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FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION FOR A BETTER LIFE:  
TOWARDS A FIRST TRANSLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
IN PRACTICE THROUGH UNESCO'S FIRST REGIONAL  
FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION CENTRE – CREFAL – IN  
MEXICO.

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# **Fundamental Education For A Better Life: Towards A First Translation Of Human Rights In Practice Through UNESCO's First Regional Fundamental Education Centre – CREFAL – In Mexico**

## **ABSTRACT**

Keywords: contemporary history, transnational history, photography, history of education, translation, human rights, basic education, visual studies

The end of the Second World War marked the start of a new era with worldwide support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). In signing the Universal Declaration, Member States of the United Nations (UN) pledged to promote a series of universal values codified in the document. As a UN organisation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was assigned to disseminate the declaration and its content through educational initiatives and mass communication worldwide.

The ideal of creating worldwide peace in the minds of men and women with equity in and respect for each other's rights was centralised in its mission. Moreover, education was seen as a solution for the creation of a changing mentality in several target groups, from governing bodies to children. The development of educational and communication tools has enthusiastically begun to achieve this goal. One of their first initiatives on the dissemination of human rights was the creation of a travel album inspired by the 1949 Human Rights Exhibition at the Musée Galliera in Paris. The aim was to spread the album worldwide and teach the global population about their rights and duties.

The first years of UNESCO were inherently connected with support for the creation of the UDHR, and their programme and perspective on (the right to) education. During its early years, the educational department had many plans, including projects on fundamental education. Fundamental education aimed to create happier lives for men and women in relation to their environment and culture, ultimately leading to social and economic progress. UNESCO had high ambitions for this initiative. However, it is difficult to find any research in the literature that focuses on these projects and their practical implementation.

In this dissertation, I aim to reconstruct the story of UNESCO's first regional centre on fundamental education, the "*Centro Regional de Educación Fundamental en América Latina*" (CREFAL), in the Pátzcuaro region of Mexico in relation to the UDHR. The development of the centre and its programme will be explored through archival research in UNESCO, local and national archives, the archive of Jaime Torres Bodet at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), the Library of Congress and the archives of CREFAL and the Organization of American States (OAS). By utilising images, videos, audio, and documents related to this centre, I aim to reconstruct the transfer and circulation of the first translation of the right to education, encompassing fundamental education and human rights in general.

In my dissertation, I will argue that UNESCO's ideals, as reflected in the UDHR, quickly challenged their project realisation and, consequently, their relations with and between its member states. This change might have only enlarged the difficult intermediating task for UNESCO to propagate peace "in the minds of men". Consequently, the organisation's own projects, in this case their project on fundamental education, experienced large downfalls and their core ideas were transferred into other projects leading to the end of their ambitious project in 1958.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What were the specific goals and strategies of UNESCO's early educational programmes, particularly in promoting fundamental education and human rights awareness? What was UNESCO's understanding of fundamental education and its view of the programme?
2. Who was involved in the establishment of CREFAL and the Fundamental Education Project in Mexico? What were the key challenges and obstacles faced by UNESCO in implementing its educational initiatives, being the organisation of a worldwide network of regional centres on fundamental education and, in particular, CREFAL?
3. Which archival sources and historical materials can provide insights into the development and operation of CREFAL? Can these sources be used to reconstruct the transfer and circulation of the UDHR in local communities?
4. Did UNESCO connect the Universal Declaration on Human Rights to its programmes on fundamental education and educate participants about their rights and duties, as outlined in the UDHR? What were the consequences of the challenges faced by UNESCO in realising its ambitious educational goals, and how did these challenges impact the organisation's relations with member states and the continuation of its projects?

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Trained as a social worker, I acknowledge that the pursuit of a doctoral study has been an invaluable learning experience that deepened my understanding of contemporary history as well as holistic thinking. Multiple times, I questioned whether I was learning in a professional sense or whether I was enriching my personal life. This journey has been one of self-discovery, resilience, and the relentless pursuit of knowledge. As I moved forward, I carried out not only the expertise gained through my research, but also a set of skills and perspectives that will undoubtedly shape my future endeavours.

Balancing research, teaching responsibilities, and personal commitments during my PhD were delicate acts. Learning to manage my time effectively, prioritising tasks, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance have been crucial, especially while working full-time. Meanwhile, I was pushed to think even more critically, ask questions, and explore knowledge in new ways. Through extensive literature reviews, methodological explorations, and countless hours of analysis, I honed my research skills. The importance of adaptability and resilience was never more evident than during the COVID-era. The closure of countries and archives has led to a serious delay in my research. However, every obstacle ultimately becomes an opportunity for growth.

As many during COVID-times, I engaged with fellow researchers online, at conferences, and in summer schools. While I could not attend as many conferences as I would have liked, the exchange of ideas and the opportunity to interact with scholars from diverse backgrounds were both fascinating and instrumental in shaping my research outlook. Our annual committee meetings, in particular, were a new source of motivation for me, providing fresh perspectives and renewed enthusiasm for my work.

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I would also like to thank my other committee member, Prof. Dr Denis Scuto, and my former committee member, Prof. Joyce Goodman. They have been extremely thoughtful and supportive throughout this journey.



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<sup>1</sup> In this dissertation, I prefer to use the endonym 'P'urhépecha' as used in the article of Luis Urrieta and Judith Landeros. It's the way the P'urhépecha refer to themselves. I consider it is one of way of acknowledging the indigenous groups' culture and tradition. I am aware that the international writing is different. In English literature, the name of the indigenous group is often written as 'Purépecha'. See: Luis Urrieta and Judith Landeros, "Hacer El Hombre Más Hombre": Fundamental Education, Deficit Perspectives, Gender, and Indigenous Survivance in Central Mexico', *Comparative Education Review* 66, no. 3 (2022): 484–507, <https://doi.org/10.1086/720560>; CREFAL, *2a. Etapa de Actividades* (Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, México: E. Muñoz Gavalache, 1952).

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	United Nations' Administrative Committee on Coordination
ASFEC	Arab States Fundamental Education Centre
CAME	Conference of Allied Ministers of Education
CREFAL	Centro Regional de Educación Fundamental en América Latina
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the UN
IBE	International Bureau of Education
IIC	International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation
ILO	International Labour Organization
NEA	National Education Association
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OAS	Organization of American States
SEP	Secretariat of Public Education
SU	Soviet Union
TA	Technical Assistance Programs
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNAM	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
UNCHR	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
USA	United States of America

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## PROLOGUE

“Humanity on its journey through history is like a convoy of ships brought together in a time of war to face the dangers of the seas; its average speed must be determined by that of its slowest members. Or, to abandon the metaphor and state the point in clearer terms, you cannot have a wholly educated younger generation amid an adult society remaining sunk in ignorance.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Extract from a speech delivered by Mr. Jaime Torres Bodet, Director-General of UNESCO, to the Commission on Human Rights at its meeting at Geneva on 26 April 1951. See: UNESCO, ‘UNESCO And Its Programme - The Right To Education VIII’ (Paris: L’Union Typographique, 1952), UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000128322?posInSet=1&queryId=d226f92e-c16a-4d6d-bc8c-08950d9586d2>.

## INTRODUCTION



Figure 1: CREFAL - Quinta Eréndira. © Stefanie Kesteloot, personal archive, 19 July 2022.

In the wake of the devastation caused by the Second World War, the need for global solidarity and collective action to address pressing social and educational challenges became more apparent. The first report of the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) underscored the urgent necessity to tackle global inequities in access to education and essential resources.<sup>3</sup> This highlighted the crucial role of education in building a strong foundation for a more equitable and just world. The report, titled “Fundamental Education – Common Ground for All Peoples”, outlined UNESCO’s ambitious vision of promoting fundamental education as a cornerstone of global development. Entrusted with the responsibility of leading worldwide educational efforts, the specialised agency of the United Nations (UN) was appointed to carry out significant work in the field of fundamental education.

Even before the first meeting of the Preparatory Commission for UNESCO, the international community had already agreed that the new organisation was responsible for raising the global level of education. The Honourable Nils Hjelmtveit, Minister of Education of Norway

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<sup>3</sup> Special Committee to the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, ‘Fundamental Education Common Ground for All Peoples’.

expressed this sentiment clearly during the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME): “We must give depth and breadth to the education of the common people if we are to lay a firm basis for democracy within the individual nation and for understanding and collaboration among the peoples of the world.”<sup>4</sup> His beliefs were echoed by numerous delegates participating in the Preparatory Commission, who recognised the importance of creating a new field in education, namely fundamental education.<sup>5</sup>

Fundamental education, as conceptualised by UNESCO, encompasses a holistic approach to literacy, viewing the acquisition of reading and writing skills as “a prerequisite for scientific and technical advance and for... better health, more efficient agriculture, and more productive industry; for full intellectual awareness and mental development; for democracy and national progress; and for international awareness and knowledge of other nations,” described Julian Huxley, an English biologist and UNESCO’s first Director-General.<sup>6</sup> However, he acknowledged that literacy alone does not guarantee democracy. Nazi Germany had demonstrated very well how false information and manipulation of the press, and the debasement of literature and cinema could lead to many wrong actions. As a new and specialised organisation of the UN, UNESCO faced the formidable task of fostering stability, well-being, and ensuring peaceful and friendly relations among nations. This mandate also implied advancement in economic and living standards as well as the universal acceptance and observance of fundamental human rights and freedoms.<sup>7</sup>

Concurrently with the establishment of UNESCO and drafting of the report “Fundamental Education. Common Ground For All Peoples”, efforts were underway to formulate a Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).<sup>8</sup> Between April 1946 and December 1948, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), appointed by the UN, discussed the rights and duties of men to be protected by the UDHR. This period marked a turning point in history, characterised by both the profound horrors and atrocities that the Second World War had brought and a prevailing sense of optimism and hope in the potential of the newly formed UN.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Special Committee to the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Special Committee to the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Special Committee to the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Special Committee to the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 15.

<sup>8</sup> M. Glen Johnson, ‘A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights’, in *The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights. A History Of Its Creation And Implementation 1948 - 1998*, by M. Glen Johnson and Janusz Symonides (Paris, France: UNESCO, 1998), 19–76.

<sup>9</sup> M. Glen Johnson.

The member states of the UN, the organisation which was established immediately after the war, intensified the search for an international answer to protect human rights in the pursuit of lasting peace, as previous declarations appeared inadequate to address the scale of global challenges.<sup>10</sup> Among the notable figures involved were the Vice-chair P.C. Chang from China, who advocated for a departure from Western philosophical frameworks during the drafting process; the son of a Jewish merchant, René Cassin, a French lawyer and philosopher and Charles H. Malik from Lebanon who served as a rapporteur of the commission. He was also the president of the Economic and Social Council of the UN (ECOSOC) and led the Third Committee, who debated and secured the adoption of the UDHR in 1948.<sup>11</sup> Together, they drafted the UDHR with references to: (a) observations made by members of the Commission on Human Rights during their first session in January-February 1947; (b) drafts and proposals submitted by the governments of Chile, Cuba, Panama, India, and the United States; (c) provisions in the national constitutions of some fifty-five countries; and (d) draft declarations submitted by certain NGO's.<sup>12</sup> Their work was supported by a survey carried out by UNESCO's Philosophers' Committee in finding support for the drafted UDHR.<sup>13</sup>

The importance of the UDHR was emphasised when it was adopted late in the evening of 10 December 1948 by the General Assembly of the UN in Paris.<sup>14</sup> The following day, UNESCO's General Conference passed a resolution highlighting the importance of the Declaration for all UNESCO activities, particularly those related to education and international understanding.<sup>15</sup> Resolution 8.1 of the General Conference states:

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<sup>10</sup> The UDHR was preceded by several other declarations since the Enlightenment. These declarations traditionally referred to natural freedom and the inherent rights of every individual, stated Walter Kälin. Additionally, the declarations never surpassed the national boundaries of the state. It was inconceivable that other states would interfere in the 'domestic affairs' of a state regarding how it treated its citizens. Exemplary of these declarations are the Virginia Bill of Rights (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, attention grew regarding the negative effects on international relations, leading to the 1815 Vienna Congress, which obliged various states to guarantee equal protection and ensure no discrimination against all religions. See: Walter Kälin, 'What Are Human Rights?', in *The Face of Human Rights*, by Walter Kälin, Lars Müller, and Judith Wyttenbach (Baden: Lars Müller, 2004), 14–37.

<sup>11</sup> M. Glen Johnson, 'A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights'.

<sup>12</sup> M. Glen Johnson, 35.

<sup>13</sup> In his book, Mark Goodale elaborates on the UNESCO survey sent out by the Philosophers' Committee and provides a collection of the responses received. See: Mark Goodale, *Letters to the Contrary: A Curated History of the UNESCO Human Rights Survey*, Stanford Studies in Human Rights (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2018).

<sup>14</sup> M. Glen Johnson, 'A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights'; Jaime Torres Bodet, 'The Mission Of UNESCO - UNESCO Courier Supplement', *UNESCO Courier*, March 1949, A-C.

<sup>15</sup> Janusz Symonides, 'UNESCO And The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights', in *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A History Of Its Creation And Implementation 1948-1998*, by M. Glen Johnson and Janusz Symonides (Paris, France: UNESCO, 1998).



“The Director-General is instructed to stimulate the dissemination of information about the UDHR adopted by the UN, particularly through the Projects Division of the Mass Communication Department; to encourage the incorporation of the Declaration as subject-matter in the teaching about the UN which is given in schools; and to direct his programme sections to employ the Declaration wherever possible in their programme activities.”<sup>16</sup>

UNESCO’s Executive Board followed the decision of the General Conference at its private meeting on the evening of 12 December 1948:

“The Board decides to give the Director-General full freedom of action concerning steps to be taken for the diffusion of the Declaration of the Rights of Man both to Governments and to National Commissions, by means of mass communication at his disposal; for this purpose, the Director-General may use such funds as he may consider necessary and shall inform the Board at its next session”.<sup>17</sup>

Mexican educator Dr Jaime Torres Bodet became UNESCO’s new Director-General and made his first appearance at the Third Session of UNESCO’s General Conference in Beirut in 1948. This General Conference coincided with the adaptation of the UDHR in the UN General Assembly.<sup>18</sup> His leadership marked UNESCO’s commitment to promoting human rights and education globally. Immediately after his assignment, he proposed to the governments of the Member States and the National Commissions to introduce 10 December as a day to honour the principles of the liberty and dignity of Man. Additionally, he acknowledged the dissemination of the UDHR as a joint responsibility of the UN, UNESCO, and the Member States of the specialised UN agency.<sup>19</sup>

Under the new director’s guidance, UNESCO demonstrated a serious commitment to its mandate. Shortly after the adoption of the UDHR, the UNESCO Courier announced the inauguration of a UNESCO exhibition on Human Rights in Paris, followed by a volume of the

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<sup>16</sup> ‘3C - Records of the General Conference of UNESCO, Third Session, Beirut, 1948, v. 2: Resolutions’ - UNESCO Digital Library, accessed 24 August 2023, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114593?posInSet=1&queryId=b6866eba-0ffe-403e-8151-0c6e8b302820>.

<sup>17</sup> It is remarkable to read that the UDHR and the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which is a Declaration made between the member states of the Organization of American States (OAS), are used interchangeably. As a researcher, I found it sometimes very difficult to distinguish whether a reference was made to the Declaration of the Rights of Man or to the UDHR. In this context, due to the proximity of the adaptation of the UDHR and the resolution of the General Conference, I infer that the reference here is to the UDHR. See: ‘Resolutions and Decisions Adopted by the Executive Board at Its Thirteenth Session from 1 to 14 December 1948’ (UNESCO Digital Library, 20 January 1949), 13EX/Decisions + Corr., UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000113920?posInSet=2&queryId=7b9cb742-ac0b-4705-83d9-96906049c039>, ‘Provisional Summary Records of the 13th Session of the Executive Board’ (UNESCO Digital Library, 12 January 1949), 13EX/SR8, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000161602?posInSet=1&queryId=099cf466-5dda-483c-9512-2bad290c929b>.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Jaime Torres Bodet Elected Director-General’, *UNESCO Courier*, December 1948, 1.

<sup>19</sup> “‘Human Rights Day’ Urged by Unesco Head”, *UNESCO Courier*, December 1948, 1.

UNESCO Courier devoted to the Human Rights Declaration.<sup>20</sup> The *Human Rights Exhibition*, a large-scale international exhibition at the Musée Galliera in Paris, opened on 29 September 1949 coinciding with UNESCO's Fourth General Conference.<sup>21</sup> From 1 October 1949 until 31 December 1949 the exhibition was open to the public. It was one of the first visualisations of its kind, aiming to “show the men to whom we owe, in all parts of the world, the Human Rights that are today our most treasures possession – from Sophocles to Lincoln and from Confucius to Lamennais”.<sup>22</sup> It was the organisation's intention, said the Director-General, to disseminate the content of the Declaration to the public, fostering a deeper understanding of their rights and encouraging better defence and respect. He emphasised the role of ordinary individuals in achieving the ideals of the UDHR, expressing hope for the support of governments, the UN, and its Specialised Agencies.<sup>23</sup>

In an effort to extend its outreach, the Paris exhibition was transformed into a travel album titled the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* (1950).<sup>24</sup> This portable version was distributed globally to UNESCO's member states with the goal of educating adults and children worldwide about the rights and duties enshrined in the UDHR.<sup>25</sup> Both creations, the *Human Rights Exhibition* and the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights*, were first attempts to visualise the organisation's utopian ideal and its approach to global problems.<sup>26</sup>

The topic of this dissertation emerged at the intersection between fundamental education and the dissemination of the UDHR. Fundamental education, described shortly after UNESCO's establishment, was meant to help ideological forces that sought to foster international peace

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<sup>20</sup> ‘Man Conquering His Freedom’, *UNESCO Courier*, October 1949, 5; ‘Human Rights UNESCO Exhibition in Paris’, *UNESCO Courier*, September 1949, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Stefanie Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education: An Analysis of UNESCO's Exhibition Album on Human Rights and Its Global Dissemination in 1951’, in *Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education: An Analysis of UNESCO's Exhibition Album on Human Rights and Its Global Dissemination in 1951* (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022), 141–66, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110696905-008>; ‘Letter to the Minister from Jaime Torres Bodet’, 13 December 1949, CL/316, MC/53, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France.

<sup>22</sup> Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’, 142; ‘Human Rights UNESCO Exhibition in Paris’, *UNESCO Courier*, September 1949.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Human Rights UNESCO Exhibition in Paris’, ‘Human Rights and Public Opinion’, *UNESCO Courier*, September 1949, 9.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Letter to the Minister from Jaime Torres Bodet’; ‘Visualizing Universalism: The UNESCO Human Rights Exhibition 1949-1953’ (The Human Rights Exhibition Project), accessed 6 June 2019, [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/521fa71ae4b01a7978566e1e/t/570fd84240261d1195924e33/1460656201979/Universalism\\_pamphlet.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/521fa71ae4b01a7978566e1e/t/570fd84240261d1195924e33/1460656201979/Universalism_pamphlet.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> UNESCO Exhibition-Album to Show Man's Unending Fight to Gain His Rights’, *UNESCO Courier*, December 1950, p. 6-7.

<sup>26</sup> Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’, 142; Tom Allbeson, ‘Photographic Diplomacy In The Postwar World: UNESCO And The Conception Of Photography As A Universal Language, 1946–1956’, *Modern Intellectual History* 12, no. 2 (2015): 383–415, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244314000316>.

through international understanding.<sup>27</sup> The programme was focussing on helping individuals to adapt to their changing environment, enhance their cultural strengths and achieve economic and social progress.<sup>28</sup>

According to Torres Bodet, teachers and educators played a significant role in this vision. He emphasised that education was the key to fostering mutual understanding and building a peaceful world, a responsibility entrusted to UNESCO per its constitution.<sup>29</sup> Education is particularly significant, as highlighted in Article 26 of the UDHR, which affirms everyone's right to education.<sup>30</sup>

As Torres Bodet stated: "As long as one half of the human race is unable to read the very declaration of its rights and duties, to understand the text of a law, to consult the most elementary books on agriculture and machinery, it will continue to be at the mercy of forces which it can neither control nor comprehend. And we would have to admit that democracy does not reign on earth."<sup>31</sup>

His statement underscores the importance of not only knowing one's rights and duties, as enshrined in the UDHR, but also having access to and understanding information, documents, and exhibitions that elucidate and visualise these principles. The *Human Rights Exhibition Album*, disseminated by UNESCO, served as a means of informing and educating both children and adults about their rights and duties.<sup>32</sup>

In its early years, particularly in the realms of education and mass communication, UNESCO's efforts were linked to the dissemination of the UDHR, and campaigns aimed at combating global illiteracy under the umbrella term of fundamental education. By equipping

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<sup>27</sup> Mulugeta Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.' (Type C Project, New York City, New York, Columbia University, 1963), 14.

<sup>28</sup> The organisation never managed to define the term properly. Ultimately, after many discussions, the Sixth General Conference adopted a broad resolution in favour of the creation of international fundamental education centres, which began: "Believing Fundamental Education to be at the heart of the work of UNESCO and convinced that the general plan [to create this world network] constitutes a first attempt to combat through education the problems of ignorance, poverty and disease [...]" See: Jens Boel, 'UNESCO's Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact', in *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts*, by Poul Duedahl (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 153–67, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-58120-4>; 'Fundamental Education: Definition and Programme' (UNESCO Digital Library, 1947), FE/CONF/6+Extract1, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000145169?posInSet=1&queryId=f49f05d9-0cd6-4b26-a93e-129c8d43d030>; John Bowers, 'Fundamental Education. Programme for 1948', *UNESCO Courier*, February 1948, 4.

<sup>29</sup> In the preamble of UNESCO's Constitution, we read: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." See: UNESCO, 'Constitution - Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization', accessed 26 August 2023, <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/constitution>; "Teachers Hold Key To Unesco Aims", Director-General States', *UNESCO Courier*, May 1949, 3;

<sup>30</sup> United Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights', United Nations (United Nations), accessed 26 August 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

<sup>31</sup> UNESCO, 'UNESCO And Its Programme - The Right To Education VIII'.

<sup>32</sup> 'UNESCO Exhibition-Album to Show Man's Unending Fight to Gain His Rights'.

individuals with reading and writing skills, fundamental education facilitated a broader understanding of the UDHR, empowering men and women to assert their rights and corresponding duties to society.

Unfortunately, there is a scarcity of research addressing the intersection between fundamental education and UDHR. Through this study, I aim to bridge this gap by examining UNESCO's early initiatives in fundamental education and their relationship with the UDHR. Understanding this historical context is essential for gaining insight into UNESCO's role in advancing education and human rights on a global scale during its early years.

Moreover, this research will shed light on the organisation's early policy decisions and operational practices concerning fundamental education and the dissemination of the UDHR. It can provide valuable insights into the development and execution of education policies within an international framework, particularly in collaboration with other intergovernmental organisations such as the OAS. This study explores UNESCO's collaboration with the OAS, including its policy decisions and operational practices.

Furthermore, this study extends beyond intergovernmental organisations to contribute to the history of CREFAL and its integration into national and international contexts. The efforts and practices of all organisations have had a significant global impact on educational practices and policies in various regions. Specialists from various Latin American countries participated in CREFAL's fundamental education programme, aiming at inducing a chain reaction in their country of origin.<sup>33</sup> Analysing the conceptualisation, implementation, and reception of these practices can enrich broader discussions on international education and human rights advocacy.

Additionally, this research not only explores UNESCO's historical initiatives, but also aims to uncover lessons and legacies that can inform contemporary efforts in education and human rights. By examining the success, challenges, and eventual decline of UNESCO's fundamental education project, this study provides valuable insights into the complexities of implementing educational initiatives in transnational and collaborative socio-political contexts. Ultimately, the findings of this research can guide current educational practices in the fields of human rights and citizenship by promoting inclusive and comprehensive approaches to education.

The focus of my study is CREFAL, the centre established in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, Mexico. Founded in 1951 in close collaboration with the OAS, it was the first in a worldwide network of six centres dedicated to fundamental education. By examining this centre and

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<sup>33</sup> 'UNESCO Plans \$ 20,000,000 Education Programme. Executive Board Approves Project for World Network of Training Centres', *UNESCO Courier*, December 1950, 3.

reconstructing its history in relation to the initial dissemination of the UDHR, particularly through the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights*, I aim to gain insight into the early translation of the right to education and human rights in general. Specifically, my research will focus on Article 26 (“the right to education”), paragraph 2 which states:

“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations and racial or religious groups and shall further the activities of the UN for the maintenance of peace.”<sup>34</sup>

Isaac Leon Kandel, in a contribution found in Mark Goodale’s book “Letters to the contrary”, historically highlighted two dominant motives in the provision of education before the UDHR. The first and earliest motives aimed to indoctrinate the younger generation in the religious beliefs of their denominations, while the second, which emerged with national states, aimed to foster loyalty to political groups or nations.<sup>35</sup> Kandel advocated for greater emphasis on education for freedom, defined as intelligent recognition of responsibility and duty, with a common goal of an educational programme based on the cultural heritage of men of all races and ages, devoid of attachment to any national culture. CREFAL and its specialist training programme in fundamental education offers an ideal subject for studying whether the objective of developing a programme towards “the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of human rights and fundamental freedoms”, as stated in the second paragraph of article 26, is achieved.<sup>36</sup>

This exploration is notable for its in-depth research, comprehensive literature review, and multiple visits to various research sites. While the UNESCO Archives in Paris was the primary accessible archive for a researcher based in Western Europe, visits to the CREFAL archive in Pátzcuaro, Mexico, along with Torres Bodet’s personal archives at the UNAM and the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City, provided crucial insights. Additionally, visits to the Archives of the OAS and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. (United States of America) enriched this research. These visits facilitated the reconstruction of the transnational and global narratives of the first regional centre on fundamental education. Through the analysis of diverse documents, it becomes clear that each organisation, and even more precisely each nation and actor, had its own priority and perspective on translating human rights, particularly on the right to education in practice. Videos, images, audio recordings, and documents from various archives will be utilised

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<sup>34</sup> Nations, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’.

<sup>35</sup> Isaac Leon Kandel was one of the leading educational theorists and historians in the world. Though Romanian-born, he worked as an English professor at a Teachers College. He was one of the scholars who responded in writing to the survey of the Philosopher’s Committee. See: Goodale, *Letters to the Contrary*, 290.

<sup>36</sup> Nations, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’.

to reconstruct the history of CREFAL in relation to human rights and address the following research questions:

1. What were the specific goals and strategies of UNESCO's early educational programmes, particularly in promoting fundamental education and human rights awareness? What was UNESCO's understanding of fundamental education and its view of the programme?
2. Who was involved in the establishment of CREFAL and the Fundamental Education Project in Mexico? What were the key challenges and obstacles faced by UNESCO in implementing its educational initiatives, being the organisation of a worldwide network of regional centres on fundamental education and, in particular, CREFAL?
3. Which archival sources and historical materials can provide insights into the development and operation of CREFAL? Can these sources be used to reconstruct the transfer and circulation of the UDHR in local communities?
4. Did UNESCO connect the Universal Declaration on Human Rights to its programs on fundamental education and educate participants about their rights and duties, as outlined in the UDHR? What were the consequences of the challenges faced by UNESCO in realising its ambitious educational goals, and how did these challenges impact the organisation's relations with member states and the continuation of its projects?

The answers to these questions are provided in the following five chapters. In the first chapter, I discuss the reading materials, archival sources, and methodologies used to write this dissertation. I will offer a brief overview of the main scholars who have studied fundamental education, the right to education, and the organisations involved, such as UNESCO, OAS, and CREFAL. Drawing from my visits to archives in Europe and the Americas, I aim to reconstruct a transnational narrative of the inaugural regional centre on fundamental education in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, Mexico. In this chapter, I also focus on the concept of transnationalism and what it means to me. I will also discuss the concept of cultural diplomacy. It will become clear that each organisation, and even more precisely each nation, had its own priorities and perspectives in translating human rights and, in particular, in translating the right to education into practice, being the realm of fundamental education.

In the second chapter, I provide a concise overview of UNESCO as an organisation, including its principles and mission. By briefly examining UNESCO's role as a disseminator of the UDHR, I aim to elucidate the organisation's central objectives and their practical translation of the right to education, with a specific focus on fundamental education. Utilising sources such as the *Human Rights Exhibition Album*, I will analyse UNESCO's visual representation of the right to

education and, more specifically, fundamental education and its intended emphasis. In this way, I will provide a deeper understanding of UNESCO's conceptualisation of this educational approach.

In the subsequent chapter, I will delve into the intricate relationships surrounding the fundamental education project, specifically the genesis of CREFAL as UNESCO's first regional centre for fundamental education in Latin America. Through an examination of the collaboration between key partners, such as the OAS and the government of Mexico, I elucidate the negotiation process and its outcomes. Drawing primarily from UNESCO, CREFAL, and OAS archives, this chapter will shed light on the inception and early development of CREFAL in the broader context of international cooperation.

In the following chapter, the focus shifts to the fundamental education project itself, exploring the establishment of the centre in Pátzcuaro in Mexico, and its operational structure. By providing an overview of the region's history and describing the centre's mission, organisational framework, and shortly touching on the key partnerships CREFAL had with the Food Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), and World Health Organization (WHO), I aim to reconstruct the operational dynamics of the first regional centre on fundamental education. Through an analysis of visual and documentary sources from UNESCO, CREFAL, and the Library of Congress, I will offer insights into UNESCO's portrayal of the centre and its activities, as well as the on-ground realities captured by various photographers.

In the concluding chapter, I will explore the various variables influencing fundamental education projects and analyse their implications. Connecting these findings to the broader scholarly discourse, I underscore the interconnectedness of CREFAL's history within the global context of its time. Additionally, I will briefly discuss the emergence of technical assistance projects introduced by UNESCO's parent organisation, the UN. The project on fundamental education was ultimately overshadowed by technical assistance and was known to bring an economically oriented perspective to development and education. Furthermore, I will investigate the role of the UDHR in shaping the conceptualisation of fundamental education and its practical implementation. By elucidating these interpretations, I aim to provide valuable insights into the dissemination, translation, and interpretation of the UDHR through the pioneering lens of the first regional centre on fundamental education.

## Chapter 1 Breaking down the practice of educating human rights: a methodological framework.

“UNESCO is easy to criticise, even to mock. How could it be otherwise? Here we have an organization which has set out to influence the educational, scientific and cultural activities of the world – no less. Obviously ridiculous and laughable! Yet would it not be more helpful to suspend judgment at least until the facts have been looked at as a whole?”<sup>37</sup>

(Theodore Besterman, 1951)

### Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a concise review of the existing literature pertaining to fundamental education and the dissemination of the UDHR. It delves into the insights offered by different scholars relevant to the focal points of this dissertation. This chapter also outlines the methodology used in this study.

UNESCO, renowned globally as a specialised agency of the UN dedicated to education, science, and culture, serves as a nexus connecting governments and institutions worldwide. Its inception brought together 48 member states, each transcending national boundaries through knowledge exchange and participation in seminars and projects organised by UNESCO. Hence, I will briefly explain how adopting a transnational perspective enhances the understanding of the ongoing activities around CREFAL.

However, it is important to note that my analysis was not solely influenced by a transnational perspective. The network surrounding CREFAL and UNESCO showcases a highly international composition with scientists, consultants, and government representatives frequenting the organisation’s meeting rooms and corridors. These interactions frequently unveil the national priorities of member states, prompting a deeper exploration of the concept of cultural diplomacy, as evidenced by negotiations among UNESCO representatives.

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<sup>37</sup> Theodore Besterman, *UNESCO Peace In The Minds Of Men* (London, Great Britain: Methuen & Co. LTD, 1951), vii.



## 1.1 Literature Review and state of the art

### 1.1.1 On the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

There is a substantial body of literature on UDHR and its genesis. In this dissertation, I primarily engaged with the works of William A. Schabas, Mark Goodale and Glen Johnson and Janusz Symonides. Their scholarship provides a comprehensive overview of the various stages that culminated in the adoption of the UDHR.

William A. Schabas thoroughly compiled the official documents of the Preparatory Commission to the Commission of Human Rights, tracing the trajectory of the declaration from its inception to the final vote in the UN's General Assembly on the evening of 10 December 1948.<sup>38</sup> The Declaration must be viewed as a dynamic process, with participating states aware of constructing a document that would shape the future and potentially be subject to legal disputes.<sup>39</sup> Understanding the right to education requires an exploration of its historical context.

A significant contribution to this exploration is Mark Goodale's book "Letters to the Contrary". He explored the UNESCO Symposium and sought to understand the ideological and multicultural dynamics surrounding the principles embodied in the UDHR during the 1940s. His work encapsulates responses, reports, memoranda, letters, and meetings from the 1947-1948 to UNESCO human rights survey, offering valuable insights into the consensus and intellectual climate of the time.<sup>40</sup>

For a broad overview, I turned to the works of Janusz Symonides, particularly drawing on contributions from Thomas Buergenthal and Glen Johnson. Buergenthal provides a clear overview of the UDHR's creation, elucidating its implications for political and civil rights and examining political and organisational influences and subsequent resolutions and charters. Moreover, he reflects on the philosophical underpinnings and contextual political dynamics surrounding the Declaration.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> William A. Schabas, ed., *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: The 'Travaux Préparatoires'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xxxvii.

<sup>39</sup> Navanetham Pillay was a South-African jurist who served as the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the UN from 2008 to 2014. She wrote a foreword for the work of William A. Schabas. See: Schabas, xxxviii & xlii.

<sup>40</sup> Goodale, *Letters to the Contrary*, xiv, xvi & 8.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Buergenthal, 'International Human Rights in an Historical Perspective', in *Human Rights: Concept and Standards*, by Janusz Symonides (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 3–31.

In contrast, Glen Johnson's focus lies on the members of the UN Commission on Human Rights and its members, contextualising their roles and the drafting process that ultimately crystallised the Declaration.<sup>42</sup>

Janusz Symonides significantly contributes to understanding UNESCO's role in the UDHR, both during the drafting process and post-adoption. Notably, UNESCO's General Conference swiftly adopted a resolution just a day after the UDHR's adoption, underscoring the declaration's significance for UNESCO's mission, particularly in the realms of education and international understanding.<sup>43</sup>

Photography has emerged as a key tool for UNESCO to transcend barriers of nation, language, and illiteracy in disseminating this new system of rights and duties.<sup>44</sup> Less than a year after the UDHR's adoption, the *Human Rights Exhibition* opened in Paris in September 1949 and was shortly thereafter turned into a travel album, the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* (1950).<sup>45</sup> This album represented one of the earliest visualisations of its kind, using images and pictures to depict the content of human rights to overcome the barriers of languages.

In Walter Kälin and Lars Müller's work, I discovered a first inspirational contemporary pictorial work which depicted human rights through global scenes.<sup>46</sup>

Sharon Sliwinski, on the other hand, explored the relationship between spectatorship and human rights through an analysis of significant world-historical events, such as the engravings relating to the 1755 earthquake in Lisbon, Portugal and the genocide of 1992.<sup>47</sup> She focused on how images depicting human rights atrocities were circulated and perceived by spectators, shaping their ideas and ideals of human rights even before the global adoption of the UDHR. This exploration raises intriguing questions about what spectators may have perceived from the other side of the world when watching the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights*.

Thierry Gervais' book 'The "Public" Life of Photographs' examines the context in which images are displayed and explores how our understanding of both the role and content of photographs depends on how we access them. Art historian Rémy Besson, on the other hand, focuses on a specific medium and distinguishes three complementary elements important for

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<sup>42</sup> M. Glen Johnson, 'A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights'.

<sup>43</sup> Janusz Symonides, 'UNESCO And The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights'.

<sup>44</sup> Jane Lydon, "'Little Gunshots, but with the Blaze of Lightning': Xavier Herbert, Visuality and Human Rights', *Cultural Studies Review* 23, no. 2 (June 2017): 87–105, <https://doi.org/10.5130/csr.v23i2.5820>.

<sup>45</sup> Kesteloot, 'Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education'.

<sup>46</sup> Walter Kälin, Lars Müller, and Judith Wyttenbach, *The Face of Human Rights* (Baden: Lars Müller, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> Ruthie Ginsburg, 'Human Rights in Camera by Sharon Sliwinski', *Journal of Human Rights* 12, no. 3 (1 July 2013): 362–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2013.812429>; Sharon Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago, United States of America: The University of Chicago, 2011).

analysing the medium—in this case, the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights*. First, the album needed to be a “singular cultural production”. Second, the combination of text and visuals must convey its own universal message. The medium itself (*an sich*) acquired a “certain degree of autonomy” in creating its unique meaning. Third, the album had to be sent to various environments (*milieux*), where it interacted as a tangible object with both visitors and the surrounding display environment.<sup>48</sup>

While tracing the journey of the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* and exploring the *milieu* in which it was displayed, I found myself in Mexico, specifically in Pátzcuaro, where the first regional centre for fundamental education was established. In the UNESCO Courier of December 1950, I encountered information indicating that the album was part of a collective educational campaign aimed at educating both children and adults about their rights and the corresponding duties the people must fulfil.<sup>49</sup> It occurred to me that the dissemination of the album coincided with the opening of CREFAL. The first English and French copies of the albums were sent globally in 1951, and CREFAL opened its doors on 11 September 1950. In my view, CREFAL provided an ideal venue for showcasing UNESCO’s album, allowing for the education of men and women regarding their rights and duties as part of the fundamental education programme, benefiting both trainee specialists and the local community in which the CREFAL staff and students operated. This possibility became evident to me as I came across photos in the UNESCO Archives of Haiti depicting the travel exhibition. The country also served as an experimental ground for UNESCO’s Fundamental Education Pilot Project Programme.

### **1.1.2 On fundamental education**

The UDHR serves as a guiding framework for promoting education rooted in human rights principles. By recognising education as a fundamental human right and a key enabler of personal development and social progress, the UDHR emphasises the interconnectedness between education and the realisation of human rights for all individuals. Yarong Chen is among the few scholars who link the UDHR with fundamental education. In her paper, she refers to Article 26 of the UDHR which outlines the right to education.<sup>50</sup> This connection underscores the importance

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<sup>48</sup> Rémy Besson, ‘Prolégomènes Pour Une Définition de l’intermédialité à l’époque Contemporaine’, June 2014, <https://univ-tlse2.hal.science/hal-01012325>; Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’, 145.

<sup>49</sup> ‘UNESCO Exhibition-Album to Show Man’s Unending Fight to Gain His Rights’.

<sup>50</sup> Yarong Chen, ‘Experimenting with a Global Panacea: UNESCO’s Fundamental Education Programme in China, 1945–1950’, *International Review of Education* 68, no. 3 (1 June 2022): 345–68, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-022-09959-5>.

of education as a fundamental human right. Additionally, it was common for Torres Bodet to refer to the right to education in his speech, as noted by Laves and Thomson.<sup>51</sup> However, fundamental education encompasses more than just access to it. Chen highlights that fundamental education also covers a person's standard of living and the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, referencing both Articles 25 and 27 of the UDHR.<sup>52</sup> I even dare to take this in the next step. In my opinion, fundamental education could be seen as a significant step towards the introduction of the second generation of human rights, embracing social, economic, and cultural rights embedded in the UDHR.<sup>53</sup> Before delving into an in-depth analysis of fundamental education, it is crucial to examine the available literature on this subject. While many scholars have explored fundamental education as a UNESCO programme, there has been limited focus on the programme itself, with even fewer studies dedicated to institutions such as CREFAL.

While Chens's research also focused on the programme of fundamental education, in China, Mulugeta Wodajo's work, "An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education", stands out as one of the few comprehensive studies solely dedicated to

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<sup>51</sup> Walter H. C. Laves and Charles A. Thomson, *UNESCO. Purpose, Progress, Prospects*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957).; Laves also highlighted the importance of raising educational levels, particularly in countries with inadequate facilities, as a way to support effective democratic systems of government and promote attitudes conducive to peace. Literacy campaigns are thus essential in providing people with the understanding and attitudes necessary for peace. See: Walter H. C. Laves, 'UNESCO and The Achievement Of Peace', *The Political Quarterly*, 22, no. 2 (April 1951): 169–74, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.1951.tb00212.x>.

<sup>52</sup> For fluency purposes, I cite here what can be found in Article 25: "1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. 2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection."; and Article 27: "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. 2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author." See: Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'.

<sup>53</sup> In human rights literature, three generations of human rights are distinguished. The civil and political rights are seen as the first generation of human rights and are understood as individual and liberal rights of non-interference and democratic participation in society. These individual rights imply a vertical relationship between the state and the individual and were conceived during the Age of Enlightenment. Moreover, they are seen as negative rights. Opposed to these negative rights is a second generation of rights, which are rather related to the socialist concept. They are based on the harmonisation of individual and collective interests in societies, in contrast to the first generation of rights which would only support capitalist interests in separating state and society. These rights are referred to as economic, social and cultural rights, including the freedom of assembly, the right to work, the right to education, etc. They imply positive rights and are considered not only the responsibility of the state but also the duty of every citizen. A third generation of rights consists of collective rights of people, emerging from the contexts of colonialism and imperialism. Article 28 of the UDHR provides the basis for this concept of collective rights, ensuring solidarity between people of the Global South and the Global North. It includes the right to self-determination and is positively connotated as well as international in scope. The concept of the three generations finds its normative expression in the two UN International Covenants of 1966 and the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. See: Schabas, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*; Janusz Symonides, *Human Rights: Concept and Standards* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Spasimir Domaradzki, Margaryta Khvostova, and David Pupovac, 'Karel Vasak's Generations of Rights and the Contemporary Human Rights Discourse', *Human Rights Review* 20, no. 4 (1 December 2019): 423–43, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-019-00565-x>.

fundamental education.<sup>54</sup> In her PhD dissertation, Wodajo carefully analysed UNESCO's programme on fundamental education using various documents from the UNESCO Secretariat, which were retrieved from the UNESCO Liaison Office and the United Nations' Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Library in New York, both published and unpublished materials, as well as records from UNESCO sponsored conferences and seminars.<sup>55</sup>

Wodajo identified four distinct periods within UNESCO's fundamental education programme. The first period, spanning from 1946 to 1950, was characterised as a period of formulation. During this time, UNESCO laid the theoretical groundwork for fundamental education, considering it a priority project.<sup>56</sup> However, defining fundamental education and identifying its beneficiaries pose significant challenges. To address these questions, the Secretariat staff surveyed experts to explore the meaning, scope, and content of fundamental education. Several specialists in colonial education participated in this committee of experts, including anthropologists Margaret Mead and Margaret Read, the French inspector Albert Charon, experts in comparative education Isaac Kandel and Joseph Lauwerys and well-known missionaries such as Frank Laubach.<sup>57</sup> The resulting publication, "Fundamental Education: Common Ground For All Peoples," published in late 1946, sparked discussions, but did not provide a definitive definition.<sup>58</sup> The debate surrounding the definition of 'fundamental education' persisted. Jens Boel, a former chief archivist at UNESCO, explained in his work "UNESCO's Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact" how UNESCO initially chose not to define the concept but rather describe it, maintaining a holistic approach to education, even after updating the definition in 1949.<sup>59</sup>

The second phase, spanning from 1951 to 1955, denoted by Wodajo as a period of action, saw the initiation of numerous projects and the establishment of two regional centres dedicated to fundamental education: one in Pátzcuaro, Mexico and another in Sirs-El-Layyan, Egypt.<sup>60</sup> A pilot project in Haiti commenced in 1947, coinciding with the dissemination of the aforementioned

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<sup>54</sup> This PhD dissertation was written in 1963 to obtain the degree of Doctor of Education. See: Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.'

<sup>55</sup> Wodajo.

<sup>56</sup> Wodajo.

<sup>57</sup> Damiano Matasci, 'Assessing Needs, Fostering Development: UNESCO, Illiteracy and the Global Politics of Education (1945–1960)', *Comparative Education* 53, no. 1 (2 January 2017): 35–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2017.1254952>.

<sup>58</sup> Wodajo.

<sup>59</sup> Jens Boel is a Danish historian and former chief archivist of UNESCO, serving between 1995 and 2017. See: 'Jens Boel', OpenGlobalRights, accessed 9 March 2024, <https://www.openglobalrights.org/jens-boel/>; Jens Boel, 'Fundamental Education : A Pioneer Concept - Jens Boel Explains Why', UNESCO News, accessed 28 July 2019, <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/fundamental-education-pioneer-concept-jens-boel-explains-why>; Jens Boel, 'UNESCO's Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact'.

<sup>60</sup> Wodajo, 2.

survey, while two other pilot projects, one in China and one in Tanganyika (similar to former Tanzania), did not proceed further.<sup>61</sup> The progress made in the Haitian pilot project eventually led to the conceptualisation of a World Network of Fundamental Education Centres, with the Regional Centre of Fundamental Education in Latin America (CREFAL) as the inaugural centre. Additionally, during these initial years, the associated project scheme was launched in 1949, and within two years had endorsed 34 projects in 15 countries, only two years later, integrating vital activities of fundamental education with UNESCO's framework.<sup>62</sup>

In the third period, termed the period of reformulation from 1956 to 1960, UNESCO underwent a thorough review of its programme, largely prompted by the emergence of the upcoming community development programme, specifically Technical Assistance (TA), within the UN.<sup>63</sup> Given the perceived competition between the two programs and organisations, it became essential to reassess UNESCO's efforts and activities. Consequently, numerous meetings were held between the United Nations Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), ultimately leading to the integration of fundamental education into community development from the 9<sup>th</sup> General Conference onwards. Furthermore, at the 10<sup>th</sup> General Conference in 1958, UNESCO was compelled to discontinue the use of the term 'Fundamental Education' in favour of the UN's term 'Community Development'.<sup>64</sup> Wodajo also observed a similar trend at an organisational level, with UNESCO attempting to divest itself from financial and administrative obligations towards its two regional centres, the Arab States Fundamental Education Centre (ASFEC) and CREFAL, transferring the burden to the national states where the centres were located.<sup>65</sup>

Recognising the onset of the fourth period – the period of withdrawal–commencing in 1961, UNESCO began to distance itself from its centres, opting to relinquish certain responsibilities in favour of the TA of the UN. Another significant change occurred at the Addis Ababa Conference on the Development of Education in 1961, signalling a shift from the perspective of education. This emphasis shifted towards secondary education, which promised a greater return on investment in development.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> UNESCO had been criticised for starting up the Haitian programme while the concept of fundamental education still had to be defined. Also, the idea of a Chinese project had to be abandoned due to the political turmoil in the country and the project in Tanganyika was launched to fail due to many logistical difficulties. See: Wodajo, 82 & 90; Chen, 'Experimenting with a Global Panacea'; Walter H. C. Laves and Charles A. Thomson, *UNESCO. Purpose, Progress, Prospects*, 143-144.; Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 1st ed., Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 109.

<sup>62</sup> Jens Boel, 'UNESCO's Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact'; Wodajo.

<sup>63</sup> Wodajo.

<sup>64</sup> The 9<sup>th</sup> General Conference of UNESCO took place between 5<sup>th</sup> November to 5<sup>th</sup> December 1956 in New Delhi. The 10<sup>th</sup> General Conference occurred from 4<sup>th</sup> November to 5<sup>th</sup> December 1958 in Paris.; Wodajo.

<sup>65</sup> Wodajo; Walter H. C. Laves and Charles A. Thomson, *UNESCO. Purpose, Progress, Prospects*.

<sup>66</sup> Wodajo.

Jens Boel's exploration focused on the origins, vision, scope and activities of fundamental education until the 10<sup>th</sup> General Conference in 1958, where, as he noted, UNESCO abandoned the term fundamental education. Boel also delineated UNESCO's translation of fundamental education into the field through pilot projects and regional centres, highlighting its eventual integration into the TA programme of the UN. While Wodajo emphasises the continuity of fundamental education, Boel underscores another transition, arguing that despite UNESCO abandoning the term of fundamental education, the idea of education became rooted within the UN system as an essential and indispensable tool for development.<sup>67</sup>

Over the years, fundamental education programs in Mexico have been regularly discussed by different scholars.<sup>68</sup> I consider that one of the earliest and most independent publications I could find on the fundamental education programme in Mexico was the publication of Tibor Mende.<sup>69</sup> As an author and journalist interested in development, he published on CREFAL in 1952 in the UNESCO Courier of February, only to publish his own book "*L'Amérique Latine Entre en Scène*" a few months later.<sup>70</sup> As in the UNESCO Courier, he provides a first glimpse on the organisation and work done in CREFAL, narrating on the history of Mexico and its context while sketching his visits to the regional centre on fundamental education and the surrounding 'laboratory' or villages, such as Janitzio, Ihuatzio, Jaracuaro, etc.<sup>71</sup> Specialists visiting local communities aim to strengthen the capacities of the Tarascans and empower them and their well-being through the programme. Together, they work on practical aspects of daily life such as hygiene, healthy food, daily financing, and community development.<sup>72</sup> In short, the Tarascans were trained to manage and solve the challenges of daily life autonomously, so they could be the actors of their own development and well-being. What astonishes him is the speed of the programme. He questions the pace of the programme and points towards the contrast between revolutionary change, which can be introduced in twenty-four hours, and evolutionary and sustainable growth, aimed at avoiding past mistakes by promoting lasting change with respect to the rhythm of the local communities.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Jens Boel, 'UNESCO's Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact'.

<sup>68</sup> I focus solely here on the fundamental education programme in Mexico. While literature on the pilot projects, including those in Haiti, is available, they appear to be less relevant for my study.

<sup>69</sup> Of course, UNESCO Staff had regularly published work on fundamental education in the UNESCO Courier or even through their own books, such as Laves and Thomson or Behrman. Yet, to me, it is of utmost importance to not only focus on the work of UNESCO employees but also on independent scholars, and in this case, journalists.

<sup>70</sup> Tibor Mende, *L'Amérique Latine Entre en Scène*. (Paris, France : Editions du Seuil, 1952).

<sup>71</sup> Mende, 305-316.

<sup>72</sup> Mende.

<sup>73</sup> Mende.

Mende was not the only one visiting CREFAL. In 1954, Brother Stanislaus wrote an article as an American student at the School of Education at the University of Michigan. He had participated in a course called “Workshop in International Education: A laboratory in Comparative Education” which included a study tour to CREFAL. He also wrote an article for the “Journal des Traducteurs” in 1954, witnessing his trip, where he was able to study the problems, methods, and objectives of teachers working in the laboratory of CREFAL.<sup>74</sup>

Wallace Woolsey visited CREFAL in 1963. Then still, as during the time Stanislaus visited CREFAL, Lloyd Hughes was still the assistant-director of CREFAL.<sup>75</sup> Coincidentally, both published their descriptions of CREFAL in the same year, describing its history and organisation. Hence, Wallace Woolsey described the centre from a visitor’s point of view and focused more on the region, the community’s beloved bishop Don Vasco de Quiroga and the former owner of the mansion, Lázaro Cárdenas. He highlighted that CREFAL might appear as a little centre, yet approximately 700 students have benefited from its courses over the past 11 years, influencing many lives spread of individuals throughout Latin America.<sup>76</sup>

Woolsey was welcomed by Lloyd Hughes. The same Hughes also published an article “CREFAL: Training Centre For Community Development For Latin America” in the same year, wherein he highlights the history of the centre, its organisation, programme and courses, and organisation for the participating students. In contrast to the rest, he sheds light on the problems that CREFAL is currently encountering. It seemed inevitable that, for both staff and students, living and working close to the area exposes them to various challenges. Living in a small multicultural compound near the Pátzcuaro railway station, they were also exposed to a sort of ‘goldfish bowl’ existence, feeling regularly exhibited to official and unofficial visitors of the centre. Moreover, as he continues, restrictions on our social lives sometimes lead to social revolt and boredom. Creativity and adaptability are required to make the most of the situation.<sup>77</sup> In addition,

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<sup>74</sup> Brother Stanislaus, ‘The Linguistic Aspects of a Field Trip to CREFAL’, *Journal Des Traducteurs / Translators’ Journal* 1, no. 1 (1955) : 18–21, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1057539ar>.

<sup>75</sup> Lloyd H. Hughes, an American of negro birth - as Todd Shepard describes him - has been involved with fundamental education and CREFAL for years. Initially, in 1948, he was asked to conduct a study of the Mexican Cultural Missions. Upon his return from Mexico, he became an employee of UNESCO, heading UNESCO’s Division of Fundamental Education. See: Todd Shepard, ‘Algeria, France, Mexico, UNESCO: A Transnational History of Anti-Racism and Decolonization, 1932–1962’, *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 2 (July 2011): 273–97, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S174002281100026X>; Philip W. Jones, *International Policies for Third World Education: Unesco, Literacy and Development*, Routledge Library Editions. Comparative Education Vol. 8 8 516837 (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018).

<sup>76</sup> Wallace Woolsey, ‘CREFAL - UNESCO’S School for Community Development Leadership in Latin America’, *Hispania* 46, no. 1 (1963): 115–118.

<sup>77</sup> Lloyd H. Hughes, ‘Crefal: Training Centre for Community Development for Latin America’, *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft / Revue Internationale de l’Education* 9, no. 2 (1963): 226–35.



the unconscious resistance of the mind sneaks in the implementation of the programme and can pose difficulties in adapting to new approaches and goals. As he writes:

“We accept new goals, new orientations, new methods mentally and verbally, but when it comes to applying them, we may be compared with the passenger who rides on the rear platform of a moving train; we look in one direction while we travel in another. Though we set about new goals with enthusiasm, somewhere along the way towards their attainment we tend to regress into our traditional ways and practices, simply because it is easier to follow tradition and old, established patterns of action and thought”.<sup>78</sup>

It was not until 1988 that another scholar conducted in-depth research, dedicating an entire chapter to fundamental education. In his book titled “International Policies For Third World Education: UNESCO, Literacy and Development”, Philip W. Jones focused on UNESCO’s fundamental education programme within the context of its early initiatives, emphasising the importance of providing a basic level of education to all individuals.<sup>79</sup> According to Jones, fundamental education transcends traditional literacy programs by promoting holistic development, including the social, cultural, and economic aspects. He discusses how fundamental education serves as a key strategy for fostering literacy, basic skills, and community development in Third World countries, evaluating various projects while also highlighting the work done by the commission on fundamental education and the diplomatic efforts of Mexican representatives in promoting literacy education as a crucial aspect of development strategies.

As Boel and Wodajo, Jones also delves into the inter-agency rivalry between UNESCO’s fundamental education programme and the TA organised by the UN over the years.<sup>80</sup> Jones refers to a 1951’ paper “A Note On The Relationship Of Fundamental Education To Economic And Social Development”, written by UNESCO’s Secretariat, which underscores the importance of fundamental education in contrast to TA for education and development. Jones interprets fundamental education as emphasising basic education, empowerment, community participation, and community-centred strategies to address social, economic, and educational challenges in a more inclusive and sustainable manner, distancing itself from TA.<sup>81</sup> In summary, individual well-being precedes the development narrative.

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<sup>78</sup> Hughes, 232-233.

<sup>79</sup> Jones, *International Policies for Third World Education*.

<sup>80</sup> Jones.; Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO’s Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.’; Jens Boel, ‘UNESCO’s Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact’; Maren Elfert, *UNESCO’s Utopia of Lifelong Learning: : An Intellectual History*, Routledge Research in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education (New York, New York ; Routledge, 2018).

<sup>81</sup> Jones.

Jones expresses a positive outlook on fundamental education activities, stating: “Of all activities in fundamental education organised away from Paris, they were the most successful”.<sup>82</sup> He refers specifically to both CREFAL and ASFEC, the two regional centres, drawing parallels between their successes and failures while emphasising the importance of a common language and regional homogeneity in their operations. Jones suggested that UNESCO had learned from its experiences, unlike the organisation of the pilot project in Haiti.<sup>83</sup> Additionally, in his description of CREFAL, Jones mentioned the establishment of the American Fundamental Education Press in Washington, D.C., funded by the original \$ 100,000 contribution pledged by the OAS for the Latin American centre in Mexico.<sup>84</sup> Jones’s work piqued my interest and prompted me to question the genesis of CREFAL, especially in relation to the Latin American Fundamental Education Press, as this was the first time I encountered information about this press. It seemed that the collaboration between UNESCO and the OAS on fundamental education and meeting the educational needs of Latin America was not as successful and seamless as I initially assumed.

Like Boel, Jones also highlighted the holistic approach inherent in fundamental education programs. Both scholars surprised me in this aspect, as I recalled from my studies in social work that it was not until the 1960s that ‘development’ acquired a different connotation, shifting from a paternalistic approach towards individual well-being.<sup>85</sup> Over 200 years ago, the concept of ‘civil society’ emerged from Enlightenment ideals, promoting equality among all members of society, the separation of religion and state, and the right to freedom of expression, ideals that were also incorporated in the UDHR.<sup>86</sup> At the time, there was a belief that interventions in people’s lives through healthcare, parish relief, and education were necessary for societal progress. However, this bourgeois ideal had a dual strategy of combining open and egalitarian principles with an emphasis on elevating civilisation.<sup>87</sup> This led me to wonder whether this new programme centralised the individual or society; otherwise, it would be, in my opinion, quite ‘revolutionary’.

It was not just me that questioned whether a particular top-down approach towards communities was inherent in the fundamental education programme. Professor of History and

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<sup>82</sup> Jones, 81.

<sup>83</sup> In chapter 2, I will focus more on the pilot project in Haiti.

<sup>84</sup> In documents found in the CREFAL Archives, it appears that the American Fundamental Education Press was referred to as “OMEFAL.” Unfortunately, I could not find an exact translation of the abbreviation. See: ‘Resoluciones Del Comité de Coordinación Junta Del CREFAL y OMEFAL’, 1953, 1953/500-502/C-4/E-6, CREFAL; Jones, *International Policies for Third World Education*.

<sup>85</sup> Tom Vanwing, ‘De narrige legitimering van het sociaal-cultureel volwassenenwerk’, in *Spoor zoeken. Handboek sociaal-cultureel werk met volwassenen*, by Larock Yves et al. (Gent: Academia Press, 2005), 101–29.

<sup>86</sup> Here I refer to T. Notten, *Overleven in de Stad. Inleiding Tot Sociale Kwaliteit En Urban Education* (Apeldoorn: Garant, 2004); Vanwing, ‘De narrige legitimering van het sociaal-cultureel volwassenenwerk’, 104; Nations, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’.

<sup>87</sup> Vanwing, ‘De narrige legitimering van het sociaal-cultureel volwassenenwerk’.

Philosophy of Education Joseph Watras specifically queried whether this initiative could be perceived as a new form of colonialism in his article “Was Fundamental Education Another Form of Colonialism?”.<sup>88</sup> Through his examination of the work of progressive educator Pedro Tamesis Orata, Watras concluded that the introduction of academic skills possibly weakened the traditional orientations of societies.<sup>89</sup>

In his other article “UNESCO’s programme of fundamental education, 1946-1959”, Watras reached a similar conclusion. While initially focusing on the definition of the concept of fundamental education and UNESCO’s first pilot project in the Marbial Valley, he also explored the contradictions inherent in the programme. He argued that fundamental education had become a form of advertising, with words aimed at helping to disguise the control exerted by experts. It was the fundamental education workers who determined what the people needed through surveys.<sup>90</sup> He identified four tendencies in the programme that contradicted the aim of fundamental education. First, fundamental education workers imposed a modern scientific culture on indigenous societies, potentially overshadowing or disregarding cultural traditions and practices. Second, the workers found themselves manipulating indigenous people to accept what the programmes offered, raising ethical concerns about the approach taken. Third, they masked the cultural traits implied by the programmes, possibly diluting or erasing the unique cultural identities of the communities involved. Finally, fundamental education workers did not question or reevaluate their programs but instead translated failure into a need for increased effort.<sup>91</sup>

Watras’ analysis of the fundamental education programme appears to contrast with Jones’ focus on the programme, as the latter was inherently positive about the results achieved by CREFAL. Yet, scholars Luis Urrieta and Judith Landeros from Austin followed Watras’ path. In their article ““*Hacer el hombre más hombre*”: Fundamental Education, Deficit Perspectives, Gender, and Indigenous Survivance in Central Mexico”, they examined the impact of fundamental education programs in indigenous communities in the 1960s. By the 1960s, CREFAL created opportunities for researchers to conduct studies under the fundamental education mission in Pátzcuaro and the neighbouring *pueblos* (towns), concluding that CREFAL projects sometimes

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<sup>88</sup> Joseph Watras, ‘Was Fundamental Education Another Form of Colonialism?’, *International Review of Education* 53, no. 1 (2007): 55–72, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-007-9033-4>.

<sup>89</sup> Pedro Tamesis Orata was born in Urdaneta, a small village in the Philippines, in 1899. He grew up amidst difficult conditions but managed to graduate in 1920 as highest-ranking student from the high school in the province Pangasinan. He then moved to the United States to enrol in the University of Illinois and completed his bachelor’s degree there in 1924. One year later, he also completed his master’s degree. He was awarded an assistantship at The Ohio State University, where he furthered his doctoral studies. See: Watras.

<sup>90</sup> Joseph Watras, ‘UNESCO’s Programme of Fundamental Education, 1946 - 1959’, *History of Education (Tavistock)* 39, no. 2 (2010): 219–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00467600903043282>.

<sup>91</sup> Watras.

intervened in local indigenous communities without seeking their input, leading to unintended consequences such as undermining the voices of the P'urhépecha and their traditions and cultures.<sup>92</sup> In this dissertation, I do not necessarily focus on the impact of fundamental education programs in local communities. The time spent in Pátzcuaro, Mexico was too limited. Nonetheless, in my opinion, it is interesting to explore the academic works which can be found from Spanish-speaking scholars.

Alfonso Rangel Guerra is one such scholars. He argued that the educational experience Mexico had through its cultural missions was reflected in the programme and staff of CREFAL. Lucas Ortíz was known as an expert in the field of rural education and appointed as the first director of CREFAL. Rangel Guerra points out that the continuity of the rural programme is reflected in the theses of the students. One of the first theses written by León J. Bourgeat in 1952, was titled: “*La Escuela Rural Al Servicio De La Educación Fundamental*”.<sup>93</sup> The influence of the Mexican programme on CREFAL was confirmed.

Two other scholars have also focused on the Mexican relationship with UNESCO's fundamental education programme. Federico Lazarín Miranda described Mexico's participation in the project and what it meant for the Latin American world.<sup>94</sup> Mexico's long history in rural education is an example of the Latin American world and corresponds to UNESCO's vision of fundamental education. He also believed that this contributed to why Mexico was chosen as the first country to host a regional centre for fundamental education.<sup>95</sup> Alicia Civera Cerecedo, on the other hand, focused on the realisation of UNESCO's projects in Mexico. She examined pilot projects set up in the region of Santiago Ixcuintla in the state of Nayarit, a central zone in the country near the Pacific coast.<sup>96</sup> This pilot project was approved by the Second General Conference of UNESCO in Mexico. She concluded that two tendencies were visible in UNESCO's fundamental educational pilot projects. First, many projects were still in the research phase. Those responsible for these projects did not know what to do or how to implement the proposed project. Mostly, UNESCO sent some staff to the field to exchange ideas but mostly relied on governments to support the project. Moreover, there was a second tendency in which countries were required to conduct their own research and present their projects to the General

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<sup>92</sup> Urrieta and Landeros, “Hacer El Hombre Más Hombre”.

<sup>93</sup> Alfonso Rangel Guerra, ‘La Educación rural mexicana y la educación fundamental en el inicio del CREFAL’, *Revista Interamericana de Educación de Adultos* 28, no. 2 (2006): 169–76.

<sup>94</sup> Federico Lazarín Miranda, ‘México, la UNESCO y el Proyecto de Educación Fundamental para América Latina, 1945-1951’, *Signos históricos* 16, no. 31 (June 2014): 89–115.

<sup>95</sup> Lazarín Miranda.

<sup>96</sup> Alicia Civera Cerecedo, ‘Los Proyectos Educativos Piloto De La UNESCO Y La Definición De La Educación Fundamental, 1945-1951’, n.d., 1–10.

Conference. UNESCO's initial projects on fundamental education were cheaper, yet the experiences taken in these projects contributed to the extension of UNESCO's fundamental education project and ultimately led to the opening of a regional centre for the training of educators in fundamental education, namely, CREFAL in Mexico.<sup>97</sup>

### **1.1.3 On UNESCO and fundamental education**

As demonstrated in the literature review on fundamental education, particularly in the Mexican context, I observed a limited number of publications. However, several other works regularly feature discussions about the programme and centre. Notable among these publications are the works of Glenda Sluga and Maren Elfert.

In her book “UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning – An Intellectual History”, British scholar Maren Elfert aims to explore the evolution of lifelong learning from a humanistic perspective.<sup>98</sup> UNESCO had played a significant role in shaping the discourse for a humanistic and emancipatory perspective towards education.<sup>99</sup> In her study, she sought to understand why the meaning of lifelong learning has shifted over the decades and explored UNESCO's role in actively promoting the right to education, emphasising the fulfilment of individual potential and the betterment of human lives.<sup>100</sup> In doing so, she also focused on fundamental education programs. The programme was progressive, as it championed a humanistic vision of education and emphasised the intrinsic value of learning for individuals and societies. Despite UNESCO's advocacy work, Elfert argues, echoing the trends noted by Wodajo and Jones, that governments and competing organisations continuously pushed back UNESCO's influence in favour of a more technical and economic approach to education.<sup>101</sup>

In her book “Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism,” Glenda Sluga underscores the significance of internationalism as a distinct phenomenon of that era, highlighting its impact on shaping global politics and history.<sup>102</sup> Sluga examined UNESCO's cosmopolitan message and analysed how UNESCO's Member States' strong national influence hindered the promotion of its ideals. She recommends using a transnational approach to study international organisations,

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<sup>97</sup> Alicia Civera Cerecedo.

<sup>98</sup> Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*.

<sup>99</sup> Maren Elfert, ‘Humanism and Democracy in Comparative Education’, *Comparative Education* 59, no. 3 (3 July 2023): 398–415, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2023.2185432>.

<sup>100</sup> Elfert; Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*.

<sup>101</sup> Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*; Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.’; Jones, *International Policies for Third World Education*.

<sup>102</sup> Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*.

viewing them as political spaces where internationalism intersects with national history and nationalism.<sup>103</sup> Sluga described how the fundamental education programme was influenced both directly and indirectly by the national ideas of key figures, such as Director-General Huxley and American President Harry S. Truman.<sup>104</sup>

However, political figures were not the only ones that influenced UNESCO and its programme. Early works, such as Theodore Besterman's "UNESCO. Peace In The Minds Of Men" offers insight into UNESCO as a specialised agency of the UN, administratively independent but with special contractual relations with the UN. Besterman elucidated how UNESCO is obliged to submit annual reports to the parent body and how its activities are codified in a contractual relationship.<sup>105</sup> ECOSOC, for instance, has the authority to review the activities of Specialised Agencies, giving the UN some political control over these seemingly independent agencies.<sup>106</sup>

Fernando Valderrama's historical overview in "A History Of UNESCO" proved invaluable to this dissertation. Valderrama provides a comprehensive overview of UNESCO's origins, evolution, and key activities, including the organisation's role in promoting education, science, culture, communication, and international cooperation. The book delves into UNESCO's initiatives, programs, and challenges faced over the years, highlighting significant events, such as conferences, declarations, and partnerships. It explores efforts to address human rights, poverty, cultural diversity, and sustainable development through various sessions of General Conferences.<sup>107</sup>

PhD-student Chloé Maurel also focused on UNESCO's first 30 years, unravelling the organisation's evolution and tendencies. She not only focused on the Director-Generals and their ambitions and contributions to UNESCO but also on the organisational and political contexts in which UNESCO operated. She points to the organisation's lack of striking power as a specialised agency of the UN and its dependency on its member states. Nonetheless, she concludes that UNESCO has played an important role in various fields such as science, education, and culture. Despite the tensions and challenges faced in many initiatives, the organisation still managed to have a positive impact on society and international relations.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Sluga.

<sup>104</sup> Sluga.

<sup>105</sup> Besterman, *UNESCO Peace In The Minds Of Men*.

<sup>106</sup> Besterman.

<sup>107</sup> Fernando Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO* (Presses Universitaires de France, Vendôme, France: UNESCO, 1995), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000101722?posInSet=1&queryId=144b1ff5-d58b-4aec-b44b-f94655e7fb65>.

<sup>108</sup> Chloé Maurel, 'L'UNESCO de 1945 à 1974' (Phdthesis, Université Panthéon-Sorbonne - Paris I, 2006), <https://theses.hal.science/tel-00848712>.

In “UNESCO and World Politics”, James Patrick Sewell states: “International organisation’s charter proclaims a better future for mankind, yet, unavoidably, their human participants live in this world. [...] Always they are manned by individuals with different predispositions in different roles who relate to each other, to mundane circumstances, and to policy choices in differing ways.”<sup>109</sup>

He asserts that international organisations do not operate in isolation but are influenced by global politics, a statement also made by Sluga.<sup>110</sup> Sewell discusses the concept of “engaging”, referring to becoming involved or more involved in an ongoing international relationship, and explores what motivates such “engagement” among participants and its effectiveness.<sup>111</sup> He notes a shift in UNESCO’s programs, as well as those of other UN Specialised Agencies, towards a more field-oriented approach aligned with other agencies’ development financing initiatives.<sup>112</sup>

This critique is echoed in the work of Dorn and Ghodsee, who examined how literacy and education became politicised during the Cold War. Literacy and, by extension, the fundamental education programme became a tool for combating communism and promoting economic development.<sup>113</sup> Their work underscores the delicate balance UNESCO faced in advocating for its humanistic vision of education amid competing demands for education as an economic development tool. Following Sluga’s advice to approach UNESCO and their initiative from a transnational perspective, I aim to explore the bystanders of this international organisation and examine the genesis and development of the programme to gain insights into the initial translation and reception of human rights principles in general.

## 1.2 Methodology

UNESCO, as an intergovernmental organisation, was founded with the mission to “construct peace in the minds of men”.<sup>114</sup> ‘Constructing peace’ meant fostering awareness of individual rights and responsibilities while promoting respect for each other. This optimistic preamble placed great faith in humanity’s goodness and willingness to embrace personal responsibility. However, Lyman Bryson, an American radio and television broadcaster and

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<sup>109</sup> James Patrick Sewell, *UNESCO and World Politics: Engaging In International Relations*, Princeton Legacy Library 1610 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400871063>.

<sup>110</sup> Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*.

<sup>111</sup> Sewell.

<sup>112</sup> Sewell.

<sup>113</sup> Charles Dorn and Kristen Ghodsee, ‘The Cold War Politicization of Literacy: Communism, UNESCO, and the World Bank’, *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 2 (2012): 373–98.

<sup>114</sup> UNESCO, ‘Constitution - Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’.

educator who consulted UNESCO between 1947 and 1950, identified two main challenges facing the organisation.<sup>115</sup> The first, he believed, was the difficulty of fostering “mutual trust and friendly collaboration”.<sup>116</sup> He questioned how UNESCO could achieve this goal, emphasising the need to disseminate “more effective kinds of knowledge” that could counteract past tendencies towards suspicion and even hatred.<sup>117</sup> Additionally, Bryson stressed the importance of UNESCO’s approach to the public, noting that they held the ultimate power to achieve peace and must understand and actively participate in the pursuit of international peace.<sup>118</sup>

A similar sentiment is echoed in the booklet “The Kansas Story on UNESCO”, which recounts the efforts of the Kansas State Council to support UNESCO’s programs and purposes. Hundreds of citizens gathered to develop effective programs “for international understanding in their communities” and, more importantly, to reflect on the question: “What can I, as an individual, do for peace?”<sup>119</sup> However, many individuals expressed feelings of helplessness regarding their ability to make a difference.<sup>120</sup> Apathy, created by feelings of helplessness, could be a danger to today’s society. Hence, an answer to this threat could be “a cooperation based on mutual understanding” among people, created by an organisation which is dedicated to peace and involves both governments and individuals.<sup>121</sup>

UNESCO was appointed with the expectation that it would play a facilitating role in “educating peace,” relying on the intelligence and spirit of individuals rather than solely on government efforts. The organisation’s task, as reflected in its preamble, was to establish peace founded on the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind, rather than solely on political and economic arrangements.<sup>122</sup> However, as Bryson noted, despite UNESCO’s positive intentions in its information campaigns, not all states were members of the organisation, and some might not

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<sup>115</sup> Lyman Bryson was an American educator, born in Nebraska. He started his career as a journalist before pursuing several degrees in adult education. Later in life, he served as a consultant for UNESCO, advising on the use of radio in education. He collaborated with Germán Arciniegas, Maurice Bedel, Bart Bok, Jean Piaget, and Rex Warner on UNESCO’s publication: “Les Droits de l’esprit: six études sur les aspects culturels de la Déclaration universelle des droits de l’homme.” See: Germán Arciniegas et al., *Les Droits de l’esprit: six études sur les aspects culturels de la Déclaration universelle des droits de l’homme* (Liège, Belgique et Paris, France: UNESCO, 1950), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000128482>; Al Thompson and Margaret McAleer, ‘Lyman Bryson Papers - A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress’ (Library of Congress, Washington D.C., 2010).

<sup>116</sup> Lyman Bryson, ‘UNESCO’, *The Journal of Higher Education* 17, no. 9 (1946): 451–55, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1975983>.

<sup>117</sup> Bryson.

<sup>118</sup> Bryson.

<sup>119</sup> United States National Commission for Unesco, *The Kansas Story on Unesco* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949).

<sup>120</sup> United States National Commission for Unesco.

<sup>121</sup> United States National Commission for Unesco.

<sup>122</sup> UNESCO, ‘Constitution - Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’.



disseminate the information as intended. Moreover, there was a risk that UNESCO's message could be misunderstood or misinterpreted by the masses.<sup>123</sup>

Bryson's last comment recalls for Kenneth Burke's words: "Every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing."<sup>124</sup> Burke, a rhetorician, highlighted how words function as 'reflections of reality' and thus as well as 'selections of reality', shaping our shared understanding of the world.<sup>125</sup> Similar to Stuart Hall's enquiry into the construction of meaning and shared understanding, the question was raised and examined how language could construct meaning and sustain a dialogue "between participants which enables them to build a culture of shared understanding and interpret the world in roughly the same way".<sup>126</sup> A similar question was addressed by Bryson regarding UNESCO's challenges in educating the public about human rights and the responsibilities inherent in them, particularly through the right to education, with fundamental education being one expression of this in a local context.<sup>127</sup>

John Bowers, the former director of UNESCO's fundamental education initiative, emphasised its role in helping people thrive in changing conditions, uphold cultural values, and advance economically and socially.<sup>128</sup> His words from 1948 underscore the importance of individual responsibility and adaptation to the modern world, shaped by both national and international influence. This perspective resonates with therapeutic methodologies such as contextual thinking, a framework still regularly used in therapeutic settings wherein the individual is centralised through a social-anthropological approach in its context. In cooperation with the therapist, the client explores him as an individual within the broader context of its families, communities, and societies. Moreover, in their collaboration, the client and therapist emphasised the importance of understanding and navigating various social and cultural layers to promote personal resilience and well-being in combination with contextual resources.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Bryson, 'UNESCO'.

<sup>124</sup> Kenneth Burke. *Permanence and Change*. (New York: New York Republic, 1935): 70 in: L. Lingard, 'What We See and Don't See When We Look at "Competence": Notes on a God Term', *Advances in Health Sciences Education* 14, no. 5 (1 December 2009): 625–28, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10459-009-9206-y>.

<sup>125</sup> Kenneth Burke. *Language as symbolic action: Essays on life, literature and method*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966): 70 in: Lingard.

