

Media Technologies for a Better World

UNESCO's Ethical Framework for Communication Infrastructures and Uses of Media after the Second World War

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Abstract

This article explores how UNESCO attempted to frame mass communication primarily as a social good, believing it should be reflected in international cooperation in terms of trade and tariffs and equal distribution of communication networks and infrastructures after the Second World War. Analyzing UNESCO's media policy after World War II, the article posits that non-commercial organizations play an important role in bringing innovation to media landscapes through socially-conscious frameworks, in spreading technological know-how, in improving access to information, and, most importantly, encouraging international debate on media ethics. Even though UNESCO was accused of promoting Western values, it continually strove to stay in tune with innovation and change in the areas of media production and media technologies. UNESCO's work combined local intervention with a more regional, national and global perspective. It defined its role as that of a global political force and moral authority which operated on different scales and at different levels; it collaborated with national and local partners while at the same time relying on the support of its member states and the United Nations.

Our paper looks at a global, non-commercial organization that not only steered worldwide innovation in communication infrastructure but also made efforts to define ethical standards for media use and mass communication. Established after the Second World War, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) ran campaigns in the late 1940s to remove information barriers and foster the free flow of information throughout the world. Against a backdrop of emerging conflicts between East and West, North and South, UNESCO promoted the free and global spread of ideas "by word and image," by developing its press, broadcasting and film services, advocating for the improvement of technological infrastructures (e.g. the worldwide allocation of high frequencies), helping to remove economic obstacles to global trade in news and other media (e.g. by advocating for tariff reductions on educational, scientific and cultural

materials), and renegotiating telephone regulations. While critics accused UNESCO of using its media policies to promote Western values and ideas during the Cold War, UNESCO saw its role in the context of the fight for human rights, especially the right to freedom of information and the right to education.¹ UNESCO thus mobilized mass communication policies in the service of what the organization defined as an egalitarian vision that was intended to become a major wellspring of innovation.

We will begin by shedding light on UNESCO's ethical mission and media policy and by exploring how the organization attempted to frame mass communication as primarily a social good, which it believed should be reflected in international cooperation in terms of trade and tariffs and equal distribution of communication networks and infrastructures after the Second World War. To this end, UNESCO conducted a survey on the "technical needs in press, film and radio of war-devastated countries," which aimed to highlight how access to information was hampered by material and infrastructural imbalances across countries and regions. In addition, UNESCO promoted international dialogue to encourage the spread of media and information, and became a media provider itself that sought to set ethical standards in and through its own productions. We will then present a case study showing how a UNESCO radio project sought to achieve the "free flow of information and ideas" by addressing the "analog divide" in broadcasting infrastructures and technologies – foreshadowing notions of the "digital divide" and the goals of the World Wide Web. This will serve as an example of how non-commercial interests spurred action and invention through an international mass communication strategy.

By analyzing UNESCO's media policy after World War II, we argue that non-commercial organizations play an important role in bringing innovation to media landscapes through socially-conscious frameworks, in spreading technological know-how, in improving access to information, and, most importantly, in encouraging international debate on media ethics. Even though UNESCO was accused of promoting Western values, it continually strove to stay in tune with innovation and change in the areas of media production and media technologies.

1 International scholars have provided valuable research on UNESCO's history as a transnational organization and the history of humanitarianism, illuminating the tensions, political and cultural biases, contradictions, transnational effects, and blind spots of UNESCO's history and engagement. Studies have critically analyzed the hidden agenda of humanitarianism, UNESCO's overarching mission of establishing a peaceful and equal (one) world community, its policy of neutrality, its efforts to become a norm-setting organization and a global moral authority, its ideological biases and, finally, the history of the UNESCO Human Rights Survey, one of the organization's most challenging transnational endeavors during its early years. See e.g. Haskel 1985; Bornstein/Redfield 2011; Fassin 2011; Iriye 2002, Sluga 2010; Rangil 2011; Sewell 2015, Toy/Toy 2010; Finnemore 1993; Mundy 1999; Barnett/Finnemore 2004; Jones 2007; Goodale 2018.

The Seeds of Peace in War

From its beginnings, UNESCO's mission as stated in its founding document was fundamentally linked to that of the Charter of the United Nations and oriented towards the concepts of equality, justice, and basic freedoms for all. In addition, UNESCO was mandated by the United Nations as the specialized agency responsible principally for international intellectual cooperation, which added a rational and philosophical sensibility to its ethical mission.

