

RECOMMENDATION No. 8

concerning

THE ORGANIZATION OF RURAL EDUCATION (1936)

The International Conference on Public Education,

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

The Conference,

Considering that in various countries the peasant class constitutes a reservoir of physical health and an element of moral force which it is necessary to safeguard in integrity by fighting against the drift to the towns and the depopulation of the country;

That the conditions of modern civilisation and the progress of agricultural technique make it possible to organize an easier and a more comfortable life in the country;

That, even if the expansion of education has not had the serious effect, which some would lead us to believe, of drawing young people away from the country, the schools have at any rate in this respect not always been free from blame;

That, on the contrary, the rural school, without aiming at giving a purely agricultural teaching, could and should enable country children to understand the importance and the social and intellectual dignity of peasant life, and should give them the fundamental scientific knowledge which is nowadays necessary for the intelligent practice of rural vocations;

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Considering that, generally speaking, the problem of the rural school is to be found to-day in almost all countries, though in varying aspects;

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

1) That it should be an accepted principle that the education given to the children in rural schools should not be in any way inferior to that given to the children in urban schools, and that it should permit them to pass into secondary schools;

2) That, to this end, and to assure greater justice in the field of education, an effort should be made to remedy as far as possible any unfavourable conditions which may still exist in rural schools;

3) That the same standard of instruction should be ensured in all schools, whether in town or country, it being naturally incumbent on the teachers to adapt their curricula to local conditions and, in particular, to draw their "centres of interest" from the environment in which their pupils live;

4) That an effort should be made also to adapt the organization of rural schools (holidays, vacations, time-tables, as well as curricula) to the conditions of local or regional life;

5) That in order to assure a more complete community of spirit between urban and rural schools, both should be under the same Ministry;

6) That the general curricula of elementary schools should have a definite bearing on the conditions of life in the country;

7) That rural teachers should utilise the peculiar facilities for teaching offered by their environment so as to give a concrete and living character to their lessons, and thus to develop in their pupils a taste for rural life;

8) That for the older children in the rural schools the scientific instruction, without being purely agricultural, should have a particular bearing upon the ideas needed nowadays by agriculturists for an intelligent and profitable practice of their vocation;

9) That, in order to enable rural schools to give the children the complete education to which they are entitled, the maximum number of pupils to be admitted to any single-teacher school should be strictly limited;

10) That an endeavour should be made to reduce the number of single-teacher schools as far as possible by the provision of central or consolidated schools; and that, even if such schools are retained for the sake of the younger pupils, central classes should, at any rate, be established for the older boys and girls, and to this end, necessary arrangements should be made for transport and meals;

11) That, for young people of rural families, who are able to continue their studies but do not desire a purely agricultural training sections with a definitely rural bias should be established in the senior or higher elementary schools or corresponding institutions, in addition to the general sections preparing for the higher elementary school certificates;

12) That teachers of rural schools should not have a status inferior to that of teachers in town schools;

That, with this end in view, general and professional training of the same standard should be given to both urban and rural teachers whether in common or in separate institutions adequate attention being paid in all cases to rural subjects and also, in the case of women teachers, to domestic subjects;

13) That short courses in agricultural or domestic instruction should be organized for men and women teachers wishing to specialise in post-school or continuation work in rural areas;

14) That special benefits should be given to teachers in rural schools to compensate them for the inconveniences and disadvantages of living away from towns, thereby encouraging them in some measure to remain in the rural areas;

15) That the work of the rural school should be supplemented or facilitated by extra-curricular or post-school activities such as young farmers' clubs, womens' rural institutes, itinerant libraries rural broadcasts, educational films, educational and cultural missions, correspondence courses, etc.