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**EDUCATION FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING AFTER WWII – AN EDUCATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS?**

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**ABSTRACT**

UNESCO's program on education for International Understanding had the overall aim of contributing to a world based on peaceful cooperation between nations and peoples after WWII. Such education, although it included providing pupils with knowledge, centered more on the teaching of skills, practices and attitudes every individual would need in order to live peacefully together across cultural and national boundaries. International Understanding as such was to be a mental defense against war and totalitarian ideas. Here, we discuss the content of education for international understanding in the 1940s and early 1950s, together with ideas for its implementation in different regions and nations. It will revolve around UNESCO's Teachers' Seminars from 1946 to 1952, and their foci on cultural understanding and human rights education

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within UNESCO's broader debates on how to teach International Understanding.

**Keywords:** education, UNESCO, human rights, international understanding.

## **EDUCAÇÃO PARA A COMPREENSÃO INTERNACIONAL APÓS A SEGUNDA GUERRA MUNDIAL - UMA EDUCAÇÃO PARA OS DIREITOS HUMANOS?**

### **RESUMO**

O programa da UNESCO sobre educação para o entendimento internacional tinha o objetivo geral de contribuir para um mundo baseado na cooperação pacífica entre nações e povos após a Segunda Guerra Mundial. Tal educação, embora incluísse o fornecimento de conhecimentos aos alunos, centrava-se mais no ensino de habilidades, práticas e atitudes que cada indivíduo precisaria para viver pacificamente juntos além das fronteiras culturais e nacionais. O entendimento internacional como tal deveria ser uma defesa mental contra a guerra e as idéias totalitárias. Aqui, discutimos o conteúdo da educação para a compreensão internacional nos anos 40 e início dos anos 50, juntamente com idéias para sua implementação em diferentes regiões e nações. Ele girará em torno dos Seminários de Professores da UNESCO de 1946 a 1952, e seus focos sobre compreensão cultural e educação em direitos humanos dentro dos debates mais amplos da UNESCO sobre como ensinar a Compreensão Internacional.

**Palavras chave:** educação, UNESCO, direitos humanos, compreensão internacional.

## **EDUCACIÓN PARA LA COMPRENSIÓN INTERNACIONAL DESPUÉS DE LA SEGUNDA GUERRA MUNDIAL: ¿UNA EDUCACIÓN PARA LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS?**

### **RESUMEN**

El programa de la UNESCO sobre educación para el entendimiento internacional tenía como objetivo general contribuir a un mundo basado en la cooperación pacífica entre naciones y pueblos después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Esta educación, aunque incluía proporcionar a los alumnos conocimientos, se centraba más en la enseñanza de habilidades, prácticas y actitudes que todo individuo necesitaría para convivir pacíficamente más allá de las fronteras culturales y nacionales. El entendimiento internacional como tal debía ser una defensa mental contra la guerra y las ideas totalitarias. En este artículo se analiza el contenido de la educación para el entendimiento internacional en los años 40 y principios de los 50, junto con las ideas para su aplicación en diferentes regiones y naciones. El tema girará en torno a los Seminarios para Profesores de la UNESCO de 1946 a 1952, y su enfoque en el entendimiento cultural y la educación en derechos humanos dentro de los debates más amplos de la UNESCO sobre cómo enseñar el Entendimiento Internacional.

**Palabras clave:** educación, UNESCO, derechos humanos, entendimiento internacional.

## L'ÉDUCATION POUR LA COMPRÉHENSION INTERNATIONALE APRÈS LA SECONDE GUERRE MONDIALE – UNE ÉDUCATION AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME?

### RÉSUMÉ

Le programme de l'UNESCO sur l'éducation à la compréhension internationale avait pour objectif général de contribuer à un monde fondé sur la coopération pacifique entre les nations et les peuples après la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Cette éducation, bien qu'elle comprenne la transmission de connaissances aux élèves, était davantage axée sur l'enseignement de compétences, de pratiques et d'attitudes dont chaque individu aurait besoin pour vivre en paix au-delà des frontières culturelles et nationales. La compréhension internationale en tant que telle devait constituer une défense mentale contre la guerre et les idées totalitaires. Nous abordons ici le contenu de l'éducation à la compréhension internationale dans les années 1940 et au début des années 1950, ainsi que des idées pour sa mise en œuvre dans différentes régions et nations. Elle s'articule autour des séminaires d'enseignants de l'UNESCO de 1946 à 1952, et de leurs centres d'intérêt sur la compréhension culturelle et l'éducation aux droits de l'homme dans le cadre des débats plus larges de l'UNESCO sur la manière d'enseigner la compréhension internationale.