The seeds of the organization that would eventually become UNESCO were planted during World War II, at a time when no one yet knew when the war would end and what the full extent of its aftermath would be. From 1942 to 1945, the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME) met in London, bringing together representatives of Allied countries to address the question of how to rebuild their education systems once the war was over. In its first year, the idea for a permanent international organization for educational and cultural cooperation took shape and was advocated by CAME. At the Conference of San Francisco leading to the establishment of the United Nations in June 1945, a formal recommendation was passed to convene a United Nations Conference for the establishment of an organization for education, science and culture. During that Conference, UNESCO was founded as a specialized agency of the UN. Its Constitution was signed in London on November 16, 1945 and came into effect when it had been ratified by twenty member states. The following year, the League of Nations' International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation (IICI), founded in Paris in 1925 as the implementing agency of the International Commission for Intellectual Cooperation (CICI), became the vehicle through which UNESCO was realized. The IICI was mandated to support the program set by the CICI, including promoting international networks and cooperation in areas such as copyright, arts and letters, museums, translation, higher education, and cinema and radio for educational purposes.² By agreement, the Institute was closed in 1946, when UNESCO took over partial responsibility for its mandate.

UNESCO thus became the agency responsible for a unique and expanded mission of international intellectual cooperation, with strong roots in both the IICI and its parent organization, the UN. The Preamble to UNESCO's Constitution reveals the philosophical and moral tenor of the organization, focused on no less ambitious a goal than helping to establish

2 See <https://atom.archives.unesco.org/international-institute-of-intellectual-co-operation> and p. 12, [www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/\(httpAssets\)/36BC4F83BD9E-4443C1257AF3004FC0AE/%24file/Historical_overview_of_the_League_of_Nations.pdf](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/36BC4F83BD9E-4443C1257AF3004FC0AE/%24file/Historical_overview_of_the_League_of_Nations.pdf), accessed 22. 10. 2020.

world peace by shaping the attitudes and beliefs of individuals: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."³ UNESCO's main aims were to be achieved through the three areas referred to in its title: education, science and culture. UNESCO's fourth main field, mass communication, was not found in its title but was set out in the first article of its Constitution: "all means of mass communication" were to help "[advance] the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples [...] and to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image."⁴ These four areas were the means of achieving "peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations [...] 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."⁵

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The idea of the "free flow of ideas by word and image" is thus written into UNESCO's Constitution and was always framed in an ethical light. This ethical framework informed everything the organization did thereafter, including its media strategy. In its first decade of existence, UNESCO was composed of over 70 member states from across the globe. To carry out its tasks, it had a budget composed of annual fees contributed by member states which totaled just under 8 million USD in its first year, rising to over 22 million USD by the mid-1950s.⁶

UNESCO's Media Policy

UNESCO's media policy was underpinned by its specific mission and its strong link to the United Nations, as well as by the legacy of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation. UNESCO was also inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in December 1948. The United Nations gave UNESCO the role of promoting universal human rights and enabling their "translation" and application in politically, culturally and economically diverse world regions. Article 19 of the Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression" and that "this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."⁷ However, this

3 Preamble, UNESCO Constitution, November 16, 1945: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html, accessed 22. 10. 2020.

4 Ibid., Article 1,2a.

5 Ibid., Article 1,1.

6 UNESCO General Conference, 1 C/Resolutions, p. 214 and 9 C/Resolutions, p. 52.

7 www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights, accessed 7. 1. 2020.

universal declaration had to be implemented at national and regional level, sometimes in areas that had been directly affected by the destruction and trauma of the Second World War. National policies, the political agendas of colonial powers, and geographical borders all represented obstacles to the worldwide flow of information – and there were also other barriers of a different nature, since the exchange of information took place within what was in essence an international trading zone based on import and export regulations, economic and political power, and technological know-how.⁸

Between the world wars, the League of Nations (LoN) had already advocated for the free exchange of both material and social goods, arguably a precursor to the idea of the free flow of information that would be significantly evolved by UNESCO. Article 23e of the Covenant of the League of Nations urged member states “to secure and maintain freedom of communications and of transit and equitable treatment for the commerce of all Members of the League.”⁹ The work of Article 23e, “which was designed to promote intercourse and trade between countries separated from each other by other States,”¹⁰ was carried out by the Communications and Transit Section within the League Secretariat. In particular, the aspects of “freedom of communication and transportation” found form in committees on “international road traffic, rail transport and inland navigation, ports and maritime navigation, unification of road signals and maritime signals, simplification of passports and visa procedures, transmission of electric power across national frontiers, etc.”¹¹

In addition to early work by the LoN, some scholars link the notion of the “free flow of information” to the liberal policy-makers in the United States during the Second World War.¹² Schiller notes: “the idea that no barriers should prevent the flow of information between nations” emerged in the context of American capitalism and the country’s post-war global ascendancy. “The rapid international advances of United States capitalism, already underway in the early 1940’s, were legitimized as unexceptional and highly beneficial expressions of growing freedom in the international arena – freedom of capital, resource and informational flows.”¹³ By this account, the “free flow of information” was a trend related to a growing internationalism and capitalist ideals of unrestricted movements of goods and people.¹⁴ Although the particular strands of influence on UNESCO’s concept of the

8 Fickers/Griset 2019.

9 https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art22, accessed 22. 10. 2020.

