

RECOMMENDATION No. 44
TO THE MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION
concerning
THE EXPANSION OF SCHOOL BUILDING
(1957)

The International Conference on Public Education,

Convened in Geneva by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the International Bureau of Education and having assembled on the eighth of July, nineteen hundred and fifty-seven for its twentieth session, adopts on the sixteenth of July, nineteen hundred and fifty-seven the following Recommendation:

The Conference,

Considering that past and future recommendations of the International Conference on Public Education cannot be fully implemented without the provision of adequate school buildings in the various countries,

Considering Recommendation No. 9 on the legislation governing school building, adopted on the seventeenth day of July, nineteen hundred and thirty-six, by the International Conference on Public Education at its fifth session,

Considering that educational development is one of the essential problems to be solved in coming years for the future good of mankind, for cultural, economic and social progress and for international understanding, and that this development largely depends on the provision of school buildings,

Considering that the right to education implies for all children without distinction the opportunity of receiving their education in

suitable accommodation, with classrooms specially designed and equipped for that purpose,

Considering that all countries, whatever the stage of their material and cultural development, are suffering from a shortage of school buildings,

Considering that growth and internal movements of population, the introduction or prolongation of compulsory education for all and the extension of secondary education must increase school enrolments year by year,

Considering that, on account of the complexity of the problem, effective collaboration must be established within each country between all the authorities and interests which are concerned with school building development,

Considering that while all countries must benefit from international cooperation in this field many countries need positive international aid,

Considering that countries sharing similar aims, but having different economic, financial and administrative systems, need to find varied solutions to the problem of school building,

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

Survey of needs

1) In order to find a rational solution to the problem and avoid all unnecessary expense, it is essential to draw up well in advance an overall plan based on a study of present and future needs in school building.

2) This study should be based on the educational requirements of each country, and should include:

a) a census of existing school buildings including rented premises, provisional accommodation and hutments, with details of their present use, the extent to which they can be adapted to new needs, etc.;

b) statistical data regarding present and future trends in school population;

c) a study of the possible effects on the growth and distribution of school enrolments of: (i) the introduction, where it does not already exist, of compulsory education for all; (ii) a possible extension of the

R 44

compulsory schooling period; (iii) the provision of secondary education for an increasing number of children; (iv) internal movements of population; (v) a better distribution of school accommodation;

d) an estimate of the financial outlay necessary to give effect to the plan;

e) an analysis of the availability of technicians, building labour and materials;

f) arrangements for carrying out the plan in phases.

3) The nature of the bodies responsible for carrying out this study and keeping the results up to date will vary according to the administrative structure of each country and the degree of centralisation of its educational system; but it is desirable, even when the responsibility rests with local authorities, that an overall study giving a general view of the whole country's requirements should be provided.

4) The production of such long-term development plans, as well as revealing issues requiring decision, also offers particularly effective means of awakening authorities and public opinion to the urgent demands to be met by the country and the financial effort involved.

Administrative measures

5) The administrative procedure for the erection of school buildings should be as simple and as speedy as possible; it should never impede or delay the planning and building of schools.

6) Where different authorities are concerned at different levels with school building, it is necessary to avoid duplication or overlapping in the work of central, federal, regional and local administrative bodies.

7) It is in the interests of education to associate the local public authority with the school building programme in so far as their contribution would be effective.

8) In cases where different departments (education, public works, finance, etc.) are directly responsible in the matter of school building, every effort must be made to coordinate their roles on a permanent basis.

9) The adoption of national, regional or local long-term plans, whether mandatory or not, will facilitate action, increase efficiency and save time; all plans for social and economic development should include a special section comprising the needs and plans for school building expansion in the coming four or five years.

10) It is important to build accommodation for teachers at the same time as the schools themselves, especially in areas where the housing shortage threatens to affect the recruitment of teachers.

Financial and economic measures

11) Whatever the stage of development reached in the educational field, expenditure on school building in every country must be regarded as a continuing necessity; in order to provide for this outlay a long-term financial policy is necessary.

12) Depending on the administrative and economic structure of each country, a balance must be established as rationally as possible between the respective shares of financial responsibility for school building which are to be borne by local, regional and central or federal authorities.

13) In view of the magnitude of the financial outlay required for school construction, every effort should be made to keep capital expenditure as low as possible, provided that the quality of the building and educational and health standards do not suffer as a result.

14) When it is a question of providing basic educational facilities or of meeting new demands which are particularly urgent, the following exceptional financial measures have been found useful:

a) supplementary budgets or specially created national or local funds or loans to cover extraordinary programmes of work;

b) additional revenue from special taxes, collections, stamp issues, etc.;

c) the attraction of private capital by issues of stocks;

d) private gifts by individuals or local communities of money, land, labour or materials.

15) In some countries, the legal obligation requiring large industrial, commercial, mining, agricultural or housing concerns to share in some way in the building of schools, may help to solve the school building problem in certain areas.

Technical measures

16) The design of schools must be based upon educational, sociological and sanitary requirements and meet the needs of children and families, taking into account such factors as climate, surroundings,

R 44

economic situation and building techniques; therefore the design of schools must be the result of a close collaboration between educators, parents, designers, builders and administrators.

17) Experience has shown the value of the study, by bodies set up for that purpose, of school design and actual construction.

18) In designing new buildings, it is necessary to take into consideration changes in teaching methods as well as continuous technical progress.

