The Futures of Education:
Perspectives and insights from the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet)

Authors: TakingITGlobal

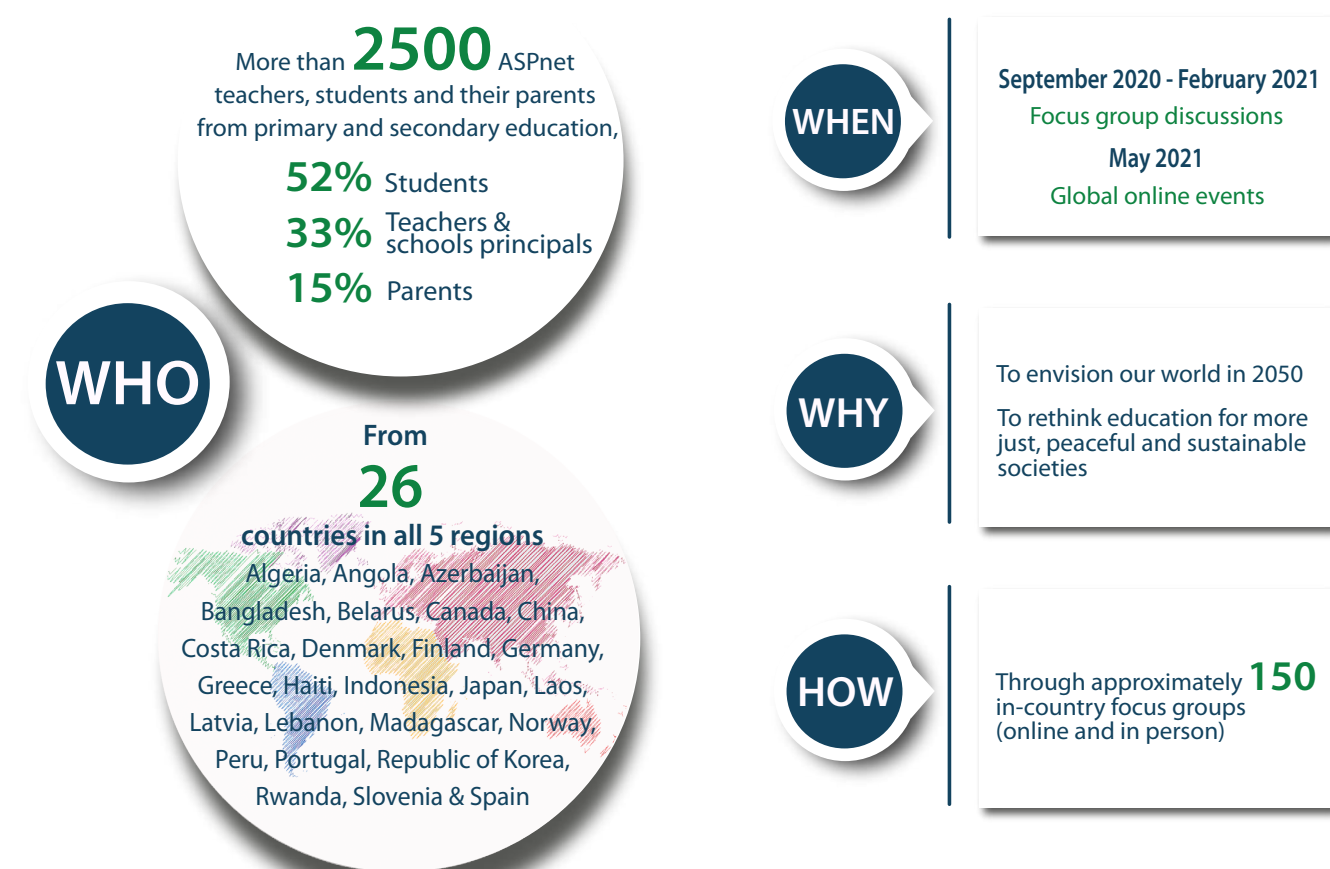Futures of Education
A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT

Introduction

[UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative](#) is catalyzing a global debate on how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet. As part of the initiative's broad and open consultative process, a special collaboration was launched with the [UNESCO Associated Schools Network](#) (ASPnet) to bring school community voices to the global debate. ASPnet is UNESCO's network of more than 12 000 educational institutions in over 180 countries. Its work focuses on three thematic action areas reflecting [Sustainable Development Goal 4 Target 7](#): (a) global citizenship and a culture of peace and non-violence; (b) sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles; and (c) intercultural learning and the appreciation of cultural diversity and heritage.

Through a global call for participation, National Coordinators for the network were invited to organize focus group discussions in their countries to engage school leaders, teachers, students and their parents in joint reflections and to co-construct ideas and perspectives on what the futures of education ought to be. The outcomes of focus group deliberations were shared through a series of [global online events](#) with ASPnet members worldwide and engaged members of the [International Commission on the Futures of Education](#).

