KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY
MODEL UNITED NATIONS CLUB

# UNESCO

## STUDY GUIDE

## ETHICAL RESTRICTION ON GOVERNMENTS USE OF EDUCATION AS A TOOL NATIONAL IDENTITY SHAPING

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to HASMUN 2025 — a journey that goes far beyond a typical Model United Nations conference.

This year, we invite you to become part of an experience built on diplomacy, dialogue, and the determination to create change. HASMUN has long stood as a platform for driven individuals to challenge perspectives, develop leadership, and speak for the world they envision. In every committee room, in every debate, we believe your voice has the power to shape not only resolutions, but real ideas for the future.

Whether this is your first MUN or one of many, we encourage you to approach each session with openness, curiosity, and commitment. The friendships you form, the ideas you exchange, and the challenges you overcome will stay with you long after the final gavel falls.

On behalf of the entire Secretariat, we are thrilled to have you with us. Prepare to question, to collaborate, and to grow.

We look forward to meeting you soon.

Warm regards,

Nazrin Sadigova

Secretary-General

HASMUN 2025

Letter from the Under-Secretaries-General

Dear delegates,
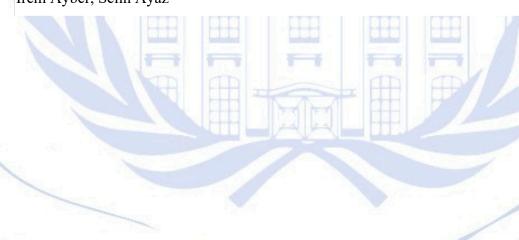
Welcome to HASTRAIN'25 and UNESCO Committee!
We are İrem Ayber and Selin Ayaz, your committee board members. We are having the honor to serve as the board members of this committee.
On behalf of the Committee Board for the UNESCO Committee, we extend our warmest welcome to all delegates. We are thrilled to have you participate in this prestigious Model United Nations conference. The UNESCO Committee focuses on the critical issues related to global standards for education, restriction on national-identity formation through education. As delegates, you have a unique opportunity to engage in meaningful debate, negotiation, and problem-solving to address these pressing issues. This study guide contains many prominent information about the agenda while giving an open space for you to also do your own research. Remember, regardless of your country's position in the agenda, you are all equal in the committee and you have all the resources in your hands to come up with great solutions and innovative ideas to achieve the goals set by the committee.
We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at HASTRAIN 2025.

Best regards,
İrem Ayber, Selin Ayaz

***I. Introduction to the Committee:*** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was established in 1945 with the aim of supporting peace and sustainable development through education, science, culture, and communication. Its primary purpose is to build bridges between societies, safeguard cultural heritage, improve education systems, and enhance cooperation between countries. UNESCO is an organization that develops international ethical standards in areas such as shaping state education policies, protecting cultural diversity, and ensuring freedom of expression.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, known as UNESCO, was established on November 16, 1945, immediately after the Second World War. The destruction caused by the war had created a deep trauma not only physically but also humanely, culturally, and mentally.

Therefore, the international community, acting on the idea that lasting peace could only be achieved in people's minds and social relations, felt the need to establish an organization based on cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, and communication. The UNESCO Constitution came into force on November 4, 1946, enabling the organization to officially begin its activities. Headquartered in Paris, UNESCO today has a broad network of member states covering a large part of the world and continues its activities through its global network of representatives.

UNESCO's fundamental purpose is to build bridges of knowledge, culture, and understanding among societies to safeguard international peace and security, promote sustainable development, and disseminate the universal values of human rights. In pursuit of this mission, UNESCO supports the development of education systems, protects cultural heritage, encourages scientific research and cooperation, and establishes norms in the field of communication that facilitate the free flow of ideas. The organization's fundamental philosophy is based on the understanding that wars arise not from the will of governments but

from hatred, ignorance, and bias in people's minds. Therefore, UNESCO aims to strengthen intellectual solidarity, increase intercultural dialogue, and ensure that societies understand each other better.

UNESCO is also a structure that produces international ethical and normative standards. It creates documents and policies that serve as guidelines for countries on issues such as shaping education policies, protecting cultural diversity, and ensuring freedom of expression. In this context, UNESCO plays an active role in important areas such as improving state education systems, ensuring equal opportunities, promoting universal access to lifelong learning programs, and protecting education in crisis zones. In the field of science, it encourages international research and cooperation on globally significant issues such as environmental sustainability, the protection of water resources, biological diversity, and climate change.

UNESCO's activities are based on an approach that promotes understanding between societies, cultural diversity, and humanity's shared heritage. UNESCO is an organization that aims to support peace and sustainable development through education, science, culture, and communication; builds bridges between societies, protects cultural heritage, improves education systems, and strengthens international cooperation. It also provides guidance to governments in shaping their education policies and develops international ethical standards on cultural diversity and freedom of expression.