19) School premises should not be conceived as monuments intended to last for centuries but as buildings which may be easily adapted to changes in the distribution of population and to educational and technical progress.

20) Without seeking undue uniformity or inflexibility which would be incompatible with varying local conditions and the evolution of educational ideas, the simplification and standardization of building components, and, where necessary, the drawing up of adaptable and varied model plans can be of great help in reducing capital costs and speeding up construction.

21) Rational examination of user needs can lead to substantial economy by reducing the floor area and, in certain cases, the cubic content of school buildings. Provided that the needs of education and health are safeguarded it appears essential to secure such economies.

22) Much school building will have to be carried out in stages for reasons of expediency; nevertheless each project should be planned as a whole before any part is built, so that the completed project is satisfactory educationally and architecturally.

23) In areas where the climate is suitable, the provision of open-air accommodation may constitute an economical method of partially solving the school building problem.

24) It is essential that in all town planning, space be reserved from the start for all types of schools, including boarding accommodation if necessary, without losing sight of the fact that in the none too distant future more space will be required for secondary education than for primary education.

25) In the choice of sites for new schools it is desirable to take into account such factors as possible population changes, traffic hazards, means of transport, sanitary requirements, availability of public utilities, topography and soil conditions, etc.

26) In sparsely populated areas advantage should be taken of any development in transport facilities; centrally placed schools, for example, able to accommodate larger numbers of pupils, might be more economically substituted for separate small schools; on the other hand the building of large schools with an excessive number of classes and pupils should be avoided; it is better to build, whenever possible, rationally distributed schools which will be suited to the child and where life and work in common will be possible, where the social conscience of the children can be trained and contact with the outside world and with nature facilitated.

27) It is educationally desirable that children should contribute to the greatest possible extent to the furnishing and decoration of their own school.

28) Building services and concerns should have at their disposal reliable information on school building in order to allow them to establish programmes of work covering a substantial period ahead and to organize their labour and equipment as efficiently as possible.

29) For the purpose of enabling building services and concerns to obtain materials at better prices, to standardise certain constructional elements and to organize operations on a rational basis, it may be found desirable, in some cases, to combine the erection of several schools in one inclusive contract.

30) Encouragement should be given to the organizing of national congresses and seminars for specialists, of exhibitions, of competitions for designs, etc., connected with the building of schools.

Emergency measures

31) Some emergency solutions cannot be entirely rejected; as far as possible, however, they should be recognised as necessary evils to be remedied as quickly as possible and not allowed to become permanent.

32) Emergency measures such as increasing the number of pupils per class or taking classes in shifts (one classroom being used for two or three groups of pupils in turn) have obvious disadvantages and should only be adopted in exceptional circumstances.

33) The use of premises designed for other purposes than teaching, and the erection of temporary structures, are often unavoidable expedients. For short-term use they probably offer the easiest and cheapest way of providing emergency accommodation. If retained in use for long periods, however, there is evidence that, apart from their educational and environmental disadvantages, their cost (purchase price, rent, upkeep, etc.) may exceed that of well designed permanent school buildings.

International cooperation

The Conference submits to the United Nations and its Specialised Agencies and to the Inter-governmental Organizations the following recommendation:

34) It is of advantage to all countries to combat everything which may hinder educational development, and consequently to help each other acquire increased efficiency in their school building activity.

35) It is desirable to pay particular attention to the case of under-developed countries. As they have great requirements and considerable leeway to make up, they suffer, despite every possible effort on their part, from a shortage of material, financial and technical facilities which renders positive foreign aid a necessity. For this reason it is desirable that international organs whose activities are on a world or regional scale continue and if possible increase their assistance in the matter of school building to countries in particular need.

36) In the field of school building construction, design and costing (which should always be worked out with reference to local conditions), international aid can take the form of:

a) Exchanges of ideas, experience and information. In this connection it would be advisable to set up, with the assistance of Unesco, the International Bureau of Education and other international institutions, an international school building centre with appropriate technicians and educators on the staff. Such a centre should stimulate and assist the development of similar regional centres.

b) The awarding of scholarships in connection with technical assistance programmes, the sending of architects and technicians to under-developed countries, in particular to study the use of available local material, to draw up plans specially conceived for the various areas and to suggest the economies which are even more necessary in those countries than elsewhere.

c) The organization jointly by important international associations of educators, architects and economists of international meetings school building exhibitions and study travel.

d) The publication of pamphlets, handbooks and reviews devoted to modern methods of school building.

37) International organizations could also play a useful part in the setting up of national and regional research centres which would devise suitable building plans and speedy, economic methods of construction suitable for different areas.

38) International aid may take the form of grants, loans on particularly favourable conditions and even of contributions to an international fund, set up under the United Nations, for advancing school building.

39) It is indispensable for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to consider the possibility of making long-term loans for school building to countries which request them. These loans will be needed so long as the economic development of these countries has not advanced sufficiently to enable them to meet the necessary expenditure themselves.

40) It would be advisable to have experts examine the question of the international circulation of capital available for investment in school building, particularly building by under-developed countries.

41) International aid may be constituted by donations and by offers of school building materials at favourable prices; the possibility of such exchanges should form the subject of special study by international and national organizations concerned with economic and social questions.

42) It is important for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in its programmes of activities for the next few years to make provision for a major project devoted to school building.