<sup>126</sup> Stuart Hall was a British sociologist who argued that the meaning of words and images depends on our 'circuit of culture.' Thus, our culture and reality depend on our representational system, which is formed by our language. By using language, we construct shared meanings. See: Paul Du Gay, *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, Repr., Culture, Media and Identities 657895 (London: Sage Publications, 2003).

<sup>127</sup> Bryson, 'UNESCO'.

<sup>128</sup> Bowers, 'Fundamental Education. Programme for 1948'.

<sup>129</sup> Nagy is known as one of the founding fathers of a contextual methodology in social work. Its success is largely due to its multidisciplinary approach and holistic thinking. Marleen Heylen and Kris Janssens provide a profound exploration of this methodology in their book: 'Het Contextuele Denken. Een methodiekontwikkeling voor het welzijnswerk'. See: Marleen Heylen and Kris Janssens, *Het contextuele denken. Een methodiekontwikkeling voor het welzijnswerk* (Leuven: Acco, 2004).

In line with my studies on social work, I recognised the need for a similar holistic approach to my research questions. This approach aimed not only to comprehend the fundamental education programme and the dissemination of the UDHR towards ‘the people’, but also to reflect on the historical context behind these endeavours. Today’s reality is undoubtedly different from the social landscape of the 1940s and the 1950s, particularly in Europe, the USA, and Latin America.

At the outset of my research, from my background as a social worker, I identified three distinct layers of social reality through the lens of an actor-versus-structure paradigm.<sup>130</sup> This paradigm is grounded in the understanding that social phenomena occur at various levels of reality. In essence, it entails analysing social reality by recognising and delineating interconnected layers.<sup>131</sup>

First, I pinpoint the immediate environment of the individual, referred to as the ‘micro-level’. This level encompasses an individual’s day-to-day interactions with their family and social circles.<sup>132</sup> The local communities surrounding Lake Pátzcuaro exemplify this micro-level in the context of a fundamental education programme. Both participants, including students and residents, of the CREFAL programme can be situated within this level.

In contrast, Vranken and Henderickx clarified the idea at the macro level. This level pertains to global society in which individuals maintain abstract yet interdependent relationships. Although these connections may be distant and impersonal, they may also influence daily exchanges and interactions.<sup>133</sup> The macro level was interpreted as encapsulating the fundamental education programme spearheaded by UNESCO and the OAS and manifested through CREFAL in its direct engagement with the community.

Thus, in my view, CREFAL occupies an intermediary position, operating at the meso level. According to Vranken and Henderickx, the meso-level encompasses borders and other organisations such as businesses, hospitals, and universities, serving as a bridge between the macro and micro levels.<sup>134</sup> All communication with stakeholders involved in the programme flowed

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<sup>130</sup> Jan Vranken and Erik Henderickx, *Het speelveld en de spelregels: Een inleiding tot de sociologie*, zevende (Leuven, België: Acco, 2000), 80.

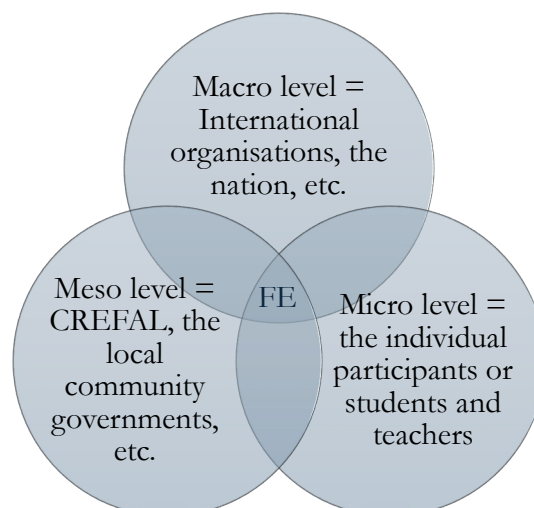
<sup>131</sup> Vranken and Henderickx.

<sup>132</sup> Vranken and Henderickx.

<sup>133</sup> Vranken and Henderickx.

<sup>134</sup> Vranken and Henderickx.

through CREFAL. This conceptual division reveals a crucial distinction in the motives for social action, as articulated by the authors. At the micro level, individual participants drive actions, whereas at the macro level, institutionalised patterns of actions take precedence. The meso level serves as a meeting point for both individual and institutional patterns.<sup>135</sup>



*Figure 2: Simplified representation of the different layers of social reality related to the fundamental education programme.*

To visually illustrate this conceptual framework, I developed a simplified representation (Figure 2). In the middle, I added the fundamental education programme, surrounded by the three circles representing the described layers of social reality: the macro level, the meso level and the micro level. Their cross-sections signify the continuous exchange of ideas and actions between actors and structures. I found a similar but more detailed approach in the work of Ivan Lind Christensen and Christian Ydesen.<sup>136</sup> They developed an impact framework model to elucidate how networks of agents and mechanisms for the movement of knowledge, such as exhibitions, journals and conferences, actually impact and connect with local practices. Christensen and Ydesen use methodological concepts such as ‘transfer’, ‘translation’, ‘transformation’ and ‘trading’ to capture the movement within and between spaces wherein ideas, knowledge and practice flow.<sup>137</sup> Although my focus is not on impact, I found this framework to be quite inspirational for better understanding the movement and exchange of ideas.

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<sup>135</sup> Vranken and Henderickx.

<sup>136</sup> Ivan Lind Christensen and Christian Ydesen, ‘Routes of Knowledge: Toward a Methodological Framework for Tracing the Historical Impact of International Organizations’, *European Education* 47, no. 3 (2015): 274–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10564934.2015.1065392>.

<sup>137</sup> Lind Christensen and Ydesen.

The actor-versus-structure approach that I used as a starting point allowed me to structure the social reality of my study subject for the first time. The actor approach enabled me to identify individual actions as expressions of subjective motive. Moreover, these actions can be interpreted as social insofar as they occur and are targeted towards others. In contrast, the structural approach views the social as a separate entity. While positioned above the individual, it structures the actions of the individual and assigns meaning to them. From this perspective, society becomes something more objective and compelling.<sup>138</sup>

According to anthropologists Rik Pinxten and Koen De Munter, it is essential for researchers and scientists to recognise that we all live within a certain context or *milieu*. “We reason from intuitions or assumptions that we consider self-evident or natural, without questioning them. Many observations can be interpreted with these assumptions or do not seem to conflict with them. However, critical self-reflection may lead us to question our principles, particularly when prompted by members of other cultures with the image that we have created.”<sup>139</sup>

Rémy Besson, an art historian, similarly explored these ideas in relation to art objects. I used his work “Prolégomènes pour une définition de l’intermédialité à l’époque contemporaine” to examine UNESCO’s album, intended to convey a universal message worldwide.<sup>140</sup> However, reflecting on Pinxten and De Munter’s insights, it becomes apparent that creating a universal message is challenging. In my analysis “Mediating the Right to Education: An Analysis of UNESCO’s Exhibition album on Human Rights and Its Global Dissemination in 1951”, I focused on the representation of the right to education and concluded that, while UNESCO made a commendable effort, it was difficult to discern the relationship between the visuals and identify the core theme of each panel. As the album circulated through different spaces, viewers and curators constantly reinterpreted their universal language, resulting in varying perspectives.<sup>141</sup>

Besson identifies three complementary elements that define an object as a medium.<sup>142</sup> First, an object should be a “singular cultural production”.<sup>143</sup> In this case, the travel album had a similar

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<sup>138</sup> Vranken and Henderickx, *Het speelveld, de spelregels en de spelers*.

<sup>139</sup> This is a free translation of the author. The original text reads: “We redeneren vanuit intuïties of veronderstellingen die wij als vanzelfsprekend of natuurlijk achten zodat we ze niet in vraag stellen. Vele observaties zijn perfect te duiden binnen die veronderstellingen of schijnen er in elk geval niet mee in conflict te komen. Het is vooral wanneer we onszelf kritisch gaan bekijken, eventueel op aanwijzen van leden van andere culturen die zich ontevreden voelen over het beeld dat wij van hen hebben gemaakt, dat wij onze uitgangspunten in twijfel duren te trekken.” See: Rik Pinxten and Koen De Munter, *De Culturele Eenw*, Tweede druk (Antwerpen, Belgium: Uitgeverij Houtekiet, 2008), 54.

<sup>140</sup> Besson, ‘Prolégomènes Pour Une Définition de l’intermédialité à l’époque Contemporaine’.

<sup>141</sup> Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’.

<sup>142</sup> Besson, ‘Prolégomènes Pour Une Définition de l’intermédialité à l’époque Contemporaine’; Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’.

<sup>143</sup> Besson, ‘Prolégomènes Pour Une Définition de l’intermédialité à l’époque Contemporaine’; Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’; Unless otherwise indicated, all translation is the author’s own.

composition of images, photographs, and documents to the larger exhibition in the Musée Galliera. It was thus a unique independent exhibition compiled by UNESCO's Department of Mass Communication. Second, the object should acquire "a certain degree of autonomy", creating its own meaning.<sup>144</sup> For most panels, UNESCO's Department of Mass Communication produced separate captions to comment on the chosen visuals. The panels and captions came into a separate box, allowing the curators of the exhibitions to decide how to represent the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* to the public. The album itself was designed within the unique institutional, social, and cultural context of UNESCO and sent to a very different *milieu*, Besson's third element, where it interacted as a perceptible object with both the visitors and the environment in which it was exhibited. Through this interaction, the use and meaning of the album could change, and even cause small changes in the environment.<sup>145</sup>

In addition, Besson also distinguished four analytical levels to reflect on media composed of different forms of expression, such as, in this case, visuals and text.<sup>146</sup> In my analysis of the album, I drew on three of his defined levels – "*co-présence*", "*émergence*" and "*milieu*" – to carry out a detailed analysis of UNESCO's representation of the right to education.<sup>147</sup> This involved that I was examining a few selected panels and the relationship 'between images,' which Besson defined as "*co-présence*".<sup>148</sup> The exhibition images showcased UNESCO's discourse on a particular theme. I have focused in my analysis on "the right to education". The visuals on that theme were meant to be exhibited with the enclosed captions, and created a new medium 'between text and images,' which Besson refers to as "*émergence*".<sup>149</sup> Through the addition of captions, a specific interpretation of the visual was conveyed to the viewer and a new meaning was created.<sup>150</sup> In my essay, I also

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<sup>144</sup> Besson, 'Prolégomènes Pour Une Définition de l'intermédialité à l'époque Contemporaine'; Kesteloot, 'Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education'.

<sup>145</sup> Besson, "Prolégomènes." This was also true for the *Family of Man* exhibition; see: Karin Priem and Geert Thyssen, 'Puppets on a String in a Theatre of Display? Interactions of Images, Text, Material, Space and Motion in The Family of Man (ca. 1950s-1960s)', in *Puppets on a String in a Theatre of Display? Interactions of Images, Text, Material, Space and Motion in The Family of Man (ca. 1950s-1960s)* (Routledge, 2016); Kesteloot, 'Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education'.

<sup>146</sup> Besson, "Prolégomènes."; Kesteloot, 'Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education'.

<sup>147</sup> In addition to the three levels which I will describe more fully, Besson also mentions "*le transfert*," or the transfer of one medium into another, symbolised as a diachronic relationship. See: Besson, 'Prolégomènes Pour Une Définition de l'intermédialité à l'époque Contemporaine'.

<sup>148</sup> Besson, "Prolégomènes."; Kesteloot, 'Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education'.

<sup>149</sup> Besson, 'Prolégomènes Pour Une Définition de l'intermédialité à l'époque Contemporaine'; Kesteloot, 'Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education'.

<sup>150</sup> In their discussion, Robert Gordon and Jonatan Kurzwey use the term "intertextuality" to reflect on the combination of photographs and captions, applying Julia Kristeva's definition of intertextuality as "the transposition of one or more systems of signs into another, which results in a new articulation." These signs provide new meaning to one another and, as Barthes stated, can be used to "anchor the interpretations of photographs." See: Robert Gordon and Jonatan Kurzwey, 'Photographs as Sources in African History', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.250>; Priem and Thyssen, 'Puppets on a String in a Theatre of Display?'

looked at the images and text both separately and combined and examined any discrepancies between the visual message and the corresponding texts as the album was created in the social and cultural context of its creator, UNESCO. The album was sent to different *milieux* or spaces, where it interacted with both the visitors and the environment in which it was exhibited.<sup>151</sup> This different “*milieu*” (“between space and images”) is described by Rémy Besson as a third analytical level.<sup>152</sup>

One can observe that I have shifted my choice of words from ‘context’ and ‘level’ to ‘space’, ‘place’, ‘transfer’ and ‘translation’ as I explored historical methodologies for my research on the fundamental education programme. In doing so, I agree with Sluga and Chen that the transnational approach appears to be the most suitable.<sup>153</sup>

Similar to the contextual thinking methodology, a transnational approach will enable me to examine the interconnectedness between international organisations such as the OAS, UNESCO, and CREFAL and to construct a global narrative based on archival resources which often possess a local or national character. It acknowledges the shared responsibility that these organisations took in collaborating and sharing expertise, practices, and innovations, as demonstrated in their efforts regarding fundamental education, particularly in the case of CREFAL’s organisation in connection to the UDHR. Through this methodological lens, I can illuminate the diverse cultural, political, and social dynamics that shaped this project on fundamental education while providing a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in these international collaborations.

In exploring transnational historical thinking, I primarily focused on the writing of Pierre-Yves Saunier, who opened his book in the following words:

“Local history can only be understood in the light of the history of the world. There is unity as well as continuity. To understand the history of contemporary Italy, we must understand the history of contemporary France in contemporary Germany. Each acts on each. Ideas and commodities can even refuse the bounds of a nation. All are inextricably connected, so each is needed to explain the others. [...] Each age must be studied in the light of all the past; local history must be viewed in the light of world history.”<sup>154</sup>

In short, a transnational approach emphasises what works between and through the units that humans have set up to organise their collective life. It is an approach that focuses on relations and formations, circulations, and connections between, across, and through these units, and how

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<sup>151</sup> Besson, “Prolégomènes.”

<sup>152</sup> Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’, 145-146.

<sup>153</sup> Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*; Chen, ‘Experimenting with a Global Panacea’; Akira Iriye, *Global and Transnational History: The Past, Present, and Future*, Palgrave Pivot 1223158 (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>154</sup> Pierre-Yves Saunier, *Transnational History: Theory and Practice* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), 1.

were made, not made, and unmade.<sup>155</sup> It is an approach that goes beyond traditional nation-state-centred perspectives, explores the interactions among actors in civil society across imagined boundaries of nation-states, and can help shed light on the complexities of historical networks and exchanges.<sup>156</sup> In my opinion, it is the ideal approach to not only understand the context of implementation of the programme of fundamental education in Pátzcuaro Mexico but also the relevance of the UDHR and the reception of the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* in general to the Tarascan communities. Neither the Tarascan communities nor CREFAL can be studied without considering the influence of international organisations and the national state of Mexico. The concepts inherent in transnational thinking will allow me to scope, understand, and translate my thoughts by breaking down the different units created by the people involved in the fundamental education programme. I followed Saunier's ideas in approaching the historical context of CREFAL.

When conducting historical research from a transnational perspective, Saunier distinguished three different approaches to transnational history. First, Saunier discusses the process of examining the historical interactions among communities, political entities, and societies. The main objective was to analyse how these interactions fluctuated over time. This involves assessing how the levels of exchange, integration, and disintegration between territorial units have changed. Ultimately, this approach offers empirical insights into the phenomenon of globalisation.<sup>157</sup> Second, a transnational perspective allows us to recognise and assess the influence of foreign contributions on the development, discussion, and execution of local aspects within communities, political entities, and societies. Similarly, it considers how local characteristics are projected onto foreign contexts.<sup>158</sup> Third, transnational history examines trends, patterns, organisations, and individuals that exist across and between these distinct entities often used as units of historical study. This approach provides an opportunity to uncover the history of various projects, individuals, groups, concepts, activities, processes, and institutions.<sup>159</sup> Here, I also place a project on fundamental education, and more specifically, CREFAL. While the first regional centre on fundamental education was based in Latin America, specifically in Pátzcuaro, Mexico, it was a project involving numerous local and international actors. From this perspective, I agree with Saunier that transnational history complements other views on these interactions.<sup>160</sup> I refer

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<sup>155</sup> Saunier.

<sup>156</sup> Eckhardt Fuchs, 'Networks and the History of Education: Paedagogica Historica', *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no. 2 (April 2007): 185–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230701248271>.

<sup>157</sup> Saunier.

<sup>158</sup> Saunier.

<sup>159</sup> Saunier.

<sup>160</sup> Saunier.

here to the tool of ‘cultural diplomacy’, which could be used by nations to advance their interests and influence through cultural means, such as promoting their values, beliefs, and ideologies on the international stage.<sup>161</sup> Collaboration between specialists from diverse countries stimulates cultural flow across borders through institutions and educational programmes, particularly CREFAL.<sup>162</sup>

In addition to transnational history, I find it pertinent to explore the tools of cultural diplomacy. In contextual thinking, a social worker reproduces in cooperation with the client’s context. This client is not isolated; ideas flow and communication occur within the family or community. The founder of contextual therapy and psychiatrist Iván Nagy interprets this as follows: “Relationships determine not only our well-being, but also our development, functioning, feelings, physical health, and social functioning in all respects”.<sup>163</sup> Applying this thinking to my research subject, the programme of fundamental education in the first regional centre in Pátzcuaro, Mexico, it is conceivable that the relationships in which the centre was entangled influenced the programme and its organisation. Moreover, as the programme was created in cooperation with international agents and agencies in the aftermath of the Second World War and during the onset of the Cold War, power relations were undoubtedly involved. Hence, I argue that a combination of the above-discussed methodologies and tools, such as cultural diplomacy, might serve this dissertation very well. These concepts allow me to translate and identify the entanglements involved, which were discovered through intensive archival research.

However, I continue to focus primarily on transnational history as a methodology for interpreting history through an analysis of all levels of societies, territories, and subnational, regional, or global situations.<sup>164</sup> This analysis focuses on the fundamental education programme in CREFAL. As one will read later, the programme was a collaboration between two intergovernmental organisations: UNESCO and the OAS. Both organisations signed an agreement in July 1950 to establish a centre for the training of personnel and the preparation of fundamental education materials, along with a Bureau for coordinating studies and producing fundamental

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<sup>161</sup> S. E. Graham, ‘The (Real)Politics of Culture: U.S. Cultural Diplomacy in Unesco, 1946–1954’, *Diplomatic History* 30, no. 2 (2006): 231–51.

<sup>162</sup> Saunier, 10.

<sup>163</sup> This a free translation of the author. The original text reads: Het zijn “relaties [...] die ons wel en wee bepalen, dat we in alle opzichten door relaties bepaald worden, dat relaties in welke vorm dan ook in vloed hebben op onze ontwikkeling, op ons functioneren, op hoe we voelen, op onze lichamelijke gezondheid en ons sociaal functioneren.” See: Gerrie Reijersen Van Buuren, *Therapie in Beeld. Verlangen naar Erkenning. Ontdek Wie Je Bent.*, Zevende druk (Leuven, België: Acco, 2019), 16.

<sup>164</sup> Saunier, *Transnational History: Theory and Practice*.



education materials for Latin American States in the city of Washington, D.C.<sup>165</sup> This agreement connected two nations, the United States of America (USA) and Mexico, and the international field, filled with specialists from countries worldwide who joined through intergovernmental organisations. It also connected local communities in Pátzcuaro with the international community and the rest of Latin America. Many students from several Latin American countries were sent to Pátzcuaro to participate in the fundamental education programme and return with their knowledge, intending to create a snowball effect.<sup>166</sup> As Saunier notes, connectors operate within an organised system and do not function in isolation.<sup>167</sup>

A connection facilitates reciprocity and exchange among interconnected actors and systems. It is noteworthy that consular services, diplomats, and government representatives played pivotal roles in organising the fundamental education programme. As Saunier highlighted, their involvement constituted a complex mixture in which private interests intersected with government representation.<sup>168</sup> Consequently, I contend that within the context of CREFAL, transnationalism and the tool of cultural diplomacy are inherently intertwined. In his book, Saunier described the nature of relationships and identified four distinct types. Firstly, he delineates “dedication” characterised by a relationship of conversation wherein protagonists collaborate by mutual consent for the mutual benefit of a common goal. Second, he elucidates the relationships marked by “dominance”, which entails issues of asymmetry and reciprocity. Thirdly, he describes “mobilisation” as a relationship trope emphasising usage, where some actors establish a connection with minimal impact on other partner. Finally, he identifies “alignment” as a relationship type, denoting convergence, where all participants are influenced by the establishment and adoption of a shared set of references.<sup>169</sup> Analysing the case of CREFAL, I observed discernible relationships marked by “dedication” and other marked by “dominance”. The latter phenomenon may also be construed as a manifestation of cultural diplomacy, whereby one culture or nation seeks to exert influence and asserts control over another.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> UNESCO and OAS, ‘Agreement Between The United Nations Educational, Scientific And Cultural Organization And The Organization Of American States Concerning The Training Of Staff And Preparation Of Fundamental Education Material For Latin America’, July 1950, JX 1980.45.A21 1951.A24, OAS.

<sup>166</sup> I use the term ‘co-ordination committee’ to refer to the committee that coordinated the activities between the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre and the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material. Later on, it will become clear that the committee has been named differently. However, I prefer to use the term as stated in the agreement between UNESCO and the OAS. Article 6 mentions that UNESCO and the OAS will set up a co-ordination committee. See: UNESCO and OAS.

<sup>167</sup> Saunier, *Transnational History: Theory and Practice*, 34.

<sup>168</sup> Saunier.

<sup>169</sup> Saunier, 82.

<sup>170</sup> In Chapter 5, I will discuss the different types of relationships observed in the context of CREFAL.

While the fundamental education programme was conceived by a network of educational specialists, its outcomes often diverged from the initial intentions due to evolving relationships. Hence, it is essential to trace the genesis of the programme to fully grasp its purpose and the pivotal role played by these specialists in shaping a global education agenda alongside UNESCO's involvement. The programme would not exist in its current form without the contributions of the OAS and government representatives.<sup>171</sup> Therefore, investigating their roles in the programme and the influence of the UDHR (including the *Human Rights Exhibition Album*) is imperative.<sup>172</sup> Saunier observed that studies on movements, organisations, and events involving individuals engaging in cross-border dialogues to articulate and advocate a cause consistently emphasised that these international organisations operated in conjunction with and through national frameworks, institutions, and allegiances.<sup>173</sup> Specialists involved in creating the programme had to navigate their beliefs while aligning with the organisation's goals. During my analysis, I strive to remain mindful of the interferences of loyalty, nationality, and education.

This consideration is particularly significant given the period in which CREFAL was established, characterised by the hegemony of the United States. Additionally, in the ongoing development of the fundamental education programme and the dissemination of the UDHR, I observed an increasing influence of the US discourse, aligning with the findings of many other scholars regarding UNESCO and OAS during the Cold War era.

Furthermore, the concept of fundamental education and its programmes have widely circulated. In this dynamic process of circulation, as described by Saunier, ideas are influenced by the context and environment in which they move, leading to shifts in meaning, usage, or appropriations.<sup>174</sup> Consequently, I advocate fieldwork, including visits to CREFAL's environment, despite the passage of more than 70 years. I contend that this approach offers a unique perspective that complements the existing research. During my research, I immersed myself in Pátzcuaro, engaging with locals, an indigenous population, and exploring surrounding villages. The first experience provided insight into the choices made regarding the programme. Additionally, I had the opportunity to visit the OAS archives and engage with archivists, thereby gaining valuable contextual information related to the OAS and their policies.

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<sup>171</sup> In Chapter 3, I discuss about the genesis of the programme of fundamental education.

<sup>172</sup> In Chapters 3 and 5, I investigate the role of government representatives and consultants, in particular those from the USA and the OAS.

<sup>173</sup> Saunier, *Transnational History: Theory and Practice*.

<sup>174</sup> Saunier.

## Conclusion

The examination of CREFAL's case study, situated within the broader context of transnational history and cultural diplomacy, aims to elucidate the intricate relationships and dynamics that influenced the implementation of the fundamental education programme. Using Saunier's conceptual framework, this study traces the inception and evolution of the programme. I seek to comprehend the programme's development and acknowledge the significant contributions of specialists, governmental representatives, and international organisations such as UNESCO and the OAS.

By characterising these relationships, the study underscores the multifaceted nature of international collaborations, revealing the interconnectedness of global initiatives with national frameworks and allegiances. This is particularly significant within the geopolitical context of the Cold War era, where the hegemony of the United States significantly shaped discourse and policy implementation.

While literature focusing exclusively on CREFAL and fundamental education programmes is limited, numerous scholars have provided valuable insights into the complexities of global educational initiatives within organisations such as UNESCO and the OAS. Alongside extensive literature reviews and archival research, fieldwork has emerged as a pivotal methodological approach. This has provided deeper insights into the local context and the intricate interplay of factors influencing decision-making processes.

This holistic approach enriches our understanding of the past and informs contemporary perspectives, offering valuable lessons for future endeavours in global education and diplomacy.

## Chapter 2 UNESCO And The Right To Education

“Our ancients said, people are the foundation of the nation. If the foundation is firm, then the nation will enjoy tranquillity. I apply that to the whole world. But three-fourths of the world’s people today are underhoused, underclothed, underfed, illiterate. Now as long as this continues to be true we have very poor foundation upon which to build the world.”

(James Yen, 1946)<sup>175</sup>

### Introduction

Promoting Enlightenment and upholding democratic values through mutual knowledge and understanding of education and culture has been a cornerstone of UNESCO’s constitution. This belief is encapsulated in the well-known opening statement: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”<sup>176</sup> In Julian Huxley’s 1946 publication, “UNESCO Its Purpose and Its Philosophy”, the organisation’s inaugural Director General outlined two primary objectives. Initially, he emphasised that UNESCO’s efforts should align with the aims of the UN, stressing international cooperation. Additionally, Huxley articulated UNESCO’s mandate to “foster and promote all aspects of education, science and culture, in the widest sense of those words.”<sup>177</sup>

UNESCO has emerged as a dynamic entity undergoing continual evolution, particularly during its formative years. As noted by Watras, the initial delegates encountered challenges in formulating a comprehensive philosophical framework to guide their initiatives.<sup>178</sup> Initially characterised as “scientific humanism” by Huxley, this conception met resistance from delegates who perceived it as his personal ideology. At UNESCO’s Second General Conference, Jacques Maritain, leading the French delegation, advocated reconciliation and emphasised the importance of embracing diversity within the organisation. The consensus reached on the UDHR exemplified

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<sup>175</sup> Special Committee to the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, ‘Fundamental Education Common Ground for All Peoples’.

<sup>176</sup> According to Fernando Valderrama, the widely cited sentence is the work of statesman and poet: Clement Attlee, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and Archibald MacLeish, United States poet and Librarian of Congress. See: Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*, Julian Huxley, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy* (London: The Frederick Printing Co., 1946), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000068197?posInSet=1&queryId=e21b949a-e4ba-46d4-bb37-85857a26ab94>.

<sup>177</sup> Huxley, 5.

<sup>178</sup> Watras, ‘UNESCO’s Programme of Fundamental Education, 1946 - 1959’.

the principle of “unification in its diversity”, a perspective echoed by Walter H. C. Laves and Charles A. Thomson in their 1957 contribution, “UNESCO: Purpose, Progress, Prospects”.<sup>179</sup> Understanding the contextual background of UNESCO’s operations is crucial.

In this chapter, I delve into UNESCO’s engagement with its educational mandate. First, I provide a concise overview of UNESCO’s identity as an intergovernmental organisation. Then, I explore its role in disseminating the UDHR globally, in line with the objectives set forth by the UN. I examine the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights*, a pioneering exhibition distributed worldwide, as a testament to UNESCO’s commitment to promoting human rights awareness. The organisation was assigned a pivotal role in informing the global population about the UDHR adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948.

Later in the chapter, I will analyse Article 26 of the UDHR which enshrines upon the right to education. Education is one of UNESCO’s foundational pillars shaping its policies and actions. Thus, in the third section of this chapter, I scrutinise UNESCO’s perspective on the right to education and its translation into concrete initiatives, with a particular focus on its fundamental education projects.

## 2.1 The focus on UNESCO

### 2.1.1 UNESCO’s birth

The establishment of UNESCO in November 1945 marked the inception of an intergovernmental body, promoting peace and security as mandated in its constitution.<sup>180</sup> Poul Duedahl characterises UNESCO’s mission as involving global peacebuilding through what he terms as “mental engineering”.<sup>181</sup> Central to this mission were key concepts, such as universalism,

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<sup>179</sup> Jacques Maritain, ‘Human Rights: Comments and Interpretations; a Symposium Edited by UNESCO, with an Introduction by Jacques Maritain’ (Preparatory Commission of UNESCO, 1948), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000155042?posInSet=2&queryId=de5b71e7-2e7e-419a-99d7-720a914fb2cb>; I - IX.

<sup>180</sup> After the first World War, several states recognised the need for multilateral intellectual cooperation as an aspect of an international organisation. The League of Nations emerged from this need and discussed the establishment of intellectual cooperation during its first session. See: Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*; Poul Duedahl, ‘Introduction. Out of the House: On the Global History of UNESCO, 1945-2015’, in *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts*, by Poul Duedahl (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 3–23, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-58120-4>; UNESCO, ‘Constitution - Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’.

<sup>181</sup> Poul Duedahl, ‘Introduction. Out of the House: On the Global History of UNESCO, 1945-2015’, 3.

cultural relativism, multiculturalism, internationalisation, and cultural diversity.<sup>182</sup> Unlike approaches solely focused on politics and economics, UNESCO emphasised education, science, and culture as primary tools for fostering collaboration among nations to advance “universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights and fundamental freedoms” regardless of race, sex, language, or religion.<sup>183</sup> The organisation believed that enhancing knowledge and awareness of both one’s own and other people’s rights would contribute to building a secure and peaceful world.<sup>184</sup>

UNESCO’s origins can be traced back to the aftermath of World War I, which saw the establishment of the League of Nations, the first global intergovernmental organisation dedicated to maintaining worldwide peace. During its inaugural session, the League acknowledged the importance of multilateral intellectual cooperation along with governmental political activities.<sup>185</sup> This recognition led to the formation of the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation in 1922, followed by the establishment of the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation in Paris in 1926. This institute, initiated by the French Government, operated across various domains including education, social sciences, natural sciences, cinema, libraries and archives, arts and letters, scientific property and copyright, and the establishment of national intellectual cooperation committees. However, its activities were interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War. After the war, UNESCO inherited the institute’s archives and materials to continue its work.<sup>186</sup>

UNESCO emerged from the CAME, which convened as a testament to the ongoing commitment to international cooperation at an intellectual level. In London, several education ministers and their representatives from the Allied Forces gathered primarily to address issues directly related to war and its aftermath, particularly in the realms of education, culture, and displacement.<sup>187</sup> Throughout their meetings in 1943, the concept of establishing an international educational organisation gradually gained acceptance. In his work “A History of UNESCO,” Fernando Valderrama refers to a letter addressed to the Government of the USA wherein CAME expressed their intention to “consider plans for the formation of a permanent organisation... on an international basis with the objective of promoting cooperation in educational matters in the

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<sup>182</sup> Poul Duedahl.

<sup>183</sup> UNESCO, ‘Constitution - Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’.

<sup>184</sup> Elfert, *UNESCO’s Utopia of Lifelong Learning*, 15; Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’, 144.

<sup>185</sup> Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*.

<sup>186</sup> Valderrama Martínez.

<sup>187</sup> The Ministers of Education present at CAME were from the following countries: Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Great Britain, Greece, Holland, Luxemburg, Norway, Poland and Yugoslavia. The British dominions, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland, South Africa, and Éire, were also represented, along with China, the USA and the U.S.S.R., the latter took part as an observer. See: Besterman, *UNESCO Peace In The Minds Of Men*.

post-war period”.<sup>188</sup> The US government embraced this proposal and catalysed its progression by introducing a programme for international cultural and educational cooperation.<sup>189</sup>

Simultaneously, in May 1944, the US government invited the United Kingdom, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and China to discuss the framework for an international security organisation. This initiative culminated in the adoption of the United Nations Charter approved during the San Francisco Conference in April 1945. This Charter officially came into effect on 24 October 1945 marking the commencement of the newly established UN.<sup>190</sup>

As the UN was in the process of formation, CAME persisted in its endeavours. In January 1945, the committee deliberated on potential collaborations between the UN, the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC), and the International Bureau of Education (IBE). Although the primary emphasis of the conferences was on education, the scope of the discussions was broadened to encompass cultural cooperation. This expansion led to recommendations for a cultural conference during the San Francisco Conference. Subsequently, a French proposal advocating for a conference dedicated to cultural cooperation in the first half of November 1945 was accepted.<sup>191</sup>

On 1 November 1945 Miss Ellen Wilkinson, the Minister of Education of Great Britain, inaugurated a conference at the Institute of Civil Engineers in London dedicated to “the establishment of a United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization”.<sup>192</sup> The conference spanned from 1 November to 16 November 1945, drawing delegates and representatives from 43 countries, with the largest presence coming from Latin America.<sup>193</sup> This prominence was not unexpected, given the efforts of the IIIC to continue its activities in the Americas during the Second World War.<sup>194</sup> Additionally, seven organisations dispatched observers: the International

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<sup>188</sup> Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*.

<sup>189</sup> Besterman, *UNESCO Peace In The Minds Of Men*.

<sup>190</sup> Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*.

<sup>191</sup> Valderrama Martínez.

<sup>192</sup> Valderrama Martínez, 21.

<sup>193</sup> Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Chile, China, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Philippines, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Holland, India, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Nicaragua, Norway, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the Union of South Africa, the United Kingdom, the USA, Uruguay, Venezuela and Yugoslavia sent delegates and representatives to the conference. Only Venezuela sent an observer. The U.S.S.R. declined its invitation. See: Valderrama Martínez; Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*; Besterman, *UNESCO Peace In The Minds Of Men*.

<sup>194</sup> The occupation of Paris abruptly disrupted the IIIC's activities in Europe. It continued its activities in Latin America as the American Conference of Intellectual Cooperation. During the Havana Conference, a resolution was adopted to establish an International Centre for Intellectual Cooperation in the Americas to maintain the existing network of cultural relations. See: Nuria Sanz and Carlos Tejada, *México y la UNESCO, la UNESCO y México: historia de una relación* (UNESCO, 2016), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000234777?posInSet=1&queryId=083b2d56-355a-49e1-864b-74af956dede3>; Juliette Dumont, ‘La Segunda Guerra mundial en la redefinición de las relaciones culturales entre América Latina y Europa’, 2014, <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01455557>.

Labor Organization (ILO), the Secretariat of the League of Nations, the League of Nations Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, the IIIC, the Pan-American Union (later the OAS), the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), and the IBE.<sup>195</sup>

The conference's agenda encompassed various topics, including the naming of the new organisation, drafting its constitutional preamble, and defining its objectives and primary functions.<sup>196</sup> These discussions were organised into five commissions; "Title, Preamble, Purposes and Principal Functions of the Organization" chaired by Jaime Torres Bodet (Mexico); "General Structure of the Organization" chaired by Alf Sommerfelt (Norway); "The Executive Board and Secretariat" chaired by Léon Blum (France); "Relations with International Organizations and Seat of the Organization" chaired by Jan Opocensky (Czechoslovakia) and "The Interim Commission" (chaired by Leo Marquard (Union of South Africa)).<sup>197</sup>

Furthermore, several scientists, including Joseph Needham, Head of the British Scientific Mission to China, and Julian Huxley, a British biologist, advocated for the integration of science into the organisation. The devastation caused by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing underscored the necessity for a close connection between the humanities and scientific disciplines. During the 1945 Conference, Ellen Wilkinson articulated this sentiment as follows:

"In these days, we are all wondering, perhaps apprehensively, what the scientists will do to us next, it is important that they should be linked closely with the humanities and should feel that they have a responsibility to mankind for the result of their labours. I do not believe that any scientists will have survived the world catastrophe, who will still say that they are utterly uninterested in the social implications of their discoveries."<sup>198</sup>

On 6 November 1945 the organisation's proposed name was amended to include 'science', given rise to UNESCO, UNESCO was born. However, it was not until 4 November 1946 when Greece ratified and signed the Constitution of UNESCO as the twentieth state that UNESCO could commence full operations.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*.

<sup>196</sup> Valderrama Martínez.

<sup>197</sup> Valderrama Martínez.

<sup>198</sup> Valderrama Martínez, 22-23.

<sup>199</sup> According to section 3 of Article XV of UNESCO's Constitution, the constitution could only come into force upon the signature of twenty member states. See: Valderrama Martínez; UNESCO, 'Constitution - Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization'.



### *A. Establishing UNESCO's Operational Framework*

Following the CAME, a Preparatory Commission convened to carry forward the momentum generated by its discussion. Miss Ellen Wilkinson presided over this commission, with Sir Alfred Zimmern initially serving as Executive Secretary. Zimmern, a distinguished English political scientist and former Deputy Director of the League of Nations, was succeeded by Dr Julian Huxley, an esteemed English biologist who later assumed the role of UNESCO's First Director General.<sup>200</sup> The commission comprised representatives from several nations, including Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Canada, France, Greece, Holland, India, Mexico, Norway, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the USA, all contributing to the preparatory efforts leading to UNESCO's formal establishment as a specialised UN agency.<sup>201</sup>

While administratively independent, Specialised Agencies such as UNESCO were mandated to align their activities with the broader goals of the UN, which centred on promoting global peace and security. UNESCO's mission has specifically focused on advancing peace through initiatives in education, science, and culture.<sup>202</sup>

In the initial draft framework proposed during the Conference for the Establishment of the International Agency on 6 November 1945, six key functions of the organisation were delineated for the first time. These functions aimed to “facilitate consultations among leaders in the educational and cultural life of all peace-loving countries”, promote “the free flow of ideas and information”, “foster the growth within each country and in its relations with other countries, of educational and cultural programme which give support to international peace and security”, develop accessible “educational and cultural plans and materials”, conduct and encourage “research and studies on educational and cultural problems related to the maintenance of peace and the advancement of human welfare” and provide assistance to enhance countries’ “educational and cultural activities”.<sup>203</sup>

Simultaneously, discussions revolved around UNESCO's organisational structure. The envisioned structure included a General Conference comprising Member States, an Executive Board elected by the General Conference from among appointed delegates, and a Secretariat

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<sup>200</sup> Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*, 26.

<sup>201</sup> A fifteenth seat was left available for the USSR in the hope that they would take it, which did not happen. See: Valderrama Martínez.

<sup>202</sup> Besterman, *UNESCO Peace In The Minds Of Men.*

<sup>203</sup> Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*, 23.

overseen by the Director General.<sup>204</sup> A preliminary organisational chart found in the UNESCO Archives visualises the proposed structure (Figure 3).

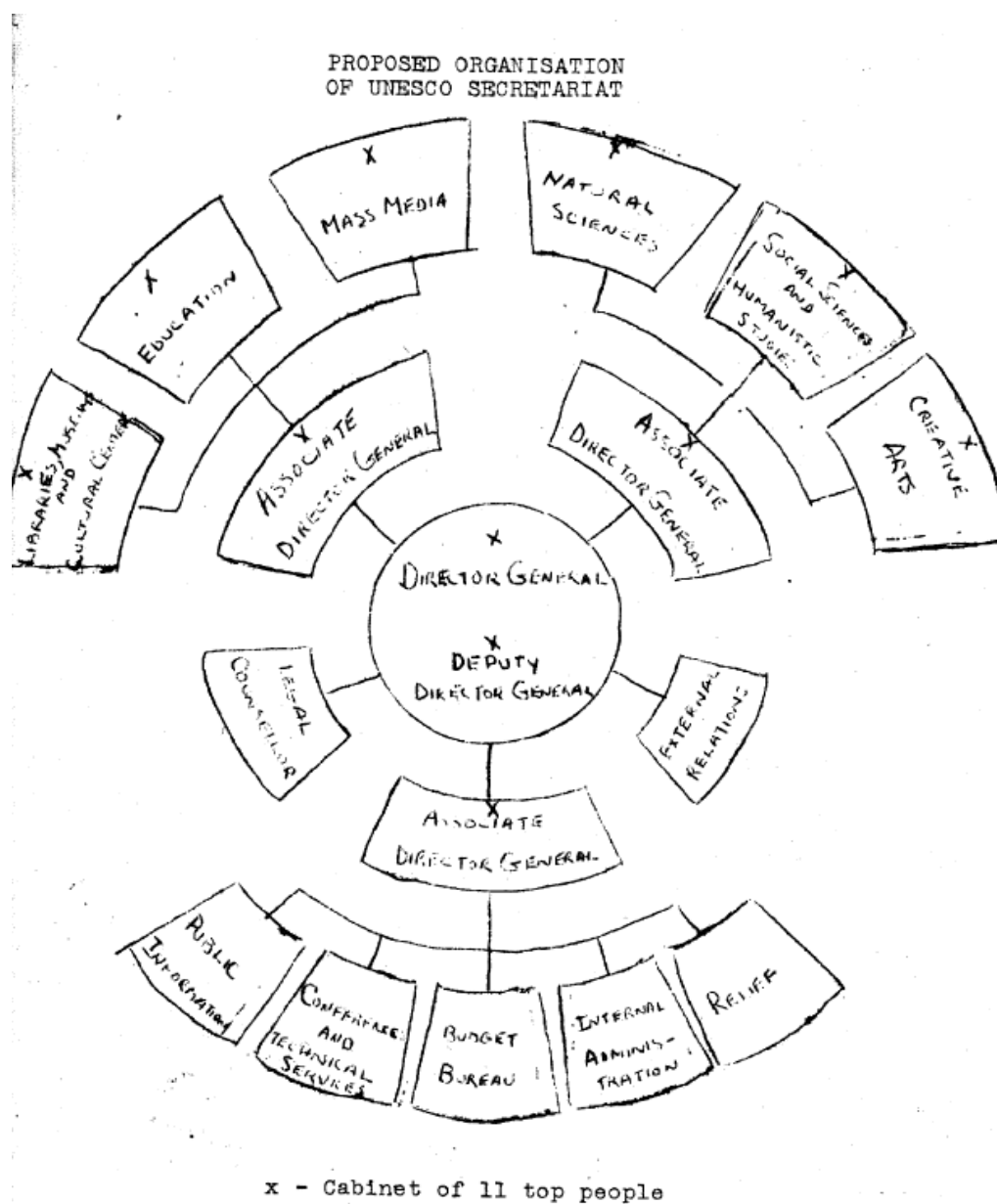


Figure 3: "Proposed Organisation of the UNESCO Secretariat", UNESCO Archives

Moreover, UNESCO's Program Sections and General Programme were delineated, encompassing areas such as Education, Mass Media, Libraries, Archives and Museums, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Philosophy and Humanities, Creative Arts, as well as projects under the

<sup>204</sup> Valderrama Martínez.

umbrella of Fundamental Education, International Understanding and Reconstruction and Rehabilitation.<sup>205</sup>

The Preparatory Commission concluded its mandate on 14 and 15 November 1946, following the ratification of UNESCO's constitution by 20 countries, as stipulated in Article XV.<sup>206</sup> This marked a significant milestone in the organisation's journey towards full operationalisation.

### ***B. UNESCO and its structure***

The culmination of efforts by the three Western Allied powers led to readiness for operationalisation.<sup>207</sup> This milestone saw the relocation of the new organisation to its headquarters at Avenue Kléber, 19 in Paris, France, in September 1946.<sup>208</sup> A formal welcome awaited them on 19 November 1946 preceding the commencement of their inaugural General Conference. The gathering was chaired by Mr. Léon Blum, who served as de facto President of the Provisional Government of the French Republic.<sup>209</sup> Despite opposition from the American quarters, Dr Julian Huxley assumed the role of the organisation's first Director-General, albeit for a limited period of two years, beginning 6 December 1946.<sup>210</sup> The existing staff, already engaged in the preparatory phases under the Preparatory Conference and Commission, seamlessly transitioned into the Secretariat, ensuring the continuity of the commission's work.<sup>211</sup>

The operationalisation of the Secretariat's programme necessitated approval from both the General Conference and the Executive Board, as stipulated in Articles IV, V, and VI of UNESCO's Constitution.<sup>212</sup> Although subjected to periodic amendments through resolutions, the fundamental principles governing the functions of these organs have remained consistent over the years.

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<sup>205</sup> 'Organizational Charts - Proposed Organization of UNESCO Secretariat (1946)' (UNESCO), UNESCO/Prep.Com./Exec.Com./13., accessed 4 April 2024, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/archives/organization-charts>; Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*.

<sup>206</sup> The first twenty countries to ratify UNESCO's constitution were: United Kingdom, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Union of South Africa, Australia, India, Mexico, France, Dominican Republic, Turkey, Egypt, Norway, Canada, China, Denmark, USA, Czechoslovakia, Brazil, Lebanon and Greece. See: Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*.

<sup>207</sup> Maren Elfert describes in her book that UNESCO was as an early creation of the three Western powers that had won the war: Britain, France, and the United States. While the United Kingdom appointed the First Director-General, France provided the location of the organisation, and the United States contributed to drafting the constitution. See: Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*.

<sup>208</sup> Besterman, *UNESCO Peace In The Minds Of Men*; Poul Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind: UNESCO and the Invention of Global History, 1945-1976', *Journal of World History* 22, no. 1 (2011): 101-33.

<sup>209</sup> Mr. Léon Blum was appointed president only eight days after the end of UNESCO's First General Conference, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1946. See: Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*.

<sup>210</sup> Valderrama Martínez; Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*.

<sup>211</sup> Fernando Valderrama, *A History of UNESCO*, (Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France: 1995), 29.

<sup>212</sup> UNESCO, 'Constitution - Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization'.

### **i. The General Conference**

As of 2020, the General Conference convened biennially, transitioning from an annual schedule held until 1952.<sup>213</sup> Comprising delegates from Member States, each nation may appoint up to five delegates through its National Commissions or relevant educational, scientific, and cultural bodies. The General Conference assumes the responsibility of determining UNESCO's policies and primary objectives, including the approval of programmes proposed by the Executive Board.<sup>214</sup> Furthermore, it elects members of the Executive Board and appoints the Director-General for a six-year term based on the board's recommendations.

Additionally, the General Conference will receive periodic reports from Member States regarding their "laws, regulations and statistics relating to educational, scientific and cultural" affairs including updates on actions taken in response to recommendations and conventions as outlined in paragraph 4 of Article IV – The General Conference of UNESCO's Constitution.<sup>215</sup>

Moreover, the General Conference has the authority to convene international conferences on topics related to education, sciences, and humanities, and to provide advisory guidance to the UN on similar matters.<sup>216</sup>

### **ii. The Executive Board**

Article V of UNESCO's Constitution delineates the role and composition of the Executive Board, a body that has undergone revisions over time while maintaining its core functions. At least semi-annually, the Executive Board formulates the agenda for the General Conference and oversees the implementation of programmes endorsed by the conference. It also evaluates UNESCO's programme and corresponding budget estimates in accordance with the mandates outlined in Article VI, which also defines the duties of the Director-General.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> UNESCO; Theodore Besterman, 'Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization', in *UNESCO Peace In The Minds Of Men* (London, Great Britain: Methuen & Co. LTD, 1951), 113–26.

<sup>214</sup> Besterman, 'Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization'.

<sup>215</sup> Paragraph 4 of Article IV of the General Conference states:

"The General Conference shall, in adopting proposals for submission to the Member States, distinguish between recommendations and international conventions submitted for their approval. In the former case a majority vote shall be required. Each of the Member States shall submit recommendations or conventions to its competent authorities within a period of one year from the close of the session of the General Conference at which they were adopted." See: UNESCO, 'Constitution - Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization'.

<sup>216</sup> This is only a brief explanation of the tasks of the General Conference, as outlined in the Constitution of UNESCO. For a full overview, I recommend consulting the Constitution itself. See: UNESCO.

<sup>217</sup> Paragraph 3 of Article VI of the Secretariat states:

Initially comprising eighteen members, the Executive Board's composition was expanded to fifty-eight members in 1995, including the President of the General Conference *ex officio*.<sup>218</sup> Members were selected based on geographical representation, expertise, and experience relevant to UNESCO's focus areas of education, science, and culture.

Additionally, the Board facilitates engagement with international organisations and specialists to address pertinent issues within its scope.<sup>219</sup>

### **iii. The Secretariat and its Director-Generals**

The operational arm of UNESCO, the Secretariat, is headed by the Director-General and is staffed by personnel responsible for implementing UNESCO's programmes within an international framework. Contrary to receiving directives from external entities, the Secretariat operates autonomously, guided solely by the decisions of the General Conference and the Executive Board.

The composition of the Secretariat is tailored to meet specific operational requirements, with personnel selected based on their competencies and geographical distribution. The Director-General, appointed for a six-year term by the joint decision of the General Conference and Executive Board, plays a pivotal role in coordinating Secretariat activities. In accordance with Article VI of UNESCO's Constitution, the Director-General is tasked with formulating work proposals, estimating budgets, and delivering periodic reports on UNESCO initiatives. Additionally, the Director-General represents UNESCO at various international forums, including meetings of the General Conference, the Executive Board, and other pertinent committees.<sup>220</sup>

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“(a) The Director-General, or a deputy designated by him, shall participate, without the right to vote, in all meetings of the General Conference, of the Executive Board, and of the Committees of the Organization. He shall formulate proposals for appropriate action by the Conference and the Board and shall prepare for submission to the Board a draft programme of work for the Organization with corresponding budget estimates.

(b) The Director General shall prepare and communicate to Member States and to the Executive Board periodical reports on the activities of the Organization. The General Conference shall determine the periods to be covered by these reports.” See: UNESCO.

<sup>218</sup> UNESCO.

<sup>219</sup> This is only a brief explanation of the tasks of the General Conference, as outlined in the Constitution of UNESCO. For a full overview, I recommend consulting the Constitution itself. See: UNESCO.

<sup>220</sup> I refer to footnote 217 for a direct citation of paragraph 3, Article VI of UNESCO's Constitution.; This is only a brief explanation of the tasks of the General Conference, as outlined in the Constitution of UNESCO. For a full overview, I recommend consulting the Constitution itself. See: UNESCO.

Dr Julian Huxley, UNESCO's inaugural Director-General, served an abbreviated two-year term from December 1946 to December 1948, owing to opposition from American and Catholic interests.<sup>221</sup> Despite this, Huxley's influence on UNESCO's formative years was profound and guided by his vision of "scientific world humanism" and evolutionary principles.<sup>222</sup> This grandson of T.H. Huxley reflected the Darwinist ideas of progress through 'evolution', as denoting "all the historical processes of change and development at work in the universe".<sup>223</sup> His proposals for the UNESCO programme reflect his perspective. In what Poul Duedahl calls "a form of mental engineering", he wanted to change people's mindsets in a way that would make them give up on hostile and divisive attitudes, leading them in the direction of global unity.<sup>224</sup> His



Figure 4: Dr Julian Huxley. Retrieved from: UNESCO, 'UNESCO's Former Directors-General', accessed 27 March 2024, <https://en.unesco.org/director-general/former-dgs>

tenure witnessed the integration of science into UNESCO's mandate and the inception of initiatives emphasising the interconnectedness of science, such as social scientists and cultural

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<sup>221</sup> P.J. Weindling argues that Julian Huxley was perceived by the Americans as too 'soft on communism', while Catholics resisted 'his secular and materialistic worldview'. Fernando Valderrama, in his book 'A History of UNESCO,' states that Huxley himself requested this exception for a two-year term. However, no other author consulted supports this claim. Toye and Toye even suggest that Alfred Zimmern and his wife, Lucie, advocated for this short mandate due to suspicions from the Americans. Duedahl also discusses the controversy surrounding Huxley's agenda, noting that Yugoslav delegates viewed it as too right winged, while the Americans saw it as extremist left-wing. Moreover, in a top-secret statement, the CIA had suggested to President Harry S. Truman that UNESCO had been infiltrated by communists, leading to pressure for Huxley to leave the organisation in November 1948. In chapter 5, I will explore these ideas further. See: Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*; John Toye and Richard Toye, 'One World, Two Cultures? Alfred Zimmern, Julian Huxley and the Ideological Origins of UNESCO', *History* 95, no. 3 (319) (2010): 308–31; Paul J. Weindling, ed., 'UNESCO: At the Conscience of the World', in *John W. Thompson: Psychiatrist in the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Boydell & Brewer, 2010), 177–202, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/john-w-thompson/unesco-at-the-conscience-of-the-world/0F76A3503034F6DEF92AE937F5B3079F>; Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*; Poul Duedahl, 'Peace in the Minds: UNESCO, Mental Engineering and Education', *Foro de Educación* 18, no. 2 (2 July 2020): 23–45, <https://doi.org/10.14516/fde.848>.

<sup>222</sup> One example of his perspective is his collaborative project with Joseph Needham, emphasising the "understanding of the scientific and cultural aspects of the history of mankind, of the mutual inter-dependence of peoples and cultures, and of their contributions to the common heritage." Central to his idea was "science as the prime mover in the evolution of human history." Inspired by Darwin, he even structured the world's cultures through various evolutionary layers. Poul Duedahl argues that it seems difficult for Huxley to "abandon well-established Eurocentric perceptions of the existence of dominant and subordinate cultures." See: Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind', 107.

<sup>223</sup> John Toye and Richard Toye, 'Brave New Organization. Julian Huxley's Philosophy.', in *Sixty Years of Science at UNESCO 1945-2005* (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2006), 40–43, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000149088>; Huxley, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy*.

<sup>224</sup> Duedahl, "Peace in the Minds".

domains.<sup>225</sup> Educationalists hold key positions. Huxley believed that the organisation would be able to make UNESCO's values, everybody's values.<sup>226</sup> Furthermore, the setup of the pilot projects of fundamental education was established according to scientific thinking, as they served as laboratory experiments in which diverse methods of community education were tested.<sup>227</sup>



Figure 5: Jaime Torres Bode. Retrieved from: UNESCO, 'UNESCO's Former Directors-General', accessed 27 March 2024, <https://en.unesco.org/director-general/former-dgs>

Jaime Torres Bodet assumed the position of UNESCO's second Director-General during the General Conference in Beirut in November 1948, following his appointment on November 26.<sup>228</sup> Prior to this role, Torres Bodet, a former Mexican Minister of Education, was intimately involved with UNESCO, chairing the commission on the organisation's structure and function during the CAME Conference in London in November 1945. Although appointed for a six-year period, Torres Bodet resigned during the Seventh General Conference in Paris (1952). Throughout his tenure, he voiced concerns about inadequate funding, waning motivation among Member States to submit required reports, and challenges in recruiting experts for fundamental education and technical assistance.<sup>229</sup>

His resignation, accepted by the General Conference on 1 December 1952 came amidst deliberations over the provisional budget for 1953 -1954, a discussion that underscored Member States' reluctance to fully endorse his efforts.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> In their work, Toye and Toye describe the two opposed cultures. Both Joseph Needham and Julian Huxley were proponents for the inclusion of 'science' in the title of UNESCO and in its programme and activities. Moreover, Huxley advocated for the integration of social scientists in UNESCO as they had been criticising nationalism and racism before and during the Second World War. See: Toye and Toye, 'Brave New Organization. Julian Huxley's Philosophy.'; Patrick Petitjean, 'Blazing the Trail. Needham and UNESCO: Perspectives and Realizations', in *Sixty Years of Science at UNESCO 1945-2005* (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2006), 43-47, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000149088>; Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind', 107; Duedahl, 'Peace in the Minds'.

<sup>226</sup> Duedahl, "Peace in the minds".

<sup>227</sup> Watras outlines how UNESCO planned to apply various methods of community education in specific areas as part of the pilot projects to test and demonstrate the effectiveness of fundamental education techniques in addressing local challenges and improving living conditions. See: Watras, 'UNESCO's Programme of Fundamental Education, 1946 - 1959'.

<sup>228</sup> Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*.

<sup>229</sup> Jaime Torres Bodet, 'World Political Events and UNESCO', *UNESCO Courier*, January 1952; Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*.

The continuation of Julian Huxley's project *History of Mankind* illustrates the different approach that swept through UNESCO. Poul Duedahl describes in his article how shocked Torres Bodet was in early 1952 when the General Conference approved an enormous budget for the project on a *History of Mankind*. See: Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind'.

<sup>230</sup> 'Jaime Torres Bodet Leaves UNESCO', *UNESCO Courier*, January 1953; Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*.

While Torres Bodet's leadership was influenced by the priorities set by his predecessor, Julian Huxley, he also pursued his own agenda.<sup>231</sup> Known for his educational reforms and anti-illiteracy campaigns in Mexico, Torres Bodet prioritised combating ignorance and inequality.<sup>232</sup> His emphasis on primary and fundamental education, which encompasses essential technical, moral, and civic instruction, was prioritised.<sup>233</sup> In contrast to Huxley, Torres Bodet adopted a more pragmatic approach, emphasising operational effectiveness over theoretical discussions about UNESCO's functioning.<sup>234</sup> During his tenure, he advocated for the observance of Human Rights Day on 10 December and operationalised several early UNESCO projects, including the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* and the establishment of a network of regional centres for fundamental education.<sup>235</sup>

Torres Bodet's resignation paved the way for the appointment of John W. Taylor, an American, as an interim Director-General on 2 December 1952.<sup>236</sup> Taylor, who had previously served as deputy Director-General, demonstrated a keen interest in mass education, peace, and UNESCO's core principles.<sup>237</sup> However, his tenure was short, spanning only seven months, until Luther Evans was elected as the third Director-General



Figure 6: John W. Taylor. Retrieved from: UNESCO, 'UNESCO's Former Directors-General', accessed 27 March 2024, <https://en.unesco.org/director-general/former-dgs>



Figure 7: Luther Evan. Retrieved from: UNESCO, 'UNESCO's Former Directors-General', accessed 27 March 2024, <https://en.unesco.org/director-general/former-dgs>

on 1 July 1953.<sup>238</sup> After the assignment of his compatriot, John W. Taylor left the organisation.<sup>239</sup>

Evans possessed expertise in political science, earning a doctorate focusing on the League of Nations. He joined the National Commission of the USA in 1946, and later, in 1949, assumed the role of the American delegate at the Executive Board of UNESCO. However, his approach marked a departure from previous leadership. He adopted a more administrative approach, prioritising efficiency

<sup>231</sup> Duedahl stated that Huxley's project on the writing of a history of mankind was not prioritised by Torres Bodet despite the former Director-General's regular requests. See: Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind'.

<sup>232</sup> Duedahl; Jaime Torres Bodet, 'World Political Events and UNESCO'.

<sup>233</sup> Jaime Torres Bodet, 'World Political Events and UNESCO'.

<sup>234</sup> Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*.

<sup>235</sup> Valderrama Martínez.

<sup>236</sup> Valderrama Martínez; UNESCO, 'UNESCO's Former Directors-General', accessed 27 March 2024, <https://en.unesco.org/director-general/former-dgs>.

<sup>237</sup> Maurel, 'L'UNESCO de 1945 à 1974'.

<sup>238</sup> Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*.

<sup>239</sup> Maurel, 'L'UNESCO de 1945 à 1974'.



and ‘immediate’ results.<sup>240</sup> Paul Rivet, a French ethnologist, characterised UNESCO in 1956 as a central organisation distributing services and aid to member states, particularly those in underdeveloped regions.<sup>241</sup> Evans advocated for a strategy wherein Member States would take more proactive roles, shifting away from UNESCO and independently spearheading large-scale projects.<sup>242</sup> Consequently, there was a notable decline in the emphasis on UNESCO’s mass communication and fundamental education programmes, with a greater focus on strengthening the social sciences department.<sup>243</sup> Upon concluding his term in 1958, Evans left his post at the Tenth General Conference to become the chairman of the American Commission for Refugees and director of the Colombian University Library.<sup>244</sup>

Following Evans’ resignation on 22 November 1958 Vittorino Veronese, an Italian lawyer and law professor nominated by the Executive Board, assumed the position of Director-General. He had already been involved with UNESCO since Italy’s membership in 1948, serving on his nation’s Commission, and later as a delegate to the Executive Board. He was a staunch opponent of fascism and had a profound interest in social and educational issues that shaped his approach to leadership. However, his tenure as a Director-General was brief, ending in 1961 at his request due to health struggles. René Maheu, who had been acting as Director-General ad interim, succeeded him.<sup>245</sup>

The diverse leadership styles of UNESCO’s Director-Generals and their influence on the Secretariat during its formative years profoundly influenced the organisation’s trajectory.<sup>246</sup> Maurel wrote the following:

“The less charismatic personalities of the last two directors-general [Luther Evans and Vittorino Veronese] compared to the first two [Julian Huxley and Jaime Torres Bodet], along with their lack of large-scale projects to equip UNESCO with clear guiding concepts, mark the years

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<sup>240</sup> Maurel.

<sup>241</sup> Maurel, 108.

<sup>242</sup> Maurel.

<sup>243</sup> After the resignation of Jaime Torres Bodet, the development of a network of training and production centres for fundamental education slowed down significantly. In Chapter 5 of this dissertation, I will examine this stagnation. See : Maurel.

<sup>244</sup> Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*; Maurel, ‘L’UNESCO de 1945 à 1974’.

<sup>245</sup> Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*; Maurel, ‘L’UNESCO de 1945 à 1974’.

<sup>246</sup> Duedahl, ‘Peace in the Minds’.

1953-1961, in contrast to the first seven years, as a period in which few new conceptual developments were introduced.”<sup>247</sup>

The absence of ambitious projects, such as those focused on fundamental education, marked this era despite Evan’s active participation in the negotiations leading up for their establishment. In this dissertation, his role as well as that of Torres Bodet and Huxley in UNESCO’s fundamental education project will be discussed later.<sup>248</sup> First, I will briefly focus on UNESCO’s programme during the early years, as presented at the General Conference, with a particular emphasis on the areas of education and human rights.

### **2.1.2 UNESCO and its early years**

Education, science and culture were regarded as primary instruments for fostering collaboration among nations “to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the people of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion”.<sup>249</sup> It was believed that nurturing knowledge and awareness of individual and collective rights would contribute to establishing a secure and peaceful world.<sup>250</sup>

The dissemination and exchange of knowledge has emerged as a fundamental concept in UNESCO’s initiatives. Over time, UNESCO has developed an extensive network with civil society, facilitating communication beyond its headquarters. This involved establishing field offices in member states, deploying experts in various regions, and engaging with national commissions, schools, and numerous non-governmental organisations (NGO’s). This direct engagement with civil society facilitated programme implementation and the distribution of media materials, including books, films, and various forms of new media, such as the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* and pamphlets addressing racial issues.<sup>251</sup> These materials were primarily aimed at promoting

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<sup>247</sup> This a free translation of the author. The original text reads: “La personnalité moins charismatique de ces deux directeurs généraux [Luther Evans and Vittorino Veronese] par rapport aux deux premiers [Julian Huxley and Jaime Torres Bodet], et leur absence de projet d’envergure pour doter l’Unesco de conceptions directrices nettes, font des années 1953 – 1961, par opposition avec les sept premières années, une période où peu de développements conceptuels nouveaux sont introduits.” See : Maurel, ‘L’UNESCO de 1945 à 1974’, 110.

<sup>248</sup> The genesis of the Latin American Centre for the Production and Training in Fundamental Education (CREFAL) is discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, along with the role of Evans in fundamental education in Chapter 5.

<sup>249</sup> UNESCO, ‘Constitution - Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’.

<sup>250</sup> Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’.

<sup>251</sup> Poul Dueahl, ‘Introduction. Out of the House: On the Global History of UNESCO, 1945-2015’.

peace, education, and international cooperation; mobilising support for the UDHR; and combating prejudice.<sup>252</sup>

In addition to reconstruction efforts, which aimed to address immediate needs from a long-term perspective, UNESCO organised activities such as voluntary work camps and the establishment of functional communities for orphans.<sup>253</sup> These initiatives not only sought to address basic physical needs, but also provided fundamental education and instilled democratic values among participants, aiming at enduring peace.<sup>254</sup> Even countries considered ‘defeated aggressors,’ such as Japan and Germany, received support from UNESCO to reintegrate into the international community.<sup>255</sup>

In the realm of culture, UNESCO undertook projects promoting free access to information, establishing libraries, and initiatives such as the History of Mankind project and the preservation of World Heritage Sites.<sup>256</sup> These endeavours aimed to underscore the shared humanity and history of all people, fostering a sense of global belonging.<sup>257</sup>

Recognising that literacy was foundational to the success of their broader initiatives, UNESCO prioritised fundamental education. Education was viewed not only as a means of imparting knowledge but also as a moral tool essential for cultivating responsible members of society.<sup>258</sup> Watras argued that “the delegates hoped it would end the economic distress, poverty and ignorance that the delegates believed had contributed to the willingness of people to engage in international hostilities”.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Suzanne Langlois, ‘And Action! UN and UNESCO Coordinating Information Films, 1945-1951’, in *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts*, by Poul Duedahl (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 73–94, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-58120-4>.

<sup>253</sup> Miriam Intrator, ‘UNESCO, Reconstruction, and Pursuing Peace through a “Library-Minded” World, 1945-1950’, in *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts*, by Poul Duedahl (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 131–48, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-58120-4>.

<sup>254</sup> Since the Trogen conference, UNESCO has perceived children as forces of renewal and factors of change. They became symbols of hope. Under UNESCO auspices, it was decided to set up international camps where children from various communities would receive education for international understanding. These camps were attended by children invited as representatives of their respective communities. One such international camp was organised in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg. See: Samuel Boussion, Mathias Gardet, and Martine Ruchat, ‘Bringing Everyone to Trogen: UNESCO and the Promotion of an International Model of Children’s Communities after The Second World War’, in *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts*, by Poul Duedahl (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 99–115, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-58120-4>.

<sup>255</sup> Poul Duedahl, *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-58120-4>.

<sup>256</sup> Intrator, ‘UNESCO, Reconstruction, and Pursuing Peace through a “Library-Minded” World, 1945-1950’; Duedahl, *A History of UNESCO*.

<sup>257</sup> Duedahl, *A History of UNESCO*.

<sup>258</sup> Jens Boel, ‘UNESCO’s Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact’, 153-54.

<sup>259</sup> Watras, ‘UNESCO’s Programme of Fundamental Education, 1946 - 1959’, 220.

## 2.2 UNESCO and its perspective on education

Continuing my exploration of UNESCO's core functions, it is essential to underscore the pivotal role of education within the organisation. UNESCO has long regarded education as one of its primary pillars, anchoring many of its initiatives and endeavours around this fundamental aspect. In the next section, I will focus on the organisation's perspective on education, with particular emphasis on fundamental education, which emerges as a central programme from the organisation's inception.

### 2.2.1 The preamble of UNESCO's constitution

The historical overview of UNESCO reveals a consistent emphasis on education, a theme inherited from its predecessor organisations such as the LN and the IIC. This educational imperative was reaffirmed in the preamble of UNESCO's constitution, where the Governments of the Member States articulated a shared commitment:

“[...]

That the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern;

[...]

For these reasons, the States Parties to this Constitution, believing in full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives;

In consequence whereof they do hereby create UNESCO for the purpose of advancing, through the educational and scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world, the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of mankind for which the United Nations Organization was established and which its Charter proclaims.”<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> UNESCO, ‘Constitution - Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’.

Education is regarded as a catalyst for fostering just and liberal humanity, which is intricately linked with the dignity of individuals. Furthermore, the declaration emphasises the imperative of universal access to education, encompassing not only formal schooling and skill training but also access to information and the pursuit of ‘objective truth’.

UNESCO’s functions and objectives are reiterated in the first two paragraphs of Article I of its constitution:

“The purpose of the Organization is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.

To realize this purpose the Organization will:

Collaborate in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of people, through all means of mass communication and to that end recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image;

Give fresh impulse to popular education and to the spread of culture:

By collaborating with Members, at their request, in the development of educational activities;

By instituting collaboration among the nations to advance the ideal of equality of educational opportunity without regard to race, sex or any distinctions, economic or social;

By suggesting educational methods best suited to prepare the children of the world for the responsibilities of freedom;

Maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge:

[...]

By encouraging cooperation among the nations in all branches of intellectual activity, including the international exchange of persons active in the fields of education, science and culture and the exchange of publications, objects of artistic and scientific interest and other materials of information;

[...]

With a view to preserving the independence, integrity and fruitful diversity of the cultures and educational systems of the States Members of the Organization, the Organization is prohibited from intervening in matters which are essentially within their domestic jurisdiction.”<sup>261</sup>

The objectives of the fundamental education project, which will be further elaborated upon in the subsequent section of this chapter, and even the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights*, are closely aligned with the stated purposes of the organisation outlined in paragraph 1 of Article I. Both initiatives aimed to educate and inspire participants and viewers to actively contribute to the establishment of peace and security by encouraging respect for human rights, the rule of law, and fundamental freedoms for all individuals. Fundamental education projects have sought to address various cultural, social, and economic aspects of the lives of their target population, with the goal of enhancing overall well-being. The organisation’s efforts to establish a network dedicated to fundamental education can be correlated with paragraph 2b of Article I which emphasises collaboration among Member States at the educational level. In contrast, the travel album, produced by the Mass Communication Department, was designed to disseminate the content of the UDHR through various media forms. Paragraphs 2a & c of the Article could be associated with this album, as it aimed to educate diverse audiences about the rights and responsibilities outlined in the Universal Declaration through visual and textual representations.

### **2.2.2 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Right to Education**

The UDHR, which was adopted and signed by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948 represents a significant milestone in international efforts to safeguard human rights.<sup>262</sup> During the voting process, driven by the UN, only eight countries—the nations of the ‘Communist bloc’, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia—abstained.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> UNESCO.

<sup>262</sup> M. Glen Johnson, ‘A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights’; Goodale, *Letters to the Contrary*.

<sup>263</sup> The drafting process of the UDHR was challenging. Eleanor Roosevelt exceeded expectations in finding a universal consensus on rights and duties. During the voting process of the UDHR on 10 December 1948, it became evident that despite extensive debates, there were still 8 abstentions: one from Saudi Arabia, one from South-Africa, and six from the nations of the ‘Communist Bloc’. These ‘Communist Bloc’ countries feared the impact of the UDHR on their national sovereignty, which Sluga interprets as forewarning of

At the outset of the UN, human rights were not a primary focus of the Allied forces, notably the British and Soviet forces. However, the experience of confronting Nazi fascism and its resultant atrocities shattered the belief that nations were capable of adequately safeguarding their populations. As Mazower elucidates, historical circumstances spurred the emergence of a discourse on human rights aimed at international protection. Furthermore, Mazower contends that the concept of human rights offers an alternative to the League of Nations' minority rights treaties, which had been profoundly undermined by the Holocaust's devastation of minority populations. Additionally, Mazower suggested that the United States perceived this new discourse as an opportunity to reclaim international leadership by championing the cause of human rights.<sup>264</sup>

President Roosevelt advocated for the inclusion of this emerging human rights discourse into the United Nations Charter, navigating between reluctant British and Soviet allies, who showed less enthusiasm for global human rights safeguards, and representatives of smaller states and NGO's who advocated for more comprehensive, precise, and detailed commitments in this domain.<sup>265</sup> These efforts culminated in the incorporation of references to human rights in the Charter, prompting the establishment of a small group of experts tasked with exploring the question "What are human beings and what are they entitled to?"<sup>266</sup>

Subsequently, the UNCHR, chaired by Mrs. Roosevelt, was established. This commission comprised members such as P.C. Chang from China, who held the vice-chair; Charles Malik from Lebanon, in the position of rapporteur; René Cassin of France; John P. Humphrey, as the Director of the Division of Human Rights, Professor Fernand Dehousse from Belgium, Colonel William Hodgson of Australia and Mrs Hansa Mehta from India. All of them collaborated closely with various NGOs to strengthen their human rights mandate.<sup>267</sup> Concurrently, UNESCO's Philosopher's Committee embarked on a mission to interpret and safeguard human dignity on a global scale.<sup>268</sup>

During the drafting of the UDHR, extensive consultations and debates took place within the UNCHR, based on an international survey, trying to prove that the underlying principles of

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their suspicion towards internationalisation. See: M. Glen Johnson, 'A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights'; Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001); Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*.

<sup>264</sup> Mark Mazower, 'The Strange Triumph of Human Rights, 1933-1950', *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 2 (2004): 379–98; Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*.

<sup>265</sup> M. Glen Johnson, 'A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights'.

<sup>266</sup> Walter Kälin, 'What Are Human Rights?'; M. Glen Johnson, 'A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights'.

<sup>267</sup> M. Glen Johnson, 'A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights'.

<sup>268</sup> M. Glen Johnson.

human rights were universal and could be found in every cultural system<sup>269</sup>. Other discussions have also emerged around conflicting Marxist and liberal ideologies, such as Western and non-Western legal and philosophical traditions. The non-Western perspective was seldom integrated into the discussions, primarily because many representatives from non-Western countries had received education in Western institutions.<sup>270</sup>

Ultimately, upon signing the declaration, UN member states committed to advancing these universal values. UNESCO played a pivotal role in assisting in disseminating the principles enshrined in the UDHR, as mandated in its constitution.<sup>271</sup>

UNESCO's initiatives are primarily centred on enhancing educational and cultural awareness worldwide. Various endeavours have been undertaken on educational, scientific, cultural, and informational fronts to further its mission of fostering international understanding and achieving global peace. Among these initiatives, some were dedicated to disseminating information about and educating on the scope and significance of the UDHR.<sup>272</sup> The *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* (1950) exemplifies one such effort.

The album is a condensed version of the *Human Rights Exhibition* held in Paris. This large-scale international exhibition opened at Musée Galliera in September 1949 and was open to visitors until December 1949. It was one of the first visualisations of its kind, aiming to “show the men to whom we owe, in all parts of the world, the Human Rights that are today our most treasured possession”.<sup>273</sup> The exhibition sought to demonstrate the historical construction of these universal values.

The album followed a similar composition to the Paris exhibition to reproduce the exhibition's message worldwide.<sup>274</sup> This portable version was distributed globally to UNESCO's member states with the goal of educating adults and children worldwide about the rights and duties enshrined in the UDHR.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Goodale, *Letters to the Contrary*.

<sup>270</sup> M. Glen Johnson, 'A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights'.

<sup>271</sup> UNESCO, 'Constitution - Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization'.

<sup>272</sup> Jaime Torres Bodet, 'UNESCO Joins in United Nations' Efforts to Make Human Rights Declaration a Living Reality', *UNESCO Courier*, December 1951.

<sup>273</sup> 'Human Rights UNESCO Exhibition in Paris'; Kesteloot, 'Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education'.

<sup>274</sup> 'Letter to the Minister from Jaime Torres Bodet'; 'Visualizing Universalism: The UNESCO Human Rights Exhibition 1949-1953'; Kesteloot, 'Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education'.

<sup>275</sup> 'UNESCO Exhibition-Album to Show Man's Unending Fight to Gain His Rights'; Kesteloot, 'Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education'.



Nearly 12,000 copies of albums were made and distributed globally. In 1951, 6,700 English and 3,500 French copies were sent, while the distribution of 1,122 Spanish copies was delayed.<sup>276</sup> Several member states, national commissions, UNESCO field offices, and other UN agencies also received copies, whereas the remaining albums were distributed to governments that had no national commissions or other recipients, such as sales agents.<sup>277</sup> The album was said to have been successful. It was sold out.<sup>278</sup>

In my essay titled, “Mediating the right to education: an analysis of UNESCO’s exhibition album on human rights and its global dissemination in 1951” I conducted a detailed examination of the images and text featured in the album to the right to education, aiming to grasp the underlying discourse. Given the album’s intended distribution, it served as a vehicle for conveying the message of the UDHR, including its provisions regarding “the right to education”.