**Mots-clés:** education, UNESCO, droits de l'homme, compréhension internationale.

## INTRODUCTION

Central to the establishment of a large number of inter-governmental organisations at the end of the Second World War, was the question of how to achieve the foundations of a durable peace for the future. Among them was the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the preamble of its Constitution starting with the statement “[t]hat since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed” (UNESCO, 1946, Preamble). Established in 1946, this became the premise for the work UNESCO were to carry out within the fields of education, science and culture in the following decades and to this day. International Understanding became shorthand for a form of peace education that would provide knowledge about different people’s cultures, mutual tolerance and practices of solidarity. But, how was it to be taught in educational institutions around the world and would it achieve its aim?

The concept of International Understanding was fluid at the time studied, which is part of the reason for adopting a broad understanding of it here (UNESCO, 1953, p. 5). Echoing Jaime Torres Bodet, UNESCO’s second Director-General, it deals with a type of education that seeks to deepen the sense of solidarity between peoples, whilst at the same time ensuring the development of the individual within their own country.

To train citizens – since we are concerned with education – who will be faithful in their duty to their own country and who, for that very reason, will also be loyal to the international obligations which their country has assumed. These obligations imply, for the citizens of all the countries belonging to the system of the United Nations, a willingness to carry out, in a peaceful, progressive spirit, the engagements into which they have all entered. There, indeed, is a task for education: education for peace, education for living in a world community (UNESCO, 1953, p. 5)

How the concept evolved and was discussed will be further explicated

below.

This article, based on both archival and open source materials, sits within the field of the history of education with a strong link to international history (Fuchs, 2007; Sluga, 2013; Iriye, 2004). With that in mind, work done by the Global History of UNESCO project at the University of Aalborg has provided important contributions (Duedahl (Org), 2016; Kulnazarova & Ydesen (Org.), 2017). The crossover between education and international politics is still an understudied field, but one we both are interested in (e.g. Brathagen, 2018; Teige, 2017; Teige 2011). Here, we focus on UNESCO's involvement in spreading ideas of International Understanding and of Human Rights, the latter also a somewhat understudied field.

One of UNESCO's efforts were the Teacher Seminars from 1947 to 1953 on teaching International Understanding, and its implementation around the world. It continued wartime efforts by the allied countries present in London, with their Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME) and various working groups between 1942 and 1946 (UNIO, 1945; Thue 2005; Teige 2017; Teige 2011). Promotion of peace education and intellectual cooperation in the interwar period was a further precedent of UNESCO's postwar work, as seen in the work of, for example, the International Bureau of Education and the New Education Fellowship. The International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation was the advisory body to the League of Nations most similar to UNESCO. The aim of these efforts were to educate the "internationally minded person" (UNESCO, 1947C, p. 5).

UNESCO and their associated organizations emphasized the need for learner active methods, be it in acquiring knowledge or coming to embody the required practices and ideas identified through their work. In the text below, we will look at proposals for how teachers and other educationists could promote international understanding through particular teaching methods and pedagogical practices alongside the development of institutional cultures and how teachers themselves embodied international understanding. In particular,

we will focus on how this was proposed done in relation to Cultural Understanding and what was at the time referred to as ‘teaching about human rights’, similar to today’s Human Rights Education.

Although UNESCO mainly focused on educational methods and, i.e. at schools around the world, they at the same time promoted research into related fields that could improve the basis of said educational approaches. Social sciences saw an upswing after the second large world calamity, and especially psychological and sociological research into how mentalities formed; how suspicion, contempt or animosity between peoples developed; and, what aspects could promote understanding, peace and security (Laves & Thomson, 1957, p. 253-4). These studies had an impact on the International Understanding debate, and therefore has a place in a study like the present one.

First, we discuss the concept of International Understanding in its context and various understandings of the concept by those involved. Second, we turn to two strands central to the teaching of International Understanding, Cultural Understanding and the proposed Human Rights Education; and what these entailed in practice. Before the conclusion, we briefly address a few scientific research projects that formed part of the backdrop of the discourse on education for International Understanding.

## ***EDUCATION FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING***

As World War II drew to an end, plans were in place for the reconstruction of the war-torn areas. Europe had a special position in the work on reconstruction – materially, culturally and intellectually. Europe, more specifically Western Europe, was to some degree the part of the world that heads of state and bureaucrats envisioned when they made plans for the post-war period. At the same time, there were also embedded ideas about international cooperation. The focus on international cooperation from the interwar period was

to be continued and strengthened, because only through cooperation a new catastrophe could be avoided. Nevertheless, it soon became clear that if one was to succeed in building a world based on peace, it had to be a global project. In order to achieve the goal of creating international understanding and laying the foundation for good international cooperation, as many states as possible had to be involved in this work (Brathagen 2018, Teige 2017). The implications of this, and the extent to which this was embedded in the work of teaching aimed at creating international understanding, will be discussed later in the article.

