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UNESCO AND EDUCATION

In no other field does UNESCO's role as a 'shaper of the future' appear so clearly as in education.

UNESCO had its forerunners in the field of international co-operation among educators. In the aftermath of the First World War, the Council of the League of Nations proposed the creation of an International Committee to examine questions of intellectual and educational co-operation. The International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation established in 1925 did not actually have education as one of its specific functions, although it did devote a significant proportion of its activities – some of them in many ways foreshadowing those of UNESCO – to education. The somewhat marginal nature of the Institute's educational activities in fact so frustrated educators that in 1929 the International Bureau of Education (IBE) was transformed into an intergovernmental organization. Carrying on the work of the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute of the University of Geneva, IBE was to open the way to co-operation among governments in the field of education, hitherto regarded as a preserve of national sovereignty.

Conceived while bombs were falling, in the darkest hours of the bloodiest conflict in history, UNESCO was the offspring of a meditation on war and on the atrocities perpetrated during the period that came to an end in 1945. Its birth called education into question for failing to prevent the war and its consequences, yet constituted a declaration of faith in education for the build-ing of a better future.

'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men

that the defences of peace must be constructed.' But not peace at any price: peace founded upon 'the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind' and not merely the absence of war. This is a primarily educational mission, involving 'full and equal opportunities for education for all'. Hence the realization that the right to education and education for justice, freedom and peace are the two fundamental ethical tasks assigned to UNESCO. They go hand in hand. This is the first distinguishing feature of UNESCO – an organization whose ethical purpose has precedence over its technical function.

UNESCO was also endowed with other fields of competence besides education: the natural sciences, the social and human sciences, culture and communication. Its educational work greatly benefited from its contact with these disciplines and their occasional interpenetration, which education had to take into account. As a result, education was no longer confined to teaching and pedagogical aspects, but was thrown open to the entire realm of knowledge, ideas and creativity that it blended to forge a modern humanism. This is UNESCO's second distinguishing feature.

Its work in the field of education – and this is its third distinguishing feature – is to be seen in the context of the United Nations System. While independent, UNESCO is a party to a collective endeavour to foster peace and the common prosperity of all. Its contribution takes the form of international co-operation by educators whose efforts to extend and improve education serve these causes, thereby giving a highly practical

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

Education for justice, liberty and peace is the nations' sacred duty: the importance that the authors of the Constitution attributed to education and their faith in its power situate UNESCO's founding text within the great humanist tradition of the eminent thinkers who have been the glory of different civilizations, they make it one of the most remarkable ethical documents of the twentieth century and give it an imperishable relevance.

The importance of education in the eyes of UNESCO's founders is mirrored by the importance of its place in the Constitution. The fact that no other concept appears as frequently as that of education in its Preamble and Article I is significant in this respect. This vision of the role of education is one of the great messages conveyed by the Constitution from the founders of UNESCO.

UNESCO: an Ideal in Action. The Continuing Relevance of a Visionary Text, Federico Mayor and Sema Tanguiane, Paris, UNESCO, 1996.

flavour to the debate on education and the policies to which it leads. All reflection, studies and exchanges of ideas among educators are action-oriented. UNESCO – and this is its fourth distinguishing feature – is the only intergovernmental organization with competence in education that has a universal vocation.

UNESCO is neither a technical agency, nor a research institute; nor is it a centre for theoretical speculation or purely pedagogical study, or as has sometimes been mistakenly thought, a supranational ministry of education. Throughout the fifty years of its existence, it has constantly helped its Member States to identify their needs and aspirations in the field of education through consultations, surveys and international or regional conferences. But, in so doing it has always been guided by these countries' own choices and has always scrupulously abided by their decisions. While never neutral when principles of equity, human dignity, respect for human rights and international understanding have been at stake, it has never sought to impose national policies, curricula or textbooks.

UNESCO has constantly sought to mobilize the political will of the international community on behalf of the two great educational causes – the right to education and the role of education in building a more caring world – but it has never attempted to supplant the governments of its Member States. In any event, it lacks the means to do so. Even if it were to devote the whole of its budget, including its own operating costs, to illiteracy eradication it would have barely 25 cents a year to spend on each illiterate in the world.

Today the fact is that since the task of developing and improving education rests essentially with governments, UNESCO has been called upon to play a different and quite considerable role over the last fifty years: that of acting as a stimulus and a catalyst,

1946-1996 DIRECTORS, LATER ASSISTANT DIRECTORS-GENERAL, FOR EDUCATION	
• Kuo Yu-Shou, China	1946-1948
• Clarence E. Beeby, New Zealand	1948-1949
• Jean Piaget, Switzerland (a.i.)	1949-1950
• Lionel Elvin, United Kingdom	1950-1956
• W. Harold Loper, United States of America	1957-1960
• Masunori Hiratsuka, Japan	1960-1961
• Shannon McCune, United States of America	1961-1962
• Gabriel Betancour-Mejia, Colombia	1963-1966
• Jean Guiton, France (a.i.)	1966-1967*
• Carlos Flexa Ribeiro, Brazil	1967-1970
• Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Senegal	1970-1974
• Leo Fernig, United Kingdom (a.i.)	1974-1975
• Sema Tanguiane, ex-USSR	1975-1988
• Akihiro Chiba, Japan (a.i.)	1988-1989
• Colin N. Power, Australia	since 1989

* And earlier, on three other occasions.

analysing trends, defining policies, setting standards, formulating key ideas, encouraging innovation and organizing exchanges of information, ideas and people. And, at the appropriate time mobilizing the financial and human resources needed for the advancement of education. UNESCO's role in the field of education is to do with scant resources what other institutions cannot do, or cannot do as well.

1946-1996 EVOLUTION OF UNESCO'S REGULAR PROGRAMME RESOURCES																
<p>BUDGET IN 1948</p> <p>The 1948 UNESCO programme was divided into six chapters. These, with the sums for each, are as follows: Reconstruction \$614,141 Communication \$1,714,722 Education \$854,551 Cultural Interchange \$530,237 Social sciences \$327,236 Natural sciences \$918,926</p> <p>These allocations total \$4,959,813 for 1948, leaving something over two million dollars for administrative purposes, for the next session of the General Conference, for the Executive Board [...]</p> <p><small>The UNESCO Courier, February 1948</small></p>	<p>Regular budget yearly total*</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>1996</td><td>259.2</td></tr> <tr><td>1990</td><td>189.4</td></tr> <tr><td>1980</td><td>151.5</td></tr> <tr><td>1970</td><td>38.7</td></tr> <tr><td>1960</td><td>13.7</td></tr> <tr><td>1950</td><td>8.0</td></tr> <tr><td>1947</td><td>6.9</td></tr> </table> <p><small>* in millions of current dollars (not re-evaluated)</small></p>	1996	259.2	1990	189.4	1980	151.5	1970	38.7	1960	13.7	1950	8.0	1947	6.9	<p>EDUCATION'S SHARE of the regular programme budget</p> <p>As the aim of this brochure is to report on UNESCO's global action in education since 1946, without following a strictly sectoral approach, it can be estimated that considerably more than 50% of the Organization's regular programme budget was earmarked for education.</p>
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