10 United Nations Archives Geneva, Communications and Transit Section, 1919–1946 (Sub-Fonds), <https://biblio-archives.unog.ch/detail.aspx?ID=411>, accessed 24. 10. 2020.

11 <https://biblio-archives.unog.ch/detail.aspx?ID=411>.

12 See Schiller 1974; Diop 2019.

13 Schiller 1974 p. 75.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

“free flow of information” require deeper study, the American influence on UNESCO’s general mass communication program was acknowledged in an early report in the *UNESCO Monitor*: “How deeply American political and commercial interests are involved need not be underscored. It was at the behest of Americans that the London Conference of 1945 adopted the resolution instructing the Preparatory Commission to give special attention to Unesco’s work in the field of mass communications.”¹⁵

UNESCO, however, brought to the concept of the “free flow of information” a specifically non-commercial and human rights dimension, since it was situated within UNESCO’s mission to promote “full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge,”¹⁶ in addition to being informed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this manner, UNESCO framed the “free flow of information” as an individual human right, as well as a matter of equality between states – although these principles still had to be realized by practical means, through the equal distribution of communication infrastructures and cooperation in global trade and commerce.

In a 1948 article in the *UNESCO Courier*, we learn that the first Director-General of UNESCO, Julian Huxley, delivered a speech at the United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information which took place in Geneva in March that year.¹⁷ A British biologist, humanist and philosopher, Huxley had been the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Establishment of UNESCO from March 1946 until he was elected UNESCO’s first Director-General in December that same year. Although he remained at the head of UNESCO for just two years, Huxley played a key role in the organization’s founding and orientation. For example, he authored one of its founding texts in 1946, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy*, which influenced the critical early direction the organization would take. Huxley stressed that UNESCO’s mission was to achieve tangible results in the areas placed on the political agenda by the United Nations: “I say that only a practical and not a theoretical conception of freedom of information is capable of overriding the political and cultural differences of peoples.” He emphasized that UNESCO’s approach to freedom was one of concrete action aimed at addressing the actual needs of peoples. In other words, UNESCO seems to have been eager to convert the abstract values promoted at a larger political scale into tangible results by respecting the

15 The Proposals, *UNESCO Monitor* 1, no. 1, August 1947, p. 4.

16 Preamble, UNESCO Constitution, November 16, 1945, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html, accessed 24. 10. 2020.

17 Huxley Defines Press Freedom At Geneva Conference, *UNESCO Courier* 1, no. 3 (1948), p. 1-2, and Unesco Outlines Views at U.N. Meetings on Free Information, *ibid.*, p. 1, 7.

significance of local needs and fostering local agency. However, Huxley also defined an overarching aim for UNESCO's action: the prevention of press and information monopolies by means of worldwide and equal distribution of communication devices, media technologies and related professional training facilities, all in service of a UNESCO-specific concept of information which in turn should support the idea of fundamental education and mutual understanding between different cultures and nations. It therefore seems as if UNESCO's focus was not only on balancing out technical and economic differences between countries; it also wanted to assume a leading role in defining universal ethical standards for media production, the dissemination of knowledge, and the work of the press. Thus, UNESCO's mission was centered around two main issues: it was about bridging the analog divide, which had arisen as a result of economic and technical inequalities, and defining standards for the quality and content of news and information. However, UNESCO's role as a self-proclaimed global moral authority was constantly under threat because it was trapped by its own ideological biases and challenged by conflicting political powers, the need for financial support, and the appeal and success of popular culture and mass entertainment.

