


INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN A VIEW OF COSMOPOLITAN LAW FROM A HABERMASIAN PERSPECTIVE

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/arev7n4-010>

Submitted on: 03/03/2025

Publication date: 04/03/2025

Rayner Raulino¹, Mariangela Lima de Almeida² and Letícia Soares Fernandes³

ABSTRACT

The article explores the influence of international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in the formulation of global policies, addressing their relationship with higher education and the dynamics of global governance. From the perspective of Jürgen Habermas' cosmopolitan law, the importance of these institutions in the promotion of a global democracy and the formulation of provisional consensus through communicative action is analyzed. The text highlights how globalization and the interdependence of states reinforce the need for international organizations to deal with global issues, such as human rights and education. In addition, the study conducts a historical survey of documents and conferences produced between 1945 and 2022, emphasizing the contributions of these bodies in the definition of policies aimed at education and sustainable development. The right to education is discussed as an essential part of global policies, with emphasis on the need to ensure equal opportunities at all educational levels, especially in Higher Education. Finally, the article articulates the challenges faced by Higher Education, such as adapting to technological and social changes, and proposes that building a global democratic community depends on the collaboration and active participation of Member States in inclusive and equitable global governance.

Keywords: International organizations. Educational public policies. Cosmopolitan Law. Global governance.

¹ PhD in Education University Center of Espírito Santo

Email: raynerraulino@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9023-5596>

² PhD in Education with Post-Doctorate in Special Education

Federal University of Espírito Santo

E-mail: mlalmeida.ufes@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7092-2583>

³ PhD student in Education

Federal University of Espírito Santo

E-mail: lsflele@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4780-8667>

INTRODUCTION

We begin reflections on the role of international organizations in the construction of a cosmopolitan law, especially from a Habermasian perspective, as it becomes increasingly necessary in a globalized world. With the advance of globalization, issues related to human rights, democratic governance, social justice, and the right to education have gone beyond the borders of nation-states, requiring new forms of political and legal organization that can deal with global problems. In this sense, Habermasian studies enable a critical understanding of how these organisms can act in the construction of consensus and the promotion of a global democratic order, through communicative rationality and republican constitutionalism.

In this sense, this article proposes to examine the influence of these organizations in the production of global policies and their contribution to confronting social inequalities, especially in the educational field. The objective is to foster a reflection on the need for a more robust dialogue between States and international institutions, aiming at the creation of inclusive and fair solutions to contemporary challenges.

Thus, this movement was organized based on the survey of documents and conferences produced by the selected international organizations, namely the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) between the years 1945 and 2022. From the survey, we carried out a mapping to build a line of reasoning to achieve the objectives of this work in articulation with the theorization of Jürgen Habermas.

Jürgen Habermas' (2001) critical theory is related to the social analysis of the contemporary world by proposing a reinterpretation of the critical theory originally formulated by Max Horkheimer. Habermas redefined the basis of critical theory, introducing the distinction between instrumental rationality and communicative rationality (Muniz, Cenci; Bergamaschi, 2023). While instrumental reason is associated with the material reproduction of society and domination, communicative reason is focused on mutual understanding and non-manipulation. This redefinition enables a critical analysis of current social problems, considering the intensification of globalization and the influence of state power in capitalist society (Nobre, 2004).

Habermas (2001) proposes a new interpretation of critical theory, incorporating communicative reason in the context of action, to guide the individual towards understanding and emancipation in a democratic space of participation. He points out that

the existence of instrumental rationality is linked to the material reproduction of society, while communicative rationality is related to the symbolic reproduction of society and oriented towards understanding. Therefore, by emphasizing the importance of the democratic role of the individual in society, the studies of Habermas (2001) seek to offer solutions to social problems in a sphere that transcends the borders of national states.

It is in this movement of overcoming the borders of national states that international organizations are inserted as instruments of a world government. A world government refers to the idea of a global political authority with the ability to establish and enforce policy decisions with significant impact at the international level. This authority would be tasked with dealing with global issues such as education, security, trade, human rights, and the environment, and would have the legitimacy to act on behalf of all citizens of the world (Habermas, 2001). From this context, Jürgen Habermas (2001) discusses the possibility of a world government as a way to deal with issues such as the intensification of globalization and the need to protect citizens' rights on a global scale.

A new political closure of world society economically without barriers will certainly only be possible if the forces that can generally negotiate globally are also willing to participate in institutionalized procedures of will-forming, in the sense of maintaining the social level and eliminating extreme social disparities. They must be prepared to broaden their perspectives beyond "national interests" towards *global governance* (Habermas, 2001, p. 141).

