues relating to sustainability at large.

> EdTech simply cannot provide the emotional support and mentorship that human educators offer in building cognitive, socio-emotional development and empathetic connections.
>
> **Farida Shaheed**
> UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

Teacher professional development needs to engage teachers in building a deeper understanding of the conditions required to bring about positive changes within the teaching profession. Futures thinking and methodologies can help. Teachers' reflections and discussions about possible scenarios for the future – for example, a pair of scenarios where 'things went wrong' and one in which 'things went right' explored at the Forum on the Futures of Education 2024 – can deepen their exploration of the drivers, policies, approaches, conditions and mindset that contributed to the possible given futures (see Box 3). Incorporated into professional development, futures scenarios and other approaches to anticipation and long-term thinking can help teachers extrapolate for the present what can be done to catalyse positive changes.

Box 3. 'Imagine 2030 and the future for teachers.' Insights from two possible scenarios explored at a workshop the 2024 Forum on the Futures of Education

Scenario 1: 'Things went horribly wrong'

WHAT WENT WRONG

Yet another failure
It is 2035 and AI in education has transformed learning for the worse. Students from all backgrounds are struggling. Teachers feel more frustrated and overworked with limited support, personnel and status. Hoped-for educational objectives have not been attained.

What went wrong?
What elements and actions turned promises into failures? How did different actors like students, educators, administrators, families, community and civil society organizations, companies, and policy-makers contribute to this?

Areas for thought

- What ethical, technological and pedagogical failures were crucial to the failure of AI in education?
- What unanticipated, unknown risks emerged from integrating AI in education?
- What led to the worsening of equity, access, quality and relevance?
- What new narratives and ideas might we imagine for teaching, as a profession, that integrates technology with the emotional and social growth of students?

The teacher shortage grew massively, inequality in education deepened and the human element in education was replaced by a technologically determined transactional enterprise devoid of universal values and hopes.
Concerns are raised around cognitive actigraphy in AI-driven education, primarily on the cognitive overexertion and impact on the mental well-being of students and teachers.
The increasing role of AI and its adverse effects on the teacher-student relationship are crucial aspects of emotional and social development.
Lack of coherence and privacy in integrating technology across schools and teaching and learning practices is envisioned as a pessimistic scenario for teachers.

Scenario 2: 'What went right'

WHAT WENT RIGHT

Yet another accomplishment

It's 2035 and AI in education has transformed learning for the better. Students from all backgrounds are thriving. Teachers are more effective than ever, and hoped-for educational objectives have largely been attained.

What went right?

How were we able to succeed? What elements and actions turned promises into success? How did different actors like students, educators, administrators, families, community and civil society organizations, companies, and policy-makers contribute to this?

Areas for thought

- What ethical, technological and pedagogical accomplishments were crucial to the success of AI in education?
- What unanticipated benefits emerged from integrating AI in education?
- What known risks did we successfully address and how?
- How were issues of equity, access and quality resolved?
- What needs to continue?
- Who needs to be part of that conversation?

Teachers are empowered and well-supported. A collaborative teaching profession is valued for its wisdom and for achieving essential changes for the future of society. A new social contract for education has been realized.

Teachers receive adequate training in AI literacy and technology use. Students are guided in the ethical use of AI, benefiting from it as a learning aid rather than a replacement for traditional education. AI is ensured to complement rather than diminish human values. There is a transition from passion to compassion in the future, recognizing that education is about fostering meaningful dialogue and preparing students for diverse futures.

The role of the teacher is to ensure that technology supports our journey rather than defining it.

Source: Education International (2024).

Social dialogue and teacher agency are crucially relevant for policy-making

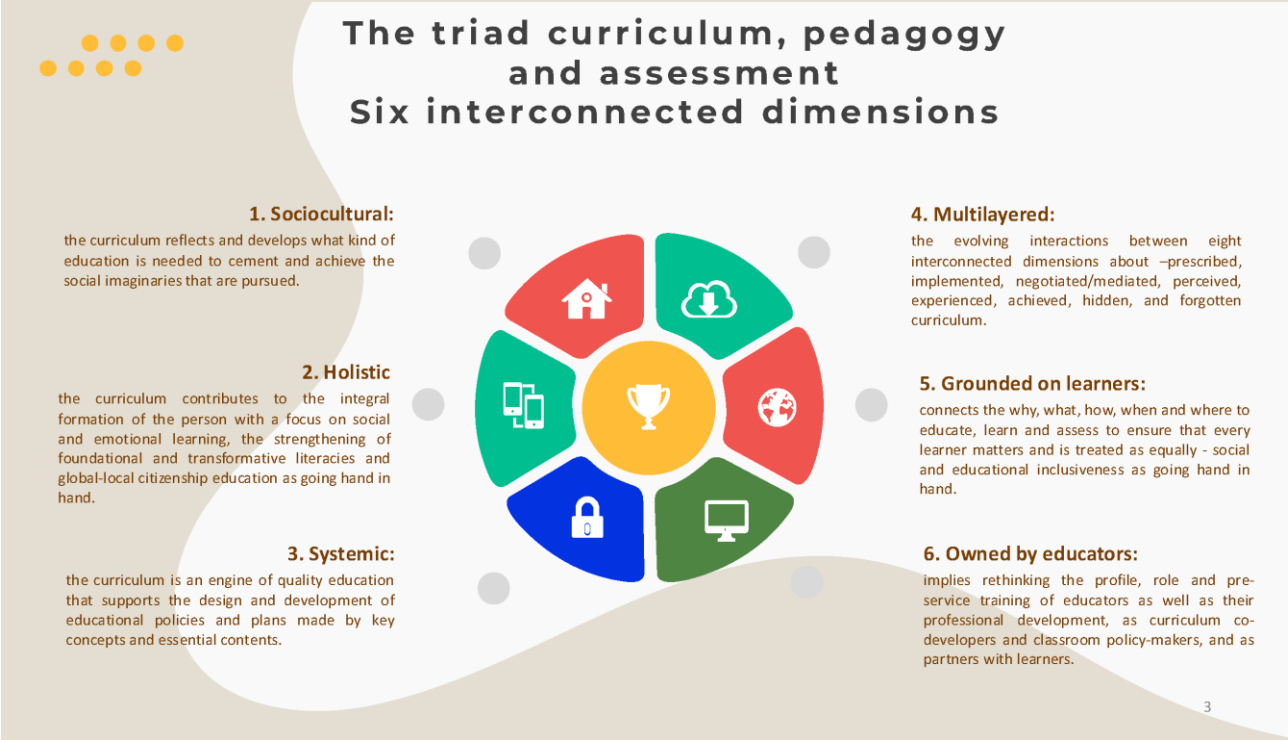
> Teachers who integrate technology masterfully in their classrooms are the ones who are going to transform education.
>
> **Mike Thiruman**
> General Secretary, Singapore Teachers' Union

Teachers' perspectives must be amplified and included in policy-making and decision-making to address issues related to their profession. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the necessity of being prepared for any disruption to education. Ensuring teacher input in the design and implementation of technology in teaching and learning is essential in navigating future challenges. All stakeholders – including students, parents, teachers and policy-makers – must move from discourse to action. The international community requires commissions and mechanisms to address teacher shortages and ensure that any integration of AI in education is carefully done and well thought through.

Renewing pedagogy, curriculum and assessment

A forward-looking approach to education requires reimagining the interconnected triad of curriculum content, pedagogy and assessment as a foundation for building sustainable, equitable and reparative futures (Figure 1). This perspective is rooted in sociocultural, holistic, systemic, multilayered, learner-centred and teacher-empowered dimensions. It challenges predefined, technocratic models and calls for practices that are genuinely responsive to the diverse realities of learners' lives across time and space. At its core, this vision sees education as a dynamic platform for intergenerational dialogue, the cultivation of trust and the development of civic agency.

Figure 1. The triad curriculum, pedagogy and assessment: Six interconnected dimensions



Source: Opertti (2024).

Pedagogy, curriculum and assessment must repair past harms and reimagine futures through care, justice and inclusion

> Classrooms are far more than just physical spaces. They shape the relationships we build, the power dynamics we feel and the learning experience we carry forward.
>
> **Ellie (Joohyun) Lee**
> Co-chair, ESD Working Group, SDG4 Youth & Student Network

Reparative pedagogy, as conceptualized by scholars like Sriprakash,[32] invites us to consider how education can act as a site of repair and justice. It asks: What harms has education enacted, and what responsibilities arise from that history? Rather than viewing learning as a neutral process, reparative pedagogy foregrounds historical and structural injustices while opening space for hope, relationality and care. It understands pedagogical work as involving emotional and political labour, recognizing the profound entanglements in processes of meaning-making, identity formation and transformation. This interplay is vital: learners do not just know, they also feel their way into understanding. Educational futures must take this into account.

In practical terms, this transformative vision demands political, policy-based, ethical and technical conversations that bridge global innovation with local realities. There is much to be learned, for example, from Indigenous learning models and pedagogical approaches in non-formal education spaces which seek to address historical and structural injustices though the fostering of dialogue, the creation of meaning and understanding, and the imagination of new social possibilities. Educational reform should support intersectoral, inter-institutional and intergenerational collaborations, ensuring that every learner is recognized as an agent capable of shaping more inclusive and just societies. Such a framework not only confronts historical inequities but also cultivates capacities to navigate and transform a complex, uncertain and unjust world. Key levers for reimagining pedagogy, curriculum and assessment can include:

Interconnected transformation towards a clear purpose: Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are inseparably interconnected. Their transformations must be coherent with one another and their educational purposes. They are not ends in and of themselves. Rather, they must be rethought as deeply intertwined elements that incorporate ethics and the evolving knowledge commons – including humanities, sciences and technology, language, mathematics and the arts – in ways that honour diverse cultural and contextual realities.

Collaborative ecosystems of teaching and learning: Building intersectoral, inter-institutional, and intergenerational partnerships is essential to bridge global insights with local needs, fostering systems that are inclusive, adaptive and resilient. Siloed sectors and disciplines that fragment knowledge need to be overcome. Teachers and learners must be empowered as co-developers of knowledge in creative and inclusive learning environments (see Box 4). Ethical use of technology can support this by nurturing freedom, creativity and critical thinking – conditions essential for a hopeful future.

> We need new school programmes and curricula that are adapted and accessible through different forms of engagement. Furthermore, we need new forms of assessment methods that can celebrate diverse forms of intelligence.
>
> **Lola Bikindou**
> Student, Sogang University

Rethinking assessment in the digital age: Transforming assessment could be one of the most direct ways to shift educational priorities. Instead of simply integrating digital tools, schools and policy-makers

32 Sriprakash (2022).

must ask what learning is important, how to measure what is important (and what in that learning which is important cannot be measured), and how assessments can support deeper and diverse forms of learning. By recalibrating how we understand and evaluate learning, we can unlock broader changes across teaching, curriculum design and pedagogical relationships.

Box 4. A message from youth: Foster inclusive and creative learning environments

Stigmas and preconceived notions still hinder the full inclusion of students with diverse learning needs, including neurodiverse students and students with dyslexia. Students reflected on how embracing neurodiversity can lead to a brighter future in the classroom.

Inclusive classroom models promise to bridge gaps in understanding, ensuring that every student reaches their potential. Youth considered that neurodiversity does not need to be corrected; it is the learning approaches that need to be transformed. Fostering inclusive and creative learning environments is essential to supporting neurodiverse students.

Students at the Forum imagined innovative classroom models to embrace neurodiversity, including using synesthetic teaching methods, providing secluded or isolated reading hubs or playhouses, incorporating word gymnastics and assistive technology, and fostering inclusive and accommodating classroom environments. Gamification can help engage peers in understanding the barriers of neurodivergent students and promote empathy through interactive play. Other academic events can track parents' attention and raise awareness and involvement.

By embracing neurodiversity's strengths and challenges, we can reshape classrooms to be genuinely inclusive, creating a future that values every learner's unique ability.

Education for peace requires systemic, interdisciplinary responses to complex global challenges

Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment can provide tools to foster peace as they influence all aspects of our daily lives and future. However, teaching for and about peace can only achieve so much if education systems themselves are not aligned with the pursuit of peace. This includes safe, violence-free and supportive learning environments that provide essentials like proper nutrition and healthcare.

Challenges to peace in the 21st century include declining respect for human rights, democratic backsliding, climate change, entrenched inequalities, the spread of hate, and harmful discourses and practices (both online and offline), as well as disruptive technological advancements. These dynamics are interconnected and complex. While each of these issues is contextual and unique in its nature and impact, their combined interactions can contribute to the outbreak of violent conflict. Addressing interrelated threats to peace requires holistic, transformative and inter/transdisciplinary approaches.

The 2023 UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development,[33] drew inspiration from the report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education[34]. The 2023 Recommendation was adopted by UNESCO Member States by consensus, and it provides an ambitious, system-wide perspective on how education can and should contribute to bringing about lasting peace and

[33] UNESCO (2023).
[34] UNESCO (2021).

fair and sustainable development. The Recommendation introduces a renewed understanding of peace as a transformative and participatory process built on individuals' daily actions. This renewed understanding involves addressing the underlying causes of conflict as essential to establishing conducive environments to the flourishing of human well-being.

Such an understanding entails building education systems that recognize the impacts of and are responsive to the surrounding cultural, social, political and natural environments, cultivating an ethic of responsible citizenship at local and global levels and shared responsibility for peace, human rights and sustainable development. Working to guide the implementation of the Recommendation can be a powerful driver that affects comprehensive educational agendas. A systemic, forward-looking and inter/transdisciplinary approach to education requires active advocacy for and work towards peacebuilding – building on effective policies and practices, addressing shortfalls, identifying opportunities for renewed commitments, and crafting ideas and proposals to advance ambitious agendas across regions.

> There is no education without a clear, explicit definition of the human being. We have to answer the question of what it means to be a human being. Without this, I cannot think about the future of education of my people.
>
> **Refat Sabbah**
> President, Global Campaign for Education

Education for peace entails, among other things, addressing the contradictions between intention and practice. Connecting the past, present and possible futures, and challenging and mobilizing values, emotions and behaviours with a focus on incorporating the participation of young people should also holistically reshape all aspects of education systems. Education for peace is about strengthening interconnections, solidarity, collaboration and intercultural understanding among persons and communities as well as removing barriers and frontiers. Forging synergies between universal and particular cultural values is crucial to making the case and giving effect to common civilizational grounds. Advocacy for education for peace shall be firmly grounded in social justice, reparative futures and pedagogies as well as in the strengthening of dialogue and collaboration across all levels and components of education systems.

To strengthen the roles that education can play for peace, it is crucial to move along complementary lines of action. Governments and the international community can steer interdisciplinary and inclusive dialogues on the multiple purposes of education. All parts of society benefit from a vision of schools as safe spaces that ensure teachers' and learners' freedom and agency. Furthermore, positioning lifelong and life-wide learning is essential to move learning beyond formal instruction and focus widely on changing mindsets and behaviours on peace education in all age groups.

