

R 11

RECOMMENDATION No. 11 **concerning** **THE TEACHING OF MODERN LANGUAGES** (1937)

The International Conference on Education,

Convened at Geneva by the International Bureau of Education and being assembled on the 19th July at its sixth session, adopts on the twenty-first July, nineteen hundred and thirty-seven, the following recommendation:

The Conference,

Considering that the study of modern languages in different types of schools is steadily gaining in importance,

By reason of its practical utility at a time when the taste for travel and the possibility of indulging it have developed very considerably and the economic relations between nations are becoming more numerous;

By reason of the cultural interest provided by a direct knowledge not only of the literature but also of the customs, the history and the civilisations of foreign countries;

By reason of the influence which this closer understanding of one people by another can and must exercise on the growth of the spirit of peace,

Recommends to the Ministries of Education of the different countries;

1) That the study of modern languages should be as far as possible encouraged in different kinds of schools, including vocational schools and the senior classes of elementary schools;

2) That the acquisition of one foreign language at least should be made possible for all types of teachers — to enable them to keep alive their curiosity about what is happening in foreign countries in the subject which they teach — and also because of the profit, both intellectual and social, that their teaching is bound to derive from the knowledge of a foreign civilisation;

3) That the teaching of a modern language should have as its aim not only the capacity to use that language for practical purposes but, what is even more important, the educative interest inseparable from a knowledge of foreign civilisations and a mutual understanding between peoples;

4) That, with this end in view, the methods of teaching be directed not only to producing a facility in the use of the foreign language, whether written or spoken, but also to making the teaching of modern languages more and more a means towards the wider development of human personality;

5) It should be clearly understood, however, that neither in object nor method should the teaching of modern languages be modelled on that of the dead languages; that side by side with the more formal exercises a large proportion of the time should be devoted to practice in the actual use of the language — although the use of the direct method should not be allowed to exclude explanations and that exactitude of expression which is only possible in the mother tongue;

6) That sufficient time should be devoted not only to the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar, but also to the practice of correct pronunciation and intonation, and that with this object in view the essential phonetic exercises should be regularly practised;

7) That the vocabulary taught should bear close relation to “word frequency” and should be adapted to the interests of the pupils;

8) That textbooks (courses) should be written, appropriate to the age and needs of the pupils — possibly by teachers of the two countries in collaboration — and that room be found in them — though not to excess — for idioms and expressions of common speech, and that the subject matter be designed to describe the foreign country and the customs of its inhabitants;

9) That special teaching material, such as wall pictures, children’s newspapers, and libraries of foreign books, should be available for the staff; that the formation of foreign language circles be encouraged outside the work of the classroom; and that, finally, holiday courses,

R 11

exchange of pupils, and foreign correspondence should further the acquisition of a greater command of the language and a more direct knowledge of the foreign country;

10) That, remembering always that the chief part must be played by the master, the teaching of foreign languages should be put in a position to profit from the resources supplied by modern science — silent or sound films representing scenes of foreign life, typical landscapes, records in the foreign tongue and broadcasts — whether intended for the general public or arranged for the use of schools;

11) By reason of the peculiar circumstances inseparable from the teaching of modern languages, the size of classes should be kept reasonably small.