

RECOMMENDATION No. 37
TO THE MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION
concerning
THE STATUS OF PRIMARY TEACHERS
(1953)

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 having assembled on the sixth day of July, nineteen hundred and fifty-three for its sixteenth session, adopts on the fifteenth of July nineteen hundred and fifty-three, the following recommendation:

The Conference,

Considering that good service conditions are necessary to attract to the primary teaching profession suitably gifted young men and women, in sufficient numbers to provide for the extension of free and compulsory education to all children;

Considering that the status of primary teachers is closely linked with their professional training which is dealt with in Recommendation No. 36 concerning Primary Teacher Training, adopted by the Conference in its present session;

Considering that the status of primary teachers in common with that of other teachers is determined in part by legal and administrative guarantees of contract, tenure, remuneration, conditions of service, and social security, and in part by other less easily measured factors which influence the esteem in which the teaching profession is held both by employing authorities and by public opinion;

R 37

Considering that the status of the teaching profession as a whole depends largely on the profession's internal unity, its good relations with the education authorities, the extents to which teachers are consulted in matters affecting both their conditions of work and the standards and content of education, and on the freedom of teachers from direction in matters of personal convictions, it being understood that this freedom does not entitle teachers to impart such convictions to their pupils in despite of the rights of the parents;

Considering that primary teachers, in common with others, contribute to their prestige by the quality of their spiritual and intellectual contribution to the nation's life, by bearing their share, individually, in the social demands of their local communities, and by displaying a spirit of service in the interests of their pupils which is evidenced outside as well as inside the hours of paid employment;

Considering on the one hand, that outside the classroom, and without distinction of sex, race, colour, opinion or personal beliefs primary teachers like all educationists should be free to exercise their civic rights, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but on the other hand, that their mission as educationists imposes on them duties towards the children, whose conscience and personality they should respect, towards the families who entrust their children to them, and towards the community in which they are called upon to serve;

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

Administrative status

1) Where primary teachers enjoy the status of public servants, the general rights and guarantees conferred by such status should not be inferior to those conferred on other categories of public servants;

2) In cases where primary teachers do not enjoy the status of public servants, they should be engaged on contract, the general terms of which should not be less favourable than those of comparable staffs engaged on contract;

3) Without advocating rigid uniformity, sympathetic attention should be given to the steps taken in countries with decentralized systems of education to eliminate as far as possible any excessive inequalities that may exist in the conditions of service, especially as regards salaries, of primary teachers within a given country;

4) Where for administrative purposes primary teachers come under local authorities, steps should be taken to ensure that such authorities, particularly those in rural areas, are in a position to guarantee the rights of primary teachers, especially in regard to the regular payment of their salaries;

5) Primary teachers should enjoy the maximum security of tenure except in the case of grave misconduct specified in the appropriate regulations as entailing dismissal; if they fulfil the conditions required, they should be given permanent appointments, or, where this is not considered possible, long-term appointments with the possibility of renewal;

6) The application of the regulations concerning the rights and duties of primary teachers should be the responsibility of the competent authorities who should not be subject to any extraneous pressure or interference;

7) In the event of unsatisfactory work or conduct on the part of a primary teacher, the penalties as defined in the relevant regulations should be applied objectively, and the teacher should have the right of appeal to the appropriate authorities if he feels that he has been treated unjustly;

8) Primary teachers should also have the right of appeal if they feel that the administrative provisions as specified in the law or regulations have been unjustly applied to them.

9) As a general rule authorized delegates of primary teaching staffs should form part of the bodies responsible for examining appeals lodged by such staffs against decisions concerning them made by the education authorities in disciplinary matters or matters concerning professional competence;

10) Primary teachers or their representatives should be accorded the privilege of participating in the formulation of policies which affect their work, and in education conferences at which problems relating to the work of primary teachers are being considered;

11) Teachers should have the right to join freely whichever professional organizations they prefer, which would be qualified to represent them on all occasions.