*II. Agenda Item:* Ethical restriction on Governments: Use of education as a tool national identity shaping

*1. Theoretical Background*

*a. Education as a tool of socialization*

Alongside a way of learning skills, education plays the deeper role of shaping the identities of people. Schools pass down more than just facts; they transmit values, worldviews, and ideas about what it means to belong. In each and every country, classrooms do more than teach: they socialize. They help students form an identity not just as individuals, but as members of a national community. The "ideal citizen" that schools try to produce reflects the state's vision for its future, culture, ethics, and political values.

Socialization happens on several levels. First, the cognitive side: students learn basic skills, but even those are filtered through political and cultural choices. What counts as important knowledge, and which histories are emphasized, while some are thrown out? These decisions aren't neutral and they reveal what a society values. The civic level operates through lessons on law, rights, duties, and political institutions; students are taught how to "act" like citizens. Things like national holidays, school ceremonies, and citizenship classes shape how people think about belonging and participation.

But perhaps the most subtle, and most powerful, form of socialization is cultural. This is where schools transmit ideas about identity: who's included, who's invisible, and what kinds of people are "truly" part of the nation. Literature choices, language policies, and textbook imagery send messages about which groups are central to national life and which are pushed to the margins.

Governments sit at the center of all this. Unlike other institutions, schools are directly regulated and monitored by the state. Ministries approve curricula, control textbooks, choose official languages, and train teachers. That means education can serve as a force for justice, or as a mechanism of exclusion since it is centrally controlled. When schools foster critical thinking, embrace diversity, and allow space for multiple voices, education becomes a tool of freedom but when the state pushes a single story, erases minority histories, or punishes dissent, schooling becomes a tool of control.

### b. Competing paradigms

Every country, whether democratic or authoritarian, uses education to foster some version of national identity, but not all states define nationhood the same way. Different models and paradigms reveal very different assumptions about unity, diversity, and the purpose of citizenship.

### i. Civic Nationalism Paradigm

This model sees the nation as a shared civic project, not something inherited by blood, but something created through collective agreement. Here, national identity is based on values like democracy, legal equality, and public participation. Education under civic nationalism tries to produce citizens who understand democratic principles, think critically, respect the rule of law and believe in pluralism and equality.

History classes focus on social progress (civil rights movements, constitutional reforms, the expansion of justice) rather than ancient myths or ethnic superiority. National belonging is seen as a choice, a kind of agreement among diverse people to live under the same rules. While civic nationalism still involves shaping identity it does so through inclusion rather than cultural dominance.

## *ii. Ethnic or Cultural Nationalism Paradigm*

This model is rooted in the idea that nations are defined by shared ancestry: by blood, language, religion, or heritage. Education in this paradigm becomes a way to protect the "authentic", "true" culture of the majority which often happens at the expense of minority groups.

In practice, this means that minority languages might be banned or discouraged, textbooks could glorify the dominant group's history and heroes, alternative narratives may be seen as threats or foreign influences or that school rituals would promote uniformity over diversity. The deeper danger here isn't just preference for the majority group, it's that difference becomes equated with disloyalty. Students are taught to truly "belong," they must conform. In certain contexts this might turn into outright erasure.

## *iii. Pluralist / Multicultural Paradigm*

The pluralist model treats the nation not as a single cultural unit but rather as a mosaic: many traditions, many histories, coexisting under a shared civic framework. Education here becomes a space for dialogue rather than assimilation.

Key features of this model include:

- Multilingual education and language rights,
- History lessons that include multiple perspectives,
- Respect for Indigenous and minority knowledge systems,
- Teaching methods that adapt to different cultural contexts.

Teachers in this paradigm act less like gatekeepers and more like facilitators. They help students navigate complexity and understand differences, teaching them how diverse groups live together. This model aligns closely with UNESCO's values, treating diversity not as a challenge to unity, but as its foundation.

## c. Understanding National Identity and the Role of Education

National identity is a shared value that defines how a country or society perceives itself historically, culturally, socially, and politically. This identity is formed through a common language, history, and cultural values. People's perception of themselves as part of a society is largely acquired through education, because the education system is the most influential and comprehensive way of transmitting social values and common ethics to new generations.

The impact of education on national identity is particularly evident through the education system, specifically through the curriculum, textbooks, school environment, and cultural activities. History lessons convey a nation's origins, important leaders, significant events, and turning points. Language education, on the other hand, strengthens the official language of society and demonstrates its closeness to culture. All of this contributes to students' understanding of citizenship and national duties.

States often use the education system to preserve the unity and solidarity of the country and to create a social foundation. While this sometimes strengthens the national structure, at other times, when taken to extremes, it can turn into the imposition of a single identity. Therefore, the power of education to shape national identity can be both beneficial and controversial.

## d. Ethical Boundaries in Government Influence over Education

Government regulation of the education system is a natural necessity in democratic societies, as education is a public domain and must comply with national standards. States are subject to ethical boundaries in this area. However, if these boundaries are crossed, the education system may stray from its primary purpose of imparting knowledge and become an ideological tool.

The most important dimension of ethical boundaries is the principle of impartiality. Governments can't reflect a specific political ideology, worldview, or cultural identity when developing the curriculum. The education system should not become a tool that blocks access

to different views and cultures. Students should be able to develop their own thoughts and try out different perspectives.

