

HISTORICAL NOTE

by
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The present edition brings up to date the one published in 1961 which included the recommendations adopted by the International Conference on Public Education from 1934 to 1960. By adding the text of the recommendations of the subsequent sessions, from 1961 to 1968, this collection endeavours to give an over-all view of the International Bureau of Education's achievements in this field before it was integrated into Unesco:

But before dealing with what was no doubt the IBE's main achievement — the recommendations to the Ministries of Education — it may be as well to outline briefly the successive phases of the history of this organization.

The IBE was originally a private body. It was set up as such by the Institut J.-J. Rousseau, or rather by the founder of the Institute, Professor Edouard Claparède, at the end of December 1925. The Director appointed was Professor Pierre Bovet, the assistant directors were Mrs. Elisabeth Rotten and Mr. Adolphe Ferrière and the secretary-general Miss Marie Butts.

When the Rockefeller Foundation made a donation of 5,000 dollars to the Institut J.-J. Rousseau, the latter lost no time in making available 12,000 Swiss francs for the establishment of this International Bureau of Education. In so doing, the Institute was waiving a decision taken by the third Congress on Moral Education (Geneva 1922) under the chairmanship of Mr. Adolphe Ferrière, that the headquarters of the International Bureau of Education which was already being mooted should be in The Hague.

This donation of 12,000 Swiss francs could certainly not be considered as any more than a catalyst, but some optimists felt that it was unthinkable that a million educators should not be found in the world who would be willing to make a contribution of 5 Swiss francs to a Bureau of this kind. In their opinion, the IBE with an annual budget of five million Swiss francs would be safe from any lack of material resources. This optimism unfortunately proved unfounded, for the number of members did not exceed 400 — rather wide of the mark! Another illusion then came into being: the World Federation of Education Associations had decided to hold its 1927 congress in Geneva. The President of the Federation was endeavouring to collect a very large sum of money. With the millions that the Federation expected to find, it seemed inconceivable that it would refuse to help a budding international bureau of education. Here again, future events were to prove otherwise. The Congress took place, but the financial results tell far short of expectation.

Despite the difficulties of this first period, the IBE had already begun its work as an information centre, supplying educational documentation to educators in many countries. Lack of financial backing, however, made it impossible for it to continue its activity in the way its founders had envisaged. It was realized that the IBE would have to give up its absolute freedom, in other words, it could no longer rely solely on the help of private individuals or institutions. It was then that the idea took shape of reorganizing the IBE on a governmental basis, with a new directorate. Professor Jean Piaget was appointed director, Mr. Pedro Rosselló assistant director and Miss Marie Butts remained as secretary-general.

The second period of the history of the International Bureau of Education began very modestly with the signature of the new statutes on 29 July 1929. For the first time in history, representatives of governments signed a document in which they undertook to collaborate in the field of education. The new members of the International Bureau of Education were: the Ministry of Education of Poland, the Government of Ecuador, the Department of Education of the Republic and Canton of Geneva and the Institut J.-J. Rousseau, the latter being the only private organization to be a member of the IBE. Regarding the official or public institutions which were likely to become members of the IBE, article 4 of the new statutes stated: "The bodies named below shall be recognised as members of the International Bureau of Education; any Government, public institution or international organization, paying a minimum annual

contribution of 10,000 Swiss francs, may, subject to the approval of the Council, also become a member.”

The place of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, originally the only part of Switzerland to be a member of the IBE, by virtue of the autonomy of each canton in the field of education, was to be taken by the Swiss Confederation a few years later.

Article 2 of the statutes defined the purpose of the IBE as being “to serve as an information centre for all matters relating to education. The Bureau, which aims at promoting international cooperation will maintain an entirely neutral position with regard to national, political and religious questions. As an organ of information and investigation, it will work in a strictly scientific and objective spirit. Its activities will be two-fold: to collect information relating to public and private education, and to undertake experimental or statistical research and to make the results known to educationists.”

During the ten years of this second period, i.e. the ten years prior to the second world war, the IBE was extremely active despite its very limited budget, gradually gaining new member countries and asserting itself as an international institution in the service of education and of understanding between peoples. The main concern was its relations with Ministries of education and these relations took on a concrete form in the International Conference on Public Education. The idea of such a Conference appeared to members of the IBE Council as a natural extension of their annual summer session. They felt that it would be interesting to invite to this meeting, in addition to the three representatives of each member State, representatives of non-member States, who would be asked to present a report on the outstanding features of educational development in their respective countries during the year. Meetings of this kind were held in 1932 and 1933 but it was in 1934 that the International Conference on Public Education took the form it was to keep until 1968. There was a discussion on the national reports on educational developments which latter comprised a general study and a condensed but comprehensive statistical section.