As a result, the results of the meetings of international organizations with their member countries over the last decades have been willing to constitute this "*global governance*" as cited by Habermas (2001) to solve social problems to reduce inequalities. However, we must constantly question ourselves about how the arguments of the member countries are constituted in these spaces, given that it is now up to this debate to present the table with the survey of documents and conferences for the alignment of the study proposal of this article and the theoretical articulations based on the selected documents.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A GLOBAL DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY

We start from Habermas' contributions on the understanding that globalization was a process of economic, political and cultural integration and that it intensified from the second half of the twentieth century, and among the main factors that contributed to globalization are the technological revolution, commercial and financial liberalization, the formation of

regional economic blocs and the emergence of new international actors. However, globalization has also generated challenges and inequalities, such as the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few global actors, the precariousness of work, and environmental degradation (Habermas, 2004).

From this scenario, we realize the importance of the creation of international organizations, as they play a crucial role in promoting cooperation and global governance. Such organizations are established through international treaties and conventions to foster collaboration between States and other international actors in various areas (Lubenow, 2017).

These bodies act as forums for the discussion and negotiation of issues of global interest, as well as for the constitution of provisional consensus, by establishing international norms and standards in these areas. They also play an important role in providing technical and financial assistance to developing countries, as well as in mediating and resolving international conflicts through the principles of the constitution of republicanism.

The principle of republican constitutionalism and the protection of human rights are fundamental to democracy and cosmopolitan law for several reasons. First, republican constitutionalism unifies public and private autonomy, which is essential for building a global democratic community committed to peace, justice, and the equal distribution of socioeconomic resources. Second, the protection of human rights is crucial to democracy and cosmopolitan law because they are the basis of human dignity and individual, universal, and inalienable freedom. Therefore, these principles are fundamental for the construction of a global democratic community committed to peace, justice, and the equal distribution of socioeconomic resources (Pires, 2020).

In the exercise of articulating Habermasian theory with the documents from the discussion forums and global negotiations on the debate for the resolution of social inequalities in education, we intend to unveil in this text the movements existing in the selected historical period (from 1945 to 2022) that brought influences to the participating member countries. In this sense, we present below the table with the documents collected from the UN and UNESCO:

Frame 1 – Survey of documents systematized by the selected international organizations

YEA R	DOCUMENT	ORGANIZATION
1945	<i>The United Nations Charter was signed in San Francisco</i>	UNO
1948	<i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i>	UNO
1990	<i>World Declaration on Education for All and Plan of Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs (Jomtien: 1990-2000)</i>	UNESCO
1993	<i>Rules on equality of opportunity</i>	UNO
1998	<i>World Declaration on Higher Education in the 21st Century: Vision and Action</i>	UNESCO
2000	<i>United Nations Millennium Declaration</i>	UNO
2000	<i>UNESCO and the new perspectives for the development of Higher Education</i>	UNESCO
2009	<i>World Conference on Higher Education: the new dynamics of Higher Education and research for change and social development</i>	UNESCO
2015	<i>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</i>	UNO
2022	<i>World Conference on Higher Education (Spain)</i>	UNESCO
2022	<i>Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education</i>	UNESCO

Source: Elaboration by the authors (2024).

The first movement was the survey of documents present on the official pages of the UN and UNESCO that deal with the confrontation of social inequalities in three themes: human rights (1945, 1948), education (2000, 2015), and Higher Education (1998, 2000, 2009, 2022). In the next paragraphs, we will address the systematization of ideas based on the three themes mentioned.

A new political closure of world society economically without barriers will certainly only be possible if the forces that can generally negotiate globally are also willing to participate in institutionalized procedures of will-forming, in the sense of maintaining the social level and eliminating extreme social disparities. They must be prepared to broaden their perspectives beyond "national interests" towards global *governance* (Habermas, 2001, p. 141).

As a result, the results of the meetings of international organizations with their member countries over the last decades have led to constitute this "*global governance*" as cited by Habermas (2001), with a view to solving social problems to reducing inequalities. The survey of documents and conferences is in line with the study proposal and the theoretical articulations of this article.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE DEBATE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

We focus on the theme of human rights resulting from the creation of the United Nations (UN), which was a process of paramount importance, as it involved diplomatic negotiations and agreements between the allied nations during World War II. In this way,

the notion of establishing an international organization to promote peace and cooperation among nations was discussed during this conflict and was strengthened with the signing of the United Nations Declaration by 26 countries in 1942, committing to fight together against the Axis powers (UN, 1945). The culmination of this process was the San Francisco conference, held in April 1945, which brought together representatives from 50 countries to negotiate and establish the Charter of the United Nations. The Charter defined the purposes, principles, and structure of the UN, including the creation of the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the International Court of Justice (UN, 1945).

After processes of negotiations and debates, finally, on June 25, 1945, the Charter of the United Nations was adopted by the UN, and officially, the organization was established on October 24, 1945, after the ratification of the Charter by the signatory countries. Soon after, the UN was conceived as a forum where countries could discuss and resolve international issues peacefully, promote economic and social development, protect human rights, and maintain international peace and security (UN, 1945).