Pedagogy for climate justice must challenge outdated paradigms and foster equitable transitions

Climate change is regarded by many as 'the defining issue of our time'. With over 32.6 million people displaced due to climate related disasters in 2022, humanity requires fair climate change solutions. Quality education must empower people with the relevant knowledge, skills, values and attitudes about climate change. Following the launch of the global initiative 'Greening Education Partnership' at the UN Transforming Education Summit in 2022, the global community of over 93 Member States and 1400 organizations have been accelerating synergetic efforts on climate change education. In particular, one of the less-addressed topics for quality climate education as defined by the global guidance on greening curriculum, includes climate justice and post-carbon economies. These two topics touch on the fundamentals of societal transformation towards greener and more peaceful societies, each addressing the underlying systemic causes of the current climate crisis.

Education for post-carbon economies is not just an incremental shift – it is a radical rethinking of how societies understand progress, prosperity and sustainability. At its core, it challenges the long-standing dominance of fossil-fuel-driven economic models that have prioritized limitless growth at the expense of ecological balance and social well-being. It instead promotes new ways of thinking that are regenerative, equitable and in harmony with planetary boundaries.

> The current education system is centred around "best in the world" – best universities in the world, best schools in the country, and so on. What if the new social contract for the future was best *for* the world? What would that mean for kids, for teachers, for schools, for universities, and for UNESCO?
>
> **François Taddéi**
> President, Learning Planet Institute

Climate justice and education for post-carbon economies are essential yet underexplored aspects of climate education, each offering a framework for rethinking economic and social models, addressing environmental inequalities and fostering peaceful, sustainable societies. Education can drive social transformation by integrating these two key concepts into curricula and learning ecosystems.

Climate justice is an educational imperative for the future: it emphasizes the ethical and political dimensions of climate change, recognizing that its impacts are not borne equally. Vulnerable communities – often those least responsible for emissions – face the gravest consequences. Integrating climate justice into education empowers students to critically examine the roots of environmental inequities and develop solutions that prioritize fairness, responsibility and global solidarity. Schools and curricula must foster climate literacy that goes beyond science, embedding social and economic perspectives that encourage students to advocate for equitable climate policies and practices.

Education about post-carbon economies can help build sustainable future alternatives. A true societal transformation requires a shift away from fossil-fuel-driven economic models towards sustainable, regenerative alternatives. Education for post-carbon economies challenges traditional growth-centric paradigms, instead prioritizing well-being, environmental stewardship and social equity. Learners must be equipped with the skills to imagine and implement alternative economic frameworks – such as circular economies, green jobs and localized, sustainable industries – that reduce reliance on carbon-intensive systems. By integrating these perspectives into curricula, education can become a driver of economic transition and innovation.

Systemic and systematic barriers to transformative climate education need to be identified and overcome. Despite growing awareness of the need for climate education, significant barriers persist in integrating climate justice and post-carbon economies into mainstream learning. Challenges include outdated curricula, insufficient teacher training, political resistance and a lack of interdisciplinary approaches. Many education systems remain focused on conventional economic and industrial models, limiting students' exposure to alternative paradigms. Education can explore strategies for overcoming these challenges, such as teacher capacity-building, policy reform and multistakeholder collaboration, to ensure that climate education becomes a transformative force in schools and communities.

Bridging the gap between climate education and real-world impact requires concrete, actionable steps at national and local levels. This includes integrating climate justice and post-carbon topics into existing curricula, fostering partnerships between education institutions and climate organizations, and equipping teachers with the resources needed to facilitate complex discussions. Crucially, empowering young people as active participants in shaping climate education policies will ensure that learning remains relevant and responsive to the diverse contexts and impacts of climate change.

Building lifelong and life-wide learning societies

Rapid social, economic and technological changes reinforce the importance of learning throughout life, across all times and spaces. Learning cities – urban spaces designed to foster education across all ages and settings – are emerging as powerful environments for change. Learning cities recognize that education does not only happen in formal classrooms; rather, learning extends to workplaces, public spaces, cultural exchanges, digital platforms, natural environments and beyond.

As societies face sweeping changes and disruptions, cities of all sizes can be well-positioned to reimagine the futures of education by embracing inclusive and flexible learning opportunities that expand the times, spaces and opportunities. Society-wide approaches can help equip individuals and communities with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate uncertainty, drive innovation and build sustainable futures.

Learning cities can strengthen inclusivity, social equity and well-being through education

At the heart of the idea of a 'learning city' is the principle that education should be accessible to everyone at every stage of life. Unlike conventional education systems and institutions that focus primarily on early stages of education and formal schooling, learning cities support continuous education for all – children, youth, adults and seniors. Learning cities actively create opportunities for upskilling, reskilling and vocational education, ensuring that individuals and their communities can adapt to shifting socioeconomic landscapes. By integrating learning into daily life, learning cities empower citizens to thrive in dynamic and evolving societies.

Learning cities play a crucial role in promoting educational equity by ensuring that marginalized and vulnerable populations – including people with disabilities, refugees, minorities and economically disadvantaged groups – have continuous access to learning opportunities. These cities adopt inclusive, learner-oriented pedagogies that respect diverse needs and backgrounds. Moreover, integrating health literacy, mental well-being programmes and physical activity into education, recognizes that learning is deeply connected to personal and societal well-being. This holistic approach to education strengthens social cohesion, builds resilience and supports individuals in leading fulfilling lives.

UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities is an international learning and support network that aims to share inspiration and good practices that can further foster a culture of learning at the local level. Whether part of the network or not, any city can learn from the network and foster a culture of learning for all.

Public spaces can become active learning environments

One of the defining features of learning cities is their ability to reimagine urban spaces as places of learning and engagement. Libraries, museums, parks, community centres and even streets become interactive learning hubs, offering informal and experiential learning experiences. From urban gardening projects to cultural festivals and civic dialogues, these spaces foster curiosity, creativity and community involvement. The report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education challenges us to think even more broadly – viewing natural landscapes and biosphere reserves, including forests, lakes and rural paths, as essential learning spaces that reconnect education with the environment.

Learning societies can leverage digital transformation for education

By providing digital literacy programmes, online learning platforms and smart public spaces equipped with free Wi-Fi, cities can help bridge the digital divide and ensure that all citizens can participate in the

knowledge economy. The integration of technology allows for more flexible, personalized learning pathways, catering to individual interests and needs. By embracing digital tools, learning cities not only enhance access to educational opportunities but also prepare societies for the future of work, governance and civic participation.

As the world grapples with unprecedented challenges, learning cities offer a vision for the future of education that is adaptable, inclusive and deeply embedded in everyday life. By fostering lifelong and life-wide learning, transforming public spaces into educational hubs, advancing social equity and leveraging digital innovation, these cities contribute to building resilient and empowered communities. Learning cities embody transformative potential, positioning education as a force for individual growth, social progress and a sustainable future for all.

Rethinking educational leadership

> We need AI, we need technologies, we need everything, but we should not let the technologies drive what we are doing. It is in an engagement with the communities and for us to determine how to bring technologies in, under what conditions and what to do so we don't create new inequalities over again.
>
> **Ebrima Sall**
> Executive Director, TrustAfrica

Renewing the social contract for education requires courageous, principled, effective and foresight-oriented leadership. There is an acute need for strong education leaders who are entrusted with the opportunities and sufficient autonomy to make informed decisions. This is true within schools and educational organizations, as well as in middle tier leadership and broader social and political contexts. The capacity for generating collaborative and supportive learning and school environments and translating national visions into local realities lies with school principals, youth leaders, the middle tier and political leaders.

UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5 examined what constitutes effective educational leadership and how it varies between countries over time. It sought to better understand the visions and goals driving leadership in education. It also examined the extent to which, and through what practices, the exercise of leadership contributes to better education outcomes.

The Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5 framework is useful to explore the ways in which educational leadership can help forge a new social contract for education and foster more just, equitable and sustainable futures. Over the last few decades, promising shifts in the roles of leaders are evident in the move from more administrative functions to approaches that collaborate with teachers, staff, families and the wider community to strengthen educational purpose and results. These positive shifts could be built upon while outmoded bureaucratization and stifling modes of managerialism can be set aside. If education is to help us build futures that can adapt to the unknown and uncertain, leadership is essential. However, it requires sufficient support and autonomy to respond to rapidly evolving and diverse needs in particular contexts.

The roles and functions of school leaders need to adapt and change

To reimagine leadership in education, we need to develop, embrace and nurture renewed leadership capabilities in essential dimensions, such as setting expectations, focusing on learning and fostering collaboration. Education leadership must encourage and nurture diverse groups of people with the potential to pursue leadership roles. Leadership must be dynamic, responsive and forward-thinking. Embracing change and innovation, leaders can create education systems that address today's rapidly evolving challenges.

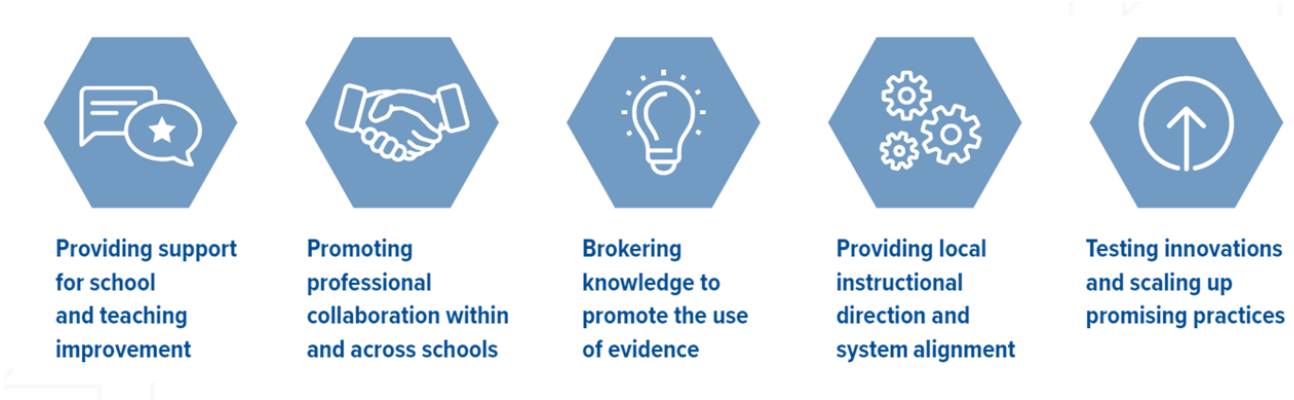
Governments need to strengthen and professionalize school principals

Governments should prioritize laws and policies that select and develop school leaders well before their appointment. They should ensure fair, open, competitive and inclusive hiring practices, as well as timely and comprehensive training. Governments should support principals to focus on their core role, should decentralize leadership structures to allow for shared decision-making and should promote collaborative pedagogical and leadership styles that enable principals to empower education personnel, students and communities to work towards common goals for school improvement. They should implement contextualized and formative standards and recognize leaders' achievements, offering feedback conducive to their career advancement.

Middle-tier and political leadership are critical to fostering collaboration and driving systemic change

Middle tier leadership (i.e. the subdistrict, district or regional levels of education systems, which sit between the school and central government systems) is the under-leveraged and neglected support system for education systems. Most countries lack a comprehensive diagnosis of the middle-tier system to identify challenges and levers for improvement. Strong middle-tier leadership supports teaching and school improvements, promotes professional collaboration within and across schools, shares knowledge to encourage the use of evidence, provides local instructional direction and system alignment, and can test innovations and scale up promising practices (see Figure 1). Governments need to recognize their role, enhance their ability to foster stakeholder agency and strengthen their institutional capacity to create equitable, resilient and future-ready education systems. Political leaders, too, need time, support and inspiration to lead, build relationships and deliver reforms and more profound education transformations.

Figure 2. Instructional leaders: Possible impacts of middle tier leadership



Source: Mizunoya (2024) based on Tournier et al. (2023).

Youth leaders bring first-hand understanding of challenges, fresh perspectives and innovative solutions

Youth leadership is essential. They can ensure that education systems address and represent students' real needs and aspirations. Their voices reflect the current experiences of learners and help create policies and practices that are more inclusive and equitable. Youth leaders also stimulate innovation and creativity. They often think outside the box, offering fresh ideas to tackle persistent educational challenges. When young

people take on leadership roles, they are empowered and develop a sense of ownership and responsibility over their education, fostering greater engagement and commitment to making positive changes. As co-creators and future leaders, young people are uniquely positioned to anticipate and address emerging global challenges, such as technological disruption, climate change and societal inequities, ensuring that education remains relevant and forward-looking (Box 5).

Box 5. A message from youth: Empower youth as co-creators and leaders of the societies and systems they will inherit

The world is more interconnected than ever, and university students are at the forefront of this globalization. While international frameworks champion youth participation, too many students face institutional barriers such as rigid hierarchies, unspoken cultural or structural limitations that discourage or punish their efforts to engage and create meaningful change.

Education systems must go beyond teaching about active citizenship; they must enable it. Education must transcend tokenism to empower youth as co-creators of their futures and build genuinely inclusive education systems. They must ensure youth participation is encouraged and actively supported, with meaningful roles and fostering genuine participation in decision-making. By dismantling barriers and enabling active citizenship, institutions can prepare students to lead in a rapidly changing global society.

Reconsidering research paradigms and reimagining higher education as an inclusive bridge

Renewing the social contract for education calls for collaborative research and innovation as well as inclusive knowledge and practices in higher education, both grounded in the principles of the right to education throughout life and the right to science and scientific research.[35] A future-oriented research agenda must be wide-ranging and multifaceted, embracing diverse forms of knowledge, perspectives, disciplines and methodologies.[36] It must contribute to a better understanding of how vectors of societal, technological, environmental, political and economic disruptions intersect with education.[37] Knowledge and research must go beyond mere measurement and critique. Research must engage with diverse perspectives, methods, ways of knowing, learning and being, and expand into complex learning environments to improve policy and action.

Higher education also plays a transformative role in shaping national and local development and contributing to better futures for all. It promotes sustainability, inclusivity and interconnectedness and must act as a real bridge between learners and their communities. At the very core of the transformation is the principle that higher education is a public good. It should be guided by rights-based practices and values that go beyond academic achievement and engage students in reimagining and co-creating the futures of research, teaching and community engagement in higher education.

[35] UNESCO (2018, 2021).
[36] UNESCO (2021).
[37] UNESCO Canadian Commission and Canada SSHRC (2021).

Research requires an understanding of injustices, engaging diverse types and sources of knowledge

Research can be a powerful catalyst for a renewed social contract by sustaining action-oriented, reparative approaches that connect the past, present and future. We need science and research that foregrounds repair and redress for injustices. Research methods should be informed by grounded collective dialogue, debate and action on reimagining classrooms, schools, colleges and universities for social and environmental justice, engaging diverse stakeholders as knowledge holders and legitimate partners.[38] Research from within education is a field of inquiry and analysis in its own right: education institutions are places where knowledge is produced, and teachers and students are central authors and participants in this knowledge.

