

## **RECOMMENDATION No. 32**

**concerning**

### **COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND ITS PROLONGATION (1951)**

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 twelfth of July, nineteen hundred and fifty-one for its fourteenth session, adopts on the twentieth of July, nineteen hundred and fifty-one, the following recommendation:

The Conference,

Considering that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on the 10th december, 1948, recognises the right of every person to education, and stipulates that fundamental and primary education shall be free, and that primary education shall in addition be compulsory,

That the Draft Covenant on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to be submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations, recognises that "primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all" and that "secondary education, in its different forms including technical and professional secondary education, shall be generally available and shall be made progressively free,

That this Draft Covenant provides that: "Each State Party to the Covenant which, at the time of becoming a Party to this Covenant, has not been able to secure within its metropolitan territory or other territories under its jurisdiction compulsory primary education, free of charge, undertakes, within two years to work out and adopt a detailed plan of action for the progressive implementation within a reasonable number of years, to be fixed in the plan, of the principle of compulsory primary education free of charge for all",

That the universalisation of the basic right to education is a problem which arises not only in the educationally less advanced countries, but also in other countries where the educational needs of steadily increasing populations have to be met,

That the problem of the prolongation of compulsory education is in its turn becoming a major concern for the authorities in an increasing number of countries, including educationally less advanced countries with large urban and industrial centres,

That the IIIrd International Conference on Public Education, held in Geneva in 1934, recognised that the problem of compulsory education and its prolongation takes different forms in different countries, and that the proposed solutions of it should take account of national, and in some cases regional and local, conditions,

That the techniques of teaching and education to be employed should (a) serve to develop the potentialities of each culture in accordance with its historical traditions, and to encourage between the various cultures the harmony which will generate peace and concord; and (b) be kept in line with social and economic developments, by means of international cooperation on the widest possible scale,

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

### **Compulsory education enforcement plans**

1. Plans for the full enforcement of compulsory education, in the spirit of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on the 10th December, 1948, should be drawn up without delay in those countries where the problem arises;

2. Since the plans for the full enforcement of compulsory education would involve not only educational measures, but also financial, social and other measures, they should be drawn up by inter-ministerial committees or other competent joint bodies, assisted possibly by the representative bodies and active forces in the country;

3. The plans for the full enforcement of compulsory education should include both measures for immediate execution and measures to be gradually applied over a fixed number of years;

4. The plans for the full enforcement of compulsory education should be preceded by careful enquiries, based on statistical estimates of the present and future school population, into the quantitative aspects of the problem;

## R 32

5. The plans for the full enforcement of compulsory education should also be coordinated with, and have due priority among, the country's plans for reform and for economic and social development; preliminary study should be made, in particular, of the following factors:

*a)* economic factors (total of the national income, degree of industrialisation, agricultural organization, the country's standard of living, etc.);

*b)* financial factors (system of taxation, administration of national, regional and local budgets, etc.);

*c)* social factors (organization of the various communities, general social structure, existence of nomadic tribes, family life, status of women, etc.);

*d)* geographical factors (population density and distribution, development of urban as compared with rural areas, climate and topography, communications, etc.);

*e)* political factors (political and administrative structure, etc);

*f)* linguistic factors (co-existence of two or more languages, unwritten languages, etc.);

6. The plans for the full enforcement of compulsory education should be flexible, and subject to constant amendment and re-adaptation in the light both of the results obtained and of changes in the general situation, which should be under permanent observation;

7. The plans for compulsory education and its full enforcement should be widely publicised, and their value to individuals and society alike emphasised, so as to secure the complete and unreserved backing of public opinion;

8. Since the plans for the full enforcement of compulsory education will necessarily extend over a more or less long period in a number of countries, it will be advisable to consider whether the campaign should be conducted throughout the country, or confined at first to certain regions so as to concentrate energies;

9. The campaign in favour of the full enforcement of compulsory education should be undertaken simultaneously for boys and for girls.