Another important issue is the protection of the rights of minority groups. Governments' education policies should not become a structure that ignores ethnic, religious, or cultural minorities or disregards or limits their educational rights. According to UNESCO rules, education should be an environment that protects cultural diversity and offers equal rights to different identities. Therefore, single-language policies, uniform identity impositions, or the exclusion of minority communities' history are unacceptable from an ethical standpoint.



In summary, the state's influence on education must be impartial and transparent. Curriculum changes must be based on scientific foundations. The transmission of false information, the distortion of historical facts, and the inclusion of scientific inaccuracies in the curriculum lead to the violation of fundamental principles. State intervention should be designed in such a way that it does not deprive students of their rights to critical thinking, free expression, preservation of their cultural identity, and equal access to education. In this regard, the role of governments is not to impose education in a dictatorial manner, but to make it fair and inclusive for everyone.

### e. Risks of Using Education for Identity Shaping: Bias, Indoctrination, and Cultural Suppression

Education is a very powerful method for shaping the common values and identities of societies. However, excessive or one-sided use of this power by states can lead to serious ethical problems. One of the greatest potential dangers is that the curriculum becomes biased. History is one of the most fundamental subjects that shapes the collective memory of communities, and governments can use this field to reinforce national narratives of heroism or to portray their own political ideologies in a positive light. This can weaken students' critical thinking skills, cause them to think negatively about different perspectives, and lead to the formation of a closed-minded attitude towards different views.

Another significant danger is conscious manipulation and the imposition of uniform thinking (indoctrination). Students' freedom to question and defend their own ideas can be constrained by ideological patterns developed by states. This undermines the principle of impartiality in the education system. Over time, this creates a mindset dependent on authority within society.

In addition, excessive education during the formation of national identity can lead to cultural pressure and the danger of assimilation. Ethnic minorities, immigrant communities, and indigenous peoples, in particular, can find themselves caught between their own cultural heritage and the identity that the state wishes to shape. Language policies, history curricula, and cultural education practices can lead to the erasure or disregard of these communities' identities. This harms both individual rights and cultural diversity.

Shaping the education system in this way for ideological purposes is contrary to international norms. As stated by UNESCO, education should promote pluralism, critical thinking, and the preservation of cultural diversity. The balance between national identity and education must be maintained. Otherwise, it may create polarization within society and lead to greater problems that will erode democratic values in the long run.

### f. Global Examples of National Identity Formation through Education

The role of education in the formation of national identity varies from country to country. In many parts of the world, governments use the curriculum to highlight the nation's history, cultural heritage, and shared values. However, some governments adopt a more centralized and controlling approach to this process.

For example, some states want students to develop a shared sense of "national identity" by emphasizing topics such as historical leaders, military victories, or the struggle for national independence in education. While this may strengthen social unity and integrity, it can sometimes lead to biased or incomplete historical narratives.

In other countries, national identity is defined through cultural diversity and multilingualism. In these societies, education systems adopt an approach that encompasses different cultures

and minority identities. Curricula for minority languages, cultural heritage courses, and programs that include different perspectives on history are examples of this inclusive model.

In some countries, however, education has been used as a powerful ideological tool. In these cases, the state establishes an education system that promotes a single identity or ideology. Educational styles that praise political leaders, disregard alternative interpretations of history, and discourage critical thinking are examples of this dangerous approach.

## 2. National Identity Shaping Mechanisms

### a. Curriculum design

The curricula are designed by each state itself. Thus, these designs usually differ from each other and instill the political view and ideology of the state that designed the curricula. This may lead to misinformation, polarization and discrimination against certain groups or nations.

The term "indoctrination" is used to explain whenever children are taught ideas, beliefs and values that conflict with their families' opinions. American educational reformer Horace Mann's solution to the problem of indoctrination was for teachers and schools to remain scrupulously nonpartisan and nonsectarian, especially on curriculum design. Students would receive instruction in the "great essentials of political knowledge," including the Constitution, the three branches of government and elections, but any and all "political proselytism" would be forbidden.

There are several types of education within the same country: general, private, religious, etc. All world countries have religious schools related to the Islamic, Christian, Jewish and other religions.

Such models of religious education exist in all world countries including European and American countries. Christianity-based education dates back to the Byzantine State where schools taught Christian theology like the Catechetical School of Alexandria and the University of Constantinople whose professors moved to Europe after it closed and adopted the same methods and curricula there.

In Islam, the educational institute was the Prophet's mosque in Madinah where the Prophet met his companions and taught them about religion. The Prophets' companions then imparted what they were taught to their families. Education via mosques continued throughout the

Islamic state during the rule of Rashidun Caliphate, Umayyad Caliphate and Abbasid Caliphate.

Nowadays, religious education is seen as "compulsory" by conservative governments. In Muslim countries, Islamic education provided by non-state actors has been regarded as a potential threat to political stability, by creating a medium for Jihadi and Islamist groups to indoctrinate and recruit younger generations. This propelled Muslim autocrats to increasingly regulate Islamic schooling and even directly provide state-sanctioned religious education as a counter strategy, to impose a version of religious education aligning with their regimes' objectives, and block political Islam groups from leveraging Islamic schooling to their advantage.