Although these national reports have been criticized as being over-optimistic it is not certain that some exaggerations were not constructive in that they gave rise to emulation among the various countries. While not all the Conference participants were educationists — many countries being represented by diplomats posted at Berne or Geneva — these non-specialists were often able as parents, to contribute an element of realism which was sometimes

absent from other meetings. The reports sent by the ministries of education served as the basis for the International Yearbook of Education from 1933 onwards.

Again, with reference more particularly to the member countries, mention may be made of the establishment in 1937 of the Permanent Exhibition of Public Education, in which these countries were able to arrange a display showing certain aspects of their educational development. This exhibition now contains stands arranged by 38 countries.

The prominence given to government relations should not cause certain activities, albeit lesser ones, to be overlooked, for the latter helped to keep the IBE in touch with the world of education. For six consecutive summers teachers from various countries gathered in Geneva for vacation courses on "How to make the League of Nations Known and Develop the Spirit of International Co-operation." The children's literature section, which had been set up during the first period as a result of American initiative and with American funds in order to develop a spirit of international cooperation through children's books, published various studies and enjoyed the collaboration of experts in various countries. The Bulletin of educational news and bibliography, the IBE's first regular publication, started at the very outset of the Bureau, continued to be issued regularly four times a year, increasing both the number of copies and the number of pages. The Library was gradually building up its collections of works on comparative education legislative texts, school textbooks, children's books and educational journals.

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The outbreak of the second world war did not put an end to the existence of the IBE. Although most of its ordinary activities had to be suspended since relations with the outside world were almost entirely cut off, it was able to set up a Service of Intellectual Assistance to Prisoners of War, available without distinction to all those who wished to use their term of detention to further their studies or improve their knowledge. Being a member of the consultative committee in Geneva on reading matter for prisoners of war and interned persons and thanks to many gifts, this service was able to send over half a million books to prisoner of war camps between 1939 and 1945.

After the war, the IBE followed with great attention and interest the creation of Unesco, which invited governments to collaborate not only in the field of education but also in those of science and culture.

On 28 February 1947 a provisional agreement was concluded between Unesco and the IBE in order to establish the necessary unity of action between them. A joint commission, consisting of three representatives of each organization, was given the task of ensuring effective cooperation between the two institutions. This agreement included provision for the joint convening of the International Conferences on Public Education, the joint publication of the findings of the inquiries and the Yearbook, exchange of documentation, etc. The agreement was confirmed and enlarged on 28 February 1952 and on the basis of this collaboration the IBE continued to implement during the fifties and sixties a programme of which the broad outline had already been laid down.

An important stage was reached when, as a result of negotiations taken on the initiative of the IBE Council, a new agreement was concluded between Unesco and the IBE in 1968 and approved by the governing bodies of the two organizations. This agreement observed that the IBE's activities fitted into the framework of those of Unesco and transferred to Unesco the functions assigned to the IBE by its statutes.

It established in Geneva, as an integral part of Unesco, an international centre of comparative education, under the name of the International Bureau of Education and enjoying a large intellectual and functional autonomy.

Under the terms of the statutes of the IBE approved by the General Conference of Unesco, the IBE was given a Council consisting of representatives of 21 Member States designated by the General Conference. A particular task of this Council is "to draw up, on the proposals of the Director of the Bureau, the draft general programme and budget of the Bureau".

The agreement and statutes, which bear witness to a twofold desire to ensure both rationalization and continuity, stipulate specifically that Unesco shall convene and conduct the sessions of the International Conference on Public Education.

In presenting this collection of recommendations adopted by the International Conferences on Public Education since 1934, it is important to point out that the adoption of recommendations in the field of education was at that time a bold innovation. Educationists

were highly suspicious of government intervention in this field and the governments themselves were wary of any international action in this connexion. A member of the International Commission for Intellectual Co-operation had even gone so far as to write that the League of Nations would never concern itself with education !

At all events, it seemed that there could be no question of drawing up conventions, for the recommendations were already considered by many to be too forceful. Albert Thomas, the first Director of the International Labour Office and one of IBE's most faithful friends from its inception, had warned against producing conventions to which the States would only adhere after lengthy negotiations. He felt, moreover, that in the field of education it was better to advise than to attempt to impose.