As part of the reconstruction work, focus was placed on the strain the human mind had been through during the years of war, and especially among those who had been exposed to totalitarian propaganda before the war, and those who had experienced acts of war near them. It was also pointed out that the minds of children and young people were particularly vulnerable, and that if peace was to be secured for the future, the human mind had to be equipped for this. There was a certain type of people who had to be created if one was to succeed in building a new global civil society based on peace and universal human rights. How were these individuals to be created? What was a good citizen? Or a good citizen of the world - from a UNESCO perspective? The school was to become a central institution in the long-term work of securing world peace and creating these individuals, but how could this be done? One of the answers was international understanding.

As early as the summer of 1947, six months after the creation of UNESCO, the organization held a seminar on education for international understanding in Sèvres outside Paris. The goal of the seminar was twofold (UNESCO, 1947C, p. 2). First, the seminar was meant to be a place where the participants could discuss and learn from each other and the experts present, how to teach international understanding in their home countries. Second, it was about spreading knowledge and experiences the participants gained at the seminar to those of represented member countries. Retained for later seminars, this double goal aimed at the establishment of a culture of sharing among these individuals across

national boundaries.

At the seminar in Sèvres, experts from all over the world were present. Helena Ribeiro de Castro and Christian Ydesen have in their article “Textbook revisions in Brasil, 1945-1960” pointed out a parallel between the seminar in Sèvres and the Brazilian movement for progressive education (De Castro & Ydesen, 2017). Several of the key figures from Brazil were involved in reform pedagogy and Dewey's thoughts on democracy and education. There were also strong links between IBECC, the Brazilian progressive education movement and UNESCO (De Castro & Ydesen, 2017, p. 187, 189).

Sèvres seems to have been the first occasion of thorough discussions of the content of "international understanding" in a UNESCO context (UNESCO, 1947C). Later discussions have either been based on the working groups' reports from Sèvres, or failed to take a more theoretical discussion of international understanding. In this article, the understanding that was worked out in Sèvres in 1947 that forms the basis for the discussions.

Education for international understanding was from the beginning one of the pillars of UNESCO's efforts to ensure lasting peace. After its establishment, and especially after the seminar in Sèvres in 1947, the organization worked, together with the member states, systematically to spread the idea of education for international understanding, and worked out methods, principles and guidelines for such education in cooperation with the member countries.

Most attempts at explanations of what international understanding should be, answer more to the question of how and why, than to what. Attempts to explain what international understanding was and should be were thus closely intertwined with how it could be learned. Due to this close link between what international understanding was and how it should be disseminated, we have chosen to operationalize international understanding broadly. This has some practical implications. From the sources, it is clear that international understanding was defined so that it would function as a consensus version, with a meaning that most people could stand for. In other words, a kind of smallest

common denominator, based on the discussions in the seminars and working groups in Sèvres in the summer of 1947.

Discussing concepts in this way was a common practice in this period. In the work on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through 1947 and 1948, the UNESCO Philosophical Commission had to accept that they came up with "working definitions" for concepts such as freedom and democracy, but that it was not possible to agree on more accurate definitions (UNESCO, 1947E). The political situation with the escalation of the conflict between East and West made it important to find a conceptual apparatus that made it possible to agree across ideology and the gap between East and West that developed in the latter half of the 1940s. For UNESCO's educational work, it was important that as many people as possible supported the project, since a global engagement was a prerequisite for success.

UNESCO's and Member States' work on education for international understanding had several short-term and long-term goals. The overall goal was to create "a world-wide awareness, the guarantee of understanding, mutual help, and peace" (UNESCO, 1947C, p. 5). International understanding should also mean peaceful coexistence on a global basis, regardless of role, status or work (Nkaké, 1996, p. 3). If the project was to have the opportunity to succeed, the various goals had to be seen in context. It was about both individual knowledge and skills, and attitudes and behaviors at an overall level (UNESCO, 1947C, p. 3).

But how was international understanding described in the discussions? In the first seminar report from Sèvres, the goal of education for international understanding is described as follows:

This goal should be to bring about - by the development of a sympathetic and tolerant mental attitude, by information, knowledge, the practice of social virtues, understanding, interest, mutual respect and finally affection: all these successive stages revealing more and more clearly what we all have in common and what is precious in our infinite diversity - a world-wide awareness, the guarantee of understanding, mutual help, and peace.

