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## UNESCO FUTURES OF EDUCATION REPORT 2021 *REIMAGINING OUR FUTURES TOGETHER: A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR EDUCATION*

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The interwoven futures of humanity and our planet are under threat. Urgent action, taken together, is needed to change course and reimagine our futures. Education, long acknowledged as a powerful force for positive change, has new, urgent and important work to do.

This independent report, two years in the making, and informed by a global co-construction process that engaged with over a million people, has been prepared by the UNESCO - appointed International Commission on the Futures of Education, chaired by the President of Ethiopia. Rather than presenting a blueprint, it is a call for ongoing dialogue and action - an invitation to governments, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and citizens around the world to forge a new social contract for education that will help us build peaceful, just, and sustainable futures together.

## Background

This report is the third in a series of once-a-generation foresight and visioning exercises conducted by UNESCO beginning in 1972 with the Faure *Commission Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow* report and continuing with the 1996 Delors Commission *Learning: The treasure within*. The 2021 *Reimagining our futures together* report embraces UNESCO's humanistic approach to human development and lays out an agenda for dialogue and action at multiple levels.

Part 1 of the report, titled "Between past promises and uncertain futures" presents an assessment of the state of the world. Long term trends show that the world has come a long way in education in terms of access, learning outcomes, and gender equality. However, progress has been uneven and many of today's gaps are based on yesterday's exclusions and injustices. The Commission observes that the world is at a point where, to many, things feel very out of balance. It calls for education to help us relearn our interdependencies and rebalance our relationships.

Additionally, it is clear that the world faces a number of key disruptions and uncertain futures. The planet is in peril, but there is great momentum to heal it. Democratic participation is under attack in many places, but citizen participation is growing. Digital technologies don't always deliver on their promises, but nonetheless have huge potential. It is also clear that ensuring human-centered work is getting harder, but at the same time more attention is being paid to purpose and to work that matters. In sum, the world faces multiple possible futures and in each of these areas education cannot only react; instead knowledge and learning have a crucial role to play in shaping the futures we want.

## Recommendations

The report warns against worrisome trends in how we learn, calls for a massive updating of what we learn, and presses reset on the core reasons behind why we learn.

The displacement of schooling into domestic spaces, proposals to automate learning, and crass commercialization are exacerbating inequalities and risk undermining public education. The report calls for all actors to commit to supporting education as a public societal endeavor and to strengthening education as a common good.

The report notes that too often today discrete subject-area knowledge is handed to students in educational institutions and programmes without connection to everyday lives and contemporary challenges. Instead, curricula and learning outcomes need to focus on ecological, intercultural and interdisciplinary learning.

In place of a narrow focus on education for national citizenship and to support development efforts - such as can be found in many countries - the report calls for education to build personal and collective capacities to transform. Education needs to centre on supporting individuals, communities, countries, and regions to transform their relationships with each other, with the living planet Earth and with technology.

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