The conception of a recommendation was therefore linked to that of educational freedom and also to the idea of experiment which was essential for the gradual formulation of a doctrine. Furthermore, in order to avoid the all too frequent tendency of educational congresses to reach conclusions based on subjective opinions and therefore not representative of the opinion of the majority it seemed desirable to conduct international inquiries on the subjects chosen for the recommendations. The draft recommendations submitted to the Conference were based on the findings of these inquiries. The monographs which were produced prior to the Conference made clear the points of convergence between States so that discussion could concentrate on the points of divergence.

The practice of basing the draft recommendation on these inquiries removed any element of surprise from the subsequent discussion, since all the solutions mentioned in the governments' replies were included. In the beginning, this procedure was found disconcerting and some delegates would have preferred more improvisation. In any case the draft recommendations had the merit of drawing on the diversity of prevailing situations, not only between one country and another, but also within a single country, particularly in the case of federations. In order to respect this diversity they proposed a variety of solutions. Following this procedure from 1934 to 1968, the Conference adopted 65 Recommendations at the rate of two or three a year, with the exception of the years 1940 to 1945, since the Conference did not meet during the last world war and of 1964, in which year the Conference had to break off its work.

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The choice of subjects for the draft recommendations was governed by two criteria: firstly, to interest as many delegations as possible — for which purpose the previous year's discussion on the national reports served as a valuable guide — and secondly, to deal with both questions of educational administration and questions of pedagogical interest. From the 21st recommendation onwards, since the sessions were convened jointly by Unesco and the IBE, the subjects were chosen by the Unesco IBE Joint Commission on the basis of suggestions made by Member States of either organization.

Some subjects were placed on the agenda two or three times, either under the same terms or formulated in a slightly different way. The training of primary and secondary teaching staff and their salaries are two examples of this practice, and these two recommendations also led to a Recommendation concerning the status of teachers, drawn up in close collaboration by the International Labour Office and Unesco and adopted by a special inter-governmental conference.

Regarding the content of the recommendations, it will be observed that, as the text became longer, it increasingly took the form of a monograph, dealing more and more frequently with a particular aspect of a major problem rather than with a subject as a whole.

With the exception of the last few recommendations, the subjects chosen generally dealt with primary and secondary education. This is not due to mere chance. The IBE, which has always endeavoured to avoid duplication, felt more at ease in this sector. As regards vocational education, it felt that the International Labour Office was better endowed with material and staff resources to deal usefully with this aspect of education. A similar attitude was adopted with regard to university education when the International Association of Universities was formed. There was only one exception to this rule, when the Conference adopted a recommendation concerning "measures to increase facilities for the recruitment and training of technical and scientific staff."

The growing tendency to consider educational problems in their inter-relationships and education systems as a whole seems destined to remove these more or less artificial divisions, and these considerations, which at a particular time limited the activities of the International Conference on Public Education, are no longer applicable.

As a result of the joint organization of the conferences by Unesco and the IBE from 1947 onwards, questions relating to international

collaboration were introduced. This does not mean that the IBE had neglected problems of peace but, here again, this organization had felt that it was for other institutions to deal with international collaboration in this field.

There are, however, recommendations on “the development of international understanding among young people and teaching about international organizations” (1948), “the teaching of geography as a means of developing international understanding” (1949) “the international interchange of teachers” (1950) and, finally, on “education for international understanding as an integral part of the curriculum and life of the school” (1968).

Although it is not always clear whether a recommendation falls within the field of educational organization or that of teaching, it is interesting to divide the recommendations into two distinct groups according to whether they refer to administrative and organizational problems or to problems of an educational nature. The following is an attempt at such a classification, indicating in addition to the title of each recommendation its number and year of publication.

Recommendations of an administrative nature

1. 1934 Compulsory schooling and the raising of the school leaving age
2. 1934 Admission to secondary schools
3. 1934 Economies in the field of public education
4. 1935 The professional training of elementary school teachers
5. 1935 The professional training of secondary school teachers
6. 1935 Councils of Public Instruction
7. 1936 The organization of special schools
8. 1936 The organization of rural education
9. 1936 Legislation regulating school buildings
10. 1937 School inspection
13. 1938 The salaries of elementary school teachers
16. 1939 The salaries of secondary school teachers
17. 1939 The organization of pre-school education
19. 1946 Equality of opportunity for secondary education
21. 1947 The free provision of school supplies
29. 1950 The international interchange of teachers
32. 1951 Compulsory education and its prolongation
33. 1951 School meals and clothing
34. 1952 Access of women to education
36. 1953 Primary teacher training

