

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION YEAR ¹

... Why then is there need for an International Education Year? Because, despite all the strides, education in both the industrialized and the developing worlds is in crisis as was fully recognized at the Conference of European Ministers of Education convened by Unesco in Vienna in 1967.² One of the reasons for this is the unprecedented growth in population, especially in developing countries where orderly growth of education is so vital for economic and social expansion. This has made it hard, if not almost impossible, to build enough schools, train enough qualified teachers, produce the necessary textbooks and other materials in order to keep pace with the numbers. While the percentage of the world's totally illiterate population has declined from a little more than 44 per cent—the proportion estimated at the time of the Unesco survey over a decade ago—to a fraction over 33 per cent now, the actual number of illiterates has increased from 700 million to between 740 and 750 million and rises steadily each year.

In addition, despite encouraging school enrolment figures, the drop-out and “repeater” rates have remained depressingly high. In Africa, for example, seven out of ten children still quit before completing sixth grade.

Reform and modernization in both methods and content of education have not kept up with the times. Much of the educational structure—and again this is especially the case in most of the newly independent States—remains many years behindhand, while other areas of society are taking advantage of the new technology. Other reasons for the crisis are the lack of good jobs, the information “explosion” and the “credibility gap” between what the

¹ “Why International Education Year?”, by Richard Greenough, *UNESCO Chronicle*, Paris, 1969, No. 4.

² See *UNESCO Chronicle*, Vol. XIV (1968), No. 1.

young are taught in school and what society practises, all of which have created tensions, dissent, often disorder.

Some of the underlying causes of student unrest help to explain this crisis even more. Again, there is an unprecedented growth in the number of young people. Those under the age of 24 are in an absolute numerical majority today: they represent 54 per cent of the world's population, and in Africa, Asia and Latin America 60 per cent.

Then there is the information "explosion". In the scientific world alone, new ideas, or new concepts, applications and uses for old or familiar ideas are pouring forth in an endless flow. It has been calculated that all this information and material adds up to some 15 million pages of new reading matter each year, and that an economist, for instance, would now have to spend 12 hours each day just to keep up with progress in his own field.

Furthermore, the head of the family, or the average teacher, is no longer an accepted fountainhead of knowledge—unless he is a very exceptional parent or teacher. The chances are that a university student of today knows more in some disciplines than they do, and an ordinary computer can certainly store more facts. Finally, there is the "credibility" or morality gap facing the student, who is urged to look deeply and honestly into, for example, the causes of war and injustice, only to graduate into a world where such problems are all too often veiled in hypocrisy or at least in dubious reasoning.

That the international community is acutely aware of the necessity of focussing world attention on this crisis in education was seen when the United Nations General Assembly on 17 December 1968 unanimously adopted a resolution proclaiming 1970 "International Education Year"...

But the real goal of the International Education Year is to bring about changes in policies and practices in respect of education and training. Regional and international conferences held during 1970 will provide one means of defining some of the policy consequences on the International Education Year. These include the Food and Agriculture Organization's world conference on agricultural education in the summer of 1970, Unesco's International Conference on Public Education, to be held at that time and, in a

more general form, the sixteenth session of Unesco's General Conference which will take place at the end of the year may be expected to address itself to a critical reappraisal of modern education, and to adopt a report for submission to the United Nations General Assembly.

The much quoted statement by H. G. Wells that human history is a "race between education and catastrophe", well applies to the crisis today. But education *can* win the race if all available resources are mobilized to meet the pressing needs of a better world that all are trying to create. And this is the aim of the International Education Year.

SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY FOR THE DISABLED

In October 1968 the ordinary meeting of delegates of the Fédération internationale des mutilés et invalides du travail et des invalides civils (FIMITIC) took place in Copenhagen. The Federation's main objective is to co-ordinate and harmonize social policy for the welfare of disabled persons—irrespective of the cause of their disability—so that social benefits, services and institutions in the various countries may, as far as possible, be consistent with certain minimum standards. The FIMITIC meeting defined fourteen such standards. These are quoted below in view of the interest of many National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in rehabilitation problems.¹

1. Every disabled person is entitled to the best possible rehabilitation aiming at overcoming the disability if possible, restoring ability for gainful employment, fitting the disabled person for his place in society and making him as self-reliant as possible in everyday life. Governments, science and private organizations should make the most modern rehabilitation methods available to the

¹ Are included in the term "rehabilitation", all the measures and methods which are necessary for the return of disabled persons to social and professional life.