However far it may be from the perfect realization of its ideal, this education must seek to produce a man conscious of the fact that all peoples have common problems to solve, that their interests are often identical, and that in any case war is not a sound method of settling their problems or of rectifying the inequalities exist between peoples (UNESCO, 1947C, p. 5).

The first of the two sections focus mostly on the purpose of, or goal for, education for international understanding and a description of how the goal is to be achieved. Recently, there is a more concrete description of what qualities a person who possesses international understanding (UNESCO, 1947C, p. 5).

But how should international understanding be taught? It would not be enough to teach what international understanding was, and thus just by teaching factual knowledge, for example about other peoples and cultures. It was important that learning international understanding also meant that the students developed the right attitudes on all levels. Having a factual basis was necessary, but not sufficient to develop international understanding. The education had to make it possible for the students to develop an attitude towards other people, cultures and nations that ensured that the ideal of peaceful coexistence between the peoples of the world could be realized. Such an education had to be given in a way that made the students, regardless of whether they were children, young people or adults, active in the learning process. This also provided some guidelines on what teaching methods that would be suitable for teaching international understanding.

As mentioned, the participants at the seminar in Sèvres were divided into working groups. One of these groups discussed international understanding in the light of cultural differences. They worked out four dimensions that they believed formed the basis for international understanding (UNESCO, 1947D, 27-8). These dimensions partly show the relationship between knowledge, emotions, attitudes and skills, and are a good example of how all of these must be present for a person to have international understanding.

The four dimensions presented by the working group were 1) Knowledge,

ideas and concepts. This was also referred to as intellectual consciousness. 2) Attitudes, sensitivity, emotions, a form of emotional awareness. 3) Thinking, and through these techniques to apply knowledge and apply this to new problems and experiences. 4) Skills or techniques you use to apply what you know, what you believe or mean and what you can reason out to translate it into practical action. The latter is thus about putting knowledge, beliefs and thinking into practice (UNESCO, 1947D, p. 28). A key point in the discussions was that only creating people with the right attitude was not sufficient. They also had to possess the right skills: "The two [persons of fine spirit and individuals of skill] are inseparable in the internationally-minded person." (UNESCO, 1948B, p. 36). Knowledge was not enough; behavior, skills and attitudes were to be cultivated for international understanding to grow in the individuals.

From the foregoing, it is clear that education for international understanding was about the individuals. On the other hand, education for international understanding was also a process with a larger and broader goal: a more peaceful world in the longer run. It was not just a question of only creating understanding between people, but between governments and nations, and between different cultures (Krill de Kapello, 1970, p. 21). Every individual is at the same time part of his primary group, as part of her or his family, of the local community, the nation *and* the international community. It was therefore important to start in the inner circle, with attitudes and behaviors in the family and the local community. On that basis, the form of empathy and the attitudes that came with having an international understanding should again form the basis for attitudes towards people outside the local community and towards people from other countries and cultures.

### **THE ROLE OF CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN EDUCATION FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING**

The idea was that an individual who had international understanding had

the ability to care about and be concerned about how people live and feel in other countries and cultures than their own. Such a person would try to put himself in another person's place and through this understand other people's attitudes and actions. In this context, such conduct was seen as the basis for the person's tolerance and altruism (UNESCO, 1947C, p. 7). It was argued that education for international understanding was one of the keys to being able to shape such a person. At the same time, it was not possible to imagine that education for international understanding could take place in the same way across the globe, even if the goal was the same.

The countries of the world would have different preconditions for carrying out such a form of education. One thing was that the school system, the school's content and the extent to which the curriculum was centrally controlled or not gave different preconditions for schools in different countries. In addition, access to education would be different in different parts of the world and, in many regions, even between urban and rural areas. It was therefore necessary to start at different levels in the work of developing how education for international understanding should take place in different countries.

In some countries the degree of illiteracy was so high that basic writing and reading instruction became a first step on the road to teaching topics that would support the development of international understanding. Elsewhere, one first had to secure access to education due to poorly developed school systems, before considering content that had an international outlook. Other countries (such as the Nordic countries) were considered to have an average level of education in the population that was so high that topics that contributed to international understanding could be included in the school almost immediately. (source)

It is obvious that it was important for UNESCO that different countries should include international understanding in education on the basis of their starting points and prerequisites. In his opening speech at the seminar Teaching about Human Rights in the Netherlands in 1952, the then Secretary General of

UNESCO, Jamie Torres-Bodet, stated that “An education which aims at teaching people to live as citizens of a world community must be, in every country, a national education.” (UNESCO, 1952, p. 6) At the same time, he pointed out that such an education could not have the same form and content everywhere, even if the goal was to be the same. He continued:

The goal is the same for us all, but the means we apply to reach it are not and should not be identical. We must respect the originality of each separate culture, and appreciate the differences which distinguish one country from another; we must try to win consent but never to force submission (UNESCO, 1952, p. 6).