Article 26 of the 1948 UDHR outlines the right to education in the following manner:

“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit;

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations and racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the UN for the maintenance of peace;

Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Besides reports and meeting notes about the translation of the album, I was not able to find any correspondence regarding the distribution of a Spanish version. However, I can confirm that the album was distributed. In Chapter 5, I will discuss this matter further. See: ‘Information on First Edition of Human Rights Album’, 27 April 1955, MCA/123, MC/53, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France; ‘Rapport Sur La Distribution de l’Album Sur Les Droits de l’Homme’, n.d., MC/53, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France; ‘Addition to Work Plan 1951 - First Six Months’, 5 January 1951, MCM/Memo2001, 342.7(100) A146 part II from 1-1-1951 and up, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France; Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’.

<sup>277</sup> ‘UNESCO Exhibition-Album to Show Man’s Unending Fight to Gain His Rights’, ‘Information on First Edition of Human Rights Album’, ‘Rapport Sur La Distribution de l’Album Sur Les Droits de l’Homme’, Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’.

<sup>278</sup> ‘A Note on the New Human Rights Album’, 21 January 1955, MC/53, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France; Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’.

<sup>279</sup> Nations, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’.

As with all articles of the UDHR, Article 26 intersects with numerous other provisions. For instance, principles such as freedom of thought and opinion; the emancipation of woman; freedom of religion; freedom of creative work; and the right to family life, can all be correlated with the concept of “full development of the human personality”, or the promotion of “understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial, or religious groups”. Furthermore, the term “everyone” in the same article echoes the imperative of emancipating women. In this context, the notion of the family typically denotes a traditional structure comprising parents and children.

Like many other articles, the right to education underwent extensive debate before its inclusion in the UDHR, as noted by Glen Johnson. One of the initial discussions revolved around the contentious issue of compulsory education. Johnson outlines both perspectives: one advocating for children’s entitlement to fundamental education, irrespective of parental preferences, while the other asserts parent’s right to choose their child’s educational path.<sup>280</sup>

This study underscores the pivotal role of the UN in promoting education.<sup>281</sup> Notably, a joint amendment proposed by Mexico and the United States in the Third Committee further emphasised the significance of education within the UN framework.<sup>282</sup> This reaffirmation highlights the critical role of education as a catalyst of global peace and stability.

### **2.2.3 UNESCO’s (visual) perspective on the right to education**

Educating the global population on the universal principles enshrined in the UDHR has long been considered a fundamental mission of UNESCO in its pursuit of international peace and common welfare.<sup>283</sup> Throughout history, education has been perceived as a catalyst for fostering positive societal transformations.<sup>284</sup> Since the formulation of UNESCO’s constitution in 1945 and the subsequent adoption of the UDHR in 1948, UNESCO’s stance on and advocacy for the right

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<sup>280</sup> M. Glen Johnson, ‘A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights’.

<sup>281</sup> Only two more articles refer to the specific role the United Nations can take in the promotion of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 14, which promotes the right to protection and asylum, and Article 29, the specific duties of every person concerning the rights and duties towards another. In both instances, the United Nations highlights that a refusal to protect another’s freedom indicates a lack of respect for one’s own freedom. The United Nations is also mentioned in the preamble of the UDHR. See : Nations, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’..

<sup>282</sup> Charles H. Malik served as Chair of the Third Committee during the debates on the UDHR in 1948. This Committee of the UN primarily focused on social, humanitarian, and cultural issues. See: M. Glen Johnson, ‘A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights’.

<sup>283</sup> Glenda Sluga, ‘UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley: Journal of World History’, *Journal of World History* 21, no. 3 (September 2010): 393–418, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2010.0016>.

<sup>284</sup> Elfert, *UNESCO’s Utopia of Lifelong Learning*; Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO’s Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.’

to education has evolved. Recent publications of the organisation, such as “Reading the past, writing the future” and the “Right to Education Handbook”, delve into the nuances of the right to education and its evolving dynamics over time.<sup>285</sup> At its core, the right to education remains a fundamental human right that guarantees universal access to education for all individuals, as underscored in the inaugural article of the UDHR.<sup>286</sup>

This perspective represents the culmination of evolving ideologies shaped by historical context. Stemming from its roots in the League of Nations and the IIC, UNESCO’s early educational policies have retained certain emphases. Fernando Valderrama outlines three different periods in the IIC’s developmental trajectory. The initial phase, spanning from 1926 to 1930, was marked by an emphasis on evaluating available resources, a phase akin to a research endeavour aimed at assessing available documents and establishing pertinent relations. Subsequently, from 1930 to 1936, the institute directed its efforts towards integrating youth into the educational framework and coordinating secondary education, thereby targeting children and young adults for educational engagement. The third phase, commencing in 1936, witnessed a shift towards adult education, with a pronounced focus on leveraging visual and auditory media, such as radio and film, to advance rural education, civic instruction, and peace education. Notably, initiatives were launched to establish an information centre dedicated to developing educational materials pertaining to the League of Nations. Concurrently, comparative studies on key challenges in secondary education have been conducted, accompanied by the publication of bulletins and the establishment of a national educational documentation centre, all under UNESCO’s auspices, ensuring the sustained continuity of educational programmes.<sup>287</sup>

UNESCO’s early publications, speeches, and initiatives provide insights into their stance on the right to education. The first issue of the UNESCO Courier in February 1948 highlights the resolutions made at the 1947 Mexican Conference on UNESCO’s programme. In 1948, Member States agreed that “it is the duty of all member states to guarantee a basic minimum of education to all their citizens that is free and universal compulsory primary schooling”.<sup>288</sup> In pursuit of this goal, UNESCO has planned to establish a global panel of fundamental education experts. These

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<sup>285</sup> UNESCO, *Reading the Past, Writing the Future: Fifty Years of Promoting Literacy* (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.54675/DGPI6272>; UNESCO and Right to Education Initiative (UK), *Right to Education Handbook* (Paris, France and London, United Kingdom: UNESCO and Right to Education Initiative, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.54675/ZMNJ2648>.

<sup>286</sup> Article 1 of the UDHR states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” See : Nations, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’.

<sup>287</sup> Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*, 5.

<sup>288</sup> ‘Highlights of UNESCO Projects for New Year’, *UNESCO Courier*, February 1948, 6.

experts aimed to help “men and women to live fuller and happier lives in adjustment with their changing environment, to develop the best elements of their own culture, and to achieve the economic and social progress which will enable them to take their place in the modern world”.<sup>289</sup>

A pivotal moment that occurred in November 1948, as reflected in an article in the *UNESCO Courier*, marks a shift in UNESCO’s educational strategy. The organisation envisioned its role as providing support and guidance to member states on educational matters and disseminating relevant information through the establishment of a Clearing House. Julian Huxley articulated this vision, stating that by “creating a central service to provide technical information and advice on education at all levels, and by publicizing new and interesting national achievements in all parts of the world, educational advance will be rendered not only more rapid, but more of an international venture, and new standards will gradually be set up”.<sup>290</sup> He foresaw UNESCO as an intergovernmental organisation that would gather and disseminate scientific knowledge to foster global unity.<sup>291</sup>

This marked the beginning of UNESCO’s multifaceted initiatives. As previously mentioned, one such initiative that provides valuable insight into UNESCO’s interpretation of “the right to education” is its representation in the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* (1951).

The album consisted of 110 white carton board panels, 48 x 31.5 cm in size, and featured 276 monochrome illustrations.<sup>292</sup> The images were grouped into four sections: (1) the principal stages in human development; (2) the need for human rights; (3) the rights themselves divided into fourteen main headings such as the abolition of slavery, freedom of creative work, and the right to education; and (4) a final section elaborating on UNESCO’s task of disseminating the UDHR and hereby the plights and duties of man with respect to another’s rights.<sup>293</sup> For each panel,

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<sup>289</sup> ‘Fundamental Education’, *UNESCO Courier*, February 1948, 4.

<sup>290</sup> ‘Emphasis on Education Clearing House Program’, *UNESCO Courier*, November 1948, 4.

<sup>291</sup> It remains important to note that Julian S. Huxley’s belief in unifying the world was still approached through a colonial and scientific lens. Glenda Sluga mentions that Huxley aimed to focus UNESCO’s programmes only on the “world’s ‘dark areas’, that is, places populated by the ‘darker races’ or by the less privileged classes”. See: Sluga, ‘UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley’, 404.

<sup>292</sup> ‘Exhibition Album Human Rights (Manual)’, n.d., MC/15, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France; ‘Human Rights Album’, 27 January 1955, MCS/Memo/28, MC/53, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France; Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’.

<sup>293</sup> UNESCO chose to group the different articles of the UDHR into fourteen sections to illustrate the interconnectedness between the different rights. These sections were: The abolition of slavery (Art. 4); Freedom of movement (Art. 13); The abolition of inhuman treatment (Art. 5); Protection against arbitrary arrest - equality before the law (Arts. 6-15); The dignity of labour and social security (Arts. 23, 24, 27); Standard of living and assistance (Art. 25); The protection of family life and of property (Arts. 16, 17, 22, 23); The emancipation of women (Arts. 2, 16); Freedom of religion (Arts. 18); Freedom of thought and opinion (Arts. 18, 19); The right to education (Art. 26); Participation in cultural life (Art. 27); Freedom of creative work (Art. 27) and the right to participate in government (Art. 21). See: Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’, 144; ‘Exhibition Album Human Rights (Manual)’; ‘A Short History of Human Rights’, n.d., MC/36/4, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France.

separate captions were printed on the same material used for the panels, explaining and commenting on the corresponding visual(s). “Word and image,” as stated in Article 1 of the organisations’ constitution, were frequently used to promote their message.<sup>294</sup> The album itself was intended for use in schools, libraries, and adult education centres.<sup>295</sup>

Seven panels depict the “right to education”. They were placed in the third part of the album and contained 21 images in total, visualising a number of related themes, such as “Education Was Once a Privilege,” “Universities in Former Times,” “Knowledge Has No Frontiers,” “A Radical Change in Methods of Teaching,” “The Scourge of Illiteracy,” “Education and Democracy,” and “Towards Equality of Opportunity”.<sup>296</sup> The selected themes reflect their priorities. The chosen images encompassed a variety of photographs, engravings, and drawings, accompanied by captions. These captions typically include the subject heading and title of the corresponding panel on the left side, while the right-side features explanatory text, providing a brief description of the images.

All panels align with the sentiments expressed in the second paragraph of UNESCO’s constitution, which underscores the significance of adopting new teaching methodologies and fostering collaboration among nations to promote equality and educational opportunities. However, the panels themselves are more closely associated with the various clauses in Article 26.<sup>297</sup>

For instance, in the first panel on the right to education (Figure 8), the focus is on equal access to education, illustrated through visuals and texts depicting individuals from both private and privileged classes. This can be viewed as a significant visual representation of the second paragraph of Article 26 of the UDHR, which emphasises the universal right of every individual to access education.

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<sup>294</sup> Allbeson, ‘Photographic Diplomacy In The Postwar World’; UNESCO, ‘Constitution - Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’.

<sup>295</sup> Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’.

<sup>296</sup> ‘Exhibition Album Human Rights’, n.d., MC/15, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France; ‘Captions of the Exhibition Album on Human Rights’, n.d., MC/15, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France; Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’.

<sup>297</sup> As observed, each curator had the discretion to decide whether to utilise and display the provided captions. I have opted to showcase the images alongside their intended captions to facilitate the analysis of each panel, similarly to my essay. See: Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’, 148.

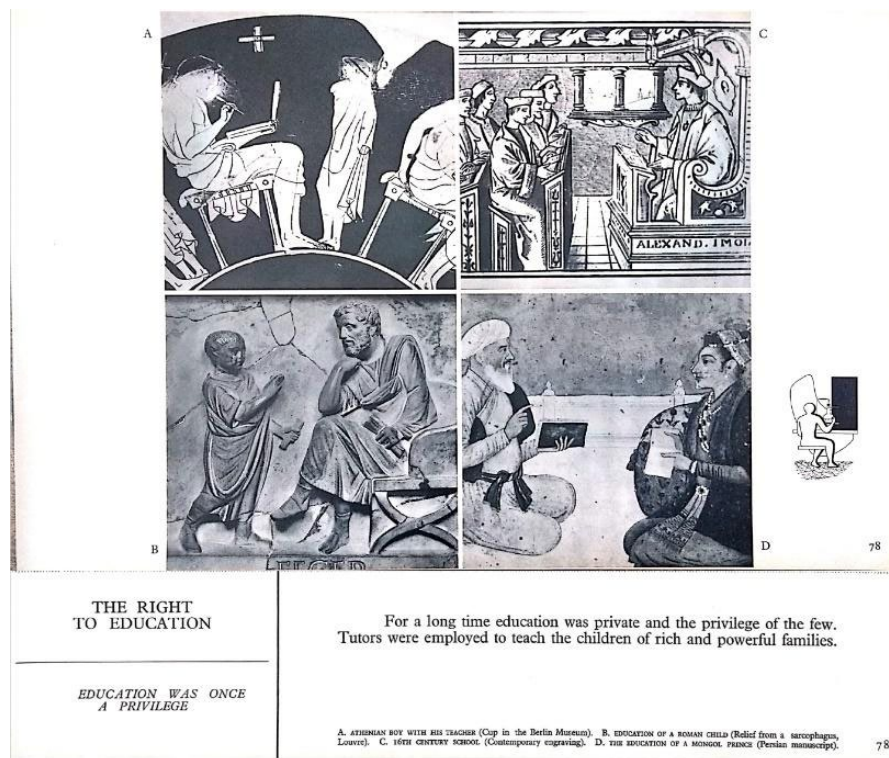


Figure 8: "The Right to Education," panel 78 (2 pages – image and caption), *The UNESCO Exhibition Album on Human Rights*. © UNESCO. The image and caption pages have been merged by the author with permission from UNESCO Archives.

While Panel 79 (Figure 9) primarily focuses on universities and equality of opportunity, it also addresses the issue of literacy, specifically, the lack of reading and writing skills. This aligns with the first paragraph of Article 26 of the UDHR, which emphasises the importance of education accessible to all. UNESCO recognises the limited accessibility of universities and aims to address this by advocating for greater access to knowledge and vocational education. Additionally, this panel highlights the organisation's emphasis on literacy for the first time, reflecting one of its core objectives. Moreover, the other panels within the exhibition underscored the significance of literacy skills.

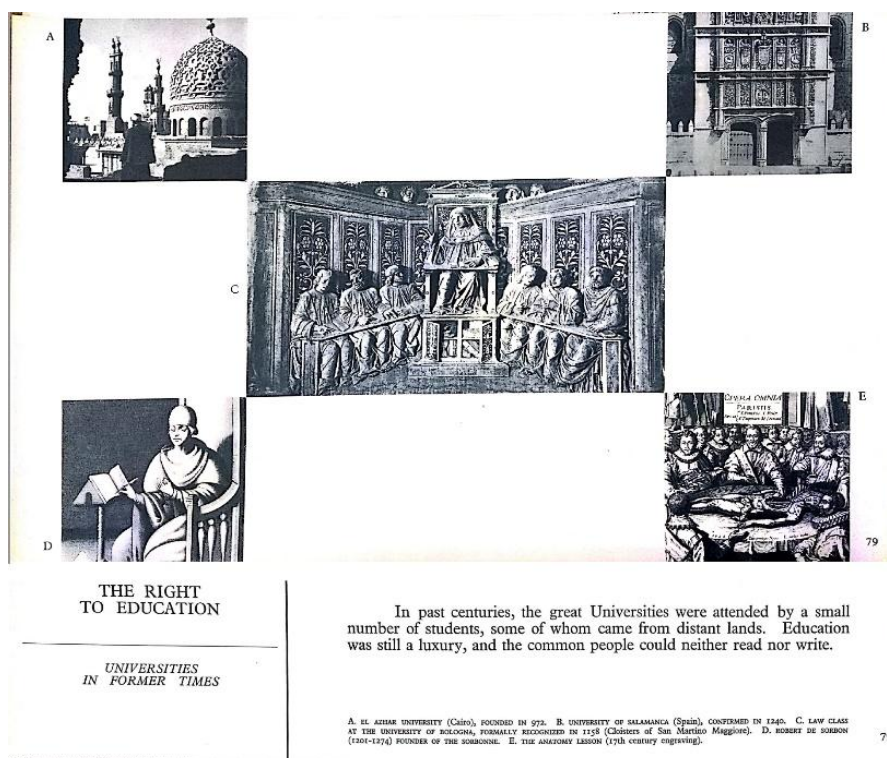


Figure 9: "The Right to Education," panel 79 (2 pages – image and caption), *The UNESCO Exhibition Album on Human Rights*. © UNESCO. The image and caption pages have been merged by the author with permission from UNESCO Archives.

Panel 82 (Figure 10), titled "The Scourge of Illiteracy", directly addresses the issue of illiteracy. First, it links a low literacy rate to challenging geographical conditions, which may hinder students from attending school. Second, it illustrates illiteracy through two pictures. One captured a scene in Oaxaca, Mexico, where people participate in a literacy campaign by reading aloud. The other depicts a moment in Wu-sih, China, where a Chinese child is shown teaching a young housewife how to read as per caption. Notably, both countries were early participants in UNESCO's educational initiatives on fundamental education. China was involved in a pilot project in fundamental education in Nanking, while Mexico hosted UNESCO's first regional centre on fundamental education in Pátzcuaro.<sup>298</sup>

<sup>298</sup> Chen, 'Experimenting with a Global Panacea'.



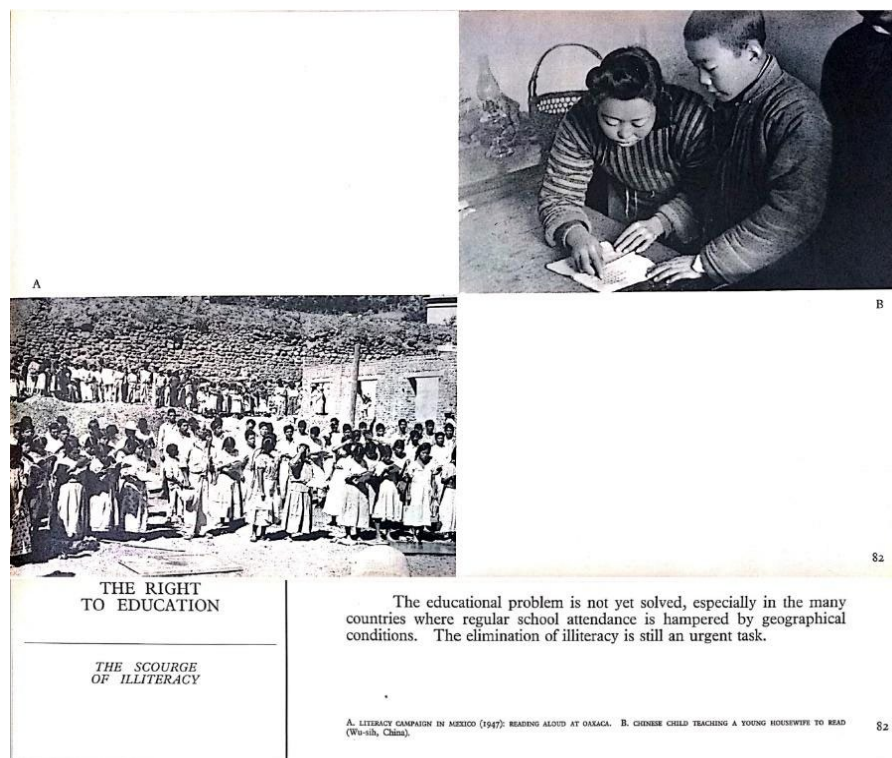


Figure 10: “The Right to Education,” panel 82 (2 pages – image and caption), *The UNESCO Exhibition Album on Human Rights*. ©UNESCO. The image and caption pages have been merged by the author with permission from UNESCO Archives.

The remaining panel that revisits the literacy theme is panel 84 (Figure 12). This panel features a prominent image of a white boy named Bill engrossed in reading a textbook, identified as one of the top students in the Blackfriars school “class”.<sup>299</sup> The caption below this image underscores the direct correlation between elementary education and social equality. This panel resonates with the principles outlined in Article 26, which advocates equal opportunities and free and compulsory elementary education.

<sup>299</sup> Walter George, ‘School in the Mailbox. Australia’s “Phantom Schools” Serve 18.000 Children’, *UNESCO Courier*, November 1950, 12.



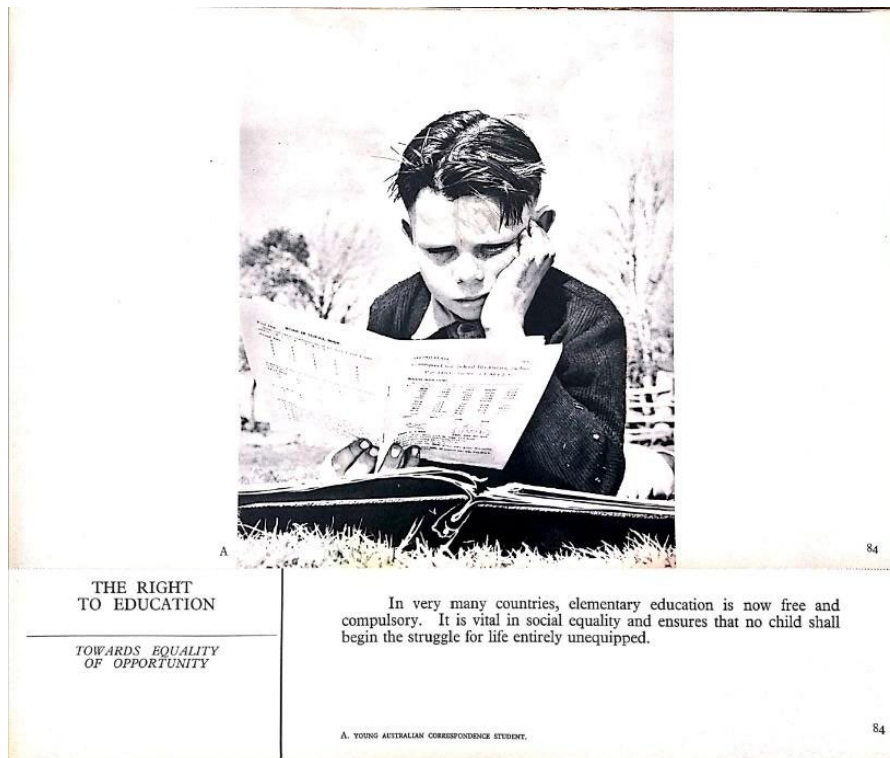


Figure 12: “The Right to Education,” panel 84 (2 pages – image and caption), *The UNESCO Exhibition Album on Human Rights*. ©UNESCO. The image and caption pages have been merged by the author with permission from UNESCO Archives.

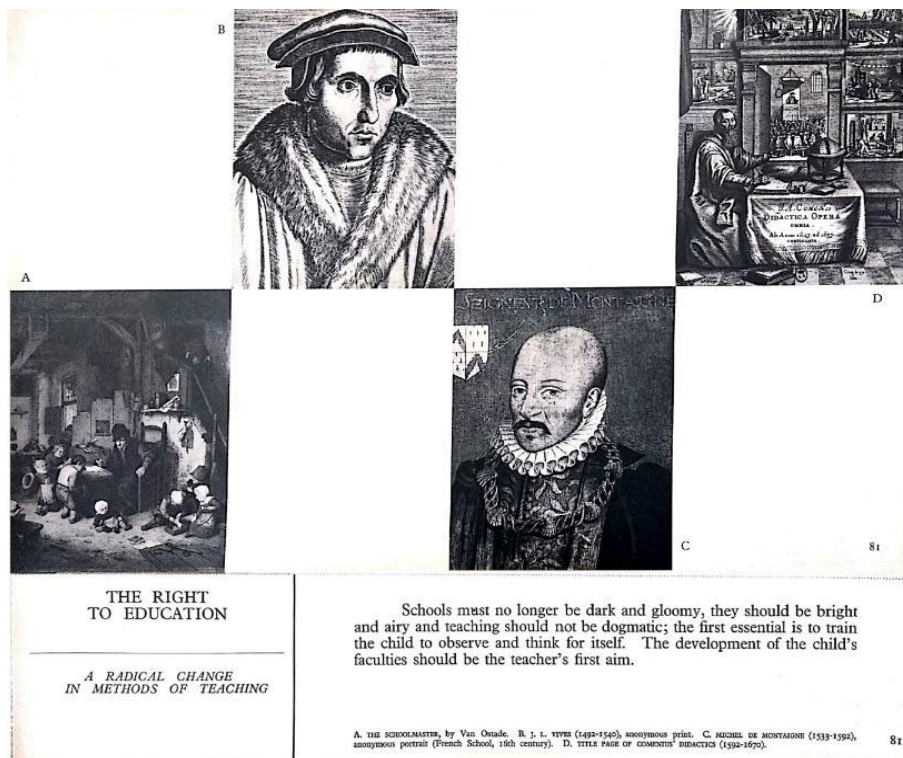


Figure 11: “The Right to Education,” panel 81 (2 pages – image and caption), *The UNESCO Exhibition Album on Human Rights*. © UNESCO. The image and caption pages have been merged by the author with permission from UNESCO Archives.

The previous and following panels continue to emphasise collaboration and the exchange of knowledge to ensure education, foster the full development of individuals' personalities, and enhance their respect for one another, ultimately contributing to the maintenance of peace. The theme “A Radical Change in Methods of Teaching” articulated in the caption of panel 81 (Figure 11), is self-explanatory. Here, UNESCO prompts viewers to contemplate new teaching methods presented by various educators aimed at inspiring students to think critically as individuals.

This applies to the two final panels. Panel 83 (Figure 13) connects critical thinking with civic responsibilities expected within a democratic state. Additionally, this underscores the belief that providing educational facilities should be a priority for every state. These depictions emphasise UNESCO's overarching goal of promoting global understanding and peace through education, reflecting the organisation's commitment to fostering intellectual growth and civic engagement worldwide.

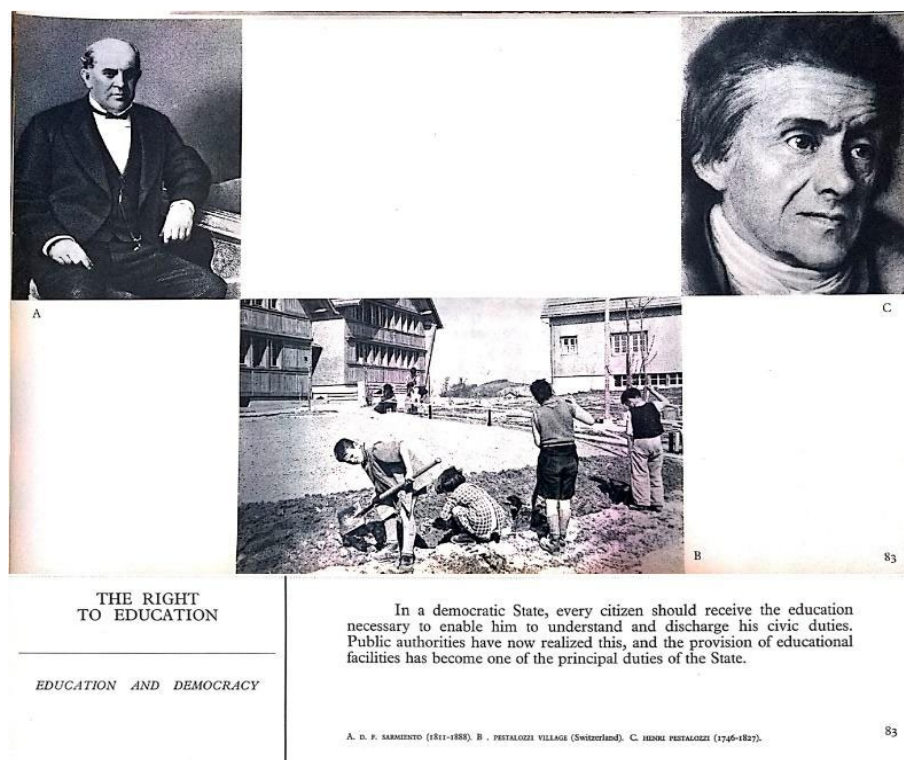


Figure 13: “The Right to Education,” panel 83 (2 pages – image and caption), *The UNESCO Exhibition Album on Human Rights*. ©UNESCO. The image and caption pages have been merged by the author with permission from UNESCO Archives.

The universality of learning is stressed in Panel 80, titled “Knowledge has no frontiers” (Figure 14). This panel highlights the belief that learning transcends geographical boundaries and is a universal pursuit. Furthermore, it emphasises that collaboration and exchange of knowledge

between nations are essential for fostering human progress. Together, the themes depicted in the panels exemplify UNESCO's dedication to advancing education as a means of fostering mutual understanding and global progress.

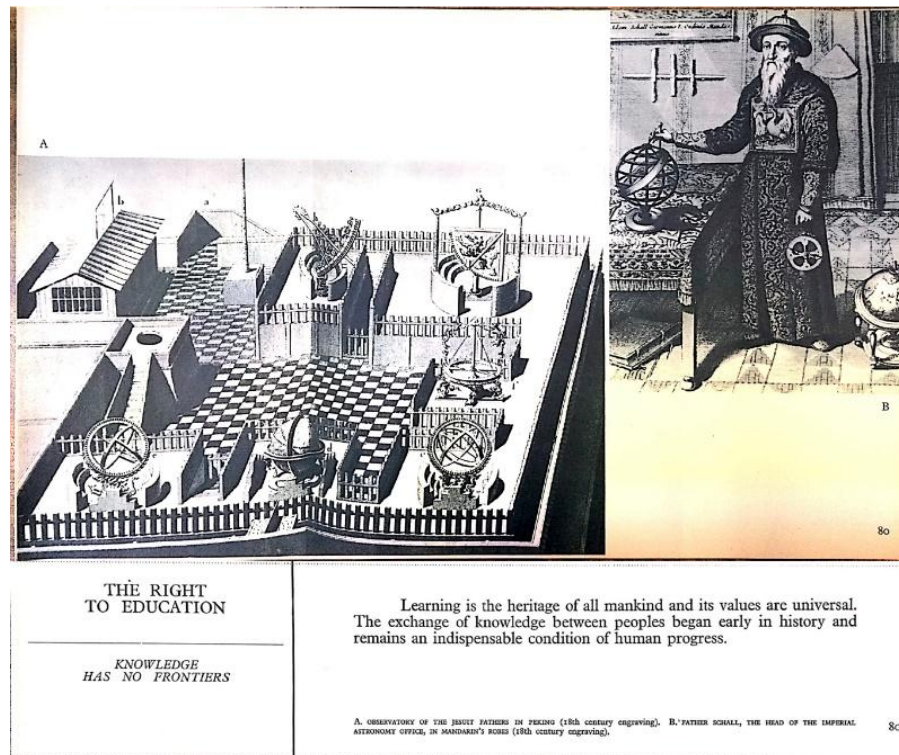


Figure 14: "The Right to Education," panel 80 (2 pages – image and caption), *The UNESCO Exhibition Album on Human Rights*. © UNESCO. The image and caption pages have been merged by the author with permission from UNESCO Archives.

The examination of UNESCO's constitution and the UDHR emphasises their inseparable connections. Furthermore, the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* underscores the prominent focus of UNESCO's early educational programmes, from post-war reconstruction efforts to the rewriting of textbooks and the promotion of fundamental education. The imperative of equal access to education and the challenge of illiteracy are recurrent themes across numerous panels, while the exchange of knowledge and innovation of teaching methodologies are envisioned to cultivate democratic societies founded on mutual respect for human rights. It is reasonable to speculate that UNESCO's flagship programmes, particularly those centred on fundamental education, would incorporate the exploration of the UDHR into their educational outreach. In Chapters 4 and 5, I will discuss any discernible presence of the UDHR within UNESCO's fundamental education initiative, examining visual materials and publications. The analysis below will address questions regarding the nature of fundamental education and its intended beneficiaries.

## 2.3 Fundamental Education: Education for Who?

In the UNESCO publication “Transforming lives through education” from 2018, the current Director-General, Audrey Azoulay, writes: “Education is a fundamental human right that we must ensure and defend every single day.” Since the establishment of the organisation in November 1945, education has been the cornerstone of its programmes. Over the years, UNESCO has dedicated itself to promoting the right to education and its implementation worldwide. “Transforming lives through education” presents a visual narrative focusing on the profound impact of education, which is believed to have the transformative power to “build self-confidence, contribute to economic and social progress, and promote intercultural understanding”.<sup>300</sup>

Azoulay’s statement underscores the profound value of education in transforming life and fostering societal progress. This reflects UNESCO’s longstanding commitment to this goal. Alfred Zimmermann had advocated for a “fight against illiteracy” with the purpose of eradicating poverty.<sup>301</sup> Only a couple of months later, the term “fundamental education” emerged, initially conceived as an overarching term to encapsulate the diverse educational initiatives undertaken by various nations, known by different names such as “mass education”, “basic education”, “cultural missions” and “community development”.<sup>302</sup> Chinese Kuo Yu-Shou, UNESCO’s inaugural director of education, championed the adoption of fundamental education. In his work “UNESCO’s Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact,” Boel delves into the rationale behind Kuo Yu-Shou’s rejection of certain terms mentioned earlier. For instance, “illiteracy” was deemed too restrictive in scope, while “mass education” carried an “unpleasing connotation” as it overlooked individual differences. Similarly, “popular education” was dismissed because of its perceived patronising undertone, particularly in some languages. Lastly, “basic education” raised concerns about potential associations with the concept of “basic English” and Mahatma Gandhi’s principles.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Anne Muller, Cristina Stanca-Mustea, and UNESCO, *Transforming lives through education - Transformer la vie grâce à l'éducation* (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2018), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000264088>, 4.

<sup>301</sup> Watras, ‘UNESCO’s Programme of Fundamental Education, 1946 - 1959’, 221.

<sup>302</sup> ‘1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.’, UNESCO Courier, June 1951: 6.

<sup>303</sup> Jens Boel, ‘UNESCO’s Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact’, 154.

Fundamental education, as articulated by Bowers, transcended mere literacy campaigns, encompassing both adults and children, accommodating individual differences, and implying not only literacy but also social advancement.<sup>304</sup>

Bowers elucidated fundamental education in his first article in the 1948 UNESCO Courier as an endeavour

“to help men and women to live fuller and happier lives in adjustment with their changing environment, to develop the best elements of their own culture, and to achieve the economic and social progress which will enable them to take their place in the modern world, achieving the aim of the United Nations to live together in peace.”<sup>305</sup>

Despite this lengthy initial description, UNESCO never succeeded in providing a precise definition of the term. Upon criticism from both the UN and its member states, a new trial for an ‘official’ definition came in November 1950 and was presented to the Inter-Secretarial Working Party of the UN and Specialised Agencies. It reads as follows:

“Fundamental Education is that kind of minimum and general education which is to help children and adults who do not have the advantages of formal education, to understand the problems of their immediate environment and their rights and duties as citizens and individuals, and to participate more effectively in the economic and social progress of their community.

It is fundamental in the sense that it gives the minimum knowledge and skills which is an essential condition for attaining an adequate standard of living. It is a prerequisite to the full effectiveness of work in health, agriculture and similar skilled services. It is general in the sense that this knowledge and these skills are not imparted for their own sake only. It uses active methods, it focuses interests on practical problems in the environment, and in this way seeds to develop both individual and social life.

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<sup>304</sup> Bowers, ‘Fundamental Education. Programme for 1948’; Watras, ‘UNESCO’s Programme of Fundamental Education, 1946 - 1959’.

<sup>305</sup> ‘Fundamental Education: Definition and Programme’, 2; Bowers, ‘Fundamental Education. Programme for 1948’, 4.



It is concerned with children for whom there is no adequate system of primary schooling and with adults deprived of educational opportunity; it utilises all suitable media for their development through individual effort and through community life.”<sup>306</sup>

In the UNESCO Courier of June 1951, fundamental education was portrayed as ‘UNESCO’s greatest challenge’. Its primary objectives are as follows:

“to help people to understand their immediate problems and to give them the skills to solve them through their own efforts. It is an emergency solution designed to help masses of illiterate adults and children in countries whose educational facilities have been inadequate. It is an attempt to salvage a generation by giving it the minimum of education needed to improve its way of life, its health, its productivity and its social, economic and political organization.”<sup>307</sup>

Like Boel, I identify a holistic approach reflected in all descriptions, integrating social, educational, cultural, and economic livelihoods in relation to beneficiaries’ contexts.<sup>308</sup> However, it is noteworthy that the UN’s goal of fostering global peace in harmony has been conspicuously absent. Additionally, in the 1953 published book “New Horizons at Tzetzzenhuaro”, fundamental education was simply defined as instruction in the essential aspects of daily life and survival. Its primary aim was to help individuals understand their own challenges and empower them to resolve them autonomously.<sup>309</sup>

This indicates a transition from a collective approach focused on solidarity and peaceful coexistence to a more individualistic one, in which individuals are encouraged to enhance their own lives and those of their communities. This shift is also evident in the language used to define the concept. While the 1948 definition employs empowering verbs such as “to help”, “to develop”, “to enable” and “to achieve”, reflecting a reciprocal relationship with the participant, subsequent definitions imply a disparity between the teacher and the student, as seen in phrases like “to help”, “to give the minimum of education”, and “to make them understand”. These words convey a somewhat ‘patronising’ tone, a pitfall Kuo Yu-Shou sought to avoid and demonstrate that

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<sup>306</sup> According to Wodajo, this interpretation suggests a revised definition of the definition from the 1950s. See: UNESCO, “A Definition of Fundamental Education,” ED/94 (rev.), (Paris, 1952), in: Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO’s Concept and Program of Fundamental Education’, 24.

<sup>307</sup> ‘1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness,’ 6.

<sup>308</sup> Jens Boel, ‘UNESCO’s Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact’, 154.

<sup>309</sup> Unesco, ed., *New Horizons at Tzetzzenhuaro: One Year of Work at a Fundamental Education Centre for Latin America* (Paris, 1953), 10.

UNESCO was not immediately capable of altering the course of intervention in people's lives, as Vanwing elucidates.<sup>310</sup> In my view, while the UNESCO Secretariat aimed for societal progress, the world was not yet fully prepared to embark on a trend from a paternalistic approach towards individual accountability for one's own livelihoods. Nevertheless, the organisation's longstanding commitment to a holistic and empowering approach remains unchanged, while societal accountability disappears.<sup>311</sup>

### 2.3.1 “UNESCO’s Greatest Challenge”

For many years, the project on fundamental education stood as the ambitious flagship of UNESCO and embodied the organisation’s “One World’s vision,” particularly under its first Director-General, Julian Huxley.<sup>312</sup> Huxley not only championed a philosophy of “world scientific humanism,” founded on the idea of evolution driving towards a ‘unified mind’ wherein the

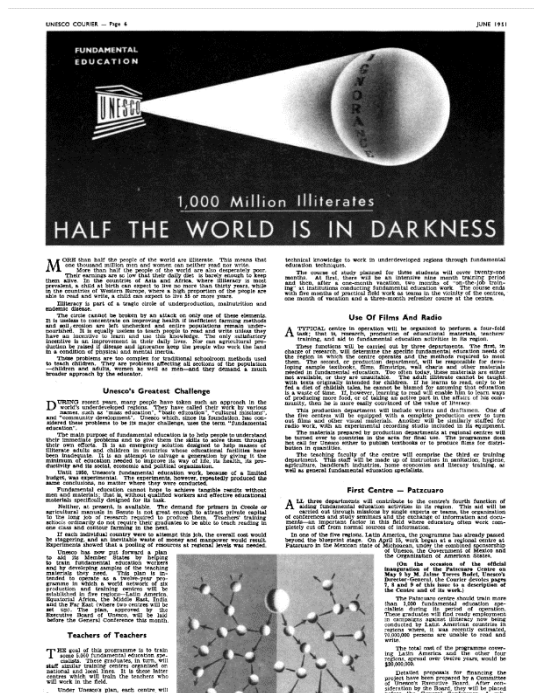


Figure 15: “1,000 Million Illiterates. Half the World is in Darkness,” UNESCO Courier, Vol. IV, no. 6 (June 1951): 6

<sup>310</sup> In my first chapter, I explain how it took already until the 1960s for the concept of ‘development’ to shift from a paternalistic approach to one focused on individual well-being. See: Vanwing, ‘De narrige legitimering van het sociaal-cultureel volwassenenwerk’; Jens Boel, ‘UNESCO’s Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact’.

<sup>311</sup> In their works, Wodajo and Boel both delve into UNESCO’s perspective on the definition of fundamental education. They argue that maintaining a broad definition of fundamental education was a catalyst for criticism and ultimately led to the abandonment of the project in 1958. In Chapter 5, I will further analyse this matter.

<sup>312</sup> Sluga, ‘UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley’.

universal power of knowledge and education held centrality, but this grand ambition is also echoed in the organisation's preamble.<sup>313</sup> UNESCO's commitment to fundamental education and its battle against ignorance as a direct response to the master race theory of Nazism and the devastation of war finds vivid representation in the banner of an article published in the June 1951 UNESCO Courier.<sup>314</sup> It serves as a concrete expression of UNESCO's formidable mission, resonating with Huxley's call to 'enlighten' those in the world still ensnared by 'darkness' and 'ignorance'.<sup>315</sup> The lasting impact of UNESCO's first Director-General is clearly visible in how the organisation's grand project is depicted visually.

The organisation aimed to break the interconnectedness among illiteracy, low productivity, malnutrition, and widespread endemic diseases. To address these challenges, they needed to adopt a comprehensive approach to enhance the living conditions of their target populations, as suggested by Julian Huxley in his book "UNESCO: its Purpose and its Philosophy".<sup>316</sup> He stressed that "literacy is a prerequisite for scientific and technical advance and for its applications to the general welfare through better health, more efficient agriculture and more productive industry; for full intellectual awareness and mental development; for that social and political consciousness which is the necessary basis for democracy and for national progress; and for international awareness and the knowledge of other nations".<sup>317</sup> In essence, literacy is intricately linked with scientific and technical progress, ultimately benefiting general welfare by improving health, enhancing agricultural efficiency, and increasing industrial productivity, while fostering intellectual and mental development conducive to democracy and national progress.

Although the Preparatory Commission initially rejected Huxley's assertions in 1946, a similar practical translation emerged five years later for the UNESCO Courier. This description outlines the organisation's vision as follows:

"It is useless to concentrate on improving health if inefficient farming methods and soil erosion are left unchecked and entire populations remain undernourished. It is equally useless to teach people to read and write, unless they have an incentive to learn and use this knowledge. The only satisfactory incentive is an improvement in their daily lives. Nor can agricultural production

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<sup>313</sup> Sluga, 397 & 402.

<sup>314</sup> '1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.'

<sup>315</sup> Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*, 68; Sluga, 'UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley', 404.

<sup>316</sup> Huxley's book "UNESCO: its Purpose and its Philosophy" sparked controversy in 1946 within the Preparatory Commission. The Commission went for asking him to present the document as a personal perspective rather than a vision of the Commission. See: Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*; Huxley, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy*.

<sup>317</sup> Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*, 26; Huxley, *UNESCO*, 29.



be raised if disease and ignorance keep the people who work the land in a condition of physical and mental inertia.”<sup>318</sup>

The depiction and initial rejection of the Preparatory Commission recalls earlier discussions of the definitions of fundamental education. It is noteworthy to mention that the vision of fundamental education appears to have evolved over a short span of five years between the initial initiatives on fundamental education and the programme under the tenure of Torres Bodet. Scholars such as Chen and Elfert have also focused on the ‘economic twist’ that UNESCO took in its educational initiatives.<sup>319</sup>

For instance, Chen highlighted the economic and social benefits of a Fundamental Education programme in China, which garnered increased support from member states for similar fundamental education projects in the Third World.<sup>320</sup> These pilot projects were ultimately considered prototypes of UN-based developmentalism.<sup>321</sup>

Similarly, Elfert, in her book, examined the shifting orientation of UNESCO’s fundamental education approach towards a more economical approach, aligning with the support of the UN and Member States. This ultimately led to continued integration of economic considerations into development efforts and educational initiatives.<sup>322</sup> According to Elfert, this transition towards a more technical approach compromises the organisation’s ability to uphold and promote its humanistic educational ideology.<sup>323</sup>

However, Huxley’s words and statements from the Secretariat outlined in the UNESCO Courier underscored UNESCO’s holistic approach, striving for technical advancement, intellectual growth, and scientific progress to enhance people’s lives. Educators were encouraged to adopt a broader approach extending beyond traditional classroom teaching, emphasising practical applications and community engagement. This initiative was identified as one of the seven priorities in UNESCO’s educational programme, as early as 1948.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> ‘1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.’

<sup>319</sup> Elfert, *UNESCO’s Utopia of Lifelong Learning*; Chen, ‘Experimenting with a Global Panacea’.

<sup>320</sup> Chen, ‘Experimenting with a Global Panacea’.

<sup>321</sup> Later in this chapter, I will briefly discuss the fundamental education pilot projects, one of which took place in Nanjing (or Nanking), China. See: Chen; Sluga, ‘UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley’.

<sup>322</sup> The statements of Elfert and Chen will be more thoroughly discussed in the following chapters. Additionally, Wodajo asserted that these reorientations ultimately led to the disappearance of fundamental education in 1958, a topic that will be more extensively explored in Chapter 5.

<sup>323</sup> Elfert, *UNESCO’s Utopia of Lifelong Learning*.

<sup>324</sup> ‘1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.’

### 2.3.2 Fundamental Education in UNESCO

Even prior to UNESCO's establishment, the organisation's Secretariat was already deeply engaged in an ambitious endeavour aimed at breaking the tragic circle of poverty and ignorance. The Secretariat's organisational chart from 1947 underscores the significance of fundamental education within the organisation's framework. Fundamental education was delineated as an integral component of one of its overarching programme projects, alongside other programme sections, such as education and general services (Figure 16).<sup>325</sup> This constitutes a distinct department within the organisational structure. Despite the chart's creation in 1947, UNESCO had already undertaken various actions in the realm of fundamental education in preceding years under the auspices of its Preparatory Commission.<sup>326</sup>

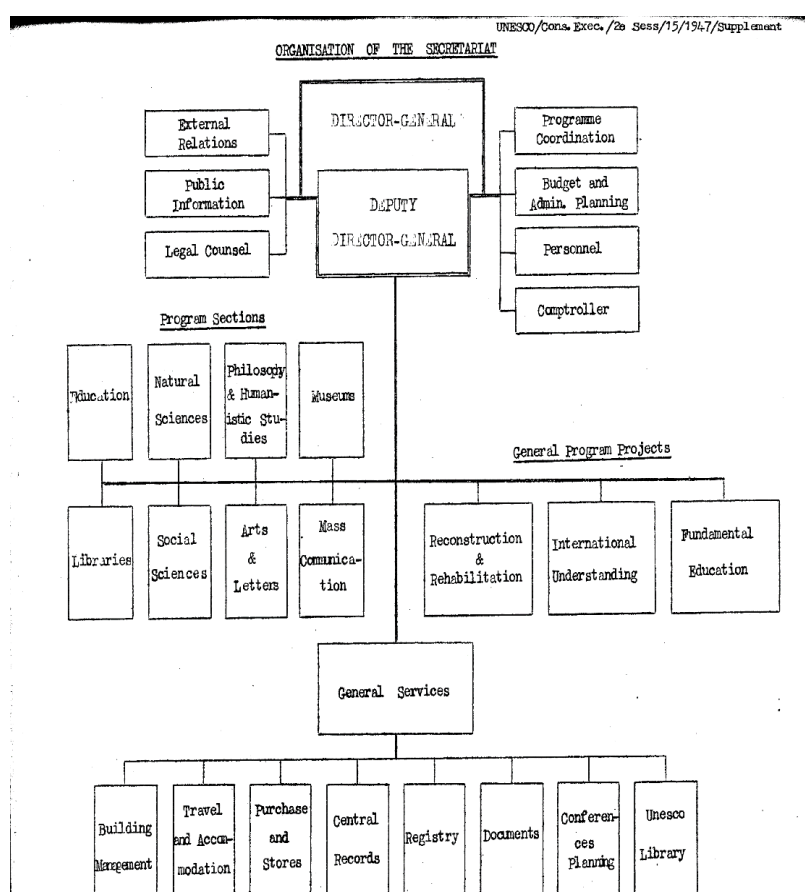


Figure 16: "Organisation of UNESCO Secretariat (1947)." Courtesy of UNESCO (UNESDOC)."

<sup>325</sup> 'Organization of UNESCO Secretariat (1947)' (UNESCO), UNESCO/Cons. Exec./2e Sess/15/1947/Supplement, accessed 4 April 2024, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/archives/organization-charts>.

<sup>326</sup> The preparatory commission of UNESCO had already taken some actions in the field of fundamental education and the reconstruction programme, even before the ratification of UNESCO's constitution. See: Boel, 'Fundamental Education : A Pioneer Concept - Jens Boel Explains Why'.

John Bowers, a British diplomat, was head of the Department of Fundamental Education. In 1947, the staff comprised individuals of various nationalities, including American, Australian, British, Chinese, Danish, French, and Haitian. John Bowers expressed a hope in 1947 for the addition of a Mexican and an Arab, continuing the emphasis on cultural diversity as promoted by UNESCO and regularly defended by Huxley.<sup>327</sup>

Surprisingly, in the 1952 organisation chart (Figure 17), the fundamental education division disappeared and became part of the education division under the direction of British educationalist Herbert Lionel Elvin.<sup>328</sup> The disappearance of the programme on fundamental education in only

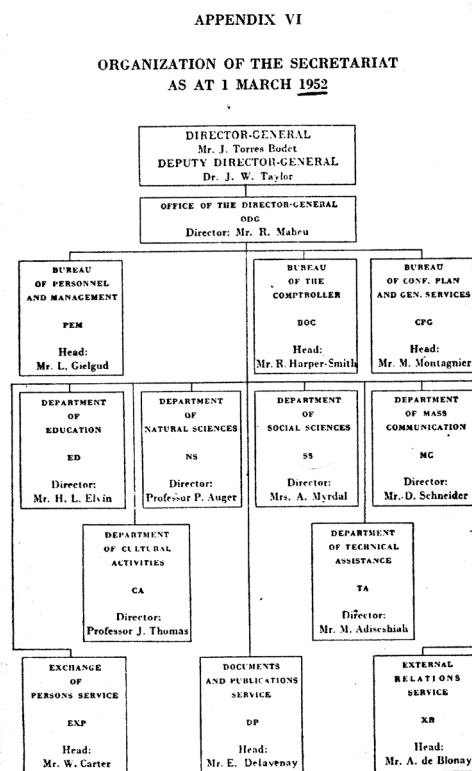


Figure 17: "Organization of the Secretariat as at 1 March 1952".  
Courtesy of UNESCO (UNESDOC).

<sup>327</sup> Statistics cited by Sluga in 1947 revealed that out of the 557 posts in the UNESCO Secretariat, 514 were occupied by French and English nationals. In contrast, she noted that the UN Secretariat in New York, with around three thousand staff members, comprised 50 percent North Americans, and six of its nine assistant secretary-general positions were held by Europeans. Approximately 7 percent of the UN's Secretariat's staff hailed from Asia and the Far East, including Australia and New Zealand, while 7 percent were from Eastern Europe, 4 percent from Latin America and less than 1 percent each from Africa and the Middle East. Achieving cultural diversity in UNESCO was challenging, as highlighted in Sluga's work, where Huxley expressed pressure to appoint "a coloured man on the staff" to emphasise the organisation's universal character. Emmanuel Gabriel, a Haitian Fundamental Education employee, was that appointee. See: Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 106; Bowers, 'Fundamental Education. Programme for 1948'.

<sup>328</sup> 'Organization of the Secretariat as at 1 March 1952' (UNESCO), accessed 4 April 2024, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/archives/organization-charts>.

five years can be seen as part of a visual proof of the decrease in the importance of the UNESCO flagship programme. Nonetheless, we must also keep in mind that UNESCO continued to develop itself organisationally. However, it is all the few steps that show how fundamental education programmes have become less important.

However, in 1948, Bowers announced the formation of a panel of experts on fundamental education, who would serve as consultants and advisers to UNESCO. The Secretariat would facilitate this process by acting as a clearing house, ensuring a two-way flow of all relevant information on fundamental education between experts and Member States.<sup>329</sup> Information and research on fundamental education would be disseminated through a bulletin published in one of UNESCO's working languages.<sup>330</sup> These measures were essential for the development of a 'World Fundamental Education Movement', comprising a network of diverse initiatives. These included projects such as the Chinese Mass Education Movement, the Mexican Cultural Mission, tribal development schemes, village improvement projects in India, literacy campaigns in Brazil and other South American countries, teachers' training schools, medical or agricultural extension schemes, and major economic development endeavours such as the British Overseas Food Corporation's Groundnuts Scheme in Tanganyika.<sup>331</sup> In this dissertation, Mexican Cultural Missions are of specific interest, as they were a national programme in Mexico. This programme will serve as an inspiration for the programme of fundamental education, as introduced through CREFAL in Pátzcuaro, Mexico.<sup>332</sup>

### *A. The Associated Projects and the International Fundamental Education Advisory Service*

Some of the above-mentioned projects could be categorised as 'Associated Projects'. These initiatives were established by various organisations but received support from UNESCO. A travelling consultant from UNESCO and a liaison officer from the associated project would maintain close communication. However, this service was not established immediately. It was not

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<sup>329</sup> Bowers, 'Fundamental Education. Programme for 1948'.

<sup>330</sup> The working languages of UNESCO were initially French and English. In 1948, a resolution at the UN General Assembly added Spanish as another working language for the UN and its Specialised Agencies. Russian was added in 1968, followed by Chinese and Arabic in 1973. See: 'What Are the Official Languages of the United Nations? - Ask DAG!', accessed 27 December 2023, [https://ask.un.org/faq/14463?\\_gl=1\\*4q2e47\\*\\_ga\\*MTg2NTE0MDM2NC4xNzAzNjc3MzA3\\*\\_ga\\_TK9BQL5X7Z\\*MTcwMzY3NzMwNi4xLjAuMTcwMzY3NzMwNi4wLjAuMA..](https://ask.un.org/faq/14463?_gl=1*4q2e47*_ga*MTg2NTE0MDM2NC4xNzAzNjc3MzA3*_ga_TK9BQL5X7Z*MTcwMzY3NzMwNi4xLjAuMTcwMzY3NzMwNi4wLjAuMA..)

<sup>331</sup> Bowers, 'Fundamental Education. Programme for 1948'.

<sup>332</sup> In Chapter 4, I will delve into the Mexican cultural missions and their relationship with CREFAL's fundamental education programme.

until 1951 that an International Advisory and (a Technical) Information Service was established. This service was tasked with recognising UNESCO's associated projects in countries that were undertaking campaigns against illiteracy and low living standards. In 1951, only South Africa, India, the Philippines, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic received support, yet the primary focus of each project varied significantly.<sup>333</sup>

For example, the project in South Africa was conducted by the Department of Agriculture in close collaboration with the Division of Soil Conservation and Extension. It was primarily an agricultural programme that conducted test demonstrations to increase food production and advise farmers. In Colombia, education was utilised to address farming challenges on mountainous lands prone to erosion, while in the Philippines, the National Federation of Parent Teachers Associations aimed to introduce better health, sanitation, and recreational services through education. In all other countries, combating illiteracy remains a central focus. Mobile missions, libraries, and schools were often established to provide education and educational facilities, even in remote villages.<sup>334</sup>

All associated projects received assistance from UNESCO. The organisation provided relevant documentation on the latest developments in the field of fundamental education to the project or liaison officers. Additionally, UNESCO supported them in finding solutions to the encountered problems. Furthermore, up to six UNESCO travel consultants (or fieldworkers) were available for up to six months to assist in project development. The central idea behind this service was the “two-way” flow of knowledge, as stated in the March 1951 UNESCO Courier. UNESCO anticipated that the data collected by educators in the field would be extremely valuable in addressing other fundamental education challenges, such as literacy teaching for individuals who speak languages other than the country's official language.<sup>335</sup>

### ***B. Pilot projects***

Besides these associated projects, UNESCO planned to establish its own pilot projects. Chantal Verna described them as endeavours focused on “the reduction of illiteracy and the promotion of basic knowledge in areas such as health and agriculture, to encourage civic

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<sup>333</sup> “‘Associated Projects’ - An International Fundamental Education Advisory Service’, *UNESCO Courier*, March 1951: 2.

<sup>334</sup> “‘Associated Projects’ - An International Fundamental Education Advisory Service’.

<sup>335</sup> “‘Associated Projects’ - An International Fundamental Education Advisory Service’.

engagement and the ability of citizens to sustain the well-being of their community's social and economic conditions, and relatedly, its political peace".<sup>336</sup>

These projects were envisioned as small-scale experiments, as in laboratories, aligned with Julian Huxley's vision of science.<sup>337</sup> In 1948, UNESCO developed four pilot projects. In 1947, three of those pilot projects were already established: one in the vicinity of Nanking (now Nanjing), China; one in Nyasaland, British East Africa (present-day Malawi); and one in the Marbial Valley, Haiti. A fourth was likely to have been established in Peru.<sup>338</sup> However, the Peruvian project never seemed to be materialised.

In John Bowers' words, the pilot projects were intended to be focused and controlled field experiments conducted at the invitation of national governments with guidance from UNESCO's resident expert consultants.<sup>339</sup> These experts provided advice to host governments and supplied educational materials, such as textbooks, films, and filmstrips. The results of these pilot projects were shared through UNESCO's Technical Information Service for consultation.

The projects in China and British East Africa could build on the groundwork laid by existing movements and initiatives. For example, the project in Nanking, China, benefited from the Chinese Mass Education Movement, while the Nyasaland pilot project in British East Africa was linked to the British Overseas Food Corporation's Groundnuts Scheme in Tanganyika. UNESCO sent consultants to both projects, including a Danish agricultural economist with experience in Folk High Schools to Nyasaland and an American with extensive Chinese experience in Nanking.<sup>340</sup>

The Haiti project faced initial delays owing to insufficient funding from the Haitian government. UNESCO collaborated with specialised UN agencies, such as the FAO and the WHO, as well as external organisations, such as the Rockefeller Centre, to secure funding. In the Marbial Valley, UNESCO aimed to establish a rural training centre for young Haitians, featuring facilities such as a small clinic, a demonstration farm, a community centre, a library, a museum and a teacher training school.

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<sup>336</sup> Chantalle F. Verna, 'Haiti, the Rockefeller Foundation, and UNESCO's Pilot Project in Fundamental Education, 1948-1953 \*', *Diplomatic History* 40, no. 2 (1 April 2016): 269–95, <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhu075>.

<sup>337</sup> Sluga, 'UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley'.

<sup>338</sup> At that moment, UNESCO and the government of Peru were also negotiating the establishment of a fourth pilot project in the Cuzco area. See: Bowers, 'Fundamental Education. Programme for 1948'; 'Records of the General Conference of UNESCO, Third Session, Beirut, 1948, v. 2: Resolutions'.

<sup>339</sup> Bowers, 'Fundamental Education. Programme for 1948'.

<sup>340</sup> Bowers.

Some pilot projects were seen as failures, largely dependent on the author's perspective, while others called them experiments.<sup>341</sup> However, as Chantalle Verna noted, "literacy and education were central to a community's social, economic, and political standing".<sup>342</sup> These projects were distinctive in their emphasis on local practices with the overarching goal of fostering an educationally self-sustaining society.<sup>343</sup>

In brief, each of UNESCO's pilot projects served as an experimental platform for developing new techniques and methods in fundamental education. Their purpose was not only to inspire other nations and organisations to emulate their approach but also to provide valuable lessons for UNESCO itself in establishing future projects. Furthermore, these initiatives stimulated ongoing brainstorming among UNESCO staff and experts involved in fundamental education.

### *C. A Global Network on Fundamental Education and its prototype*

As previously demonstrated, UNESCO's vision of establishing fundamental education projects evolved significantly during its formative years. In contrast to Huxley's laboratory perspective, Torres Bodet had grander ambitions, envisioning a global network of six fundamental education centres. This plan marked the first global attempt to combat the problems of ignorance, poverty, and disease through education. The six centres were to be established across five different regions: Latin America, the Middle East, the Far East, Equatorial Africa, and India, with two centres planned for the Far East. This ambitious plan was authorised by the Sixth General Conference.<sup>344</sup> The project was budgeted at a total cost of \$ 20 million and was estimated to have been implemented over a twelve-year period.<sup>345</sup>

UNESCO outlined four primary functions for these regional centres. First, they would serve as research hubs for localised fundamental education, focusing on identifying local needs and developing effective methodologies. Second, they would function as production centres,

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<sup>341</sup> Jens Boel refers in his essay to the Bernot report, which provides a sceptic impression of his field trip to Haiti, while Glenda Sluga, in her book, mentions the failure of the pilot project in British East Africa and its significant cost to the British taxpayer. See: Jens Boel, 'UNESCO's Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact'; Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, '1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.'

<sup>342</sup> Verna, 'Haiti, the Rockefeller Foundation, and UNESCO's Pilot Project in Fundamental Education, 1948-1953 \*'.

<sup>343</sup> 'Fundamental Education: Definition and Programme'.

<sup>344</sup> 'Records of the General Conference, Sixth Session, Paris, 1951: Resolutions', 1951, 6C/Resolutions, CPG.51.VI.5, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114588?posInSet=1&queryId=7ca32692-2d48-45d4-9922-925584281862>.

<sup>345</sup> Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.'; 'Special Project for the Establishment of a World Network of Regional Fundamental Education Centres', 30 March 1951, 6C/PRG/3, Box 375 A 031, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France.

creating educational materials tailored to the specific contexts of each other, including textbooks, films, wall charts, and other resources.<sup>346</sup> UNESCO illustrated in its June 1951 *UNESCO Courier*:

“If he [a man] learns to read, only to be fed a diet of childish tales, he cannot be blamed for assuming that education is a waste of time. If, however, learning to read will enable him to learn ways of producing more food, or of taking an active part in the affairs of his community, then he is more easily convinced of the value of literacy.”<sup>347</sup>

This production department would include writers, illustrators, and potentially, a visual production centre and radio production house for developing films and radio programmes.<sup>348</sup>

The third function involved training programmes for fundamental education experts. Each centre would accommodate two classes of 100 students annually, providing instruction in sanitation, agriculture, home economics, literacy training, and general fundamental education.<sup>349</sup> Graduates would become specialists in their respective fields, contributing to fieldwork teams upon completion of the programme.<sup>350</sup>

These three functions would facilitate the fourth function of the centres: serving as hubs for information exchange, documentation, and organisation of study seminars and conferences.<sup>351</sup>

UNESCO estimated that these regional centres would train several thousand fundamental educational specialists.<sup>352</sup> While estimates varied, with some sources suggesting 4000 teachers trained and others indicating 5000, the goal remained consistent: to create a ripple effect by having graduates train local staff in similar centres established by national governments.<sup>353</sup> These centres would also disseminate the latest educational methods, contributing to the broader advancement of fundamental educational initiatives at the national and local levels.<sup>354</sup> The ultimate goal is to

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<sup>346</sup> Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO’s Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.’; ‘1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.’; ‘Special Project for the Establishment of a World Network of Regional Fundamental Education Centres’.

<sup>347</sup> ‘1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.’

<sup>348</sup> ‘1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.’; ‘Special Project for the Establishment of a World Network of Regional Fundamental Education Centres’.

<sup>349</sup> Other Specialised UN-agencies, such as the food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the World Health Organization (WHO), would also send expert trainers to this programme to assist the centres in teaching and training their students in the related subjects. See: ‘1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.’; Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO’s Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.’; ‘Special Project for the Establishment of a World Network of Regional Fundamental Education Centres’.

<sup>350</sup> A team, sent out in the field, could consist of an adult educator, a sanitary engineer, a nurse, a rural schoolteacher and an agricultural expert. See: ‘1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.’.

<sup>351</sup> ‘1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.’; Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO’s Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.’; ‘Special Project for the Establishment of a World Network of Regional Fundamental Education Centres’.

<sup>352</sup> ‘Pátzcuaro - A School For Tacticians In The Fight Against Ignorance’, *UNESCO Courier*, February 1951.

<sup>353</sup> ‘Pátzcuaro - A School For Tacticians In The Fight Against Ignorance’; ‘1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.’

<sup>354</sup> ‘1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.’



address the two major deficiencies the specialised agency identified: the shortage of experts and specialists relative to the vast and varied needs and the lack of appropriate educational materials.<sup>355</sup>

Many of the member states were enthusiastic. Shortly, after the Sixth General Conference, Torres Bodet received “generous” offers from the governments of ten member states: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, France (for its African territories), Lebanon, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and Turkey. All these countries were interested in contributing to the establishment of an international fundamental education centre in their territories.<sup>356</sup> Unfortunately, only two regional centres were established in the end, where CREFAL, or the “Centro Regional de Educación Fundamental en América Latina” in Mexico, was the first one. As foreseen, in 1952, ASFEC, or the Arab States Fundamental Education Centre in Sirs-el-Layyan, opened its doors as a second regional centre on fundamental education.<sup>357</sup> The centre is located in the surroundings of Cairo, Egypt, and hosted future teachers from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Hashemite Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.<sup>358</sup> Both centres served as hubs for research, production of educational materials, training of experts, and dissemination of information.



*Figure 18: Statue of Jaime Torres Bodet, founder of CREFAL, located in the garden of CREFAL. The statue was installed in November 2002. © Stefanie Kesteloot, personal archive, 19 July 2022.*

<sup>355</sup> ‘Special Project for the Establishment of a World Network of Regional Fundamental Education Centres’.

<sup>356</sup> In her dissertation, Wodajo refers to only five member states - Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, and the Philippines – that offered to host UNESCO’s proposed regional centres. I rely on a circular letter CL/550 found in the UNESCO Archives, written by Director-General Jaime Torres Bodet. See: ‘Letter from Jaim Torres Bodet’, 20 September 1951, CL/550, Box 375 A 031, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France; Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO’s Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.’ 93.

<sup>357</sup> In an extract from the resolutions adopted by the Sixth Session of the General Conference of UNESCO, it was found that the resources of the 1952 budget should be applied towards the maintenance of the Latin American Centre and the establishment of a second centre, the establishment of a central coordinating organisation and surveys and negotiations leading to the development of other centres under the plan. See: ‘Extract from The Resolutions Adopted by the Sixth Session of the General Conference of UNESCO’, n.d., 6C/Resolutions, Box 375 A 031, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France.

<sup>358</sup> “From the four corners...,” UNESCO Courier, Vol. V, no. 1 (January 1952): 15.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have primarily focused on UNESCO's organisational structure and its emphasis on the right to education and fundamental education. I explored the key organs of UNESCO, including the General Conference, Executive Board, and Secretariat. Additionally, I examined UNESCO's early perspective on literacy, which initially focused on traditional skills, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. However, what stood out was UNESCO's holistic approach to fundamental education, wherein skills and subjects were taught within the socioeconomic context of learners.<sup>359</sup>

UNESCO's commitment to fundamental education was vast and driven by its mission to promote peace. As a specialised agency of the UN, UNESCO was tasked with upholding the principles of the UDHR, aiming to foster mutual respect and understanding among individuals. This commitment was referred to as the organisation's "combat of ignorance", which provided a legal basis for implementing comprehensive education programmes. UNESCO collaborated with other international organisations, such as the Organization of American States (OAS), and specialised UN agencies, such as the FAO, WHO, and ILO, to extend its reach and impact.

This chapter has clarified the specific goals and strategies of UNESCO's early educational programme, highlighting its efforts to promote democratic values and international peace. A notable challenge of the programme was the organisation's inability to define fundamental education as a comprehensive concept, which slowed down the development of the programme and hindered UN support.<sup>360</sup> Additionally, within a short period of five years, the fundamental education programme also lost much of its importance. Initially depicted as a separate division in UNESCO's 1947 organisational chart, it was quickly integrated into the education division by 1952, reflecting a shift in focus and priorities. Over the years, it seems that UNESCO adapted its understanding of the programme, moving from its flagship programme towards one that disappeared by 1958.<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> UNESCO, *Reading the Past, Writing the Future: Fifty Years of Promoting Literacy*.

<sup>360</sup> Boel mentions that the debate about the scope and definition of the programme led to some tensions with the UN. Similarly, Wodajo argues that the broad scope and content of fundamental education made it almost unmanageable, spurring a rivalry between the UN's concept of community development and UNESCO's programme of fundamental education. This will be more broadly discussed in the last chapter of this dissertation. See: Jens Boel, 'UNESCO's Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact,' 164; Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.'

<sup>361</sup> Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.'; Elfert, 'Humanism and Democracy in Comparative Education'; Jens Boel, 'UNESCO's Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact'.

In conclusion, while UNESCO's holistic and ambitious vision for fundamental education faced significant challenges, it laid the groundwork for future educational initiatives. Understanding the origins and development of this programme is essential to fully grasp its outcomes and legacy. Therefore, the upcoming chapter will focus specifically on the establishment of CREFAL, UNESCO's inaugural regional centre for fundamental education, developed in partnership with the OAS. This exploration will provide deeper insights into the practical implementation of UNESCO's educational strategies.

## Chapter 3 Who's involved? – An exploration of the UNESCO-CREFAL relation and its involved partners

“The emancipation of the Latin American countries, a little over a century ago, was one of the defining events of modern history. It marked a new and important phase shifting civilization from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, and helped ensure the preponderance of the two Americas. [...] And yet, today, the republican powers of Latin America are slowly acquiring the maturity that will allow them to play their role as Great Powers. Their population, which is growing rapidly, their resources and their industries are gradually raising them to the level of the United States (US), of which they may one day equal the power. Anyone who assures their help or wins their sympathies holds one of the levers of our era.”<sup>362</sup>

(Tibor Mende, 1952)

### Introduction

The success or failure of UNESCO's fundamental education projects must be assessed within a broader framework. It was crucial not only for the targeted audience, namely local communities, to be receptive to learning and collaborative efforts related to fundamental education but also for national and international governments to share this commitment. Various stakeholders were involved in the field, including specialised UN agencies, intergovernmental organisations, and national governments, all of which contributed to the implementation of the programme at the grassroots level. In this chapter, I examine the key collaborators in UNESCO's fundamental education programme, focusing particularly on their role in establishing CREFAL, with emphasis on the involvement of the OAS and the Mexican government.

First, I delve into the origins of the idea of a regional centre dedicated to fundamental education. Second, I discuss the deliberations and decisions related to the establishment of CREFAL among UNESCO's governing bodies and delegates of its Member States. Finally, I

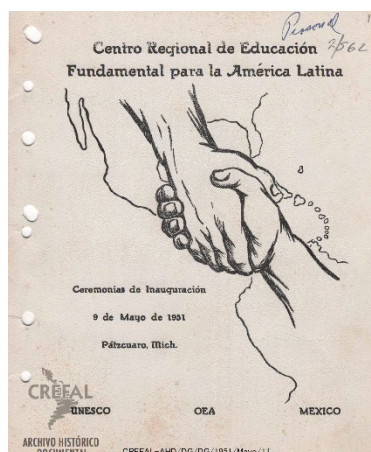
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<sup>362</sup> This paragraph is translated by the author. The original text reads: “L’émancipation des pays de l’Amérique latine, il y a un peu plus d’un siècle, fut l’un des événements essentiels de l’histoire moderne. Elle marquait une phase nouvelle et importante de ce glissement qui déplace la civilisation de la Méditerranée vers l’Atlantique, et devait contribuer à assurer la prépondérance des deux Amériques. [...] Et pourtant, aujourd’hui, les puissances Républiques de l’Amérique Latine acquièrent à grand pas la maturité qui leur permettra de jouer leur rôle de Grandes Puissances. Leur population, qui s’accroît rapidement, leurs ressources et leurs industries les haussent peu à peu au niveau des Etats-Unis dont elles pourraient bien un jour égaler la puissance. Quiconque s’assure de leur aide ou gagne leurs sympathies tient en main l’un des leviers de notre ère.” See : Mende, *L’Amérique Latine Entre en Scène*, 9.

analyse the arguments put forth by UNESCO and its partners, including the Mexican government and the OAS, during the foundation process.

### 3.1 The Genesis of CREFAL

#### 3.1.1 Focus on the agreement.



*Figure 19: Frontpage of the ceremonial booklet of the inauguration of CREFAL. Courtesy of CREFAL Archives. ('Ceremonias de Inauguración 9 de Mayo de 1951', n.d. AHD/DG/DG/1951/Mayo/11.)*

CREFAL, the Latin American fundamental education centre in Pátzcuaro, Mexico, started its activities on 15 April 1951 with an official inauguration led by Jaime Torres Bodet on 9 May 1951.<sup>363</sup> CREFAL was UNESCO's first training and production centre for fundamental education, established in close partnership with the OAS and the Mexican government. On 11 September 1950 an Agreement between UNESCO and the Mexican government on the Establishment of a Regional Centre for the Training of Teachers and the Development of Material for Fundamental Education in Latin America was signed, followed by a subsequent agreement between the OAS

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<sup>363</sup> CREFAL, 'Reseña Histórica de CREFAL', *Crefal* (blog), accessed 4 September 2020, [https://www.crefal.org/index.hp?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=27&Itemid=182;](https://www.crefal.org/index.hp?option=com_content&view=article&id=27&Itemid=182;) '1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.'

and UNESCO a few months later.<sup>364</sup> These agreements delineated the allocation of responsibilities among the participating entities.

The agreement between the Mexican government and UNESCO primarily addressed practical and logistical issues. It outlined the privileges of foreign staff and students at the centre of Mexican territory. Additionally, the government committed to providing support by furnishing buildings and furniture and granting access to various modes of transportation, including the national railway system and chauffeured cars.<sup>365</sup> Furthermore, Mexico ensured the proximity of a radio station and designated two rural schools as laboratories for UNESCO's fundamental education experiments conducted at the autonomous centre. The subsequent chapter will delve into the practical implications of this agreement.<sup>366</sup>

In this analysis, I focus primarily on the agreement between the OAS and UNESCO, which delineated tasks between the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre from UNESCO, CREFAL, and the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Materials under the OAS.<sup>367</sup> The centre in Mexico concentrated on training and leader training in fundamental education, material preparation, and sample material for publication, testing, and evaluation of educational materials developed by the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre and the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material.

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<sup>364</sup> The "Agreement between UNESCO and OAS Concerning the Training of Staff and the Preparation of Material for Fundamental Education for Latin America," as drafted and proposed to the twenty-first Executive Board, was only authorised for signing by the Director-General after approval from ECOSOC, the Member States and ultimately the Executive Board. This decision was made at the twenty-fourth Board meeting. Approval from the UN is necessary in accordance with Article XVIII of the Agreement between UNESCO and the United Nations. See: 'Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America' (Paris, France, 16 February 1950), 19 EX/41 + Add., UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000161809?posInSet=2&queryId=79b7d280-4818-4734-980b-1caecc0441d9>; 'Summary Records of the 20th Session of the Executive Board (5th Meeting)', 20 July 1950, 20EX/SR5, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000161843?posInSet=2&queryId=a24bf5c3-422b-40c6-8f5c-1cbf567c2e29>; 'Resolutions and Decisions Adopted by the Executive Board at Its Twentieth Session from 26 to 29 March 1950', 5 April 1950, 20EX/Decisions, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000113910?posInSet=1&queryId=bfe7de8e-0edf-4c36-9bd3-c7ecadcd7f1b>; 'Summary Records of the 21st Session of the Executive Board (2nd Meeting)' (UNESCO Digital Library, 4 June 1950), 21EX/SR2, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000162212?posInSet=2&queryId=318185d2-730e-4e92-bc80-345d7adc7839>; 'Resolutions and Decisions Adopted by the Executive Board at Its Twenty-First Session from 15 May to 16 June 1950', 11 July 1950, 21EX/Decisions, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000113908?posInSet=2&queryId=c53d447e-e2f9-41be-b641-8143023e1e3b>; 'Acuerdo Entre La UNESCO Y El Gobierno Mexicano Sobre El Establecimiento De Un Centro Regional Para La Formación Del Personal Y La Preparación Del Material De Educación De Base En América Latina', 11 September 1950, AHD/DG/DG/1950 - SEPTIEMBRE, CREFAL.

