

RECOMMENDATION No. 21

concerning

THE FREE PROVISION OF SCHOOL SUPPLIES

(1947)

The International Conference on Public Education,

Convened at Geneva by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Bureau of Education and being assembled on the fourteenth of July for its tenth session adopts on the fifteenth of July, nineteen hundred and forty-seven, the following recommendation:

The Conference,

Considering that in the Preamble of the Convention establishing the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization the Signatory States declare themselves to believe "in full and equal opportunities for education for all";

That the International Bureau of Education, in its report on "Equality of Opportunity for Secondary Education," stresses the fact that the aim of educational reforms to-day is that equal opportunities for education should be ensured to all human beings, whatever their race, dwelling place, creed, fortune or rank, so that they may develop their capacities to the full;

Recalling Recommendation No. 19 of the International Conference on Public Education, adopted as a result of this report;

Considering that parents' lack of means can be a serious obstacle to the intellectual, moral and social development of a child even when attendance at school is free;

Submits to the Ministries of Education in the various countries the following recommendation:

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The Conference,

1) Believes on the one hand that the principle of the free provision of school supplies ought to be considered as the natural and necessary corollary of compulsory schooling, and on the other hand that the application of this principle to young people attending non-compulsory types of education, should be considered as the human ideal towards which one ought to aim;

2) Believes in consequence that an indispensable minimum requirement is the free provision of all school supplies required for compulsory education, it being understood that these supplies include both the teaching material for collective use and supplies for individual use;

3) Considers it desirable that school books should become the property of the pupils on finishing their compulsory education, in order to provide them with the nucleus of a small personal library and thus to stimulate their taste for the things of the mind;

4) Considers that when school supplies for individual use, particularly textbooks, are collected from pupils to be distributed to others, they should be thoroughly disinfected;

5) Expresses the desire that adequate financial provision should be made for school libraries of reference books (expensive textbooks, dictionaries, geographical atlases, great literary classics, etc.), and that, furthermore, the possibility of international publication of books for school work (such as atlases of blank maps, and collections illustrating physical and political geography, the history of art, development of applied science, the customs, habits and dress of the nations of the world) should be seriously considered;

6) Considers furthermore that means of transport should be provided free for pupils living at a considerable distance from the school which they are obliged to attend;

7) Considers that where the expense of providing free supplies is borne by the regional or local authorities, it is desirable that the State should if necessary subsidise the authorities responsible for provision of supplies when their financial resources are known to be inadequate;

8) Considers also that the activities of public and private bodies connected with the school should be encouraged; (it is indeed desirable that as large a number of citizens as possible should be able to give free and spontaneous expression of the interest they take in the school, but this does not relieve school authorities of their responsibilities);

9) Recalling Recommendation No. 15 concerning the drafting, utilisation and choice of school textbooks adopted by the VIIth Conference, draws attention to the desirability on the one hand of carrying out inquiries into the most economical means of publishing textbooks, pamphlets or information sheets, and of manufacturing furniture, equipment and other school materials, utilising to the full the resources of the country, and on the other hand of setting up in the Permanent Exhibition of Public Instruction in Geneva, a collection of the school textbooks in use in the various countries;

10) Expresses the desire-that an international agreement should be made with a view to increasing the number of educational films and other audio-visual material and of facilitating both their purchase and free circulation beyond national boundaries, so that the net cost may be reduced.