> *"ASPnet school community insights and perspectives provided an important contribution to the work of the International Commission and the Futures of Education Global Report. I would like to express my special thanks to all students, teachers, parents and National Coordinators who organised and participated in focus group consultations. Their rich discussions and contributions led to the creation of this report. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Futures of Education and my team for developing and implementing this joint project. Key findings contained in this report will guide our ongoing and future efforts to enact transformative education for sustainable development, global citizenship, health and well-being."*
> *Julie Saito, International Coordinator of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (November 2021)*

A global ASPnet consultation to co-construct our educational futures

WHO

More than **2500** ASPnet teachers, students and their parents from primary and secondary education,

52% Students
33% Teachers & schools principals
15% Parents

From
26
countries in all 5 regions
Algeria, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Madagascar, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Slovenia & Spain

WHEN

September 2020 - February 2021
Focus group discussions
May 2021
Global online events

WHY

To envision our world in 2050
To rethink education for more just, peaceful and sustainable societies

HOW

Through approximately **150** in-country focus groups (online and in person)

Source: UNESCO

Report Outline

This report is organized into four sections which highlight the outcomes of the discussions:

- **"Envisioning our shared futures"** highlights the results from a future-thinking exercise illustrating participants' common imagination of our world in 2050, as well as participants' initial visions of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

The following three sections address key themes underlying desired futures and education practices that emerged during the consultative process. Diversity and equality, *including tolerance, respect, inclusion*

- **"Education beyond the classroom,"** examines how educational approaches must include global-oriented issues, exposures, and actions, with learning environments that spread across home, schools, and communities.
- **"Co-construction of education"** describes how education stakeholders all have a role to play in co-constructing education, from supporting learner-driven approaches to challenging existing rigid structures.
- **"Social and emotional well-being,"** explores holistic, whole-student, whole-school, and whole-community approaches that move beyond academic progress and assessment. It invites educators and administrators to prioritize socio-emotional skills strategies, resources and opportunities for learning that empower children to succeed both in and out of schools.

The report concludes with an overview of trends and challenges identified from the discussions.

Envisioning our shared futures

To open the imagination to a plurality of possible futures, participants started the discussions with a collaborative, hands-on and futuristic brainstorming session on what they want and do not want to see in our world 30 years from now. The following themes emerged across countries, underlying recurring hopes for 2050:
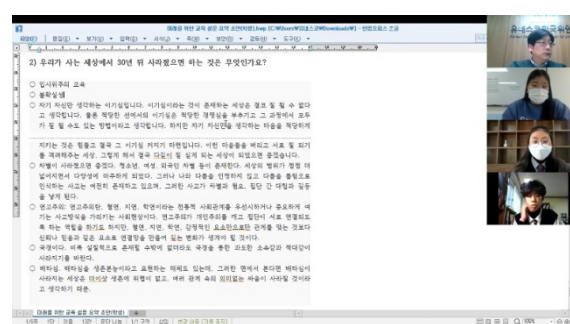
- **Environmental sustainability**, including *nature, environment, waste management*
- **Diversity and equality,** including *tolerance, respect, inclusion*
- **Human Rights,** including *accessibility to education, freedom, health care, quality of education*
- **Belonging,** including *connectedness, community, cooperation, family*
- **Moral values**, including *empathy, respect, honesty, kindness*

In addition to these five themes, **well-being, peace, and economic security** were also significant transversal issues crosscutting participating countries. While the conversations revealed commonalities, they also uncovered specific visions of the future reflecting different local realities. For instance, students in Latvia expressed concerns related to the impact of technology use and reliance on authentic and engaging learning environments, while teachers in Angola emphasized the need to have schools with libraries.

When teachers, students and their parents were asked what they do not want to see in our world 30 years from now, many similar issues were discussed. Reflecting the focus on environmental sustainability, pollution was a prime concern across focus groups. They also expressed that they do not want to see or experience:

© Kijoon Soh - Students in **Korea** discussing what they *do not want to see in our world in 30 years*

- **Conflict,** including war, violence, extremism, terrorism
- **Human rights violations,** including illiteracy, slavery, sex trafficking, child labour
- **Exclusion and discrimination,** including racism, bullying, inequality
- **Apathy,** including inaction and indifference
- **Ill-health,** including disease, covid and other viruses
- **Economic hardship,** including poverty, financial insecurity and low/under employment

Many focus groups concentrated on elements related to areas that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to address, such as pollution, poverty, war, racism, and disease. Particularly interesting were the frequently mentioned not-wants of apathy and inaction. Research shows that efforts to address social and global problems such as poverty, gender

inequality and climate change are hindered significantly by apathy and low levels of active civil and political engagement amongst populations (Wilson, 2010).

Additional issues discussed included the use of **social media and screen time**, the positive and negative implications of **digital technology** in education and addressing **fake news and media literacy** through education.

"Working with the SDGs in various school projects has been one of the ways I have gained more awareness of the seriousness of climate change and the importance of sustainable living. But besides that I don't think that sustainability plays a big enough role in our curriculum."
Student from Denmark

© International Centre for the UNESCO ASPnet (ICUA) - Students in **China** discussing what has helped them in their formal education to live more sustainably

The issue of apathy and inaction also emerged strongly when focus groups were discussing how we can live more sustainably on our planet, where 72% of countries mentioned **taking action** as a priority, especially related to consumption and waste (72%), environmental conservation (61%), civic participation (67%), development (56%), and relationship building (44%). Discussants recommended promoting awareness of issues, big-picture thinking skills (systems thinking), and taking responsibility, which together create an ethos towards living a sustainable lifestyle.

Overall, students, teachers and parents across the 26 countries found that the world is increasingly complex and interconnected; and that GCED and ESD can be key enablers to make sense of, play an active part in, and hold each other accountable for building more peaceful, just and sustainable societies.