This had not prevented discussions about how the consideration of an individual's loyalty to both his own nation and the international community should be safeguarded and expanded in the work to develop international understanding. The individual should seek to be as loyal to humanity alongside his own country and his local community (UNESCO, 1947C, p. 7). It was therefore pointed out that there would be a danger that loyalty would be drawn elsewhere than towards one's own nation and culture. At the same time, it was embedded in the idea of education for international understanding that dealing with loyalty conflicts and understanding how other countries and cultures were connected was something a person with a well-developed international understanding should be able to handle.

The discussions on loyalty were part of the background for cultural understanding becoming central to education for international understanding. Education for international understanding was an education of the individual, but the goal was to participate in and live together in a community, locally, nationally, regionally and internationally. The focus of UNESCO's work with education on safeguarding national identity and at the same time creating peace internationally made the study of cultures one of several elements in education for international understanding. Through education, students should have the opportunity to gain a basic and good understanding of cultures other than their

own, which should make them more tolerant of people from other cultures.

The ability to accept cultural differences, and also to understand and appreciate them, therefore became a key element in building an international understanding in the individual. In order to achieve this, there was a need for knowledge that cultures could be different without one being better or worse than the other. It was also about learning to live with the differences that coming from different countries and cultures would lead to, but without this becoming a germ of conflict. Understanding in this context therefore also meant reciprocity, as in order to achieve understanding it could be that changes in both understandings were necessary (UNESCO, 1947B, p. 18; UNESCO 1948A, p. X). Culture and cultural differences were taken seriously and the importance is illustrated by the fact that the topic of how to educate for international understanding in a national context was repeated over several seminars.

Learning about other cultures required both knowledge and skills. But how did you learn about others? What one learned about other cultures, which were not similar to one's own, had an impact on the attitudes that were developed. Therefore, the teaching of history and geography should include both countries and cultures that one's own country had an important relationship with, and cultures and countries that were either a contrast or in different ways were significantly different from one's own (UNESCO, 1947D, p. 28).

One factor that was highlighted as central to being able to develop attitudes that created tolerance for other cultures, and thus supported an international understanding, was the emotional. This was true both in the UNESCO context and in other discussions about peace education and upbringing. As we will return to later in the article, the social sciences, and especially psychology and sociology, played a central role in teaching with international understanding as its goal.

## ***HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION WITHIN THE BROADER CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING***

Within the broader project of promoting International Understanding through education, we find the task to carry out ‘teaching about human rights’, something akin to today’s Human Rights Education. The descriptive phrase used throughout the documents relied upon here differed, but its content, as we will see, was quite similar. Human rights became almost a form of shorthand for the necessary values needed to underpin the international mind, and without necessarily excluding either secular or religious positions. Within the broad definition of international understanding applied here, teaching about human rights were to be part of the overall effort to have individuals be sympathetic and tolerant towards others. Human rights were to serve as an international ethic, one all individuals whether rich or poor, powerful or not, actually followed in most of their interactions with other people.

Some of the historical actors involved in discussions of teaching about human rights from 1948 to 1952, described these early years as “the first step” on a much longer route (UNESCO, 1952A). Its inception was marked by the inauguration of a new Director-General. On the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Paris, UNESCO’s General Conference meeting in Beirut welcomed Jaime Torres Bodet as its second Director-General. With his dual background as both the minister of education and of foreign affairs for Mexico, Bodet had his own perceptions of how human rights and future peace were to be realised. Education was more reliable in the long run than the “perishable clay of treaties”, for if “the teacher trains the new generations to intolerance, in obedience to a blind and exclusive nationalism, the diplomat in his turn will be compelled to pursue a policy of aggression or revenge.” (Bodet, 1948/1949, p. 4).

From the years under Huxley’s administration, Bodet inherited an organization under heavy criticism for being without direction and adopting too many projects it did not manage to finish (See e.g. Aghnides, 1948). In response,

Bodet and members of the Executive Board drew up a “programme of action” in February 1949 within the remit set by the General Conference in Beirut the year before. In public, he noted that “we cannot ignore the fact that UNESCO as an organization has not yet compelled sufficient recognition to be certain of its future.” (Bodet, 1949, p. 3) The programme was also sent to member states. (NNA/MFA) Priority was given to projects that could a) contribute to a greater value in the standard of living for ordinary people; b) make sure large-scale cooperation between leading intellectuals could take place; and, c) gain some tangible results “fairly quickly” (Courier, 1949). Under the last point, we find the undertaking to spread knowledge about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It became part of a larger project to find out how human rights were already taught in schools around the world, and how the Declaration could fit into existing practices.