- 37. 1953 The status of primary teachers
- 38. 1954 Secondary teacher training
- 39. 1954 The status of secondary teachers
- 40. 1955 The financing of education
- 42. 1956 School inspection
- 44. 1957 The expansion of school building
- 45. 1957 The training of primary teacher training staffs
- 47. 1958 Facilities for education in rural areas
- 49. 1959 Measures to increase facilities for the recruitment and training of technical and scientific staff
- 51. 1960 The organization of special education for mentally handicapped children
- 52. 1961 Organization of one-teacher primary schools
- 53. 1961 Organization of pre-primary education
- 54. 1962 Educational planning
- 55. 1962 Further training of primary teachers in service
- 56. 1963 The organization of educational and vocational guidance
- 57. 1963 The struggle against the shortage of primary teachers
- 61. 1966 Teachers abroad
- 62. 1967 The shortage of secondary school teachers

i.e. 38 recommendations of an administrative nature or relating to educational administration.

Recommendations of an essentially educational nature

The following 27 recommendations refer to problems of an essentially educational nature and particularly to the teaching of a specific subject (geography, handicrafts, modern languages etc.):

- 11. 1937 The teaching of modern languages
- 12. 1937 The teaching of psychology in the training of elementary and secondary school teachers
- 14. 1938 The teaching of classical languages
- 15. 1938 The drafting, utilisation and choice of school textbooks
- 18. 1939 The teaching of geography in secondary schools
- 20. 1946 The teaching of hygiene (health education) in primary and secondary schools
- 22. 1947 Physical education in secondary schools
- 23. 1948 The teaching of handwriting
- 24. 1948 The development of international understanding among young people and teaching about international organizations
- 25. 1948 The development of psychological services in education

- 26. 1949 The teaching of geography as a means of developing international understanding
- 27. 1949 The introduction to natural science in primary schools
- 28. 1949 The teaching of reading
- 30. 1950 The teaching of handicrafts in secondary schools
- 31. 1950 Introduction to mathematics in primary schools
- 35. 1952 Teaching of natural science in secondary schools
- 41. 1955 The teaching of art in primary and secondary schools
- 43. 1956 The teaching of mathematics in secondary schools
- 46. 1958 The preparation and issuing of the primary school curriculum
- 48. 1959 The preparation, selection and use of primary school textbooks
- 50. 1960 The preparation and issuing of general secondary school curricula
- 58. 1965 Literacy and adult education
- 59. 1965 Teaching of modern foreign languages in secondary schools
- 60. 1966 The organization of educational research
- 63. 1967 Health education in primary schools
- 64. 1968 Education for international understanding as an integral part of the curriculum and life of the school
- 65. 1968 The study of environment in school

It is difficult to form an opinion on the weight which these 65 recommendations may have had, their implementation having been left entirely to the governments' discretion.

Reference to the information supplied by Member States on steps taken to implement the recommendations, however, seems to indicate that it is not an overstatement to say that they have had some influence, perhaps to a varying degree, but certainly a very real one, not only on educational legislation but even on educational practice. A perusal of these recommendations leaves the impression that the educational ideas which they embody have withstood the test of time fairly well. Some of them, of course, were based on circumstances which no longer obtain but the wide range of educational and administrative problems which they cover remains, on the whole, comparable to the range of problems with which those responsible for education are still faced. When the recommendations have not supplied a solution to these problems they have at least the merit of stating them by approaching them in the wide variety of their aspects and in the light of concrete realities, sometimes in very modern terms.

Some of these recommendations — such as those dealing with special education, educational planning, or literacy — open up entirely new prospects.

Taken as they are, these recommendations, apart from their present interest, have often another interest: they bear witness to 35 years' reflection on education, they offer a wide panorama of this particularly stimulating period, during which the world of education has become aware of new prospects in international cooperation.

RECOMMENDATIONS ONE TO TWENTY IN THE PRESENT VOLUME WERE PASSED BY THE FIRST NINE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ON PUBLIC EDUCATION, CONVENED BY THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION, THROUGH THE INTERMEDIARY OF THE SWISS FEDERAL COUNCIL. THE REMAINING FORTY-FIVE WERE PASSED BY THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ON PUBLIC EDUCATION, CONVENED JOINTLY BY THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION AND THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION.