

BOOKS AND REVIEWS

EDUCATION FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING ¹

The International Bureau of Education in Geneva has now published the results of a comparative study it has undertaken on education for international understanding as carried out in 82 countries. These results were presented at the XXXIst session of the International Conference on Public Education in Geneva in 1968 and it can be seen from the answers received that a universal effort is at present being made for the education of the young generations in a spirit of peace, concord, international co-operation and respect for human dignity.

The interest taken by the Red Cross in all work for peace in the world is known, as are the fine practical achievements of the Junior Red Cross in this sphere. We think it will serve a useful purpose to give the remarks arising from the analysis made by the International Bureau of Education of the documentation it received and collected in a volume:

“ 1. The constitutions of about 30 countries contain references to problems whose repercussions go far beyond the national frontiers; laws and legislative acts concerning education also often recognize the importance of education for international understanding.

2. In all the replies, education for international understanding is related to subjects on the curriculum, more particularly history, geography, civics and social studies, but also religion and ethics, philosophy, literature, social science, mother tongue and foreign languages, science, etc. On certain occasions it may be the subject of distinct lessons or activities.

3. The importance of the family and out-of-school organizations with regard to education for international understanding,

¹ *International Understanding as an Integral Part of the School Curriculum*, I.B.E., Geneva and UNESCO, Paris, Geneva, 1968, 258 pages.

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tolerance and respect for human rights is recognized by a large number of countries where the schools endeavour to establish effective collaboration with these factors of influence.

4. In the majority of countries, the schools endeavour to introduce children to current international problems and to acquaint them with the activity of the United Nations and specialized institutions, supplementing or correcting the outside information to which young children are continually exposed.

5. A wide variety of methods are used, involving pupils' active participation. In about 40 countries a check is kept on audio-visual aids from the point of view of international understanding; elsewhere, any such interference is rejected as being akin to censorship.

6. The same number of countries reports a similar check on textbooks, often together with revision. It is interesting to note, in this connexion, that reciprocal arrangements for verification between two or more countries are becoming fairly frequent.

7. Some reserve is shown with regard to the use in schools of documentation issued by international institutions, such documentation being often beyond the pupils' grasp and existing only in the more widely used languages.

8. There is wide support for inter-school correspondence as a means of encouraging international understanding and the mutual knowledge of peoples; it enables collections to be made and creates friendships across the frontiers. Exchanges, travel, artistic productions, cultural and sports meetings organized on an international basis are all ways of bringing nations closer together.

9. Psychological research relating to the aggressive instinct does not appear, as such, to play a great part; the importance attributed to sports and competitive activities is due rather to experience and is based on young people's need for movement. Rather than stressing the element of rivalry, its ultimate aim is to develop moral qualities and a sporting spirit. Several replies emphasize the importance of the choice of toys given to children.

10. About 30 replies state that research is being undertaken in the field of international understanding.

11. Regarding Unesco Associated Schools, some replies state that the results they have obtained are remarkable and others that it would be premature to form an opinion of their influence.

12. It is undeniably the teaching staff who bears the greatest responsibility with regard to the younger generations' training in a spirit of peace, positive collaboration among peoples and respect for human rights; this is a clear indication of the importance of training teachers for this vital task and providing them with the appropriate means for further training. The number of replies received on this subject bears witness to the importance attached to it by the Ministries of Education.

There are, however, certain difficulties which stand in the way of all these undoubted efforts directed towards establishing a better world; they are material ones and therefore not insuperable, but others are of a pedagogical and psychological nature and inherent in modern life and in the present time, which makes them more difficult to control."