The initial phase of focus on ‘teaching about human rights’, included a process of knowledge production, in terms of surveys and enquiries into a particular field to gain understanding of its content and operations. Through sharing that knowledge to increase their understanding of existing human rights education practices and methods in different places, the educators in question arguably contributed to early HRE initiatives on inter-, trans- and national levels (UNESCO, 1953). Central in this process, was the preparation by, what were initially, five large transnational teachers organisations’ federations, of separate reports to the 1952 *Seminar on Education of World Citizenship, with special reference to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. These organisations reflected the multi-layered structure of UNESCO itself, in that they had international secretariats and national chapters alongside individual schools and teachers as members. They were both inter- and transnational at the same time. Some acknowledged a primary Euro-American dominance, whilst others argued that they had a more global outlook (UNESCO, 1952C; cf. UNESCO, 1952A). The original federations were the International Federation of Secondary Teachers (IFST), the International Federation of Teachers’ Associations (IFTA), the New Education Fellowship (NEF), the World Federation of Teachers’ Unions

(WFTU) and the World Organization of the Teaching Profession (WOTP).

Their individual reports, included as Working Papers for the Seminar, were based on the results of enquiries into the “methods and programmes of teaching about Human Rights” among their members, started in March 1951 (UNESCO, 1951). They would make for an interesting study of the intellectual history of human rights education in their own right. What is interesting to note for our purposes is that the project by 1952 had taken on a very familiar three-part division as to how to teach human rights to promote practices and ideas supportive of international understanding. ‘Teaching about human rights’ becomes more or less the same as to “teach about, for and through human rights”, which is the approach of the 2011 Declaration on the rights to human rights education, further reflected in most human rights education literature today (UN, 2011). Through active methods instruction, teachers’ embodiment and institutional cultures of human rights, students were to become world citizens with respect for the rights of all human beings.

Within these reports, how to teach about human rights was closely linked to ideas of active methods instruction, which in the final report of the Seminar was explicitly defined by one working group as:

those methods which are employed in organizing the learning activities in ways which correspond with the process of human growth and development, the emphasis being upon the behaviour and purposeful action of the learner, while the rôle of the teacher or leader lies in the arranging conditions and making available resources and materials, and in guiding the learning process (UNESCO, 1953, p. 11).

It was further specified throughout that this form of instruction should be aimed at the individual developing their own identity and, at the same time, become well adapted to the self-regulation needed for the good of the group. This echoed discussions on education in International understanding more broadly.

The methods in question ranged from individual work, group discussions

and extracurricular clubs to dramatics and democratic bodies that participated in the running of schools. For the youngest, up to 12 years of age, an emphasis was on the practical, whilst the focus on the text of the Declaration itself increased with the age of the child. To study the content of the Declaration itself, became more direct with increased age, but primary school teachers also opened for the use of children's charters in a language accessible to them. The New Education Fellowship pointed to a Norwegian example, the pamphlet *Equal Rights for All*, which was included as an Annex to their report, and urged others to draft similar documents (UNESCO, 1952B).

In the final report of the Seminar, the secondary teachers pointed to four central concepts to order any teaching of the Declaration around (liberty, equality and justice, fraternity and solidarity, and, duty to the community). The oldest group in question, 15-18, ought to be “thoroughly familiar with its social, political and philosophical implications” (UNESCO, 1953, p. 12). It was also “recommended that all teachers should consider what contribution they can make to education on the principles of the Universal Declaration”, also for youths not in school (UNESCO, 1953, p. 12).

From many of the European schools came a description of their school cultures as reflective of human rights. The veracity of these claims probably varied, but what they argued for was that students experienced teachers and school institutions that in their day-to-day behaviour modelled respect for human rights and democratic processes. This would train them in the necessary skills and attitudes deemed necessary for people to live peacefully together. Contrary to instruction in human rights principles, several reports mentioned this behavioural approach to ‘teaching’ human rights as something that could start earlier. In one response to IFTA, the suggestion was as early as 8 or 9 years of age (UNESCO, 1952C).

It is evident from the Working papers submitted to the Seminar by four of the five teachers' federations that the conception of human rights at the time was of phenomena well established and already taught about in a number of

schools. The familiar UNESCO narrative of these rights evolving over millennia as the human family sought more freedom resonates well with the underlying understanding of human rights in these documents (UNESCO, 1952C).

