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UNESCO: Topic #1- Indoctrination of Youth in Authoritarian Regimes

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Authoritarian regimes throughout history have used education and media to shape the beliefs of young people to their liking. Through strictly monitored state-issued curricula, youth organizations, and censorship, these governments crush dissent and ensure compliance with state directives. Notable examples of such youth organizations include: Hitler Youth (Germany, 1926-1945), Komsomol (Soviet Union, 1918-1991), Red Guards (China, 1966-1976), and Basij Youth (Iran, 1979-Present).¹²³

These problems continue in the modern era. According to the Varieties of Indoctrination dataset (V-Indoc), developed by researchers at Oxford and Cambridge, over seventy percent of authoritarian regimes use education to ensure loyalty and ideological conformity in the future generations of their constituency.⁴ In addition, UNESCO's General Education Monitoring Report found that, in conflict-affected and authoritarian countries, over 50% of children lack access to unbiased, inclusive education. Authoritarian regimes also exclude or distort the language and histories of minority groups, erasing their unique identities in pursuit of total conformity.⁵

These practices, aside from violating Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, directly contradict the UNESCO mandate to ensure access to unbiased education and promote international unity through cultural diversity.⁶⁷ They lead to cycles of indoctrination that make youth less likely to embrace democracy, and they contribute to worldwide instability and violence. However, enforcing

¹ [The Komsomol and the Hitler Jugend on JSTOR](#)

² [From Red Guards to Thinking Individuals: China's Youth in the Cultural Revolution - Association for Asian Studies](#)

³ [Basij](#)

⁴ [wp_136.pdf](#)

⁵ <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/publication/hidden-crisis-armed-conflict-and-education>

⁶ [Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations](#)

⁷ [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)



educational reform would, in many cases, require a breach of national sovereignty which breaches the UN charter.⁸

While researching how the international community can address this crisis, some guiding questions to focus on include:

- What is the state of education in your country? Is your education system open and biased? Why yes/no?
- How can the UN balance respect for international sovereignty with the protection of youth rights?
- What mechanisms can be used to monitor and report indoctrination practices?
- What is the most effective method to ensure the compliance of authoritarian regimes with international standards of education?
- How is technology being used in indoctrination and how should it be addressed?
- What is the role of the international community in counteracting indoctrination? How would it do so?

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Best,

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Chair, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

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⁸ [United Nations Charter \(full text\)](#) | [United Nations](#)