The Charter of the United Nations of 1945 addresses several issues related to the organization and functioning of the United Nations, as well as the principles of international law; however, it does not address the theme of Higher Education. The principles contained in this charter include the purposes of the United Nations, the structure and functioning of the organization, the rights and obligations of UN member states, the responsibility of the UN in maintaining international peace and security, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the promotion of economic and social development (Pires, 2020).

And to these ends, to practice tolerance and live in peace with each other as good neighbors, and to unite our forces to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force will not be used except in the common interest, to employ an international mechanism to promote the economic and social progress of all peoples (UN, 1945, n.n.).

The Charter is a fundamental document of international law and is an important instrument for the promotion of peace, security, and development throughout the world. It exerted influences on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. This declaration was approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 and had a substantial impact on the development of international law and the promotion of human rights on a global scale (UN, 1948).

The Universal Declaration (UN, 1948) established a crucial milestone by recognizing the inalienable and fundamental rights of all people, regardless of nationality, ethnic origin, gender, religion or any other condition. Since its adoption, several advances have taken place, including the development of international treaties and conventions to protect and promote human rights in specific areas, the establishment of monitoring mechanisms to monitor the implementation of human rights treaties, and the active role of international and non-governmental organizations in the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. Likewise, the Declaration has had a significant impact on the promotion and protection of human rights on a global scale, driving advances in international law and the work of human rights organizations. For example, in its article 26, the document highlights that:

1. Every human being has the right to education. Education will be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental grades. Elementary education will be mandatory. Technical-professional instruction will be accessible to all, as well as higher education is based on merit.
2. Education shall be directed towards the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Education will promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and racial or religious groups and will assist the activities of the United Nations in favor of the maintenance of peace (UN, 1948, n.n.).

On the subject of human rights, we present two documents that emerged in a movement of criticism of the sovereignty movement of certain national states. Habermas (2001, 2002) also makes this criticism of the concept of sovereignty associated with the idea of a self-sufficient nation-state that holds a monopoly of political power within its borders. He argues that this concept of sovereignty is no longer suitable in an interconnected and interdependent world, where global issues go beyond national borders. Habermas' (2001, 2002) critiques of the concept of sovereignty are related to his vision of an interdependent world that requires more inclusive and democratic forms of global governance, capable of dealing with challenges that go beyond national borders. He defends the need to rethink sovereignty in a context of interconnection and the promotion of a legal order that can regulate relations between states and guarantee citizen participation in global issues.

In summary, the first theme leads us to understand the importance of human rights as a guarantee of the different people who make up the different societies. Therefore, they must be guaranteed regardless of the origin, context, and conditions (economic, political,

physical, biological, and social) of individuals. The creation of global policies to confront existing inequalities is born from the conditionality of interdependencies between States. It is also noteworthy that international documents encourage participating states to create local programs and policies to confront social inequalities.

Therefore, the implementation of these provisional consensuses instituted in the creation of these policies may require the incorporation of these social rights from the actors belonging to the contexts of this implementation. Thus, incorporation can generate challenges that require investigative processes for the creation of strategies with a view to constitutions and mutual understandings of reality itself. In the next topic, it is important to understand how this movement took shape in the debate on the right to education.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

At this point, we will address the issues pertinent to the debate on the right to education present in two documents, namely: the United Nations Millennium Declaration (UN, 2000) and the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). The idea here is to address its influences in meeting the provisions of the right to education. We started the debate with the *United Nations Millennium Declaration* (2000), which in September 2000, during the Millennium Summit, was elaborated at the meeting of the 189 member countries of the United Nations. At this meeting, the social, political, economic, cultural and environmental challenges that should be prioritized by nations, institutions, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society at the beginning of the twenty-first century were discussed. The debates were based on a document prepared by Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, entitled *We, the Peoples, the Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century* (Rezende, 2008).

This process of constructing a document based on collective debate leads us to understand the work of Habermas (1997) entitled *Law and Democracy*, in which he defends the constitution of this public sphere with the world of life, favoring the constitution of law arising from communicative rationalities. Law is in disputes for its legitimacy on several fronts and Habermas (1997) highlights that modern law faces challenges about its moral foundation, its ability to deal with complex and global issues, in the promotion of justice and equity, especially about collective and social rights.

As a consequence of the challenges in the constitution of modern justice, the *United Nations Millennium Declaration established commitments and goals to address global*

challenges and improve the quality of life of people around the world. Indeed, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) include the elimination of poverty, the universalization of primary education, the promotion of gender equality, the reduction of infant and maternal mortality, the fight against disease, environmental sustainability, and the global partnership for development. In addition, the declaration also emphasized the importance of peace, security, and respect for the rule of law (UN, 2000).

