

RECOMMENDATION No. 18

concerning

**THE TEACHING OF GEOGRAPHY
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
(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 twenty-first of July, nineteen hundred and thirty-nine, the following recommendation:

The Conference,

Considering that geography teaching, if conducted on rational lines, may be of first-rate importance in developing in pupils their powers of observation and reasoning;

Hence that it deserves to be accorded an important place in all secondary schools;

Considering further that the study of men's efforts to adapt their physical background to their needs can, while fostering love of one's country, engender feelings of esteem for all other peoples and so increase understanding and collaboration between nations;

Considering, finally, that the contemporary world can only be truly understood through knowledge of the conditions of life of the peoples, and that the science of geography is therefore a valuable source of culture as well as of knowledge;

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

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1) It is desirable that the teaching of geography should afford to pupils a sufficiently exact knowledge of the physical background, the human and political aspects, and the economic life, not only of their own but also of other countries;

2) The teaching should be so conceived as to bring into play all the intellectual faculties of the child;

3) Geography should be accorded a place in the curriculum, as well as in examinations, commensurate with its educational and cultural value;

4) The time devoted to it should not be less than an average of one and a half hours per week;

5) This instruction should be judiciously distributed within the school life of the pupils. The subject matter should be presented with due regard to the degree of maturity and the mental development of the pupils;

6) Physical geography and human geography being equally important for the comprehension and reasoned understanding of a country it is desirable that, if the former occupies a relatively small place, its study should be specially enhanced by association with the latter;

7) In schools offering a six-year course, it is desirable that in the lower classes attention be mainly given to a general description of the major geographical areas, and that a more detailed study be reserved for the later years, such study requiring greater maturity of mind and some grasp of exact ideas in allied sciences;

8) The teaching of geography and of other subjects such as botany, geology, cosmography, history, etc., should be coordinated so that the pupil may better understand the interrelation and the scientific basis of geographical facts;

9) Verbal memorisation of meaningless names should find no place in the teaching, which should be intuitive in character and based essentially on activity methods;

10) The educational authorities should equip the schools with teaching material — maps, collections of slides, cinematograph apparatus, projectors, etc. — and should make grants-in-aid for excursions within the country and abroad;

11) It is desirable that educational authorities should contribute financially towards the publication of textbooks on economic geography, with a view to extending the knowledge of the agricultural, industrial and commercial life of their countries;

12) Individual research work, local or regional surveys made by groups of pupils, and inter-regional and international school correspondence are means of education that should be employed;

13) Classrooms specially equipped for geography are greatly to be desired;

14) The pupil should be expected to share actively in the preparation of teaching material: graphic representations, sections of soil and subsoil, collections of folklore, etc.;

15) In view of the nature of this teaching, the training of the teachers should be both theoretical and practical and should ensure acquaintance with the biological and geological sciences, as well as with certain social sciences, especially political economy, history, and sociology;

16) The educational authorities should encourage teachers to improve their qualifications by awarding grants for foreign travel, facilitating exchanges of teachers and organising holiday courses.