Figure 1: What do school communities want and not want to see in our world in 2050?

Source: Authors, developed from a database of responses from all focus groups, regardless of language of consultation

"A green planet for all." Students from Algeria

"A world in which it is possible to grow inward, to be a better person, a human being. Make us more human. Promote values in and for students." Teachers from Costa Rica

"[We] want to see [our] children recycle and reuse; a new world with less plastic and pollution." Parents from Greece

"Conflicts that endanger the lives and education of children" Teachers from Haiti

"[We] unanimously concluded that [we] want to see a world without violence, crime or exploitation. A world without any form of violence either against human beings or animals and nature." Teachers from Greece

"Pollution, hunger and inequality in the world." Teachers from Peru

"A society where people have empathy for others and communities are connected across generations." Parents from Japan

"Terrorism, fanatism, poverty, inequality, impunity and injustice, corruption, dictatorship and Robotics ruling the world." Students and Teachers from Lebanon

"After 30 years, there should still be behaviors such as sharing warmth, and saving and helping others voluntarily." Students from Korea

"Education which is silent on terrorism, dictatorship, environmental issues, gender inequality, and gender stereotypes, human trafficking, discrimination based on any reason especially addressed to people with disabilities." Teachers from Rwanda

"Solidarity with peoples in the world and exchange culture of peace." Teachers from Laos

Education beyond the classroom

In focus group consultations, teachers, students and their parents were vocal proponents of teaching and learning experiences that take students outside of the confines of traditional classrooms. Participants brought forth three key priorities for engaging in this learning:

- Understanding and critically thinking about the world and the links between our own lives and the lives of people around the world;
- Contributing to the community, being accountable to the community and holding community members responsible for their actions;
- Respecting and valuing diversity, showing compassion for people in their communities, calling for social justice and equity.

Cross-cultural applied activities have transformative power

In the twelve country consultations that asked their students about building global-minded citizens, 100% of the groups identified applied and experiential education as essential pedagogical methods for the future, which include student exchange or study abroad programs, project-based learning, community service learning, travel/field trips, work integrated learning and the celebration of international days (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Students and teachers call for applied and experiential learning experiences
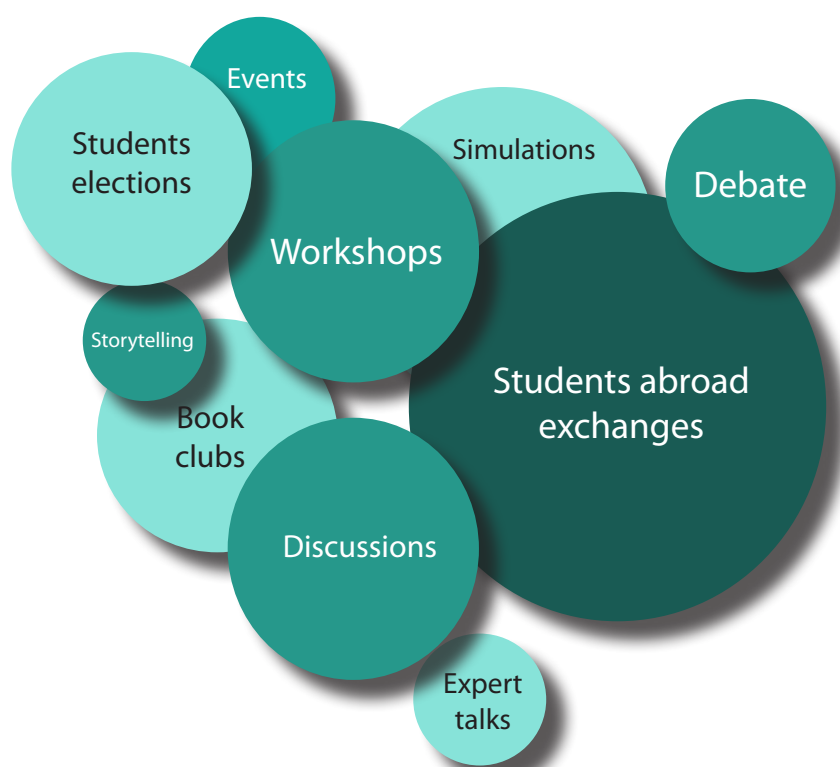
Source: Authors. Note that bubbles are generally sized in relation to the number of mentions in focus groups

Participants believed that these cross-cultural applied activities and immersive experiences should have disruptive as well as transformative power, making 'real' the local/global intersections that exist in every community and creating growth in the three areas outlined above: by building knowledge of global awareness, creating cognitive dissonance with personal beliefs and bias, and leading to personal growth and action.

"Understand why I am learning and what it will give me. Knowledge that is gained through practice, is the most comprehensive, can be gained easier and is more useful in daily life. Communicating with people of different generations by listening to the insights expressed by older people." Students from Latvia

"Education which is silent on terrorism, dictatorship, environmental issues, gender inequality, and gender stereotypes, human trafficking, discrimination based on any reason especially addressed to people with disabilities." Teachers from Rwanda

"Children need more experiences from other cultures and countries. It would be good for children to have visits from other schools in Norway and abroad to compare experiences." Teachers from Norway.

"Terrorism, fanatism, poverty, inequality, impunity and injustice, corruption, dictatorship and Robotics ruling the world." Students and Teachers from Lebanon

"We learn to live more sustainably by having opportunities to work on projects that effectively made some difference (eco-projects, volunteer projects)." Students from Portugal

"After 30 years, there should still be behaviors such as sharing warmth, and saving and helping others voluntarily." Students from Korea

"Encourage group work so that there is adaptation and exchange between students." Teachers from Madagascar

"A society where people have empathy for others and communities are connected across generations." Parents from Japan

"Solidarity with peoples in the world and exchange culture of peace." Teachers from Laos

"Pollution, hunger and inequality in the world." Teachers from Peru

"In civics class students debate over hot global issue about human right and citizenship. Integrating learning process with world phonemes has created a sense of humanity and students have big concern over the problems faced by world. For example: The student creates a video informing about COVID 19 in English, which is then uploaded to their Instagram." Focus group participants from Indonesia

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"The students' activities in the school should be more widen and involved in the social activities for learning" Teachers from Laos

"Water pollution in Bangladesh is a serious issue. Many rivers are dying or already completely dead. One of the major reasons is establishment of industrial buildings at the bank of the rivers. When the students see things by their own eyes, it is indeed a clarion call for them. When after 30 years from now they reach an age where they are taking and implementing decisions, they must act sensibly because they know what they are doing what impact their decisions can create." Focus group participants from Bangladesh

"Our students need to "leave" the neighborhood in which they live to become citizens of the world. Many of them do not know other neighborhoods in the city of Madrid and only have experiences outside the neighborhood through the activities that take place in the center. We positively value the cultural outings, as well as the camps that are made from Infantile where they have the opportunity to get to know other places also at the national level. We believe that traveling opens the mind to the world. The discussion occurs when it is seen that in order to make this change, a methodological change is needed where the contents can converge with activities designed in contact with the environment." Teachers from Spain

© Jussi Tomberg - Students in **Finland** discussing how to improve education to be able to become sustainable, global citizens

Students as critical citizens and inclusive, sustainable schools

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) that extends beyond the classroom provides students and teachers with opportunities to work collaboratively, to examine the world's human and natural systems from multiple perspectives, and to integrate learning across the curriculum by following the threads in an increasingly complex reality. This type of global education intentionally wrestles with questions of diversity, identity, citizenship, democracy, power, privilege, sustainability, and ethical action. **Focus groups have strongly urged that future educational approaches include: (1) global-oriented issues, (2) exposure and actions, and (3) learning environments that spread across the home, schools and communities.** Working with intangible cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge and ways of learning and teaching were mentioned as particularly important.

© Diana Borrás - School leaders and teachers in **Costa Rica** debating how education can contribute to fostering more sustainable and peaceful societies

Similar findings came out of focus group discussions on Education for Sustainable Development, as participants overwhelmingly agreed that experiential and applied learning experiences were crucial to the future of ESD. The general sentiment was that **in the future, learning will happen more intentionally in alternative places and spaces, as students called for expanding learning in (1) the community, (2) internationally by travelling to other places and experiencing other cultures, and (3) in the outdoors, such as learning to grow one's own food**. The data also shows that students are craving connectedness in teaching methods, with the top three methods including the exchange and sharing of ideas, trips, and discussions.

There was also an emphasis on involving both family and the community in ESD initiatives, with over half of the national focus groups identifying this as a priority. Broadening the educational lens beyond school to encompass family and community education on sustainability was also perceived as a solution in consultations across all participating countries, both to increase the effectiveness of education provided to children at school, and to reinforce at home what is learned in the classroom. This included community-based gardening, up-cycling workshops, and technology training that could enable the information about sustainability to be learned in an applied and experiential way. These methods spark interest in students and teachers, enabling them to apply what they learn in holistic practices. In order to realize these initiatives, consultations identified that curriculum improvement, students as critical citizens and inclusive schools were key focus areas.

At Elm Creek School, a K–12 community school in Elm Creek, Manitoba, Canada, students and teachers launched a school-wide project to bring more awareness to, and take action on, the SDGs. Students were placed into multi-graded groups and then each of these groups was assigned one or two of the Sustainable Development Goals to research. This research process led to planning that supported the ultimate goal of the entire school working together to implement action projects that could address the SDGs. Action projects that continue to be implemented and sustained include:

An annual food drive to collect non-perishable food items for children and families in need within the school's community and surrounding areas (SDG #2: Zero Hunger)

© Darlene Banman - Elm Creek School's annual food drive to collect non-perishable food items for children and families in need

An annual drive to collect school supplies, personal care items, and small toys for children in developing countries (SDG # 4: Quality Education)

A school-wide waste composting project using worms to break down food waste into useable compost for the school's garden, which then raises produce for the school's canteen (SDG #12: Responsible Consumption and Production)
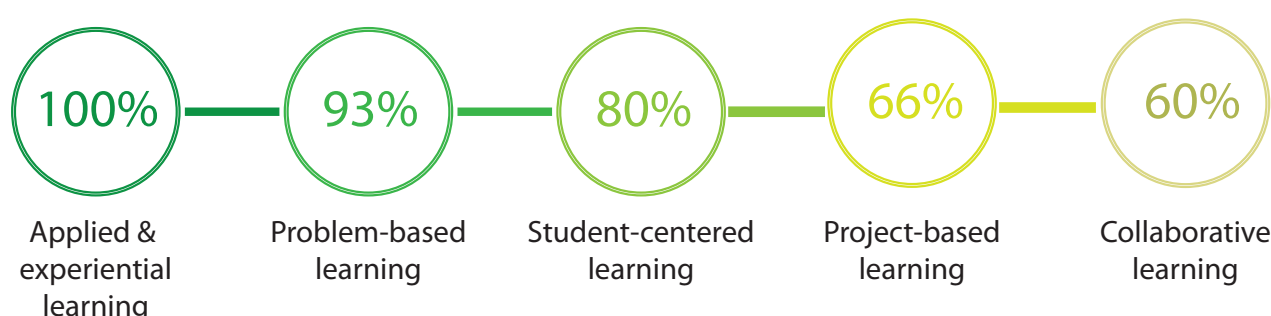
Co-construction of education

Teachers, students, parents and communities all have a role to play in co-constructing education, from supporting learner-driven approaches to challenging existing rigid structures.

Learner-driven pedagogy

A key insight that emerged from the student focus groups is the desire for learner-driven pedagogy. In learner-centered classrooms, teachers are not the sole purveyors of information and knowledge. Rather, the students themselves play an active role in the learning process. Creation of meaning becomes one of the primary aims in learner-centered approaches. Figure 3 shows the types of learner-centered pedagogies and practices recommended by students, some of which tie back to "Education beyond the classroom". These are based on the idea that students are engaged in knowledge construction using their experiences and actions. Further, students would like to have opportunities to suggest topics and focus of lessons.

Figure 3: Learner-Centered Pedagogies and Practices Recommended by Students

Percentage of countries where the practice was mentioned at least once

100%	93%	80%	66%	60%
Applied & experiential learning	Problem-based learning	Student-centered learning	Project-based learning	Collaborative learning

Source: Authors

Focus group participants argued that for ESD to become transformative, learners should be offered more responsibility over their learning. For example, in the learner-driven approach, the learners themselves define sustainability and sustainable development through an iterative process. The learner-driven strategies are tools which support critical, innovative or even transformative thinking. With this approach, the learners' actions create interest, which then creates more action. **Teachers, students and parents discussed sustainable actions that schools can immediately start to implement to model sustainable living to the school community:**

> *"Plant, observe, protect! The project started while these 7-year-old students were in quarantine at home. The instructions were uploaded step by step on an e-class platform. The students, planted seeds and kept an observation diary for the sprouts, collected and dried plants for the class common e-Herbarium, drew plant-figures, celebrated Earth Day by writing and drawing with a collaborative online doc–– with students from a school in Poland, celebrated World Bee Day with crafts, drawings, poems, photographs and a Greek-Polish video was created to present their work. They also celebrated Sustainable Gastronomy Day focusing on local products, sustainable preparation of food, no waste of natural resources and a food industry process that can be continued into the future without being harmful to our environment or health."*
> *Teachers from Greece*

> *"The school carried out a campaign to collect used tires and gave them a new use, placing them in the garden (like pots), teaching students one of the basic principles of sustainability which is reuse." Teachers from Angola*

> *"Take care of plants, composting, take care cleanliness, waste management, canteen management. For 3 days they are absent in regular class and do this program outdoor." Focus group from Indonesia*

> *"The school […] from their own initiative […] planted one thousand trees in this covid situation across the city. So this is quite an extra-ordinary practice for the students." Focus group from Bangladesh*

> *"A caring school culture that invites everyone to discuss all kinds of issues, even controversial ones, thus fostering freedom of speech [and] an atmosphere of over-all kindness and well-being, as well as of equity and equality." Students from Finland*

"Involving pupils and students participation in decision making about their work in their own class, school and education." Teachers from Denmark

"Promote students' self-initiative and self-efficacy: one of the attendees provided the example of students that wanted a vegetarian school canteen – they founded a student council to realise their idea, the school canteen now serves vegetarian meals only; foundation of Climate Councils in schools." Focus group from Germany

"Our school program to protect and preserve the environment, for example, students bring their own tumbler and lunchbox, a canteen without plastic wrap, using e-book during teaching learning proses, paperless exams, and collecting used frying oil as biodiesel fuel for city public transport." Teachers from Indonesia

"Take care of plants, composting, take care cleanliness, waste management, canteen management. For 3 days they are absent in regular class and do this program outdoor." Focus group from Indonesia

"Extracurricular outings focused on environmental issues, videos are viewed and discussions are held between students and teachers."
Parents from Spain

"The guiding principle of course content for elective course CRS (interdisciplinary thematic set - chemistry, geography, psychology, philosophy) are two basic questions: Are we, do we want to be, do we dare to be critical consumers? Do we have the knowledge to assess our own consumer habits and to change them? Together with relevant professors, students think over, examine, and look for solutions on how they can affect the world themselves, how our actions can ultimately cause an ecological disaster or create an environment-friendly and sustainable relationship with our common good. Students examine the effects of consumerism as one of the main reasons for numerous environmental, social and economic issues, and ultimately examine whether we are capable and ready to take on the challenge to effect small or larger changes in our own life and conduct, thus joining forces in a network of sustainable and common progress. Course content is supplemented with laboratory work, lectures by visiting experts and visits to institutions. The curriculum also includes an expert field trip." Teachers from Slovenia

"By integrating the SDGs into the curriculum through a multidisciplinary approach and extracurricular activities, by integrating innovative training in entrepreneurship, leadership, and 21st century skills, by integrating learning in the arts and crafts of the 21st century such as robotics and artificial intelligence while respecting ethics and human values, by ensuring an educational system adapted to the needs of each child, and by providing continuous training for teachers and students."
Teachers and students from Lebanon

Teacher preparation as key ingredient for inclusion of GCED and ESD

Focus group participants strongly advocated for professional development that would allow teachers to be comprehensively equipped to educate around the behaviours, beliefs, goals, and values of GCED and ESD, in practical, moral, and institutional terms. Teachers advocated for resources and training to allow for a movement away from technical, siloed and bureaucratic curriculum to communicative and holistic dialogues.

"Teachers play a critical role in transforming education. Building the capacity of teachers is considered one of the top priorities in the schools. Teachers are expected to not only have strong subject knowledge, but also be globally aware themselves, and possess effective pedagogic skills to turn GCED visions into reality at the classroom level. To prepare students to be ethical, moral, and responsible global citizens, teachers are given professional development opportunities with cross-cultural understanding and international competence themed field trips and training. For example, teachers from Qingdao mentioned seven groups of school administrators and teachers who had cross-cultural communication training overseas. After the training, these teachers reported gaining broader global visions and richer multicultural perspectives. As a result, teachers depended on their knowledge base and pedagogic skills needed to respond to the new demands of GCED teaching. A special note is that the schools intend to involve all teachers in global teaching and learning, regardless of their subject expertise."
Focus group participants from China

Participants, especially teachers, also identified that a more equitable balance between learning methods and community-mindedness was in need of development. Global Citizenship Education can provide educators with the perspectives necessary to help young people make sense of the contemporary world and take conscious decisions about the role they want to have in it. Teachers must be allowed the flexibility in time, curriculum and assessment to unpack institution and community-based bias and help students consider their own roles and responsibilities as well as those of their families and communities in the production of equitable educational outcomes. Emphasizing the key drivers of this balance between learning methods and community-mindedness will come from:

- **Community service** (mentioned by Angola, Indonesia, Korea, Lebanon, Slovenia and Spain)
- **Cultural humility** (Angola, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Slovenia and Spain)

- **Equitable access** (Angola, Bangladesh, Germany, Greece, Lebanon, Slovenia and Spain)
- **Seeking perspectives that differ from their own** (Angola, Bangladesh, Belarus, Japan, Korea, Laos, Lebanon, Greece, Slovenia and Spain)

From their conversations, we see teachers as individually navigating educational systems, where global citizenship and sustainable values, morals and frameworks are largely discussed, but policies, resources and institutional arrangements in educational settings might not support or may even hinder these educational approaches.

Challenging rigid structures

Nearly all focus groups with teachers that addressed the question, "How can education possibly exacerbate inequalities, injustices, racism and some of the other challenges we identified?" reported that rigidity in the structures of teaching approaches is the greatest contributor to exacerbating inequalities, and that systemic and historical inequalities were the greatest contributors to ongoing discrimination and other challenges.

© Christiane Jeitani - Teachers in **Lebanon** discussing how to foster global citizens for sustainable development

School leaders and teachers systematically identified that to meet the educational needs and improve learning opportunities of all their students necessitated equitable policies, immersive state curricula that positively informed teacher pedagogies, diversity in student population, more flexibility to bring global dimensions and perspectives into teaching and learning including through cultural and character education, collaboration with colleagues across disciplines, professional development opportunities, and adequate, up to date resources.

A recommendation that came out of the discussions was to encourage education stakeholders to challenge policies and practices that prevent teachers from setting the learning goals and methodologies, and/or equally constrain opportunities for students to set learning and meaning-making priorities. A comprehensive approach, with educational stakeholders working in unison within systems to challenge, overcome and grow from prescriptive policies and practices, can more holistically address the obstacles that many individuals face in learning environments.

Parental Involvement

When considering the role that parents should play in their child's education, parents across most participating countries were in agreement that their role includes to support student school involvement and learning, to maintain solidarity with the messages students receive from their teachers/schools, and to teach values and attitudes. When considered alongside a complementary question on the role that the wider community should play in education and schools, the same countries that discussed parents' roles (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Korea, Laos and Spain) believed that providing support to the school learning environment and reinforcing values, morals, and ethics were the most important factors.

"[We] play a fundamental and irreplaceable role in the education of [our] children. Therefore, [we] must reflect on it and to see the importance of [our] role in the education of [our] children."
Parents from Spain

"Family education should assist school education, through activities such as not leaving food leftovers, recycling, and saving."
Teachers from Korea

"[We] have to be role models of sustainable behaviour to teach [our] children sustainable habits." Parents from Belarus

""[We] should take part in different school activities along with the students."
Parents from Greece

"Without the cooperation of parents and school communities, students cannot obtain a good education. School community plays a significant role for students to know all values in today's world and teachers do their best to pass their knowledge and experience to students and increase their outlook. Parents› involvement in schools reinforces this relationship and gives them a chance to be aware of their students› academic knowledge."
Parents from Azerbaijan

"The school does real programs collaborating with parents: Bring water bottle at school, 3Rs, water fountain, charity, international projects, gardening, etc."
Parents from Indonesia

Social and emotional well-being

A strong emphasis emerged from the focus group discussions on education for the whole human being, 'head, heart and hand,' and on fostering a balance between practical, academic and artistic engagement and capacity. This principle of educating the whole human being does not only mean that the education should include academic subjects, artistic subjects and practical subjects but that in each subject area the whole human being should be engaged in the learning process (thinking, feeling and doing). Social and emotional skills, such as communicating, empathy, mindfulness, courage and leadership emerged as central to the examples of current global citizenship education captured in the discussions. References

"Cultivating social skills – We need to shift from lecture-based education to students engaging proactively in their learning process, and also cultivating their social skills through integrated activities, such as group activities or those with local communities." Teachers from Korea

"There is an experience in the Directorate of Basic Education in which students are motivated to share and collaborate with different communities. "Sharing smiles" and "Young Hope". Young people organize to help others, learn to teach by doing, and build themselves in the process… (We hope for) A world in which it is possible to grow inward, to be a better person, a human being. Make us more human. Promote values in and for students." Teachers from Costa Rica

"Empathy, solidarity, respect, creativity, culture, science, multilingualism. Knowing how to show respect and education towards each of the people who make up an educational center, whether students, teachers or anyone who works in it. And that they know how to take it to the outside world, to their daily life." Teachers from Spain
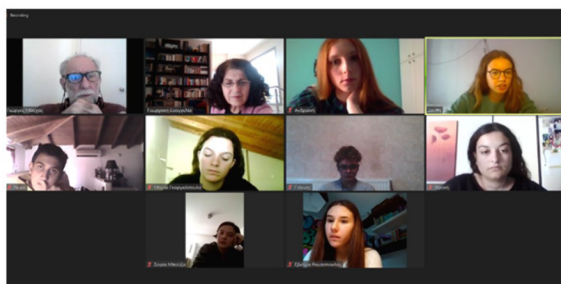
© Evangelia Georgaki - Students in **Greece** debating how we can live more sustainably on our planet

Student participants identified whole-school and green space initiatives as key opportunities for schools to teach more about sustainable development. They also recognized 'character building education' as the principal value that schools can help develop in students, and 'responsibility' (including to oneself, family, and community) as the primary attitude that schools should foster in children and young people.

Recommendations relating to social and emotional well-being derived from focus group discussions include holistic, whole-student, whole-school and whole-community approaches that go beyond cognitive achievements and integrate the benefits of environmental education into a coherent approach for exploring, discussing, and experiencing individual and community well-being.

Additionally, educators and administrators need to prioritize socio-emotional skills strategies, resources, and opportunities for learning that empower children to succeed both in and out of schools. Acknowledgement of the multidimensional nature of education is essential, encompassing several aspects of a child's well-being: physical, social, emotional and mental.

Whole school approaches: To learn what we live and live what we learn

Putting transformative education into practice requires more than teaching contents related to peace, human rights or sustainable development. It requires mainstreaming their principles into every dimension of a learning institution. A whole-institution approach involves rethinking school governance, teaching content and methodology, campus and facilities management as well as cooperation with partners and the broader communities. It involves participatory, reflexive and learner-led processes. The institution itself becomes and functions as a role model for the learners, who integrate the principles they experience in their learning institution into their daily practices, thereby building competence and values in a comprehensive manner. UNESCO Associated schools have implemented the whole-school approach to climate change and developed a how-to guide for schools.

"[Schools can foster global citizens for sustainable development when they] adopt a Whole School Approach that touches all aspects of school life: school governance, teaching and learning, facilities and activities, and community partnerships." Teachers from Lebanon

"The school will adopt the whole school approach. Pupils/students will participate in the whole school effort to turn the school to sustainability, reducing the ecological footprint, introducing the circular economy foundations, the elimination of violence at school and the open and sincere cooperation between all the stakeholders of the school community." Focus group participants from Greece

Conclusion

"Building a stable society and a culture of peace among citizens should be a purpose of every country. Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development are very important topics to be discussed, channels through which the Education system could prepare enabled citizens who will be able to live and work worldwide in the coming future."
Teachers from Rwanda

Education is constantly undergoing transformation, and as legal, economic, and demographic situations continue to evolve, it becomes necessary to adapt educational methods to the realities of the current world. The COVID-19 pandemic has particularly underscored the importance of reflecting on how knowledge and learning need to be rethought in an increasingly complex, dynamic and precarious world. As the pandemic has provided an unexpected moment for us to transform the world and reimagine our education systems, conversations on what, where, and how our learning environments prioritize our futures is imperative. The outcomes in this report show how teachers, administrators, students and their parents in countries around the world are rethinking education priorities to emphasize GCED, ESD and building personal agency. In the midst of dynamic learning challenges, educators are exploring their needs and developing internal capabilities, rather than waiting on the direly needed external provision of support, resources or policy solutions.

When education stakeholders from countries around the world were asked to rethink the futures of education, learning and knowledge, the responses showed strong relationships with the key themes of (1) education beyond the classroom, (2) co-construction of education, and (3) social and emotional well-being. Examples of pedagogical changes that were showcased included those that transformed the "lesson" into a real-life or experiential inquiry or exchange; adapting education systems to allow for either teacher-led or student-driven learning; and promoting problem-based and project-based activities that require student collaboration. In these approaches, learning environments situate students and teachers as co-generators of knowledge and utilize local action as key and vital learning outcomes. This enables children and young people to envision themselves as change-agents and empowers them to create the futures they want to see. The focus group outreach uncovered excellent examples of all educational work in these directions, and inter-nation sharing needs to be encouraged.

