



Futures Dialogues

Futures of Research on Gender and Education

Date and time: Wednesday 20 May 2026, 14:00 to 15:30 (Paris time)
Languages: English and French
Format: Zoom meeting – Please [click here](#) to register

[Please register here!](#)

Over the past decades, significant progress has been made in advancing gender equality in education, particularly in improving access and achieving parity in enrolment at primary and increasingly secondary levels, with women now surpassing men in tertiary education in many regions (UNESCO, 2026; UIS). Global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), have helped drive investments and policy commitments toward more inclusive education systems.

Research has played a central role in this progress – shaping global agendas, informing policy decisions, and generating the evidence base used to monitor and catalyse change. It has also helped strengthen accountability and provide foresight to anticipate phenomena. However, it has often focused heavily on established indicators such as enrolment and completion, sometimes at the expense of deeper analysis of power relations, social norms, and lived experiences within education systems (UNESCO and University College London, 2024).

Despite progress, gender inequalities in education persist in multiple and evolving forms. These include disparities in learning outcomes, subject choices, leadership pathways, school safety, and transitions into employment (UNESCO, 2026). At the same time, global transformations including digitalization, climate change, conflict, and shifting social norms, are reshaping both education systems and gender relations in ways that are not yet fully understood.

These dynamics point not only to gaps in evidence, but also to the complexity of translating knowledge into meaningful and sustained change. They raise important questions about how research can better engage with policy, practice, and lived realities, and how it can contribute to more gender-transformative education systems.

UNESCO Chairs and participants in this Futures Dialogue will explore the futures of research on gender and education – considering what kinds of evidence are needed, and how research can more effectively support equitable, inclusive and gender-transformative education systems in a rapidly changing world.

[This Futures Dialogue](#) will feature two moderated panels followed by an open discussion on the futures of research on gender and education. It will focus on:

- (1) **Shifting focus: Evolving priorities in gender and education research;** and
 - (2) **New approaches: Rethinking how research on gender and education is conducted,**
- with **Closing the gap: Linking research, policy and practice** as a cross-cutting theme.

Key considerations for the futures of research on gender and education

1. Shifting focus: Evolving priorities in gender and education research

From research on access to research on power, inequality and transformation

- **From parity to power and agency:** Focusing on participation, and leadership and educational institutional cultures.
- **Education as a driver of gender norms:** How curricula, pedagogy, and school environments reinforce or challenge gender norms, and what enables transformative change.
- **Intersecting inequalities:** How gender interlinks with poverty, disability, ethnicity, migration status, location and other factors to shape unequal educational experiences and outcomes.
- **Gender in crisis contexts** How conflict, displacement, and climate change reshape risks, roles, and access—and what enables resilience and continuity.

2. New approaches: Rethinking how research on gender and education is conducted

From measuring gaps to enabling change

- **Measuring gender norms and power relations:** Research tools that capture attitudes, beliefs, social norms and internal dynamics beyond standard indicators.
- **Integrated, intersectional designs:** Research that reflects the complexity of lived experiences through sampling and data collection strategies.
- **Gender-transformative and feminist research approaches:** Interrogating and challenging the norms, structures and power relations that produce inequality.
- **Participatory and youth-led methods:** Engaging learners as co-researchers through participatory action research, peer ethnography, and youth-led inquiry on gender norms and inequalities.
- **Digital tools and data:** Responsible use of digital and AI methods to analyse participation, representation, and bias.
- **Longitudinal perspectives:** Tracking how gender norms and education shape life trajectories over time.

3. Closing the gap: Linking research, policy and practice

From evidence generation to use for transformation

- **Strengthening uptake:** How are research findings communicated, interpreted, and used in policy, planning, and school-level decision-making.
- **Informing transformative action:** Apply research to design and implement gender-transformative policies and practices.
- **Understanding what drives use:** Institutional, political, and practical factors that enable or constrain research uptake.

References

UIS. 2026. [UIS Data Browser](#). UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) website.

UNESCO. 2026. [Global Education Monitoring Report 2026: Access and equity – Countdown to 2030](#). Paris, UNESCO.

UNESCO and University College London (UCL). [Accountability for Gender Equality in Education \(AGEE\): bridging the local, national and global](#). Paris and London, UNESCO and UCL.

Provisional Agenda

Futures of Research on Gender and Education Wednesday 20 May 2026, 14:00 to 15:30 (Paris time)	
14:00-14:05	Welcome Justine Sass , Chief, Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality UNESCO
14:05-14:35	Panel discussion Segment 1: Shifting Focus: Evolving priorities in gender and education research Moderator: Matthias Eck , Programme Specialist, Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality UNESCO <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gloria Bonder, UNESCO Regional Chair on Women, Science and Technology in Latin America, Coordinator of the UNESCO Chairs on Gender, Director of the Department of Gender, Society and Policies of Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), Argentina• Catherine Jere, Co-Chair of the UNESCO Chair in Adult Literacy and Learning for Social Transformation, University of East Anglia, United Kingdom• Nkonso Mkhize, University of KwaZulu-Natal (PhD candidate), South Africa
14:35-15:00	Panel discussion Segment 2: New approaches: Rethinking how research on gender and education is conducted Moderator: Matthias Eck , Programme Specialist, Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality UNESCO <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Penny Jane Burke, UNESCO Chair in Equity, Social Justice and Higher Education, Director, Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education, University of Newcastle, Australia• Aaron Benavot, Professor, Department of Educational Policy & Leadership, University at Albany, United States

15:00-15:20	Collective reflections, open dialogue and ways forward
15:20-15:25	Concluding comments Justine Sass , Chief, Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality UNESCO
15:25-15:30	Closing remarks and next steps Keith Holmes , Research Coordinator/UNITWIN, Future of Learning and Innovation Division, UNESCO

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