Early in 1952, UNESCO published a “World Handbook of Educational Organization and Statistics” based on questionnaire replies received from 57 Member States. Later that year the seventh session of the General Conference of UNESCO passed a resolution (1.121) instructing the Director-General: “To undertake ... comparative studies”... having an essential bearing on questions included in the education programme of UNESCO”. This encouraged the Secretariat to undertake a more ambitious publication based on planned collaboration with the educational authorities of its Member States and the first edition of the “World Survey of Education” appeared in 1955. It carried as a subtitle the title of the 1952 world handbook. It was a bold effort to produce a comparative study on education based on an overall view of the world's educational systems and to attempt various analyses as a result of the compilation of standardized information.

The texts contained in the survey were provided in the main by the educational authorities of the Member States which responded to a questionnaire sent out by the Secretariat. In other instances, based on official published sources available to the Secretariat, drafts were prepared which were later sent to the States concerned for revision. Where the government did not reply or amend the draft submitted to it, the text prepared by the Secretariat was included in the “survey” with the necessary reservations. This first volume contained 194 national and territorial chapters dealing with the organization of education within each of these countries and territories1; some additional summary statistics were provided. Diagrams of the “educational ladder” of each country and territory showing the articulation of the various levels and types of institutions together with a glossary of terms used to designate each of them were also included. These glossaries were later regrouped in alphabetical order in a special chapter at the end of the volume, just before the general index.

The chapters at the beginning of the volume presented a world-wide comparative description of educational systems and statistical reporting. They provided a global view of the child population of the world, of school enrolment and the broad relation of primary to secondary education; some information on the access of girls to education was also to be found.

A glance at the table of contents of this volume reveals the radical political changes, on the international scene, which have taken place in the world since 1954.

In all, four other volumes of the “World Survey of Education” were published. They appeared in 1958 and dealt with “primary education”; in 1961 with “secondary education” in 1966 with “higher education” and finally in 1971 when the questions of “educational policy, legislation and administration” were taken up once more.

Each volume constituted a work of reference which was self-contained and yet formed part of a series.

1 All dependent areas such as non-self governing territories, protectorates, overseas provinces or departments, colonies and trust territories were referred to by a single general term: “territories”.
The second volume was devoted to a detailed treatment of the “primary school”. The opening chapters dealt with primary education from a world stand-point and discussed the progress over the previous thirty years. The 197 country chapters which followed were all constructed on a consistent pattern under four main headings: Historical; Policy and administration; Organization and Problems and trends in primary education.

The third volume dealt with the subject of “secondary education” and carried some 200 chapters covering the countries and territories of the world as existed in mid-1960. The preliminary chapters were considerably expanded by comparison to those published in the two previous volumes. The quantitative aspects of educational change which constituted the main thrust in volumes I and II were extended to cover developments in the organization and content of education.

The introductory section of the fourth volume, which was devoted to “higher education” consisted of statistical and bibliographical chapters offering a global view of higher education by summing up whatever comparable elements which may have existed among the national systems at that time.

The fifth and last volume, sub-titled “Educational policy, legislation and administration” was published in 1971. Although it carried similar sub-title as the first volume, it reflected the improvements that were developed over the previous two decades, especially with regard to the preparation and presentation of the diagrams illustrating the articulation of different types of school at each level. It also contained in respect of many countries, a new diagram of the structure of administration and control showing the lines and types of responsibility of successive levels.

The introductory chapters of this volume attempted to sketch some of the more significant generalizations that could be drawn from a study of the mass of detail found in the national chapters and at the same time outline the general situation at a given moment in time which tried to identify trends in education on a worldwide scale.

The information contained in the five volumes of the series provided a means of assessing and evaluating the general state of education throughout the world in a more comprehensive manner than had been previously possible.

They made available comparable and comprehensive data, both statistical and descriptive concerning the organization and administration of education in a maximum number of States and territories. Designed as a practical work of reference for people concerned with the conduct of educational affairs, the “World Survey of Education” series produced universally accepted categories for the reporting of educational information making possible improved comparability.

There were, however, several shortcomings, the most obvious being the considerable time-lag between the point at which Member States submitted accounts of their education systems and the date of their publication in a volume the size of the “World Survey”. Already in 1955 the question was being posed as to whether once the series of four volumes covering general, primary, secondary and higher education, was completed, it would be preferable to repeat the series in a 12-year span or whether some other formula should be adopted.

An appeal was made in the last volume, in 1971, to devise, for the future, fresh means of recording and communicating information of the kind which appeared in the five volumes. Irrespective of what has been developed, the “World Survey” remains, today, an important landmark in UNESCO’s efforts for the advancement of education.
**BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR**

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