Included in this was the preference for democratically governed societies and states, and a strong link between democracy at home and respect for human rights abroad is detectable. What is interesting to note here is the criticism of the project of teaching the Universal Declaration that came from one of the originally five federations, the World Federation of Teachers' Unions.

This organization argued, like the others, that the Declaration itself was “too academic” and that “action should be based not on principles but on political and social realities.” (UNESCO, 1952D, p. 3) But, contrary to the others, the WFTU argued that although the Declaration could hold value “in certain countries” it was to be seen as an instrument of propaganda (UNESCO, 1952, p.3). These points were raised in a separate report made by a Joint Committee for three of the original five organisations upon their partial merger in the time leading up to the Seminar itself. The Joint Committee argued that it, albeit also representing this organization, did not support this view, and wanted to avoid the use of the word ‘propaganda’ at all costs when it came to the teaching of the Declaration (UNESCO, 1953D, p. 3).

Only one of these organizations pointed to a true challenge for the societies in which schools fully embraced this type of education. In relation to what we today refer to as critical thinking, the Executive Committee of NEF asked the question of what would happen when schools took on the challenge of HRE seriously, and students started to question the practices of their own state (UNESCO, 1952B). What is interesting about this report is how the NEF’s EC provided its separate answer to some of the questions raised by UNESCO. It even criticised one state within its geographical reach for not living up to particular human rights, i.e. the equal rights of men and women to vote (UNESCO, 1952B). That HRE would strengthen democracy at home seems to have been agreed upon, but not how that process could come to include difficult situations due to criticism

from a state's own, young nationals.

Opinions varied of whether to teach human rights separately from or as enmeshed in the general topic of international organisation, usually focused on the United Nations system as a whole. From 1949 onwards UNESCO centrally, and through various initiatives by Jaime Torres Bodet, favoured a connection to the broader celebrations of Human Rights Day (See e.g. Courier, 1949). Others argued that the link between the greater human rights project of the UN and HRE itself to be maintained through using United Nations Day on 24 October for such purposes. Here, a secondary line of argument was that so many international days existed already, that there was hardly room for another in the national school calendars (Brathagen, 2018).

In terms of links to other subjects already taught, history and geography along with civic studies were identified, as for international understanding more generally, as the primary subjects in which to teach human rights. How different UN members did approach the issue of celebrating Human Rights Day, that is 10 December, can also tell us something about their approach to teaching human rights. Although meant to capture broader segments of society than merely the national school systems, they include references to them. From the younger years and through to university level, various states reported on actions taken.

## **RESEARCH BASED WORK TO PROMOTE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING**

The post-war period was not only characterized by practical reconstruction work and intensified work to prevent future war at a higher level (Thue, 2005). In UNESCO's work on education for international understanding, this took place in collaboration between the member countries, and between teachers and scientists. The period coincides with a stronger focus on social science research, which in UNESCO also gained practical significance for the

work with education for international understanding. In the case of major research projects, UNESCO's role was mainly to stimulate research cooperation internationally, to secure and circulate information, and to encourage studies and assist Member States in their work. In connection with the project "Tensions Affecting International Understanding", UNESCO participated in the start-up phase and otherwise assisted more practically, at the same time as both the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the American Social Science Research Council contributed (KLINEBERG, 1950).

The tensions project was about finding the underlying factors that contribute to creating the tensions that lead to war, i.e. the tensions that prevent the creation of (lasting) peace. It is mainly about tensions between countries and cultures, but the project also studied psychological aspects in individuals, such as so-called national character. One crucial dimension of the project was a desire to find out with the help of social science methods and theories what tensions there could be, how they arose and how they could be solved (DUEDAHL, 2016, p. 40-41; Pick, 2012, p. 206-213; Laves & Thomson, 1957, p. 253-262; CANTRIL, 1950; KLINEBERG, 1950). The project culminated in two major publications, both published in 1950. Hadley Cantril's *Tensions that cause wars* was about the influences that contribute to fostering either international understanding or aggressive nationalism, while Otto Klineberg's *Tensions affecting international understanding* summarized the results of the study of national character, stereotypical attitudes and how these can be modified and what influences can lead to aggression (LAVES & THOMSON, 1957, p. 255; CANTRIL, 1950; KLINEBERG, 1950).