In his speech, Huxley clarified that the "realization of freedom of information does not consist simply in opening up access to more and more masses of information of any and every kind" and that UNESCO would instead set out to counter the "distortion of news and common vulgarity of which the purveyors of news are so frequently guilty." In terms of beneficial content, Huxley referred to cultural and scientific knowledge and their educational value, while also acknowledging the traps of essentialist concepts of truth and cultural superiority that can exist behind such knowledge creation. To keep up with ethical standards, Huxley proposed that UNESCO should provide appropriate training for journalists at international level and become a leading media provider in its own right, while also fostering international dialogue and facilitating ethically correct models of media production. Huxley summarized UNESCO's mission in this respect as follows: "It is with this in mind that Unesco's programme today is devoted, on the one hand, to meeting the technical needs I have mentioned. But it also launches out to include the interchange of man's achievements in science and the arts, philosophy and the humanities. In particular Unesco is developing today a large programme of articles, broadcasts and films demonstrating the excellencies and particular achievements of different countries, which will be interchanged amongst the nations of the world."¹⁸

18 Huxley Defines Press Freedom At Geneva Conference, *UNESCO Courier* 1, no. 3 (1948), p. 2.

Therefore, UNESCO's "translation" of article 19 of the Declaration of Human Rights was twofold. It focused not only on the pragmatic task of implementation and international technological dialogue but also on becoming a worldwide moral authority and gatekeeper of media production. To fulfill both roles, UNESCO acted as a technological, economic, and professional influencer and a provider of media. The organization sought to gain power and authority by gathering global data about media policies in particular societies, local circumstances, conditions for media production, and the flow of information in various countries.¹⁹ UNESCO therefore had a strong awareness of the significance of place-based knowledge and structures and was eager to bring this in line with its global mission.

The UNESCO Survey on Technical Needs for the Free Flow of Information

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From 1947 onwards UNESCO collaborated not only with the United Nations Regional Economic Commissions but also with professional associations like the Universal Postal Union, the International Telecommunication Union and the International Organization of Journalists; with international film producers and broadcasting associations; with radio receiver production companies and publishers; and with representatives of governments, financial experts, and many more. In addition, UNESCO created several interlinked commissions and sub-commissions which worked under the umbrella of its Mass Communication Division. The Commission of Experts for a Freer Flow of Information and the Commission of Technical Needs in Press, Radio and Film played major roles.²⁰ UNESCO thus created a huge and powerful internal apparatus for media policy. This apparatus also involved a considerable number of external consultants and field workers who were responsible for collecting and delivering local and large-scale data on the use and spread of media, giving advice on technical, economic (e.g. foreign currency exchange, productivity rate and economic growth) and legal problems (e.g. trade regulations and import and export permits), supporting UNESCO in its efforts to expand and monitor international

19 UNESCO's powerful mission became a source of growing conflicts at a time when social movements and political tensions were becoming stronger. From the late 1970s, UNESCO set out to establish a New World Information and Communication Order. This initiative led to several severe crises between UNESCO and its members states in the East, the West, and the Global South. The conflicts highlight the various claims on cultural, technological, and political supremacy, which were related, among other things, to the Cold War, globalization, and decolonization. Hence, UNESCO was forced again and again to (re-)translate its media policies and ethics in order to satisfy its politically, economically, and culturally diverse member states. See e.g. Brendenbach, 2019.

20 See e.g. Julian Behrstock, Remove the Barriers, *UNESCO Courier* 2, 8 (1949), p. 7-8.

exchanges of media practices and foster dialogue among media experts, and, finally, helping UNESCO to develop its own media productions.

The development of a questionnaire which served as a data collection tool for the work of the Commission of Technical Needs in Press, Radio and Film and the recruitment of field workers to carry out the survey in pre-selected countries started in April 1947 and was managed by members of UNESCO's Mass Communication Division.²¹ The survey was divided into seven sections: (1) An introductory section covered geographical data and available maps, population numbers and the geographical distribution of populations, with further questions on the number of schools and the illiteracy rate, living costs, the prices of daily newspapers, periodicals and ordinary radio receivers, the taxes on these receivers, and finally the price of cinema projection sets; (2) the second section was a general questionnaire on national legal frameworks for the media, news agencies, radio broadcasting, copyright and censorship, with other questions referring to the training and professional status of media personnel, the number of trade unions and professional associations, and (tele-)communication networks; (3) a third section referred to news and literary agencies, their work and facilities; (4) the fourth section included questions about the press, the availability of raw materials, printing machines, the number and distribution of newspapers, and collaboration with international correspondents; (5) the fifth section covered radio and broadcasting facilities and included questions on existing organizations, the structure of individual radio stations, the technical equipment of each station, personnel, programs and advertising, receiver manufacturers, investments in television, and ongoing research on radio and television technologies; (6) the sixth section dealt with the gramophone and record industries and the spread of these technologies; (7) the seventh and last section of the survey was dedicated to cinema and film and included questions about production facilities (including studios and equipment), independent film organizations, production companies and agencies for film distribution, the availability of trained technicians, educational films, and the legal framework of film and film production.²²

The 1947 survey contained more than 1,500 questions; nine field workers were sent to twelve countries, including some of the most war-devastated countries in Europe – France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Greece – as well as other countries such as China and the Philippines. A quick look at the profile of the field workers, who also received training on UNESCO's priorities and aims before embarking on their missions, shows that all of

²¹ UNESCO Archives, file code: Comm.Tech.Needs/I-ID.