> A reparative framework really centres around this idea that the past, present and future are interconnected.
>
> **Arathi Sriprakash**
> Professor of Sociology and Education, University of Oxford

Epistemic justice entails the equitable recognition and inclusion of diverse knowledge systems by advancing participatory, community-based methodologies that not only uphold the right of all peoples to their own knowledge but also understand the relational nature of knowledge, thus bridging knowledge divides. It is about strengthening complex ecologies of knowledge. The responsibility of research is not just to extract data from communities but also to use the research methods to create the kind of dialogues necessary to reimagine the social contract for education. The notion of justice is multidimensional and central to research. Ecosystem approaches to knowledge production should be strengthened to bridge knowledge gaps.

Research must challenge the deficit framing of marginalized communities; these communities represent expertise and resources that can be engaged with and learned from. If we are serious about repairing past injustices and exclusions, it is crucial to recognize and integrate diverse types and sources of knowledge – including Indigenous, relational and pluralistic ways of knowing. Furthermore, research also has to contribute to the understanding of the relationality of inequalities – the dispossession of some is linked to the accumulation of advantages for others.[39] Ultimately, research can support open and emancipatory imaginations and inquiries – assuming it advances critical thinking – while also highlighting the quest for reparative justice and conceiving the future as not predetermined.

Future-oriented research must be interdisciplinary and contribute to policy, planning and action

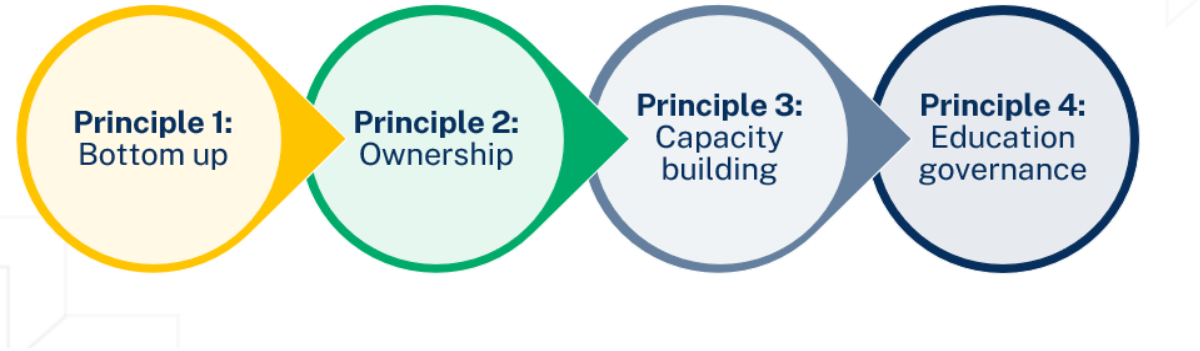
Future-oriented research triangulates perspectives from various disciplines, even if contested, around megatrends (demography, climate, urbanization, employment, technology, etc.), allowing for regional variations and examining the implications for education and research in the Global South, Global North and their interconnection and exchanges. Research should track inequalities in education and society across the globe, acknowledging the diverse perceptions of inequalities, trends, drivers and the policy and practice efforts to address and overcome them. Such an agenda also needs to consider the differences in the impacts that the megatrends have in different parts of the world. It is crucial to reconnect with the past, both its strengths and accomplishments as well as injustices and exclusions.

[38] Corson (2020); Damus (2020); Mbembe (2023); Moore and Nesterova (2020); Myers et al. (2024); Odora Hoppers (2020).
[39] Mbembe (2024); UNESCO (2024).

> We need to continue to think about finding creative and effective ways to connect the generation of knowledge and research with policy and practice. We need research that allows for different perspectives on the implications of future scenarios for education.
>
> **Fernando Reimers**
> Professor, Harvard University Graduate School of Education & Member of the International Commission for the Futures of Education

Research and policy-making should engage bottom-up processes, reflecting and engaging grassroots realities, and the most pressing issues identified by local actors, as well as their diverse perspectives. Participatory structures are needed. Sharing data and evidence can enable policy-makers, planners and practitioners to understand and communicate research, which can in turn help foster innovations in education, industries and society. Inclusive, democratic and transparent governance should overcome political and vested interests as well as the resistance to rely on data and evidence for policy-making. Figure 3 summarizes the four main principles to be considered for using data and evidence for policy and action. Ultimately, data and evidence have to be readily available to policy decision-makers and planners; generating accessible repositories can facilitate the analysis and use of data for envisioning transformative action.

Figure 3. Data and evidence, key to inform decision-making, policy and planning: Four main principles



Source: Poisson (2024).

Higher education is a public good that is integral to the right to education

Higher education is undergoing dramatic changes, from growing enrolments to extensive internationalization and rapid digitalization. In spite of this, many structural inequalities persist, including limited flexibility and relevance, budget cuts, insufficient overall financing and access for vulnerable groups.

Higher education is an integral part of the right to education throughout life, and institutions must be active in building a new social contract for education.[40] Higher education must be reimagined as an inclusive bridge that links knowledge to practice, connects education systems to communities and brings together different

[40] Independent Expert Group on the Universities and the 2030 Agenda (2022); Makoe (2023); UNESCO (2021).

regions and generations.[41] It drives sustainable development, social justice and citizenship, preparing learners to navigate and contribute to an increasingly complex and interconnected world. We need more dynamic entities that address global challenges while maintaining strong ties to their local context.

Such principles require moving beyond viewing higher education as exclusive or elite. Instead, higher education has to be viewed as a public good and fundamental right that nurtures human potential while advancing access, inclusion and relevance for all. It is a social mobility tool, an equalizer of opportunities for better jobs, well-being and a better future.

Higher education systems generally do not live up to expectations because they lack adequate support. Transforming higher education requires increased and sustainable public funding as well as innovative financing models. Stronger multistakeholder partnerships and collaboration among institutions, governments, industry and civil society at various levels are needed to support accessible, affordable and quality higher education that can address complex global challenges. Higher education must not only be reactive but also proactive when navigating its future.

Values beyond academic achievement should guide the transformation of higher education

The paths to the futures of higher education depend on values beyond access and academic achievement. They require regularly redefining the purposes of universities and other institutions but should continuously centre quality of life for all as a transformative guide. Centring quality of life implies democratizing access to higher education, making it affordable for all. Moreover, what is taught in higher education, and how it is taught, should be adapted to individuals through innovative and flexible pathways and be driven by students' aspirations and ownership of their learning.

Engagement with society and communities should become more integral to education, teaching, research and science, fostering just, equitable and sustainable social change. The core functions of higher education must become more relevant to needs and changes occurring in communities and society. Care for the environment and sustainability should be addressed by universities, their graduates and other institutions, viewed through global and local cultural, social, economic and political dimensions. As the world moves towards a more digitized reality, research and innovation are pivotal to developing and sharing new technological developments, as well as to better understanding their use and impact.

Students and youth are co-creators in the transformation of higher education

Students and youth are not just beneficiaries but co-creators and decision-makers of educational transformations. Their voices, perspectives and leadership are crucial for ensuring higher education remains relevant and responsive to societal needs. Governments need to involve them in curriculum design, institutional governance and shaping how emerging technologies, such as AI, are integrated into teaching and learning, research and innovation. Box 6 portrays youth views about academic spaces in higher education that were expressed during the Forum.

---

[41] A roadmap *Beyond Limits: New Ways to Reinvent Higher Education* (UNESCO, 2022) launched at the *2022 World Higher Education Conference* (WHEC 2022) outlines key principles and transitions to reorient higher education to 2050 and beyond, from encompassing inclusion and diversity to a commitment to sustainability and social responsibility, and more transdisciplinary and collaborative approaches.
Guided by the roadmap, the Futures of Higher Education project from UNESCO's International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC for its name in Spanish) works to stimulate creative and imaginative thinking on the role of higher education in addressing global challenges (UNESCO-IESALC, 2021). The project is generating new perspectives based on expert, public and youth consultations (UNESCO-IESALC, 2021).

Box 6. A message from youth: Redesign academic spaces to foster engagement and innovation

Universities are idealized as spaces of academic freedom and open discussion. However, the reality is that passive, one-way lectures all too often dominate these spaces, limiting students' growth and opportunities for engagement, creativity and collaboration. Universities often fail to fulfil their promise of interactive, democratic learning due to outdated teaching styles and spatial designs that create an invisible psychological distance between professors and students. Uniformity in classroom layouts creates systemic barriers. Spatial hierarchies reinforce power hierarchies by creating an environment where students feel disengaged or silenced.

We can reimagine and redesign academic spaces to foster relational pedagogy and create vibrant environments that nurture meaningful learning, communication, empathy and connections. Removing fixed seating and adopting open, collaborative layouts can transform classrooms into hubs of engagement and innovation.

Foundational principles in action

As the contexts and conditions of education continue to shift and be shaped by new disruptions, challenges and opportunities, the foundational principles of education as a human right throughout life and education as a common good must not only endure but evolve in their meaning and application. These principles, rooted in human rights and oriented toward collective flourishing, can serve as compass points for navigating change. Yet they are not static ideals, and they can gain strength through practice, reinterpretation and renewal in diverse settings.

This section explores how these core commitments are understood and operationalized across varied educational landscapes – how they adapt, how they are challenged and how they remain vital to building inclusive, sustainable, resilient and just futures of education.

Recontextualizing the right to education in a digital era

The right to education throughout life must be a foundational principle of any renewed social contract for education. This right has been universally recognized for nearly 80 years, expressed in Article 26 in the UN Declaration of Human Rights that 'Everyone has the right to education.' Yet, the context in which educators, institutions, governments and societies are striving to apply this right is rapidly changing. Among other issues impacting questions on the right to education – including governance, inclusion, the role of privatization, intellectual freedom and climate disruptions – the emerging context is increasingly shaped by the rapid evolution of digital technologies, both within the education sector itself as well as in society more widely.

> The right to education has to be understood in a broad, wide ranging manner in order to embrace all diversity.
>
> **H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde**
> Chair, International Commission on the Futures of Education & Former President, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Recontextualizing the right to education invites important conversations about how this principle should continue to be applied, safeguarded and defended in today's rapidly changing world, as well as in the range of possible scenarios that education could encounter in the future. Recontextualization in times of change is vital not only for understanding the right to education itself but its intersections with the many human rights that it enables, including rights to information, privacy, freedom of thought and expression, equality and non-discrimination, cultural life, work and development.

Digital advancements alone have not fulfilled the right to education

Since the beginning of the internet era, numerous UN Special Rapporteurs on the right to education have examined the implications of connected digital technology for the right to education.[42] Special Rapporteurs have highlighted promising ways in which digital technology could potentially reinforce education, making it more accessible, inclusive and of higher quality. But they have also highlighted evidence of the concerning ways in which technology can undermine education – for example, by replacing relationships, conversations and complex human interactions with rote and automated screen-based experiences; by raising barriers to educational participation and narrowing the social and humanistic aims of education; by exacerbating

[42] UNGA (2024).

learning inequalities; by introducing invasive surveillance; and by exposing education to new threats and outsourcing critical decision-making to amoral machines.[43] Furthermore, they have called attention to the persistence of links between the digitalization of education and its privatization, documenting how public education is becoming increasingly dependent on for-profit corporations with limited public accountability.[44] It is therefore critical to consider the evolving nature of AI and digital technologies and their present and future implications for the right to education throughout life.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, school closures affected over 90 per cent of the world's students and pushed many societies into an unplanned global experiment in remote learning. For the first time, digital tools were not merely supporting education but became its primary delivery medium as an emergency measure. This global 'stress test' exposed fragilities of pre-pandemic efforts to ensure the right to education while also highlighting the urgent need to clarify what this right means in a digital era. For millions, digital connectivity was a crucial measure for bridging the unexpected disruptions to schools, universities and educational systems of all kinds. As these temporary measures extended longer than initially envisioned, however, the wide-scale shift to remote learning during the pandemic ignited growing fears of teacher-less, placeless and school-less education in a vision of learning stripped of its human, social and collective foundations. Calls for the right to *unconnected* education also emerged as a defence of the vital relationships, structures and spaces that make education meaningful. Schools and other learning environments are also more than merely sites of education; they reflect vital relationships and shared commitments to social well-being, including nutrition programmes, culture and the arts, safe spaces for play and recreation, family health resources and early childhood development.

> Technology can do a good job, but it's human development that we must focus on. Education is about human endeavour.
>
> **Mike Thiruman**
> General Secretary, Singapore Teachers' Union

Just as the world's final pandemic-related physical school closures were phasing out in 2022, widescale consumer-based AI products with powerful large language models (LLMs) again caused a significant disruption to education. In her October 2024 report to the UN General Assembly, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Farida Shaheed, examined the implications of AI in education from a human rights perspective. She acknowledged claims of AI's potential to enhance access to education, particularly for individuals with disabilities, and the time-saving potential for teachers' routine or administrative work. However, findings showed a lack of comprehensive evidence demonstrating its effectiveness in both promoting the right to education and accelerating progress towards SDG4, while also raising concerns around other issues, including inequality, privacy, surveillance, quality, fair assessment and commercialization.

Privatization must be mitigated to protect students' rights and best interests

The deepening digitalization of education risks privatizing what has long been recognized as a public endeavour and a common good. As commercial EdTech platforms enter classrooms, often under the guise of innovation, they collect vast amounts of student data, exert influence over curricula and reshape educational norms without sufficient public accountability. AI accelerates this process through the use of automated algorithms. These dynamics are reshaping not only how education is delivered but also who controls it and for what purposes, creating dependencies of schools, teachers and students on commercial platforms. The

[43] UNGA (2016).
[44] UNGA (2015).

risks of reframing education as a private commodity, rather than as a universal human right, are becoming more acute.

The future of the right to education must be shaped by deliberate public choices grounded in human rights, social justice and collective well-being. Farida Shaheed, the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, stated at the Forum: 'the fulcrum for educational transformation in the digital age is not innovation for its own sake but the reaffirmation and evolution of the right to education itself.'[45] The technology industry's involvement in education is possible but only with independent assessment of EdTech tools, legal safeguards for algorithmic decision-making, publicly owned digital tools, including AI models and EdTech platforms, and participation by students, teachers and communities.

> Ethical AI frameworks may be necessary, but they're not sufficient because they remain often idealistic principles. We need robust, enforceable legal and policy frameworks.
>
> **Farida Shaheed**
> UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

When expanding the reach of educational technology, the motto 'nothing about us without us' should especially apply to the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, ensuring cultural and epistemic diversity and agency. Technology must always be socially and pedagogically justified, accountable and developed for the best interests of students, teachers and community involved, and never just for the interests, profit or data capture of private companies.

Continuing to protect, adapt or reimagine education to ensure the right to education endures

As digital technologies increasingly shape how education is delivered and experienced, the right to education is being reinterpreted in real time – sometimes expanded, sometimes contested. Three scenarios based on real-world experiences in diverse contexts offer distinct but interconnected snapshots of how digital transformation is impacting learners, educators and policy-makers, inviting us to consider what must be protected, adapted or reimagined to ensure this right endures (Box 7).

