

RECOMMENDATION No. 17

concerning

THE ORGANIZATION OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION
(1939)

The International Conference on Public Education,

Convened at Geneva by the International Bureau of Education and being assembled on the 17th of July at its eighth session, adopts on the nineteenth of July, nineteen hundred and thirty-nine, the following recommendation:

The Conference,

Affirming the value it attaches to preserving the integrity of family life, and to education in and through the family continuing as long as possible;

Considering that, owing to the conditions of modern life, especially in towns, very many women are employed outside their homes and that for many mothers it is impossible to do all that should be done for their young children;

That consequently it is essential to create institutions where those children can be cared for and educated;

Considering further that methods particularly fruitful for the physical, mental and moral development of young children have resulted from the general progress of education;

That education for the home and family should be so developed as to enable future mothers to be initiated in such methods, and that these should be made more widely known through their adoption in such institutions of pre-school education as may be accessible to families desiring them;

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That the value of those institutions is in fact proved by the extent to which they have developed in many countries where, owing to the adoption of such methods, they have in turn exercised the happiest influence on education as a whole;

That this success is in great measure due to a body of teachers specially trained for pre-school education;

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

1) Pre-school education, which is intended for the child before it reaches the age of compulsory schooling, should be the concern of the school authorities and be available to all children;

2) Such education should be assured by the statutory bodies (State, province, communes, etc.), or by voluntary bodies (philanthropic or religious associations, industrial undertakings, cooperatives, private individuals, etc.);

3) In districts where no pre-school institutions exist, the elementary school should be open to children of pre-school age, who should be offered conditions favourable to their natural development, psychological and physical;

4) The minimum age of admission to pre-school institutions should be low enough to permit them to receive all children whose mothers, being at work, cannot look after them; but, as it is important that the young child should wherever possible remain within the family circle, pre-school attendance should be voluntary;

5) The age of leaving the pre-school institution should correspond to the age of admission to the elementary school. Bearing in mind however the needs of the elementary school, even though admission to the nursery school or class be permitted at any time, transfer to the elementary school should take place at definite times — at most twice a year;

6) The conditions as to free provision for children in pre-school institutions should be the same as in elementary schools;

7) The time-table of pre-school institutions should be more flexible than that of elementary schools. It is desirable that arrangements for supervision should enable children to be admitted before, and kept after, the regular hours;

8) The school year should be adapted to seasonal requirements in countries where the climate or the conditions of work necessitate this (summer nursery-schools or kindergartens, etc.);

9) It is very desirable that the maximum number of children entrusted to teachers in pre-school institutions should not exceed that: in elementary school and it is useful also to have the help of young probationers, nurses or other assistants;

10) It is highly desirable that the inspection and guidance of pre-school education should be in the hands of special inspectresses and mistresses;

11) In the construction, arrangement and equipment of buildings for pre-school education, account should be taken of the special needs of the children for whom these buildings are intended;

12) School authorities should help pre-school institutions to acquire and use special educational equipment;

13) The methods used should appeal to the spontaneous activity of children of pre-school age, and should be adapted to the particular conditions of their physical, moral and mental development;

14) The systematic introduction to reading, writing and arithmetic should be reserved for the elementary school, pre-school education should be restricted to sensory-motor development; in particular it is essential to prepare for the later teaching of arithmetic by the use of material which will help the child to acquire notions of number and form,

15) School authorities should safeguard the health of children attending pre-school institutions through medical supervision, development of mental hygiene, establishment of school kitchens, distribution of milk, etc.;

16) Collaboration with the family so necessary throughout school life, should be considered essential during the pre-school age. Parents' meetings, visits to the home, participation of parents in the activities of the school and all organizations contributing to this collaboration should be strongly encouraged;

17) The training of teachers for pre-school classes should always include theoretical and practical specialisation preparing them for their task. In no case should this preparation be less complete than that of elementary school teachers;

18) The further training of pre-school teachers already in service: should be encouraged;

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19) In principle, the conditions of appointment and the salaries of pre-school teachers should not be inferior to those of their colleagues in elementary schools;

20) Having regard to the special training contemplated in paragraph 17, it should be possible for teachers in pre-school institutions to pass into the elementary schools and vice-versa.