There is a clear connection between the work done in Sèvres in the summer of 1947 and, among other things, the Tensions project. The work that was put into Sèvres addressed several topics that also played a central role in the work of the project. More than ten working groups, each with its own mandate, subsequently submitted their own reports on what they had arrived at. It is especially the discussions in three of the working groups that appear again in the

Tensions project; one where the discussion was about problems in educating for international understanding (UNESCO, 1947B), one that focused on international understanding in the light of cultural differences (UNESCO, 1947D), and one that discussed the work with emotions in relation to international understanding (UNESCO, 1947A). In these working groups, educators, psychologists and psychiatrists in particular were prominent members. Among these from the Estonian and American educator Hilda Taba (1902-1967), French Thérèse Brosse (1902-1991), the British psychiatrist Henry V. Dicks (1900-1977) and the American educational researcher Robert Havighurst (1900-1991). Both Taba and Brosse continued to work under the auspices of UNESCO, even after 1947. Dicks and Havighurst were leading researchers in human development, but from different angles. Both social psychologists, sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists were key professional groups in the work behind it.

The early post-war period was a period in which the social sciences grew stronger than in the interwar period. Sociologists, social psychologists and social anthropologists had previously researched extensively on social behavior within nations, in connection with election research, but also to study influence and propaganda before and during the war that was just over. The question was whether this could also be done at an international level (Laves & Thomson, 1957, p. 254). One of the places where the social sciences made their entrance was in UNESCO. As a special consultant for UNESCO's Social Science department in 1946 and 1947, the American sociologist Edward Shils (1910-1995) had a strong influence on the design of the department's work area. He was also the one who wrote the basic note for what became Tensions-project (RANGIL, 2011; DUEDAHL 2016, p. 15-16; KREBS 2016, p. 40).

The report after the Tensions project, which came out in 1950, focused on personality and nationality, national stereotypes, attitudes and what influenced aggression (KLINEBERG, 1950). There are several more well-known studies that addressed related issues. During and after the Second World War

several reports, articles and books which in one way or another dealt with the topic of how to prevent totalitarian ideas to take hold of the minds of young people, were published. One of the most famous projects that was underway at the same time was the project *The Authoritarian Personality* conducted by the Berkeley group. This research has been regarded as the most influential and ambitious research project on the psychological background for fascism conducted in the early post-war period (THUE, 1997, p. 190).

The point of origin for the project on authoritarian personality was to study prejudice based on a diagnostic approach, rather than a descriptive one. The aim was to investigate the psychological background/origin for fascistic ideologies in the American society. The Authoritarian Personality (1950) can be seen as an expression for the mentality, or a general need to know more about what happened in the minds subjected to the Nazi propaganda during the war, and hence how to prevent this from happening again. The researchers' hypothesis was that personality consists of different layers; manifest and latent. To find and reveal the latent layers, they wanted to develop an indirect research design. As part of their design, they developed scales for measuring certain latent attitude-syndromes. They brought together topics that could be seen as symptoms of tendencies which was found relatively deep in the personality, and which made a person disposed of spontaneously expressing or be influenced by fascistic ideas (THUE, 1997).

The use of psychology as part of social research for social and mental engineering was an important effect of the project. In a UNESCO context: to be able to re-educate one also had to gain knowledge of what to unlearn, who was most receptive of totalitarian thought and through that kind of knowledge build up a theoretical and practical framework for learning how to live together in a diverse and global world based on peace between mankind.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS ON INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING AS PEACE EDUCATION**

UNESCO's work on international understanding has a long history. What we know today as the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network, ASP Net, has its roots in the work on international understanding in the 1940s and 50s. In this article, we have focused on the start-up of the work and the first years afterwards. Furthermore, we have discussed how cultural understanding and human rights were key components in the work of building an internationally minded person. Working with international understanding through education was a way of working that enabled UNESCO, in collaboration with representatives from the member states, to reach closer to the schools and pupils than if they had only arranged courses or sent out teaching materials prepared by the organization itself. By working closely with the member countries, the work could also be adapted to the local context, based on economic, cultural, political and social conditions in the individual country, while the goal was the same.

Through teaching and training in skills that supported the development of an international understanding, a type of person was to be created who was tolerant, inclusive, had an understanding of peoples and cultures other than his own, and who could withstand the influence of totalitarian thinking. These were important qualities in a world that was strongly marked by two world wars, and an emerging rivalry between east and west. Education for international understanding should provide knowledge, skills, attitudes and ways of thinking which in turn should build up an awareness of other countries and cultures. Knowledge of human rights was important so that both students and society could otherwise contribute to supporting and living according to the values that were incorporated in them.

To spread these ideas through education required both new teaching methods and new contents in what was being taught. Such education was aimed at individuals and should be a key element in contributing to the education of the human mind to support and promote peace rather than war. In this way, we can

say that the work with education and international understanding appears as an education designed to create a breeding ground for peace and provide the pupils with tools to counteract conflicts and totalitarian thinking. Cooperation between nations was therefore both necessary and important.

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