### Global citizenship education (GCED)

UNESCO promotes global citizenship education to assist learners understand the world around them and cooperate to fix the biggest issues in the world, regardless of their religious, racial or socioeconomic background. *"Global citizenship education (GCED)"* is about teaching and learning to become these global citizens who peacefully live together on one planet.

Adjusting curricula and lessons content to increase knowledge about the world and the interconnected nature of contemporary challenges and threats are objectives of this program. That includes, among other things, a deep understanding of human rights, geography, the environment, systems of inequalities, and historical events that underpinned current developments

Instilling values that reflect a global vision of the world and provide purpose, such as respect for diversity, empathy, open-mindedness, justice and fairness for everyone.

However, systems with similar values have been denied before in some certain countries with high levels of authoritarianism. Therefore, struggles may occur during the implementation process of GCED.

### b. Language restrictions

Researchers believe that two-thirds of the world's children grow up in a context where more than one language is spoken. In such environments, completing education in a non-official

language of the state is mostly prohibited by law. These standardized education systems can bring benefits, such as enhancing minority students' ability to learn and improving their overall scientific and cultural literacy; however, in most cases, pupils struggle to adjust themselves to a language that they do not use on a daily basis. Teaching children in their home language during the early years is particularly beneficial for developing cognitive skills in numeracy and problem-solving.

*Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)*

*"Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)"* requires the use of the mother tongue as a language of instruction in the classroom, however, it is not about restricting access to national and international languages. Rather, MTB-MLE is about properly preparing children to learn these languages well. Starting in the language they know best allows children to build a strong foundation, which then enables them to make an effective transition into other national or international languages in due course.

Writing systems need to be acceptable to the language speakers and other stakeholders, and a participatory process centering around the language community is crucial to ensuring appreciation, acceptability, accuracy and ownership.

One of the biggest issues regarding this topic is differentiating between a language and a dialect. There are not any international organizations nor commissions that can determine the differences between a dialect and a language. Most of the time, the line is drawn through geopolitics, proximity and ideological differences. As the linguist Max Weinreich stated: "*A language is a dialect with an army and navy*"

One significant case regarding this is China 's plans to exclude Tibetan as a core subject from the national college entrance exam for the majority of students in the autonomous region, raising concerns over the future of the language. As the reason of this exclusion, Chinese government states that this approach will assist the Tibetan region by enhancing globalization and improving the scientific and cultural literacy

In the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, the enrolment rate in primary school is less than 60%, with a high dropout rate. One of the most critical contributing factors is that children do not understand the language of instruction (Bangla), and the curriculum does not relate to their culture. To address this issue an MTB-MLE programme was set up to provide relevant

learning materials in five indigenous languages. The success of this programme, along with others, has resulted in the Bangladesh government acknowledging MTB-MLE in their national education policy.

In 2021, a new law aimed at protecting and promoting regional languages across France was approved by the French parliament.

It concerns all regional languages in the country including Picard, Breton, Corsican, Alsatian, Flemish, Basque, Occitan, Creole, etc. It will give primary schools the possibility of "immersive teaching" in a regional language, meaning they can offer teaching in a specific regional language for the majority of the school day.

The French language would be introduced gradually until the pupils are completely bilingual by the end of primary school.

### c. Rituals and symbols

Social practices, rituals and festive events are habitual activities that structure the lives of communities and groups and that are shared by and relevant to many of their members. They are significant because they reaffirm the identity of those who practise them as a group or a society and, whether performed in public or private, are closely linked to important events. Social, ritual and festive practices may help to mark the passing of the seasons, events in the agricultural calendar or the stages of a person's life. They are closely linked to a community's worldview and perception of its own history and memory. They vary from small gatherings to large-scale social celebrations and commemorations. Each of these sub-domains is vast but there is also a great deal of overlap between them.

Rituals and symbols are great tools to shape a national identity. Flag raising ceremonies, school uniforms, national anthems, and national or religious holidays are the most common types of school rituals that are also related to symbols which promote patriotism, religious education, hierarchy, or the ideology of the state.

Drawing on the diversity of cultural expressions, cultural symbols, rituals and the arts enrich and revitalize education, offering diverse learners, including those in vulnerable situations, the means to express their humanity and to access a diversity of forms of expression, ways of thinking, knowing, being and doing, as well as histories and languages of peoples and

communities, which give meaning to their reading of the world, boost their self-confidence and motivation, and thus contribute to improved learning. Culture and the arts enable, expand, and sustain spaces and communities of learning. The educational system should provide opportunities for all the students to globalize, at the same time, being empowered by the cultural values, symbols, and national or religious traditions.

UNESCO commits to engage the unique resources of culture and education to work in greater synergy to advance mutually beneficial development outcomes; stressing the critical need to enable all learners to fully benefit from the opportunities of culture and education through inclusive access to quality education, respecting and engaging with the diversity of peoples and cultures as a positive and transformative force, and expanding sustainable lifestyles.