²² Ibid.

them were at least bilingual and had received academic training. Among them were four radio or newspaper correspondents working abroad or in charge of foreign affairs; an editor-in-chief of a Dutch magazine; two officials from education or information ministries with a background as board members of media associations, one of whom subsequently became a member of the UNESCO Secretariat; a former adviser for the Anglo-Greek Information Service; and a former lecturer to the British and Allied forces. The majority of field workers had British or French nationality; exceptions were two field workers who were Swedish and Dutch.²³

80 While collecting relevant data, the field workers were in touch with national ministries of education, ministries of information, ministries of trade and commerce and statistical offices.²⁴ In addition, the workers contacted trade unions and professional associations, large media industries and production companies, editors and publishers, and university officials for information on professional training of journalists and radio technicians, and they also visited radio transmission stations to gather technical data. On their return to Paris in mid-July 1947 the field workers summarized their data and submitted country reports. UNESCO then set up specialized sub-commissions on press, radio and film whose task was to elaborate further on the respective sections of the country reports. The meetings of these commissions took place between August 25 and 30, 1947 at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. Conclusions and recommendations were further discussed in four plenary meetings of the overarching Technical Needs Commission which were attended by representatives of international media organizations, representatives of all the countries involved, Western financial and commercial experts, technical experts, and observers from the United Nations. A preliminary report concludes: "It is comparatively easy to assess needs, but unfortunately those needs always come back to problems of production, distribution, purchase and exchange; that is, in most cases, to problems of foreign currency and import permits."²⁵ It was further stated that "Unesco's task is to consider certain problems not from a national, but from an international point of view" and that "the effort which has been made has called forth in many authorities a sympathetic attitude whose value must not be underestimated, for it is an element in the promotion of goodwill between peoples."²⁶

A UNESCO report from June 1951, presented when UNESCO had already surveyed more than sixty countries, some administered by colonial

23 Ibid.

24 When the survey was conducted in other countries in subsequent years, some of these official institutions were run by colonial powers.

25 Ibid., p. 3.

26 Ibid.

powers, mentions UNESCO's role in helping to introduce two international agreements on tariff reduction and on the removal of trade barriers to facilitate the worldwide exchange of information and materials in the fields of education, science and culture.²⁷ In addition, UNESCO supported international exchanges for media experts, initiated research on mass communication, and established an international coupon scheme (1949) allowing sponsors to make direct contributions to countries and local institutions in need. Among the studies published by UNESCO was a book on "Education by Radio: School Broadcasting" (1949), a book on "Broadcasting to Schools" (1949), and three publications on the use of media in fundamental education: "Radio in Fundamental Education" (1951), "The Use of Mobile Cinema and Radio Vans in Fundamental Education" (1949), and "Choice and Care of Films in Fundamental Education" (1950).²⁸

The large number of UNESCO publications on media use in formal and fundamental education can be explained by the fact that the Technical Needs Commission soon discovered a high rate of illiteracy in the majority of countries under survey. The 1948 report by the Radio Sub-Commission on Technical Needs confirmed: "Both in Asia and [Latin] America, the experts had to consider one problem of exceptional seriousness – the problem of illiteracy, which, in some cases, concerns 85% of the population. For that reason, the Sub-Commission was particularly interested in Education by Radio, in the two-fold form of school broadcasting and mass education by radio. A special endeavor should be made to promote Education by Radio for purely instructional purposes and Education by Radio should take precedence over purely cultural broadcasts (the transmission of the cultural heritage and the creation of a new form of art)."²⁹

The findings on high illiteracy rates in Asia and Latin America revealed an urgent need related to another key UNESCO program whose aim was to provide basic education at all levels to populations in underdeveloped countries, and minority populations in developed countries, with the broader goal of promoting international understanding.³⁰ While UNESCO had already done some work to promote radio broadcasts with an educational purpose, the radio sub-commission survey results were highly influential in furthering the development of UNESCO's program on educational broadcasting. Previous work on the subject had included a lecture on "broadcasting in education for international understanding" at a 1947 Summer Seminar

27 UNESCO Archives, file code: WS/051.98 (1951).

28 Ibid., p. 17.

29 UNESCO Archives, file code: CL/159.

30 Advisory Committee on Educational Broadcasting, 1949. *The Use of Radio in Fundamental Education*. Submitted by the Division of Fundamental Education. Document code: UNESCO/MC/Conf.3/4: 1, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000147858.locale=en>.

on Education for International Understanding.³¹ UNESCO's program on radio for educational purposes was also prefigured by the activities of its predecessor organization, the IICI. From the early 1930s, the IICI published studies and surveys on the intellectual role of radio and cinema and on the potential for radio as a means to universal education and peace. For example, the 1933 IICI publication *La Radiodiffusion Scolaire* described the results of a survey on the benefits and limits of "this new mode of education" and on the subjects best suited to radio teaching, the methods used, and results obtained at primary, secondary, and post-secondary education levels in 25 countries.³²

Early in UNESCO's existence, the evidence from the 1948 survey of a severe literacy gap across significant swathes of the globe served to justify the validity of UNESCO's educational mission, while also offering a solution to help address it. Indeed, education by radio took center stage – not only in 1948 but also in subsequent years.³³ As a direct result of the 1948 report, a detailed questionnaire produced by members of the Secretariat was sent to thirteen countries that were considered to be experienced in educational broadcasting.³⁴ An Advisory Committee on Educational Broadcasting composed of five specialists in either education or broadcasting was also convened and met at UNESCO in June 1949. On the basis of the completed questionnaires, the Advisory Committee submitted several recommendations and reports to UNESCO. Recommendations included the establishment of a centralized Documentation and Information Centre for the collection, production, and dissemination of materials on school broadcasting; and the distribution of program materials by UNESCO's Radio Division to school broadcasting services internationally, in either script or recorded form, either on its own initiative or in cooperation with broadcasters.³⁵

Moreover, the radio sub-commission repeatedly recommended equipping schools with radio receivers, supporting community listening with mobile radio facilities and encouraging local radio stations to devote their programs to school broadcasts and mass education. UNESCO acknowledged that these aims required not only additional efforts in professional training of qualified staff but also the possibility of purchasing tax-free

31 Lyman Bryson, *Broadcasting in education for international understanding*, 1947, UNESCO, Document code: SEM/LEC/4/ED.

32 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000092853.locale=en>, accessed 24. 10. 2020.

33 Report of the Commission on Technical Needs, 1948. UNESCO Archives, file code: MC/9.

34 Advisory Committee on Educational Broadcasting, 1949, *Broadcasting to Schools: Reports on the Organization of School Broadcasting Services in Various Countries*, UNESCO: Introduction, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000133153.locale=en>, accessed 24. 10. 2020.

35 *Ibid.*, 23.

or tax-reduced low-cost public, school, and home receivers. To this end UNESCO held extensive discussions with member states and (mainly US) radio industries to lobby for tax reductions, technical standardization, and the mass production of cheap radio sets.

Case Study: Educational Broadcasting and Audiovisual Technical Needs in Pakistan, 1952–1953

Two related UNESCO projects in Pakistan in the early 1950s illustrate how UNESCO used radio as a medium to advance the right to freedom of information and the right to education in a national context. The missions took place shortly after Pakistan joined UNESCO in 1949. More to the point, Pakistan was still an infant country finding its feet following Indian independence from British colonial rule and the subsequent partition in 1947 that led to the establishment of Pakistan as a separate country. The separation of India and Pakistan along religious lines resulted in a majority-Muslim population in Pakistan, in contrast to a majority-Hindu population in India.³⁶ This configuration was not accomplished without mass upheaval, adding to the instability of a new country. In less than a year, an estimated 10 million Muslim refugees in India absconded to Pakistan, while almost the same number of Hindus and Sikhs, who suddenly found themselves on newly-created Pakistani territory, were forced to move to India.³⁷ The educational problems in the new country were grave: only 12% of men and 6% of women could read and write, while less than half of the 7.8 million school-aged children attended primary schools.³⁸ Pakistan found itself with only six technical, research, and science institutions, compared to 81 in India; thousands of teachers of Hindu and Sikh faith left the country, while schools in Pakistan hosted Muslim refugees from India.³⁹ To address these problems, the Pakistani government created a “national program of education,” declaring that “mass illiteracy and democracy cannot exist together.”⁴⁰

Given the urgent needs of the new country, it is little wonder that UNESCO focused to some degree on educational problems there. The “Mission for the Development of Radio Broadcasting in Pakistan” was carried out from the beginning of 1952 to spring 1953, while a related project linked to the UNESCO gift coupon program provided radio receiving sets

36 Ziring 2020.

37 Ibid.

38 John M. Saunders, Project 45.1 – Pakistan Audiovisual, Radio Listening Sets for High Schools in Karachi Area, Paris, UNESCO, n.d., file code: 36A 653 (549) 45, p. 2.

39 Ibid., p. 2.

40 Ibid.

to high schools in Pakistan in 1953. Run by different administrative organs within UNESCO, the two projects contributed to the same general program for the development of national broadcasting infrastructure, educational broadcasting, and audiovisual technical needs in Pakistan.

Mission for the Development of Radio Broadcasting in Pakistan, 1952–1953

The “Mission for the Development of Radio Broadcasting in Pakistan” consisted of “two missions of a very different nature” grouped under the same title.⁴¹ The purpose of the mission was indeed twofold: on the one hand, it aimed to develop capacities for educational broadcasting in schools, and on the other, it wanted to address national infrastructural broadcasting needs by assisting in the design of a broadcasting studio to be built in Dacca (now known as Dhaka) and by helping to plan a more evenly distributed radio network of small satellite stations across the country.

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A major aim of the mission was to assist the new country in its efforts to achieve autonomy and stability. In a written rationale for the project, the head of the mission, A.J. Halls, states: “it becomes incumbent on the world to help provide the means by which [the people of Pakistan] can realize the responsibility which it is theirs to exercise.”⁴² Education was one of the keys to helping the citizenry achieve this. Halls argues: “In this country of vast distances [...] the attempt to provide suitable educational facilities presents an impossible task to traditional educational institutions.” Radio represented a possible answer to the problem: “[...] broadcasting emerges as a method both cheap and efficient [...] when boldly and skillfully handled, broadcasting remains the most expeditious method of bringing to great numbers of people that body of knowledge without which they are unable to take their place as useful citizens of a modern state.”⁴³ Halls even posits that, since Pakistani villagers communicated “by word of mouth rather than by the written word,” broadcasting “follows a tradition of instruction which must be more acceptable, in the early stages, than through any other medium.”⁴⁴

Because of the limited duration of the mission, Halls agreed with the staff at Radio Pakistan, the national broadcasting service, that the scope should be limited to schools broadcasting. After touring West Pakistan,

41 Raymond Junod, *Mission pour le développement de la radiodiffusion au Pakistan. Rapport final*, Paris, UNESCO, 1953, p. 1.

42 A. J. Halls, *Rationale: Educational Broadcasting in Pakistan*, Paris: UNESCO, November 24, 1951. File code: 36A 653 (549) 45, p. 1.

43 *Ibid.*

44 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Halls determined that the experiment could begin in Karachi, where Radio Pakistan headquarters were based. The educational broadcasts would initially focus on a few subjects: social sciences, health and hygiene, and history and geography.

The accomplishments of the mission were summarized in an unsigned mission report as follows: a shortage of radio receiving sets in schools was addressed through the assistance of UNESCO's gift coupon program (described in more detail in the next section); education authorities and teachers were shown the value of "radio education";⁴⁵ a Schools Broadcast Officer was appointed to train teachers in radio script writing and to train radio staff in educational broadcasting; and a School Broadcasting Department was established, presumably within the national Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, with which Halls collaborated. Despite these important achievements, the technical part of the mission was recognized as having been more successful, because educational broadcasting remained "the central problem" and "the whole field of mass education [was] left untouched."⁴⁶

The technical part of the mission was carried out by two UNESCO radio engineers. UNESCO technicians assisted with plans to build a block of broadcasting studios in Dacca and small satellite stations evenly distributed across the country. The technicians also advised Radio Pakistan personnel on the acquisition of key instruments for radio studio engineering. These activities were not merely technical; the aim was to help build Pakistan's radio broadcasting capacity and infrastructure at a national level. In collaboration with local Pakistani specialists, the UNESCO technicians adapted their expertise to local needs and expectations by focusing particularly on the transmission of knowledge and tools to enable local specialists to carry out their own programs.

For example, in helping to plan the structure of the broadcasting building in Dacca, UNESCO technicians complied with Radio Pakistan's desire for a building that was "as simple as possible" to "accommodate local circumstances and costs," even if this meant "renounc[ing] standards commonly used in Western countries."⁴⁷ The new satellite stations were likewise an initiative of Radio Pakistan. In total 16 new satellite stations were to be "scattered [...] over the country to cover those reception areas which suffer from insufficient field strength of the regional transmitters,"⁴⁸ thereby increasing the effectiveness of the national radio network by en-

45 *Educational broadcasting: Pakistan - (mission)*, Paris, UNESCO, 1953, p. 3.