As we embrace this exceptional opportunity to reimagine education during a period of dramatic change and uncertainty, the themes set out in this report set forth an excellent foundation for potential future dialogue on the futures of education. These include, but are not limited to:

- The ways schools use holistic approaches to curriculum to challenge nationalistic discourses, education programs and practices, thereby linking citizenship education to global dimensions and global citizenship
- How schools are approaching global citizenship and national citizenship (patriotism, nationalism) in global versus local tensions
- Linkages between environmental sustainability and notions of holistic education, social and emotional well-being, and global citizenship
- Educational policies and practices that promote interweaving priorities of equality, environmental sustainability, and well-being in citizenship education
- Ways in which technology and new online learning tools that transcend national borders can continue to transform our thoughts of global communities, global citizenship, and educational networks

Holistic and collaborative listening, sharing and building are critical in the endeavor to nurture the development of learning environments that promote students as critical thinkers, globally minded, globally competent and active citizens. Education can prepare young people as citizens to not only thrive in a changing world, but to creatively and responsibly dialogue around solutions and act upon them. The diversity of voices heard in these discussions revealed plural realities – and futures – within educational contexts, but also common hopes, fears, and threads of ideas for education systems that are more connected to and prepared for our current and future realities.

Annex: Methodological approaches

For the focus group discussions, a set of questions were developed for each of the unique stakeholder groups (see Figure 5). Nevertheless, the facilitators allowed participants to bring up themes that were not necessarily a part of the standardized question set, but were relevant to the discussion.

Figure: Focus group discussion questions

1st round of reflection: our world in 2050					
What do you still want to see in our world 30 years from now? What do you not want to see in our world 30 years from now? Please pick one of the trends that you do not want to see in 2050, and tell us how it impacts "myself, home, school, community, country and world"					
2nd round of reflection: education for more just, peaceful & sustainable societies					
Global Citizenship Education			Education for Sustainable Development		
Q1. What makes a global citizen?			Q1. How can we live more sustainably on our planet? What knowledge, skills, attitudes and values are needed?		
Q2. How can education foster global citizens?			Q2. How can education support us to live more sustainably on our planet?		
Students	**Teachers/Principals**	**Parents**	**Students**	**Teachers/Principals**	**Parents**
1. From your experience going to school, what has helped you in particular to become a global citizen?	1. Opportunities/ What works well? Please share an example of how global citizenship is (or could be) successfully taught in your class/school and that you would like to recommend for scale/i.e. to other teachers/school principals?	1. Please share an example of how your children's school effectively fosters global citizens.	1. From your experience going to school and learning, what has helped you in particular to live more sustainably? *Additional questions you could use to elicit responses:* Tell me about a moment that you had in a class where you really felt that you understood something or learned a skill that you believe is helping you to live more sustainably on our shared planet? Tell me about a moment in your class where you were really engaged: what was the topic addressed? How was it addressed, i.e. what did the teacher do that helped to engage you?	1. Opportunities/ What works well? Please share an example of how sustainability/ sustainable development is (or could be) successfully taught in your class/school and that you would like to recommend for scale/i.e. to other teachers/school principals?	1. Please share an example of how your children's school effectively fosters learnings associated with sustainable development. What could your children's school do better?

Students	Teachers/Principals	Parents	Students	Teachers/Principals	Parents
2. What ideas do you have to improve today's education to allow you/ students to become global citizens? Additional questions you could use to elicit responses: What would you like to learn more about or what skills would you like to develop to better understand and act upon the challenges we identified and bring about a more just and peaceful world?	2. Challenges/What does not work so well? How can education possibly exacerbate inequalities, injustices, racism and some of the other challenges we identified? What needs to change in our education system today to foster students' knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to become global citizens and to counter these challenges?	2. What role should parents play in their children's education? What role should the wider community play?	2. What ideas do you have to improve today's education to allow you/ students to live more sustainably? In other words, how can education contribute to developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to change the world/ promote a more sustainable world?	2. Challenges/What does not work so well? How can education possibly exacerbate unsustainable behaviours and systems? What needs to change in our education system today to foster the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for future generations to live more sustainably?	2. What role should parents play in their children's education? What role should the wider community play in education/ schools?

After the primary stakeholder consultations, the information collected was systematically collated and analysed. Axial coding was used to pick out themes and assign each one a reference number. Once codes were assigned to sentences, or to a collection of sentences, it was possible to calculate the frequency of codes and themes, both across and within groups or individuals. Code frequency supplied an objective measure of the prevalence of an attitude between and within groups. A vertical and horizontal analysis was then used in the data review process. The vertical analysis considered the discussion points contributed at each site, and then compared the similarities and dissimilarities between sites by theme. A horizontal analysis considered the findings within these themes at each site by the intensity and frequency, and then compared the similarities and dissimilarities between groups. The data was coded and interpreted for responses to questions both across the sample and within demographic groups of interest, including (but not limited to) specific geographies and stakeholder roles.

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 efforts to respond to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.

Futures of Education initiative

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.

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