### d. Ideological framings

Throughout history, different ideologies, especially the extremist ones, used education as a tool to indoctrinate the children about their ideology. It is argued that modern nations provide public education just to indoctrinate their ideologies in schools. Through indoctrination, any regime ultimately aims to create an "unshakable commitment" to its core principles that is resistant to shocks in regime performance and other counterinfluences. More specifically, citizens further learn what beliefs and behaviors to display in public, and how to do so. The regime utilizes complementary channels to maximize and maintain its intended impact. Individuals are exposed to political messages and learn acceptable behaviors and values at schools, universities, voluntary associations, and the military, and in the workplace, the media, and the arts.The most common ways to use ideological indoctrination in the education are:

- Prohibition of a minority language in education by establishing a monolingual educational system. This strategy aims to assimilate minorities through creating a common culture, the culture of the majority race.
- Distorting historical values, telling history selectively and subjectively, in hopes of assuring that children view their history and race "superior" to others.
- Prohibiting the questioning or the critique of curricula, national traditions, or the ideology of the state, creating a society that accepts every rule without critical thinking and questioning

- Centralizing education, yielding all the power to the state. This enables the state to control the education, and instill ideological values to children, even in the most remote areas of the country. This strategy is against private schooling, since it is more difficult to control.

Examples of certain ideologies' educational frames and indoctrination methods throughout the history:

*Nazism*

Germans who grew up under the Nazi regime were exposed to a wide range of indoctrination methods. Between 1933 and 1945, young Germans were exposed to anti-Semitic ideology in schools, in the (extracurricular) Hitler Youth, and through radio, print, and film. As a result, Germans who grew up under the Nazi regime are much more anti-Semitic than those born before or after that period: the share of committed anti-Semites, who answer a host of questions about attitudes toward Jews in an extreme fashion, is 2–3 times higher than in the population as a whole.



*Communism/Socialism*

The introduction of a new curriculum in China gave rise to an increased government trust and the democratic identity of the political regime. In a similar fashion, education played a crucial role in the Soviet regime in stimulating the transmission of socialist values and the construction of the new Soviet man: selfless, learned, healthy, muscular, and enthusiastic in spreading the communist Revolution.

However, nowadays, many of the post-Soviet countries (like Poland, Russia or East Germany) have high rates of supporting right-wing populist parties, which is the opposite of the leftist, communist/socialist view in the political spectrum.

*Islamist Ideologies*

Through their extremist teachings, Islamists in education have provoked a range of social crises. In ethnically or religiously diverse environments, Islamists have worked to undermine adherents to belief systems other than their own. They have raised generations of students to believe that only all cultures and readings of religion besides theirs are illegitimate. Beyond their intervention in religious education and humanities studies, they also extend their influence into the teaching of biology, physics, and other scientific studies.

When ISIS took control over some parts of Iraq and implemented a new educational system, the absence of certain important topics in the Arabic and mathematics classes in this system suggests that students had a low level of literacy by the end of their primary school education. Second, the learning objectives stated in the books all fell into the lowest.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban government is strictly against modern education. Taliban have been interested in converting modern schools into religious, jihadi schools. Increasing Jihadi schools and Jihadi literacy and attracting youth to these schools spreads an extremist mentality and thought among youth. They will eventually become suitable soldiers for recruitment to the Taliban and other domestic and international terrorist groups.

### e. Textbook content

### American schooling and indoctrination

The White House states that American parents trust America's schools to provide their children with an educational system to instill a patriotic admiration for the national values of the United States of America.
In recent years, however, parents have witnessed schools indoctrinate their children in radical, anti-American ideologies while deliberately blocking parental oversight.

### State-provided education

Many Politicians or educational scientists argue that education should be privatised, In order to purify the education from any ideological indoctrination. However, there are many obstacles and issues along the way of this privatization. For example, It is not ensured that the market will regulate itself, being available for each socioeconomic stage. Also, it is difficult to ensure that each privatised educational institution provides an education that is away from any indoctrination or separatist movement.

### 3. National identity debates

### a. Indoctrination

Indoctrination differs from learning since it doesn't encourage students to ask questions, reflect, or explore multiple perspectives but rather teaches them that certain ideas are untouchable and must be accepted. The goal is not to nurture understanding, but to cultivate different forms of loyalty, such as loyalty to the state, the ruling ideology, or a particular cultural group. The clearest sign is when knowledge is treated as a fixed truth, and students are told to memorize and repeat instead of critically engaging. Challenging the official line is seen as disrespect and even danger. When criticism becomes "unpatriotic" and disagreement becomes "disloyal," the classroom stops being an academic space and becomes a disciplinary one.

