

RECOMMENDATION No. 7
concerning
THE ORGANIZATION OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS
(1936)

The International Conference on Public Education,

Convened at Geneva by the International Bureau of Education and being assembled on the 13th July for its 5th session, adopts the following recommendation on the fourteenth of July one thousand nine hundred and thirty-six:

Considering the fact that whereas the percentage of deaf and dumb, and particularly that of blind people, appears to be definitely diminishing, the number of the mentally defective, on the other hand, whether merely backward or mentally unstable, tends to increase in alarming proportions;

And considering that while it is the business of public authorities to take proper measures to deal with the causes of this increase (hereditary diseases, alcoholism, the conditions of modern life), it is the duty of educationists to concern themselves with conditions by which both the physically defective—the blind, deaf and dumb—and the mentally defective may, by suitable courses of education, be enabled to live an economic and social life more profitable to themselves and to society, and be trained like other children to profit by the moral, artistic and intellectual riches which give to human life its true value;

Bearing in mind also that extreme caution must be exercised in classifying children as mentally abnormal—so as to avoid prematurely stigmatising children as subnormal who may be able to live an almost normal life, and thus lowering them for the whole of their lives both in their own esteem and in that of society;

The Conference,

Recommends to the Ministries of Public Instruction in the various countries,

1) That all authorities entrusted with the organization of special schools should be compelled, wherever necessary, to open special classes or schools, if possible boarding schools, both for the physically defective and for the mentally defective;

That these establishments should be created under such conditions that the special instruction should not be available only to children in urban centres;

2) That the instruction given in them should be under the same conditions as regards remission of fees as the instruction given in the ordinary classes of normal children;

3) That, for boarders, scholarships should be awarded liberally to the children of poor families;

4) That the education in these schools should include not only:

a) the special culture of which these children have need (for example learning to speak and lip-reading for deaf-mutes, reading and writing for the blind);

b) general culture, which ought, as far as possible, to be comparable with that given to other children; but also an appropriate vocational training, taking into account the state of the labour market;

5) That the fullest account should be taken of the children's possibilities; that in consequence classes should be very small, and methods of instruction should always be the individual, active and concrete methods, already in use in a certain number of countries;

6) That the children should be considered not as being a burden on the public but as educable members of society; that, in consequence, the establishments devoted to them should be placed under the Ministries in charge of Public Instruction in the various countries;

7) That school medical inspection, made compulsory everywhere should deal with the mental health of the children as well as with their physical health, that in the classification of subnormal children there should be a close collaboration between teachers, school doctors, and if possible psychiatrists and school psychologists, and that the selection should be effected with extreme caution;

R 7

8) That preliminary instruction in the special courses required should, if possible, be given to prospective teachers under training in the Normal Schools and Training Colleges, that probationary periods should be instituted for those who wish ultimately to teach in special schools, and that teachers should be encouraged to undergo such probation by the provision of adequate scholarships, or by the continuance of the payment of salary;

9) That a supplementary salary should be granted to teachers who hold certificates of aptitude for the teaching of abnormal children and teach satisfactorily in special schools.