### **Financing the plans**

10. Lack of funds being the greatest obstacle to the full enforcement of compulsory education, careful study should be made of the financial aspects of the enforcement plans; such study should cover not only the

means of securing the necessary funds, but also a scheme of expenditure, so as to ensure the best use of the sums involved;

11) Since ways of raising revenue vary from country to country, no one method of financing the plans for the full enforcement of compulsory education can be put forward; in some countries new local or nation-wide taxes will have to be imposed, while in others it will be necessary to earmark for the plans an adequate percentage of the ordinary public education budget or to institute a special credit extending over a fixed number of years;

12) Insofar as the country's financial structure permits, joint participation by the central and local authorities in financing the plans may well be desirable, especially if participation by one party is made conditional on participation by the other;

13) Widespread publicity should be given to the financial aspects of the plans, in order to convince public opinion that, since all educational advance is expressed sooner or later in a considerable increase in the national revenue, investment in education is sound policy.

#### **Duration of compulsory education**

14) The term of compulsory education should not be too short especially in countries where the language problem arises; a child should not leave school before what he learns in school is sufficiently consolidated to be lasting, and to enable him to play his full part in the life of the community;

15) In countries where no legislation on compulsory education as yet exists, the minimum term of compulsory education should be fixed according to the principles of the preceding article, but not so as to run the risk of never being translated into practice;

16) The lowering of the term of compulsory education, in countries where it has already been fixed at 5, 6, 7 or more years, is inadvisable even if a large proportion (50 % or more in some cases) of the children of school age are evading the compulsory education provisions; in such cases the enforcement plan should concentrate on gradually bringing practice into line with the law;

17) In countries where compulsory education provisions will in all probability be fully enforced in the near future, the number of children enrolled being already not less than 70-80 % of the number

## **R 32**

of children of school age, the term of compulsory education should be gradually extended to 7 or 8 years;

18) The prolongation of compulsory education beyond the age of 14 or 15, on a full-time basis, or on a part-time basis within the framework of primary education or of a variety of secondary schools, is more especially to be encouraged in countries where compulsory education provisions are already fully enforced;

19) The age at which children are authorised by law to take up employment and the school-leaving age should be fixed in accordance with each other; the maximum cooperation should exist between the national education and labour authorities; such cooperation should be established, moreover, at the international level as well, among the organizations concerned with compulsory education and those concerned with the conditions of work of children and young persons.

### **Special cases**

20) Since all children have the right to be educated, the education authorities should wherever possible create the necessary institutions, and take adequate steps to ensure that the statutory or customary exemption of, for example, invalid children, mentally or physically handicapped children, and children exempt from schooling on the grounds of distance of their home from the school, can be suppressed;

21) Under certain conditions children whose parents (showmen boatmen or sailors, etc.) have no fixed abode, may well be provided for through residential schools, and correspondence or broadcast courses, etc.;

22) The education of the children of nomads raises special problems to which the education authorities will find varying solutions; one satisfactory solution, under certain circumstances, being that of mobile schools.

### **Aids to enforcement and penalties**

23) A periodic census of the children of school age should be taken in each locality, in order that enforcement of compulsory education may be effectively controlled;

24) Although penalties should exist for serious cases of failure to comply with compulsory education provisions, the approach in this connection to parents and guardians should be mainly made through persuasion and other facilitating measures;

25) The cooperation of parents and teachers should be encouraged; parents' associations, as well as attendance officers and social workers can render very real assistance in cases of failure to comply with compulsory education provisions;

26) The free provision of compulsory education, in conformity with Recommendation No. 21 passed by the Xth International Conference on Public Education, should not be limited to exemption from school fees, but should also be extended gradually to include school materials and textbooks;

27) Wherever possible, obstacles to attendance arising through the distance of pupils' homes from their school should be overcome through the better siting of schools, provision of transport facilities, establishment of boarding schools, etc.;

28) When pupils live nearer a school under an authority other than that of the school they would normally attend, they should be authorized to attend the nearer school;

29) School medical services, meals and, if necessary clothing services should be developed by the school authorities, not only because of their essential value, but also to facilitate school attendance, even where social aid of this kind is provided by other official or private bodies;

30) Family allowances may be regarded as aids to enforcement, as they compensate, for example, for the inability of children of school age to earn money, and offset other potential causes of non-attendance.