In this way, the commitments and goals for education established in this document aim to ensure that all children have access to quality basic education. In addition to the universalization of primary education, the objective is to guarantee the completion of the complete cycle of primary education and equal access to all levels of education. These commitments reflect a commitment to promoting equal access to education and ensuring that all children have the opportunity to develop their potential and contribute to their communities and societies (UN, 2000).

Additionally, in 2000, the UN established the Millennium Development Goals to combat extreme poverty and hunger in the world by 2015. However, at the end of the MDGs, the UN began a process of creating a new global agenda for sustainable development, called *the Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) in September 2015 (Rome, 2019).

The SDGs represent an evolution of the MDGs, as they embody a broader and more integrated vision of sustainable development, encompassing not only the eradication of poverty and hunger, but also the promotion of social equality, the fight against illiteracy, the protection of the environment and the strengthening of democratic institutions. They are composed of 17 goals and 169 targets, covering topics such as health, education, gender equality, clean energy, and reducing inequalities (Rome, 2019). With a time horizon of 2030, the SDGs are considered a global framework for the promotion of sustainable development. In Brazil, the National Commission for the Sustainable Development Goals (CNODS) leads the implementation of the SDGs, coordinating and monitoring their implementation in the country and promoting the integration of public policies in favor of sustainable development (Rome, 2019).

Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The related targets propose that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education; ensuring access to quality early childhood education and care; propose providing equal access to

technical, vocational and higher education, as well as increasing the number of young people and adults with skills relevant to decent jobs and entrepreneurship, to eliminate gender inequalities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education. All of this contributes to the effective learning of basic literacy and numeracy skills for all young people and a substantial proportion of adults, to promote sustainable development through education, to build and improve environmentally sound and effective learning facilities, as well as to expand scholarships for developing countries to have access to higher education and vocational training (UN, 2015).

In this sense, we perceive a first intention to discuss the advances of students and their entry into Higher Education, because, in goal 4.3, there is a mention that member countries must ensure access to quality Higher Education at affordable prices, being the only goal that addresses our theme of the research project. The objective of this article is related to this theme, as the documents point out that the sustainable development of a society is related to access to quality education. Therefore, the educational challenges posed in this implementation of quality education lead to investigative processes being constituted to guarantee access, permanence and completion of teaching to individuals.

Given the above, we can understand that the realization of the right to education, as established in the Millennium Declaration and the Sustainable Development Goals, requires a continuous process of dialogue and legitimation, in line with Habermas' concept of communicative rationality. For the author, modern law must emerge from a deliberative process in which the various social actors actively participate in the construction of legitimate and morally grounded norms (Habermas, 1997). Thus, the implementation of the educational goals proposed in these international documents depends on a democratic and inclusive public debate, in which governments, institutions and civil society build consensus based on mutual understanding and the search for the common good. This process is directly linked to what Habermas (1987) calls the "world of life", in which social and cultural values are shared, enabling an interaction guided by intersubjective understanding.

In this sense, the theory of communicative action reinforces the need for a discursive environment in which decisions about educational policies are made in a transparent and argumentative way, allowing different perspectives to be considered (Habermas, 1981). The search for equity and quality in education, as provided for in the 2030 Agenda, requires a collective commitment in which undistorted communication and rational debate are essential instruments to ensure access, permanence, and completion

of education for all. Thus, the achievement of these objectives should not be just a formal guideline, but a continuous process of democratic legitimation, aligned with the needs and challenges of contemporary societies. As Habermas (1998) argues, deliberative democracy is fundamental for the construction of legitimate social rights, such as education, ensuring that public policies are the result of a discursive consensus that respects the principles of justice and inclusion. It is up to the next topic to articulate these global movements to understand their implications for Higher Education.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE DEBATE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

With the advancement of global policies in local movements, the development of norms for the debate on Higher Education expands. Such advances were instituted because the legitimacy of these global policies came from public discourses and intersubjective understandings present in different contexts about the need to systematize Higher Education. According to Habermas (1981), communicative rationality allows different actors to participate in a democratic debate and to substantiate their positions in an argumentative way, aiming to reach a legitimate consensus. To this end, the documents selected for this discussion come from UNESCO, a specialized UN agency.

Specialized agencies emerged as a response to the need for international cooperation in the economic and social fields, as established in the Charter of San Francisco (UN, 1945). These agencies are created with the objective of performing specific tasks related to education, science, culture, health, work and other fields, aiming to promote development and cooperation among nations. The creation and responsibilities of specialized agencies are established in the instruments of their constitutions, which determine their competences and autonomy in specific matters. Thus, specialized agencies play an important role in promoting international cooperation and development in various areas (Borges, 2011).

According to Habermas (1998), international institutions should be analyzed within a transnational public sphere, in which legitimate norms are established through discursive and communicative processes, rather than simple technocratic impositions. Democratic participation in debates on educational policies reinforces the idea of a global public space, where different voices can contribute to the construction of more inclusive and equitable educational policies.