Appointment

12) The procedure for the appointment of primary school teachers should be as simple as possible and should be carried out with complete objectivity;

R 37

13) The automatic appointment of primary teachers who have obtained the required teaching certificates presents advantages, wherever there is a shortage of teaching staff; in making appointments for which both men and women candidates are equally qualified and in circumstances where the appointment of either would be suitable, there should be no discrimination because of sex;

14) In countries where automatic appointment is not applicable, it is advisable to use a selection procedure which affords the candidates all possible guarantees, and takes account of their records of character and achievement during the training course, their qualifications, their extra-curricular activities, and the results of tests and interviews;

15) Where a selection procedure has been adopted for promotion or appointment to higher posts, this should be based on principles similar to those described in Clause 14, and also on candidates' service record and seniority;

16) The periods of probation required in certain countries before confirmation of appointment, should not be unduly long, in order that teachers may enjoy their full rights as soon as possible;

17) Among the means of encouraging teachers to remain as long as possible in one post, and of avoiding too frequent changes, especially in rural areas, appropriate steps should be included which facilitate the appointment of teachers to posts, if they so desire, in their own locality or its neighbourhood;

18) When husband and wife are both teachers, appropriate steps should be taken to facilitate their appointment to the same or neighbouring localities, wherever suitable vacancies exist;

19) In countries where it is possible to do so, the promotion of teachers to a higher salary level should be provided for without necessarily involving the transfer of the teacher to another locality.

Hours of work

20) In view of the pupils' limited capacity for classroom work, and the supplementary work which the teacher is called on to do outside the classroom, the number of actual teaching hours should not exceed 30 per week; teaching programmes should permit teachers to prepare their lessons thoroughly, correct the work of their pupils, and leave time for extra-curricular activities, meetings with parents, and professional and cultural studies;

21) The duration of holidays and their distribution over the year should take into account the special need of pupils and teachers for recreation and leisure;

22) Where schools are organized on the basis of double shifts, and where the teacher has charge of alternate groups of pupils, care should be taken to provide adequate staffing so as to keep the teaching load within the limits recommended in Clause 20;

23) The salaries primary teachers receive, should as a rule be sufficient to permit them to devote all their energies to their educational and social activities; paid work outside the hours of normal employment should be undertaken only if it does not prejudice these activities, and does not undermine the respect for teachers of the public in general, and of parents and pupils in particular.

Salaries

24) Given the fact that the low qualifications of teachers in public or private schools are often among the main reasons for their low salaries and unfavourable conditions of employment, and are also detrimental to the interests of the children, public authorities should consider the desirability of fixing by law the minimum qualifications of teachers in all types of primary schools;

25) Primary teachers' salaries should correspond to the importance of their task, and should not place them in an inferior position as compared with the various categories of public servants or employees with equivalent training or social status;

26) Salary minima should be sufficient to ensure primary teachers, from the very beginning of their career, living conditions which enable them to work well and to establish a home;

27) Salary scales should be drawn up on the simplest lines possible, and in such a way that the proportion of teachers on the lower scale should be as small as possible;

28) While recognizing that systems of remuneration vary from one country to another, it appears desirable that the gap between minimum and maximum salaries should not be too great within the same country, provided both minimum and maximum salaries ensure adequate remuneration to the teachers;

29) In countries where there are two or more systems of primary teacher training, teachers possessing qualifications involving a longer and completer training should be placed on a higher salary scale;

R 37

30) Equally qualified men and women primary teachers should be on the same salary scale; in countries where this principle is not applied, steps should be taken progressively to reduce the existing differences;

31) Progress on the increment scale should permit primary teachers to reach the intermediate salary grades as quickly as possible, and at the end of their career to obtain a reasonable pension or lump sum, assuming these are calculated on the basis of salary;

32) Wherever promotion to a higher level of salary is based mainly on selection, steps should be taken to ensure that such selection is made by the responsible authorities, not arbitrarily, but on the basis of seniority, qualifications, ability, efficiency, and merit, considered together;

33) Within any given country with a decentralized educational system, where primary teachers have varying allowances and are on varying salary scales, appropriate means should be found to eliminate as far as possible any undue differences that may exist between rates of remuneration;