Textbooks often reveal this most directly. Some topics get glorified and others disappear. A nation's victories might be highlighted with pride, while violence, discrimination, or oppression are skipped. Minority groups might be reduced to caricatures or erased entirely, while the dominant group is portrayed as noble, enlightened, or destined to rule. Even literature can be used in this way. Novels and plays that reinforce nationalist narratives are given prestige, while stories about social inequality, injustice, or dissent are excluded because they "send the wrong message." Classroom rituals then reinforce the lesson: flags, pledges, daily affirmations, and ceremonial narratives become tests of loyalty instead of symbols of shared belonging.

Indoctrination tends to flourish in authoritarian environments, where education systems are tightly controlled and teachers fear consequences for deviating from the script. Educators may be told directly what they are and are not allowed to mention; entire chapters of history may be off-limits. Students quickly learn that conformity is safer than curiosity. They do not explore identity, they perform it.

But indoctrination isn't exclusive to dictatorships. Democracies can drift into it during wartime, political polarization, or national panic. Governments justify it in the name of "unity" or "security," insisting that criticism weakens the nation.

UNESCO's approach fundamentally rejects indoctrination. The organization believes that education should widen students' perspectives, not narrow them. Students should not be molded into obedient citizens simply because it is convenient for the state. They should be

taught how to evaluate claims, understand complexity, and engage critically, even when that means questioning their own national narratives. Anything less turns education into a tool of compliance, not a tool of empowerment.

### b. Assimilation

Assimilation in education looks more subtle than indoctrination, but its effects are equally profound. It occurs when a school system quietly or explicitly pressures minorities to abandon their languages, customs, or identities to fit the mold of the majority. The message is never phrased openly as "erase yourself." Instead, it comes disguised as progress, success, modernity, or national unity.

The first step is almost always language. When schools deny access to minority languages (or treat them as irrelevant, unprofessional, or backward) children learn that their mother tongue is an obstacle. Once they are forced to learn, think, and express themselves exclusively in the majority's language, they slowly distance themselves from their original culture. This isn't just a communication loss. Language connects generations, rituals, humor, memory: everything that forms community continuity. When the language disappears, the culture begins to dissolve.

Curricula reinforce this shift. The dominant group's history becomes the national story, while Indigenous or minority histories are depicted as marginal, temporary, inferior, or simply personal. Heroes of imperial conquest or nation-building are celebrated. Resistance movements, cultural preservation efforts, or minority intellectual traditions are brushed aside as disruptions. Students internalize this hierarchy.

In many places, assimilation is framed as benevolent. Governments claim to be helping minority children access "modern opportunities" or "civilized behavior." Indigenous traditions are portrayed as primitive; rural or tribal communities as inefficient or backward. Cultural autonomy becomes seen as an obstacle to upward mobility. Assimilation becomes the price of "success."

Assimilation is also deeply political. When the majority culture is placed at the top of a hierarchy, schools and institutions can justify unequal resource distribution. Funding for minority-language schools shrinks. Community-based teachers are dismissed as unqualified. Students who do not assimilate are labeled "slow," "disruptive," or "unprofessional." Economic disadvantage is reframed as personal inadequacy.

UNESCO's view is more nuanced: national identities can exist and even unify people, but unity should not require erasing differences. A healthy educational system allows students to belong to the nation without abandoning their cultural roots. Assimilation fails because it forces uniformity in exchange for acceptance: treating diversity as a problem to fix, rather than a source of collective strength.

### c. National unity

National unity is often presented as the "noble" side of identity education. It is the idea that schools should help students feel part of something larger than themselves, a nation with its own history, hopes, and challenges. When done well, unity provides a foundation for coexistence: common laws, shared values, civic responsibility. It can hold societies together through crisis, rebuild trust after conflict, and empower students to imagine a shared future.

For countries recovering from war or living through political volatility, unity isn't abstract; it's survival. Education can help overcome mistrust and heal divisions. For newly independent states, schools play a central role in building collective self-respect. And for democracies, unity is tied to civic literacy, teaching young people how institutions work and how they can participate, but the line between unity and conformity can be exceptionally thin.

Unity becomes dangerous when it is defined by sameness. If "belonging" means having one religion, one language, or one moral structure, then education simply becomes a tool to draw the boundaries of citizenship. Those who fit are insiders; those who don't must be tolerated or absorbed. Dissent is no longer disagreement, it becomes betrayal. Minorities are no longer constituents to respect, they are obstacles to overcome.

History becomes the battleground. Schools that promote inclusive unity acknowledge the complexity of national experience. They teach about injustice, imperialism, oppression, resilience: not to shame students, but to prepare them to live responsibly in a plural society. By contrast, systems that seek unity through myth-making sanitize the past, glorify national victories, and turn suffering into a rallying cry. Emotional manipulation replaces historical literacy.

Citizenship is shaped accordingly. Democratic systems build unity through shared rights and equal participation. Authoritarian or majoritarian states define unity through loyalty: to a leader, to a dominant culture, or to a singular "national essence." Education in such contexts becomes a loyalty test: who fits the script and who is expendable?

The central challenge is balance. Most societies need some shared framework to function; students cannot grow up without reference points. The question isn't whether unity is necessary, because it is. The question is whether unity allows difference to exist. When unity becomes a weapon, societies become brittle, scared, and easily manipulated. When unity is built on respect, institutions become resilient.

UNESCO's position sees unity not as agreement on a single identity, but as an environment where many identities can coexist without fear. Schools should give students a shared political space, not a single cultural mold.

### 4. International frameworks

a. UNESCO frameworks

The term "UNESCO frameworks," as a United Nations organization, refers to international concepts that member states are expected to adhere to within the framework of UNESCO's mission. These normative instruments establish common standards, obligations, principles, and guidance mechanisms among member states. It is a large-scale normative architecture that systematically establishes international norms, standards, and common values, aiming for states, societies, and cultures to act in harmony within this framework. By establishing this architecture, UNESCO aims to reinforce universal values for humanity, such as the preservation of cultural heritage, the right to education, cultural diversity, and the sharing of knowledge and culture.

UNESCO's "standard-setting" instruments fall into three categories:

- *Conventions*: Multilateral binding agreements; they enter into force through a process of signature + ratification by states; member states assume legal responsibility for compliance with these agreements.
- *Recommendations*: Non-binding, normative documents that states can use as guidance in national legislation and policy-making; they aim to establish international standards.
- *Declarations*: Documents defining universal values, fundamental principles, and norms; they are generally advisory in nature and aim to provide guidance to states.

These are one of the constitutional functions of UNESCO. They are used to ensure the formation of "universal norms" among member states.

The importance of UNESCO frameworks;

- Establishing common international standards, holding States accountable and defining obligations, increasing international cooperation and solidarity, protecting rights-based approaches and universal values, monitoring and reporting, and accountability are very important issues.

Areas covered by UNESCO frameworks;

- Protection of cultural and natural heritage, protection of intangible cultural heritage, protection and promotion of cultural diversity and expressions, right to education and lifelong learning, freedom of expression, protection of cultural and identity rights, sharing of knowledge and science.

UNESCO International Frameworks;

Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA) - 2015; It is a comprehensive roadmap developed to implement global education policies under Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). It aims to ensure access to inclusive, equitable, and quality education and guarantee lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals. Adopted under the leadership of UNESCO with the participation of United Nations agencies, member states, civil society organizations, and international education actors, the framework is designed to reduce educational inequalities worldwide and establish common standards. The document is implemented through the development of national education plans, the strengthening of financing models, the creation of monitoring and evaluation indicators, reporting obligations, and regional cooperation mechanisms.

Dakar Framework for Action – Education for All (EFA) - 2000; It is the fundamental global framework for action that ensures the universal recognition of the right to education. Adopted in Senegal in 2000 at the World Education Forum with the participation of representatives from 164 countries, this framework aims to address critical issues such as illiteracy, early school dropouts, and inequalities in access to education for disadvantaged groups. The framework emphasizes the need for states to restructure their education policies, monitor and report on implementation processes, and operate international solidarity and financing mechanisms. In this respect, it is a historic turning point that ensures the monitoring and accountability of the right to education on an international scale.

Paris OER Declaration – 2012; This is an important UNESCO declaration that encourages the development and sharing of Open Educational Resources (OER) on a global scale. It was adopted with the aim of expanding digital learning opportunities and reducing barriers to accessing educational materials due to economic constraints. The document provides guidance on practices such as promoting open licensing systems, establishing national OER policies, strengthening digital infrastructure, and establishing inter-institutional academic cooperation mechanisms. In this way, it supports the principle of equality in access to knowledge by making educational materials accessible to everyone.

Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage – 2003; It is a binding international treaty aimed at protecting intangible cultural heritage such as oral traditions, rituals, performing arts, social practices, festivals, and crafts. It aims to preserve cultural identities and pass them on to future generations in the face of threats posed by globalization and modernization to cultural diversity. Within the scope of implementation processes, State Parties create national inventories, develop protection programs, submit periodic reports, and benefit from international funding and technical support mechanisms. In addition, UNESCO manages protection processes through official lists such as the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the Urgent Safeguarding List.

Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions – 2005; It is a fundamental UNESCO convention aimed at protecting and supporting cultural production, freedom of expression, and cultural policies. Adopted in response to the risk of cultural homogenization posed by globalization, this document ensures the strengthening of cultural sectors and the promotion of intercultural diversity. The development of national cultural policies, the provision of economic support to cultural industries, the regulation of the circulation of cultural goods and services, and the implementation of periodic reporting systems are among the convention's key mechanisms.

Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity – 2001; It is a universal declaration that defines cultural diversity as humanity's common heritage and a fundamental dimension of human rights. It emphasizes that culture is not merely an aesthetic heritage, but the cornerstone of social identity, social cohesion, creativity, and peace. The Declaration encourages states to

develop policies in areas such as strengthening intercultural dialogue, protecting cultural rights, and supporting cultural pluralism through education and media. This document has positioned the concept of cultural diversity as a strategic norm in global decision-making processes.

