

**RECOMMENDATION No. 15**

**concerning**

**THE DRAFTING, UTILISATION AND CHOICE  
OF SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS  
(1938)**

The International Conference on Public Education,

Convened at Geneva by the International Bureau of Education and being assembled on the 18th of July for its seventh session, adopts on the twenty-second of July, nineteen hundred and thirty-eight, the following recommendation:

The Conference,

Considering that the spoken word of the teacher ought to remain the essential and living element of the lesson;

That the activity methods distinguishing modern teaching appeal above all to the spontaneity of the child, to the development of his faculties of observation and reasoning, and demand direct contact as often as possible with actual objects tending thus to lessen the relative importance of the textbook;

That nevertheless the textbook remains for all subjects, not only a valuable guide and an occasional aid, or a means of verification and revision, but also an indispensable auxiliary;

That the educational authorities should ensure that it serves its purpose in the best possible manner;

Submits to the Ministries of Public Instruction of the various countries the following recommendation:

1) School textbooks should fulfil definite requisites in three fields: pedagogical (scientific bases and methods); technical (appearance and make-up); and economic (purchase price);

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2) In countries where education is directed or controlled by the State, it is for the State to take proper measures to ensure the improvement of textbooks and to supervise their application. This duty will fall, in other countries, or the authorities responsible for the schools;

3) Commercial competition between authors and publishers being liable to result in lowering the quality of the books, it may be in the general interest that the official authorities should take all useful measures to ensure the publication of textbooks for the elementary classes, prepared on sound pedagogical lines, well-printed and inexpensive. These considerations have particular weight in relation to textbooks prepared for very young children and to reading books;

4) In those countries where there is control by the authorities, it is preferable that this control should be exercised before the printing of the textbooks and that the selection committees should comprise not only inspectors and officials of the Ministries, but also school teachers, chosen from amongst those most competent;

5) It is desirable that the conditions governing the approval of textbooks should be specified by official regulations, and that attention should be directed above all to scientific background and teaching methods. It is understood, of course, that the textbooks should conform to the official programmes, where such exist, that they should not contain anything conflicting with State institutions, and that they should endeavour to harmonise the principles on which the national life is based with those of humanity;

6) To prevent the drawbacks of too frequent changes of textbooks and the harmful consequences for the pupils which would result, it is desirable:

a) that the number of textbooks approved by the official authority should be limited in each branch and class;

b) that the approval given should hold-good for a sufficiently long period;

c) that the number of textbooks used in any one class should not be too great, especially in primary schools;

d) that there should not be too many changes of text from one edition to another of a particular textbook, at least unless they are justified by sufficient reasons;

e) that endeavour be made, as far as possible, to assure collaboration between the local education authorities, in order that pupils changing their schools should not be obliged to provide themselves each time with new textbooks;

f) that the right of the teacher to choose the textbook to be used according to his conceptions or his pedagogical preferences, should be restricted by the approval or the ratification of the competent committee;

7) It is desirable that school textbooks should be relieved of charges or taxes that would result in an increase in price, and that they should be accorded beneficial treatment as regards the conditions of circulation: carriage, postage rates, etc.;

8) Where the State itself undertakes the publication and distribution of the books, it is desirable to secure as far as possible their free distribution, particularly to necessitous children;

9) The purpose of the textbook being simply that of a guide and of an auxiliary, it is desirable to leave to the teacher a certain liberty in its use within the limits of the curriculum;

10) To facilitate the methodical employment of the textbook by teachers, one might usefully publish for their use special books of reference, or of teaching matter, or again interpolate in the text of school-books a certain number of explanations and annotations;

11) It is desirable that each school establishment or, at least, the school centre of each locality, should possess for the use of the teachers a library containing the different school textbooks in each branch and in each grade (standard), in order to afford a good choice of books and useful experimentation of various methods.