34) In countries where pre-school teachers are on lower salary scales than primary teachers, it is desirable to consider the elimination of such inequality, given the same qualifications and training for both;

35) Wherever teachers in demonstration schools attached to training establishments, or in senior, complementary or special primary schools, require supplementary or specialist qualification or training, it appears justifiable that such teachers should receive higher remuneration than other primary teachers;

36) In view of their special responsibilities, head-teachers are entitled to higher salaries graded, where necessary, according to the size of their school;

37) Probationary, replacement, supply, and uncertified primary teachers are entitled to salaries which, although they may be lower than those of permanently appointed teachers, enable them to live in reasonable comfort;

38) In countries where it is not already the case, steps should be taken to ensure that primary teachers' holidays and authorized leave are fully paid.

Allowances and privileges

39) In countries where salary scales have not been adjusted to meet the higher cost of living, primary teachers should receive cost-of-living allowances, and such allowances should be periodically revised;

40) Special allowances should be paid to primary teachers working in localities less favoured by reason of their isolation, climate, unhealthy conditions, or other factors, or in large towns with a relatively high cost of living; determination of such factors should rest with the competent authorities;

41) In view of the housing shortage existing in most countries, it is becoming increasingly desirable that the authorities should provide primary teachers with living accommodation, either free or at a low rent, or with an allowance in lieu;

42) It is desirable that where family allowances exist for other public servants or employees, they should be granted to primary teachers on the same terms as for other public servants or employees of comparable status;

43) In cases where teachers are called upon to transfer to other localities in the interest of the service, removal allowances should be paid.

Social insurance

44) All primary teaching staffs should have a social insurance scheme covering the following contingencies: retirement, compensation for survivors, disability, illness and maternity;

45) Whatever organizations are responsible for administering the social insurance scheme (public bodies, associations of public servants, or private insurance companies), the public authorities should ensure that they are in a position to afford the necessary guarantees and to meet their liabilities towards the beneficiaries of the scheme;

46) Countries exist where primary teachers are not required to pay contributions to the social insurance scheme of which they are members, but wherever they are required to do so, such contributions should not be higher than those paid into the scheme by the public authorities;

47) On reaching a given age or completing a given number of years of service, primary teachers should be entitled to a retirement pension or lump sum, or both; they should be paid at a proportional level if they leave the service before the given limits after completing a stipulated minimum number of years of service, with the proviso that such arrangement does not encourage them to leave the service prematurely;

48) In the event of disability or incapacity leading to enforced retirement, primary teachers should be entitled to a pension or lump sum proportional in amount to years of service, with a minimum high enough to ensure that the teachers concerned are not in want;

R 37

49) In the event of illness, primary teaching staffs should be entitled to sick leave with full pay for a given period, their replacement being supplied by the education authorities; it is desirable that they should receive an allowance for medical expenses and medicines, where provision is not otherwise made; in the event of the illness lasting beyond the given period, the pay should be only gradually reduced, until recovery or premature retirement on disability pension;

50) All women primary teachers should be entitled to maternity leave with full pay before and after the birth of the child lasting in all not less than three months, leave in excess of this minimum being reckoned as sick leave;

51) In the event of a primary teacher's death, compensation should be paid to his dependent survivors or at least to his widow, provided she does not remarry, and his children up to a certain maximum age which is not lower than that of the end of compulsory education, and beyond such age if they are pursuing their general or vocational education;

52) It is desirable that representatives of primary teaching staffs should assist in formulating the regulations of social insurance schemes, and should be associated with the administration of the funds and the settlement of disputed claims.

Teachers from other areas

53) Due account being taken of the various factors on which existing legal provisions concerning the employment of teachers from other countries are based, it is desirable, especially where there is a shortage of teachers, that the possibility be envisaged of admitting such teachers, under certain conditions;

54) To be eligible for appointment to public primary school posts, such teachers should possess the same diplomas as the teachers of the countries concerned, or the equivalent;

55) In countries with a federal system, it is desirable that members of a given constituent state, province or canton have every possible facility for appointment throughout the federation concerned.