Box 7. Three scenarios for considering the right to education in a digital age

Scenario One: Learning without schools

In ***Country One***, a global pandemic shuttered schools for over two years, prompting a massive shift to remote online education. The government distributed devices and connectivity, training teachers in digital instruction. Over time, many students adapted and even thrived using AI-powered learning tools that offered personalized, career-oriented content. Yet education soon became almost entirely home-based as climate crises and growing insecurity forced repeated school closures.

Now, after nearly four years of remote learning, the population is divided. Some celebrate the rise of digital education as a sign of progress; others mourn the erosion of school communities and in-person learning. Accusations of rights violations mount, while the government insists that this is the future of learning.

[45] Shaheed (2024).

Scenario Two: Schools without screens

In ***Country Two***, physical schools remain central to education, rooted in strong community ties and committed teachers. But these classrooms are overcrowded, under-resourced and struggle to deliver basic learning outcomes. With little to no internet access, students and teachers are largely excluded from digital tools and global knowledge networks.

Frustrated by this exclusion, civil society campaigns for digital inclusion as a matter of educational rights. Still, the government resists, pointing to tight budgets and arguing that fulfilling the right to education does not require connectivity. The debate in this country is not about too much technology – it is about being left behind in a world where digital access increasingly defines opportunity.

Scenario Three: Digital overload in connected classrooms

In ***Country Three***, digital learning is fully integrated into education. Schools are connected, students are tech-savvy and AI tools support personalized learning. The latest policy even shifts one school day per week to at-home, screen-based learning.

At first, this seems innovative. But over time, parents raise concerns about excessive screen time, the decline of social interaction, and reduced engagement with print materials and with peers in person. Some families begin demanding policies to reinstate more offline learning, especially for younger children. Here, the right to education is not just about access to technology – it is about ensuring balance, well-being and meaningful human connection in an increasingly digital world.

A growing number of contexts reflect present conversations and debates about the implications of future scenarios, examining how digital technology can be meaningfully understood and implemented in terms of the right to education.

- What principles should guide the integration of digital technologies in education to ensure they enhance rather than undermine human connection, inclusion and learner well-being?
- How should the right to education be safeguarded in contexts where digital technology is either over-relied upon or largely absent?
- What responsibilities do governments have in regulating the role of private and commercial digital providers when the public character of education systems is at stake?

Governing education as a common good

A foundational principle of a new social contract is to regard education as a public endeavour and a common good. As a shared societal endeavour, education builds common purposes and enables individuals and communities to flourish together. Inclusive governance approaches are needed that collectively strengthen this purpose. What, then, could governing education as a common good and public endeavour look like?

Efforts to govern education as a common good reveal both challenges and opportunities in aligning diverse interests and actions within shared, long-term visions for education. In contexts with limited resources or diverse ranges of educational needs, inclusive governance can strengthen educational equality, inclusion and quality of outcomes. How can such approaches be scaled or adapted across different settings? What shifts in

governance are needed to support education as a human right and a common good? Looking ahead, what might a renewed social contract for education look like by 2050, and what roles will various actors play in making it a reality?

Renewing the social contract for education cannot result from top-down approaches alone. Rather, the governance of education as a common good requires genuine collaboration, participation and shared ownership across a diversity of actors and protagonists. Educators, policy-makers, communities, youth, families, civil society and academia all play indispensable and complementary roles in renewing education as a shared societal endeavour. Their efforts to foster democratic decision-making, community movements and inclusive school networks demonstrate how collective action can begin to shape education when grounded in common values and shared purpose.

A shared purpose is not only required in education but everywhere. Indeed, the UN Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* 2021 report called for a new social contract grounded in mutual responsibilities among governments, institutions and individuals to ensure that all people, particularly youth and future generations, can lead just and dignified lives. Education is a vital part of how societies can together address growing global concern for our shared futures.

The following five cases were shared at the International Forum on the Futures of Education 2024 in Suwon, Republic of Korea, and represent merely a few of the countless examples of efforts and experiences around the world. They shed light on some of the questions of governing education as a common good from local, national and regional perspectives. Each are characterised by involving diversity of constituents participating in decision making, envisioning shared futures and responding to change.

> For the Pact of the Future to be meaningful, we have to have pacts of the future everywhere at every level that are negotiating on the conditions of the places where we are having the impact so that we can have the contract, social contract. It's not only a global abstract thing; it has to be translated concretely everywhere at every level of society.
>
> **Ebrima Sall**
> Executive Director, TrustAfrica

Case 1: Developing a network of innovative schools in Catalonia, Spain

In the 1990s, the Kingdom of Spain introduced a transformative education law aimed at shifting from a selective, knowledge-accumulation model to an inclusive, competency-based system while extending compulsory education up to age 16. While promising, these reforms lacked initial support, including comprehensive retraining for teachers or sufficient resources to apply extensive educational changes system-wide. Despite these gaps, vibrant innovation began to take root in local education systems. How could such innovative practices become shared rather than isolated?

In considering this question, the Escola Nova 21 network was launched in Catalonia in 2016 as a three-year alliance for educational transformation, led and promoted by organizations, including the Centre for UNESCO of Catalonia (CATESCO). They saw that Catalonian schools, both new and old, had begun to implement student-centred approaches but wished to see individual efforts lead to more systemic transformation. The initiative, inspired by UNESCO's 2015 *Rethinking Education* report,[46] engaged around 500 schools and focused on three key actions: strengthening and scaling pedagogical reference schools, piloting change processes in a representative sample and spreading innovations through local networks.

[46] UNESCO (2015).

Participating schools took concrete steps to reshape learning environments. These included adopting globally oriented and competency-based curricula, employing interdisciplinary, real-world projects, redefining the role of teachers as facilitators of personalized and self-owned learning, and introducing professional development tailored to teachers' new roles. Schools also restructured classroom spaces to promote collaboration and implemented restorative practices, such as talking circles, to support student well-being and inclusive school cultures.

> Collaboration requires trust. There is a saying: *"Trust arrives on foot, but it leaves on horseback."* It takes time to build those relationships. And we have to be always careful to keep that trust strong.
>
> **Tracey Burns**
> Chief Research Officer, National Center on Education and the Economy, Washington, DC

The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily slowed progress, but many schools sustained their momentum due to the collaborative nature of the network. Additionally, forty institutions within the network formed *Fòrum Futur Educatiu*, a collective committed to mutual learning, promoting educational transformation, and disseminating UNESCO's 2021 *Reimagining our futures together* report, translated into Catalan by CATESCO.

It also supported the conceptualization of new school models. For example, the Angeleta Ferrer Institute is a high school in Barcelona founded in 2021 through a partnership between the Catalan government and the Barcelona Institute of Science and Technology. The school serves as a centre for science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) learning, educational research and teacher training, embodying the principles of meaningful, competency-based learning, inclusion and well-being – demonstrating how a renewed social contract in education can move from vision to action.

Case 2: Community pacts for education in Italy

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Italy emerged as a pioneer in implementing social pacts for education through the launch of the *Piano Scuola* 2020–2021 (School Plan 2020-2021) by the Ministry of Education. For the first time in an official policy document, the term 'Community Education Pact' appeared, marking a significant shift towards a systemic approach to educational innovation rooted in collaboration. This plan provided schools and local education organizations – public and private institutions alike – with tools and frameworks to forge agreements that aligned educational services with community needs. With an initial investment of 10 million Euros in 2021, these efforts led to the formation of 676 'Community Education Pacts' across Italy, which aimed to support marginalized students and reimagine education during a time of unprecedented disruption.

These pacts enabled the creation of responsive educational pathways that prioritized solidarity, inclusion and pedagogical innovation. They helped schools build alliances with local stakeholders, leading to curriculum redesigns that encouraged interdisciplinary learning, intercultural and intergenerational dialogue and authentic, experience-based education. Examples of these pacts have included digital distance learning initiatives, community civic centre establishments for all ages and pacts transforming outdoor spaces, museums and cultural centres into open learning environments. Sustainability pacts have focused on environmental education and community resilience, promoting a vision of schools as hubs for civic engagement and social cohesion.

To support these and other cooperative efforts, Italian schools have been encouraged to use an existing but underutilized legal tool – the Regulation for Shared Administration of Common Goods – which allows schools to easily establish formal partnerships with civil society, families and local institutions. Over 1,000 municipalities have adopted this regulation, making it simpler for schools to become community anchors. In

parallel, a National Observatory on Community Educational Pacts was launched in 2021 with the National Institute for Educational Documentation, Innovation and Research (INDIRE) to monitor community pact implementation, assess their levels of complexity and provide templates for schools to envision the future of education in their communities. Observatory research regularly highlights key challenges and trends, including a growing emphasis on sustainability and inclusion.

To ensure educators retain a central role amidst these shifts, Italy has also implemented national professional development programmes, design thinking toolkits and leadership training – especially focused on schools in remote areas – to help empower teachers and school leaders to realize the promise of community pacts in a new social contract for education.

Case 3: Educational entrepreneurship to reflect local diversity in Southeast Asia

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), working directly under the guidance of eleven Education Ministers in the region, is exploring innovative approaches to address the complexity and diversity of education systems in Southeast Asia. The region is characterized by immense cultural and historical diversity – rooted in centuries of migration and cultural exchange through vital trade routes like the Strait of Malacca. Today, this diversity presents both an opportunity and a challenge: governments are under immense strain, with Ministries operating at or beyond full capacity, yet there is a growing need to contextualize education for local realities in accordance with the vision of a renewed social contract for education. SEAMEO recognizes that while this vision is admirable, achieving it requires new, flexible and decentralized models that can alleviate the burden on centralized systems.

One promising approach SEAMEO is championing is empowering local communities through local education entrepreneurship. This idea involves supporting local education entrepreneurs – individuals or small organizations rooted in their communities – who are best positioned to understand and address context-specific educational needs. This does not mean restricting the role of government but rather finding a balance between public direction and private innovation on a local level.

Drawing inspiration from models like Singapore, where a centralized education system coexists with a vibrant startup ecosystem, SEAMEO envisions a future where local entrepreneurship can drive innovation in response to cultural nuances. Critical to this approach is building entrepreneurial capacity through incubators, accelerators and mechanisms for scaling ideas, alongside enabling frameworks where government-set criteria allow education entrepreneurs to propose solutions that districts can adopt based on local fit. SEAMEO is also experimenting with the revival of local capital mechanisms such as cooperatives, community banks and loans to turn locally led proposals into tangible, sustainable reality.

Case 4: Fostering involvement of civil society for the promotion of human rights in the Arab region

Over the past century, states in the Arab region have worked to strengthen and modernize education systems, stemming largely from many states gaining independence in the 1950s and 60s. This required developing a shared vision of public schools based on a social contract that fosters integration and equity. As the Arab region undergoes numerous contemporary and longstanding challenges, a growing group of education and civil society stakeholders are striving to assess how they can use the heritage of the education systems they have today while also steering them towards the path of renewal.

In Tunisia, the Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR) collaborated with UNESCO and the Tunisian government to widen a dialogue on a new social contract for education. Striving to make these dialogues of

a whole-of-society approach to education, government participants have included the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education of Vocational Training and the Ministry of Social Affairs. To broaden the discussion beyond government officials, participants also included students, civil society, teachers, media, experts and scholars from different backgrounds, people with disabilities and the private sector. This series of multistakeholder dialogues has both promoted a vision of a transparent and equitable social contract, advancing sustainable development and future-oriented solutions, and also reimagined education with innovative approaches, fostering creativity, critical thinking and collaboration to integrate human rights and citizenship.

Extending this process to the Arab States beyond Tunisia, the AIHR collaborated with a number of key education and human rights actors in the region, including the Arab Network of National Human Rights Institutions, the Arab League, UNESCO, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the National Council for Human Rights in Egypt. Together, they organized a regional dialogue forum titled *The Future of Education and Human Rights Education in the Arab Region: Towards a New Social Contract.* This consultative space involved representatives from twelve Ministries of Education who presented key challenges and lessons learned in their contexts. It also involved experts who presented working papers and research on the topics related to renewing the social contract for education and NGOs with grassroots experience in education and human rights issues. The participants' combined inputs culminated in a document reflecting a shared vision for renewing the social contract in the Arab region at a time when education is needed as an element of just and peaceful futures more than ever.

Case 5: Transforming local, national and regional governance in the Caribbean

The Organization of East Caribbean States (OECS) comprises eleven small island member-states in the Eastern Caribbean, working collaboratively and in a multidimensional manner to transform education. Recognizing that governance needs to be transformed to address contemporary challenges of equity, innovation and systematic resilience, the OECS envisions the operationalization of a new social contract for education by reimagining governance at local, national and regional levels.

OECS local-level governance reforms aim to decentralize decision-making by empowering schools and communities to adapt education strategies. For example, they help establish school boards to include parent and teacher engagement; promote accountability in data-driven systems that monitor attendance, performance and equity gaps; ensure targeted intervention at the community level; and foster partnerships between students, their schools and local organizations to provide holistic community support.

National-level policy and leadership transformation requires prioritization of equity in resource allocation, directing more resources to underserved areas, especially rural and low-income communities. In order to do so, the OECS strengthens and streamlines Ministries, 'transforming the Ministry from a command centre to a service centre and making the school the centre of gravity of the education system.' The OECS also invests in leadership, building capacity among educational leaders to drive innovation and change, particularly in integrating technology and addressing post-pandemic learning losses.

At the regional level, the OECS envisions itself as a 'mini-EU-type' integration construct, ensuring the free movement of people, goods and services across the 11 member states. While centralization is critical for the harmonization of standards and qualifications, the OECS fosters cross-border collaboration while remaining dedicated to respecting national contexts. The partnership leverages shared resources, such as teacher training programmes, joint education research and exchange initiatives, to build regional solidarity.

In these ways, the effective operationalization of a renewed social contract for education in OECS's context demands governance reforms at every level: locally, communities must be empowered; nationally, policies

must prioritize equity and efficiency; and regionally, collaboration and integration must drive collective progress. By embracing these shifts, the OECS envisions the transformation of education as a tool for equitable growth and sustainable development, ensuring that every learner succeeds.

Learning from diverse efforts

At a time marked by social, economic and political volatility, these examples underscore the importance of inclusive, participatory approaches that recognize the vital roles of communities, civil society organizations, governments, local enterprises and many others at local, national and regional levels. The cases illustrate how governance can be reimagined to reflect local diversity through creative and entrepreneurial strategies that are both context-sensitive and systemically aware. Key lessons that can be drawn from these cases include: retaining and reinforcing the central role of teachers in moments of educational changes; fostering cooperative relationships across networks of schools and contexts in which innovations and insights can be quickly shared; exploring how existing governmental mechanisms can be harnessed in new ways or how new ones can be creating; and overcoming institutional silos and stimulating collaboration across schools, sectors and even countries.

Together, these contributions suggest that governing education as a common good does not imply a single model or approach but rather a dynamic, collaborative and democratic process that calls for trust, imagination and sustained commitment towards a shared vision. Many more examples will likewise be needed – including those of non-formal, community led education efforts, technical and vocational education and more – to continue to gain insight into governing education as a public endeavour and a common good in diverse settings.

