

CALL FOR THINK PIECES**What will shape the future
of international cooperation in education?**

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UNESCO's Futures of Education IdeasLAB invites short think pieces (1500 words maximum) that reimagine, interrogate and analyze recent changes in global governance, multilateralism and international cooperation in education. We welcome contributions from all who engage with governance or education – including researchers, policy-makers, futures thinkers, public servants, private sector actors, educators, youth and civil society. Think pieces must be submitted by 10 November 2025. *

Description

Multilateralism is in a moment of deep transition. The international system that optimistically pledged its commitments to 'Education for All' in 1990 appears less recognizable today. The frameworks and shared vision that once provided firm foundations for international cooperation in education have frayed, and in mid-2025 they appear more fragile than in past decades. At the same time, new imaginaries and solidarities offer opportunities to reimagine multilateralism, international cooperation and governance at all levels. *How can we think about this present moment? What has changed, and what trajectories – both promising and perilous – appear ahead?*

Longstanding assumptions about global governance, progress and international development are being called into question. On one hand, traditional mechanisms, international aid and funding streams to support education appear far more brittle than they did just a few years ago, as they are commonly operating with less money, influence and ambition than they were in the 1990s and early 2000s. On the other hand, appeals for self-determination in development choices, rejections of longstanding oppressions and power asymmetries,

and demands for equal standards in human rights and justice are calling into question conventional development paradigms. Yet despite these developments and disruptions, the need for global cooperation in education is more urgent now than ever before. Communities, societies and the planet are confronting the consequences of ecological tipping points, the intensification and increase in violent conflicts, rising economic inequalities, concentrations of wealth, and head-spinning technological changes. Humanity is facing these interconnected challenges at a moment when the multilateral system itself is inundated by crises of trust, shrinking budgets and, in many instances, reduced social and financial support for education. *What assumptions are being challenged, and how? What new approaches, visions or signals of change appear to hold promise, and what meaningful steps could be taken to reinvigorate multilateralism and global cooperation in education? Whose voices, interests and experiences must be more seriously accounted for?*

New players in the governance of education are also emerging with diverging interests, motivations and needs. Regional blocs and political and economic alliances are exerting greater influences on cooperation. So too are transnational corporations, technology platforms with near global reach, and private individuals and philanthropies with financial reserves that occasionally rival or exceed those of national economies. Meanwhile, grassroots movements, Indigenous communities and civil society organizations are working to ensure that their knowledge and experience are recognized and incorporated in how education is shaped and governed in diverse contexts. *As new power dynamics take hold and collide, where are there opportunities for multilateral and global cooperation in education? If assumptions that have defined education development for the past several decades are indeed crumbling, what is likely to emerge in their place?*

We welcome a wide range of provocations, analyses and ideas to think through these and other questions about the future of international cooperation and education, and how education itself can help shape directions for both humanity and the planet.



Submission guidelines

Submission form

To submit your contributions, please complete the webform here:

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/8415794/What-will-shape-the-future-of-international-cooperation-for-education>

Only think pieces that have been submitted via the webform can be considered by the review team.

Deadline

Submissions close on **Monday, 10 November 2025** at 11:59pm Central European Time (CET).

Some submissions may be reviewed on a rolling basis, and we encourage you to submit ahead of the deadline.

Evaluation criteria

UNESCO's [Futures of Education IdeasLAB](#) welcomes diverse perspectives, fresh viewpoints and provocative debates. All submissions will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

- a. Relevance to the topic and alignment with the call for contributions
- b. Originality, criticality and quality of the contribution (content)
- c. Quality of writing (e.g. grammar, organization, clarity of argument and style)

Other factors that may be considered across the published collection include balance of representation of region, stakeholders and perspective.

All authors must confirm that their submissions are their original work, that they are human-generated and that they do not violate any copyright agreements with other publishers.

Authors must properly attribute all sources, including any AI-generated components.

Plagiarism, commercial content and product promotion are strictly prohibited.

Writing guidelines

Submissions should not exceed 1,500 words (excluding references).

Think pieces may be submitted in either of UNESCO's two official working languages, English or French.

Please refer to the [IdeasLAB FAQ and guidelines](#) for any questions about style, citations and formatting. We also encourage you to browse previously published think pieces to see examples of what IdeasLAB has published in the past.

Copyright and publication

We appreciate all submissions to this call. However, only those accepted for publication by the review and editorial team will be retained.

Published think pieces will be attributed to the author(s) and placed under open access copyright in line with standard UNESCO practices.

UNESCO does not offer remuneration for think pieces in response to this call.

Further information and questions

Any questions about this call can be directed to the IdeasLAB editorial team at: futuresofeducation@unesco.org

We thank you for your interest and look forward to reading your contributions.