46 *Ibid.*

47 J. M. Madsen, *Technical Report of Expert Studio Engineering Mission for Development Broadcasting: Pakistan*, Paris, UNESCO, 1952, p. 4.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

sureing greater coverage across the country. Moreover, each station would contain a small music studio and a small “talk studio” in order to enable transmission of local programs, if desired.⁴⁹ This indicated a move to decentralize radio programming, empowering local stations to create their own productions. UNESCO technicians also helped with the acquisition of equipment such as a sound level meter and acoustic measuring instruments, providing Radio Pakistan with key radio engineering tools that could serve for future broadcasting design and construction projects.

UNESCO Gift Coupon Program: Radio Receiving Sets for Schools in Karachi, Pakistan, 1953

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The gift coupon program was administered by the UNESCO Rehabilitation Service, established to provide aid to countries, especially “war-devastated” countries in the aftermath of World War II, in the areas of education, science, and culture. A communiqué describing the need for radio receiving sets in Pakistan high schools was printed and distributed to potential gift coupon donors, including the U.S., the UK, and France. In several longer, unpublished versions of the communiqué, the head of UNESCO’s Voluntary International Assistance Division, John Saunders, like Halls, wrote of Pakistan’s educational needs in the context of its newfound post-colonial independence, and the ensuing chaos of a “partitioned” country.

Reference was also made to the 1948 *Report of the Commission on Immediate Technical Needs in Press, Radio and Film of War-devastated Countries*, which cited the “particularly serious” need for radio receiving sets in schools in Pakistan.⁵⁰ Several UNESCO initiatives and programs were developed to address the radio “analog divide” in the post-war years. The appeal for gift coupons was moderately successful: 120 radio receiving sets were sent to high schools in Karachi, thanks to a donation by the Norwegian government. The radio receiving sets contributed to the educational broadcasting mission in Pakistan headed by Halls, and enabled school broadcasting to be incorporated as part of the curriculum in Karachi high schools.

49 Ibid.

50 Cited in John M. Saunders, Project Description: Pakistan, Schools & Villages Radio Sets, file code: 36A 653 (549) 45, p. 2 and 4.

Conclusion

UNESCO's role as a powerful force in media policies was inspired and ethically justified not only by specific sections of its Constitution, which clearly articulate its mission related to mass communication and the "free flow of ideas by word and image," but also by article 19 of the Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulates the right to information. Moreover, the addition of an educational component that fueled UNESCO's work on educational broadcasting is reinforced by article 26 of the Declaration, which emphasizes everyone's right to education. Although the idea of the "free flow of information" existed before UNESCO, the contribution of UNESCO to the development of an ethical framework in this area cannot be overlooked. UNESCO brought a human rights dimension to the notion of "free flow of information," insisting that it should also result in practical measures in international cooperation, including reducing material and trade barriers.

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The case of Pakistan demonstrates how UNESCO employed various radio-related post-war reconstruction strategies to achieve this vision. The strategies deployed by UNESCO include educational development through radio; the infrastructural development of a national radio service, which involved efforts towards more equal distribution within the national radio broadcasting network; and the material provision of radio equipment in schools. Through this and other specific communication programs focused on major media – beginning in the 1940s with the written press, radio, film, television and audio recordings, and shifting in later years to computer-based technologies and artificial intelligence – UNESCO has continued to play a significant role in promoting a human rights-centered understanding of the notion of "free flow of information" on a global scale. Major programs such as the New World Information and Communication Order of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which attempted to address global imbalances in media flows, representation and control, and latterly the International Programme for the Development of Communication, have continued this relevant work. Most recently, UNESCO has taken on a leading role in fostering international dialogue on the ethics of artificial intelligence, with a particular focus on addressing imbalances and considering humanistic values in the development and design of AI technologies. The various effects – both tangible and intangible – of UNESCO's programs on media and communication over the decades merit further study.⁵¹

51 To date, most studies have concentrated on UNESCO missions in the field of textbook revision while also referring to publishing houses and the press, e.g. Duedahl 2016; Kulnazarova/Ydesen 2017; Fuchs/Bock 2018.

UNESCO's action to guide the ethical development and distribution of communication infrastructures not only involved local collaboration; it was also in line with the organization's overarching media policies. UNESCO's work combined local intervention with a more regional, national and global perspective. Indeed, UNESCO defined its role as that of a global political force and moral authority which operated on different scales and at different levels; it collaborated with national and local partners while at the same time relying on the support of its member states and the United Nations. Educational value proved to be UNESCO's predominant ethical consideration for the quality of its media productions and also an appropriate justification for collecting international data, which in turn provided a basis for economic and technical intervention in various countries around the world, encouraging the growth of global media industries and improving international dialogue on media technologies.

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