Spotlight on the Republic of Korea

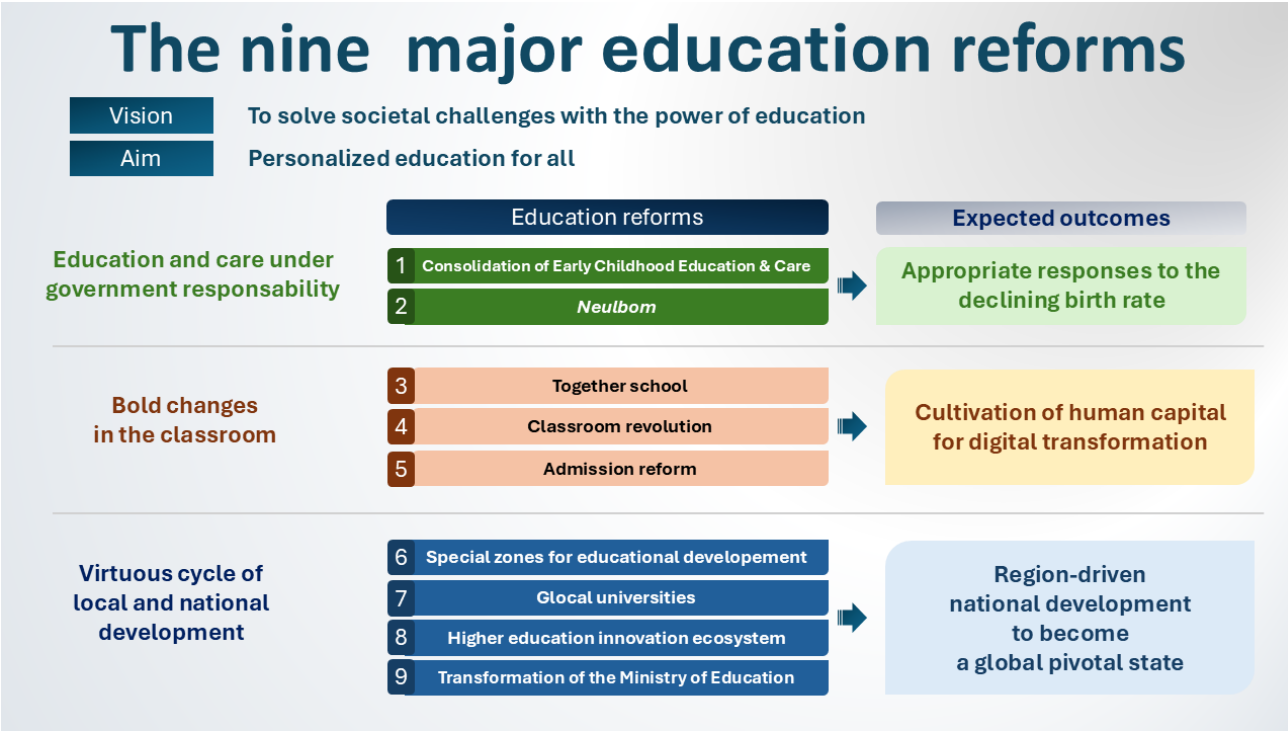
Making the most of its location, the 2024 International Forum on the Futures of Education provided a first-hand opportunity to gain insights from the national policy and strategy to transform education in the Republic of Korea and public efforts to renew education in the province of Gyeonggido. The Forum also offered visits to model schools and educational institutes in Gyeonggido which illustrated a range of localized efforts to ensure inclusive, green and future-oriented educational approaches in the area.

National education policy and strategy

The Republic of Korea has developed an array of initiatives targeted at developing the education system (Figure 4). They aim to adapt education to major societal challenges – including low birth rates and demographic shifts, regional concerns about cities at risk of future extinction, digital transformation and the need for ecological sustainability – and prepare for future demands. National policies and strategies respond to a broader vision to solve societal changes with the power of education.

> The Republic of Korea is a very good example. Having put education at the centre of their endeavour as a country, we can now see where it can lead to.
>
> **H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde**
> Chair, International Commission on the Futures of Education & Former President, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Figure 4. Nine major education reforms in the Republic of Korea



Source: Adapted from S. M. Park (2024).

The Ministry of Education is implementing nine major education reforms as part of a multiyear plan to offer personalized education for all, including consolidation of early childhood education and care to address declining birth rates, reforming curricula and school structures to address digital transformation, and stimulating a diverse range of educational innovations across the Republic of Korea's regions and sectors, described below.

Education and care under government responsibility

Two reforms have been conceived to respond to societal challenges, particularly the declining birth rate and the childcare burden for working parents:

1. **Consolidation of early childhood education and care**: In 2024, to ensure universal access to world-class services for all children aged 0 to 5, the government transferred the provision of daycare services (previously in the Ministry of Health and Welfare) to the Ministry of Education, adding to the existing kindergarten provision. The reform included a pilot project to guarantee sufficient service hours, lower the teacher-child ratio, enhance teacher competencies and customize education and care programmes.
2. ***Neulbom*, a comprehensive 'edu-care' service consisting of after-school programmes for elementary schools**: To reduce the childcare burden for Korean working parents, including the financial burden of private services, previous daycare services (provided by caregivers) and after-school classes (provided by teachers) were integrated into comprehensive, collaborative after-school programmes and spaces.[47] The activities align with the school curriculum as they are free and of voluntary participation. With a first phase introduced in 2024 for 1st graders (ages 6–7) in all elementary schools, it is planned to reach all grades by 2026.

Bold changes in the classroom

Three reforms were aimed at developing human capital and equipping students with essential skills for the digital transformation:

3. **Together School**: The reform enhances the support for students with financial difficulties, underachieving students, multicultural, low-income or immigrant families, and students with disabilities. It focuses on health support, addresses issues of school violence and protects teachers' activities. In addition, the Together School reform provides a digital communication platform for student-teacher-parent interactions and is part of ongoing efforts to allow all stakeholders to come together and have open dialogues towards common goals.[48]
4. **A classroom revolution**: With the provision of digital textbooks to be phased in between 2025 and 2028, the Ministry of Education is welcoming the transition by supporting teacher training for innovative teaching and evaluation, digital-based education and the introduction of a high school credit system.

> In such social circumstances, in order to maintain national competitiveness and solve social challenges, a fundamental transformation of the education system is definitely necessary.
>
> **Sung Min Park**
> Deputy Minister, Office of Planning and Coordination, Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea

[47] Republic of Korea Ministry of Education (2023, 2024).
[48] Republic of Korea Ministry of Education (2023).

5. University admissions: University admissions systems are being revised to enshrine equity and reduce the burden of private education expenditures for admissions. The reform is aligned to complement the 2022 revised national curriculum, improvements to high school academic records and grading systems, and the national university entrance exam.

A virtuous cycle of local and national development

Four other reforms stem from the government's goal to encourage region-driven national development and become a pivotal global State:

6. Special Zones for Education Development: Regional and local education systems are undergoing national changes to empower their capacity to tailor education to demands. A pilot programme designating some zones as 'Special Zones for Education Development' encourages bottom-up regional education development strategies and relationships between primary, secondary and higher education. Such a designation also allows for collaboration between local educational authorities and governments under a national umbrella of policies and regulations.[49]
7. Glocal Universities: Local universities are being empowered as innovation hubs, driving mutual growth between regions and institutions. These thirty 'Glocal Universities' are backed through financial support and regulatory measures that encourage respective local governments to develop autonomous innovation plans with intersectoral spill-over effects. The reform also considers additional governance improvements for universities, including amendments of relevant laws and guidelines when necessary.
8. Higher education innovation ecosystem: The Ministry of Education aims to make universities the epicentre of an innovation ecosystem. Through the Regional Innovation System and Education (RISE), the central government grants greater authority to local governments of higher education institutions while simultaneously transferring financial support and promoting deregulation and restructuring policies. With full implementation starting in 2025, these changes are expected to break down the barriers between departments, encourage and expand students' interdisciplinary studies choices, and attract talented international students.
9. Transformation of the Ministry of Education: The Ministry of Education stands firm in building an integrated management system, linking education with other social data that can lead to data-driven education policies. Horizontal partnerships with localized education innovations, region-driven planning and management, and global partnerships have been conceived to position the Republic of Korea as a global leader and at the forefront of global education.

The case of Gyeonggido

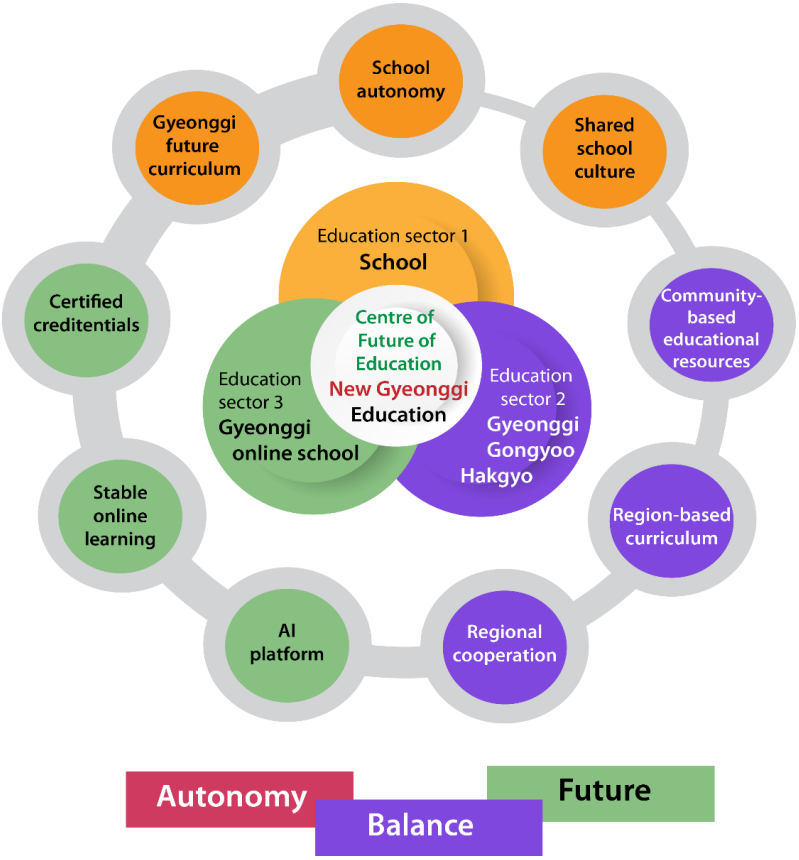
Public initiative to renew education in a local context

The Gyeonggido Office of Education (GOE) is pursuing a public initiative to renew education in response to the profound societal changes and challenges brought by rapid shifts towards a digital society, increasingly diverse populations and Earth's climate and environmental crises. Gyeonggido's education system comprises

[49] S. Kim (2024).

31.2 per cent of students and 37.5 per cent of schools in the country.[50] A shift in the GOE, therefore, can have important ripple effects across the country.

Figure 5. A paradigm shift in Gyeonggido's public education system



Source: Adapted from Yim (2024).

Gyeonggido is dedicated to leading the country's educational agenda, heading towards new paths at the forefront of educational transformation. The GOE is implementing the *Gyeonggi Future Education* initiative, which expands public education to include local and online platforms beyond schools. With this initiative, the GOE is committed to broadening public education and transforming the educational paradigm.[51]

[50] Yim (2024).
[51] Yim (2024).

The initiative focuses on integrating three key structures into a cohesive public education system, serving as the foundation for the GOE's vision for the future of education:

1. The initiative places **schools** at the system's heart, assuring their maximum autonomy while streamlining and delegating their non-educational administrative tasks.

   The GOE provides one smart device per student, a wireless communication network in all schools, an AI-based teaching and learning platform (*Hi-Learning*) and AI-based teaching capacity enhancement (*Hi-Coaching)*.

   The *Hi-Learning* platform, for example, is a solution to address large class sizes.[52] It allows teachers to deliver individualized education to every student, offering learning diagnosis, teaching recommendations, lesson planning tools and an extensive online library. It is also designed to expand educational opportunities and provide quality education for all students. The platform allows schools to evolve towards digital classroom environments while strengthening mutual understanding and engagement between teachers and students. It extends learning beyond the classroom environment, broadening spaces and bridging time.

   > Traditional school systems often face challenges in providing tailored learning opportunities. Delivering specialized and diverse education across multiple disciplines makes it vital to collaborate with local communities, tapping into human and material resources locally available.
   >
   > **In-suk Kim**
   > Head of Local Education Division, Gyeonggido Office of Education, Republic of Korea

   The *Net Zero School Project* is another key initiative in the GOE's commitment to carbon neutrality education and the broader drive towards climate action and educational transformation. The project aims to reduce schools' carbon footprints and accomplish carbon neutrality through implementing carbon offset credits.[53] It is rooted in three principles: (a) *Easiness and fun*, by which schools and students are guided to reduce their carbon footprints through eco-friendly activities; (b) *Complete performance*, supporting further carbon reductions to achieve full carbon neutrality; and (c) *Reward and sustainability*, involving sustained efforts to lower emissions through meaningful rewards.

2. ***Gyeonggi Gongyoo Hakgyo*, an out-of-school regional educational cooperation platform**, was designed in collaboration with local communities, operating independently across thirty-one cities and counties, while being led and overseen by the GOE.[54] The integrated platform enhances out-of-school learning opportunities, aiming to expand educational opportunities for elementary, middle and high school students, and out-of-school youth across the regions by leveraging their unique resources. A key feature of the platform is its regionally customized programmes, which enhance education capacity and community bonds, reduce educational disparities and support vulnerable students.

3. The ***Gyeonggi Online School*** is an online learning centre to be launched in 2025, aimed at guaranteeing fair educational opportunities through customized and student-led education.[55] The online school will support students' learning growth to advance their education and career planning. The plan includes several offerings: (a) courses offering course or credit recognition, (b) courses

[52] Heo (2024).
[53] W.-w. Park (2024).
[54] I.-s. Kim (2024); Yim (2024).
[55] Yim (2024).

intended to expand the learning experiences and (c) options granting academic recognition, compensating for blind spots in the academic offer.

Visits to schools and educational institutions

The sites selected were intended to reflect and showcase essential aspects of Gyeonggido's educational context and local actions (Box 8). The region faces unique challenges, such as educational differences in suburban and urban areas and growing demands for vocational training, digital learning and sustainable development. Gyeonggido education reflects various aspects of the Republic of Korea's educational landscape. Given the multiple challenges, the sites visited represent key themes encapsulated in the values of autonomy, balance and the future – crucial not only in contemporary education but also in shaping the future. Based on these themes, the selected schools and institutions exemplify diverse approaches taking place in the region:

> Gyeonggi education is a microcosm containing all kinds of examples of Korean education. […] If Gyeonggi education changes, the Republic of Korea's education changes.
>
> **Tae-Hee Yim**
> Governor, Gyeonggido Office of Education, Republic of Korea

- **Schools support the growth of students with healthy minds and bodies**: **Yongin Samgye High School** offers a tailored curriculum for students in suburban areas and has redefined school spaces to foster individual collaboration skills. Programmes include math classes using smart devices, emphasizing future-oriented education for students in rural areas. **Cheonglim Middle School** focuses on future education, fostering health in people, nature and relationships, and provides character education, IT-physical education and art education to support social-emotional learning.
- **Distinctive school curricula feature global citizenship education and vocational training: Seongnam Foreign Language High School** specializes in citizenship education, international exchange and intercultural education to promote inclusion and solidarity for inspiring togetherness through diverse educational encounters. **Gyeonggi Game Meister High School** offers a curriculum focused on game programming, design and analysis, emphasizing career-connected learning, communication and cooperation. **Korea Ceramic Art High School** provides a pottery-specific curriculum with education that helps students transition to the workforce, including start-up support for entrepreneurial ventures.
- **Digital education utilizes AI-based teaching and learning platforms: San Ui Elementary School** is a leader in digital-based education, incorporating *Hi-Learning* and using EdTech to enhance digital capabilities and provide education as a public good. **Esol Elementary School** integrates AI-based courseware and *Hi-Learning*, creating collaborative educational platforms that extend to kindergartens.
- **Sustainable education can encourage student participation in climate action initiatives: Chunghyun Middle School** focuses on carbon neutrality and eco-environmental education, offering an ecological restoration curriculum for a damaged planet. Students experience eco-environmental education by making mini *sotdae* – wooden poles traditionally erected to honour successful civil exam candidates – and attending eight classes in each classroom. **Songnae High School** centres education for sustainable development, featuring an ecological transformation curriculum that builds students' AI capabilities in order to respond to future sustainable development needs and promotes coexistence between humans, nature, science and technology. **Gyeonggido Office of Education 4.16 Institute for Life and Society Education** merges dark heritage sites with life and safety education programmes

aimed at healing the wounds caused by past incidents. The institute is a reminder of the lessons learned from the Sewol ferry disaster, preserving public memories and advancing educational efforts to promote safety and life.

Like all other schools and educational institutes, the ten listed here have all reckoned with significant challenges. Despite these challenges, these institutions are actively seeking solutions and adapting to meet the evolving educational needs of students. Some of these schools sit at the intersection of tradition and innovation, striving to integrate both by embracing digital textbooks, appointing non-teachers, such as professional game developers as principals, or fostering partnerships with ceramic companies for career development.

> All paths to transformation start from and return to schools.
>
> **Tae-Hee Yim**
> Governor, Gyeonggido Office of Education, Republic of Korea

Some schools have worked not only with other schools but also with local communities to make tangible changes. At the same time, these schools and institutes maintain the essential value of education amidst changes, focusing on the balance between students' evolving learning needs and the crucial role of teachers in the educational process.

Box 8. Visits to schools and educational institutes in Gyeonggido: Local experiences to renew the social contract for education

At Yongin Samgye High School, participants toured a student-tailored, user-designed learning space like the place of memories of the high school and observed EdTech-based classes in subjects such as Korean, English, Mathematics, Science and Information Technology, which were blended with the use of iPads. There was also an exhibition of students' crafts, including painting and poetry.

At Cheonglim Middle School, participants toured educational spaces of character and environmental education like the book cafe 'Malgeunsoop', smart gym, AI smart classroom and vertical garden. They observed and experienced classes in Music, Art, Science, Gymnastics and other subjects. The participants also had the opportunity to interact with some of the students.

At Seongnam Foreign Language High School, visitors toured educational spaces such as home-based classrooms for major languages and the school's language room. They observed classes where team teaching in the four major languages took place and explored an exhibition of educational materials related to international interaction and global citizenship education.

At Gyeonggi Game Meister High School, participants experienced and observed the development of game engines. Participants were curious about how a public school became a vocational gaming school. The school prepared tours of educational spaces such as the project and game analysis classrooms. The participants also observed a class on the application of game engines.

At Korea Ceramic Art High School, participants toured the library, display classroom, media classroom, workroom and pottery kiln and observed classes where students specializing in ceramics created their works. They also visited an exhibition showcasing students' ceramic masterpieces. Additionally, they had the chance to appreciate collections from students involved in startup groups.

At San Ui Elementary School, participants observed a class based on Gyeonggi *Hi-Learning* and attended a concert by the student orchestra. Elisa Guerra, a member of the International Commission on the Futures of Education and contributor to UNESCO's *Reimagining our futures together* report, shared her book, *The Voices of the Trees*, with students and engaged in a conversation with them.

At Esol Elementary School and the attached Esol Kindergarten, participants toured an educational space dedicated to digital education, while others explored booths presented by student clubs in the gym and experienced an indoor physical education class. They also observed an elementary school class that utilized digital textbooks and the *Hi-Learning* platform in a laboratory and participated in a kindergarten class.

At Chunghyun Middle School, a model school for net-zero emissions, participants were introduced to the ecological restoration curriculum aimed at repairing the damaged earth. They experienced making Bio Kimchi and mini *sotdae* and participated in a project focused on creating ecological, environmental spaces for sustainable development.

At Songnae High School, participants toured the school's environment, including the ecological forest, eco-road, gallery and workshop for the SDG class. They observed a class for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in a green classroom and made traditional knots. After enjoying eco-friendly meals, the participants had a chance to interact with students.

At the Gyeonggido Office of Education 4.16 Institute for Life and Safety Education, an educational institute established to preserve the memory of the April 16th MV Sewol Sinking tragedy, visitors participated in life and safety education activities. They toured classrooms dedicated to the memory of the April 16th tragedy and met with some bereaved family members. The participants watched a programme about students' activities and took part in a Question and Answer session.

Catalyzing a global movement to renew the social contract for education

While the call for transformation, notably voiced at the 2022 UN Transforming Education Summit, has yet to generate the scale of global momentum long hoped for, there is undeniable energy and creativity emerging from schools, universities, communities and youth-led initiatives around the world. These efforts, rooted in diverse local realities and aspirations, reflect a shared commitment to just, equitable and sustainable futures for humanity and the planet.

To channel this momentum into a broader movement, we must create further spaces and mechanisms that allow these diverse efforts to connect, learn from one another and collectively grow. Forums and conferences can serve as vital platforms for reflection, dialogue and inspiration. But, beyond convening, there is a need for sustained processes to weave together the many strands of innovative policy and practice and to move from fragmented action towards a more cohesive global effort to renew education as a common good.

Strengthening diverse voices and efforts in a shared movement

Diverse constituencies – students, teachers, civil society, researchers and networks – are already playing critical roles in transforming education from the ground up. Amplifying and strengthening these contributions is vital to renewing the social contract for education. Their active and democratic participation in numerous ways – from decision-making to awareness-raising to innovation in practice – can help ensure that reforms address access, equity and relevance and are grounded in lived realities.

> The discussion is not only about youth, but by and with youth. It's not about listening to the voices of youth but fostering meaningful conversations.
>
> **Byungjoon Yoo**
> Graduate student, Seoul National University

Student organizations – ranging from local unions to continental and global platforms – are actively shaping the direction of education. They contribute not only through activism and advocacy campaigns (e.g. #FeesMustFall in South Africa and #DataMustFall in Malawi) but also by developing future leaders in teaching, educational administration and policy-making. Student networks and organizations can offer contributions to co-designing educational reforms, fostering student-led innovations and ensuring that student voices are not merely included but recognized as essential protagonists in transformation.

Teachers are the co-creators, contextualizers and innovators of education policy, and they bring invaluable insights into what can work in practice. For any educational transformation to be possible, it is vital to move beyond quick-fix policies and towards long-term, trust-based implementation rooted in teacher engagement. When this is achieved, teachers can help bridge top-down visions with bottom-up innovations, and teacher organizations can ensure that educators are both contributors to and beneficiaries of new policies and pedagogies.

Civil society networks play crucial roles in mobilizing grassroots movements and advocating for inclusive, democratic participation. They bring together diverse voices on important themes – youth, women, persons with diverse capacities, Indigenous and local communities – and offer a model of resilient advocacy rooted in hope and action that responds to the needs and opportunities of countless local contexts. Their long-

standing presence and relationships can enable collective action and global solidarity essential for rethinking education as a common good.

Effective partnerships benefit from alignment across long-term horizons, building relationships that go beyond the short-termism of limited funding timelines and projects. Non-formal and informal education systems, particularly those championed by civil society, can accelerate change when aligned with formal education. Networks offer a way to 'unlearn' outdated practices and democratize participation by enabling active citizenship and localized innovation.

Building momentum for renewing the social contract for education

These diverse contributions from students, teachers, civil society, government officials and research institutions demonstrate that renewing the social contract for education is already underway. However, their full transformative potential is strengthened through the support of platforms that foster collaboration, amplify innovations and connect local practices to global visions. UNESCO's Futures of Education Programme can serve as both a convener and a catalyst – mobilizing foresight, documenting and analyzing good practices, and enabling co-design with a wide range of actors.

> It is very important that we continue harnessing collective intelligence in action, just as we are doing today in this beautiful, inspiring learning city. Let this kick off the second chapter of this fantastic novel, which is the future of the Futures of Education Initiative.
>
> **Stefania Giannini**
> Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

As the UN's specialized agency for education, UNESCO has a mandated role to provide global leadership in the field. This is reflected not only in its coordination, monitoring and reporting functions but also in its role as a global laboratory of ideas. Across its sectors, UNESCO operates as a knowledge organization – generating, curating, brokering and mobilizing knowledge at a global scale to inform education policy and practice. Its position as a thought leader was underscored by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who, during his 2018 visit to UNESCO, urged the Organization 'to take on its leadership role in the debate on the future of education.'[56]

With such a charge, UNESCO is well-placed to help illuminate emerging trends and pathways, foster inclusive dialogue and deepen global understanding of the transformations needed to renew the social contract for education together. In doing so, UNESCO would not just support a global movement for educational renewal but would also learn from it, embodying the inclusive, participatory ethos of the new social contract it seeks to foster.

By leveraging foresight research, collective experience and expertise, inclusive dialogue and collaborative peer learning to support long-term vision, the global UNESCO Futures of Education Programme can catalyse and support the vision set out in *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*, the International Forum on the Futures of Education 2024 in Suwon, Republic of Korea, along with the vital spaces for dialogue and collaboration that doubtless lie ahead.

[56] UNESCO (2019, p. 1).

References

Burns, T. 2024. *Keynote Plenary Panel: What Futures of Education Can Be Envisaged?* (Presentation made at the UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, 2-4 December, Suwon, Republic of Korea.)

Corson, J. 2020. *Visibly Ungoverned: Strategies for Welcoming Diverse Forms of Knowledge.* Paris, UNESCO. (Background paper for the Futures of Education initiative, ED-2020/FoE-BP/10.) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374085?posInSet=18&queryId=b9923b42-7687-487a-bf9e-1ba831ad15b8.

Damus, O. 2020. *Les futurs de l'éducation au carrefour des épistémologies du Nord et du Sud.* Paris, UNESCO. (Document d'information pour l'initiative Les futurs de l'éducation, 1.) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/notice?id=p::usmarcdef_0000374047.

Delors, J., Al Mufti, I. a., Amagi, I., Cameiro, R., Chung, F., Geremek, B., Gorham, W., Komhauser, A., Manley, M., Padron Quero, M., Savane, M.-A., Singh, K., Stavenhagen, R., Suhr, M. W. and Namzhao, Z. 1996. *Learning: The Treasure Within.* Paris, UNESCO. (Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century.) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/notice?id=p::usmarcdef_0000102734.

Education International. 2024. *Rapporteur Notes. Parallel Thematic Workshop: Teachers on the Frontline for Change.* (UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, 2-4 December, Suwon, Republic of Korea.)

Faure, E., Herrera, F., Razzak Kaddoura, A., Lopes, H., Petrovsky, A. V., Rahnema, M. and Champion Ward, F. 1972. *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow.* Paris, UNESCO, International Commission on the Development of Education. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/notice?id=p::usmarcdef_0000001801.

Heo, Y.-j. 2024. *Speaker Special Session 2. Public Initiative to Renew Education in a Local Context: The Case of Gyeonggido, Republic of Korea. Integration of Online and Offline Education, Hi-Learning!* (Presentation made at the UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, 2-4 December, Suwon, Republic of Korea.)

IEA. 2024. *World Energy Investment 2024.* Paris, International Energy Agency.

Independent Expert Group on the Universities and the 2030 Agenda. 2022. *Knowledge-Driven Actions: Transforming Higher Education for Global Sustainability.* Paris, UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380519.

ITU. 2024. *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2024.* Geneva, International Telecommunication Union, Development Sector. https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/D-IND-ICT_MDD-2024-4/.

Kim, I.-s. 2024. *Speaker Special Session 2. Public Initiative to Renew Education in a Local Context: The Case of Gyeonggido, Republic of Korea. The World's Largest Educational Platform: Gyeonggi Gongyoo Hakgyo!* (Presentation made at the UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, 2-4 December, Suwon, Republic of Korea.)

Kim, S. 2024. Gov't designates pilot special education zones to promote balanced regional development. *Korea Joongang Daily*, 28 February. https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/2024-02-28/national/politics/Govt-designates-pilot-special-education-zones-to-promote-balanced-regional-development/1991206. (Accessed 24 April 2025.).

Lin, D., Wambersie, L. and Wackernagel, M. 2021. *Estimating the Date of Earth Overshoot Day 2021.* Oakland, Calif., Global Footprint Network, Earth Overshoot Day.

Makoe, M. 2023. *The Futures of Higher Education: Reimagining the Futures of Higher Education; Insights from a Scenario Development Process Towards 2050.* Paris, UNESCO. (Paper commissioned for the World Higher Education Conference, 18-20 May 2022.) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000389902.

Mbembe, A. 2023. *Pathways of Tomorrow: Contribution to Thinking Commensurate with the Planet.* Paris, UNESCO. (Education Research and Foresight Working Paper Series, ED-2023/WP-32/2.) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/notice?id=p::usmarcdef_0000387026_eng.

——. 2024. *Transforming Knowledge and Research for Just and Sustainable Futures: Towards a New Social Imaginary for Higher Education.* Paris, UNESCO. (Education Research and Foresight Working Paper Series, ED-2024/WP-33/1.) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390388?posInSet=1&queryId=3059f4a9-a497-4669-9a86-6f68b35904b2.

Meng, S.-Q., Cheng, J.-L., Li, Y.-Y., Yang, X.-Q., Zheng, J.-W., Chang, X.-W., Shi, Y., Chen, Y., Lu, L., Sun, Y., Bao, Y.-P. and Shi, J. 2022. Global prevalence of digital addiction in general population: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review*, Vol. 92, p. 102128. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2022.102128

Mizunoya, S. 2024. *Speaker Parallel Thematic Workshop: Rethinking Educational Leadership. Leveraging the Potential of Middle Tier Education Leaders to Forge a New Social Contract for Education.* (Presentation made at the UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, 2-4 December, Suwon, Republic of Korea.)

Moore, S. J. and Nesterova, Y. 2020. *Indigenous Knowledges and Ways of Knowing for a Sustainable Living.* Paris, UNESCO. (Background paper for the Futures of Education initiative, ED-2020/FoE-BP/5.) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374046?posInSet=23&queryId=b9923b42-7687-487a-bf9e-1ba831ad15b8.

Myers, K., Nally, D., Paulson, J. and Sriprakash, A. 2024. Reparative futures. *Futures*, Vol. 164, p. 103474. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2024.103474

Odora Hoppers, C. A. 2020. *Knowledge Production, Access and Governance: A Song from the South.* Paris, UNESCO. (Background paper for the Futures of Education initiative, 26.) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/notice?id=p::usmarcdef_0000374033.

OECD. 2020. *Back to the Future of Education: Four OECD Scenarios for Schooling.* Paris, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (Educational Research and Innovation.)

——. 2022. *Trends Shaping Education 2022.* Paris, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/content/publication/d7ff793d-en.

——. 2025. *Trends Shaping Education 2025.* Paris, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/trends-shaping-education-2025_ee6587fd-en.html.

Opertti, R. 2024. *Parallel Thematic Workshop: Purposeful Pedagogy, Curricula and Assessment.* (Presentation made at the UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, 2-4 December, Suwon, Republic of Korea.)

Park, S. M. 2024. *Keynote Special Session 1: National Policies and Strategies to Transform Education in the Republic of Korea.* (Presentation made at the UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, 2-4 December, Suwon, Republic of Korea.)

Park, W.-w. 2024. *Speaker Special Session 2. Public Initiative to Renew Education in a Local Context: The Case of Gyeonggido, Republic of Korea. Carbon Neutral Education by Gyeonggido Office of Education Paves the Way to a Sustainable Future Through Climate Action.* (Presentation made at the UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, 2-4 December, Suwon, Republic of Korea.)

Peterson-Withorn, C. 2025. *Forbes' 39th Annual World's Billionaires List: More Than 3,000 Worth $16 Trillion*. Jersey City, NJ, Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/chasewithorn/2025/04/01/forbes-39th-annual-worlds-billionaires-list-more-than-3000-worth-16-trillion/ (Accessed 7 July 2025.).

Poisson, M. 2024. *Speaker Plenary Panel: Mobilizing Knowledge and Research for Just and Sustainable Futures. Data and Evidence, Key to Inform Decision-Making, Policy and Planning.* (Presentation made at the UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, 2-4 December, Suwon, Republic of Korea.)

Republic of Korea Ministry of Education. 2023. *Briefing on Neulbom School*. Seoul, Ministry of Education. https://english.moe.go.kr/boardCnts/viewRenewal.do?m=0202&s=english&page=5&boardID=254&boardSeq=93685&lev=0&opType=N (Accessed 16 April 2025.).

——. 2023. *Students, Parents, and Teachers to Gather Together for 'Schools Together'*. Seoul, Ministry of Education. https://english.moe.go.kr/boardCnts/viewRenewal.do?m=0202&s=english&page=2&boardID=254&boardSeq=96996&lev=0&opType=N (Accessed 16 April 2025.).

——. 2024. *The Plan to Neulbom School in 2024*. Seoul, Ministry of Education. https://english.moe.go.kr/boardCnts/viewRenewal.do?m=0202&s=english&page=1&boardID=254&boardSeq=100288&lev=0&opType=N (Accessed 16 April 2025.).

Shaheed, F. 2024. *Keynote: The Right to Education throughout Life in the Digital Era.* (Presentation made at the UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, 2-4 December, Suwon, Republic of Korea.)

Sriprakash, A. 2022. Reparations: theorising just futures of education. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, Vol. 44, No. 5**,** pp**.** 782-95. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2022.2144141

Tournier, B., Chimier, C. and Jones, C. (eds.) 2023. *Leading Teaching and Learning Together: The Role of the Middle Tier,* Reading, UK/Paris, Education Development Trust/UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384504.

UN-SG. 2021. *Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General.* New York, United Nations, Secretary-General. https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/#download.

——. 2022. *Transforming Education: An Urgent Political Imperative for Our Collective Future.* New York, United Nations. (Vision Statement of the Secretary-General on Transforming Education.) https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit/sg-vision-statement.

UN. 2023. *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 10: Transforming Education.* New York, United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/common-agenda/policy-briefs.

UNESCO-GEMR. 2024. *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5. Leadership in Education: Lead for Learning.* Paris, UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report Team. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391406.

——. 2025. *What is the Potential Impact of Recent Cuts in Aid to Education?* Paris, UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report Team. (UNESCO GEM report blog.). https://world-education-blog.org/2025/04/09/what-is-the-potential-impact-of-recent-cuts-in-aid-to-education/ (Accessed 10 May 2025.).

UNESCO-GEMR, UIS and World Bank. 2024. *Education Finance Watch 2024.* Paris/Montreal/Washington, DC, UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report/UNESCO Institute for Statistics/World Bank. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391641.

UNESCO-IESALC. 2021. *Pathways to 2050 and Beyond: Findings from a Public Consultation on the Futures of Higher Education.* Caracas, UNESCO, International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379985.

——. 2021. *Thinking Higher and Beyond: Perspectives on the Futures of Higher Education to 2050.* Caracas, UNESCO, International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380519.

UNESCO. 2015. *Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good.* Paris, UNESCO.

——. 2018. *Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers.* Paris, UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000263618.

——. 2019. *International Commission on the Futures of Education: UNESCO Global Futures of Education Report.* Paris, UNESCO. https://redclade.org/wp-content/uploads/Futures-of-Educ-Project-document-19-Mar-2019.pdf.

——. 2021. *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education.* Paris, UNESCO. (Report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education.) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381560.

——. 2022. *Beyond Limits: New Ways to Reinvent Higher Education.* Paris, UNESCO. (Working document for the World Higher Education Conference, 18-20 May 2022.) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000389912.

——. 2023. *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research.* Paris, UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000386693.

——. 2023. *Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development.* Paris, UNESCO. https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-education-peace-and-human-rights-international-understanding-cooperation-fundamental?hub=87862.

——. 2024. *Strategic Review: Improving the Use of Evidence for Education Policy, Planning and Implementation.* Paris, UNESCO. (Prepared by Steiner-Khamsi, G. and Faul, M. V. with Baek, C., Hopkins, A. N. and Iwabuchi, K., NORRAG.) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388747.

UNESCO, ILO and UNICEF. 2024. *Valuing Teachers Voices: Towards a New Social Contract for Education. Concept Note.* Paris, UNESCO/International Labor Organization/UNICEF. (4 October World Teachers Day.) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383002.

UNESCO Canadian Commission and Canada SSHRC. 2021. *Imagining the Future of Knowledge Mobilization: Perspectives from UNESCO Chairs.* Paris/Ottawa, UNESCO Canadian Commission for UNESCO/Government of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

UNGA. 2015. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Kishore Singh: Protecting the Right to Education Against Commercialization.* New York, United Nations, General Assembly. (Human Rights Council. Twenty-ninth session. Agenda item 3: Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, A/HRC/29/30.) https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/797838?ln=en&v=pdf.

——. 2016. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education.* New York, United Nations, General Assembly. (Human Rights Council. Thirty-second session. Agenda item 3: Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, A/HRC/32/37.) https://www.right-to-education.org/resource/report-special-rapporteur-right-education-right-education-digital-age.

——. 2024. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Farida Shaheed: Artificial Intelligence in Education.* New York, United Nations, General Assembly. (Seventy-ninth session. Agenda item 71 (b): Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, A/79/520.) https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a79520-artificial-intelligence-education-report-special-rapporteur-right.

WEF. 2025. *Future of Jobs Report 2025. Insights Report.* Geneva, World Economic Forum.

World Bank. 2023. *2023 in Nine Charts: A Growing Inequality*. Washington, DC, World Bank. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2023/12/18/2023-in-nine-charts-a-growing-inequality (Accessed 7 July 2025.).

——. 2025. *World Bank Indicators: Rural Population*. Washington, DC, World Bank. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?view=map (Accessed 7 July 2025.).

Yim, T.-H. 2024. *Keynote Speaker Special Session 2. Public Initiative to Renew Education in a Local Context: The Case of Gyeonggido, Republic of Korea. Transforming Education for All: Gyeonggi Future Education.* (Presentation made at the UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024, 2-4 December, Suwon, Republic of Korea.)

Appendix

Forum concept note and programme

> "It is by actively engaging in the dialogue and practice to build a new social contract for education that we can renew education to make just, equitable and sustainable futures possible."

Reimagining Our Futures Together: A new social contract for education (2021, p.142)

Rationale

Our world faces complex disruptions, unique opportunities and uncertain futures. How must education rise to the challenges ahead – not only to react but to help *shape* the future? We are at a critical juncture. The climate crisis, the pervasive rise of AI, growing inequality and societal divisions are compelling us to reconsider our approaches. Indeed, we face an existential choice between continuing on an unsustainable path or radically changing course. But no trend is destiny. It is urgent to imagine new future possibilities.

Education is crucial to this change of course. It has great potential to help shape more just, inclusive and sustainable futures by rebalancing our relationships with each other, the living planet and with technology. Yet, to do so, education itself must be transformed.

The 2021 report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education "Reimagining Our Futures Together: A new social contract for education"presents a long-term vision and a set of principles to realize the transformative potential of education at this critical juncture of societal transformation. It provides insights and proposals for a new social contract to shape more just and sustainable futures. new social contract for education must both repair historical injustices and unleash education's transformative potential for individual and collective wellbeing. This implies a holistic, systemic transformation—that is, a renewed vision of the purpose of education and a set of guiding principles, inclusive arrangements for governance and decision-making, and a rethinking of the roles of the range of constituencies involved in education as a collective responsibility and a common good. It centres on two foundational principles: an expanded vision of the right to education throughout life, and education as a public endeavour and a common good, reflecting humanity's wide diversity of ways of knowing, living, and being.

Describing the aims of the Report, H.E. Ms Sahle-Work Zewde, former President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Chair of the International Commission on the Futures of Education, has said, "Our hope is that the proposals this report presents – as well as the public dialogue and collective action it calls for – will serve as a catalyst to shape futures for humanity and the planet, that are peaceful, just and sustainable."

The International Commission's report served as a key reference and foundation for the extensive, consultative preparatory process leading up to the 2022 Transforming Education Summit (TES) and the United Nations Secretary-General's Vision Statement on Transforming Education.[57] In their work to translate commitments to action, Member States have been invited to consider the levers of transformation addressed in the International Commission's report, with a clear line of accountability between vision, commitments, resources, actions and results.

The Forum provides the opportunity to invigorate global dynamics with a long-term vision of innovation and recommended actions for doing things differently as we endeavour to renew the social contract for education in view of more just, inclusive and sustainable futures.

Aims and Outcomes

The Futures of Education Report is an open invitation to strengthen public dialogue, collective engagement and co-construction in innovative policy, research and action. While country conditions are unique, educational issues and challenges are not specific to any one context. Solutions can be found when diverse constituencies from different countries and regions come together and engage in a collaborative dialogue to address these shared challenges.

[57] UN (2022). *Transforming Education: An urgent political imperative for our collective future*. New York, United Nations. (Vision Statement of the Secretary-General on Transforming Education.)

The Forum aims to invigorate this worldwide movement to renew and innovate education as a public endeavor, a societal commitment, as an enabling human right, and as one of the most important shared responsibilities of states, citizens, and societies.

Collaborative efforts become crucial as the Forum's participants reflect on the three key questions:

- What should we continue doing?
- What should we abandon?
- What needs to be creatively reimagined?

Sharing and learning from the wealth of more specific and contextualized responses to these questions is key in our collective efforts to renew education to transform the future.

In this forward-looking perspective, the Forum has two main expected outcomes:

- Mobilize a global multi-stakeholder education community dedicated to collaborative action to renew the social contract for education in view of shaping more just and sustainable futures for all.
- Announce the establishment of a UNESCO Futures of Education Observatory that builds on the rich policy, practice and research learning from a range of contextualized experiences in social and educational innovation from around the world.

Organization

The UNESCO Forum on the Futures of Education 2024 is an in-person event. It is co-organized with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea, the Gyeonggido Office of Education (Republic of Korea) and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO.

The Forum will also provide a first-hand opportunity to gain insights from the national policy and strategy to transform education in the Republic of Korea, and public efforts to renew education in Gyeonggido. The Forum also offers visits to a range of model schools and educational institutes in Gyeonggido which illustrate localized efforts to ensure inclusive, green and future-oriented educational approaches.

Working languages for all plenary sessions will be English / French / Korean while parallel sessions will be conducted in English and Korean.

Participants

The forum anticipates approximately 1,000 international and Korean national participants onsite. This is a multi-constituent forum, including government ministers and senior policy makers from participating Member States, representatives from partner organizations agencies and other international organizations, researchers, representatives of teacher associations, civil society organizations, youth organizations, and various other stakeholders. This is an onsite event. Plenary sessions will be livestreamed.

Programme

Day 1 Monday 2 December 2024		
#	**Time**	**Session**
1.1	**13:30 – 14:00**	**Opening addresses** • **H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde**, former President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Chair of the International Commission on the Futures of Education • **Stefania Giannini**, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO • **Ju-Ho Lee,** Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Education • **Tae-Hee Yim**, Governor of the Gyeonggido Office of Education • **Kyung Koo Han**, Secretary General of the Korean National Commission for UNESCO **Master of Ceremonies: Sobhi Tawil,** Director, Future of Learning and Innovation Division, UNESCO
1.2	**14:00-14:30**	**Cultural event/performance**
1.3	**14:30 – 14:45** **CONVENTION HALL A**	Introduction Why a new social contract for education? Education faces an urgent twin challenge of resolving persistent inequities inherited from the past while addressing new disruptions in global development. UNESCO presents the *why* and *what* of a new social contract for education as proposed in the Report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education. Speakers • **Sobhi Tawil,** Director, Future of Learning and Innovation Division, UNESCO. • **Fernando Reimers,** Professor, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, and member of the International Commission on the Futures of Education. • **Elisa Guerra,** Founder of the international network of schools *Valle de Filadelfia*, and member of the International Commission on the Futures of Education.
1.4	**14:45 – 15:30** **CONVENTION HALL A**	Plenary panel What futures of education can be envisaged? Experts use scenario analysis and futures literacy to anticipate future challenges and opportunities to better steer education policy, practice, and research towards more equitable and sustainable prospects for students, educators, and societies. **Moderator: Karen Mundy**, Professor, University of Toronto Keynote speaker • **Tracey Burns**, Chief Research Officer, National Center on Education and the Economy Discussants • **Kais Hammami**, Director, Center for Foresight, ICESCO • **Shermon Cruz,** Exec. Director and Chief Futurist, Centre for Engaged Foresight, Manila

1.5	**15:30 – 16:30** **CONVENTION HALL A**	**High-level Policy Dialogue** The futures of education in diverse contexts: International perspectives Ministers of Education from diverse regions of the world share their experiences and insights on how best we can renew the social contract for education to ensure more just and sustainable futures for all. Moderator: **H.E. Serigne Mbaye Thiam**, High Level Envoy and Advisor, Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and former Minister of Higher Education, of National Education, and of Water and Sanitation of Senegal Speakers • **H.E Mariatou Koné**, Minister of National Education and Literacy of Côte d'Ivoire • **H.E. Noureddeine Al Nouri**, Minister of Education, Tunisia • **H.E. Harjot Singh Bains**, Minister of Education, Higher Education, and Technical Education, Punjab State, India • **H.E. Ms Amna Al Balushi,** Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Sultanate of Oman to UNESCO Final remarks • **Stefania Giannini**, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO
16:30 – 17:00		Coffee Break
1.6	**17:00 – 17:50** **CONVENTION HALL A**	**Special session 1** National policy and strategy to transform education in the Republic of Korea Learning from the implementation of the Republic of Korea's strategic vision for educational reform structured around the futures of universities, digital learning, and the innovative "edu-care" service in primary schools. Moderator: **Hyunsook Seo,** Director-General, UNESCO Korean National Commission Keynote speaker/Panel 1: **Sung Min Park,** Deputy Minister of Office of Planning and Coordination, Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea Keynote speaker/Panel 2: **Jae-hoon Jung,** Professor of Social Welfare, Seoul Women's University Keynote speaker/Panel 3: **Young Hoan Cho,** Professor of education and directorof Learning Sciences Research Institute, Seoul National University Keynote speaker/Panel 4: **Heon Young Kim,** Professor of mechanical engineering and mechatronics, Kangwon National University
1.7	**17:50 – 18:40** **CONVENTION HALL A**	**Special session 2** Public initiative to renew education in a local context: The case of Gyeonggido, Republic of Korea The Gyeonggido Office of Education introduces "Gyeonggi Future Education," an initiative aimed at expanding the value and role of public education as a new social contract for education. Rooted in its educational philosophy of fostering future talents with both character and competence, this vision looks ahead to 2050 and beyond. Moderator: **Hyun-Joo Na**, School Inspector, Gyeonggido Office of Education Keynote Speaker: **Tae-Hee Yim,** Governor, Gyeonggido Office of Education Speakers: • **Young-ju Heo,** Teacher, Gyeonggi High School of Automotive Science • **In-suk Kim,** Head of Local Education Division, Gyeonggido Office of Education • **Won-woo Park,** Professor Emeritus, Seoul National University

1.8	**18:40– 18:50**	**Orientation session** Orientation to Day 2 site visits to schools and educational centres in Gyeonggido
19:20 – 21:00		**Welcome dinner** Commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Korean National Commission for UNESCO

Day 2 Tuesday 3 December 2024		
#	**Time**	**Session**
2.1	**08:00 – 14:30**	Site visits in Gyeonggido Visits to several model schools and educational institutes in Gyeonggido that illustrate localized inclusive, green and future-oriented approaches. 1.Yogin Samgye High school 2. Cheonglim Middle School 3. Seongnam Foreign Language High School 4. Gyeonggi Game Meister High School 5. Korea Ceramic Art High School 6. San Ui Elementary School 7. Esol Elementary School 8. Chunghyun Middle School 9. Songnae High School 10. Gyeonggido Office of Education 4.16 Institute for Life and Society Education
14:30 – 15:00		**Coffee break** Reconvene from site visits to schools and educational centres
2.2	**15:00 – 16:00** **CONVENTION HALL A**	**Keynote** The right to education throughout life in the digital era The session explores the impacts of digitalization on the norms and principles that underlie the right to education throughout life. In doing so, it also examines the numerous rights associated with education, including the rights to privacy, to information, to participation, and to non-discrimination. Moderator: **Mark West,** Future of Learning and Innovation Division, UNESCO Keynote speaker • **Farida Shaheed,** United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education Discussants • **Daniel Baril,** Chair of the Governing Board, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning • **Maria Smirnova,** Human Rights Officer, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights • **Mike Thiruman,** General Secretary, Singapore Teachers' Union • **Muongeni Tamara**, Youth leader, Zimbabwe
2.3	**16:00-16:15**	**Transition from plenary session to parallel thematic workshops 1**
	16:15-17:30 **CONVENTION HALL 3**	1. Purposeful Pedagogy, Curricula and Assessment Moderator: **Renato Opertti,** UNESCO International Bureau of Education Speakers: • **Soo-Inn Lee,** CEO and Co-founder of Enuma, Global Learning XPRIZE Winner • **Renuka Rautela,** National Project Officer, UNESCO MGIEP • **Arathi Sriprakash,** Professor of sociology and education, University of Oxford • **François Taddéi,** President, Learning Planet Institute, Paris

	ROOM 405-408	2. Teachers on the Frontline for Change **Moderator: David Edwards,** General Secretary, Education International **Speakers:** • **Elisa Guerra,** Founder, Valle de Filadelfia school network (Mexico) • **Mike Thiruman**, General Secretary, Singapore Teachers' Union and Member of the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on the Teaching Profession • **Manal Hdaife,** Teacher and Chair, EI Arab Cross Country Regional Structure • **Corenna Haythorpe,** Federal President, Australian Education Union • **Jeong-Pyo Hong,** Second Deputy Superintendent, Gyeonggi Office of Education
	ROOM 401-102	3. Social Transformation through Greening Education **Moderator: Abdirizak Ibrahim**, Technical Advisor, Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education, Somalia • **Sun-Kyung Lee,** Professor of Science Education at Cheongju National University of Education • **Rosalia Fatiaki,** Association of the University Staff of the Pacific Islands (AUSPS), Fiji • **Ms Nafissa Insebayeva,** Innovation and Education Programme Specialist, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) • **Mr Samuel Mue,** Youth Climate Leader, Kenya
	ROOM 301-302	4. Human-Centered Approaches to Technology in Education **Moderator: Mark West,** UNESCO Future of Learning and Innovation **Speakers:** • **Jae-Young Chung,** President of Korea Education and Research Information Service, Republic of Korea • **Armand C. Doucet**, Senior Advisor Artificial Intelligence - New Brunswick Department of Education & Early Childhood, Canada • **Jonghwi Park,** Academic Programme Officer, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability, Japan • **Kevin Martin,** Research Director, Digital Assessment Futures, Digital Education Futures Initiative, Cambridge University, UK • **Cecilia 'Thea' Soriano,** Campaigns and Communications Manager, Global Campaign for Education
	17:30-17:45	**Transition from parallel sessions to plenary session**
2.4	**17:45 – 19:15** **CONVENTION HALL A**	**Plenary panel** Renewing education as a common good: Who and how? Renewing the social contract for education cannot result from top-down approaches alone, but also requires avenues for collective participation, decision-making, governance, and ownership. This session will explore community perspectives and experiences from around the world in renewing shared commitment to education across stakeholders in diverse settings. **Moderator** • **Refat Sabbah,** President, Global Campaign for Education **Speakers:** • **Blanca Amengual**, Principal of Angeleta Ferrer Secondary School, Fòrum Els Futurs de l'Educació, Catalonia, Spain. • **Giuseppina Rita Jose Mangione and Stefania Chipa**, National Institute for Educational Documentation, Innovation and Research (INDIRE), Italy. • **Garry Pawitandra Poluan,** Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Secretariat • **Abdel Basset Ben Hassen,** President, Arab Institute for Human Rights • **Didacus Jules,** Director General, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)

Day 3 Wednesday 4 December 2024		
#	**Time**	**Session**
3.1	**09:30 – 09:45**	Transition to parallel thematic workshops 2
3.2	**09:45 – 11:00**	Parallel thematic workshops 2
	ROOM 405-408	1. Rethinking Educational Leadership **Chair: Tracy Burns**, Chief Research Officer at the National Center on Education and the Economy, Washington, DC **Moderator:** Manos Antoninis, Director, UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report Speakers: • **Karen Mundy,** Professor of Educational Policy and Leadership, University of Toronto • **Yong-Joo Jeong,** Principal, Seoul Cheonhwang Elementary School • **Karen Chand**, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network – Asia (SDSN Asia) • **Eduard Vallory**, Director of the Barcelona Institute of Science and Technology (BIST) and Chairman of Center for UNESCO of Catalonia (CATESCO) • **Esther Gomani**, Africa Student Representative on the Executive Committee of UNESCO SDG4 Youth and Student Network • **Suguru Mizunoya, Head of the Technical Cooperation team,** UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP).
	ROOM 301-302	2. Building life-long and life-wide learning societies **Moderator: Daniel Baril,** Chair, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning Speakers: • **Ebrima Sall,** Executive Director, Trust Africa • **Soong-Hee Han**, Professor of Education and Lifelong Learning at Seoul National University • **Mike Thiruman,** General Secretary, Singapore Teachers' Union • **Didacus Jules,** Director General, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) • **Ying Ma,** Head of Curriculum Development, Institute for Adult Learning, Singapore
	ROOM 401-102	3. Futures of Higher Education **Moderator: Ms Bosen Lily Liu,** UNESCO Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) Opening remarks • **Ms Farida Shaheed**, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education (video message) Speakers: • **H.E. Mr Seringe Mbaye Thaim,** former Minister for Higher Education of Senegal and member of UNESCO's International Commission on the Futures of Education • **Buhm Soon Park**, Professor and Director of Center for Anthropocene Studies at the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) • **Hilligje Van't Land,** Secretary-General, International Association of Universities (IAU) • **Sofía Bermúdez**, Founder and Director of One Generation and member of the UNESCO SDG4 Youth & Student Network

	CONVENTION HALL 3	4. Education for Peace and Social Justice **Moderator: Faryal Khan,** UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok Speakers: • **Renato Opertti,** UNESCO International Bureau of Education • **Arathi Sriprakash,** Professor of sociology and education, University of Oxford • **Hyun Mook Lim**, Director of Asis-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), Seoul. • **Azra Mustafić,** Project Coordinator, Youth for Peace Organization (SDG4 Youth Network) • **Miki Sugimura,** Professor, Comparative and International Education, Sophia University, Tokyo. • **Rilli Lappalainen,** Founder and CEO, Bridge 47
11:00 – 11:15		**Coffee break**
3.3	**11:15 – 12:15** **CONVENTION HALL A**	**Special session 3** Youth perspectives on the futures of education This session features discussions among youth from diverse cultural backgrounds and nationalities currently residing in the Republic of Korea. They will exchange ideas on how educational systems might be reimagined to genuinely foster the inclusion of young voices in shaping a just, peaceful and sustainable futures. Moderators: • Byungjoon Yoo • Sohyun Park Speakers: • Ni Made Adinda • Aliyeva Ofelya • Joohyun Lee • Lola Bikindou • Boussoussen Ayoub
12:15 – 13:30		Lunch
3.4	**13:30 – 14:30** **CONVENTION HALL A**	**Plenary panel** Mobilizing knowledge and research for just and sustainable futures Renewing the social contract for education requires knowledge and research from a wide variety of contexts, approaches, and perspectives. Researchers reflect on projects, opportunities, challenges, and innovative approaches to draw from diverse methods, analytic frameworks, partnerships and more, in pursuit of pressing questions for just and sustainable futures of education. **Moderator: Fernando Reimers,** Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education Speakers: • **Arathi Sriprakash**, Professor of Sociology and Education, University of Oxford • **Ebrima Sall**, Executive Director, Trust Africa • **Muriel Poisson,** Team Leader, Knowledge Generation and Mobilization, UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP).

3.5	**14:30 – 15:00** **CONVENTION HALL A**	**Plenary panel** Views from the International Commission on the Futures of Education Members of the International Commission on the Futures of Education will share their own reactions to the Forum and their perspectives on education's future possibilities. Moderator: • **Tracey Burns,** Chief Research Officer, National Center on Education and the Economy, Washington, DC Speakers: • **Doh-Yeon Kim,** Professor Emeritus of Seoul National University, Former Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Republic of Korea • **H.E. Serigne Mbaye Thiam,** Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and former Minister of Higher Education, of National Education of Senegal • **Karen Mundy,** Professor, University of Toronto • **Abdel Basset Ben Hassen,** President, Arab Institute for Human Rights • **Elisa Guerra,** Founder, *Valle de Filadelfia* school network (Mexico) • **Fernando Reimers,** Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education
15:00 – 15:30		Coffee Break
3.6	**15:30 – 16:30** **CONVENTION HALL A**	Catalyzing a global movement to renew the social contract for education This closing session begins with a presentation from UNESCO of next steps and shares the broad shapes of its forthcoming Observatory on the Futures of Education. Speakers from various positions respond, asking what it will take to catalyze social movements worldwide to renew education around the world, while navigating disruptions on the horizon. Moderator • **Elena Toukan,** Research Specialist, Future of Learning and Innovation, UNESCO Presentation • **Sobhi Tawil,** Director, Future of Learning and Innovation, UNESCO Responses and Discussion • **Student Organizer – Esther Gomani,** Africa Student Representative on the Executive Committee of UNESCO SDG4 Youth and Student Network *The role of student organizations in shaping the future of education* • **Teacher Leader – Mike Thiruman**, General Secretary of the Singapore Teachers' Union *Harnessing the voices, experiences, and policy insights of educators* • **Civil Society – Refat Sabbah,** President, Global Campaign for Education *Mobilizing civil society organizations* • **Foundations and Networks – Rilli Lappalainen,** Founder and CEO, Bridge 47 *Partnerships for innovation and research* • **Observatory – Giuseppina Rita Jose Mangione and Stefania Chipa**, INDIRE, Italy *Key lessons from a National observatory*
3.7	**16:30 – 17:00**	**Closing of the Forum**
17:10 - 19:00 **CONVENTION HALL B**		**Closing Reception** Hosted by Gyeonggido Office of Education

Side events 3 December 2024	
Time	**Event**
10:00 – 15:00 CONVENTION HALL A	**2024 Korean UNESCO ASPnet Gathering** Education for Peaceful Coexistence - Schools as Incubators of Cooperation and Solidarity

4 December 2024	
Time	**Event (RSVP required; lunchboxes provided)**
12:15 – 13:15 **ROOM 403**	Launch of *Prospects* Special Issue "Renewing the Social Contract for Education," Vol. 54, Issue 2 ***Prospects* Editor in Chief** • **Simona Popa,** UNESCO International Bureau of Education **Guest-Editors** • **Sobhi Tawil,** Director, UNESCO Futures of Learning and Innovation • **Elena Toukan,** UNESCO Futures of Learning and Innovation **Presentations from Contributing Authors** • **Mark Bray,** Professor, University of Hong Kong • **Rita Locatelli,** Professor, Universita Cattolica del Sacro Cuore • **Fernando Reimers,** Professor, Harvard University Graduate School of Education

Exhibition 2-4 December 2024		
Time	**Event**	**Hall/Room**
DAY 1 (2 December) 12:30-19:30 **DAY 2 (3 December)** 9:00-19:00 **DAY 3 (4 December)** 9:00-17:00	Exhibition booths showcasing Gyeonggi Educational Policies and Activities related to the Futures of Education	3F, 4F Hallway

unesco
United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

Renewing the social contract for education

Directions for change

UNESCO International Forum on the Futures of Education

Suwon, Gyeonggido, Republic of Korea, 2-4 December 2024

Stay in touch

futuresofeducation@unesco.org

https://www.unesco.org/en/futures-education

Address: UNESCO Headquarters
7 Place Fontenoy
75007 Paris, France

Follow @UNESCO on social media