<sup>365</sup> In those years, the Mexican national railway system was still accessible for passengers. Nowadays, there is a resurgence of interest in reviving the railway system in certain parts of the country. See: Lydia Carey, 'Are Trains on Track for a Comeback in Mexico?', 18 March 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/are-trains-on-track-for-a-comeback-in-mexico>.

<sup>366</sup> I will discuss this in greater depth in Chapter 4.

<sup>367</sup> A copy of the agreement can be found in Annex 2.

Hence, the centre would also offer specialised courses for educators and provide technical support to field educators.<sup>368</sup> Despite being recognised as an autonomous entity by both organisations, the centre operated under the UNESCO Education Department, led by a director assisted by Directors of Training and Production.<sup>369</sup> As shown in the table below (Figure 20), I provide a visual representation of the agreement signed by UNESCO's Director-General, Jaime Torres Bodet on 7 July 1950 and by OAS's Secretary-General, Alberto Lleras, on 27 July 1950.<sup>370</sup>



Draft Agreement (19EX/41+ ADD.)	Latin American Fundamental Education Centre	Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material
Part of	UNESCO	OAS
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training courses for FE teachers and leaders</li> <li>- Preparation and publication of model FE material</li> <li>- Testing and evaluation of the educational material</li> <li>- A special course for training educators in the use and preparation of FE material</li> <li>- Provide technical information to field educators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collection, analysis and classification of all documentation on FE</li> <li>- Coordination of the work of national or international organisations</li> <li>- Service for production and distribution of FE material</li> <li>- Advanced training for selected students</li> </ul>

Figure 20: This table provides an overview of the agreement between the OAS and UNESCO signed in July 1950 and was presented at the ISCHE Annual Conference on 21 June 2021. (Stefanie Kesteloot, 'The Educational Economics of UNESCO's First Regional Centre on Fundamental Education in the Immediate Post-War Period: An Archival Exploration.')

Notably, the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material was not mentioned in any UNESCO Courier. However, the narratives of both the centre and the bureau are closely intertwined with the origin and subsequent operations of CREFAL. The UNESCO redaction never referenced the Latin American Bureau for the Production of

<sup>368</sup> UNESCO and OAS, 'Agreement Between The United Nations Educational, Scientific And Cultural Organization And The Organization Of American States Concerning The Training Of Staff And Preparation Of Fundamental Education Material For Latin America'; 'Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America'.

<sup>369</sup> UNESCO and OAS, 'Agreement Between The United Nations Educational, Scientific And Cultural Organization And The Organization Of American States Concerning The Training Of Staff And Preparation Of Fundamental Education Material For Latin America'; 'Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America'.

<sup>370</sup> This table is an adaption of the table presented at the ISCHE Annual Conference on 21 June 2021. See: Stefanie Kesteloot, 'The Educational Economics of UNESCO's First Regional Centre on Fundamental Education in the Immediate Post-War Period: An Archival Exploration' (ISCHE Annual Conference, Online, 21 June 2021), <https://hdl.handle.net/10993/49031>; UNESCO and OAS, 'Agreement Between The United Nations Educational, Scientific And Cultural Organization And The Organization Of American States Concerning The Training Of Staff And Preparation Of Fundamental Education Material For Latin America'.

Fundamental Educational Material. Did the specialised agency omit mentioning the Bureau because they were dissatisfied with it, because they did not endorse it, or was there another, unknown reason? However, these questions remain unanswered.

### **3.1.2 An idea is growing.**

As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, discussions regarding the practical implementation of UNESCO's fundamental education concept began immediately after the organisation's inception. Initially, the focus of fundamental education was to assist "Member States who desire such help to establish a minimum of Fundamental Education for all their citizens".<sup>371</sup> Owing to organisational and financial constraints, the institute's role was primarily limited to supporting Member States interested in establishing national fundamental education programmes with respect to each country's historical and political traditions. This support included facilitating the exchange of information and expertise through expert meetings on fundamental education.<sup>372</sup>

During an April 1947 meeting preceding the Second General Conference in Mexico City, a series of meetings and gatherings contributed to the development of UNESCO's educational strategies. Suggestions originating from UNESCO's second Executive Board and a February gathering of fundamental educational experts were compiled and further enriched by ideas shared during a London meeting held on 31 December 1946. This gathering included key figures such as Dr Kuo Yu-Shou, head of the UNESCO's Education Department, Dr Margaret Read from the Institute of Education, Dr Chu Shih-Ying, the Chinese delegate to the General Conference, and consultant Dr Joseph Albert Lauwerys. Similarly, a meeting held in Paris in February featured prominent attendees such as Dr Martínez Báez, Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board, and Professor P. Carneiro, Member of the Executive Board, M. Albert Charton, General Inspector in the Ministry of Overseas France, Mr. John Bowers (UK) and Dr Kuo Yu Shuo, Mr. E. Gabriel, Dr Lauwerys and Miss E. Torres of the UNESCO Secretariat. The subsequent April 1947 meeting continued the brainstorm activity with participants including M. Charton, Albert from France, Mr. Chetsingh Ranjit, Editor of the Indian Journal of Adult Education, M. Coulon Marion, Counsellor for Education at the Ministry of Public Instruction in Belgium, Dr Oliver R.A.C., Professor of Education in the UK, Mr. Post P., head of the Teacher's Training School of Indonesia (Netherlands) and the same Dr Read Margaret from the UK. Notable attendees from the

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<sup>371</sup> 'Fundamental Education: Definition and Programme', 23 & 51.

<sup>372</sup> 'Fundamental Education: Definition and Programme', 23 & 51.



Executive Board included Dr M. Martínez Báez from Mexico, Professor Paolo Carneiro from Brazil, Mr. R.M. Guntekin from Turkey and Dr A. Sommerfelt from Norway. Dr Kuo Yu-Shou chaired the meeting.<sup>373</sup> During these meetings, discussions ranged from the scope and definition of fundamental education over the concept of establishing demonstration centres to Julian Huxley's proposal for exchanging workers from different nationalities for fundamental education purposes.<sup>374</sup> In my opinion, the first indications of a fundamental education centre emerged during this period. It was in these documents that I could find the first traces of a centre on fundamental education, characterised as a demonstration centre aimed at addressing specific issues such as language, the development of reading materials, and engagement with rural communities, particularly peasant farmers.<sup>375</sup>

It fell upon the meeting of experts to further explore the myriad perspectives on fundamental education to translate this significant project for UNESCO concretely, as proposed by Kuo Yu-Shuo.<sup>376</sup> To tackle this monumental task, the gathering of experts meticulously formulated sixty-one questions spanning nine different topics: scope and methods, international dimensions, organisational and administrative structures, socioeconomic considerations, linguistic challenges, availability of reading materials and library resources, emerging media, and the role of teaching personnel.<sup>377</sup>

Significantly, this marked the inaugural occasion when fundamental education experts broached the subject of “training courses for fundamental education staff and native workers”, an idea prepared by Bowers.<sup>378</sup> UNESCO's ideas on training courses are two-fold. First, they

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<sup>373</sup> 'Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947' (UNESCO Digital Library, 1947), EDUC/17-24, EDUC/27-28, ED/SR. 1-6, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000125845?posInSet=9&queryId=d747f1b3-a728-4fe4-b532-29c6a4bc981a>.

<sup>374</sup> 'Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - Report on Progress since the General Conference' (UNESCO Digital Library, 1947), Educ./18, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000125845?posInSet=9&queryId=d747f1b3-a728-4fe4-b532-29c6a4bc981a>.

<sup>375</sup> 'Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - Report on Progress since the General Conference'.

<sup>376</sup> 'Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - Report on Progress since the General Conference'.

<sup>377</sup> 'Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - General Problems' (UNESCO Digital Library, 1947), UNESCO/Educ./19/1947, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000125845?posInSet=9&queryId=d747f1b3-a728-4fe4-b532-29c6a4bc981a>.

<sup>378</sup> 'Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - Training Courses for Fundamental Education Staff and Native Workers' (UNESCO Digital Library, 1947), UNESCO/Educ./21/1947, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000125845?posInSet=9&queryId=d747f1b3-a728-4fe4-b532-29c6a4bc981a>; 'Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - Summary Report of the Third Meeting, Held on Friday, 18th April 1947, at 10 a.m., at UNESCO House, 19 Avenue Kleber, Paris (16e)' (UNESCO Digital Library, 1947), UNESCO/Educ./S.R.3/1947, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000125845?posInSet=9&queryId=d747f1b3-a728-4fe4-b532-29c6a4bc981a>.

envisaged establishing a platform for discussions, lectures, and exchange of ideas among fundamental education experts. Second, the organisation could institute training programmes tailored to native workers and leaders in fundamental education pilot projects and other initiatives.<sup>379</sup> Furthermore, it was proposed that these courses could be conducted at Primrose Hill, located near Birmingham, at the “Fircroft Trust’ establishment – a charitable institution principally endowed by the Cadbury-family”.<sup>380</sup> The “Fircroft Trust” had already gained recognition as a prominent training centre for community leaders and would be free from April 1948 onwards.<sup>381</sup>

UNESCO’s panel of experts identified an opportunity to repurpose the facility as a Fundamental Education Training Centre. This proposal involved a two-month training programme that aimed to educate 30 students in various agricultural techniques at the “Avoncraft” residential college for rural workers. Situated on a sprawling 900-acre model farm, college-boasted facilities such as dairy, artificial insemination depots, and experimental poultry breeding farms.<sup>382</sup>

However, experts were aware of the challenges associated with this approach. First, UNESCO needed to define its vision regarding the scope and purpose of fundamental education, a question that had already been raised in numerous meetings and persisted, as Boel and Wodajo outlined.<sup>383</sup> Second, the suggestion seemed to advocate an approach wherein personnel would be

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<sup>379</sup> ‘Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - Training Courses for Fundamental Education Staff and Native Workers’.

<sup>380</sup> During the Second World War, George Cadbury, one of the founders of the “Fircroft College Trust”, had continued to pursue his interest in adult education and made plans for the postwar period. The initial vision for Fircroft was twofold: firstly “providing an institution where young men of the working class may reside for a longer or shorter period to get help in their studies, and the enthusiasm which comes of comradeship with those engaged in similar pursuits”; and secondly “from such an institution, as a centre, to promote this object by correspondence and by personal visits to different parts of the country as opportunity offers.” See: John Bartlett, *The Croft Trust : Its History and Relationships with Fircroft and Avoncroft Colleges* (Worcestershire: Halfshire Books., 1993), [http://archive.org/details/crofttrustitshis0000bart., 3](http://archive.org/details/crofttrustitshis0000bart./3); ‘Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - Training Courses for Fundamental Education Staff and Native Workers’.

<sup>381</sup> A Leslie N Stephens was appointed warden of Fircroft and Primrose Hill and temporary director of studies at Avoncraft. He had described the aim of Fircroft in a couple of recommendations as follows: “The aim of Fircroft can be described as the training and development of ‘whole men’ with a special emphasis on training for citizenship, which should include industrial as well as civic responsibility” and “the training should encourage co-operation in living, clarity of thought and expression, both in the spoken and written word, a developing appreciation of history, literature and the arts, the opportunity of obtaining a working knowledge of natural science, together with physical training and craft work, including gardening”. Moreover, he wanted students to leave Fircroft not only better equipped in mind and spirit but also with a wider and deeper sense of the community, local, national and international. See: Bartlett, *The Croft Trust*, 35.

<sup>382</sup> ‘Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - Training Courses for Fundamental Education Staff and Native Workers’.

<sup>383</sup> In Chapter 2, I have discussed the definition of fundamental education. See: ‘Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - General Problems’; Boel, ‘Fundamental Education : A Pioneer Concept - Jens Boel Explains Why’; Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO’s Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.’; ‘Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - Summary Report of the First Meeting, Held on Friday, 17th April 1947, at 10 a.m., at UNESCO House, 19 Avenue Kleber, Paris (16e)’ (UNESCO Digital Library, 1947),

trained in a 'developed' nation with the intention of implementing the learned Western techniques in their home country. Additionally, Bowers described that the trained fundamental education workers should possess "a knowledge of conditions in backward areas and the ability to devise and inspire a course of study which would enable the students to apply the lessons of western civilisation, education, industry, agriculture, community life, town planning, local government to the setting of their own less developed area".<sup>384</sup>

However, Bowers's proposal failed to garner unanimous support from experts in 1947. Dr Read and M. Charton advocated for localised training initiatives, although they acknowledged the potential benefits of an initial international training programme. The Belgian delegate and educationalist Dr Lauwerys, working at the UNESCO Secretariat, suggested a preliminary assessment of existing training programmes worldwide, a proposal endorsed by other Secretariat members, including the Portuguese agricultural engineer Dr Cortesão and the Norwegian linguist Alf Sommerfelt, who also served on the Executive Board. Additionally, two other participants, British Dr Oliver and Dutch representative Dr Post, expressed support for a comprehensive review of the available training opportunities in the field. It was deemed crucial to avoid duplication of efforts with existing organisations and universities offering courses on fundamental education. Dr Kuo Yu-Shuo concluded the discussion by acknowledging the potential for a fundamental education training centre on the agenda for 1948, although he highlighted the financial constraints that posed a significant obstacle to its realisation. This financial limitation would persist as a recurring challenge.<sup>385</sup> Ultimately, the demonstration centre did not make it onto the agenda of 1948 and was converted into a study centre upon Dr Read's request.<sup>386</sup>

However, the concept of establishing a training centre remained. A few months later, at the Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education in Nanking in September 1947, a

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UNESCO/Educ./S.R.1/1947, UNESDOC,  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000125845?posInSet=9&queryId=d747f1b3-a728-4fe4-b532-29c6a4bc981a>; 'Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - Scope and Definition' (UNESCO Digital Library, 1947), UNESCO/Educ./20/1947, UNESDOC,  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000125845?posInSet=9&queryId=d747f1b3-a728-4fe4-b532-29c6a4bc981a>.

<sup>384</sup> 'Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - Training Courses for Fundamental Education Staff and Native Workers'.

<sup>385</sup> 'Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - Summary Report of the Third Meeting, Held on Friday, 18th April 1947, at 10 a.m., at UNESCO House, 19 Avenue Kleber, Paris (16e)'.

<sup>386</sup> 'Meeting of Experts on Fundamental Education, Paris, 1947 - Summary Report of the Sixth Meeting, Held on Saturday, 19th April 1947, at 2 p.m., at UNESCO House, 19 Avenue Kleber, Paris (16e)' (UNESCO Digital Library, 1947), UNESCO/Educ./S.R.6/1947, UNESDOC,  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000125845?posInSet=9&queryId=d747f1b3-a728-4fe4-b532-29c6a4bc981a>.

similar recommendation emerged during the concluding session.<sup>387</sup> Delegates from participating countries deemed it advantageous to establish experimental training schools or offer supplementary courses in fundamental education to train experts in the field of fundamental education.<sup>388</sup> According to representatives of “committee A” on the organisation of fundamental education, such education should encompass

“physical and health training; character training; cultivation of national culture; training in dissemination of scientific knowledge suitable for everyday life; cultivation of habits of manual work; cultivation of interest in child study; promotion of spirit of lifelong service in education; promotion of the ideal of international understanding and world peace”.<sup>389</sup>

Additionally, delegates from “committee D” on the pilot project in China recommended conducting comparative experiments on adult education methods, providing training for teachers and workers in fundamental education, and exploring ways in which fundamental education could foster a greater respect for all individuals.<sup>390</sup> Furthermore, the committee advocated for an experimental programme and the establishment of a training centre for fundamental education teachers within the pilot project in China.<sup>391</sup> Chen’s paper highlights that the Nanking Conference concluded without any definite plans for implementing a pilot project or establishing a training centre for fundamental education.<sup>392</sup> However, these deliberations underscored the growing consensus on the need for a training centre dedicated to fundamental education.

Discussions and recommendations made at the Nanking Conference were further explored at a Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education attended by delegates from around

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<sup>387</sup> The Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education took place in Nanjing, China from the third to the twelfth of September 1947. Delegates from Australia, Burma, China, Hong Kong, India, the Malayan Union, Nepal, New Zealand, Sarawak, Siam and Singapore attended the conference. A UNESCO mission comprised four individuals: Dr Y.S. Kuo (Head of Education Section), Dr J.A. Lauwerys (Consultant, Education Section), Prof. Enrique Aguilar (representative of the Mexican Ministry of Education) and Dr Hugh Hubard (Expert). See: ‘Report - Report on Nanking Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education’ (Paris: UNESCO Digital Library, 14 November 1947), Educ./58, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000125817?posInSet=2&queryId=d62273a9-3842-40e7-80ec-175671afd3b1>.

<sup>388</sup> ‘Report - Report on Nanking Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education’; ‘Report on (the) Nanking Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education’ (Mexico City: UNESCO Digital Library, 30 October 1947), FE, Conf./8, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000145059?posInSet=1&queryId=a33dd9a2-3072-4447-987e-5f5351235bdd>.

<sup>389</sup> ‘Report - Report on Nanking Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education’, 4.

<sup>390</sup> ‘Report on (the) Nanking Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education’; ‘Report - Report on Nanking Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education’.

<sup>391</sup> ‘Report on (the) Nanking Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education’; ‘Report - Report on Nanking Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education’.

<sup>392</sup> Chen also points out that the Nanjing (or Nanking) conference was overshadowed by conflicts between nationalists and communists, entangled with the broader confrontation between the US and the USSR. See: Chen, ‘Experimenting with a Global Panacea’.

the world.<sup>393</sup> This conference aimed to address, for the first time, the problem of fundamental education from an international perspective. This approach implied that fundamental education should be oriented along international lines, and that valuable information should be shared among all member states.<sup>394</sup> Through an exploration of UNESCO's pilot projects and its associated projects, along with input from delegates working in the field from all over the world and experts in fundamental education, the organisation sought to arrive at general conclusions and recommendations on fundamental education.

It became evident that the establishment of training centres for teachers in fundamental education was a recurring proposal. H. Van Boheemer, a Dutch inspector of Education in Surinam, echoed Mr. W.'s sentiments. H. M. d'Haens, a former chief inspector of western elementary instruction in the Netherlands East Indies, who advocated for the establishment of a 'kweekschool', a training college for teachers in Surinam.<sup>395</sup> Boheemer concluded that many elementary school teachers were either insufficiently trained or not at all trained.<sup>396</sup> Bernard Mishkin, who discussed the problems of fundamental education in the Amazon area, had similar thoughts on the issue of untrained teachers. He wrote:

"It would seem obvious that a programme which is based on teachers who are untrained to fulfil their special task, or who are over-worked already in the execution of their normal duties and are offered no incentive to give their best, must necessarily be doomed."<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> The Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education took place from third to the eight of November 1947 in Mexico City. The Study Conference was attended by delegates coming from Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Haiti, Honduras, India, Mexico, Netherlands (Curaçao and Surinam), New Zealand, Panama, Philippines, UK (British West Indies), United States and Uruguay. Also delegates from the Pan-American Union and the UN Secretariat participated in this conference. This Study Conference preceded UNESCO's Second General Conference which took place from 6 November until 3 December 1947 in Mexico City in the same location, being the Escuela Normal. See: 'Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education - Problems of Fundamental Education in the Amazon Area' (Paris: UNESCO Digital Library, 25 October 1947), FE. Conf./4, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000145170?posInSet=3&queryId=e3ae54b4-cdb4-4649-9277-90f97625b3b7>; 'Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education - Summary Report of the First Meeting, Held on Monday, 3 November 1947 at 10 a.m. at Escuela Nacional de Maestros, Mexico City' (Mexico City: UNESCO Digital Library, 3 November 1947), FE/Conf./SR 1, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000145165?posInSet=8&queryId=N-EXPLORE-121e2dae-6751-4320-8921-d1bb6c4fad46>; Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*, 39.

<sup>394</sup> 'Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education - Summary Report of the First Meeting, Held on Monday, 3 November 1947 at 10 a.m. at Escuela Nacional de Maestros, Mexico City'.

<sup>395</sup> 'Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education - Report on the Fundamental Educational Problems in Surinam (Dutch Guyana)' (Paris: UNESCO Digital Library, 23 October 1947), FE. Conf./7, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000145170?posInSet=3&queryId=e3ae54b4-cdb4-4649-9277-90f97625b3b7>, 5.

<sup>396</sup> 'Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education - Report on the Fundamental Educational Problems in Surinam (Dutch Guyana)'.

<sup>397</sup> 'Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education - Problems of Fundamental Education in the Amazon Area', 12.

At that time, UNESCO also received a formal invitation from the British government for UNESCO's participation in a pilot project in Nyasaland, British East Africa. This document, which focused on the selection of the area, purpose, and organisation of the project, revealed prerequisites like those required for establishing a regional centre for fundamental education.<sup>398</sup>

Additionally, the Anglo Latin sub-committee on fundamental education techniques discussed some sections of Bowers' work on fundamental education.<sup>399</sup> The chairman, Mexican Professor Roberto Moreno y Garcia, proposed the establishment of an International Teacher's College where audio-visual techniques on fundamental education would be taught. This idea was strongly supported by Sr. Piñeros Corpas from Colombia. However, they recognised that this idea would need to be discussed further at the General Conference.<sup>400</sup>

During this period, several delegates had the opportunity to visit Fundamental Education Projects arranged by the Mexican Government. The excursions were instructed by Sr. Lucas Ortiz, Director-General of National Education in Mexico, and took place between the seventh and ninth of November. Delegates could choose between two excursions. The first, planned for Friday 7 November 1947 was a one-day visit to the Cultural Mission at Amanalco de Becerra. The second excursion, departing on the same day, went to Morelia, Michoacán, where the University, museums, and churches were visited. The night was spent at Pátzcuaro, Tarasco's capital. On Sunday, delegates visited a rural school to observe various aspects of regional education.<sup>401</sup>

The delegates witnessed how peasants were taught to manage their water supply, combat disease, grow better fruits and crops, build weather-proof houses, make decent furniture, bake

<sup>398</sup> In the previous chapter, I discussed shortly the different pilot projects UNESCO established. In the next chapter, I will focus on the prerequisites for the establishment of a regional fundamental education centre, as stipulated by UNESCO. See: 'Fundamental Education - Pilot Project in British Africa Suggested Outline Plan' (Paris: UNESCO Digital Library, 8 September 1947), FE. Conf./3, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000145170?posInSet=3&queryId=e3ae54b4-cdb4-4649-9277-90f97625b3b7>; 'Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education - Summary Report of the Second Meeting, Held on Monday, 3 November 1947 at 3.30 p.m. at Escuela Nacional de Maestros, Mexico City' (Mexico City: UNESCO Digital Library, 3 November 1947), FE/Conf./SR 2, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000145165?posInSet=8&queryId=N-EXPLORE-121e2dae-6751-4320-8921-d1bb6c4fad46>.

<sup>399</sup> The Anglo Latin sub-committee was composed of Professor Roberto Moreno y Garcia (Mexico, Chairman), Mr. L.D. Edwards (Australia), Dr Jorge Caveller (Colombia), Dr Joaquin Pineros Corpas (Colombia), Prof. Lucas Ortiz (Mexico), Dr Roberto Salis Quiroga (Mexico), M.P. Koeze (Netherlands), H.E. Sr. José Daniel Crespo (Panama), Señora Elida de Crespo (Panama), Dr Luis E. Valcarcel (Peru), M. Alfonso Tealdo (Peru), Mr. P. M. Sherlock (United Kingdom), Dr R. Mellada (United States), Srita. Elisa Elviera Zulonga (Venezuela) and M.E. Gabriel (Secretary UNESCO). See: 'Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education - Sub-Committee I Techniques of Fundamental Education' (Mexico City: UNESCO Digital Library, 12 November 1947), FE/Conf./SR/6, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000145165?posInSet=8&queryId=N-EXPLORE-121e2dae-6751-4320-8921-d1bb6c4fad46>.

<sup>400</sup> 'Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education - Sub-Committee I Techniques of Fundamental Education'.

<sup>401</sup> 'Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education - Summary Report of the First Meeting, Held on Monday, 3 November 1947 at 10 a.m. at Escuela Nacional de Maestros, Mexico City'.

better bread, and weave and sew. Although these activities were emphasised, the local people were not taught to read and write. Nonetheless, the delegates noted that a village school had to be established.<sup>402</sup> These observations have contributed to a growing enthusiasm for fundamental education projects.

In a first attempt to set up a programme on fundamental education, delegates gathered in 1948 in Caracas, Venezuela.<sup>403</sup> UNESCO and OAS delegates combined their efforts in Caracas, and again in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1949 to discuss collaboration on a programme for fundamental education and education for international understanding.<sup>404</sup> The OAS, then undergoing a transformative process, did not want to miss the opportunity to collaborate on UNESCO's ambitious project on fundamental education.<sup>405</sup>

The UNESCO seminar on education in Caracas opened on 5 August and continued until 8 September 1948.<sup>406</sup> In Venezuela, educators from 17 Latin American countries and Puerto Rico joined representatives of OAS and UNESCO to discuss several topics of education and where ideas floated.<sup>407</sup> Under the direction of Dr Nannetti, the former Minister of Education of Colombia and Director of the “*Escuela Normal Superior*” of Bogota, they examined various approaches to education such as literacy and adult education, rural and vocational education, agricultural and industrial education, teacher training, and education for peace.<sup>408</sup> Additionally, the principles of fundamental education were accepted for the first time as one of the recommendations of the seminar.<sup>409</sup> But even more, as Dr Nannetti described: “the seminar opened the way to new forms of American cultural cooperation, especially by showing the existing possibilities for fruitful

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<sup>402</sup> Bowers, ‘Fundamental Education. Programme for 1948’, 4.

<sup>403</sup> Guillermo Nannetti, ‘UNESCO And the OAS In Latin America’ (Pan American Union, Washington D.C., n.a.), JX 1980.55.N15, OAS.

<sup>404</sup> Guillermo Nannetti, ‘UNESCO And the OAS In Latin America’ (Pan American Union, Washington D.C., n.a.), JX 1980.55.N15, OAS.; Unión Panamericana, ‘Informe Anual del Secretario General de la Organización de los Estados Americanos. Correspondiente al Año Económico. 1 de julio de 1949 - 30 de junio de 1950’ (OAS, Washington D.C., 1950), OEA/Ser.D/III 1945-1946 1949-1950, OAS.

<sup>405</sup> The OAS Charter was adopted on the Ninth International Conference of American States in Bogotá, Colombia on 30 April 1948. See: U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States, ‘History’, U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States, accessed 1 June 2024, <https://usoas.usmission.gov/our-relationship/about-oas/history/>; Unión Panamericana, ‘Informe Anual del Secretario General de la Organización de los Estados Americanos. Correspondiente al Año Económico. 1 de julio de 1948 - 30 de junio de 1949’ (OAS, Washington D.C., 1949), OEA/Ser.D/III 1945-1946 1949-1950, OAS.

<sup>406</sup> ‘Key Educators At Four Seminars - Study Teaching For a World Society’, *UNESCO Courier*, August 1948.

<sup>407</sup> Unión Panamericana, ‘Informe Anual del Secretario General de la Organización de los Estados Americanos. Correspondiente al Año Económico. 1 de julio de 1949 - 30 de junio de 1950’, 65.

<sup>408</sup> Guillermo Nannetti, ‘UNESCO And the OAS In Latin America’; ‘Key Educators At Four Seminars - Study Teaching For a World Society’.

<sup>409</sup> Unión Panamericana, ‘Informe Anual del Secretario General de la Organización de los Estados Americanos. Correspondiente al Año Económico. 1 de julio de 1948 - 30 de junio de 1949’; “‘Alphabet of the Soil’... for Antonio”, *UNESCO Courier*, July 1949; ‘Group Leaders Selected For Rio Seminar’, *UNESCO Courier*, July 1949; Guillermo Nannetti, ‘UNESCO And the OAS In Latin America’.

cooperation between the OAS and UNESCO. [...]. It was the first step in the direction of systematic cultural cooperation in the Americas.”<sup>410</sup>

Only a year and a half later did another meeting of experts on education take place. At the sixth Inter-American Seminar on Adult Literacy and Education, which took place from 27 July to 3 September 1949 at the Hotel Termas Quitandinha, in the picturesque mountain town of Niteroi above Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, several experts on education gathered together to discuss their ideas on education and topics such as the facts and figures of illiteracy, teaching methods and materials, and literacy campaigns.<sup>411</sup> This symposium was organised jointly by UNESCO, the Secretariat of the OAS, and the Brazilian Institute of Education, Science, and Culture (“*Instituto Brasileiro de Educação Ciência e Cultura*”) and chaired by the Brazilian B. Lourenço Filho, the director of one of Brazil’s highly successful campaigns against illiteracy. Colombian Dr Guillermo Nannetti, former

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<sup>410</sup> Guillermo Nannetti, ‘UNESCO And the OAS In Latin America’, 5.

<sup>411</sup> The seminar was attended by delegates from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, the USA, Uruguay and Venezuela. Other countries, including France, India, the Netherlands, Egypt and the United Kingdom, sent observers. Additional organisations represented were other Specialised Agencies of the United Nations (UN), namely the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and Geneva’s IBE. Furthermore, the ‘Informe Anual del Secretario General de la Organización de los Estados Americanos’ mentioned that the seminar was organised into five different groups: ‘Documentation and statistics,’ ‘Primary school and illiteracy,’ ‘Organization of Campaigns against Illiteracy,’ ‘Objectives and Techniques’ and ‘Literacy and Adult Education.’ See: Unión Panamericana, ‘Informe Anual del Secretario General de la Organización de los Estados Americanos. Correspondiente al Año Económico. 1 de julio de 1948 - 30 de junio de 1949,’ 67; Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, Rio de Janeiro, ‘The Primary School and Illiteracy; Analysis and Conclusion (of Working Group IV)’ (UNESCO Digital Library, 1949), UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000155801?posInSet=5&queryId=N-EXPLORE-31bc5752-0ccf-4db4-8ccc-5744093656f2>; Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, Rio de Janeiro, ‘Organization of Campaigns Against Illiteracy (Working Group II)’ (UNESCO Digital Library, 1949), SEM/RIO/9, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000155802?posInSet=4&queryId=N-EXPLORE-31bc5752-0ccf-4db4-8ccc-5744093656f2>; Fernando Romero, ‘Literacy and Adult Education (Working Group V)’ (UNESCO Digital Library, 1949), SEM/RIO/12/A.7/E, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000155805?posInSet=1&queryId=32990dcd-a24f-4571-a8a5-4dbacba65f44>; Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, Rio de Janeiro, ‘Documentation and Statistics’ (UNESCO Digital Library, 1949), SEM/RIO/8/REV., UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000155803?posInSet=3&queryId=N-EXPLORE-31bc5752-0ccf-4db4-8ccc-5744093656f2>; Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, Rio de Janeiro and OAS, ‘General Information’ (UNESCO Digital Library, 1949), UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000155719?posInSet=8&queryId=N-EXPLORE-31bc5752-0ccf-4db4-8ccc-5744093656f2>; Rony Rei do Nascimento Silva, Ilka Miglio de Mesquita, and Ana Clara Bortoleto Nery, “‘Homens que ensinaram a América ler’”, *Revista Brasileira de História da Educação* 21, no. 1 (2021): e155–e155, <https://doi.org/10.4025/rbhe.v21.2021.e155>; ‘Group Leaders Selected For Rio Seminar’, ‘The Latin American Struggle Against Illiteracy’, *UNESCO Courier*, July 1949. and “A Letter from Quitandinha”, *UNESCO Courier*, Vol. II, no. 8 (Paris: September 1949): 5; “Educator Stirred by New Approach to Continental Campaign Against Illiteracy”, *UNESCO Courier*, Vol. II, no. 9 (Paris: October 1949): 2.



Minister of National Education of Colombia and the director of the Caracas seminar on fundamental education, was appointed chair of the organising committee.<sup>412</sup>

As a member of the fifth working group, “Literacy and Adult Education”, the Peruvian Fernando Romero wrote a working paper entitled “Procedures for adult education campaign”, in which he summarised two approaches to literacy campaigns. First, he discussed the methods of the Chinese Provincial Education College of Kiangsu (Wusih). This institute trained specialists in fundamental education through the exchange of knowledge with students on several topics such as pedagogy, health, social studies, economics, administration, sociology, law, philosophy, and agriculture.<sup>413</sup>

A second method was presented by another member, the Mexican Dr Guillermo Bonilla y Segura, one of the founding fathers of Mexican Cultural Missions. These missions were first introduced during the presidency of Alvaro Obregón in the autumn of 1923. “*Maestros*” (teachers) were formed into mobile teams to be sent to geographically and culturally remote areas. Initially, those teachers focused on improving the living conditions of the local population; subsequently, they tried to implement a rural schooling system.<sup>414</sup>

As the experts believed that neither approach was universally applicable, Romero described a compromise solution that incorporated the advantages of both methods. He also described an InterAmerican Institute of Fundamental Education. At the Institute, instructors would receive specialised training in their areas of expertise. Moreover, experiments, as introduced in pilot projects, could continue to be conducted. The Institute would serve as a platform for exchanging knowledge and evaluating experiments conducted by the fundamental education units and teams and the unit working in the immediate target area – a “backward area development unit”, as Romero describes.<sup>415</sup>

The conclusions drawn by the members of the fifth working group at the Inter-American Seminar were compiled in “Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education”, introduced by Dr

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<sup>412</sup> At that time, Dr Nannetti was also a member of UNESCO’s Executive Board and the Director of the Education Division of the OAS. See: Unión Panamericana, ‘Informe Anual del Secretario General de la Organización de los Estados Americanos. Correspondiente al Año Económico. 1 de julio de 1949 - 30 de junio de 1950,’ 153; Unión Panamericana, ‘Informe Anual del Secretario General de la Organización de los Estados Americanos. Correspondiente al Año Económico. 1 de julio de 1948 - 30 de junio de 1949,’ 66; ‘A Letter from Quitandinha’, *UNESCO Courier*, September 1949.

<sup>413</sup> Romero, ‘Literacy and Adult Education (Working Group V)’.

<sup>414</sup> In the following chapter, I will explore the cultural missions in greater detail. For now, it is important to remember that these missions were not simply replicated by UNESCO in a local context. See: Eddy Stols, *Mexico in historical perspective* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Acco, 1993); Guillermo Bonilla y Segura, ‘Report on the Cultural Missions of Mexico. Bulletin, 1945, No. 11’, *US Office of Education, Federal Security Agency* (US Office of Education, Federal Security Agency., 1945), <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED542852>.

<sup>415</sup> Romero, ‘Literacy and Adult Education (Working Group V)’, 8.

Nannetti's preface, who headed the group (Figure 21). The recommendations suggest that UNESCO and the OAS take joint action for the successful development of adult education in less economically developed regions in the wake of President Truman's Point IV Program.<sup>416</sup> Moreover, both organisations "should study the possibility of organizing an Inter-American Institute of Basic Education, destined to prepare teachers of teachers and to have concentrated therein all the investigations, experiments, and systems of education that are already in use or are being developed".<sup>417</sup> Twenty-three recommendations were formulated and addressed specifically to UNESCO and the OAS as future collaborators in a joint adult education programme.<sup>418</sup>

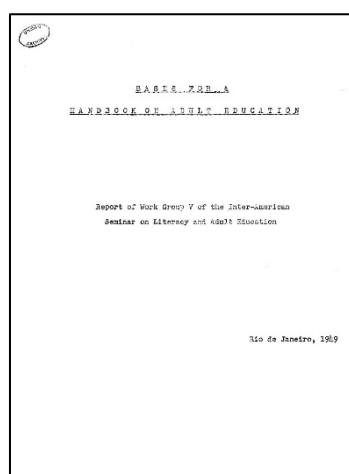


Figure 21: *Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, Rio de Janeiro. "Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education. Report of Work Group V of the Inter-American Seminar on Literacy and Adult Education", UNESDOC.*

Just a few weeks later, UNESCO's Programme and Budget Commission picked up the idea of an Inter-American Institute in their working paper on fundamental education, which was presented at UNESCO's Fourth General Conference. The commission noted a strong need for adequately trained staff and advanced specialised training, as well as a serious lack of adequate materials.<sup>419</sup>

Ultimately, the delegates of the 1949 General Conference approved resolution 2.415, allowing UNESCO to seek for cooperation among the Member States for "the establishment of

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<sup>416</sup> President Truman extended the US foreign aid programmes with a "fourth point," namely technical assistance to "underdeveloped areas." The US aimed to engage in activities that could "strengthen and generalize peace throughout the world by counteracting the economic conditions that predispose to social and political instability and to war". See: Thomas G. Paterson, 'Foreign Aid under Wraps: The Point Four Program', *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 56, no. 2 (1972): 119–26.

<sup>417</sup> Rio de Janeiro Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, 'Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education; Report of Work Group V of the Inter-American Seminar on Literacy and Adult Education', 1949, SEM/RIO/12, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000155800?posInSet=6&queryId=N-EXPLORE-31bc5752-0ccf-4db4-8ccc-5744093656f2>.

<sup>418</sup> Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, 48 - 51.

<sup>419</sup> 'Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre', 19 September 1949, 4C/PRG/11, Box 375 A 031, UNESCO Archives.

regional centres for the training of teachers and workers and the production of materials for fundamental education”.<sup>420</sup>

In my opinion, the “Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education” contains the foundations of a first pragmatic translation of what CREFAL ultimately became. The idea of a training centre on fundamental education has been regularly discussed since 1946 by UNESCO’s Committee of Experts on Fundamental Education.<sup>421</sup> However, it was only at the Caracas and Rio de Janeiro Seminars that both UNESCO and the OAS were present. One would think that both organisations would have a similar approach to the development of an international network of fundamental education institutions, especially because the recommendations were written for both organisations by Nannetti, a representative of the OAS and members of UNESCO’s Executive Board. Nevertheless, the discussions took a sudden twist when the OAS proposed the establishment of a production bureau for fundamental educational materials in Washington, D.C., jeopardising the financial resources promised to UNESCO.

## **3.2 Where should the centre be established? The choice of Mexico**

### **3.2.1 The General Conference’s interested parties**

UNESCO’s quest for host countries began. In the paper distributed to Member States, the Programme and Budget Commission specified the contextual requirements for the establishment of a regional training and production centre. First, the chosen region should have known recurring problems. If possible, only one language was spoken. Second, the area should be familiar with concept-related projects in fundamental education. Third, the centre’s surroundings should serve as an experimental ground for field research. Fourth, the candidate Member State should be willing to provide a building, furniture, and domestic staff. Finally, the government or another

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<sup>420</sup> ‘Records of the General Conference of UNESCO, Fourth Session, Paris, 1949: Resolutions’ (Paris: UNESCO Digital Library, 1949), 4C/Resolutions, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114590?posInSet=3&queryId=f1a7500f-a6ad-46ec-b078-a20aaf97fc90>.

<sup>421</sup> Dr Nannetti, as a member of UNESCO’s Executive Board, also referred to both seminars as the cornerstones of a first regional centre on fundamental education. See: Guillermo Nannetti, ‘UNESCO And the OAS In Latin America’.

organisation in the country should be prepared to take over the full responsibility of the centre within an unspecified period.<sup>422</sup>

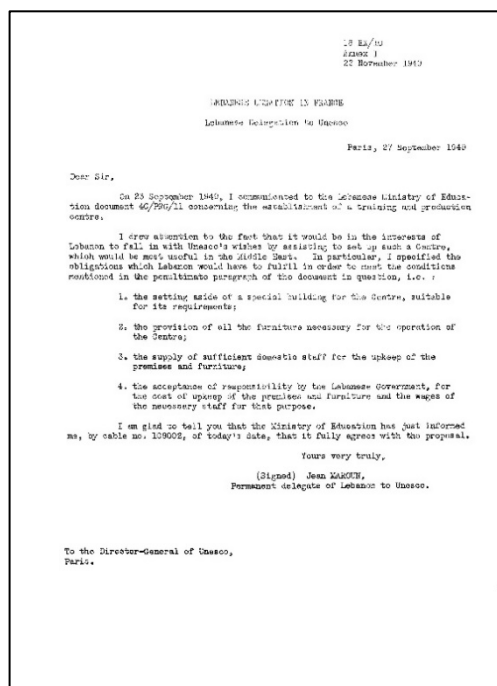


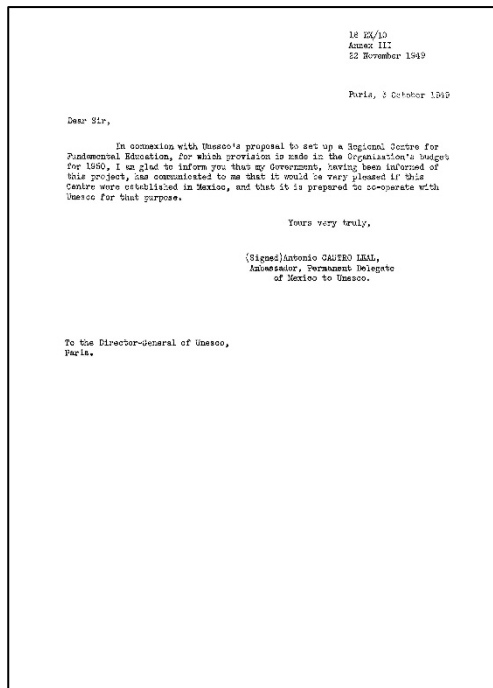
Figure 22: Letter from Jean Maroun, permanent delegate of Lebanon to UNESCO, to the Director-General of UNESCO ('Proposed Training and Production Centre – Fundamental Education', UNESDOC, Annex I - 18EX/10)

Three interested Member States contacted UNESCO very quickly after the conference was approved. Lebanon was the first. On 27 September 1949 while the conference was still ongoing, Torres Bodet received a letter from the permanent delegate of the Lebanese government, Jean Maroun (Figure 22). In his letter, Maroun expressed the interest of the Lebanese Ministry of Education in the establishment of a regional centre on fundamental education for the Middle East.<sup>423</sup> On 3 October 1949 Mexico submitted its candidacy through a permanent Mexican delegate to UNESCO, Antonio Castro Leal (Figure 23).<sup>424</sup>

<sup>422</sup> In Wodajo's dissertation, she mentions that UNESCO's responsibility for each of the centres would last at least for six years. See: 'Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre'; Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education,' 95.

<sup>423</sup> 'Proposed Training and Production Centre - Fundamental Education' (UNESCO Digital Library, 1949), 18EX/10, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000161741?posInSet=2&queryId=5e6fc0ba-e428-499b-b597-32a1b19161d2>.

<sup>424</sup> 'Proposed Training and Production Centre - Fundamental Education'; 'El CREFAL: Organización, programa, actividades y resultados alcanzados', 15 November 1961, UNESCO/SCC/3, OAS.



*Figure 23: Letter from Antonio Castro Leal, permanent delegate of Mexico to UNESCO, to the Director-General of UNESCO ("Proposed Training and Production Centre – Fundamental Education", UNESDOC, Annex I - 18EX/10)*

Less than a month later, on 21 October 1949 Alberto Lleras, the Secretary General of the OAS, confirmed “the decision of the General Secretariat to cooperate in the establishment and work of the Training and Production Centre for Fundamental Education in Latin America” (Figure 24).<sup>425</sup> Moreover, the OAS offered both technical and financial assistance to UNESCO by means of its specialised institutes and services. This proposal was in accordance with concluding recommendations VI and VII reached at the Rio de Janeiro Seminar by experts in fundamental education.<sup>426</sup> In his letter, Lleras also emphasised a strong preference for Mexico, a country whose experience could be considered useful.<sup>427</sup>

Lleras’ tendency toward Mexico, as elucidated in his Annual Report, stems from the wish not only to maintain the proposed regional centre for fundamental education within the American

<sup>425</sup> Alberto Lleras’ full name is Alberto Lleras Camargo. However, his letters were always signed as Alberto Lleras. For consistency reasons I will adopt the name used as his signature. See: ‘Letter from Alberto Lleras to the Director-General of UNESCO’, 22 November 1949, Annex II - 18EX/10, Box 375 A 031, UNESCO Archives; ‘Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre for Latin America: Explanatory Note Based on the Agreement between UNESCO and the Organization of American States’ (UNESCO Digital Library, 1950), ED/75, ED/80 + CORR. + ADD., UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000125995?posInSet=2&queryId=9c41e0ae-8485-409e-9310-653421d8948d>.

At the General Conference, resolution 32.3 was adopted, authorising the Director-General to take steps for future cooperation between UNESCO and the OAS. See: ‘Records of the General Conference of UNESCO, Fourth Session, Paris, 1949: Resolutions’.

<sup>426</sup> Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, ‘Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education; Report of Work Group V of the Inter-American Seminar on Literacy and Adult Education’.

<sup>427</sup> ‘Letter from Alberto Lleras to the Director-General of UNESCO’.

sphere, but also to ensure the continued involvement of the OAS in the advancement of this significant initiative. So, he stated:

"If we do not offer this cooperation, as requested by the Rio de Janeiro Seminar, the Center could eventually be relocated from the regional American zone to any other part of the world, to the serious detriment of our countries' interests. Even if it were established in the Americas, if we did not openly participate in it, in accordance with the wishes of American educators, we would have voluntarily withdrawn from one of the most brilliant and effective initiatives promoted by our experts in Rio de Janeiro, and we would not have any subsequent opportunity to develop it as extensively as desired with our direct action. Considering the serious responsibility this would entail, I dared to announce to UNESCO that I would propose an allocation of one hundred thousand dollars in the budget of the Pan American Union for 1950-51 to collaborate in the creation and maintenance of the centre, and I have done so."<sup>428</sup>

As mentioned, Lleras proposed allocating \$ 100,000 to the establishment of the centre in the upcoming budget. However, in his annual budget, as in his letter, he emphasised that it was up to the members of the council of the OAS to finally approve his proposal.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> This translation is the authors' own. The original text reads: "Si nosotros no ofrecemos esa cooperación, como lo pidió el Seminario de Río de Janeiro, el Centro eventualmente podría ser desplazado de la zona regional americana hacia cualquiera otra del mundo, con grave perjuicio para los intereses de nuestros países. Y aún realizado en América, si no participáramos abiertamente en él, atendiendo a los deseos de los educadores americanos, nos habríamos apartado voluntariamente de una de las iniciativas más brillantes y eficaces, promovida por nuestros expertos en Río de Janeiro, y no tendríamos posteriormente ninguna intervención para desarrollarla con la amplitud que es de desear y con nuestra acción directiva. Pensando en la grave responsabilidad que ello implicaría, me atreví a anunciar a UNESCO que presentaría en el presupuesto de la Unión Panamericana, para 1950-51, una partida de cien mil dólares para colaborar a la creación y sostenimiento del Centro, y así lo he hecho." See: Unión Panamericana, 'Informe Anual del Secretario General de la Organización de los Estados Americanos. Correspondiente al Año Económico. 1 de julio de 1948 - 30 de junio de 1949' (OAS, Washington D.C., 1948 1949), OEA/Ser.D/III 1945-1946 1949-1950, OAS, 41.

<sup>429</sup> Unión Panamericana, 41; 'Proposed Training and Production Centre - Fundamental Education'.

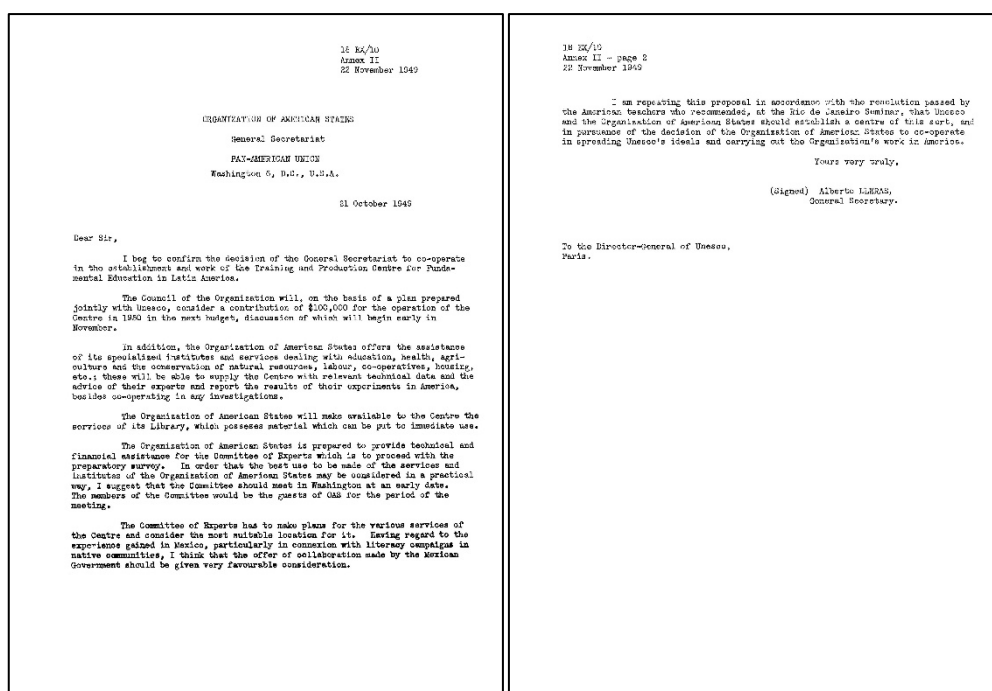


Figure 24: Letter from Alberto Lleras, General Secretary of OAS to the Director-General of UNESCO ("Proposed Training and Production Centre – Fundamental Education", UNESDOC, Annex I - 18EX/10)

### 3.2.2 The view of the UNESCO Secretariat

The UNESCO Secretariat had already started some preparatory work in the search for the location of the first UNESCO regional centre on fundamental education. Confidential notes shared between John Bowers, Head of UNESCO's Fundamental Education Division, and Jean Guiton, acting as Deputy Head of UNESCO's Education Department, reflect ongoing discussions (Figure 25). The letters received from the candidate Member States, Lebanon and Mexico, were forwarded to Bowers by Clarence Beeby, Assistant Director-General. Beeby instructed Bowers to find a solution for the "Middle East versus Latin America" situation by the next Executive Board session in November 1949.<sup>430</sup>

<sup>430</sup> 'Confidential - Fundamental Education Training and Production Centre, 1950', 20 October 1949, Memorandum JBB, Box 375 A 031, UNESCO Archives.

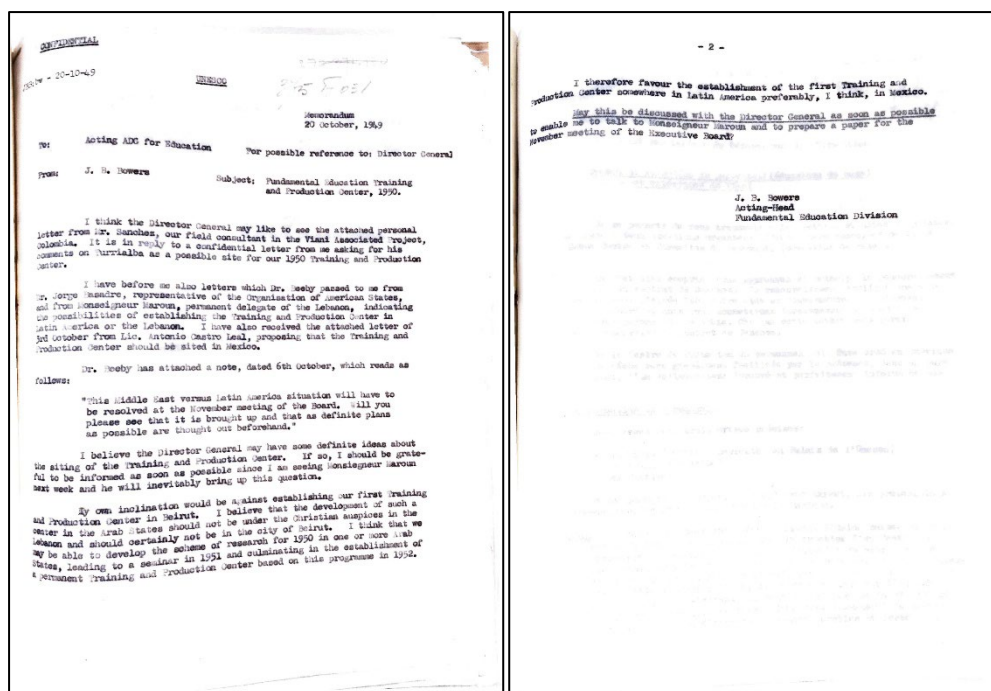


Figure 25: Confidential Memorandum from Bowers to the Acting Adjunct Director-General for Education. Courtesy of UNESCO Archives. ('Confidential – Fundamental Education Training and Production Centre, 1950,' 20 October 1949, Memorandum JBB, Box 375A031).

On 20 October 1949 Bowers wrote a confidential note to Guiton, in which he expressed reservations about a first centre in Beirut. He wrote:

“I believe that the development of such a centre in the Arab States should not be under the Christian auspices in the Lebanon and should certainly not be in the city of Beirut. I think that we may be able to develop the scheme of research for 1950 in one or more Arab States, leading to a seminar in 1951 and culminating in the establishment of a permanent Training and Production Centre based on this programme in 1952. I therefore favour the establishment of the first Training and Production Centre somewhere in Latin America preferably, I think, in Mexico.”<sup>431</sup>

Guiton agreed with Bowers' perspective in his confidential note of 24 October 1949 (Figure 26). He wrote to the Director-General that he was worried that UNESCO would end up in 'an ivory tower':

“It seems unlikely that, even in Lebanon, Christians and Muslims will be able to unite for the creation of a Staff Training Centre for fundamental education, which is precisely one of the sources of conflict between them (the language and content of that education, religious impact);

<sup>431</sup> 'Confidential - Fundamental Education Training and Production Centre, 1950'.



and we run the risk of being accused of 'Christian imperialism' by all the countries in the Middle East."<sup>432</sup>

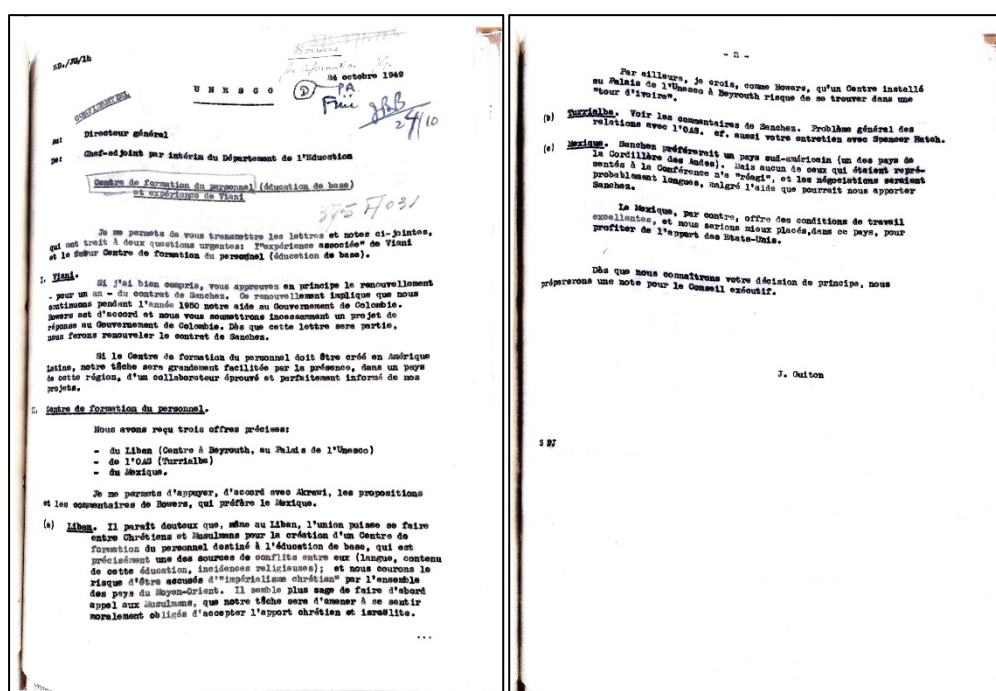


Figure 26: Confidential Memorandum from Guiton. Courtesy of UNESCO Archives. ('Confidentiel – Centre de formation de personnel (éducation de base) et expérience de Viani', 24 October 1949, ED./JG/1h, Box 375 A031).

Only a year earlier, UNESCO's General Conference was held in Beirut, Lebanon. The ongoing Israeli–Palestinian tensions had an immediate impact on UNESCO's activities and led to considerable controversy both within the institution and with Member States.<sup>433</sup> The tensions originating from the conference, coupled with the comments made by Bowers and Guiton, indicate that UNESCO's inclination towards a Latin American country also seemed to have been influenced by the Middle Eastern conflict.

Bowers explained in his memo to Guiton that he had asked Mr. Patricio S. Sanchez, UNESCO's field consultant in the Viani Associated Project in Colombia, if Turrialba (Costa Rica) could be considered as a location for the establishment of their 1950 training and production

<sup>432</sup> This translation is the authors' own. See : 'Confidentiel - Centre de formation du personnel (éducation de base) et expérience de Viani', 24 October 1949, ED./JG/1h, Box 375 A 031, UNESCO Archives.

<sup>433</sup> Maurel described in her work how the 'Anglo-Saxon' group in Beirut felt threatened by the support for Torres Bodet by the Latin American and Arab countries, which favoured French culture. Additionally, according to information from the US State Department, Jean Maroun was considered "anti-American" and "completely pro-French in orientation." See: Maurel, 'L'UNESCO de 1945 à 1974,' 186-188 & 226-227.

centre.<sup>434</sup> It seems likely that earlier informal talks between members of UNESCO's secretariat and members of the OAS led to this idea. The Agricultural College of Turrialba, Costa Rica, directed by the Duane Spencer Hatch and part of the Pan-American Union, the forerunner of the OAS, was located in the town.<sup>435</sup> Guiton was not in favour of Turrialba. Unfortunately, he does not explain his reasons at length, only referring briefly to the Viani experts' comments and pointing towards a general problem regarding UNESCO's links with the OAS and the Director-General's meeting with Spencer Hatch.<sup>436</sup>

Sanchez expressed a preference for a South American country from the Andes Region. Unfortunately, none of the Andes's countries reacted after the Fourth General Conference event. Therefore, the Deputy Head agreed with Bowers's suggestion that the Mexican option was chosen. According to Guiton, working conditions in Mexico were excellent. Moreover, the proximity and support of the United States could be advantageous to UNESCO.<sup>437</sup>

Wodajo also argued that one of the weaknesses of UNESCO's fundamental education programme was the discrepancy between the national efforts of the member states and the international efforts coordinated by UNESCO, which ultimately led to the programme's failure.<sup>438</sup> Although the programme was received with great enthusiasm at the Fourth General Conference, the response from national governments seemed somewhat muted. Could this have been an early sign that the programme was doomed to failure?

### **3.2.3 The Executive Board's Decision**

The three letters received were submitted to the 18th session of UNESCO's Executive Board.<sup>439</sup> On 2 December 1949 Roger Seydoux, the chairman of the Board's Programme

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<sup>434</sup> The Viani project was an associated project established in 1948 between the Colombian government and UNESCO. Its objective was to help rural inhabitants appreciate the qualities of their soil, understand the dangers threatening it, and secure their cooperation in soil protection. See: 'The Viani Associated Project', *UNESCO Courier*, September 1949; 'Item 8.7.1.1. of the Revised Agenda: Rural Education in Colombia. Report to the Sixth Session of the General Conference of UNESCO' (UNESCO, 3 July 1951), 6C/PRG/30, FEColombia\_375(86), UNESCO Archives.

<sup>435</sup> Later, Spencer Hatch would direct the centre for fundamental education, established by Ceylon and UNESCO, in the village of Minneriya. See: Maurel, 'L'UNESCO de 1945 à 1974,' 1024; Daniel Behrman, 'Ceylon's "Dry Zone" Pioneers Restore Prosperity to Ancient Kingdom', *UNESCO Courier*, January 1953; UNESCO, 'Progress Report for the Period September-November 1949 Submitted by the Director-General, M. Torres Bodet, to the Executive Board of UNESCO, 24 November 1949' (UNESCO Digital Library, 1949), 18EX/2 + Corr., UNESDOC; 'Confidentiel - Centre de formation du personnel (éducation de base) et expérience de Viani'.

<sup>436</sup> 'Confidentiel - Centre de formation du personnel (éducation de base) et expérience de Viani'.

<sup>437</sup> 'Confidentiel - Centre de formation du personnel (éducation de base) et expérience de Viani'.

<sup>438</sup> Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.'

<sup>439</sup> 'Proposed Training and Production Centre - Fundamental Education'.

Committee, informed other Executive Board members of the committee's decision through a verbal statement.<sup>440</sup> After a lengthy discussion and an additional consultation of the Mexican government by Bowers towards the end of 1949 regarding premises and other logistical questions, the Programme Committee decided to establish a training and production centre in Mexico in line with the Secretariat's suggestion.<sup>441</sup>

It must be noted that Bowers' visits to Mexico towards the end of 1949 was solely on the premises of UNESCO. The OAS had not been invited to participate in the first meeting of experts held in Paris or in a trip to Mexico. This was possibly because, as the organisation explained themselves, the OAS council had not yet decided on the 1950-51 budget.<sup>442</sup>

### 3.3 Drafting an agreement

The Executive Board hoped for quick movement.<sup>443</sup> It decided to send a member of the Secretariat to Mexico to organise the establishment of the centre and prepare a draft agreement with the OAS, also known as the Pan-American Union.<sup>444</sup> The committee was also keen to maintain close collaboration with the Executive Board and appointed a board member to accompany the Secretariat member, a task which Dr Luther Evans accepted.<sup>445</sup>

John Bowers and Manuel Jimenez (a member of UNESCO's Bureau of Conference Planning) visited Mexico and Washington, D.C. from 13 to 28 January 1950. During their trip, they aimed to negotiate a draft agreement on the terms and conditions for the training and

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<sup>440</sup> Roger Seydoux admitted to the members that he had not had time to write a report, so he informed the Board verbally. See: 'Summary Records of the 18th Session of the Executive Board (13th Meeting)' (UNESCO Digital Library, 1949), 18EX/SR13, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000161757?posInSet=2&queryId=e77ee262-a6a6-458a-8dec-f679cfccee30>.

<sup>441</sup> 'Summary Records of the 18th Session of the Executive Board (13th Meeting)'. The members of the Programme Committee for the 18th session of the Executive Board were Mr Roger Seydoux, Professor Stanislaw Arnold, Professor Paulo Carneiro, Professor Chen Yuan, Dr Luther Evans, H.E. Count Stefano Jacini, Dr Manuel Martínez Báez, Dr Guillermo Nannetti, H.E. Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Professor Alf Sommerfelt, Mr Kudsi Teçer, Mr. Louis Verniers, Dr E. Ronald Walker, and Sir John Maud (ex officio). See: 'Resolutions and Decisions Adopted by the Executive Board at Its Eighteenth Session from 24 November to 2 December 1949' (UNESCO Digital Library, 8 December 1949), 18EX/Decisions + Corr., UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000113913?posInSet=2&queryId=8d8c3fc2-3309-4c71-9676-af007798586e>.

<sup>442</sup> OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, 'Annual Report 1951' (OAS, Washington D.C., 1951), JX 1980.45 .A21 1951 .A24, OAS, 143.

<sup>443</sup> "Resolution and Decision adopted by the Executive Board at its Eighteenth session from 24 November to 2 December 1949," 18EX/Decisions, UNESCO Archives.

<sup>444</sup> As mentioned earlier, the OAS was still in a transition period as its Charter was only adopted on 30 April 1948. In correspondence files, it was regularly noted that it was still referred to by its former name, the Pan-American Union. See: U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States, 'History'.

<sup>445</sup> 'Summary Records of the 18th Session of the Executive Board (13th Meeting)'.

production centre in Mexico with the Mexican Ministry of Education and with OAS officials in Washington, D.C..<sup>446</sup> Evans joined Bowers and Jimenez in the United States.

The Director-General's report submitted to the 19th Executive Board session summarised the discussions at both meetings. It was reported that the Mexican government had cooperated most cordially and guided Bowers and Jimenez to several sites suitable for the Latin American production centre. Moreover, UNESCO was offered a site, building, and various privileges for staff and students.

However, negotiations with the OAS did not proceed according to this plan. Just before Bowers and Jimenez set off on their trip, Lleras again confirmed the organisation's interest in the establishment of a regional training and production centre for fundamental education in Latin America and the OAS's willingness to contribute (Figure 27). On 6 January 1950 he wrote:

“For my part, I have pleasure to inform you that today the Council of the Organization approved the proposals for the financial year beginning on 1 June 1950 and in which a sum of \$ 100,000 is included, as the contribution of the OAS for the realisation of the Centre. This sum is offered under the condition that, according to our previous understanding, it would be possible to reach an agreement on the direction and administration of the Centre between the OAS and UNESCO.”<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> ‘Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America’; ‘Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre for Latin America: Explanatory Note Based on the Agreement between UNESCO and the Organization of American States’.

<sup>447</sup> ‘Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre for Latin America: Explanatory Note Based on the Agreement between UNESCO and the Organization of American States’; ‘Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America’.

EX/41  
Annex 1  
16 February 1950

"REPORT FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF  
THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
TO THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL"

(COMMUNICATION)  
8 January 1950

Dear Sir,

I refer to your letter of 25 December, in which you inform me of the decision adopted by the Executive Board of OAS last session, regarding the establishment of a Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America. I have taken note that the Executive Board has resolved and accepted the offer of co-operation made by the Mexican Government and that it has instructed the Director-General to study, in collaboration with the Organization of American States and the Mexican Government, a definite plan for the Centre and the conditions of co-operation between the participating Agencies.

I have been with great pleasure that the Executive Board has commissioned Dr. Luther Brown to take part in the negotiations on the working agreement which the two Organizations must conclude for the establishment of the Centre.

For my part, I have pleasure to inform you that today the Council of the Organization approved the proposal for the financial year beginning on 1 June 1950, and in which a sum of \$100,000 is included, as the contribution of the Organization of American States for the realization of the Centre. This sum is offered under the condition that, according to our previous understanding, it would be possible to reach an agreement on the direction and administration of the Centre between the OAS and UNESCO.

Our Education Service, under Dr. Guillermo Nannetti, will take all necessary measures to facilitate the work of the Committee of Experts, as requested by you, which is to meet between 20 and 30 January. Again, in accordance with your wishes, we have called upon Dr. Anne Rouss Clark to collaborate with us in the work of the Committee, and at an appropriate time will send you the names of the experts whom we wish to invite especially in the fields of school administration and adult education, so that the Committee will be able to cover all aspects of the problem.

Please excuse my not replying sooner; I was awaiting the definite approval of the Council.

Yours sincerely,

Albino Torres Bodet  
Secretary General

Dr. Albino Torres Bodet,  
Director-General,  
Mexico.

*Figure 27: Letter from the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States to the Director-General ("Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America," 19 EX/41 + Add., UNESDOC (Paris, 1950))*

In Washington, D.C., Bowers, Jimenez, and Evans discovered that the two organisations had different views on the future regional training and production centre. According to the Director-General's report, Bowers presented UNESCO's plan for two centres as previously presented at the General Conference: a Latin American centre employing 24 people and a second small clearing house and research bureau in Washington, D.C., with one liaison officer. This officer would conduct research and maintain the relationship between the Mexican centre, the OAS office, and other agencies in North America.<sup>448</sup>

Dr Nannetti, former head of the fifth working group at the Inter-American Seminar on Illiteracy in the Americas, and a member of UNESCO's Executive Board and Director of the OAS Education Division, saw things differently. At the January meeting, he proposed the establishment of a production bureau in Washington, D.C., staffed by ten people. This bureau would collaborate with the "Institute of Fundamental Education" in Mexico which would employ only 12 people and collaborate with pilot and associated projects and other agencies active in fundamental

<sup>448</sup> 'Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America'.

education in Latin America.<sup>449</sup> This plan would remove the production wing of the future UNESCO centre from Latin America and move it to Washington, D.C., where educational materials for fundamental education in Latin America would be designed, written, edited, and printed drawing on resources from regional or international agencies. It was assumed that materials produced in Mexico would be adopted and printed for general use by the Mexican government.<sup>450</sup> According to UNESCO's interpretation, the Washington Bureau would serve the launch of "a large-scale Pan-American production programme", drawing on source materials and technical advice from Pan-American and International Agencies in Washington and elsewhere.<sup>451</sup>

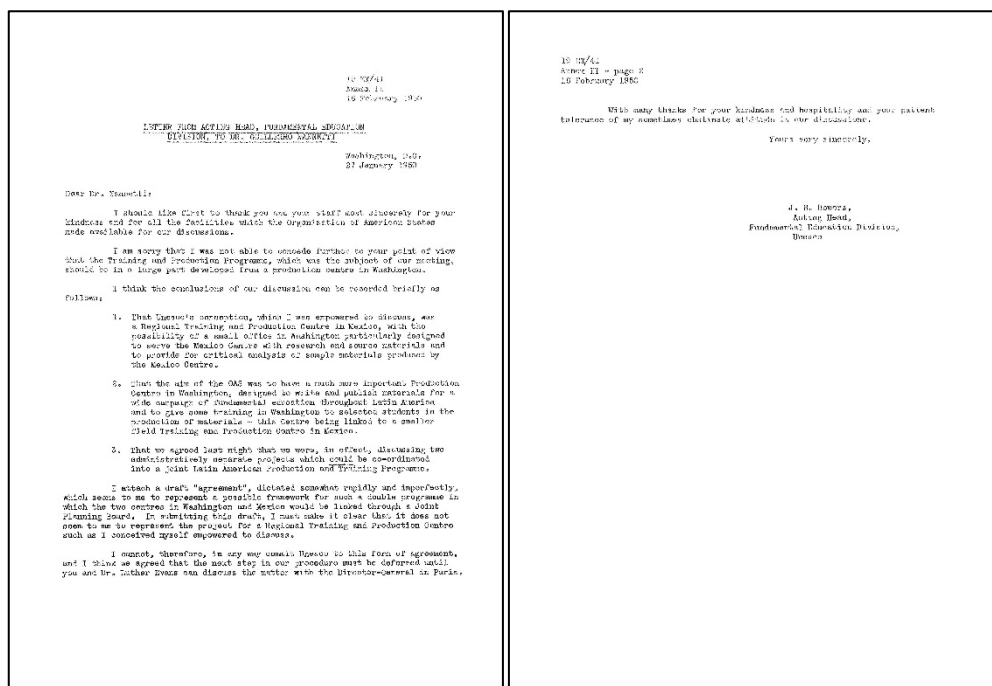


Figure 28: Letter from Bowers to Dr Nannetti ("Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America," 19 EX/41 + Add., UNESDOC (Paris, 1950))

Despite the surprise of the UNESCO representatives and the about-turn, negotiations continued.<sup>452</sup> On 27 January 1950, Bowers wrote a letter to Dr Nannetti summarising his observations in Washington, D.C (Figure 28). He again stressed UNESCO's perspective on the Latin American training and production centre, explaining that the organisation aspired to produce

<sup>449</sup> 'Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre for Latin America: Explanatory Note Based on the Agreement between UNESCO and the Organization of American States'.

<sup>450</sup> 'Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America'; 'Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre for Latin America: Explanatory Note Based on the Agreement between UNESCO and the Organization of American States'.

<sup>451</sup> 'Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America'.

<sup>452</sup> In Chapter 5 of this dissertation, I will focus on and discuss this turn of events.

everything as locally as possible, in this case in Mexico. He did not appear to believe that a small office in Washington, D.C., designed to serve the Mexican centre, would be the best option. Moreover, he understood that the OAS was planning to open a main centre to produce fundamental educational materials in Washington, D.C., linked to a smaller field training and production unit in Mexico. Hence, as a compromise, Bowers proposed a “Washington solution” involving two separate administrative projects coordinated by a joint Latin American Production and Training Programme.<sup>453</sup> Attached to his letter, he submitted a draft agreement in which the Washington Bureau, as suggested by the OAS, and the Mexican Centre, as presented by UNESCO, were recognised as two administratively separate units, with separate funding but cooperating through a Joint Planning Board.<sup>454</sup>

This agreement would have immediate financial implications for UNESCO’s project. The costs, as set out earlier at the Fourth General Conference, would increase. Member States based their decisions on calculations that included a \$ 100,000 contribution from the OAS in 1951. Unfortunately, as Lleras mentioned in his letter on 6 January 1950 this budget would only be available if the two organisations reached agreement. While Bowers’ draft agreement might be a step towards successful collaboration, in this case, the OAS contribution would be limited to \$ 20,000.<sup>455</sup> Moreover, the OAS would not fund the project if no concessions were made.

The initial ideas and layout of UNESCO’s programme on fundamental education as presented to the Fourth General Conference by the Programme and Budget Commission differed considerably from Bowers’ “Washington solution”.<sup>456</sup> Nonetheless, at the 19th session of the Board, the Director-General again emphasised UNESCO’s belief in the local production and development of fundamental educational materials through direct interaction with the local community. He stressed the advantages of a “laboratory” in a rural area, in which both training and production work would be mutually enriching. While he affirmed that production may be faster in Washington, D.C., he remained cautious regarding the risks of strong political and public information influence. As Graham explains, many weaker UNESCO Member States also feared that information produced for global audiences would be dominated by US policies.<sup>457</sup> This fear

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<sup>453</sup> ‘Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America’.

<sup>454</sup> ‘Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America’.

<sup>455</sup> In the draft agreement between UNESCO and the OAS an allocation of \$ 20,000 per annum was suggested in article 13 (c). See: ‘Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America’.

<sup>456</sup> ‘Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre’.

<sup>457</sup> “Weaker” here refers to a limited ability to fund UNESCO and thereby influence its policy. The US was one of the largest contributors to UNESCO and felt it had a significant role in heavily influencing the organisation’s policy. See: Committee on Foreign Affairs, ‘Point Four Background and Program’ (Washington D.C.: United States, Government Printing Office, 1949), [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/Pcaac280.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pcaac280.pdf); Graham, ‘The (Real)Politics of Culture’.

may not have been overlooked. In their article, Dorn and Ghodsee referred to the growing anxiety that the US felt towards UNESCO. The country was afraid of supporting anything that might be affiliated with communism.<sup>458</sup>

Moreover, the information distributed through resources produced abroad might be poorly adapted to the readership or overly general. The resources might also be too expensive, thereby failing to serve the initial purpose of accessibility. The material would need to be free of copyright and would have to serve as a “sample” aimed at inspiring own production by the government and organisation according to their needs.<sup>459</sup>

At the Board’s 17th session, a Special Committee composed of the members Dr Caracciolo Parra-Perez, Seydoux, and Evans had already represented UNESCO during negotiations for a general draft agreement organising the institute’s collaboration with the OAS.<sup>460</sup> However, by the 19th Board session, it became clear to the Director-General that both agreements – the special agreement on the regional training and production centre and the general agreement on the partnership between the two organisations – would be strongly intertwined. Therefore, Torres Bodet asked Parra-Perez, Seydoux, and Evans to reconsider both texts during the 19th session. Dr Jorge Basadre, an OAS representative in Paris, and Dr Nannetti attended separate organised meetings.<sup>461</sup>

The Special Committee drafted an agreement that established the roles of the two organisations. Two centres were created: a Latin American Fundamental Education Centre attached to UNESCO and a Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material, attached to the OAS, in Washington, D.C. The bureau would prepare and distribute general fundamental education material adapted to the needs of those who had already received minimal education, while the Latin American centre would be responsible for training teachers and developing basic material for those with no reading or writing skills. A coordinating committee

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<sup>458</sup> At a later stage, the fundamental education programme became quite controversial, with several critical US voices deeming it “contrary to American ideals and traditions”. See: Dorn and Ghodsee, “The Cold War Politicization of Literacy”.

<sup>459</sup> ‘Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America’.

<sup>460</sup> At the 17th session of the Executive Board, a negotiating committee composed of Parra-Perez, Stoddard or Evans and Seydoux was established to negotiate a general agreement with the OAS based on Article XI of UNESCO’s Constitution. Ultimately, it was Evans who served on the committee. Problems immediately occurred by Seydoux’ questioning if the OAS was actually an intergovernmental organisation, as stipulated in the first paragraph of Article 11 of UNESCO’s Constitution. See: ‘Resolutions and Decisions Adopted by the Executive Board at Its Seventeenth Session from 15 September to 4 October 1949’, 14 October 1949, 17EX/Decisions + Add., UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000113914?posInSet=2&queryId=d738e167-7835-412d-b136-353ad3ccd4cd>; Unión Panamericana, ‘Informe Anual del Secretario General de la Organización de los Estados Americanos. Correspondiente al Año Económico. 1 de julio de 1949 - 30 de junio de 1950’, 138-41.

<sup>461</sup> This Special Committee met on several mornings before the start of the meetings of the 19th Executive Board session. See: ‘Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America’.



would organise activities between the centre and the bureau. This committee was chaired by a fundamental education specialist, who was jointly chosen for a two-year period by the UNESCO Director-General and the General Secretariat of the OAS. According to this draft, the OAS would agree to a contribution of \$ 40,000, thereby providing the UNESCO Secretariat with guaranteed funding for the first two years of the centre.<sup>462</sup>

In my opinion, it is noteworthy that the summary records of the 19th Executive Board session reveal an unfolding discussion between Parra-Perez and the other Board members. Parra-Perez mainly focused on the agreement reached and stressed that no additional appropriations were required.<sup>463</sup> Yet, according to Mexican member Castro Leal, this “Washington solution” should only be adopted after consulting the Mexican government, since the proposals and draft agreement differed from the original idea. However, members of the negotiating committee opposed Leal’s proposal and only planned to inform the Mexican government of the changes after they had been approved by UNESCO and the OAS.<sup>464</sup> This sequence of events between the members of UNESCO’s Executive Board, the OAS, and the Mexican government perplexes me. During the Fourth General Conference, UNESCO outlined the conditions for a regional centre on fundamental education to its Member States. It confirmed that the host country should be willing to take over full responsibility for the regional centre within an unspecified period of time.<sup>465</sup> It is therefore remarkable that the Executive Board members initially opposed the participation of the host country in the negotiations on the “Washington solution” by relying on a swift collaboration between the Director-General and the Mexican government which was driven by a sense of urgency. This seemed to downplay the importance of Mexico’s perspective in the establishment of the centre, reducing it to a mere logistical facilitator.

Louis Verniers, the chairman of the meeting, ultimately supported Leal and postponed a final decision.<sup>466</sup> Leal communicated the Mexican government’s perspective to the Board at its 20th session – “The Mexican government was of opinion that the draft agreement between UNESCO and OAS modified the original draft not only in detail but as regarded the very basis of the proposal and the initial idea of a self-supporting centre” – and requested that the government

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<sup>462</sup> ‘Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America’.

<sup>463</sup> ‘Summary Records of the 19th Session of the Executive Board (24th Meeting)’ (UNESCO Digital Library, 30 June 1950), 19EX/SR24, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000161819?posInSet=2&queryId=b41b250e-415a-4673-bde8-492a1701c31f>.

<sup>464</sup> ‘Summary Records of the 19th Session of the Executive Board (24th Meeting)’.

<sup>465</sup> ‘Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre’.

<sup>466</sup> ‘Summary Records of the 19th Session of the Executive Board (24th Meeting)’.

participate in the negotiations.<sup>467</sup> Moreover, according to Leal, the Mexicans had again emphasised their extensive expertise in fundamental education, which would certainly be valuable for UNESCO. Therefore, Torres Bodet, though unsure of the OAS opinion on the matter, suggested that the Mexican delegate to the Special Committee be invited to future negotiations on the centre and its location, and hoped for OAS participation in negotiations for a second draft agreement.<sup>468</sup>

It was not until the 21st Executive Board session, which coincided with the Fifth General Conference in Florence, that the Board authorised the Director-General to sign both agreements: one between the OAS and UNESCO, and one between UNESCO and the Mexican government concerning the creation of a Latin American Centre and a Bureau on Fundamental Education.<sup>469</sup> The General Conference followed the Board's decision and adopted a resolution 1.2124, approving the establishment of a Regional Training and Production Centre.<sup>470</sup>

Practical preparations between the three partners could finally be started through the UNESCO and OAS Joint Coordinating Committee. Dr Nannetti participated as an OAS representative, whereas Bowers represented Torres Bodet. The meetings took place from 28 August to 11 September 1950 in Washington and Mexico City. On the last day, an agreement between the Mexican government and UNESCO was signed, leading to the official foundation of CREFAL.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> 'Summary Records of the 20th Session of the Executive Board (5th Meeting)'.

<sup>468</sup> 'Summary Records of the 20th Session of the Executive Board (5th Meeting)'.

<sup>469</sup> The Fifth General Conference in Florence took place between 22 May and 17 June 1950. See: Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*, 70.; 'Summary Records of the 21st Session of the Executive Board (8th Meeting)', 4 June 1950, 21EX/SR8, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000162212?posInSet=2&queryId=71d0f335-d948-483b-8aaf-e5293f2b956d>.

<sup>470</sup> Resolution 1.2124 states: "The Director-General is authorized to continue to assist the Training and Production Centre for Fundamental Education set up in 1950, in accordance with the agreements made with the Government of Mexico and the Organization of American States." See: 'Records of the General Conference of UNESCO House, Fifth Session, Florence, 1950', 1950, 5C/Resolutions, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114589?posInSet=1&queryId=1259cf2f-6282-4ceb-acc8-fd90ca8c4e7e>.

At the 24th session of the Executive Board, the members were notified by Basadre that the OAS had agreed to a draft agreement with UNESCO and also, indirectly, the UN. This agreement was a general draft agreement between the OAS and UNESCO and not the specific agreement concerning the establishment of a Latin American Centre for Fundamental Education. See: 'Approval of Agreement with the Organization of American States', 27 October 1950, 24 EX/15, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000162254?posInSet=2&queryId=3bf152ad-96c8-4045-a1b4-a571ae6cb4d2>.

<sup>471</sup> Both agreements - one between the OAS and UNESCO, and the other between UNESCO and the Mexican government - are attached as an annex.

The location of the first regional centre on fundamental education was not confirmed until 31 October 1950. On that day, Lic. Manuel Gual Vidal, the official representative of the Mexican government in UNESCO and an employee of the Public Education Secretariat of Mexico, received a letter from Lázaro Cárdenas offering the donation of the Quinta Eréndira for the establishment of the UNESCO "international school". This offer was immediately accepted by President Miguel Alemán Valdés, as noted by Manuel Gual Vidal. Consequently, no specific location is mentioned in

## Conclusion

The sequence of events described in this chapter, involving UNESCO's Executive Board, the OAS, and the Mexican government, was unexpected. At the Fourth General Conference, UNESCO outlined the conditions for establishing a regional centre on fundamental education among its member states, emphasising the host country's responsibility to take over the regional centre within an unspecified timeframe.<sup>472</sup> Therefore, it is remarkable that the Executive Board appeared to disregard a government willing to host such an international centre during the continuing negotiations on the "Washington solution".

As illustrated, the original agreement initially proposed by Bowers underwent significant changes before reaching its final form. These modifications, especially regarding the production aspect of the centre, restricted the Latin American centre to producing only elementary resources on fundamental education. I consider these changes had an immediate impact on the host country and, later on, the state responsible for the production centre.

Maurel and Sluga have previously highlighted UNESCO's pursuit of cosmopolitanism, leading to ongoing tensions between the various interests of Member States, international organisations - particularly the OAS - and the ideas put forth by UNESCO's staff and Executive Board.<sup>473</sup> In my view, the Mexican government may have felt pressured to promptly agree with the new plan forged between the OAS and UNESCO. Consequently, I regard that Leal's decision, and ultimately that of the Director-General, to allow the Mexican government to participate in further negotiations with the OAS was the correct course of action.

Moreover, it is remarkable that despite the OAS's active involvement in the Rio de Janeiro Seminar on Illiteracy and UNESCO's Fourth General Conference, the organisation pursued a divergent path. Through its commitment to a \$ 100,000 contribution, the OAS influenced

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the agreement between the Mexican government and UNESCO. In Chapter 4, I will focus more on the location of CREFAL. See: 'Acuerdo Entre La UNESCO Y El Gobierno Mexicano Sobre El Establecimiento De Un Centro Regional Para La Formación Del Personal Y La Preparación Del Material De Educación De Base En América Latina'; Guillermo Medina and others, *CREFAL: Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe. Edición conmemorativa del 30 Aniversario de la Institución* (Pátzcuaro, Mich., México, 1981); 'El CREFAL: Organización, programa, actividades y resultados alcanzados'; Catherine Ettinger, *La Quinta Eréndira de Lázaro Cárdenas De casa campestre a sede del CREFAL*, Primera edición (Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, México: CREFAL, 2021), <https://crefal.org/publicacion/la-quinta-erendira-de-lazaro-cardenas-de-casa-campestre-a-sede-del-crefal/>; 'Progress Report by the Director-General on the Period from 1 August to 15 October 1950' (UNESCO Digital Library, 31 October 1950), 24 EX/2, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000162239?posInSet=22&queryId=c1e2f56a-d355-4a77-a79e-130d8a529813>; CREFAL, 'Reseña Histórica de CREFAL'; Daniel Behrman, 'Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance', *UNESCO Courier*, June 1951.

<sup>472</sup> 'Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre'.

<sup>473</sup> Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*; Maurel, 'L'UNESCO de 1945 à 1974'.

UNESCO to adopt an alternative plan, resulting in the establishment of a Latin American Bureau on Fundamental Education in Washington, D.C., and a Latin American centre in Mexico, which was echoed by Wodajo. She also notes UNESCO's departure from its original plan under pressure from the OAS to accept the establishment of the two centres.<sup>474</sup> Although UNESCO acknowledged the potential advantages of materials produced in a Washington Bureau – quicker production and greater political and public appeal – it expressed concerns about their potential generality and high cost. Furthermore, UNESCO emphasised the need to closely align the training and production activities of the regional centre to mutually “enrich” each other.<sup>475</sup> It seems that UNESCO tried to keep the initial conditions intact, albeit settling for reduced funding of \$ 40,000.

Although I refer to the organisation as a whole, I recognise potential differences in opinions. Unfortunately, I can rely solely on the correspondence available from the three archives I visited and online sources. Not all correspondence has been preserved, nor have all discussions been documented in written reports. However, the correspondence I collected clearly indicates that Mexico was not selected as a host country because of its connections with the Director-General Jaime Torres Bodet or the country's pioneering efforts in national campaigns on fundamental education, as argued by Wodajo and Lazarín.<sup>476</sup> Furthermore, the fifth working group of the Rio de Janeiro seminar explicitly stated that the Mexican example, like the other examples discussed, was not universally applicable. Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that Mexico was chosen due to the lack of alternative options, as Lebanon was the only other candidate, and at the request of the OAS who wished to keep this grand project on American soil.

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<sup>474</sup> Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education,’ 106.

<sup>475</sup> ‘Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America’.

<sup>476</sup> Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.’; Lazarín Miranda, ‘México, la UNESCO y el Proyecto de Educación Fundamental para América Latina, 1945-1951’. 104.

## Chapter 4 UNESCO's first regional centre on fundamental education - CREFAL

“to help men and women to live fuller and happier lives in adjustment with their changing environment, to develop the best elements of their own culture, and to achieve the economic and social progress which will enable them to take their place in the modern world.”

(John Bowers, UNESCO Courier 1948)<sup>477</sup>



Figure 29: Quinta Eréndira - Edificio Principal y Plaza de las Banderas. Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archives, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-R-19\_P-13.

### Introduction

On 11 September 1950, CREFAL, UNESCO's Pátzcuaro Centre for Fundamental Education in Mexico, marked the inception of one of the six inaugural regional centres worldwide.<sup>478</sup> Operational activities commenced on 15 April 1951 under the supervision of Dr Lucas Ortiz Benitez, the former head of Mexico's rural education department. Subsequently, on 9

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<sup>477</sup> Bowers, 'Fundamental Education. Programme for 1948', 4; 'Acuerdo Entre La UNESCO Y El Gobierno Mexicano Sobre El Establecimiento De Un Centro Regional Para La Formación Del Personal Y La Preparación Del Material De Educación De Base En América Latina'.

<sup>478</sup> CREFAL, 'Reseña Histórica de CREFAL'.

May 1951, the centre was officially inaugurated by UNESCO's Director-General, Jaime Torres Bodet.<sup>479</sup>

CREFAL swiftly catalysed networks of cooperation with various UN agencies, such as the FAO, WHO, and the ILO. Concurrently, logistical support from the OAS and UNESCO was provided to CREFAL.<sup>480</sup> To date, the centre is still operational.



*Figure 30: Picture of Plaza de Las Banderas with Quinta Eréndira in the background.*  
© Stefanie Kesteloot, personal archive, 20 July 2022.

The forthcoming discussion is mainly dedicated to the translation of UNESCO's "right to education" through fundamental education, particularly as manifested by CREFAL. This chapter aims to reconstruct the narrative of CREFAL, outlining its mission and core programmes through the use of visuals, radio shows, videos, and documents sourced from archives and online resources. I will explore the geographical placement of the project, the mechanisms employed by CREFAL personnel to translate the vision of fundamental education from the coordinating committee to local stakeholders, the method of implementation, the insights gained from archival photographs and videos, and the visual articulation of the project's ethics.

It remains important to mention that in this narrative, UNESCO takes center stage as the primary protagonist organisation. Given that Dr Nannetti served as the director of the OAS's education division and as a member of UNESCO's Executive Board and Chair of the Fifth

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<sup>479</sup> "1.000 Million Illiterates. Half the World is in Darkness," *UNESCO Courier*, Vol. IV, no. 6 (June 1951): 6

<sup>480</sup> "Reseña Histórica de CREFAL", CREFAL, accessed 4 September 2020 on: [https://www.crefal.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=27&Itemid=182](https://www.crefal.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=27&Itemid=182)



Working Group of the Rio de Janeiro Seminar, I acknowledge the influence of the OAS on UNESCO's decision-making process regarding fundamental education projects.<sup>481</sup>

## 4.1 The location



Figure 31: Picture of the mosaic "Plano del Lago de Pátzcuaro" in the Quinta Eréndira. © Stefanie Kesteloot, personal archive, 5 August 2022.

<sup>481</sup> For further information, I refer to Chapter 3.

CREFAL is situated in the Michoacán region bordering Lake Pátzcuaro in a city with the same name.<sup>482</sup> While Pátzcuaro may not be centrally located within Latin America, it has garnered international recognition as a premier destination for the training of professionals in fundamental education from the Latin American region and beyond. The location met the standards stipulated by UNESCO, serving as a hub for the instruction of men and women in the Latin American region in fundamental education through one of the formal languages of UNESCO, namely Spanish.<sup>483</sup>

In a 1963 article, American historian Wallace Woolsey recounted his visit to Pátzcuaro, describing it as a bustling destination frequented by tourists eager to experience the vibrant Friday market on the main plaza or embark on excursions across the lake to Janitzio.<sup>484</sup> The area maintains its allure with local fishermen and traditional celebrations, such as the Day of the Dead, still thriving to this day.<sup>485</sup>



*Figure 32: Local fishermen on Lake Pátzcuaro performing the traditional way of fishing. In the background is the small island, Janitzio, visible with on top the statue of José María Morelos. © Stefanie Kesteloot, personal archive, 17 July 2022.*

Furthermore, the Pátzcuaro area is well known for its extensive social work in the surrounding villages.<sup>486</sup> Woolsey fondly recalls his discussions with Lloyd Hughes, then director of CREFAL, on one of the terraces of the “Quinta Eréndira”, overlooking the tranquil waters of the

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<sup>482</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, delegates participating in the regional study conference on fundamental education in Mexico had the opportunity to visit Pátzcuaro during one of the excursions, organised by the Ministry of National Education and the Government of the State of Michoacán. See: ‘Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education - Summary Report of the First Meeting, Held on Monday, 3 November 1947 at 10 a.m. at Escuela Nacional de Maestros, Mexico City’.

<sup>483</sup> Woolsey, ‘CREFAL - UNESCO’S School for Community Development Leadership in Latin America’.

<sup>484</sup> Woolsey, 115-16.

<sup>485</sup> I have learned this information through various conversations with local archivists, such as Luz Margarita Mendieta Ramos or Velma Valdespino. See also: ‘Day of the Dead, Night of the Dead, Día de Muertos, Noche de Muertos’, accessed 28 April 2024, <http://www.lakepatzcuaro.org/dayofdead.html>.

<sup>486</sup> I refer here to the history of the area, which is discussed later in this chapter.



lake Janitzio, likely with a view of the statue honouring the revolutionary leader José María Morelos, which had been unveiled in 1933.<sup>487</sup>



*Figure 33: On the bottom of the picture, you can see "Plaza de Las Banderas". On top of the picture, you can see the island Janitzio with on top the statue of José Maria Morelos. © Stefanie Kesteloot, personal archive, 5 August 2022.*

Quinta Eréndira, once the residence of the former Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas, derives its name from the daughter of an ancient Tarascan chief named Timas, as recounted in Eduardo Ruiz's historical tales in "Michoacán: paisajes, tradiciones y leyendas".<sup>488</sup> Cárdenas, renowned for his admiration for Eréndira as a 'first anti-colonialist heroine,' named places close

<sup>487</sup> At that time of Woolsey's writing, the American Dr Lloyd Hughes was the director of CREFAL. See: Woolsey, 'CREFAL - UNESCO'S School for Community Development Leadership in Latin America'; 'Statue of José Maria Morelos – Janitzio, Mexico - Atlas Obscura', accessed 2 June 2024, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/isla-de-janitzio>.

<sup>488</sup> Lázaro Cárdenas was elected in 1934 as the new president of Mexico for a six-year term. Under his presidency, he initiated new land reforms, renamed his political party from PNR (Partido Nacional Revolucionario) to Partido de la Revolución Mexicana, and continued to modernise the country's infrastructure by nationalising the railway system and the country's petroleum reserves. He also expropriated the equipment of the foreign oil companies operating in Mexico. The political and civic nationalism that dominated Mexico for over half a century was consolidated during his regime. Additionally, it was Cárdenas who gave refuge to Trotsky.

Eduardo Ruiz, on the other hand, was a leading liberal politician of his time, a Magistrate on Mexico's Supreme Court, a historian, a writer and also a partisan (guerrillero) who fought against the French intervention during Mexico's 'Second Independence' (1864-1867). The chapter 'Eréndira' did not appear until the second volume of Ruiz' historical tales, published in 1900. See: Stols, *Mexico in historisch perspectief*, 133-134; Behrman, 'Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance'; Ana Cristina Ramírez Barreto, 'Eréndira on Horseback: Variations on a Tale of Conquest and Resistance' (Great Britain: Antony Rowe Ltd, Chippenham, Wiltshire), accessed 29 April 2024, [https://www.academia.edu/231840/Eréndira\\_on\\_Horseback\\_Variations\\_on\\_a\\_Tale\\_of\\_Conquest\\_and\\_Resistance](https://www.academia.edu/231840/Eréndira_on_Horseback_Variations_on_a_Tale_of_Conquest_and_Resistance); Ettinger, *La Quinta Eréndira de Lázaro Cárdenas De casa campestre a sede del CREFAL*, 81.

to his heart in her honour and adorned them with several murals depicting his heroine mounted on horseback.<sup>489</sup>



Figure 34: Meeting room ‘Sala de Banderas’ in the Quinta Eréndira. © Stefanie Kesteloot, personal archive, 5 August 2022.

The mural was painted by Cueva del Río on the eastern wall of Quinta’s former dining room, and is an adaptation of Fermín Revueltas’ original artwork.<sup>490</sup> Divided into three panels, the mural captures Revueltas’ thematic exploration: the division of the ‘kingdom’ by Tari’curi on the left, the legend of Eréndira in the middle, and the encounter between Tangahxuan II and Cristóbal de Olid on the right.<sup>491</sup> Additional historical scenes decorate other walls, including depictions of the canvas of Jucutacato, a portrait of the first bishop of Michoacán Don Vasco de Quiroga, and a scene alluding to the struggle for independence featuring José María Morelos.<sup>492</sup>

Eréndira assumes a central and prominent position within the murals, depicted as fleeing with her white horse, adorned in white attire, with indigenous defenders to her left and Spanish conquerors to her right. Tímas, Eréndira’s father, lies at the base of the scene, underscoring the valorous defence of Pátzcuaro. The panel is titled: “Eréndira, daughter of the warrior Tímas who

<sup>489</sup> Barreto, ‘Eréndira on Horseback’.

<sup>490</sup> Ettinger, *La Quinta Eréndira de Lázaro Cárdenas De casa campestre a sede del CREFAL*, 91.

<sup>491</sup> Ettinger, 93-4.

<sup>492</sup> Ettinger, 91.

perished in the heroic defence of Pátzcuaro, eludes her pursuers on a horse seized from the conquerors.”<sup>493</sup>

The legend symbolises the resistance of indigenous Tarascans against the cultural dominance of Spanish conquerors, a theme eloquently depicted in the mural adorning the estate’s former library. Here, the Tarascan queen embodies the spirit of rebellion, heroically evading her adversaries in a dramatic horseback chase.<sup>494</sup> The mural serves as a captivating narrative, recounting her tale to the public.

Upon the generous offer of Lázaro Cárdenas, the former president and proprietor of Quinta Eréndira, it was decided that Pátzcuaro would become CREFAL’s esteemed domicile in the autumn of 1950.<sup>495</sup> Lucas Ortiz, the inaugural director of CREFAL was tasked with scouring various locations for the optimal site for the new international school affiliated with UNESCO and the OAS.<sup>496</sup> Despite exploring numerous locations across different states, including Morelos, México, Puebla, Querétaro, Guanajuato and Michoacán, and even proposing the former international and agricultural school “La Huerta” as a potential venue, only Quinta Eréndira met the rigorous standards set forth by the international organisations.<sup>497</sup>

Pátzcuaro, both geographically and qualitatively, has emerged as a perfect choice. Situated at the southern terminus of an anchor-shaped lake spanning approximately 128 square kilometres and nestled at an elevation of 2,000 metres above sea level, the city boasts a diverse array of lifestyles represented by its 20 surrounding communities.<sup>498</sup> Moreover, Pátzcuaro fulfilled the five standards outlined in a document prepared by the Programme and Budget Commission in support of resolution 2.415 adopted at the Fourth General Conference in Paris.<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>493</sup> The translation is the author’s own. The original reads as: “Eréndira hija del Guerrero Timas muerto en la heroica defensa de Pátzcuaro se libra de sus perseguidores en el caballo quitado a los conquistadores.” See: Ettinger, 94.

<sup>494</sup> Ettinger, 81.

<sup>495</sup> Medina and others, *CREFAL: Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe. Edición conmemorativa del 30 Aniversario de la Institución*.

<sup>496</sup> In Chapter 5, I will delve more in depth regarding the appointment of Lucas Ortiz for this specific task and the negotiations between him and Cárdenas. See: Lucas Ortiz Benítez, *Exhortos y Rememoraciones* (México: Centro de Cooperación Regional para la Educación de Adultos en América Latina y el Caribe, 2004).

<sup>497</sup> Ortiz Benítez; Unesco, *New Horizons at Tzetzzenhuaro*.

<sup>498</sup> Unesco, *New Horizons at Tzetzzenhuaro*, 11.

<sup>499</sup> In the paper, the programme and budget commission refer to resolution 2.425. However, in the records of the General Conference of 1949, there is no mention of any resolution 2.425, but rather a resolution 2.415 on “Training and Production Centres”. I believe this is a typographical error, and I am citing resolution 2.415 which instructs the Director-General: “To co-operate with Member States in the establishment of regional centres for the training of teachers and workers and the production of materials for fundamental education.” See: ‘Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre’; ‘Records of the General Conference of UNESCO, Fourth Session, Paris, 1949: Resolutions’.

### **4.1.1 The responsibility of the hosting government**

Two out of five conditions pertain to the responsibility of the state government, specifically the Mexican government, and were fulfilled during the aforementioned negotiations.<sup>500</sup>

First, it concerns the readiness of the Member State, in this instance Mexico, or another entity, to fully shoulder the responsibility for the centre within a defined yet unspecified timeframe.<sup>501</sup> Wodajo has already explored the reorientation of CREFAL in her work, which occurred under the influence of the UN and the growing determination of certain Member State delegates within UNESCO.<sup>502</sup> In the early sixties, fundamental education emerged as the educational arm of the community development movement, prompting the centre to adjust its structure and name to the *Centro Regional de Educación Fundamental para el Desarrollo de la Comunidad en la América Latina* or Regional Centre of Basic Education for Community Development in Latin America.<sup>503</sup> Throughout this period, the centre continued to receive support from various international organisations such as the FAO, WHO, UN, and UNESCO, as well as the Mexican government. By 1974, a new agreement was reached between the Mexican government and UNESCO in Paris to establish and operate a Regional Centre for Adult Education and Functional Literacy for Latin America, known as the *Centro Regional de Educación de Adultos y Alfabetización Funcional para América Latina*. Subsequently, CREFAL evolved into an international educational institution in Latin America under the auspices of the Mexican government. The transition occurred between 1975 and 1978.<sup>504</sup>

Second, the Mexican government was required to provide accommodation and certain amenities for the centre.<sup>505</sup> Woolsey noted CREFAL's support from various organisations, such as UNESCO, the OAS, and the UN, alongside significant assistance from the Mexican government. "The latter has provided the physical plant and grounds and also supplies most of

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<sup>500</sup> I refer here to Chapter 3, where the negotiation process between the Mexican government, the OAS and UNESCO is described.

<sup>501</sup> 'Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre'.

<sup>502</sup> At the Ninth General Conference, several Member States delegates questioned UNESCO's continued responsibility for its centres on fundamental education. Both centres, CREFAL and ASFEC, had become a financial burden, consuming approximately 30 – 40 % of the regular budget of the international organisation's Education department. See: Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education', 152.

<sup>503</sup> Woolsey, 'CREFAL - UNESCO'S School for Community Development Leadership in Latin America'.

<sup>504</sup> Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.'; CREFAL, 'Reseña Histórica de CREFAL'.

<sup>505</sup> In the February 1953 newsletter from CREFAL, it was mentioned the Mexican government had paid \$ 900.000 for new buildings in 1952. In 1953, an additional \$ 500.000 was subsidised to be used for new furniture, classrooms, a library, bedrooms, and other facilities. See: CREFAL, 'Boletín Informativo 1' (CREFAL, February 1953), eso-mav-V-15-53, UNESCO Archives, Paris, France.

the maintenance and other important services.”<sup>506</sup> This aligns with the initial paragraph of the second chapter of the agreement between the Mexican government and UNESCO regarding the establishment of a regional centre for the training and development of basic education material in Latin American or the so-called “*Acuerdo entre la UNESCO y el Gobierno Mexicano sobre el establecimiento de un Centro Regional para la Formación del Personal y la Preparación del Material de Educación de base en América Latina*”.<sup>507</sup> The Mexican government, represented by the Secretary of Public Education, the Mexican jurist and educator Lic. Manuel Gual Vidal, further committed to supporting two rural primary schools, serving as experimental laboratories, and a radio station within a twenty-kilometre radius of the centre.<sup>508</sup> This culminated in the establishment of radio XELQ in Morelia, located 56 kilometres from Pátzcuaro.<sup>509</sup> Additionally, the government pledged to furnish office and classroom furniture, except for technical equipment, which fell under UNESCO’s purview. A Multilith press, Varitype machines, and a film strip projector, as described by the UNESCO officer and Fundamental Education Department staff member Daniel Behrman, are among the technical equipment provided.<sup>510</sup>

Furthermore, the Mexican government oversaw transportation arrangements. They supplied the requisite vehicles, including drivers, and permitted the CREFAL staff and students to use trains within Mexico.<sup>511</sup> Lucas Ortiz also emphasised the imperative of access to various modes of transportation, including trains, highways, planes, as well as communication channels such as telephone, postal, and telegraph services, in his memoirs.<sup>512</sup>

#### **4.1.2 Pre-existing conditions**

UNESCO sought to avoid starting from scratch, thus formulating a fourth condition: the desire to establish the centre in an area where “some progress has been made in fundamental

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<sup>506</sup> Woolsey, ‘CREFAL - UNESCO’S School for Community Development Leadership in Latin America’, 116.

<sup>507</sup> The agreement is included as Annex 4. ‘Acuerdo Entre La UNESCO Y El Gobierno Mexicano Sobre El Establecimiento De Un Centro Regional Para La Formación Del Personal Y La Preparación Del Material De Educación De Base En América Latina’.

<sup>508</sup> ‘Acuerdo Entre La UNESCO Y El Gobierno Mexicano Sobre El Establecimiento De Un Centro Regional Para La Formación Del Personal Y La Preparación Del Material De Educación De Base En América Latina’.

<sup>509</sup> Behrman, ‘Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance’.

<sup>510</sup> Behrman.

<sup>511</sup> Other paragraphs refer to privileges for foreign staff and conventions already agreed between the Mexican government and other international institutions. See: ‘Acuerdo Entre La UNESCO Y El Gobierno Mexicano Sobre El Establecimiento De Un Centro Regional Para La Formación Del Personal Y La Preparación Del Material De Educación De Base En América Latina’.

<sup>512</sup> Ortiz Benítez, *Exhortos y Rememoraciones*, 70.



education and where there is opportunity for field research”.<sup>513</sup> Consequently, they sought a location sufficiently distant from the capital city, yet close enough to a university and urban centre, afflicted by known recurrent issues, and where Spanish was predominantly spoken. Additionally, the government (and UNESCO) stipulated that the site must afford access to both urban and rural contexts, enabling students and professors to engage with the local population through practical fieldwork and experimentation.<sup>514</sup>

Both Cuernavaca, situated in the province of Morelos, and Pátzcuaro satisfied the criteria of recurring problems and linguistic homogeneity, with Spanish being the most prevalent language. After further investigation by Ortiz, the latter was selected.<sup>515</sup> As Woolsey elucidated: “it was felt that a place with a more rural type of environment would better meet the needs of the work to be done.”<sup>516</sup>

The city of Pátzcuaro, with its lake and 20 surrounding communities, aptly fulfilled the first aspect of UNESCO’s fourth condition. Since the sixteenth century, the city has served as the focal point for various programmes aimed at rural and community development, all initiated by Don Vasco de Quiroga, Michoacán’s first bishop.<sup>517</sup>



Figure 35: The monument of “Tata Vasco” in the Iurix Chapel at the “hospital” of Santa Fe de la Laguna, Mexico. © Stefanie Kesteloot, personal archive, 23 July 2022.

<sup>513</sup> ‘Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre’.

<sup>514</sup> Ortiz Benítez, *Exhortos y Rememoraciones*, 70.

<sup>515</sup> Ortiz Benítez, 70; Woolsey, ‘CREFAL - UNESCO’S School for Community Development Leadership in Latin America’, 117.

<sup>516</sup> Woolsey, ‘CREFAL - UNESCO’S School for Community Development Leadership in Latin America’, 117.

<sup>517</sup> Woolsey; Behrman, ‘Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance’.

### A. “Tata Vasco”

For generations, “Tata Vasco”, Tarascan for ‘our beloved father’, has been revered as a symbol of humanitarian reform and utopian aspiration, particularly in Mexico where he exerted significant influence in Pátzcuaro and its surrounding villages.<sup>518</sup> At the age of 60, he was dispatched by the Spanish government in 1530 to New Spain. He served as the first bishop of Michoacán for an extensive period of 30 years and passed away at the age of 95 in 1565.<sup>519</sup> During his tenure, he abolished the enslavement of the Tarascans and introduced Catholic faith to the P’urhépecha residing in the region.<sup>520</sup> Additionally, he established schools and a college, along with constructing hospitals, notably the renowned one in Santa Fe de La Laguna, a village situated on the northern shore of Lake Pátzcuaro.<sup>521</sup> Moreover, he organised vocational training workshops and imparted skills in Tarascan crafts, such as copper smithing, weaving, wood carving, and pottery, tailored to the needs of each village.<sup>522</sup> Vasco de Quiroga instructed Janitzians in fishing techniques, while the Ihuatzians specialised in agriculture. Meanwhile, Jaracuarians excelled in crafting sombreros, the famous Mexican straw hats. Each village adhered to its trade for generations, convening every Friday at the Pátzcuaro market to vend their goods, a tradition that endures to this day.<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> The ‘utopian’ hope refers to Thomas Mores famous book ‘Utopia’. The book was a true inspiration for Vasco de Quiroga and influenced the way he built up the surrounding communities. See: James Krippner-Martinez, ‘Invoking “Tato Vasco”: Vasco de Quiroga, Eighteenth-Twentieth Centuries’, *The Americas* 56, no. 3 (2000): 1–28; George McClelland Foster and Gabriel Ospina, *Empire’s Children: The People of Tzintzuntzan* (Mexico: Smithsonian Institution, 1948).

<sup>519</sup> The exact year of Don Vasco de Quiroga’s appointment as bishop remains uncertain, as I found three different articles citing three different years: 1536, 1537 and 1538. See: Woolsey, ‘CREFAL - UNESCO’S School for Community Development Leadership in Latin America’; Krippner-Martinez, ‘Invoking “Tato Vasco”’; Behrman, ‘Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance’.

<sup>520</sup> The Tarascans – also known as the P’urhépecha – are distinct to the Aztecs. They had been living next to the Aztecs, trading with them. Due to these living conditions, they were able to keep their own culture and language until today, even under Spanish siege. See: *The Tarascan/Purépecha Empire: The Forgotten Empire of Mexico*, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7u-b2qQ6S4>; Unesco, *New Horizons at Tzintzuntzan*; Foster and Ospina, *Empire’s Children*.

<sup>521</sup> The hospitals founded by “Tata Vasco” were much more than places for the sick. They served as “the centre of religion, politics and of humanity of the Indian.” See: Foster and Ospina, *Empire’s Children*.

<sup>522</sup> Each member of the hospital was trained for the rotation of work, such as agriculture, stone working, weaving, and other tasks, as ordained by Quiroga. See: Foster and Ospina.

<sup>523</sup> Tibor Mende, ‘Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World’s Most Unusual Social Experiments.’, *UNESCO Courier*, February 1952, 3.



Figure 36: *Sin título – Selling sombreros on the market – Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-2\_N-29.*

This socioeconomic framework, initiated by “Tata Vasco”, persisted among the lakeside villages. Following his demise, his remains were interred in the Basilica of Pátzcuaro, located in an urn in the recess of a Tuscan pedestal. Over time, the Spanish bishop attained a revered status for his role in shaping a new culture in Michoacán – a culture marked by the convergence of Tzintzuntzan, the urban centre of the Tarascan or ‘P’urhépecha kingdom’; Pátzcuaro, the site where he implemented his vision of a reformed church under staunch sixteenth-century Castilian Catholic guidance; and Valladolid-Morela, which from 1580 served as the nexus of church-state administration and the regional Iberian influence.<sup>524</sup>

“Tata Vasco” epitomises a unique manifestation of Mexican early modern Christian humanism, particularly significant in the aftermath of the Mexican revolution, where he was championed by numerous Mexican anticlerical intellectuals affiliated with the established ruling party.<sup>525</sup>

### ***B. ‘Misiones Culturales’***

The Mexican Revolution, which took place from 1910 to 1916, led to the creation of a new constitution in 1917, marking a significant change in the country’s direction. During this period, it was crucial to balance the aspirations of various stakeholders, including national and regional governments, the Catholic Church, and *campesinos* (peasants) and workers. In 1920, the former

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<sup>524</sup> Krippner-Martinez, ‘Invoking “Tato Vasco”’, 3.

<sup>525</sup> Krippner-Martinez.



revolutionary, Álvaro Obregón assumed the presidency of Mexico in 1920 and initiated socialist reforms aimed at forging a new Mexican nation inclusive of rural *campesinos* (peasants) and indigenous populations. His educational reforms focused on promoting *indigenism*, indigenous culture, and national identity, gaining widespread support.<sup>526</sup> Previously marginalised at the national level, both peasants and the heterogeneous indigenous population found a voice in Obregón's administration, which was dominated by urban Mexicans and the *mestizo* (a mix of Spanish and indigenous) population.<sup>527</sup>

In 1921, José Vasconcelos was appointed head of Obregón's Secretariat of Public Education (SEP), a project he had conceptualised and developed.<sup>528</sup> Jaime Torres Bodet, who later became the head of UNESCO, served as Vasconcelos' private secretary at the time.<sup>529</sup> Vasconcelos identified the lack of educational opportunities in rural areas as a pressing concern.<sup>530</sup> In addressing this, he diverged from traditional authoritarian methods, instead advocating for universal access to education through literacy campaigns and cultural missions. His approach also incorporated theoretical, cultural, and political messages conveyed via popular murals made by renowned artists, such as Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros.<sup>531</sup>

Cultural missions dispatched small teams of educational specialists to remote rural areas to demonstrate the value of the federal government's educational initiatives. Their ultimate goal was to establish schools that provided a 'nationalistic' education, fostering an educated society working for the common good.<sup>532</sup> During the Mexican Revolution, many Mexican intellectuals pursued higher education at North American universities, particularly in the USA, where they encountered new educational philosophies, including those of the American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer John Dewey.

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<sup>526</sup> Burton Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico* (Westport, USA: Greenwood Press, 2000): 155 – 173; Stols, *Mexico in historisch perspectief*: 131-2.

<sup>527</sup> Obregón had the Zapatistas, the supporters of the former farmer Emiliano Zapata, on his side, which helped bring stability back to the country. The president also redistributed approximately 1.600.000 hectares of land, primarily to war veterans, and introduced several new educational and cultural reforms. See: Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico*; Stols, *Mexico in historisch perspectief*; David G. Tovey, 'The Role of the Music Educator in Mexico's Cultural Missions', *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 139 (1999): 1–11.

<sup>528</sup> "“Por Mi Raza Hablará El Espíritu”", *El Despertar de Una Larga Noche de Oposición: Vasconcelos*, accessed 1 May 2024, [https://www.dgcs.unam.mx/boletin/bdboletin/2019\\_135.html](https://www.dgcs.unam.mx/boletin/bdboletin/2019_135.html); Christian Ydesen and Inés Dussel, 'Jaime Torres Bodet, Mexico, and the Struggle over International Understanding and History Writing. The UNESCO Experience', in *UNESCO without Borders: Educational Campaigns for International Understanding*, ed. Aigul Kulnazarova (London: Routledge, 2017), 160.

<sup>529</sup> Christian Ydesen and Inés Dussel, 'Jaime Torres Bodet, Mexico, and the Struggle over International Understanding and History Writing. The UNESCO Experience', 160.

<sup>530</sup> In 1921, it was found that illiteracy levels hovered at 71 %. See: Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico*; Tovey, 'The Role of the Music Educator in Mexico's Cultural Missions'.

<sup>531</sup> Tovey, 'The Role of the Music Educator in Mexico's Cultural Missions', 2; Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico*, 158.

<sup>532</sup> George C. Booth, *Mexico's School-Made Society* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 21-38 in: Tovey, 'The Role of the Music Educator in Mexico's Cultural Missions'.

Dewey's educational approach, characterised by its blend of democratic and humanistic values with economic and scientific interests, particularly his 'learning by doing' approach, has often been cited as an inspiration for the cultural missions. During his 1926 visit to Mexico, Dewey praised the integration of school and community activities, stating: "I could go further and say that there is no educational movement in the world that presents a greater spirit of intimate union between school activities and those of the community than the one seen here now, in Mexico."<sup>533</sup> He acknowledged the close integration between school activities and community life as a realistic implementation of his philosophical ideas on education.<sup>534</sup>

However, Rockwell critiques the narrative that Dewey's philosophy was central to these missions and refers to claims made by several Mexican educators, being Corona, Ramírez, and Castillo, who argued that "Mexican rural schools developed slowly through the exchange between pedagogical theories and the experience of teachers and inspectors on the ground."<sup>535</sup> She weighs this argument and considers that Dewey was "probably more impressed by the vital relationship between these communities and the creation of rural schools."<sup>536</sup> She contends that the 1920s Mexican rural school network was not a large-scale laboratory for Dewey's ideas, but rather a setting ground where pedagogical ideas were adapted to local social and political contexts.<sup>537</sup>

The teachers deployed on cultural missions had dual responsibilities. Firstly, they introduced rural inhabitants to aspects of Western culture, especially in areas untouched by Spanish colonisers.<sup>538</sup> Second, they identified, encouraged, and assisted potential elementary teachers in local areas by sharing basic teaching techniques during their three-to-six-week stays.<sup>539</sup> The first cultural mission, led by Roberto Medellín in the village of Zacualtipán, was deemed a success and

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<sup>533</sup> This is an author's translations. The original text reads: "Yo deseo ir más lejos y decir que no hay en el mundo movimiento educativo que presente mayor espíritu de unión íntima entre las actividades escolares y las de la comunidad, que el que se ve ahora en México." See: Tovey, 9.; Alfonso Rangel Guerra, 'La Educación rural mexicana y la educación fundamental en el inicio del CREFAL', 175.

<sup>534</sup> In his "Democracy and education", Dewey argued for a rapprochement between education and 'real life'. See: Bert De Munck, 'Humanisme op de werkvloer? Beroepsgerichte en Algemeen vormende vaardigheden, van de late middeleeuwen tot heden', in *Paradoxen van pedagogisering: handboek pedagogische historiografie*, by Marc Depaepe, Frank Simon, and Angelo Van Gorp, Tweede (Leuven: Uitgeverij Acco, 2006), 85–108.

<sup>535</sup> Elsie Rockwell, 'Did Teachers College Influence the Mexican Rural School Project? Unraveling External and Internal Relations Among Key Actors (1915–1930)', *Teachers College Record* (1970) 124, no. 10 (2022): 16–39, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681221137108>, 33.

<sup>536</sup> Rockwell, 33.

<sup>537</sup> Rockwell, 33–34.

<sup>538</sup> Tovey recognises some similarities between the '*misiones*' and the '*misioneros*' to the former Spanish missionaries who aimed for the conversion of Mexico's indigenous population during the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Conquest. It was a mission well accomplished, as the native Mexican population was considered to be fully converted to Christianity. See: Tovey, 'The Role of the Music Educator in Mexico's Cultural Missions', 3.

<sup>539</sup> Tovey; Lloyd H. Hughes, *The Mexican Cultural Mission Programme*, Monograph on Fundamental Education, I (Paris, France: Lahure, 1950).

led to the expansion of similar initiatives across various states by 1928.<sup>540</sup> Each mission team consisted of an administrative head, who also served as a teacher-trainer, and specialists in fields such as agricultural science, social work, health education and recreation, domestic sciences, building sciences, ‘small industries’ (crafts and trades such as soap-making and tanning), and music.<sup>541</sup> Despite their success, these missions faced significant risks, as team members were often targeted and attacked by guerrilla groups known as “*cristeros*” during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>542</sup>

By the 1940s, at the end of Lázaro Cárdenas’ presidency, the government’s socialistic discourse had softened, leading to reduced conflict between the conservative Catholics (“*cristeros*”) and the cultural missions team. In 1942, the programme was expanded to encompass 48 rural missions, targeting 540,000 people across 146 remote zones in Mexico. The missions were carried out by 18 mission teams and embraced a ‘self-help’ approach that empowered communities to address their challenges.<sup>543</sup> This campaign, later continued and expanded by the new Minister of Education, Jaime Torres Bodet, culminated in the “Each One Teach One” initiative, which established 60,000 collective teaching centres. These centres were staffed largely by volunteers from different backgrounds such as professional teachers, industrialists, farmers, landowners and even newly literate individuals.<sup>544</sup>

Cultural missions were also deployed in Pátzcuaro, fulfilling UNESCO’s fourth condition for the establishment of regional education centres.<sup>545</sup> Furthermore, delegates attending the Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education had the opportunity to visit some of the

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<sup>540</sup> In the literature, there is a discrepancy regarding the head of the first group of missionaries. Max H. Miñano Garcia claims that Rafael Ramírez organised and headed the first group, while the weight of evidence favours the contention of Ignacio Ramírez López, who states that the founder of the new movement was Roberto Medellín. Nonetheless, all authors agree that Rafael Ramírez’s contribution to the development of cultural missions was greater than that of any other person. See: Hughes, *The Mexican Cultural Mission Programme*; Tovey, ‘The Role of the Music Educator in Mexico’s Cultural Missions’.

<sup>541</sup> The first mission consisted of the head, Roberto Medellín; teacher of rural education Rafael Ramírez; teacher of soapmaking and perfumery, Isaías Barcenás; teacher of tanning, Rafael Rangel; teacher of agriculture, Fernando Galbiati; teacher of music, Alfredo Tamayo and teacher of physical education and nursing, Ranulfo Bravo. See: Hughes, *The Mexican Cultural Mission Programme*; Tovey, ‘The Role of the Music Educator in Mexico’s Cultural Missions’.

<sup>542</sup> Tovey, ‘The Role of the Music Educator in Mexico’s Cultural Missions’, 4.

<sup>543</sup> ‘Mexico’s “Schools Without Walls” Teach the Lesson of Self-Help’, *UNESCO Courier*, February 1951; Tovey, ‘The Role of the Music Educator in Mexico’s Cultural Missions’, 6.

<sup>544</sup> Jaime Torres Bodet served as a Minister of Education from 1943 and 1946. In 1945, he led the Mexican delegation to the UN Conference for the establishment of UNESCO. See: ‘Jaime Torres Bodet Leaves UNESCO’; ‘UNESCO-UNAM / Jaime Torres Bodet Prize in Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts | UNESCO’, accessed 4 June 2024, <https://www.unesco.org/en/prizes/jaime-torres-bodet>.

<sup>545</sup> Behrman, ‘Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance’.

organised projects on regional education during their stay in Mexico, prior to the Second General Conference.<sup>546</sup>

I assume that many of these projects had been organised or continued under the tenure of Torres Bodet as the Minister of Education between 1943 and 1946. Whether these visits to his work helped Torres Bodet to be elected as Director-General, I cannot say. At the time of the delegates' visit, in 1947, Torres Bodet served as Minister of Foreign Affairs in Mexico.<sup>547</sup>

### 4.1.3 The final condition

Only one condition outlined by UNESCO remained outstanding. UNESCO expressed a preference for regional organisations to share responsibility for the centre.<sup>548</sup> However, thus far, limited information has been uncovered regarding regional organisations that collaborated with CREFAL, aside from the Specialised Agencies of the UN, namely the FAO, WHO, ILO, and the OAS.<sup>549</sup>

Despite this, the CREFAL staff took proactive measures to raise awareness about these organisations among the broader public. For example, during the UN week between 18 and 24 October 1954, the Rotary Club of Pátzcuaro dedicated 20 October to commemorating the UN. They sponsored the event and invited experts from CREFAL and representatives to participate in a special session focused on the UN and its Specialised Agencies.<sup>550</sup>

While specific regional organisations were not frequently mentioned, several collaborations were accomplished. According to the CREFAL work report of July 1952, health students visited the central office of the state's coordinated health and assistance services, as well as other institutions and organisations related to health in Mexico and participated in the Fourth World

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<sup>546</sup> In the preceding Chapter, I discussed the organisation of these field trips. See: 'Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education - Summary Report of the First Meeting, Held on Monday, 3 November 1947 at 10 a.m. at Escuela Nacional de Maestros, Mexico City'.

<sup>547</sup> 'UNESCO-UNAM / Jaime Torres Bodet Prize in Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts | UNESCO'.

<sup>548</sup> 'Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre'.

<sup>549</sup> In the book "CREFAL: Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe", it is mentioned that UNICEF was also a partner of CREFAL between 1951 and 1960, or CREFAL's first stage. This is the only source mentioning the partnership of UNICEF during this period. Therefore, I prefer to only focus on the other Specialised Agencies of the UN such as the FAO, ILO and WHO. Moreover, I consider this might be a mistake as UNICEF was initially established as an organisation to help the children in need who were victims of the second world war. It took several years before UNICEF changed its focus from children in Europe towards children all over the world. See: UNICEF België, 'Geschiedenis UNICEF', accessed 7 May 2024, <https://www.unicef.be/nl/waarom-bestaat-unicef/geschiedenis-unicef>; Medina and others, *CREFAL: Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe. Edición conmemorativa del 30 Aniversario de la Institución*.

<sup>550</sup> Dr Jorge St. Siegens, 'Letter to Sr. Ortiz, Oficial de Relaciones Públicas, UNIC, México', 4 November 1954, 1954/00-01/C-10/E-2, CREFAL.

Congress of Mental Health. Similarly, economy students visited institutions such as the *Escuela Práctica de Agricultura de la Huerta* in Michoacán and the Tepalcatepec basin in 1952.<sup>551</sup> There were also collaborations with the Federal Commission for Electricity for the introduction of electricity in Jarácuaro as well as with telecommunication and postal services.<sup>552</sup> Moreover, according to a document found in the OAS Archive, informal agreements were signed with the Latin American Institute of Educational Cinematography (“*el Instituto Latinoamericano de Cinematografía*” or ILCE), the National Indigenous Institute (“*el Instituto Nacional Indigenista*” or INI), the anthropological department of the University of California in Berkeley, and the Centre for International Cooperation of the University of the State of Montana, USA. The collaborations mainly focused on the exchange of information regarding scripts and publications, conducting tests and evaluations, and facilitating exchange visits from students and professors to CREFAL.<sup>553</sup>

CREFAL did not hesitate to establish powerful collaborations between regional organisations, governmental services, and international organisations, effectively acting as a civil society organisation within a complex network of connections. This approach aligns with Saunier’s description of entities that can be studied as ‘units of historical study’.<sup>554</sup> As in contextual thinking, or transnational thinking, it is essential to explore the historical background of such units.

In the previous chapter, I analysed the genesis of the centre. In this chapter, I have explored the circumstances of that time, including the geographical context and an anthropological perspective on the Quinta and its intertwining with regional narratives, along with UNESCO’s conditional requests for project implementation. This historical analysis sheds light on the origins of CREFAL not only from a local perspective - such as the exploration of important regional figures like “Tata Vasco” and his introduction of social work to the Tarascans - but also from a national perspective, considering the “*misiones culturales*” brought to the region by the Mexican government. Both perspectives demonstrate a pre-existing path for development and educational work in the region, fulfilling one of UNESCO’s conditions.<sup>555</sup>

Exploration revealed that development projects were not new to Tarascans. Without delving deeper into the impact of external interventions on Tarascan culture, I will continue my analysis of CREFAL by examining the organisation itself, focusing on the role of the UDHR and the translation of fundamental education by its personnel and students.

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<sup>551</sup> A replica of the basin of Tepaltepec is also present in the garden of CREFAL, referring to the pride Cárdenas had for his region.

<sup>552</sup> ‘Informe de Labores C.R.E.F.A.L. Julio - 1952’ (Biblioteca CREFAL, 1952), CRE 52-3 Ej. 3, Biblioteca CREFAL, 20, 22 & 34.

<sup>553</sup> ‘El CREFAL: Organización, programa, actividades y resultados alcanzados’.

<sup>554</sup> Saunier, *Transnational History: Theory and Practice*, 3.

<sup>555</sup> ‘Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre’.

## 4.2 Making the First Regional Centre on Fundamental Education operational

The inception of the New Mexican Education Centre was initially documented in the UNESCO Courier of February 1950 when John Bowers, head of the fundamental education section, travelled to Mexico to oversee the final stages of the comprehensive plan for fundamental education.<sup>556</sup> While the scope of CREFAL's work may seem modest, its Latin American programme exerted a significant impact on countless lives globally and within UNESCO.<sup>557</sup>

### 4.2.1 The mission

Seventy million individuals, representing a staggering number of illiterates in Latin America, are described as being trapped behind a barrier of ignorance. This significant burden hinders both the economic and social progress of the Latin American continent, as highlighted by the author of the “Pátzcuaro – A School for Tacticians in the Fight Against Ignorance” article in the UNESCO Courier of February 1951.<sup>558</sup> Illiteracy is described here as synonymous with hunger, disease, poverty, and underutilisation of human potential. Central to addressing these challenges are teachers, who play a pivotal role in combating illiteracy, ignorance, and other societal afflictions.<sup>559</sup>

The author elaborates concisely on the purpose of CREFAL, the pioneering centre designed to serve as a ‘mass production’ hub for teachers in fundamental education. Daniel Behrman, a UNESCO staff member, further emphasises the monumental task undertaken by the international centre in Pátzcuaro which leads the fight for better life conditions for many around the world in his article published in the June 1951 UNESCO Courier.<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>556</sup> ‘Mexican Education Centre Will Serve a Continent’, *UNESCO Courier*, February 1950: 3.

<sup>557</sup> Todd Shepard highlighted how the Mexican work with indigenous communities also inspired UNESCO in its anti-racism programmes. See: Shepard, ‘Algeria, France, Mexico, UNESCO’; Woolsey, ‘CREFAL - UNESCO’S School for Community Development Leadership in Latin America’.

<sup>558</sup> ‘Pátzcuaro - A School For Tacticians In The Fight Against Ignorance’.

<sup>559</sup> ‘Pátzcuaro - A School For Tacticians In The Fight Against Ignorance’.

<sup>560</sup> Behrman, ‘Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance’.



Figure 37: First page of Daniel Behrman's article in June 1951 UNESCO Courier, 7.

Behrman outlines two main objectives: "Objective n° 1: 80 sq. miles – 10,000 Tarascans around a mountain lake," referring to the laboratory provided to UNESCO comprising of eighteen Tarascan villages around the lake, encompassing mountains, islands and plains; and "Objective n° 2: Spreading the benefits of Pátzcuaro to all the world".<sup>561</sup> These objectives translate into two main functions for the Pátzcuaro centre: training teachers of fundamental education for Latin America and beyond and identifying the most effective teaching aids available for fundamental education.

Fundamental education teachers are depicted not merely as educators but also as specialists in their domain, entrusted with the effective transmission of knowledge to those requiring it. Consequently, faculty members hail from various UN agencies, including the WHO, FAO, and ILO, as well as from Colombia, Denmark, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the mainland United States.<sup>562</sup> Their collective aim was to equip teachers with the skills needed to improve the lives of individuals within their respective communities.<sup>563</sup>

The second objective entails establishing a production centre for innovative educational materials developed by teachers' colleges to combat illiteracy. These materials, including radio scripts, cinema scripts, and wall charts, among others, are promptly tested with the Tarascans - an

<sup>561</sup> Behrman.

<sup>562</sup> Behrman.

<sup>563</sup> 'Pátzcuaro - A School For Tacticians In The Fight Against Ignorance'.

intelligent and industrious population residing in the ‘Switzerland’ of Mexico, known for their strong desire for education.<sup>564</sup>

In the previous chapter, attention was focused on delineating the division of tasks between the OAS and UNESCO. Examination of correspondence and governing bodies’ records revealed UNESCO’s responsibility to conduct training courses, prepare and publish sample materials, and test and evaluate educational resources. UNESCO pledged to offer specialised training courses for educators and provide technical information to field educators.<sup>565</sup> These standards can be recognised in the two objectives discussed by Behrman and the other, unknown, author from the Secretariat in their articles on the main public.

Furthermore, the description of the teachers’ training purposes reveals a discernible connection with the initial missionaries dispatched by the SEP during cultural missions. Their primary objective was to educate trainers, instilling in them the confidence and skills required to enhance the lives of many others.

Here, I want to pause briefly. As already discussed regarding the contribution of Tom Vanwing, the intervention was widely accepted for creating better lives for populations through health, education, and parish relief.<sup>566</sup> Through Foucault’s understanding, normalisation became a trend wherein everything that was not normal had to become normal, and even more, was in the possibility of becoming normal.<sup>567</sup> Consequently, in my understanding, I acknowledge that whoever holds the power, defines the concept of normality. Education is herein regularly seen as the ‘motor to change’. Thus, it is also fundamental education that should lead people towards a ‘fuller and happier life’ as entitled in the rights for all of the UDHR.<sup>568</sup>

As previously mentioned, the teachers deployed in the cultural missions had a dual task: providing rural inhabitants with positive exposure to Western culture, and identifying, encouraging, and assisting elementary teachers in these tasks while exchanging basic teaching techniques with them.<sup>569</sup> Additionally, an explanatory note from UNESCO indicated that the Mexican government was asked to attach one or more Cultural Missions to the Centre, along with

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<sup>564</sup> ‘Pátzcuaro - A School For Tacticians In The Fight Against Ignorance’.

<sup>565</sup> ‘Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre for Latin America: Explanatory Note Based on the Agreement between UNESCO and the Organization of American States’; UNESCO and OAS, ‘Agreement Between The United Nations Educational, Scientific And Cultural Organization And The Organization Of American States Concerning The Training Of Staff And Preparation Of Fundamental Education Material For Latin America’.

<sup>566</sup> Vanwing, ‘De narrige legitimering van het sociaal-cultureel volwassenenwerk’.

<sup>567</sup> Marc Depaepe, ‘Geen Ambacht Zonder Werktuigen. Reflecties Over De Conceptuele Omgang Met Het Pedagogische Verleden.’, in *Paradoxen van pedagogisering: handboek pedagogische historiografie*, by Marc Depaepe, Frank Simon, and Angelo Van Gorp, Tweede (Leuven: Uitgeverij Acco, 2006), 23–71: 45.

<sup>568</sup> Bowers, ‘Fundamental Education. Programme for 1948’.

<sup>569</sup> Tovey, ‘The Role of the Music Educator in Mexico’s Cultural Missions’; Hughes, *The Mexican Cultural Mission Programme*.



some rural schools and literacy centres from the neighbourhood to be used as practice fields for the trainees and production staff.<sup>570</sup>

In summary, cultural missions and CREFAL were clearly intertwined, particularly through their educators. Therefore, it is important to remain cautious and critical of CREFAL's programme during its early years. For example, the scholar Guillermo Palacios, aligning with Foucault's ideas, argues that the social category of 'peasant' was constructed as a way to legitimise the dominion of the post-revolutionary state in the rural world during the cultural missions of the 1930s (1932-1934). In this narrative, the teacher was responsible for training the peasants and the teachers in training, as noted by Isidro Castillo, a Mexican fundamental education specialist involved with CREFAL. It was up to the teachers to shape the mindset and practices of the rural population and to guide the formation of a new identity.<sup>571</sup>

Whether the teachers were tools of the Mexican state during the period of the cultural missions is difficult to determine, and this likely evolved over time. However, as mentioned above, it can be concluded that UNESCO envisioned spreading peace, security, and general welfare worldwide through fundamental education. The illiterate, particularly in the so-called 'backward areas' of the world, were to be taught to read, write, and achieve a minimum standard of general education in health, hygiene, technical knowledge, and world citizenship to combat ignorance and illiteracy.<sup>572</sup> The teachers were seen as implementers of this mission. However, considering that the fundamental education specialists were from Mexico and were neither trained by UNESCO nor the OAS in world citizenship, nor given training on the content of fundamental education as envisioned by UNESCO, the OAS, or even the UDHR, it is worth questioning where the influence of the Mexican state ended and that of the international community began. Therefore, it is important to explore the perspectives of staff and students on CREFAL and its programme in the early years.

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<sup>570</sup> 'Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre for Latin America: Explanatory Note Based on the Agreement between UNESCO and the Organization of American States'.

<sup>571</sup> Elsie Rockwell, 'Guillermo Palacios, La pluma y el arado. Los intelectuales pedagogos y la construcción sociocultural del "problema campesino" en México, 1932-1934, México, El Colegio de México, 1999, 261 pp.', *Signos históricos* 5 (June 2001): 215–35.

<sup>572</sup> 'Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre for Latin America: Explanatory Note Based on the Agreement between UNESCO and the Organization of American States'.

## 4.2.2 CREFAL's first staff

Drawing on Behrman's article, I reconstructed an initial and simple organisational chart. This chart proved to be immensely helpful in delineating the operational structure of the centre and shedding light on the viewpoints of CREFAL's staff concerning fundamental education.

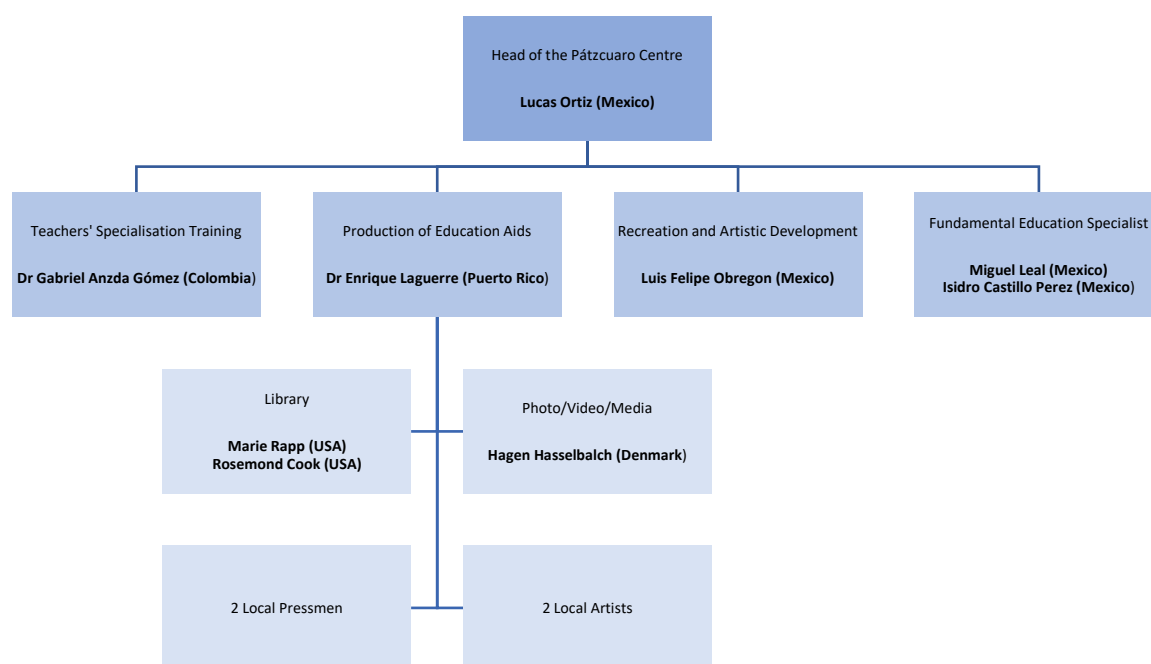


Figure 38: Organisational chart CREFAL 1951 - Based on: Behrman, 'Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance', UNESCO Courier, June 1951, 7-11.

"It is no use teaching a man literacy unless you convince him it will help solve the problems of his daily life. We teach literacy when we teach health or home economics or agriculture, but never as a separate, isolated subject," asserts Lucas Ortiz.<sup>573</sup> The former head of the Mexican rural education department, Ortiz, served in various educational roles, including as the chief of Mexican cultural missions.<sup>574</sup> At the age of 47, he assumed the first director of the Pátzcuaro centre, a decision documented in the records of the 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Executive Board.<sup>575</sup>

<sup>573</sup> Behrman, 'Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance'.

<sup>574</sup> Angélica Arreola Medina, 'Lucas Ortiz Benítez - Detalle Del Autor - Enciclopedia de La Literatura En México - FLM', in *Enciclopedia de La Literatura En México* (Mexico City, Mexico: Foundation for Mexican Letters AC Liverpool), accessed 3 May 2024, <http://www.elem.mx/autor/datos/128127>.

<sup>575</sup> The appointment of Lucas Ortiz as the new director of CREFAL had been somewhat controversial. In Chapter 5, I will delve further into this matter. See: 'Summary Records of the 23rd Session of the Executive Board (3rd Meeting)' (UNESCO Digital Library, 18 September 1950), 23EX/SR3, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000162237?posInSet=2&queryId=2e860820-971a-4bbe-b7f8-6bfe48df6e11>.

As a director, Ortiz outlined four primary tenets of fundamental education. First, he advocated for education geared towards safeguarding individuals' health. Second, he stressed the importance of leveraging local natural resources. Third, he emphasised the significance of fostering a dignified family life, both materially and spiritually. Finally, he underscored the right to leisure and the need to facilitate enjoyment.<sup>576</sup> These foundational principles formed the basis of teacher training at the CREFAL centre, reflecting the key provision of the UDHR. So do I recognise “the right to a family life” as in article 16, “the right to leisure” as described in article 24, “the right to a standard of living”, being article 25 and “the right to education” as referred to in article 26.<sup>577</sup>

Dr Gabriel Anzola Gómez, a Colombian educator, oversaw specialised teacher training. Dr Anzola recognised the intrinsic link between education, communication, and practical advancement. He recounted an instructive anecdote illustrating this connection:

“About 15 years ago, I was director of education in a Colombian province with 15 rural schools. We suddenly faced an outbreak of tropical anaemia, and I had to act quickly. The province's doctors distributed medicine wholesale, and we began a big campaign to build sanitary facilities. We put a cement latrine in every school, and the sickness disappeared. But the following year, tropical anaemia broke out all over again. It did not take us long to find out why. Every latrine was locked. Someone had tacked up signs: ‘Keep this door closed to prevent mosquitoes from entering.’ So, no one ever opened the door.”<sup>578</sup>

Dr Enrique Laguerre, hailing from San Juan, Puerto Rico, played a pivotal role in overseeing the production of teaching aids at the centre. A former Spanish literature professor and radio programme producer, Dr Laguerre, emphasised the necessity of crafting locally relevant educational materials. Moreover, he advocated for adapting content to ‘lay language’, specifically the P’urhépecha language spoken by the Tarascan community.<sup>579</sup> This ‘localisation’ strategy aimed to actively engage and inspire learners by aligning educational content with their cultural context. For instance, a farmer who reads about successful methods to combat crop pests would be more inclined to utilise these techniques. Dr Laguerre implemented this strategy by enlisting two local pressmen and two artists to locally create illustrations and drawings for textbooks.<sup>580</sup>

The centre also established a Multilith press and a set of Varitype machines to support students who conducted research in the field. Dr Laguerre selected these machines for their

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<sup>576</sup> Behrman, ‘Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance’; Unesco, *New Horizons at Tzetzzenhuaro*.

<sup>577</sup> Nations, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’.

<sup>578</sup> Behrman, ‘Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance’.

<sup>579</sup> Behrman.

<sup>580</sup> Behrman.

versatility, allowing for the reproduction of a wide range of typefaces and the enlargement of letters at minimal cost, as noted by Behrman.<sup>581</sup> In addition to his role as the centre's publisher, Dr Laguerre collaborated with two experienced American librarians, Marie Rapp from Detroit, Michigan and Rosemond Cook from Brockport, New York.<sup>582</sup> Together, they managed a research library and exchange service aimed at keeping the centre's staff, and Latin American educators were informed about advancements in their field. Over time, the library grew through contributions from students on fundamental education and collaboration with specialists from the UN's specialised organisations and the OAS.<sup>583</sup>

Dr Laguerre and his team recognised the importance of utilising various media channels to engage with their target audience. One of the preliminary conditions set forth by UNESCO was the presence of a radio station.<sup>584</sup> The CREFAL team conducted a preliminary study which revealed that each village typically possessed six to seven radio sets, often situated in the central hubs of community activity.<sup>585</sup> Leveraging this insight, the team collaborated with Radio XELQ in Morelia, a nearby town approximately 55 km from Pátzcuaro, to disseminate information about CREFAL and its objectives to the local population. Furthermore, the radio platform served as an initial venue for students to introduce themselves, share insights about their home countries, and discuss their aspirations and work at CREFAL. Additionally, students actively contributed to the production of educational programmes throughout the year, which were broadcast over XELQ.<sup>586</sup> This multifaceted approach not only facilitated outreach to the community, but also provided students with a platform to engage with local audiences and share their perspectives and experiences.

The visual aspect of the educational materials received significant support through the recruitment of two local artists. Drawing from previous experiences, UNESCO has observed the effectiveness of locally produced visual aids in projects, such as the Audio-Visual Fundamental Education Project in China. These initiatives highlighted the importance of tailoring visuals to local contexts, with locally created filmstrips often yielding better outcomes than those developed by UNESCO's international staff.<sup>587</sup> This underscored the significance of localising educational

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<sup>581</sup> Behrman.

<sup>582</sup> Behrman.

<sup>583</sup> To this day, CREFAL's library remains operational. The collection included student theses written as assignment during their stay in the centre, which can still be consulted.

<sup>584</sup> 'Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre'.

<sup>585</sup> Behrman, 'Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance'.

<sup>586</sup> Behrman.

<sup>587</sup> A few years earlier, UNESCO had shown an animated cartoon about the dangers of mosquitoes to an audience in Africa. At a certain point, the mosquito was enlarged on the screen, which stimulated the audience into a hilarious mood, as Dr Laguerre recounts to Daniel Behrman in his article. See: Behrman.

material production, as UNESCO discussed with the OAS during their negotiations.<sup>588</sup> This might be one of the main reasons why it was so important for UNESCO to maintain the production of educational material on local grounds. Initially, the filmstrips produced by CREFAL were intended to serve as sample material for other Latin American countries.<sup>589</sup> The first head of the section for visual aid creation was Hagen Hasselbalch, the sole European member of the staff and a Danish writer, director, and cameraman. He oversaw the production of film strips intended for dissemination in the villages.<sup>590</sup>

Beyond these departments, CREFAL accommodated two other fundamental education specialists, namely Miguel Leal and Isidro Castillo Perez, both from Mexico. Perez, the founder of Mexico's inaugural rural teachers' training school, and Leal, holding a prominent position in Mexico's agricultural education department, brought valuable hands-on experience to their roles. Their approach to education emphasised practical, experiential learning, with Castillo expressing that he would not have been drawn to the centre had it been a conventional school.<sup>591</sup>

Accompanying them was another Mexican educator, Luis Felipe Obregon, aged 47, tasked with training teachers in recreational activities. Obregon emphasised the supreme importance of such activities for two reasons. First, they addressed a critical need in villages where pastimes were limited to card-playing, alcohol consumption, or idleness, as observed by Obregon and echoed by Mexico's Cultural Mission Department in 1945.<sup>592</sup> This department underscored the role of music in connecting with rural populations and combatting issues such as alcoholism.<sup>593</sup> Second, Obregon viewed recreational activities as effective tools for building rapport and trust within communities, emphasising the bonding experience of playing with children on the street.<sup>594</sup>

The preliminary programme on recreational activities encompassed several activities. Initially, Obregon proposed revitalising local dances, renowned among the Tarascans, and fostering the talents of village composers and musicians through music classes. Given the longstanding cultural significance of music in Tarascan community life, Obregon envisioned the formation of village orchestras, often seen gathering on Sundays for collective performances. Additionally, he advocated for sports engagement, including basketball, volleyball, and football,

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<sup>588</sup> I refer here to Chapter 3, where I discuss the negotiating process between the OAS and UNESCO.

<sup>589</sup> 'Pátzcuaro - A School For Tacticians In The Fight Against Ignorance'.

<sup>590</sup> Behrman, 'Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance'.

<sup>591</sup> Behrman.

<sup>592</sup> Behrman.

<sup>593</sup> Tovey, 'The Role of the Music Educator in Mexico's Cultural Missions'.

<sup>594</sup> Behrman, 'Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance'.

envisioning small-scale championships to incentivise participation with prizes, such as agricultural tools and household equipment.<sup>595</sup>

Moreover, Obregon advocated for the inclusion of women in recreational activities, particularly during family leisure time. He proposed scenarios in which women could contribute through singing while their spouses played the guitar. Finally, he expressed a desire to organise outdoor theatre productions, which, beyond their recreational value, could serve an educational purpose. These performances vividly illustrate the benefits of literacy skills to the audience, aligning with the educational objectives of the programme.<sup>596</sup> These five specialists collaborated from the first hour to provide comprehensive training in fundamental education to students from abroad, all of whom were trained at CREFAL.

Certainly, the composition of CREFAL staff has evolved over time. A comprehensive document sourced from the OAS provides a detailed overview of the teaching and administrative personnel employed at the centre from 1951 to 1961.<sup>597</sup> Analysis of the data revealed a predominant representation of individuals of American or Mexican nationality among the staff (Figure 39). However, it is noteworthy that the dataset may not encompass all staff members because of the identified gaps within the timeframe. Nevertheless, even with these limitations, it is unlikely that the general conclusion regarding the composition of staff employed by international agencies at CREFAL would be significantly altered.

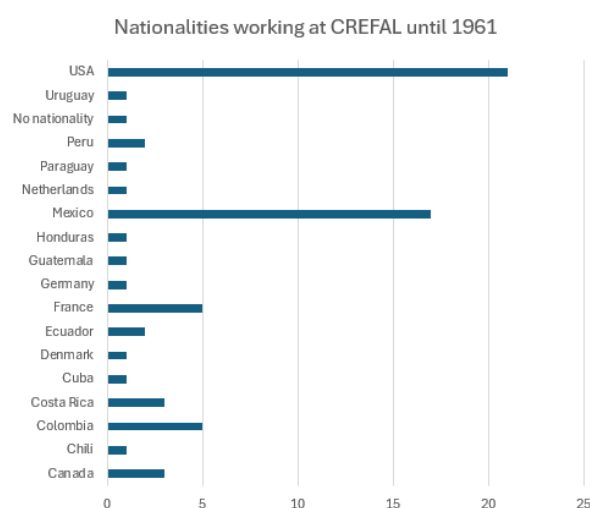


Figure 39: Graph made based on the list of nationalities found in "El CREFAL: Organización, programa, actividades y resultados alcanzados," SCC/3 – Anexo VI, Paris, 15 November 1961, OAS Archives.

<sup>595</sup> Behrman.

<sup>596</sup> Behrman.

<sup>597</sup> 'El CREFAL: Organización, programa, actividades y resultados alcanzados'.

### 4.2.3 CREFAL's partners

The comprehensive document “El CREFAL: Organización, Programa, Actividades y Resultados Alcanzado” not only provides insights into the staffing composition at CREFAL but also delineates the sponsorship of personnel and their respective departments.<sup>598</sup> This clarification highlights the collaborative ethos of the centre’s operations, echoing previous successful partnerships, such as the Haitian Pilot project. In light of this, esteemed organisations such as the WHO, ILO, and FAO were invited, in accordance with draft resolution 1.223, to contribute their specialised expertise to the training and production centre for fundamental education in Mexico.<sup>599</sup>

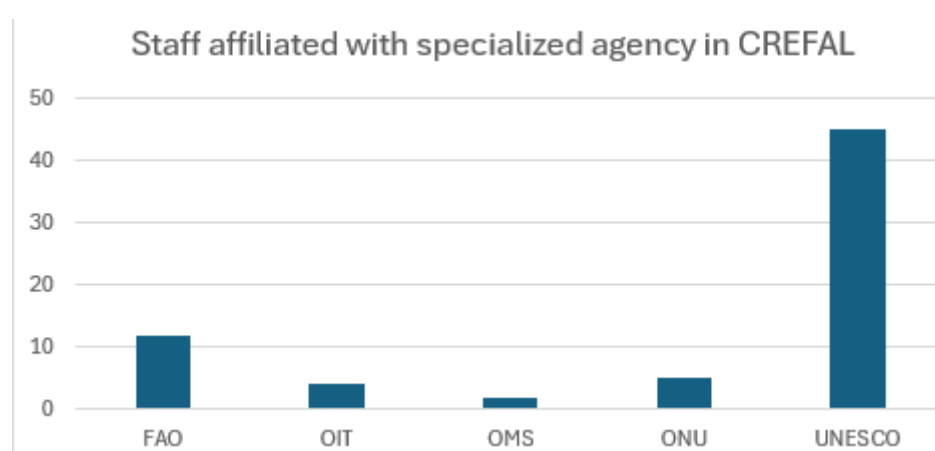


Figure 40: Number of staff employed at CREFAL - graph made based on the Specialised Agencies found in “El CREFAL: Organización, programa, actividades y resultados alcanzados,” SCC/3 – Anexo VI, Paris, 15 November 1961, OAS Archives.

From CREFAL’s inception, Specialised Agencies played a vital role in providing financial support to cover the salaries of teaching staff aligned with their organisational mandates. For instance, personnel employed by the FAO were engaged in tasks related to establishing cooperatives and household economy, while WHO personnel focused on public health and health education, and ILO personnel specialised in handicrafts, popular arts, and rural industry courses. Additionally, UN-sponsored personnel were involved in community development and organisation. It is worth noting that collaboration between CREFAL and other Specialised

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<sup>598</sup> ‘El CREFAL: Organización, programa, actividades y resultados alcanzados’.

<sup>599</sup> Draft resolution 1.223 refers to a proposal to be presented at the General Conference of 1951 for the year 1952, which aims to promote UNESCO’s contribution in the field. This resolution emphasises the coordination of activities between the UN and its Specialised Agencies. See: ‘Summary Records of the 24th Session of the Executive Board (1st Meeting)’, 4 June 1950, 24EX/SR1, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000162272?posInSet=2&queryId=7ffbd096-b2de-458d-86b2-17e8b0e3c5f9>.

Agencies, except UNESCO, is not governed by any formal agreement. Since 1956, however, representatives from these agencies have held seats on the CREFAL interinstitutional committee.<sup>600</sup>

In this dissertation, I no longer focus on the role of international agencies as partners in CREFAL, as this falls outside the scope of this study. However, there is an early indication of the shift in CREFAL's orientation, which will become more pronounced from the 1960s onwards. According to the comprehensive document "El CREFAL: Organización, Programa, Actividades y Resultados Alcanzado," in 1952, the Colombian G. Ospina was dispatched by the UN to support CREFAL in community development specialisation. He was later joined by F. Jones Vargas from Costa Rica in 1954, focusing on the community organisation.<sup>601</sup> Both individuals were likely sponsored by the UN's TA.<sup>602</sup> Additionally, Wodajo noted that the UN's launch of the TA in 1950 laid the groundwork for CREFAL's shift towards community development, marking the beginning of a new phase in the institution's trajectory. Prof. Guillermo Medina, in his book "Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe", identifies 1961 as the starting point of CREFAL's orientation towards community development.<sup>603</sup>

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<sup>600</sup> The Interinstitutional Committee was formally established in 1956 with the aim of evaluating the work of the Centre, advising the Director in the development of plans and programmes, and serving as a liaison with the headquarters of the institutions and other development projects established by the same organizations in Latin America. See: 'El CREFAL: Organización, programa, actividades y resultados alcanzados'.

<sup>601</sup> 'El CREFAL: Organización, programa, actividades y resultados alcanzados'.

<sup>602</sup> So far, I have not found any documents proving this statement. However, it is true that the UN was sponsoring CREFAL through its TA programme. In 1952, the budget of the centre came from three different sources: UNESCO (\$ 55.000), the OAS (\$ 40.000) and TA (\$ 203.600). See: Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.'; 'Informe de Labores C.R.E.F.A.L. Julio - 1952'.

<sup>603</sup> Medina and others, *CREFAL: Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe. Edición conmemorativa del 30 Aniversario de la Institución*.



#### 4.2.4 CREFAL's local communities

However, the success of these projects relied on the support of the local inhabitants. CREFAL operates within the *Zona de Influencia* or the Zone of Influence. This was a rectangular district carved out of four municipalities. These municipalities consisted of an urban centre from which it was governed, along with a number of surrounding villages. These municipalities surround Lake Pátzcuaro and include 22 communities, villages, and towns with a total area of approximately 130 square kilometres and a total population of 17,419 inhabitants. Colonia Ibarra is the closest community to the centre's headquarters and Erongarícuaro, the farthest being more than twenty miles, or about thirty-two kilometres, away. Villages in the zone ranged from 55 to 3,678 in population.<sup>604</sup>



Figure 41: CREFAL's Zone of Influence. (Map found in CREFAL, 2a. Etapa de Actividades, Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, Mexico - OAS Archives, n.p.)

Tibor Mende's article, published in the February 1952 edition of the UNESCO Courier, vividly illustrates how villagers played a crucial role in implementing the project. The willingness of the villagers to engage in consultations and discussions was paramount.<sup>605</sup> During Mende's exploration of Janitzio, he observed fishermen mixing and spreading concrete to construct a community sports ground, while Alfonso Vargas, a member of the working team, explained how the village contributed financially to this project.<sup>606</sup> This grassroots involvement underscored villagers' ownership of their own development initiatives. Similar sentiments were echoed in UNESCO's 1953 publication "New Horizons at Tzetzzenhuaro", emphasising the importance of earning locals' trust.<sup>607</sup> Trust within a community was paramount and required a gradual approach. Students initially approached village problems with caution, offering advice only when trust was

<sup>604</sup> Lloyd H. Hughes, 'Fieldwork: Keystone of CREFAL's Training Programme' (CREFAL, 1958), 1958/1958/500/C-12/E-2 Historia del CREFAL, CREFAL.

<sup>605</sup> Tibor Mende, 'Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World's Most Unusual Social Experiments.', *UNESCO Courier*, February 1952.

606 Mende.

<sup>607</sup> Unesco, *New Horizons at Tzentszenhuaro*.

established, ultimately facilitating lasting improvements.<sup>608</sup> When students arrived in Tzentzenhuaro in 1951, they were initially met with a friendly but cautious reception. However, by addressing urgent needs effectively, such as access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and combating lice infestation, the students gained more respect. This led to the formation of a “village improvement committee” in Tzentzenhuaro, comprising 12 men from the community, tasked with collecting funds from residents to support ongoing village improvements.<sup>609</sup>

Building trust within the community by addressing their needs has become a recurring strategy. However, the personality of each specialist also played a significant role. Specialists had to collaborate effectively with their teams and villagers, necessitating acceptance from both parties. Mende illustrates this process through the case of Jaracuaro, known as the ‘sombbrero-village’, and the esteemed Mexican teacher-student, Filiberto Tentori. Tentori swiftly gained the villagers’ trust during a pig epidemic, despite having arrived in the village only five months prior in 1952. By that year, the villagers had formed a cooperative, acquired an electric power press, constructed a basketball court, and replaced the old well with a new one. Plans were underway to purchase an electric pump, and villagers had recently established their own journals. These developments signify the transformation initiated by CREFAL, blending new ways of life with existing traditions to improve the community.<sup>610</sup>

The book, along with Mendes’ article, documents various consultations held in the villages surrounding Lake Pátzcuaro, such as Janitzio, Ihuatzio, Hueciro, San Bartolo, Jaracuaro, La Pacanda, and Cucuchucho.<sup>611</sup> In Janitzio, for example, Mende described a conversation between a Haitian student and an elderly woman who was drying fish. They deliberated on more efficient working methods and improved the hygienic conditions for handling food. Upon returning to the working team, Mende observed discussions led by Alfonso Vargas on potential strategies for increasing village income, such as earmarking funds for church repairs or generating revenue through the sale of tourist guidebooks. Similar conclusions were drawn for the other villages. In Ihuatzio, an agricultural community, Mende sees men gather cornerstones to construct a communal centre. Nearby, women gather around a Costa Rican student, showing them embroidery techniques while discussing balanced diets and kitchen hygiene. In San Bartolo, efforts are made to establish a chicken coop, while in Hueciro, vaccinations for chickens are pursued.<sup>612</sup> In contrast, in Cucuchucho, students were met with hostility, facing a barrage of thrown stones

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<sup>608</sup> Mende, ‘Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World’s Most Unusual Social Experiments.’

<sup>609</sup> Unesco, *New Horizons At Tzentzenhuaro*, 8 – 9.

<sup>610</sup> Mende, ‘Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World’s Most Unusual Social Experiments.’

<sup>611</sup> Mende; Unesco, *New Horizons at Tzentzenhuaro*.

<sup>612</sup> Mende, ‘Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World’s Most Unusual Social Experiments.’

upon their arrival. However, the situation shifted when some village leaders sought advice from Julio F. Cruz, the team's health worker, regarding the link between water quality and typhoid. This interaction marked a turning point, fostering trust between the villagers and students. Behind the closed doors, women were eavesdropping when the students discussed the connection between contaminated water and intestinal diseases. Shocked by the loss of 10 community members due to such diseases, village leaders acknowledged the necessity of a well with clean water. The students suggested seeking government assistance, pointing out that their reluctance to ask had hindered their progress. Shortly thereafter, the governor agreed to provide a mason and some cement, contingent on Cucuchucho's contribution to labour and additional materials for the construction of a new well.<sup>613</sup>

In each narrative, the success of the initiatives was determined by several key factors: trust, the personalities of the students, their proximity to the residents, and villagers' ownership of their own developments. Luis Urrieta, a scholar of P'urhépecha descent with significant ancestral and family ties in Nocutzepo, a village within CREFAL's zone of influence, and Judith Landeros, a scholar contributing to the analysis of Urrieta's data, provide a critical counternarrative on CREFAL's programmes.<sup>614</sup> Both researchers explored stories and counter-stories related to CREFAL's initiatives.<sup>615</sup> While they acknowledge that CREFAL's fundamental education programme was generally well received in the P'urhépecha community, it was not all roses and moonlight. Fundamental education experts faced reluctance and resistance from the community's elders and women, echoing earlier accounts of eavesdropping on women.<sup>616</sup>

Urrieta and Landeros rightly argued that more research should be conducted on the counter-stories of CREFAL's programmes to challenge the dominant discourse. However, owing to the constraints of this study, gathering data and testimonials from the residents themselves proved unfeasible, precluding further exploration of their perspectives.<sup>617</sup>

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<sup>613</sup> Unesco, *New Horizons at Tzentzenhuaro*.

<sup>614</sup> Urrieta and Landeros, "Hacer El Hombre Más Hombre".

<sup>615</sup> Urrieta and Landeros.

<sup>616</sup> Urrieta and Landeros; Unesco, *New Horizons at Tzentzenhuaro*.

<sup>617</sup> At the start of my study, I planned a three-month stay in Pátzcuaro, Mexico, which would have allowed me to immerse myself in the Tarascan culture. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic and the constraints of a PhD-study, this stay was reduced to one month. Moreover, the Tarascans speak their own language, P'urhépecha. As in the fundamental education approach, it is always easier to converse with people in their native tongue. Unfortunately for me, I neither speak P'urhépecha nor enough Spanish to conduct an oral history project within a three-week visit to the CREFAL Archives. However, during my stay in July 2022, I was invited by the archivists to join them on one of their initial explorations for an oral history project, searching for testimonies on the CREFAL projects. I look forward to the outcomes of their project.



Figure 42: Sin título - Poster "Zona de Influencia" – Courtesy of CREFAL, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-74\_N-23.

Urrieta and Landeros suggest that fundamental education workers operated within a framework that perceived modernity as civilised and traditional as uncivilised.<sup>618</sup> This perspective, imposed on the *Zona de Influencia*, or CREFAL's 'laboratory zone', overlooked the traditional community history, ties, and knowledge, opting instead for a Western viewpoint. The researchers even describe this as a colonial intrusion, although this characterisation might be too harsh. Instead, I would describe it as a paternalistic approach, similar to that seen in other countries. As discussed earlier, through Tom Vanwing's work, it took until the 1960s for the then-accepted civic ideal – that intervention was necessary to improve the population's lives – to come under scrutiny.<sup>619</sup> I have also previously mentioned that, while intent was present, the practice lacked a more empowering approach that would be developed later in social work.<sup>620</sup>

Watras was another scholar who argued that fundamental education was not a form of colonisation. However, we agree that the arrival of fundamental education workers certainly

<sup>618</sup> Urrieta and Landeros, "Hacer El Hombre Más Hombre".

<sup>619</sup> Vanwing, 'De narrige legitimering van het sociaal-cultureel volwassenenwerk'.

<sup>620</sup> I refer here to Chapter 2.; Vanwing.

weakened the traditional structures, habits, and knowledge. The elevation of living standards came at the cost of undermining the original orientation of these societies.<sup>621</sup>



Figure 43: Tradition and ties among the Tarascans in Santa Fe de la Laguna: The preparation of the communal Friday meals in honour of the founder “Tata Vasco”. © Stefanie Kesteloot, personal archive, 5 August 2022.

#### 4.2.5 CREFAL’s students

Having examined the complex dynamics and impacts of CREFAL’s programmes on local communities, it is essential to shift our focus to students at the heart of these initiatives. These students, hailing from diverse backgrounds and countries, played a crucial role in implementing and sustaining the community development projects. When Behrman visited CREFAL, fifty-two students were present, representing nine countries: Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Peru, Guatemala, Haiti, and Mexico.<sup>622</sup>

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<sup>621</sup> Santa Fe de la Laguna is one of the communities that has historically asserted its origins, traditions, and communal territory. Moreover, it is governed by local customs and practices (*usos y costumbres*) and operates under the indigenous customary law for self-government, which is recognised by the Mexican State. During a private guided tour to Santa Fe on 23 July 2022, an artisan responded to my inquiry about the benefits of CREFAL’s programmes with a pointed question: “The benefits for who?” and declined to elaborate further. See: Carla Galan, ‘Rituals, Feasts, and Ceremonies Sustaining and Regenerating Commons Socio-Cultural Institutions And Livelihoods in Santa Fe de La Laguna, Mexico’, *Community Development*, 23 June 2023.

<sup>622</sup> Behrman, ‘Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance’.





Figure 44: Primera Generación del CREFAL (The first generation of CREFAL). © Stefanie Kesteloot, personal archive, taken from a picture found on the walls of CREFAL, 19 July 2022.

In an earlier version of the UNESCO Courier (February, 1951), it was stated that ten students attending the training in basic education and better teaching methods at CREFAL would be from Mexico. This was also confirmed by the seventh article of the agreement between UNESCO and the Mexican government on the establishment of a regional centre for the training of staff and the preparation of fundamental education material in Latin America. This article ensured that ten Mexican students would be trained at the centre, selected by the Mexican

government in agreement with the director of the institution.<sup>623</sup> Forty other trainees were from various Latin American countries. This arrangement is reflected in the photograph of the first generation of students who completed their studies at CREFAL (Figure 44) and in the table found in the 1981 book “CREFAL: Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe” (Figure 45).

CUADRO RESUMEN *									
P A I S E S	PRIMERA ETAPA: EDUCACION FUNDAMENTAL								
	PROMOCIONES	51-52.	52-53.	53-54.	54-55.	55-56.	56-57.	57-58.	59-60
TOTALES		46	63	58	56	65	58	130	149
Argentina		—	—	—	—	—	—	4	9
Bolivia		5	5	—	5	4	—	9	6
Brasil		—	7	—	—	5	—	3	—
Colombia		—	5	—	10	—	5	5	14
Costa Rica		5	—	6	—	5	—	13	—
Cuba		—	5	—	5	—	4	2	1
Chile		—	—	5	5	—	5	5	5
Ecuador		6	—	9	—	5	—	9	6
Guatemala		4	5	—	—	5	7	12	8
Haití		4	5	—	5	—	6	3	6
Honduras		4	—	9	—	4	5	6	6
México		10	12	9	11	10	9	15	52
Nicaragua		—	—	10	5	10	5	13	9
Panamá		—	5	—	—	1	1	5	5
Paraguay		—	5	—	—	—	2	1	3
Perú		5	1	5	5	5	5	8	4
El Salvador		3	1	5	5	—	—	2	5
Uruguay		—	4	—	—	2	—	6	2
Venezuela		—	4	—	—	5	—	5	5
España		—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
U.S.A.		—	—	—	—	4	4	3	—
Viet-Nam		—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
									3

\* FUENTE: CREFAL. Departamento de Control de Estudios.

Figure 45: An overview of the students attending CREFAL. (Table found in: Guillermo Medina and others, CREFAL: Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe (1981), 62)

During the initial years of CREFAL, when its core task was fundamental education, more than 600 students participated in the institution’s training programme.<sup>624</sup> These trainees were professionals with prior training and nominated by their respective governments for participation in the CREFAL programme. They came from diverse fields, including medicine, education,

<sup>623</sup> ‘Acuerdo Entre La UNESCO Y El Gobierno Mexicano Sobre El Establecimiento De Un Centro Regional Para La Formación Del Personal Y La Preparación Del Material De Educación De Base En América Latina’.

<sup>624</sup> The author of the book ‘CREFAL: presencia y acción en América Latina y el Caribe’, distinguishes five different phases during CREFAL’s existence. During the first phase, spanning from 1951 and 1960, the institution was primarily oriented towards fundamental education. The second phase, from 1961 to 1968, saw CREFAL focusing on community development work. From 1969 to 1974, the centre reoriented towards functional literacy. Beginning in 1975, the focus shifted to adult education as a form of permanent education, and in 1979, this evolved into a focus on both adult education and functional literacy. See: Medina and others, CREFAL: Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe. Edición conmemorativa del 30 Aniversario de la Institución.

agriculture, social work, agrarian reform, and development programmes in health, education, agriculture, labour, and industry.

CREFAL's core activities focused on areas such as health, economy, home and household management, recreation, and basic knowledge. These activities were supported by two main branches: teacher training and the production of educational materials.<sup>625</sup> The programme was interdisciplinary and incorporated social anthropology, social psychology, sociology, pedagogy, social research, fundamental education theory, literacy, and document research. Additionally, CREFAL offered a laboratory workshop that included training in the use of visual aids, cinema, theatre, drawing, engraving, and printing.<sup>626</sup> Students were given the opportunity to choose a specialty of their interest, with guidance from CREFAL's staff.<sup>627</sup>

The trainees became part of a multidisciplinary team consisting of five specialists from the aforementioned fields. These teams were assigned to communities in the *Zona de Influencia*. They began with a survey and visited villages to identify local needs. This approach allowed them to develop programmes tailored to each village.<sup>628</sup>

The studies, according to the plan, would last twenty-one months, with three months of vacation.<sup>629</sup> During the first phase, the trainees remained at CREFAL for a month-long training on the theoretical aspects of fundamental education. This training covered core topics on health, home and household management, economy, recreation and the use of audiovisual production materials. They also familiarised themselves with the areas to which they were assigned and received English courses.<sup>630</sup>

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<sup>625</sup> Medina and others; CREFAL, *2a. Etapa de Actividades*.

<sup>626</sup> Medina and others, CREFAL: *Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe. Edición conmemorativa del 30 Aniversario de la Institución*.

<sup>627</sup> CREFAL, *2a. Etapa de Actividades*; 'Pátzcuaro - A School For Tacticians In The Fight Against Ignorance'; Behrman, 'Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance'; Mende, 'Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World's Most Unusual Social Experiments.'

<sup>628</sup> Mende, 'Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World's Most Unusual Social Experiments.'

<sup>629</sup> The description of the training course is based on Medina's book. In the UNESCO booklet, the phases appear somewhat mixed up. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the UNESCO booklet was written at the beginning of the fundamental education programme, while Medina's book was published in 1981. See: UNESCO, *Aprender Para Vivir. Hay que liberar al mundo de la ignorancia* (Amsterdam: Holland N.V., 1951); Medina and others, CREFAL: *Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe. Edición conmemorativa del 30 Aniversario de la Institución*.

<sup>630</sup> Medina and others, CREFAL: *Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe. Edición conmemorativa del 30 Aniversario de la Institución*, 10-11.





Figure 46: Mexico - The trainees from the Pátzcuaro Fundamental Education Centre make a study trip to the surrounding communities - boat Mission Cultural Lacustre n° 1. Photo found in: Mende, 'Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World's Most Unusual Social Experiments', UNESCO Courier, February 1952, 3.

The second phase, which lasted for five months, was dedicated to practical work in the communities. This included preparing educational materials, organising community activities, and providing training and support for implementing local improvement projects.<sup>631</sup> During these months, the students were 'probing'. They would just walk around trying to understand the problems of 'their village' and be ready to offer advice wherever it is asked for.<sup>632</sup>

Laboratory work and fieldwork were conducted over the next nine months, including documentary research and the preparation of educational materials through group work and plenary sessions.

This third phase was followed by a fourth phase lasting three months, during which the trainees summarised and analysed their experiences in relation to practical implementation in their home countries.<sup>633</sup> At the end of the training, CREFAL hoped that the trainees would return home as highly trained specialists.<sup>634</sup> Through these trainings, UNESCO aimed to create a 'chain reaction'

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<sup>631</sup> Medina and others, 11.

<sup>632</sup> Mende, 'Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World's Most Unusual Social Experiments.'

<sup>633</sup> Medina and others, *CREFAL: Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe. Edición conmemorativa del 30 Aniversario de la Institución*, 11-12.

<sup>634</sup> 'Pátzcuaro - A School For Tacticians In The Fight Against Ignorance'; Mende, 'Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World's Most Unusual Social Experiments.'

in fundamental education, with CREFAL alumni sharing new and modern techniques with local teachers in their respective countries.<sup>635</sup>

Additionally, the programme included visits to Mexican organisations and institutions to present their reports on activities and attend seminars hosted by Latin American institutions working on documentary research. The participants concluded their stay by preparing a thesis and graduating from exams.<sup>636</sup>

It would have been interesting to hear participants' stories about their experiences in the training programme and, more importantly, how they transferred their knowledge back home. As emphasised by CREFAL and UNESCO, staying as local as possible was crucial. Therefore, each technique learned or provided as an example would likely be adapted to local circumstances. This combination could be fascinating material for further research.

Unfortunately, I did not find any research from the students' perspective. Hughes, discussing CREFAL in the 1960s, is the only one who mentions that staff and students live in a sort of 'goldfish bowl', constantly on display for official and unofficial visitors.<sup>637</sup> He gently described the challenges of living and working together in such an environment, where they were exposed to endless small talk, tea, tennis, and social events. The monotony and limited social life at the centre often led to boredom and social unrest. Moreover, students and staff were always faced with resistance, usually unconscious, as they were challenged to accept new goals, orientations, and methods.<sup>638</sup>

While Hughes' article dates back to 1963, it is reasonable to imagine that similar conditions applied to students participating in the programme throughout the decade. The length of the programme, the distance from their home countries to Mexico, and the challenges of living abroad and working in villages certainly impacted the students. They were continually exposed to diverse problems and human reactions, varying according to local circumstances. Their patience had to be immense, as their primary ambition was not to achieve quick results but rather sustainable ones.

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<sup>635</sup> 'Pátzcuaro - A School For Tacticians In The Fight Against Ignorance'.

<sup>636</sup> Medina and others, *CREFAL: Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe. Edición conmemorativa del 30 Aniversario de la Institución*, 12.

<sup>637</sup> This was also mentioned in Chapter 1. See: Hughes, 'Crefal'.

<sup>638</sup> Hughes.

## 4.3 Human rights in CREFAL

CREFAL was established by UNESCO through its embrace of the principle of fundamental education rights from its inception. Along with plans to establish a regional centre and network, the evolving view on education emerged, driven by historical crises and the development of renewal.<sup>639</sup>

In “Aprender Para Vivir”, Torres Bodet questioned in the introduction of the little booklet how the UDHR can be called universal when we know that, out of every two men, one cannot even read. Moreover, as he continues, we consider the responsibility of a democratic nation to be the responsibility of the individual. However, he asked, how can we demand from certain countries in which more than 50 percent, if not more than 80 percent of the population, are unaware of the conventions signed by their governments - not because they want to hide them, but simply because they lack the means to inform their people accurately?<sup>640</sup>

UNESCO recognised that development can only occur when material conditions are met. How can we expect a Chinese day labourer, who is struggling to support his family amid the hardships of hunger and war, to fully appreciate the significance of Article 26 of the UDHR?<sup>641</sup>

Torres Bodet acknowledged that issues concerning conventions and declarations are normally resolved by states on their own. He also recognised that it is beyond the financial possibilities of UNESCO to organise a universal literacy campaign. Yet, he believed that fundamental education might provide an answer to the battle that many are fighting, helping them to live a fuller and happier life, as initially defined.<sup>642</sup> The first step in fundamental education, he argued, would then be the study of the needs of the people to ensure they know about their rights and duties as enshrined in the UDHR.<sup>643</sup>

Previously, I mentioned that, in my opinion, fundamental education could be seen as a significant step towards introducing the second generation of human rights, which encompasses the social, economic, and cultural rights of the UDHR.<sup>644</sup> These rights are based on the harmonisation of individual and collective interests in society. They are known as the freedom of assembly, the right to work, the right to education, etc. They imply positive rights and were

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<sup>639</sup> Isidro Castillo, *Educación Fundamental Ideario, Principios y Orientaciones Pedagógicas* (CREFAL, 2018), <https://crefal.org/publicacion/educacion-fundamental-ideario-principios-y-orientaciones-pedagogicas/>.

<sup>640</sup> UNESCO, *Aprender Para Vivir. Hay que liberar al mundo de la ignorancia*.

<sup>641</sup> Castillo, *Educación Fundamental Ideario, Principios y Orientaciones Pedagógicas*.

<sup>642</sup> UNESCO, *Aprender Para Vivir. Hay que liberar al mundo de la ignorancia*; Bowers, ‘Fundamental Education. Programme for 1948’.

<sup>643</sup> Castillo, *Educación Fundamental Ideario, Principios y Orientaciones Pedagógicas*.

<sup>644</sup> I refer here to Chapter 1.

considered not the sole responsibility of the state but a duty of every citizen, a concept easily recognisable in the idea of fundamental education as promoted by staff and students.<sup>645</sup> Through photographs found in the archives of CREFAL and UNESCO, I see a first translation of the programme on fundamental education and, thus, on the articles enshrined in the UDHR.

Little is known about the UNESCO's photographers. Fortunately, I discovered a document at the OAS providing an overview of all the photographers present at CREFAL between 1951 and 1960.<sup>646</sup> Five photographers, all with foreign backgrounds, worked in Pátzcuaro. The first photographer was Hagen Hasselbalch, a Danish national who worked at CREFAL for one year during the inaugural period from 1951 to 1952. He was the only European photographer at CREFAL.

The other four photographers were Simon Singer, Richard Kent Jones, H. Trubov and Lucien Parizeau. Singer, Jones and Trubov were American nationals, while Parizeau was Canadian. Simon Singer was the first of these, serving from 1952 to 1954. He was followed by Richard Kent Jones, who worked as a photographer until 1956. Jones returned in 1957 to work in the Graphic Arts Department for another year, during which he co-created the film "Eres libre", illustrating the rights and duties outlined in the Rights of Men.<sup>647</sup>

After Jones, Lucien Parizeau served for one year until 1958, and H. Trubov was the last one, working from 1959 until 1960.<sup>648</sup>

In this section, I have selected photographs mostly from the CREFAL Archives that exemplify certain rights enshrined in the UDHR.<sup>649</sup> I will focus on Article 25, which guarantees the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one's family; Article 26, which enshrines the right to education; and Article 27, which states that everyone has the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community.<sup>650</sup> These rights are most easily recognisable in photographs.

Many more articles of the UDHR are reflected in CREFAL's fundamental education programme. This study revealed that the specialists were also working on interpreting leisure time and improving working conditions, which can be linked to Articles 23 and 24, respectively, on the

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<sup>645</sup> Symonides, *Human Rights*.

<sup>646</sup> 'El CREFAL: Organización, programa, actividades y resultados alcanzados'.

<sup>647</sup> *Eres Libre* (Canal Crefal, 1956), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMF7Z8DL02w>.

<sup>648</sup> H. Trubov also authored a book 'Tres Problemas: Capacitación de Maestros, distribución de materiales y selección de equipos' and can still be consulted in CREFAL's library. See: 'El CREFAL: Organización, programa, actividades y resultados alcanzados'.

<sup>649</sup> There are still numerous photographs and negatives in the UNESCO Archives. Unfortunately, since UNESCO does not yet know who took each photograph and is therefore struggling with copyright issues, they do not allow them to be published.

<sup>650</sup> Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'.

right to work and the right to rest and leisure.<sup>651</sup> Additionally, Article 21, which states that everyone has the right to participate in the government of their country or has equal access to public services, is evident through the various partnerships established by the government.<sup>652</sup> Articles 18 and 19, which discuss the right to freedom of thought, opinion, and expression, are also crucial components of the programme, aiming to combat ignorance and promote critical thinking.<sup>653</sup> These rights, though not directly addressed, are inherent in the programme's broader goals.

I will first focus on Article 26, the right to education. In the photographs below, we see students engaging with people who appear to be interested in CREFAL's campaigns. It seems likely that CREFAL organised a fair to motivate locals to attend school and read. As discussed below, this fair was probably organised concurrently with recreational activities, such as folklore dancing, sports tournaments, or music events. In the background of the first picture (Figure 47), we see a poster saying "*Siempre es tiempo para aprender a leer*", translated as "It's always time to learn how to read" (Figure 48). Moreover, in the following pictures from the same series, we see a mobile library (Figure 50) with books ready to be read by the public, as demonstrated in a subsequent picture showing men reading books while sitting on a small wall (Figure 49). It is easy to connect these pictures with the right to education, particularly to the first paragraph of the article.<sup>654</sup> Education and knowledge were made available and offered to people. Additionally, as demonstrated in the following pictures, technical and professional training were also provided. However, the focus here is on how the local community was engaged in and recruited for literacy campaigns.

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<sup>651</sup> Behrman, 'Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance'; 'Informe de Labores C.R.E.F.A.L. Julio - 1952'; Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'.

<sup>652</sup> Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'; Mende, 'Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World's Most Unusual Social Experiments.'; 'Informe de Labores C.R.E.F.A.L. Julio - 1952'; Unesco, *New Horizons at Tzetzzenhuaro*.

<sup>653</sup> I refer here to the first chapter and the frequently cited speeches of both Director-General, Julian Huxley and Jaime Torres Bodet. See: '1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.'; UNESCO, *Aprender Para Vivir. Hay que liberar al mundo de la ignorancia*.

<sup>654</sup> Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'.



Figure 47: *Alumnos atendiendo a las personas interesadas* (Students serving interested people (author's own translation) Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-3\_N-31.



Figure 48: Poster "Siempre es tiempo para aprender a leer." Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-71\_N-15.



Figure 50: *Repartiando volantes sobre campana de alfabetización* (Handing out flyers for the literacy campaign) Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-3\_N-40.

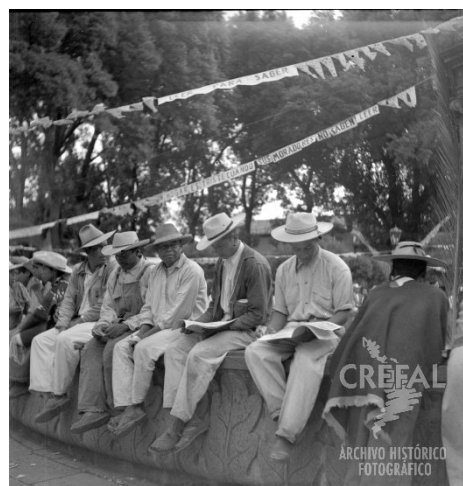
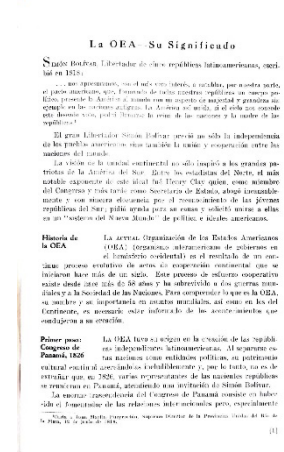
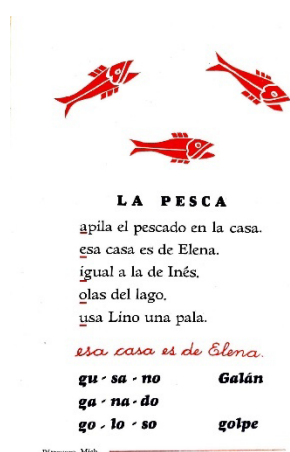


Figure 49: *Interesados en su lectura* (Interested in reading) Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-3\_N-32.

The education campaigns went beyond motivating the locals to attend classes. Booklets, as previously mentioned by Laguerre, were created for locals. Some of these booklets were designed to teach reading, whereas others aimed to inform them. I found several examples of these materials during my visit to the CREFAL Library.





The first booklet (Figure 51) discusses rural life, which is familiar to the Tarascans. The third (Figure 53) provides detailed information on the OAS, including its history, functions, organisation, and collaborations, with the aim of informing the public. The middle booklet (Figure 52) features a girl reading about Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a former Mexican revolutionary whose movement triggered Mexican independence.<sup>655</sup> The literature available to students covered a wide range of subjects, spanning from microstructures of society or individual contexts, such as local and rural life, to macrostructures or global contexts, such as the field in which organisations like the OAS operate. Additionally, national themes were also represented, disseminating information about Hidalgo, the father of the nation.<sup>656</sup>

<sup>655</sup> ‘Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla | Facts, Accomplishments, & Biography’, in *Britannica*, 4 May 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Miguel-Hidalgo-y-Costilla>.

<sup>656</sup> Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla was a Roman Catholic priest and revolutionary leader. He is called the father of Mexican Independence. See: 'Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla | Facts, Accomplishments, & Biography'; Stols, *Mexico in historisch perspectief*.

In the gardens of CREFAL, one can find a monument and two statues. One statue embodies Jaime Torres Bodet (Figure 18), while another one is dedicated to the three ‘great ones’ being Abraham Lincoln, Benito Juárez, and José Martí. The latter also has a separate statue. For more information: Ettinger, *La Quinta Eréndira de Lázaro Cárdenas De casa campestre a sede del CREFAL*, 69.



Figure 54: *Sin título - Learning how to read and write.* Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, *Archivo histórico Fotográfico*, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-68\_N-23.

In his book, Castillo elaborates on the importance of transferring basic knowledge, emphasising that knowledge is not an end in itself but a function of individual and societal interests. In fundamental education, knowledge serves multiple purposes, aligned with its elevation and work programmes. These purposes include ensuring that actions are performed with full awareness rather than blindly, freeing the mind from prejudices and fears, inculcating individuals and groups with the literary language of the country (reading and writing), economic organisation, jurisprudence, social and political functioning of the nation, and understanding national problems and tasks in relation to its history and culture.<sup>657</sup>

This involves understanding the elementary scientific principles that support hygienic practices, acquiring knowledge and techniques for economic progress, and teaching ideas to improve family living conditions. Additionally, it encompasses expanding cultural interests and social relationships through recreation and understanding the community's place in the country's geography and history, literacy, and other relational elements. It also includes preparation for

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<sup>657</sup> Castillo, *Educación Fundamental Ideario, Principios y Orientaciones Pedagógicas*.



citizenship, international civics, and the promotion of ethical and spiritual ideals oriented towards both individuals and society.<sup>658</sup>

Castillo emphasises that fundamental education is a universal and continuous process that involves the entire community, with the school just being one component of this broader educational framework. He argues that fundamental education should not be limited by boundaries or considered a temporary measure but should be viewed as a comprehensive and ongoing endeavour to address essential aspects of human development.<sup>659</sup>

Human development, the concept that forms the basis for the creation of a UDHR, encompasses all the rights and duties of individuals. In my opinion, as previously mentioned, the way CREFAL staff gave expression to fundamental education is not only related to Article 26 of the UDHR. Other articles are also relevant, such as Article 25, which prescribes that everyone has the right to a standard of living that is adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one's family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care.<sup>660</sup> This right is also very clearly visible in the following pictures.

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<sup>658</sup> Castillo.

<sup>659</sup> Castillo.

<sup>660</sup> Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'.

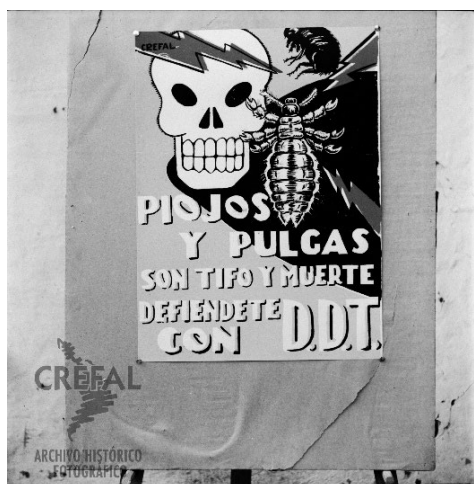


Figure 56: Campaign for DDT (Lice and fleas are typhus and death, defend yourself with DDT) – Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-79\_N-28.

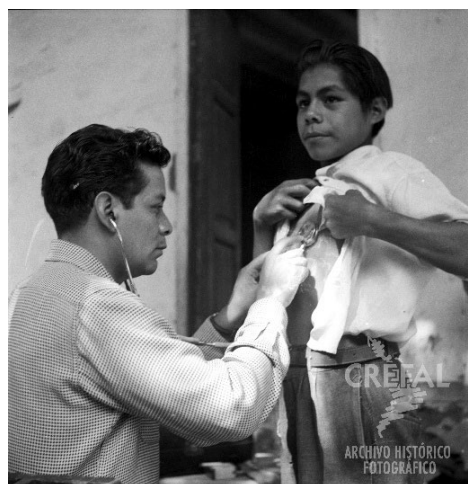


Figure 55: Salud (Health) – Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-75\_N-10.



Figure 58: Sin título - Sewing classes – Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-73\_N-37.



Figure 57: Sin título - Poster 7 alimentos basicos (7 basic foods) – Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-17\_N-19.

In this dissertation, I do not elaborate on the campaigns themselves. History should be understood in its historical context, or as Goodale expresses it, with a “period eye” and I will not question the validity of some campaigns.<sup>661</sup> I take it for granted that the staff were working to the best of their abilities to spread what was considered the most accurate information at that time.

The pictures depict Tarascans visiting doctors to provide medical care. One picture shows a poster outlining essential nutritional foods, while the other recommends DDT in the battle against lice and fleas. Sewing classes are also depicted. Testimonies revealed that many other

<sup>661</sup> Goodale, *Letters to the Contrary*.

practices were included, such as the replacement of contaminated wells.<sup>662</sup> Urrieta and Landeros also recounted practices, such as installing bathrooms, elevating the *fogón* (stove) for cooking (Figure 60), introducing ‘modern’ beds for sleeping, and separating animals from living spaces.<sup>663</sup>



Figure 60: *El fogón alto es más cómodo* - Promotion for a high stove in the communities of the CREFAL Zona de Influencia. Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-79\_N-45.

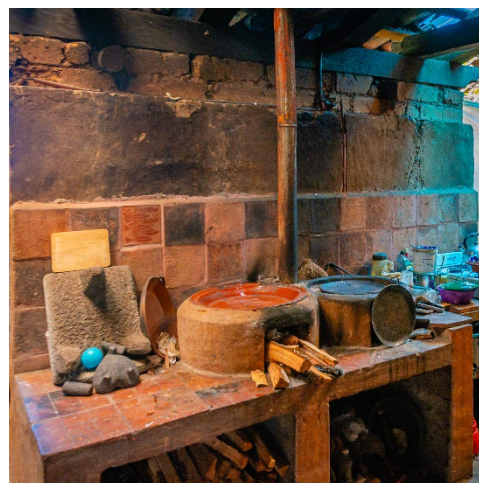


Figure 59: *A traditional kitchen in Santa Fe de La Laguna.* © Stefanie Kesteloot, personal archive, 23 July 2022.

Ensuring an adequate standard of living intersects with Articles 25 and 23, which discusses the right to work. Good health supports the capacity to earn a good income, and conversely, a good income allows for better healthcare. The villages surrounding Lake Pátzcuaro have their own specialities, as introduced by “Tata Vasco”. As explained, Vasco de Quiroga introduced Tarascans to particular crafts, such as copper smithing, weaving, wood carving, and pottery, tailored to the needs of each village.<sup>664</sup> These specialisations remain visible today and are evident in the photographs. These crafts provide the local community with work and a means to earn income to support their families, aligning with Article 23 of the UDHR, which refers to the right of work and free choice of employment.

Hughes described the villages as being poor and lacking many basic public services and utilities, such as markets. The average annual income of a villager did not exceed 150 dollars per

<sup>662</sup> Mende, ‘Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World’s Most Unusual Social Experiments.’

<sup>663</sup> Urrieta and Landeros, “Hacer El Hombre Más Hombre”; CREFAL, *CREFAL: Instantes de Su Historia. Memoria Gráfica 1951-2008*, Primera edición (México: Centro de Cooperación Regional para la Educación de Adultos en América Latina y el Caribe, 2009).

<sup>664</sup> Each member of the hospital was trained for the rotation of work, for example in agriculture, stone working, weaving, etc., for the rotation of work which Quiroga ordained. See: Foster and Ospina, *Empire’s Children*.

year, making them vulnerable to money lenders who charged high interest rates, pledging their crops, and future harvests as security in times of sickness. Consequently, many villagers were heavily in debt and unable to achieve a pay-as-you-go basis. Their poor health and frequent sickness consumed many working days, which could otherwise be used productively, he argued.<sup>665</sup>



Figure 62: *Sin título – Feeding the chickens –*  
 Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, *Archivo histórico Fotográfico*,  
 MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-A-111-59.



Figure 61: *Sin título - Carving fishing boats –*  
 Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, *Archivo histórico Fotográfico*,  
 MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-23\_N-12.

In a picture previously shown, I already mentioned the depiction of the division set by Vasco de Quiroga (Figure 36). Sombreros were sold in the market. In UNESCO's Digital Archives, I found a picture showing a whole family at work, making sombreros in Jaracuaro, known for its sombrero crafting. It seems that the fundamental education programme took into account the crafting and source of income from the families.<sup>666</sup> In the other picture, we can see men carving a new fishing boat (Figure 61). Boats were used as fishing vessels, but they could also be used for kayaking contests, as depicted on photographs found in the UNESCO Archives.<sup>667</sup>

CREFAL aimed to improve working conditions around Pátzcuaro, including agricultural work. Peasants were taught better harvesting techniques and methods for chicken breeding, as shown in Figure 62.<sup>668</sup> Also, the Tarascans were instructed on how to protect their animals through livestock vaccination (Figure 64), how to fertilise their land, and how to implement irrigation

<sup>665</sup> Hughes, 'Fieldwork: Keystone of CREFAL's Training Programme'.

<sup>666</sup> Mende, 'Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World's Most Unusual Social Experiments.'

<sup>667</sup> Unfortunately, as many of the pictures were taken by unknown photographers, the organisation does not grant permission to publish them.

<sup>668</sup> 'Informe de Labores C.R.E.F.A.L. Julio - 1952'.



techniques.<sup>669</sup> Moreover, the Tarascans were motivated to reorient themselves to other sources of income, such as the breeding of ducks (Figure 63).



Figure 64: Sin título - Protect your animals against diseases – Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-71\_N-21.

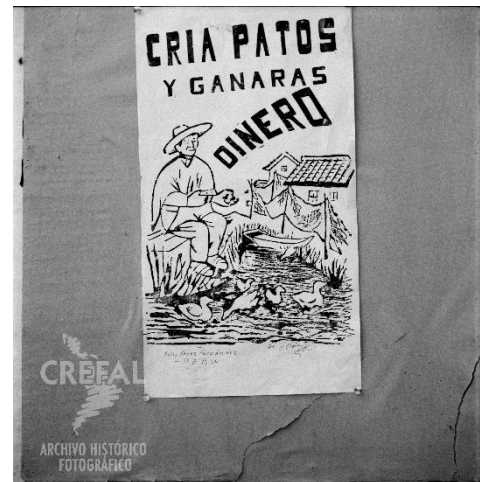


Figure 63: Sin título – Raise ducks and you will earn money – Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-71\_N-7.

However, it was not only in the field of economics that we saw the Tarascans working. In many pictures, men are seen collecting stones and engaging in construction work (Figure 65). The entire community helped to construct toilets, basketball courts, roads, cemeteries, and more. Through my analysis of the students' and staff's vision of fundamental education, it became clear that they wanted to empower the Tarascans by giving them power and opportunities to improve their own villages. This is evident not only in their stories but also in their photographs. These efforts align with Article 17, which states that everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others, and Article 20, which states that everyone has the right to peaceful assembly and association.<sup>670</sup> As previously mentioned, I will not discuss whether these initiatives were beneficial for the Tarascans. I simply cannot say that. Assimilation and integration can result in identity loss, a feature certainly felt by the P'urhépecha.

<sup>669</sup> 'Informe de Labores C.R.E.F.A.L. Julio - 1952'.

<sup>670</sup> Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'.

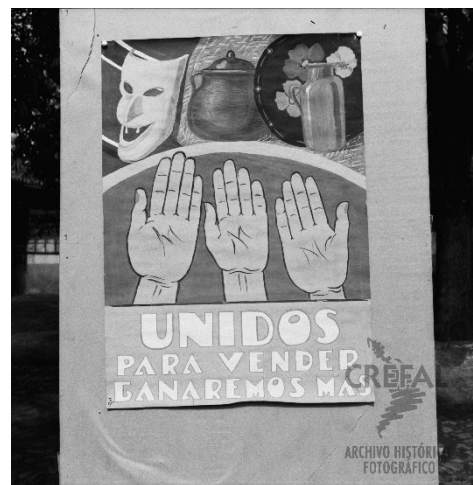


*Figure 65: Sin título – Men working in construction – Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-10\_N-35.*

But it was not only in construction that men were working together. As previously mentioned, the establishment of collaborations and cooperatives was highly motivated in the fundamental education programme. Several posters found in the CREFAL Archives call for the Tarascans to cooperate for economic purposes with the specific goal of making more profit (Figure 66 and Figure 67).



*Figure 67: Sin título – Let's buy thread and palm together for everyone – Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-71\_N-22.*



*Figure 66: Sin título – United to sell, will makes us earn more – Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-72\_N-42.*

This recalls the practices of “Tata Vasco” and the early cooperatives of the “Utopian socialists,” as Wodajo notes.<sup>671</sup> Vasco de Quiroga imparted skills in Tarascan crafts tailored to the needs of each village. It appears that this practice continued, but under the guise of a fundamental

<sup>671</sup> Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO’s Concept and Program of Fundamental Education,’ 1.

education programme, initiated by CREFAL and influenced by intergovernmental agencies such as UNESCO and the OAS. At the Third General Conference of UNESCO, resolution 2.83 stated that the programme should aim for a better living based on “the needs and resources of the local community” by actively promoting fundamental education “among the less privileged groups within their own borders”.<sup>672</sup>

Not only did the division of the crafts between the villages remain, but traditional practices can still be easily observed today, demonstrating a degree of freedom of expression, conscience, and religion as stipulated in Articles 18 and 19 of the UDHR. For instance, the dance of the little old men (*“Danza de los Viejitos”*) continues to be performed (Figure 68), and the traditional community meals on Friday in Santa Fe de La Laguna also persist (Figure 43).



Figure 68: One of the dancers of a "Danza de los Viejitos" in Janitzio. © Stefanie Kesteloot, personal archive, 17 July 2022.

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<sup>672</sup> 'Records of the General Conference of UNESCO, Third Session, Beirut, 1948, v. 2: Resolutions', 21.



However, more important are the traces and the intersection with Article 27, which states that everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, enjoy arts, and share scientific advancement and benefits.<sup>673</sup> Regularly, I found articles and pictures covering theatre, music play, or sports tournaments. Culture and recreation, as Obregon mentioned, were regularly used to share knowledge, but also to provide people with meaningful pastimes. As Castillo put it, it frees us from bad thoughts or distracts us, creating energy and balance for a person.<sup>674</sup> It was a way to communicate with people and attract them to new activities at the centre and in the community.



Figure 70: Sin título – Music ensemble – Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-85\_N-39.



Figure 69: Sin título - Volleyball tournament - Picture found in CREFAL Archive, Archivo histórico Fotográfico, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-39\_N-50)

Recreation was not only about entertainment, sports, or playing music together (Figure 69 and Figure 70). Theatre puppets from comic characters, such as ‘Charalito’ (Skinny Bones) (Figure 71), regularly joined Crefalito, CREFAL’s house puppet christened by Alfredo Mendoza Gutierrez, the director of the theatre puppet workshop at CREFAL. The stories of theatre puppets were eagerly followed by old and young Tarascans. The puppets argued in local dialect with their ‘family’, performed fancy folk dances, and had drinking sprees, but each play contained an educational point, for example on literacy, hygiene, or community development. As Mendoza Gutierrez argues, “we get our message across, by giving them amusing entertainment at the same time”.<sup>675</sup>

<sup>673</sup> Nations, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’.

<sup>674</sup> Castillo, *Educación Fundamental Ideario, Principios y Orientaciones Pedagógicas*.

<sup>675</sup> Gabriel Anzola Gomez, ‘UNESCO’s Most Popular Teacher’, *UNESCO Courier*, 1955.





Figure 71: *Sin título - Theatre* – Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, *Archivo histórico Fotográfico*, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-48\_N-11.

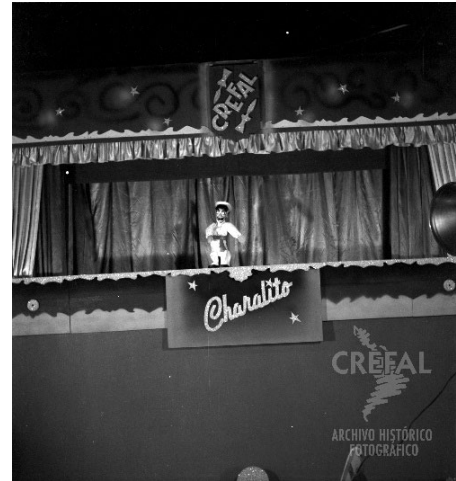


Figure 72: *Sin título - Puppet Show Charalito* – Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, *Archivo histórico Fotográfico*, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-78\_N-12.

The building of instruments and the construction of sports fields were also part of CREFAL's programme, as recounted by Mexican student Tentori.<sup>676</sup> In his testimony, he spoke about how the communities worked together to build sports fields, such as a basketball court, during their free time. Ultimately, this recreational ground was not only meant for sports, but also became a place where young people met every evening.<sup>677</sup>

The children and traditions were not forgotten either. I found a picture of a marble tournament in which children were playing (Figure 75). Additionally, there were pictures of traditional dances and customs, such as the dance of the “*Viejitos*” and flower arranging (Figure 74). Both the dance and the tradition of ‘flower arranging’ are still easily visible today in the Mexican society (Figure 68 and Figure 73). While the first, the dance is still regularly performed, mostly by four performers, in touristic spots, flower arranging is still more commonly done as a matter of ritual, for example, at Friday community gatherings in Santa Fe de La Laguna or in churches and during festivities.



Figure 73: *Flower arranging in Santa Fe de La Laguna.*  
© Stefanie Kesteloot,  
personal archive, 5 August 2022.

<sup>676</sup> Here, I refer to the previous sections on CREFAL's staff and students.

<sup>677</sup> Mende, ‘Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World's Most Unusual Social Experiments.’



Figure 75: Sin título – Marble tournament –  
 Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo  
 histórico Fotográfico,  
 MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-13\_N-16.



Figure 74: Sin título – Flower arranging –  
 Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo  
 histórico Fotográfico,  
 MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-84\_N-24.

Remarkably, I found a picture of cyclists (Figure 76). To the best of my knowledge, Mexico is not a cycling country. Even during my stay, I seldom saw cyclists. I suspect that the bicycles were introduced by the international staff and students of the CREFAL programme. Further research should be conducted to determine whether this hypothesis holds.

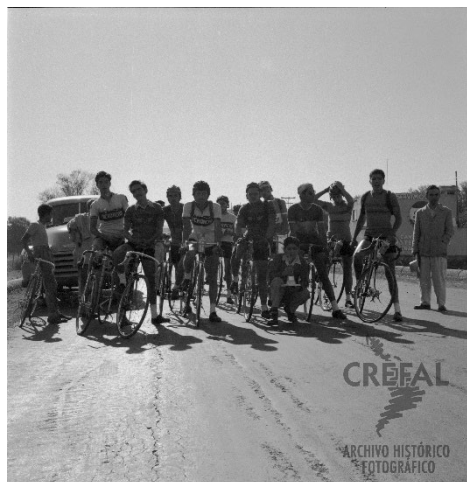


Figure 76: Sin título - cyclists in Pátzcuaro -  
 Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, Archivo  
 histórico Fotográfico,  
 MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-40\_N-48.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the multifaceted approach of CREFAL in promoting fundamental education and the integration of human rights within local communities around Lake Pátzcuaro. Through a detailed analysis of archival photographs, testimonies, and the documented activities of CREFAL, it is evident that staff and students, whether consciously or unconsciously, endeavoured to translate human rights into practical applications in the field. This exploration highlighted the presence of various human rights articles, particularly those from the second generation, such as the right to education, adequate living standards, and participation in cultural life.

The photographs vividly depict the diverse efforts undertaken by CREFAL to improve the living conditions and educational opportunities of the Tarascan people. These images show Tarascans receiving medical care, engaging in educational activities, and participating in community development projects. The campaigns organised by CREFAL, such as fairs to motivate locals to attend school and read, reflect a clear commitment to the principles enshrined in Article 26 of the UDHR, which guarantees the right to education. Similarly, efforts to replace contaminated wells, instal bathrooms, and introduce modern amenities align with Article 25, which ensures the right to a standard of living that is adequate for health and well-being.

Furthermore, the promotion of traditional crafts and local industries, as introduced by Vasco de Quiroga, underscores the significance of Article 23, which upholds the right to work and the free choice of employment. These crafts not only provide economic stability but also preserve cultural heritage, fostering a sense of identity and community among Tarascans. The emphasis on recreation, cultural activities, and community engagement illustrates the practical application of Article 27, which advocates the right to freely participate in cultural life.

However, despite the evident alignment with these human rights principles, there remains a notable absence of explicit references to the UDHR within the fundamental education programme. This absence raises questions about the extent to which the programme was influenced by the UDHR and how the interventions were integrated with respect to the cultural and traditional contexts of the local population. The translation of human rights into the field seems to have been mediated through a Western lens, which, while aiming to empower and uplift, also risked imposing external values on indigenous practises. Urrieta and Landeros observed that ‘modernity’ often neglected tradition and cultural practices.<sup>678</sup> Watras, taking a softer stance, stated

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<sup>678</sup> Urrieta and Landeros, “Hacer El Hombre Más Hombre”.

that higher living standards came at the price of weakening the original orientation of society, a perspective I agree with.<sup>679</sup>

It seems likely that fundamental education workers, while employing scientific techniques that might be effective, often overlooked the environmental and cultural contexts in which they were applied. This could have led to the imposition of Western methodologies as ideal solutions, potentially disregarding the local realities and traditional knowledge of people.

My analysis reveals that the efforts of CREFAL were rooted in a genuine desire to improve the lives of the Tarascan people. However, the interplay between international human rights standards and local traditions requires nuanced understanding. The absence of direct references to the UDHR does not diminish the positive impacts of the programme but highlights the complexities involved in translating global principles into local realities. This intersection of human rights and fundamental education, as observed through the activities of CREFAL, underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity and the need for a balanced approach that honours both universal rights and local traditions. The observations of Urrieta and Landeros and Watras can be situated within this intersection. Their critiques call for the recognition of the neglect of local traditions, an issue that also arose during the study of cultural missions, as argued by Palacios, who noted the post-revolutionary state's dominance over the peasants.<sup>680</sup> The question also remains as to whether "Tata Vasco" was genuinely seen as a hero or whether he was made into one.

In conclusion, this chapter illuminated the significant strides made by CREFAL in promoting human rights through fundamental education. Staff and students played a pivotal role in translating abstract principles into tangible benefits for Tarascan communities. While the explicit mention of UDHR was lacking, the practical applications of its articles were evident in the various initiatives undertaken.

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<sup>679</sup> Watras, 'Was Fundamental Education Another Form of Colonialism?'

<sup>680</sup> Rockwell, 'Guillermo Palacios, La pluma y el arado. Los intelectuales pedagogos y la construcción sociocultural del "problema campesino" en México, 1932-1934, México, El Colegio de México, 1999, 261 pp.'

## Chapter 5 The ‘end’ of UNESCO’s ‘greatest challenge’ – UNESCO and its mediating role

“You can change society by either revolution or evolution. The first may be quicker and more spectacular – but probably less lasting. [...] Our way is the painful, slow method of teaching people how they can change their lives. It is not imposed, it is developed... it is slow, but it is lasting.”

(Mexican specialist in rural education, UNESCO Courier 1952)<sup>681</sup>

### Introduction

Creating CREFAL was not an easy task. Moreover, the international network on fundamental education, as initially prescribed and proposed to UNESCO’s member states, was short lived and quietly discontinued. Although the programmes’ expectations were high at the outset, they quickly diminished in importance. CREFAL also struggled to survive, facing similar difficulties to the centre in Sirs-El-Layan. As foreseen, both centres ultimately became dependent on the national governments of their respective countries, namely Mexico and Egypt.<sup>682</sup>

In this chapter, I will explore the reasons behind the decline of the fundamental education programme and, consequently, the struggles CREFAL had to face. I believe that the political climate of the Cold War significantly influenced the programme’s development. Therefore, I will first discuss this specific political environment, as I consider the budgetary constraints faced by the centres were a direct result of this climate; securing donations required a certain political enthusiasm.

Fundamental education was not the only programme in operation. Over the years, it faced growing competition from the UN’s Technical Assistance (TA) programme. This competition is further discussed in the following sections. TA focused more on economic outcomes than on social outcomes, making it a significant rival to the fundamental education programme. This rivalry and its implications will be examined in the second section.

However, the centre did not operate solely through international partners and organisations; the Mexican government was also actively involved. Despite its international scope, the national influences cannot be overlooked. In the third section, I will focus on the impact of

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<sup>681</sup> Mende, 4.

<sup>682</sup> Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO’s Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.’

the Mexican context, including the influence of former president, Lázaro Cárdenas, the role of the state, and the historical significance of Michoacán, Cárdenas's home and cherished state.

Finally, I focus on the question of human rights. UNESCO was tasked with disseminating the UDHR to the public. Several initiatives, including the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights*, were launched in line with the mission to educate people about their rights and duties. Fundamental education was designed not only to ensure literacy but also to develop critical thinking and help people move beyond ignorance. In the final section, I will analyse the initiatives taken by CREFAL in disseminating the UDHR, highlighting its role as both a creator and operator of UNESCO's mission.

## 5.1 Towards another world?

Scholars such as Wodajo, Watras, Boel and Sluga all agreed: "The project on fundamental education was short-lived and died quietly."<sup>683</sup> In her dissertation, Wodajo identified four periods of the fundamental education programme. The first period, the period of formulation, covered the years 1945 to 1950. During these years, UNESCO's programme of fundamental education was regarded as one of its most important initiatives.<sup>684</sup> The second period, the period of action, took place between 1950-51 and the summer of 1955. This was a peak period during which two regional centres on fundamental education were established, coinciding with the tenure of Torres Bodet as Director-General of UNESCO. During this period, the UN's ACC examined the relationship between fundamental education and the UN's new community development programme.<sup>685</sup> Wodajo identified a third period, from 1956 to 1960, which she called the period of reformulation. During this time, the UN's TA gained more importance.<sup>686</sup> Finally, she identified the period of withdrawal during which the international atmosphere shifted from the optimism and idealism of the postwar years to the reality of the Cold War era.<sup>687</sup>

The Cold War certainly influenced international organisations such as UNESCO and their programmes, including the fundamental education project and the ambitious plan for six regional centres. Yet, in my opinion, the impact of the Cold War began earlier than Wodajo suggested, not

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<sup>683</sup> Wodajo, 164.

<sup>684</sup> Wodajo, 164.

<sup>685</sup> Wodajo, 165.

<sup>686</sup> Wodajo, 167.

<sup>687</sup> Wodajo, 167- 8.

in the 1960s, but much earlier.<sup>688</sup> We can already see the impact of ‘communist’ versus ‘liberal’ ideologies during the drafting process of the UDHR.<sup>689</sup> Moreover, I also argue that the genesis of CREFAL and other regional centres on fundamental education was influenced by the ideological tensions brought forward by the Cold War.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, tensions during the creation of CREFAL were evident during the outset. Initial financial and ideological support from the OAS quickly waned. Based on documents from the Inter-American Seminar on Illiteracy in the Americas (Brazil), the initial idea was to establish an Inter-American Institute of Fundamental Education. The Institute would provide specialised training for instructors, serve as a platform for exchanging knowledge, and evaluate experiments conducted by fundamental education units, including a “backward area development unit”.<sup>690</sup>

The conclusions drawn by members of the fifth working group at the Inter-American Seminar were compiled in “Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education”, introduced by a preface from Dr Guillermo Nannetti, who headed the group. Nannetti, a representative of the OAS, was present at the Rio de Janeiro Seminar and UNESCO’s Fourth General Conference. At the same General Conference, ideas collected at the seminar were presented through a paper written by UNESCO’s Programme and Budget Commission on Fundamental Education.<sup>691</sup>

UNESCO presented a plan wherein all activities related to fundamental education – teaching, production, and distribution of teaching materials – would be centred at one regional centre. After being granted permission to open a call for hosting countries and the selection of Mexico as the base for a first regional centre, the OAS wanted the production and distribution wing to be located in the US.<sup>692</sup> Guillermo Nannetti, a member of UNESCO’s Executive Board and former head of the fifth working group at the Inter-American Seminar on Illiteracy and Director of the OAS Education Division, described the distinction between the two possible institutions as follows:

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<sup>688</sup> It should be noted that Wodajo was a scholar of the Cold War period, having completed her PhD in 1963. Much work has been published since then, revealing more facts and figures about that specific era. See: Wodajo, 17.

<sup>689</sup> In Chapter 2, it was already mentioned that the drafting process of the UDHR was not easy. Eleanor Roosevelt went beyond expectations to find a universal consensus on rights and duties. During the voting process of the UDHR on 10 December 1948, it became clear that, despite tremendous debates, there were still 8 abstentions: one from Saudi Arabia, one from South-Africa and six from the nations of the ‘Communist Bloc’. The ‘Communist Bloc’-countries feared the impact of the UDHR on their national sovereignty. See: M. Glen Johnson, ‘A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights’; Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

<sup>690</sup> Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, ‘Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education; Report of Work Group V of the Inter-American Seminar on Literacy and Adult Education’; Romero, ‘Literacy and Adult Education (Working Group V)’.

<sup>691</sup> ‘Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre’.

<sup>692</sup> In Chapter 3, I discussed the genesis of CREFAL and the OAS’s sudden twist.

“The essential idea of the campaign is to investigate, with the cooperation of experts, the best ways of reaching the illiterate and semi-literate masses of Americans through the production of reading materials and audio-visual aids that will contribute to raising the standard of living and through the training of educators of adults and specialists in literacy campaigns.

The Service of Production, attached to the Secretariat of the OAS, will work with the technical offices of the Inter-American institutes and agencies in revising the published material prepared by experts of those agencies and institutes. The experts of the different services of health, agriculture, labour, housing, etc., will present in concrete form what it is necessary to say to the peoples. The expert in the production of materials will show how this message of modern science should be sent out to the masses.”<sup>693</sup>

In addition, Alberto Lleras, then the Secretary-General of the OAS, confirmed on 6 January 1950 that the Council of the Organization (OAS) had approved the proposals for the financial year beginning on 1 June 1950 including a sum of \$ 100,000 as a contribution to the establishment of one centre.<sup>694</sup> Shortly after the Executive Board’s acceptance of Mexico, it became clear that the initially promised \$ 100,000 of funding would only be paid if UNESCO agreed to the establishment of a production and distribution centre for fundamental educational resources in Washington, D.C..<sup>695</sup> UNESCO’s Director-General saw this sudden twist as the possible launch of “a large-scale Pan-American production programme”, a reference to the former name of the OAS.<sup>696</sup>

Moreover, in a confidential letter written by Guiton, acting Deputy Head of UNESCO’s Education Department, it was mentioned that both UNESCO’s field consultants Duane Spencer Hatch and Patricio Sanchez referred to recurring problems with the OAS.<sup>697</sup> I consider that the OAS, as a newly established organisation, was searching for its place in this new world and found itself trapped between the policies of its main donor, the US – recently launching its “Point IV

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<sup>693</sup> Guillermo Nannetti, 13.

<sup>694</sup> Also, this was previously discussed in Chapter 3. See also: ‘Letter from Alberto Lleras to the Director-General of UNESCO’.

<sup>695</sup> ‘Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America’.

<sup>696</sup> ‘Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America’.

<sup>697</sup> In Chapter 3, the opinions of Hatch and Sanchez regarding the choice of hosting country for the first institute on fundamental education are also discussed. See: ‘Confidential - Fundamental Education Training and Production Centre, 1950’.



Program” under President Harry S. Truman - the impending Cold War, and collaboration with new global organisations such as UNESCO.<sup>698</sup>

The Point IV Program was launched during Harry S. Truman’s presidency. The US administration intended to implement this development programme through international agencies such as the OAS and UNESCO. In its opinion, sizeable US contributions to the UN and its Specialised Agencies gave it a say in determining their policies and programmes.<sup>699</sup> It cannot be said with certainty how the US administration intervened at this moment through the OAS in a bid to stop the rise of the Latin world and its influence on UNESCO.<sup>700</sup> However, in the annual report of the OAS Inter-American Institute of 1951, I found a summary of the events that occurred before the opening of the CREFAL.

Firstly, it was described how the idea of setting up two institutes originated from experts: Mrs. Clark of the Institute of Inter-American Affairs, Dr Ismael Rodríguez Bou of the University of Puerto Rico and Miss Ella Griffin, one of the workers for the UNESCO pilot project in Haiti. None of them were employees of the OAS. Their intention to launch the idea of the two institutes was not to diminish the importance of the Mexican agency but rather to amplify its scope and provide additional resources and materials at its disposal.<sup>701</sup>

Second, it was reaffirmed that the Secretary-General had sent a cablegram to UNESCO’s Executive Board, stating that he had reserved a \$ 100,000 contribution in the 1950-1951 draft budget of the OAS for the purposes outlined at Rio by the American teachers and at Paris by the General Conference of UNESCO, and the desire to collaborate with them.<sup>702</sup> This \$ 100,000 appropriation was approved by the Council of the OAS with reservations. Their Committee on Finances stated the following:

“The Committee understands that the money for this item, if no satisfactory agreement with UNESCO is reached as to the form of participation of the Pan American Union in the project,

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<sup>698</sup> At the Rio de Janeiro seminar, it was mentioned that Truman’s Point IV Program should be considered for the possible establishment of a campaign on fundamental education. See: Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, ‘Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education; Report of Work Group V of the Inter-American Seminar on Literacy and Adult Education’, 47-51.

<sup>699</sup> Committee on Foreign Affairs, ‘Point Four Background and Program’.

<sup>700</sup> In a next section of this Chapter, I will focus on the shift of the rising Latin American countries through Tibor Mende’s observations. See: Mende, *L’Amérique Latine Entre en Scène*.

<sup>701</sup> OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, ‘Annual Report 1951’ (OAS, Washington D.C., 1951), JX 1980.45 .A21 1951 .A24, OAS, 144.

<sup>702</sup> OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, ‘Annual Report 1951’ (OAS, Washington D.C., 1951), JX 1980.45 .A21 1951 .A24, OAS, 142.

will not be spent. It is furthermore understood that this Agreement will provide for the joint administration of the Centre by UNESCO and the Pan American Union.”<sup>703</sup>

As previously mentioned, the approval of a \$ 100,000 contribution and the experts’ recommendation to establish two institutes were key topics of discussion between the OAS and UNESCO during the 19<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Board.<sup>704</sup> Shortly after the board approved Mexico’s involvement in the debates on the Mexican centre, the Secretary-General of the OAS received a US State Department memorandum on the proposed Agreement with UNESCO regarding the production of materials and teacher training in the field of fundamental education from the American Ambassador Paul C. Daniels on 20 April 1950.<sup>705</sup> In short, it stated that the US government could not approve the preliminary draft of the agreement between the OAS and UNESCO on the training of staff and preparation of fundamental education material for Latin America because it believed that the plan involved duplication of activities and responsibilities.<sup>706</sup>

Moreover, as the memorandum stated: “the US is willing to approve a provisional agreement making it possible to set the project in operation, if the redrafting of the said document would involve delay in the initiation of the programme, and subject to the condition that there must be a provision prohibiting duplication.”<sup>707</sup> Furthermore, in the opinion of the US, “the contribution from the OAS to the Fundamental Education Centre cannot be authorised until a preliminary agreement, at least, has been adopted by the two international organizations to provide for joint administration of the project”.<sup>708</sup> The ambassador’s communication reached Secretary-General Lleras on the eve of his trip to Mexico, prompting him to find a formula that would meet unanimous acceptance while carefully considering the attitudes of Mexico and the US, which had shifted between February and April. This led Lleras to seek interviews, including one with Mr.

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<sup>703</sup> OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, 143.

<sup>704</sup> For a description of these discussion, I refer to the third Chapter of this dissertation.

<sup>705</sup> OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, ‘Annual Report 1951’, 145.; Mexico had called for involvement in the negotiations between the OAS and UNESCO as the initial plan for one centre seemed to be abandoned in favour of two institutes, one in Mexico and one in Washington D.C. This has also been discussed in Chapter three.

Ambassador Daniels was a US Foreign Service Officer between 1928 and 1953 before serving as a special adviser on Antarctica in the US Department of State. Between 1948 and 1950, he served as an ambassador to the Council of Organization of American States and helped with the creation of the treaty between the American states who are part of the OAS. See: ‘Paul C. Daniels Oral History Interview | Harry S. Truman’, accessed 10 October 2023, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/oral-histories/danielsp..>

<sup>706</sup> OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, ‘Annual Report 1951’; UNESCO and OAS, ‘Agreement Between The United Nations Educational, Scientific And Cultural Organization And The Organization Of American States Concerning The Training Of Staff And Preparation Of Fundamental Education Material For Latin America’.

<sup>707</sup> OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, ‘Annual Report 1951’, 145.

<sup>708</sup> OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, 145-6.

Gual Vidal, the Secretary of Education of Mexico, only to hear in May 1950 that the document had already been approved by the Executive Board.

Moreover, the UNESCO Secretariat refused to make any alterations to the February document, as it had already been heavily discussed by the Executive Board during its 19<sup>th</sup> Session, and granted permission to the Mexican government to approve it, as well as by the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Board.<sup>709</sup> In my opinion, it is important to stress once again that Dr Nannetti was a member of the UNESCO Executive Board and present during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> sessions. By not raising his concerns at that time, the UNESCO Secretariat may have been more reluctant to amend the February document. Additionally, they were in a hurry, as the Paris session of the General Conference authorised the establishment of the centre in 1950. The OAS was free to choose whether to cooperate or not.<sup>710</sup>

Ultimately, it was upon the representative of the US, Mr. Luther Harris Evans, that Article 7 of the February document and an additional article, Article 18, were added.<sup>711</sup> The revised text of Article 7 led to OAS-UNESCO coordination, with the task of averting the duplication of activities and responsibilities, as US ambassador to the Council of the OAS Daniels had expressed concerns about.<sup>712</sup> Article 7 of the agreement between UNESCO and the OAS concerning the training of staff and preparation of fundamental education material for Latin America reads as follows:

“The functions of the Co-ordination Committee will be to coordinate the activities of the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre and of the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material, so as completely to unify their work and avoid all unnecessary duplication of the work of the Centre or of the bureau or any overlapping of their common effort with that of governments or public or private organizations.

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<sup>709</sup> Any reflections on these discussions can be found in the summary records of the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board. In Chapter 3, I have already provided a description of the discussion that unfolded over the February document. See: ‘Summary Records of the 19th Session of the Executive Board (24th Meeting)’; ‘Summary Records of the 20th Session of the Executive Board (5th Meeting)’.

<sup>710</sup> Additionally, the time pressure has been extensively discussed in Chapter 3. See: OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, ‘Annual Report 1951’, 147; UNESCO, ‘Summary Records of the 20th Session of the Executive Board (5th Meeting)’.

<sup>711</sup> At that time, Luther H. Evans was the librarian of Congress, having been sworn in on 30 June 1945 by President Harry Truman. In 1953, he resigned from the library to become the Director-General of UNESCO. See: Texas State Historical Association, ‘Evans, Luther Harris’, Texas State Historical Association, accessed 8 October 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/evans-luther-harris>; ‘Summary Records of the 21st Session of the Executive Board (2nd Meeting)’.

<sup>712</sup> OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, ‘Annual Report 1951’, 148.

For this purpose, the Coordination Committee will draw up an initial plan setting out broad lines of action for the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre and for the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material, which plan will be submitted for approval to UNESCO and OAS.

The Committee will examine the draft budgets and the annual work programmes of the Centre and of the Bureau and will transmit its opinion regarding them, and any suggestions it may think fit to formulate, to the Directors of the Centre and of the Bureau as well as to UNESCO and the OAS.”<sup>713</sup>

Not only did Article 7 include the remarks of Ambassador Daniels but it also reinforced the functions of the committee. Moreover, Article 18 opened up the possibility for revision of the agreement after one year. It reads:

“The present agreement is subject to revision. Twelve months after its entry into force, the two organisations will consult with a view to deciding what amendments, if any, should be made.

They will inform the government of the territory on which the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre has been established, of the results of their consultation before proceeding to a final revision of the agreement.”<sup>714</sup>

With these amendments, the draft was unanimously approved by the Executive Board of UNESCO. This authorised the Director-General to sign and obtain the signature of the Secretary-General of the OAS.<sup>715</sup> This was the first agreement signed by both organisations regarding a specific cooperative project.<sup>716</sup>

In my view, it is clear that the US exerted its influence on the OAS through its government representative, Daniels. Through his memorandum, he warned of the duplication of activities by the two institutions and ensured the existence of a coordination committee. The interference was minimal and, in this case, logical, yet it underscored the importance of the memorandum. Not only

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<sup>713</sup> The agreement between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Organization of American States concerning the training of staff and preparation of fundamental education materials for Latin America has been added as an annex. See: UNESCO and OAS, ‘Agreement Between the United Nations Educational, Scientific And Cultural Organization And The Organization Of American States Concerning The Training Of Staff And Preparation Of Fundamental Education Material For Latin America’, July 1950, JX 1980.45.A21 1951.A24, OAS.

<sup>714</sup> UNESCO and OAS; OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, ‘Annual Report 1951’, 148.

<sup>715</sup> OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, 148.; ‘Summary Records of the 21st Session of the Executive Board (2nd Meeting)’.

<sup>716</sup> Earlier, UNESCO and the OAS had jointly organised seminars in Caracas and Río de Janeiro through their administrative channels. See: OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, ‘Annual Report 1951’.

did the Secretary-General of the OAS take immediate action, but their instructions were also promptly followed. This clearly shows the power of the US in promoting its values, beliefs, and ideologies, as defined through the tool of cultural diplomacy. However, it did not stop there.

An article published by George Meek found that the US had been quite influential in the OAS, particularly on Cold War issues and communism, during the period from 1948 to 1960.<sup>717</sup> Moreover, during the early years, the nationality of the staff working for the OAS was predominantly American, with 57 percent in 1953, declining to 17 percent in 1975—a percentage of their early years that cannot be ignored. While the Secretary-General and the top two posts in the Secretariat were held by foreign nationals, I cannot overlook the indirect influence the US might have had on the decision-making process and policy of the OAS through their staff.<sup>718</sup> Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that US policy might have influenced not only the OAS, but also UNESCO, as Christian Ydesen writes:

“[...] the US approached UNESCO in two opposing ways: as a lever it could use to strengthen its involvement with the UN and parlay its exceptionalistic sensibility in international relations, and as a means to promote US progressive ideals on the international stage. These two aims were in conflict and resulted in actual realpolitik manoeuvring and the strategic placement of personnel within UNESCO.”<sup>719</sup>

One of the strategically placed people may have been American Luther Harry Evans. He became UNESCO's third Director-General in 1953.<sup>720</sup> As the former Librarian of Congress, he had already been investigated by the U.S. Federal Loyalty Program. This programme, set up by President Harry S. Truman through Executive Order (E.O.) 9835, checked the loyalty of all federal executive agency employees through preliminary investigations conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Although the Library of Congress was not an executive branch agency, it was initially not required for Congress staff to participate in the Federal Loyalty Program. However, Evans placed the library under Truman's Executive Order 9835, either in an attempt to protect himself from false accusations or due to strong anti-communist feelings.<sup>721</sup>

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<sup>717</sup> George Meek, 'U.S. Influence in the Organization of American States', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 17, no. 3 (1975): 311–25, <https://doi.org/10.2307/174726>.

<sup>718</sup> Meek.

<sup>719</sup> Christian Ydesen, 'Debating International Understanding in the Western World. UNESCO and the United States 1946 - 1954', in *UNESCO without Borders: Educational Campaigns for International Understanding*, ed. Aigul Kulnazarova (London: Routledge, 2017), 251.

<sup>720</sup> Evans resigned as the Librarian of Congress to become UNESCO's Director-General on 5 July 1953. See: Louise S. Robbins, 'The Library of Congress and Federal Loyalty Programs, 1947-1956: No "Communists or Cocksuckers"', *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 64, no. 4 (1994): 365–85.

<sup>721</sup> Robbins.

It was also Evans, then a member of UNESCO's Executive Board since 1949, who had been in touch with newly elected President Eisenhower regarding the disloyalty of several Americans at the UNESCO Secretariat.<sup>722</sup> He testified to this problem, which had arisen in 1952 or earlier:

“What had happened was that the constitution of UNESCO and the staff regulations provided that employees of UNESCO should not serve any government or outside power but should serve exclusively the interest of the organisation and should be loyal to the organisation under the instructions of the General Conference, the Executive Board and the Director-General. Well, some Americans and others who were thus supposed to obey the Director-General of UNESCO as their oath of office required were charged with having violated this oath by trying to subvert the organisation's instructions and purposes because of loyalty to a Communist conspiracy.”<sup>723</sup>

One of the incidents his words might refer to is a confidential letter from Howland H. Sargeant from the US Department of State. In this letter, Torres Bodet was informed that a group of UNESCO staff members had given funds and public support to an arrested member of the French Communist Party, Jacques Duclos.<sup>724</sup> He was warned by the American delegate by the words: “If the public reports of these incidents are found to be correct, I believe you would find [it] in the general interest of UNESCO to make known the remedial steps that are taken to preserve the integrity of the Secretariat.”<sup>725</sup> As Dussel and Ydesen report, Torres Bodet claimed that the press reports had been ‘completely uncircumstantial’ and refused to put UNESCO's Secretariat under a general investigation.<sup>726</sup>

Evans also defended UNESCO against right-wing accusations in a speech given at the annual conference of the National Education Association (NEA), addressing the fear of an international world government interfering with US politics.<sup>727</sup> However, more than 800 critical

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<sup>722</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower became the 34<sup>th</sup> President of the United States in 1953. See: ‘Dwight D. Eisenhower’, The White House, accessed 29 October 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/dwight-d-eisenhower/>, ‘Oral History Interview with Luther H. Evans, 1970’, DLC Catalog, 1970, <https://dlc.library.columbia.edu/catalog/cul:qbzkh18c4k>.

<sup>723</sup> ‘Oral History Interview with Luther H. Evans, 1970’, DLC Catalog, 1970, <https://dlc.library.columbia.edu/catalog/cul:qbzkh18c4k>, p. 13-14.

<sup>724</sup> Christian Ydesen and Inés Dussel, ‘Jaime Torres Bodet, Mexico, and the Struggle over International Understanding and History Writing. The UNESCO Experience’.

<sup>725</sup> Christian Ydesen and Inés Dussel, 155.

<sup>726</sup> Christian Ydesen and Inés Dussel, 155.

<sup>727</sup> Christian Ydesen, ‘Debating International Understanding in the Western World. UNESCO and the United States 1946 - 1954’, 242.

letters were written to the NEA protesting UNESCO's interference and expressing fears of communism.<sup>728</sup> UNESCO was pressured by some member states, particularly the US, "to make clear that the promotion of international understanding did not mean support of world government" as Huxley once expressed.<sup>729</sup> The threat of losing national sovereignty coincided with the rising fear of communism and the development of the Cold War; a conclusion also argued by Sluga and other scholars such as Elfert, Maurel and Hart.<sup>730</sup>

In addition, Dorn and Ghodsee, as well as Graham, already referred to these critical voices from the US, who framed UNESCO as a communist organisation because of its advocacy for cooperative economic arrangements and its principled stand against usury.<sup>731</sup> Moreover, the climate of fear grew, feeding American critical voices claiming that a certain kind of "socialist internationalism" was being promoted by the UN, and particularly by UNESCO. According to Dorn and Ghodsee, the growing emphasis on community development in response to the growing criticism ultimately led to a decline in US support for UNESCO.<sup>732</sup> A similar trend was described by Sluga. She argued that UNESCO fell victim to being branded as too communist and cosmopolitan by the US government, even though it had been labelled by Russia as "a front for American attempts at world domination" or by Tito's Yugoslavia for its antinationalist and anti-communist "philosophical *Esperanto*".<sup>733</sup>

The memorandum of Ambassador Daniels and the influence of UNESCO's third Director-General during the various stages of the founding of CREFAL make me suspect that the US's influence on the OAS slowly decreased the organisation's support for UNESCO's fundamental education programme, whether directly or indirectly. I follow Christian Ydesen's point of view, in which he identifies three main points of interest in each UNESCO programme and considers them for both organisations.

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<sup>728</sup> Christian Ydesen, 243.

<sup>729</sup> Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*, 23; Walter H. C. Laves and Charles A. Thomson, *UNESCO. Purpose, Progress, Prospects*, 211; Huxley, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy*, 13.

<sup>730</sup> Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 114; Chloé Maurel, 'Le rêve d'un « gouvernement mondial » des années 1920 aux années 1950. L'exemple de l'Unesco', *Histoire@Politique* 10, no. 1 (2010): 9–9, <https://doi.org/10.3917/hp.010.0052>; Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*, 23; Randle J Hart, 'The Greatest Subversive Plot in History? The American Radical Right and Anti-UNESCO Campaigning', *Sociology* 48, no. 3 (2014): 554–72.

<sup>731</sup> Dorn and Ghodsee, 'The Cold War Politicization of Literacy', 2012, 4–5 & 381.

<sup>732</sup> Several scholars, such as Sluga, Dorn and Ghodsee, describe how US delegates remained in Paris to interview the members of UNESCO's Executive Board as well as delegates of other member states. Their objective was to determine the truth behind claims circulating in the US that UNESCO was under communist control. See: Dorn and Ghodsee.; Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*.

<sup>733</sup> Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 1st ed., Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 113–4.

First, there was an exceptional geopolitical situation, in which the US was founded after the Second World War.<sup>734</sup> Not only Meek in 1975, but also already Walter Laves and Charles Thomson in 1957, emphasised that states making the largest contributions also exerted the most influence on the UNESCO budget and programme.<sup>735</sup> As the programme on fundamental education largely depended on voluntary contributions, and considering that the US was the founder of programmes such as the Marshall plan and Truman's Point IV programme and was also the largest contributor to both the US and UNESCO, it is not surprising to find evidence of US interference, such as the memorandum of Ambassador Daniels to the Secretary-General of the OAS and the contributions of the well-positioned Luther Evans, who tried to find solutions and a balance between the different demands. As a Librarian of Congress, he had balanced between intellectual freedom and the censorship of communist literature, while Daniels represented the US Department at the Council of the OAS.

One thing was certain: Evans and Daniels knew the political landscape in the US very well, particularly Evans. He also knew of the distinct US recalcitrance towards UNESCO coming from right-wing groups and politicians concerned with issues of patriotism. This is the second point of interest observed by Ydesen.<sup>736</sup> While uncertain and unconfirmed by sources, I consider these threats as incentives for the establishment of the fundamental education press. This way, the larger production of educational material and, thus, the flow of information remained on the American soil. It was Bowers who also expressed this concern in a letter to Nannetti in which he wrote that the reading material could have a strong political and public information influence and might be too general and too expensive for the real purpose of fundamental education.<sup>737</sup> The fear of US dominance similarly fed the debate on who was allowed to spread the worldview, fearing the introduction of a world government to which they were opposed.

The Cold War context, a third point of interest Ydesen described, incited a fear of communism and anything that might be remotely interpreted as a step towards a world government.<sup>738</sup> From this point of view, I consider that the OAS, as a new international

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<sup>734</sup> Christian Ydesen, 'Debating International Understanding in the Western World. UNESCO and the United States 1946 - 1954', 250.

<sup>735</sup> Walter H. C. Laves and Charles A. Thomson, *UNESCO. Purpose, Progress, Prospects*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), 297.

<sup>736</sup> Christian Ydesen, 'Debating International Understanding in the Western World. UNESCO and the United States 1946 - 1954', 250.

<sup>737</sup> UNESCO, 'Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America' (UNESCO Digital Library, 16 February 1950), 19EX/41, UNESDOC, [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000161809\\_fre?posInSet=1&queryId=0e1401da-6124-4ab9-9d86-b3c0668279a0](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000161809_fre?posInSet=1&queryId=0e1401da-6124-4ab9-9d86-b3c0668279a0).

<sup>738</sup> Christian Ydesen, 'Debating International Understanding in the Western World. UNESCO and the United States 1946 - 1954', 250.



organisation from the American States, did not want to be associated with communism, even if it meant letting down its partner, in this case UNESCO. As decided at the Rio de Janeiro Seminar, both organisations relied on the Point IV programme of President Truman for their aid in developing countries and, thus, on the US as their biggest donor.<sup>739</sup>

The interference of the US, whether directly or indirectly, relates to these observations. In the following sections, I will continue to add more feedback related to these main points: the exceptional geopolitical situation of the post-Second World War US, the distinct recalcitrance of the US towards UNESCO, the Cold War context, and the fear of communism.

## 5.2 Towards another orientation

As Wodajo mentioned earlier, a third period, a period of reformulation, entered CREFAL's existence from 1956 onwards. As described in a working document from the Special Committee on CREFAL: "... it became clear that basic education needed to be part of a broader development perspective that included the organisation of cooperatives, managed credit systems, and other social and economic activities. Basic education had thus become one of the more important educational aspects of community development."<sup>740</sup> The centre ended up being reorganised in 1961.<sup>741</sup> As Wodajo described, the fundamental education programme became part of an international movement on community development.<sup>742</sup>

This was not the first time that the centre had been criticised. Wodajo described that some delegates at the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference, which took place in 1952, had already started to question the advisability of establishing regional centres. A Belgian delegate expressed that fundamental education was the primary responsibility of the national governments themselves. He argued that the regional centres were expensive to maintain and that the Pátzcuaro problem had only been solved with the aid of outside technical assistance and the OAS. The view of the Belgian representative was supported by several delegations, including those of the USA, New Zealand, France, and India. The latter said: "The plans for Regional Centres were

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<sup>739</sup> Maurel, 'L'UNESCO de 1945 à 1974'.

<sup>740</sup> This is a free translation of the author. The original text reads: "...il est devenu manifeste que l'éducation de base devait s'inscrire dans le cadre d'un développement plus large comportant l'organisation de coopératives, de systèmes de crédit dirigé et d'autres activités sociales et économiques. L'éducation de base est donc devenue de plus en plus l'aspect éducatif d'une entreprise de développement Communautaire." See : 'Comité Spécial Charge de faire Rapport Sur Le CREFAL - Document de Travail' (UNESCO Digital Library, 1961), UNESCO/SCC/2, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000155566?posInSet=1&queryId=37f5b8e3-ffcc-4137-b437-eac3dd205240>.

<sup>741</sup> 'Comité Spécial Charge de faire Rapport Sur Le CREFAL - Document de Travail'.

<sup>742</sup> Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education',

overambitious and costly. The problem of fundamental education should be handled on national level with national resources, except when the setting up of a Regional Centre was obviously desirable in the light of circumstances.”<sup>743</sup> Moreover, the Iranian delegate agreed with their views and called for a national approach to fundamental education. Wodajo cited: “... it was advisable to begin work at the national level. In that way, it would be easier to act on public opinion, to move later from national to international plans.”<sup>744</sup>

From these quotations, I recognise three findings. First, although the words of the delegates were spoken in 1952, only one year after the grand opening of the Pátzcuaro centre, it seemed that UNESCO, like many other international organisations, still held an ambiguous position and was balancing between the respect for national sovereignty and international ‘intervention’, an issue also discussed by Sluga and Elfert.<sup>745</sup> Like Wodajo, I was surprised by the sudden twist taken by the delegates. However, this contrast cannot be ignored. In 1951, the delegates of the national states fully supported the opening of the first regional centre, only to break down the grand project one year later. In her search for an explanation, Wodajo refers to the fact that it happened regularly that many delegates only attended General Conferences once, not being aware of what had been said at the previous conference.<sup>746</sup> Nonetheless, in my opinion, this twist is surprising, as delegates normally report to their own governments. I find it hard to believe this was the sole reason.

Additionally, politics regularly interfered with the debates at the UNESCO General Conference, Wodajo states.<sup>747</sup> These interventions ultimately led to the resignation of UNESCO’s second Director-General, Jaime Torres Bodet. His resignation did not come as a surprise, as he had already threatened to do so in 1950.<sup>748</sup> He resigned following a discussion on the provisional budget for UNESCO for 1953-1954 with the following words: “May UNESCO one day develop its programme as we who had the privilege of being present at its birth in London, in 1945, dreamed that it might. And notwithstanding all obstacles, may peace assure for the world, through education, science and culture, a destiny worthy of mankind.”<sup>749</sup> In his speech, he referred to the continuing debates and rising political and economic obstacles UNESCO began to encounter, in sharp contrast to its foundation, where solidarity and unanimity ruled over countries’ national borders.

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<sup>743</sup> Wodajo, 112-3.

<sup>744</sup> Wodajo, 113.

<sup>745</sup> Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, Elfert, *UNESCO’s Utopia of Lifelong Learning*.

<sup>746</sup> Wodajo, 114.

<sup>747</sup> Wodajo, 114.

<sup>748</sup> Christian Ydesen and Inés Dussel, ‘Jaime Torres Bodet, Mexico, and the Struggle over International Understanding and History Writing. The UNESCO Experience’, 156.

<sup>749</sup> ‘Jaime Torres Bodet Leaves UNESCO’.

I agree with Dussel and Ydesen, who state that the disagreement over the budget struggle of 1952 might have been the immediate cause for Torres Bodet's departure, yet the ongoing competing ideas about UNESCO's role and tensions were indirectly a larger cause. They describe that at that same General Conference, Torres Bodet sought approval for a budget increase to \$ 20,691,060 for the years 1953 and 1954. US Delegate Howland Sargeant, the same delegate who also wrote a confidential letter to Torres Bodet about the intrusion of communistic ideas in UNESCO by its staff, supported a British proposal to cut the budget to some \$ 17,400,000 but added that additional funds could be obtained from the UN Expanded TA Programme in the amount of \$ 5,500,000.<sup>750</sup> Both scholars also quote Torres Bodet's reply: "The General Conference would be shirking its responsibilities if it were to cut down the Organization's own programme in the vain hope that the cut might be made good by the TA. Thereby you would merely lose control, both of the programme and the budget."<sup>751</sup> Additionally, Wodajo also testifies to some circulating rumours referring to Bodet's resignation, as he realised his favourite UNESCO programme, being fundamental education, was doomed to fail because of a lack of funds.<sup>752</sup>

Torres Bodet's predictions came true. The UN's Technical Assistance Program (TA), which competed with fundamental education, became the 'imprimatur of realpolitik legitimacy' in January 1949 by Truman's Point IV program, as stated by Sluga.<sup>753</sup> Additionally, she states that TA was the rest of the world's corollary to the European-focused Marshall Aid programme, offering similar opportunities for tactical advantage in the Cold War.<sup>754</sup> In short, the fear of communism interfered here as well.

Both programs, TA and fundamental education, focused on the development of non-European states and colonies. While TA became a major initiative to provide technical knowledge and aid for economic development, fundamental education focused more on education and the improvement of basic skills.<sup>755</sup> UNESCO's programme was seen as a special contribution to the social and economic progress of underdeveloped areas. Nonetheless, it did not take long before a serious rethinking and reformulation of the nature, scope, and content of fundamental education became necessary.<sup>756</sup> Inevitably, over the years, UNESCO's fundamental education programme became an increasingly part of the TA programme, as the UN's ACC regarded community

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<sup>750</sup> Christian Ydesen and Inés Dussel, 'Jaime Torres Bodet, Mexico, and the Struggle over International Understanding and History Writing. The UNESCO Experience', 156.

<sup>751</sup> Christian Ydesen and Inés Dussel, 156.

<sup>752</sup> Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.', 122.

<sup>753</sup> Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 110-1.

<sup>754</sup> Sluga, 111.

<sup>755</sup> Sluga, 110.

<sup>756</sup> Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.', 124.

development as “a component of the wider concept of economic and social development” where education in general and fundamental education in particular were seen as one of the “services” of community development.<sup>757</sup>

However, as shown in the figure below, the UNESCO Secretariat calculated that they would need to rely on \$ 4 million of UNESCO’s share of the UN TA Fund to establish a network of six regional centres (Figure 77).<sup>758</sup>

Voluntary contribution of the Member States	\$ 6.400.000	32 %
Funds derived from the TA Programme	\$ 4.000.000	20 %
UNESCO’s ordinary Budget	\$ 1.600.000	8 %
Other voluntary contributions from governmental or private sources	\$ 8.000.000	40 %
Total Cost of the Project on FE	\$ 20.000.000	100 %

*Figure 77: Financial Plan on Fundamental Education - Estimation over 12 Years—Working Party, 1951.*<sup>759</sup>

This working plan was made in 1951, the same year that CREFAL opened its doors. Wodajo also immediately recognised that this large worldwide project was far too dependent on voluntary contributions. While her numbers in her dissertation differ slightly from mine, she calculated that almost 75 % of the budget was derived from voluntary contributions, including the contributions of member states.<sup>760</sup> This percentage was too high for such an ambitious project.

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<sup>757</sup> In her dissertation, Wodajo refers to several conferences that have been organised between the UN and UNESCO for the purpose of redefining and clarifying the two concepts and delimiting the responsibilities of the two organisations. She discusses two of these conferences in detail. The first was sponsored by the UN’s ACC and the second one by UNESCO’s Secretariat. The first conference focused on the relationship between community development and fundamental education, while the second was organised by UNESCO at the request of the Director-General, Luther Evans, in an effort to clarify the scope, purpose, and relationship of fundamental education with the other concepts, such as community development. See: Wodajo.

<sup>758</sup> Wodajo, 95.

<sup>759</sup> ‘Financing of Special Project in Fundamental Education. Report of the Working Party.’, 6 April 1951, 26 EX/3, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000162336?posInSet=22&queryId=582df66a-cdae-4341-9c14-7feb21c4315>.

<sup>760</sup> Wodajo and I rely on two different documents and one similar document. As I could not find the addendum of the Programme Commission presented to the Sixth General Conference to which Wodajo refers, I rely on a report of a working party presented at the twenty-sixth session of the Executive Board to the Sixth General Conference. Nevertheless, our conclusion remains the same. See: ‘Financing of Special Project in Fundamental Education. Report of the Working Party.’; Wodajo, ‘An Analysis of UNESCO’s Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.’ 96.

The same was true for CREFAL as well. In September 1949, the first calculations were made for the regional centre in support of Resolution 2.425, adopted at the Fourth General Conference. The Programme and Budget Commission foresaw an initial budget of \$ 116,535 for the first period of eight months and a total of 40 trainees.<sup>761</sup> This budget was calculated to cover the costs of the permanent posts, training grants for the first period, other staff members, and maintenance of vehicles. The commission estimated that a budget of \$ 174,803 would cover the cost of the centre's second operational year. Nonetheless, as I read in the book "New Horizons at Tzetzzenhuaro", the 1952 operating cost was \$ 348,600. These costs were shared as follows: UNESCO \$ 70,000; the OAS, \$ 40,000; ILO, FAO, and WHO \$ 35,000 and the UN TA, \$ 203,600.<sup>762</sup> I found similar numbers in the suggested agenda for meeting the coordination committee of CREFAL. In addition, Figure 78 shows that a major portion of the budget was expected to come from unspecified international sources, amounting to \$ 302,000 for 1953 and \$ 304,500 in 1954.<sup>763</sup>

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<sup>761</sup> 'Fundamental Education Regional Training and Production Centre'.

<sup>762</sup> Unesco, *New Horizons at Tzetzzenhuaro*, 11.

<sup>763</sup> 'Suggested Agenda for Meeting of Co-ordination Committee of CREFAL September 8 to 14 1952.' (CREFAL, 1952), 1952/00-00/C-3/E-3, CREFAL.

BUDGET APPROVED BY UNESCO FOR CREFAL OPERATIONS 1953/54				
	1953 Normal Budget	TA Funds	O A S	Total
Salary and personnel costs Director & Admin. Officer	17,000			17,000
International Professional Staff (Unesco)		60,000		60,000
Maintenance grants 90 Non-Mexican students		90,000		90,000
Equipment not manufactured in Mexico		25,000		25,000
Locally recruited staff, main- tenance grants to Mexicans, etc.	70,000			70,000
Salaries and other administrative costs			40,000	40,000
Total Unesco normal budget	87,000			
Total Unesco TA		175,000		
Total OAS			40,000	
Total contributions from international sources				302,000
	1954 Normal Budget	TA Funds	O A S	Total
Salaries and personnel costs Director & Admin. Officer	17,500			17,500
International Professional staff (Unesco)		62,000		62,000
Maintenance grants - 90 Non-Mexican students		90,000		90,000
Equipment not manufactured in Mexico		25,000		25,000
Locally recruited staff, main- tenance grants to Mexicans, other expenses	70,000			70,000
Salaries and other admin- istrative costs			40,000	40,000
Total Unesco normal budget	87,500			
Total, TA		177,000		
Total, OAS			40,000	
Total contributions from all international sources				304,500

Figure 78: Suggested agenda for meeting the coordination committee of CREFAL, 8 September–14, 1952. Courtesy of CREFAL Archives. (Cuarta reunión del Comité de Coordinación del CREFAL: 1952/00-00/C-3/E-3).

Surprisingly, despite being announced as one of UNESCO's biggest challenges, the project on fundamental education faced striking budget limitations. During this period, many countries, especially in Europe, were still occupied with the reconstruction of their own societies and depended on aid such as that delivered through the Marshall plan.<sup>764</sup> From this point of view, it is

<sup>764</sup> The war in Europe had left many traces of decay due to the Second World War. In the first years after the war, the countries were able to manage their own reconstruction. Unfortunately, from 1947, the European recovery faltered due to the discontinuation of the help provided by the UNRRA. It was the American Secretary of State, General George Marshall (1880-1959), who introduced the Marshall Plan or European Recovery Plan (ERP) at Harvard University in Massachusetts (USA). The plan aimed not only to contribute to the reconstruction of Europe from a humanitarian and economic perspective but also towards a political perspective, as it was part of the fight against communism. See: 'Het Marshallplan, of hoe Amerika het westen won', Historiek, 3 February 2023, <https://historiek.net/het-marshallplan-of-hoe-amerika-het-westen-won/22754/>; 'Oral History Interview with Luther H. Evans, 1970', DLC Catalog, 1970, <https://dlc.library.columbia.edu/catalog/cul:qbzkh18c4k, 8>.

not surprising that some delegates of member states, as quoted above from Iran, India, etc., call for a return to the national spectrum. As with the Haitian programme on fundamental education, it was highly likely that this plan for a regional network of six centres also had to be abandoned.<sup>765</sup>

Moreover, UNESCO's member states were regular member states of the UN. Sluga describes a tendency in her book wherein representatives of non-European states and colonies were very keen to divert the resources of the UN to their own countries.<sup>766</sup> A similar trend may have occurred in UNESCO. Member States of the UN already contributed to the UN. Thus, these states indirectly contributed to the fundamental education programme through the UN's TA Programme.<sup>767</sup> As the numbers found in the book "New Horizons at Tzetzzenhuaro" indicate, approximately 60 % of the operational budget of CREFAL was donated through the UN's TA programme. The longer CREFAL existed, the more the programme became part of the UN's TA Programme.

This outcome was not surprising. In the "Bases for a Handbook for Adult Education", written in 1949, it was mentioned that fundamental education should be seen as the application of president Truman's Point IV plan where education should be seen as an instrument to improve the circumstances of economically less developed regions wherein the communities should be trained for productive work.<sup>768</sup> In addition, in one of the resolutions of the coordination committee found in the CREFAL Archives, the committee asked to adapt fundamental education more to the standards of the UN concerning community development.<sup>769</sup> This tendency was also described by Elfert. She also saw a shift in fundamental education towards a more technical approach,

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<sup>765</sup> Wodajo describes in her dissertation how the Haitian Pilot Project failed and had to be abandoned due to, among other things, a lack of funding and excessive expectations regarding the funding. The budget had been set on approximately \$ 66,000, of which UNESCO would contribute only 20 %, while the remaining 80 % had to be sourced from elsewhere. The Haitian government agreed to pay 20 % of the budget, while the rest had to come from private resources. Ultimately, these appeared to be small sums, mostly from American foundations, such as the Ford Foundation, which were insufficient to cover the overall costs of the project. Aside from the lack of funding, the project was also abandoned due to concerns related to the working site. The FAO advised that Marbial was not an ideal location due to its numerous needs. Additionally, there were delays in reaching a formal agreement in combination with the limited impact, and continuous tensions within the local context wherein the UNESCO team operated. See: Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education', 85-90 & 176; Verna, 'Haiti, the Rockefeller Foundation, and UNESCO's Pilot Project in Fundamental Education, 1948-1953 \*'. The two other pilot projects faced similar challenges: the project in China had to be abandoned due to political turmoil, while the Tanganyika project never started due to various difficulties outside of UNESCO's control. See: Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education', 90.; Chen, 'Experimenting with a Global Panacea'.

<sup>766</sup> Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 111.

<sup>767</sup> It was the US who blocked a resolution to be approved by the OAS to avoid this kind of politics. They wanted to avoid, at all costs, paying twice for the same support. This was already demonstrated by the previously described memorandum of Paul C. Daniels discussed in the previous section.

<sup>768</sup> Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, 'Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education; Report of Work Group V of the Inter-American Seminar on Literacy and Adult Education', 46.

<sup>769</sup> 'Resoluciones Del Comité de Coordinación Junta Del CREFAL y OMEFAL'.

influenced by the changing political and economic landscapes, impacting the organisation's ability to uphold its educational ideology.<sup>770</sup> In my opinion, this shift towards TA and a more technical approach to development was already 'predicted' in 1949. Whether UNESCO took the right steps by staying loyal to its humanistic orientation cannot be said. Nonetheless, I agree with Elfert that the changing educational policies and practices of UNESCO were certainly influenced by neoliberal economic ideologies, as set forth by President Truman through his Point IV Plan.<sup>771</sup>

However, it was not only the reorientation towards the TA programme that led to the reorientation of CREFAL and the disappearance of the term 'fundamental education'. As the book "New Horizons at Tzetzzenhuaro" stated, voluntary contributions did not come, and the cost of the centre was carried out by UNESCO and the partner organisations, leading to the previously described opposition of the UNESCO Member States.<sup>772</sup> Additionally, as Wodajo described, UNESCO had difficulties motivating the host countries to take full responsibility for the centres, as stated in the original plan. According to this plan, the centres should have already been transferred to the Mexican and Egyptian governments after six years.<sup>773</sup> However, it took, in the case of Mexico, until 1961, before the Mexican centre operated fully under the responsibility of the government of Mexico.

In 1962, barely a year after the expiration of UNESCO's twelve-year plan, only two regional centres were operational, both established before 1954.<sup>774</sup> This result is not surprising. In the 1950 agreement between UNESCO and the OAS concerning the training of staff and preparation of fundamental education material for Latin America, Article 17 stipulated that the agreement would expire on 31 December 1954.<sup>775</sup> This expiration lifted the unconditional contribution of the OAS to the centre of \$ 40,000 as stipulated by Article 13, and replaced by a new Article 7, stating that the cooperation between the OAS and UNESCO would change to the provision of twenty 19-month fellowships for Latin American students at CREFAL, amounting to \$ 1,900 each.<sup>776</sup>

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<sup>770</sup> Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*, 70-1.

<sup>771</sup> Elfert.

<sup>772</sup> Unesco, *New Horizons at Tzetzzenhuaro*.

<sup>773</sup> Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education,' 95.

<sup>774</sup> Wodajo, 100.

<sup>775</sup> UNESCO and OAS, 'Agreement Between The United Nations Educational, Scientific And Cultural Organization And The Organization Of American States Concerning The Training Of Staff And Preparation Of Fundamental Education Material For Latin America'.

<sup>776</sup> In Annex 5, you can find the new agreement between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Organization of American States concerning cooperation in the field of fundamental education. See: The Committee On Inter-American Organizations, 'Report On The Agreement Between The OAS And UNESCO Concerning Cooperation In the Field Of Fundamental Education', 20 October 1954, C-i-262 Rev. 2 (English), OAS; 'Resolutions and Decisions Adopted by the Executive Board at Its Thirty-Ninth Session from 3 November to 10 December 1954', 31 December 1954, 39EX/Decisions, UNESDOC, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000113803?posInSet=2&queryId=66345d8e-0124-47c1-87b0-2acf054a4fd1>.



Although the Committee on Inter-American Organizations of the OAS expressed its belief in cooperation between the OAS and UNESCO for the advancement of fundamental education in Latin America, the decision left UNESCO and the Mexican government to secure their own financial resources.<sup>777</sup>

UNESCO was also pressured by the ACC. In 1958, the ACC presented two proposals, both advocating for the withdrawal of UNESCO's financial involvement in the centres. According to the first proposal, the existing centres, being CREFAL and ASFEC in this case, would be transformed into "Regional Training Centres for Rural and Community Development" with the UN bearing the main responsibility and UNESCO cooperating on the same footing as other Specialised Agencies, such as the WHO, FAO, and the ILO. A second proposal envisaged a future for ASFEC and CREFAL as national centres for Mexico and Egypt.<sup>778</sup> UNESCO's Secretariat favoured the first proposal but was ultimately overruled by the Eleventh Session of the General Conference, which rejected the Secretariat's proposal.<sup>779</sup>

Wodajo argued that UNESCO should not be blamed for its inability to implement its plan for a world network of fundamental education centres and identified two factors hindering UNESCO's progress. First, no other regions in the world have a common and unified language. Second, there was a shortage of funding. Torres Bodet did not succeed in interesting philanthropic groups to make donations for his network. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the OAS withdrew its support, and member states redirected their contributions to national programmes.<sup>780</sup>

CREFAL's future became uncertain, particularly after the OAS shifted to providing indirect help in the form of twenty yearly fellowships. The Mexican government had already contributed \$ 400,000 yearly funds that were mostly used for the maintenance of buildings and the salaries of local personnel. CREFAL's authorities hoped for help from the President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, but this did not succeed. In addition, there was increasing pressure to end UNESCO's financial and administrative involvement in the centre.<sup>781</sup> The reorientation towards social welfare, rural extension, and especially community development is not surprising from a budgetary point of view. Not only was it still possible to apply for funding within TA, but the centre was already strongly financially supported by TA. In Figure 77, we can see that TA involved 20 percent of the total budget, yet according to the numbers from Figure 78, the financial

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<sup>777</sup> The Committee On Inter-American Organizations, 'Report On The Agreement Between The OAS And UNESCO Concerning Cooperation In the Field Of Fundamental Education'.

<sup>778</sup> Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education,' 101.

<sup>779</sup> Wodajo, 102.

<sup>780</sup> Wodajo, 103.

<sup>781</sup> Wodajo, 110.

support derived from TA had already increased to more than 50 percent of the budget of CREFAL. Needless to say, if CREFAL wanted to ensure its existence, it had to reorient its programme towards the propagated community development of TA and hereby addressing the emerging rivalry between the two programmes.<sup>782</sup> However, the two sponsoring world organisations were not the only players in the field. Previously, I mentioned that Mexico also took part in the pie and had already donated more than \$ 400,000 on a yearly basis.<sup>783</sup> In the next section, I will discuss the relationship between Mexico as the host government and the fundamental education project within the global context of that time period.

### 5.3 Towards a Latin American focus?

Tibor Mende, a Hungarian development journalist, had described in his 1952 book “L’Amérique Latine Entre en Scène” how he saw the Latin American world becoming part of the larger global system in collaboration with the ‘Great Powers’. He wrote:

“And yet, today, the republican powers of Latin America are slowly acquiring the maturity that will allow them to play their role as Great Powers. Their population, which is growing rapidly, their resources, and their industries are gradually increasing to the level of the US, of which they may one day equal the power. Anyone who assures their help or wins their sympathies holds one of the levers of our era.”<sup>784</sup>

Tibor Mende’s observations predicted the powerful evolution of Latin American countries, especially in the case of Mexico. In addition, Dumont observed a similar trend, arguing that the Second World War was a catalyst for Latin American intellectuals to foster a more balanced relationship between Europe and Latin America.<sup>785</sup> However, in the same year that Mende’s book was published, Torres Bodet announced his resignation as Director-General. Earlier, I described how budgetary discussions led to Torres Bodet’s decision to step down as UNESCO’s Director-

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<sup>782</sup> Wodajo, 124.

<sup>783</sup> Wodajo, 110.

<sup>784</sup> This paragraph is translated by the author. The original reads as: “Et pourtant, aujourd’hui, les puissantes Républiques de l’Amérique Latine acquièrent à grands pas la maturité qui leur permettra de jouer leur rôle de Grandes Puissances. Leur population, qui s’accroît rapidement, leurs ressources et leurs industries les haussent peu à peu au niveau des Etats-Unis dont elles pourraient bien un jour égaler la puissance. Quiconque s’assure de leur aide ou gagne leurs sympathies tient en main l’un des leviers de notre ère.” See: Tibor Mende, *L’Amérique Latine Entre en Scène*. (Paris, France: Editions du Seuil, 1952), 9.

<sup>785</sup> Dumont, ‘La Segunda Guerra mundial en la redefinición de las relaciones culturales entre América Latina y Europa’.

General. However, these financial discussions were only the tip of the iceberg, as the funding shifted, causing the organisation to suffer severely from insufficient resources. Some projects failed because member states rechannelled resources as a result of the upcoming Cold War.<sup>786</sup> The context of the Cold War and the emerging ideological conflicts had been detrimental to the initial ambitions of UNESCO and its Director-General, who had been on stage since the early days of UNESCO.<sup>787</sup>

Torres Bodet was a well-known educationalist. In 1943, he was appointed by President Manuel Ávila Camacho as Mexico's Secretary of Education after working in diplomatic affairs in Europe for several years during the 1930s.<sup>788</sup> As Minister of Education, he organised several literacy campaigns in Mexico, built schools, constructed libraries, and taught more than 1.2 million Mexicans how to read.<sup>789</sup> He saw education as the most important and permanent doctrine for peace, both at the international and national levels, a perspective that he regularly reiterated whenever he had the opportunity.

“If victory is to guarantee the principles for which the free peoples of the world have fought, the first standards that nations must adopt in education will be to make it a permanent doctrine for peace, both on the international and the national level. [...] For so long as liberties are enshrined in treaties and in charters only as faculties devoid of reality, and so long as individuals in different countries do not have full opportunity of enjoying them, peace and democracy will continue to be in danger.”<sup>790</sup>

Unfortunately, Torres Bodet also had to act in a new post-war economic and political world. While the results of his campaign in Mexico were outstanding, the struggle he faced at UNESCO was different. Coming from Mexico, a country that had always had a controversial relationship with UNESCO's largest donor, might not have always been to his advantage. Greaves, Ydesen, and Dussel refer to the conservative turn the country took away from the radicalisation

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<sup>786</sup> Langlois, 'And Action! UN and UNESCO Coordinating Information Films, 1945-1951', 86-7.

<sup>787</sup> During the Conference for the Establishment of the International Agency, which took place from 1 November to 16 November 1945, Jaime Torres Bodet chaired the commission on the 'Title, preamble, purposes and principal function of the Organization.' See: Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*.

<sup>788</sup> Christian Ydesen and Inés Dussel, 'Jaime Torres Bodet, Mexico, and the Struggle over International Understanding and History Writing. The UNESCO Experience', 149; Maurel, 'L'UNESCO de 1945 à 1974', 76.

<sup>789</sup> In the *Courier* of December 1948, an article was dedicated to the biography of Jaime Torres Bodet, born in Mexico City on 17 April 1902. He had a distinguished career as a poet, essayist, critic, educationalist, and diplomat. See: 'Education: A Doctrine For Peace', *UNESCO Courier*, December 1948, 2; Maurel, 'L'UNESCO de 1945 à 1974', 76.

<sup>790</sup> 'Education: A Doctrine For Peace', 2.

of Cardenas's socialist education in the 1930s and towards national unity.<sup>791</sup> The Mexican government promoted an ideology of reconciliation and international realignment with its northern neighbour, particularly in the wake of the Second World War.<sup>792</sup>

The relationship with the US had always been fluctuating, especially under former socialist and extraordinary Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas. Born of Indian descent in 1895, Michoacán's former governor played an important role in transforming a nationwide party (PNR or *Partido Nacional Revolucionario*) into a revolutionary party and regime (*Partido de la Revolución Mexicana* or PRM).<sup>793</sup> He gained popularity through his marathon campaign all over the country. He travelled more than 27,358 km by car, rail, airplane, boat, and horse, which gave him the opportunity to learn about Mexico's problems, familiarise people with his ideas, and build a base of support.<sup>794</sup> Cárdenas believed in an increased state role in agriculture, industry, infrastructure, and social development and stressed the need for better distribution of health, a greatly expanded role for peasant and worker groups, and a larger government role in social and economic matters.<sup>795</sup> Once elected in 1934, he quickly restarted the division of land into *ejidos* or communities, initially initiated by Mexican President Obregón.<sup>796</sup> Moreover, he initiated a six-year ambitious plan in which he nationalised all railway infrastructure and took over some foreign petroleum companies from the UK and the US. The latter agreed, under former President Franklin D. Roosevelt's tenure, to a compensation as part of the good neighbour policy that emphasised cooperation and trade

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<sup>791</sup> In Chapter 4, I referred to the scholar Guillermo Palacios who discussed the legitimisation of the dominion of the state through the cultural mission organised in the 1930s. See: Rockwell, 'Guillermo Palacios, La pluma y el arado. Los intelectuales pedagogos y la construcción sociocultural del "problema campesino" en México, 1932-1934, México, El Colegio de México, 1999, 261 pp.'

<sup>792</sup> Greaves C., *El viraje conservador: La educación en la Ciudad de México entre 1940 y 1970* (The Conservative Turn: Education in Mexico City between 1940 and 1970) (2012) In P. González and A. Staples (eds.), *Historia de la Educación en la Ciudad de México* (History of Education in Mexico City). Mexico DF: Secretaría de Educación del Distrito Federal/El Colegio de México, pp. 407-445 In: Christian Ydesen and Inés Dussel, 'Jaime Torres Bodet, Mexico, and the Struggle over International Understanding and History Writing. The UNESCO Experience', 149.

<sup>793</sup> Lázaro Cárdenas can be considered as an exceptional president. He had mixed ancestry in contrast to other leading political figures who were of higher social status and had lighter skins. See: 'Lázaro Cárdenas | Mexican President, Revolutionary Hero | Britannica', 15 October 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lazaro-Cardenas>; Philip Russell, *The History of Mexico: From Pre-Conquest to Present* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 345.

<sup>794</sup> Philip Russell, *The History of Mexico: From Pre-Conquest to Present* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 346.

<sup>795</sup> Russell, 346.

<sup>796</sup> Alvaro Obregón was the President of Mexico between 1920 and 1924. He initiated the division of land during his tenure but also had to balance his relationship with his northern neighbour, the US. It was under his legacy that the former minister of education, José Vasconcelos, introduced the rural mission where *maestros*, or teachers, were sent to the countryside. This was the launch of the first literacy campaigns in Mexico. Through these campaigns, the government tried to create a national and historical consciousness through murals. See: Eddy Stols, *Mexico in historisch perspectief* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Acco, 1993), 131-2.

rather than military intervention.<sup>797</sup> This nationalisation led to the birth of PEMEX or *Petróleos Mexicanos*, a state-owned petroleum company that still exists today. Additionally, in 1937, Cárdenas granted Trotsky and his family asylum in Tampico, Mexico.<sup>798</sup>

It did not take long before Cárdenas' opponents, including Catholic traditionalists, rural people rejecting land reform and an activist state, *hacendados* (both those retaining land and those recently deprived of it), and middle class and agricultural workers who had not benefited from the land reform, referred to the Mexican president as "communist".<sup>799</sup> Others, such as foreign investors, provincial elites, Monterrey industrialists, bankers, and merchants, also feared Mexico's road to socialism.<sup>800</sup>

President Cárdenas was a grand figure during his tenure. The Mexican writer, journalist, and diplomat Carlos Fuentes wrote on Cárdenas' presidency:

"I have known all of the presidents of Mexico from 1934 to the present. Some have been more intelligent than others, some more politically astute, some more cultivated; but only one has attained true greatness: Lázaro Cárdenas. By greatness I mean, over and beyond tactical skill, energy, and determination, the concept of nationhood, the lofty vision that Cárdenas had of Mexico, its people, its history and culture, its destiny. He never thought small; he never belittled Mexico or its people."<sup>801</sup>

Nonetheless, after the inauguration of President Manuel Ávila Camacho in 1940, President Cárdenas quickly receded from the political spotlight.<sup>802</sup> He consequently emerged as a symbol of Mexico's aspirations for electoral democracy and civil liberty. His departure from the presidency and relinquishment of power marked the completion of the Revolution's institutionalisation,

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<sup>797</sup> President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the 32nd President of the US between 1933 and 1945. He was married to Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, who chaired the UNCHR. President Roosevelt was determined to improve the relationships between the US and the countries in Central and South America through his Good Neighbour Policy. See: 'Franklin D. Roosevelt', The White House, accessed 15 November 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/franklin-d-roosevelt/>; 'Milestones: 1921–1936 - Office of the Historian', accessed 15 November 2023, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/good-neighbor>.

<sup>798</sup> Eddy Stols, *Mexico in historisch perspectief* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Acco, 1993), 133-4.

<sup>799</sup> Russell, *The History of Mexico*, 350.

<sup>800</sup> "Monterrey industrialists" refers to wealthy and conservative businessmen associated with the city of Monterrey in Mexico. See: John M. Goshko, 'Monterrey's Industrial Barons a Power in Mexican Politics', *Washington Post*, 1 January 1977, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/01/01/monterreys-industrial-barons-a-power-in-mexican-politics/fbe8efb8-0942-4769-9e5c-f2487c34401e/>.

<sup>801</sup> Russell, *The History of Mexico*, 353.

<sup>802</sup> The election of Camacho was one of the most violent in recent history. He rallied up against General Juan Andreu Almazán. Camacho was known by Cárdenas as his Secretary of Defence and was designated by Cárdenas as his successor. See: Russell, 351.

becoming a central element of his legacy.<sup>803</sup> Additionally, Cárdenas had significantly advanced social democracy, overseeing land redistribution, the construction of 3,000 schools, and the training of 100,000 teachers.<sup>804</sup>

From this perspective, it is not very surprising that Cárdenas offered his own mansion, “Quinta Eréndira,” to the Mexican government. Lucas Ortiz Benítez narrates in his book “Exhortos y Memorias” how he was invited to the house of the former president of Mexico, Lázaro Cárdenas, or Tata Lázaro, in Jiquilpan (Michoacán) to discuss new plans for an international school in Mexico. Ortiz, who had just been appointed director of the new institution, had been desperate to find the right location for the plans of UNESCO and the OAS. Until then, no proposed location had met the standards set by the two international organisations, although they were interested in founding the centre in Pátzcuaro (Michoacán). During Ortiz’s search, it came to Cárdenas’s attention that Ortiz, appointed as the director of the centre, was in search of an adequate building. During this search, the former President stepped forward and opened a dialogue with Ortiz. He said: “They have informed me that UNESCO intends to open a school in Mexico to train teachers for indigenous education, and that you will be the director. What can you tell me about it without being indiscrete?”<sup>805</sup>

In short, Cárdenas was curious about these plans. At the end of the dialogue, in which Cárdenas carefully listened to Ortiz, he revealed the reason for his invitation. Cárdenas owned a mansion in Pátzcuaro, named Eréndira. Cárdenas believed, as Ortiz narrates, that he did not have the right to enjoy Eréndira as his private mansion. Therefore, he would like to donate it to the community so that it can be used as a health centre or school, serving the interests of the community.<sup>806</sup> In October 1950, the donation became official in Lázaro Cárdenas’s letter to the Mexican government, in which he proposed to donate his mansion, “Quinta Eréndira,” to the new International School that UNESCO and the Mexican government were willing to host (Figure 79).<sup>807</sup> This proposal was gratefully accepted by Manuel Gual Vidal, the president of Mexico.<sup>808</sup> CREFAL was born.<sup>809</sup>

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<sup>803</sup> Russell, 352.

<sup>804</sup> Russell, 352.

<sup>805</sup> This a free translation of the author. The original text reads: “Me han informado que la UNESCO pretende abrir en México una escuela para adiestrar maestros destinados a la educación indígena, y que tú serás el director. ¿Qué puedes decirme al respecto sin cometer indiscreción?” See: Ortiz Benítez, *Exhortos y Rememoraciones*, 71.

<sup>806</sup> Ortiz Benítez, 73-4.

<sup>807</sup> Medina and others, *CREFAL: Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe. Edición conmemorativa del 30 Aniversario de la Institución*.

<sup>808</sup> I refer to Chapter 4 for more information on ‘Quinta Eréndira’.

<sup>809</sup> Woolsey, ‘CREFAL - UNESCO’S School for Community Development Leadership in Latin America’, 116.

161 (CREFAL)  
Ururapan, Mich., a 31 de octubre de 1950.

Sr. Lic. Manuel Gual Vidal,  
Secretario de Educación Pública.  
México, D. F.

Estimado Licenciado y fino amigo:

Al tener conocimiento que una Comisión de esa Secretaría venía buscando locales para instalar la Escuela Internacional que la Organización de las Naciones Unidas acordó establecer en México y que el Gobierno de nuestro país señaló la ciudad de Mérida como sede de tan importante Escuela, propuse al Gobierno del Estado facilitar la Quinta Bréndira con sus anexos para que, de ser útil a tal fin, se ocupe desde luego.

La propia Comisión pasó a inspeccionar la Quinta y habiendo manifestado que está en condiciones de aprovecharse con ligeras adaptaciones, construyendo en un extremo del área perteneciente a la misma Quinta los alojamientos para el alumnado y otros servicios, pongo a disposición de esa Dependencia la citada Quinta con sus anexos por el tiempo que sea necesario y sin costo alguno; en la inteligencia de que el terreno de la propia Quinta sobre el que se construyan los nuevos edificios, será cedido al Gobierno gratuitamente.

Acompañó a la presente dos planos: uno de la casa y otro del perímetro de la propiedad.

De aceptar esa Secretaría la proposición que hago le ruego se me informe en qué fecha debe entregarse la casa con sus anexos, para desocuparla oportunamente.

Aprovecho esta ocasión para saludarlo y quedar de usted, una vez más, atento amigo y servidor.

Lázaro Cárdenas.

Figure 79: Letter from Cárdenas to Sr. Lic. Manuel Gual Vidal. Courtesy of CREFAL Archives, AHD/1950/Admin/RI/Octubre

While I have not found any documents on UNESCO and the OAS' opinion regarding the donation from former president Lázaro Cárdenas, I can imagine that this created some movements on Mexican northern neighbour's soil. The Cárdenas administration, known for executing massive land reforms as part of the president's agrarian reform programme and the nationalisation of the foreign-owned petroleum industry, displeased many American property owners and caused the US to lose millions.<sup>810</sup> Now, the same president had stepped forward offering his help to UNESCO and the OAS by donating his own private mansion back to the community for the purpose of a health care centre, school, etc.<sup>811</sup> His belief in and preference for a social democratic system, with a slight touch of communism, was once more expressed by his gesture.

Additionally, Cárdenas was a popular president. Ortiz refers to him in his memoirs as "Tata Lázaro" in reference to "Tata Vasco", the Spanish missionary who created community centres, schools, and hospitals for the indigenous people.<sup>812</sup> This emphasises the importance Cárdenas had to the community.

<sup>810</sup> John J. Dwyer, 'Diplomatic Weapons of the Weak: Mexican Policymaking during the U.S.-Mexican Agrarian Dispute, 1934-1941', *Diplomatic History* 26, no. 3 (2002): 375-95.

<sup>811</sup> Ortiz Benítez, *Exhortos y Rememoraciones*, 73-4.

<sup>812</sup> "Tata Vasco" has been discussed in Chapter 4.

However, Ortiz's appointment as the new director of CREFAL had been somewhat controversial. Evans, the US delegate and member of the Executive Board, expressed surprise at the decision on Ortiz's appointment during the 23rd Executive Board session.<sup>813</sup> Lucas Ortiz Benítez recounts in his memoirs that he received a telegram in June 1950 while on a trip to Potosí, Bolivia. At that time, he was working for the UN as part of the first Technical Assistance Mission to Latin America. He wrote that he was offered the position of director of the new institution, which was to be established as part of a global network of centres.<sup>814</sup> This issue had previously been discussed at the 21<sup>st</sup> Executive Board, to which Director-General Torres Bodet and Leal referred in their response to Evans at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Executive Board.<sup>815</sup> However, I could not find any trace of this decision in the summary reports of the 21<sup>st</sup> Executive Board and assumed that the decision was made off-record.<sup>816</sup>

Ortiz did not remain long as the sole director. At the 1953 meeting of the coordination committee between the OAS and UNESCO, it was recommended that Hughes become the assistant director of CREFAL, a role he assumed in 1953 as the deputy director of CREFAL. He became responsible for the preparatory study towards the reorganisation of CREFAL and ultimately its reorganisation.<sup>817</sup> Lloyd Hughes was an American of African descent.<sup>818</sup> For years, he was involved in fundamental education and CREFAL. Initially, in 1948, he was asked to conduct a study on the Mexican Cultural Missions. Upon his return from Mexico, he became an employee of UNESCO and headed to UNESCO's Division of Fundamental Education. Hughes was likely also investigated by the U.S. The Federal Loyalty Program, ensuring that there was no possibility of communist sympathy.<sup>819</sup>

The political ideas of Mexican presidents changed over time, and I cannot help but think that Cárdenas' donation might have triggered those lingering fears for communistic ideas. From the previous sections, we learned that UNESCO was already in troubled waters due to perceived communist threats. The donation and inspiration taken from cultural missions might have been additional triggers causing the OAS to distance itself from the centre, ultimately leading to a change in their donations towards fellowships and the implementation of Hughes alongside Ortiz. The main reason for this movement remains unclear and unexplained in the documents found in the

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<sup>813</sup> 'Summary Records of the 23rd Session of the Executive Board (3rd Meeting)'.

<sup>814</sup> Ortiz Benítez, *Exhortos y Rememoraciones*, 68-9.

<sup>815</sup> 'Summary Records of the 21st Session of the Executive Board (8th Meeting)'; 'Summary Records of the 23rd Session of the Executive Board (3rd Meeting)'.

<sup>816</sup> 'Summary Records of the 21st Session of the Executive Board (8th Meeting)'.

<sup>817</sup> 'Resoluciones Del Comité de Coordinación Junta Del CREFAL y OMEFAL'.

<sup>818</sup> Shepard, 'Algeria, France, Mexico, UNESCO'.

<sup>819</sup> Previously, I referred to the U.S. Federal Loyalty Program



archive. However, the appointment of Hughes coincided with the new direction that UNESCO took in 1953. Dorn and Ghodsee argue that by the beginning of 1953, the American Luther Evans sought a more limited, technical role for the organisation, a similar shift that CREFAL would take in the following years.<sup>820</sup>

## 5.4 And the UDHR and fundamental education?

The Cold War did not start in 1948, as many have presumed. It was Luther Evans who learned from Truman's administration that Stalin had started to become more difficult many years before, in 1945. This was also reflected in the creation of the UDHR, the UN, and the constitution of UNESCO, as Valderrama, Johnson and Symonides write.<sup>821</sup> Inevitably, the difference in perspective between the two grand nations and the protagonists of the Cold War remained. I argue that the remaining discussion between the two nations, whether to focus on social rights or liberal rights, remains visible in the project on fundamental education in Mexico. For this reason, I focus on the last part of this chapter on the connection and visibility of UDHR in fundamental education.

As in UNESCO's constitution, the project on fundamental education was also meant to inform people about the rights and duties incorporated in the UDHR. In the handbook "Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education," created at the Rio de Janeiro Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas in 1949, the participants referred in recommendation XX to the need for educating and informing adults about the Rights of Man as publicised by the UN and the OAS.<sup>822</sup> It is important to mention that, at that time, the Rights of Man as the UDHR were used interchangeably, making it very confusing for a researcher to determine whether they were referring to the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, adopted by the Ninth International Conference of American States in Bogotá, Colombia on 2 May 1948 or the UDHR, adopted by the UN General Assembly in Paris, France on 10 December 1948.<sup>823</sup>

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<sup>820</sup> Dorn and Ghodsee, 'The Cold War Politicization of Literacy'.

<sup>821</sup> 'Oral History Interview with Luther H. Evans, 1970'; Valderrama Martínez, *A History of UNESCO*; Janusz Symonides, 'UNESCO And The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights'.

<sup>822</sup> Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, 'Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education; Report of Work Group V of the Inter-American Seminar on Literacy and Adult Education'.

<sup>823</sup> 'American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man: Adopted by the 9th International Conference of American States' (International American Conference (9th: 1948: Bogotá), UN, 1948), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/565094>; Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'; Francisco-José Quintana, 'The (Latin) American Dream? Human Rights and the Construction of Inter-American Regional Organisation (1945-1948)', SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY, 28 January 2024), <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=4708725>.

## XX

be That in every literacy and adult education campaign, the adults/acquainted with the Declaration of the Rights of Man as made public by the United Nations and OAS.

Figure 80: Recommendation XX in the “Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education.” Courtesy of UNESCO Archives. Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, ‘Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education; Report of Work Group V of the Inter-American Seminar on Literacy and Adult Education,’ UNESDOC (Rio de Janeiro, 1949), 50.

The focus of this analysis is not on whether the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man or the UDHR was more influential. Both declarations influenced each other, as Latin American diplomats and jurists played a parallel role in the drafting both documents. They were both seen as frameworks of rights and duties to be taught to the people.<sup>824</sup> Therefore, it is surprising to find so little in the CREFAL archives referring to human rights in general, particularly regarding what was written and published during the period of reference, being 1945 – 1960.

My project began with UNESCO’s *Exhibition Album on Human Rights*. This album was created to show the efforts and contributions made by all peoples, nations, and civilisations to the UDHR and mostly emphasised the historical aspects of this struggle.<sup>825</sup> The album’s intent was to circulate through different spaces and places, creating connections between and among governing bodies and communities and spreading a universal message around the world.<sup>826</sup> For this purpose, the travel album was translated into three official working languages of the UN, and thus UNESCO: English (6,700 copies), French (3,500 copies), and Spanish (1,122 copies), and was sent around the world in 1951 and somewhat later.<sup>827</sup> Although no trace was found in the UNESCO Archives, I suspected a Spanish version of the Album should have been sent to CREFAL as well.

During my initial research explorations and email exchanges, it took a long time before I discovered any material on the UDHR in CREFAL’s archives, especially concerning the travel album. Furthermore, the CREFAL archivists were unfamiliar with the travel album and did not know what they were referring to. Two weeks after my arrival in Pátzcuaro, one of the CREFAL archivists found the Spanish version of the Album in the CREFAL Archive: the “Álbum

<sup>824</sup> Quintana, ‘The (Latin) American Dream?’

<sup>825</sup> ‘Human Rights Album’.

<sup>826</sup> Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’, 144.; Saunier, *Transnational History: Theory and Practice*.

<sup>827</sup> The distribution of the Spanish translation of the Album was delayed due to UNESCO’s occupancy with other activities. See: Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’; United Nations, ‘Official Languages’, 144; United Nations (United Nations), accessed 27 December 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/our-work/official-languages>; ‘What Are the Official Languages of the United Nations? - Ask DAG!’, accessed 27 December 2023, [https://ask.un.org/faq/14463?\\_gl=1\\*4q2e47\\*\\_ga\\*MTg2NTE0MDM2NC4xNzAzNjc3MzA3\\*\\_ga\\_TK9BQL5X7Z\\*MTcwMzY3NzMwNi4xLjAuMTcwMzY3NzMwNi4wLjAuMA..](https://ask.un.org/faq/14463?_gl=1*4q2e47*_ga*MTg2NTE0MDM2NC4xNzAzNjc3MzA3*_ga_TK9BQL5X7Z*MTcwMzY3NzMwNi4xLjAuMTcwMzY3NzMwNi4wLjAuMA..)

Exposición Los Derechos Del Hombre”(Figure 81).<sup>828</sup> The album was slightly dusty, showed traces of usage, and was almost complete.<sup>829</sup>

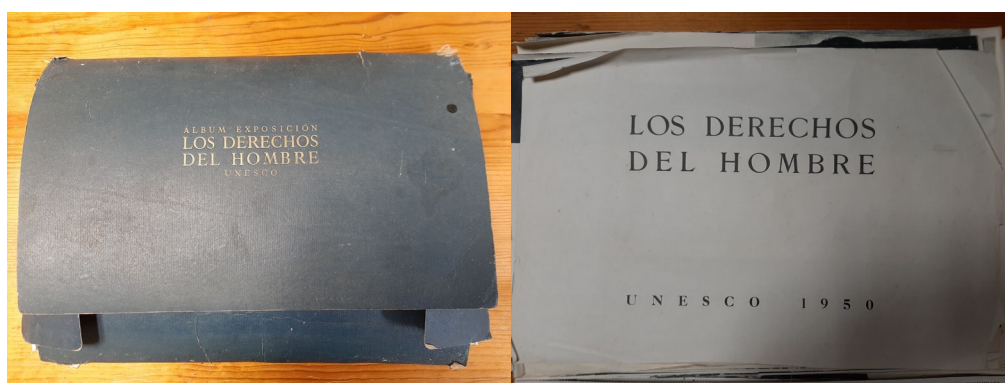


Figure 81: *Álbum Exposición Los Derechos Del Hombre* - Courtesy of CREFAL Archive. © Stefanie Kesteloot, personal archive, 20 July 2022.

Unfortunately, until now, the CREFAL archivists and I have been unable to find any traces of how the album had been used and when, nor in pictures, documents, or other local archives.<sup>830</sup> I do have an assumption that, inspired by a “Report of The Secretariat On Action Taken With Regard To The Resolutions And Recommendations Approved At The First Meeting Of The Inter-American Cultural Council” found in the OAS Archives, the album might have been used in a UN exhibition. Both the OAS and UNESCO had pledged to develop a joint programme for disseminating information on the principles of the UN and the OAS, including their Declaration on Human Rights.<sup>831</sup> On pictures found in the CREFAL Archive, I could see a large exhibition organised on the Plaza Vasco de Quiroga, the central square in Pátzcuaro. In accordance with the recommendations of the Inter-American Cultural Council in Mexico City in 1951, the UDHR should be represented as part of the UN’s presentation.<sup>832</sup> In addition, it would have been a great moment to introduce the people to the UDHR and its rights and duties. Unfortunately, the

<sup>828</sup> ‘Álbum Exposición Los Derechos Del Hombre’ (UNESCO, n.d.), AHD/CREFAL I/DG/SP/1951/XIII/1, CREFAL, accessed 20 July 2022.

<sup>829</sup> The album has been used, as several traces of usage were found on the panels, such as holes in the corners. Moreover, some panels (53 “Standard of Living and Public Assistance – Charity a Moral Duty,” 55 “Standard of Living and Public Assistance – Luxury and Destitution,” and 91 “Participation in Cultural Life – Books as Messengers of Culture” were missing, but the corresponding clarifications were still present. Additionally, the clarifications had been packed in an illogical order, as if they had just been taken down. (Own experience in the CREFAL Archive). See: ‘Álbum Exposición Los Derechos Del Hombre’.

<sup>830</sup> I attempted to consult previous editions of the local newspapers in local archives. Unfortunately, these years were unavailable at the Archivo Municipal de Pátzcuaro.

<sup>831</sup> The Department of Cultural Affairs of the Pan American Union, ‘Report Of The Secretariat On Action Taken With Regard To The Resolutions And Recommendations Approved At The First Meeting Of The Inter-American Cultural Council’ (Washington D.C., 1956), JX 1980.45 .A21 1956 .A11 no.8, OAS, 8-9.

<sup>832</sup> The Department of Cultural Affairs of the Pan American Union.

pictures found in the CREFAL archive on this topic are not dated or sharp enough to fully support this hypothesis.

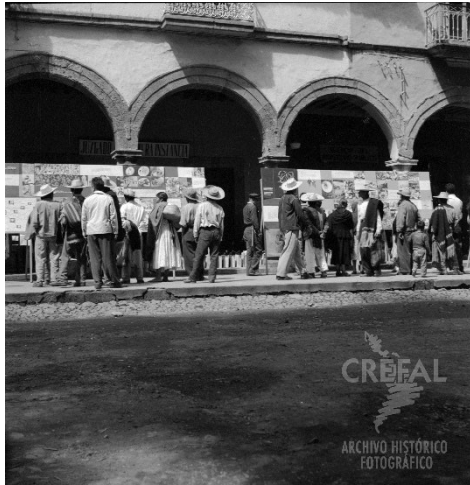


Figure 83: *Sin título – Visitors to a public exhibition on the UN.* Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-75\_N-20.



Figure 85: *Sin título – Visitors to a public exhibition on the UN.* Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-75\_N-32.

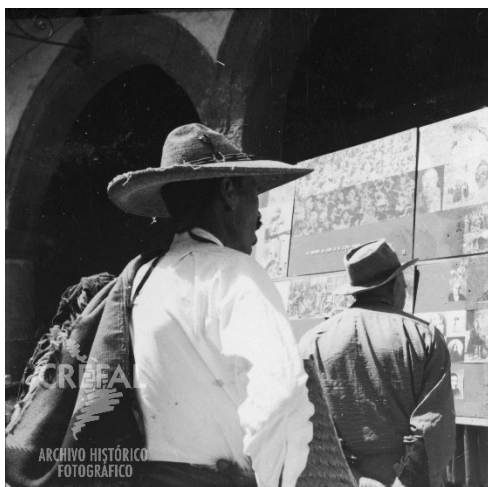


Figure 82: *Sin título – Visitors to a public exhibition on the UN.* Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-75\_P-27.



Figure 84: *Sin título – Visitors to a public exhibition on the UN.* Photograph courtesy of CREFAL Archive, MX\_CREFAL\_AHF\_ByN120\_S-75\_P-34.

A clear reference to the UDHR, and even more concretely to the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man adopted by the OAS, was made in the short movie production “Eres

libre,” based on the booklet of the same title.<sup>833</sup> The booklet was written by Ermilio Abreu Gómez and produced by the Washington-based Latin American Fundamental Education Press (or the Pan American Union and UNESCO), which issued a booklet among other publications in the *Biblioteca Popular Latinoamericana* (or Latin American Popular Library) in 1952.<sup>834</sup> The Press intended to organise these “*bibliotecas*” for rural communities, unions, cooperatives, and other centres where aid for education campaigns had been sought.

The book “Eres Libre” was published among other books in a series called “Civic Series”, which was overseen by Nannetti.<sup>835</sup> By 1954, ten books were published in this series, ranging from Artigas to Saint Francis of Assisi.<sup>836</sup> The booklet itself was no longer available in any UNESCO, CREFAL, or OAS library, but could be found in the Médiathèque du musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac in Paris. On the other hand, the educational short film production “Eres Libre” is freely available on Canal CREFAL, the channel of the “*Centro de Cooperación Regional para la Educación de Adultos en América Latina y el Caribe*,” or briefly, the contemporary CREFAL.<sup>837</sup>

The script was also written by Emilio Abreu Gómez, a Mexican author, journalist, and Spanish professor and was based on the previously produced booklet of 1952.<sup>838</sup> Richard Kent Jones from the US and Alfonso Robles Landi from Mexico directed the entire movie with the help of J. Ramiro Girón Peña, a scholar from Guatemala and participant of the CREFAL school in 1956. The Guatemalan student was not a professional filmmaker, nor did he aspire to be one. However, he ran a mobile education film unit in the late 40s and early 50s, which was operated by

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<sup>833</sup> *Eres Libre*.

<sup>834</sup> The booklet was the fifth publication in the ‘Serie Civismo’. See: The Coordinating Committee, ‘Resolutions of the Coordinating Committee - Latin American Bureau For The Production Of Fundamental Education Materials’, October 1952, JX 1980.2.A8.L17CC1952e, OAS.; ‘Watch: A Call to Emancipation – Orphan Film Symposium’, accessed 28 December 2023, <https://wp.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/2022/08/20/emancipation/>.

<sup>835</sup> By 1954, the Press had produced six series: a civic series (Artigas, Simón Bolívar, Abraham Lincoln, José de San Martín, Morelos, Eres Libre, Martí, Algo Sobre América, La Patria, and San Francisco de Asís), a health series (La Viruela, ¡Cuidado con la Leche!, Agua Pura, La Tuberculosis, El Paludismo, Cuida a tus Hijos, El Alcoholismo, and la Casa de Salud), a series on agriculture (Defiende tu Suelo, Defiende los Bosques, Mejor Semilla de Maíz, Abonos Agrícolas, and El Huerto Casero), a series on economic and social affairs (Bueno y Barato, Crédito Agrícola, la Casa Rural, Ayuda a tu Pueblo, and la Biblioteca Popular), a recreation series (Quetzalcóatl and Vamos a Leer), and a series on basic information (Language, Arithmetic, and Decimal Metric System). In each series, a minimum of two booklets had been published. See: The Committee On Inter-American Organizations, ‘Report On The Agreement Between The OAS And UNESCO Concerning Cooperation In the Field Of Fundamental Education’; ‘Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Coordinating Committee for the Plan for Training Personnel and Producing Materials for Fundamental Education’, 29 August 1950, AHD/DG/DG/DAF, CREFAL.

<sup>836</sup> The Committee On Inter-American Organizations, ‘Report On The Agreement Between The OAS And UNESCO Concerning Cooperation In the Field Of Fundamental Education’.

<sup>837</sup> *Eres Libre*.

<sup>838</sup> ‘Ermilio Abreu Gómez - Detalle Del Autor - Enciclopedia de La Literatura En México - FLM’, accessed 27 December 2023, <http://www.elem.mx/autor/datos/2>.



the Guatemalan Office of the Inter-American Cooperative Education Service, an agency that was part of the USA's Cold War Cultural Policy.<sup>839</sup> The movie itself was a production of CREFAL.<sup>840</sup>

The final direction was in the hands of the Mexican Alfonso Robles Landi and Richard Kent Jones, a filmmaker from the US and former employee of Motion Picture (Warner Bros) in Hollywood.<sup>841</sup> According to a document found in the archives of the OAS, he worked with CREFAL from 1954 onwards until 1956 in the department "Cinematografía" and from 1957-1958 in the department "Artes Gráficas".<sup>842</sup> In this department, it is likely that the idea of producing a movie based on the booklet of "Eres libre" began.

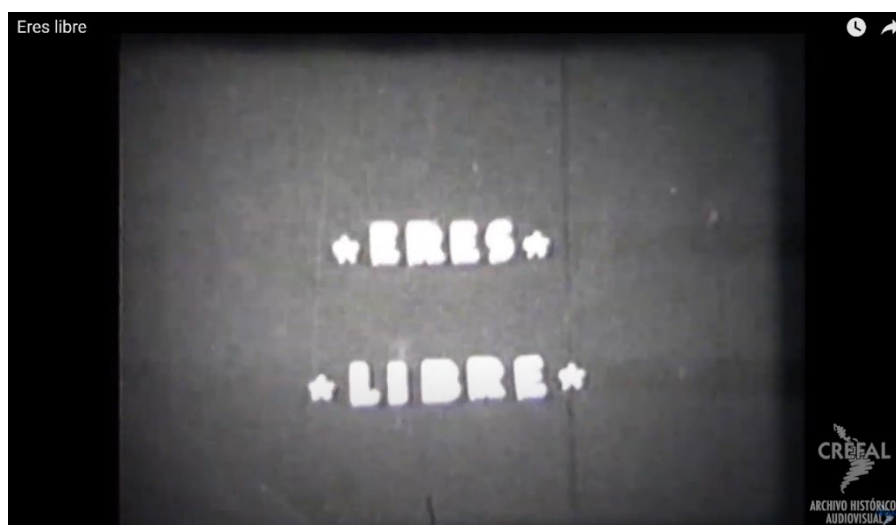


Figure 86 Screenshot taken from the video production 'Eres Libre' - consultable on Canal CREFAL (via YouTube, accessed 23 March 2024)

The duration of the movie is 10 minutes and 22 seconds. The movie is a 16 mm black-and-white production, with a narrating voice explaining the visuals and their interpretations. The music was composed by the Mexican Leopold Monson. The distribution was intended for inhabitants of

<sup>839</sup> 'Watch: A Call to Emancipation – Orphan Film Symposium'.

<sup>840</sup> *Eres Libre*.

<sup>841</sup> Richard Kent Jones was born on 5 February 1915 in Los Angeles, California, US, and died on 23 March 2004 in New Castle, Colorado, US. Just like his brother, Charles M. (Chuck) Jones, he had worked as an animator for Warner Brothers before joining the army in 1943. After the war, in 1950, he went with his family to Mexico to obtain his Master of Arts at the Autonomous University of Guadalajara. In 1955, he returned to Mexico to set up and direct an animation studio in Mexico City. In 1956, he joined the UNESCO professional staff, where he became a high-level expert in educational methods. As with any American going abroad to work for international institutions during that period, he had been screened for his political ideas by the US government to ensure he had no 'communist' affiliations. See: 'Richard Kent Jones - Biography', IMDb, accessed 28 December 2023, <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm10593554/bio/>; 'Richard Kent Jones', 28 March 2004, <https://www.postindependent.com/news/richard-kent-jones/>.

<sup>842</sup> 'El CREFAL: Organización, programa, actividades y resultados alcanzados'.

the Pátzcuaro region, particularly Tarascans, who collaborated in the making of and frequently appeared in the film.<sup>843</sup>

David M.J. Wood, a researcher at the Institute of Aesthetic Research at the UNAM in Mexico City, described the movie in 2022 as centred around the idea of freedom, as suggested by the title “Eres libre” (“You are free”).<sup>844</sup> According to Wood, the filmmakers aimed to translate the liberal concepts of rights, duties, and individual liberty fundamental to CREFAL’s mission to indigenous peasants in the area.<sup>845</sup> The film, produced in Spanish, uses a simple film style to ensure comprehension by the P’urhépecha.

The narrator references several rights to the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, including the right to religious freedom (art. 3), the right to life, liberty, and personal security (art. 1); the right to nationality (art. 19); the right to residence and movement (art. 8); the right to equality before law (art. 2); the right to a family and its protection (art. 6); the right to work and fair remuneration (art. 14); freedom of investigation, opinion, expression, and dissemination (art. 4); the right to the benefits of culture (art. 13); the right to leisure and its use (art. 15); and the right to education (art. 12).<sup>846</sup> The film also emphasises duties such as obeying the law (art. 33), providing for children and parents (art. 30), serving the community and nation (art. 34), and respecting national symbols and the national anthem.<sup>847</sup>

Similar to UNESCO’s first Director-Generals’ views, the voiceover highlights the importance of literacy: “If you can read and write, you have a path to a better life. You have the right to read whichever books you like, to learn better things. If you can read and write, you won’t be fooled by others.”<sup>848</sup> The American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man does not emphasise education as much as the UDHR. In the Rights of Man, it is stated that “Every person has the right to an education, which should be based on the principles of liberty, morality and human solidarity”, to ensure a decent life, raise living standards, and fully integrate into society. Equality of opportunity and access to primary education were also included.<sup>849</sup> The UDHR, adopted half a year after the Rights of Man, in its second paragraph of Article 26, states: “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the

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<sup>843</sup> *Eres Libre*.

<sup>844</sup> ‘Watch: A Call to Emancipation – Orphan Film Symposium’.

<sup>845</sup> ‘Watch: A Call to Emancipation – Orphan Film Symposium’.

<sup>846</sup> ‘American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man’.

<sup>847</sup> *Eres Libre*, ‘Watch: A Call to Emancipation – Orphan Film Symposium’; ‘American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man’.

<sup>848</sup> This is a translation by David M.J. Wood from the Orphan Symposium, where he narrated and translated the voiceover of “Eres libre.” See: ‘Watch: A Call to Emancipation – Orphan Film Symposium’.

<sup>849</sup> ‘American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man’.

strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.”<sup>850</sup>

The cited phrases reflect a simplistic nod to the UDHR, resonating with the speeches of Huxley and Torres Bodet. Both leaders viewed literacy as a tool for a better life, particularly through fundamental education. The programme was seen as an emergency solution to break the cycle of underproduction, malnutrition, and endemic disease, providing the minimum education needed to improve life, health, productivity, and , economic, and political organisation.<sup>851</sup> Torres Bodet frequently referred to the second paragraph of the UDHR, emphasising the need for education in response to hostile and totalitarian regimes. It is not surprising that he, as UNESCO’s Director-General, often referred to the UDHR to support the global spread of education from 1948 onwards. Illiteracy and ignorance were seen as ‘evil,’ with education being the solution, legitimised by the UDHR and the right to education.<sup>852</sup>

What is surprising, however, is the lack of reference to the UDHR in CREFAL’s programme. This contrasts with the recommendations from the first meeting of the OAS-UNESCO Joint Committee on Coordination which took place between 17 and 20 February 1953 in Mexico. This committee suggested the development of a joint programme to disseminate information on the principles of the UN and the OAS, including their Declarations on Human Rights.<sup>853</sup>

To this day, it seems that more effort was placed on teaching the P’urhépecha and CREFAL students about the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man rather than the UDHR. In a report by Director-General Torres Bodet to UNESCO’s Executive Board, he stated that the OAS might aim for the launch of “a large-scale Pan-American production programme. Source materials and technical advice would be drawn from Pan-American and International Agencies in Washington and elsewhere. Educational materials, designed for fundamental education in Latin America, would then be written, edited and printed by the Bureau.”<sup>854</sup> Moreover, as Bowers described his first observations in a letter to Nannetti on 27 January 1950:

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<sup>850</sup> Nations, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’.

<sup>851</sup> ‘1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.’

<sup>852</sup> UNESCO, ‘UNESCO And Its Programme - The Right To Education VIII’.

<sup>853</sup> The Department of Cultural Affairs of the Pan American Union, ‘Report Of The Secretariat On Action Taken With Regard To The Resolutions And Recommendations Approved At The First Meeting Of The Inter-American Cultural Council’.

<sup>854</sup> ‘Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America’.



“The aim of the OAS was to have a much more important Production Centre in Washington, designed to write and publish materials for a wide campaign of fundamental education throughout Latin America and to give some training in Washington to selected students in the production of materials – this Centre being linked to a smaller field Training and Production Centre in Mexico.”<sup>855</sup>

The evolution of the use of the UDHR and the Rights of Man in fundamental education recalls Marc Depaepe’s contribution in the book “Paradoxen van pedagogiseren”.<sup>856</sup> He described a pedagogical paradox in which the goal of better education, according to the enlightened ideals of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was to produce more empowered people. However, this emancipatory objective assumed an asymmetrical relationship. “Development was contingent upon the submission and compliance of the students to the authority of the ‘master’”.<sup>857</sup> The objective of fundamental education was to empower people and help them create a better life. If you consider Depaepe’s paradox, you can question who benefits exactly from a better life. In his article “Was Fundamental Education Another Form of Colonialism?” Joseph Watras examined conflicts when educators aimed to reduce poverty while trying to respect indigenous cultures.<sup>858</sup> Inspired by Martin Carnoy, who claimed that Western education was introduced to Third World countries as part of imperialist domination, Watras argued that literacy was then used by many organisations as a pretext to enhance self-government and improve the living conditions of people in developing countries.<sup>859</sup> In this case, fundamental education, as advocated by UNESCO, aimed to show people that they could learn academic skills to address everyday problems and improve their lives.

Moreover, there was still an ongoing ‘war against ignorance’ as one of the core assignments of fundamental education in 1947, which had to be part of a democracy, to be done by the people for the people. However, this approach was ultimately weakened by 1950, shifting towards enabling children and adults to understand their environment and their roles as citizens.<sup>860</sup> While Watras concluded that fundamental education was not a form of colonisation, with which I agree, it did bring about an imbalance in the lives of the people, as the experts had weakened their hold

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<sup>855</sup> UNESCO, ‘Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America’.

<sup>856</sup> Depaepe, ‘Geen Ambacht Zonder Werktuigen. Reflecties Over De Conceptuele Omgang Met Het Pedagogische Verleden.’

<sup>857</sup> The translation is a free translation made by the author. See: Depaepe, 53.

<sup>858</sup> Watras, ‘Was Fundamental Education Another Form of Colonialism?’

<sup>859</sup> Watras, ‘Was Fundamental Education Another Form of Colonialism?’.

<sup>860</sup> Watras, ‘Was Fundamental Education Another Form of Colonialism?’.

on the local community's traditional orientations.<sup>861</sup> Urrieta and Landeros made a similar argument.<sup>862</sup>

Over the years, the perspective on fundamental education shifted. Initially, the UNESCO Commission declared that fundamental education aimed to change the community through the people themselves. By 1951, the focus had shifted to helping people understand their immediate problems and develop skills to solve them independently.<sup>863</sup> By 1956, fundamental education increasingly aligned with technical assistance projects, emphasising an economic perspective and a more patronising approach.

This aligns with David Wood's suggestion that CREFAL's staff and students often patronised the P'urhépecha, viewing them as backward and primitive. By developing their own materials, they aimed to lead them towards development and modernity.<sup>864</sup> This idea was central to fundamental education, which aimed to empower people to create better lives, necessitating specialised teachers and materials tested and produced in a natural environment like the Pátzcuaro region.

To me, fundamental education initially had an emancipatory approach, which attracted my interest. However, over time, I observed that fundamental education, particularly literacy, became increasingly economically driven, ultimately integrating into the UN's TA Projects organised by the UN's Economic and Social Council.<sup>865</sup> From this perspective, it is unsurprising that the American Declaration on the Rights of Man, which represents a more American interpretation of universal rights and duties, was more prevalent in CREFAL than the UDHR, which incorporates second-generation rights. This shift suggests a slight aversion to anything perceived as 'too social'. In my view, this change diluted the original emancipatory vision of fundamental education, steering it towards a more utilitarian and economically focused agenda. This transition reflects the broader political and ideological trends of the time, where social rights were often overshadowed by economic priorities.

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<sup>861</sup> Watras, 'Was Fundamental Education Another Form of Colonialism?'.  
<sup>862</sup> In the previous Chapter, I have discussed the research of Urrieta and Landeros more in detail. See: Urrieta and Landeros, "Hacer El Hombre Más Hombre".

<sup>863</sup> Watras, 'UNESCO's Programme of Fundamental Education, 1946 - 1959'; '1.000 Million Illiterates. Half The World Is In Darkness.'

<sup>864</sup> In his talk, David M.J. Wood explains how J. Ramiro Giron Peña believed that movies made for primitive audiences should correspond to what Wood calls the 'Visual Aesthetics of Simplicity'. Giron believed that movies for this target group should be brief and contain only between 250 and 392 feet of 16-millimetre film, with few or no subtitles. Moreover, they should express only a single basic idea, use a variety of camera angles, and include plenty of close-ups and extreme close-ups to emphasise important details. Furthermore, the viewers should be able to associate themselves with the protagonists in the movie. See: 'Watch: A Call to Emancipation – Orphan Film Symposium'.

<sup>865</sup> Jens Boel, 'UNESCO's Fundamental Education Program, 1946-1958: Vision, Actions and Impact'; Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.'; Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on the macro context of the project on fundamental education. Initially, I discussed the interference of the Cold War and its visibility within the project. I then explored the connection between TA projects and fundamental education, demonstrating how fundamental education ultimately became integrated into TA. Subsequently, I examined the historical context of Mexico and its unique interaction with fundamental education. Finally, I focused on the UDHR and the travel album, which initiated this entire research.

While these elements seemed disparate at first, several connections emerge. The Cold War and Mexican context had significant implications for the projects on fundamental education. In this context, UNESCO, the OAS, the Mexican government, and the central negotiator Luther Evans played pivotal roles. John Bowers, UNESCO's head of the fundamental education division, initiated negotiations with the OAS, supported by Luther Evans, a US member of UNESCO's Executive Board. Evans continued to lead discussions with Dr Guillermo Nannetti, the acting head of the fundamental education division from the OAS.<sup>866</sup> Evans later became the fourth Director-General of UNESCO during an intense Cold War period, when UNESCO was under scrutiny for alleged communist affiliations. The project on fundamental education in Mexico may have exacerbated these concerns.

The building of CREFAL, "Quinta Eréndira," was donated by Mexico's former president, Lázaro Cárdenas, who had previously nationalised the petroleum industry in Mexico and granted asylum to Trotsky and his family. Moreover, the infiltration of socialist thinking in the educational system, notably the cultural missions of the 1930s, certainly did not help either. This historical context likely contributed to the US's nervousness about the project.

Whether the division of the fundamental education project into two parts was an indirect consequence of their northern neighbour's nervousness remains uncertain. According to the annual OAS report, this was a suggestion made by experts, ultimately becoming a reality.<sup>867</sup> Nevertheless, the first regional centre on fundamental education ended up in two parts: the Fundamental Education Press in Washington, D.C., and the Mexican Centre, CREFAL, in Pátzcuaro.

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<sup>866</sup> In both the UNESCO and OAS archives, it was found that Luther Evans played a major role in the establishment of CREFAL. See: UNESCO, 'Fundamental Education: Regional Training and Production Centre in Latin America'; OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, 'Annual Report 1951'.

<sup>867</sup> OAS Inter-American Cultural Council, 'Annual Report 1951'.

Previously, I concluded that the “Human Rights Travel Exhibition Album” was difficult for the average person to comprehend.<sup>868</sup> Although the CREFAL archivists and I could not determine when or how the album was used, I assume that it was challenging for the staff, students, and locals in Pátzcuaro to understand. Meanwhile, the booklet “Eres libre” was written by Ermilio Abreu Gómez based on the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man.

This booklet was later followed by a short film directed by J. Ramiro Giron Peña, supervised by Alfonso Robles Landi and Richard Kent Jones. The film, which is now considered an orphan movie, was created in 1956.<sup>869</sup> Despite the recent adoption of the UDHR, references in the movie were made to the Rights of Man rather than to the UDHR.

It is unclear whether this was a conscious choice or simply the outcome of the prevailing circumstances, as evidenced by the reorientation of fundamental education away from UNESCO’s empowering vision towards a technical and economic approach to development of the UN. Nonetheless, it remains remarkable how quickly the UDHR moved to the background in the fundamental education programme and, indeed, how little attention was given to this newly adopted Declaration.

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<sup>868</sup> Kesteloot, ‘Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education’.

<sup>869</sup> ‘Watch: A Call to Emancipation – Orphan Film Symposium’.

## CONCLUSION

Three years after the end of the Second World War, the UDHR was adopted at the Third General Assembly of the UN in Paris on 10 December 1948.<sup>870</sup> By a vote of 48 to 0 with eight abstentions, the world committed to the implementation of human rights.<sup>871</sup> UNESCO, the UN's specialised agency, was tasked with disseminating the UDHR globally through educational initiatives and mass communications, teaching people about their rights and duties as outlined in the declaration.

From its inception, UNESCO undertook several initiatives to educate people about the UDHR through books, radio, films, teaching in schools, and exhibitions. This dissertation begins with an exploration of the visualisation of the UDHR in a travel album named the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights*, based on a large-scale international exhibition opened at the Musée Galliera in Paris in September 1949.<sup>872</sup> The travel album, like the Paris exhibition, aimed to demonstrate the efforts and contributions made by all peoples, nations, and civilisations to the UDHR and to show both children and adults the help they could derive from their rights and corresponding duties.<sup>873</sup>

The exhibition album was intended to travel around the world and was produced in the three UN working languages: French, English, and Spanish.<sup>874</sup> In 1951, the album embarked on a journey to the other side of the world.<sup>875</sup> Coinciding with its travels, UNESCO and the OAS's first regional centre on fundamental education, CREFAL, opened its doors in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, Mexico. The P'urhépecha, or Tarascans, the indigenous people living around Lake Pátzcuaro, were the first recipients of the common programme of UNESCO and the OAS on 'fundamental education'.

According to the Rio de Janeiro Seminar recommendations, both organisations, but mainly UNESCO, played a leading role in the spread of fundamental education worldwide.<sup>876</sup> Despite multiple trials, UNESCO never managed to definitively define fundamental education and only

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<sup>870</sup> United Nations, 'History of the Declaration', United Nations (United Nations), accessed 4 January 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/udhr/history-of-the-declaration>; M. Glen Johnson, 'A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights', 38.

<sup>871</sup> M. Glen Johnson, 'A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights'; Farrokh Jhabvala, 'The Soviet-Bloc's View of the Implementation of Human Rights Accords', *Human Rights Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (1985): 461–91, <https://doi.org/10.2307/762150>.

<sup>872</sup> Kesteloot, 'Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education', 141–142.

<sup>873</sup> Kesteloot, 143; 'UNESCO Exhibition-Album to Show Man's Unending Fight to Gain His Rights', 6–7.

<sup>874</sup> 'What Are the Official Languages of the United Nations?'

<sup>875</sup> Kesteloot, 'Chapter 7 Mediating the Right to Education', 144.

<sup>876</sup> Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, 'Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education; Report of Work Group V of the Inter-American Seminar on Literacy and Adult Education'.

provided a description.<sup>877</sup> According to the organisation, fundamental education aimed at improving the quality of life, adapting to change, promoting cultural development, fostering economic and social progress, integrating into modern society, and ensuring peaceful coexistence.<sup>878</sup> But what did this mean in reality?

This dissertation explored the available literature on the intersection of human rights, fundamental education, and CREFAL, all related to UNESCO. Although substantial literature exists on UNESCO and human rights in general, there is little on the intersection of these three topics. CREFAL and UNESCO's fundamental education programme have been partly discussed in older works from scholars such as Wodajo, Mende, and Hughes, as well as more recent publications by scholars like Boel, Chen, Watras, Sluga, Jones, Maurel, and Elfert.<sup>879</sup> However, there is a lack of literature on the OAS side of the story, the content of the programme in relation to the UDHR, and the influences of the broader context on CREFAL's programme.

### **i. Summary of findings**

I approached the available literature and documentation through a transnational perspective recommended by Sluga and Chen and my personal need for a holistic approach inspired by contextual thinking.<sup>880</sup> I relied on Pierre-Yves Saunier's writing for my interpretation of transnationalism.<sup>881</sup> This approach, going beyond state-centred perspectives, helped me unravel the complex interactions among the actors involved in this research topic.

The transnational approach illuminated the complex interactions among various actors. By considering the fundamental education project as a unit of historical study, I uncovered the historical evolution of several concepts and activities. This included the translation of human rights

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<sup>877</sup> Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.'

<sup>878</sup> The organisation never managed to define the term properly. Ultimately, after many discussions, the Sixth General Conference adopted a broad resolution in favour of the creation of international fundamental education centres, which began: "Believing Fundamental Education to be at the heart of the work of UNESCO and convinced that the general plan [to create this world network] constitutes a first attempt to combat through education the problems of ignorance, poverty and disease [...]" See: Boel, 'Fundamental Education : A Pioneer Concept - Jens Boel Explains Why'.

<sup>879</sup> Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.'; Mende, *L'Amérique Latine Entre en Scène*; Hughes, 'Crefal'; Boel, 'Fundamental Education : A Pioneer Concept - Jens Boel Explains Why'; Chen, 'Experimenting with a Global Panacea'; Watras, 'UNESCO's Programme of Fundamental Education, 1946 - 1959'; Watras, 'Was Fundamental Education Another Form of Colonialism?'; Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*; Jones, *International Policies for Third World Education*; Maurel, 'L'UNESCO de 1945 à 1974'; Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*.

<sup>880</sup> Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*; Chen, 'Experimenting with a Global Panacea'; Heylen and Janssens, *Het contextuele denken. Een methodie ontwikkeling voor het welzijnswerk*; Reijersen Van Buuren, *Therapie in Beeld. Verlangen naar Erkenning. Ontdek Wie Je Bent*.

<sup>881</sup> Saunier, *Transnational History: Theory and Practice*.

principles into practice, the collaboration between founding organisations (the OAS and UNESCO), and engagement with local communities in CREFAL's programmes. Moreover, this perspective allowed me to connect to the tool of 'cultural diplomacy,' understood as interpreting the relationships between nations or organisations using cultural means to promote their values and beliefs, to advance their interests and influence on a global stage.<sup>882</sup>

This interconnectedness is examined in chapters three and five. In these chapters, I explored the complexities and struggles of the CREFAL programme, highlighting the challenges faced in its implementation and sustainability. In chapter three, I specifically examined the intricate dynamics around the genesis of the centre, including the exploration of ideas in seminars attended by experts on mass education and basic education from around the world. Despite the idea already existing within UNESCO, it was ultimately at the Rio de Janeiro Seminar that the recommendation for an Inter-American Centre for the training of educators and production of reading materials for adults was officially made to UNESCO and the OAS.<sup>883</sup> Shortly thereafter, the idea was approved by UNESCO's Fourth General Conference.<sup>884</sup> Mexico was chosen as the host country, influenced by the OAS, and a promised \$ 100,000 contribution from the OAS. Shortly after, it became apparent that the OAS wanted two institutions instead of one: one in Washington, D.C., responsible for the production of educational materials, and one in Pátzcuaro, responsible for the training of teachers and students (Figure 20). The OAS used its financial contribution to pressure UNESCO to agree with the establishment of two institutions, demonstrating a form of cultural diplomacy.

Chapter five explored how the Cold War context and fears of communist influence, combined with concerns about state sovereignty, challenged the broader UNESCO-CREFAL partnership and its effectiveness in promoting fundamental education and human rights. These macro-level struggles significantly impacted the Mexican institution's programme, especially its finances. The earlier promised \$ 40,000 contribution from the OAS ultimately led to only a \$ 1,900 fellowship for twenty students in 1954.<sup>885</sup> Additionally, the lack of voluntary contributions from member states caused financial struggles for CREFAL and placed a lasting burden on UNESCO

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<sup>882</sup> Graham, 'The (Real)Politics of Culture'.

<sup>883</sup> Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, 'Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education; Report of Work Group V of the Inter-American Seminar on Literacy and Adult Education'.

<sup>884</sup> 'Records of the General Conference of UNESCO, Fourth Session, Paris, 1949: Resolutions'.

<sup>885</sup> The Committee On Inter-American Organizations, 'Report On The Agreement Between The OAS And UNESCO Concerning Cooperation In the Field Of Fundamental Education'; UNESCO and OAS, 'Agreement Between The United Nations Educational, Scientific And Cultural Organization And The Organization Of American States Concerning The Training Of Staff And Preparation Of Fundamental Education Material For Latin America'.

to maintain the centre instead of leaving it to the responsibility of the host country as stipulated in their conditions.<sup>886</sup>

Chapters four and five also illuminated how UNESCO and the OAS strategically positioned their values within the framework of CREFAL's initiatives. Chapter four focused on the specific strategies employed by UNESCO and the OAS to embed their educational philosophies and human rights agenda into CREFAL's programmes by developing comprehensive educational materials that reflected their emphasis on literacy, technical skills, and civic education, ensuring that these resources were accessible and relevant to the local communities. Moreover, I focused on the historical context in which the programmes were introduced and how these contexts might have influenced CREFAL's work. For example, the Tarascans had already been subject to development programmes under the leadership of "Tata Vasco" and the cultural mission programmes of the Mexican government, where literacy and the development of a national consciousness were central. This knowledge proved to be useful for developing public campaigns that raised awareness of education for both children and adults.<sup>887</sup>

In the fifth chapter, I explored the operational challenges and diplomatic negotiations surrounding CREFAL. Lucas Ortiz, already involved in TA projects, was appointed by UNESCO as the first Director of CREFAL.<sup>888</sup> He negotiated with Cárdenas about the donation of the former president's mansion for an international school. This school bears witness to the importance of the local context, such as the murals of Eréndira in the Quinta. The Mexican government collaborated with CREFAL in their programmes and was responsible for the logistical support of the international school, providing funding for the reconstruction and construction of the site. As the teachers and students of CREFAL approached the local communities from a self-help perspective, they also helped them find the correct funding for improving their communities, such as connecting them to the electricity network.

This exploration of CREFAL's network highlighted the importance of network building and collaborative efforts in implementing fundamental education initiatives. However, understanding the broader context of these educational programmes requires a deeper examination of the underlying principles driving them. Before exploring the practical translation of fundamental education in the field, it was necessary to explore the foundational concepts and understanding of fundamental education. Central to this exploration is the UDHR, particularly the

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<sup>886</sup> Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.'

<sup>887</sup> Hughes, *The Mexican Cultural Mission Programme*, Romero, 'Literacy and Adult Education (Working Group V)'.

<sup>888</sup> Ortiz Benítez, *Exhortos y Rememoraciones*.



‘right to education’ as articulated in Article 26.<sup>889</sup> The UDHR served as an inspiration for UNESCO’s educational mission and embodied the ideals that fundamental education aimed to promote globally. Through its visual representation of the right to education, the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* provided an invaluable tool for tracing UNESCO’s initial interpretations and dissemination efforts. Through the album, I learned that UNESCO advocated for education for everyone, not only for privileged people (Figure 8), and that everybody should have the chance to learn how to read, write, or continue their education, for example, by going to a university (Figure 9). These thoughts were clearly visible in their fundamental education project by opening a training centre for students who could educate themselves in fundamental education methodologies and the production of educational material. Local communities were also motivated to take a chance in learning how to read and write. By using mobile libraries and sending students into the field for long stays in the villages surrounding Lake Pátzcuaro, they ensured that education was brought to the local communities (Figure 10).

By going to these villages and gaining the confidence of the Tarascans, knowledge transfer could take place. Students helped the communities replace contaminated wells and taught them how to build sports fields. Knowledge exchange was central (Figure 14). There was not only an exchange of knowledge between students and local communities, but also between the students and their trainers, who came from different parts of the American continent. Their task was to get communities to help and think for themselves (Figure 11 and Figure 13).

Through the exploration of the right to education depicted in the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights*, we can see UNESCO’s idea of education coming forward through the programme on fundamental education. It gives us a clear idea of what to expect from the programme and how to interpret the description of fundamental education as a way of leading people to “fuller and happier lives”.

## ii. The research questions

At the start of this dissertation, I formulated some research questions which I aimed to answer through exploration in the different chapters. In the second chapter, I addressed two key research questions regarding UNESCO’s programmes: “What were the specific goals and strategies of UNESCO’s educational programmes, particularly in promoting fundamental

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<sup>889</sup> Nations, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’.

education and human rights awareness?” and “What was UNESCO’s understanding of fundamental education and its view of the programme?”

UNESCO’s early educational programmes, still bearing the marks of the Second World War, were driven by the overarching goal of fostering global peace and socio-economic development. The organisation pursued these goals through four strategies.

First, they aimed to combat illiteracy and ignorance. The newly established specialised organisation sought to disrupt the interconnected cycle of illiteracy, low productivity, malnutrition, and endemic disease. This comprehensive strategy was rooted in the belief that improving literacy was essential for scientific and technical progress, health improvements, and more efficient agriculture, ultimately leading to national and international development.

Second, they maintained a holistic educational perspective. UNESCO did not confine itself to basic literacy but incorporated a broad range of subjects and skills relevant to learners’ socioeconomic contexts. They emphasised the interconnectedness of education with health, agriculture, and community well-being, aiming to empower individuals and communities to enhance their overall quality of life.

Third, they organised small-scale pilot projects to test and refine effective educational strategies, followed by the idea of establishing a regional network of six fundamental education centres. Only two were established: CREFAL in Pátzcuaro, Mexico, and ASFEC in Sirs-el-Layyan, Egypt which opened in 1952. These centres served as hubs for research, production of educational materials, training of experts, and dissemination of information.

Finally, UNESCO actively promoted the rights and responsibilities of the people, as outlined in the UDHR. The *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* is a prime example of UNESCO’s aim to educate people worldwide. The right to education, as articulated in Article 26 of the UDHR, was regularly cited to emphasise the need for a new approach to education.

Since its inception, UNESCO has advocated for fundamental education. Their conception was both comprehensive and progressive, viewing fundamental education as more than the acquisition of basic skills. The programme aimed for integrated learning, addressing various aspects of life, including health and hygiene, home economics, vocational training, cultural activities, and environmental awareness. UNESCO aimed to empower individuals by providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to improve their lives and contribute positively to the community. This empowerment was viewed as a cornerstone for fostering democratic values and civic engagement, as discussed in another panel of education (Figure 13). UNESCO also emphasised the importance of tailoring educational content to the local context, ensuring its relevance and utility to learners. The adaptation of learning materials to the context of the learners, such as the

booklet “Vida Rural” (Figure 51) or the numerous posters, such as the poster “Siempre es tiempo para aprender a leer” developed to promote reading (Figure 48), aimed to make education more effective and impactful. As we later learned, this idea was almost jeopardised by the collaboration with the OAS and the establishment of the Fundamental Education Press. Nonetheless, collaboration with other international organisations and national governments, in this case, the government of Mexico, was essential for the successful implementation and sustainability of their educational initiatives.

In responding to the two research questions mentioned above, I found in my second chapter that UNESCO faced many challenges not only in disseminating the content of the UDHR globally but also in establishing its fundamental education project. Nonetheless, there was an intrinsic link between education and human rights, illustrating how UNESCO foresaw using its educational programmes to promote and protect the rights outlined in the UDHR. However, the organisation did not operate in isolation. The success of their programmes was significantly linked to strategic partnerships, such as the FAO, ILO, WHO, and the OAS.

Believing that one cannot understand the full context and content without highlighting the genesis of a certain programme, I opted to focus on the following research questions in the third chapter: “Who was involved in the establishment of CREFAL and the Fundamental Education Project in Mexico?” and “What were the key challenges and obstacles faced by UNESCO in implementing its educational initiatives, being the organisation of a worldwide network of regional centres on fundamental education, and specifically CREFAL?”

The establishment of CREFAL and the Fundamental Education Project in Mexico involved numerous key stakeholders, each playing a vital role in the process. Among the primary contributors were UNESCO, and more specifically, the Secretariat as the organisational body and the Executive Board, the OAS, and the Mexican government.

The Executive Board provided the strategic direction and framework for the initiative. Members such as Luther Evans, who were actively involved in the negotiations, played a critical role in shaping policies concerning the Fundamental Education Project. Along with John Bowers, Evans travelled regularly to the US to assist Bowers in ongoing negotiations between the OAS and UNESCO.

The OAS was a significant partner, especially considering its influence and commitment to regional education projects. The OAS’s involvement was marked by its substantial financial contributions and efforts to integrate the project into a broader Pan-American educational framework. Notable figures from the OAS, such as the Secretary-General Alberto Lleras and Dr Nanneti, were pivotal in facilitating this collaboration. Nanneti, as the Director of the Education

Department of the OAS, was actively involved from the start, not only through negotiations but also through his active participation in the Seminar on fundamental education organised in Caracas and Rio de Janeiro, as well as in UNESCO's Executive Board.

The Mexican government also played an active role. Represented by individuals such as Lic. Manuel Gual Vidal, they were crucial in providing the necessary support and resources for the establishment of the centre. Vidal, the official representative of the Mexican government in UNESCO and an employee of the Public Education Secretariat of Mexico, acted as a liaison, ensuring that the project received governmental backing and logistical support. The proactive engagement of Mexican leaders, including President Miguel Alemán Valdés, who promptly accepted the offer to use the Quinta Eréndira for the UNESCO "International School," was instrumental in the project's successful initiation (Figure 79).

International representatives from various countries who participated in Fundamental Education Seminars and Conferences or were engaged in the Committee of Experts on Fundamental Education also contributed to the project's development.<sup>890</sup> Their input helped shape educational strategies and ensured that the project benefited from a diverse range of experiences and practices.

However, the implementation of a worldwide network of regional centres on fundamental education, and specifically CREFAL, involved navigating between several key challenges and obstacles.

One of the main obstacles discussed in the third chapter was the varying agendas and interests of UNESCO's member states, particularly international organisations such as the OAS. These differences often led to political tensions, as seen in the negotiations over the "Washington solution" and the establishment of the centres. The then Secretary-General of the OAS explained to his General Assembly that he offered UNESCO a \$ 100,000 contribution to keep this grand project on American soil, a mission well accomplished.<sup>891</sup>

Financial constraints represent another significant challenge. Funding remained a persistent issue. While the initial enthusiasm for the fundamental education programme at the Fourth General Conference was high, securing sustained financial support from member states proved difficult. The OAS's initial commitment of \$ 100,000 influenced UNESCO to adjust its plans, but

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<sup>890</sup> In Chapter three, I name several fundamental education experts who were involved by name.

<sup>891</sup> Unión Panamericana, 'Informe Anual del Secretario General de la Organización de los Estados Americanos. Correspondiente al Año Económico. 1 de julio de 1948 - 30 de junio de 1949,' 41.

ultimately, funding was reduced to \$ 40,000, impacting the project. Financial constraints have been a recurring issue and obstacle recognised by many scholars, such as Wodajo, Sewell, and Elfert.<sup>892</sup>

As Besterman wrote, UNESCO cannot decide solely on its own but operates through other international organisations.<sup>893</sup> Bureaucratic complexities slowed down the decision-making process. The need for approval from multiple bodies, such as from the UN's Economic and Social Council, brought tensions forward, as seen in the summary records of the Executive Board's nineteenth and twentieth meetings, almost leading to the exclusion of the Mexican government in the decision-making process on CREFAL and adding layers of complexity and delay to the project's implementation.<sup>894</sup>

Despite these challenges, practical implementation finally took off with the establishment of CREFAL, as discussed in the fourth chapter.

In this chapter, I explored CREFAL as a unit of history.<sup>895</sup> I focused on the operational level of CREFAL without considering the entanglements of the international network in which the centre operated. In doing so, I aimed to answer the following questions: "Which archival sources and historical materials can provide insights into the development and operation of CREFAL?" and "Can these sources be used to reconstruct the transfer and circulation of the UDHR in local communities?"

For this dissertation, I utilised several archival sources and historical materials, primarily from the UNESCO, CREFAL, and OAS Archives. Additional sources include the personal archive of Jaime Torres Bodet, the national archive of Mexico, and the Library of Congress. Documents, photographs, testimonies, and personal accounts contributed to the reconstruction of this narrative. Documents have provided me with insights into the planning and implementation processes. Visual documentation of educational and community activities was crucial, depicting the practical application of the educational programme. Testimonies, though very scarce, collected from key figures like Lucas Ortiz and other CREFAL staff and students, offered personal perspectives on the institution's impact and challenges.

Historical publications were also of utmost importance. Works such as "CREFAL: Presencia y Acción en América Latina y el Caribe" by Guillermo Medina and others, as well as the

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<sup>892</sup> Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*; Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.'; Sewell, *UNESCO and World Politics*.

<sup>893</sup> Besterman, *UNESCO Peace In The Minds Of Men*, 107.

<sup>894</sup> 'Summary Records of the 19th Session of the Executive Board (24th Meeting)'; 'Summary Records of the 20th Session of the Executive Board (5th Meeting)'.

<sup>895</sup> Saunier, *Transnational History: Theory and Practice*, 3.

dissertation of Mulutega Wodoja and publications by Besterman and Jones, provided insights into the scope and organisation of the fundamental education project and the founding organisations.

The field trip experience to Pátzcuaro was invaluable, granting me access to their library with educational materials formerly produced by CREFAL, and providing direct evidence and contextual information.

By consulting various archival sources and historical materials, I learned more about the foundation and the early years of CREFAL. These sources were silent testimonies to the planning and negotiations between UNESCO, the Mexican government, and the OAS concerning the establishment of CREFAL. Photographs and testimonies highlighted the practical application of educational theories in local communities. The focus on health, hygiene, technical knowledge, and world citizenship was consistently depicted in the reviewed materials. Moreover, it was visually demonstrated how CREFAL's programmes were tailored to the specific needs of the Tarascan communities. The organisation's students and staff tried to integrate traditional crafts into the programme while focusing on community participation aimed at empowering the Tarascans and encouraging community development through governmental programmes at their own initiative.

While explicit references to the UDHR were also scarce in archival materials, the principles embodied in the UDHR were clearly reflected in CREFAL's educational practices. The photographs and documents showed that many activities and programmes at CREFAL aligned with articles of the UDHR. For example, the right to education (Article 26), the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 25), and the right to participate in cultural life (Article 27) were evident in the literacy campaigns, health initiatives, and cultural activities organised by CREFAL.<sup>896</sup> I concluded that there was a practical implementation of human rights, although it was more implicit than explicit. The focus on improving living conditions, promoting health and hygiene, and encouraging cultural participation pointed to an underlying commitment to human rights, even if not formally articulated in these terms. Furthermore, there was a tendency to respect and blend local traditions and knowledge with educational programmes. It should be noted that this was still a colonial era dominated by the West. Therefore, while experts in fundamental education aimed to empower people and work from their livelihoods as much as possible, the greater world might not have been completely ready for these kinds of practices.

This chapter highlights the complex interplay between global human rights ideals and local strategies. The materials allowed only a partial reconstruction of the translation and circulation of

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<sup>896</sup> Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'.

the UDHR within the Tarascan communities. I also discussed the visibility of several articles recognised in the programme through visuals found in the archives.

In the fifth chapter, I focused more on the network and collaboration established around CREFAL and its connection with the global spread of the UDHR. I explored the following questions: “What were the consequences of the challenges faced by UNESCO in realising its ambitious educational goals, and how did these challenges impact the organisation’s relations with member states and the continuation of its projects?” and “Did UNESCO connect the Universal Declaration on Human Rights to its programmes on Fundamental Education and educate participants about their rights and duties, as outlined in the UDHR?”

From the analysis presented, it is evident that UNESCO initially aimed to integrate the principles of the UDHR into its fundamental education programmes. The intention was to inform and educate the participants about their rights and duties, as articulated in the UDHR. This was reflected in early documents and recommendations, such as those from the Rio de Janeiro Seminar, which emphasised the importance of educating adults about their rights, as proven in recommendation XX of the “Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education”.<sup>897</sup> However, practical implementation faced significant obstacles. Evidence from CREFAL’s archives indicates that the UDHR was not as prominently featured in educational materials and activities as initially thought. Moreover, despite its significance, the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* was not widely understood or utilised effectively within its programme. The lack of references found in the CREFAL Archive or even in documents in the OAS and UNESCO demonstrates the minimal significance the UDHR had in the CREFAL initiative.

The Cold War created an atmosphere of suspicion and political tension, particularly between the US and the Soviet Union. As Johnson describes, these tensions were already visible during the drafting process of the UDHR.<sup>898</sup> He noted not only the struggle the drafting committee had in finding a general consensus on the concept of human rights, but also the emphasis placed on economic and social rights versus civil and political rights.<sup>899</sup> I consider the reorientation of fundamental education towards technical assistance and economic development, aligning more closely with the UN’s TA projects, as a translation of these debates into practice. A technical and economic approach to development was favoured over a more social and cultural approach. This shift diluted the focus on human rights education, showing a slight preference for the American

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<sup>897</sup> Seminar on the Problem of Illiteracy in the Americas, ‘Bases for a Handbook on Adult Education; Report of Work Group V of the Inter-American Seminar on Literacy and Adult Education’, 50.

<sup>898</sup> M. Glen Johnson, ‘A Magna Carta For Mankind: Writing The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights’.

<sup>899</sup> M. Glen Johnson.

Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, as described by Quintana.<sup>900</sup> He explained how human rights were utilised as instruments by Latin American and US elites to advance broader regionalist visions that focused on promoting institutional, collective security, and economic aspects rather than pursuing human rights as a primary focus.<sup>901</sup> It seems that the dissemination of the UDHR on the American continent also fell victim to this practice.

Internal and external pressures influenced the implementation of UNESCO's educational programmes. The significant involvement of Luther Evans, a prominent figure from the United States, in the negotiations and establishment of CREFAL illustrates the complex interplay between international politics and educational initiatives. A consequence of this interplay culminated in the division of the first regional centre on fundamental education. It was decided that a production centre in Washington, D.C., and a field training centre in Pátzcuaro would be established. This wish for a division might reflect broader geopolitical strategies and concerns, particularly the US's apprehension about socialist influences in Latin America.

These challenges had profound consequences for UNESCO's relations with its member states and the continuity of its projects. The tension between maintaining a universal, humanistic approach to education and adapting to the political and economic priorities of influential member states often led to compromises. This resulted in a redefinition of the scope and objectives of fundamental education, ultimately impacting its effectiveness and reach.

In conclusion, while UNESCO's programmes on fundamental education were conceived with the intention of promoting the UDHR, the political and economic realities of the post-war world significantly altered their trajectory. The challenges faced by UNESCO not only hindered the full realisation of its ambitious educational goals but also reshaped its relationships with member states and the direction of its projects. The case of CREFAL exemplifies how these dynamics played out on the ground, highlighting the complexities and compromises inherent in international educational initiatives during a tumultuous historical period.

### **iii. Contribution to existing literature and broader field**

Overall, this dissertation contributes to both theoretical and practical knowledge in the fields of international education, human rights, and transnational history. It makes significant contributions to the existing literature on UNESCO, fundamental education, and the UDHR.

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<sup>900</sup> Quintana, 'The (Latin) American Dream?'

<sup>901</sup> Quintana.



First, it fills a critical gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the intersection between these three areas, which has been sparsely covered in previous studies. Scholars such as Boel and Wodajo have focused on the definition of fundamental education and the disappearance of the term and the programme.<sup>902</sup> Additionally, Chen recently published a paper on one of the fundamental education projects intended to be organised in China, and Sluga and Elfert briefly addressed fundamental education in their narratives.<sup>903</sup> This dissertation adds more information to the field on CREFAL and the programme of fundamental education itself, as well as on the translation of the UDHR to the people.

This research offers new insights into the challenges and strategies involved in promoting fundamental education and human rights in a postwar global context. While many scholars have focused on the definition of fundamental education, none had questioned the genesis of the programme. Unravelling the truth about the genesis not only opens up the field for more questions related to the programmes of the OAS but also provides a strong example of how diplomacy was used between international organisations.

Moreover, this dissertation contributes to the field by opening up, though minimally, on several pictures and videos waiting to be explored in the CREFAL and UNESCO Archives. I examined these through a 'UDHR-lens'. However, several questions remain unanswered. So far, we do not know exactly who captured these pictures. I was fortunate to find a list of CREFAL employees, which helped identify potential contributors to the extensive archive of pictures.<sup>904</sup> The same applies to UNESCO; the first known photographer's contributions were recorded only at the end of the fifties.<sup>905</sup>

I consider my work as a contribution to the research already conducted on the UDHR. There is barely any research available that examines the UDHR put into practice right from the start. The practical aspects of the UDHR are regularly investigated in several cases, but I have not found any research focusing on the early practical transfer of the rights enshrined in the UDHR. It is also interesting to note how little attention was given to the UDHR in the fundamental

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<sup>902</sup> Wodajo, 'An Analysis of UNESCO's Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.'; Boel, 'Fundamental Education: A Pioneer Concept - Jens Boel Explains Why'.

<sup>903</sup> Chen, 'Experimenting with a Global Panacea'; Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*; Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*.

<sup>904</sup> 'El CREFAL: Organización, programa, actividades y resultados alcanzados'.

<sup>905</sup> Here, I refer to the pictures found in the UNESCO Archives taken by Eric Schwab or J.S. Bach. The latter took pictures for UNESCO between 1959 and 1963, while photographs by Schwab date back to 1957. Earlier photographers were presumably staff and students from CREFAL, such as Hagen Hasselbalch and Pedro Piña Soria, or visitors such as the journalist Tibor Mende. See: Behrman, 'Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance'; Mende, 'Report on Pátzcuaro. One of the World's Most Unusual Social Experiments.'

education programme, as it took until 1953 for the coordination committee to ask for the programme CREFAL to align with the UN programme.<sup>906</sup>

This study is also interesting for using a transnational perspective, as recommended by Sluga and Chen, for exploring the interactions between various international and local actors.<sup>907</sup> This methodological approach not only enriches our understanding of CREFAL but also allows us to learn how international organisations' missions directly and indirectly influenced the establishment of the centre. Without the financial contribution and the OAS's pressure to keep the centre on American soil, the Mexican centre might not have existed. However, if the OAS had not been pressured for a fundamental education press, CREFAL might have faced fewer financial problems, as they could have sold their produced educational materials to support the centre. Additionally, if the US had not intervened through Ambassador Daniels, there might not have been an additional article stating that the activities between the two organisations could be revised, providing a way out for the OAS's commitment.

The donation of a different mansion might have resulted in a different centre or a different perception of the programme by the Tarascans. It is still unclear how the local community perceived the programme, but I am glad to have heard and read that more research is forthcoming.<sup>908</sup> The findings I have uncovered reveal practical implications of the programme for the local population and can be used for current and future educational programmes, particularly those aimed at integrating human rights education with local cultural practices. Several scholars, such as Watras and Urrieta and Landeros, have already pointed out that the programme led to the loss of some traditional local habits. Earlier, I also highlighted the complex wording and understanding of the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights*. By emphasising the importance of contextual adaptation and community participation, recommendations can be made to policymakers and educators involved in international development and educational reform. Learning from the past is essential to creating a better future. I demonstrated the relevance of these themes in addressing contemporary global challenges.

#### **iv. Limitations and future research directions**

In my dissertation, I explored the initial translation of the UDHR into practice through CREFAL. However, evidence of this translation was limited, with only superficial references to

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<sup>906</sup> 'Resoluciones Del Comité de Coordinación Junta Del CREFAL y OMEFAL'.

<sup>907</sup> Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*; Chen, 'Experimenting with a Global Panacea'.

<sup>908</sup> I refer here to the paper of Urrieta and Landeros and to the conversations I had with the CREFAL Archivists during my stay in July 2022.

the UDHR in the organisation's programme. Notably, there was no trace of the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* being utilised in the consulted documents. Surprisingly, the fundamental education programme, initially a UNESCO priority aimed at combatting ignorance, lacked a comprehensive focus on the UDHR. Instead, the programme's primary aim of empowering individuals to lead "fuller and happier lives" was overshadowed by an emphasis on training students and guiding indigenous communities towards a modern life, as interpreted by Western standards, with a wink to continuing the cultural missions in Mexico.

This created tension between empowerment and a patronising approach that sought to integrate and assimilate the Tarascans into the global world. CREFAL's influence extended beyond local boundaries because of its international spirit and visitors coming from all over the world, primarily from Latin American countries. Therefore, the ideas and methodologies used in the programme did not remain local; they were taken to their countries of origin, and visitors brought habits and cultures from their own cultures to CREFAL.

One disadvantage of the programme, as noted by Urrieta and Landeros, was the erosion of local habits and traditions, such as the introduction of mattresses and stoves into local homes and the use of different agricultural techniques.<sup>909</sup> These local habits were often seen as inferior to the techniques introduced by CREFAL's staff and students. Were local cultural habits meant to be preserved for their cultural value, or were they altered to combat alcoholism and idleness, as Felipe Obregon suggested, to attract Tarascans to the CREFAL programme?<sup>910</sup> The focus seemed more on the latter, raising questions about how the right to life and the right to culture, as proclaimed in the UDHR, were interpreted and whose needs they served.

Although this dissertation provides a detailed exploration of CREFAL and its foundational context, it is not without limitations. The scarcity of archival materials on the OAS's involvement and the limited personal testimonies from local communities restrict a fully comprehensive understanding of the impact and reception of the fundamental education programmes. There is a need for a 'history from below'. Future research could focus on obtaining oral histories from the Tarascan people and other local participants to provide a more nuanced perspective on the ground-level impact of these initiatives. The work of Urrieta and Landeros comes close, yet much remains to uncover, especially given the region's rich history.<sup>911</sup> The Tarascans had been subjected to development programmes and foreign interference for years, which undoubtedly left its mark

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<sup>909</sup> Urrieta and Landeros, "Hacer El Hombre Más Hombre".

<sup>910</sup> Behrman, 'Pátzcuaro. First H.Q. in the Fight Against Ignorance', 11.

<sup>911</sup> Urrieta and Landeros, "Hacer El Hombre Más Hombre".

and made the population more receptive to development programmes. However, their voices should also be heard throughout the institution's history. By blending the institutional history with local history, a comprehensive overview of the centre's activities and programmes can be achieved.

CREFAL did not operate in isolation. It was established through collaboration between two major organisations, one of which was a specialised UN agency. These organisations did not act independently. The interference of the US in the OAS was evident.<sup>912</sup> Moreover, UNESCO also required approval from ECOSOC (UN), where the US was also the largest donor. Coupled with the US's role in the Marshall plan, it is clear that many countries depended on US financial input. Consequently, the global atmosphere of the upcoming Cold War also had a significant impact on CREFAL, as on all global development projects. The preference for maintaining the production of fundamental educational materials in the US fits into this context. Further research should consider broader geopolitical influences on UNESCO's educational projects, particularly in the Cold War context.

Additionally, the fundamental education press was intended to be responsible for the global distribution of fundamental education materials, such as the books of the *Biblioteca Popular Latinoamericana*. This might have also assured the US that communistic thoughts would not spread in Latin-America during the tumultuous 1950s, especially since many staff working at the OAS in Washington D.C. were from American descent and were subject to the U.S. Federal Loyalty Program.<sup>913</sup>

More importantly, the UDHR quickly receded to the background right after its adaptation, becoming a 'victim' to, ironically enough, a developing Cold War and the vision of the largest donor to the UN.<sup>914</sup> While UNESCO was tasked with spreading the UDHR and seemed to have unconditional support for its fundamental education projects, these efforts were soon curtailed. Understanding the interplay between international politics and educational initiatives can offer lessons for contemporary efforts in global education and human rights advocacy.

Reflecting on my dissertation journey, I recall my initial excitement upon discovering the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* and a possible Spanish translation in the UNESCO Archives. This curiosity deepened as I uncovered more about UNESCO's pilot projects on fundamental education and CREFAL. The numerous untouched photos in the UNESCO Archives further fuelled my curiosity.

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<sup>912</sup> Meek, 'U.S. Influence in the Organization of American States'; Committee on Foreign Affairs, 'Point Four Background and Program'; Quintana, 'The (Latin) American Dream?'

<sup>913</sup> Meek, 'U.S. Influence in the Organization of American States'.

<sup>914</sup> Dorn and Ghodsee, 'The Cold War Politicization of Literacy'; Quintana, 'The (Latin) American Dream?'

Despite my grand curiosity, numerous questions remain unanswered, such as: “How can we better understand the experiences of the local population?” and “What were the experiences of the CREFAL students and staff in the realm of fundamental education?” Additional questions include: “What Western habits did the international staff and students bring to CREFAL, and how did these influence the centre’s practice?”; “How did the cultural mission programme affect the centre’s programme?”; “What stories do the photographs from the centre tell?” and “Who took all these photographs?”

Further studies should also explore the operations of ASFEC and the Fundamental Education Press in greater depth. Comparative analysis between CREFAL and other regional centres could yield valuable insights into the varied approaches and outcomes of UNESCO’s fundamental education programmes in different parts of the world.

Additionally, when exploring the Fundamental Education Press, it could be interesting to focus not only on their operations but also on one of the main protagonists here, namely Nannetti and the OAS’s administration. Such a study could help to understand the driving forces of this organisation in the field of education and fundamental education.

## **v. Connection to current times**

In conclusion, the UDHR remains one of the most significant declarations ever made. In today’s global context, where conflicts continue to disrupt communities and displace populations, the rights and duties inherent in the UDHR are more essential than ever. Ongoing conflicts in regions such as Israel and other parts of the world highlight the critical need for robust educational frameworks that promote peace, understanding, and human rights. UNESCO’s mission to empower individuals through education and raise awareness of human rights is still highly relevant today.

UNESCO continues to advocate for the right to education as a guaranteed human right.<sup>915</sup> Education is characterised as a universal, key right, and of high priority.<sup>916</sup> States play a pivotal role in upholding the right to education and disseminating human rights education through their schools and educational institutions. Education is vital to the “full enjoyment of many civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights”.<sup>917</sup> Nonetheless, the work is far from complete, and

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<sup>915</sup> UNESCO and Right to Education Initiative (UK), *Right to Education Handbook*, 28; Muller, Stanca-Mustea, and UNESCO, *Transforming lives through education - Transformer la vie grâce à l’éducation*.

<sup>916</sup> UNESCO and Right to Education Initiative (UK), *Right to Education Handbook*, 28.

<sup>917</sup> UNESCO and Right to Education Initiative (UK), 33.

the necessity of UNESCO's mission is underscored by the persistent conflicts and human rights challenges that we face today.

This dissertation underscores the importance of maintaining a critical perspective. The effort to spread human rights did not vanish quickly but became influenced by the emerging Cold War, showing a preference for the American liberal perspective. While the UDHR and the idea of using education as a tool to combat ignorance were noble, UNESCO quickly fell victim to financial pressure from significant donors.

By exploring the complex history and implementation of UNESCO's fundamental education programme in Mexico, this study highlights the challenges and contributions of international and local actors. Examining archival materials through a transnational lens has provided new insights into the intersection of human rights education and fundamental education in a post-war context. The findings underscore the historical relevance of these educational initiatives in promoting global peace and development, while also emphasising the need for ongoing critical engagement and innovation in the field.

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<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/john-w-thompson/unesco-at-the-conscience-of-the-world/0F76A3503034F6DEF92AE937F5B3079F>.

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[https://ask.un.org/faq/14463?\\_gl=1\\*4q2e47\\*\\_ga\\*MTg2NTE0MDM2NC4xNzAzNjc3MzA3\\*\\_ga\\_TK9BQL5X7Z\\*MTcwMzY3NzMwNi4xLjAuMTcwMzY3NzMwNi4wLjAuMA..](https://ask.un.org/faq/14463?_gl=1*4q2e47*_ga*MTg2NTE0MDM2NC4xNzAzNjc3MzA3*_ga_TK9BQL5X7Z*MTcwMzY3NzMwNi4xLjAuMTcwMzY3NzMwNi4wLjAuMA..)

Wodajo, Mulugeta. ‘An Analysis of UNESCO’s Concept and Program of Fundamental Education.’ Type C Project, Columbia University, 1963.

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## **ANNEXES**

### **Annex 1: Full List of Consulted Archival Sources and Collections**

UNESCO Archives

7 Place de Fontenoy

75007 Paris

CREFAL Archives

Avenida Lázaro Cárdenas 525

Col. Revolución

C.P. 61609, Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, México.

OAS Archives

19<sup>th</sup> Street & Constitution Ave.

NW Washington, D.C.

The Library of Congress

101 Independence Ave., SE

Washington, DC 20540

Archivo Histórico de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Centro Cultural Universitario, 04510

C.U., 04510 Ciudad de México, CDMX, México

Archivo General de la Nación

Avenida Ingeniero Eduardo Molina, Héroe de Nacozari 113

Venustiano Carranza, 15280 Ciudad de México, CDMX, México

Archivo municipal de Pátzcuaro

Portal de Hidalgo 1, Centro

61600 Pátzcuaro, Mich., México

**Annex 2: Agreement between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Organization of American States concerning the Training of Staff and Preparation of Fundamental Education Material for Latin America**

A G R E E M E N T  
BETWEEN  
THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,  
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION  
AND  
THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
CONCERNING  
THE TRAINING OF STAFF AND PREPARATION OF  
FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION MATERIAL FOR LATIN AMERICA

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), represented by its Director-General, Dr. Jaime Torres Bodet, of the one part, and

the Organization of American States (OAS), represented by Dr. Alberto Lleras, Secretary General, of the other part,

being desirous to put into operation a joint project for the training of personnel and for the preparation of fundamental education material for Latin America,

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

CHAPTER I - Purposes

Article 1: There shall be established in the territory of one of the Latin American States a centre for the training of personnel and for the preparation of fundamental education material, hereinafter called "the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre" and, in the city of Washington, D.C., a Bureau for the co-ordination of studies and production of fundamental education material for the Latin American States, hereinafter called "the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material."

Article 2: The Latin American Fundamental Education Centre will provide for:

(a) Training courses for teachers and leaders of fundamental education, especially in:

- literacy campaigns
- the integration of the primary school and of adult education in the community
- methods of teaching:

- economic and social development
- health
- agriculture
- improved domestic economy
- encouragement of local crafts, and of arts and recreational activities.

These courses will place emphasis upon the value of team work and social activities.

- 100 -

- (b) The preparation and, on occasion, the publication of model fundamental education material specially adapted to the needs, resources and cultural levels of local communities, which will be distributed in the different countries of Latin America with all the necessary instructions for its adaptation to the particular conditions of the different countries concerned.
- (c) The testing and evaluation of the educational material prepared by the Centre or sent to it by the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material or by any other competent body.
- (d) A special course for training educators in the use and preparation of fundamental education material and in its adaptation to the particular requirements of the environment.
- (e) The issue of technical information to field educators engaged in fundamental education or in the preparation of educational material in Latin America.

Article 3: The Latin American Bureau for Production of Fundamental Education Material will be responsible for:

- (a) The collection, analysis and classification of all documentation on fundamental education originating in Latin America and the American continent in general and for ensuring the exchange of information on this subject.
- (b) The co-ordination of the work of national or international organizations or of governments engaged in production of fundamental education material for Latin America, and their provision with technical information.

It will also include:

- (a) A service for the preparation, editing, publication, production and distribution of fundamental education material designed for general use in Latin America.
- (b) Advanced training for selected students from the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre or from other similar centres in Latin America.

## CHAPTER II - Administrative Organization

Article 4: The Latin American Fundamental Education Centre will be an autonomous service of the Education Department of UNESCO, under the direction of a Director, assisted by a Director of Training and a Director of Production. This service will enjoy complete financial autonomy. It may receive a grant each year from the General Conference of UNESCO.



Article 5: The Latin American Bureau for the Production of Education Material will be an autonomous service attached to the Fundamental Education Section of the Secretariat of OAS and will be under a director. This service will enjoy complete financial autonomy and may receive grants.

Article 6: UNESCO and OAS will set up a Co-ordination Committee consisting of:

- a chairman chosen by agreement between the Director-General of UNESCO and the Secretary General of OAS in consideration of his expert qualifications in the field of fundamental education;
- one representative of UNESCO appointed by its Director-General;
- one representative of OAS appointed by its Secretary General.

Dr. Laurence Filho is appointed as the first Chairman for a period of two years, his term of office being renewable.

The Director of the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre and the Director of the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material, or their representatives, will attend as of right all meetings of the Committee and will take part in its discussions, without the right to vote.

The Committee will establish its own rules of procedure and will decide the date and place of its meetings.

Article 7: The functions of the Co-ordination Committee will be to co-ordinate the activities of the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre and of the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material, so as completely to unify their work and avoid all unnecessary duplication of the work of the Centre or of the Bureau or any overlapping of their common effort with that of governments or public or private organizations.

For this purpose the Co-ordination Committee will draw up an initial plan setting out broad lines of action for the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre and for the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material, which plan will be submitted for approval to UNESCO and OAS.

The Committee will examine the draft budgets and the annual work programmes of the Centre and of the Bureau and will transmit its opinion regarding them, and any suggestions it may think fit to formulate, to the Directors of the Centre and of the Bureau as well as to UNESCO and the Organization of American States.

Article 8: The Director of the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre, the Director of Training and the Director of Production will be appointed and dismissed by the Director-General of UNESCO after consultation with the Secretary General of OAS.



Article 9: The Director of the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material will be appointed and dismissed by the Secretary General of OAS, after consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO.

Article 10: The Director of the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre will have all the necessary powers for carrying out the programme of training and production proposed in Article 2 and adopted upon the advice of the Co-ordination Committee. In particular:

- he will draw up and sign all contracts and undertakings on behalf of the Centre;
- he will deal with suppliers and third parties on behalf of the Centre;
- he will be responsible for the direction of the whole staff of the Centre;
- he will appoint and dismiss members of the staff with the exception of the two Directors appointed by the Director-General of UNESCO under Article 8;
- he will administer the budget and employ the funds put at his disposal for the execution of the programme of the Centre, in conformity with the annual budget approved by the Director-General of UNESCO on the advice of the Co-ordination Committee;
- he may delegate all or some of his powers;
- he will prepare each year a technical report and an administrative and financial report for the Director-General of UNESCO and will communicate them to the Co-ordination Committee and to the Secretary General of OAS;

Article 11: The Director of the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material will have all the necessary powers for carrying out his duties. In particular:

- he will establish a plan for the production of educational material in conformity with the initial plan drawn up by the Co-ordination Committee;
- he will prepare, publish and issue educational material for Latin America in conformity with the advice of the Co-ordination Committee;
- he will make available to the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre all the basic documentation it may desire and a technical service for the purpose of studying, analysing and criticizing the sample materials prepared by the Centre;

- he will carry out the instructions of the Co-ordination Committee concerning the publication or printing of material produced by the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre;
- he will take the necessary steps to issue to national or international organizations or to governments the sample material produced by the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre or by the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material in the form of manuscripts, matrixes for local publication, or in the form of books;
- he will take all steps to encourage these countries to adapt, reproduce and use this material.

### CHAPTER III - Financial Provisions

Article 12: The costs of the Co-ordination Committee will be borne by UNESCO and OAS under arrangements to be made between the two organizations.

Article 13: The funds allocated to the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre will be furnished by UNESCO except for the following funds and services, which will be furnished by OAS:

- (a) The provision of basic research materials and documentation, especially samples of educational material, visual material and any information asked for by the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre from the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material.
- (b) The temporary services of experts from the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material, in accordance with the plans and advice of the Co-ordination Committee.
- (c) An unconditional contribution of not less than forty thousand dollars per annum. The contribution of OAS may be increased after consultation between the two organizations, should the budget of the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre be increased after 1951.
- (d) Facilities for research, critical analysis and, on occasion, the edition and publication of material produced by the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre as part of its programme.
- (e) Office accommodation and secretarial and research facilities for members of the staff of the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre carrying out study or research in the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material.
- (f) Facilities for research and study for certain students from the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre, to be selected by

the Co-ordination Committee, for advanced training in the production of materials in the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material within the framework of the prescribed programme.

Article 14: The funds allocated to the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material will be provided by OAS except for the costs of preparing, evaluating and testing all fundamental education materials produced in accordance with its working programme and transmitted for this purpose by the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material to the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre.

Article 15: Grants-in-aid and subsidies allocated to the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre by UNESCO and OAS will be paid in their entirety into the Centre's banking account not later than 15 January and 15 July respectively of the current year, with the exception of the first year.

For the whole duration of the agreement all grants and subsidies not expended in the course of the financial year will be used to meet the expense of the following years.

- Article 16:
- (a) All material published either by the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre or by the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material, in accordance with the plan drawn up by the Co-ordination Committee, will bear the stamp of UNESCO and OAS.
  - (b) UNESCO and OAS reserve the right to publish directly all material that has not been produced or published in conformity with the instructions of the Co-ordination Committee.
  - (c) The two organizations further reserve to themselves the right to reproduce, with an acknowledgment of origin, all the material mentioned in the first paragraph of the present Article, whether in translations or in the original languages.

Article 17: The present agreement is concluded for a limited period expiring on 31 December 1954. Nevertheless, either contracting organization may notify to the other, before 1 September of any year, its intention to denounce the said agreement, such denunciation taking effect as from 31 December of the current year.

Article 18: The present agreement is subject to revision. Twelve months after its entry into force the two Organizations will consult with a view to deciding what amendments, if any, should be made in it.

They will inform the government of the territory on which the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre has been established, of the results of their consultation before proceeding to a final revision of the agreement.

IN FAITH WHEREOF the undersigned, being duly authorized, have signed the present agreement in two originals, in English and French, each equally authentic.

PARIS 7 July 1950

For the United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization.

/S/ JAIME TORRES BODET  
Director-General

WASHINGTON July 27 1950

For the Organization of American  
States.

/S/ ALBERTO LLERAS  
Secretary General

Figure 87: Agreement between UNESCO and the OAS concerning the training of staff and preparation of fundamental educational material for Latin America. Courtesy of the OAS, OAS Archives, Inter-American Cultural Council (OAS), 1st Meeting Mexico 1951, JX 1980.45.A21 1951.A.24.

**Annex 3: Agreement between the United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the  
Organization of American States**



AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS  
EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION  
AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,  
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION  
AND  
THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES,

Whereas:

the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has been created for the purpose of advancing, through the educational and scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world, the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of mankind for which the United Nations Organization was established and which its Charter proclaims;

Whereas:

the Organization of American States has, among its objects, the promotion of the cultural development of its Member States, of their co-operation for the attainment of the high purposes of civilization, and of the education of peoples towards justice, freedom and peace;

Whereas:

this task has been entrusted by the Charter of the Organization of American States to certain special organs of the Organization of American States, more particularly the Inter-American Cultural Council, the Cultural Action Committee of American States, and the Pan American Union (through its Department of Cultural Affairs), as well as to certain specialized organizations which have been granted full legal capacity;

Noting:

that the tasks and activities which the Organization of American States has undertaken as regards education, science and culture in the Western Hemisphere are in harmony with those that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is undertaking on a world scale;

Being desirous of co-ordinating their efforts in the pursuit of common ends, and for that purpose of defining the processes of co-operation between those of their bodies concerned and of the representation of each of the two Organizations at each other's meetings;

Have agreed upon the following:

## ARTICLE I

### Co-operation

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Organization of American States agree to co-operate with each other through their appropriate bodies.

This co-operation shall extend to all matters that arise in the field of education, science and culture and are connected with those tasks and activities of the two organizations that are in harmony.

## ARTICLE II

### Mutual Consultation

The competent bodies of the two organizations shall consult regularly on all the matters mentioned in Article I that are of common interest to them.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization shall inform the Organization of American States of any plans for the development of its regional activities in the Western Hemisphere. It shall consider any proposals concerning such plans which may be made to it by the Organization of American States with a view to securing effective co-ordination between the two organizations and avoiding unnecessary duplication of activities.

The Organization of American States shall inform the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization of any plans for the development of its activities in the field of education, science and culture. It shall consider any proposals concerning such plans which may be made to it by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization with a view to securing effective co-ordination between the two organizations and avoiding unnecessary duplication of activities.

When circumstances so require, the two organizations shall engage in special consultations with a view to selecting the best means of ensuring that their activities in matters of common interest are fully effective.

## ARTICLE III

### Joint Action

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Organization of American States may, through special agreements, together decide upon joint action with a view to attaining objects of common interest.

These agreements shall define the ways in which each of the two organizations shall participate in this action, and shall specify the financial commitments that each is to assume.

#### ARTICLE IV

##### Joint Committees

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Organization of American States may refer to joint committees all matters of common interest that it may be deemed useful to refer to such committees.

Any such joint committee shall consist of an equal number of representatives from each of the two organizations; the number of representatives to be appointed by each organization shall be fixed by mutual agreement.

The reports drawn up by such committees shall be submitted to the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and to the Council of the Organization of American States.

Each of these joint committees shall adopt its own rules of procedure.

#### ARTICLE V

##### Statistical and Legislative Information

The two organizations especially recognize the desirability of avoiding any unnecessary duplication in the assembling, analysis, publication and dissemination of statistical and legislative information. They shall combine their efforts to obtain the best use of statistical and legislative information and to reduce the burdens on the governments and other organizations from which such information is collected.

#### ARTICLE VI

##### Administrative Arrangements for Collaboration and Liaison

The Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Secretary General of the Organization of American States shall make appropriate administrative arrangements to ensure effective collaboration and the exchange of technical services between the staffs of the two organizations.

They may also make administrative arrangements defining the part to be played by regional centres and offices in liaison between the two organizations.

#### ARTICLE VII

##### Exchange of Information and Documents

Subject to any arrangements that may be necessary in order to preserve the confidential nature of certain documents, the two organizations shall proceed to a full and prompt exchange of information and documents concerning matters of common interest to them.



The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization shall be kept informed by the Organization of American States of developments in the work of the Organization of American States which are of interest to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The Organization of American States shall be kept informed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization of developments in the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization which are of interest to the Organization of American States.

#### ARTICLE VIII

##### Reciprocal Representation

The Council of the Organization of American States, in preparing the Regulations of the Inter-American Conference, which are to be submitted to the governments for consideration, shall include an article providing that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization be invited to be represented at the Inter-American Conference. With reference to Inter-American Specialized Conferences, the Council of the Organization of American States shall recommend to the appropriate Organization or entity that an invitation be extended to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to be represented in those Conferences whenever the items in their programmes may be of interest to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. In both cases such representatives shall participate without vote in the Conferences indicated.

Representatives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization shall be invited to attend the meetings of the Council of the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Economic and Social Council, the Inter-American Council of Jurists, the Inter-American Cultural Council, and the Cultural Action Committee of American States when matters are discussed that may be of interest to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Such representatives shall have the right to participate in the deliberations of these bodies, and of their commissions and committees, with respect to matters in which the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is interested, and may make proposals but may not vote.

On the basis of an effective reciprocity, representatives of the Organization of American States shall be invited to attend the meetings of the General Conference and of the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in which matters of interest to the Organization of American States are considered. Such representatives shall have the right to participate in the deliberations of those bodies, and of their commissions and committees, in which matters of interest to the Organization of American States are considered, and may make proposals but shall not have the right to vote.

## ARTICLE IX

### Inclusion of Items in the Agenda

Subject to any preliminary consultations that may be necessary, the Organization of American States may propose items for inclusion in the agenda of the meetings mentioned in Article VIII, paragraph 3, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization may propose items for inclusion in the agenda of the meetings mentioned in Article VIII, paragraphs 1 and 2.

## ARTICLE X

### Specialized Inter-American Organizations

Any relations that may be established between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and a Specialized Inter-American Organization shall be defined by a special agreement concluded in accordance with Article XI of the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and with Article 100 of the Charter of the Organization of American States.

## ARTICLE XI

### Revision and Denunciation

The present agreement may be revised. Failing agreement upon its revision, either of the parties may denounce it by giving one year's notice to the other party.

## ARTICLE XII

The present agreement shall be signed by the appointed representatives of the two Organizations after its approval by the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and by the Council of the Organization of American States.

It shall enter into force immediately upon its signature.

Done at Habana the 8th of December, 1950 in duplicate, in the English and French languages, both texts being equally authentic.

For the United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization:

JAIME TORRES BODET

[SEAL]

For the Organization of  
American States:

ALBERTO LLERAS

[SEAL]

Figure 88: Agreement between UNESCO and the OAS Courtesy of the OAS, OAS Archives, Inter-American Cultural Council (OAS), 1st Meeting Mexico 1951, JX 1980.45.A21 1951.A.2.

**Annex 4: Acuerdo entre la UNESCO y el Gobierno Mexicano  
sobre el Establecimiento de Un Centro Regional Para la  
Formación del Personal y la Preparación del material de  
Educación de Base en América Latina**

ACUERDO ENTRE LA UNESCO Y EL GOBIERNO MEXICANO  
SOBRE EL ESTABLECIMIENTO DE UN CENTRO REGIONAL  
PARA LA FORMACION DEL PERSONAL Y LA PREPARACION  
DEL MATERIAL DE EDUCACION DE BASE EN  
AMERICA LATINA

El Gobierno de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, representado por su Excelencia, el señor Licenciado Manuel Gual Vidal, Secretario de Educación Pública, por una parte, y la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (UNESCO), representada por el señor John Bowers, Director de la División de Educación Fundamental, en representación de su Excelencia el Director General de la UNESCO, por otra parte.

CONSIDERANDO que la Conferencia General de la UNESCO en el curso de su Cuarta Reunión ha encargado a su Director General de cooperar con los Estados Miembros a fin de crear Centros Regionales destinados a la formación de los maestros y especialistas, y a la preparación del material de educación de base;

CONSIDERANDO que la Conferencia General ha destinado en el presupuesto de 1950 los créditos necesarios para el establecimiento de un Centro Regional para la Educación de Base en América Latina;

CONSIDERANDO la oferta hecha por el Gobierno Mexicano para el establecimiento de dicho Centro en territorio mexicano;

CONSIDERANDO que el Consejo Ejecutivo ha autorizado al Director General a aceptar la oferta del Gobierno Mexicano;

SE HA CONVENIDO LO QUE SIGUE:

CAPITULO PRIMERO

Creación del Centro

ARTICULO PRIMERO.—Será instituido, sobre el territorio de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, un Centro para la formación de personal y la preparación del material de Educación de Base que a continuación se designará como "el Centro".

ARTICULO SEGUNDO.—El Centro será un servicio autónomo de la UNESCO que gozará de completa autonomía financiera y estará dirigido por un Director que tendrá todos los poderes necesarios para la eje-

cución del programa del Centro y para hacer todos los contratos con terceros.

ARTICULO TERCERO.— El Centro podrá, dentro de las limitaciones de su programa, hacer un llamado a la cooperación de todas las instituciones especializadas y a todas las organizaciones internacionales.

## CAPITULO SEGUNDO

### Facilidades acordadas por el Gobierno Mexicano

ARTICULO CUARTO.— El Gobierno Mexicano se compromete a:

a) Poner a la disposición del Centro terrenos e inmuebles que serán determinados por acuerdo entre el Gobierno Mexicano y la UNESCO, conservando el Gobierno la propiedad de los mismos; el Gobierno Mexicano se compromete, además, a efectuar todas las modificaciones, reparaciones y adaptaciones (comprendiendo la instalación o adaptación de inmuebles e instalaciones eléctricas, telefónicas o sanitarias) que pueden ser necesarias para adaptar el inmueble a las necesidades del Centro y a conservar el inmueble en buen estado;

b) Sostener, dentro de un radio de veinte kilómetros del Centro, cuando menos dos escuelas rurales primarias que funcionen normalmente, y permitir la utilización de esas escuelas como escuelas prácticas de aplicación para los estudios del Centro y para la experimentación del material tipo de educación producido por el Centro;

c) Proporcionar el mobiliario necesario para la utilización del inmueble y de sus dependencias, con excepción del equipo técnico que será proporcionado por la UNESCO;

d) Conceder gratuitamente el transporte en ferrocarril sobre el territorio mexicano, para los alumnos y los profesores del Centro cuando hagan viajes que interesen al funcionamiento del Centro;

e) Proporcionar y sostener los vehículos necesarios (con chofer) para los transportes locales de profesores y estudiantes del Centro, muy especialmente para el trabajo en el lugar y en sus alrededores.

ARTICULO QUINTO.— El Gobierno Mexicano acordará al Centro de Educación de Base en América Latina y a sus funcionarios que no sean mexicanos los privilegios siguientes:

A.— Por lo que se refiere al Centro mismo.

Mientras entra en vigor la convención sobre los privilegios e inmunidades de las instituciones especializadas, entre el Gobierno Mexicano y la UNESCO las disposiciones de las secciones 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 y 12 de la citada convención, serán aplicables al Centro.

La correspondencia oficial del Centro se beneficiará de la franquicia postal conforme a las disposiciones legales del país, convenciones internacionales y a los arreglos administrativos que se realicen de común acuerdo por las autoridades mexicanas competentes y el Director del Centro.

B.— Por lo que se refiere al personal del Centro.

El Director del Centro y sus adjuntos, lo mismo que sus cónyuges y sus hijos menores, gozarán, sobre territorio mexicano, de privilegios, exenciones y facilidades acordadas por el Gobierno Mexicano a los empleados diplomáticos ante él acreditados.

Además, las disposiciones de las secciones 19, 20, 22 y 23 de la Convención sobre los privilegios e inmunidades de las instituciones especializadas serán también provisionalmente aplicadas a los funcionarios del Centro.

Los otros funcionarios gozarán así como sus cónyuges e hijos menores de los mismos privilegios que los funcionarios de un rango comparable, pertenecientes a las misiones diplomáticas acreditados ante el Gobierno Mexicano.

El Gobierno Mexicano reconocerá y aceptará como documento válido de viaje los "Laissez-Passer" de las Naciones Unidas expedidos a los funcionarios de la Organización y a los cuales se les concederá gratuitamente visa oficial, para los efectos de su internación en México.

C.— Por lo que se refiere a la libertad de acceso al Centro.

El Gobierno Mexicano autorizará la entrada en México, sin el pago de los derechos de visa, a las siguientes personas:

- a) Los funcionarios de la UNESCO comisionados en el Centro o encargados de establecer relaciones con él;
- b) Los expertos y personas encargadas de los cursos, y
- c) Los estudiantes designados por los diversos Estados de América Latina para seguir los cursos o seminarios del Centro.

A las personas mencionadas en los apartados a), b) y c) anteriores se les otorgará visa oficial válida por todo el tiempo en que desempeñen sus funciones o estén conectadas con el Centro.



### CAPITULO TERCERO

#### Cooperación entre el Gobierno Mexicano y el Centro

ARTICULO SEXTO.—El Gobierno Mexicano cooperará estrechamente con el Centro por medio de sus servicios y de todos los Comités especializados que pueda constituir para el efecto, especialmente para poner a disposición del Centro un campo de aplicación práctica para la educación de los adultos en comunidad, así como para la experimentación del material tipo producido por el Centro.

ARTICULO SEPTIMO.—El Centro reservará cada año diez lugares para los alumnos que serán designados por el Gobierno de México, de acuerdo con el Director del Centro. Estos alumnos serán seleccionados entre las personas que tengan ya cierta experiencia de la educación de base o de la educación general. Los gastos de su estancia y de sus estudios en el Centro serán cubiertos por el presupuesto del Centro.

ARTICULO OCTAVO.—El Director del Centro pondrá a la disposición del Gobierno Mexicano y de todas las organizaciones o especialistas interesados en la Educación de Base todas las informaciones técnicas publicadas por el Centro y todos los otros informes relacionados con su programa.

ARTICULO NOVENO.—El presente acuerdo se establece para todo el tiempo que dure el funcionamiento del Centro.

Entrará en vigor inmediatamente después de su firma.

En testimonio de lo cual los suscritos, debidamente autorizados, firman el presente convenio en dos originales en inglés y español, mismos que fueron confrontados.

México, Distrito Federal, a once de septiembre de mil novecientos cincuenta.

POR EL DIRECTOR  
GENERAL DE LA  
UNESCO

John Bowers

POR EL GOBIERNO DE LOS  
ESTADOS UNIDOS  
MEXICANOS

Lic. Manuel Gual Vidal

Figure 89: Acuerdo entre la UNESCO y el Gobierno Mexicano sobre el Establecimiento de un Centro Regional para la Formación del Personal y la Preparación del material de Educación de Base en América Latina. Courtesy of CREFAL Archives, AHD/DG/DG/1950/SEI.

**Annex 5: Agreement between the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and the Organization of American States concerning co-operation in the field of fundamental education.**



ANNEX I

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,  
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION AND THE ORGANIZATION  
OF AMERICAN STATES CONCERNING CO-OPERATION IN THE FIELD  
OF FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION

(See item 9.1.1)

Introduction

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), represented by its Director-General, Dr. Luther H. Evans, and

The Organization of American States (OAS), represented by its Secretary-General, Dr. Carlos Davila, being desirous of maintaining their relations concerning co-operation in the field of fundamental education, as established by the Agreement of July 1950, on "the training of staff and preparation of fundamental education material for Latin America", which Agreement terminates on 31 December 1954,

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1: The present Agreement is designed to provide procedures for co-operation between the OAS and Unesco in the field of fundamental education in Latin America.

Article 2: A Joint Advisory Committee as provided for in Article IV of the Agreement between Unesco and the OAS dated 8 December 1950 shall meet for this purpose by mutual arrangement.

Article 3: The Joint Advisory Committee shall give special attention to the operation of the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre (CREFAL), which shall be under the authority of the Director-General of Unesco, and to the operation of the Latin American Fundamental Education Press (formerly the Latin American Bureau for the Production of Fundamental Education Material) (OMEFAL), which shall be under the authority of the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States.

Article 4: In accordance with principles laid down by the General Conference of Unesco, the activities of the Latin American Fundamental Education Centre (CREFAL) are to:

A. train teams of teachers and workers who specialize:

(a) in the teaching of the following technical branches of fundamental education;

- (i) literacy;
- (ii) health;
- (iii) agriculture;
- (iv) home and family life, and community organization;
- (v) rural arts and crafts; and
- (vi) cultural and recreational activities;

(b) in the use of the relevant educational materials;

B. carry out experiments in the production of fundamental education materials required in the teaching of these subjects;

C. test materials submitted by the PRESS and other appropriate bodies; and

D. disseminate technical information on fundamental education.

Article 5: The functions of the Latin American Fundamental Education Press (PRESS) are to:

- A. Produce and distribute fundamental education materials for Latin America, giving particular attention to the experimental work carried out at CREFAL.
- B. Collect, analyse, and classify materials on fundamental education received from the American Nations;
- C. Organize courses in production for students from CREFAL, or from other similar institutions in Latin America; and
- D. Provide technical information to governments and to organizations interested in the production of fundamental education material.

Article 6: (i) The function of the Joint Advisory Committee shall be to consider and stimulate fundamental education in Latin America, and to co-ordinate the plans and programmes of the two Organizations in this field.

(ii) The Committee shall co-ordinate especially the activities of the CREFAL and the Press so as to harmonize their work and to avoid duplication, or any overlapping of their common effort with those of governments or public or private organizations. The Committee shall also examine the draft programmes and budgets of the Centre and of the Press and shall transmit its comments and suggestions to Unesco and to the OAS.

Article 7: The OAS shall participate in the training of fundamental education teams at CREFAL by providing annually twenty 19-month fellowships in the amount of \$1,900 each. These fellowships shall be awarded by the Secretary-General of the OAS and be known as "OAS Fellowships". The recipients of the OAS Fellowships shall be selected by the Director of CREFAL, with the approval of the Secretary-General of the OAS and in accordance with the general requirements to be established for all the trainees by the Joint Advisory Committee, and the procedure for payment shall be agreed upon between the Pan-American Union and the Director.

Article 8: The Joint Advisory Committee may, at any time, suggest amendments to the present Agreement.

Article 9: The present Agreement shall remain in force until 31 December 1958. Either of the two contracting Organizations, however, may notify the other, not later than 1 September of any given year, of its intention to denounce the Agreement. In this case, the Agreement shall expire on 31 December of the year in which this notification is given.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned subscribe to the present Agreement, the two originals, in English and Spanish, being equally authentic.

Washington, 18 October 1954

Washington D.C., 18 October 1954

For the United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization

For the Organization of American States

Luther H. Evans  
Director-General

Carlos Davila  
Secretary-General

*Figure 90: Agreement between the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Organization of American States concerning co-operation in the field of fundamental education. Courtesy of UNESDOC (39 EX/Decisions).*