### **Teaching aspects of compulsory education**

31) In order that parents should appreciate school work and welcome compulsory education for their children, schools should be integrated as closely as possible with the community; schools should play their part in raising living standards in the community, and in its social, economic, civic, artistic and cultural advance; with these ends in view, schools should adopt curricula adapted to the children, and techniques such as active methods, which relate education to the children's surroundings, arouse their interest, and make them wish to improve their surroundings; schools should also profit from the experiments and pilot-projects made in the field of fundamental education;

32) In communities where illiteracy prevails, plans for the full enforcement of compulsory education should be accompanied by plans for the fundamental education of adults; parents will thus be encouraged

## **R 32**

to welcome the education of their children, and greater harmony created between children leaving school and the grown-ups; the fundamental education work should be closely coordinated with that of the ordinary schools;

33) Although the system of one-teacher primary schools presents technical difficulties, it is of value wherever its adoption may contribute to the full enforcement of compulsory education;

34) In fixing the length of the school year, due account should be taken of regional characteristics (climate, period of seasonal work, etc.);

35) Account of such characteristics should also be taken in drawing up time-tables, in order to facilitate school attendance to the greatest possible extent;

36) Although a time-table based on two sessions a day is in general to be preferred, a time-table based on one session may be adopted as an exceptional measure, a) wherever shortage of buildings and teachers or seasonal conditions are such that the children's right to education could not otherwise be made effective; and b) where the social or economic conditions make it desirable;

37) A time-table based on one session only should not entail overwork for pupil or teacher, and should not impair their health or efficiency;

38) Given the very considerable obstacle to the full enforcement of compulsory education in certain countries, presented by the language problem, and though stressing the role which in principle may be played by the mother tongue, the solution of this problem should be sought on the basis of each country's national, regional or local conditions, and of the findings of child and educational psychology.

### **Staffing problems**

39) The essential factor in any campaign for the full enforcement of compulsory education consists of the teachers themselves; lack of teachers is at the present time one of the obstacles to full enforcement, and great effort will be called for before it is overcome; it will therefore be necessary, as proposed in Recommendations Nos. 4 and 13, passed by the IVth and VIIth International Conferences on Public Education:

a) to offer teachers salaries in conformity with the importance of their task;

b) to grant them security of employment;

c) to create a sufficient number of training colleges;

40) Both the general and the professional training of teachers should be as advanced and as complete as possible; in order to implement compulsory education provisions, however, shortened training courses might in addition be required in certain countries; such courses being regarded only as emergency measures, and possibilities for further training (in the form of study periods, educational missions, vacation courses, education journals, and the like) should be available for all teachers, whatever their training;

41) Their professional training should enable teachers, especially those in rural areas, not only to become technically efficient, but also to take an active part in the life and work of their locality, based on a knowledge of its customs, needs and ambitions; teachers should be the active mediators of a fundamental education comprising general culture, hygiene, crafts and agriculture;

42) Where necessary, school authorities should make every endeavour to provide sufficient incentives to attract teachers to rural areas.

### **School building problems**

43) In the light of Recommendation No. 9, passed by the Vth International Conference on Public Education, the following proposals are worthy of consideration;

44) All plans for the full enforcement of compulsory education should be accompanied by school building programmes; these programmes should cover not only schools, but also living accommodation for teachers where the need for it arises;

45) The siting of schools should be studied with care, due account being taken of the distribution of the school population, and of the distance children will have to travel to school;

46) School building programmes should take due account, within the limits of economic possibilities, of the educational, hygienic and climatic conditions of the localities where the schools are to be erected;

47) Under certain circumstances, it would be of value to secure the cooperation of the people in the construction of their own schools without in any way absolving the authorities from their responsibilities in the matter;

48) Emergency school building programmes might be envisaged to meet the most pressing needs, covering the use of prefabricated materials and of the provisional use of buildings not originally intended as schools, etc.;



## **R 32**

49) Even where in principle financial responsibility for school building falls on the public authorities, private individuals or associations might be encouraged to render assistance in the form, for example, of the free grant of building sites, donations and subscriptions; in cases of urgency, special loans might also be envisaged;

50) Wherever possible, schools should be equipped with a playground, a workshop, and a field or garden;

51) Wherever climatic conditions permit, open air schools may solve the school building problem, given their educational, financial and hygienic advantages;

52) School building should form an integral part of all town-planning, in order that a sufficient number of schools for the full enforcement of compulsory education may be provided for and built.

### **Prolongation of compulsory education**

53) The Conference, recalling Recommendations Nos. 1, 2 and 19 passed by the IIIrd and IXth International conferences on Public Education, recommends that those countries which have fully enforced compulsory education already should draw up, with the least possible delay, a programme for the gradual extension of compulsory education to young persons;

54) Financial aid should be considered, when necessary, for families of limited means, especially at the period when children are of an age to begin work, to compensate such families for the loss of earning ability and thus enable them to continue sending their children to school;

55) The prolonged education should be adapted to the children's varying abilities, aptitudes and interests, and to varying social and economic needs, and should make full use of modern culture; a wide choice of studies should be offered to the pupils, with full possibilities of getting guidance, of changing course, and of making leeway in subjects in which they are backward;

56) The study of science and technology should be sufficiently humanised to make it as suitable for general as for specialist education;

57) The maximum coordination should exist among the various types of schools for prolonged education (academic and "modern" secondary schools technical and vocational schools, primary schools, etc.), so as to facilitate transfer from one type to another and enable rational selection and guidance to be made;

58) Efficient continuation classes in the employer's time should enable young persons between school-leaving age and the age of 18 already in employment, to perfect their vocational and general education.

### **Assistance from international organizations**

The Conference,

Submits to the United Nations Organization and its Specialised Agencies and to the Inter-governmental Organizations the following recommendation:

59) That the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, in consultation with Member States concerned and appropriate United Nations Agencies and International Organizations, consider the possibility of formulating a programme for assistance to Member States who apply for such assistance, in introducing free and compulsory education according to national requirements, and in accordance with the Covenant of the United Nations; such a programme to coordinate all sources of assistance now available, explore the possibility of loans, and raise funds from voluntary contributions;

60) That, in drawing up plans for technical assistance, priority be given those concerning the full enforcement of compulsory education;

61) That such assistance be not only of a financial kind, but also include the efficient cooperation of the international bodies in the drawing up and execution of the plans for the full enforcement of compulsory education;

62) That the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development consider the possibility of making long-term loans to countries requesting them, for the purpose of implementing the compulsory education enforcement plans, until the programme of economic development of these countries has advanced sufficiently to enable them to meet the necessary expenditure on compulsory education themselves;

63) That the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization assist by the organization of regional conferences on the adaptation of the principles put forward by the XIVth International Conference on Public Education to the particular conditions of each world region;

64) That missions of experts be sent to countries so requesting, to make direct study of their special problems in connexion with the full enforcement of compulsory education, and that international scholar-

## **R 32**

ships be available for the experts of these countries, to enable them to study the problems of compulsory education in countries where it is already fully enforced;

65) That the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization continue enquiries and research on compulsory education and its prolongation, and on school guidance and coordination of schools at secondary level, and that the results be published and brought to the knowledge of education authorities and educationists generally;

66) That, through bilateral or multilateral agreements, and with a view to the full enforcement and the prolongation of compulsory education, exchanges of information, meetings of specialists, and possibly mutual assistance, be arranged.