In summary, in this topic we will address four UNESCO documents that discuss Higher Education, namely: the *World Declaration on Higher Education in the 21st Century: vision and action* (UNESCO, 1998), *UNESCO and the new perspectives for the development of Higher Education* (UNESCO, 2000), *World Conference on Higher Education: the new dynamics of Higher Education and research for change and social development* (UNESCO, 2009) and *Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education* (UNESCO, 2022b).

We identified that the *World Declaration on Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action* (UNESCO, 1998) emphasizes the importance of higher education for socio-cultural and economic development, as well as addresses the challenges faced by this sector on a global scale. In its articles, it deals with a variety of relevant topics, such as the role of higher education in sustainable development, the need to ensure equal access to this type of education, the importance of international cooperation, the promotion of research and innovation, among other issues relevant to the context of higher education.

In addition, the document includes a reference framework for priority action for the change and development of higher education, which proposes a series of priority actions aimed at improving the quality and relevance of higher education at the global level. According to the document (UNESCO, 1998), Higher Education is understood as a level of education that covers several categories of courses, such as undergraduate, graduate, master's, doctorate, among other academic and professional training programs. These courses are offered by universities and other educational institutions that are approved by the competent authorities of the State as institutions of higher education.

The objective of Higher Education is to prepare students for the job market, as well as for the research and development of new technologies and knowledge. In addition, Higher Education is crucial for the socio-cultural and economic development of a country, as it contributes to the training of qualified professionals and to the production of scientific and technological knowledge, being fundamental for progress and innovation in various areas (UNESCO, 1998).

The document addresses graduate studies in several important aspects. Firstly, it highlights research as an essential function of all higher education systems, emphasizing the need to promote postgraduate studies and foster innovation, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity in programmes. It also highlights the importance of ensuring the quality

of Higher Education programs, including graduate studies. In this sense, it proposes a transparent internal self-assessment and an external review with independent experts, aiming at internationally recognized comparative quality standards (UNESCO, 1998).

Finally, the document highlights the importance of research in all disciplines in the context of national, regional and international research and development policies. These points demonstrate the document's concern with promoting excellence in graduate studies, ensuring quality, social relevance and the training of qualified human resources in various fields of knowledge.

The organization recognizes the importance of Higher Education for the development of society and emphasizes that this modality should be perceived as a long-term national investment to improve economic competitiveness, cultural development and social cohesion. Therefore, UNESCO plays a key role in promoting the quality, relevance and accessibility of Higher Education, as well as in the search for alternative sources of funds for the financing of Higher Education (UNESCO, 2000). Based on this scenario, UNESCO has organized itself in recent decades to prepare different documents, as highlighted by Werthein and Cunha (2000) when they state that the report *Unesco and the new perspectives for the development of Higher Education* (UNESCO, 2000) is a compilation of different sources and documents produced by UNESCO over the years.

In 1993, UNESCO adopted a resolution encouraging those responsible to formulate a policy applicable to the whole of Higher Education. In 1995, it published the guidance document entitled *Policy for Change and Development in Higher Education*, which identified three main trends in Higher Education common to education systems. In 1998, UNESCO held the *World Conference on Higher Education*, which approved the *World Declaration on Higher Education* and the *Referential Framework for Priority Action for the change and development of Higher Education* (Werthein; Cunha, 2000).

In addition to the texts cited, another report was fundamental for the preparation of the document entitled *Unesco and the new perspectives for the development of Higher Education* (UNESCO, 2000), namely, the Delors Report. Originated from the recommendation of the General Conference of UNESCO in 1991, which proposed the creation of an international commission to reflect on educating and learning for the twenty-first century. This commission was officially established in 1993, under the coordination of Jacques Delors, and for almost three years it met in various parts of the world, with the participation of experts from different areas and the support of numerous sectoral studies.

The final report, completed in January 1996, presented a comprehensive analysis of education-related issues, including an approach to higher education (UNESCO, 2000).

The Unesco document (2000) highlights that the *Delors Report* is important because it recognizes the current challenges faced by Higher Education, such as inequality in access and quality of education, graduate unemployment, and brain drain. In addition, it highlights the need to promote the relevance and quality of Higher Education to ensure its role as one of the drivers of development. Its importance lies in the comprehensive analysis of issues related to Higher Education and in the recognition of the need to face such challenges, contributing to guide educational policies and practices that seek to improve higher education. These documents established the new missions and functions of higher education in the context of the globalization of human activities. Therefore, this report is a compilation of such documents, other studies and reflections by UNESCO on the subject.

The document highlights the importance of promoting the relevance and quality of Higher Education as a whole, adapting it to the demands of society and the labor market. It is necessary to rethink the mission and redefine the functions of Higher Education, emphasizing the importance of the relationship with the world of work and the constant updating of knowledge. It is essential to establish good relations with the State and society, supported by the principles of academic freedom and autonomy (UNESCO, 2000).

