

Questions that are likely to be posed during UNESCO focus group discussions

Why does the project use Futures (in the plural)?

The concept of futures in the plural is used to recognize that there is a rich diversity of ways of knowing and being around the world. The plural form also acknowledges that there are multiple dimensions to the future and that there will likely be various desirable and undesirable futures – all of which will vary greatly depending on who you are and where you stand. Rather than attempting to chart a single future, looking at futures in the plural validates multiple possible and desirable futures of humanity on our shared planet. UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative also approaches the future as a space for democratic design that is connected to, but not limited by, past and present. It builds on dedicated evidence-based trend analysis that can help shine light on anticipated challenges and opportunities. This is complemented by participatory mechanisms for envisioning new possible futures of education. Consultations across world regions will tap the visions and aspirations of a wide range of stakeholders under the understanding that innovation and ownership of the future need to be locally anchored as well as globally discussed. The project embraces a fluid, iterative, and collective approach to futures-making. The goal is to generate discussion and action on the role of education, knowledge and learning in view of the predicted, possible and preferred futures of humanity and the planet.

Why “Learning to become”?

The concept of Learning to Become points to a philosophy of education and an approach to pedagogy that views learning as a process of continual unfolding that is ongoing and life-long. To think in terms of “becoming” is to invoke a line of thought that emphasizes potentials, rejects determinism and expresses a flexible openness to the new. Learning to Become also invokes the need to develop the capacity to imagine a good and fulfilling life. Around the globe, for the many that live in conditions of poverty, exclusion, displacement and violence, the future can appear more as a set of shrinking possibilities than a world of hope and promise. When human aspiration is wasted, the world suffers. As we come to terms with human-caused changes to the planet and face the possibilities of fundamental transformations in social organization, human consciousness and human identity, humanity needs to devote attention to the question: what do we want to become? Knowledge and learning are at the core of transformations in human minds and societies. Learning to Become invites us to become something we have not yet become.

Why look beyond the 2030 agenda?

Education is a key piece of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Despite the scope of these global commitments and the expected achievements, there is still an urgent need to look beyond this fast-approaching horizon. While the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action lays out a roadmap for the transformation of education systems and affirms a central commitment to inclusion and equity, we must still ask what education might yet become – and what education might yet enable us to become. UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative uses the horizon of 2050 and beyond in order to anticipate and shape both nearer and more distant futures.

Why should we participate in the consultation process and how will our perspectives be taken into account?

In the visioning and research phase of the consultation process, which will run through September 2020, the will focus on discussing the educational challenges and opportunities envisioned for 2050 and beyond. Consultations will center on three topics: (1) How do you view 2050?; (2) What should be the collective purposes of education in 2050?; (3) How will learning need to change in the future? These inputs will be analyzed and synthesized for presentation to the International Commission on the Futures of Education and also publicly released (in a variety of ways) to help further the global debate on the futures of education. These channels and associated documents/webpages will be developed in all 6 official UN languages. In a second phase of consultation between October 2020 and April 2021, deliberations on initial visions and strategies proposed by the International Commission will also be the subject of consultation.

Why should I participate in a focus group discussion when I can complete the online modules?

The open-ended nature of focus group consultation allows for people to explore and clarify their views. Group interaction is key to the focus group methodology. Oftentimes, a focus group conversation can lead in new and unexpected directions as participants reflect on their own and others' ideas. Focus groups also allow for participants to become an active part of the process of visioning the futures of education. They will share ownership and be a part of co-construction the futures of education. Participants of focus group discussions are also encouraged to undertake one or more of the online consultations which range from answering a short question, to providing a 1000 word essay with their views on a topic related to the futures of education, and even submitting a drawing, sketch or painting to illustrate their vision on the futures of education.