### b. Human Rights Law

Human rights law sets the moral and legal boundaries around what governments can do when shaping identity through education. It doesn't ban states from promoting national values or shared narratives. What it does do is draw a hard line at coercion, discrimination, and cultural erasure. These frameworks protect more than just individual liberty; they also defend the dignity of learners, the autonomy of families, and the survival of communities.

i. Education as a Human Right

The most foundational document here is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, specifically Article 26. It doesn't just say that people have the right to education, it goes further. Education, it says, should aim to develop the full human personality, strengthen respect for human rights and freedoms, and promote tolerance among groups and nations.

That means education isn't supposed to just create "good citizens" or obedient workers. It's meant to empower people: to help them flourish intellectually, emotionally, and socially. It's not a machine to produce patriotism. It's a space where young people learn to live with others, respect differences, and think for themselves.

ii. Cultural and Identity Rights for Children

It's easy to think of children as blank slates but human rights law sees them differently. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified by nearly every UN member, children are recognized as people in their own right. That means they don't just receive identity from the state, they develop it themselves.

Two parts of the CRC are especially relevant:

- **"Article 29"** says education must promote respect for the child's own culture, language, and values.

- **_"Article 30"_** protects the rights of minority and Indigenous children to practice their culture and speak their language.

This directly challenges assimilationist policies. If a school forces a child to abandon their mother tongue or erases their cultural background, it's not just unfair, it's a violation of international law. UNESCO echoes this: cultural identity isn't something governments "allow." It's something they're obligated to respect.

iii. Equality, Non-Discrimination, and Access

Human rights frameworks are also crystal clear on one point: education must be equal and inclusive. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) prohibits states from segregating schools or using curricula that demean, distort, or ignore the histories of minority communities. Access to education must not depend on ethnicity, religion, or background. The same goes for other marginalized groups. Treaties like CEDAW (for gender equality), CRPD (for people with disabilities), and Migrant Rights Conventions all reinforce the idea that **_no one_** should have to give up their identity to access education. If a child has to abandon their language or hide their beliefs just to succeed at school, something has gone wrong. That's not inclusion, it's coercion.

### c. Institutional frameworks

Laws and principles only go so far. If there aren't actual institutions in place to uphold them (bodies that check power, allow input, and create accountability) then even the best educational systems can turn toxic. That's where institutional frameworks come in. They're not just bureaucratic structures. They're the guardians of ethical education. They turn values into reality, or fail to.

### i. National Ministries and Curriculum Councils

Most countries place education policymaking in the hands of government ministries. These bodies decide what goes into textbooks, how teachers are trained, and which languages are used in classrooms. When they work properly, meaning democratically and transparently they can bring coherence and accessibility to national education. But there's a risk. When these ministries are controlled by ruling parties or ideological regimes, they stop being public institutions and become political machines. Curricula are no longer designed to educate, they're designed to persuade.

The fix isn't to remove state involvement. It's to design institutions with safeguards, open curriculum review processes, input from educators, scholars, parents, and minority representatives, legal avenues to contest biased or discriminatory content. Without these protections, education becomes a tool of soft authoritarianism.

## ii. Local Governance and Community-Based Decision-Making

In decentralized systems, regions, municipalities, or even Indigenous councils help shape educational decisions. These frameworks reflect a powerful truth: identity isn't formed in a ministry office: it's formed in families, neighborhoods, and cultural communities. These local institutions don't weaken national unity, they ground it in real experience. But they only work if protected by law. Without legal standing, local input becomes a suggestion, not a right.

## iii. Courts and Constitutional Protections

Legal systems can make or break identity education. Courts have overturned language bans, struck down religious discrimination, and required more inclusive textbook content. When executive or legislative branches become politicized, courts become one of the last defenses against ideological overreach. Courts aren't perfect. But they matter, especially when other institutions fail.

## iv. International Oversight and Monitoring

United Nations bodies like UNESCO, the Human Rights Council, and treaty committees monitor how states use education to shape identity. Countries are required to submit regular reports and respond to critiques. These reviews might be non-binding, but they carry weight, especially when civil society and international media amplify them. They may not change a regime overnight, but they build pressure. They help expose abuses and provide platforms for reform.

## v. NGOs, Researchers, and Advocacy Networks

Outside of government, a wide range of actors play watchdog roles. Civil society organizations, universities, teacher unions, and even investigative journalists track what's happening in schools. In open societies, these groups play a vital role in pushing governments to stay accountable. In repressive states, they may be silenced or harassed, but their existence remains a form of resistance.

*III. Questions To Be Addressed*

1. What significant recent actions have UNESCO and its member states have taken regarding the use of education in shaping national identity within the agenda item?
2. How can member states further develop recent efforts on the establishment of principles for national identity-building within education systems?
3. What are the prominent ethical boundaries that should be taken into consideration by governments while setting standards on education?
4. How can states form national identities while concurrently protecting cultural diversity, minority rights, and academic freedom?
5. What international guidelines or mechanisms could be developed in order to monitor the states?
6. Who are the major parties involved and main actors who take part in global standardization on restriction and monitoring of state activities regarding the use of education in national-identity building?
7. What are the potential risks of insufficient international response to problematic forms of national identity-building in education?

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