The Unesco report (2000) emphasizes that the scientific production of knowledge plays a crucial role in the context of higher education institutions. Universities and other institutions are in a unique position to exploit globalization, contribute to the reduction of the knowledge deficit and promote intercultural dialogue. In this context, research and the training of researchers are considered fundamental for the search for a quality pedagogical approach. In addition, the report highlights the importance of active teacher evaluation and integration between the university and basic education as essential elements to ensure the quality of students (UNESCO, 2000).

In addition to the Unesco reports, another important movement for analysis is the World Conferences on Higher Education. According to Werthein and Cunha (2000), these conferences are mainly intended to promote discussions and establish a vision and actions for Higher Education in the twenty-first century. During the event, essential issues related to Higher Education are addressed, such as the promotion of international cooperation, improvement of the quality of education, expansion of access to higher education and the

relationship between Higher Education and socioeconomic development. The conferences provide guidelines and recommendations to guide the development and improvement of Higher Education on a global scale, considering the needs and challenges of the contemporary educational context (Werthein; Cunha, 2000).

In this sense, the *World Conference on Higher Education: the new dynamics of Higher Education and research for change and social development* (UNESCO, 2009) is based on the assumption that the economic crisis has affected access to and quality of Higher Education in different countries, causing budget cuts in public funding, increased enrollment rates and reduction of scholarships, in addition to negatively impacting the resources available to higher education institutions, affecting the ability to invest in infrastructure, research and qualified faculty.

Therefore, the search was to find collaborative and argumentative responses to solve these impacts and ensure that higher education continues to play a role in social and economic development. Also noteworthy is the responsibility of governments to ensure that Higher Education is accessible and of high quality for all citizens, regardless of their socioeconomic background. In addition, it affirms the importance of institutional autonomy and academic freedom to ensure the quality, relevance, transparency and social responsibility of higher education institutions (UNESCO, 2009). In terms of economic support, the statement stresses the need for governments to invest adequate financial resources in higher education to ensure high-quality and affordable education. Therefore, the implications for governments include ensuring the accessibility and quality of higher education, respecting the autonomy of higher education institutions, and adequately investing financial resources in this sector (UNESCO, 2009).

We currently have the UNESCO report entitled *Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education*, from 2022. This movement proposes the creation of a new social contract for education. According to UNESCO (2022b), the report seeks to inspire innovation and transformation in education, providing structure, principles, and recommendations to be explored, shared, and enriched by people around the world. In addition, the document aims to address current and future challenges in education, including issues of ethics, equity, justice, social change, environmental challenges, educational inequalities, and the need to rethink education at all levels, from basic education to postgraduate in the face of the challenges of the twenty-first century (UNESCO, 2022b). Regarding Higher Education, the document states:

Universities are also expected to find new and more impactful ways to educate children and young people, especially young children, and to become more involved in adult education practices. Higher education is, by definition, a locus of intergenerational and transformative dialogue, and much of the futures outlined in this Report depend on them. Without strong, autonomous, reliable and innovative higher education, it will be impossible to build the social contract of education envisioned in this Report (UNESCO, 2022b, p. 154).

Thus, when addressing Higher Education, the report highlights the need to rethink and innovate in Higher Education, dealing with issues such as pedagogical innovation, literacy according to the reality of students, inclusion and equity, the importance of research and innovation; it also highlights the need to rethink the evaluation and ranking of higher education institutions and the need to rethink pedagogy and curricula (UNESCO, 2022b).

One point stands out in both documents analyzed: it refers to four fundamental learnings according to which education needs to be organized throughout the life of each person to guarantee the founding pillars of knowledge. The four fundamental learnings present in the UNESCO report are: learning to know, which involves the acquisition of general and specific knowledge; learning to do, which includes obtaining practical and technical skills; learning to live together, which refers to the development of social skills; learning to be, which aims at the integral development of the person. These learnings aim to provide a comprehensive education for individuals, preparing them to face the challenges of the contemporary world (UNESCO, 1998, 2000, 2009, 2020).

In summary, the documents address the role of specialized agencies, such as UNESCO, in promoting international cooperation and development in the educational, scientific and cultural fields. UNESCO has been instrumental in promoting the development of Higher Education around the world. The organization maintains a constant concern with the development of Higher Education, culture and scientific and technological research, as well as has promoted partnerships and technical cooperation to put knowledge at the service of countries that have an urgent need to implement programs and policies to overcome poverty.

It is in this direction that Habermas (2003) questions the impact of economic globalization on the capacity of national governments to act, raising concerns about the viability of the social welfare of States in a globalized economy. The theorist also questions whether national governments have the same capacity to implement compensatory programs, reflecting on the effectiveness of national policies in the face of challenges in a scenario of increasing global economic interdependence. These reflections highlight the

importance of considering how globalization affects the sovereignty and ability of nation states to intervene, as well as the effectiveness of their policies in comparison with decisions at the supranational level, to understand the challenges faced for higher education in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world.

In this sense, Habermas (2003) argues that, in order to preserve the autonomy of educational systems in the face of global market pressures, it is essential to strengthen democratic institutions capable of deliberating and establishing guidelines for higher education in an inclusive and legitimate manner. Thus, this aspect is crucial to understand the challenges faced by Higher Education in an interconnected world.

In addition, UNESCO stimulates debate in Member States to make changes and development in Higher Education. The importance of this agency in the analysis and development of higher education is highlighted, with the preparation of documents and conferences that aim to ensure the quality, relevance and accessibility of Higher Education worldwide.

The texts also highlight the importance of research and the training of researchers, as well as the need to promote innovation, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity in graduate programs. Likewise, the importance of academic research processes articulated with the contexts of international, national and regional policies is perceived, as the privileged place that higher education institutions occupy makes it possible to face social challenges. Thus, the text emphasizes the importance of lifelong education and the four fundamental learnings: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be.

In short, this topic — elaborated and analyzed — connects with the Habermasian theory of communicative action in several aspects, especially by emphasizing the importance of global dialogue on Higher Education, the creation of norms legitimized by discourse and the role of universities as spaces for critical debate. UNESCO, by promoting conferences and elaborating guidelines for education, can be seen as an actor that operates in the transnational public sphere, seeking to build discursive consensus on Higher Education. However, for such consensuses to be truly legitimate, it is essential to ensure the democratic participation of different actors and to prevent discourse from being captured by narrow economic or political interests. As Habermas (1997) argues, the legitimacy of educational policies depends on a deliberative process in which all relevant voices can be heard and considered.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The elaboration of this article focused on an approach to the influence of international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in the production of global policies that affect the world of life in which the studies emerge. This approach helped us to understand the role of Higher Education in the context in which the documents of international organizations are implemented. Higher education plays a crucial role as a training environment that faces challenges, drives innovation and research, as well as adjusts to social and technological changes. It is recognized for promoting interdisciplinarity, ensuring excellence and training qualified professionals. This training is essential to deal with current challenges, stimulate innovation and progress, preparing individuals for a constantly evolving world.

Due to this approach, we organized the text based on three points based on the survey of the selected documents, namely: *International organizations and the debate on human rights*; *International organizations and the right to education*"; *"International organizations and the debate on Higher Education*.

To support the theoretical analysis, Habermasian contributions were applied to encompass the relationships between researcher, field of study, society and related systems. The analysis is related to the search for reciprocal recognition and stabilization in legitimate orders, introducing concepts such as the world of life and communicative action. In addition, we present main documents and conferences, between 1945 and 2022, produced by the selected international organizations, articulating the ideas for the construction of a line of reasoning for understanding the constitution of the debate on education, with a focus on Higher Education and its potentialities.

Regarding the importance of education, the documents analyzed believe that it needs to happen throughout life. According to the previous explanations, lifelong education is described as a continuous process that encompasses all age groups and stages of existence, aiming to offer learning opportunities to all people. This educational approach is considered a means of fostering inclusion and equity, expanding access to education at all levels and prioritizing the quality and outcomes of lifelong learning.

To this end, this lifelong education is guided by the four fundamental learnings that involve the acquisition of general and specific knowledge, the development of practical and technical skills, the cultivation of social skills and the promotion of the integral development

of the person. When discussing lifelong education, we delve into the context of Higher Education. The selected documents highlight the importance of Higher Education in socio-cultural and economic development, emphasizing the need to ensure equal access to this form of education and the relevance of international cooperation. In addition, they emphasize the importance of research and innovation, as well as the need to improve the quality and relevance of higher education on a global scale.

To achieve these objectives, the documents propose a reference framework of priority action for the transformation and advancement of Higher Education, which includes a series of priority actions aimed at promoting excellence in graduate studies, ensuring quality, social relevance and the training of qualified professionals in various areas of knowledge. In addition, the texts emphasize the importance of research and the training of researchers, as well as the need to promote innovation, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity in graduate programs.

When addressing Higher Education, we can cite, for example, the document *Reimagining our Future: A New Social Contract for Education* (UNESCO, 2022b), which highlighted significant challenges, including the need to adapt to social and technological changes, promote innovation and research, and prepare for the envisaged futures. These challenges underscore the relevance of rethinking Higher Education to meet future demands and contribute to innovation, research and development in an ever-changing world.

In summary, we can affirm that the selected documents indicate that Higher Education is very important as a time/space for the training of professionals who need to understand their realities. To this end, they must constitute communicative rationalities, through which individuals can, in constant dialogue, pay attention to the current challenges of education that emerge in their contexts. In addition, the documents gain importance in the potential of international cooperation and the promotion of global policies to guarantee the right to education and inclusion at all levels and all stages of education, including Higher Education.

REFERENCES

1. Borges, M. C. de A. (2011). UNESCO and the right to higher education. In *Annals of the 25th Brazilian Symposium on Education Policy and Administration and 2nd Ibero-American Congress on Education Policy and Administration*. ANPEd. Retrieved January 8, 2024, from <https://anpae.org.br/simposio2011/cdrom2011/PDFs/trabalhosCompleto/comunicacoesRelatos/0344.pdf>
2. Habermas, J. (1981). *Theory of communicative action: Rationality of action and social rationalization* (Vol. 1). São Paulo: Martins Fontes.
3. Habermas, J. (1987). *Theory of communicative action: On the critique of functionalist reason* (Vol. 2). São Paulo: Martins Fontes.
4. Habermas, J. (1997). *Law and democracy: Between facticity and validity* (F. B. Siebeneichler, Trans., Vol. 1). Rio de Janeiro: Tempo Brasileiro.
5. Habermas, J. (1998). *The inclusion of the other: Studies of political theory*. São Paulo: Loyola.
6. Habermas, J. (2001). *The post-national constellation: Political essays* (M. S. Silva, Trans.). São Paulo: Literatura Mundi.
7. Habermas, J. (2002). *The crisis of legitimation in late capitalism* (V. Chacon, Trans.). Rio de Janeiro: Tempo Brasileiro.
8. Habermas, J. (2003). *Era of transitions* (F. Siebeneichler, Trans.). Rio de Janeiro: Tempo Brasileiro.
9. Habermas, J. (2004). *Truth and justification: Philosophical essays* (M. C. Mota, Trans.). São Paulo: Loyola.
10. Lubenow, J. A. (2017). The divided West: The impact of neoliberal economic globalization on the political integration of the European Union. *Aufklärung: Journal of Philosophy*, 4*(3), 119–134. <https://doi.org/10.18012/arf.2016.37603>
11. Muniz, T. L., Cenci, E. M., & Bergamaschi, J. D. G. (2023). The contributions of critical theory and cosmopolitanism in Jürgen Habermas to the affirmation of specialized global decision-making bodies. *Electronic Journal Law and Politics*, 18*(2), 404–426. <https://doi.org/10.14210/rdp.v18i2.18527>
12. Nobre, M. (2004). *Critical theory*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor. (Philosophy Step by Step Collection).
13. Pires, T. I. T. (2020). Jürgen Habermas' conception of cosmopolitan law: Philosophical and pragmatic premises of a humanitarian ideal. *Journal of Law [EJLL]*, 21*(2), 333–352. <https://doi.org/10.18593/ejll.21184>

14. Rezende, M. J. (2008). The UN Millennium Development Goals: Some political challenges of the co-responsibility of the various social segments in the fight against absolute poverty and exclusion. **Investigación y Desarrollo*, 16*(2), 184–213. http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0121-32612008000200003
15. Roma, J. C. (2019). The Millennium Development Goals and their transition to the Sustainable Development Goals. **Ciência e Cultura*, 71*(1). http://cienciaecultura.bvs.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0009-67252019000100011
16. United Nations. (1945). **Charter of the United Nations**. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://brasil.un.org/pt-br/91220-carta-das-na%C3%A7%C3%B5es-unidas>
17. United Nations. (1948). **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://www.unicef.org/brazil/declaracao-universal-dos-direitos-humanos>
18. United Nations. (1993). **Rules on equalization of opportunities**. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://ampid.org.br/site2020/onu-pessoa-deficiencia/#deficiencia>
19. United Nations. (2000). **United Nations Millennium Declaration**. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://www.oas.org/dil/port/2000%20Declara%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20do%20Milenio.pdf>
20. United Nations. (2015). **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://brasil.un.org/pt-br/sdgs>
21. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (1998). **World Declaration on Higher Education in the XXI Century: Vision and action**. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved December 11, 2023, from <https://cev.org.br/media/biblioteca/4027441.pdf>
22. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2000). **UNESCO and the new perspectives for the development of higher education**. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000145552>
23. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2009). **World Conference on Higher Education: The new dynamics of higher education and research for change and social development**. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from http://portal.mec.gov.br/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=4512-conferencia-paris&Itemid=30192
24. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2015). **Education 2030. Incheon Declaration: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all**. Incheon: UNESCO. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243278_por

25. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2022a). *World Conference on Higher Education*. Spain: UNESCO. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://www.unesco.org/en/higher-education>
26. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2022b). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. Brasília: International Commission on the Futures of Education, UNESCO; Boadilla del Monte: Fundación SM. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381115>
27. Werthein, J., & Cunha, C. da. (2000). *Fundamentals of the new education*. Brasília: UNESCO. Retrieved January 8, 2024, from <https://encurtador.com.br/kGIX4>